

1,464 tickets issued for not using seatbelts, using mobiles



4 policemen killed in new shootout in Jordan



Bollywood's Kareena Kapoor and Saif Ali Khan have baby



Kuwaiti female shooter Afrah dreams of Olympic glory



MPs SUBMIT DRAFT LAW TO CUT EXPAT NUMBERS

FADHL DEMANDS HOLIDAY ON XMAS, LARGE TREE ON SAFAT SQUARE



Min 03°
Max 15°
High Tide 07:07 & 18:13
Low Tide 11:18 & 23:59



150 FILLS
NO: 17087
40 PAGES

FREED KUWAITIS RETURN HOME FROM IRAN

KUWAIT: Four Kuwaitis arrested several days ago in Iran's southwestern region of Ahvaz returned to Kuwait yesterday. The four were released on Monday and handed over to the Kuwaiti Embassy in Tehran. They were welcomed yesterday at Kuwait airport by family and friends, along with senior officials.

Assistant Foreign Minister for Consular Affairs Sami Al-Hamad congratulated the government and citizens over the release of the four men. He said the foreign ministry, on the instructions of Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaleed Al-Sabah and Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, made direct contacts with the Iranian authorities for the speedy release of the Kuwaitis. He lauded the efforts exerted by all sides, particularly praising the major role played by Kuwaiti diplomats in Iran.

Kuwait had summoned the Iranian ambassador on Friday and demanded the release of the men. Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Rai had reported the four were on a fishing trip when they strayed into Iranian waters and were detained on Friday. Kuwait recalled its ambassador from Tehran in January after relations were broken off between Saudi Arabia and Iran following attacks on the kingdom's missions. A Kuwaiti and an Iranian were sentenced to death in January by a court in Kuwait for spying for Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah group. — Agencies



KUWAIT: Four Kuwaitis who were arrested several days ago in Iran are welcomed at Kuwait airport by family and friends and senior officials yesterday. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Five Kuwaiti lawmakers yesterday submitted a draft law calling to cut the number of expatriates in Kuwait in order to reach a demographic balance within five years. The bill - signed by MPs Khalil Abul, Oudah Al-Oudah, Abdulwahab Al-Babtain, Omar Al-Tabtabaei and Ahmad Al-Fadhil - the last three being first-time lawmakers, calls to establish a higher national committee for the demographic structure to be headed by the interior minister.

The proposed committee will take the necessary measures to make Kuwaitis and expatriates equal in number after five years. At present, out of a population of 4.4 million people, Kuwaitis make up just 30 percent, or 1.33 million. MP Abul however said that domestic helpers, currently totaling over 650,000, so-called contract workers who are recruited to work on specific large development projects and children of Kuwaiti women with non-Kuwaiti husbands are exempt from the law.

Also, the draft law stipulates that the size of any single foreign community should not exceed 30 percent of the total foreigners in the country. Based on a rough calculation by Kuwait Times, the number of Kuwaitis after five years is expected to reach 1.6 million, which means that expatriates have to be equal to them at 1.6 million. Adding domestic helpers, contract workers and children of Kuwaiti women, the number of expatriates will be around 2.3 million after five years.

This would mean that if new recruitment is totally suspended, which is impossible, as many as 800,000 expatriates will have to be cut. Applying the 30 percent quota limitation, most of the cut will have to be made from Indians, who exceed 900,000 now, and Egyptians, who are close to 600,000 people.

Continued on Page 13



BERLIN: Forensic experts examine the scene yesterday around a truck that crashed into a Christmas market near the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. — AFP

BERLIN TRUCK RAMPAGE SUSPECT STILL AT LARGE

AMIR CONDEMNS ATTACK

BERLIN: A Pakistani asylum-seeker suspected of ploughing a lorry into a Berlin Christmas market, killing 12, was released yesterday for lack of evidence, leaving investigators to pursue their hunt for the real perpetrator of the massacre. "The accused, detained over the attack on the Berlin Christmas market on December 19, 2016, was let go on this evening on the orders of the federal prosecutor," the prosecutor's office said in a statement. "The forensic tests carried out so far did not provide evidence of the accused's presence during the crimes in the cab of the lorry."

A "soldier" of the Islamic State group carried out the truck attack, a news agency linked to the militants said yesterday. "A soldier of the Islamic State carried out the Berlin operation in response to appeals to target citizens of coalition countries," the IS-linked Amaq news agency said in a statement posted online.

The Pakistani man was arrested after Germany daily Die Welt said a witness saw the suspected driver jump out of the vehicle's cab and trailed the individual for about two kilometres, tipping off police about his location. But doubts had grown throughout the day over whether the suspect held in custody overnight actually committed the atrocity, sparking fears of a killer on the run.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday

sent a cable of condolences to German Chancellor Angela Merkel over the victims of the attack. The Amir sharply condemned the attack as a heinous criminal act that targeted innocents, and breaches all religions and human values. He also reiterated Kuwait's support to all measures Germany is taking to confront terrorist acts that aim at disrupting its security and stability.

HH the Amir further reaffirmed Kuwait's unshakable position based on rejecting all forms and manifestations of terrorism, and backing the international community in its fight against terrorism. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent the Germany chancellor similar cables.

Berlin's police chief Klaus Kandt had earlier said "we may have a dangerous criminal in the area", and announced that security would be boosted while urging "heightened vigilance". Investigators asked the public to send them any photos and video footage. Twelve people were killed when the truck tore through the crowd Monday, smashing wooden stalls and crushing victims, in scenes reminiscent of July's deadly attack in the French Riviera city of Nice. Another 48 people were injured, 24 of whom were released from hospital by late yesterday.

Continued on Page 13

REBELS WARNED TO QUIT ALEPPO

RUSSIA, IRAN, TURKEY AGREE ON NEED TO WIDEN TRUCE

KUWAIT MOVES ANNUAL DC PARTY TO TRUMP HOTEL

WASHINGTON: Kuwait yesterday said it would host its annual Washington party at Donald Trump's new hotel, underscoring the president-elect's unusual status as the owner of a major venue for events in the US capital. Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah, Kuwait's ambassador to the US, said the party would take place on Feb 25, adding that he hopes guests like the "new hotel in town". He said no one pressed him to move the Kuwaiti National Day event from its regular venue at the Four Seasons. Although Kuwait did not have a contract with the Four Seasons for the party, the date had been set aside for it to possibly take place there.

"I do not know President-elect Trump," the ambassador told AP in a telephone interview. "I do not know any of his people. None of his people have contacted me." He added: "I thought would be exciting for our guests to see a new venue. It looks great. It looks cool. So let's do it." Sheikh Salem noted that last year's reception occurred at the Newseum, a museum promoting the media.

Sheikh Salem ridiculed the notion that he would choose the DC hotel to curry favor with the next administration. "We have very deep economic, military and cultural ties; we've had tens of thousands of American troops in our country," he said, noting Kuwait's basing of forces for US operations in Afghanistan and to fight the Islamic State group. "You think a two-hour reception in a ballroom does that?" — AP

ALEPPO: Syria's army yesterday urged the last remaining rebels and civilians to leave the besieged opposition enclave in Aleppo as it prepares to take full control of the devastated city. The evacuation of Aleppo's rebel sector is seen as a pivotal moment in the nearly six-year war that has killed more than 310,000 people and triggered a major humanitarian and refugee crisis. Following a flurry of diplomatic activity, key regime allies Russia and Turkey are ready to facilitate the drafting of an agreement, which is already being negotiated, between the Syrian government and the opposition, and to become its guarantors," the declaration said.

a ceasefire, according to Lavrov, who said the evacuation of east Aleppo should finish within "one or two days".

The foreign ministers from Russia, Iran and Turkey adopted a document they called the "Moscow Declaration", which set out the principles that any peace agreement should follow. "Iran, Russia and Turkey are ready to facilitate the drafting of an agreement, which is already being negotiated, between the Syrian government and the opposition, and to become its guarantors," the declaration said.

Continued on Page 13



MOSCOW: (From left) Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu attend a press conference yesterday. — AFP

ERDOGAN OPENS FIRST BOSPHORUS ROAD TUNNEL

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday opened the first ever road tunnel underneath the Bosphorus Strait in Istanbul, the latest project in his plan of transforming Turkey's infrastructure. The opening ceremony - which brought together Turkey's entire ruling elite - went ahead as planned despite the shock assassination of the Russian ambassador to Ankara by a Turkish policeman a day earlier.

Turkey in October 2013 opened the Marmaray rail tunnel underneath the iconic waterway, the first link beneath the waters that divide Europe and Asia. But the new two-storey Avrasya (Eurasia) Tunnel, built at a depth of 106 m, is the first tunnel for cars underneath the Bosphorus and aims to

relieve congestion in the traffic-clogged Turkish megacity. After cutting the ceremonial ribbon, Erdogan joined a vast cortege of vehicles making the first undersea car journey between the two continents, stopping halfway to take souvenir photos.

The assassination of Russian ambassador Andrei Karlov Monday was the latest in a string of shocking acts of violence in Turkey this year. But Erdogan vowed that his ambitions will not be derailed by the failed July 15 coup and the swathe of terror attacks Turkey has suffered in 2016. "Subject us to as much terror as you want, bring in as many villains but you will never be able to divide this nation," he told thousands at the opening ceremony.

The tunnel required an investment of \$1.2 billion, including loans of \$960 million, and will reduce driving time for the route from up to 2 hours to just 15 minutes. It was built by a consortium consisting of private Turkish construction company Yapi Merkezi and South Korea's SK Group. The project comprises a 5.4-km tunnel, with the portion beneath the Bosphorus 3.4 km long. The tunnel was built with a special tunnel boring machine which had a daily progress speed of 8-10 m on average. With Istanbul lying on an active seismic zone, the tunnel has been designed to withstand a 7.5-magnitude earthquake.

Continued on Page 13



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Saudi Prince Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, in presence of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan photo



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Dr Nayef Al-Harbi. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Dr Abdullah Al-Kamali. — KUNA photos

CROWN PRINCE RECEIVES ACADEMICS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Dr Nayef Al-Harbi who presented a copy of his PhD thesis on means to develop education in Kuwait.

His Highness the Crown Prince also received Dr Abdullah Al-Kamali who also presented to him a copy of his PhD thesis on organizational skills within the field of education. Also presenting his PhD thesis was Dr Meshari Yousef Al-Dieen, who delved into means to develop administration at Kuwait University (KU).

Another guest who also handed His Highness a doctorate thesis was Dr Fahad Fahad Al-Ajmi who studied methods to develop skills of high school headmasters. Meanwhile, Dr Fawaz Fahad Al-Adwani also presented His Highness with a PhD thesis about administrative law. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Dr Fawaz Al-Adwani. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Dr Meshari Al-Dieen. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Dr Fahad Al-Ajmi. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT URGES UNSC TO SHOULDER RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS ALEPPO

ARAB FMS CONCERNED OVER SYRIAN CITIES' 'DEMOGRAPHY CHANGE'

CAIRO: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah reiterated call for UN Security Council (UNSC) to shoulder responsibility towards devastating conflict in Syria and the unfolding Aleppo tragedy.

The UNSC has to fulfill its duties to find a permanent solution to this devastating conflict and to put an end to the fighting and destruction in Syrian cities, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said in his speech at the extraordinary Arab foreign ministers' meeting held in Cairo late Monday.

The solution of the crisis should be based on the relevant Arab and UNSC resolutions, and Geneva I meeting outcome, he stressed. He warned that the current tragic situation in Aleppo would have grave consequences on the security and stability of the region and the whole world. He underlined that there would be no military solution to the conflict in Syria. "There will be no solution in Syria other than a negotiable peaceful solution based on international references," he stated.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled hoped the Arab ministerial meeting would end up with effective resolutions to support Syrian people. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled shed lights on the regional and international efforts to deal with the Syrian crisis since March 2011.

Over 2,206 days, the Arab League held 40 ordinary, extraordinary and committee meetings at the levels of ministers and permanent delegates to the pan-Arab organization over Syria. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has also held several meetings on the different organizational levels to discuss the Syrian crisis and ensuing "worst humanitarian crisis in the modern history."

Three conferences

The tragic humanitarian situation featured high on the different Arab, Islam and international conferences, he said. In this regard, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled noted that Kuwait has hosted three international donors conferences for Syria in 2013, 2014, 2015 and co-organized the fourth one in London in 2016.

Kuwait has pledged a total of \$1.6 billion for Syria people in the four conferences, the minister said, adding that popular campaigns to provide relief aid to people of Aleppo has collected so far more than \$20 million.

Despite all these efforts, the blood of Syrian people still being shed, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled lamented. He recalled some of the appalling figures of the conflict. Over 400,000 people have been killed since the eruption of the crisis in addition to 4.8 million of refugees and 6.6 million of internally displaced people, he said.

Kuwait's top diplomat expressed gratitude for the Arab League General Secretariat and member states for their swift response and support to Kuwait's demand for holding an urgent Arab ministerial meeting over the developments in Aleppo.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled extend-

ed his condolences to governments and people of Jordan, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia and Egypt on the victims of the recent terrorist attacks that targeted their countries. He reiterated Kuwait's firm stance against these heinous terrorist acts and its support to all regional and international efforts to eradicate the scourge of terrorism.



CAIRO: First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah heads Kuwait's delegation at the extraordinary Arab foreign ministers' meeting. — KUNA

ARAB, EU OFFICIALS AGREE TO BOOST BILATERAL TIES

CAIRO: It is necessary to bolster Arab-European dialogue "taking into account the intertwined fates of both regions and to overcome collective challenges," Tunisian Foreign Minister Khamis Al-Joheinawi said yesterday. The Tunisian official made the remark in a speech during a meeting of Arab and European Union (EU) Foreign Ministers at the Arab League's headquarters in the Egyptian capital.

Joheinawi highlighted the need of further cooperation between both sides at a "critical juncture", calling for regular meetings between Arab and European officials. Moreover, on a suggestion to hold an Arab-European summit, he said that it will be instrumental in boosting bilateral ties and establishing a "well-balanced partnership", which is crucial to ensure concerted efforts.

Meanwhile, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini noted that conflicts in Syria, Libya and Yemen have had a ripple effect through Europe, which underscores the "EU's key role in protecting security in the Arab world."

The EU official denounced a spate of recent terrorist attacks, calling for increased efforts to take relations between both sides to the next level

and to enhance cooperation on numerous pivotal issues, including illegal immigration. On the conflicts in Syria and Yemen, Mogherini stressed that "military action is never the solution", calling on the international community to help re-build the war-torn nations.

Similarly, the Arab League's Secretary General Ahmad Abul-Gheit said that the Arab world and the EU should work as "partners" in this juncture, as further cooperation between both sides will be "mutually beneficial."

The Arab League chief also noted that solutions to lingering conflicts are only possible through forging a solid partnership between the Arab world and the EU, which is feasible given their geographical locations and similar experiences.

On the situation in Syria, Abul-Gheit condemned the "atrocities in Aleppo", saying that the UN Security Council should be committed to its obligations of preserving global peace and security. He also pressed the EU to use its "political clout" to put an end to the bloodshed in Syria, adding that the only solution to the conflict is a political one.

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah led the Kuwaiti delegation to the meeting. — KUNA



CAIRO: This handout photo released by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) yesterday shows Arab and European Foreign Ministers pose for a group photo ahead of their meeting in Cairo, Egypt yesterday. — KUNA

GHANEM HOLDS TALKS WITH MONGOLIAN COUNTERPART

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem held official talks yesterday with the visiting Chairman of Mongolia's State Great Khural Miyeegombyn Enkhbold and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed their bilateral relations and exchanged views on the current and future level of the Kuwaiti-Mongolian cooperation, particularly in the parliamentary filed.

They also discussed a number of subjects and issues of joint interest, in addition to the current political situations in the region and around the world, and ways to coordinate their stands toward those situations in the regional and international parliamentary arenas. Following the meeting, Ghanem held a luncheon banquet in honor of the visiting Mongolian Speaker and his accompanying delegation at the Kuwaiti parliament. — KUNA



Marzouq Al-Ghanem

Syrian cities
The Arab foreign ministers have raised concerns and expressed total rejection of the Syrian regime measures to create new demographic realities in various Syrian cities. In a statement at the conclusion of their meeting, the ministers expressed full opposition to the Syrian regime and its allies' measures and policies to change the demographic characteristic of Aleppo and other cities through displacing their residents and bringing in others to replace them.

They emphasized the need for guarantees to ensure the return of evacuees and displaced people to their cities and homes after the end of the conflict. They called for concerted efforts to achieve a ceasefire deal and resume peace talks to reach a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

They reiterated commitment to support the aspiration of Syrian people for freedom, equality, fairness, and stability. They ministers also strongly condemned the crimes of the terrorist groups in Syria such as the so-called Islamic State and Al-Nusra Front. They urged the UN Security Council to take firm actions against those responsible for the gross human rights violation and massacres against civilians in Syria. The ministers called on the UN to press for an end to the bloodshed in Syria and to help revive talks between warring parties. — KUNA

RAIL NETWORK MOVES TO THE NEXT PHASE

SLATED TO FINISH BY 2023

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Plans to build a railway network connecting Kuwait to the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council states may be moving forward. According to Mohammed Al-Hedeba, a board member with the Public Authority for Roads and Transport, the feasibility study for the railway line has been completed. The next step, the tendering of a contract for an international consultant to evaluate the technical offers, will take place within two months. Hedeba added that the project's construction would start in 2018 and finish by 2023, at a total cost of KD 1 billion. He added that the project would be executed as a public-private partnership (PPP). The long-distance Kuwait national railroad system was originally scheduled for completion

in 2018, but like many mega projects in Kuwait, has been stalled for years. Originally projected to cost KD 3 billion, the project is under the authority of the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (formerly the Partnership Technical Bureau). The integrated rail network is planned to have 511 km of double tracks. The railroad system will serve freight and passengers, with speeds of 120 km/hr on regional lines and speeds of 200 km/hr on others.

National security building tendered

The audit and control sector at the Ministry of Electricity and Water submitted a contract to design, build, execute and maintain the planned new National Security Bureau headquarters. The contract has been submitted to Minister Abdul Rahman Al-Mutawa to be signed, said informed

sources, noting that the contract's total cost is KD 12.7 million. The six-floor building is expected to cover an area of 8,000 sq m in Mubarak Al-Abdullah, of which 3,000 sq m would be allocated for parking.

Contractors warned, fined

A contractor for the new Abu Halifa infrastructure project may face a fine after falling 206 days behind schedule, according to sources at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare. Bader Al-Waqayyan, the authority's manager concerned with infrastructure projects, has also given a final notice to the contractor executing public facilities in district D of Sabah Al-Ahmed City, warning him that the project would be withdrawn, as it is now more than 550 days behind schedule.

KAC DISMISSES REPORTS ON STALLED AIRCRAFT DELIVERY

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) denied yesterday the veracity of reports claiming that aviation giant Boeing has refused to deliver its second B777-300ER aircraft to KAC on financial grounds. In a statement to the press, the world's largest aerospace company noted that KAC cited technical reasons for not having received the aircraft yet, adding that such procedures are customary in the aviation business.

Moreover, the statement added that it is incumbent upon Boeing to ensure that the Kuwaiti national carrier's strategy for change ultimately comes to fruition. KAC is due to receive its second B777-300ER aircraft out of a fleet of 10, in a process that will adhere to the strictest aviation procedures, the statement pointed out. — KUNA



News

in brief

KUWAITI-IRAQI HIGH LEVEL MEETING IN BAGHDAD

BAGHDAD: A Kuwaiti-Iraqi high level ministerial meeting will be held in Baghdad late December to focus on means to bolster relations, said Kuwaiti Ambassador to Iraq Salem Al-Zamnan yesterday. He added that preparations for the upcoming meeting were discussed with senior officials at the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, adding that the upcoming gathering might witness the signing of several agreements. The last high level meeting of this kind was held in Kuwait on December 23, 2015. Five meetings such level were held previously between the two countries. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah visited retired officers during their weekly gathering yesterday at the ministry's spring camp in Subhan.

Kuwaitis safe

BERLIN: Kuwait's embassy in Germany yesterday said that all Kuwaitis in the capital Berlin are safe after the lorry crash at a Christmas market that killed 12 people and injured many others Monday evening. The embassy has had contacts with the German Foreign Ministry, the Berlin police, and all the hospitals in the vicinity of the crash to make sure that no Kuwaiti was among victims of the incident, a statement said. It appealed to Kuwaitis in the city to keep in touch with the emergency room set by the embassy following the incident, through phone numbers 0049308973000 and 00491608973000. — KUNA

No LNG imports

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Monday denied press reports that it was negotiating with a neighboring country to import natural gas. The press reports issued in neighboring countries that Kuwait was negotiating with one of those nations to import natural are not correct, KPC said in a statement. Kuwait, it added, has been importing liquefied natural gas (LNG) from international market and global companies with good prices since 2009. Kuwait's importation of LNG aimed at honoring demands of domestic market, said KPC. KPC said it would spare no effort to meet LNG demands, either through increasing local gas production or importing from international market. — KUNA

New ambassador

KUWAIT: Kuwait's new Ambassador to China Samih Johar Hayat presented his credentials to Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing yesterday. Ambassador Hayat conveyed greetings from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the Chinese leader. The Chinese leader wished the new Kuwaiti diplomat well and good luck during his mission in China. He also wished the State of Kuwait evermore progress and prosperity, and hoped for further bolster of Chinese-Kuwaiti ties. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A traffic campaign was carried out on the instructions of Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Suleiman Al-Fahd and under the supervision of Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs Maj Gen Fahd Al-Shuwaye in

Hawally, Farwaniya and Capital governorates. The campaign resulted in issuing 1,464 traffic tickets, 1,028 of which were for not using seatbelts and 436 were for using mobile phones while driving. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun



RECRUITMENT OPEN DAY

Walk - in interviews from qualified candidates for the following position On Saturday 24th December 2016

From : 10:00 am to 2 pm

- Fitness Trainer (Male / Female) with 3 years min experience
- Nutrition Specialist (Female)
- Physiotherapist (Female)
- Receptionist / Front Desk Admin (Female) with 3 years min experience
- Cleaner (Female)
- General Helper (Male)

Document Required:

- Updated CV
- Civil ID Copy
- Valid Visa # 18 transferable
- English speaking (Arabic is a plus)

LOCATION:

Salmiya, Zahra Complex, 6th Floor, M2R Office
You may also email CV to : hr@m2rkw.com

EXTRA DAY OFF FOR BEDOON, GULF NURSES

TERROR SUSPECT FOUND GUILTY, MOM ACQUITTED

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Health Minister Dr Jamal Al-Harbi agreed to grant bedoon and Gulf nurses two days off like their Kuwaiti counterparts during his meeting with the president and members of Kuwait Nursing Society (KNS). Harbi agreed to write to Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh to approve the amendment, KNS President Bandar Al-Enezi said. Harbi also agreed to form a committee with the min-

istry and KNS members to evaluate certificates of the nursing institute and give recommendations to appoint nurses who have completed supervisory courses as nurses-in-charge and assistant nurses to meet a shortage in hospitals and medical centers.

Suspect jailed

The criminal court sentenced terror suspect Abu Turab to five years in jail and acquitted his mother of being a member of the Islamic State

(IS). Abu Turab confessed of going to Syria and selling oil to IS, but said he repented and returned. Separately, the cassation court deferred the case of former MP Abdullah Al-Barghash's citizenship revocation till Jan 24. Meanwhile, lawyer Nasser Al-Ajmi from the Nasser Al-Nasser law firm said the commercial court ruled that an insurance company has to pay a citizen KD 5,000 following a previous ruling against him. The court gave its ruling after reviewing all documents.

KUWAIT KEEN ON YOUTH EMPOWERMENT: MINISTER

SHEIKH SALMAN HIGHLIGHTS NATIONAL UNITY

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah has affirmed Kuwait's keenness on empowering youths and investing in their activities upon the directives of His Highness the Amir. In a press statement made on Monday on the sidelines of a workshop on "youth's efforts in achieving the 2030 agenda," the minister expressed his happiness for Kuwait's embrace of the second phase of a program on supporting young leaders in the Arab region. Up to 100 male and female youths whose age ranging between 19-29 years are taking part in the workshop.

Sheikh Salman, also Minister of Information, said the program aims to inspire innovation and creativity of young people, activate communication channels with them and develop their initiatives. He noted that the program is based on some topics; promoting social cohesion, economic empowerment and boosting equality between men and women in various fields.

Meanwhile, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Subaih said the program seeks to prepare Arab youth for taking part effectively in implementing the goals of sustainable development in line with the UN's 2030 agenda. In a speech delivered in 2015, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has stressed Kuwait's commitment to implementing these goals, she added.

His Highness the Amir said "the goals of sustainable development urge us to work in accordance with innovative methods to keep pace with requirements and needs so as to end poverty by 2030", she stated. This can be done through international collective action and effective partnership, she noted, stressing that Kuwait has been paying much attention to all segments of society within its development plans. The State of Kuwait also allocated some programs to young people that meet their ambitions and aspirations, and remove obstacles facing them, she said.

The program is part of roles played by governmental bodies in collaboration with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that aims to prepare youth in the Arab region, she pointed out. The minister expressed her gratitude to all bodies participating in holding this key event.

The workshop launched on December 14-19



Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah

is part of UNDP in partnership with the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (GSSCPD), supported by Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, Public Authority for Youth, UN Women and office of UN Secretary General's envoy for youth.

National unity

In other news, Sheikh Salman stressed the importance of boosting national unity, looking after Kuwait's interests, and committing to political leadership's directions. It is also important to implement His Highness the Amir's directions mentioned in his speech at the opening of the National Assembly's 15th

legislative session, Sheikh Salman affirmed Monday while chairing a meeting with officials from information and youth ministries.

He also stressed the importance of implementing His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah's directions he has given in his speech at the Parliament's 15h legislative session opening, describing the Premier's directions as a work roadmap for all bodies.

It is also important to bolster cooperation among all authorities in the country in order to face regional and international challenges, Sheikh Salman said, urging the need to consolidate all efforts toward fighting sedition, sectarian ideologies, and racism in the Kuwaiti society.

He also called upon all ministries' affiliated bodies to setup a comprehensive program for an economic reformation, including rationalization for water and electricity consumption in order to face global oil prices. Empowering the youth toward serving their country and supporting their various creativities would, eventually, qualify them to take charge of Kuwait's development and growth march in all fields, said the minister.

Sheikh Salman also directed all his ministries' affiliates to study His Highness the Amir's speech and the government's action program for the next four years, and come up with action plans and future projects to achieve Kuwait's development goals.

The meeting was attended by KUNA Chairman and Director General Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij Al-Sabah, Tareq Al-Merzam, Undersecretary of the information ministry, Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, Mohammad Al-Asousi, Acting Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Director-General of the Public Authority for Youth (PAY), and Kamel Al-Abduljaleel, General Manager of Kuwait National Library.— KUNA



KRCS CONTINUES TO AID SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

BEIRUT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) continued yesterday to provide relief aid and assistance to the Syrian refugees residing in Lebanon. Head of the KRCS field team Talal Al-Khattaf said that the society provided around 5,000 liters of diesel to some 250 Syrian refugee families in Beqaa district, eastern Lebanon. Hopefully this small aid gesture will help these families fend off the harsh cold winter, said the offi-

cial. There are around one million Syrian refugees in Lebanon escaping from the ongoing war raging since 2011 in their country. Recently, the city of Aleppo, besieged by Syrian regime forces and allies, had been subjected to a ruthless onslaught that resulted in the death and injury of many Syrians. The crisis in Aleppo is expected to worsen the humanitarian situation in Syria and nearby countries.— KUNA

KUWAIT DISTRIBUTES 1,000 LITERS OF WHITE FUEL TO DISPLACED IN MOSUL

IRBIL: The State of Kuwait on Monday handed out 1,000 liters of white fuel used for heating to the displaced Iraqis in the Khazir camp in eastern Mosul. Kuwait's Consul General in Irbil Omar Al-Kandari said "we doled out this amount of fuel to 1,500 displaced families in the camp," adding that the aid is part of the campaign launched to meet needs of displaced Iraqis in winter. He stressed Kuwait's continued aid, especially fuel, to all families living in the camp.

The generous aid provided by Kuwait has been dispensed upon the humanitarian initiative by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who has been named in 2014 by the UN in New York as a "Humanitarian Leader" and Kuwait as a "Humanitarian Center" for such efforts.

"Being keen on alleviating suffering of displaced brothers, we have been sparing no effort to offer various aid to them

through different methods," he said. The consul thanked Kuwait and those who are responsible for implementing the Amir's initiative, referring that oil that has been handed out to the displaced is insufficient.

In the meantime, Iraq's Ministry of Displacement and Migration said that the number of displaced people from Nineveh exceeded 120,000 since the beginning of military operations to liberate Mosul. Minister Jassem Mohammed Al-Jaff also said in a statement that the number of displaced people hosted by the ministry's camps reached 120,680 since the start of liberating Nineveh.

The ministry's field teams are continuing receiving and aiding the displaced families, he stressed. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Iraq (UNHCR) has welcomed Kuwait's contribution to distributing aid to the displaced Iraqis in winter.— KUNA



SALALAH: Chairman of the International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq poses for a group photo with other participants in the 2016 Oman International Conference on Social Responsibility.— KUNA

KRCS HOSTS URGENT MEETING ON SITUATION IN ALEPPO

KUWAIT/SALALAH: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) will host an urgent meeting for heads of the GCC Red Crescent Societies Wednesday which will focus on the Aleppo crisis, an official said yesterday. The meeting will discuss efforts to handle the Aleppo humanitarian crisis and how GCC bodies will coordinate on the issue, KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Ali Al-Sayer said. A suggestion to send a joint GCC field team to offer aid to the displaced Syrians from Aleppo will also be on the agenda of the meeting, he said.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO), and Amiri Diwan Advisor Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq has commended the Kuwaiti people's rush to help brothers in Syria's Aleppo. This praise came at the sideline of the 2016 Oman International Conference on Social Responsibility that started in Salalah, Oman yesterday. Maatouq was honored during the event attended by Omani, Gulf, and Arab social responsibility figures.

Speaking after receiving the award, Maatouq urged businessmen to assume their social and



KRCS Chairman
Dr Hilal Ali Al-Sayer



Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq

humanitarian responsibility amid the repercussions of the conflicts and disasters sweeping the region. He highly appreciated Oman's hosting of the conference that has brought together a multitude of Gulf, Arab, and international figures and institutions specialized in social service and responsibility and sustainable development. Expanding the concept of social responsibility is significant progress for enhancing the role of the private sector to counter humanitarian, social

and environment problems worldwide, he said. According to the IICO chief, Islam laid down the basis of social responsibility more than 1,400 years ago. He voiced thanks to Sheikha Aisha bint Khalfan Al-Siyabiyah, chairperson of the Public Authority for Craft Industries and International Ambassador for Social Responsibility, and honorary sponsor of the Salalah conference.

Yesterday's event is organized by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry branch in Dhofar, in cooperation with the

Regional Network for the Social Responsibility (RNSR) and International Ambassadors Program for Social Responsibility. Chairman of the Omani Special Olympics Faisal bin Turki Al-Said handed over the award to the Kuwaiti Amiri Diwan Advisor.

Addressing the ceremony, Maatouq thanked the board of trustees of the award, headed by Professor Youssef Abdul-Ghaffar. He expressed deep pleasure for the award that came in recognition of Kuwait's charity and humanitarian initiatives and efforts. In light of the human disasters in various parts of the world, Maatouq called for further and closer cooperation to end the suffering of millions of people worldwide.

The conference aims to develop effective partnership between the private sector and the civil society organizations, and shedding more light on the importance of social responsibility. It also seeks to encourage the private sector firms to contribute to social projects as well as to the efforts to realize the goals of the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development.— KUNA

In Brief

AMIR PATRONIZES KFAS CEREMONY

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will patronize an awards ceremony by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS) which will be held in Bayan Palace today at 10:30 am. — KUNA



SAUDI, KUWAIT DISCUSS TIES

RIYADH: Saudi Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Defense received yesterday a telephone call from Kuwaiti Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, in which they discussed bilateral relations between the two countries. — KUNA



BANK SPONSORS 'INDUSTRY' EVENTS

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced offering platinum sponsorship for social and sports activities organized by the Public Authority for Industry (PAI), including the annual ceremony it organizes to honor distinguished and retired employees.



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Birds perched on a pole at a beach in Kuwait City.—Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT BOOSTS MEDIA TIES AMONG MUSLIM COUNTRIES

JEDDAH: A senior Kuwaiti has said that the country is eager to take part in all the events that seek to enhance the media cooperation among the Muslim states. Assistant Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information's Press and Publications Department Khaled Al-Rashidi made the statement yesterday on the sidelines of the 11th Islamic Conference of Information Ministers in Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Member States, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, held on December 19-22. Rashidi is leading the Kuwaiti delegation to the conference themed 'New Media to Counter Terrorism and Islamophobia.' He will also lead the delegation to a ministerial meeting in Jeddah on Wednesday, on behalf of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. The preparatory meetings' 11th Islamic Conference have focused on the role of the new media for supporting the Palestinian Cause, and Al-Quds Al-Sharif, he said.

The Kuwaiti media has always given priority to highlighting the cause, Rashidi said, referring to the three-volume "Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Encyclopedia" printed at the Ministry of Information earlier this year. During the preparatory meetings, Saudi Arabia submitted a draft resolution on the role of the media for combating terrorism, he said. This is one of the major topics tabled for discussions, since terrorism has come to threaten the world's stability, Rashidi added, rejecting all claims lining the phenomenon to Islam. Participants in the preparatory discussion also addressed Islamophobia, calling for setting mechanisms to counter the phenomenon and assert the real bright image of Islam, against distortion attempts, he said. Addressing the opening session on Monday, Undersecretary of the Saudi Ministry of Information and Culture, Dr Abdulmohsen Alyas stressed the dire need to utilize the new media to counter terrorism and Islamophobia through



JEDDAH: The Ministry of Information's Khaled Al-Rashidi attends the 11th Islamic Conference of Information Ministers. — KUNA

action plans, implementation mechanisms and clear indicators that help address the greatest number of issues and problems facing the Muslim world. — KUNA

ARABS NEED TO COOPERATE ON HOUSING: SAUDI MINISTER

RIYADH: It is imperative to boost cooperation amongst Arab nations in the housing and reconstruction sector to meet the aspirations of Arab people, Saudi Minister of Housing Majid Al-Huqayl said yesterday. The Saudi minister made the remarks during the 33rd session of the Council of Arab Housing and Reconstruction Ministers in the Saudi capital, with participation of Kuwait's Minister of State for Housing Affairs Yasser Abul. Moreover, Huqayl said that such meetings aim to ensure that quality housing is provided for all Arab nations,

adding that the meeting is also an opportunity to share successful experiences in the housing sector. He also spoke of a concerted Arab housing strategy which will be instrumental in ensuring sustained development in the Arab region, highlighting the need for increased real estate and housing projects. The issues expected to be discussed during the meeting run the gamut from residential societies and reconstruction to the formation of a database to help bring the council's goals to fruition, in addition to a myriad of issues germane to the housing sector in the Arab world. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Hawally Security Director Brigadier Abdeen Al-Abdeen honored a number of police officers for their efforts in maintaining security in the governorate.

REMIT TO WIN
ELECTRONIC ITEMS DELIVERED IN INDIA

Grand prize: KD 600/- Voucher

Do a transaction to India and you hold a golden chance to take home electronic items of your choice. Free delivery done in India

Al Mulla Exchange | 184 0123

Crime

Report

SUSPECTS ATTEMPTED TO RUN OVER OFFICERS

KUWAIT: Security men at the shooting range in Sulaibiya opted not to file charges against the occupants of a car that entered the club and almost ran them over. The suspects then fled. According to a security source, the car belongs to a citizen living in Doha. Police are investigating.

Club stormed

Three men escaped from police and left their car behind with a bottle of liquor, after storming a club in Jahra to settle a dispute with a worker. Police received a call about three unauthorized people entering the club. When police arrived, they fled on foot, leaving their car behind. Police are investigating.

Swindling

Search is ongoing for two Egyptian men wanted for swindling. Both used their knowledge of a project's plan and took KD 8,000 from a contract company after convincing the investor about giving him part of the project in exchange of money.

File stolen

The legal representative of a private hospital accused a patient of stealing a medical file. A security source said the suspect asked the hospital's administration to make copies of some of the papers in her file, which she later stole.

Fight

Two Kuwaiti citizens and an Egyptian man filed charges against each other. The citizens claimed that they were beaten by the expat, who denied the claims. The medical report suggests that the expat might be the attacker as one of the citizens suffered a broken arm.

Phones stolen

Thieves stole 30 smartphones worth more than KD 5,000, along with nearly KD 3,500 in cash from a store. The store's salesman accused an employee of an adjacent store of being the culprit. A case was filed for investigations.

Assault

A Pakistani car mechanic was beaten up by a customer who refused to pay the amount he was asked to pay. He filed a case at Sulaibiya police station. The mechanic was taken to hospital, while police are looking for the suspect.

Forged passports

A Bangladeshi man was arrested at Kuwait International Airport with three forged passports he intended to sell to people barred from traveling.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



OOREDOO PARTNERS WITH 'REFOOD' VOLUNTEER INITIATIVE

KUWAIT: Ooredoo, Kuwait's fastest network in 2016, has recently partnered with 'Refood,' a youth initiative that focuses on delivering food for people in need inside Kuwait. Supporting this initiative comes in tandem with the company's strategy based on caring, connecting and challenging, which places great emphasis on supporting youth volunteer initiatives.

Ooredoo stated that this cooperation aims to raise awareness of companies inside Kuwait on the importance of taking a proactive role in social responsibility. 'Refood' is a youth volunteer charity initiative that aims to put all food that typically goes to waste to good use by collecting food items that are about to expire and donating them to families and people in need inside Kuwait on a weekly basis.

Ooredoo has recently participated in several major events nationwide that are focused on youth and volunteerism. It has partnered with a number of esteemed entities, such as the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, the Arab Media Forum, Spread the Passion, among other organizations that focused on youth efforts.

Ooredoo is also the proud founder of a volunteer program entering its third year, which attracted hundreds of volunteers from across Kuwait. The program aims to give the volunteers certification in volunteerism, covering all the necessary skills, in cooperation with famous characters locally and regionally. Volunteers were tasked with distributing meals in Ooredoo's Ramadan iftar tent throughout the holy month of Ramadan over the past two years, located across the street from Ooredoo's head office in Kuwait City.



الجريدة

Al-Jarida

IT'S HIGH TIME WE WORKED

By Yousif Al-Jassem

Now that all electoral and political conflicts, battles and arguments are over, and parliamentary seats, the speakership and parliamentary committees' membership is determined, it is high time we started working. Nowadays, we need accomplishments as much as we needed arguments a few days ago. Roadmaps are now very clear for each and every one of the 50 lawmakers who are now in office because of the promises and visions they made and discussed with voters. Now they have access to plans and studies that have not been executed or partially executed. They have clear targets of financial and administrative corruption the country has been suffering from.

The people are starting a new phase with the 2016 parliament and they have a fully integrated scene of useless and pointless attitudes and theses. They also have full perception of each group's capability to talk and work at the same time instead of work associated

with destruction. They are very fed up with acceleration of tensions to achieve personal gains and pick fights with windmills without any benefit for the people. They are fed up with acting heroically by criticizing others rather than working and making achievements with the only aim of picking side fights to hide their weaknesses and enchant those who find joy in watching bloody cockfights.

Our country has had enough talk and needs more work because many chances and opportunities have been wasted. Besides, we have many financial and moral local and foreign challenges and conflicts and byzantine arguments will do us no good. The people have portrayed the form of the parliament they wanted. They made the change everybody had been calling for. Regardless of our opinion about the new Cabinet formation, the people deserve that both powers work on accomplishing what is already delayed to make up for previous failures and disappointments.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

They are fed up with acting heroically by criticizing others rather than working and making achievements

الجريدة

Al-Jarida

A STREET CAT NAMED BOB

By Salah Al-Sayer

All Arab media houses, newspapers and magazines are complaining about lack of readers. We are practically suffering from a phase of 'reading desertification' in the Arab world. If the late famous writer Nagueb Mahfouz was born in this period, I am sure he would have chosen a different profession other than writing, which has now turned into an easy task that needs no talent nor knowledge. It has become just like singing in the bathroom without any audiences. Everyone in the Arab world is anxious to express, write, compose and publish regardless of the quality of opinions they express or mastery of writing. There are several printing press publishing thousands of books, novels and articles to the extent that writers have outnumbered readers.

Such writing desertification is mainly happening in Arabic while in other languages, millions of copies are still printed by publishing houses. We all are familiar with the British writer, J K Rowling who became one of

Such writing desertification is mainly happening in Arabic while in other languages, millions of copies are still printed

the world's richest women after writing the 'Harry Potter' series. A few days ago, a new film named 'A Street Cat Named Bob' was released which is based on a book about a failed street singer and drug addict who is always accompanied by his cat Bob, which eventually helps the singer quit drugs.

The story is entirely based on the personal life of the writer who is a British guitarist named James Bowen. After a publishing house's manager noticed how passersby in Covent Garden were attached to him and his cat that usually stands between his feet or on his shoulders while he plays his guitar, he asked the singer to write his own story. When published, the book became a best-seller and later turned into a movie adaptation. Those who keep questioning the credibility of disastrous statistics issued by international organizations about reading in the Arab World, such doubts surrender before tragic facts which are noticed in all book fairs in the Arab countries.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

KFH PARTNERS WITH THE 2016 WORLD ISLAMIC BANKING CONFERENCE IN BAHRAIN

MANAMA: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced its strategic partnership of the 23rd Annual World Islamic Banking Conference (WIBC) as its Global Islamic Banking Partner. The conference was held recently in ART Rotana Hotel, Amwaj, Kingdom of Bahrain.

The Conference was held under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and was attended by many high level delegates from the CBB, including the governor, leading banking and intech institutions as well as senior officials from Kuwait Finance House-Bahrain.

Abdulhakeem Al-Khayyat, Managing Director and CEO of KFH-Bahrain, said: "We are proud to always partner with one of the world's leading Islamic banking conferences on an annual basis. Over the years, the WIBC has a solidified reputation as an indisputable compass for the global Islamic finance and banking industry, building a robust platform that comprises of leading bankers, institutional investors, asset managers, policy makers, academics and other stakeholders from across the globe. It showcased important strides in the latest technology, banking practices, research and forward thinking initiatives."

The conference was centered around the subject of "Economic Uncertainties: Vigilance and Growth," reflecting the fact that global economy finds itself at an important inflection point. Key features for WIBC 2016 include a Governors' Power Table; Guru Speaker; specialized streams focused on banking leadership opportunities and asset management best practices; thought leadership from leading strategy consultants; and panel sessions focused on SMEs and entrepreneurship, the impact of innovation in financial technology (fintech); and much more, with an aim at enabling Islamic finance to converge, strengthen and



grow itself as an ecosystem whilst equipping leaders with breakthrough insights to navigate the complexity of the global financial system.

Khayyat was a key panel member amongst three other influential CEOs in the industry who took part in a 'CEO Power Debate,' which was held on the second day of the conference that discussed with the audience pertinent

issues affecting the way forward for the Islamic Banking. In addition, Sattam Al-Gosaibi, Executive Manager and Head of Corporate Finance has conducted number of media interviews during the Conference, as well as Lilian Le Falher, Executive Manager and Head of Treasury, Financial Institutions and Capital Markets was a panel member in several key workshops and debate sessions.

ABK EMPLOYEES COMPLETE KEY CUSTOMER PROTECTION TRAINING



KUWAIT: All customer-facing employees at Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) have now completed the bank's in-house e-learning course to enhance customer protection knowledge and skills. Customer service is at the heart of ABK's commitment. The bank continuously updates employee skills and ensures all employees have the very latest knowledge to provide the best advice possible to customers and protect their interests where required.

The training course, which employees are required to complete annually, ensures that anyone from the bank who has direct contact with customers is fully compliant with the Central Bank of Kuwait's customer protection requirements and the

Bank's procedures, which reflect international best practice. Included in the course were elements which specifically address the needs of customers with disabilities, whereby six ABK branches in Kuwait have been developed with special needs facilities.

ABK is committed to ensuring its employees are fully up to date with customer protection policies and processes and to date a total of 450 staff have undergone the training. The bank applies the latest systems and methodologies in learning to achieve positive overall growth. For more information about Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait please visit eahli.com or contact a customer service agent via 'Ahlan Ahli' at 1899899.



Merkel summons security leaders in wake of attack

JAKARTA GOVERNOR FIGHTS OFF BLASPHEMY CHARGE

TRUMP BLAMES TERRORISTS FOR EU ATTACKS

‘ISLAMIST TERRORISTS SLAUGHTER CHRISTIANS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES’

PALM BEACH: Jumping ahead of investigators, President-elect Donald Trump is blaming Islamic terrorists for deadly violence in Turkey and Germany and vowing anew to eradicate their regional and global networks. Authorities in both countries were still investigating Monday when Trump issued a pair of statements condemning the attacks, the same day the Electoral College formally awarded him the presidency.

By yesterday morning, Trump was back on Twitter striking out at an insult from Bill Clinton. The ex-president told a suburban New York City newspaper this month that Trump “doesn’t know much. One thing he does know is how to get angry, white men to vote for him.” The Bedford-Pound Ridge Record Review also reported that Bill Clinton claimed that Trump called him after his election victory over Hillary Clinton. “Wrong, he called me (with a very nice congratulations),” Trump said in a two-part tweet. The president-elect added that Bill Clinton is the one who “doesn’t know much... especially how to get people, even with an unlimited budget, out to vote in the vital swing states (and more).” The Clinton campaign, he said, “focused on the wrong states.”

That was Trump’s reminder that he defeated Hillary Clinton in such battlegrounds as Pennsylvania and scored surprise victories elsewhere - such as Wisconsin. The tweets came after a rattling day of violence around the world. Trump called the brazen shooting of Russia’s ambassador to Turkey “a violation of all rules of civilized order.” He added that a “radical Islamic terrorist” had assassinated the diplomat, Andrei Karlov.

Turkish authorities identified the gunman as Mevlut Mert Altintas, a member of Ankara’s riot police squad, and said he was later killed in a shootout with police. Altintas shouted in Turkish about the Syrian city of Aleppo and



MOBILE: In this Dec 17, 2016, photo, President-elect Donald Trump speaks during a rally at the Ladd-Peebles Stadium. —AP

also yelled “Allahu akbar,” Arabic for “God is great.” In Berlin, where at least 12 people were killed, Trump said the Islamic State group “and other Islamist terrorists continually slaughter Christians in their communities and places of worship as part of their global jihad.”

He added that these terrorists and their

regional and worldwide networks “must be eradicated from the face of the Earth” and pledged to carry out that mission with “all freedom-loving partners.” He later tweeted: “Today there were terror attacks in Turkey, Switzerland and Germany - and it is only getting worse. The civilized world must change thinking!”

Inauguration looms

In Zurich, police said three people were wounded when a gunman opened fire in the prayer hall of a mosque frequented by Somali immigrants. Trump vowed during the presidential campaign to go after the Islamic State group, but repeatedly declined to fill in the

public on his plan. His statements came at the end of a day in which he was formally elected president by the Electoral College, clearing the way for his Jan 20 inauguration. Trump also announced his candidate for secretary of the Army on Monday and held a round of transition meetings.

He was expected to hold additional transition meetings at his Palm Beach, Florida, estate yesterday and Wednesday. His choice of Army veteran and fellow New Yorker Vincent Viola to be Army secretary will put another billionaire in a leading position in the new administration.

Viola is a West Point graduate who joins a list of people with military backgrounds already bound for the Cabinet.

Trump’s picks for defense secretary, homeland security secretary, national security adviser and deputy national security adviser are retired military.

Viola was the first member of his family to attend college. He was trained as an Airborne Ranger infantry officer and served in the 101st Airborne Division. A lawyer, he started multiple businesses, became a billionaire and bought the Florida Panthers hockey team for \$250 million in 2013.

Trump has already tapped several wealthy businessmen for jobs, including fast-food executive Andy Puzder to be secretary for the Labor Department, billionaire investor Wilbur Ross for Commerce, financier Steven Mnuchin for Treasury and Goldman Sachs President Gary Cohn as his top economic adviser. Trump still has numerous other posts to fill, such as US trade representative. Among those he met with on Monday at his Mar-a-Lago estate was Robert Lighthizer, a deputy US trade representative in the Reagan administration, Trump’s aides said. Trump is spending the run-up to Christmas with his family. — AP

CATCH THE END-OF-YEAR OFFER FROM NISSAN AL BABBAIN

Visit us in Al-Rai and Al-Ahmadi Showrooms, Al-Rai showroom now open from 8:30 am till 8:30 pm - (KFH), Shuwalkh T: 24397731

www.nissankuwait.com

1 804 888
Customer Care Center

شركة عبد المحسن عبد العزيز البابتين
Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co. WLL

ISRAELI POLITICS ROCKED BY 40 FAMILIES ON A HILLTOP

AMONA OUTPOST, Palestinian Territories: When a voice crackled from speakers on the cold and rainy West Bank hilltop finally announcing a deal, hundreds of young Jewish protesters who had camped out reluctantly started to leave. The youths with dangling sidelocks and knitted skull-caps were suspending their campaign following Sunday's agreement, but the power of their cause had already been made clear.

A long-running drama over the future of the small Jewish outpost of Amona in the occupied Palestinian territory, where the youths were protesting, has rocked Israeli politics and demonstrated the influence of the country's far-right. Though only 40 families live in mainly caravan homes on the hilltop, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government found itself tied in knots over how to remove them before a court-ordered December 25 deadline, resulting in Sunday's deal.

The controversy has led to a wider debate over the future of the West Bank and of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, long the focus of peace efforts but a possibility many now see as fading. Religious nationalists in Netanyahu's coalition used Amona to push for the legalization of several thousand other Israeli settler homes in the West Bank — a measure that may yet pass. They also renewed their argument for what they would like to see happen over the long-term: Israel annexing most of the West Bank.

Some analysts see the argument as gaining more traction than ever, particularly with Donald Trump taking office as US president in January. "I believe that we are witnessing now a slow but clear move from both ends of the political rainbow toward serious consideration of the possibility of annexation of some of the (Palestinian) territories," Yedidia Stern of The Israel Democracy Institute think-tank told AFP.

'Protect the land'

Israeli settlements are seen as major stumbling blocks to peace efforts as they are built on land the Palestinians see as part of a future state of their own. All are considered illegal under international law, but Israel differentiates between those it has approved and those it has not. Settlements such as Amona are called outposts—those that Israel has not approved. While it may seem unlikely that 40 families on a hilltop could wield such heavy influence, Amona became symbolic.

Netanyahu was forced to move carefully even though the outpost was under the high court order to be evacuated because it was found to have been built on private Palestinian land. The settlers were refusing to leave, while their supporters from within and outside the government rushed to their defense. In 2006, the demolition of nine permanent houses in the same outpost led to clashes, and Netanyahu was eager to avoid violence this time.

When the residents rejected a government proposal last week that would have moved 12 of the families to a nearby plot, several hundred headline youths filed into Amona to head off a feared imminent forced evacuation. By Sunday, they had drilled and welded fortifications inside Amona's synagogue, with metal rods and chains put in place.

Vowing to peacefully resist, they slept on the floor inside the synagogue, in residents' homes and in cars. Some took up positions on top of a water tower, while others at one point blocked roads with debris and scattered nails on the tarmac. "We came to protect the land, to show that we won't give up without a fight," a protester in a black skull-cap who declined to give his name said at the synagogue before dawn Sunday. "After God gave us this land, we cannot give it up to the Arabs," said the young man. At one point Sunday, youths shouted down Housing Minister Yoav Galant and blocked his car. — AFP



KARAK: Jordanian security forces guard an entrance, left, as boys walk past in the morning mist in front of Karak Castle. — AP

FOUR POLICEMEN KILLED IN NEW SHOOTOUT IN JORDAN

IS CLAIMS WEEKEND KARAK ATTACK

AMMAN: Gunmen killed four Jordanian policemen in a new shootout yesterday in Karak, where a weekend attack claimed by the Islamic State group left 10 people dead, a security source said. Security forces came under fire after launching a raid to track down suspects following Sunday's assault, whose victims included a Canadian tourist, the source said, adding that the operation was still ongoing. But another senior security source quoted by the official Petra news agency said that the suspects were not linked to the "terrorist group" behind Sunday's attack.

The general security department said in a statement that police surrounded a house where the gunmen were holed up and that the suspects opened fire on them. A Jordanian member of parliament from Karak, Haitham Ziadeen, confirmed that an operation was under way to arrest wanted gunmen. "A shootout erupted after security forces arrived to raid a house in the Qarifa region of Karak province, where the gunmen have sought shelter," he said.

Sunday's shooting spree in Karak, home to one of the region's biggest Crusader castles, killed seven policemen and two Jordanian civilians as well as the Canadian tourist. A total of 34 other people were wounded, including the son of the Canadian holidaymaker and another foreigner, according to authorities. Four assailants were killed by the Jordanian security forces after an hours-long siege of the Crusader castle, where the suspects had fled after opening fire on police patrols and a police station in the city.

The Islamic State group yesterday claimed responsibility for the attack, saying it was carried out by four "soldiers of the caliphate" who used machine-guns and hand grenades. A

statement said the jihadist assault targeted Jordanian "apostate" security forces and citizens of the US-led coalition battling the jihadists in Syria and Iraq.

Revenge for air campaign

IS identified the four dead militants and said the attack was revenge for the US-led coalition's air campaign targeting jihadists in Syria and Iraq. It also pledged to carry out further assaults on countries within the US-led coalition. Jordan is part of the alliance and has carried out air strikes targeting IS. It also hosts coalition troops on its territory.

Maaz Al-Kassasbeh, a Jordanian fighter pilot from Karak, was captured by the jihadists when his plane went down in Syria in December 2014, and he was later burned alive in a cage. King Abdullah II denounced Sunday's shooting spree as a "cowardly terrorist attack", during a visit Tuesday to the police headquarters in Amman. But he vowed that the assault "will not affect the security and stability of Jordan. It will reinforce its will and the criminals will not be able to undermine" the country.

The Canadian foreign ministry confirmed that one of its nationals had been killed and another injured in "the heinous attack". "The government of Canada stands ready to assist Jordan in bringing the perpetrators of this attack to justice," a statement added. On Monday, Jordanian police said they found suicide belts and other explosives in the hideout of the suspects behind the attack. IS has claimed previous attacks on Jordan, including in June when a suicide bomber killed seven border guards near the Syrian frontier. According to sources close to Islamists, almost 4,000 Jordanians have joined

jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria, and an estimated 420 have been killed since 2011.

Jordan writer killer sentenced to death

Meanwhile, a Jordanian court yesterday sentenced to death an Islamist man accused of killing a Christian writer outside an Amman court in September over a cartoon deemed offensive to Islam. Nahed Hattar was hit by three bullets on the steps of the court where he had been on trial for insulting Islam after he shared a cartoon on social media that mocked Islamists.

His 49-year-old killer, Riyad Ismail, a computer engineer who worked for the education ministry, was arrested at the scene and charged with premeditated murder, terrorism and possession of an illegal firearm. Yesterday Ismail appeared before the military court, bearded, handcuffed and wearing a brown prison uniform to hear the judge at the state security court sentence him to "death by hanging".

Judge Ziad Al-Edwan said he was sentenced "for having carried out deadly terrorist act, incitement, premeditated murder and illegal possession of a firearm." Ismail responded by saying: "Allah suffices me because he is the best disposer of affairs—a traditional Muslim phrase used by people who feel they have been wronged and consider that only God's judgment counts.

The court also sentenced the man who sold Ismail the gun and the man who introduced him to the weapon merchant to one year in jail each. Hattar, a 56-year-old leftist writer, had been arrested on August 13 after posting a cartoon on Facebook under the title "God of Daesh" (the Islamic State jihadist group). He was later released on bail. — Agencies

GUNFIRE, ARRESTS IN CONGO AS KABILA'S MANDATE ENDS

KINSHASA: Gunfire erupted in major DR Congo cities and the UN voiced alarm over a wave of arrests, as protesters demanded President Joseph Kabila step down after his mandate expired yesterday. With fears of violence high in the vast and unstable nation, shots rang out in the capital Kinshasa, there was sustained gunfire in the country's second city of Lubumbashi, and the thud of heavy weapons in central Kananga.

Plumes of smoke from burning barricades hung over Kinshasa after overnight protests, and activity ground to a halt as troop carriers patrolled the largely empty streets of the megacity of 10 million. Tension has been mounting for months in Democratic Republic of Congo ahead of the December 20 deadline for Kabila's second and final term in office to end.

With no election planned and no sign of the president stepping down, veteran opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi finally issued a plea to the country's 70 million people to reject the Kabila administration. The international community has warned of spiraling violence and France urged the government to "respect human rights" as the UN voiced alarm over the arrests of 113 opposition leaders and civil society activists in four days. "I am gravely concerned by the arrests of those who seek to express their political views," said Maman Sambo Sidikou, who heads the large UN mission in Congo.

An AFP correspondent said the streets of Lubumbashi's Matuba neighborhood were strewn with rocks and burnt tyres early yesterday amid a heavy police presence. Local authorities said "police were forced to fire into the air to disperse civilians" because some protesters were armed. It was impossible to immediately verify that claim. In Kananga in central DR Congo, residents reported the sound of light and heavy arms near the airport. A priest said there were scenes of panic as residents fled the area.

'Teargas and gunfire'

Several people are thought to have been killed in the unrest in various regions, but this has yet to be confirmed. National

police spokesman Pierre-Rombaut Mwanamputu told AFP he was unable to give an immediate toll after the violence. "Fortunately, we are not back to the slaughter of September," he said, referring to bloodshed in September when at least 53 anti-Kabila protesters died in two days, according to the UN.

The 45-year-old leader, who has ruled since 2001, is constitutionally barred from seeking a third term but under a controversial recent constitutional court order, he may stay on until a successor is chosen. As the clock ticked on yesterday's end-of-mandate deadline, crowds had gathered before midnight Monday to blow whistles and beat on improvised drums, calling on Kabila to quit.

"There was teargas and gunfire," said Andre, a resident of Kinshasa's Matete neighborhood, adding that security forces "threatened the population." And in what opponents dubbed "a provocation", state TV overnight announced a new government. Headed by Samy Baniabanga, it is part of an October deal between the ruling party and tiny fringe opposition groups that enables Kabila to remain in office pending elections in April 2018. But the main opposition bloc rejects this plan.

'Caving in to pressure'

In a YouTube video released during the night, opposition leader Tshisekedi launched "a solemn appeal to the Congolese people to no longer recognize the authority of Mr. Joseph Kabila, to the international community to no longer deal with Joseph Kabila in the name of the Democratic Republic of Congo". Valentin Mubake, a close aide to Tshisekedi, confirmed to AFP that the video was authentic.

The message was not available in the DR Congo where authorities since Sunday have imposed controls on pictures and video on social media networks. Tshisekedi said he hoped to continue talks launched by the Catholic Church last week to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. The talks were halted Saturday with no significant progress but were to resume on Wednesday. — AFP



KINSHASA: A man holds a bird as a crowd gathers to protest in the neighborhood of Yolo. — AFP

PROFILE: SHARP-SUITED COP WHO KILLED RUSSIAN ENVOY

ISTANBUL: The assassin of the Russian ambassador to Ankara was a 22-year-old from a quiet region in the west of Turkey who had served with the anti-riot police for less than three years. The man identified as Mevlut Mert Altintas shouted "Allahu Akbar" (God is greatest) and "Don't forget Aleppo" as he waved his gun around at a cultural centre in the Turkish capital. But there has yet to be any indication Altintas, who was later "neutralised" by police, was attracted to religious extremism or had any history of activism.

Images showed the clean-shaven man smartly dressed in a suit, tie and white shirt pull out a gun and fire at ambassador Andrei Karlov from behind as the envoy opened a Russian photography exhibition in Ankara. He then threatened terrified spectators, yelling "Allahu Akbar" and saying that the murder was vengeance for Russia's actions in the war-battered Syrian city of Aleppo.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu said Altintas was born in the town of Soke in Aydin province in western Turkey and attended a special school for training future policemen. Altintas

then joined the Ankara anti-riot police—the Cevik Kuvvet in Turkish—and had worked there for the last two-and-a-half-years. The region of Aydin on the Aegean coast is one of Turkey's most peaceful regions well away from trouble-spots and the country's most religiously conservative areas.

Family questioned

After the attack on Karlov, Altintas refused to surrender and remained inside the exhibition centre as clashes took place with police for 15 minutes. But he was then killed by police in an operation, authorities said. Reports said that his mother, father and sister were immediately detained for questioning in their homes in western Turkey.

The mayor of Ankara, Melih Gokcek, known for his outspoken comments, speculated on his official Twitter account that the attacker may be linked to the group of Fethullah Gulen blamed for the July 15 coup aimed at toppling President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. His suggestion has yet to be echoed by other officials. In footage from the scene, Altintas talks about pledging allegiance to jihad in Arabic. — AFP

REVEALING STORY OF A MASS GRAVE IN MOSUL

HAMAM AL-ALIL: Three men set up a fence and a ribbon of yellow and black crime scene tape around a site south of Iraq's Mosul, marking a mass grave of jihadists' victims. It is one of dozens of such sites discovered in areas around Iraq that have been recaptured from the Islamic State group, whose rule has been defined by extreme brutality. Now investigators face the

enormous task of piecing together details of what happened to IS's many victims, and determining who they were.

"It really is a crime scene," Fawaz Abdulabbas, deputy head of the International Committee on Missing Persons in Iraq, said of the site near Hamam al-Alil discovered after Iraqi forces recaptured the town last month. "Between 80

and 100 bodies are here, including those of women and children," Abdulabbas said.

Among the bodies may be that of Imed Dhaer, a policeman who was kidnapped by IS, leaving 10 children without their father and two wives without their husband, his brother Fuad said. When Iraqi forces launched an offensive in mid-October to recapture Mosul, the last IS-held city in the country, the jihadists "came to search for all members of the security forces", including 33-year-old Imed, his brother said. The IS militants "were locals; they knew the houses and professions of all those they took", Fuad said.

Three days of executions

Since then, he has had no news of his brother, but residents of Hamam Al-Alil said they heard shooting at the grave site, a former Iraqi firing range near the town. "For three days, from 7:00 to 11:00 pm, they executed" the people they had seized and then "dumped the bodies before partially covering them with dirt mixed with garbage" in what they termed "burials of dishonor", said Dargham Kamil, an official from the Martyrs' Foundation. The organization, which is under the authority of the Iraqi premier's office, has been working for over a month to trace how the killings unfolded, and has already collected many accounts from local residents. Fuad can imagine what happened and now wants only one thing: to see the body of his brother, to know for sure. "Only that can soothe our hearts," Fuad said. — AFP



MOSUL: This file photo taken on November 7, 2016 shows members of the Iraqi forces checking a body they pulled from a mass grave they discovered in the Hamam Al-Alil area after they recaptured the area from Islamic State (IS) group jihadists during the ongoing operation to retake Mosul, the last IS-held Iraqi city. — AFP



CHICAGO: In this Dec 16, 2016 photo, Esperanza Villalobos, a "community navigator," works at her office at The Resurrection Project. — AP

CITIES, COUNTIES PLAN IMMIGRANT LEGAL AID AFTER TRUMP'S VICTORY

CHICAGO: Major US cities and counties are beefing up legal services for immigrants to help them fight deportation and avoid fraudulent lawyers in the wake of Donald Trump's election and his hard-line immigration enforcement promises. Tapping local government funds to represent immigrants in federal proceedings provides an early example of the type of pushback the Republican incoming president will receive in Democratic strongholds. Advocates call it a matter of justice and smart economics, but some question whether it's a fair use of taxpayer money.

Chicago has approved a \$1.3 million legal fund. Los Angeles elected officials said Monday they are working with private foundations to set up a \$10 million fund, while some California state lawmakers have proposed spending tens of millions of dollars to provide lawyers to immigrants facing deportation. New York is mulling a public-private legal fund, building on New York City's public defender program that's considered a national model. "We need to be able to stand by people who are fearful," Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, a former White House chief of staff, said after the measure passed the City Council last week.

Trump's pledges to build a border wall and deport the estimated 11 million people living in the country without legal permission have triggered uncertainty in immigrant circles. He has since scaled back the deportee number, but not detailed his platform. Since his win, a lack of legal representation for immigrants has become a growing concern. It was the top issue raised by a Chicago task force of leaders, including Democratic Sen Dick Durbin, convened after the election. Los Angeles County supervisor Hilda Solis said she's especially worried about the fate of unaccompanied minors and young immigrants who filed personal information with the federal government to obtain work permits under the Obama administration.

Private donations

In Los Angeles, officials want the fund set up before Trump becomes president in January. About half the money will come from the city and county and half from private donations. "We don't know how far the new administration will go when it comes to our nation's immigration policy, but we've all heard the rhetoric, the dangerous rhetoric of the election," said Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti. "And we are ready to support people who can't afford or who don't realize they might need a lawyer."

Immigrants aren't guaranteed a lawyer in immigration court and only about 37 percent of those in deportation proceedings have legal representation, according to a September American Immigration Council report. Democratic state lawmakers in

California have proposed legislation that could cost up to \$80 million for immigration attorneys and other legal training. Santa Clara County is looking into the idea and San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee added \$1.5 million to a fund for immigrant legal services.

In Chicago - where an estimated 150,000 people do not have permanent legal status - the money will be divided among two nonprofits. One will focus on poor immigrants facing deportation. The other will employ 200 "community navigators" who will network through churches, schools and community events to find immigrants who are in the country illegally and help them figure out if they have avenues to stay.

"People are nervous," said Esperanza Villalobos, who already does the job in Mexican-heavy Chicago neighborhoods. She reports a surge in immigrants seeking her out since the election. In Chicago, which has some of the most immigrant-friendly laws in the nation, the debate over the fund had tense moments, highlighting how contentious the issue is outside Democratic strongholds. Chicago set aside money only for one year and is banking on private donations to keep it going.

Three aldermen representing neighborhoods with strong Trump support voted against it, including Nicholas Sposato. He dismissed it as "the legal defense fund for the illegals" and said Chicago should consider the money for other issues. The cash-strapped city diverted the funds from a little-used homeowner rebate program. "I'm not a hater," Sposato said during the vote at full the council meeting. "Any given day, 1,000 homeless veterans out there. What are we doing for them?"

Public-funded services

Another reason cited by local governments for creating the funds is the economy, because immigrants, regardless of legal status, work and pay taxes. In addition, children of immigrants who are deported may end up needing publicly-funded services such as foster care and health care, said Avidesh Moussavian, a policy attorney with the National Immigration Law Center in Washington.

"There's the due process issue, but there's actually quantifiable economic impact," she said. In 2013, New York City tested a program to infuse public defender offices with money for attorneys dedicated to representing detained immigrants. The program has grown from \$500,000 in its initial year to roughly \$6 million. Attorneys have represented more than 1,500 immigrants from 2013 through late last year, the most recent statistics available. About 70 percent of attorneys won their cases, according to the nonprofit Vera Institute of Justice. — AP

BRITAIN'S 90-YEAR-OLD QUEEN REDUCES OVER 25 ROYAL DUTIES

LONDON: Queen Elizabeth II will stand down as patron of over 25 bodies including the Wimbledon tennis championships and the Rugby Football Union, handing them to other royals after turning 90, her office said yesterday. "At the end of The Queen's 90th birthday year, Her Majesty will step down as patron from a number of national organizations," Buckingham Palace said in a statement.

Other bodies on the list include the children's charity Barnardo's, the British Cycling Federation and the Royal Geographical Society. At the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club Wimbledon, where the queen has been patron since 1952 despite only attending a few matches, she will be replaced by Prince William's wife Kate. Prince Harry will take the queen's place at the Rugby Football Union, where she has

also been the official patron since inheriting the throne in 1952.

A Buckingham Palace spokesman said the charities concerned represented less than five percent of the 600 organizations of which the queen is a patron. "The queen will no longer have a formal connection to these organizations. If there is a royal engagement, then the invitation will go to other members of the royal family," he said.

The queen has already slightly reduced her engagements in the past year, according to estimates in British media, from 393 in 2014 to 341 in 2015. The queen became the world's longest-reigning monarch in October this year following the death of Thai king Bhumibol Adulyadej. In September last year she had surpassed the reign of her great great grandmother Victoria, who was on the throne from 1837 until 1901. — AFP

REVOLT FIZZLES AS TRUMP EASILY WINS ELECTORAL COLLEGE VOTE

PROTESTORS CHANT - 'NO TRUMP, NO KKK, NO FASCIST USA'

WASHINGTON: So much for an Electoral College revolt. Despite weeks of lobbying and a day of protests, President-elect Donald Trump won all but two of the Electoral College votes he claimed on Election Day, ensuring he will become America's 45th president. There were more protest votes among Democratic electors - five - than there were among Republicans.

All 538 electors met in state capitals across the country Monday to cast their votes. Trump's polarizing victory in November and the fact that Democrat Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by more than 2.8 million votes had stirred an intense lobbying effort. But the endeavor produced more noise than results. With all states reporting, Trump finished with 304 votes and Clinton had 227. It takes 270 Electoral College votes to win the presidency. Texas put Trump

over the top, despite two Republican electors casting protest votes.

"We did it!" Trump tweeted Monday evening. "Thank you to all of my great supporters, we just officially won the election (despite all of the distorted and inaccurate media)." He later issued a statement saying: "With this historic step we can look forward to the bright future ahead. I will work hard to unite our country and be the President of all Americans."

Befitting an election filled with acrimony, thousands of protesters converged on state capitals Monday, urging Republican electors to abandon their party's winning candidate. More than 200 demonstrators braved freezing temperatures at Pennsylvania's capitol, chanting, "No Trump, no KKK, no fascist USA!" and "No treason, no Trump!" In Madison, Wisconsin, protesters

shouted, cried and sang "Silent Night." In Augusta, Maine, they banged on drums and held signs that said, "Don't let Putin Pick Our President," referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Faith Spotted Eagle 2020

Among the Republican electors in Texas who cast protest votes, one voted for Ohio Gov John Kasich; the other voted for former Texas Rep Ron Paul. Clinton lost four electors in Washington state - three voted for former Secretary of State Colin Powell and one voted for Native American tribal leader Faith Spotted Eagle. She also lost an elector in Hawaii to Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders. Clinton beat Sanders in the Democratic primaries.

Several Democratic electors in other states tried to vote for protest candidates but they either changed their votes to Clinton or were replaced.

The Electoral College has 538 members, with the number allocated to each state based on how many representatives it has in the House plus one for each senator. The District of Columbia gets three, despite the fact that the home to Congress has no vote in Congress.

There is no constitutional provision or federal law that requires electors to vote for the candidate who won their state - though some states require their electors to vote for the winning candidate.

In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, elector Charlie Buckels reached out to Trump's opponents after the New York businessman got all of the state's eight votes.

"For those of you who wished it had gone another way, I thank you for being here," said Buckels, the state GOP finance chairman. "I thank you for your passion for our country." A joint session of Congress is scheduled for Jan. 6 to certify the results of the Electoral College vote, with Vice President Joe Biden presiding as president of the Senate. Once the result is certified, Trump will be sworn in on Jan 20. — AP



OLYMPIA, Washington: Jo Walter, of Bremerton, Wash., wears a large Donald Trump head mock-up as she protests Electoral College voting. — AP

N CAROLINA'S 'BATHROOM BILL' SET ON FAST PATH TO REPEAL

CHARLOTTE: North Carolina lawmakers appear poised to repeal a controversial law widely derided as the "bathroom bill" because it requires transgender people to use restrooms corresponding with the sex on their birth certificate in many public buildings. As part of the deal, the Charlotte City Council voted Monday to repeal the local nondiscrimination ordinance that first prompted legislators the pass the state law.

Opposition to the state law, called HB2, cost the state hundreds of jobs, several high-profile sports events and perhaps Gov Pat McCrory a second term. The repeal would be a remarkable sign of cooperation for Democratic Gov.-elect Roy Cooper and the GOP-controlled legislature. Just last week, lawmakers called a special session and stripped Cooper of some of his authority when he takes office next month.

The council's move is contingent on North Carolina fully repealing HB2 by Dec 31. Charlotte City Councilwoman Claire Green Fallon said that when she walked into a breakfast with legislative leaders Monday, she had no idea the incoming governor and Republican leaders had struck a deal - apparently over the weekend - to dump

the contentious law. McCrory said later Monday that he would call legislators back to the Capitol on Wednesday to repeal HB2, which also excludes sexual orientation and gender identity from antidiscrimination protections. In addition, the measure reaffirms that local governments can't require area businesses to pay a minimum wage higher than North Carolina's statewide minimum, currently set at \$7.25 per hour.

Although Fallon said she was unaware of what was happening at breakfast, Charlotte City Council member Julie Eiselt said some council members received a call from Cooper on Sunday night that there would be a special session to repeal HB2. Eiselt said the move by the council was a leap of faith but council members felt that, because Cooper was comfortable, they would proceed with the vote. She said she thinks there are enough lawmakers in Raleigh who don't want to see "the continued wreckage that's happening in our state."

Sending a message

Republicans had said the Charlotte ordinance - which ensured transgender people the right to use restrooms correspon-

ding to their gender identity - had to go first before they would consider getting rid of HB2. Supporters of HB2 were quick to criticize the likelihood that lawmakers would vote for its repeal. "We're sending the message to our supporters that lawmakers should not now betray people who supported them and compromise common-sense principles like privacy, dignity and freedom from our citizens," said Tami Fitzgerald, executive director of the North Carolina Values Coalition. Repeal also would break faith with social conservatives just weeks after they knocked on thousands of doors to back McCrory's re-election effort, Fitzgerald said.

The legislative affiliate of the Family Research Council sent out a statement asking supporters to call McCrory and ask him not to call the special session and "stand up to out-of-state bullies." The NCAA, which pulled seven championships out of North Carolina because of HB2, welcomed the news. "We are encouraged by the current discussions in North Carolina and remain committed to hosting future NCAA championships to ensure they promote an inclusive atmosphere for college athletes, coaches, administrators and fans," the organization

said in a statement, adding that the relocated championships for 2016-17 will remain in their new cities.

And LGBT advocates held out hope that the General Assembly would follow through, although they also said protection from discrimination transcends politics. "LGBT rights aren't a bargaining chip. Charlotte shouldn't have had to repeal its ordinance in exchange for HB2 to be repealed," Simone Bell, the Southern Regional Director for Lambda Legal, said in a statement. "LGBT people in North Carolina still need protection from discrimination."

In March, a full repeal of the law appeared highly unlikely. At the time, Republican legislative leaders didn't address McCrory's request to restore the right to sue in state court for employment discrimination, which was one of the bill's original tenets. But they praised him for reaffirming bathroom provisions in the law. It was in September that McCrory and GOP legislative leaders offered a deal to Charlotte saying they would consider rescinding HB2 if city leaders repealed the ordinance. Charlotte Mayor Jennifer Roberts basically told McCrory and the lawmakers they would have to move first. — AP



RALEIGH, North Carolina: In this Monday, April 25, 2016, file photo, protesters head into the Legislative building for a sit-in against House Bill 2. — AP

LA'S SKID ROW RUNNERS FIND A 'HOME' IN JOGGING TEAM

LOS ANGELES: Dawn is breaking over downtown Los Angeles as a small group of men and women set off on a six-mile run from Skid Row, the epicenter of the city's homelessness crisis. They are part of the Midnight Runners, an unusual running team made up mostly of recovering addicts and homeless people seeking a new lease on life. As they jog past an apocalyptic scene of sidewalks lined with tents, cardboard boxes and makeshift tarps, many in the group know they could easily be among the thousands who call these streets "home."

"It's a wake-up call every time I walk out here of where my life could go if I keep making bad choices," says Kenneth Collins, 35, one of the latest members of the team, who is a recovering drug addict and has been homeless on and off for the past 16 years. According to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, there are some 47,000 homeless people in and around Los Angeles. An estimated 6,000 live in Skid Row, a sprawling 50-block area

that has the highest concentration of homeless people in the country.

Like several of his running mates, Collins lives at the Midnight Mission, a shelter and addiction center right in the middle of Skid Row. The running club offers its members a therapeutic outlet as they battle to overcome years of addiction to drugs or alcohol as well as homelessness. The brains behind the project is a Los Angeles judge, Craig Mitchell, an avid jogger who spends his days on the bench overseeing murder, rape and other felony cases.

Mitchell says he came up with the idea after a man he had sentenced to prison reached out to him while on parole and invited him to visit the Midnight Mission. "He found his way back to my courtroom and asked me to come down to the Mission to meet the people involved in his recovery," said the 60-year-old judge, sitting in his court chambers wearing a dress shirt, shorts and running shoes.

Running with a judge

"It was completely happenstance. I was put on the spot on how I could help and I said, 'How about a running club.'" Five years later, the club has become a mainstay attracting more and more runners who have participated in marathons across the globe, from Ghana, to Italy and, most recently this past summer, Vietnam.

"I would have never dreamt... that I would one day be running a marathon in Vietnam and with, of all people, a judge," said David Noriega, who joined the team last year as he fought drug addiction that led to a life of crime, homelessness and a total 13 years behind bars.

"I mean, I'm an ex-con, and I'm running with a judge who handles criminal cases," added the 50-year-old father of four, his eyes often welling with tears as he told his story. "And when I came back from Vietnam in the summer, my kids were no longer ashamed to call me their father." After run-

ning in the Los Angeles marathon this coming March, next on the bucket list of the Midnight Runners will be a marathon in Jerusalem in 2018.

'Someone who cares enough'

The overseas trips which can run into the tens of thousands of dollars are funded by donations and by the judge himself who doesn't hesitate to foot the bill when it comes to buying running shoes for the 20 to 25 people on the team. Mitchell said while he is considered a mentor by many of the runners who also include a prosecutor, a criminal attorney and a movie executive - he has found they bring much meaning to his life.

"These are people I expect to be my friends for the rest of my life," he said. "The nicest thing is when someone will give me a hug and they'll say what I hear far too infrequently from my own children - 'You know Judge Mitchell, I really love you.' It doesn't get much better than that." — AFP

FACTS ON ASYLUM-SEEKERS SEEKING REFUGE IN EUROPE

ISLAMABAD: Chancellor Angela Merkel said yesterday that German authorities believe a deadly rampage by a lorry driver at a Berlin Christmas market was a "terrorist" attack likely committed by an asylum-seeker. But Berlin's police chief later voiced doubt that a detained Pakistani was behind the attack that killed 12, which would mean the perpetrator remains at large. Here are some facts and figures about would-be refugees from Pakistan, Afghanistan and elsewhere:

Figures show 1.25 million asylum-seekers poured into Europe in 2015 — twice as many as the previous year-flee-

ing war and poverty in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa. Many European nations launched media campaigns and dire warnings to dissuade would-be migrants from making the trip, but that did not slow the influx.

Syrians fleeing civil war were the largest group, numbering nearly 363,000, followed by 178,200 Afghans. A raging Taliban insurgency, which has greatly intensified following the 2014 withdrawal of US-led NATO combat troops, bolsters the case for Afghan applicants. The situation is less clear-cut for the tens of thousands of Pakistanis

applying for asylum in Europe and North America every year on the grounds of religious, political or sexual persecution.

Ahmadi Muslims, Christians and converts to Christianity are among the groups seen as most vulnerable because of frequent attacks on their homes, places of worship and the ever-present threat of blasphemy charges. Other groups include sexual minorities, those who fear attacks from the Taliban and couples who have had interfaith marriages.

According to official statistics, 48,015 Pakistanis applied for asylum in Europe in 2015 — more than double the 22,220

in 2014. In Germany the number of applicants was 8,470 compared to 4,225 the year before. Due to the porous western border with Afghanistan, many Pakistanis — especially ethnic Pashtuns from the northwest — may claim to be Afghans to increase their chances of being granted refugee status.

According to European Union officials the acceptance rate is around 20 percent for Pakistanis while it is 60 percent for Afghans. Explaining the difference, EU commissioner on migrations Dimitris Avramopoulos told AFP in 2015: "Pakistanis cannot be qualified as political refugees given Pakistan is in a democratic process." In July a Pashtun teenager went on an axe rampage on a train in Wurzburg in Germany, wounding four tourists from Hong Kong and a German passer-by.

After initial speculation he may have been Pakistani, he was later found to be an Afghan. German weekly Der Spiegel named him as Riaz Khan Ahmadzai, and said he had been in contact with the Islamic State group. IS had suggested he drive a car into a crowd, but the Afghan rejected the idea as he did not have a driver's license. The teenager said he would instead get on a train and carry out his attack onboard. — AP

EUROPE TIGHTENS UP SECURITY AT MARKETS

PARIS: Security was beefed up at Christmas markets across Europe after a lorry ploughed through a market in Berlin killing 12 people and heightening security fears at the onset of the holiday season. The carnage in the German capital had particular resonance in France, which has borne the brunt of terror attacks in Europe for the past two years.

The witness accounts of a truck barreling through a crowd of revelers immediately brought to mind the scenes in the Riviera city of Nice in July, where an Islamist used a truck to mow down 86 people during Bastille Day celebrations. President Francois Hollande said France was under a "high level of threat" following the events in Berlin but pointed out that the country already has a large-scale security operation in place. "We have a high level of threat and we also have a particularly high level of mobilization and vigilance," Hollande said.

France's best-known Christmas market in the picturesque eastern city of Strasbourg has been a particular concern for security forces for years, with at least two jihadist cells in the city being broken up in the past few years. Bruno Le Roux, France's recently appointed interior minister, visited the market on Tuesday, telling Europe 1 radio that authorities "will ensure the security of our territory and citizens". He urged people to "enjoy themselves" but also be careful when celebrating Christmas and the New Year.

Strasbourg security

In Strasbourg, police have set up barricades at the various entry points to the main island of the city, where the market is located. While the officers check bags, private security guards mingle with the crowd to keep watch. The large Christmas market extending along the renowned Champs-

Elysees avenue in Paris was the target for a gang of six suspected jihadists arrested in November, according to prosecutors.

In the wake of the Berlin attack, officials on Tuesday added more concrete blast blocks at pedestrian entrances to the market, which is sealed off on the traffic side by barricades. Ivan Pallen, a 27-year-old marketing student from Mauritius who was enjoying the festive stalls selling sweets and mulled wine, said the level of security was a hard balance to strike. "You don't see many police but perhaps they are in plain clothes," he told AFP. "At the same time, you don't want to see soldiers carrying weapons stationed every two metres along a Christmas market."

Belgium, where many of the plots in Europe have originated, left its alert level at "possible or likely" attack. In Britain, the central English city of Birmingham erected concrete blocks earlier this month around what it bills as the "largest authentic German Christmas market outside Germany or Austria". A spokesman for the National Police Chiefs' Council said that despite the Berlin attack, the threat to Britain remained unchanged at severe, meaning an attack was "highly likely".

In Austria, a traditional home of the Christmas market, authorities said security would be stepped up around such sites. Austrian Interior Minister Wolfgang Sobotka urged people not to change their Christmas routines, but to be alert to anything unusual.

"I ask everyone to continue to go to markets or big events, albeit while exercising the greatest caution," he said. Poland, where the truck used in the Berlin rampage began its journey before being apparently hijacked, said it would lay on more police patrols around sensitive sites such as stations and shopping centers. — AFP



BERLIN: (From Left) The Mayor of Berlin Michael Mueller, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere and German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier attend a flower ceremony at the Kaiser-Wilhelm Memorial Church. — AP

MERKEL SUMMONS SECURITY LEADERS IN WAKE OF ATTACK

'THERE IS STILL A LOT THAT WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS ACT'

BERLIN: Chancellor Angela Merkel summoned Germany's top security officials yesterday to discuss the government's response to the deadly truck attack in Berlin that claimed at least 12 lives. Nearly 50 people were injured when a truck ploughed into a popular Christmas market filled with tourists and locals outside the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church near Berlin's Zoo station late Monday.

"There is still a lot that we don't know about this act with sufficient certainty," Merkel told reporters in Berlin, in her first personal statement following the incident. "But we must, as things stand, assume it was a terrorist attack." Police, too, said that the truck appeared to have been driven intentionally. So far, no group has claimed responsibility. Authorities arrested a man about 2 kilometers (1 1/2 miles) from the crash site on suspicion of having been at the wheel of the truck.

Numerous German media reported that the suspect was a Pakistani citizen. Footage showed the suspect, his head covered in a white sheet, being pushed into a police car shortly after the attack. Berlin's public radio station RBB-Inforadio cited security sources saying the man entered Germany on Dec 31, 2015. News agency dpa, also citing unnamed security sources, said he came to Germany as a refugee in February 2016. Berlin's Tagesspiegel newspaper reported that the man was known to police for minor crimes. Merkel, who has been criticized for allowing in large numbers of migrants, addressed head-on

the possibility that an asylum-seeker was responsible.

'Making an effort'

"I know that it would be particularly hard for us all to bear if it were confirmed that a person committed this act who asked for protection and asylum in Germany," Merkel said. "This would be particularly sickening for the many, many Germans who work to help refugees every day and for the many people who really need our help and are making an effort to integrate in our country."

A spokesman for Berlin's office for refugee affairs said police conducted a large-scale search overnight at a large shelter for asylum-seekers at the city's now-defunct Tempelhof airport. Four men in their late 20s were questioned but nobody was arrested, Sascha Langenbach told The Associated Press. Among the dead was a man in the truck, who succumbed as paramedics treated him, Berlin police spokesman Winfried Wenzel said. Police said later that the man was a Polish national, but didn't give further details of who he was or what happened to him.

The Polish owner of the truck said he feared the vehicle may have been hijacked. Ariel Zurawski said he last spoke with the driver, his cousin, around noon, and the driver told him he was in Berlin and scheduled to unload yesterday morning. "They must have done something to my driver," he told TVN24.

Under the cloak of help

Germany has not so far experienced any mass-casualty attacks by Islamic extremists, but has been increasingly wary since two attacks by asylum-seekers in the summer that were claimed by the Islamic State group. Five people were wounded in an ax rampage on a train near Wurzburg and 15 in a bombing outside a bar in Ansbach, both in the southern state of Bavaria. Both attackers were killed.

Those attacks, and two others unrelated to Islamic extremism in the same weeklong period, contributed to tensions in Germany over the arrival last year of 890,000 migrants. Far-right groups and a nationalist party seized on Monday's attack, blaming German Chancellor Angela Merkel for what had happened. "Under the cloak of helping people Merkel has completely surrendered our domestic security," Frauke Petry, the co-chairwoman of the Alternative for Germany party, wrote.

Manfred Weber, a member of Merkel's conservative bloc and leader of the European Parliament's biggest political grouping, cautioned against sweeping verdicts but said it was important to ensure that extremists didn't enter the country. The German government said Merkel spoke yesterday with President Barack Obama, who expressed his condolences. In Washington, White House National Security Council spokesman Ned Price said the United States was ready to help in the investigation and response. — AP



DORTMUND: Police officers carrying machine guns patrol at the Christmas market. — AP

ZURICH MOSQUE GUNMAN WAS SWISS, NO ISLAMIST LINK: POLICE

ZURICH: A gunman who shot three worshippers in a Zurich mosque on Monday evening was a 24-year-old Swiss man with Ghanaian roots and no apparent links to Islamist radicalism, police said yesterday. The suspect, whom they did not identify by name, is thought to have killed another man in Zurich on Sunday. He seems to have taken his own life shortly after the mosque shooting, whose motivation remains a mystery, police officials said. "He is Swiss and we don't know anything about the motives," Christiane Lentjes Meili, head of criminal investigations for the Zurich cantonal police, told a news conference.

The gunman from the nearby town of Uster had stormed into the Islamic centre near the main train station in Switzerland's financial capital and opened fire on people praying, wounding three men, whose condition was said to be improving on Tuesday. His body was found soon afterwards around 300 meters away. He appears to have shot himself, police said.

Investigators were still puzzling over what set off the deadly chain of events. The man — whose last run-in with the law was as a bike thief seven years ago — had quit his job in a shop on Friday. There were indications that the man had taken an interest in occult sciences, Lentjes Meili said, adding it was not clear at this stage whether he was mentally ill. Two

days later he is suspected of killing a man with South American roots he seems to have been acquainted with and leaving the body in a playground in Zurich. The mayhem continued when he entered the mosque after dusk on Monday, armed with a gun for which he had a permit.

"We are still waiting to see if that person was targeting us or if it was a coincidence that brought him to us. Everything is open," Saad Subaan from the Zurich Islamic Community Foundation told reporters after the media conference. The victims are aged 30, 35 and 56. Two of them were seriously injured in the attack, a rare case of gun violence in Switzerland, while a third sustained less severe injuries.

"All Muslims are of course shocked that people praying came under fire," Onder Gunes, spokesman for the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Switzerland, said before the shooter's background became known. "This would be equally shocking if done by a Muslim, Christians, Hindus or any other religious group," he said, adding: "We all have to stand together for peace. This cannot be allowed to escalate." Switzerland, where two-thirds of the 8.3 million population identify as Christian, has been wrestling with the role of Islam as its Muslim population has risen to 5 percent. In 2009, a nationwide vote backed a constitutional ban on new minarets. — Reuters

BERLIN WITNESSES RECOUNT HORROR

BERLIN: A sudden bang and then everything went dark. Survivors of the carnage caused when a lorry ploughed into a Berlin Christmas market recount the fear and horror they felt when festive revelry turned to death and destruction in a matter of seconds. Many also told of lucky escapes and chance decisions that meant they were not standing in the path of the truck that mowed down the crowd on Monday, killing at least 12 people.

'20 centimeters away'

Lana Sefovac, a Bosnian who lives in Berlin, was at the entrance of the market at the time of the attack. "We were at a stall because we wanted to buy some food. We were lucky we were hungry because if we had been on the promenade we would have been victims," she told regional N1 television in Bosnia. "I was standing in front of the stall, my father was in front of me, my mum was behind. I heard a very, very noisy sound and when I turned towards it, the first thing I saw was wood flying all around because he literally smashed the first wooden booth by driving very fast. "He was driving directly toward us, directly into us, but then he made a turn because he did not want to drive into (our) booth but where people were. He wanted to run people over."

"He passed 20 centimeters from my mum. She fell. My dad fell too. I turned and started screaming because I couldn't see my mum. I thought she was injured as the speed was high and I was sure he pushed her. She stood up, dad too, and at that moment I turned and saw the truck hitting a lamppost, with people laying around it and to the side.

"Absolutely everyone was shocked, nobody knew what to do, we were all trying to find our loved ones and friends that only a minute earlier we were drinking mulled wine with and now they were lying down in blood. Then we were worried that something else could happen, someone could come out of the truck, there could be an explosion or something, so as soon as the first shock passed, we immediately ran away."

'Totally powerless'

Belgian woman Carima Douch, who was working at the Zaventem airport in Brussels when the suicide bombings happened in March, told of yet another lucky escape. She told Dutch daily De Telegraaf daily after witnessing the Berlin attack: "It's very difficult. You feel totally powerless. And I am speechless. Everything comes back again. — AFP



BERLIN: View of the truck that crashed the evening before into a Christmas market at Gedachtniskirche church. — AFP

AUSTRALIA SIGNS MEGA DEAL FOR FRENCH SUBS

ADELAIDE: Australia yesterday signed a mega deal to purchase a fleet of next-generation submarines from France, with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull hailing the vessels' "cutting-edge technology". French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian inked the inter-governmental agreement (IGA) in Adelaide that will see French shipbuilder DCNS design and build the Shortfin Barracudas. The total cost of the 12 submarines, including separate agreements with US and Australian contrac-

tors, will hit Aus\$50 billion (US\$37 billion).

"The IGA is the last foundation stone needed to ensure Australia is able to develop a cutting-edge sovereign submarine capability," Turnbull told reporters. The agreement is a "critically important step in the development of our security, in the assurance of our government in delivering Australians the security and the prosperity that they need," he added. With most of the work on the subs to be carried out in Adelaide, Turnbull underlined the

number of domestic jobs to be created.

"This will be a sovereign defense industry ... centered here in Adelaide ... creating 2,800 jobs at the very cutting edge of technology," he said. "Our future, our assurance, our security as a first world high wage generous social welfare net economy depends on the technology, the innovation, the skills that come from investments such as this.

"This is a key element in our economic plan." Le Drian said the agreement was "an

important building block in deepening our bilateral relationship, notably ... between our two navies".

He thanked Australia and described the signing as an "historic event". Australia awarded DCNS the main contract in April, beating off competition from Germany and Japan. The inter-governmental agreement sets out the legal framework under which Canberra and Paris will partner on the submarine program over coming decades. The vessels will

be a scaled-down, conventionally-powered version of France's 4,700-tonne nuclear-fuelled Barracuda but boast the same stealth capabilities. Design and mobilization work has already been launched with Australian experts working in Cherbourg while DCNS was to open new offices in Adelaide later yesterday employing up to 300 engineers. US defense contractor Lockheed Martin was named in September to fit the combat systems for the Barracudas. — AFP

AFTER TWO YEARS, MH370 STILL LIKELY NORTH OF SEARCH AREA

SYDNEY: For two years, a handful of ships have diligently combed a remote patch of the Indian Ocean west of Australia in a \$160 million bid to find Malaysia Airlines Flight 370. Yesterday, investigators made what was surely a painful admission: They have probably been looking in the wrong place.

The latest analysis by a team of international investigators concluded the vanished Boeing 777 is highly unlikely to be in the current search zone and may instead be in a region farther north. But though crews are expected to finish their deep-sea sonar hunt of the current search area next month, the possibility of extending the search to the north appeared doubtful, with Australia's transport minister suggesting the analysis wasn't specific enough to justify continuing the hunt. The latest twist in the search for Flight 370 highlights the extraordinary difficulty officials have faced in their attempts to find the aircraft based on the faintest scraps of data. All along, officials have said they are not simply looking for a needle in a haystack - they are looking for the haystack.

Yesterday, the haystack was poised to shift again, with the release of a report by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, which is leading the search for the plane. The report is the result of a November meeting of international and Australian experts who re-examined all the data used to define the search area for the aircraft, which vanished during a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on March 8, 2014, with 239 people on board.

Since the plane disappeared, experts have analyzed a series of exchanges between the aircraft and a satellite to estimate a probable crash site along a vast arc of ocean in the southern hemisphere. A deep-sea search of a 120,000-square kilometer stretch of water along the arc has so far come up empty.

Early stages of the hunt

In November, the experts went back over the satellite data, along with the results of a new ocean drift analysis of the more than 20 items of debris likely to have come from the plane that have washed ashore on beaches throughout the Indian Ocean. The analysis, based on where the items washed up and when, suggested the debris originated farther north along the arc from the current search

zone. Given the number of aircraft parts found so far, the team concluded that a debris field had floated on the water surface after the plane crashed. So they eliminated areas of the ocean where air crews had searched the surface in the early stages of the hunt. That left a 25,000-square-kilometer area immediately to the north of the current search zone as the most likely place where the plane hit the ocean, the report said.

The investigators concluded with "a high degree of confidence" that the plane is not in the current search area. And they agreed the new area needs to be searched. "The experts concluded that, if this area were to be searched, prospective areas for locating the aircraft wreckage, based on all the analysis to date, would be exhausted," the report said.

However, a new search would require fresh funding. The countries involved - Malaysia, Australia and China - agreed in July that the \$160 million search will be suspended once the current effort is exhausted unless new evidence pinpoints the plane's exact location. Australian Transport Minister Darren Chester suggested an extension was unlikely, noting that the latest report does not give a specific location of the plane.

"As agreed at the Tripartite Ministers meeting in Malaysia in July we will be suspending the search unless credible evidence is available that identifies the specific location of the aircraft," Chester said in a statement. "The search for MH370 has been the largest in aviation history and has tested the limits of technology, and the capacity of our experts and people at sea." Malaysia's Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai did not explicitly rule out a new search, but said in a statement, "We remain to be guided as to how this can be used to assist us in identifying the specific location of the aircraft." When asked about the search, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson did not comment beyond noting China's role in the effort so far. Australian government oceanographer David Griffin, who worked on the analysis of how the debris drifted, said he is confident the plane is in the newly identified search area. And he dismissed the idea that the new analysis means the search to date has been a wasted effort, saying that the current search zone was based on the best available data at the time. — AP



LONDON: This file photo taken on December 16, 2016 shows supporters posing for a photograph with a placard showing the Royal Marine flag with a picture of former Marine Sgt Alexander Blackman, outside the Royal Courts of Justice. — AFP

BRITISH SOLDIER WHO KILLED TALEBAN FIGHTER DIVIDES UK

'SHUFFLE OFF THIS MORTAL COIL ... IT'S NOTHING YOU WOULDN'T DO TO US'

LONDON: A British soldier who cited Shakespeare after killing an injured Taliban fighter could be home on bail in time for Christmas, three years after being found guilty of murder in a landmark conviction. The case of Alexander Blackman, who was identified only as "Marine A" during his trial, has fascinated and divided public opinion in Britain.

On September 15, 2011, the 42-year-old Royal Marine shot a Taliban fighter who had been seriously injured by fire from an Apache helicopter in Helmand province. "There you are. Shuffle off this mortal coil ... It's nothing you wouldn't do to us," said Blackman, paraphrasing Shakespeare's "Hamlet" after shooting the fighter at close range with a 9mm pistol. "Obviously this doesn't go anywhere, fellas. I just broke the Geneva Convention," he said to his fellow Royal Marines, in reference to international law governing the treatment of prisoners of war.

Footage of the incident was captured on a camera mounted onto the helmet of one of the soldiers, and two years later Blackman was convicted of murder by a court martial. The case was the first time since the Second World War that a British soldier was convicted of a murder carried

out on the battlefield. "You treated that Afghan man with contempt and murdered him in cold blood," judge Jeff Blackett told Blackman in December 2013 as the soldier was given a life sentence with a 10-year minimum.

"By doing so you have betrayed your corps and all British service personnel who have served in Afghanistan, and you have tarnished their reputation," Blackett added. The conviction was supported by Britain's then chief of defence staff, Nicholas Houghton, who said: "Murder is murder, this is a heinous crime." But now Blackman is making a bid for freedom, with a court hearing in London on Wednesday set to decide if he will be granted bail.

'Icing on the cake'

The soldier's legal team ultimately aims to overturn the conviction and have the crime lessened to manslaughter, following a Royal Navy review which suggests Blackman was suffering from post-traumatic stress at the time of the shooting. Blackman has denied murder and claimed he shot the Taliban fighter once the insurgent was already dead.

His wife, Claire Blackman, told the BBC she

hoped to have her husband home for Christmas. "Bail would be the icing on the cake," she said. Dozens of veterans are due to gather on Wednesday outside the Royal Courts of Justice to call for "Justice for Marine A, abandoned by the government," according to a poster. Blackman's supporters include Richard Kemp, a former commander in Afghanistan, who said the soldier had been "thrown to the wolves by cowards".

MP Richard Draw and author Frederick Forsyth have promised to pay the £200,000 bail. The Daily Mail newspaper has also campaigned against the murder conviction. "Did a man who for 13 years risked his life defending his country, often in the most appalling environment... really deserve to be tried for murder and thrown in jail like a common criminal?" the right-wing newspaper wrote.

Beyond the "Marine A" case, British tabloids have campaigned against former soldiers facing trial for alleged crimes committed while on duty. They received support from Prime Minister Theresa May, who in October promised to "put an end to the industry of vexatious claims that has pursued those who served in previous conflicts". — AFP



In this file photo taken from a Royal New Zealand Airforce (RNZAF) P-3K2-Orion aircraft on April 13, 2014 shows co-pilot and Squadron Leader Brett McKenzie helping to look for objects during the search for missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, off Perth in Western Australia. — AFP

B'DESH ARRESTS ISLAMISTS BLAMED FOR CAFE ATTACK

DHAKA: Bangladesh security forces yesterday arrested two members of an Islamist militant group blamed for a deadly attack on a cafe in Dhaka in July in which 22 people were killed, most of them foreigners. The July 1 attack in Dhaka's diplomatic quarter was claimed by the Islamic State and was the worst militant attack in Bangladesh, which has been hit by a spate of killings of liberals and members of religious minorities in the past year.

The two suspects, aged 21 and 28, were members of a faction of the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) militant

group, known as New JMB, which has pledged allegiance to Islamic State, and which police believe was involved in organizing the cafe attack. "We have recovered money, jihadi books, leaflets and sharp weapons," Lutful Kabir, a senior official with the police-led Rapid Action Battalion, which is involved in counter-terrorism efforts, told a news conference. The five gunmen who attacked the cafe were all killed. Police have killed at least 42 suspected Islamists in raids since then, including the man police said was the attack mastermind, Bangladesh-born Canadian citizen Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury. — Reuters

S LANKA INVESTIGATES 'PLOT' BY GANDHI'S WOULD-BE ASSASSIN

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka said yesterday it was investigating a former navy sailor convicted of attempting to assassinate India's Rajiv Gandhi 25 years ago on suspicion of involvement in an alleged plot to kill its president. Vijithamuni Rohana de Silva served two and a half years in prison for trying to murder the former Indian leader as he inspected a naval guard of honour in Colombo in 1987.

He has since turned to astrology and yesterday Sri Lanka's Information and Parliamentary Affairs ministry secretary said police were investigating whether he was part of a plot to kill President Maithripala Sirisena. Nimal Bopage said authorities could not ignore claims de Silva had posted on Facebook and other social media over the past five months, in what he called a sus-

tained campaign. "This man claims to be an astrologer and he is predicting that the president will be killed by January 26," Bopage told reporters in Colombo.

"We have alerted the police to carry out a criminal investigation because we suspect this to be part of a wider plot to assassinate the president." De Silva took up a singing career after his release from jail, later turning to politics, before settling on astrology. Sri Lankan politicians have immense faith in astrology. Many have their own seers whose predictions are considered more important than the advice of senior aides. Former president Mahinda Rajapakse called a snap election nearly two years ahead of schedule on the advice of his personal astrologer and lost to Sirisena. — AFP

TALEBAN SHOWS SONS BORN TO US, CANADIAN HOSTAGE COUPLE

PESHAWAR: Senior Taliban figures confirmed yesterday they had released a new video showing a kidnapped American-Canadian family, including two young boys born in captivity while held by the feared Haqqani network. The video showed for the first time the two sons of Canadian Joshua Boyle and Caitlan Coleman, a US citizen. Coleman, 31, was pregnant when the couple were abducted in 2012 inside Afghanistan while on a backpacking trip. A Canadian spokesman said the government was reviewing the video, while US officials would not immediately comment. In the video, Coleman begs for an end to their "Kafkaesque nightmare" and is critical of both the American and Canadian governments and the family's Haqqani captors.

"We understand both sides hate us and are content to leave us and our two surviving children in these problems," she said. "But we can only ask and pray that somebody will recognise the atrocities these men carry out against us as so-called retaliation in their ingratitude and hypocrisy." The two young boys - who, along with their parents, appeared healthy - fidgeted on their father's lap as Coleman added: "My children have seen their mother defiled."

Two senior Taliban figures based in Afghanistan told Reuters by telephone that the video had been uploaded by the radical Islamist insurgents, who are fighting to topple the US-backed government in Kabul. One said the video came from the Haqqani network - a close affiliate of the Afghan Taliban - and it had been delivered to both US and Canadian officials before being posted on YouTube late on Monday night.

He said the Haqqani network is demanding the release of three of its senior members - including the brother and maternal uncle of Sirajuddin Haqqani, who is deputy leader of the Afghan Taliban. Coleman's reference to her two "surviving children" was unexplained. She appealed to both President Barack Obama and President-elect Donald Trump to make a deal with their captors.

"They want money, power, friends. You must give them these things before progress can be made." Michael O'Shaughnessy, spokesman for the Canadian Department of Global Affairs, said officials were studying the video. "We are deeply concerned for the safety and well-being of Joshua Boyle, Caitlan Coleman and their young children



This undated militant file image from video posted online in August 2016, which has not been independently verified by The Associated Press, provided by SITE Intel Group, shows Canadian Joshua Boyle and American Caitlan Coleman, who were kidnapped in Afghanistan in 2012. — AP

and call for their unconditional release," he said. US officials declined to comment on the new video but referred reporters to statements made by State Department spokesman John Kirby after the last video of the couple released in late August. In those statements, Kirby called for the family's "immediate release on humanitarian grounds" and said the US would "continue to work aggressively" to bring all American hostages home.

Spanish Red Cross worker kidnapped

In other news, gunmen have abducted a Spanish employee of the Red Cross in northern Afghanistan, officials said yesterday, the latest in a series of kidnappings of foreigners in the conflict-torn country. The abduction occurred on Monday when workers of the international charity were travelling in two vehicles from Mazar-e-Sharif city to the volatile Taliban hotbed of Kunduz.

"One male colleague was taken. The rest were let go," the International Committee of the Red Cross said in a statement. "We're extremely concerned for the safety of our colleague. We're doing our best to discover what precisely happened, and

to secure his safe and unconditional release as quickly as possible." A diplomatic source in Madrid confirmed he was a Spanish national. "We can say that a Spanish Red Cross worker is being held against his will in the north of Afghanistan," the source told AFP, without offering other details.

No militant group has so far claimed responsibility for the abduction. Local authorities are investigating the incident, Kunduz government spokesman Sayed Mahmood Danish told AFP. Kunduz faces an intensifying Taliban insurgency as the militants in October overran its provincial capital for the second time in one year.

Kidnapping of foreigners has been on the rise in Afghanistan recently, with criminal gangs staging abductions for ransom or handing the victims over to insurgent groups. In August, gunmen wearing military uniforms kidnapped two professors of the American University of Afghanistan in the heart of Kabul, underscoring the growing insecurity in the country. And in November, an Australian national was snatched from Kabul, just months after another citizen was rescued after being taken at gunpoint. — Agencies

UN RIGHTS CHIEF URGES PHILIPPINES TO PROBE PRESIDENT FOR MURDER

GENEVA: The UN rights chief urged the Philippines yesterday to investigate President Rodrigo Duterte for murder, after he boasted that he in the past had personally killed suspected criminals. Duterte said in a speech last week that when he was mayor of the southern city of Davao, where he served three terms between 1988 and 2016, he personally killed people to set an example for police. He made the comments in a speech to businessmen as he discussed his campaign to eradicate illegal drugs, which has seen police and unknown assailants kill thousands of people since he became president on June 30.

"The Philippines judicial authorities must demonstrate their commitment to upholding the rule of law and their independence from the executive by launching a murder investigation," UN rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said in a statement. "The killings committed by Mr Duterte, by his own admission, at a time

when he was a mayor, clearly constitute murder," he said. "It should be unthinkable for any functioning judicial system not to launch investigative and judicial proceedings when someone has openly admitted being a killer," he insisted.

Duterte has said that as newly elected mayor of Davao, he and several local policemen ambushed a group of suspected kidnapers shortly after the gang collected ransom from the parents of the released hostage, a local teenage girl. "Maybe my bullets killed them, maybe not, but after the (firefight) they were all dead," he said. He meanwhile told the BBC on Friday that he had personally killed "about three people" during his term as mayor.

Philippine Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre insisted that the president had not violated any law. "If the suspect fought back, he must have been forced to kill him," Aguirre told reporters last week. But Zeid was adamant, warning

that the acts clearly violated the Philippine constitution. "The killings described by President Duterte also violate international law, including the right to life ... and innocence until proven guilty," he said. The UN rights chief's statement also decried the "environment of alarming impunity and violence" created by Duterte's deadly campaign to eradicate illegal drugs. According to the UN, nearly 6,100 people had been killed since Duterte took office in late June.

China offers guns for drug war

Meanwhile, China has offered the Philippines guns and equipment worth \$14 million to wage its war on drugs and combat terrorism, Manila's defense minister said yesterday, as ties improve under President Rodrigo Duterte. Beijing has publicly backed the controversial campaign, which has left 5,300 people dead in less than six months and drawn criticism from the United Nations and

the United States, Manila's ally.

Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the latest offer came from Chinese ambassador Zhao Jianhua who met him and Duterte on Monday. "(The ambassador) told the president: 'I know your problems in terrorism and in drugs so we would like to help you,'" Lorenzana told reporters. The Chinese embassy did not immediately reply to requests for comment.

Lorenzana said the Philippines might use the \$14 million grant to acquire small arms, fast boats or night-vision goggles, adding the deal would be finalised before year-end. China also offered long-term soft loans worth \$500 million which the Philippines would get next year to fight illegal drugs and terrorism, Lorenzana added. Duterte, 71, launched an unprecedented anti-crime crackdown after winning May elections on a pledge to eradicate drugs by killing tens of thousands of criminals.

Despite their conflicting territorial

claims in the South China Sea, Duterte has meanwhile sought warmer relations with Beijing. He has repeatedly credited China for offering to supply the Philippines with arms and aid under generous terms. In contrast, he has criticized a US decision to defer action on hundreds of millions of dollars in proposed development aid, as well as to block the sale of rifles to Manila over human rights concerns.

"I do not need your assistance," Duterte said in a speech Monday with the US envoy in attendance. "China is going to release to me 50 billion. Go home, I do not need your aid," he added without specifying the currency. Lorenzana said his aides would visit China next year to inspect the weapons on offer. He added China was also spending on a drug rehabilitation centre in the Philippines following the inauguration of a major facility in October funded by a Chinese businessman. — Agencies

CHRISTIAN JAKARTA GOVERNOR FIGHTS OFF BLASPHEMY CHARGE

DENIES EVER INTENDING TO OFFEND HIS MUSLIM COUNTRYMEN

JAKARTA: Jakarta's Christian governor returned to court yesterday to fight allegations of insulting the Quran that could see him jailed under tough blasphemy laws in the world's largest Muslim-majority country. The high-profile case against Basuki Tjahaja Purnama—the first Christian to govern the capital in more than 50 years—has captivated attention in Indonesia, and fanned concerns about hardliners pushing their agenda in the nation of 255 million.

Purnama, better known by his nickname Ahok, ignited a firestorm of criticism when he quoted a verse from the Islamic holy text in September. The governor apologized but his remarks angered Muslims—both moderate and conservative—who marched against him in the largest rallies seen in Indonesia in years. In a teary, nationally televised defense last week, Purnama denied ever intending to offend his Muslim countrymen and asked the judges to dismiss the case. Purnama's lawyers deny the charges, claiming proceedings are being

rushed and the judges subject to public pressure. But prosecutors yesterday argued the charges were in line with the law. They claim the governor insulted Muslims by claiming his political opponents were using the Quran to sway voters against him. "Based on our analysis and judicial description, the entire objection filed by the accused and his lawyers is not based (on) the law and have to be rejected," prosecutor Ali Mukartono said.

Outside the courthouse, hundreds of hardline Islamists chanted "God is Great" and waved banners demanding Purnama be jailed. "We want the judges to decide to arrest Ahok because he is already a suspect and the police and attorney general are not bold enough to arrest him," Thirman Elon, an anti-Purnama protester said. Purnama was named a suspect in November, but has not been formally arrested and is not in custody. He remains a candidate for re-election in February and is still campaigning. Hundreds of his supporters

also descended on the court yesterday. "Ahok is not guilty. What he did was not blasphemy. Ahok has apologized many times and as Muslims we should forgive him," said Misirah, who like many Indonesians goes by one name. Almost all blasphemy cases in Indonesia have resulted in convictions and if found guilty, Purnama faces a maximum five-year prison sentence.

The trial has been adjourned until December 27. The laws have seen Muslims from sects deemed deviant put behind bars, and even atheists have been handed jail sentences for falling foul of the provisions. Rights groups claim the laws are used to persecute minorities and fear the highly public case against Purnama is eroding Indonesia's reputation for tolerance and diversity. Long the favourite to win re-election in February, Purnama has watched his lead slip as the case against him has dragged on. He is running against two Muslim candidates for the governorship of Indonesia's largest city.

Tourists paraded in 'walk of shame'

In other news, two Australian tourists accused of stealing a bicycle have been forced to take a "walk of shame" through an Indonesian island with signs round their necks, an official said yesterday. "I am thief (sic). Don't do what I did," the signs read.

The tourists, whose identities were not revealed, allegedly stole the bicycle about 10 days ago on Gili Trawangan, a popular tourist destination in central Indonesia. CCTV recordings showed the two Australians taking a bike from the hotel, said village chief Muhamad Taufik. The hotel manager reported the case to the authorities who caught the pair the following day, Taufik added. "We interrogated them, made an agreement, paraded them around the island and forced them to leave Gili," Taufik told AFP.

The two were the first foreigners this year to undergo a "walk of shame" on the island. A few Indonesians have been forced to take part this year in similar parades for theft. National laws are in force on the island but it is unclear whether the Australians underwent a formal police investigation. "The walk of shame parade is a regulation in our village. I don't know whether the police are charging them now, what matters to me is that they're no gone," Taufik said. Such parades have taken place for years on Gili Trawangan, a tiny island off the coast of Lombok and just east of the major resort island of Bali. — AFP



JAKARTA: Muslim protesters shout slogans as they hold up a placard with a picture depicting Jakarta Gov Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama behind bars during a rally outside a court where his trial hearing is held. — AP



In this undated file photo released by the US Navy Visual News Service, the USNS Bowditch, a T-AGS 60 Class Oceanographic Survey Ship, sails in open water. — AP

CHINA RETURNS US DRONE SEIZED IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

BEIJING: China yesterday handed back to the United States an underwater drone it had seized last week in an incident that raised tensions in a relationship that has been tested by President-elect Donald Trump's signals of a tougher policy toward Beijing. Trump has riled the Chinese leadership by saying he might reconsider US policy toward Taiwan, the self-ruled island the mainland claims as its territory.

The Chinese navy vessel that seized the drone returned it near where it was seized, and it was received by the USS Mustin about 80 kilometers northwest of Subic Bay in the Philippines, Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook said in a statement. Cook said Washington considered the seizure illegal. "This incident was inconsistent with both international law and standards of professionalism for conduct between navies at sea," he said, adding that the US has called on China to refrain from "further efforts to impede lawful US activities."

Warnings and rebukes

The statement said the US would continue to "fly, sail, and operate in the South China Sea wherever international law allows." Such freedom of navigation missions in which US ships sail near China's artificial islands draw warnings and rebukes from Beijing. A spokeswoman of China's Foreign Ministry said there was no basis for the Pentagon's assertion that the seizure was unlawful, though she didn't fully explain the position, instead linking it to the US's military presence in the waters, which Beijing considers provocative.

"We have been pointing out that over a long time, the US has been sending aircraft and vessels to conduct close-in reconnaissance and military surveys in waters facing China, which poses threats to China's sovereignty and security," said Hua Chunying, the spokeswoman. "That is the root cause of the incident," she said, while calling for the US to stop such activities. China's defense ministry said in a statement that it handed the drone back after "friendly consultations." Chinese officials say the drone was removed from the water to ensure the safety of passing

ships, but domestic political experts have read the move as a warning to Trump not to test Beijing's resolve over Taiwan. Early this month, Trump broke protocol by speaking with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen. He later said he did not feel "bound by a one-China policy" unless the US could gain trade or other benefits from China. Beijing regards any acknowledgement that Taiwan has its own head of state as a grave insult.

"China wants to send a message to the US side about how serious the consequences can be if sensitive issues in China-US relations are handled unilaterally and indiscreetly," said Xiong Zhiyong, an international relations expert at the China Foreign Affairs University in Beijing. "The return of the seized drone shows that China hopes the US will not provoke China on these issues and engage in solving issues through consultation."

Assertive China

The incident underscores how Trump will confront as president an increasingly assertive China that wants to extend its reach in the South China Sea, a strategically vital area through which about \$5 trillion in global trade passes each year. Several of China's smaller neighbors have protested China's territorial claims there and are closely watching Trump's handling of the disputed sea. The seizure of the drone fits into China's broader strategy aimed at shaping the perception that it is in control of the South China Sea and will not back down, said Michael Raska, a military analyst at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore.

"They use the South China Sea as political, economic and informational means to project power and to influence domestic and external perception that the South China Sea is basically Chinese," Raska said. "This puts the US and China into contending trajectories, but neither side has the strategic interest to escalate beyond these low-level incidents." The US said the drone was being operated by civilian contractors collecting unclassified scientific data in international waters. — AP

DEEP DIVISIONS IN TAIWAN ON GAY MARRIAGE REFORM

TAIPEI: Watching her boisterous twin toddlers romp around the living room, Hope Chen worries what would happen to them if she ever fell seriously ill or had an accident. In a worst case scenario, it should be her partner of seven years who would look after them, Chen says. But Taiwan does not recognize them both as legal guardians because they are gay and cannot marry. Chen, 37, gave birth using eggs from her partner Zoro Wen. She had to travel to Thailand for IVF, which is only allowed in Taiwan for legally married couples.

"I'm the mother who gave birth so I'm the only legal parent," Chen, 37, told AFP from the family's Taoyuan apartment in the north of Taiwan, where a floor-to-ceiling bookcase includes the title "Why do you have two moms? For her, even though they have blood relations, she has no parental rights," says Chen.

Men in an unmarried heterosexual relationship can still gain guardianship of their children through adoption—an option which is also not available to Chen and Wen. The couple hopes things will soon change as parliament debates amendments to the civil law that would make the island the first place in Asia to legalise same-sex marriage. But while support for marriage equality has gained momentum since pro-gay rights President Tsai Ing-wen came to power in May, so too have resisting voices, revealing a divided society deeply rooted in traditional family values.

Both sides have staged large-scale rallies in the past month, attracting tens of thousands, ahead of a critical second review of three draft bills for marriage equality on December 26. The first review in November held by a parliamentary vetting committee to decide on one version to put forward to the legislature-ended without consensus as thousands of protesters criticised the lack of public participation in drafting the bills. "There is now such a high expectation for the dream to be realised. You can't bring it crashing down, can you?" Yu Mei-nu, a lawmaker who proposed one of the bills on behalf of Tsai's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), said in an

interview referring to opponents of reform. Taiwan is one of the region's most forward-thinking societies when it comes to gay rights, hosting a gay pride parade which draws tens of thousands every year.

Still, past attempts to legalize same-sex marriage stalled under the then ruling Kuomintang (KMT) party, which dominated politics for decades before being unseated by the DPP in this year's elections. A recent poll by think tank Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation shows the public is evenly split on the issue.

'Basic morals'

Mother-of-three Becky Wu, who is the head of a parents' union of Taipei elementary schools,

says she is concerned that changes to the civil law will impact what she sees as fundamentals in Taiwanese society. "Our basic morals and concepts, ancestry, grandmother, grandfather, mother, father—all those will disappear," she said. "It becomes the rights of the minority over the rights of the majority," said Wu. "In the past, kids were taught men and women have sex because they love each other and marry," she said. "Now they're told love is not a prerequisite and they're free to experiment, whether with men or women." Religious groups remain the staunchest critics of gay marriage, with an alliance of Buddhist, Taoist and Christian organisations issuing a statement last month warning of the destruction to social ethics and traditional family values. — AFP



TAIPEI: This picture taken on November 17, 2016 shows a supporter of same-sex marriage holding a rainbow flag outside the Parliament. — AFP

JUNTA CHIEF HITS BACK AT WEB CENSORSHIP CRITICS

BANGKOK: Thailand's junta chief yesterday defended amendments to a cyber security law that boosts censorship powers, slamming social media as a hotbed of immorality that needs policing. Changes agreed to last week broaden the scope of the Computer Crime Act, which hands up to five years in prison for anyone found guilty of sharing "distorted" information online.

The toughened law has drawn a strong backlash in social-media obsessed Thailand, with particular alarm provoked by the creation of a new committee to flag websites that breach "public morals". Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha hit back yesterday, saying the dangers of access to an unfettered internet merited new regulation.

"The government will not watch all the time for someone to make a mistake... (it) will only consider content that could make society unstable," the 62-year-old former general told reporters, "I would like to ask you back, you who

spend much more time on social media than me, do you see the dangers from it? Illegal drugs sales, pornography, inappropriate words, defamation, distorted information," he said.

Prayut's government, the most authoritarian Thailand has seen in more than a decade, has harshly cracked down on online dissent since its 2014 power grab. Amendments to the bill, which still need formal approval from the king, have prompted a slew of cyber attacks against government websites, with activists temporarily crashing some web pages. The junta had already leaned heavily on the existing Computer Crime Act.

According to watchdog Fortify Rights, there have been at least 399 prosecutions under the computer law in 2016 compared to 46 in 2013, the year before the junta grabbed power. The junta has also ramped up its use of a draconian royal defamation law that punishes criticism of the monarchy with up to 15 years in prison per offence. — AFP



People ride a raft down a slope at the Mount Hermon ski resort in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights yesterday. — AFP

BERLIN TRUCK RAMPAGE SUSPECT STILL AT LARGE

Continued from Page 1

The mangled truck came to a halt with its windscreen smashed, a trail of destruction and screaming victims in its wake, with Christmas trees toppled on their side. Merkel - who visited the scene of the carnage for a minute's silence and then joined a memorial service in the adjacent Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church - labeled the deadly rampage a likely "terrorist" attack. Merkel said that, if it was confirmed that the killer had been part of the country's recent refugee influx, this would be "particularly sickening in relation to the many, many Germans who are involved every day in helping refugees".

Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere said the Pakistani being held had insisted he was innocent and had not surfaced on any terror watch lists. De Maiziere vowed those responsible would be hunted down. The Polish-registered vehicle, which was loaded with steel beams, had cut a bloody swathe of 60-80 m into the market in the once-divided city's inner west.

At least six of those killed were German citizens, authorities said, while countries from Israel to Spain said their nationals were among those injured in the busy tourist spot. A Polish man, killed with a gunshot, was found on the truck's passenger seat, said de Maiziere. He was believed to be the vehicle's registered driver. The Polish owner of the lorry, Ariel Zurawski, confirmed Monday that the driver - his 37-year-old cousin - was missing, telling AFP: "We don't know what happened to him... I've known him since I was a kid. I can vouch for him."

Survivors recounted harrowing stories of near misses and carnage as festive partying turned to death and destruction in seconds. Briton Emma Rushton was enjoying a glass of mulled wine when the Christmas scene was shattered by a loud crash and screams. "We heard a really loud bang and saw some of the Christmas lights to our left starting to be pulled down," she told Sky news. "Then

we saw the articulated vehicle going through people and through the stalls and just pulling everything down, and then everything went dark."

German flags flew at half-mast yesterday and mourners placed flowers and candles at the site. As darkness fell, Berlin's landmark Brandenburg Gate was lit in the German colors black, red and gold in honor of the victims. The government declared that the city's 60-odd Christmas markets - after a one-day voluntary stoppage out of respect for the victims - should continue because "we must not let our free way of life be taken from us".

Europe has been on high alert for most of 2016, with bloody jihadist attacks striking Paris and Brussels. Germany also suffered two attacks in July in the southern state of Bavaria committed by asylum seekers and claimed by the Islamic State group. An axe rampage by an Afghan or Pakistani man on a train wounded five people, and a suicide bombing by Syrian asylum seeker left 15 people injured six days later. The arrival of 890,000 refugees last year has polarized Germany, with critics calling the influx a serious security threat.

Marcus Pretzell of the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany party labelled the Christmas market victims "Merkel's dead". The attack in Berlin comes five months after Tunisian Islamist extremist Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel ploughed a truck into a crowd on the Nice seafont, killing 86 people. Merkel received calls of support from a string of foreign leaders, including French President Francois Hollande, Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, her spokesman Steffen Seibert said.

As well as sharing their condolences, they "stressed the need for European solidarity in the fight against terrorism", Seibert said. The White House said US President Barack Obama had offered Merkel assistance following "the horrific apparent terrorist attack". — Agencies

MPS SUBMIT DRAFT LAW TO CUT EXPAT NUMBERS

Continued from Page 1

If the law is approved by the National Assembly, accepted by the government and implemented as it is, it means that Indians and Egyptians cannot exceed 500,000 people, or 30 percent of the expected 1.6 million expats. Such proposals are not new, as a similar bill was submitted in the previous Assembly, but it was never debated or even discussed by the interior and defense committee, as reducing the number of expatriates is not an easy task. Abul said the serious imbalance in the demographic structure poses social, economic, security and political risks to the country and the issue must be resolved.

In another development, MP Fadhl yesterday strongly criticized a decision by the Social Affairs and Labor Minister Hind Al-Subaih ordering the removal of a Christmas tree from Dasma Cooperative Society, which is run by a private investor. Fadhl also called for declaring Christmas a public holiday and for erecting a very

large Christmas tree on Safat Square, the largest square in downtown Kuwait City that has important historical significance.

He made the proposal to allow Christians to mark the occasion and for people to exchange gifts and peace and love greetings on the occasion. There are around 200 Kuwaiti Christians, along with hundreds of thousands of foreign Christians in the country. The state is also home to several major churches and Christmas is observed without any problems.

Meanwhile, the Assembly will hold an emergency debate today on the sports suspension and to explore ways to lift the freeze imposed in October last year by the International Olympic Committee, FIFA and several other international sports federations. The session was demanded by 11 MPs and comes just two days after the government said it will issue new legislations that will conform with international sports charters, and that it will invite IOC and FIFA to participate in the discussion of the law, which will be prepared within six months.

ERDOGAN OPENS FIRST BOSPHORUS ROAD...

Continued from Page 1

"Praise be that we are part of a country and a city that connects two continents," said Erdogan. Erdogan said a trip through the tunnel would cost 15 lira (\$4.25) until the end of the year, with all the revenues until then going to families of victims of the coup and those who helped defeat it.

Turkish Transport Minister Ahmet Arslan told AFP the authorities now planned to build a third tunnel under the Bosphorus that would have three storeys and carry both cars and trains. "I think the Avrasya tunnel will hugely ease the lives of the residents of Istanbul," Arslan told AFP. "But we are not just going to stop there," Erdogan has said he is aiming to build a "new Turkey" with transformed infrastructure in time for the 100th anniversary in 2023 of the foundation of the modern

state by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

Other schemes, which Erdogan boasts are his "crazy projects", include a gigantic third airport for Istanbul, the first ever bridge across the Dardanelles straits and even a Suez-style shipping canal for Istanbul. Prime Minister Binali Yildirim announced at the tunnel's inauguration ceremony that the new airport would open on Feb 26, 2018. Just one month after the attempted coup, Erdogan opened the third bridge across the Bosphorus named after the mediaeval sultan Selim the Grim.

Suggestions for the naming of the new tunnel included Ataturk and the late-period Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II, an archconservative whose reputation has undergone a major revival in Turkey in recent years. But the authorities have settled on the far less politically loaded Avrasya Tunnel, despite a high-profile campaign by officials for the public to submit names. — AFP

REBELS WARNED TO QUIT ALEPPO

Continued from Page 1

In a boost to the troubled peace process, the ministers agreed on "the importance of widening the ceasefire, of free access for humanitarian aid and movement of civilians onto Syrian territories".

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan meanwhile said he had agreed with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in a phone call that the assassination of Moscow's ambassador in Ankara on Monday would not harm cooperation including on Syria.

In east Aleppo yesterday, soldiers using megaphones called on the remaining fighters and civilians to exit the opposition districts, a military source told AFP. "The army is expected to enter (Aleppo) to clean the area after the fighters leave," the source said. At least 25,000 people have left rebel districts of Aleppo since the operation began last week, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which is overseeing the operation. Spokeswoman Ingy Sedky said 750 people had been evacuated in parallel from Fuaa and Kafraya, two Shiite-majority villages in northwest Syria besieged by rebels, as part of the deal.

Ten buses left the battered east yesterday morning, Sedky told AFP. But no other buses moved the rest of the day, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and a medical official overseeing evacuations. Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman said the delay was due to complications in Fuaa and Kafraya. Around 20 buses had entered the two villages yesterday but had yet to evacuate anyone, Abdel Rahman said, but he had no details on the reason.

State news agency SANA blamed the "delay in the last batch" of evacuations from Aleppo on "disputes" among rebel groups. "I'm waiting for my brother to get out of east Aleppo - he's a 70-year-old civilian," Nuhad Al-Seikh told AFP just outside rebel-held Aleppo. "I've been speaking to him over the cellphone. He said he boarded a bus but is still waiting," said the 55-year-old.

An AFP correspondent at Khan Al-Assal, the staging

ground where evacuees from Aleppo, Fuaa and Kafraya were being transferred to their respective destinations, saw hundreds of people aboard eight buses from the two villages. Bashar Babbour, who works with the medical charity UOSSM, told AFP from Khan Al-Assal that evacuees from yesterday morning looked cold and exhausted. "When people are going to the medical assessment teams, most of them ask for food and water, in addition to blankets, especially if they're arriving at night," Babbour said. He said many other evacuees were also asking if there was Internet access there so they could contact friends or relatives.

The World Health Organization said the Aleppo evacuees included around 300 needing medical treatment, among them dozens of children. "The huge majority of these patients have trauma injuries," spokesman Tarik Jasarevic said, adding that 93 people in critical condition had been referred to hospitals in Turkey. Aleppo was once Syria's commercial and industrial hub, but it has been divided since 2012 between government forces in the west and rebels in the east.

Government forces launched an offensive in mid-November to capture the whole city, and had seized more than 90 percent of the eastern half when the evacuation deal was struck. In a regime-held neighborhood on the southern edges of Aleppo, an AFP correspondent saw Syrian troops strolling through the area yesterday while others gathered around burning tyres to stay warm. "I hope today is the last day of rebels leaving, because we've been promised we can go on vacation and rest if the operation ends today," said Akram, a soldier.

Diplomatic efforts - including several rounds of peace talks in Geneva - have failed to resolve the conflict, which reached a turning point last year when Russia launched air strikes in support of Assad. In a rare show of international unity, the UN Security Council on Monday unanimously adopted a French-drafted resolution to monitor the Aleppo evacuations. UN envoy Staffan de Mistura also said he hoped to convene new peace talks in Geneva in February. —Agencies

Kuwait Times

Premier Brands

To see your ad here, call:
+965 248 35 616 / 617
 E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net
 ads@kuwaittimes.net
 Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

SHARP
LC-32LE265M

32" LED

49.990 D.K. / 59.990 Q.B. / 17% OFF

2x HDMI, USB, 200Hz

SHARP
LC-50LE275X

50" AQUOS LED

99.990 D.K. / 119.990 Q.B. / 17% OFF

HDMI, MHL, USB

SHARP
LC-55LE570X

55" AQUOS LED

189.990 D.K. / 229.990 Q.B. / 17% OFF

androidtv, SMART TV, Camera

QUAD-CORE, USB, WIFI, HDMI

best بست
AL-YOUSIFI اليوسفي

Credit: Start from 5KD • Up to 48 month • Instant approval

Shop Online www.best.com.kw Free Delivery

1809 809

• Kuwait 1 (the New str.) • Kuwait 2 (Panasonic Tower) • Hawalli 1 (Tunis str.) • Hawalli 2 (Bin Khaldon str.) • Shuwaikh (4th Ring road) • Al-Rai (4th Ring road)
 • Salmiya (Salem Al-Mubarak str.) • Farwaniya (Behind police Station) • Fahaheel (Opp. General Parking) • Jahra (Opp. Main Co-op.) • Airport (Departure Hall)

Kuwait Times
 THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
 DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
 ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

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

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
 ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
 FAX : 24835620/1
 CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
 ACCOUNTS : 24835619
 COMMERCIAL : 24835618

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

Focus

BUILDING A NEW TURKEY: ERDOGAN'S 'CRAZY PROJECTS'

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday opened a new road tunnel underneath the Bosphorus in Istanbul, the latest in a string of ambitious schemes to transform the country's infrastructure. Erdogan, who has dominated the country as premier from 2003 and then head of state since 2014, boasts that such undertakings are his "crazy projects" that no other Turkish leader had dared dream of. From bridges, to a shipping canal, and airports, here is a run-down of the projects whose completion Erdogan has overseen and those still in progress.

Marmaray Tunnel

Opening date: Oct 2013

The Marmaray Tunnel was the first ever undersea passage beneath the Bosphorus between Europe and Asia. It takes a suburban train system linked to Istanbul's metro network. According to the authorities, it has so far transported 172 million passengers.

Osman Gazi Bridge

Opening date: June 2016

The fourth-longest suspension bridge in the world, the Osman Gazi bridge stretches 2.6 km across the Izmit gulf in Turkey's industrial northwest. It is named after the founder and first ruler of the Ottoman Empire.

Sultan Selim the Grim Bridge

Opening date: Aug 2016

A hybrid between a suspension and cable-stayed bridge, the Sultan Selim the Grim bridge is the widest suspension bridge in the world at 58.5 m. The bridge is the third across the Bosphorus, after the first opened in 1973 and the second in 1988. It is named after the 16th century sultan who conquered swathes of the Middle East during his eight-year rule.

Istanbul New Airport

Opening date: Feb 26, 2018

Work on the new Istanbul airport is already well advanced, with opening expected in early 2018. Built by the Black Sea, well outside the city centre, the authorities hope that the size of the facility will make Istanbul a global aviation hub like Dubai. Campaigners however accuse the authorities of ruining one of the few remaining green areas outside the city.

Canal Istanbul

Opening date: Unspecified

Possibly the most ambitious of all Erdogan's projects, the Canal Istanbul envisages the dredging of a new canal from the Sea of Marmara to the Black Sea to take the pressure off the Bosphorus, one of the world's busiest shipping bottlenecks. The authorities have dismissed suggestions the Panama or Suez-style project is a step too far and Erdogan has said tenders will start in 2017.

Dardanelles Bridge

Opening date: 2023

The bridge will span the famous Dardanelles Straits off the Gallipoli peninsula in a project that would dwarf the bridges over the Bosphorus. Erdogan has said construction will start on March 18. The area has huge national significance for Turks as the place where Ottoman troops resisted invading Allied soldiers in World War I. It is expected to be called 1915 Bridge after the year of the campaign.

Avrasya Tunnel

Opening date: Dec 20, 2016

The bridge is the first ever road tunnel underneath the Bosphorus Strait in Istanbul and has been built at a depth of 106 m. The total tunnel project comprises an undersea Bosphorus crossing 3.4 km long. The authorities are now considering building a third tunnel in Istanbul to take trains and vehicles. — AFP



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan gestures as he speaks during the opening ceremony of the Eurasia Tunnel in Istanbul yesterday. — AP

All articles appearing on these pages are the personal opinion of the writers. Kuwait Times takes no responsibility for views expressed therein. Kuwait Times invites readers to voice their opinions. Please send submissions via email to: opinion@kuwaittimes.net or via snail mail to PO Box 1301 Safat, Kuwait. The editor reserves the right to edit any submission as necessary.



TRUCK ATTACK SHOWS MERKEL'S VULNERABILITY

For months, Germany's Angela Merkel has looked like the one safe bet in European politics. As Britain's David Cameron, Italy's Matteo Renzi and France's Francois Hollande all succumbed to the scorn of angry voters, the German chancellor promised to fight for a fourth term and seemed destined to win it. That is still the base case scenario as Germany gears up for an election in the autumn of next year, one of several in Europe that could tilt the region's political landscape.

But the truck attack on a crowded Christmas market in the bustling heart of the former West Berlin on Monday night is a reminder that even Merkel, Europe's longest-serving leader, is vulnerable to events on the ground as 2017 unfolds. Initial reports suggested the attack, which killed 12 people and injured 48, was carried out by a 23-year-old migrant from Pakistan who arrived in Germany one year ago, with the flood of refugees that Merkel welcomed with her optimistic mantra "we can do this". Later, police said it was unclear whether the man they had arrested on Monday night was indeed the driver.

What does seem clear however, is that any attack in Germany with a link, no matter how tenuous, to last year's refugee influx will be laid at Merkel's door by opponents keen to destabilize the one mainstream leader in Europe who has looked invulnerable. "The attack will re-ignite criticism of Angela Merkel, her liberal refugee policy and commitment to open borders, demonstrating how vulnerable she is heading into next year's election," said Mujtaba Rahman of Eurasia Group.

In her first comments since the attack, Merkel, 62, urged Germans not to succumb to fear and said the country would find the strength to continue to live "free, together and open". But she also hinted at the troublesome implications of the incident for her and others who have opened their arms to refugees fleeing war and persecution in the Middle East. "I know it would be especially hard for us all to bear if it were confirmed that the person who committed this act was someone who sought protection and asylum in Germany," she said.

Populists Pounce

The right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, which was created three years ago in opposition to euro zone bailouts but has since morphed into an anti-immigration party, was quick to put the blame on Merkel and her policies. "The environment in which such acts can spread was carelessly and systematically imported over the past one-and-a-half years," said AfD leader Frauke Petry. "It was not an isolated incident and it won't be the last."

Foreign critics also took their digs, with Nigel Farage, a

driving force behind the Brexit vote in June which forced out Cameron, tweeting: "Terrible news from Berlin but no surprise. Events like these will be the Merkel legacy." A poll released yesterday morning and conducted before the attack showed support for Merkel's conservative bloc - her Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian allies - at 36 percent, 14 points ahead of the next strongest party, the Social Democrats (SPD), and 25 points ahead of the AfD.

The survey for Stern magazine also showed that 50 percent of Germans would back Merkel in a hypothetical vote for chancellor, compared to just 14 percent for SPD leader Sigmar Gabriel. Despite that healthy margin, Merkel herself has said next year's election will be "tough like no other".

Her advisers have also cautioned against viewing her re-election as a done deal, pointing to the threat of attacks, a renewed influx of refugees and the risk that Russia could try to destabilize Merkel with fake news and cyber leaks as it appears to have done in the run-up to the recent US election. "Nothing is certain," one top aide told Reuters last month. "There is a lot of time until the election and a lot can happen between now and then."

Merkel has watched over the past half year as Cameron and Renzi staked their political futures on referendums that they lost. Hollande, deeply unpopular, announced this month he would not stand for a second term next year. In 2017, the Netherlands, France, Germany and probably Italy will hold elections. — Reuters

MINORITY EU GOVTS STRUGGLE

Europe's growing number of shaky minority and coalition governments mostly managed to muddle through 2016 but their lack of political strength suggests they will not be pursuing many major policy initiatives in 2017. Opposition threats to flagship labor reforms in Spain and difficulties passing new residential rental laws in Ireland last week exposed the fragility of incumbents who returned to power this year but in a much weakened form.

Bulgaria is braced for months of uncertainty and threats to necessary economic reforms by the fall of its center-right minority government, while weeks of policy battles almost toppled minority administrations in Norway and Denmark. Ahead of 2017's crowded election calendar, these struggles suggest that even if the centre-ground holds in the Netherlands, France, Germany and Italy, some victors may have to get used to rule by compromise and the risks that go with that.

"What electorates want is change, they're just not sure what change and, if you're a minority government, it's very difficult to deliver that while also maintaining some form of credible economic policy," said Commerzbank economist Peter Dixon. "Rollback (of policy) is a risk. You might end up in a situation where governments are unable or unwilling to push forward on the kinds of policy response that may be needed and if you have weak governments at a time of policy problems, that then leads to additional political risk."

With estimates of planned borrowing next year indi-

cating that euro zone governments have little intention of ramping up fiscal stimulus, that suggests that monetary policy in the shape of the ECB's asset-buying program will continue to be the main stimulus to the region's economies. In Ireland, Prime Minister Enda Kenny's minority government relies on the cooperation of the main opposition party Fianna Fail to pass legislation, an arrangement that leaves it with "all of the responsibility, but none of the power", according to Investec Ireland Chief Economist Philip O'Sullivan.

O'Sullivan made the remarks after Kenny's Fine Gael had to battle to secure their rivals' backing for new residential rent controls, a key policy initiative. Kenny has also so far been unable to stop a proposed law, tabled by opposition Fianna Fail, to hand the central bank powers it does not want to set mortgage rates.

'No Big Bang'

They did easily agree their first budget in October and the pact has lasted longer than O'Sullivan and others predicted, the kind of makeshift stability Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy is hoping for as he bids to avoid legislative standstill in Spain. In just six weeks since his new government was sworn in, opposition proceedings have been initiated to scrap prominent education and civil rights laws, with the labour reforms credited for helping Spain rebound from its worst downturn in almost a century next in the firing line. — Reuters

SWEDISH TV HIT SHINES LIGHT ON SAMI PEOPLE

"Midnight Sun", Sweden's new blockbuster crime series, has drawn praise for its bloody tale of Arctic Circle murder but also concern over the portrayal of the indigenous Sami people who are its stars. The first season, which wrapped up earlier this month, follows a duo of French and Swedish police officers investigating the killing of a Frenchman in Kiruna, a Lapland outpost whose tundra landscape is dominated by a massive iron mine.

The Sami have lived for millennia in those frozen lands, arriving in waves of settlers from Asia with herds of reindeer that have remained their livelihood generations hence. The tensions with the Scandinavians who arrived much later and went on to dominate them is the constant backdrop to "Midnight Sun's" dark police tale. The tensions persist today because northern Sweden is experiencing an economic boom due to mineral mining, wind farms and extensive logging, which are encroaching more and more upon reindeer grazing grounds.

"There is significant discrimination against the Sami, and things are getting worse because of the pressure put on the (northern) territories by mining and other industries," said Olivier Truc, author of the bestselling Arctic thriller "Forty Days Without Shadow". For the Sami, then, seeing their portrayal on Sweden's small screen is both a source of pride and concern, with their little-known indigenous culture writ large - and not always accurately. "The expectations were immense, and overall, they were disappointed," said Lars-Ola Marakatt, a radio journalist for a Sami language station who polled other Sami viewers.

'Brutal and quiet'

Some of those interviewed bashed "Midnatssol", as it is known in Swedish, for failing to reproduce the northern Swedish accent, misrepresenting the nature of local disputes and drawing a broad and blunt portrait of the Sami spirit and traditions. Peter Paajarvi, a 49-year-old high school teacher in Kiruna, objected to seeing northern

Swedes described as "brutal and quiet". "It looks like they wanted to create a stereotype," he told AFP. Marakatt said the show's well-intentioned screenwriters "have done too much in terms of pedagogy and explanations" - perhaps as a nod to the foreign audience of "Midnight Sun".

The series is a coproduction of Sweden's public broadcaster SVT and France's Canal Plus, and airing in both countries, while broadcast rights have been sold for several other countries. But many Sami also take pride in coming in from the cold in Swedish popular culture. "There is a real

pride in the Sami who for the first time find themselves at the center of a super-production," said Marakatt.

And for reindeer herder Margret Fjellstrom, critics should recall a key fact: "It's fiction". "They deliver a clear message that Sapmi (Lapland in the Sami language) has been exploited for hundreds of years while it really belongs to the Sami," she said. Fjellstrom dismissed worries the Sami would be typecast as vengeful bloodletters - a concern of some in the north, "no doubt, because of everything we have suffered". — AFP



(From left) Director Bjorn Stein, director Mans Marling, actress Leila Behkti and actor Gustaf Hammarsten pose during a presser for the new TV-series Midnatssol (Midnight Sun) in Stockholm on Sept 27, 2016. — AFP

CRASH VICTIM HOLMLUND IN COMA AFTER SURGERY

STOCKHOLM: Swedish ski cross champion Anna Holmlund has been put in a medically induced coma after sustaining a head injury during training, Sweden's ski cross federation reported yesterday. The 2014 Olympic bronze medallist suffered from bleeding in the brain after a crash before this week's World Cup competition in Innichen in northern Italy. The two-time World Cup winner was unconscious when paramedics air-lifted her by helicopter to a hospital in Bolzano where she underwent surgery. "It is not possible to speak about the future developments as the situation is still unstable," the Swedish Ski Federation said in a statement on Monday. The federation's ski cross director Joar Batelson told AFP on Tuesday that the 29-year-old was still in a worrying condition. But he said that although Holmlund is still unconscious, her condition has become more stable overnight since the accident. "She is sedated so her body can rest," Batelson told AFP. Holmlund is placed second in the overall World Cup standings behind Canada's Marielle Thompson. — AFP



FOOTBALL LEAKS' PROMPTS FRENCH TAX FRAUD PROBE

PARIS: French authorities have opened a preliminary inquiry into tax fraud and money laundering in the wake of the 'Football Leaks' revelations, the national financial prosecutor's office announced yesterday. "Football Leaks" is the investigation led by 12 European media organisations aimed at exposing the sport's darker side, with the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo and Jose Mourinho both accused of tax evasion in recent weeks — charges the pair deny. "Following the publication...of a series of press articles regarding 'Football Leaks', the national financial prosecutor's office decided to open...a preliminary investigation into the charge of laundering of aggravated tax fraud, facts likely to relate to French tax residents," read a statement. The wide-ranging probe of financial documents also claimed Paris Saint-Germain duo Angel Di Maria and Javier Pastore funnelled parts of their income through tax havens, while accusing Manchester United and France star Paul Pogba of stashing away money in the Channel Islands, at the request of his agent Mino Raiola. — AFP

PARALYSED JOCKEY LEAVES HOSPITAL

LONDON: German jockey Freddy Tylicki, paralysed in a horrific four horse pile-up almost two months ago, left hospital yesterday. The 30-year-old, who is based in England and had two Group One wins in a breakthrough season in 2016, tweeted it was a red letter day for him. "I've been waiting on this day for a long time and it's finally come #nextchapter #keepfighting," tweeted Tylicki, who will now undergo rehabilitation at a spinal unit in London. Tylicki also thanked his family and the racing community who spurred on by racing journalist Matt Chapman — raised over £330,000 (\$407,000, 392,000 euros) to help him. Tylicki, son of a three-time German champion jockey, admitted in mid-November he was struggling to come to terms with the fact he was paralysed from the waist down. "Struggling and fighting!!!! (with a gloomy faced icon) Thank you every single one for all the support! Here is to a long road in front of me! Much love everyone! (heart icon)." Tylicki suffered his life changing injury at the end of October at Kempton Park, southwest of London. — AFP



MY DREAM IS TO WIN AN OLYMPIC MEDAL: AFRAH

By Abdellatif Al-Sharaa

KUWAIT: In an interview with Kuwait Times, Afrah Adel bin Hussein spoke about the challenges she faces as a shotgun shooter. Afrah is an accomplished shotgun shooter, who started at a young age. She belongs to a family who loves this sport. Her brother Mohammad is also an accomplished shooter in the 50-meter rifle category and her mother is a well-established referee at the shooting club. Afrah tried many sports before settling as a shotgun shooter.

Some excerpts:

Kuwait Times: Why, in your opinion, is shooting the most successful sport in Kuwait?

Afrah: There are three reasons - firstly, shotgun shooters are Olympic champions and have proved their competence in international arenas; secondly, the technical management and ranges are of high standard and we may not find something like it in the Middle East; the

third and most important reason is that the honorable President of KSSC Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah has worked hard to make this possible. We also cannot forget HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's support for athletes.

KT: How did Kuwait make it to the top in Asia and the world?

Afrah: As a shooter among Olympic and world champions, I was instilled with the spirit of challenge and competition from an early age. Olympians Fuhaid Al-Deehani and Abdullah Al-Rashidi, have been pillars of inspiration to reach the world level with determination, patience and training.

KT: Has the suspension of Kuwaiti sports activities affected you?

Afrah: Of course, I was affected like all other athletes, morally as well as psychologically. I hope this nightmare ends and Kuwait's ath-

letes return to international arenas once again, as there is nothing sadder than seeing our champions deprived of hoisting Kuwait's flag at international events.

KT: How and why did you choose this sport?

Afrah: I started from the third division of the national team, then with firm training, I became a member of the first team, which made me realize that shooting is an important part of my life, and I chose it because it was said to be a difficult sport for women, and this challenged me to create a distinguished name in this sport. My ambition increases day by day. My parents supported and encouraged me to continue, and go ahead and reach new levels. I am part of a family that loves shooting as a sport. My mother, being an international shooting referee, is a major motivation for me and she has always supported me technically and morally.

KT: Does practicing sports impact school,

family or traditions, as it requires traveling to participate in tournaments?

Afrah: No, on the contrary, I feel practicing sports isn't against our society, as I was raised in a sports environment that encouraged me locally and abroad.

KT: Is your motivation to reach higher based on material incentives?

Afrah: For sure, material elements are very important and are considered a motivation for an athlete, and this is not only limited to shooters but athletes in general. But the moral motive is very important for an athlete, because psychological and mental comforts are the shortest roads towards success. I don't mind participating in tournaments that do not give financial rewards, because shooting for me is a joy, and my participation is not only for the sake of money.

KT: Will Kuwaiti women shooters win Olympic medals in the future?

Afrah: Definitely. Determination and hard work is important to win at the Olympics or any medals regardless of gender.

KT: What is your main goal?

Afrah: I want to win the world championships, and I am looking forward to participate in the Olympics and become the first Kuwaiti woman to win an Olympic medal. This is my dream and I hope to achieve it one day.

KT: Tell us about your best and worst experiences.

Afrah: The best was when I won the Sixth Asian Shooting Tournament 2016 that was held in Abu Dhabi, and became the Asian champion. I have also won Arab, Gulf and Kuwait championships. I have faced no bad experiences yet.

Afrah gave special thanks to Sheikh Salman, the godfather of shooting in Kuwait, who has worked on developing the sport and taking it to the top levels globally.

FIVE SPORTS SCANDALS TO WATCH IN 2017

PARIS: Doping, financial and sexual abuse scandals have increasingly shamed sport in the past 12 months. Here are five scandals to look out for in 2017:

RUSSIA DOPING

Barely a week goes by without new cases of doping in Russian sport even as the country battles to get back into international athletics in time for the 2017 world championships in London. The International Association of Athletics Federations has already extended its suspension of Russian competitors until at least February. World Anti-Doping Agency chief Craig Reedie told AFP in November that Russia is "quite a long way off" being compliant with international doping statutes. Russia has passed a new law making doping a criminal offence, but it has strongly denied accusations in the McLaren report of state-run doping. International experts say the country is in denial, that they are still not getting enough cooperation and that cities closed to foreigners are a doping black hole. After more than 110 Russians were banned from the Rio Olympics in August, the International Olympic Committee opened two investigations into Russian sport, including one on doping at the Sochi and London Olympics. Russian weightlifting has also been badly hit and Russia has lost the world bobsled championships because of the scandal.

FOOTBALL CORRUPTION

Football's world governing body has had a mass clearout since Swiss investigators detained seven FIFA officials at their Zurich hotel in May 2015. US prosecutors have not given up their campaign however and eight key figures in the case will face trials in New York on November 6, unless talks about possible guilty pleas succeed. Former FIFA vice president Jeffrey Webb, who has pleaded guilty to racketeering conspiracy, wire fraud and money laundering could be sentenced in May. Two other former FIFA vice presidents, Jack Warner and Nicolas Leoz, could be extradited to the United States in 2017. Forty-one individuals and companies have been charged by US authorities over more than \$200 million in bribes. Separately, US and Swiss prosecutors are looking into the award of the 2018 and 2022 World Cups to Russia and Qatar respectively as well as the activities of former FIFA boss Sepp Blatter.

CYCLING POWER CHEATS

In April 2016, Femke Van den Driessche, a former European youth cyclocross champion from Belgium, became the first person to be banned for using a hidden electric motor. She may not be the last. Thomas Voeckler, a former holder of the Tour de France leader's yellow jersey, said he was "convinced" that the motors have been used by professionals but added that it should be easier to detect than doping. Infrared cameras were used on this year's Tour. American former champion Greg LeMond has said that all doubts must be ended and suspicions have been cast in the direction of several teams.

FOOTBALL ABUSE

British police are investigating hundreds of historical cases of sexual abuse of young footballers by coaches and some top clubs have been implicated. London police said they have more than 100 allegations of abuse at 30 clubs including four now in the Premier League. Scottish police added 109 cases. Former Crewe Alexandra player Andy Woodward opened the floodgates by telling about abuse he suffered at the club's academy 25 years ago. Since then it has been revealed that Chelsea paid a player to stay silent about abuse and that an accused youth coach at Crewe had also worked at Manchester City. Southampton have also been drawn into the scandal, which English FA chairman Greg Clarke has called the "biggest" crisis he can recall in football.

WEIGHTLIFTING'S DOPING STRAIN

Weightlifting, one of the most popular Olympics spectacles, accounted for 48 of the 104 positive tests detected in new analyses on samples from the 2008 Beijing Games and London 2012. The shaming of Kazakhstan's Ilya Ilyin, who won a gold medal at each Games, highlighted the crisis facing the sport which WADA diplomatically considers "high risk". Even the International Weightlifting Federation said that Russia's and Bulgaria's multiple doping failures were "shocking" before banning them from the Rio Olympics in August. IWF president Tamas Ajan said in Rio that Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus would be banned for a year because of their high number of doping failures. No official announcement has been made yet however. China could also be at risk from a motion passed by the IWF this year calling for a ban for any country that has three or more failures from the new tests on London and Beijing samples. — AFP



ZAIN AWARDS WINNERS OF GULFRUN KARTING RACE

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, awarded the winners of GulfRun Karting Endurance Race - 24 hours category. The awarding came as part of Zain's strategic partnership of the 12th edition of GulfRun, the region's most anticipated motorsport activity.

Zain's support of this exciting event over the years stems from the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards the youth and sports sectors. The event is organized by a group of Kuwaiti youth, and has received overwhelming feedback during the past years.

GulfRun involved a Karting Endurance Race, which was held at Kuwait's SIRBB

Circuit over a continuous period of 24 hours. The activity witnessed tremendous success, gathering many enthusiasts of this sport alongside the public. Zain awarded CER Karting/Burgan Agri Co. for winning the first place title, as well as awarding the winners of the second and third place titles.

GulfRun kick-started last weekend, and will continue until February 2017, involving several thrilling activities taking place in Kuwait and Bahrain. Alongside the Karting Endurance Race, the event will also include an exciting car show at 360 Mall, where participants will be showcasing their exquisite high-speed sports cars to thrill seeking individuals. Following the car show event, participants will be flying over

to the Kingdom of Bahrain to take part in several training procedures in preparation for the final race at the Bahrain International Circuit. Participants will be able to gain valuable insights with the help of qualified trainers and professional instructors who have a long-track of motorsport experience.

It is worth mentioning that GulfRun is an annual motorsport event which was established in 2005 by a group of Kuwaiti youth who are simply passionate about automobile racing. The event extinguishes itself from any other motorsport activity by promoting a safe and secure environment to race and train, as well as spreading awareness to limit street accidents.

RYAN SAYS FIJI SEVENS SHOULD SPLIT FROM FRU

WELLINGTON: Former Fiji sevens coach Ben Ryan yesterday said the team he led to Olympic glory should split from the Fiji Rugby Union (FRU) to ensure they are properly managed.

Ryan said players in the world champion team that won gold when rugby sevens made its Olympic debut in Rio were currently off-contract and only being paid a modest per diem allowance

for their services. The Englishman, who left his post after the Games, questioned the FRU's handling of the team. "What does alarm me is we have one of the most marketable, iconic sports teams they won back-to-back World Series titles, (they are) Olympic gold medallists," he told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"If we can't market them properly and

get their value and what they're worth so the boys and the programme can get the money and resources that they need, then I think it's time for us to look at the whole system."

He suggested Fiji sevens should become a commercial entity separate from the FRU. "It would be run commercially, transparently and for the first time you would get proper funding coming in

without any worries around governance, having to pay off debt from various other things," he said. "If the government actually pushed this, if they decided we'd be better off having an independent commercial franchise, backed by World Rugby and the government and the FRU, it would be a hugely popular decision." It is not the first time Ryan has criticised the FRU for not paying its players

adequately, prompting the organisation to hit back in a statement earlier this month. "It seems it is difficult for him to move on," the FRU said, expressing disappointment at his "constant remarks" about the team.

Sevens is Fiji's national sport and the team were given a rapturous reception after winning the Pacific nation's first ever Olympic medal in Rio. — AFP

HEROES AND ZEROS OF 2016

PARIS: AFP Sport looks back at a selection of 'heroes' and 'zeros' from 2016:

HEROES LEICESTER CITY

Claudio Ranieri's Leicester City pulled off one of the greatest shocks in English football history by defying title odds of 5,000-1 to lift the Premier League trophy. Having miraculously avoided relegation the previous season, the Foxes rode that wave of momentum all the way to a fairytale triumph. Their rags-to-riches revival was epitomised by the rise to prominence of former non-league striker Jamie Vardy whose 24 goals was second only to England teammate Harry Kane. Riyad Mahrez scooped the PFA Players' Player of the Year award, while N'Golo Kante and Wes Morgan joined them in the team of the year.

EDER

The Guinea-Bissau born striker emerged as Portugal's unlikely hero by firing the national team to a first major title with a 1-0 extra-time win over France in the Euro 2016 final. With just three goals in 28 appearances-all of them in friendlies-and only 13 minutes played en route to the final there was little to hint at Eder's heroics at the Stade de France. But an early injury to Cristiano Ronaldo forced a re-think and the 28-year-old was brought on towards the end of normal time. His 30-yard thunderbolt left Hugo Lloris grasping at thin air and Portugal hoisting aloft the Henri Delaunay trophy. "The ugly duckling went and scored. Now he's a beautiful swan," quipped Portugal coach Fernando Santos.

LUVU MANYONGA

The South African battled both rivals and addiction along his road to redemption which culminated with a silver medal in the long jump at the Rio Olympics. Manyonga burst onto the international stage with a fifth-place finish at the 2011 worlds in Daegu but descended into a drug-riddled "living hell" after growing hooked on crystal meth. He served an 18-month ban for a failed test in 2012 but eventually got clean after leaving behind his hometown of Mbekweni. He was denied gold by the slimmest of margins in Brazil, finishing one centimetre behind American Jeff Henderson, but still provided one of the most inspirational stories of the Games.

CHICAGO CUBS

Joe Maddon's team ended a 108-year wait by beating the Cleveland Indians in thrilling fashion to clinch the World Series. The Cubs romped through the regular season, winning over 100 games for the first time since 1935, but again appeared destined to succumb to the "Curse of the Billy Goat" after falling behind three games to one. However, Chicago rallied to level the best-of-seven contest and, ignited by Dexter Fowler's lead-off home run, raced into a 5-1 lead in the decider. The Indians hit back with Rajai Davis launching a two-run home run off flamethrower Aroldis Chapman to tie the scores before a brief rain delay added to the drama. But the Cubs weren't to be denied, winning 8-7 to snap the longest title drought in the game.



Simone Biles

SIMONE BILES

The American marked her first Olympic Games with a performance for the ages. Aged just 19, Biles won a record-equalling four gold medals in the team event, individual all-around, vault and floor exercise. A slip on the beam cost her a shot at a fifth title, eventually settling for bronze, but by then her status as the world's best female gymnast was in no doubt. Biles became the fifth woman to win four gold medals at the same Games after Hungarian Agnes Keleti (1956), Soviet Larissa Latynina (1956), Czech Vera Caslavská (1968) and Romanian Ecaterina Szabo (1984). "I'm not the next Usain Bolt or Michael Phelps," the Texas said. "I'm the first Simone Biles."

ALL BLACKS

New Zealand reinforced their billing as rugby union's preeminent force with an 18-match winning streak-a record for a tier-one nation. It started with a thumping win over the Wallabies in August 2015 and blossomed

into a historic run that included a third World Cup title-their trans-Tasman rivals again vanquished in the final-later that year. All Black greats Richie McCaw, Dan Carter and Ma'a Nonu bowed out of the international game but Steve Hansen's side didn't miss a beat in 2016. A 3-0 series win over Wales preceded a convincing



Maria Sharapova

Rugby Championship triumph that culminated with a 57-15 throttling of South Africa in Durban. New Zealand then beat Australia at Eden Park to make it a record 18 wins in a row before a first defeat to Ireland in Chicago halted their historic streak.

ZEROS MARIA SHARAPOVA

One of the golden girls of tennis, Sharapova's reputation suffered a damaging blow with news of a failed doping test at January's Australian Open. The Russian tested positive for the banned heart drug meldonium and was subsequently handed a two-year ban, later reduced to 15 months on appeal. Fellow professionals reacted with a mixture of criticism and support for the five-time Grand Slam champion, while sponsors were also divided by her transgression. Both racket manufacturer Head and sportswear giant Nike stood by Sharapova but others swiftly pulled the plug on their relationship. She is eligible to return in April 2017, but it won't be an easy road back with her every move set to be scrutinised intensely.

SAM ALLARDYCE

Landing the England manager's job should have represented the pinnacle of Allardyce's career, but just 67 days after his appointment he was unceremoniously axed following his controversial remarks in a newspaper sting. The 62-year-old was secretly filmed giving advice on how to circumvent transfer rules while also mocking predecessor Roy Hodgson. His reign was the shortest of any England manager by far and piled on further embarrassment after the Three Lions' shock defeat to Iceland at Euro 2016. "Entrapment has won on this occasion and I have to accept that," a resigned Allardyce told reporters outside his home in Bolton.

RYAN LOCHTE

The American added 4x200m freestyle gold to his list of honours in Brazil but an infamous 'robbery' scandal soon turned that achievement into a mere footnote. Lochte claimed he and three team-mates were mugged by robbers pretending to be police as they returned home from a night out in Rio. But police quickly denounced the bogus story with CCTV footage showing the group had vandalised a petrol station. Gunnar Bentz, Jimmy Feigen and Jack Conger were banned for four months, while swimwear manufacturer Speedo headlined a host of sponsors to sever ties with Lochte, who was handed a 10-month ban. The 32-year-old was also charged with filing a false robbery report-a crime punishable by up to six months in prison.

NICK KYRGIOS

The talented but volatile Australian endured another turbulent year on tour which ended with an eight-week ban and fine for 'tanking' against Mischa Zverev at October's Shanghai Masters. Kyrgios agreed to consult a psychologist and his suspension was trimmed to three weeks, clearing him to return for the start of the 2017 season. The 21-year-old vowed to "use this time off to improve on and off the court" but only time will tell whether it's truly a case of lesson learned. He is the first player since John McEnroe in 1990 to be banned for poor on-court behaviour and also withdrew from Rio, along with compatriot Bernard Tomic, following a row with the Australian Olympic Committee.

TYSON FURY

The self-styled 'Gypsy King' was on top of the world after ending Wladimir Klitschko's long reign as heavyweight champion in late 2015, but a year on his reputation lies in tatters. Fury tested positive for cocaine while battling severe depression and twice cancelled planned rematches with Klitschko. He backtracked hours after claiming he was retired in a foul-mouthed Twitter rant and a turbulent 12 months was topped off with the suspension of his boxing licence. Beyond his brash persona, Fury's fragilities were laid bare with his return to the sport looking remote. — AFP



PHILADELPHIA: Philadelphia Flyers' Andrew MacDonald (47) is sent flying after a hit from Nashville Predators' Colton Sissons (10) during the third period of an NHL hockey game, Monday, in Philadelphia. Nashville won 2-1 in a shootout. — AP

AFTER MAROON'S EMOTIONAL EQUALIZER, OILERS BEAT BLUES

ST LOUIS: Ryan Nugent-Hopkins scored 2:55 into overtime to lift the Edmonton Oilers over the St. Louis Blues 3-2 on Monday night. Nugent-Hopkins scored on a wrist shot after getting a pass from Connor McDavid. Nugent-Hopkins' winner followed a tying third-period goal by Patrick Maroon, a St. Louis native. He made it 2-2 with a goal 5:47 into the third. Cam Talbot turned away 25 shots for Edmonton. Kyle Brodziak and Vladimir Tarasenko scored for St. Louis and Carter Hutton made 32 saves.

PREDATORS 2, FLYERS 1, SO

Filip Forsberg got the tying goal midway through the third period and Ryan Ellis had the only score in the shootout to help Nashville give Philadelphia its second straight loss. The Flyers had won 10 straight before losing to the Dallas Stars on Saturday. Nashville got its first win in extra time and Ellis his first successful shootout conversion this season. The Predators were 0-5 in overtime and shootouts. Nashville's Pekka Rinne stopped 31 shots, plus all three in the shootout. Steve Mason had 30 saves for Philadelphia. Defenseman Andrew MacDonald scored for the Flyers midway through the first period.

DUCKS 3, MAPLE LEAFS 2

Cam Fowler scored a power-play goal in the third period, giving Anaheim coach Randy Carlyle a victory in his return to Toronto. Carlyle was at Air Canada Centre for the first time since he was dismissed as Leafs coach almost two years ago. Anaheim had a pair of power-play goals, including Fowler's go-ahead score. Ryan Getzlaf had the other man-up tally and Nick Ritchie also scored for the Ducks. John Gibson made 33 saves. Former Ducks goaltender Frederik Andersen made 25 stops for the Leafs. Auston Matthews got his ninth goal in 12 games, and Nazem Kadri scored his 11th of the season.

FLAMES 4, COYOTES 2

Kris Versteeg put Calgary ahead with its third power-play goal of the game in the third period to beat Arizona. Versteeg and Troy Brouwer had a goal and assist each for Calgary, which had lost its last two games but has at least one power-play goal in its past eight contests. T.J. Brodie put in an empty-net goal with a minute to play to complete the scoring. Mikael Backlund also scored and Matthew Tkachuk added two assists for Calgary. Christian Dvorak and Ryan White scored for Arizona, and Mike Smith had 25 saves.

RED WINGS-HURRICANES POSTPONED

The scheduled game between Carolina and Detroit was postponed because of unplayable ice. A leak in the cooling system at PNC Arena was discovered earlier in the day. The issue was fixed but not in time to restart the game. NHL rules state a game cannot start less than 22 hours before a team's next scheduled contest and the Red Wings are set to play at Tampa Bay at 7:30 p.m. yesterday night. Carolina announced a delay on Twitter about 15 minutes before the scheduled start time of 7 pm, then publicized the postponement around 8:45 pm. Hurricanes President Don Waddell said a makeup date would probably be decided today. — AP

NHL Results/Standings

Calgary 4, Arizona 2; Edmonton 3, St. Louis 2 (OT); Anaheim 3, Toronto 2; Nashville 2, Philadelphia 1 (SO).

Western Conference						Central Division						Metropolitan Division								
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS			
Chicago	22	8	4	98	80	48	Ottawa	18	11	3	82	85	39	Pittsburgh	20	7	5	109	90	45
Minnesota	18	8	4	89	60	40	Boston	17	13	3	78	79	37	Columbus	20	5	4	98	61	44
St. Louis	17	11	5	93	96	39	Tampa Bay	15	14	3	91	91	33	Philadelphia	19	11	4	107	102	42
Nashville	14	12	5	89	89	33	Florida	14	13	5	77	87	33	Washington	19	8	3	81	66	41
Winnipeg	15	16	3	90	100	33	Detroit	14	14	4	78	89	32	Carolina	13	11	7	82	87	33
Dallas	13	14	6	84	101	32	Buffalo	12	11	7	66	79	31	New Jersey	12	12	7	74	93	31
Colorado	11	18	1	65	97	23	Toronto	12	12	7	87	94	31	NY Islanders	11	14	6	81	99	28
Pacific Division						Atlantic Division						Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L)								
San Jose	19	12	1	80	72	39	Montreal	20	7	4	96	69	44							
Anaheim	17	11	5	94	92	39														
Edmonton	17	12	5	100	92	39														
Calgary	17	15	2	89	98	36														
Los Angeles	16	13	2	79	78	34														
Vancouver	13	16	3	80	100	29														
Arizona	11	16	5	72	101	27														

EDDIE JONES WOULD HAVE BEEN WORTH WAITING FOR: RFU BOSS

LONDON: Eddie Jones would have become England coach even if he had insisted on seeing out the first year of his contract with The Stormers, Rugby Football Union chief executive Ian Ritchie told The Times.

Ritchie, whose own position was in some doubt after England's disastrous first round exit at the 2015 World Cup they hosted, admits he knew Jones would bring a 'certain amount of arrogance', a very different trait to his down to earth predecessor Stuart Lancaster.

That allied to Australian Jones's sublime coaching and motivational skills has proven a triumphant combination as England have gone through 2016 winning all 13 Tests-including the Six Nations Grand Slam and a historic 3-0 series win in Australia.

Ritchie admits however, he and the RFU were prepared to wait for their man had 56-year-old Jones and South African Super Rugby franchise the Stormers insisted on him staying for at least a season. As a fallback option they would have installed Lancaster's assistants, Andy Farrell, Mike Catt and Graham Rowntree as caretaker coaches. "If it had been absolutely impossible and we couldn't have done it, we would still have gone for the longer-term option and had some sort of holding operation," said Ritchie of the alternative of the troika staying on. "That was always a possibility. That's what we would have done," added Ritchie, formerly chief executive of the All England Club responsible for running Wimbledon, Ritchie thought at first on landing in Cape Town last November he had no chance of securing Jones's signature simply because of the breathtaking scenery.

Jones, who had boosted his stature with his handling of Japan at the World Cup where they had pulled off one of the great sporting upsets in defeating two-time

world champions South Africa, proved more malleable than he had feared. "The two of us sat in that hotel room for four hours just talking through everything," said Ritchie, who took on his present role in 2011.

"People say the first few minutes of any discussion, you get an idea of whether you can work with someone or not-and the next few hours confirmed that (I could). "It was clear he was interested in the job. It wasn't as if I was trying to persuade someone who was rampantly unwilling to do it."

Jones, who guided Australia to the 2003 World Cup final on home turf only for England legend Jonny Wilkinson to dash his hopes with a winning drop goal in the dying seconds of extra-time, even accepted his two recommendations of central contracts and selecting players playing abroad were not going to be the RFU's policy.

However, despite his ceding on those Ritchie admits Jones is 'no shrinking violet'. "That is part of the deal," said Ritchie. "It was very clear: Eddie is no shrinking violet and nor was he ever going to be. You want talented, committed people who have views of their own." — AFP



Eddie Jones

BANGLADESH NAME THREE ODI NEWCOMERS FOR FIRST NZ GAME

DHAKA: Bangladesh yesterday included three newcomers to the one-day international team in their squad for the first ODI against New Zealand on December 26.

Leg-spinning all-rounder Tanveer Haider joined paceman Subashis Roy and off-spinner Mehedi Hasan in the 15-man squad for the game in Christchurch, the first of three.

Mehedi and Subashis have played Tests for Bangladesh but have yet to make their debut in ODIs. Mehedi starred for Bangladesh in the Test series against England in October when he picked up 19 wickets in two matches, including 12 wickets in the second Test in Dhaka which Bangladesh won by 108 runs.

It was Bangladesh's first Test win against a full-strength major opponent and their eighth overall in the game's longest form.

"We have kept the backbone of a settled squad that has been very successful over the last two years," chief selector Minhajul Abedin told reporters.

"But at the same time it is also important to get players in who we believe have plenty of potential to perform at the highest level."

Bangladesh also included ace paceman Mustafizur Rahman, who has not played since undergoing surgery on his shoulder in August. He will be given a chance to prove his fitness during a limited-overs warm up match against a New Zealand XI in Whangarei today.

"If he can bowl at least seven overs we will include him in the starting line-up for the first ODI," Abedin said. Bangladesh will play three ODIs, three Twenty20 internationals and two Tests against New Zealand in their first overseas bilateral series for two years.

Squad: Mashrafe Mortaza (capt), Tamim Iqbal, Imrul Kayes, Soumya Sarkar, Sabbir Rahaman, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah, Shakib Al Hasan, Mosaddek Hossain, Rubel Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Mehedi Hasan, Subashis Roy and Tanveer Haider. — AFP

COOK YET TO DECIDE ON ENGLAND FUTURE

CHENNAI: England captain Alastair Cook has not made any decision on whether to continue in the job, the 31-year-old said after his team's 4-0 series loss against India yesterday. Cook landed in India with speculation about the position he has held since 2012 and the crushing defeat in India will only strengthen calls for him to hand over the test captaincy to Joe Root.

"This is not the place to be asking me these questions," Cook told Sky Sports after his team lost the fifth and final test by an innings and 75 runs in Chennai.

"I have got to go away and do some thinking, get back home and do it without the emotive side of what's happened over the last nine weeks," he said after the defeat which pushed England down from second to fifth in the world rankings.

England's loss was all the more frustrating for Cook as the tourists won the toss in

four of the five tests and were not made to play on the spin-friendly pitches which India rolled out to South Africa last year.

"It's been a series of missed opportunities, in terms of catches that cost us," Cook said. "Not being able to score enough runs and take enough wickets, it's a tough dressing-room to be in. We tried as hard as we can but it wasn't good enough."

England's sloppy fielding allowed Karun Nair to hit a marathon 303 not out which set the tone for India's comprehensive victory in the final test.

"It was a game of missed opportunities. We kept dropping vital chances and India kept punishing us."

"Credit to (India captain) Virat (Kohli), they've outplayed us. It's a hard thing to say as a professional because you always think you are better than the opposition but we haven't been so here." — Reuters

AECK AND KEA TEAMS ENTER FINAL WITH EMPHATIC WINS

KUWAIT: The semifinals of the 19th Prof Ramachandran Memorial Cricket Tournament (RMC) conducted by College of Engineering Trivandrum Alumni Association (CETAA) and sponsored by GTE Olayan Co was held at the beautiful Boulevard Cricket stadium at Salmiya on 16th Dec. KEA and AECK won convincingly showing why they are regarded as the top two teams of the competition and set up a repeat of last year's final.

In the first semifinal, KEA winning the toss put TEC into bat. The conditions under lights at the new venue were unpredictable and TEC were soon in trouble losing skipper Suresh and the experienced Dinto for "ducks," both falling LBW with just 3 on board. Brothers Ramesh and Girish dug in but were finding it difficult to adjust and keep the scoreboard moving. At the end of 6 overs the score was only 18 amidst the anxious faces in the TEC dug out. Sunil who joined Ramesh at the fall of Girish in the 9th over brought some cheer with confident stroke play but was run out in the end overs melee. Ramesh (17) was the only one to reach double figures and TEC managed to reach a fighting total of 61 for the loss of 6 wickets in their 15 overs with the aid of 22 extras. Nasif (2 for 6), Arjun and Syam with a wicket each helped KEA to keep TEC to manageable propositions. In reply, KEA was rocked early losing Nithin for a duck. Ajin and Govind steadied the innings without taking undue risks. When Ajin was out for 13 in the 7th over, it was still anybody's game. But thereafter Govind (26 no - Man of the Match) took charge and with good support from Tibish took KEA to a convincing 8 wicket victory with more than 30 overs to spare. Govind was particularly impressive with his calm composure and his ability to put away the loose balls. Dinto and Sandeep took a wicket each but TEC's inability to get rid of Govind proved crucial. In the second semifinal against TKM, asked to bat first AECK kept a steady run rate even though they lost 3 wickets by the 4th over. Even though none of their prolific batsmen could play a substantial innings, useful contributions from Nithin (13), Mahesh (11), Nimish (10) aided by the liberal dose of extras from TKM (24) enabled AECK to reach a formidable 87 for the loss of 9 wickets in their 15 overs. For TKM, Sreekumar who removed both the openers was particularly impressive with his prodigious swing bowling. Ajmal (2), Faizal,

Javed, Shabeer (1 wicket) supported Sreekar but extras proved their undoing.

Chasing a daunting task, TKM opened with their star batsman Anfar who lead from the front in his usual robust style in an attempt to keep up with the required rate. And when AECK dropped him twice of mishit skiers, the match seemed destined for an exciting finish. But none of the other batsmen could give Anfar (25) the required support and his fall in the 10 over clean bowled by Shameer (Man of the Match) effectively ended the match as a contest. Nimish (3), Shameer, Munaz (2 each) and Rinaz (1 wicket) withstood the onslaught by Anfar and AECK won by 24 runs in the 15th over.

Gyanendra Singh, Sports Executive, Boulevard and Arun Davidson, GC designate were the guests of honour while Mathew Philip, Ex-GC and Mohanachandran, Chairman, RMC gave away the "Man of the Match" awards.



Mathew Philip, Ex GC, handing the man of the match award to Govind (KEA).



CHENNAI: Indian cricketers celebrate winning the fifth and final Test cricket match between India and England at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai yesterday. — AFP

JADEJA STARS AS INDIA THRASH ENGLAND 4-0

CHENNAI: Ravindra Jadeja claimed seven wickets as India thrashed England by an innings and 75 runs in the fifth and final Test in Chennai yesterday to win the series 4-0. The left-arm spinner ended with career-best figures of 7-48 to skittle out England for 207 in their second innings in the final session of play as the tourists were unable to hold on for a draw.

England, who rode on a 103-run opening stand between Alastair Cook and Keaton Jennings, lost six of their batsmen for 15 runs in the evening to capitulate against an inspired Indian attack.

"We got ourselves into a good position at lunch but we weren't good enough to bat the rest of the innings out," a despondent Cook said afterwards. "Credit to (India captain) Virat (Kohli). They've outplayed us. It's hard to say as a professional but they've been better."

"It's a tough dressing room to be in. We tried our best but it wasn't good enough," he added. Jennings, who scored a debut century in the fourth Test in Mumbai, top-scored with 54 as England's batting order crumbled under the pressure of having to play out the day to save the match. The Indian players, who also defeated England with an innings to spare in Mumbai, erupted in celebration after Jadeja got number eleven Jake Ball for nought to finish a memorable series. Not only did India avenge their 2012 series loss to England at home but the hosts also won their first contest against Cook's side since 2011.

"I'm very, very proud. We were up against big totals and we ended up winning by an innings in both games. That's something that doesn't happen often in Test cricket," said Kohli.

NAIR'S TRIPLE CENTURY

Jadeja spun into action just after the lunch break to send the openers packing and he continued to wreak havoc on what seemed a flat pitch at Chennai's MA Chidambaram Stadium.

India's premier spinner Ravichandran Ashwin surprisingly went wicketless but ended as the series' highest wicket-taker with 28 scalps, above Jadeja (26). England's leading batsmen in Cook (49), Joe Root (6) and Ben Stokes (23) failed to hold on as they fell to the guile of Jadeja's left-arm spin. Indian batsman Karun Nair had put India on course to victory with his scintillating triple century on Monday.

Nair's unbeaten 303 saw the hosts declare their first innings on a record 759-7 — their highest-ever Test total to amass a 282-run lead.

Nair, 25, was playing in just the third Test

SCOREBOARD

CHENNAI, India: Final scoreboard of the fifth Test between India and England in Chennai yesterday.

England 1st innings 477 (M. Ali 146, J. Root 88; R. Ashwin 3-106)	A. Rashid c Jadeja b Yadav	2
India 1st innings 759-7 dec (K. Nair 303 not out, L. Rahul 199; S. Broad 2-80, L. Dawson 2-129)	S. Broad c Pujara b Jadeja	1
England 2nd innings (overnight 12-0; A. Cook 3, K. Jennings 9)	J. Ball c Nair b Jadeja	0
A. Cook c Rahul b Jadeja	Extras (b12, lb8, w1)	21
K. Jennings c & b Jadeja	Total (all out; 88 overs)	207
J. Root lbw b Jadeja	Fall of wickets: 1-103 (Cook), 2-110 (Jennings), 3-126 (Root), 4-129 (Bairstow), 5-192 (Ali), 6-193 (Stokes), 7-196 (Dawson), 8-200 (Rashid), 9-207 (Broad), 10-207 (Ball).	
M. Ali c Ashwin b Jadeja	Bowling: I. Sharma 10-2-17-1, R. Ashwin 25-6-56-0, R. Jadeja 25-5-48-7, U. Yadav 14-1-36-1 (1w), A. Mishra 14-4-30-1.	
J. Bairstow c Jadeja b Sharma	Result: India won by an innings and 75 runs	
B. Stokes c Nair b Jadeja	Series: India won the five-match series 4-0	
J. Buttler not out		
L. Dawson b Mishra		

match of his career. He recorded his maiden century in the morning session before expertly converting it into a double and then a triple in the evening. He became only the third batsman to convert a maiden Test hundred into a triple century, joining the elite company of West Indies' Garry Sobers (365 not out) and Australia's Bob Simpson. Kohli ended the series as the high-

est run getter with 655, including a double century of 235, his Test best, in Mumbai.

Cook's side started the series with a draw in Rajkot but lost four games on the trot.

England now head home for a Christmas break before returning for a limited-overs series. The first of three one-day internationals is scheduled for January 15 in Pune. — AFP



CHENNAI: Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli, left, and teammate Ravindra Jadeja, right, celebrates after winning the Test series against England. — AP

AUSTRALIA HEAD TO MELBOURNE WINNERS BUT NOT GRINNERS

MELBOURNE: Australia head to Melbourne for the Boxing Day test against Pakistan with some festive cheer after winning the series opener in Brisbane but Steve Smith's side will not find many Christmas presents under the tree from local media.

Pundits described Australia's 39-run win in the first day-night test held at the Gabba as one of the most gripping matches of the year. However, they could conjure only faint praise for the home side after they set Pakistan a mammoth 490-run chase and very nearly let them get there on day five.

"Australia will take a one-nil series lead to Melbourne, but it was Pakistan who skipped off the Gabba like win-

ners," cricket writer Malcolm Knox penned for Fairfax media.

"For Australia to skim home with a 39-run margin, after leading by nearly 300 on the first innings, suggests a litany of blunders."

After losing five tests in succession in Sri Lanka and at home to South Africa, Australia have hit back to win their last two with a new-look side energised by two of their three rookie batsmen. Smith, however, is under no illusions about his team's growing pains. "It showed we're still not the finished product," he told reporters.

CAUTION CRITICIZED

"We've got to continue to work hard, and keep the foot on the throat

when we've got (opponents) in that position, and be ruthless.

The comments seemed ironic when weighed against Smith's waiving of the right to enforce the follow-on after Pakistan were skittled for 142 in their first innings, 287 runs short of Australia's total. His cautious field settings on day five, with Pakistan still needing 108 runs for victory with only two wickets in hand, were queried by former captains Michael Clarke and Mark Taylor and slammed as "ridiculous" by ex-England skipper Michael Vaughan.

Smith's faith in his front-line seamers was ultimately rewarded when Mitchell Starc broke through to remove centurion Asad Shafiq

with a perfectly pitched bouncer. But it exacted a heavy physical toll that could have repercussions for the next match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Workhorse Josh Hazlewood bowled 42 overs in the second innings alone, with Starc, still yet to reach peak form after an injury lay-off in the leadup to the home summer, bowling 38.

Along with fellow paceman Jackson Bird and spinner Nathan Lyon, the pair were spared only three overs' work during a hot and humid five days at the Gabba, with part-time slow bowler Nic Maddinson the only non-specialist thrown the ball.

Australia's selectors said they

would stick with the same 12 for the Melbourne test but then determined that the bowlers would be assessed and reinforcements might yet be called in. Bowling coach David Saker added to the air of uncertainty by lamenting Australia's lack of an all-rounder to help take up the bowling slack after Mitchell Marsh was jettisoned during the South Africa series for his failure to perform with the bat. "We have to work with what we've got," Saker told state radio. "There's been successful teams around the world that have worked with four bowlers, but again you would like one of your top-six batters to be one of your bowlers, but that's what we have to work with." — Reuters

CEFERIN WARNS CROATIA ON 'DRASTIC SANCTIONS'

ZAGREB: UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin yesterday warned Croatia it risked drastic sanctions for hooliganism which he labelled a key problem.

"Unfortunately, Croatian football is not known only by excellent players but also by certain problems that need to be solved," Ceferin told reporters in Zagreb.

"One is the problem with fans, incidents, which might result in drastic sanctions," he said. Ceferin, who took over the UEFA helm in September, was speaking after meeting head of the Croatian Football Federation (HNS) Davor Suker

and Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic.

"I warned both prime minister and Davor that ... there is a serious possibility for the toughest sanctions," he said without elaborating.

Suker expressed hope that the state institutions, notably the judiciary and the interior ministry, would help the federation in the fight against fans' violence. "It is important that we get a fair and just law on hooligans," Suker said.

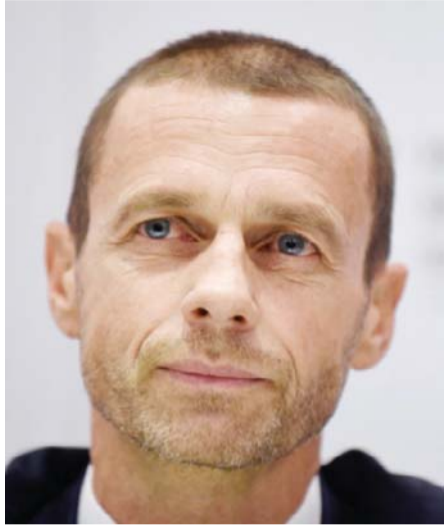
Ceferin said that Croatia's other problem was its poor football infrastructure. The country has had a series of FIFA and UEFA sanctions over unruly fans known for throwing flares at matches, chanting fascist slogans and displaying pro-Nazi symbols. Croatia were docked a point by UEFA after their fans painted a swastika on the pitch in Split ahead of their June 2015 qualifier with Italy.

Croatia's Euro 2016 match against the Czech Republic in France in June had to be suspended for a while over flare throwing. Hooliganism has increased in Croatia over the past four years since Suker, a former international striker, took over as HNS president.

Some fans believe Suker and the federation are too closely linked with controversial former Dinamo Zagreb boss Zdravko Mamic, a key figure in Croatian football. The fans accuse Mamic, indicted this year in a multi-million-euro corruption case, of unfairly profiting from football and have staged protests against the national team in response. — AFP



LANDOVER: Wide receiver Jamison Crowder #80 of the Washington Redskins fumbles the ball against cornerback James Bradberry #24 and free safety Tre Boston #33 of the Carolina Panthers in the fourth quarter at FedExField on Monday, in Landover, Maryland. — AFP



ZAGREB: UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin addresses a press conference at the headquarters of the Croatian Football Federation in Zagreb yesterday. — AFP

BRIEFS

KUWAIT DISABLED TEAM AIM TO WIN GCC CHAMPIONSHIP

ABU DHABI: Kuwait's National Disabled Team is aiming to win the title of the 8th GCC Wheelchair Basketball Championship, set to kick off later in Abu Dhabi. The Kuwaiti team is looking forward to win the tournament for the 8th time in a row, despite the fierce competition from other Gulf teams who seek to win their first title. Chairman of Kuwait Disabled Sports Club (KDSC) Shafi Al-Hajri told KUNA. The opening match between Kuwait and the UAE will be tough, he noted, expecting the winning team to achieve the championship's title. The Kuwaiti team went under a strict training camp for the event, hosting six friendly matches against the Egyptian team before heading to Turkey for further preparation, Al-Hajri said.

Neymar and Luis Suarez until 2021, Barca are desperate to keep hold of the five-time World Player of the Year, whose deal expires in 2018. "He's at home here...I believe Leo is fully convinced he's in the best place he can be," said Bartomeu. It's been a tumultuous year for Messi off the pitch though, with him and his father sentenced to 21 months in jail for tax fraud.

Shelvey banned for racial abuse

LONDON: England international midfielder Jonjo Shelvey has been banned for five games after he was found guilty of using racially abusive language by an independent panel yesterday. The 24-year-old who won the last of his six caps in 2015 — was also fined £100,000 (\$123,000, 118,000 euros) for abusing Moroccan midfielder Romain Saiss during his side Newcastle United's 2-0 defeat by Wolves in their second tier Championship clash in September. Shelvey, who has been instrumental in Newcastle's drive for an immediate return to the Premier League, was reported to the match referee by Saiss's team-mates but he strongly denies making any such remarks. "Jonjo Shelvey has been given a five-match suspension and £100,000 fine after an FA misconduct charge against him was found proven," read the FA statement.

Barca ready to make Messi best paid

BARCELONA: Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu indicated the Spanish champions are prepared to make Lionel Messi the world's highest-paid player to keep the Argentine superstar at the club. "Leo Messi is the best (player) in the history of football and we want him to stay with us," Bartomeu told reporters yesterday. "There will be negotiations...but even if I don't want to talk about figures, if he's the best player in the world it makes sense that he is so from all points of view." After extending the contracts of

REAL MADRID'S TRANSFER BAN CUT ON APPEAL AT CAS

LAUSANNE: Real Madrid's transfer ban was cut yesterday, allowing the club to sign new players sooner than expected.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport partially upheld Madrid's appeal against FIFA, keeping the team barred from registering new players only in the January trading period. But Madrid can now sign new players in the offseason transfer period starting in June. FIFA had imposed a one-year transfer ban in January. Its appeal panel confirmed the sanction to take effect for 2017.

Madrid must also pay FIFA a fine of 240,000 Swiss francs (\$233,000), reduced from 360,000 Swiss francs (\$350,000) by the single judge who heard the case.

"Considering that the infractions committed by Real Madrid were less serious and less numerous than argued by the FIFA judiciary bodies, the (judge) ruled that the sanctions imposed on Real Madrid had to be reduced," the court said in a statement.

Still, the club - which on Sunday added the Club World Cup trophy to its Champions League title - complained

about the verdict.

"The decision highlights the injustice of the original ban imposed by FIFA, although the club regrets that the CAS lacked the courage to revoke the ruling entirely," Madrid said in a statement.

The court gave an urgent ruling Tuesday and is expected to publish its full reasons in several weeks. Madrid denied wrongdoing in signing young players from outside Spain who played in games since 2005.

The case involved the sons of current coach Zinedine Zidane. Madrid's signings were registered by the Spanish soccer federation, which has repeatedly allowed clubs to break FIFA rules designed to prevent trafficking of minors. FIFA previously fined the federation 220,000 Swiss francs (\$214,000). Barcelona served a one-year signing embargo in 2015, and Atletico Madrid is currently appealing its one-year ban at CAS. Atletico has accepted not to sign players in January and has reached an agreement with CAS to reach a verdict by June. — AP



TUNIS: Henry Kasperczak, the Franco-Polish man in charge of selecting the Tunisian football team speaks to the journalists during a press conference in Tunis yesterday. Kasperczak unveiled an expanded list of 41 players for Tunisia in preparation for the CAN 2017. — AFP

NEWTON-LED PANTHERS ROLL PAST REDSKINS

WASHINGTON: Cam Newton passed for 300 yards and two touchdowns, Jonathan Stewart rushed for 132 yards and the Carolina Panthers defeated the Washington Redskins 26-15 Monday night at FedEx Field.

Newton completed 21 of 37 passes and tight end Greg Olsen had six catches for 85 yards for Carolina, which scored 10 points in the third quarter to go up by 14. Graham Gano kicked four field goals as the Panthers held on for its second straight win.

The loss leaves the Redskins (7-6-1) now on the outside looking in at the playoffs with two games remaining. Carolina (6-8) meanwhile, keeps its very slim playoff hopes alive.

Kirk Cousins passed for 316 yards on 32 of 47 passing with one interception. DeSean Jackson caught seven passes for 111 yards. The Redskins were held to 29 yards rushing.

The Panthers have won five straight versus Washington, which fell to 2-16 in Monday night games at FedEx Field.

Redskins cornerback Josh Norman played his first game against his former team, who let him leave after four seasons when they rescinded his franchise tag in the spring. Norman nearly had an interception when he broke up a third-quarter Newton pass in the end zone.

After Gano missed a 38-yard field-goal attempt with 5:37 left and Carolina up 23-12, Cousins and Jackson connected twice — once on an incomplete call that was reversed after a challenge — and Dustin Hopkins' 34-yard field goal pulled Washington within eight points with 3:44 remaining.

On the next possession, Stewart ripped off a 34-yard gain on first down and Gano's 41-yarder with 1:12 left sealed the win for the Panthers, who didn't have a turnover.

Washington's Will Blackmon fielded the second-half kickoff three yards deep and brought it out, but only to the 15. On the next play, Panthers defensive end Wes Horton hit Cousins, recovered the ensuing fumble and was brought down at the 1.

Newton hit Mike Tolbert and it was 20-3 while fans were still returning to their seats.

Gano's 23-yarder with 5:07 left in the third quarter increased the lead to 23-9.

Thanks in part to a 17-yard sideline catch by Jackson that was originally ruled incomplete before the Redskins challenged it, Washington drove to the Carolina 10. On the last play of the quarter, running back Rob Kelly lost two yards and tight end Jordan Reed was ejected for punching a Carolina player after the play.

Pushed back 15 yards, the Redskins ultimately settled for a field goal, cutting the deficit to 23-12 with 14:08 left.

The teams traded field goals early and Carolina took a 10-3 lead after going 84 yards in eight plays. Newton capped the drive when he found Ted Ginn, Jr. wide open in the end zone from 30 yards out with 1:50 remaining in the first quarter.

Three plays from scrimmage later, Carolina safety Kurt Coleman intercepted Cousins and returned it 27 yards to the Redskins 24. The Panthers drove inside the five, but settled for a 23-yard Gano field goal to make it 13-3 early in the second quarter.

A Newton penalty cost the Panthers a chance for three more. He slid after picking up a yard on third-and-9 at the Redskins 27, and Trent Murphy dove at Newton and appeared to hit his head. Murphy wasn't flagged, but Newton lobbed the ball at him and got a 15-yard taunting penalty that pushed Carolina out of field-goal range.

Cousins made the Panthers pay, leading a seven play, 89-yard drive. Kelly caught passes of 17 and 22 yards, then bulled in from the 5-yard line with 3:43 left in the second quarter. Dustin Hopkins missed the extra point and Washington trailed 13-9. — Reuters

NFL result/standings

Carolina 26, Washington 15.

American Football Conference							National Football Conference								
AFC East							NFC East								
	W	L	TOTL	PF	PA	PCT									
New England	12	2	0	0	365	233	.857	Dallas	12	2	0	0	366	258	.857
Miami	9	5	0	0	315	314	.643	NY Giants	10	4	0	0	272	250	.714
Buffalo	7	7	0	0	358	314	.500	Washington	7	6	1	0	345	343	.536
NY Jets	4	10	0	0	242	358	.286	Philadelphia	5	9	0	1	316	299	.357
AFC North							NFC North								
Pittsburgh	9	5	0	0	341	276	.643	Detroit	9	5	0	0	301	285	.643
Baltimore	8	6	0	0	306	263	.571	Green Bay	8	6	0	0	363	339	.571
Cincinnati	5	8	1	0	288	293	.393	Minnesota	7	7	0	1	264	259	.500
Cleveland	0	14	0	1	220	408	0	Chicago	3	11	0	0	248	320	.214
AFC South							NFC South								
Houston	8	6	0	0	250	294	.571	Atlanta	9	5	0	1	469	358	.643
Tennessee	8	6	0	0	340	323	.571	Tampa Bay	8	6	0	1	313	322	.571
Indianapolis	7	7	0	1	362	339	.500	New Orleans	6	8	0	0	406	392	.429
Jacksonville	2	12	0	0	260	359	.143	Carolina	6	8	0	0	337	352	.429
AFC West							NFC West								
Oakland	11	3	0	0	377	336	.786	Seattle	9	4	1	0	298	235	.679
Kansas City	10	4	0	0	319	274	.714	Arizona	5	8	1	0	340	325	.393
Denver	8	6	0	1	299	258	.571	Los Angeles	4	10	0	0	197	328	.286
San Diego	5	9	0	1	366	366	.357	San Francisco	1	13	0	1	264	434	.071

TEAM SKY CONFIDENT UKAD WILL FIND NO WRONGDOING

LONDON: Team Sky are co-operating fully with a UK Anti-Doping investigation into a package sent to Bradley Wiggins at the end of the 2011 Dauphine race and are "confident" no wrongdoing will be found, they said yesterday.

The British team issued a statement following boss Dave Brailsford's cross-examination by a Culture Media and Sport committee on Monday at which he revealed the "mystery" package contained the over-the-counter decongestant Fluimucil.

Earlier at the same hearing former coach Shane Sutton confirmed that the package had contained medicine although he did not know what it was. Sutton said it had been administered to Wiggins by team doctor Richard Freeman.

"Dave gave public evidence to the Select Committee yesterday for an hour as part of their inquiry into anti-doping," Team Sky said in a statement.

"As we have always said we believe what is most important is for UKAD to establish the truth independently. We are confident that when they report it will be clear that there has been no wrongdoing."

Team Sky and British Cycling have come under the spotlight in recent months with

UKAD launching an investigation into allegations of wrongdoing.

A Daily Mail story revealing that a package had been delivered by a British Cycling coach to Team Sky in 2011 followed shortly after cyber hackers accessed the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) database.

They released details of Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUEs) issued to Wiggins ahead of the 2011 and 2012 Tour de France and the 2013 Giro d'Italia.

Brailsford, who prides himself on Team Sky being the world's cleanest cycling team, admitted during the hearing that he had handled the situation regarding the package and Wiggins' TUEs badly but insisted there had been no intention to mislead.

He told MPs that an invoice "should be there" to document the shipment of Fluimucil - a drug that loosens mucus and which is not on WADA's prohibited list.

"There's always lessons to be learned and you start with yourself. I could have done a lot better quite frankly," Brailsford said on Monday.

"We have reviewed all our policies and how we use TUEs in the future and how do we gain and provide transparency while protecting competitive advantage." — Reuters



LONDON: A video grab from footage broadcast by the UK Parliament's Parliamentary Recording Unit (PRU) shows Team Sky director Dave Brailsford answering questions at a Commons select committee in London on Monday. Brailsford is one of six witnesses appearing before the Culture, Media and Sport select committee in Westminster today as part of its long-running inquiry into sport's fight against doping. — AFP

'OUTSIDERS' LEIPZIG PILE PRESSURE ON LEADERS BAYERN

BERLIN: RB Leipzig are playing on their role as underdogs to score some psychological points ahead of today's crunch Bundesliga clash against Bayern Munich.

"If we win, it would be a fairly big surprise. Anything other than a Bayern win would be a disappointment from a Munich point of view," Ralf Rangnick, Leipzig's sports director, told SID, an AFP subsidiary, yesterday.

"For us, this is a bonus game, which we go into as outsiders. We want to build on our good performances and perhaps get a scoop," Bayern host Leipzig at the Allianz Arena with the sides neck and neck on 36 points with the champions topping the table on goal difference.

Leipzig, only founded in 2009, had a stellar 2016, gaining second division promotion in May and going a record 13-match unbeaten at the start of their first season in Germany's top flight.

"From a sporting perspective, it was a dream year," said Rangnick. "Everyone in Germany, and also us in Leipzig, are of course surprised by this fantastic first half of the season."

Leipzig's success has come with a squad, with an average of 23, who were mostly unheard of before this season. They have nothing to lose in the club's first league match against star-studded Bayern, which has 15 internationals in their squad and seven World Cup winners from Spain and Germany.

"Any team which is forced onto the defensive by Bayern don't have a chance," said Rangnick.

"Our style of play is characterised by a high level of willingness to run, aggression and passion."

"But we have never played against a team whose individual players have such quality."

110 KILOMETRES

Bayern have a habit of signing up top talent from their rivals and club president Uli Hoeness has already suggested Leipzig's coach Ralph Hassenhuettl could be a future Munich manager, to follow on from Spain's Pep Guardiola and current incumbent Carlo Ancelotti from Italy.

"If we should ever look for a (native) German-speaking coach, he certainly is one of the three candidates to think about," Bayern president Uli Hoeness told Bild.

"It's going to be a while before Bayern get a German coach," Austrian-born Hassenhuettl observed drily.

On average, Leipzig have run four kilometres (2.5 miles) more than their opponents per league game and Hassenhuettl intends to make Bayern run for their lives.

"We want to make sure that Bayern have to do something and also that they have to cover 110 kilometres," he said, referring to the average distance covered in a Bundesliga game.

Rangnick acknowledges that while prestige and three points are at stake, the showdown will have little bearing on who lifts the title next May.

The 58-year-old has been here before. He was Hoffenheim coach in 2008/09 when the club were top midway through their first Bundesliga season, only to eventually finish seventh.

"If the example of Hoffenheim tells us something, it's that the title 'Autumn champions' (the name given to the table leaders in December) is won't have a chance," said Rangnick.

He also doubts Leipzig will make any new signings in the January transfer window. "There is no reason to change anything," he said. "From our side, it is not planned that we'll sign any new players in the winter break." — AFP



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Croatian defender Dejan Lovren (2R) vies in the air with Everton's English midfielder Ross Barkley during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Liverpool at Goodison Park in Liverpool, north west England on Monday. — AFP

	Liverpool	1
	Everton	0

LIVERPOOL: Sadio Mane's 94th minute tap-in ensured Jurgen Klopp enjoyed his first visit to Everton with a 1-0 win that saw his Liverpool team move into second in the Premier League on Monday.

A game with an abundance of passion and pride failed to deliver many goalmouth incidents and seemed more likely to be remembered for the failure of referee Mike Dean to send off Everton's Ross Barkley in the second half. The midfielder was shown only yellow for a violent stamp that struck Jordan Henderson above his ankle. But deep in injury time, Daniel Sturridge cut inside and saw his well-aimed shot strike the foot of the right-hand post, rebounding into the six-yard area where Mane reacted first and converted the game's only goal.

That dramatic goal allowed Liverpool to move to within six points of league leaders Chelsea, with Manchester City a further point back in third. Everton, with just one win in seven, are ninth.

"It's a wonderful feeling," purred Klopp to the

BBC. "Really, really good. It was a long, long stoppage time. We gave them no chances. We deserved to win."

His Everton counterpart Ronald Koeman, who was experiencing his first Merseyside derby, disagreed. "The substitutes of Liverpool had a big impact in the final result," Koeman told Sky Sports.

"We didn't keep the ball after the break so much. The team didn't deserve to lose the game." However, Koeman conceded Barkley was fortunate to stay on the pitch. "Barkley, maybe he was lucky. Maybe it's a red," said Koeman, who in his heyday as a player was renowned for his physicality.

Without a derby win in the last six years, and with just one victory from the last 19 fixtures with Liverpool, Everton had started the game in impressive and aggressive fashion but lost their way after the interval.

After 22 minutes, Barkley—the only native Merseysider on either side—pushed the ball wide to Aaron Lennon whose cross forced Ragnar Klavan into an important interception with Romelu Lukaku poised to connect at the far post. Then moments later, another Everton attack ended with Leighton Baines setting Barkley away for a 25-yard shot which passed within feet of the post.

EVERTON UNSETTLED

Everton were unsettled at the interval by the loss of the injured midfielder James McCarthy,

who according to Koeman has a hamstring injury and made way for veteran Gareth Barry, and Liverpool finally began to make an impression on proceedings.

On 50 minutes, the visitors carved out the best chance of the game with James Milner's long pass seeing Roberto Firmino shrug off Ramiro Funes Mori and advance clean through only for Maarten Stekelenburg to deny him with a brave block.

Lukaku eased the pressure, momentarily, when he headed just over while twisting, off-balance, to meet Barry's pass but it was only a brief respite as Mane exchanged passes with Firmino on 57 minutes and was denied by the combined efforts of Baines and Stekelenburg.

That incident proved costly for the Everton goalkeeper who could play on for only another seven minutes before being forced off with a leg injury, handing the gloves to substitute Joel Robles. Barkley was fortunate only to be shown that yellow card in that 67th-minute incident, which angered Dejan Lovren and saw players briefly square up to each other—a flashpoint which also led to a booking for Everton's Seamus Coleman.

The visitors continued to enjoy the better of the closing stages with Robles making the save of the match, diving quickly to his left to keep out Firmino's volley on his line before the goal, and Coleman having to clear a Firmino shot off the line in the sixth of eight minutes added on. — AFP

PSG IN CRISIS AS NICE LOOK DOWN ON LIGUE 1

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Spanish coach Unai Emery is in the spotlight as his side close a difficult first half of the season at home to Lorient today.

Emery always faced a tough task in improving on the capital side's achievements in the previous three seasons under Laurent Blanc, but the former Sevilla coach has overseen a worrying regression in terms of results.

PSG come into their last game before a short winter break in third place in Ligue 1, seven points behind surprise leaders Nice and 12 points worse off than they were at the same stage last season.

Saturday's 2-1 defeat at Guingamp means they have already lost four times this season, more than in the whole of any of the last three campaigns.

They have collected just one point from the last nine available in the league and their only win in five games so far in December came at home to Lille in the League Cup last week.

Another defeat at home to Lorient, who are bottom but are improving under new coach Bernard Casoni, could leave Emery, so successful at Sevilla, in an untenable position. "For me it is not a crisis. Great teams also go through difficult moments," PSG's Brazilian defender Marquinhos told Canal Plus. "We have a squad of superb quality and a coach who has already proven himself. We just need to come through this bad moment together and we will get our confidence back."

"I am sure that things will go better after the winter break," PSG, who will not play in Ligue 1 again until a trip to Rennes on January 14, are without Adrien Rabiot and have doubts surrounding both Hatem Ben Arfa and Javier Pastore.

The worries at the Parc des Princes are in

stark contrast to the euphoria down on the Cote d'Azur, with Nice capping a stunning few months by securing the symbolic title of autumn champions at the weekend.

LYON, MARSEILLE ON FORM

A 2-1 win at home to Dijon, secured thanks to a Mario Balotelli brace, coupled with a 3-1 defeat for local rivals Monaco against Lyon ensured that Lucien Favre's side will top the table at the end of the year. That is regardless of how they do today at Bordeaux, where they lost in the League Cup last midweek.

"Seven points above them (PSG), we are safe now," joked Favre after Sunday's game, which left Nice still with only one defeat in the league so far this season.

Monaco trail the leaders by four points in second place and Europe's leading scorers will hope to bounce back from their Lyon loss when they entertain Caen.

They will however come into their final game of the year without Benjamin Mendy after he was sent off for a petulant kick at Lyon's Corentin Tolisso in Sunday's defeat at the Stade Louis II.

"Benjamin made a mistake. I have spoken with him. You need to keep a cool head to play at the top level. We will sanction him but we will also help him work on the mental side of his game," said Monaco coach Leonardo Jardim of the rampaging full-back.

"We will try to sign off for our holidays with a victory against a team who will play on the break." Lyon have boosted their chances of another top-three finish by winning six of their last seven games, and Bruno Genesio's men will look to keep that run going when they entertain Angers. Marseille, who have climbed to sixth with three straight wins, are at Bastia. — AFP



PORTO: Porto's Brazilian defender Felipe (R) is tackled by Chaves' Brazilian defender Leandro Freire during the Portuguese league football match FC Porto vs GD Chaves at the Dragao stadium in Porto on Monday. — AFP

JOVETIC, GABIGOL NEAR EXIT AS INTER WAIT TO MAKE BIG CHANGES

MILAN: Inter Milan forwards Stevan Jovetic and Gabriel 'Gabigol' Barbosa could be sold by the Serie A giants, whose Chinese owners Suning will make "top level" signings next summer, says coach Stefano Pioli.

Pioli has managed to steady the ship since replacing Dutchman Frank De Boer last month but Inter head into today's home game against high-flying Lazio with a 15-point deficit to leaders Juventus.

Amid increasing speculation that Montenegrin forward Jovetic and Brazilian flop Gabigol are on their way out, Pioli admitted Inter will be looking to shed forwards after the Christmas break.

"To have fewer players, especially among the forwards," Pioli told La Gazzetta dello Sport on Tuesday when asked his expectations for January. Former Manchester City forward Jovetic has played only 67 minutes all season, prompting his agent to accuse Pioli of allowing key players in the squad to "pick the team".

Pioli admitted the 27-year-old, whose career at City was effectively ended by the club's decision to sign Wilfried Bony, is unlikely to play any time soon. "During a face to face (meeting) he was pretty unhappy at some of the choices that have been made," said Pioli.

"I pick players who are ready, in every sense of the word." Gabigol was hailed as a future star of the team when signed in a 30 million euros (\$31 million) deal from FC Santos in August. But the Brazilian last week asked to be sold in January after making only two substitute appearances so far.

Pioli suggested the forward has so far flattered to deceive: "He's working hard, just like all the others. But he has to show me that he's better than the players he's in competition with."

"He's not been excluded. I play the players who help me win." After a "transitional" January transfer period, Pioli said Suning will make major signings next summer as they look to lift the club, treble winners in 2010, back to the heights at home and in Europe. "The January transfer market will be one of transition. I don't think we'll make many changes," he said.

"But we'll be looking to make some top level changes next summer. The fans can rest assured, Suning really wants to make Inter one of the world's top sides again. I can feel a real passion around me." After several disastrous campaigns Inter started the season with several new faces and confident of fighting for a third place finish that offers the chance to qualify for the Champions League via a play-off round. Despite a seven-point gap to third-placed Napoli and Lazio, Pioli says the Nerazzurri remain on course. "Of course, we're Inter Milan," he said. "Plus, I think we still have massive room for improvement. I'm curious to see how good we can become." — AFP



OHIO: In this Sunday, June 5, 2016 file photo, United States forward Alex Morgan stands during the first half of an international friendly soccer match against Japan in Cleveland, Ohio. Alex Morgan has joined Lyon from Orlando Pride on a six-month deal. — AP

US FORWARD ALEX MORGAN JOINS LYON ON SIX-MONTH DEAL

LYON: United States forward Alex Morgan has joined European champion Lyon from Orlando Pride on a six-month deal, with an option for her to play a further season.

Morgan has made 120 appearances for the US women's team and scored 73 goals, winning the Olympic gold medal in 2012 and the World Cup last year in Canada.

"I'm very happy to start this new challenge with Olympique Lyonnais," Morgan told the club's website on Tuesday. "It's a great opportunity to play alongside the best players in the world." Lyon is in second place in the league this season, three points behind unbeaten Paris Saint Germain. A 1-0 defeat to PSG on Saturday was Lyon's first league loss in more than two years.

The 27-year-old Morgan will form what looks on paper like a devastating attacking partnership with France striker Eugénie Le Sommer, who has 16 goals in 12 games this season and 186 overall since joining Lyon in 2010. Morgan said in a long letter on The Players Tribune website that she made the decision during "a belated honeymoon that I recently took with my husband, Servando, in Europe." After "a few weeks of deliberation" Morgan said the decision to join Lyon became evident.

"Lyon is a team that's world-renowned for excellence, with a roster that includes many of the greatest players in the world. In fact, Lyon won all three possible titles last season: Champions League, French League and the Coupe de France," she wrote. "They are com-

mitted to growing women's soccer and provide the women with first-class facilities and an unparalleled training environment on par with the men's team."

Long-serving Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas has overseen considerable success with both the men's and women's teams.

The men won a French record seven French titles from 2002-2008 while the women have won the league 14 times and the Champions League three times. "Alex Morgan's arrival demonstrates Lyon's will to invest in the highest level, starting with the women," Aulas wrote in a Tweet.

The women's squad has 26 players, all of them internationals, representing France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Japan, New Zealand and the US. Morgan says she will start playing next month and will return to play for the Pride after Lyon's season ends in June. "I'm committed to Orlando. Just as I'm committed 100 percent to the National Team," she said. "Those things won't change, but right now I need to follow my heart."

Morgan is used to playing at the highest level of the game. At the 2012 Olympics in London, she scored a dramatic winner against Canada in the semifinals. A year earlier, she scored in the 2011 World Cup final, which the U.S. lost to Japan on penalty kicks.

A star in the National Women's Soccer League, Morgan previously played for Western New York Flash and Portland Thorns. She was named US female soccer athlete of the year in 2012. — AP

Sports

My dream is to win an Olympic medal: Afrah



Jadeja stars as India thrash England 4-0



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2016

REAL MADRID'S TRANSFER BAN CUT ON APPEAL AT CAS

Page 18



OKLAHOMA CITY: Oklahoma City Thunder guard Russell Westbrook, center, shoots between, from left, Atlanta Hawks guard Dennis Schroder, forward Kent Bazemore (24), guard Kyle Korver (26) and forward Paul Millsap in the fourth quarter of an NBA basketball game in Oklahoma City, Monday. Atlanta won 110-108. — AP

HAWKS OVERCOME WESTBROOK'S 46 TO BEAT THUNDER

OKLAHOMA CITY: Paul Millsap hit the go-ahead 10-footer with 12.7 seconds left as the Atlanta Hawks overcame Russell Westbrook's 46 points to beat the Oklahoma City Thunder 110-108 on Monday night. After Millsap's shot, Thunder center Steven Adams rebounded a missed 3-pointer by Westbrook and dunked it, but a review determined that the basket came just after time expired. Westbrook, the NBA's leading scorer with more than 30 points per game, also had 11 rebounds and seven assists. Dennis Schroder scored 31 points and Millsap added a season-high 30 for the Hawks, who won despite center Dwight Howard missing the game with tightness in his lower back. Jerami Grant scored a season-high 15 points, and Andre Roberson matched a season high with 14 points for the Thunder.

BULLS 113, PISTONS 82

Jimmy Butler scored 19 points while Rajon Rondo had 10 points, 14 assists and eight rebounds as Chicago beat Detroit to snap a three-game losing streak. Taj Gibson added 16 points, Robin Lopez had 14 and Dwyane Wade, Doug McDermott and Nikola Mirotic had 13 apiece for Chicago, which had lost six of eight. Jon Leuer

scored 16 points for the Pistons, who have dropped three straight and four of five. After scoring just 69 points in a 26-point loss on Friday, the Bulls busted out for 69 points in the first two quarters, their best for any half this season.

PACERS 107, WIZARDS 105

Thaddeus Young made a runner with 0.9 seconds left to give Indiana a victory over Washington. Paul George scored 27 points and Jeff Teague had 23, but the Pacers needed the last of Young's 12 points after the Wizards scored seven straight to tie it. With 4.6 seconds remaining, Young took the inbound pass at the top of the key, squared up his defender, Markieff Morris, then drove and put up his runner from the left side. Bradley Beal missed a potential winning 3-pointer at the buzzer and scored 22 points. Marcin Gortat finished with 21 points and 13 rebounds, John Wall added 19 points and 10 assists, and Otto Porter Jr. scored 17 points and grabbed nine rebounds.

TIMBERWOLVES 115, SUNS 108

Karl-Anthony Towns had 28 points and 15

rebounds as Minnesota beat Phoenix. Andrew Wiggins scored 26 points and Zach LaVine added 23 for the Timberwolves. Ricky Rubio had 12 assists and Minnesota picked up its first win at home since Nov. 17. Eric Bledsoe scored 27 points for the Suns, who have lost three straight and four out of five. Brandon Knight had 21 points off the bench and Devin Booker scored 18 on 6-for-15 shooting for Phoenix.

NUGGETS 117, MAVERICKS 107

Nikola Jokic had 27 points and 15 rebounds while Gary Harris scored a career-high 24 points as Denver beat Dallas. Jokic finished an assist shy of his first career triple-double and tied his career high in points to help the Nuggets win their third straight game. Emmanuel Mudiay scored 18 points. Deron Williams led Dallas with 23 points and eight assists. Denver's offensive surge started after its 20-point loss in Dallas on Dec. 12. Coach Michael Malone shook up his starting lineup and the Nuggets have responded by scoring 30 or more points in eight of the last 12 quarters and are averaging 125.3 points since the change. — AP

NBA results/standings

Denver 117, Dallas 107; Chicago 113, Detroit 82; Atlanta 110, Oklahoma City 108; Minnesota 115, Phoenix 108; Indiana 107, Washington 105.

Eastern Conference			Western Conference		
Atlantic Division			Northwest Division		
Toronto	19	8 .704 -	Utah	18	10 .643 -
Boston	15	12 .556 4	Oklahoma City	16	12 .571 2
NY Knicks	14	13 .519 5	Portland	13	16 .448 5.5
Brooklyn	7	19 .269 11.5	Denver	12	16 .429 6
Philadelphia	7	20 .259 12	Minnesota	8	19 .296 9.5
Central Division			Pacific Division		
Cleveland	19	6 .760 -	Golden State	24	4 .857 -
Milwaukee	13	12 .520 6	LA Clippers	20	8 .714 4
Chicago	14	13 .519 6	Sacramento	10	17 .370 13.5
Indiana	15	14 .517 6	LA Lakers	11	19 .367 14
Detroit	14	16 .467 7.5	Phoenix	8	20 .286 16
Southeast Division			Southwest Division		
Charlotte	15	13 .536 -	San Antonio	22	5 .815 -
Atlanta	14	14 .500 1	Houston	21	7 .750 1.5
Washington	12	15 .444 2.5	Memphis	18	11 .621 5
Orlando	12	17 .414 3.5	New Orleans	9	20 .310 14
Miami	9	19 .321 6	Dallas	7	21 .250 15.5



PARIS: In this May 27, 2016 file photo, Petra Kvitova of the Czech Republic serves in her third round match of the French Open tennis tournament against Shelby Rogers of the US at the Roland Garros stadium in Paris. Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova has been injured during an attack in her flat in the Czech Republic. — AP

PETRA KVITOVA INJURED BY KNIFE-WIELDING ATTACKER

PRAGUE: Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova was injured by a knife-wielding attacker at her home yesterday. The 2011 and 2014 Wimbledon champion said the injury to her left hand was "severe." "In my attempt to defend myself, I was badly injured on my left hand. I am shaken, but fortunate to be alive," Kvitova, who is left-handed, wrote on Twitter. "The injury is severe and I will need to see specialists, but if you know anything about me I am strong and I will fight this." It was not immediately clear how the injury could affect Kvitova's play. Details of her injury were expected to be released later yesterday.

"What happened to me was certainly not pleasant, but it's behind me," Kvitova said in an earlier statement on the Facebook page of the Czech Republic's Fed Cup team. "I have the best possible care and I'm in touch with my loved ones. The worst is behind me." Kvitova's spokesman, Karel Tejkal, said the incident, which he described as a burglary, occurred yesterday morning in the eastern Czech town of

Prostejov.

Prostejov police spokesman Frantisek Korinek said the attacker, a man who is about 35 years old, escaped from the scene and was at large. He said police have launched a manhunt.

Kvitova was scheduled to participate in a charity event in the city of Brno on Tuesday with another Czech player, Lucie Safarova.

"It's horrible," Safarova told Czech public radio. "Things like that are shocking to all of us. It can happen to anyone of us. That's really terrible."

In April 1993, Monica Seles was at the height of her success when she was stabbed in the back during a changeover at a tournament in Hamburg. A man reached over a court-side railing and knifed her, leaving an inch-deep slit between her shoulder blades.

Seles returned to the game 27 months later and reached the 1995 US Open final. In an unrelated move earlier Tuesday, Kvitova withdrew from the Czech Republic team at next month's Hopman Cup mixed-team tennis tournament because of an earlier foot injury. — AP

Kuwait Times **BUSINESS**

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2016

ANNIVERSARY
55
YEARS

British shale gas gets boost from court ruling on permit

Page 22

BoJ lifts view of economy; sliding yen boosts exports

Page 25



Will car vending machine upend used vehicle sales?

Page 23

KIB APPOINTS AHMAD ALKAZEMI AS GM OF COMMERCIAL BANKING

Page 26



BAYONNE: In this Nov 15, 2016, file photo, a worker lifts materials as construction continues on the new roadway deck of the Bayonne Bridge in Bayonne, NJ. Even as they maneuver for a share of the \$1 trillion in spending President-elect Donald Trump promised to rebuild America's roads, bridges and airports, lobbyists for transportation and utility industries are beginning to wonder whether Trump really meant what he said. — AP

WILL TRUMP LIVE UP TO HIS INFRASTRUCTURE PROMISES?

LOBBYISTS BEGIN TO WONDER IF PRESIDENT-ELECT REALLY MEANT WHAT HE SAID

WASHINGTON: Even as they maneuver for a share of the \$1 trillion in spending Donald Trump promised to rebuild America's roads, bridges and airports, lobbyists for transportation and utility industries are beginning to wonder whether Trump really meant what he said.

From the day he formally entered the presidential race to the moment he declared victory, Trump pledged to rebuild the nation's aging and inadequate infrastructure. He cited decaying bridges, potholed roads and airports like New York's LaGuardia that he said reminded him of the "third world."

Trump or his campaign also mentioned schools, hospitals, pipelines, water treatment plants and the electrical grid as part of a job-creation strategy that would make the US "second to none." It was a rare area in which House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and other Democrats hoped for common ground with the president-elect. The possibility of a major infrastructure spending plan is one of several factors that have fueled the recent run-up in stock prices. But lately lobbyists have begun to fear that there won't be an infrastructure proposal at

all, or at least not the grand plan they'd been led to expect. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell tried to tamp down expectations last week, telling reporters he wants to avoid "a \$1 trillion stimulus." And Reince Priebus, who will be Trump's chief of staff, said in a radio interview that the new administration will focus in its first nine months with other issues like health care and rewriting tax laws. He sidestepped questions about the infrastructure plan.

In a post-election interview with The New York Times, Trump himself seemed to back away, saying infrastructure won't be a "core" part of the first few years of his administration. But he said there will still be "a very large-scale infrastructure bill." He acknowledged that he didn't realize during the campaign that New Deal-style proposals to put people to work building infrastructure might conflict with his party's small-government philosophy.

"That's not a very Republican thing - I didn't even know that, frankly," he said. Since the election, Trump has backed away - or at least suggested flexibility - on a range of issues that energized his supporters during the campaign,

including his promises to prosecute Hillary Clinton, pull out of the Paris climate change accord and reinstate waterboarding for detainees. Trump transition officials didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. The mixed signals on infrastructure have lobbyists and lawmakers puzzled. "We're worried," said Brian Turmail, a spokesman for the Associated General Contractors of America, which represents more than 26,000 construction companies and 10,500 service providers and suppliers.

"Are we hearing signs that people just don't know what the plan is? Or signs that people don't want any kind of plan?" he said. "We don't know the answer." Lobbyists have responded by flooding the Trump transition team with briefing memos, lining up meetings and privately pitching their proposals to what they hope will be a more receptive Congress.

Trade associations are urging their local members to seek out their senators and House members while they're home for the holidays. The contractors' association held a news conference in front of a bridge construction project in Little Rock, Arkansas. The American Road and

Transportation Builders Association has given members form letters to send their lawmakers, while quietly floating a plan for new transportation fees to provide reliable sources of additional income for the federal Highway Trust Fund. Leaders of the US Conference of Mayors emphasized their support for an infrastructure program in a recent meeting with Trump and urged him to protect the municipal bond tax exemption, one of the primary ways localities raise money for projects.

Private investors

The Airports Council International-North America is lobbying to raise the limit on fees airports charge airline passengers. The money goes to renovate or expand terminals and increase the number of gates.

Trump's campaign pitch for infrastructure improvements included few details. A paper circulated after the election recommends using \$167 billion in federal tax credits to generate \$1 trillion in private-sector infrastructure investment over a decade. To offset the cost of the credits, US corporations would be encouraged to

bring home profits that they have parked overseas to avoid taxes, in exchange for a lower tax rate. But private investors are typically interested only in projects that create revenue, such as tolls, so that they can recoup their investments.

What states and communities need most is more direct spending, rather than tax credits, to help pay for upkeep and replacement of existing roads, bridges and transit systems, said Bud Wright, executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. "Those aren't necessarily projects that lend themselves to generating revenue," he said.

It's also possible tax credits would provide a windfall to investors in existing projects while failing to generate new ones. Some lawmakers from both parties are urging the creation of a federal "infrastructure bank" to make low-cost loans to projects. "Everybody is putting together their Christmas lists for what they want to see in an infrastructure bill," said Kevin Gluba, executive director of the Alliance for Innovation and Infrastructure. "The biggest question: Who is going to pay for it? Many of the ideas floating around are far too pricey to make into law." —AP

DEAL-MAKING TO DRIVE 2017 MIDEAST ACTIVITY

DUBAI: A Middle Eastern investment banking fee bonanza should extend into 2017, spurred by a combination of bond and share sales and mergers and acquisitions as the region adjusts to lower oil prices, bankers say. Deal such as Saudi Arabia's \$17.5 billion debut international sovereign issue has helped banks' earnings, offsetting falls in other regions due to economic uncertainty and volatile markets.

Fees from the Middle East reached \$581 million during the first nine months of 2016, an 11 percent rise compared to the same period in 2015, according to Thomson Reuters data, while global fees for these services fell 11 percent to \$60.9 billion. JPMorgan Chase & Co, HSBC and Bank of America Merrill Lynch are among the banks that have been most active in Middle East in 2016 and expect more in 2017.

"Next year could also be good. Five or six GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) states will have to issue debt and they don't need a long lead time as they've issued before," Sjoerd Leenart, JPMorgan's senior country officer for Middle East, Turkey and Africa, said in emailed comments. Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait and Qatar could press ahead with new bond issues in 2017 as they seek to fill budget deficits caused by low oil revenues. With the outlook for prices improved by OPEC's move to curtail oil output, borrowers in the region are likely to use the opportunity to fill their coffers. "We expect the strengthened commodity fun-

damentals to create a good window for issuers in early 2017," Matthew Wallace, HSBC's head of global banking, Middle East and North Africa, said in emailed comments. Coupled with the region's growing financial markets and the use of financing arrangements ranging from partial privatizations and non-core divestments to Asian private placements to structured commodity-based financings, this will drive further activity, Wallace predicted.

Borrowers such as Emirates NBD and Al-Hilal Bank have turned to private bond placements to access liquidity discreetly. The drying up of cashflows due to lower oil prices has also spurred appetite for structured finance, particularly among oil firms. While estimates for debt and equity raising in 2017 are tricky to calculate due to market uncertainty, analysts expect more corporate bonds in 2017 than 2016 as recent sovereign issues create a pricing benchmark, while banking sources say more companies are weighing initial public offerings. Bankers are also predicting more M&A, with the merger of National Bank of Abu Dhabi and First Gulf Bank to form one of the largest banks in the Middle East and Africa set to complete. Wadih Boueiz, managing director and co-head of corporate and investment banking for MENA at Merrill Lynch International, part of Bank of America Merrill Lynch, said he is optimistic of more opportunities in 2017 following a change in mindset among companies in the region in 2016. — Reuters

LAGARDE WILL REMAIN AS CHIEF DESPITE CONVICTION: IMF BOARD

WASHINGTON: Christine Lagarde will remain head of the International Monetary Fund despite her conviction Monday of negligence in a case dating to her tenure as France's finance minister. The IMF's executive board quickly met after the court's decision and expressed "full confidence" in Lagarde's ability to carry out her duties at the head of the Washington-based international lending agency. In a statement, the board cited her "outstanding leadership" and the respect and trust she has worldwide.

After a weeklong trial, France's Court of Justice of the Republic found Lagarde guilty of one count of negligence but spared her jail time and a criminal record.

The 60-year-old IMF leader had potentially faced a year of imprisonment and a fine for not seeking to block a fraudulent 2008 arbitration award to a politically connected tycoon when she was finance minister. Lagarde thanked the board for the vote of confidence "in my ability to do my job." She said she would not appeal the French court's decision.

"I am not satisfied with it, but there's a point in time when one must stop, turn the page and move on," she said. Lagarde, a lawyer, became France's first female finance minister in 2007, overseeing the country's response to the financial crisis that rocked the global economy from 2008. She is also the first woman to head the IMF.

The troubling verdict comes as the IMF is weighing its role in multiple global crises, including a bailout for Greece. "She is a strong leader," US Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew said in a state-



PARIS: International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde's lawyer, Patrick Maisonneuve, addresses media outside a special Paris court. — AP

ment after the board's decision. "And we have every confidence in her ability to guide the fund at a critical time for the global economy."

The Court of Justice of the Republic is a special tribunal to hear cases of alleged criminality

by ministers in office and is made up of three judges and 12 parliamentarians. It ruled that Lagarde's negligence in her management of a long-running arbitration case involving tycoon Bernard Tapie helped open the door for the fraudulent misappropriation of public funds. Lagarde herself was not accused of fraud.

The case revolves around a 403 million-euro (\$425 million) arbitration award given to Tapie in 2008 over the botched sale of sportswear giant Adidas in the 1990s.

Civil courts have since quashed the unusually generous award, declared the arbitration process and deal fraudulent and ordered Tapie to refund the money. The special court's presiding judge, in reading the verdict, said Lagarde should have asked her aides and others for more information about the "shocking arbitration award," which included a tax-free payment of 45 million euros in damages to Tapie, which the court described as fraudulent.

Had Lagarde contested the award, an appeal against it might have succeeded and would have strengthened the negotiating position of those who were fighting Tapie's demands for compensation over the sale of his majority stake in Adidas, the court ruled. In deciding not to sentence Lagarde, the court noted that the award to Tapie has since been annulled, sparing damage to the public purse. It also noted that Lagarde was busy at the time with the global economic crisis. Lagarde's "personality and national and international reputation" also counted in her favor in the decision not to punish her, the court ruled. — AP

BRITISH SHALE GAS GETS BOOST FROM COURT RULING ON PERMIT

THIRD ENERGY SHALE PERMIT FIRST SINCE BAN LIFTED IN 2012

LONDON: Britain's High Court ruled yesterday that a fracking permit awarded by a local council to developer Third Energy was legal, after it was challenged by environmental campaigners, opening the way to shale gas extraction in the UK. Substantial amounts of shale gas are estimated to be trapped in underground rocks and the British government wants to exploit it to help offset declining North Sea oil and gas output, create some 64,000 jobs and help economic growth.

The contested permit in Yorkshire, in the north of England, was the first approval for shale gas fracking since

a moratorium was lifted in 2012. "The substantive claim for judicial review is dismissed," Justice Lang said in her written verdict on the case, ruling that the permit remains valid.

Despite government support, progress has been slow due to regulatory hurdles and public protests, with environmental groups concerned fracking could contaminate groundwater and that it is incompatible with fighting climate change.

"We will continue to campaign on behalf of local communities for the sake of our children and their children's health and well-being," said Jackie Cray, a co-claimant in

the case. Third Energy, which is owned by former employees of the Barclays Natural Resource Investments private equity business, had been expected to produce Britain's first shale gas this year before its permit award was appealed.

The company said it was pleased with the ruling. Since Third Energy was granted its permit, shale gas developer Cuadrilla has gained approval for a second permit in north-west England after the government intervened and overruled a local authority decision. Other British shale gas developers include IGG, Egdon Resources and INEOS. — Reuters

News

in brief

Oman budget deficit grows to \$12.5 billion

MUSCAT: Oman's government posted a budget deficit of 4.81 billion rials (\$12.5 billion) in the first 10 months of 2016 compared with a deficit of 3.26 billion rials a year earlier, as low oil export prices hit its revenues, provisional Finance Ministry data showed yesterday. The government's original 2016 budget plan envisaged state expenditure of 11.9 billion rials and revenues of 8.6 billion. Officials said their 2016 economic plans assumed an average oil price of \$45 a barrel.

US dollar stable against KD at 0.306

KUWAIT: The exchange rate of the US dollar against the Kuwaiti dinar was stable at 0.306 while the euro was down to KD 0.318, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) yesterday. The CBK added that the rate of the Sterling Pound was down to KD 0.379, as well as the Swiss Franc at KD 0.297. The Japanese Yen stood firm at KD 0.002.

Qatari bank CBQ takes control of Alternatifbank

DUBAI: Commercial Bank of Qatar (CBQ), the Gulf Arab state's third-largest lender by assets, said yesterday that it had completed the acquisition of the outstanding 25 percent stake in Turkey's Alternatifbank for \$224.9 million. CBQ said in July that it would buy the stake after another shareholder, Turkey's Anadolu Industry Holding, an affiliate of Yazici Holding, exercised an option which required the Qatari bank to purchase the stock. The deal means Alternatifbank is now a 100 percent-owned subsidiary of CBQ, according to yesterday's bourse statement.

Kuwait oil price up \$1.01 to \$50.71 pb

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by \$1.01 to reach \$50.71 per barrel Monday after being at \$49.70 pb Friday, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. At the global level, the price of oil stood still with no change due to the expected decrease in global production by early 2017 as agreed upon between OPEC countries and other world major oil producers. The price of the Brent crude went down by 29 cents to settle at \$54.92 per barrel while the price of the American crude went up 22 cents to \$52.12 pb.

Saudi's Mobily signs for \$533m credit facility

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's Etihad Etisalat (Mobily) has signed to obtain a 2 billion riyal (\$533 million) credit facility from Alinma Bank, the telecommunications operator said in a bourse statement yesterday. The facility is unsecured, and proceeds will be used to fund existing and future operating and capital expenditures, the statement said.

GOLD DECLINES AS DOLLAR RISES, INVESTORS RETREAT

LONDON: Gold fell yesterday as the dollar rose and investors sold on expectations of stronger global economic growth and higher US interest rates, while deadly incidents in Turkey and Germany failed to spur safe-haven buying.

Spot gold was down 0.4 percent to \$1,133.25 an ounce at 1114 GMT. Last week it fell to \$1,122.35, its lowest since early February. US gold futures slipped 0.6 percent to \$1,135.30 per ounce.

The dollar was trading near 14-year highs after Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen reinforced expectations for a faster pace of US interest rate rises next year than had been expected.

Higher US rates could mean further gains for the US currency, which when it rises makes dollar-denominated commodities more expensive for holders of other currencies.

"A strengthening US and global economy, the dollar going up, higher equities and rising US bond yields are negative for gold," said Societe Generale analyst Robin Bhar.

"The Fed was more hawkish than we expected ... But it is surprising not to see some safe-haven buying after the events in Berlin and Turkey."

Higher US Treasury yields mean it's cheaper for investors to buy US government Treasuries, which like gold are seen as risk-free. But unlike gold which earns nothing and costs to insure and store, Treasuries earn regular coupons. Investor confidence in the global economy can be seen in holdings of the SPDR Gold Trust, the world's largest gold-backed exchange-traded fund, which at 828.10 tonnes on Monday is down more than 13 percent since Nov. 9.

Traders say some profit-taking on short positions could see gold recover over the next few days, but they expect any gains to be limited and short-lived.

Also weighing on gold is the prospect of weaker physical demand in top consumer India where retail demand has faltered due to the government's move to scrap high-value currency notes. — Reuters



TBILISI: A man leaves a currency exchange office in Tbilisi yesterday. Georgia's national currency, the lari plunged to a historic low against the US dollar amid a continuing economic slowdown and shrinking exports, the ex-Soviet country's central bank said. — AFP

ISLAMIC FINANCE STANDARDS SPUR DEVELOPMENT OF GOLD, SILVER PRODUCTS

LONDON: New standards for the use of precious metals in Islamic finance are encouraging the development of financial products based on gold and silver, from futures contracts to a mobile app.

The Bahrain-based Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI), which sets guidelines followed in whole or in part by Islamic financial firms around the world, approved new standards last month for precious metals.

The standards will reduce uncertainty over what is religiously permissible, which has hampered development of products using precious metals. The greater clarity provided by the standards could spur an increase in the use of gold and silver in Islamic finance over the next few years. It is too soon to gauge the extent of that increase, but some companies have begun testing the Islamic market's potential. Toronto-based Bullion Management Group (BMG), which manages \$348 million in assets, launched a silver fund in October and expects its bullion funds will adhere to the new AAOIFI guidance, Nick Barisheff, BMG's founder and chief executive, said.

Take-up of the fund by wealthy individuals has been limited so far, but demand for securitized products such as exchange-traded funds could come from institutions that cannot buy bullion directly because of their internal investment policies, Barisheff said. "Securitized versions could expand the market by allowing investors such as corporates." The new standards stipulate that transactions must be fully backed by physical metal and settled on the same day.

On Monday, the Singapore Exchange (SGX) said it had certified as sharia-compliant its gold futures contracts, which were originally launched in 2014 and are aimed at the wholesale market.

The physically delivered contracts will provide a new risk management tool in Islamic finance, SGX said in a statement. Its thinly traded Singapore kilobar gold contract saw only two lots traded in October, according to SGX data; targeting Islamic investors could help to revive interest in the contract.

Platforms

Meanwhile, Malaysia-based HelloGold has

launched a sharia-compliant online platform using a mobile app, targeting customers through agreements with technology and financial services firms, chief executive Robin Lee said. The firm has partnered with Asian retailer Aeon Credit Service to offer the product to Aeon's 20,000 employees in Malaysia, and plans to extend this to Aeon's 4.5 million customers in the country by February.

"We expect to sell about 10,000 ounces of sharia-compliant gold by the end of next year," Lee said. He also said that the firm planned to enter Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand next year and China by 2019. At least one institution which originally tried unsuccessfully to promote the use of gold in Islamic finance is trying again.

In 2009, the Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC) and the World Gold Council launched an Islamic gold exchange-traded product that was eventually delisted because of low trading volumes. This month, the DMCC said it had partnered with Turkey's Bors Istanbul to develop a sharia-compliant precious metals platform. It gave no time frame for the platform to be up and running. — Reuters

TURKISH CENTRAL BANK KEEPS RATES ON HOLD

ISTANBUL: Turkey's central bank kept interest rates on hold yesterday, in a move unexpected by analysts as the sliding lira currency took a back seat to President Tayyip Erdogan's push for cheaper credit. The currency has lost 17 percent of its value against the dollar this year, hit by investor concerns about a crackdown by authorities in the aftermath of a failed coup in July and by a resurgent dollar following Donald Trump's US presidential election win.

Erdogan wants the central bank to reduce borrowing costs to help spur flagging economic growth. He has described himself as an "enemy" of high interest rates and railed at banks for what he views as overcharging for credit. The bank kept its benchmark one-week repo rate unchanged at 8 percent. Thirteen of 18 economists in a Reuters poll had expected a hike in the repo rate.

"Exchange rate movements due to recently heightened global uncertainty and the increase in oil prices pose

upside risks on the inflation outlook," the bank's monetary policy committee said in a statement. "The aggregate demand developments restrain these effects," it said.

It said economic activity had shown a partial recovery for the final quarter after a deceleration in the third quarter and the recovery was expected to continue at a moderate pace.

The lira weakened on Monday after the Russian ambassador to Turkey was shot dead as he gave a speech in the capital Ankara but rebounded on Tuesday before the rates decision on relief that Moscow and Ankara struck a unified tone after the attack.

After rates were left on hold, the lira tumbled as far as 3.5440 against the dollar from 3.5095 beforehand. The bank also kept its overnight lending rate at 8.5 percent. Fifteen of the 18 economists also forecast a hike in the lending rate, which is the upper band of the bank's interest rate corridor. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.615
Indian Rupees	4.534
Pakistani Rupees	2.928
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.064
Nepali Rupees	2.836
Singapore Dollar	213.130
Hongkong Dollar	39.526
Bangladesh Taka	3.847
Philippine Peso	6.156
Thai Baht	8.591

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.895
Qatari Riyal	84.348
ani Riyal	797.557
Bahraini Dinar	815.460
UAE Dirham	83.601

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.990
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	16.755
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.233
Tunisian Dinar	133.840
Jordanian Dinar	432.470
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.046
Syrian Lira	2.188
Morocco Dirham	30.690

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	306.900
Euro	322.710
Sterling Pound	385.160
Canadian dollar	231.100
Turkish lira	881.900

Swiss Franc	300.880
Australian Dollar	225.570
US Dollar Buying	305.700

GOLD

20 Gram	234.93
10 Gram	120.38
5 Gram	61.04

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	306.550
Canadian Dolla	230.500
Sterling Pound	384.385
Euro	322.080
Swiss Franc	300.105
Bahrain Dinar	812.640
UAE Dirhams	83.855
Qatari Riyals	85.080
Saudi Riyals	82.675
Jordanian Dinar	433.540
Egyptian Pound	16.830
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.060
Indian Rupees	4.530
Pakistani Rupees	2.924
Bangladesh Taka	3.857
Philippines Peso	6.143
Cyprus pound	168.345
Japanese Yen	3.600
Syrian Pound	2.435
Nepalase Rupees	3.825
Malaysian Ringgit	69.340
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	31.240
Thai Bhat	9.535
Turkish Lira	87.725

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY BUY SELL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.377822	0.387822
Czech Korune	0.003881	0.015881
Danish Krone	0.039143	0.044143
Euro	0.315745	0.324745
Norwegian Krone	0.031458	0.036658
Romanian Leu	0.085058	0.085058
Slovakia	0.009215	0.019215
Swedish Krona	0.028798	0.033798
Swiss Franc	0.293170	0.304170
Turkish Lira	0.084259	0.094559

Australasia

Australian Dollar	0.216445	0.228445
New Zealand Dollar	0.208493	0.217993

America

Canadian Dollar	0.225053	0.234053
Georgina Lari	0.138615	0.138615
US Dollars	0.302800	0.307500
US Dollars Mint	0.303300	0.307500

Asia

Bangladesh Taka	0.003527	0.004111
Chinese Yuan	0.042685	0.046185
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037484	0.040234
Indian Rupee	0.000263	0.005519
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024

Japanese Yen	0.002527	0.002707
Kenyan Shilling	0.003157	0.003157
Korean Won	0.000248	0.000263
Malaysian Ringgit	0.064809	0.070809
Nepalase Rupee	0.002910	0.003080
Pakistan Rupee	0.002648	0.002938
Philippine Peso	0.006100	0.006400
Sierra Leone	0.000068	0.000074
Singapore Dollar	0.207639	0.217639
South African Rand	0.016354	0.024854
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001649	0.002229
Taiwan	0.009514	0.009694
Thai Baht	0.008258	0.008808

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.807488	0.815986
Egyptian Pound	0.013871	0.023124
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000181	0.000241
Jordanian Dinar	0.427814	0.436814
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000149	0.000249
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020232	0.044232
Nigerian Naira	0.001274	0.001909
Omani Riyal	0.790721	0.796401
Qatar Riyal	0.083486	0.084936
Saudi Riyal	0.080753	0.082053
Syrian Pound	0.001302	0.001522
Tunisian Dinar	0.128712	0.136712
Turkish Lira	0.084259	0.094559
UAE Dirhams	0.082133	0.083833
Yemeni Riyal	0.001016	0.001096

WHY A STRONGER US DOLLAR COULD HINDER TRUMP'S PLANS

WASHINGTON: President-elect Donald Trump's ambitious plans to revive exports, return jobs to the United States and increase oil drilling are running up against a home-grown threat: The surging US dollar. Since the Nov. 8 election, the dollar has shot up 5 percent. An index that tracks the dollar against other major currencies reached a 14-year high after the election before dipping a bit since then.

In part, the dollar's gain reflects the US economy's strength and investor confidence that Trump will accelerate growth by slashing taxes and pumping money into roads, bridges and other infrastructure.

The dollar could rise even more now that the Federal Reserve has raised interest rates and foresees three more hikes next year. With rates far lower elsewhere in the world, many investors will shift money to the United States to capitalize on higher yields - a shift that could send the dollar even higher. Which creates a problem: An expensive dollar makes US goods costlier overseas - and imports cheaper in the US. That's a recipe for more pain for American manufacturers. A high dollar can also lead some US multinational companies to move operations to countries where their dollars go further.

And a high-priced dollar tends to shrink oil prices, thereby discouraging the increased energy production that Trump has made a centerpiece of his economic plans. "A strong dollar will make it more challenging to boost the international

competitiveness of US manufacturing, bring back jobs and increase exports," says Eswar Prasad, professor of trade policy at Cornell University.

Even before the election, a comparatively strong dollar had slowed US exports for much of the past two years. Exports of goods and services had peaked in October 2014 at \$200 billion. The figure fell to \$179 billion in March before recovering slightly as the dollar weakened. But then the dollar marched back up and accelerated after Trump's victory. It was no surprise when US exports fell nearly 2 percent in October, according to the Commerce Department.

Consider what the strong dollar does to US corporate earnings, too: Whatever revenue American companies earn in foreign currencies is worth less once it's exchanged into US dollars and returned home. In recent weeks, American companies, from Whirlpool to Apple, have complained that the strong dollar has dented their earnings. At Vaughn Manufacturing Co in Nashville, Tennessee, the company president, Mark Vaughn, is fretting about the dollar's 11 percent rise against Mexico's peso since the election.

Around 20 percent of Vaughn's tool-and-die business is done in Mexico. And the company competes with Chinese and Korean companies that aren't saddled with an expensive currency.

"It's a concern," he says. A rising dollar can encourage US companies to move factories and jobs overseas because it makes



CAIRO: A man walks past a poster showing a US dollar outside an exchange office in Cairo. President-elect Donald Trump's ambitious plans to revive American exports, keep jobs in the United States and encourage oil drilling face a home-grown threat: the surging US dollar. — AP

foreign investments cheaper. Trump, of course, has pledged to stop American companies from taking operations offshore. He's even threatened to impose a 35 percent tax on companies that leave America and then ship goods back to the United States. The dollar's rally could also complicate the president-elect's plans to spur oil drilling by reducing environmental regulations. Oil is usually bought in dollars. So the

higher the dollar's value, the fewer dollars are needed to buy a barrel of oil. The result is that the dollar-denominated price of oil drops. When oil prices drop, energy companies tend to cut investment in drilling and production. Low oil prices are the main reason US business investment plummeted late last year and in the first half of 2016, thereby slowing the economy. Oil prices have risen since Trump's victory but could

retreat again if the dollar keeps rising. The Trump transition team didn't respond to requests for comment. William Cline, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, says he worries that the strong dollar could incite conflicts between the US and its trading partners - something that happened during the Reagan administration in the 1980s.

Despite his reputation as a free trader, Reagan used tariffs against Japanese motorcycles and semiconductors, which had enjoyed a price edge in the US market resulting from a sharp rise in the dollar. It took an extraordinary 1985 meeting at New York's Plaza Hotel to craft an arrangement with Japan, Germany and Britain to reduce the dollar's value and ease tension.

Trump, who threatened to tear up trade treaties and impose tariffs against Mexico and Japan, might be even quicker to impose sanctions against what he sees as unfair trade practices, potentially triggering a wider trade war. In an analysis it did before the election, the Peterson Institute warned that the United States could lose nearly 4.8 million jobs in a trade war that would result if Trump imposed the tariffs on Mexico and China - and they responded with equal tariffs of their own.

"The tricky thing in the case of Trump is if his administration sees trade deficits as the result of unfair trade" and not of economic forces that are pushing the dollar higher, Cline says. "You could get into a lot of trade conflicts." — AP



CIUDAD BOLIVAR: People queue outside a supermarket to buy basic food and household items, after massive looting took place in Ciudad Bolivar, Bolivar state, Venezuela, on Monday. — AFP

LOOTING LEAVES STORES IN RUINS IN VENEZUELA'S CIUDAD BOLIVAR

CIUDAD BOLIVAR, Venezuela: Crowds gathered Monday outside the few supermarkets in Ciudad Bolivar that survived massive looting over the sudden decision to yank the most widely used currency note from circulation, as the city in Venezuela's interior tried to return to normality.

The weekend violence left dozens of businesses destroyed or damaged, and streets were still full of trash, rubble and burned motorcycles from the protests and looting.

Hundreds of police and soldiers have been deployed to the streets of Ciudad Bolivar, a riverside city of about 700,000 residents, but many stores remained closed as of midday due to fears of more looting.

Asterio Gonzalez, president of the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry, estimated that about 80 percent of stores that sell food in the city were ransacked. He said those still standing found large crowds outside their doors Monday and were waiting for authorities to guarantee security before opening.

More than 350 businesses were looted between Friday and Sunday in Ciudad Bolivar, according to business sector estimates, along with 200 more in seven southeastern cities. Dozens of people were injured and four killed in the unrest.

The businesses targeted included supermarkets, liquor and hardware stores, auto dealerships and shops selling tires and car parts. Gonzalez said business leaders were talking with regional authorities about setting up special storage and distribution facilities to reduce crowding at the stores that survived.

Bolivar state Gov. Francisco Rangel Gomez said Sunday evening that 3,200 police officers were deployed to restore order, and 262 people were arrested in the state. Gonzalez confirmed that 700 members of the national guard also arrived in Ciudad Bolivar. Protests and looting broke out in Ciudad Bolivar and elsewhere over President Nicolas Maduro's

sudden decision to scrap the 100 bolivar note, the largest and most widely used in Venezuela despite being worth just a few U.S. cents at the black market rate.

The announcement also touched off long bank lines, a surge in electronic payments and widespread fears by poorer people with no bank accounts and all their savings in the doomed bills. Cash transactions such as buying food or gasoline became extremely difficult. Over the weekend Maduro announced that the deadline for pulling the 100 bolivar notes out of circulation would be postponed until Jan. 2 because purported saboteurs had prevented the arrival of three airplanes carrying newly printed, larger-denomination bills from abroad. He did not provide details about the alleged plot.

A plane arrived Sunday from Sweden with 13.5 million new 500 bolivar notes, but it has not been announced when they will enter circulation. Maduro called the decision to scrap the bill an economic triumph over the country's enemies. In a national broadcast Sunday the president said the action had flooded banks with currency deposited by Venezuelans racing to get rid of the paper bills while also devastating Colombian-border currency traders he blames for the bolivar's precipitous plunge in value against the US dollar.

Maduro also extended through Jan. 2 the closure of Venezuela's borders with Colombia and Brazil. Among those affected are about a hundred Brazilians who have been unable to return to their country.

Venezuela has been wracked by an economic crisis with soaring inflation and shortages of food and other commercial goods. Most economists blame the woes on price controls and falling prices for oil exports, as well as heavy government spending and production-crippling policies that gave Venezuelans lots of 100 bolivar notes but little to buy with them. — AP

WILL CAR VENDING MACHINE UPEND USED VEHICLE SALES?

RETAILER GETS RID OF DEALERSHIPS

WASHINGTON: If brick-and-mortar stores fear Amazon and e-commerce as a threat to their existence, used car dealers may be terrified by the newest development in their industry: A car vending machine. Yes, it's real. And no, you can't shake it to get a free one. Online used car retailer Carvana opened its newest "vending machine" last week in Houston, where the gleaming, glass-encased structure sits right off a busy freeway. The eight-storey automated garage - three levels higher than the first version which debuted in Nashville a year ago - holds 30 cars.

It dispenses used vehicles in four delivery bays, but only to customers who have the special coin to make it work - which they receive after completing an online purchase. This is a marketing gimmick, of course. But the company believes it could prove a valuable part of the strategy to win customers over by completely overhauling the dreaded process of buying a used car, something notoriously difficult and plagued by the fear of sales people taking advantage of prospective buyers.

"Our view of what we are trying to do is make the experience a high quality one that customers love," Carvana co-founder and CEO Ernie Garcia told AFP. The goal, he said, is "to make car buying fun." He said the founders did not start out planning to be an online site, but aimed to rethink the car buying transaction from start to finish and find ways to "differentiate economically, through the entire pipeline."

No dealerships

The first step was to take a page out of Amazon's book and get rid of dealerships, which Garcia says adds \$400 to the price of a car. Another \$1,400 goes to pay sales personnel. Carvana, which launched in 2013 and is now in 21 markets after adding 12 this year, stores its cars far outside cities in areas where rent is cheap. The company says this year it saved customers more than \$1,400 on average on purchase prices compared to the Kelley Blue Book suggested price, the industry standard.

The typical concern for customers buying a used car is whether they can trust that the vehicle is safe and reliable, and whether they are paying too much. And even in the best of cases, the process can take several hours of paperwork to complete a purchase through a traditional dealer. Carvana offers online comparison shopping, refurbished vehicles, financing options and trade-ins all on its web portal, and Garcia says the fastest purchase was com-



OAK LAWN, Illinois: In this Dec 20, 2010 file photo, a car drives past the CarMax sign at the used-car dealership. — AP

pleted in seven minutes.

The company also provides free delivery as soon as the next day, or pickup at one of the vending machines. Delivery costs \$150, so Garcia says the vending machine is another way for Carvana to trim costs. However, as part of the new service they are offering \$200 to buyers who prefer to fly to Houston to pick up from the vending machine, and transportation from the airport.

Easy returns, growing revenue

The company also offers a seven-day test drive period, which allows customers the possibility of a full refund.

"There is a lot of evidence that an easy-to-use return policy is a way to improve the car-buying experience," said Garcia, who compared the policy to online shoe retailer Zappos, which overcame skepticism about buying shoes without trying them on with its painless return policy. He said about half of the customers who return cars switch to another vehicle. "It's very clear from the customer response that what we're doing works," Garcia said.

Carvana's revenues more than doubled this year to \$350 million from \$150 million in 2015, and just \$40 million in 2014. The first year of operation saw just \$4 million in busi-

ness. And the firm this summer raised another \$160 million in funding, bringing the total to \$460 million.

The Blockbuster curse?

Carvana is not the first company to try to rethink the used car buying experience. There are many other online options, and CarMax became a big disrupter with its no-haggle pricing, easy trade-ins and reputation for straight-dealing. But CarMax also uses traditional dealerships, frequently in areas where other car dealers are located. Could the vending machine upend the sales model and make CarMax go the way of Blockbuster? The once-ubiquitous video rental stores collapsed quickly after the arrival of DVD delivery service Netflix and online streaming.

Garcia declined to say. Nor would he provide details on sales at the Nashville vending machine, except to comment that "the response we have seen has been overwhelming." As a result, the company is looking to add more. "We're trying to expand as quickly as we responsibly can," he said. "We're looking to build out more." News reports say the company was trying to acquire land near Richmond for another machine, but withdrew the application after locals raised concern about the amount of light from the building. — AFP

OIL PRICES RISE ON EXPECTED DECLINE IN US CRUDE STOCKS

LONDON: Oil prices rose yesterday on forecasts of a steep draw in US crude stocks that could indicate global oversupply is starting to shrink. Benchmark Brent crude oil futures were trading up 56 cents, or 1 percent, at \$55.48 a barrel at 1329 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were up 29 cents at \$52.41 a barrel, not far off a one-week high of \$52.52.

Analysts polled by Reuters expected weekly US crude oil inventories to show a draw of 2.4 million barrels in the week to Dec 16. Stocks fell more than expected in data published last week, lifting expectations for another large drop in this week's data. A deal to cut global supply among OPEC and non-OPEC producers struck this month has boosted oil prices to 17-month highs. The gains have set up 2016 to be the first year since 2012 in which Brent has risen. Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak told Russian newspaper Vedomosti

that Russia may extend a production cut beyond the first half of 2017 if needed.

"We are in a wait-and-see mood after OPEC newsflow caused much volatility," said Frank Klumpp, oil analyst at Stuttgart-based Landesbank Baden-Wuerttemberg. "The new balance seems to be between \$53 and \$57 a barrel on Brent for the next weeks." Asia is seen posting its biggest net additions to refining capacity in three years in 2017, further boosting demand for crude in the world's largest and fastest-growing oil-consuming region.

The increase amounts to roughly an additional 1.5 percent of refining capacity on top of Asia's total installed capacity of nearly 29 million barrels per day. Still, traders see no outright supply shortage for Asian refineries, as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is shielding most of its Asian customers from the planned cuts. — Reuters

RUSSIA ALLEGES DEUTSCHE EMPLOYEE MANIPULATED MARKETS WITH \$5BN OF TRADES

MOSCOW: Russia's central bank alleged that a banker at Deutsche Bank's Russian branch had manipulated markets by conducting 300 billion roubles (\$4.87 billion) of trades with relatives over two and a half years.

The central bank said the trades, made between January 2013 and July 2015, had generated a profit of 255 million roubles for Deutsche Bank employee Yuri Khilov and three relatives. The Russian central bank said it had passed its findings to law enforcement for their assessment of what had happened.

The central bank's investigation was conducted with help from Germany's Federal Financial Supervisory Authority. It is separate from an investigation into so-called "mirror trades" involving Deutsche's Moscow office which could have allowed clients to move money from one country to another without alerting authorities in 2014. A Deutsche spokesman said the bank had conducted an internal investigation into the activities of Khilov, who he said was

a former Deutsche employee. Deutsche has provided its findings to the market regulator and will cooperate closely with authorities, the spokesman said.

Khilov did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment. The Russian central bank's findings are an embarrassment for Germany's flagship lender, which recently cut back its investment banking activities in Russia.

Deutsche is also facing a large penalty in the United States for allegedly misleading investors when selling mortgage-backed securities. It was not clear whether Deutsche will be fined in Russia over the trades involving Khilov.

The Russian central bank alleged in a statement that Khilov and his relatives had manipulated trading in eight securities on the Moscow Exchange. Acting on behalf of Deutsche's London branch, Khilov made trades which were favourable to his relatives and in doing so manipulated markets, the statement said. — Reuters

MOROCCO CB KEEPS RATES UNCHANGED

RABAT: Morocco's central bank said yesterday economic growth would jump to 4.2 percent next year from an estimated 1.2 percent in 2016 on the back of sharply rising agricultural output.

It made the bullish projections as it kept its benchmark interest rate unchanged at 2.25 percent.

Abnormally dry weather across North Africa slashed the cereal harvest last season to 3.35 million tons, down 70 percent from the previous record 11 million tons. Last year's drought was the worst in 30 years, the government said. But early season rainfall this year is up 22 percent from a normal year and 107 percent up from last year.

The bank, known as Bank al-Maghrib, revising down this year's overall growth estimates from 1.4 percent. It lowered its key rate to 2.25 percent from 2.5 percent in March, its first cut in more than a year, to support the economy, in which agriculture accounts for more than 15 percent. The bank said it expected inflation to remain around 1.6 percent in 2016 and fall to 1 percent in 2017. Based on an average global oil price of \$43.1 a barrel, the current account deficit should reach 2.8 percent of gross domestic product in 2016, slightly higher than expected, and 2.1 percent in 2017. — Reuters

DOLLAR HITS NEW HIGH, DOW SETS SIGHTS ON 20,000

LONDON: The dollar hit a 14-year high yesterday as the yen fell after the Bank of Japan stuck to its ultra-loose monetary policy and the euro weakened following deadly attacks in Germany and Turkey.

On Wall Street, the Dow appeared set for another run at 20,000 points, as concern after the attacks in Europe were offset by reassurance over Italy's plan to spend up to 20 billion euros (\$21 billion) to rescue its troubled banks. On currency markets, a sense of caution after a truck ploughed into a Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12, sent the safe-haven Swiss franc towards a six-month high versus the euro and pushed the common currency firmly back below \$1.04.

But the dollar and rising bond yields again dominated, after the head of the Federal Reserve flagged the strength of the US jobs market in a speech to students on Monday. That sent the greenback up almost half a percent against a basket of major currencies to 103.65, its strongest since January 2003. Its gains were strongest against the yen, which slid around 1 percent after the Bank of Japan, shrugging off the yen's recent slump, said it would keep monetary policy loose.

"The biggest impact you see from the attacks in Berlin and (Ankara) is the Swiss franc/euro," said Societe Generale FX strategist Alvin Tan. "But apart from that the dollar continues to be strong after we had some rather

positive comments from Janet Yellen."

Benchmark 10-year US government bond yields, which set the bar for global borrowing costs and have been rising hand-in-hand with the dollar over the last few months, were at 2.57 percent having earlier topped 2.58 percent. The greenback has risen 12 percent versus the yen since Donald Trump's surprise presidential election victory, on his promises of increased fiscal stimulus. The win was made official on Monday after he got the required Electoral College votes.

Fundamentals

Modest 0.3 percent gains for European shares came after MSCI's broadest index of

Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan had ended down 0.3 percent due fifth straight day of losses for emerging markets stocks. China's CSI 300 index slid 0.6 percent, on Beijing's move to tighten supervision of shadow banking activities and on liquidity concerns, while Japan's Nikkei closed up 0.5 percent after a late BOJ-linked rally.

"There was no particular surprise from the policy meeting, but investors are happy that the economy's fundamentals are finally rising after the BOJ expressed an upbeat view," said Takuya Takahashi, a strategist at Daiwa Securities. Wall Street was expected to nudge higher having tailed off slightly on Monday as risk aversion set in following the deaths in Germany, the shooting dead of Russia's ambassador in Turkey, and a gun attack in a mosque in Switzerland.

Chancellor Angela Merkel said of the attack in Berlin: "There is much we still do not know with sufficient certainty but we must, as things stand now, assume it was a terrorist attack."

The lira initially rallied on relief that Moscow and Ankara struck a unified tone after the Ankara attack, but took a dive after the country's central bank unexpectedly kept interest rates on hold having been widely forecast to raise them. The currency has lost 17 percent of its value against the dollar this year, hit by investor concerns about a crackdown by authorities in the aftermath of a failed coup in July and by a resurgent dollar following Donald Trump's US election win.

The rouble though was up at 61.6554 per dollar and safe haven gold, which rose 0.4 percent on Monday, pulled back 0.7 percent to \$1,130 an ounce, as the prospect of further US rate hikes outweighed political concerns.

Asian markets closed mixed. Japan's Nikkei 225 clocked another fresh high for the year, advancing 0.5 percent to 19,494.53, while South Korea's Kospi added 0.2 percent to 2,041.94. But Hong Kong's Hang Seng index fell 0.5 percent to 21,729.06 and the Shanghai Composite Index in mainland China dropped 0.5 percent to 3,102.88. The S&P/ASX 200 in Australia gained 0.5 percent to 5,591.10.

Hong Kong closed down 0.5 percent and Shanghai also ended down 0.5 percent, with mainland Chinese investors fretting over a weakening yuan and rising bond yields. Manila shed 1.6 percent, Jakarta fell 0.3 percent and Kuala Lumpur lost 0.2 percent while Bangkok and Mumbai were also well down. However, Tokyo ended 0.5 percent higher after the Bank of Japan held fire on its stimulus but gave an upbeat view of the world's number-three economy as exports pick up on the back of a weaker yen. The Nikkei had fallen slightly Monday after a nine-day rally. Sydney added 0.5 percent and Seoul gained 0.2 percent, while Taipei and Wellington were flat.

The yen has fallen more than 17 percent against the greenback since Trump's shock US presidential election win in November fanned speculation that his plans for big government spending and tax cuts would force the Federal Reserve to raise borrowing costs. — Agencies

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Tuesday 20 December 2016

Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price Index	▲ 10.62	5,667.75	5,657.13	5,672.10	5,646.85
Weighted Index	▼ -2.55	376.69	379.24	379.23	376.11
KSX 15	▼ -9.70	883.29	892.99	891.75	882.61

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
MARIN	78	78	100	8	1	78 ▲ 5.0
IKARUS	39.0	37.5	579,050	22,020	15	39.0 ▲ 2.0
IPG	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	380 — 0.0
NAPESCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	810 — 0.0
ENERGYH	46.0	46.0	2,500	115	1	46.0 ▼ -0.5
GPI	40.0	39.5	4,487,959	179,155	62	40.0 ▲ 0.5
ABAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	102 — 0.0
Oil & Gas			5,069,609	201,297	79	792.57 ▲ 6.15

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
KFOUC	182	182	45,500	8,281	5	182 — 0.0
BPC	490	490	22,495	11,023	6	490 — 0.0
ALKOUT	660	660	1,179	778	1	660 ▲ 10.0
ALQURAIN	228	226	214,206	48,789	19	226 — 0.0
Basic Materials			283,380	68,870	31	997.00 ▲ 4.50

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
KCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	420 — 0.0
REFRI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	325 — 0.0
CABLE	375	375	25,000	9,375	2	375 ▼ -5.0
SHIP	174	170	212,500	36,261	16	174 ▲ 4.0
PCEM	910	910	23,500	21,385	4	910 ▼ -10.0
PAPER	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	275 — 0.0
MRC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	68 — 0.0
ACICO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	270 — 0.0
GGMC	300	300	1,753	526	1	300 — 0.0
HCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	118 — 0.0
KBMMK	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	190 — 0.0
NICBM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	206 — 0.0
EQUIPMENT	47.5	45.5	175,621	8,057	10	46.5 ▼ -0.5
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	50 — 0.0
GYPSUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	95 — 0.0
SALBOOKH	69	63	1,317,259	85,707	86	68 ▲ 4.0
AGLTY	620	610	658,323	407,981	33	610 ▼ -10.0
EDU	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	204 — 0.0
CLEANING	47.0	44.0	2,525,620	115,418	79	46.5 ▲ 2.0
KGL	61	55	4,506,370	263,974	148	60 ▲ 4.0
KPC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	174 — 0.0
HUMANISOFT	2,200	2,080	20,790	45,727	8	2,200 ▲ 60.0
NAFAIS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	206 — 0.0
SAFWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	385 — 0.0
GFC	30.0	30.0	100,000	3,000	1	30.0 — 0.0
MAYADEEN	28.0	27.5	1,014,105	27,888	22	27.5 — 0.0
CGC	610	570	2,112	1,286	4	600 — 0.0
MTCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	56 — 0.0
UPAC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	670 — 0.0
ALAFCO	250	244	2,860,671	708,990	110	246 ▲ 2.0
MUBARRAD	58	56	644,500	36,916	14	57 ▼ -1.0
LOGISTICS	73	70	3,751,172	267,128	71	72 ▲ 1.0
SCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	80 — 0.0
GCEM	76	76	80	6	1	76 ▲ 1.0
QIC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	73 — 0.0
FCM	78	78	5,000	390	1	78 — 0.0
RKWC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	89 — 0.0
SPEC	83	83	500	42	1	83 — 0.0
Industrials			17,845,076	2,040,035	612	1297.52 ▲ 9.32

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
KSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	136 — 0.0
NSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	64 — 0.0
PAPCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	100 — 0.0
CATTL	232	222	21,100	4,687	3	232 — 0.0
DANAH	90	88	2,528	227	3	90 ▲ 2.0
POULT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	192 — 0.0
FOOD	2,600	2,600	8,253	21,458	3	2,600 ▼ -20.0
Consumer Goods			31,881	1,144.73	9	1144.73 ▼ -0.49

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
MHC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	240 — 0.0
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	920 — 0.0
YIACO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	425 — 0.0
Health Care			0	0	0	1275.76 — 0.00

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
KCIN	1,060	1,040	1,002	1,042	2	1,060 — 0
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	265 — 0
SULTAN	58	58	214,004	12,412	9	58 — 0
CABLETV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	61 — 0
EYAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	385 — 0
IFAHR	160	152	10,300	1,597	4	160 ▲ 8
OULAFUEL	118	116	50,358	5,892	10	116 — 0
MUNTAAZAHAT	79	77	104,500	8,057	7	78 — 0
JAZEERA	760	750	4,900	3,724	4	760 — 0
SOOR	116	114	47,155	5,417	17	114 ▼ -2
FUTUREKID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	106 — 0
ALRAI	146	146	43,000	6,278	4	146 ▼ -2
ZIMAH	43.5	42.0	2,328,330	99,308	60	42.5 ▼ -1
Mezzan	940	930	7,870	7,355	3	930 ▼ -10
Consumer Services			2,811,419	151,082	120	920.16 ▼ -0.49

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
ZAIN	420	410	1,950,583	812,353	66	415 ▼ -5
OOREDOO	1,120	1,120	1,096	1,228	4	1,120 — 0
HITSTELEC	42.0	41.0	4,809,900	198,734	97	41.0 ▼ -1
VIVA	920	910	19,571	17,959	17	920 ▲ 10
Telecommunications			6,781,150	1,030,273	184	625.80 ▼ -0.51

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
SOKOUK	35.5	35.0	2689405	95,101	48	35.5 ▲ 0.5
KRE	62	60	196,554	11,957	10	60 ▼ -1.0
URC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	94 — 0.0
NRE	99	97	1,093,048	107,047	48	99 — 0.0
SRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	360 — 0.0
TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	470 — 0.0
AREEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	200 — 0.0
MASSALEH	40.0	39.5	3,500	139	3	40.0 ▲ 0.5
ARABREC	29.5	29.0	745,300	21,615	22	29.0 ▲ 0.5
ERESCO	40.5	39.5	364,000	14,561	20	39.5 ▼ -0.5
MABANEE	840	840	113,110	95,012	5	840 — 0.0
INJAZZAT	77	77	10,000	770	2	77 — 0.0
INVESTORS	24.0	23.0	1,863,689	43,802	39	23.5 ▼ -0.5
IRC	28.0	27.5	350,200	9,631	8	27.5 — 0.0
ALTUJARIA	81	80	201,819	16,346	6	80 — 0.0
SANAM	31.0	31.0	1,500	47	1	31.0 ▼ -0.5
AAYANRE	64	64	150,000	9,600	7	64 — 0.0
AQAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	69 — 0.0
ALAQARIA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	25.0 — 0.0
MAZAYA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	112 — 0.0
ADNC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	11.0 — 0.0
THEMAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	89 — 0.0
TIJARA	48.5	46.5	731,785	35,346	23	48.5 ▲ 2.5
TAAMEER	21.5	21.0	190,000	4,035	6	21.0 — 0.0
ARKAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	90 — 0.0
ARGAN	178	166	200	34	2	166 ▼ -6.0
ABAAR	22.5	22.0	739,010	16,627	12	22.0 ▼ -1.0
MUNSHAAT	53	51	729,100	37,653	32	53 — 0.0
FIRSTDUBAI	58	57	880,577	50,743	23	58 ▲ 1.0
KBT	41.5	40.5	2,553,741	104,912	39	40.5 — 0.0
REAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	196 — 0.0
MENA	21.0	20.0	2,477,000	50,638	44	20.5 ▼ -0.5
ALMUDON	38.0	37.0	2,698,038	101,065	33	37.5 ▼ -1.0
MARAKEZ	29.0	25.5	38,500	1,011	6	29.0 ▲ 1.0
REML	59					

BOJ LIFTS VIEW OF ECONOMY; SLIDING YEN BOOSTS EXPORTS

JAPAN POLICYMAKERS HOLD FIRE ON FURTHER STIMULUS

TOKYO: The Bank of Japan yesterday lifted its view of the economy for the first time in over a year, as the sliding yen boosts exports, offering some hope for Tokyo's stuttering growth program. Policymakers held fire on further stimulus and said they would maintain a plan to keep the yield on government 10-year bonds around zero, part of a broader bid to stimulate growth in the world's number three economy. The bank's final meeting of 2016 came on the heels of stronger-than-expected November export data and the first rise for more than a year in its closely watched Tankan survey of business confidence.

"The drop in the yen has given the bank some flexibility," said Toshihiko Sakai, a senior dealer at Mitsubishi UFJ Trust and Banking.

"It's taken pressure off the BoJ to ease more." Bank governor Haruhiko Kuroda said things were looking brighter as exports and factory output

gather steam—the bank said they were "sluggish" in a November statement. That was its first upgrade to its view on the economy since May 2015. The negative impact of a slowdown in emerging economies and Britain's vote to exit the European Union were fading, Kuroda said.

"There were headwinds in the first half of the year, but they've now disappeared," he added.

Japan has been on an unsure recovery path and the central bank remains way behind reaching a two percent inflation target that is a cornerstone of government efforts to revive the economy. There are also questions about whether the BoJ can keep buying government bonds at the current pace without shocking debt markets.

'Strong easing'

Kuroda yesterday brushed aside talk about tapering the BoJ's massive 80 trillion yen annual

asset-purchase scheme and suggested there was no limit to what measures the BoJ can take.

"We have to press on with strong monetary easing to reach the inflation target as early as possible," he said. "I do not subscribe to the view that policies face limits, like walls standing in the way."

The yen has tumbled against the greenback since Donald Trump's shock US presidential election win in November fanned speculation that his plans for big government spending and tax cuts will force the Federal Reserve to hike borrowing costs.

The Fed's indication last week that it could lift them three times next year sent the dollar surging against the Japanese unit. That is good news for Japan's exporters as a weak yen boosts their competitiveness and profitability.

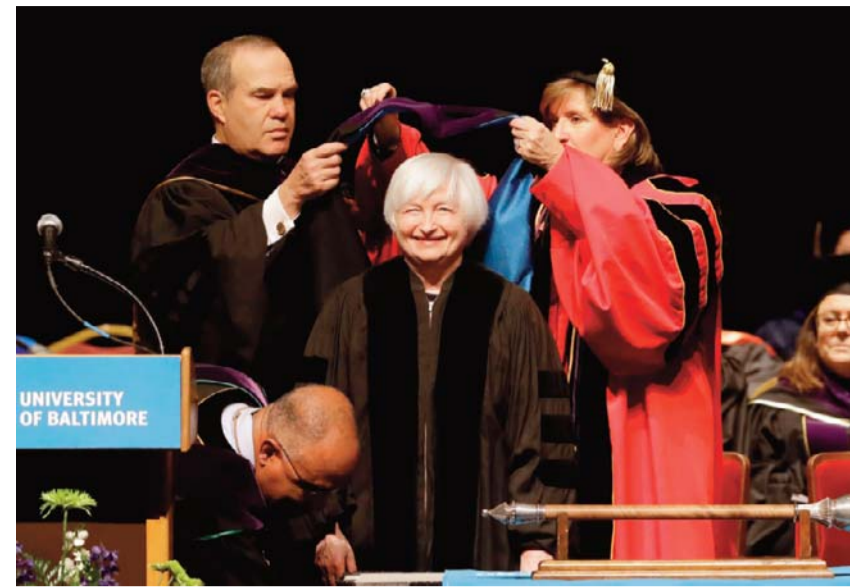
Yesterday, the dollar bought 118.06 yen from 117.07 yen earlier in the morning. Kuroda said the yen's level against the dollar was "not surprising," noting it brought the rate back to where it was earlier this year, before Brexit.

Investors tend to buy Japan's currency to shield themselves in times of turmoil. The central bank's upbeat tone comes as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's big-spending, easy-money plan to kickstart growth falters.

Tokyo this month downgraded its July-September growth estimate to 0.3 percent, from an initial 0.5 percent reading. The cut underlined the challenges in reviving an economy plagued by a deflationary price spiral that hurt activity for years. For more than three years, BoJ policymakers have embarked on a bond-buying stimulus program to try to keep interest rates ultra-low and increase borrowing and spending.

Last month, the central bank said it expects to hit two percent inflation by March 2019 — four years later than its original target and the latest in a string of delays. The BoJ hoped consumers would spend more if prices were rising, persuading firms to expand operations and getting the economy humming.

But wage growth has fallen below expectations, meaning workers have less money to spend. Abe's promises to cut through red tape—the key third plank of Abenomics—have also been slow in coming. — AFP



BALTIMORE: Federal Reserve Board Chair Janet Yellen (center) is hooded for an honorary doctor of laws degree before speaking at the University of Baltimore's fall commencement in Baltimore on Monday. — AP

YELLEN TO COLLEGE GRADS: BEST JOB MARKET IN NEARLY A DECADE

WASHINGTON: Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen said Monday that college graduates are entering the strongest job market the country has seen in nearly a decade, and their degree is more important than ever. Yellen said that with changes in the job market such as technology and globalization, succeeding in the job market is increasingly tied to higher education.

"Those with a college degree are more likely to find a job, keep a job, have higher job satisfaction and earn a higher salary," Yellen said in remarks at commencement ceremonies at the University of Baltimore. She said that annual earnings for college graduates last year were on average 70 percent higher than those with only a high school diploma. Back in 1980 that difference was only 20 percent, she said.

Yellen said the increasing demand for people with college and graduate degrees reflected the need for higher technological skills and the impact of globalization, which allows goods and services to be produced anywhere.

She said those trends were likely to continue. "Success will continue to be tied to education, in part because a good education enhances one's ability to adapt to a changing economy," she said.

In her remarks, Yellen did not make any comments about Fed interest-rate policies. The Fed last week boosted its benchmark rate by a quarter-point. It was the first increase in a year. In making the announcement, the Fed projected that it would move rates up another three times in 2017.

Yellen said that in addition to the improvement in the unemployment rate, which in November fell to a nine-year low of 4.6 percent, there have been recent signs that wage growth is picking up.

But Yellen noted that challenges remain. "The economy is growing more slowly than in past recoveries and productivity growth, which is a major influence on wages, has been disappointing," she told the graduates. — AP



TOKYO: Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda attends a meeting at the central bank headquarters in Tokyo yesterday. — AP

BRITISH AIRWAYS TO OPERATE FULL SCHEDULE ON CHRISTMAS DAY AND BOXING DAY

KUWAIT: British Airways is planning to run a full schedule on Christmas Day and Boxing Day despite proposed industrial action by Unite. Alex Cruz, British Airways CEO and chairman, said: "We are making sure that this attempt to ruin Christmas for thousands of our customers fails. Over the weekend we have been working on detailed contingency plans to ensure that we are able to operate our normal flight programme from all our airports on both Christmas Day and Boxing Day."

"We urge Unite to abandon this strike call, which is serving only to cause anxiety among our Mixed Fleet cabin crew colleagues. Our Mixed Fleet crew do a tremendous job for our customers. They earn a competitive salary package, with all crew working full-time receiving a minimum of £21,000 a year. We are seeking to improve this package and we encourage Unite to start a positive dialogue with us about our proposals. "We continue to seek a non-disruptive solution to issues of concern to our Mixed Fleet colleagues. That is why we initiated the talks at the conciliation service ACAS yesterday."

ITALY SEEKS TO BORROW 20BN EUROS TO HELP BANKING SECTOR

MILAN: The Italian government decided yesterday to seek parliamentary approval to borrow 20 billion euros to underwrite the stability of its wobbly banking sector, starting with a likely bail-out of No 3 lender, Monte dei Paschi di Siena, as early as this week.

Monte dei Paschi, recently judged the weakest of the European Union's major banks, needs to dispose of a mountain of bad loans and raise 5 billion euros in capital by the end of this month or else face the risk of being wound down by the European Central Bank. Italy's Economy minister said on Monday the money it was seeking could be used to guarantee adequate liquidity in the banking system. "These resources could also be used as part of a program to boost capital at banks," he said in a press conference.

A government bailout could come as early as this week, if Monte dei Paschi fails to pull off its own privately funded rescue plan. But it could prove to be politically explosive for the week-old administration of Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni, given that investors are required to bear losses under EU bailout rules.

Earlier on Monday, however, the bank received some rare good news in relation to its faltering rescue plan. A key investor that was reconsidering its commitment to the plan issued a statement saying that its concerns had been resolved. "(Quaestio) ... has agreed to approve the Term Sheet for the senior bridge loan as agreed with the financing banks," the investor, private bank rescue fund Atlante, said.

Atlante has committed to spending 1.5 billion euros to buy some of Monte dei Paschi's bad loans, despite having expressed "deep reservations" in a Dec. 17 letter over the terms of a bridge loan that Monte dei Paschi had secured as part of the sale of bad loans. Even with Atlante's commitment to participate in the private rescue bid, Monte dei Paschi is still not assured to raise enough money to avoid the need of a state bailout.

Its 5 billion euros cash call is meant to conclude on Thursday, but is not underwritten by a consortium of investment banks. Monte dei Paschi shares closed before both Atlante's statement and the government's announcement, having lost 11 percent and wiped out a week's gains. — Reuters

AUB ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF ITS AL-HASSAD ISLAMIC SAVING PROGRAM

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank held its weekly draw of Al-Hassad Islamic Saving program on December 14, 2016. This program offers the biggest prize amount to the largest number of winners. The prize program succeeded in becoming the first prize account in Kuwait compliant with the Islamic Sharia principles. The program has been developed to fulfil the needs of the Bank customers and increase their opportunities in winning sizeable and attractive prizes in addition to enjoying the latest banking advantages that Ahli United Bank provides.

On this occasion, the bank issued the following press release: Al-Hassad Islamic Saving program offers the highest amounts of prizes which amount to KD 3.4 Million per year. This Program also offers 26 weekly prizes, with the highest number of weekly winners. The Islamic Hassad Saving Account may be opened by the lowest amount to open an account, which is KD 100.

The winner of the weekly grand prize in the amount of KD 25,000 is: Abdullah Eissa Albuloushi.

The winners of the KD 1,000 prize each: Fatma Hasan Alsaif, Talal Zaben Alarbeer, Ali Ahmad Mohd Kandary, Ahmed Jafar Alhaddad, Abdulaziz H M Alotaibi, Tama Abdullah Alkhalidi, Hosnyah Mohammad Ramadhan, Mousa



Abdulredha Khoursheed, Amani Yaseen Bo Rubayea, Rami Abdelmunem Abdurraheem, Fahad Khalil Al-Arbeed, Haidar Jassim Mohammad, Lulwa Jaber Alahmad, Rawan Abdulsalam Mohammad, Haidar Jassim Mohammad, Lulwa Jaber Alahmad, Rawan Abdulsalam Mohammad, Sud Ajeel Aldhafeeri, Jamal Saad Alshammari, Dawood Salman Ali Matrook, Ahmed Shima Ismail, Shinto Joseph, Seddiqa Mansoor Alashoor, Layla Ali Mohamed, Sameer Hasan Mohammed Alqattan, Mohammed Jaafar Mohammed, Sawsan Isa Ali, Anupam Ramesh Kinger.

The prize program of "Al-Hassad Islamic

Saving" from Ahli United Bank offers a weekly grand prize worth KD 25,000 in addition to 25 weekly prizes worth a total of KD 25,000 distributed to 25 prizes, KD 1,000 for each winner.

In addition, prizes of Al-Hassad Islamic saving program from Ahli United Bank offer 4 quarterly grand prizes announced in quarterly draws. Each is a "Salary for Life" prize which is worth KD 250,000. In general, Ahli United Bank continues to offer innovative tools and means to meet the needs of its customers to match the Bank's long history of distinctive services which extend over 74 years during which the Bank managed to take the lead among local banks.



PARIS: Buses line up on a ring road during a protest in Paris against anti-diesel measures yesterday. — AFP

STRIKE DISRUPTS FLIGHTS OF BIGGEST NIGERIAN AIRLINE

LAGOS: Workers unpaid for months by Nigeria's biggest airline went on strike yesterday, halting flights and stranding thousands of passengers days before Christmas. Operations of Arik Air, which flies more than 100 domestic and international flights daily, stopped before dawn yesterday, Ahmed Roland Maikudi, vice president of the National Association of Aircraft Pilots and Engineers, told The Associated Press. He said pilots and other workers have not been paid for up to five months.

"We Say No To Slavery!" said placards waved by chanting workers who picketed the airline's padlocked headquarters at Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos, Nigeria's commercial hub. Strikers blocked the entry with vehicles.

Officials of Arik Air could not immediately be reached for comment. The airline has been struggling for weeks with delayed and cancelled flights usually blamed on aviation fuel shortages. A Dec. 17 statement says the airline has been able to procure only about 200,000 of the 500,000 liters of fuel needed daily.

Two other Nigerian airlines suspended operations weeks ago, and two international carriers recently stopped flying to the country. Africa's largest economy, and the continent's second-biggest oil producer, is struggling in a recession caused by low oil prices and a massive shortage of foreign currency.

Other international airlines have taken to refueling in neighboring Ghana, losing Nigeria its spot as the leading airline hub in West Africa. — AP

LLOYDS TO BUY MBNA TO PUSH CREDIT CARD BUSINESS

LONDON: Lloyds Banking Group is buying the MBNA UK credit card business from Bank of America for 1.9 billion pounds (\$2.4 billion) in an effort to increase profit and reduce its reliance on mortgage lending. The move represents the first major acquisition for Britain's biggest mortgage lender, which is part-owned by the government, since it was bailed out during the 2007-09 crisis.

Lloyds said the deal, which is expected to close in the first half of 2017, includes around 800 million pounds of acquired equity and assumes 240 million pounds for future claims for mis-sold loan insurance (PPI). Analysts said the move represented a good use of the bank's excess cash, but warned it carried some risks given

Britain's uncertain economic outlook following the country's vote to leave the European Union in June.

"Lloyds will be broadly doubling up its exposure to credit cards at a particularly benign point in the bad debt cycle and ahead of a potential slow-down...once the terms of the UK's exit from the EU are reached," Gary Greenwood of Shore Capital said. The British lender said it would pay through cash generated by its ordinary business operations.

"The acquisition... increases our participation in the expanding UK credit card market with a multi-brand strategy and advances our strategic aim to deliver sustainable growth as a UK focused retail and commercial bank," AntUnio

Horta-OsUrrio, Group Chief Executive, said. Lloyds said it was confident of being able to deliver a progressive and sustainable ordinary dividend in 2016, but Greenwood said the bank might reconsider its special dividend promised for the end of the year in order to fund the deal.

The deal will lift the contribution of the consumer finance business to 21 percent of the bank's pre-tax profits from 17 percent, reducing Lloyds' reliance on the UK mortgage business, Joseph Dickerson of Jefferies said. MBNA, which made after-tax profits of 123 million pounds in the first half of 2016, would add 650 million pounds a year to group revenues, Lloyds said, adding the deal could shave 100 million pounds a year from MBNA's cost base. — Reuters

QATAR AIRWAYS LAUNCHES REFRESHED DINING SERVICE ON INTRA-GULF FIRST CLASS

DOHA: Qatar Airways is celebrating the rollout of a refreshed and refined premium in-flight dining service for First Class passengers on the airline's intra-Gulf services.

The new First Class dining service will be served on a modern and contemporary platter made of fine-bone china, showcasing curated and designed menus designed by Qatar Airways' celebrated chefs specifically for intra-Gulf flights, which average one hour 30 minutes of flight time.

First Class passengers will enjoy hot and savoury snacks, a light salad, dessert and bread and butter, all served immediately after take-off as part of the much appreciated 'one-stop' service.

Tailored specifically for short intra-Gulf flights, the service allows Qatar Airways' valued passengers

the First Class experience they have come to expect of Qatar Airways.

Qatar Airways' Group Chief Executive Akbar Al Baker said: "I'm thrilled to announce the introduction of a refreshed in-flight dining experience for our most valued and most frequent travellers. Intra-Gulf First Class passengers will continue to enjoy our award-winning service on board the leading airline in the Middle East, now with a more streamlined and contemporary in-flight dining service that is beautifully and elegantly presented.

We're committed to being the leading airline and the first choice for passengers in the region, and our refreshed First Class service is designed specifically for our passengers based on what they truly appreciate - fresh, delicious meals presented in



a beautiful and thoughtful service."

The refreshed service is available on Qatar Airways intra-Gulf flights between Doha and Abu

Dhabi, Bahrain, Dammam, Dubai, Dubai World Centre, Gassim, Hofuf, Kuwait City, Muscat, Ras al-Khaimah, Riyadh and Sharjah.

Qatar Airways Senior Vice President Customer Experience, Rossen Dimitrov, said: "Qatar Airways prides itself on delivering seamless service for our passengers. Our frequent flyers travelling with us on intra-Gulf flights will appreciate the fresh approach we have taken to re-designing and refining the First Class on-board dining service so that they can enjoy meals from world-class chefs, elegantly served, even when flying with us on the shortest routes."

The award-winning airline continues to introduce new products in its First and Business Class, and will introduce a new Business Class concept in March 2017.

Because you are premier...
10 free valet parking locations



BURGAN BANK ADDS NEW FREE VALET PARKING LOCATIONS FOR PREMIER CUSTOMERS

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank recently announced that it has added new valet parking locations which is offered free of charge to accommodate its valued Premier Banking customers.

Premier Banking customers are entitled to free valet parking services by presenting their cards at several prime locations in Kuwait which are Villa Fayrouz Restaurant, Awtar Restaurant, Lebnani Café & Restaurant, Al-Saraya Palace Restaurant, Joori Min Beirut Restaurant, Luscius Restaurant, and Max Stores, in addition to the existing valet parking locations at Salhiya Complex, Kuwait International Airport 24/7

and Olympia Mall. With these free valet parking locations, Premier customers can enjoy a more comfortable experience away from the hassle of finding a parking space for their car.

This service has been introduced as part of the bank's wide range of valuable privileges and benefits that is especially designated for its Premier Banking customers.

To find out more about Burgan Bank's latest promotions or any of its products and services, customers are advised to visit any of the bank's branches, or contact the call center on 1804080. For more information, customers can also log onto the bank's website on www.burgan.com.

GULF BANK LAUNCHES EXCLUSIVE ATMS INSTANT REWARD CAMPAIGN



KUWAIT: Gulf Bank announced yesterday that it will be the first bank in Kuwait to launch a new instant reward campaign on the use of its ATMs, commencing with an offer in collaboration with Costa Coffee which will start this week and will run until the end of January 2017.

The new campaign offers to all Gulf Bank's ATM users, across Kuwait, coupons attached on ATM receipts providing 30 percent discount on food and drinks from Costa Coffee. These coupons will be attached to the back of the ATM receipts giving easy and practical access to enjoy a meal or coffee from Costa Coffee upon showing the coupons.

The offer, which is exclusive at Gulf Bank

COSTA COFFEE

ATMs only, allows customers to benefit from the vicinity of the ATMs and Costa Coffee shops. With every withdrawal or transaction done on Gulf Bank's ATMs, customers will indulge themselves in some treats especially during the holiday season.

Gulf Bank is committed to providing the best and most innovative services and offers to its customers, and this campaign is only a proof of its continuous efforts.

To find out more about the Bank's latest news, customers can visit the bank's bilingual website at www.e-gulfbank.com, call the Customer Contact Center on 1805805, or visit one of Gulf Bank's 56 branches in Kuwait.

MALABAR GOLD & DIAMONDS LAUNCHES 6TH EDITION OF ITS GOLD AND DIAMONDS FESTIVAL

KUWAIT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds' the prominent global jewellery retailer unveils their 6th edition of 'Malabar Gold & Diamonds Festival' in Kuwait commencing from 21st December, 2016. This season, Malabar Gold & Diamonds showcases the latest collection of gold, diamond & precious gems jewellery in their outlets, to celebrate this festive period.

This much-awaited festival is one of the biggest jewellery events in GCC and the customers get unprecedented opportunities to win a total of 300,000



gold coins. A true shopper's delight, Malabar Gold & Diamonds Festival will captivate the customers by exhibiting eye catching designs in gold, diamonds, platinum, and precious gems from different parts of the world to flaunt any occasion or event and are well priced too. The festival stands apart from the usual jewellery exhibitions and promotions and as the tag line indicates- 'Everyone Wins', i.e. every customer gets a chance to be a winner through this festival.

Customers can win a guaranteed gold coin or up to 100 gold coins instantly on purchase of gold jewellery worth KWD 200 via Scratch N Win coupons. With

every diamond jewellery purchase worth KWD 250, customers get a free 1 gram gold coin. Furthermore, customers can avail the zero deduction offer on 22K (GCC) old gold jewellery exchange as well. All the above-mentioned offers are valid until 14th Jan 2017.

To add more glitter to this season, they have also unveiled the latest collection of jewellery in gold, diamonds and precious gems to suit the tastes of their multicultural and multinational customers. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has incorporated these designs as a part of various brands presented at Malabar Gold & Diamonds' namely Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewellery, Era - Uncut Diamond Jewellery, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Divine- Indian Heritage Jewellery, Precia - Precious Gem Jewellery and Startlet - Kids Jewellery.

The last five editions of 'Malabar Gold & Diamonds Festival' elicited tremendous response from the jewellery lovers. This time also the customers are excited to be a part of this much awaited festival to witness the rarest collection of jewellery from across the world and to avail fabulous offers. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has always been at the forefront in gold jewellery manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing and plans on being the 'most-preferred' jewellery retailer in the market in the coming years. The group strives to continue embarking on its journey by further expanding in the near future.

KIB APPOINTS AHMAD ALKAZEMI AS GM OF COMMERCIAL BANKING

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced that it has appointed Ahmad Abdulrazzaq AlKazemi as General Manager of the Commercial Banking Department. In his role, AlKazemi will be leading both the commercial banking and international banking functions; developing and implementing a strategy for both divisions in line with the Bank's overall business plan.

In its statement, KIB praised AlKazemi's vast banking sector experience and his strong industry acumen, particularly in the field of corporate banking. AlKazemi spent his banking career at Gulf Bank, progressing through different positions and levels of management over the course of more than 30 years with the Bank. His last position with the Bank was as Deputy General Manager of Corporate Banking, in addition to serving as Acting General Manager of the



Ahmad Abdulrazzaq AlKazemi

department. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Kansas in the United States. AlKazemi is joining a management team of highly qualified and experienced senior banking professionals at KIB. This newest appointment comes in line with KIB's strategy which focuses on attracting the highest caliber of local talents, enabling the Bank to achieve its objectives by enhancing its performance and elevating its position within the banking sector.

The Commercial Banking Department at KIB provides financing facilities to corporate clients by offering a comprehensive package of Sharia compliant banking solutions. On the other hand, the International Banking Department is mandated with building and maintaining the Bank's international relationships, in addition to promoting international finance and correspondent banking services.



JOYALUKKAS OPENS 2ND SHOWROOM IN USA AT EDISON, NEW JERSEY

NEW JERSEY: Multi-awarded global jewellery retail chain Joyalukkas adds another milestone to 2016 with the opening of its second showroom in the USA at Edison, New Jersey on 17th December 2016 at 11:00 AM. Inaugurated by Thomas Lankey, Mayor of Edison, New Jersey, in the presence of Mr. Antony Jos, Director, Joyalukkas Group; Aniyon George, KCCNA President; Jiby Thomas, FOMAA Secretary; Bishop Joy Alappatt, Syro Malabar Diocese North America; Dilip Verghese, Francy Verghese, GM-Joyalukkas USA Operations and other dignitaries. The inauguration was a resounding success, with many local VIPs and dignitaries as well as company executives in attendance. After the overwhelming response received from their first showroom in Houston. The opening of their second showroom in New Jersey is part of the Group's aggressive expansion plans, which also include the opening of a third showroom in the USA in Chicago in the next few months.

Joyalukkas has earned the moniker "world's

favourite jeweller" by offering world-class products coupled with the highest standards of customer service wherever they operate.

"Opening showrooms in the USA is a dream come true for all of us at Joyalukkas Group," said Joy Alukkas, Chairman and Managing Director of Joyalukkas Group. "New Jersey is an exciting location and we are looking forward to providing the quality of jewellery and service Joyalukkas is known for to the cosmopolitan mix of customers here. The response to the opening our showroom in Edison was heartwarming and we strive to return this great reception with great value and quality service for all customers."

Customers visiting the Joyalukkas New Jersey showroom during inauguration period enjoy a free 2 gram gold coin on purchase of diamond, polki & pearl jewellery worth \$2000 or more. While those purchasing gold & precious jewellery worth \$1000 and more will also get a quarter gram gold coin for free.

The Joyalukkas Edison, New Jersey showroom

showcases a mix of traditional, ethno contemporary and international designs that have won hearts and following of customers around the world in exclusive Joyalukkas brands, such as Veda Temple Jewellery, Pride Diamonds, Eleganza Polki Diamonds, Masaaki Pearls, Zenina Turkish Jewellery, Li'l Joy Kids Jewellery, the Apurva Antique collection & Ratna Precious Stone Jewellery, along with exquisite pieces in gold, diamond, precious stones, platinum and pearl.

Joyalukkas Group is a multi-billion dollar global conglomerate, with varied business interests. The group operates its various business operations across UAE, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, Singapore, Malaysia, UK and India. The group businesses include Jewellery, Money Exchange, Fashion & Silks, Luxury Air Charters, Malls and Realty. Joyalukkas employs over 8,000 professionals across the world, and is one of the most awarded and recognized Jewellery retail chains in the world.

IRRESISTIBLE PRICES FROM ALGHANIM AUTO ON NEW FORD MODELS

KUWAIT: Hailed as one of the most irresistible automotive offers of the year, Alghanim Auto has recently launched its amazing promotion of 2016, offering unbelievable prices on all new Ford vehicles for the month of December only. The star vehicles include Ford Taurus, F150, EcoSport, Escape, the all-new Edge, Explorer, and Expedition. All these amazing drives come with 5 years/100,000km manufacturer warranty, thereby offering customers the value and peace of mind that a Ford owner deserves. The new reduced prices make purchasing a Ford an opportunity that should not be missed, considering that these extraordinary offers are available until the end of December.

Included in this offer is the stylish Ford Taurus, which is one of the most successful family sedans over the years thanks to its reliability, strong performance, high levels of safety, and a host of modern features continuously developed by Ford to offer customers a wide range of technologies and smart systems. Those include the Electric Power-Assisted Steering and Torque Vectoring Control for enhanced confidence and pleasure in driving. In its spacious cabin, the Taurus is available with advanced features such as Blind Spot Information System BLIS, rear park assist with rearview camera; and the intelligent SYNC entertainment system with 8" MyFord Touch display. Now available at a starting price of KD7,499 during December, the Taurus is a great way to start the New Year.

Meanwhile, truck fans can finally get into the F150, the "Pride of the Trucks" and America's best-

selling truck for the past 39 years, which is now available in a variety of trims and cab configurations including the regular cab, exclusive to Alghanim Auto.

The fully loaded Regular Cab V8 XLT featured in this offer is now at a special price of KD 8,999. The truck confidently stands out with its best-in-class 5.0L V8 engine with 385HP and 525 lb.-ft. of torque. In addition to its daring exterior that evokes strength and readiness for challenge, the V8 XLT featured in this offer is fully loaded with convenience and safety features, including SYNC entertainment system with 8" MyFord Touch display, rear view camera with sensors, remote start engine, and side steps for easy ingress and egress. The F150 is available at Alghanim Auto in Regular Cab, Super Cab, and Crew Cab configuration in a multitude of trims and colors, all are available at incredible prices.

As for the highly popular Ford SUVs and crossovers, customers can choose from a variety of models that suit their lifestyles. Designed to give drivers more of what they need with superb fuel-efficiency, the compact Ford EcoSport is equipped with 4-cylinder 1.5L engine and automatic transmission, plus standard feature such as 16-inch aluminum wheels and LED daytime running lights, now available at a very attractive starting price of KD4,399. Its bigger brethren, the Escape, comes with standard equipment such as 7 airbags, dual auto A/C with rear ventilation and fog lamp, and is now available starting from KD5,499.

Those who want to turn heads on the road

should look no further than the all-new Ford Edge, thanks to its advanced features and technology. Customers can choose from the four available trims, starting at KD 8,499 while enjoying the same reliable manufacturer warranty. The new, Family-friendly Ford Explorer steals the spotlight by offering space for 7 passengers in addition to the highest comfort and safety standards, all at the starting price of KD 9,499. The Ford Expedition, meanwhile, remains the #1 favorite for large families thanks to its diverse capabilities, technologically advanced features and beautifully refined design, not to mention its 8-passenger spaciousness and the V6 3.5L fuel-efficient EcoBoost engine that is capable of generating 385 horsepower and 629 lb.-ft. of torque. The Expedition can be further equipped with SYNC entertainment system and 8" MyFord Touch display, rear view camera with sensors and Ford's Blind Spot Information System (BLIS). The Expedition is available in 4 trims at incredible value, starting with the December-only price of KD 9,499.

All current Ford owners and customers-to-be can visit the Ford Alghanim New Vehicle Showroom, Service and Spare Parts Center in the Shuwaikh Industrial Area, opposite from the Classical Car Museum and Sirbb Circuit. The showroom is open from 9 am to 10 pm Saturday through Thursday, and 2 pm - 8 pm on Friday; while the Service Center is open from 7 am to 7 pm every day except Fridays. For added convenience, the Express Service welcomes customers till 10 pm, and from 2 pm - 7 pm on Friday.

US HOUSE REPORT URGES CLEARER GUIDANCE ON CELL PHONE TECH

WASHINGTON: Clearer guidelines are needed for law enforcement's use of secretive and intrusive cell phone tracking technology, and police and federal agents should be upfront with a judge about their deployment, a House committee said in a report Monday.

The report from the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee examines the use of cell-site simulators by federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. The technology works by mimicking a cellphone tower, allowing law enforcement to collect basic data - such as a unique subscriber number - from cellphones in a particular area or neighborhood. The data can help police determine the location of a targeted phone without the user even making a

call or sending a text message.

The surveillance devices have been broadly adopted by police departments and federal agencies, which see them as vital in helping track the location of criminal suspects. But the technology has raised Fourth Amendment concerns among privacy advocates for its ability to collect data not only about the targets of an investigation but also innocent bystanders who happen to be within range of the simulator device.

"While law enforcement agencies should be able to utilize technology as a tool to help officers be safe and accomplish their missions, absent proper oversight and safeguards, the domestic use of cell-site simulators may well infringe upon the constitutional rights of citizens

to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures, as well as the right to free association," the report states.

Simulation devices

The Justice Department has 310 devices across its component agencies, including the FBI and the US Marshals Service, and spent more than \$71 million between fiscal years 2010 and 2014 to acquire the use of the technology. The Department of Homeland Security has 124 cell-site simulation devices, according to the report. Local police departments across the country have used them repeatedly, and the Internal Revenue Service says it's deployed the technology to pursue investigations into money laundering, identity theft and

other crimes. The Justice Department issued new policies last year aimed at ensuring that federal law enforcement officials obtain a search warrant before using the technology, excluding certain emergency circumstances. The policy applied only to federal agencies within the Justice Department and not, as some privacy advocates had hoped, to state and local law enforcement whose own use of cell-site simulators have drawn scrutiny from judges. The Homeland Security Department issued its own, similar policy.

But the House committee said there should be more consistent standards covering local agencies as well. The House committee made several recommendations, including calling on state and local agencies to adopt policies that are on par

with those in use by the Justice and Homeland Security departments.

The report also criticized the use of non-disclosure agreements that state and local law enforcement agencies sign with the FBI and the manufacturer selling the device. Those agreements, which prohibit local authorities from discussing the technology's use in court, "should be replaced with agreements that require clarity and candor to the court whenever a cell-site simulator has been used by law enforcement in a criminal investigation," according to the House report. And it said the federal government should make funding to local agencies for cell-site simulators contingent on a requirement that they adopt "new and enhanced" guidelines of the Justice and Homeland Security departments. —AP



NEW YORK: In this Sept 5, 2014, file photo, the Apple logo hangs in the glass box entrance to the company's Fifth Avenue store. — AP

APPLE APPEALS EU ORDER TO COLLECT \$14B IN BACK TAXES

CUPERTINO: Apple is appealing a European Union order to collect a record 13 billion euros (\$14 billion) in back taxes based on the way it reports European-wide profits through Ireland. The move follows a similar appeal Sunday by Ireland. Ireland charges the Cupertino, California-based company only for sales within Ireland. EU Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager said the arrangement let Apple use two shell companies incorporated in Ireland to report its Europe-wide profits at effective rates well under 1 percent. In a statement Monday, Apple said the EU took "unilateral action and retroactively changed the rules, disregarding decades of Irish tax law, US tax law as well as global consensus on tax policy."

"If their opinion is allowed to stand, Apple would pay 40 percent of all the corporate income tax collected in Ireland, which is unprecedented and, far from leveling the playing field, selectively targets Apple," Apple said. "This has no basis in fact or law and we're confident the ruling will be overturned." Apple says it has a worldwide income tax rate of around 26 percent. The Irish and Apple appeals set the stage for a titanic legal battle that has implications for more than 600 US multinationals based in Ireland and thousands more using tax-avoidance vehicles globally. The EU's Department of Finance has pledged to close rules permitting shell companies, though global companies could avoid that obstacle by shifting the same accounting strategies to other countries beyond the EU's wrath. — AP

APPLE'S AIRPODS TOUGH TO RECYCLE

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple Inc's new wireless headphones could be a problem for recyclers, according to an electronics firm that took apart the device to review its component parts. Apple has been promoting a more environmentally conscious image for the company after having come under fire in the past for constructing its devices so tightly that their components can be difficult to cost-effectively disassemble for recycling. But Apple's latest 4-gram wireless headphones, or AirPods, have glued-in tiny lithium batteries that make recycling difficult, said Kyle Wiens, chief executive of iFixit, the company which took apart the AirPods and has previously analyzed other Apple products.

"They're basically saying this is the future of headphones," said Wiens. He estimates Apple has sold 1.4 billion pairs of iPhone and iPod headphones, weighing about 31 million pounds. Given that the iPhone 7 ships without a traditional headphone jack, AirPods may signal Apple's future. "There could easily be a billion of these things over the next 10 years," Wiens said. Apple has said that the \$159 AirPods can be returned to the company for recycling. A spokesman declined to comment further on recycling the devices. The headphones, which Apple released last week after a one-month delay, have garnered positive reviews. —Reuters

EU CHARGES FACEBOOK OVER WHATSAPP BUYOUT

BRUSSELS: The European Union charged Facebook yesterday with providing "misleading" information when it sought approval for its blockbuster \$22-billion buyout of the WhatsApp mobile messaging service. The European Commission said the EU's greenlight of the buyout, announced in October 2014, was not in jeopardy but the social network could face almost two hundred million euros in fines. With the charge, Facebook joins Apple, Google, Amazon and Microsoft among the US-based tech giants caught in major EU competition probes.

"The European Commission has sent a Statement of Objections to Facebook alleging the company provided incorrect or misleading information during the Commission's 2014 investigation" of the buyout, the EU's executive arm said in a statement. Facebook is accused of misleading the EU with a claim that it was technically impossible for it to merge users between the two services. But WhatsApp in August said that it would begin sharing data with Facebook, in a bid to allow better-targeted advertising and to fight spam on the platform.

The update by WhatsApp raises "concerns that Facebook intentionally, or negligently, submitted incorrect or misleading information to the commission," the EU said. The company has until January 31 to respond to the charge sheet. It faces a fine of one percent of annual sales, which stood at a whopping \$18 billion in 2015. "We respect the Commission's process and are confident that a full review of the facts will confirm Facebook has acted in good faith," a Facebook spokesperson said in an email. — AFP

SUPER MARIO RUN LIMPING START: PRICE, CONNECTIVITY MISSTEPS FOR NINTENDO

WORLD SO FAR IS UNDERWHELMED

NEW YORK: Super Mario might be running, but a hefty price tag for a mobile game just won't fly with the masses. The world so far is underwhelmed by "Super Mario Run," which Nintendo released for the iPhone last week. This is no "Pokemon Go," which captivated millions of players in their quest to collect digital monsters at real-world locations. Nintendo's stock price has fallen 7 percent on the Tokyo Stock Exchange since the game's Dec. 15 launch, and the game is rated just 2.5 stars out of 5 on the iPhone app store.

The problem, it seems, is not with the quality or design of "Super Mario Run." Both are top notch, with enough elements of classic Mario to satisfy old-school Nintendo fans, alongside mobile-friendly features such as the ability to play with one hand. Rather, Nintendo's overly optimistic \$10 price tag, as well as an inexplicable requirement for players to be constantly connected to the internet while playing, could be enough to turn off all but the most hardcore fans. As of Monday, "Mario Run" was the top free app on iTunes. This, of course, is misleading, as the app isn't free if you want to play beyond a few minutes.

Audacious price tag

Ten dollars is too much for a latte and too much for a mobile game, even if it comes with truffle shavings in the case of the latte and the world's best known video game character in the case of "Super Mario Run." Players can download the game for free and play three of the 24 available "worlds." This takes only a few minutes and leaves one extremely unsatisfied. It's like dining at a pricey restaurant knowing you can only afford the appetizer.

THE FIX: Nintendo should slash the price in half and offer more content for free, says Jordan Edelson, CEO of Appetizer Mobile, a mobile app development agency in New York. Oh, and once the price is cut, it would be a good idea to make the game available on Android, too. After all, most people in the world have Android phones. Android users tend to be less willing than iPhone users to pay for apps, so a price cut is essential.

Staying connected

The game requires a constant internet connection. It's understandable with "Pokemon Go," which uses your physical location as part of game play. There is no obvious reason need for it with "Mario," and that just leads to frustrations. Why can't one play on the subway? Or in airplane mode on the airplane as holiday travel season heats up? What if someone is away from Wi-Fi and has a limited cellular data plan? Sorry!

In a statement, Nintendo said connectivity "allows us to offer a variety of features and services that enhance the play experience. 'Super Mario Run' is not a static experience, but rather one that players can continue to return to again and again to enjoy something new and unexpected."

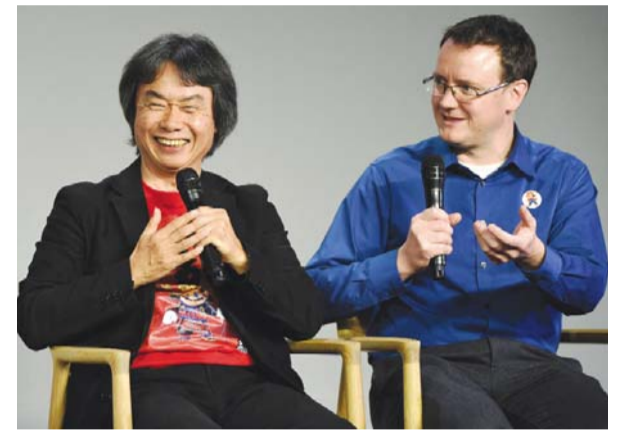
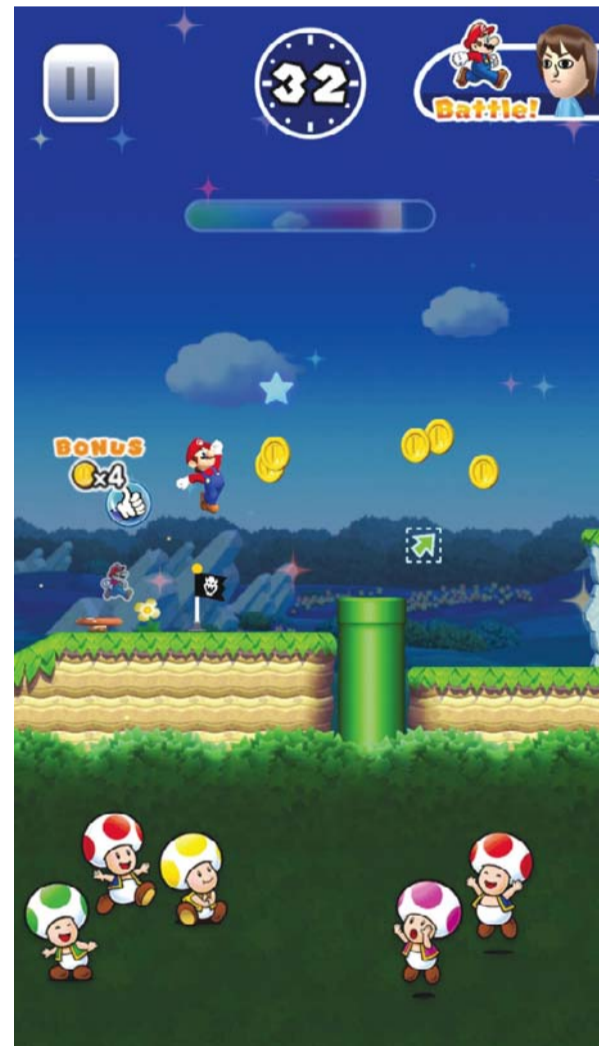
The features Nintendo cites include the ability to play across multiple devices, limited-time rewards and access to player data and scores for challenges with other players. None of these sound essential to an enjoyable playing experience.

THE FIX: Drop the connectivity requirement. "If you are trying to position it as a casual game (that can be played) with one hand, you want people to be able to play it wherever they are," Edelson says.

What Nintendo got right

If "Super Mario Run" gets over these two big hurdles, there is still a chance the game could be a success. After all, Nintendo fans have been waiting for a mobile Mario for nearly a decade, pretty much ever since mobile games have existed, so they are likely to give the Japanese gaming giant a second chance. With this much waiting, expectations have understandably been high. Critics, who judge the game based on what it's like to play it, have given it an average of 78 out of 100 on the game reviews aggregator Metacritic. This counts as "generally favorable."

And they are right. Nintendo has done a good job translating Mario's classic, side-scrolling world to a mobile screen. Mario runs without players needing to do anything, so they can focus on collecting coins and knocking out bigger enemies (usually by jumping on them). The music is music to the ears of any '80s and '90s Nintendo fan, and yes, you can play with one hand. Users, though, have rated it 5.6 out of 10 on Metacritic. Many are angry about the price and the inability to play while commuting. And since it's users and not critics who will go out and buy the game - or not - Nintendo may have a problem on its hands. —AP



NEW YORK: Japanese video game designer and producer Shigeru Miyamoto, left, and Senior Product Marketing Manager of Nintendo of America and interpreter, Bill Trinen, make an appearance at the Apple SoHo store to promote Super Mario Run for iOS. — AP



These images provided by Nintendo shows a screenshot from the game "Super Mario Run," which the gaming giant released for the iPhone on Dec 15, 2016. — AP photos

CZECH COMPANY OPENS PRODUCTION OF BATTERIES BASED ON NANOTECHNOLOGY



PRAGUE: Company HE3DA President Jan Prochazka shows qualities of a new battery during the official start of a battery production line. — AP

PRAGUE: A Czech company opened on Monday a production line for batteries based on nanotechnology, which uses tiny parts invisible to human eyes. The batteries are touted as potentially more efficient, longer-lasting, cheaper, lighter and above all safer. The automatic line will operate for several months to get all necessary certifications. Then, Prague-based company HE3DA said Monday it is ready to launch other lines in a new plant built in eastern Czech Republic, and at a factory in Slovakia.

Nanotechnology can increase the size and surface of batteries electrodes, making them sponge-like so that they can absorb more energy during charging and ultimately increasing the energy storage capacity. There's an appetite for batteries that would hold more energy, last longer, be cheaper and safer, a crucial step key for the development and success of many technologies, from solar and wind energy to electric cars.

Several ways are being explored by researchers around the globe on how to achieve that. Tesla Motors has also been building a "gigafactory" to produce conventional lithium-ion batteries for use in its electric cars and potentially to store electricity for homes. HE3DA president Jan Prochazka said he was confident his invention provides a solution other current products can't offer. "We don't want to compete with anyone on the market," Prochazka said. "We're building a new market." His battery is designed to store energy from renewable electric sources. Next planned type will be suitable for electric cars. The price has not been set yet but it is supposed to be about a half of the cost of current lithium batteries of the same capacity. — AP

DEAD CHINA RUNNER REVEALS MARATHON CHEATS

BEIJING: Thinking of competing in a marathon but put off by the distance? Easy. Pay someone to run it for you. The death of a runner in a half marathon in China's southeastern city of Xiamen this month has highlighted an unexpected form of cheating. When a runner suffered a heart attack and collapsed 4.5 km from the finish line, at first it seemed like a tragic death. But a subsequent investigation revealed that the victim was actually running on behalf of someone else.

The trickster has since been given a life ban from competing in the event, the Xinhua news agency reported on Sunday. According to the Beijing Youth Daily, 30 of the 18,000 people who had registered to participate in the Dec 10 event were disqualified. Reasons for the bans were not given, but the paper said high school students were told they could earn credits towards university entrance examinations if they finished in the top 100 places in the race, hinting at one possible motive for cheating.

Critics took to social media to attack the cheats while others blamed race organizers. "Without any systematic training or willpower, what they want is to take photos and tell the world on social media that they are leading a fashionably 'healthy' life," Xinhua quoted a poster named Chiphell as saying on one microblogging site. Organizers acknowledged that it was possible for a non-runner to pick up another person's bib, partly to help out-of-towners who may not be able to do so in person. "Trading of number bibs is banned, but it is also hard to detect," a committee member told Xinhua. Such cheating is

not entirely new. In 2010, some runners in the Xiamen marathon were disqualified for covering part of the route by bus. Xinhua quoted one marathon runner surnamed Liu as saying he had witnessed all kinds of cheating at races. Those who failed to get a number in the lottery could buy one from lucky registrants or simply take their chances by mixing into the crowd on the race track, he said. Others who wanted a finisher's certificate but did not want to actually complete the race would either have someone else run for them or take shortcuts on the course, he said.

Turning a blind eye

"The organizers should first be blamed for the chaos," another runner named Gao told Xinhua. "Once I saw a man running with a woman's number bib. The bib colors for male and female runners are different. Anyone who was not color-blind could easily spot it, but all the referees along the route just turned a blind eye." The tactic recalls the case of unremarkable Cuban runner Rosie Ruiz who won the Boston marathon in 1980 before suspicious officials realized she had taken the subway for part of the race and emerged from a station not far from the finish line.

Long-distance running has become increasingly popular in China since the country's first marathon was held in Beijing in 1981. More than 300 events are now held a year, according to the Chinese Athletics Association, despite the kind of air pollution that in 2014 forced runners to compete in Beijing wearing face masks in choking conditions. While some say the surge in popu-



XIAMEN, China: This photo taken on Dec 10, 2016 shows runners taking part in the half marathon in eastern China's Fujian province. — AFP

larity is due to the increasing desire to be seen to have a healthy lifestyle, others suspect the trend is driven by wanting to score social media points rather than love of the sport, Xinhua said.

It said that 14 people have died in

marathons over the past three years, including the substitute runner in Xiamen this month and another competitor in the same race, who collapsed after the finish line. Most of the dead were under 35, it said. Xiamen's race

organizers reacted to the deaths by appealing for athletes to abide by the rules. "We call on all runners to bear the spirit of sportsmanship and run by the rules. Anyone who breaches the rules will face severe punishment." — AFP



NAIROBI: Kenyan school teacher and breast cancer survivor Rose Kariuki reads pamphlets at the Faraja cancer care center on Monday. — AFP

MODERN LIFE, BAD HABITS: AFRICA FACES NEW ILLNESSES

NAIROBI: When Rose Kariuki first felt a lump on her left breast, the spectre of cancer - a disease she had only heard of on television - was the last thing on her mind. "To me, cancer was nowhere near us. It was shocking, I feared death, I feared so many things," the 46-year-old Kenyan school teacher told AFP. Rose is one of a growing number of Africans suffering from cancer, one of the lifestyle diseases - along with diabetes and heart problems - proving increasingly deadly on the continent.

A World Health Organization (WHO) survey released Tuesday showed that most Africans had at least one risk factor for developing one of these diseases, such as smoking, a lack of exercise, poor diet and obesity. Women were most at risk, the study showed. After Rose underwent a mastectomy of her left breast, watched her hair fall out and nails grow black under chemotherapy, she was declared cancer-free.

But her troubles were not over. Her 64-year-old mother was already suffering from diabetes but was "wasting away", and Rose encouraged her to get tested. It turned out she had pancreatic cancer. "I think maybe mum's lifestyle has brought about this. She lives in Nairobi, she is not moving a lot, she is not going to fetch water like the lady in the village," said Rose. Rose is now teaching her 16-year-old daughter to exercise and not eat too much junk food, while she has taken up free yoga and dance classes at the Faraja support center for cancer patients in Nairobi.

'Fertile ground'

Nairobi, the biggest city in East Africa, is typical of the increasingly urban lifestyle in developing countries on the continent. Workers spend long hours in traffic snarls before sitting behind desks all day. Weekends are spent in shopping malls, and western junk food such as hamburgers and pizza abound. The WHO study showed that in the 33 countries surveyed, most adults did not consume the recommended combined five servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

While the tobacco, alcohol and food industries have had to adapt to growing health-consciousness in the West, this is not the case in Africa. "They see Africa as a fertile ground because of the legislation and policy weaknesses that exist in our region, they see opportunity to make a lot of profit," said report author Abdikamal Alisalah. Philip Ouma, patient support manager at Faraja, said it was not just the middle-class who were at risk. "Initially they used to say cancer is a disease of the rich but we are finding a lot of people who are affected who are poor," he said. "There is a possibility that the diagnostic systems are better."

According to the WHO, some four million people will die from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in Africa by 2020, and the figure will surpass those of infectious diseases by 2030. Globally deaths from NCDs will hit 44 million by 2020.

Year-long waiting list

Rose said that typically, feeling sick in Africa meant you had caught an infectious disease. "Here when people feel bad they think maybe it is like typhoid, it is malaria. (Most) cancers present themselves in a very funny way so it's not often you would even think you are suffering from cancer." With poor public hospitals barely able to bear the burden of normal healthcare challenges in most African countries, the difficulties posed by a surge in lifestyle diseases are considerable.

In Kenya's main government hospital, patients can find themselves on a waiting list for up to a year to get access to radiotherapy or chemotherapy, and often it is too late. A local television report earlier this year showed dozens of cancer patients, who travel from far-flung areas, sleeping on the floor of the hospital as they have nowhere to go in between therapy sessions. "Meanwhile private hospitals have machines that are lying idly because they are expensive but the majority of people cannot afford them so it is a big problem," said Ouma. He said the wealthy from surrounding countries were lucky, they can fly to India or Nairobi which has four private hospitals. Patients from Uganda have flocked to Kenya ever since the country's only radiotherapy machine broke down in April, and others from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Tanzania, Madagascar and the Seychelles also come to Nairobi for treatment. "Those who cannot come, they give up and they stay at home," said Ouma. — AFP

LASER THERAPY WITH DEEP-SEA BACTERIA KILLS PROSTATE CANCER

LONDON: A non-surgical treatment for low-risk prostate cancer in which doctors inject a light-sensitive drug derived from deep-sea bacteria into a patient's bloodstream was shown in a trial to kill cancer cells without destroying healthy tissue. Results of a trial in 413 patients showed that the drug, which is activated with a laser to destroy tumor tissue in the prostate, was so effective that half the patients went into remission, compared with 13.5 percent in a control group.

"These results are excellent news for men with early localized prostate cancer, offering a treatment that can kill cancer without removing or destroying the prostate," said Mark Emberton, a University College London consultant urologist who led the trial. "This is truly a huge leap forward."

The treatment, called vascular-targeted photodynamic therapy or VTP, was developed by scientists at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel in collaboration with the privately-owned STEBA Biotech.

The light-sensitive drug used, called WST11, is derived from bacteria found at the bottom of the ocean. To survive with very little sunlight, they have evolved to convert light into energy with incredible efficiency, Emberton's team said in a study published in the journal *Lancet Oncology*. The Weizmann scientists exploited this feature to develop WST11,

a compound that releases free radicals to kill surrounding cells when activated by laser light.

Men with low-risk prostate cancer are currently put under active surveillance, where the disease is monitored and only treated when it becomes more severe. Radical therapy, which involves surgically removing or irradiating the whole prostate, has significant long-term side effects so is only used to treat high-risk cancers.

While radical therapy causes lifelong erectile problems and incontinence, VTP only caused short-term urinary and erectile problems which resolved within three months, the researchers said. No significant side-effects remained after two years.

In the trial, only 6 percent of patients treated with VTP needed radical therapy compared with 30 percent of patients in the control arm who were under active surveillance. The trial involved 47 treatment sites in 10 European countries, most of which were performing VTP for the first time. "The fact that the treatment was performed so successfully by non-specialist centers in various health systems is really remarkable," Emberton said. The VTP treatment is now being reviewed by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) for possible license, but it likely to be several years before it can be offered to patients more widely. — Reuters

NOW BOAR-DING - WILD PIG CHASE AT HK AIRPORT

HONG KONG: A wild boar led Hong Kong police on a merry chase after it wandered onto the apron of Hong Kong's international airport yesterday. Several officers were able to trap the animal, holding it down with their plastic riot shields after they caught up with it at Chek Lap Kok International Airport. "Around 2:30 pm, there was a wild pig that entered the restricted area where the planes are parked," an Airport Authority spokeswoman told AFP.

"The airport police unit was mobilized and subdued the pig," she said, adding that operations at the airport were not affected. Video published on the Apple Daily website showed the animal dashing away from police. "It's running over here! It's covered in blood," a man filming the pig from a vehicle commented.

Photographs showed blood on the

beast's nose and mouth as it lay on the ground under the crush of three police shields.

It was an adult female, around one metre long and weighed around 50 kg, local media reported citing a spokesperson from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. It had reportedly been transferred to an animal management center to have hits wounds inspected.

Wild boars are widespread in the Hong Kong countryside and occasionally wander into villages and urban areas in search of food. The agriculture department advises people not to approach them as they may become aggressive if threatened. A wild pig caused havoc in 2015 when it wandered into a shop knocking down a mannequin and briefly entered a changing room, forcing staff and customers to leave. — AFP

NORWAY SLASHES WOLF HUNTING QUOTA

OSLO: Norway yesterday slashed its hunting quota for wolves from 47 to 15 in a decision hailed as the "best Christmas gift" by environmental campaigners who feared a mass slaughter. Regional authorities had authorized in September the culling of 47 wolves, fuelling an outcry among activists who protested that the animals are threatened with extinction in the Scandinavian country. Rovdata, a Norwegian agency which monitors predators, recorded between 65 and 68 wolves in the country last winter and at least 25 others in regions bordering Sweden.

The environment ministry concluded that the slaughter of four packs totaling 32 wolves would violate Norwegian law and the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats. "The wolves of these four packs do not rep-

resent a sufficient potential damage to sheep and domestic reindeer" to justify their killing, Environment Minister Vidar Helgesen told a news conference.

Norway is home to nine breeding packs, against a target set by parliament of four to six, according to latest government figures. Helgesen's announcement was welcomed by WWF-Norway, which had previously voiced concern that the projected "mass slaughter" would cause 70 percent of the wolf population in the nation to disappear.

It said the decision marked the cancellation of the most comprehensive wolf hunt in Norway in over 100 years. "This is the best Christmas gift we could ever have," said WWF-Norway head Nina Jensen. "This proves once and for all that the wolf is at home in the Norwegian nature." — AFP

MOUTHWASH MAY CURE 'THE CLAP'

PARIS: In the 19th century, before the advent of antibiotics, Listerine mouthwash was marketed as a cure for gonorrhoea. More than 100 years later, researchers said yesterday the claim may be true. Listerine killed gonorrhoea bacteria in petri dishes in the lab, and in the throats of infected people, a team reported in the journal *Sexually Transmitted Infections*. This meant that daily rinsing and gargling with the popular mouthwash "might be a cheap and easy" way to prevent and control the sexually transmitted infection (STI), they said.

Despite claims by the manufacturer as far back as 1879 that Listerine treats gonorrhoea, no published scientific studies had tested the

assertion, wrote the Australian research team. So they decided to do exactly that, driven by concern over rising gonorrhoea infection levels in many countries, especially among gay and bisexual men. Also known as "the clap", gonorrhoea is spread through unprotected oral, vaginal or anal sex.

The team grew cultures of *Neisseria gonorrhoea* bacteria in the lab, then applied different dilutions of two different types of alcohol-containing Listerine mouthwash. Listerine "significantly reduced" the amount of bacteria on the culture plates, whereas a saline solution did not. The team then conducted a trial with gonorrhoea-infected men, testing the bacteria levels

in their throats before and after gargling with Listerine.

Compared to those rinsing with a salt-water solution, those who used the mouthwash had less gonorrhoea bacteria in the throat five minutes after gargling, the team reported. "Listerine mouthwash is a cheap, easy-to-use and effective agent that inhibits gonorrhoea growth and requires further careful consideration and study," wrote the researchers. According to the 2005 book *Freakonomics*, Listerine was invented as a surgical antiseptic, later sold as a floor cleaner and gonorrhoea cure. It became a commercial success in the 1920s as a solution for bad breath. — AFP

CHINA FARMERS BOLSTER BIRD FLU DEFENSES AMID ASIA OUTBREAKS

JAPAN CULLING 122,000 MORE BIRDS

BEIJING/SEOUL: Chinese chickens are being fed more vitamins and vaccines as jittery farmers ramp up henhouse sterilization in a bid to protect flocks against a virulent strain of airborne bird flu that has led to record culling in nearby South Korea. While Seoul has ordered the gassing of 20 million birds since the first case of the H5N6 virus was reported on Nov 18, outbreaks in Japan and three confirmed cases in mainland China in the last two months have stoked fears of regional spread. Hong Kong yesterday confirmed its first human bird flu infection of the season.

Fears of the virus' spread have spooked farmers preparing for the year's peak meat demand during Lunar New Year celebrations. The last major outbreak in 2013 killed 36 people and caused some \$6.5 billion in losses to the agriculture sector. "We are worried," said the manager of a state-owned 100,000 bird farm in Shandong province who gave his surname as Tan. "We are stepping up our existing anti-epidemic measures."

"We feed them (chickens) healthcare products, vitamins and anti-virus medicine," said Tan, who declined to give his first name as he was not authorized to speak to media. "Previously we fed them (vitamins and medicine) once every three months, but starting from wintertime we feed them once every week," said Tan, citing outbreaks in other countries as a concern.

Imports banned

The measures introduced at Tan's farm echo those being put in place elsewhere and draw on experiences gained during the damaging 2013 outbreak in China, the world's no. 3 producer of broiler chickens and the second-biggest poultry consumer. In recent years, farmers have increased cleaning regimes, animal detention techniques, and built roofs to cover hen pens, among other steps. Official delegations from Japan, South Korea and China gathered in Beijing last week for a symposium on preventing and controlling bird flu and other diseases in East Asia, according to the

website of China's ministry of agriculture. China now has bans in place on poultry imports from more than 60 countries, including South Korea and Japan.

The bird flu outbreaks in Japan are the first in nearly two years. Japan started a fresh cull of chickens last weekend after a fifth outbreak since the end of November. More than 780,000 chickens and ducks have been culled in the country since an outbreak of H5N6 virus at a poultry farm in Aomori prefecture on Japan's most populous island of Honshu on Nov 28.

Japan began killing about 122,000 farm birds yesterday. The highly virulent H5 strain was found in chickens at a farm in the town of Kawaminami in southwestern Japan's Miyazaki prefecture, according to a statement released by the local government. "We began killing farm birds today at 3:00 am (1800 GMT, Monday) with 380 people" involved including the military, a local government official told AFP. The mass cull is expected to be completed in 24 hours, the official said.

Authorities have also banned the transport of poultry and poultry products in areas close to the affected farms, while sterilizing main roads leading to them. Just three days ago, northern Hokkaido began culling about 280,000 farm birds. The local government completed the mass killing yesterday morning, going over the 24-hour deadline due to cold weather.

Last month, China added five nations - the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Russia and Austria - to its list of banned suppliers of poultry imports as concern grows about the spread of disease. Parts of Europe and Israel have been hit by the H5N8 strain of the virus in recent weeks. At Beijing Huadu Yukou Poultry Industry Co Ltd, a major chicken breeder based in Pinggu, near the capital, chief veterinary officer Liu Changqing said disease prevention systems have been ramped up and the firm believes its birds will be protected. "Bird flu is the number one thing that farmers guard against. It spreads so quickly, it can bankrupt you," Liu warned. —Agencies



BEIJING: An elderly man walks in front of a group of people during heavy smog at the Temple of Heaven park yesterday. —AFP

PLANES GROUNDED AS SMOG CHOKES CHINA FOR FIFTH DAY

BEIJING: Heavy smog suffocated northeast China for a fifth day yesterday, with hundreds of flights cancelled and road and rail transport grinding to a halt under the low visibility conditions. More than 20 cities have entered a state of red alert since Friday evening, implementing emergency measures aimed at cutting emissions and protecting public health from the toxic miasma. Across the region, construction sites closed and authorities reduced the number of vehicles allowed on the roads in hopes of reducing the thick haze.

In Shijiazhuang, the capital of northern Hebei province, planes could not take off or land, according to a post on a verified social media account of the city's international airport. Levels of PM 2.5 - microscopic particles harmful to human health - climbed to 844 in the area, according to the website aqicn.org. The number is almost 34 times the World Health

Organization's recommended maximum exposure level of 25 over a 24-hour period.

On the previous day, the count of PM 10, larger particles that contribute to the thick haze, was off the charts, exceeding the maximum reading of 999. On the streets of Beijing, buildings disappeared into a yellowish haze so thick that the city closed several major highways over safety concerns. PM 2.5 levels hovered around 400 mid-day, according to data provided by the US embassy in the city.

As of 11:00 am Beijing Capital International airport had cancelled 217 flights, it said in a post on its verified social media account. Trains, too, were running slowly, with at least 11 delays in the capital and another 34 halted in the neighboring port city of Tianjin. A red alert, issued when severe smog is expected to last more than 72 hours, is the highest of Beijing's four-tiered, color-coded warning system.

In December last year the capital issued its first ever red alert since the adoption of an emergency response program for air pollution in 2013, despite frequent bouts of serious smog. Most of China's smog is blamed on the burning of coal for electricity and heating, which spikes when demand peaks in winter. The issue is a source of enduring public anger in China, where fast economic growth in recent decades has come at the cost of widespread environmental degradation.

On social media, commentators vented their anger and disbelief at the conditions, which authorities have long vowed to improve. "I thought Beijing was attacked by a nuclear (weapon) this morning," said one post on the Twitter-like Weibo microblog. "My throat hurts and itches, my head hurts, too," said another. "I think Beijing people can only stand it and not protest because the Party has tamed us so well." — AFP

PLANTATIONS BEHIND MORE THAN HALF OF BORNEO DEFORESTATION

KUALA LUMPUR: Palm oil and pulp wood companies are responsible for more than half of the rapid deforestation in the Malaysian part of Borneo island, an environmental scientist said in an interview. David Gaveau, of the Indonesia-based Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), used satellite images and data on concessions from more than four decades to determine how fast deforested land was converted into industrial plantations on Borneo. "The faster the conversion, the more likely that the lands were cleared by plantation companies," Gaveau told Reuters in an interview on Monday.

Just half of Borneo - which is shared by Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia - is now covered by forests compared with 76 percent in 1973, Gaveau said. The findings by Gaveau and his group are likely to compound criticism of the palm oil industry in particular, which has faced condemnation for its land-clearing by burning and resulting smoke across Southeast Asia every year. Malaysia and neighboring Indonesia are the world's top two producers of palm oil, a widely

used edible oil found in everything from cookies to soaps. Both countries are also major producers of timber and timber products.

Plantations operating on both the Malaysian and Indonesian parts of Borneo have come under scrutiny over the clearing of forest, which has also resulted in a dramatic loss of habitat for wildlife including orangutans. "By and large, we can say that the oil palm industry has always been the major driver of deforestation," Gaveau said. But the link between plantations and deforestation was much more stark in Malaysian Borneo, Gaveau said.

Malaysia lost 4.2 million hectares, or 28 percent, of its original forest cover on Borneo between 1973 and 2015, and up to 60 percent of the cleared land was rapidly converted to plantations, Gaveau said. At the end of 2015, Malaysia had about 10.8 million hectares still covered by forest on Borneo, he said. But in Kalimantan, on the Indonesian side of Borneo, only about 16 percent of cleared land was rapidly turned into plantations, he said. —Reuters



A man places his hand over his mouth as he walks past graffiti of a dragon on a street in Beijing yesterday. — AP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

Dr. Fabad Al-Mukhaizeem
مؤيد علي المخيزيم

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

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



FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON KUWAIT MARKS 13 YEARS OF CONTINUOUS SUCCESS

The Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait celebrates its 13th year since its inauguration in 2003, offering a brand new feel and sparks a new candle of its continuous success story when it launched its brand name in Kuwait for the first time. Adjacent to the Sheraton Kuwait, A Luxury Collection Hotel the first hotel holding the Sheraton brand outside the United States of America.

The Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait is situated in the heart of Kuwait City, the center of the lively business district; close to prominent commercial hubs, governmental facilities, banks and near to the newly opened Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre making it the closest destination to the guests' options, not to mention the superb and convenient service that distinguishes its 406 rooms and suites that define modernity in addition to integrated

office services that meet the needs of the guests specially those of the business people category. The hotel has allocated seven meeting rooms to satisfy different purposes of business meetings, workshops and others. In addition to offering the best fitness center located on the 39th floor with latest equipment under the supervision of qualified staff and the indoor swimming pool providing a panoramic view of the bustling Kuwait city and highlighting the beauty of the Liberation tower and the monumental Kuwait towers.

As for the best contemporary dining, the hotel provides a wide selection of local and International cuisine at Asseef restaurant with delicious delights from around the World. In addition to La Mamma Pizzeria offering the traditional Italian pizzas, freshly prepared and passionately baked in a

wood fired oven, in addition to an assortment of appetizing Antipasti and tempting pasta.

On this joyous occasion Mounir Amer - General Manager of Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait extended his most sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed its success since its inauguration, with the desire to exceed and maintain all guests expectations providing the most attentive service and hospitality.

In his turn, Fahed Abushaar - General Manager of Sheraton Kuwait extended his most sincere gratitude and appreciation to all Public and Private sectors and he appreciated the great attitude of the executive management and all associates for their great efforts and support to move forward along with the Sheraton Kuwait, A Luxury Collection Hotel with a continuous series of success.



ACK STUDENTS COMPLETE INTERNSHIP IN NBK

Australian College of Kuwait's (ACK) students had the experience of a lifetime as they completed an internship program with the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK). As a part of ACK's continuous efforts to improve the skills of its students and in preparing them for the real-world corporate responsibilities, ACK has collaborated with NBK to provide training to its students through a 3-week internship program. Over the years, NBK has remained the leading and largest financial institution in Kuwait with effective market dominance in the commercial banking market.

Commenting on this partnership, the Executive Manager-Human Resources at NBK, Nawaf Al-Khalaf commented: "The relationship between ACK and NBK has been always special and we are so happy to collaborate closely with ACK and strengthen it while training and empowering ACK's students in the banking

industry." Meanwhile, the Acting Associate Dean - School of Business and Assistant professor, Dr Sam Toglaw commented: "ACK's partnership with NBK was a great experience for our students to better prepare them for what awaits in their future corporate endeavors. It brings great pride to us and adds to the ongoing milestones ACK achieves in bettering the standards of education for its students."

ACK delivers a unique mix of practical and theoretical learning, therefore the College strongly believes in providing internship opportunities to its students, such as this, to experience things taught in the classroom and how they are applied in a professional setting. In turn, this provides ACK graduates with invaluable skills and knowledge to further their development and prepare them for their professional careers.

STATEMENT BY EMBASSY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE STATE OF KUWAIT

On December 19, Russian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Turkey Andrei Karlov was shot dead in a terrorist attack in Ankara. We condemn this heinous crime that was committed to undermine our collective efforts towards an early political settlement in Syria and the ongoing normalization of Russian-Turkish relations.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation expects the Turkish authorities to closely cooperate with the relevant Russian agencies to investigate the circumstances of this barbaric crime, to identify and apprehend its organizers and to take effective measures to protect the safety of Russian citizens, Russian offices abroad and their personnel. For our part, we will act in conjunction with the Turkish law enforcement agencies to bring the culprits to justice.

Embassy of Russia to Kuwait expresses deep condolences to the family and friends of Andrei Karlov, an outstanding Russian diplomat. His memory will always remain in the hearts of his colleagues and all those who knew him. This tragedy is an indication that we must redouble our efforts in an uncompromising struggle against all forms of terrorism. The Book of condolences following the assassination of Andrei Karlov will be open at the Embassy on December 21, 2016, from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.



Pakistani businessman Athsham Allahditta thanked the doctors, nurses and staff of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital for their care during his treatment there. He has been discharged from the hospital after two months.



Qualitynet Drag 965 finished in second place in the Gulf Run Karting Race which took place over the weekend at Sirbb Circuit.



Qualitynet Drag 965 finished in second place in the Gulf Run Karting Race which took place over the weekend at Sirbb Circuit.



Assistant Professor of Economics at AUK, Dr Ali Aljamaal



Dean of the College of Business and Economics, Dr Jin Wang



Engineer Fawaz Alqeryan, Head of the Agriculture Unit of the Kuwait Environmental Protection Society (KEPS)

CBE HOSTS HYDROPONIC EXHIBITION AND WORKSHOP

The College of Business and Economics at the American University of Kuwait (AUK) organized the first Hydroponic Exhibition and Workshop in November 2016. The event, which was a collaboration between AUK, the Kuwait Environmental Protection Society (KEPS), and two hydroponic industry leaders-Smart Hydro Company and Al-Shaheen Nurseries Company, was held at AUK. The objective of the event was to introduce students and faculty to alternative, environmentally-friendly, efficient and sustainable food production systems.

The Hydroponic Exhibition and Workshop featured displays of a number of different hydroponic systems, presentations, and workshops that focused on how to construct and operate hydroponic systems at home.

In his opening remarks, Dr Ali Aljamaal, Assistant Professor of Economics and the organizer of the workshop, explained the impact that cost-effective and environment-friendly hydroponic systems could have on Kuwait's future and how they could enable Kuwait to develop a sustainable food production system that is in line with Kuwait Vision 2035.

Smart Hydro Company and Al-Shaheen Nurseries Company displayed locally-developed hydroponic systems, equipment, and food production supplies that can be used to maintain and operate hydroponic systems. This exhibition presented the attending faculty and students with technology that can be used to contribute to the sustainability of Kuwait's water, food and energy economy.



A discussion was also held with experts and industry leaders, faculty, students and activists on how to advance understanding of the technical, economic and business aspects of this newly-emerging industry. At the discussion, Engineer Fawaz Alqeryan, Head of the Agriculture Unit of the Kuwait Environmental Protection Society (KEPS),

explained that hydroponic systems are environmentally-friendly, given that they depend on far less water and sensible use of chemicals as plant feed compared to conventional agricultural practices.

Dean of the College of Business and Economics, Dr Jin Wang, commended the event as a contribution to the

advancement of Kuwait's agenda towards a more environmentally-friendly lifestyle. "The College of Business and Economics at AUK is proud to be a participant contributing to the fulfillment of the ambitious and inspiring Kuwait Vision 2035 by promoting education, training, and research," he said.



JUMEIRAH MESSILAH BEACH HOTEL AND SPA WELCOMES GUESTS TO EXTRAORDINARY END OF YEAR CELEBRATIONS



Marking the end of the year celebrations, Kuwait's idyllic resort Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa, invites guests to spend an evening of jubilant celebrations over a variety of awe-inspiring dining across its award-winning restaurants.

General Manager Hakan Petek said: "As we anticipate the arrival of the New Year, we look forward to welcoming guests to cherish their moments with loved ones in our hotel. On this occasion, diners can escalate their New Year experience and be captivated by internationally-inspired cuisine, passionate service, and ideal ambiance, which will set a luxurious stage for the joyous and exhilarating experiences we are distinguished for."

In preparation for the New Year, the award-winning culinary team at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa has designed masterpieces and gourmet creations of premium quality to suit every palate.

To commemorate the final hours of 2016 in the most memorable way, The Grand Celebration in Garden Café, the resort's all-day dining restaurant, will present a sumptuous buffet complimented by views overlooking beautifully lit gardens. The hotel's highly acclaimed chefs will guide guests through a gastronomic journey highlighted by a selection of salads such as roast loin of lamb infused with rosemary on polenta cookies, Turkey breast with cranberry sauce, red quinoa with baby rocket, mango, and pine seeds. There is a lot more to be enjoyed with a sushi station, seafood display, live grill, pasta station, Asian wok, a hot buffet of lamb chops and couscous, grilled veal medallions, and a variety of mezzahs. In the dessert zone, tart stations, pastries and cake, chocolate indulgences and an ice cream bar will leave diners utterly fulfilled.

The resort's award-winning restaurants will also be showcasing exquisite celebratory five-course set menus which promise an unforgettable dining experience. The striking Pepper Steakhouse, which special-



izes in the most succulent of prime steaks, will feature special canapés on arrival, a choice of beef wellington, smoked turkey, and salmon with family style sides for sharing. For a sweet ending, a black forest gateaux and candied toffee apple lollipop will seal the meal perfectly. Guests can also luxuriate over the marine inspired and multinational flavors of Salt Seafood and International with smoked king prawn salads, slow-roasted seafood bisque, and for main samplers, a meal of pan-seared sea bass fillet and lobster thermidor. Sweet delicacies include orange trifle and lavender and blueberry ice cream.

The hotel's signature Italian restaurant, Olio, will

offer an All you Can Grab Italian experience with the best antipasti dishes, rich pastas and authentic hand-picked pizzas by the Italian chef. A menu of the Italian specialties includes handmade gnocci with four cheeses, chicken cannelloni, and homemade gelato along with Tuscan tiramisù.

For a truly memorable night with family and friends, a special barbecue night will be serving traditionally grilled Southern American flavors of succulent baby ribs, grilled shrimp, smoked meats and sausages, as well as a pie bar. Guests can book their New Year dining experiences with the Restaurant Reservations team on +965 22269666.





- 00:50 River Monsters: Lair Of Giants
01:45 Bondi Vet
02:40 Lone Star Law
03:35 Tanked
04:25 The Beauty Of Snakes
05:15 Gator Boys
06:02 River Monsters: Lair Of Giants
06:49 Lone Star Law
07:36 Swamp Brothers
08:25 Groomer Has It
09:15 Lone Star Law
10:10 Biggest And Baddest Tanked
11:05 Groomer Has It
12:55 Bondi Vet
13:20 Bondi Vet
13:50 Lone Star Law
14:45 Gator Boys
15:40 Biggest And Baddest Tanked
16:35 The Beauty Of Snakes
18:25 River Monsters: Lair Of Giants
19:20 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet Tanked
20:15 Ten Deadliest Snakes
22:05 Venom Hunter



- 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
10:30 It Takes A Killer
11:00 My Crazy Ex
15:00 The First 48
16:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
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 World's Toughest Jobs
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 World's Toughest 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?
10:20 Mythbusters
11:10 Sharks Of Palau
12:00 Shark Alley: Legend Of Dynamite

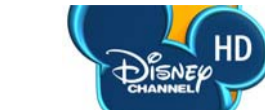
- 16:00 Deadliest Catch
16:50 Cuban Chrome
17:40 Wheeler Dealers
18:30 How Do They Do It?
18:55 How Do They Do It?
19:20 Deadliest Job Interview
20:10 Storage Hunters UK
20:35 The Liquidator
21:00 Blue Collar Backers
21:50 Incredible Engineering Blunders: Fixed
22:40 Sydney Harbour
23:30 Cuban Chrome



- 00:00 In Search Of Aliens
01:00 Monster Quest
02:00 In Search Of Aliens
03:00 Your Bleeped Up Brain
03:50 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
04:40 In Search Of Aliens
05:30 In Search Of Aliens
06:20 America's Book Of Secrets
07:10 The Universe
08:00 Monster Quest
09:00 In Search Of Aliens
10:00 Your Bleeped Up Brain
11:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
12:00 In Search Of Aliens
13:00 In Search Of Aliens
14:00 Monster Quest
15:00 In Search Of Aliens
16:00 Your Bleeped Up Brain
17:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
18:00 In Search Of Aliens
19:00 Ancient Aliens
20:00 America's Book Of Secrets
21:00 Ancient Discoveries
22:00 Patton 360
23:00 Monster Quest



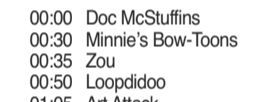
- 00:40 Killer Instinct With Chris Hansen
01:30 Deadly Women
02:20 Suspicion
03:10 Murder Among Friends
04:00 Killer Instinct With Chris Hansen
04:48 I Almost Got Away With It
05:36 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
06:24 Beauty Queen Murders
07:12 Blood Relatives
08:00 I'd Kill For You
08:50 I Almost Got Away With It
09:40 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
10:30 Beauty Queen Murders
11:20 Blood Relatives
12:10 Disappeared
13:00 I'd Kill For You
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:40 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
15:30 Beauty Queen Murders
16:20 Blood Relatives
17:10 Swamp Murders
18:00 I'd Kill For You
18:50 I Almost Got Away With It
19:40 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
20:30 Beauty Queen Murders
21:20 Blood Relatives
22:10 I Am Homicide
23:00 Six Degrees Of Murder
23:50 Nowhere To Hide



- 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 Twas The Night
12:10 Austin & Ally
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 Duck The Halls: A Very Mickey Christmas
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 Dog With A Blog
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
22:35 H2O: Just Add Water
23:00 Binny And The Ghost
23:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch



- 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 Mighty Med: There Is A Storm Coming
09:50 Kirby Buckets
10:20 Kirby Buckets
10:45 Gravity Falls
11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty



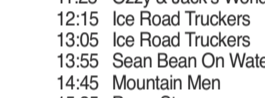
- 00:00 Doc McStuffins
00:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
00:35 Zou
00:50 Loopydoo
01:05 Art Attack
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
01:45 Calimero
02:00 Zou
02:15 Loopydoo
02:30 Art Attack



HITMAN: AGENT 47 ON OSN MOVIES HD

- 22:30 Doc McStuffins
23:00 The Adventures Of The Disney Fairies
23:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse

- 08:55 Fifth Gear
09:45 Fifth Gear
10:35 Shipping Wars
11:00 Shipping Wars
11:25 Ozzy & Jack's World Detour
12:15 Ice Road Truckers
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: Best Of
17:15 Storage Wars: Best Of
17:40 Swamp People
18:30 Ozzy & Jack's World Detour
19:20 American Pickers
19:55 Pawn Stars
20:10 Pawn Stars Best Of
21:00 Counting Cars
21:25 Counting Cars
21:50 Fifth Gear
22:40 Time Team
23:30 Counting Cars



- 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 Mighty Med: There Is A Storm Coming
09:50 Kirby Buckets
10:20 Kirby Buckets
10:45 Gravity Falls
11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty

- 16:20 My Restaurant In India
16:45 Grandma's Boy
17:15 Grandma's Boy
17:40 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
18:10 Around The World In 80 Dishes
19:05 What's For Sale?
19:30 Winroads
20:00 Lucky Chow
20:25 My Restaurant In India
20:50 Grandma's Boy
21:15 Grandma's Boy
21:40 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
22:05 Around The World In 80 Dishes
22:55 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
23:20 A Is For Apple
23:45 Lee Chan's World Food Tour



- 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 Mighty Med: There Is A Storm Coming
09:50 Kirby Buckets
10:20 Kirby Buckets
10:45 Gravity Falls
11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty

- 20:10 Make You Laugh Out Loud
21:00 Big Baboon House
21:50 Extreme Animal Babies
22:40 World's Creepiest Killers
23:30 Life On The Barrier Reef



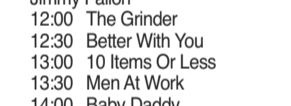
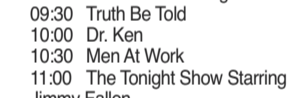
- 00:10 Mars
01:00 Startalk
02:00 Do Or Die
03:20 Do Or Die
04:45 Continent 7: Antarctica
05:50 Continent 7: Antarctica
06:45 Big, Bigger, Biggest Megacities
07:30 Mars
08:25 Nazi Megastructures
09:20 Big, Bigger, Biggest
10:15 The Border
11:10 Big Fix Alaska
12:05 Dirty Rotten Survival
13:00 Nazi Megastructures
14:00 Mars
15:00 Startalk
16:00 The Border
17:00 Big Fix Alaska
18:00 Dirty Rotten Survival
19:00 Continent 7: Antarctica
20:00 The Border
20:50 Big Fix Alaska
21:40 Dirty Rotten Survival
22:30 Continent 7: Antarctica
23:20 Megacities



- 00:00 The Last Kingdom
01:00 Pitch
02:00 Supergirl
03:00 The Strain
04:00 Good Morning America
06:00 Prison Break
07:00 The Amazing Race
08:00 Castle
09:00 C.S.I. Cyber
10:00 Prison Break
11:00 Pitch
12:00 Shark Tank
13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
14:00 The Amazing Race
15:00 Live Good Morning America
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
18:00 Castle
19:00 Once Upon A Time
20:00 C.S.I. Cyber
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 Baby Daddy
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 Baby Daddy
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 Baby Daddy
19:00 Truth Be Told
19:30 Dr. Ken
20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
21:00 Cougar Town
21:30 Cougar Town
22:00 Silicon Valley



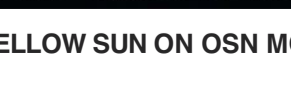
- 01:15 Mobius
03:00 Changing
05:30 Half Of A Yellow Sun
07:30 The Fold
09:00 Tracks
11:00 Half Of A Yellow Sun
13:00 A Beautiful Mind
15:15 Monkey Kingdom
17:00 Tracks
19:00 Fury
21:15 Days Of Heaven
23:00 The Hidden Face



- 01:15 Bamsé And The City Of Thieves
02:45 Tom And Jerry: Spy Quest
04:15 Columbus In The Last Journey
06:00 Baby Geniuses And The Mystery Of The Crown Jewels
07:45 Cher Ami
09:30 Baby Geniuses And The Space Baby
11:15 When Marnie Was There
13:00 Tom And Jerry: Spy Quest
14:30 Memory Loss
16:00 The Olsen Gang In Deep Trouble
18:00 Baby Geniuses And The Space Baby
20:00 Virus Attack The First Antivirus
22:00 Memory Loss
23:00 The Olsen Gang In Deep Trouble



- 01:00 American Girl: Grace Stirs Up Success
03:00 Marvel Super Hero Adventures: Frost Fight
05:00 Santa's Little Helper
07:00 The Unbeatable
09:00 Santa Claws
11:00 Santa's Little Helper
13:00 Houlal On The Trail Of Marsupiami
15:00 Christmas Trade
17:00 Jingle All The Way 2
19:00 American Girl: Isabelle Dances Into The Spotlight
21:00 Ghost Squad
23:00 Christmas Trade



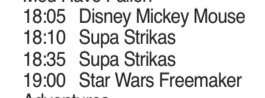
REIGN OF ASSASSINS ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

- 12:50 Shark City
13:40 Zombie Sharks
14:30 Ninja Sharks
15:20 Sharkzilla
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
22:00 Wildest Africa
22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
23:40 Ultimate Survival

- 00:40 Prototype This
01:30 Weird Or What?
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 Weird Or What?
07:12 How Do They Do It?
07:36 Food Factory
08:00 How Do They Do It?
08:26 Prototype This
09:14 Weird Or What?
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 Weird Or What?
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 Weird Or What?
18:02 You Have Been Warned
18:50 Prototype This
19:40 Weird Or What?
20:30 Curiosity: How Will The World End?
21:20 How Do They Do It?
21:45 Food Factory
22:10 Penn & Teller Tell A Lie
23:00 Curiosity: How Will The World End?
23:50 Time Warp

- 03:00 Calimero
03:15 Zou
03:30 Loopydoo
03:45 Art Attack
04:10 Henry Hugglemonster
04:25 Calimero
04:45 Loopydoo
05:00 Art Attack
05:25 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 Calimero
05:50 Zou
06:00 Loopydoo
06:15 Art Attack
06:35 Henry Hugglemonster
06:50 Calimero
07:00 Zou
07:20 Loopydoo
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 A Goofy Fairy Tale
22:00 Doc McStuffins

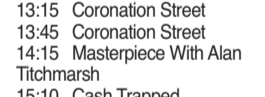
- Much Everything
11:35 Gamer's Guide To Pretty
Much Everything
12:00 Counterfeit Cat
12:30 K.C. Undercover
13:20 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
13:45 Lab Rats
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Lab Rats
14:40 Counterfeit Cat
14:50 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
15:05 K.C. Undercover
15:30 Atomic Puppet
15:55 Lab Rats
16:25 Danger Mouse
16:50 Future-Worm!
17:15 Mighty Med: How The Mighty Med Have Fallen
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
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse



- 00:20 Mountain Men
01:10 Forged In Fire
02:00 Storage Wars: Best Of
02:25 Storage Wars: Best Of
03:40 Alaska Off-Road Warriors
04:30 Pawn Stars Best Of
05:00 Ozzy & Jack's World Detour
06:00 Swamp People
06:50 Ax Men
07:40 Ice Road Truckers
08:30 Storage Wars Texas



- 00:10 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Cash Trapped
03:25 5 Star Family Reunion
04:20 Doc Martin
05:15 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
06:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
07:05 Cash Trapped
08:00 Broadchurch
09:00 Doc Martin
10:00 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
11:00 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
11:50 Cash Trapped
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Coronation Street
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
15:10 Cash Trapped
16:00 Jericho
16:55 Royal Stories
17:25 Royal Stories
17:50 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Coronation Street
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 Cash Trapped
21:00 Jericho
21:55 Royal Stories
22:25 Royal Stories
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Coronation Street
23:40 Coronation Street



- 00:10 Places We Go
00:35 My Restaurant In India
01:00 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
01:25 A Is For Apple
01:50 The Best Job In The World
02:15 Food School
02:40 Mega Food
03:30 Winroads
03:55 Places We Go
04:20 Lucky Chow
04:45 Croatia's Finest
05:10 Croatia's Finest
05:35 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
06:00 Around The World In 80 Dishes
07:15 A Is For Apple
07:40 The Best Job In The World
08:05 Food School
08:30 Mega Food
09:20 Winroads
09:45 Places We Go
10:10 Lucky Chow
10:35 Croatia's Finest
11:00 Croatia's Finest
11:25 Top Chef Top Table: Seoul
11:50 Around The World In 80 Dishes
12:40 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
13:05 A Is For Apple
13:35 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
14:00 Food School
14:30 What's For Sale?
14:55 What's For Sale?
15:25 Winroads
15:50 Lucky Chow



- 00:10 Places We Go
00:35 My Restaurant In India
01:00 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
01:25 A Is For Apple
01:50 The Best Job In The World
02:15 Food School
02:40 Mega Food
03:30 Winroads
03:55 Places We Go
04:20 Lucky Chow
04:45 Croatia's Finest
05:10 Croatia's Finest
05:35 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
06:00 Around The World In 80 Dishes
07:15 A Is For Apple
07:40 The Best Job In The World
08:05 Food School
08:30 Mega Food
09:20 Winroads
09:45 Places We Go
10:10 Lucky Chow
10:35 Croatia's Finest
11:00 Croatia's Finest
11:25 Top Chef Top Table: Seoul
11:50 Around The World In 80 Dishes
12:40 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
13:05 A Is For Apple
13:35 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
14:00 Food School
14:30 What's For Sale?
14:55 What's For Sale?
15:25 Winroads
15:50 Lucky Chow



HALF OF A YELLOW SUN ON OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL

CLASSIFIEDS



Kuwait Times
 Now you can browse
www.kuwaittimes.net
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (15/12/2016 TO 21/12/2016)

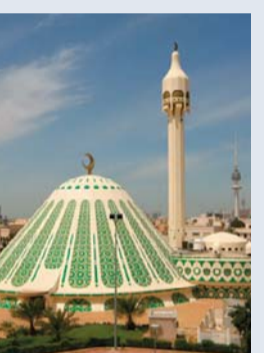
Programme	Time	Programme	Time	Programme	Time
SHARQIA-1 MOANA MOANA MOANA MOANA TAHT AL TARABEZA COLLATERAL BEAUTY	1:00 PM 3:15 PM 5:30 PM 7:45 PM 10:15 PM 12:30 AM	ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY	11:15 PM	MOANA-3D-4DX ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY-3D-4DX ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY-3D-4DX ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY-3D-4DX ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY-3D-4DX MOANA-3D-4DX MOANA-3D-4DX MOANA-3D-4DX ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY-3D-4DX ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY-3D-4DX	4:15 PM 6:45 PM 9:45 PM 12:30 AM 1:30 AM 2:15 PM 4:45 PM 7:15 PM 9:45 PM 12:30 AM
SHARQIA-2 ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY-3D ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY	12:30 PM 3:30 PM 6:30 PM 9:30 PM 12:30 AM	FANAR-3 TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA INTO THE FOREST MISS SLOANE INTO THE FOREST INTO THE FOREST	12:00 PM 2:15 PM 4:30 PM 6:30 PM 9:30 PM 11:45 PM	AVENUES-3 MANTAQH MAHZOURAH MANTAQH MAHZOURAH MANTAQH MAHZOURAH MANTAQH MAHZOURAH MANTAQH MAHZOURAH ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY THE LAST KING	12:00 PM 2:00 PM 4:00 PM 6:00 PM 8:00 PM 10:00 PM 1:00 AM
SHARQIA-3 MOANA COLLATERAL BEAUTY MANTAQH MAHZOURAH COLLATERAL BEAUTY MANTAQH MAHZOURAH ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY	12:00 PM 2:30 PM 4:45 PM 7:00 PM 9:15 PM 11:30 PM	FANAR-4 ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY	1:00 PM 3:45 PM 6:30 PM 9:15 PM 12:05 AM	AVENUES-4 COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY MOANA Special Show "MOANA" MOANA COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY	11:30 AM 1:45 PM 4:15 PM 7:00 PM 9:00 PM 11:00 PM 1:00 AM
MUHALAB-1 COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY MANTAQH MAHZOURAH MANTAQH MAHZOURAH TAHT AL TARABEZA	12:45 PM 3:00 PM 5:15 PM 8:15 PM 10:15 PM 12:15 AM	MARINA-1 COLLATERAL BEAUTY MANTAQH MAHZOURAH TAHT AL TARABEZA COLLATERAL BEAUTY MANTAQH MAHZOURAH MANTAQH MAHZOURAH ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY	11:45 AM 2:00 PM 3:45 PM 6:00 PM 8:15 PM	AVENUES-5 ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY-3D Special Show "ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY" ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY Special Show "ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY" ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY-3D ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY	12:00 PM 3:00 PM 2:00 PM 6:00 PM 6:00 PM 9:00 PM 12:05 AM
MUHALAB-2 MOANA MOANA MOANA MOANA COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY	11:45 AM 2:00 PM 4:15 PM 6:30 PM 8:45 PM 11:00 PM 1:15 AM	MARINA-2 ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY	11:30 AM 2:30 PM 5:30 PM 8:30 PM 11:30 PM	AVENUES-6 COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY	12:30 PM 2:45 PM 5:00 PM 7:15 PM 9:30 PM 11:45 PM
MUHALAB-3 ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY-3D ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY	12:00 PM 3:00 PM 6:00 PM 9:00 PM 12:05 AM	MARINA-3 MOANA MOANA MOANA MOANA COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY	12:30 PM 2:45 PM 5:00 PM 7:15 PM 9:30 PM 11:45 PM	AVENUES-7 MOANA MOANA INTO THE FOREST INTO THE FOREST INTO THE FOREST INTO THE FOREST	1:00 PM 3:30 PM 6:15 PM 8:30 PM 10:45 PM 1:00 AM
FANAR-1 COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY COLLATERAL BEAUTY	1:30 PM 3:45 PM 6:00 PM 8:15 PM 10:30 PM 12:45 AM	AVENUES-1 MOANA LAF WA DAWARAN MOANA ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA	12:30 PM 2:45 PM 5:00 PM 7:30 PM 10:30 PM 12:45 AM	AVENUES-8 FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM TROLLS DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi Special Show "ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY" THE NEIGHBOR	12:15 PM 3:00 PM 5:15 PM 5:15 PM 8:15 PM
FANAR-2 MOANA MOANA MOANA MOANA ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY-3D	11:30 AM 1:45 PM 4:00 PM 6:15 PM 8:30 PM	AVENUES-2 MOANA-3D-4DX MOANA-3D-4DX	11:30 AM 1:45 PM		

CHANGE OF NAME

I HATIM S/o MANSUR, holder of Indian Passport No. K8514434 and Civil ID No. 291072601473 has changed my name to HATIM MANSUR NAJMI, hereinafter in all my dealing and documents I will be known by name of HATIM MANSUR NAJMI. (C 5249) 17-12-2016

SITUATION WANTED

Purchase Manager experience 20 years in construction field, seeking for job in one of the leading Co. Tel: 99061637. (C 5248) 18-12-2016



PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr:	05:13
Shorook	06:38
Duhr:	11:46
Asr:	14:36
Maghrib:	16:54
Isha:	18:16

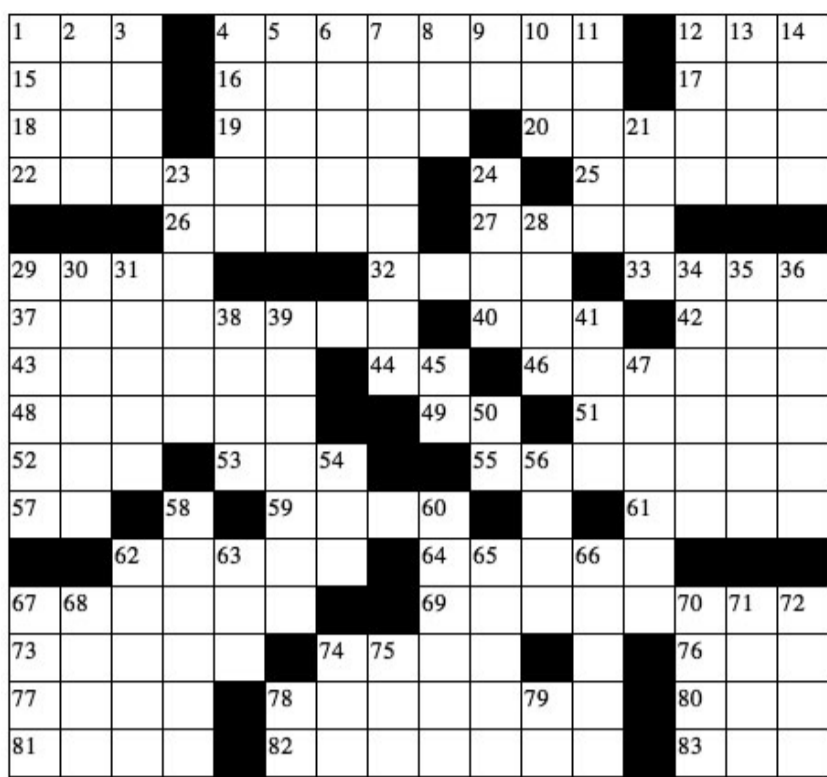
Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

Flight Schedule

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 21/12/2016				Departure Flights on Wednesday 21/12/2016			
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

CROSSWORD 1467



ACROSS

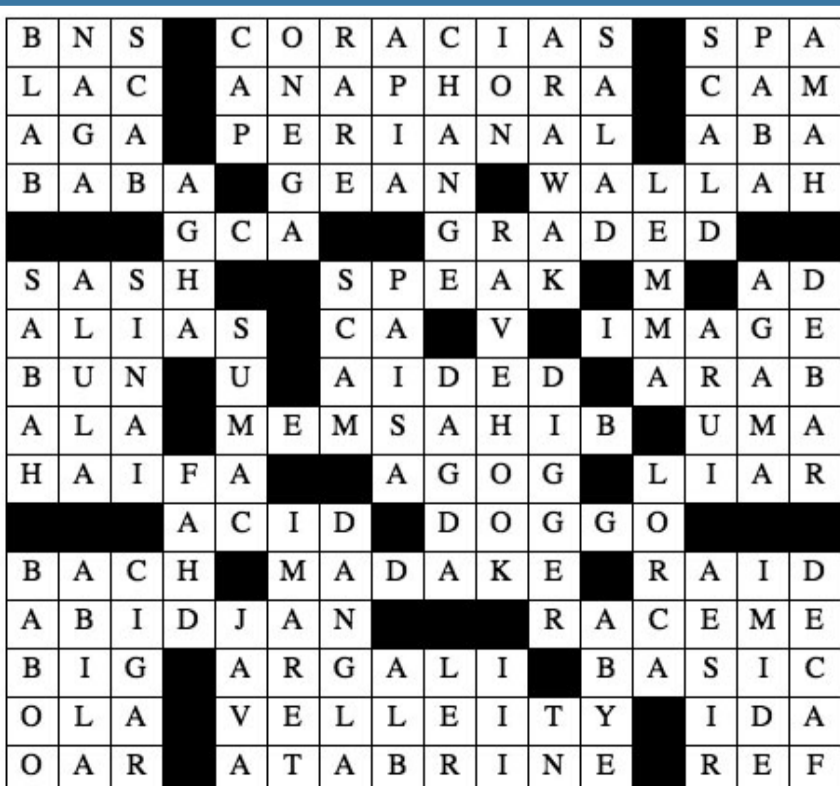
1. A steep-walled semicircular basin in a mountain.
4. Showing your contempt by derision.
12. A unit of length equal to one thousandth of an inch.
15. 10 hao equal 1 dong.
16. (heraldry) Of or relating to heraldry or heraldic arms.
17. The compass point midway between northeast and east.
18. A rapid bustling commotion.
19. Composed of or covered with relatively large particles.
20. A member of an agricultural people of southern India.
22. Responding to or operating at a wide band of frequencies.
25. Indian religious leader who founded Sikhism (1469-1538).
26. (folklore) A corpse that rises at night to drink the blood of the living.
27. Severe diabetes mellitus with an early onset.
29. British writer of short stories (1870-1916).
32. Flightless New Zealand rail of thievish disposition having short wings each with a spur used in fighting.
33. A system of one or more computers and associated software with common storage.
37. Large arboreal boa of tropical South America.
40. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
42. Edible tuber of any of several yams.
43. Eurasian perennial bulbous herbs.
44. A soft silvery metallic element.
46. Wild sheep of semidesert regions in central Asia.
48. Small genus of Australian shrubs or trees.
49. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
51. An inspection of the accounting procedures and records by a trained accountant.
52. The airforce of Great Britain.
53. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
55. Characteristic of a baby.
57. Not out.
59. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
61. Causing a dull and steady pain.
64. Hungarian choreographer who developed Labanotation (1879-1958).
67. Noisy quarrel.
69. Occurring or existing before birth.
73. Submerged aquatic plant having narrow leaves and small flowers.
76. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
77. That which is responsible for one's thoughts and feelings.
80. An American doctorate usually based on at least 3 years graduate study and a dissertation.
81. (prefix) In front of or before in space.
82. A criminal who takes property belonging to someone else with the intention of keeping it or selling it.
83. The chance to speak.

DOWN

1. A wad of something chewable as tobacco.
2. Gully or streambed in North Africa and

- the Middle East that remains dry except during rainy season.
3. A characteristic (habitual or relatively temporary) state of feeling.
4. Large west African tree having large palmately lobed leaves and axillary cymose panicles of small white flowers and one-winged seeds.
5. Thick like cream.
6. Of or relating to Oman or its people.
7. Capable of being folded up and stored.
8. English painter and art critic (1866-1934).
9. Being one more than one.
10. Tag the base runner to get him out.
11. Any of various organs that synthesize substances needed by the body and release it through ducts or directly into the bloodstream.
12. (statistics) Approximating the statistical norm or average or expected value.
13. Any tree or shrub of the genus Inga having pinnate leaves and showy usually white flowers.
14. An accidental hole that allows something (fluid or light etc.) to enter or escape.
21. Fallow deer.
23. Call forth.
24. Small short-eared burrowing mammal of rocky uplands of Asia and western North America.
28. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
30. (zoology) Relating to frogs and toads.
31. The civil and religious leader of a Muslim state.
34. Of or relating to a dyad or based on two.
35. Slightly pale.
36. A workplace where metal is worked by heating and hammering.
38. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
39. Proboscis monkeys.
41. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
45. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
47. A republic in northeastern South America.
50. A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
54. The cry made by sheep.
56. A French abbot.
58. The face or front of a building.
60. Wool of the alpaca.
62. Barely perceptible.
63. Someone who is morally reprehensible.
65. Of or relating to or involving an area.
66. A strong emotion.
68. Water falling in drops from vapor condensed in the atmosphere.
70. (military) Signal to turn the lights out.
71. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
72. A polite name for any woman.
74. Nocturnal mouse-like mammal with forelimbs modified to form membranous wings and anatomical adaptations for echolocation by which they navigate.
75. A strong solution of sodium or potassium hydroxide.
78. An honorary degree in science.
79. A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Something may spell out your need to reorganize and become more conservative. This should all work out since it is probably your intuition telling you it is time for some sort of inspection in your workplace. Because you begin a cleanup, others seem to follow suit and when inspection does happen, everyone gets higher points than usual-not necessarily this day. Team sports seem to occupy you and your friends this afternoon. Careful, you could be forgetting an important appointment. A short holiday trip, perhaps to look at lights, can be a fun activity for the whole family this evening. Curb your excessive tendency to spend money on things that are short-time enjoyment. Save some of this money for a real new year's fling, or a special gift.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may work in an area, already a hotbed of home-building activity, and decide to take on the art of real estate. This sales industry seems perfect for you. By the time you get your license you will find that regardless of the way the economy is moving you will be moving houses. Your comedic attitude is appropriate in some places, but inappropriate in others, and you have come a long way in learning when to step back and view the type of audience you might have before inserting foot, so to speak. You are becoming sensitive to the needs of others and can demonstrate this when someone asks for your opinion. Tonight you may enjoy the entertainment of youngsters. A holiday play or musical will show off a child. Perhaps a child of your own.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may find yourself in a talkative mood this morning. Ideas are clear and easy to see-you have your opinions too. You may have a conversation during the break time about the accomplishments during this year and you think about your own goals. This afternoon you may decide to work in a little overtime in hopes of getting ahead. Perhaps it is some weather change or the upcoming holiday parties, but you want to be able to leave work without leaving work incomplete. An award luncheon may be planned for next week and you will want to go. You find problems are short lived and you are as helpful as you can be to guide others through some difficult customer's story. A warm fire is enjoyed this evening.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

The activities before noon are few and you may find that you can get quite a bit accomplished at your own desk. You have a passion for details-be careful not to waste too much of your time on one thing. You feel a sense of satisfaction by getting in touch with things of a mysterious or spiritual nature. Detecting the truth in a situation is fun and resembles working a puzzle-you may find many people come to you for help in solving their problems. This could be emotional as well as a concern about business issues. It's common sense and the search for information that counts and today you are on the winning side. This evening is a great time to just sit back and enjoy what you have; however, you might consider entering a contest when you see one. Relax.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You should find this an exceptionally good day for anything job related. You shine in your particular job and may find that a promotion is in the works. You could find yourself representing or speaking for your company or communicating about your skills. This could be a day for figuring out what you truly believe in and maybe even fighting for it. This study becomes a high personal priority and may include religion, law, politics, travel and higher education. There are moments of testing your limits to see how far you can go. You feel a love of law and order and you have an appreciation for responsibilities and duty. You are happy to discover that it is possible that many technical products currently on the market help people become smarter.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

There is a doorway open for you through which you could receive insights regarding any number of matters. Career opportunities will continue to present themselves to you and you should be able to find a particular job that will match your self-expression. You have a natural sense for communicating with others, especially those younger than you. You may be guiding young people in matters of driving, voting or budgeting. Your mind is exceptionally sharp and you are quick-witted. You will gain and keep their attention most of this time and because you are an excellent teacher, you may be able to create some incentive in these students to become teachers as well. There is also a sense of nostalgia today. Good memories of the past are triggered.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may sometimes feel that you are trudging uphill, especially if you add to your usual workload. There are no hard and fast rules for getting to your goals but hard work seems to win out. Of course, the results can be much quicker if you gain help-team work is good. Taking care of yourself through diet and exercise is important at this time. Depending on the weather, you might enjoy a long drive near the outskirts of town before dinner; perhaps you will discover a country vegetable stand to visit later this weekend. Alternatively, you could choose to work on your car-tinkering with the motor, changing the oil-an activity that you may find comforting. This driving or working on your vehicle will help you transition from the workday stresses.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This is a time that you could be enjoying and appreciating your ties to others. You soon may find yourself working especially hard on some project that requires a group effort. Others could view you as the perfect person to be in charge of some project requiring a focused mind. Marriage and other close relationships give rise to great expectations now, as a new cycle gets underway in your life. It would also be a good time to bring together and organize your affairs or to rearrange your living situation. You may tend to isolate yourself somewhat later today, but only to become caught up on last-minute details for a party or get-together with friends. Expect some change in the way you help others. Perhaps your schedule will become more flexible soon.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your passion for detail puts you in a slumped over posture for much too long. Stretch and take a break as soon as you can so that you can finish what you start; pull up a stool. You have the ability to think things through to the most positive end. You dislike working for others and may soon decide to go into business for yourself. There may be an opportunity to have a business consultant advise you soon regarding this business for yourself. This way you can intelligently decide whether to do a business out of your home or to work from some rental property-remain open minded. Legal problems are not as bad as they seem. A snarled bit of paperwork is the only problem today, resulting in some delay. Tonight is fun!



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Obstacles to self-discipline or to your sense of organization may appear at this time. Someone could frustrate you in this regard, or external events might pile up and be thrust upon you. Authorities and red tape may stand between you and your goals-pace yourself. You are entering into a time of emotional directness and excitability, one that is inscribed by forceful and powerful feelings. A new emotional beginning is the first step and you will work to create a new attitude as well as a new and positive habit pattern. An idea running around in your head finally takes focus this evening and writing out a plan is a good idea. This may be any subject pertaining to your hobby or an invention. You could take this to a level that would earn you some money.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Setting your personal desires aside, you may dive into work with a strong determination to complete all tasks assigned to you. You do not want to get behind and find yourself working overtime. After work, you prepare in advance for a party-perhaps a masquerade party. This party may be done as a benefit planned to help the less fortunate during the cold weather. You may find that your rewards are many as you consider the basics that these individuals might need. The things that you value and care about find a great deal of support. Being appreciated for your gifts and talents are wonderful feelings, but that comes with family. You could be feeling a particular closeness to lovers, children and other people that are near and dear to you this evening.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Check to see if your company has, or will create, a college plan for employees. If you could take off work early twice a week, you might have time for night school and finish some special education. If not for you, it may be that you seek this for a friend. Now is a time when you are particularly helpful to others and willing to set an example. These thoughts occur to you as you see or hear about some great opportunities with a continuing education project. Expect to make some clear decisions that will affect others. Compliments are easy to find this evening. A party or group meeting is just the thing to keep you aware. You love to know all about the activities and achievements of your friends and neighbors and you are always willing to help.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Autumn

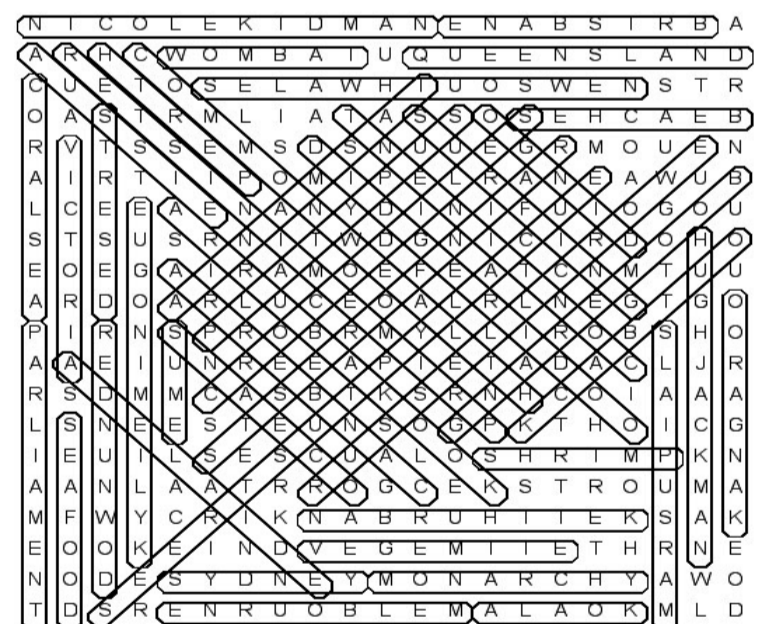
Find and circle all of the Autumn words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - an Albert Camus quotation.



- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| ACORN | EQUINOX | NOVEMBER | SEPTEMBER |
| APPLE | FALL | OCTOBER | SHORTER DAYS |
| BIRD MIGRATION | FARMING | ORANGE LEAVES | SQUASH |
| BLOWING LEAVES | FEAST | PIE | SWEET POTATOES |
| BLUSTERY DAY | FROST | PUMPKIN | THANKSGIVING |
| CANNING | HALLOWEEN | RAKE | TURKEY |
| CHESTNUTS | HARVEST | RED LEAVES | WINDY |
| CHILLY | HAYSTACK | SCARECROW | YELLOW LEAVES |
| COLD | HICKORY NUTS | SCHOOL | |
| CROPS | LONGER NIGHTS | SEASON | |

Yesterday's Solution

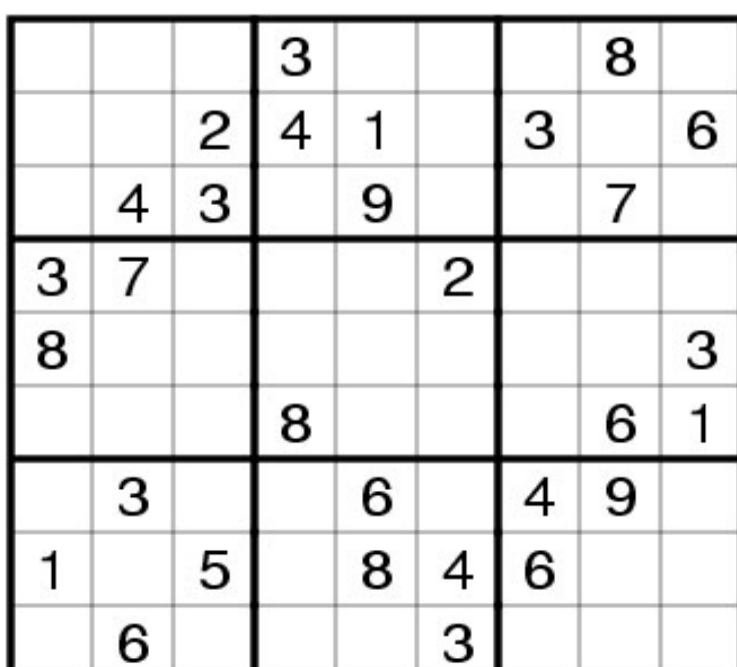
Australia



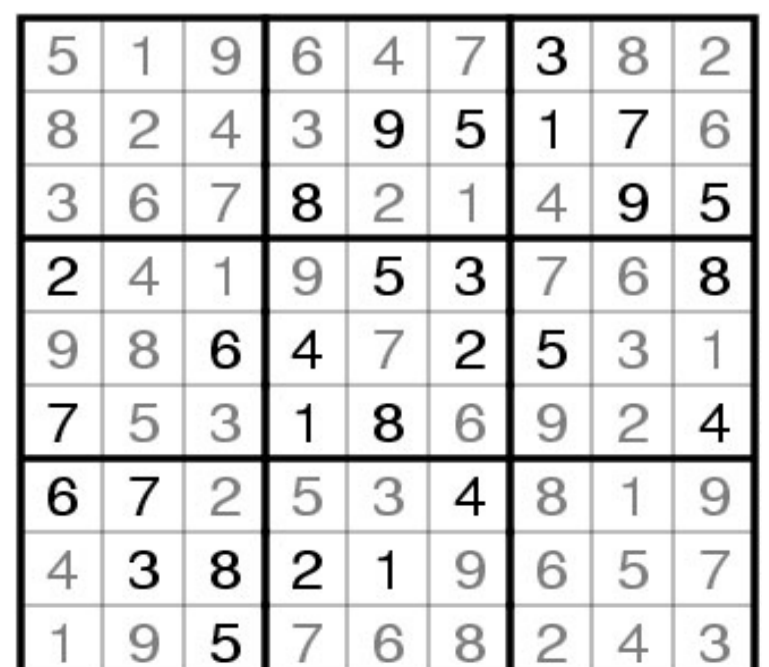
- | | | | |
|--------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| ADELAIDE | DIDGERIDOO | MARSUPIALS | QUEENSLAND |
| AUSSIE | DINGO | MELBOURNE | RAINFORESTS |
| BEACHES | DOWN UNDER | MONARCHY | RUSSELL CROWE |
| BOOMERANG | EMUS | NEW SOUTH WALES | SEAFOOD |
| BRISBANE | EUCALYPTUS TREES | NICOLE KIDMAN | SHRIMP |
| CANBERRA | HUGH JACKMAN | OCEANS | SURFING |
| COMMONWEALTH | KANGAROO | OUTBACK | SYDNEY |
| CONTINENT | KEITH URBAN | PARLIAMENT | TASMANIA |
| CORAL SEA | KOALA | PERTH | VEGETITE |
| CROCODILES | KOOKABURRA | PLATYPUS | VICTORIA |
| DESERTS | KYLIE MINOUGE | PRIME MINISTER | WOMBAT |

The hidden message is: AUSTRALIA'S MOUNT AUGUSTUS IS THE LARGEST ROCK IN THE WORLD

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	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



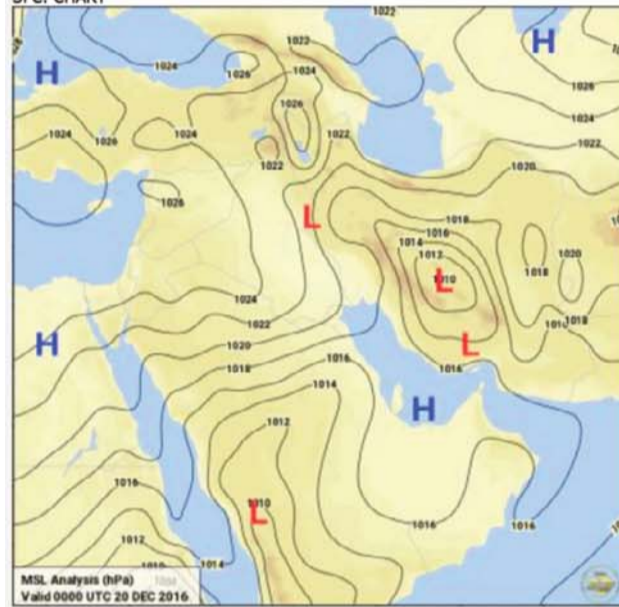
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 20/12/2016-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 16 °C

By Day : Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening gradually at times northerly to north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h with a chance for light rain
By Night : Cold with light to moderate freshening gradually at times north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Expected Weather				
Min Temp °C	05	06	08	09
Max Temp °C	17	18	21	22
Wind Direction	north westerly	north westerly to light variable	north westerly to light variable	variable
Wind Speed km/h	15 - 35	06 - 26	08 - 30	06 - 22

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	13	17		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	10	16		
ABDALY	09	18		
BUBYAN	10	17		
JAHRA	10	17		
FAILAKA ISLAND	11	17		
SALMIYAH	14	16		
AHMADI	15	15		
JAL ALIYAH	09	17		
QAROH ISLAND	17	19		
UMM AL-MARADEM	17	19		
NUWAISIB	12	17		
WAFRA	10	18		
MANAGISH	09	17		
SALMY	07	19		
MUTRIBA	08	17		

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	20
Min Temp (°C)	05
Max Rel Hum (%)	80
Min Rel Hum (%)	22
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	18 S
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

	Sunrise	06:38
	Sunset	16:53

Prayer Times

Fajr	05:13
Sunrise	06:38
Zuhr	11:45
Asr	14:35
Sunset	16:53
Isha	18:16

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



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-Rabaea	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-Daory	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 Abdallah Al-Rafea	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abdallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Plastic Surgeons	
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Family Doctor	
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Psychiatrists	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	
Dr Adrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s. Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa 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 Maarooof	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gujare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dentists	
Dr Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdallateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist	
Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924
Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288
Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Internist, Chest & Heart	
DR.Mohammes Akkad	24555050 Ext 210
Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Farida Al-Habib	2611555-2622555 MD, PH.D, FACC
Inaya German Medical Center	Te: 2575077 Fax: 25723123



ZOOEY DESCHANEL REPORTEDLY EXPECTING HER SECOND CHILD

The 36-year-old actress and her husband Jacob Pechenik - who welcomed daughter Elsie Otter after their August 2015 wedding - are believed to be preparing for a new addition to their family, TooFab reports. According to the entertainment news site, Zooey told cast and crewmembers on the set of her TV sitcom 'New Girl' about her happy news recently. During Zooey's first maternity leave, Megan Fox joined the cast of 'New Girl'. Meanwhile, Zooey previously spoke about her daughter's unusual middle name, admitting she and her spouse wanted something "wild" to go with her "classic" first name. Jokingly asked by talk show host Ellen DeGeneres if Otter is a family name, she quipped: "In a sense that we're all mammals." She then added: "We thought Elsie is a classic name - a lot of people have grandmas and aunts named Elsie. And then we were like the middle name can be a little bit like wild." "We

both found that we had a mutual love for otters. There were some more normal middle names... but I saw that nobody else likely had the middle name 'Otter.' Zooey was married once before, to Death Cab for Cutie and The Postal Service lead vocalist Ben Gibbard. The two wed in September 2009 but filed for divorce in December 2011, citing irreconcilable differences. She started dating Jacob in August 2014. Arnold Schwarzenegger "throws up" when he looks in the mirror. The 69-year-old actor and former bodybuilding champion - who first claimed the title Mr. Olympia at the international competition Joe Weider's Olympia Fitness and Performance Weekend in 1970 - has admitted he has always been "so critical" of himself, even when he was in his best shape, and is still repulsed by his appearance.



Rita Ora

has reportedly lost huge amount

One of the 26-year-old singer's company is reported to have lost the huge amount after it was taken by the man who "lived like a Saudi prince", The Sun reports. Rita's lawyer Graham Shear said: "Rita Ora has multiple business interests globally. One of the companies in which she has an interest is a potential victim of fraud along with several other companies and individuals. The potential loss suffered by all the victims collectively is thought to be significant but only a proportion of that total figure will apply to the entity in which Ora is one of several shareholders. Any loss suffered by the Company in which Ora has an interest will be recoverable from insurance policies which protect against this sort of professional misappropriation, fraud and other claims." Last year Rita was the victim of a night-time burglary at her six-bedroom semi-detached London home. A source close to Rita said: "She is very shaken and has upped her personal protection and security at her homes. "Of course she's scared about her safety and the safety of her family. "Thankfully, Rita wasn't home at the time, but a family member was sleeping upstairs so it could have been so much worse if they had been disturbed. "They called the police who arrived after 5am after they found out that cash, jewels and electrical goods had been stolen. "The police have told Rita she needs to look seriously into the possibility that this was an inside job and could be connected to a number of burglaries in the area, including the one at Simon Cowell's house."

Britney Spears and Sam have fuelled speculation

The 'Piece of Me' hitmaker was seen laughing and joking with the model as they headed inside Japanese restaurant Gyu-Kaku in Los Angeles on the weekend. The pair first met when Sam Asghari starred in the singer's raunchy 'Slumber Party' music video and have gone on three dates already, People magazine reports. Meanwhile, a source previously claimed the 34-year-old star - who has sons Sean Preston, 11, and Jayden, 10, with ex-husband Kevin Federline - is "totally smitten" with Sam. They said: "This is the longest Britney has ever been out of a serious relationship and she's made no secret of the fact that she's been desperately lonely. "She's been quietly dating for the past year, but Sam is the first man she's met who has swept her off her feet and she's totally smitten. Britney doesn't want to go public with Sam until the boys have met him properly." And Britney is also hoping Sam will help her stick to her workout regime. The insider added: "Sam has been ensuring she sticks to her fitness regime and they have been working out

together, so Britney credits him for keeping her in such great shape. "She's really happy and is hoping the tide has finally turned for her and that Sam can give her the fairytale ending she's been longing for."



Rob Kardashian is 'insecure as hell'

The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star was left "heartbroken" when Blac Chyna walked out of their family home over the weekend after accusing him of "verbally abusing" her and now Chyna's mother Tokyo Toni believes Rob needs to get "help" so he can be a better fiancé to the 28-year-old star. She said: "They are going to always going to be OK. As long as I'm around, they're going to be fine 'cause I am not playing. Rob's got his thing with him ... he plays too much. "He's the one that probably hacked the damn girl's page. He's insecure as hell and he's got to get over it. There's no help for him until he gets help. That's about all I can say." And Tokyo insists Chyna and one-month-old Dream is doing well. She added to Entertainment Tonight: "They are fine. Everything is OK on her end. Rob just needs to get himself together. Nobody wants to be sitting around waiting on him to get it right. Nobody's going to baby him. "I know damn well I'm not. And then when I talked to Rob, yes know, he's like, 'Everything's fine, Ma. I'm just going through it,' like it's nothing. He has an issue." It comes after the 29-year-old sock designer posted a sweet message for Chyna on social media. He wrote: "This weekend I was in an emotional bad place and did some things that embarrassed myself and my family. I apologize and I'm seeking help to deal with my flaws/issues. Please pray for me and I'm sorry @blacchyna. You are a great mother to our child and I love you. (sic)" Chyna later took a screenshot of the post and shared it on her own Instagram page, captioning it with a heart emoji.



Bollywood couple Kareena and Saif Ali Khan have baby

Popular Bollywood couple Kareena Kapoor Khan and Saif Ali Khan say they have been blessed with a baby boy. The couple announced the birth of their son in a Mumbai hospital in a tweet yesterday. While Taimur Ali Khan Pataudi is the first child of 36-year-old Kareena Kapoor Khan, 46-year old Saif Ali Khan already has a son and a daughter from his former actress wife, Amrita Singh. The couple belong to prominent Bollywood families. Kareena Kapoor Khan's father, Randhir Kapoor, grandfather Raj Kapoor and great-grandfather Prithviraj Kapoor were all well-known actors, producers or directors. Saif Ali Khan's mother, Sharmila Tagore, was a popular film actress in the 1970s and '80s. His father, Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, was a former Indian cricket captain. — AP



Khloe Kardashian's boyfriend Tristan Thompson has a son

The 25-year-old basketball star's former girlfriend Jordan Craig - whom he split from during the pregnancy - gave birth to the little one in Los Angeles last week and it's now been revealed he's a baby boy, a source confirmed to 'Entertainment Tonight.' Although it's no doubt tough to be in a relationship with someone who has a child with someone else, Khloe is seemingly keen to get stuck in as she hired a private jet for Tristan last week to ensure he got to Los Angeles from Cleveland, Ohio, in time. A source said recently: "Khloe's really understanding about Tristan's situation - she's a little embarrassed that her boyfriend is having a baby with someone else, but it happened before she hooked up with Tristan. She wants him to be a responsible dad, but she wants to keep it all on the down low." The 32-year-old reality TV star found out her boyfriend was having a baby with Jordan - the cousin of Kevin Hart's wife Eniko Parrish - after they started dating but decided to plough ahead with their relationship anyway and be supportive. A source said at the time: "Khloe and Tristan are doing really well. They are exclusive. There is a lot of chemistry between the two of them and they are happy." Khloe's family - including her sister Kim Kardashian West, Kourtney Kardashian and half-sisters Kylie and Kendall Jenner - aren't afraid to voice their opinions when it comes to her love life but it seems, despite fathering a child by someone else, Tristan has already got the seal of approval by the blonde beauty's mother, Kris Jenner. The 'momager' said: "They [Khloe and Tristan] are really cute. You know, she's having a good time. He seems like a really nice guy. I think just with any relationship, just in life, I think it's about chemistry and about values. You know, about how two people get along, so...you know how that goes!"



Margot Robbie confirms her marriage on Instagram

The 'Suicide Squad' star has taken to her Instagram account to share a picture of herself and new husband Tom Ackerley - who she has been dating for three years - complete with her pear-shaped diamond wedding ring. The image of the couple is blurred out apart from her left hand which features the huge sparkler on her wedding finger, which she is pointing towards the camera. Margot, 26, and Tom tied the knot in Coorabell, near Byron Bay, where around 50 guests were in attendance. The wedding began at 4pm and concluded with a disco which finished around 11pm. Margot and Tom were so determined to keep their big day a secret they even told guests to meet at different locations, from the Gold Coast to Byron Bay, before they were collected by bus and transported to the venue. Guests were also asked to hand in cameras and mobile phones to ensure a social media blackout was adhered to. The pair are said to have got engaged over the summer and managed to keep it a secret. Attendees at the nuptials included the star's brothers Lachlan and Cameron, and her sister Anya. But the actress is estranged from her dad Doug so mother Sarie is thought to have given her away. Margot was spotted landing in Australia last week with a T-shirt on which read: "Say 'I do' Down Under." The couple met on the set of movie 'Suite Francaise' and live together in London.

MUSIC

Pearl Jam, Tupac earned spots in Rock Hall of Fame

Rap legend Tupac Shakur and grunge rockers Pearl Jam earned spots yesterday in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as perpetual nominee Nile Rodgers finally won recognition in a side category. Tupac, who was slain in 1996, and Pearl Jam were both chosen to enter the shrine to rock culture in their first year of eligibility. The other selected artists were folk singer Joan Baez, stadium-packing rockers Journey and two top forces in English progressive rock—Yes and the Electric Light Orchestra. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame will induct its new class at an April 7 concert at the Barclays Center in New York. The Cleveland-based institution made its decision by nominating 19 acts and polling 800 music industry experts, with fan voting accounting for a single ballot.

Tupac remains one of the most iconic figures in rap even 20 years after his death, with fans worldwide drawn by his emotional directness and theatrical flair. He will be inducted one year after the Hall of Fame chose politically charged gangster rappers N.W.A., part of a growing recognition that hip-hop belongs to the rock tradition. Pearl Jam remains one of the enduring acts of the 1990s alternative music boom, with front man Eddie Vedder's raw vocals and left-wing activism bringing a fresh edge to classic rock songs. Nirvana, a fellow Seattle grunge band often seen as Pearl Jam's rivals, was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2014—also in the first year of eligibility, defined as 25 years since an act's first single or album.

Vindication, of sorts, for Rodgers

Chic, a top group of the disco age with nightclub hits such as "Le Freak," has been nominated a record 11 times—a streak that has been increasingly awkward for band co-founder Nile Rodgers. Chic again did not win. But Rodgers will be inducted on his own with the separate Award for Musical Excellence, which recognizes producers or side musicians who make their mark out of the spotlight. Rodgers, 64, has worked with an array of top acts from Diana Ross to Madonna to Lady Gaga. He teamed up with David Bowie in the 1980s for the rock icon's disco metamorphosis.

The dreadlocked guitarist, in an interview last year with AFP, said he tried not to "get weird" about not entering the Hall of Fame and considered the saga "actually sort of funny." But he questioned the criteria, saying that his involvement in



In this June 26, 2016 file photo, Jeff Lynne from British band Electric Light Orchestra performs at the In this Sept. 2, 2012, file photo, Pearl Jam performs at the "Made In America" music festival in Philadelphia. — AP photos



such a vast number of chart-topping records clearly demonstrated his influence.

Baez is a leading figure of the 1960s counterculture and remains a staunch activist for the environment and non-violence. Her induction comes just after fellow folk singer Bob Dylan—whom she mentored and for a time dated—won the biggest award of all: the Nobel Prize.

Prog rock triumphs

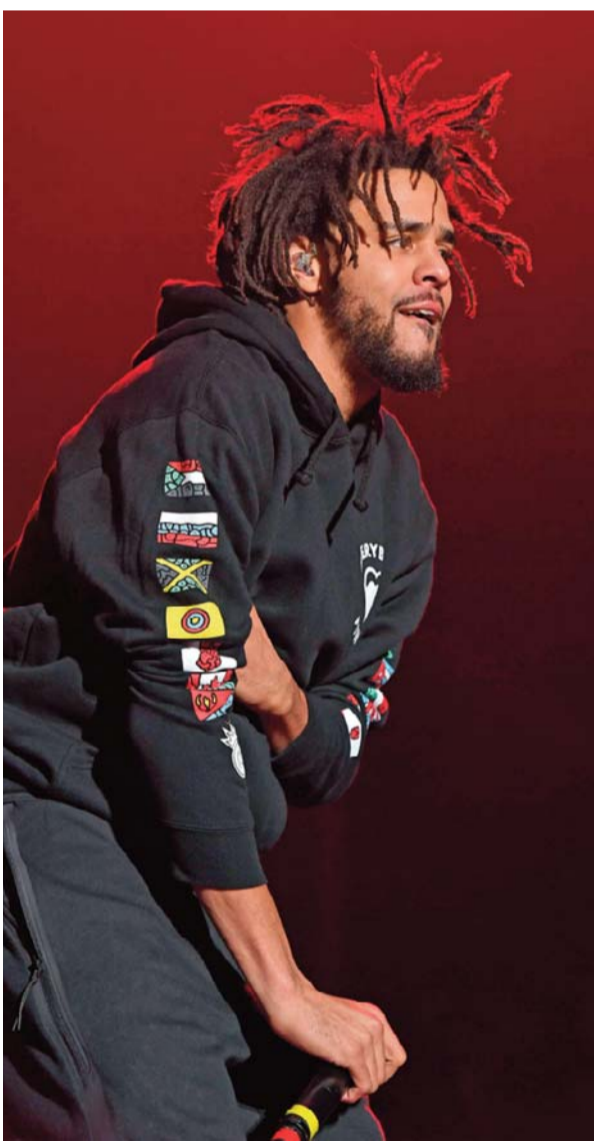
Journey is the most mainstream of the new inductees, with Neal Schon's guitar anthems pulling in massive audiences.

"Don't Stop Believin'," released in 1981, remains a staple of sporting events and political rallies in the English-speaking world. Journey nonetheless had its roots in progressive rock, the 1970s movement that brought more complex structure and improvisation to pop. Yes is one of the most identifiable bands in prog rock, winning a following through the band's technical skills and incorporation of jazz and blues.

The band also transformed itself frequently, and reached number one in the United States in 1983 with "Owner of a Lonely Heart." The only consistent member of Yes, bassist Chris Squire, died last year although founding singer Jon Anderson,

known for his unusually high voice, remains active on side projects. The Electric Light Orchestra is the most experimental of the new inductees, with the Birmingham group taking its cue from The Beatles' psychedelic phase and combining classical elements and futuristic themes. — AFP

J. Cole surprises with one of year's top-charting albums



Rapper J. Cole on Monday scored one of the biggest debuts on the US charts this year, furthering the surprise after he released the dark narrative album with little warning. "4 Your Eyez Only," the fourth studio album by the North Carolina rapper, debuted at number one on the Billboard album chart for the week through Thursday. Selling 492,000 copies or the equivalent in streaming and downloads, "4 Your Eyez Only" marks the third biggest opening week of any album in the nearly completed year, according to tracking service Nielsen Music.

Only Toronto rapper Drake's hit-heavy "Views" and pop superstar Beyoncé's conceptual "Lemonade" sold more in their first weeks in the United States. "4 Your Eyez Only," in line with J. Cole's previous work, delves into racial and income inequalities in America. The 10-track album traces the life of a character named James who goes from drug-dealing to starting a family—and to an early death. The 31-year-old Cole had recently hinted he was through with music, telling The Meadows festival in New York in October that the show—a last-minute fill-in for The Weeknd—would be his last for the foreseeable future.

But a pre-order page suddenly appeared on iTunes for "4 Your Eyez Only" a week before its release on December 9. Cole confirmed the album by putting out a documentary on the album's creation through Tidal, the streaming service led by his mentor Jay Z. In contrast to many other prominent figures in hip-hop, Cole has had little personal controversy and in recent years has avoided the formula of tapping star rappers for collaborations. His last album, "2014 Forest Hills Drive," explored societal tensions by relating how the now famous Cole returned to buy his humble boyhood home. — AFP

This file photo shows Rapper J. Cole performing onstage during The Meadows Music & Arts Festival in New York. — AFP



Fifth Harmony becomes quartet after Camila quit

Camila Cabello has left Fifth Harmony to pursue a solo career but said the girl group shouldn't be surprised by her departure. Cabello wrote in a statement posted on several social media sites that she has repeatedly talked with the other group members about her plans to focus on a solo career. Her post came hours after other Fifth Harmony group members released a statement on Twitter early Monday saying they were just informed of her plans. They said the group will continue as a quartet.

"We are four strong, committed women who will continue with Fifth Harmony as well as our solo endeavors," the group wrote in a statement. Both sides wished the other well. Cabello's statement reflected on private moments the group shared, and thanked fans for their support. "New chapters are scary, but conforming to what's safe and looking back with regret would be even scarier," she wrote.

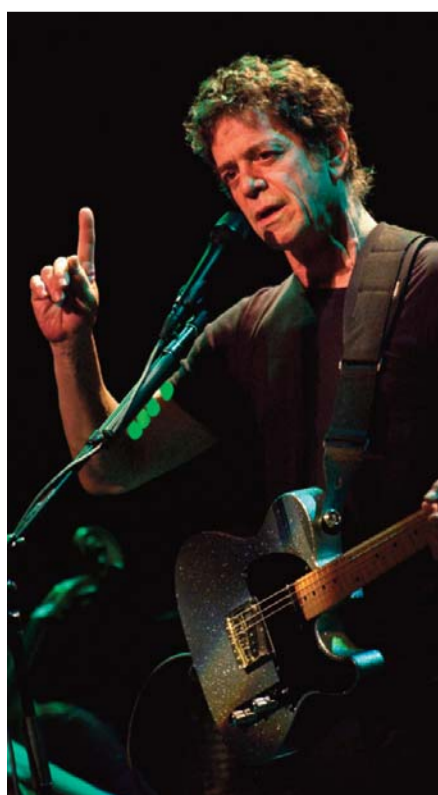
Fifth Harmony was formed on the second season of the "The X Factor" in 2012 and scored its biggest hit last year with "Worth It." Cabello has been branching out on her own with collaborations with Shawn Mendes on "I Know What You Did Last Summer" and a duet with Machine Gun Kelly, "Bad Things," that reached No. 10 on the Billboard Hot 100. — AP

Camila Cabello performs at Y100's iHeartRadio Jingle Ball 2016 at BB&T Center in Sunrise, Florida. — AP

Grammys to honor Nina Simone, Velvet Underground



This file photo shows legendary jazz and blues singer Nina Simone in concert at the Olympia music hall in Paris.



This file photo shows US singer Lou Reed performing on stage at the "Casino de Paris" in Paris.

Legendary singer Nina Simone, art-rock pioneers The Velvet Underground and funk great Sly Stone will receive Grammy Lifetime Achievement Awards in 2017, the Recording Academy announced Monday. The music industry body each year presents the special prizes for career-spanning influence, in addition to the regular Grammys which recognize the past year's works. Simone—who never received a Grammy during her lifetime—was a young piano prodigy who, as an African American in the segregated US South, was discouraged from classical music.

She became one of the most celebrated singers of soul and a staunch civil rights activist, with classic tracks such as "To Be Young, Gifted and Black." The Velvet Underground, led by John Cale and the late Lou Reed, revolutionized rock music by bringing an aesthetic from avant-garde art. The band's 1967 debut album, "The Velvet Underground and Nico," was produced by Andy Warhol and explored drugs and sexual fetishism in ways then unthinkable for mainstream pop acts. Sly Stone, leading Sly and the Family Stone, brought a new psychedelic vibe to funk music. He became a major influence on later artists, notably Prince.

Also winning the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award are "First Lady of Gospel Music" Shirley Caesar and legendary pianist Ahmad Jamal, who helped bring a greater pop audience to jazz. The other recipients are Charley Pride, the former baseball player who is the first African American to achieve success in white-dominated country music, and Jimmie Rodgers, who helped set the foundations of country before dying at age 35 in 1933. The main gala of the Grammys takes place on February 12 in Los Angeles, with pop superstar Beyoncé leading in nominations. — AFP



This file photo shows US funk, soul and rock band 'Sly (front) and the Family Stone' perform on the Olympia music hall stage, in Paris. — AFP photos

FEATURES



This file photo shows the iconic image of Cuba's revolutionary hero Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, at Revolution Square near the Ministry of Interior in Havana, Cuba.



This photo shows a skier at the Rusutsu resort in Hokkaido, Japan.



This file photo shows a Dall sheep lounging on a ridge line in Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska.



In this file photo, worshippers throw flower petals at the statue of the Our Lady of Fatima as it is carried at the Our Lady of Fatima shrine, in Fatima, central Portugal.



This file photo shows a child sprayed by a wave on the promenade, a popular tourist hotspot near the city of Cape Town, South Africa. — AP Photos

A list of top travel destinations 2017

Where should you travel in 2017? Here's a list of top destination lists from expert sources across the travel industry, from guidebook and magazine publishers to travel agents, tour operators and websites.

LONELY PLANET

Top 10 US destinations: Asheville, North Carolina; Western Washington; Lincoln, Nebraska; California's southern desert region; Montana's Flathead Valley; Atlanta; New York's Adirondack Mountains; Texas Hill Country wine region; Denver; Florida's "Emerald Coast" Top 10 countries: Canada; Colombia; Finland; Dominican; Nepal; Bermuda; Mongolia; Oman; Myanmar; Ethiopia Top 10 cities: Bordeaux, France; Cape Town, South Africa; Los Angeles; Merida, Mexico; Ohrid, Macedonia; Pistoia, Italy; Seoul, South Korea; Lisbon, Portugal; Moscow; Portland, Oregon.

FROMMER'S

Montreal, Quebec; Karasjok, Norway; Bermuda; The Pantanal, South America; Mississippi River; Paris; Sulawesi, Indonesia; San Francisco; Fatima, Portugal; Nashville; Panama Canal; Nan Madol, Micronesia; Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda; Germany; Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, Maine; Haida Gwaii, British Columbia; Doha, Qatar; Cuba.

THRILLIST

Houston; Salt Lake City; Santa Fe, New Mexico; Miami; Las Vegas; Chattanooga, Tennessee; Cincinnati; Nashville; Atlanta; Chicago; Los Angeles; San Francisco; Orlando, Florida; Portland, Oregon; Columbus, Ohio.

AFAR MAGAZINE

First 10 on a list of 100 destinations: Skala

Sikaminias, Greece; Bermuda; West Sweden; Okinawa, Japan; Kyushu, Japan; Hokkaido, Japan; Arizona; Puerto Rico; Singapore; Buenos Aires.

US destinations: Asheville, North Carolina; Marfa, Texas; Portland, Oregon; Yolo County, Northern California; Haines, Alaska; New Orleans; Black Rock City, Nevada; Nashville; Park City, Utah; Santa Barbara, California; Chicago; Philadelphia; The Catskills, New York; Los Angeles; Cape Cod, Massachusetts; Pittsburgh.

US TOUR OPERATORS ASSOCIATION

Top "hot" destinations: Cuba, Italy, Iceland, United Kingdom, Spain, Ireland, Australia, South Africa, China, Vietnam.

Top emerging or off-the-beaten path destinations: Cuba, Iceland, Croatia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Myanmar, Iran, South Africa and Morocco, Cambodia and India.

TRAVEL LEADERS

Domestic destinations: Orlando; Maui, Hawaii; New York City; Las Vegas; Alaska cruise; Honolulu; Los Angeles; Washington DC; San Francisco; Miami. International destinations: Caribbean cruise; Cancun, Mexico; London; European river cruise; Rome; Punta Cana, Dominican Republic; Paris; Mediterranean cruise; Montego Bay, Jamaica; Playa del Carmen/Riviera Maya, Mexico.

TRAVEL and LEISURE MAGAZINE

North America: Montreal, Quebec; Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Baja Wine Country, Mexico; Veracruz, Mexico; Indianapolis; Cincinnati; Honolulu; Nashville; Norfolk, Virginia; Philadelphia; Jackson Hole, Wyoming; Tofino, Canada; Bermuda.

South America: Salta, Argentina; La Paz,

Bolivia; Angra dos Reis, Brazil; Guayaquil, Ecuador; Nicaragua; Panama City, Panama; Pisco, Peru; Montevideo, Uruguay.

Africa: Okavango Delta, Botswana; Tamouda Bay, Morocco; Cape Town, South Africa; Madagascar; Rwanda; Seychelles Asia/Middle East; Cambodian Coast, Cambodia; Hampi, India; Kanazawa, Japan; Jerusalem; Al Jabal Akhdar, Oman; Suzhou, China; Laos.

Oceania: Noosa, Australia; Perth, Australia; Queenstown, New Zealand.

Europe: Helsinki, Finland; Jura, France; Provence, France; Hamburg, Germany; Paris, France; Belfast, Ireland; Turin, Italy; Rotterdam, Netherlands; Oslo, Norway; Belgrade, Serbia; Malaga, Spain; Lake Lucerne, Switzerland; Devon, United Kingdom.

FODOR'S

Helsinki, Finland; Hokkaido, Japan; Lima, Peru; Canada's national parks; Chiang Mai, Thailand; Medellin, Colombia; Aarhus, Denmark; Madagascar; Cyprus; Hong Kong; Oaxaca, Mexico; Edinburgh, Scotland; Alaska; Saxony, Germany; Wellington, New Zealand; Marfa, Texas; Kiev, Ukraine; Laos; Denver; Minho region, Portugal; Yorkshire, England; Washington, DC; Bordeaux, France; Cape Town, South Africa; Antigua and Barbuda. — AP

babycottons launches new winter collection in Kuwait

babycottons, a children's clothing brand developed to dress babies using the finest cotton in the world, has launched its new Winter 2016 collection across its stores in Kuwait. The new collection features winter designs and warmer fabrics for the colder season. babycottons, which has stores throughout America, focuses on using premium pima cotton in their garments and accessories. The latest launch includes themes such as Rufus, wintertime, Juliette, playtime, yoko and my little friend for both boys and girls from newborn up to six years old.

"Each season we welcome new and exciting clothing in our

Kuwait stores, presenting our customers with the finest cottons from Peru. I am excited to introduce the new Winter 2016/17 collection which includes some great pieces that look great and provide comfort for children of all ages," said Dima Nuseibah, the Operations Manager of babycottons in Kuwait. "Our commitment to only using the best cotton from Peru ensures that parents can rely upon our quality, durability and comfort when dressing their child."

Positioned within the affordable but high quality segment of children's clothes, babycottons offers clothing, accessories, shoes and perfumery items for newborn from size six for both

girls and boys. The key differentiator of babycottons' is the premium pima cotton, which is found only in Peru, being used in its clothing line. Pima cotton is very soft and safe to use especially on sensitive newborn children up to the age of six years. Having first launched in the Middle East in 2013, with the opening of its store at The Avenues Mall, babycottons opened its second store at the Promenade in 2015. Customers can call each of the stores directly to find out more about the current availability on 22200848 for The Avenues Mall, and 22251299 for the Promenade, or visit babycottons.com for more information.





In this photo, a 'hidden Christian' altar is seen in the house of a Japanese faithful on Ikitsuki Island in Nagasaki prefecture.— AFP photos



This photo shows a woman visiting the grave of Japanese Christian Gaspar Nishi, one of the 188 people who were executed at the site in 1609, on Ikitsuki Island in Nagasaki prefecture.

The secret world of Japan's hidden Christians

Japanese rice farmer Masatsugu Tanimoto doesn't think of himself as a Christian, and you'd almost never find him in a church. But every so often, he and others meet to recite prayers drawn from another time and place. The group, dressed in sober kimonos and sandals, rapidly make the sign of the cross as they sing a mish-mash of



This photo shows Karematsu cemetery where 'hidden Christians' are buried in the city of Nagasaki.

Portuguese, Latin and Japanese-evoking the memory of their ancestors, the so-called 'hidden Christians', who were brutally persecuted in the 17th century, when Shoguns ruled Japan.

Oscar-winning director Martin Scorsese is bringing their harrowing story to the big screen just before Christmas in his newest movie 'Silence', based on the 1966 novel by famed Japanese novelist Shusaku Endo. "If the film properly recounts the story of my ancestors, I'd gladly go see it," Tanimoto told AFP after singing with several other descendants. The group, from the town of Ikitsuki, near Nagasaki, meet at a local museum to conduct these rituals. Despite their Christian roots, the multilingual prayers, known as orasho, are not meant to honor God or any Christian figure, the 60-year-old added.

"We say 'Mary' several times but we're not praying to her. We don't refer to a specific god either, but rather to our ancestors," he added. The link to modern day Japan, where Christians make up less than one percent of the population, stretches back more than four centuries. The first missionary, Jesuit Francis-Xavier arrived in Japan with two companions in 1549 and was followed by Portuguese missionaries who drew tens of thousands more Japanese to the faith. The priests were expelled in the 17th century by military leaders who feared their growing influence.

Isolated

For Japanese converts, hiding their religion became a matter of life and death for the next 250 years, as Christianity was banned and Japan closed itself off from the outside world. Some suspects were forced to trample on holy images to prove they were not Christians. Many went into hiding or disguised their faith. Those who refused to give up Christianity faced being burned to death, crucified, or slowly drowned. Whether it was to camouflage their beliefs or adapt to an environment without priests and bibles, the hidden Christians created a blended faith that left its mark on traditions still honored by their descendants.

The Virgin Mary took the form of Kannon, the Buddhist goddess of mercy. Ave Maria became the somewhat similar "Abe Maruya." "Isolated, they had no choice but to recreate their beliefs as faithfully as possible," said Shigeo Nakazono, an ethnologist at the local Ikitsuki Island Museum. Fisherman Masaichi Kawasaki's home has four altars in his living room, including one devoted to Buddhism, another for his ancestors-common in rural Japanese homes-and a third for the Shinto faith.

The last one, stuffed with flasks, apples, flowers, a melon, a cross and candles, features a kimono-clad woman with long black hair holding a child-is unmistakable as an image of the Virgin Mary. On a table lay tiny white paper crosses like the ones Kawasaki's ancestors would hide in the ears of deceased converts. "It was only natural that I would learn this practice as it was part of my daily life growing up as a child, a bit like one assimilates a habit into everyday life," the 66-year-old said. Many descendants, known as Kakure Kirishitan (hidden Christians in Japanese), in the small community about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles)



southwest of Tokyo have never joined the church and struggle to identify with Christianity.

In this photo, a Japanese woman walks past the memorial which commemorates Japanese Christians executed in the late 1500s at the Twenty-Six Martyrs Museum in the city of Nagasaki.

Really sad

Some of earlier underground Christians converted to Catholicism after priests returned in the mid-19th century, when Japan lifted over two centuries of self-imposed isolation. In 1865, a group of nervous peasants approached a Christian missionary working in Japan. One woman whispered "our hearts are the same as yours", revealing the previously unknown existence of what turned out to be tens of thousands of the original Christians' ancestors. Some think the Catholic church should reach out to help ensure the story doesn't fade into the mists of time.

"It is something that happened here in Japan and is a unique thing in the world," said Father Renzo de Luca, director of Nagasaki's Twenty-six Martyrs Museum and Monument, which commemorates Christians executed on the site in the late 1500s. But there are just a few hundred known descendants of the hidden Christians left, and many younger people don't show much interest in carrying on traditions to honor the long-dead converts. "It's really sad," said 64-year-old carpenter Yoshitaka Oishi, his eyes welling up with tears. "If this doesn't get passed down, it's finished." — AFP

In this photo, Japanese 'hidden Christian' Yoshinori Yamamoto, wearing a kimono, poses for a portrait in a field on Ikitsuki Island in Nagasaki prefecture.



In this photo, Japanese 'hidden Christians' perform orasho prayers on Ikitsuki Island in Nagasaki prefecture.



This photo shows a sculpture of crucified Japanese Christian St. Paulo Miki at the Twenty-Six Martyrs Museum, which commemorates Japanese Christians executed on the site in the late 1500s, in the city of Nagasaki.



This photo shows a painting of a missionary priest in Japan, at the Twenty-Six Martyrs Museum, which commemorates Japanese Christians executed on the site in the late 1500s, in the city of Nagasaki.

Lifestyle

Pearl Jam, Tupac earned spots in Rock Hall of Fame



37

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2016



People look at illuminated New Year decorations to mark the upcoming New Year holiday in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek. — AFP

SRI LANKANS RUSH TO BUILD CHRISTMAS TREE ON TIME

The goal has been to erect the world's tallest artificial Christmas tree, but Sri Lankan organizers now say they'll be lucky to get the tree up in time for the holiday. Hundreds of port workers and volunteers were scrambling Tuesday to build the enormous tree on a popular beachside promenade in Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital. Once assembled, the steel and-wire frame should stand 98 meters (320 feet) high - more than 40 meters (131 feet) taller than the current record-holder. Organizers said they wanted the tree to help promote ethnic and religious harmony in the Buddhist-majority South Asian island nation.

"This is just to show the world that we can live as one country, one nation," said the former cricket player Arjuna Ranatunga, now Sri Lanka's minister of ports and shipping. Sri Lanka has "issues regarding religion, caste and race," he said. In recent years, Sri Lanka's reputation as an inclusive multicultural country has suffered amid complaints by minority Christian and Muslim communities of state-sponsored discrimination, as well as allegations of widespread abuses against minority ethnic Tamils both during and after the country's civil war against Tamil rebels, which ended in 2009.

Since assuming power in January 2015, President Maithripala Sirisena and his government have ushered in an era of transparency and post-war reconciliation, but have yet to make good on

many of their promises, including discovering the fate of thousands of people who disappeared during the war or investigating alleged wartime abuses by the military. "The new government has taken steps to control most of the things," Ranatunga said, describing the Christmas tree as "one small gesture that we can show the world that we can live in harmony."

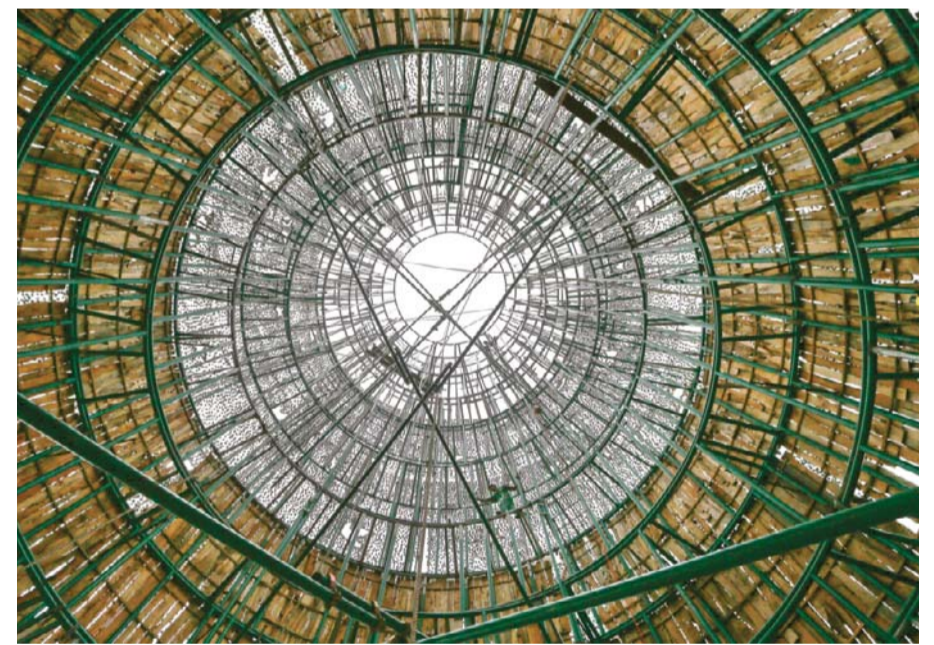
World's tallest artificial tree

Some non-Christian residents of Colombo - where Christmas lights and Santa Claus imagery overtake shopping malls during the holiday season - were delighted by the enormity of the tree challenge. "It's like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see such a thing being erected with your own eyes," store clerk Charith Nissanka, 38, said as he walked by the construction site, strewn with steel pipes and thousands of meters (yards) of netting, onto which the ornaments will be attached. Eventually, there will be more than 1 million natural pine cones attached to the tree, topped by a 6-meter-high (20-foot-high) shining star.

Ultimately, Sri Lanka hopes the Christmas tree will be declared the world's tallest artificial one, and efforts are being made to gather evidence to send to Guinness World Records, said the project's chief organizer, Mangala Gunasekara. Currently, the record is held by a Chinese firm that put up a

55-meter-high (180-foot-high) tree-like tower of lights and synthetic foliage, ornaments and lamps in the city of Guangzhou last year. The world's tallest real Christmas tree ever is listed as a 67-meter-high (221-foot-high) Douglas fir erected in 1950 at Northgate Shopping Center in Seattle. By comparison, this year's Christmas tree in New York City's Rockefeller Center is a Norway spruce that stands about 29 meters (94 feet) tall and is about 90 years old.

Not everyone in Sri Lanka thought the tree was a good idea, though. Four months after construction began in August, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith - representing the island nation's 1.5 million Catholics - lambasted the \$80,000 project as a waste of money. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe responded to the criticism by saying the tree was not being built with public money, but with donations from individuals and private firms. But workers missed initial deadlines set for Dec 15, and then another yesterday. Organizers now say they're planning to have the tree up by Christmas Eve on Saturday night. The tree would then stay up until Jan 6. — AP



In this photo, a Sri Lankan port worker climbs on a scaffolding as he fixes the frames to build an enormous, artificial Christmas tree on a popular beachside promenade in Colombo, Sri Lanka. — AP Photos



In this photo, Sri Lankan port workers carry steel rods as they try to build an enormous, artificial Christmas tree on a popular beachside promenade in Colombo, Sri Lanka.



In this photo, Sri Lankan port workers assemble decorations on frames as they try to build an enormous, artificial Christmas tree on a popular beachside promenade in Colombo, Sri Lanka.