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MPs CALL TO END SPORTS CRISIS

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: In its first special debate, the National Assembly demanded yesterday that the sports crisis that attracted international suspensions must be resolved within two months by issuing new legislation that conform to world sports charters. MPs voting by a large margin a recommendation calling to form a sports and youth committee next week that will start immediately to work on a new sports law agreed by all sides and also by the international sports organizations.

The recommendation, which was approved by all

Cabinet ministers present in the Assembly, also calls on the government to contact international sports bodies and inform them of the plan and request a temporary lifting of the 14-month suspension to allow Kuwaiti teams to take part in international events.

The resolutions were approved after a marathon six-hour debate called by 11 lawmakers to find a solution to the suspension imposed on Kuwaiti sports since Oct 2015, allegedly over government interference in sports. During the debate, a large number of MPs spoke, and most of them strongly lashed out at what they called a political struggle between leading figures in the coun-

try for personal and political objectives.

Many MPs accused the government of a lack of will to lift the ban on Kuwait by failing to convince international organizations, and also for interfering in local sports. Minister of Information and State Minister for Youth Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah denied that the government was unwilling to end the ban, but insisted that the suspension imposed on Kuwait has no legal basis.

He said the laws issued in the past few years, and specifically the law issued in June this year, did not constitute any interference in local sports. The minister

directly accused Kuwaitis holding leading positions in international sports organizations of causing the suspension in collaboration with certain officials in local sports bodies, who complained against the country.

Speaking during the debate, opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri said the problem of sports in the country is a struggle between top officials.

He said the struggle festered because the government could not stop it, adding that every side is trying to push the solution that serves its interests. Opposition MP Mohammad Al-Dallal said the struggles that led to

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KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah poses for a group photo with 2016 KFAS award winners. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah poses for a group photo with KFAS officials.

AMIR PATRONIZES, ATTENDS 2016 KFAS AWARD CEREMONY

SUPPORTING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN KUWAIT, ARAB WORLD

KUWAIT: With patronage and attendance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Kuwait Foundation for Advancement of Science (KFAS) held its 2016 award ceremony at Bayan Palace yesterday.

The awards include the Kuwait Prize awarded to Kuwaiti and Arab researchers, the Scientific Production Prize awarded to Kuwaiti researchers, and Anwar Al-Nouri Prize, offered for Best PhD thesis in Education in the Arab World. The Kuwait Prize, established in 1979, is consistent with the KFAS objectives, fulfilling its mission to support scientific research in various branches seeking to motivate Arab scientists and researchers.

Kuwait Prize

The 2016 Kuwait Prize was awarded in three categories. The first category's prize, on basic sciences in physics, was awarded to Dr George Tanius Helou (Lebanese), Executive Director of the Infrared Processing and Analysis Center, and Research Professor of Physics at the University of Caltech in Pasadena, California, USA. Prize in the second category, Applied Sciences in food and Agriculture, was awarded to Dr Sufian Abdul Salam Kamoun (Tunisian), Professor of Biology at West Anglia University, and a senior fellow at the Sainsbury Laboratory, John Innes Centre in the UK.

As for the third category of the Kuwait Prize, Arts and Literature, the prize was equally shared by Prof. Dr Nihad Mohammad Saliha (Egyptian) and Dr Afif Ahmad Rafiq Bahnasi (Syrian). Saliha is a professor of drama and criticism at the Higher Institute of Art Criticism at Egypt's Art Academy, for her distinction in the Egyptian, Arab and international theater movement and her creativity in using postmodernism art criticism curricula.

Co-Winner Bahnasi is a retired professor at the University of Damascus. Dr Afif was awarded the prize for his in-depth studies in dealing

with the unique aesthetic aspects of Arab heritage and the contemporary Arab reality, particularly, his interest in Islamic and Arab art. The fourth category of the Kuwait prize, Economics and Social Sciences in Banking and Finance, was withheld this year.

Scientific Production

As for the 2016 Scientific Production Prize, established in 1988, KFAS offered it in four researchers in four categories. Prize of the first category, Physical Sciences and Mathematics, went to Dr Halima Ali Mohammed Al-Kandari, Associate Professor, College of Health Sciences, Environmental Health Department, at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training.

The second category, Engineering Sciences, was awarded to Professor Issa Mohammed Issa Safran, Department of Petroleum Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University. The third category prize, Medical Science and Allied Health Sciences, was awarded to Professor Walid Ibrahim Al Herz, Department of Pediatrics, and Faculty of Medicine at Kuwait University.

Winner of the fourth category prize, Social Sciences and Humanities, was Professor Abdullah Abed Ali Alqatem, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts at Kuwait University in the category of Social sciences and humanities. The Scientific Production Prize in Biological Sciences, and Administrative and Economics, was withheld this year.

Key role

The Anwar Al-Nouri Prize, has been launched only this year, in recognition of the key role played by the late Anwar Al-Nouri in education both at home and on the Arab level, as well as the services he offered to KFAS as a member of the board of directors.

Winner of the first place, Dr Amira Hussein Traish (Palestinian), was awarded her PhD in 2014 from the British University in Dubai, UAE, for her dissertation titled: Comparative analysis of competence grades of students in universities of the United Arab Emirates: The effectiveness of using mother tongue in teaching reading in a second language. Dr Traish is currently a Coordinator of the English language Center, Faculty of Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Sharjah.

The second place has been equally shared by Dr Nasser Saud Abdul Aziz Al Rais (Saudi Arabia), and Dr Dalal Samir Rizkallah (Lebanese). Rais earned his PhD in 2015 from the College of Education at King Saud University for his dissertation titled: School accreditation in public schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He is currently an Assistant Professor at the Deanship of the Foundation Year and Elective Studies, Department of Self-development at the University of Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

Co-winner Rizkallah received her PhD in 2015 from the Institute of Advanced Studies of Arts and Humanities at the Lebanese University for her dissertation titled: The Development of Collaborative Self-Assessment Standards and Procedures in Vocational Education Settings. Dr Rizkallah is currently the Principal of the Antoine Sisters School in Hazmieh, Lebanon.

Warm welcome

On arrival at the venue, His Highness the Amir, who is also KFAS Chairman, was warmly welcomed by Director General Dr Adnan Shehabeddine and board members. His Highness the Amir was briefed on the KFAS and the Dasman Diabetes Institute achievements and projects.

Attending the ceremony were His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-

Jaber Al-Sabah, Sheikh Faisal Al-Saud Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, together with governors and senior state officials as well as military, police and Kuwait National Guard (KNG) commanders. The ceremony included a documentary on KFAS' major achievements.

Addressing the ceremony, Shehabeddine emphasized His Highness the Amir's keenness on honoring scientists and researchers out of a strong belief in the essential role of science for establishing a renaissance with sustainable economy.

He added that on the sidelines of the 4th Africa-Arab Summit recently held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, His Highness the Amir honored winners of Al-Sumait Prize for African Development for health and food security.

40th anniversary

Shehabeddine noted that yesterday's award ceremony coincided with KFAS 40th anniversary, saying that the great scientific stronghold was established by an Amiri Decree in 1976. It was then supported by an initiative led by the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) for the private sector firms to contribute to the financing of KFAS research projects as part of their social responsibility. The ceremony also coincided with the fulfillment of the last year of the institution's five-year strategy plan, he said.

In November, KFAS completed preparation of its new five-year strategic plan, based on a world level assessment of the performance of its programs and status over the past two years, as well as on an independent questionnaire that covered major companies and beneficiaries, he said.

The new plan, coming the form of programs

covering three main pivots; enhancing scientific awareness among the public in cooperation with the Ministry of Education for boosting the dissemination of scientific culture through the e-media targeting young people.

It also aims to build research capabilities for developing effective solutions for the obstacles to sustainable development, in addition to carrying on with the official scientific bodies to increase the share of scientific research in state budget to one percent, at least, the KFAS director said. The plan will also seek to achieve a rise in spending on the programs on bolstering the role of the private sector.

Shehabeddine noted that coordination with the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (GSSPCD) led to comprising several of the KFAS project in the development plan to be carried out with scientific bodies such the Ministry of Education and the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC). In conclusion, Shehabeddine highly appreciated His Highness the Amir's directives and patronage of the annual ceremony. He also congratulated the winners of the KFAS 2016 awards.

Developing science

Speaking on part of the award winners, Dr Helou, thanked His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah for attending and patronizing the event which aimed at developing science in Kuwait and the Arab region. Helou said that science was an ongoing quest for perfection and finding answers for questions bewildering human beings, adding that the Arab and Islamic civilization was keen on the scientific development of mankind and without such dedication, Europe and the world would not have reached the age of enlightenment. The honoree thank KFAS for always supporting scientists in the region and around the globe, saying that such encouragement will always push for more scientific advancement in the future.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and top state officials attend the ceremony.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah waves as he enters the venue.



KFAS' Director General Dr Adnan Shehabeddine delivers his speech.



Dr George Tanius Helou, winner of the 2016 Kuwait Prize in the basic sciences in physics' category delivers his speech.



KFAS' Director General Dr Adnan Shehabeddine presents a memento to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



KFAS Board Member Dr Faiza Al-Kharafi welcomes His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah honors winners of the 2016 KFAS awards.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and a number of Kuwaiti lawmakers meet with Chairman of Mongolia's Parliament Miyeegombyn Enkhbold and his accompanying delegation. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chairperson of the Kuwaiti Voluntary Work Center Sheikhha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

AMIR MEETS MONGOLIAN PARLIAMENT'S CHAIRMAN

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Chairman of Mongolia's Parliament Miyeegombyn Enkhbold and his accompanying delegation. The reception was attended by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-

Jaber Al-Sabah and Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir met with His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-

Hamad Al-Sabah, while His Highness the Crown Prince met with His Highness the Prime Minister as well. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince also met with Sheikhha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Chairperson of the Kuwaiti Voluntary Work Center. — KUNA

AMIR TO PATRONIZE ISLAMIC CAPITAL FESTIVITIES' CONCLUSION

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will patronize today a ceremony marking the conclusion of the national festivities for designating Kuwait as the Capital of Islamic Culture (2016), the Minister of Information announced on Wednesday. Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud, also Chairman of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), said in a statement that the event, to be hosted by Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center, will be attended by a large number of renowned cultural and intellectual figures from Arab and foreign countries, noting their presence will depict support for Kuwait's "cultural message."



Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah

Today's festival will conclude with the State of Kuwait Cultural Declaration. Moreover, the Islamic Organization for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) will honor General Supervisor of Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah Sheikhha Husna Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, in apprecia-

tion for her international efforts in support of Islamic arts and culture.

Furthermore, the festival program includes 'a cultural operetta,' contents of which shed light on the Kuwaiti leaders' concern for culture. The activity will also mark the designation of Kuwait as the Capital of Arab Youth Capital (2017). — KUNA

AMIR RECEIVES LETTER FROM JORDANIAN KING

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday a written letter from Jordanian King Abdullah II which included an invitation to the World Economic Forum meeting on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) which is scheduled for May of 2017. Jordanian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Salam Al-Kayed delivered the invitation letter to Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Jordanian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Salam Al-Kayed delivers the invitation letter to Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan photo



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah (third from left) chairs the Kuwaiti-Iraqi Commission departments' meeting yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT PREPARES FOR MEETING WITH IRAQ

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah chaired a meeting yesterday for national departments involved in sessions of the Kuwaiti-Iraqi Commission. The meeting aimed at discussing preparations for the commission's scheduled sixth session, on December 27-28. The joint committee is headed by the First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and his Iraqi counterpart, Ibrahim Al-Jafari. — KUNA

CONDOLENCES

**Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief,
management and staff**

convey their deepest condolences to

Al-Fulaij family

on the sad demise of

Abdullatif Fahad Abdulaziz Al-Fulaij

May Allah Almighty bestow His mercy on him



KUWAIT: Turkish ambassador to Kuwait Murat Tamer writes in the condolences book at the Russian embassy in Kuwait City yesterday, as they received condolences for the death of Russian ambassador in Turkey Andrei Karlov (portrait) earlier this week. It is worth mentioning that the slain ambassador was awarded the title of the hero of Russian Federation by the Russian President Vladimir Putin for his great contributions to Russia's foreign policy.—Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT SEEKS ROADMAP TO REVAMP EDUCATION

KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr Mohammad Al-Fares said yesterday that he had asked officials of the World Bank to work out a 'roadmap' for overhauling the teaching sector in the country. Speaking as he emerged from a meeting with the WB officials, Minister Fares indicated that the discussions dealt with the achievements made over the past years at this level and future schemes.

He added that the talks also addressed obstacles that had emerged in implementing the integrated educational revamp program, namely with respect of teachers' training and students' assessment. The minister stated that he asked the WB to work on specifying the Kuwaiti and bank responsibilities in the educational development process and report to him in details by next week.—KUNA

PIC PLANS TO PRODUCE 16M TONS PER ANNUM BY 2040

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) said yesterday its 2040 strategy aims at expanding the volume of its petrochemical production up to 16 million tons annually. It said in a press release that its current output stands at 8 million tons, including 3 million tons of fertilizers, 2 million tons of olefins and 2 million tons of aromatics.

It added that its 2040 strategy being worked out by the Kuwait Petroleum Cooperation (KPC) would pave the way for a threefold increase in the number of the company's employees who are required for future projects.

Mohammed Al-Farhoud, Chief Executive Officer for PIC was quoted in the release as saying that his business has managed to post KD 431 million in profits for the fiscal year 2015-2016 thanks to its workers' great efforts. The rise accounted for 141 percent over last year's figures, KD 263 million higher than the company's KD 168 million target, he added. He ascribed the surge in net profits to the acquisition by Equate Petrochemical Company, a PIC subsidiary, of the MEGlobal.

The company's operating profits amounted to KD 50 million in late September compared with estimated prof-

its of KD 54 million for the same period of last year, Farhoud said, expecting it to post profits worth KD 106 million for the FY 2016-2017.

Furthermore, the company has saved a total of KD 20 million in operating expenses during 2015-2016 through great efforts being exerted in order to save spending and boost revenues, he pointed out. Farhoud estimated the firm's net financial surplus at around KD 9 million by means of applying the Six Sigma approach which is primarily meant to overhaul the company's various operations in 2016.

Based in Kuwait, Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) was founded in 1963 as the first chemical fertilizer complex of its kind in the region. Today, PIC is a subsidiary of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and is a petrochemical industry leader in Kuwait and throughout the Middle East, and a growing leader worldwide.

In addition to manufacturing and marketing fertilizers, olefins and aromatics in Kuwait, the Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) participates in multiple joint ventures that also produce and market chemicals both locally and internationally.—KUNA

OIL SECTOR'S CAPITAL EXPENDITURE REACHES KD 13BN IN FIVE YEARS: KPC

KUWAIT: Acting Managing Director of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) for Financial Affairs Saad Abukhosah estimated capital expenditure of Kuwait's oil sector in the past five years at KD 13 billion (\$42.57 billion). In a press statement, Abukhosah pointed out that the KPC is doing its utmost to upgrade the performance and status of Kuwait's petroleum sector through a slew of projects to boost growth and promote integration among KPC different arms.

He described KPC's five-year plan as ambitious, noting that it comprises several mega projects such as the establishment of the clean fuel project, Al-Zour refinery, liquefied natural gas importation facilities

and the purchase of eight new oil tankers. KPC also has plans for several oil exploration and production, heavy crude and flare gas facilities, and petrochemical projects inside Kuwait and abroad, he stated. Abukhosah estimated that total cost of these projects at KD 35 billion (\$114.6 billion). KPC would finance these projects through investing some of its revenues in them or restoring to other financial alternatives provided by banks and financial institutions, he said. He expected that the execution of such plans would elevate KPC status as one of the leading regional and international energy corporation and increase Kuwait's oil revenues.—KUNA

MINISTER ATTENDS CONTRACT SIGNING TO ESTABLISH TUM KUWAIT BRANCH

KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Mohammad Al-Fares reaffirmed Kuwait's keenness on supporting scientists and adoption of modern and innovative techniques to promote scientific research. Science is key to building a knowledge-based society, finding solutions to the problems facing the improvement of infrastructure and realization of development targets, he said Tuesday evening.

The minister made the comments during the signing ceremony of a contract to launch Kuwait branch of the Technical University of Munich (TUM) in the presence of German Ambassador to Kuwait Karlfried Bergner and TUM President Wolfgang A Herrmann.

Dr Fares attended the ceremony on behalf of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the sponsor of the event. He said the patronage of the event by His Highness the Prime Minister signals that Kuwait attaches great importance to science and scientists, recalling the Amiri decrees to approve the launching of private universities.

He voiced hope that the new TUM subsidiary will provide a platform for scholars to keep abreast with the latest developments in the hi-tech fields and find effective solutions to the economic, political and social challenges facing the nowadays world. "The accelerated changes in the world of technology and the requirements

of the labor market prompted Kuwait's political leadership to prioritize the strategies for provision of quality education and modernization of academic programs," Dr Fares pointed out.

He praised the TUM as one of the world's top universities that is committed to excellence in research and teaching, interdisciplinary education and the active promotion of promising young scientists. The university was one of the first universities in Germany to be named a University of Excellence; it is regularly ranks among the best European universities, he added.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Bergner commended as exemplary the German-Kuwaiti relationships in the political, economic, cultural and educational areas. The launching of TUM branch in Kuwait will give momentum to bilateral ties in all these fields, he said. Bergner noted that the number of Kuwaiti students studying in Germany lags behind the potentials of the close relationship between the two countries, voicing hope for increasing this number in the coming years. On his part, TUM President spoke of the history of the TUM, saying it goes back to the founding year of 1868.

The idea TUM embodies has deservedly made it famous for excellent education in the scientific and technical disciplines, energized by the allure and adventure of research, cultivating both personal character and a shared culture, Wolfgang A Herrmann said.—KUNA

CONSTITUTION PROTECTS CHILD RIGHTS: JARALLAH

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Saud Nasser Al-Sabah Kuwait Diplomatic Institute held a symposium yesterday on adopting the child rights' law no. 21/2015, during which experts from various institutions spoke about children's rights. Khaled Al-Jarallah, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, said the Kuwaiti constitution enshrined the rights of children in its articles 9 and 10, which the law 21/2015 later specified.

"Kuwait has ratified many conventions on child rights, out of which the most significant one is the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two protocols, which became part of the national law. This law includes 97 articles that provide complete protection to children in all aspects including health, social education, cultural and legal, in addition to the disabled," Jarallah pointed out.

According to him, Kuwait is a leading country in childcare and in adopting child laws. "The constitution and other laws secure the protection of children to assure a suitable environment for their upbringing. Kuwait is developed

in this field through local laws and international conventions. This symposium raises social awareness about this law," he said.

Jarallah also spoke about the four Kuwaitis who were freed by Iran this week. "Kuwaiti diplomacy played an essential role in releasing the four who were arrested in Iran. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked on this case through its embassy in Tehran and the Iranian Embassy in Kuwait. I would like to thank Iran for its cooperation. It also allowed us to meet the arrested citizens and simplify the procedures of their release," Jarallah said after the symposium.

Regarding security protection of the Russian ambassador, he noted that protection is provided to all diplomats. "Kuwait has denounced the assassination of the Russian ambassador in Ankara. This act is against diplomatic norms and Islamic principles, and is unacceptable," Jarallah said.

Many specialists spoke during the symposium, including Amal Al-Dosari, Deputy of the International Committee for Child Rights at the United Nations, Dr Siham Al-Fraih, Head of the National Society for Child Protection, Dr Mona



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah speaks during the symposium.—Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Al-Khawari, Head of the Child Protection Department at the Ministry of Health, and Consultant Dr Adel Al-Failakawi, Undersecretary of the Appeals Court.



Some students pose for a group photo with representatives of KFH during the meeting.

KFH SPONSORS STUDENT FORUM, EXHIBITION OF FINANCE CLUB

KUWAIT: Under the patronage of Kuwait Finance House (KFH), the sponsor, Finance Club at College of Business Administration at Kuwait University organized a forum and exhibition for the students and other universities at the parking area of Al-Tilal Complex in Shuwaikh during the last period within the club's activities in its student environment and the university level. KFH's sponsorship for the event comes within the strategic partnership of the two sides which is continued during the academic year 2016/2017.

Over two consecutive days in a youth atmosphere mixed with seriousness and desire for cooperation and mutual acquaintance and with many of the cultural, social and educational activities, thousands of students of College of

Business Administration, their counterparts from other universities and members of some clubs took part in a variety of activities suited with different interests and ages, as well as specialties including contests and prizes for evaluating capabilities and to get knowledge of the information and experiences of the participants.

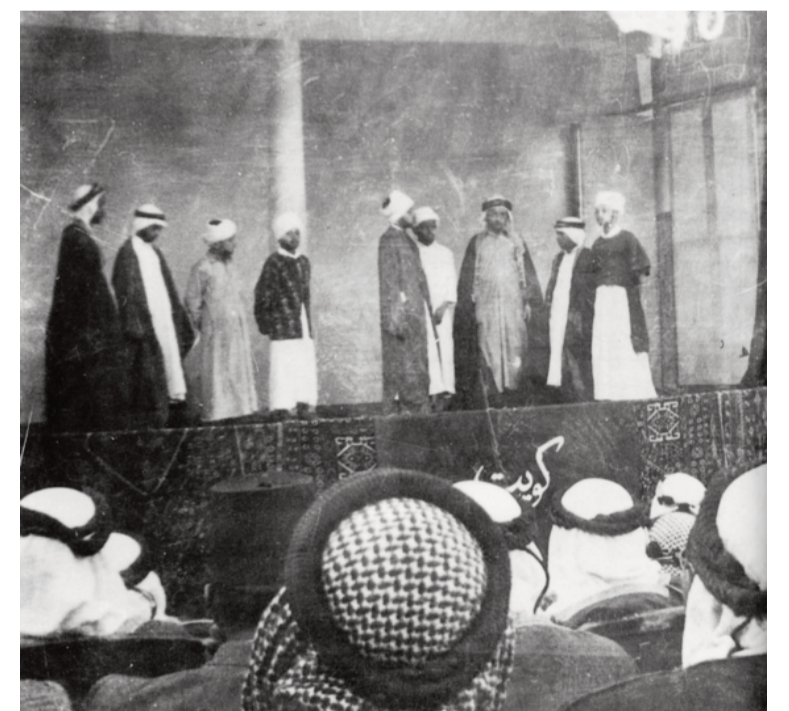
During the significant student meeting and in the exhibition, which was held within the event, more than 20 projects of small enterprises owned and managed by young Kuwaiti, have been exhibited which provided the opportunity for thousands to participate to learn about the experiences, ideas and initiatives of a group of small entrepreneurs who offered up the phases of the project since its inception as an idea and

passing through preparations and getting necessary approvals to be achieved, including the definition of some difficulties and obstacles and the ways to overcome.

The patronage, partnership and the presence of Kuwait Finance House at such comprehensive student meeting of the Finance Club emphasizes its permanent keen interest on performing social responsibility and executing its role in supporting and providing all aspects of care and paying attention to the different segments of society at all levels. Furthermore, to participate in the youth and students welfare efforts and support the activities and services provided to them from concerned clubs, committees, bodies and associations.



KUWAIT: This handout photo released by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) yesterday shows students stand outside Al-Mubarakiya School's entrance (ca. 1951).—KUNA



This photo shows a scene from a play held at Al-Mubarakiya school on June 7, 1939.

AL-MUBARAKIYA SCHOOL MARKS 105TH ANNIVERSARY

KUWAIT: Al-Mubarakiya school, the first organized educational facility in Kuwait, celebrates its 105th anniversary today. Opened on December 22, 1911, the school was founded in the era of the late Amir Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah. Around 77,000 Rupees of donations were gathered for its establishment with the first headmaster being Sheikh Yousef bin Issa Al-Qanani. Some 254 students attended the school.

According to historical sources, the idea for Al-Mubarakiya School stemmed from a meeting between Yaseen Al-Tabtabai, Sheikh Yousef Al-Qanani, and Sheikh Nasser Mubarak Al-Sabah at Al-Qanani Diwan during the anniversary celebrating the birth of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).—KUNA



This undated photo shows teachers and students from Al-Mubarakiya School pose for a group photo.



23,663 LIQUOR BOTTLES DESTROYED

By A Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Over two days, 23,663 liquor bottles were destroyed under the supervision of the Director General of the Interior Ministry's Investigations General Department Maj Gen Dr Fahd Al-Dousary and his Deputy Maj Gen Asaad Al-Ruwaihi. Dousary said that a team

of 15 members worked over two months to account and document the haul.

No injuries

Farwaniya Fire Department responded to a call about a fire in a restaurant, which was put out and kept from spreading to nearby buildings. No injuries were reported. A case was

filed to investigate the cause of the fire.

New exits

The Interior Ministry's Traffic General Department announced the opening of new exits on Jahra Road for Saad Al-Abdullah City across block 11. The opening will be on Saturday.

KUWAIT URGES RESPONSE TO TERROR BY MANIFESTING ISLAMIC HERITAGE

JEDDAH: Kuwait said yesterday it is imperative to confront terrorism by promoting Islamic cultural heritage in order to debunk stereotypes about the religion of Islam. The remark was made by Assistant Undersecretary of Minister of Information for the Sector of Press, Publication and Printing Khaled Al-Rashedi in a speech he delivered on behalf of the Minister of Information during the Islamic Conference of Ministers of Information of Islamic Cooperation Organization (OIC) member states. He expressed belief that response to extremism and terrorism should proceed from promoting Islamic cultural heritage and correcting stereotypes of Islam as well as establishing the concepts of amity, tolerance and fraternity.

He also called for cementing cooperation among the OIC member states through a single media and cultural discourse based on decrying sectarianism and intolerance but promoting togetherness and tolerance.

They are further required to boost cultural exchange and integration among their media and cultural organizations as a springboard for defending the Muslim nation's issues and rights, mainly Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque. In this context, the Kuwaiti official emphasized that it is necessary to attach more attention to the African continent which constitutes a considerably weighty Islamic depth for Arab and Islamic issues. Kuwait has taken tangible steps in this regard by hosting an Arab-African summit in 2013 and providing

\$1 billion in grants and concessional development loans valued at \$5 billion to development projects in Africa, he boasted.

Rashedi pointed to a \$1 million annual award in the name of the late Dr Abdulrahman Al-Sumait for development and intellectual research in the African continent. Furthermore, there should be some sort of cooperation and coordination between media and diplomatic channels with a view to backing the OIC's internal and external media orientations and programs, he urged.

Kuwait attaches much significance to the question of pushing forward the culture of peace and encouraging dialogue among religions, civilizations and cultures, particularly as waves of extremism, intolerance and terrorism are remarkably growing, he added.

All the news agencies of the OIC member states are required to work together in earnest in order to play a more effective part in manifesting the real image of the tolerant religion of Islam, he noted. The Islamic Conference of Ministers of Information of Islamic Cooperation Organization (OIC) member states started its 11th session in the Saudi city of Jeddah earlier yesterday under the title 'Renewed Media Role in Countering Terrorism and Islamophobia'. It is chaired by Saudi Minister of Culture and Information Dr Adel bin Zaid Altorafi and mainly attended by OIC Secretary General Dr Yusuf bin Ahmed Al-Othaimen and OIC Ministers of Information. — KUNA

UN HAILS KUWAITI AID FOR DISPLACED IRAQIS IN MOSUL

IRBIL: International Organization for Migration in Iraq (IOM) hailed Kuwait's humanitarian aid for displaced Iraqis affected by the ongoing military operations in Mosul. Kuwait has donated \$4 million for the organization, IOM said in a statement yesterday.

About 106,692 Iraqis have fled their homes since the launch of the operations on October 17 this year, said IOM, adding that they were in urgent need of aid especially in such cold weather. Meanwhile, recent statistics released by the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration showed that the number of displaced Iraqis in Mosul exceeded 120,000.

In the meantime, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in a statement welcomed the Kuwaiti contribution that allowed the UN body to continue delivering aid to a wider range of Iraqis. Kuwait has donated \$30 million for different UN organizations, aiming to aid people in need. Since the beginning of the operations, Kuwait has been delivering food for liberated towns, while also building two hospitals for emergency cases in refugee camps in the area. — KUNA

TRADERS WARNED AGAINST ONLINE MISINFORMATION

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti experts warn traders investing in Bourse Kuwait against seeking information about the bourse listed companies from social media resources to take investment decision. CEO of Al-Riyada Finance and Investment Company Mohannad Al-Sane urged investors to be cautious of inaccurate analyses on the internet and seek guidance from credited and credible experts. He explains further that some of transactions' reports posted on the networks are preliminary and others are merely rumors.

Mohammad Al-Tarrah, Chairman of Traders Association, called on the traders to follow up on releases by the Capital Market Authority (CMA) because it is well-informed on the companies' status. Moreover, the bourse website posts every day information about them, thus the investors can use these data to take sound decisions.

As to yesterday's session, traders were distinguished with predominance by small companies. Stocks of 54 companies posted gains while 31 others incurred losses. The key index, Kuwait-15, which reflects operations in blue-chips, drew up to 11.9 million shares, valued at KD 5.5 million, done in 467 spot deals - thus the benchmark settled upon closing at 884.2 points.

Boursa Kuwait price index closed in a bullish manner, to some extent, gaining 4.7 points and settling at the level of 5,672.4, thus posting spot value at KD 13.4 million through 160.4 million stocks, done in 3,653 cash dealings. — KUNA

DISABLED CITIZENS' FAMILIES STAGE DEMONSTRATION

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Speaking at a demonstration held by the families of disabled citizens on Tuesday, MPs Mubarak Al-Hajraf, Thamer Al-Suwait, Osama Al-Shaheen, Askar Al-Enezi, Marzouq Al-Khalifa and Nasser Al-Doussary said disabled citizens are not receiving due care and that their transactions are being delayed. Board member of the Kuwait Society for the Welfare of the Disabled Ali Al-Thuwaini said demands of citizens with disabilities are falling on deaf ears.

Limited partnership

The single-window department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has

started trials to establish limited partnership companies and include them in its system in a few days, said informed sources. They noted that the one-window services aim at including the service of establishing such companies before the end of the year to be the fourth kind included along with the single-person, WLL (limited liability) and joint venture companies. The sources noted that the department also aims at regulating the work of non-profit companies in collaboration with the anti-money laundering and terrorism funding department that is directly handled by the minister himself, as well as the charity department at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, which signed a memo of understanding.

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COUNTERFEIT GOODS' SMUGGLING FOILED

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

Contests rejected

KUWAIT: Customs inspectors at Shuwaik Port managed to foil a smuggling attempt of fake goods, including watches, pens, lighters and electric shock guns carrying logos of well-known brands. The shipment is worth thousands of dinars. The importers were arrested and referred to relevant authorities.

The constitutional court yesterday rejected three contests regarding domestic labor, the fatwa and legislation department and lineage hearings. The court also adjourned hearing a contest arguing the constitutionality of the DNA law till Feb 8 so that the Assembly could be notified.

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Crime

Report

SECURITY TIGHTENED AROUND EMBASSIES

KUWAIT: Security measures around embassies, particularly the Russian mission, are very strict, a security source said adding that this is the situation all year long. The source did not confirm or deny reports claiming that the Russian Embassy placed extra surveillance cameras at its perimeter, saying that "this is a matter of [the embassy's] concern." He said instructions are to have forces ready to deal decisively with any attempted terrorist attacks against the country.

'Abnormal condition'

A citizen was sent to the Drug Control General Department on the orders of Farwaniya Security Director Brigadier Saleh Matar, after he was arrested with three envelopes of 'chemical' (methamphetamine), six envelopes of a substance suspected to be heroin, KD 350 in cash, a weapon and a sensitive scale. Two traffic tickets were also issued to the suspect for failure to produce a driving license. The arrest was made after police pulled the driver over when they noticed that his car was badly damaged, then discovered that he was in an abnormal condition.

Unlicensed firearm

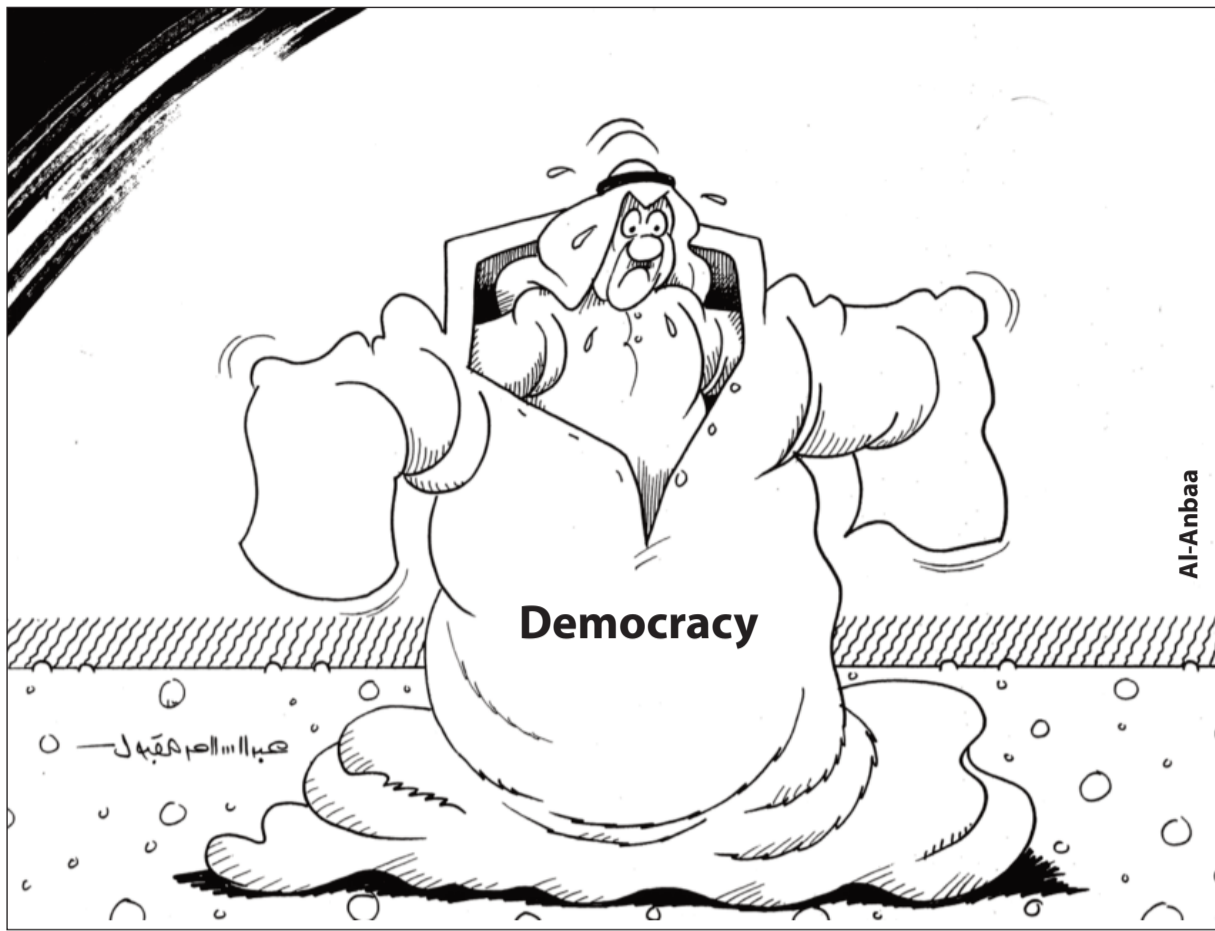
In a similar case, Farwaniya police arrested a female citizen for possessing an unlicensed firearm and drugs. She was sent to the Drugs Control Department. The woman also did not have a driving license. She remains in custody pending further action.

In trouble

A bedoon (stateless) man got his Kuwaiti friend in trouble when he made him a partner in dealing with drugs, as both were arrested with shabu (methamphetamine), hashish joints, drug paraphernalia and a sword. The bedoon is wanted on a drugs case, while the citizen's record was clean.

Deportation

Farwaniya police recently arrested eight women reported absconding by their employers. The eight include two Sri Lankan, two Filipina and four Ethiopian nationals. They were sent to the relevant authorities and are being held pending deportation.



الجريدة

Al-Jarida

TRAFFIC LIGHTS

By Mudaffar Abdullah

Child begging goes against the reputation of our country, and this practice cannot be justified under any circumstances. The state's social aid and charity organizations lend helping hands to needy families, and if discrimination is involved in giving the aid, then this issue must be exposed and fixed because being silent about such a disgraceful thing is a big mistake that will create a problem on the social and security levels. Kuwait is a 'Humanitarian Center', yet we can see children begging at traffic lights and in residential areas; sometimes selling cheap and light goods till midnight.

This is a question to all ministers of social affairs and interior, present and past, as well as children and human rights societies. Who are these children? Who provides them with these goods? How is this normal in our country? We probably buy their goods out of pity. Even police patrols pass by them

as if this is normal. It looks like officials are pleased with this situation by giving the excuse of 'let them earn a living.' We live in a rich country with generous people and a government squanders funds in grants and aid to east and west.

How can we be fine with seven-year-olds begging and subjecting themselves to danger, deviation or being kidnapped? Caring for children cannot be achieved only by signing international treaties and agreements without providing them with real protection and care. If the reason backing this is that they are non-Kuwaitis (bedoons or belonging to other Arab nationalities), this can create a serious problem in the near future. Labeling Kuwait a 'Humanitarian Center' is not only an honor, but a great burden as well. It will only remain provokingly nominal as long as we remain silent about such problems.

—Translated by Kuwait Times

الراوي

Al-Rai

MY PATIENTS TAUGHT ME

By Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

They taught me the sweetness of patience. When the body shakes from severe pain and the patient's voice gets louder with the words "Praise be to Allah" instead of moaning, I find the sweetness of patience in this patient.

They taught me the bounty of depending on Allah. When the patient is confident that recovery is in the hands of Allah, accepts the disease and listens to doctors' advice, his soul gets filled with the bounty of satisfaction. Then I see happiness in its best form on the face of this patient - a happiness which if healthy people learn about, they would fight this patient for it.

My patients taught me the true value of life. When you see someone who fought, struggled and became angry, while the storms of life around him subsided, and the disease became his reality

They taught me the true meaning of love. When loved ones surround the patient, they share with him the path of his illness, which may take long.

that he sleeps and wakes up with, you learn from him one thing - that what preoccupies us in life is not worth what we were thinking, and that the last lesson is the true lesson in life.

They taught me the true meaning of love. When loved ones surround the patient, they share with him the path of his illness, which may take long. You realize the meaning of true love that continues beyond time, and remains immortal even after time stops. It is a love that has nothing to do with life's interests, the status of man or the amount of money he has. It is love by those who are around him when he believes and spreads the values he is respected for.

Illness has many great benefits, and maybe the most simple of which is the lessons we learn from our patients. So let us make "thanks" the title of our illnesses, as it is the magic word that gives life - with all its variables - a good taste.

—Translated by Kuwait Times



KIB SPONSORS FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR HEALTH, NUTRITION AND SPECIAL NEEDS

KUWAIT: Under the umbrella of its leading social responsibility program and its ongoing efforts to support the special needs community, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) sponsored the First Annual Exhibition for Health, Nutrition and Special Needs, which was held under the title "Your life is in your health, your health is in your diet."

Held under the patronage of the Minister of Health, Dr Jamal Al-Harbi, the event aimed to raise awareness about the importance of diet and nutrition for people with special needs, in order to ensure their healthy development. The exhibition also sought to shed light on the critical role nutrition plays in combating obesity, particularly amongst the younger generations. Over the course of two days, the event featured a number of lectures on nutrition and healthy diets, in addition to several sporting activities, free medical tests, and live healthy cooking demonstrations.

Speaking about KIB's participation in the

exhibition, Nawaf Najia, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at the bank, said: "At KIB, we have always been committed to supporting the special needs community in Kuwait in every way possible. Under the umbrella of our social responsibility program, we are heavily focused on sponsoring and participating in initiatives that seek to raise awareness and educate the public about special needs. Our aim is to help shed light on the talents, achievements and ambitions of people with disabilities, underscoring the major role they are able to play in national development."

KIB's sponsorship of this exhibition comes as part of the bank's ongoing program of initiatives dedicated to supporting the special needs community. It is also in line with the bank's commitment to promoting tolerance, acceptance and positive interactions when it comes to people with disabilities.



BURGAN BANK SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDES ITS SPONSORSHIP OF DEN GALLERY EXPO

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, one of the leading commercial banks in Kuwait is proud to announce its successful sponsorship of the Opening of 'Den Gallery' Expo held at the Crystal Tower, starting December 14. The month long contemporary arts exhibition will encounter the participation of 33 Kuwaiti and GCC artists under one roof.

The opening of the exhibition met great attendance from those interested in art and culture, specifically in the areas of painting, drawing, sculpting and graphics, and was open to the public throughout the exhibition periods.

The 'Den Gallery' expo is a non-profit project, established by a group of well-known and aspiring Kuwaiti artists displaying their unique and cultural art with contemporary approaches. The aim of these passionate artists is to

present new ideas and heights to modern Kuwaiti art, to introduce and elevate the concept of art and culture within all segments of the community, in the area of painting, drawing, sculpturing and graphics.

Burgan Bank always looks forward to participating in such projects that preserve and promote the Kuwaiti culture and this stems from its strong belief in giving back to local community while encouraging them to become active members in the society. It is worthy to note that the exhibition opens its doors from December 14, 2016 up to January 14, 2017, in order to give a chance to all those interested to attend and enjoy contemporary art in all its shapes and forms.

Den Gallery presents some of the most mes-

merizing and applaudable art pieces from around Kuwait, and the bank is proud to be part of this initiative for a second consecutive year and looks forward to more fruitful sponsorships in the coming years.

It is worth mentioning that Borgan Bank's support to this initiative falls under its recently launched full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural, social and health initiatives. Borgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the Kuwaiti society.



KUWAIT: Captain Abdullah Al-Hajiri from the press division at the Interior Ministry's Security Information Department delivered a lecture on traffic awareness at Kuwait Oil Tankers Company (KOTC), and that during a safety day held recently there. Captain Hajiri spoke about traffic safety, regulations and how adhering to laws helps prevent accidents, adding that using the phone while driving was the main cause of accidents that took place this year.



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2016

31 KILLED IN MEXICO FIREWORKS BLAST

TULTEPEC, Mexico: A massive explosion gutted Mexico's biggest fireworks market on Tuesday, killing at least 31 people and injuring 72, the authorities said.

The conflagration in the Mexico City suburb of Tultepec set off a quick-fire series of multicolored blasts that sent a vast cloud of smoke billowing over the capital. The market had been packed with customers buying pyrotechnics for traditional end-of-year festivities.

Christmas and New Year parties in many Latin American countries often wrap up with clattering firework blasts. "You just heard the blast. And everything started to be on fire. People came running out on fire," Walter Garduno said. "People were alight-children," he added before trailing off. From a few kilometers (miles) away, the multiple explosions that started at 2:50 pm (2050 GMT) almost looked festive, alight in blue, red and white.

They were anything but. Of the 31 confirmed dead, "26 (died) at the scene and five in hospitals," local media reported Mexico's chief prosecutor Milenio Alejandro Gomez as saying. Forensic experts are working on genetic analyses of the bodies because "almost all of them are impossible" to identify, Mexico state's governor Eruviel Avila told the Televisa television network.

At least 72 were wounded, the authorities said. The injured were transported to emergency rooms, and 21 have since been released. Fire crews struggled for three hours before bringing the blaze under control.



MEXICO CITY: A massive explosion guts Mexico's biggest fireworks market on Tuesday. — AFP

Entire market blown up

The head of the civil protection service, Luis Felipe Puente, said crews had to wait for all the fireworks to finish exploding before they could extinguish the flames. "The entire market is gone," he said. It had 300 stands. Several of the injured were in "delicate condition," he added, saying searches were under way for more casualties in the scorched area that looked like a scene from a post-apocalyptic film, with little left standing in the smoldering ruins.

Homes and vehicles nearby were also severely damaged. In some areas, emergency workers were gently probing for survivors under heaps of charred and twisted roofing material. People desperately searching for family and friends shouted and gestured to rescuers about where they hoped the missing might be found.

Most of those picked up by rescuers suffered severe burns, many over their entire bodies. The military, which is in charge of issuing fireworks sales permits, was deployed to help emergency crews transport casualties to hospitals by ambulance and helicopter.

Ambulances, fire trucks, police vehicles and army trucks all crowded the sprawling blast area. Mexico's President Enrique Pena Nieto tweeted his condolences to the families of those killed and his wishes for the injured to recover. The Attorney General's Office has opened an investigation into the cause of the conflagration, which was prompted by "six pyrotechnic explosions," it said in a statement.

Some speculated the mishandling of gunpowder or other fireworks components may have set them off. That was the cause of an explosion in September 2005 at another fireworks market set up ahead of the Independence Day holiday. That market was destroyed.

The following year, another explosion destroyed more than 200 sellers' stands. Both incidents left dozens of injured, but no fatalities. Alejandra Pretel, a resident in Tultepec, told AFP that she didn't realize at first that the explosions were coming from the large fireworks market. "We thought it was a nearby fireworks workshop," she said.

Minutes later, it became evident the market was being destroyed. "My neighbors said they felt everything shake," she said, "but I didn't realize because I was running away." — AFP

EVACUATIONS IN ALEPPO RESUME AFTER HOLD-UP


BEIRUT: Buses carrying Syrian civilians and fighters began leaving the last rebel-held enclave of Aleppo yesterday after being stalled for a day, aid officials and pro-government media reports said. Obstacles hindering evacuations from east Aleppo and from two villages besieged by rebels outside the city had been overcome and the operation would be completed within hours, according to a news service run by the Lebanese group Hezbollah, an ally of the Syrian government.

The eventual departure of the thousands left in the insurgent zone will hand full control of the city to President Bashar Al-Assad, the biggest prize of Syria's nearly six-year-old civil war. "Buses are now moving again from east Aleppo. We hope that this continues so that people can be safely evacuated," a UN official in Syria told Reuters, as snow began to fall on Aleppo. People had been waiting in freezing temperatures since the evacuation hit problems on Tuesday, with dozens of buses stuck in Aleppo and the evacuation of the two Shiite villages, Al-Foua and Kefraya, also stalled. Rebels and government forces blamed each other for the hold-up.

Evacuation Plan

With obstructions to the evacuation plan apparently overcome, the Hezbollah news service said 20 buses carrying fighters and their families had moved from east Aleppo yesterday towards rebel-held countryside. Syrian TV said four buses and two ambulances arrived in government-controlled parts of Aleppo from Al-Foua and Kefraya. Government forces had insisted the two villages must be included in the deal to bring people out of east Aleppo.


So far, about 25,000 people have been evacuated from Aleppo, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross. A UN official said 750 people had so far been evacuated from Al-Foua and Kefraya. Aleppo's rebel zone is a wasteland of flattened buildings, concrete rubble and bullet-pocked walls, where tens of thousands lived until recent days under intense bombardment even after medical and rescue services had collapsed. Rebel-held parts of the once-flourishing economic center with its renowned ancient sites have been pulverized in a war which has killed more than 300,000, created the world's worst refugee crisis and allowed for the rise of Islamic State. But in the western part of the city, held throughout the war by the government, there were big street parties on Tuesday night, along with the lighting of a Christmas tree, as residents celebrated the end of fighting. — Reuters



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CLINTON LAWYER BLASTS FBI AFTER EMAIL SEARCH WARRANT RELEASE

NEW YORK: The FBI acted inappropriately when it announced the revival of its investigation into Hillary Clinton's private email setup days before the Nov 8 presidential election, Clinton's lawyer said, citing search warrant documents made public on Tuesday.

The pointed criticism from Clinton attorney David Kendall followed the release in federal court in Manhattan of documents related to an October search warrant targeting emails involving the Democratic presidential nominee.

The warrant was issued two days after Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James Comey informed Congress in a letter on Oct. 28 of newly discovered emails that appeared "pertinent" to his agency's probe. Comey's letter drew new attention to Clinton's use of the server while she was secretary of state from 2009 to 2013 and roiled the campaign 11 days before the election, which Republican Donald Trump won.

The Blame game

Clinton has blamed Comey and his letter for her defeat. In an affidavit unsealed on Tuesday, an FBI agent said there was "probable cause" to believe emails involving Clinton were among "thousands"

found on a laptop in an unrelated probe that contained US State Department correspondence.

But the documents gave no indication the FBI had any evidence at the time of Comey's letter that any of the emails on found on a laptop involved classified communications with Clinton. Kendall said the documents showed the "extraordinary impropriety" of Comey's letter, which "produced devastating but predictable damage politically and which was both legally unauthorized and factually unnecessary."

The FBI declined to comment. The laptop belonged to former Democratic US Representative Anthony Weiner, the estranged husband of Clinton aide Huma Abedin who was the subject of an investigation after a report about cellphone and online messages he sent a 15-year-old girl.

The search warrant materials' release was sought by Randol Schoenberg, a Los Angeles-based lawyer, who contended that transparency was crucial given the potential influence the probe had on the election's outcome.

In a statement, Schoenberg said he saw "nothing to suggest that there would be anything other than routine correspondence between Secretary Clinton and her longtime aide Huma Abedin." —Reuters



WHITE PLAINS: In this Oct. 28, 2016 file photo, Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton speaks with senior aide Huma Abedin aboard her campaign plane at Westchester County Airport. —AP



ANKARA: Wreaths are left on the road leading to the Russian embassy in Ankara on December 21, 2016, two days after Russian ambassador to Turkey was gunned down by a Turkish policeman. — AFP

TURKEY CLAIMS GULEN LINK TO ENVOY KILLING

KREMLIN CAUTIONS

ISTANBUL: Turkish authorities were yesterday looking into claims the alleged mastermind of the failed July coup was involved in the assassination of Moscow's ambassador, but the Kremlin warned against jumping to conclusions.

Monday's murder of Andrei Karlov stunned Russia and prompted warnings of retribution from the Kremlin. But both sides responded by vowing to step up cooperation, particularly on the Syria conflict. Off-duty Turkish policeman Mevlut Mert Altintas, 22, pumped nine bullets into Karlov at an art gallery in Ankara before he himself was killed by police in a shootout.

The pro-government press has repeatedly said that US-based Islamic preacher Fethullah Gulen, who Ankara blames for the attempted putsch, was behind the assassination plot. And Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told US counterpart John Kerry in a phone call on Tuesday that Ankara believed Gulen was involved. "Turkey and Russia know that behind the attack... there is FETO," his ministry quoted Cavusoglu as saying, using Turkey's acronym for Gulen's organization. Gulen, who has lived in self-imposed exile in the United States since 1999, has strongly condemned the assassination.

'Protected Erdogan eight times'

Media reports said that books on Gulen's organization were found at Altintas' home, while thorough checks are being made of his acquaintances at school and the police academy he attended. Thirteen people, including close family members, have been detained over

the killing and are being investigated for possible links to Gulen.

In a striking detail, the Hurriyet daily said Altintas, who served with the Ankara anti-riot police, had provided security for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan eight times since the July 15 attempt to overthrow the Turkish strongman.

Hurriyet writer Abdulkadir Selvi, known for his contacts in the ruling elite, said that on the day of coup bid Altintas had called in sick. But it was not clear what he did that night. Turkey and Russia are jointly investigating the murder after an agreement between Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

A team of 18 Russian investigators arrived in Ankara on Tuesday and spent the day at the crime scene after also witnessing the autopsy.

'Don't rush to conclusions'

The Kremlin indicated it was not the time for hurried pronouncements on responsibility. "In this case it is hardly worth hurrying to any conclusions until the investigation determines as our president said—who was behind the murder of our ambassador," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Commentators said that Putin would likely be unimpressed by any knee-jerk nailing of the crime on Gulen, who has become a byword for evil in Turkey after the coup bid. "It can be assumed that the Russians will not be satisfied with explanations that 'Karlov's killer was a Gulenist'... They will instead ask for solid evidence," wrote Murat Yetkin, editor-in-chief of Hurriyet Daily News.

Since the coup, Turkey has piled pressure on the United States to extradite Gulen, a one-time Erdogan ally. "We need to let them — (the investigators) let the facts and the evidence take them where it is before we jump to conclusions," said State Department spokesman John Kirby.

Dramatic footage of Monday's assassination showed Karlov stumble and crash to the ground as Altintas brandished his automatic pistol at terrified onlookers who covered behind cocktail tables. The gunman shouted "Allahu Akbar" ("God is greatest") and "Don't forget Aleppo", vowing that those responsible for events in Syria would be held accountable.

Putin to attend funeral

Turkey and Russia stand on opposite sides of the Syria conflict, with Ankara backing rebels trying to topple Moscow ally President Bashar al-Assad. But the rhetoric has warmed considerably since a reconciliation deal was signed earlier this year and Moscow and Ankara are now working closely together to evacuate citizens from the battered city of Aleppo.

Karlov's body was repatriated to Moscow on Tuesday after an emotional ceremony on the tarmac of Ankara's Esenboga airport attended by top Turkish officials. In a highly unusual scene at an airport in mainly Muslim Turkey, a Russian Orthodox priest said prayers and swung incense over the coffin.

Karlov will be laid to rest on Thursday, Peskov said, adding that Putin had decided to postpone his major annual press conference scheduled for the same day to Friday in order to attend. —AFP

IN NYC'S RUSSIAN ENCLAVES, A BIG 'NYET' TO HACKING TALK

NEW YORK: Clutching a cobbler's tool, Roman Gadayev defiantly lashed out against accusations that Russia meddled in the US election to sway the vote to Donald Trump. "Simply impossible," said the Kazakhstan native who runs a shoe repair shop near the Brighton Beach boardwalk. "This is something that only uneducated people can buy into."

Most Russian-speaking expatriates interviewed by The Associated Press this past week in Brooklyn's heavily ex-Soviet enclaves shrugged off a CIA assessment that Russia hacked the Democratic Party and Hillary Clinton's campaign boss to help Trump, portraying it as nothing more than political sour grapes. "Russia has nothing to do with this," Ludmila Bondar, a retired credit analyst who moved to America from Skvyra, Ukraine, 26 years ago, said in Russian. "People are the ones who have elected Trump."

Brighton Beach and adjacent Sheepshead Bay, which have become home to tens of thousands of Russian-speaking immigrants, are coincidentally where Trump's father based a big part of his apartment-complex empire. These enclaves along the Atlantic Ocean not far from the rides of Coney Island are also among the few corners of Trump country in overwhelmingly Democratic New York City. While the city overall went nearly 79 percent for Clinton in the presidential election, most precincts in the two neighborhoods voted "za Trampa," or for Trump, some as high as 80 percent.

Drawn to promises

First-generation migrants told the AP they were generally drawn to the Republican candidate's promises to reduce taxes and create more jobs. And many felt that US-Russian relations were likely to improve during a Trump presidency.

Touting Trump's electoral triumph as "a huge victory for regular people," Odessa, Ukraine, transplant Yuriy Taras scoffed at the hacking allegations and that Russian President Vladimir Putin was personally

behind it. "I believe Russia couldn't exert any influence on the elections in America," Taras said in Russian, strolling the boardwalk with his wife, who was covered from head to toe in fur. "Maybe Russia wanted to, but in my opinion, Putin maintains the position that he doesn't need war. He just needs others to stop bothering him."

Taras said he considers Trump's nomination of Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson, "a person who knows both Putin and Russia," as secretary of state a sign that the relations between Washington and Moscow will be on the mend. "If Trump does what he promised to, and Putin says all the time that he wants peace with America, then I think that enmity between Russia and the United States will stop," Taras added.

CIA Director John Brennan has said the intelligence community is in agreement that Russia tried to interfere in the US presidential election, though there's no evidence Moscow succeeded in helping Trump win. Democratic President Barack Obama has ordered a full review of any Russian involvement.

Yefim Kacher, a hair salon owner from Odessa who said he voted for Trump because of his promise to slash taxes, was among the few who said there appears to be sufficient evidence that Russia tried to sway the US election outcome.

Although Kacher is critical of Putin's "very aggressive" foreign policy, he hopes that the US-Russian ties will get better because "one shouldn't argue with America. It's a big nuclear power and a compromise should exist." "Relations will improve thanks to common sense because no one wants to escalate the confrontation with Russia," he said in Russian.

Roman Groysman, a 34-year-old marketing consultant whose family emigrated to the US from Ukraine, says he sees hacking merely as a modern tool deployed by foreign countries against each other. "It's to be expected. We did the same to other countries. Why wouldn't they try to do it to us?" he said. "It's all fair in love and war." — AP



BROOKLYN: In this Dec 16, 2016 photo, women choose stockings for sale in a Brighton Beach clothing store. —AP



IDLIB: A general view shows the main street and the al-Hamda mosque on November 26, 2016. —AP

IN IDLIB, DISPLACED SYRIANS BEMOAN 'OPEN-AIR PRISON'

IDLIB: Tens of thousands of displaced Syrians say they have become trapped in an "open-air prison" in the northwestern province of Idlib which they fear will be the army's next target. Rebels and civilians who have sought refuge in the opposition-held province, most recently from second city Aleppo, say they are suffering from skyrocketing prices and overpopulation.

At least 25,000 people, including rebel fighters, have left east Aleppo since Thursday under an evacuation deal that will see the city come under full government control. Many of them have headed to neighboring Idlib province to stay with relatives or in displacement centers. "We did not want to leave our land, but they used every weapon available to force us out," says Abu Mohammad, a father of four from east Aleppo. "Now they've prepared a prison for us in order to besiege us and bombard us," he adds, speaking to AFP in a camp hosting around 100 displaced families.

Idlib city has been held since March 2015 by a coalition of rebels led by the Islamist group Ahrar al-Sham and the former Al-Qaeda affil-

ate Fateh al-Sham Front. Since then, tens of thousands of people from across the country have flooded the province. The UN office for humanitarian affairs, OCHA, estimates that 700,000 internally displaced people have found shelter in Idlib since Syria's war erupted nearly six years ago.

'Tough' life in Idlib

Many of those displaced to Idlib are fleeing government bombardment or evacuating besieged areas under local deals with the regime. These "reconciliation" agreements typically see rebels and civilians bussed out of a town in exchange for an end to shelling or siege by government troops.

In addition to Aleppo, six other towns near Damascus have been evacuated in the last several months, including Daraa and Moadamiyet al-Sham. The influx to Idlib has had an overwhelming effect on everyday life, with the cost of rents and basic food skyrocketing and shortages becoming a common reality.

Abu Yazan al-Ramah, a fighter who arrived in

April from the besieged rebel town of Zabadani near the Lebanese border, says living in Idlib was "tough." "It's expensive. There are some things you can't find or at times they are unaffordable," says the 30-year-old who has joined up with a local rebel group in order to survive.

Continuing to work with rebel groups is often the only way that displaced men can secure shelter or food. According to Abu Zeid, a rebel who was wounded near Damascus, armed groups often provide newly displaced fighters in Idlib with free housing, clothes, food "and sometimes money."

Even local business owners in Idlib are struggling to respond to the soaring needs. "The population increased and so has demand," says grocery shop owner Jalal al-Ahmad. Ahmad says he buys his merchandise mainly from neighboring Turkey but admits that when he is stuck, he gets supplies from regime-held areas.

"It is much more expensive to buy from regime-held areas," says Ahmad, lamenting the rising cost of basic products such as rice, sugar, tea, cooking oil and eggs. —AFP

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GAMBIA PRESIDENT REJECTS CALLS TO STEP DOWN

BANJUL: Defeated Gambian President Yahya Jammeh has again vowed not to leave office at the end of his mandate in January, saying a court first must rule on his challenge to the outcome of a hotly disputed election.

Jammeh, who has been in power for 22 years, has rejected opposition candidate Adama Barrow's shock victory in the December 1 vote. His stance has stoked international concerns about the future of the small west African country, with the UN joining African leaders in calling for him to

step down. "Unless the court decides the case, there will be no inauguration (of Barrow) on the 19 January," said Jammeh, who had initially conceded defeat but then lodged a complaint with the country's Supreme Court to overturn the result.

"I will not cheat but I will not be cheated," he said in a lengthy television address late Tuesday. "What we are asking for is not for the IEC (Independent Election Commission) to declare me the winner, I cannot do that," he said. "Justice must be done and the only way justice can be done

is to reorganize the election so that every Gambian votes. That's the only way we can resolve the matter peacefully and fairly."

"Will not be blackmailed"
Jammeh, 51, also took aim at the West African regional ECOWAS bloc which has called on him to accept the results and refrain from any action that could compromise the peaceful transfer of power. "My rights cannot be violated and intimidated to a point where I succumb to blackmail," he said. West African leaders meeting at the weekend said they would attend

Barrow's inauguration and "take all necessary actions to enforce the results", without spelling out what those measures might be. Jammeh, who took power in a 1994 bloodless coup, initially warmly congratulated Barrow after results were declared. But a week later he condemned "unacceptable errors" by election authorities and called for a new vote. "I will not step down, because this is disrespectful of our constitution which says a transition period of 60 days. Even if he had won legally, I have 60 days of transition," he said Tuesday.

The nation's government-in-waiting said on Monday that Jammeh had no constitutional mandate to stay in office beyond January.

"Any president who loses constitutional legitimacy becomes a rebel," said Halifa Sallah, a spokesman for the opposition coalition that spurred Barrow to victory. The impoverished country has been stable under Jammeh's rule although rights groups and media watchdogs accuse him of cultivating a climate of fear and crushing dissent against his regime. — AFP

DR CONGO TENSE AHEAD OF KEY TALKS ON KABILA'S FUTURE

KINSHASA: Tension ran high in DR Congo yesterday, with police out in force in the capital and activity slowed following deadly protests against President Joseph Kabila's refusal to step down as his mandate ends.

Life very slowly resumed in Kinshasa, a megacity of 10 million, with few buses and taxis on the streets at morning rush-hour, trading slack at the market, and troops and police posted at major crossroads. A day after at least 11 people died in street protests, eyes were on talks due to resume Wednesday that were launched by the Catholic Church in hopes of finding a peaceful way out of the political crisis.

Kabila's second and final term in office ran out Tuesday with no election on the near horizon and no sign of plans to leave power any time soon. So far the mainstream opposition has called for "peaceful resistance" from Democratic Republic of Congo's 70 million people in hopes of clinching a deal at the negotiating table.

But gunfire rang out across the vast and troubled nation as protests erupted Tuesday. Officials said nine people had died in Kinshasa and two in the country's second-largest city, Lubumbashi.

Rights group Human Rights Watch said at least 26 protesters had been killed countrywide. A day after the UN's large DR Congo mission, MONUSCO, voiced alarm over the detention of 113 opposition leaders and civil society activists in just four days, there were fresh arrests in eastern Goma. In what Kabila's opponents dubbed "a provocation", a new government was announced overnight Monday to Tuesday, headed by Samy Badibanga. The freshly appointed cabinet is part of an October deal struck between the ruling party and tiny fringe opposition groups enabling Kabila to remain in office pending elections in April 2018.

'Peaceful resistance'

However, the main opposition bloc headed by 84-year-old Etienne Tshisekedi rejects the plan. It wants elections next year-along with a pledge that Kabila will not stand. Kabila, 45, 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. In a YouTube video, Tshisekedi launched "a solemn appeal to the Congolese people to no longer recognise 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".

He urged people "to peacefully resist the coup d'etat". The message was not available in DR Congo where authorities have since Sunday imposed strict controls on social media networks.

Tshisekedi said he hoped to continue the talks launched by the Catholic Church last week. In Rome, Pope Francis appealed to the people of DR Congo to be "artisans of peace" at his weekly audience. "May those who are in positions of political responsibility listen to the voice of their conscience, learn to see the cruel sufferings of their fellow citizens and have at heart the common good."

DR Congo has never witnessed a democratic transfer of power following polls since independence from Belgium in 1960. The president has been in office since his father Laurent Kabila's assassination in 2001. He was elected in 2006, and again in 2011. Some two decades ago, the country collapsed into the deadliest conflict in modern African history. Its two wars in the late 1990s and early 2000s dragged in at least six African armies and left more than three million dead. — AFP



BERLIN: An Iraqi refugee lays a flower at a makeshift memorial near the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche (Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church) yesterday. — AFP

DEADLY TRUCK ATTACK SPARKS SECURITY DEBATE IN GERMANY

RUSH TO SECURE EVERYTHING

BERLIN: Should Germany's popular Christmas markets be ringed with concrete, patrolled by armed soldiers and screened with surveillance cameras? After a truck ploughed through a crowd of holiday revelers in central Berlin, the country-having so far been spared large-scale attacks-is debating the balance between security and an open society. "This attack could have been prevented if the square had been protected by concrete barriers," said Joachim Krause, head of the Institute for Security Policy at Kiel University, about the attack that killed 12 people at a Berlin Christmas market Monday.

As in Israel, Germany needs "to systematically secure such places," Krause argued in business daily Handelsblatt. "But in Germany this has been neglected, even though the IS (Islamic State group) is calling for just this kind of attack on so-called soft targets." Some cities did quickly react to Monday's carnage: the Christmas markets of Hamburg, Stuttgart and Dresden installed concrete bollards following the Berlin attack.

On the other hand, federal police chief Holger Muench cautioned that, no matter what measures are taken, total security doesn't exist and that "there will always be a risk". In a similar vein, Berlin mayor Michael Mueller argued that "if we secure everything, if we carry out checks at all the entrances to all public spaces, then that will be at odds with our culture of openness".

Army patrols?

Nonetheless the debate is, once more, heating up. The CSU, the Bavarian wing of Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative party, re-launched a campaign it initiated months ago, after less severe attacks claimed by the IS in Germany-to authorize army troops for domestic security duties. The Bundeswehr should be able to use its training and equipment to support police and contribute to public safety, argued CSU lawmaker Florian Hahn, in comments to media group RND. While the sight of armed soldiers on the streets has become common in European countries that have suffered jihadist attacks, such as France and Belgium, it remains taboo in Germany, which in the post-Nazi era set strict constitutional limits on its armed forces.

While men and women in uniform are allowed to, for example, fill sandbags during flood disasters, most Germans would object to the sight of armed troops guarding airports and railway stations. The government recently moved to allow a first joint police-army exercise. But the country is a long way from authorizing army patrols on the streets, with little will among policy-makers to push the point.

And, unlike in France, which has suffered several far deadlier jihadist attacks, no-one in Germany is currently proposing a state of emergency. A member of Merkel's party, Klaus

Bouillon, the interior minister of Saarland state, sparked controversy by speaking of a "state of war" after the Berlin attack-only to quickly backtrack from what many criticized as a verbal escalation.

First 'real' attack

"The Germans have always given the impression that they believe these attacks only happen to others," wrote Barbara Kunz of the Committee for the Study of Franco-German Relations in an online column for Le Monde.

The country "has certainly experienced attacks in the past" but still "the risk seemed unreal", she argued.

Therefore the Berlin truck attack-for which the IS claimed responsibility-meant "for many Germans that the country has experienced its first 'real' Islamist attack".

Police union deputy chief Ernst Walter meanwhile called for more video surveillance and urged an end to "demonizing" the technology, in a country that after the Nazi and communist dictatorships-remains suspicious of all kinds of surveillance. "If politicians keep hiding behind privacy protection and the notion of individual liberty, which complicates our police work, then we will continue to have problems investigating such attacks in future," Walter said on public broadcaster ARD. — AFP



KINSHASA: A man stands by a street stall as another one walks past him yesterday. — AFP

LEADERSHIP RIVALRY THREATENS AMBITIONS OF ITALY'S 5-STAR MOVEMENT

ROME: Italy's anti-establishment 5-Star Movement, potentially just months away from winning power, is wrestling with a problem it thought it would never have to deal with: choosing a leader. And it is proving difficult. A maverick among Europe's band of new political parties, 5-Star has no formal hierarchy, believing instead in a horizontal structure where its supporters participate directly in decision-making through online ballots.

The movement founded seven years ago, which bases its appeal on fighting corruption and cronyism, is running neck-and-neck with former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi's Democratic Party (PD) in opinion polls. It was the big winner in a Dec. 4 referendum in which Italians rejected Renzi's constitutional reforms, forcing him from office and leading to calls from most political parties for elections in the first half of 2017, a year ahead of schedule. But forming a government would mean nominating a prime minister, and rivalries are building among likely contenders that could hamper the movement's election hopes or destabilise a future 5-Star government.

Party sources say a battle for support is already in progress between telegenic 30-year-old Luigi Di Maio, until recently the favorite, and Roberto Fico, 42, a former communications expert who has taken a swipe at his rival by urging the party to resist the cult of political celebrity.

A third contender has also recently emerged who may yet eclipse them both: Alessandro Di Battista, a 38-year-old deputy from Rome who shows far more passion than his rivals in decrying the corruption endemic in the mainstream parties. 5-Star is leading in some opinion polls, despite squabbles and scandals that have plagued the party's mayor of Rome, Virginia Raggi. But a leadership battle is a new and risky challenge to its fragile unity. "This is a movement with no real structure and as the stakes get higher so will personal ambitions and infighting," said Francesco Galietti

at political risk consultancy Policy Sonar.

Before the next election 5-Star's 135,000 members will choose their prime ministerial candidate in an online vote. The date of the vote, the regulations and the candidates have not yet been fixed. So far only Di Maio has confirmed he will run. Italy's mainstream parties are trying to rewrite the electoral rules to keep 5-Star from power but they have no guarantee of success against a party that could emerge with the biggest share of votes.

Limelight

Di Maio was groomed as 5-Star's prime ministerial candidate by the movement's founders: Comedian Beppe Grillo and internet guru Gianroberto Casaleggio, who died this year. Grillo, 68, 5-Star's spiritual head and de facto leader, has ruled out running for office, and in any case he would be barred under the movement's internal rules due to a conviction for manslaughter over a 1981 road accident. Yet he could remain a major influence over a 5-Star government.

Soft-spoken, moderate and immaculately turned out in suit and tie, Di Maio was at first seen as the perfect foil to Grillo's outbursts and theatrical rants. But he did little to hide his ambition. As his public profile has risen, so has the disapproval of fellow 5-Star parliamentarians who accuse him of hogging the limelight.

When he gave an interview to Vanity Fair in May, full of personal details that included his sex life with his girlfriend, he drew a rare public rebuke from his fellow deputy Fico. Some of Di Maio's colleagues also accuse him of withholding information and siding too closely with Rome mayor Raggi, who is disliked by a faction of the party's lawmakers.

Di Battista, often unshaven and casually dressed, is the new idol of 5-Star's supporters. His popularity shot up after he spent the summer touring the whole of Italy on a scooter to campaign against Renzi's constitutional reforms. — Reuters

GERMANY HUNTS TUNISIAN SUSPECT AFTER IS CLAIMS TRUCK ATTACK

BERLIN: German police launched a manhunt yesterday for a Tunisian suspected of driving the truck that ploughed through a Berlin Christmas market in a deadly assault claimed by the Islamic State jihadist group.

Media reports said asylum office papers believed to belong to the man were found in the cab of the 40-tonne lorry used in the attack that killed 12 people. The man is in his early 20s, known by three different names, and was born in the southern city of Tataouine, the reports said. He applied for asylum in Germany in April and received a temporary residence permit, according to the daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung.

A previous suspect-a 23-year-old Pakistani asylum seeker-was released late Tuesday for lack of evidence, prompting fears of a killer on the loose and further rattling nerves in a shocked country.

Twelve people were killed when the Polish-registered articulated truck, laden with steel beams, slammed into the crowded holiday market late Monday, smashing wooden stalls and crushing victims. The scenes revived nightmarish memories of the July 14 truck assault in the French Riviera city of Nice, where 86 people were killed by a Tunisian Islamist. Twenty-four people remained in hospital, 14 of whom were seriously injured, Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere said. De Maiziere said several lines of inquiry were being pursued, but "we should let the security services do their job". "No one will rest until the perpetrator or perpetrators have been caught," he told ARD public television.

The IS-linked Amaq news agency said "a soldier of the Islamic State" carried out the Berlin carnage "in response to appeals to target citizens of coalition countries". There was no evidence to back the claim, nor was the perpetrator identified. Germany is part of a US-led coalition fighting IS in Iraq and Syria. Tunisia is one of the biggest suppliers of jihadist fighters, with some 5,500 of its nationals

believed to be involved in combat in Syria, Iraq and Libya. The attack comes at a delicate time for Chancellor Angela Merkel who is running for a fourth term in 2017 but has faced strong criticism over her decision last year to open the country's borders to refugees.

'New suspect very soon'

In a blow to investigators, federal prosecutors announced Tuesday they had to release the only suspect in custody after finding no forensic evidence to link him to Germany's deadliest attack in recent years. The Pakistani man was detained late Monday after he was reportedly seen jumping out of the truck and fleeing the scene. But officials had

expressed growing doubts over whether they had the right suspect, and he denied the charges under repeated questioning.

Following the suspect's release, Berlin's police chief Klaus Kandt told ARD television "one or more" perpetrators were believed to be on the run and possibly armed. Police said they were chasing up more than 500 tips from the public and examining DNA traces found in the cab of the truck.

"I am fairly confident that we will have a new suspect tomorrow or very soon," the head of the BDK police union, Andre Schulz, told public broadcaster ZDF late Tuesday. Police were reportedly focusing their search for the Tunisian suspect in the western state of North Rhine-Westphalia. — AFP



BERLIN: Italian Foreign Affairs Minister Angelino Alfano (R) and German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier speak to journalists near the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche (Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church), close to the site where a truck crashed into a Christmas market two days before. — AFP

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People enjoy ice skating on the black ice of the Melchsee Lake in Melchsee-Frutt, Switzerland yesterday. — AP

SYRIAN GIRL BLOGGER MEETS ERDOGAN AFTER EVACUATION

ANKARA: Seven-year-old Bana Al-Abed, whose Twitter account gave a tragic description of the bombing of Aleppo in Syria, yesterday met Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at his palace in Ankara after her evacuation from the city. Erdogan hugged the girl emotionally and also held Bana and her brother as they sat on his lap flanked by the president's wife Emine. "Very happy

to meet with Mr Erdogan," Bana wrote on a tweet above a picture of her nestling up to the cheek of the smiling Erdogan.

The young Syrian girl was one of thousands of people evacuated from once rebel-held areas of Aleppo in the last days under a deal brokered by Turkey and Russia. She was evacuated on Monday and Turkish offi-

cial promised then she would come to Turkey with her family. But it was not clear when she had crossed over. "Thank you for the help in saving the children of Aleppo from the war. I love you very much," Bana told Erdogan according to the presidency.

'Stand by Syria'

For her 330,000 online followers, Bana is a symbol of the tragedy unfolding in Syria, although Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's regime has slammed her and her mother's nearly daily tweets as propaganda. Her mother Fatemah, who runs the account @AlabedBana, was also in attendance on Tuesday, the Turkish presidency said. "I was pleased to host @AlabedBana and her family at the Presidential Complex today," Erdogan said in his own tweet. "Turkey will always stand with the people of Syria," he added.

Turkey is hosting some 2.7 million refugees from the Syria conflict but has made clear it now prefers to look

after those recently displaced, who are not injured, on the Syrian side of the border. However it makes exceptions for special cases and the wounded. It was not immediately clear if Bana would be staying in Turkey. Bana's account has posted pictures of the destruction in Aleppo including her rubble-littered street, while people have tweeted messages of support and concern, notably fearing for her life when tweets became less frequent.

At least 15,000 children are among the more than 300,000 people who have been killed in Syria's near six-year war. In her last tweet with her mother Fatemah before the evacuation, Bana made an appeal to Erdogan and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu to put a fragile ceasefire back on track after frequent delays. "We have brought the hope and symbol of the children of Aleppo, Bana, and her family to our country," tweeted Cavusoglu. "What could be more beautiful than the smile of a child?" — AFP



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (center) and his wife Emine (second right) pose with seven-year-old Bana Al-Abed (third left), who tweeted from Aleppo, and her family at the Presidential Complex. — AP

MPs CALL TO END SPORTS CRISIS

Continued from Page 1

the sports suspension are political in nature and are between influential people and even bigger than the government. He said the Assembly must find a roadmap that should be implemented within two months to end the suspension.

MP Hamdan Al-Azmi named top officials as the main people fighting in the sports field. He also accused the government of not wanting a quick solution, because the required legislation can be completed within a week. He also said the struggle is bigger than the government. Several MPs warned that if the government does not seriously try to resolve the crisis, they will grill the information and youth minister.

MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said "the crisis is political but it is even bigger than politics". He said the entire issue can

be resolved by issuing a professional sports law that can be prepared within a few weeks. MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said the crisis started in 2010, adding it is political in nature. MP Saleh Ashour accused the government of not being serious enough to resolve the crisis and charged that the main aim of the legislation passed in June is to send someone he named to jail. MP Rakan Al-Nasef said the suspension was caused by a complaint sent from Kuwait to international sports bodies, adding that "we should not give these bodies a blank cheque".

But Sheikh Salman insisted that the reason behind dissolving Kuwait's Olympic committee and some other federations was because of administrative and financial violations, and that the cases have been referred to court. A number of MPs called on the minister to step down for failing to handle the crisis.

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Focus

OILMAN BROUGHT
TRUMP AND BUSH
WORLDS TOGETHER

Throughout the presidential campaign, the Bush family and many of its Republican allies turned their backs on Donald Trump. Now, they're finding common cause with Trump over his pick to lead the State Department: Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson, who has long orbited their same political, philanthropic and business worlds.

Former President George W Bush, who has largely avoided politics since leaving office in 2009, heaped praise on Tillerson in a recent phone call to Sen Bob Corker, the Tennessee lawmaker who will oversee the secretary of state confirmation hearings. Jeb Bush, Tillerson's preferred candidate in the 2016 race, called the Exxon executive a "good man and accomplished leader".

Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice and Robert Gates - Bush's vice president, secretary of state and secretary of defense - have all offered glowing endorsements. Gates, who runs a consulting firm with Rice that represents Exxon, first put Tillerson on Trump's radar when the president-elect was dissatisfied with his more conventional options. Despite the high-level backing, Tillerson faces obstacles in his path to Foggy Bottom. He has no government experience, having spent his whole career at Exxon. Senators in both parties have raised questions about his ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin, a relationship that's particularly eye-catching given uncertainty about Trump's own connections to Russia.

Corker said that while the support from the highest levels of the Republican national security establishment won't wipe away senators' questions about Tillerson, it could ease anxieties. "Most people will look at that and understand that he's not outside the mainstream," said Corker, adding that George W Bush was "effusive" in his praise for Tillerson when they spoke last week.

Rejection

While Trump was never fully embraced by more traditional Republicans, his rejection by the Bush family and its national security apparatus was particularly glaring. The family produced the last two Republican presidents and had hoped for a third in 2016. The two Bush presidencies also defined the GOP's foreign policy philosophy as one that saw overseas military intervention as a means to pre-empt attacks on the US and promote democracy abroad.

Trump has vowed to take the Republican Party in a new direction, both in style and substance. He showed no reverence for the Bush family during the campaign, blasting George W Bush over the Iraq war and deriding his administration's focus on nation building abroad. He was particularly hard on former Florida Gov Jeb Bush, who ran against Trump in the GOP primaries.

Trump transition officials say the Bush family has not coordinated its support for Tillerson with the president-elect, though Gates and Rice did directly offer their support to Trump's team. Like the Bush family, Tillerson has strong ties to Texas and its vast oil industry. Presidents George H W Bush and George W Bush ran oil companies before going into politics. Tillerson, a native of Wichita Falls, Texas, joined Exxon out of college as a production engineer before moving through the oil giant's executive ranks on his way to becoming CEO.

Bonds

The bonds between Texas oilmen can run as deep as their wells. They share the same politics, bankroll the same politicians, attend the same charity balls, and, often, talk business with the same twang. It's a club of wealth, but also a culture. "If you're a prominent family in Texas, you probably are friends with the oil business," said Peter Feaver, who worked on the National Security Council in the Bush administration and did not support Trump during the campaign. "And if you're in the oil business, you're probably friends with prominent families in Texas."

Tillerson's relationship with the Bush family dates back at least to President George W Bush's years as Texas governor, according to people who know both men. The ties have moved beyond the political realm and into philanthropy, with some of Exxon's efforts overlapping with Bush's foundation, including on women's empowerment issues. Tillerson's philanthropic work on behalf of Exxon has also overlapped with Jeb Bush, who promoted STEM education - science, technology, engineering and math - as governor of Florida. When Jeb Bush joined the crowded field of Republicans running for president in 2016, he quickly became Tillerson's choice. The executive donated to both Bush's campaign and his super PAC.

Campaign finance records show Tillerson has been a regular donor to other establishment Republicans who cringed at the prospect of Trump becoming the party's nominee. He gave money to Mitt Romney, the 2012 GOP presidential campaign who Trump also considered for secretary of State. He also donated to House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who were lukewarm Trump supporters at best during the presidential race. — AP



2016 ROCKED BY CORRUPTION SCANDALS

From the Panama Papers to the impeachments of the presidents of Brazil and South Korea, 2016 was a year marked by corruption scandals, and by rising public outrage over graft. The question is, will that translate into a lasting demand for cleaner politics? "A new phenomenon" is being seen, said Jose Ugaz, a renowned Peruvian lawyer and the chairman of Transparency International, a Berlin-based anti-corruption watchdog, who expressed cautious optimism.

"What we are facing today is very different to what we were facing 27 years ago," when Transparency International was founded, he told AFP. "Around the world we are seeing this kind of corruption that affects the people - and we are seeing a mobilization of the people against it," he said. "I think it has been a difficult year - but at the same time it gives hope for the future." The Panama Papers leak in April - an unprecedented data dump - triggered much of the outrage early in 2016. Offshore companies used by many of the world's famous, wealthy or powerful, or kin or aides close to them, were exposed. Among them were the leaders, or relatives of the leaders, of Saudi Arabia, China, Malaysia, Syria, Pakistan, Argentina and Ukraine. Also implicated was a close friend of President Vladimir Putin, as well as current or former government officials in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East - more than 140 politicians and public officials in all.

The revelations forced Iceland's prime minister to resign and embarrassed Britain's then-prime minister David Cameron. China, although in the midst of an anti-corruption drive that has netted more than a million officials, suppressed the Panama Papers information relating to Xi's family in domestic media and online forums. That bolstered suspicions among observers that relatives of the Communist Party elite remained untouched in the crackdown on graft. "There is a double standard," said Willy Lam, professor of politics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

'Power of transparency'

"The publication of the Panama Papers reminds us of the rapid expansion and power of transparency," the head of the World Bank, Jim Yong Kim, told a London anti-corruption summit in May. He urged more transparency, stressing that "corruption is, quite simply, stealing from the poor." According to a recent estimate, between \$1.5 trillion and \$2 trillion is paid annually in bribes around the world. Research also suggests that, if a country's leaders are believed to be corrupt, ordinary citizens trend toward that path too.

Some heads of state have certainly paid a price for perceived corruption in office. In Brazil, president Dilma Rousseff was impeached in August, just days after the Rio Olympics, following big street protests fueled by the country's deep recession. Much of the outrage stemmed from a huge

weekly mass demonstrations, some of which drew crowds of more than a million people.

Other leaders, though, are battling away graft allegations that piling up against them. One such official is Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, whom the US alleges embezzled with his family and associates billions of dollars from a sovereign wealth fund. Najib has shut down domestic investigations into the scandal, claiming a plot by enemies. But tens of thousands of protesters have held demonstrations demanding his resignation.

South Africa's Jacob Zuma, nicknamed the "Teflon president" for his survival of multiple scandals, is also seeking to see his mandate through to 2019 with the backing of his ANC party, despite a court ruling he should face 783 counts of corruption. An official report has also implicated him in graft allegations involving a wealthy Indian family. — AFP

Mass protests

Impeachment also hit South Korea's President Park Geun-hye this month. She faces a parliamentary inquiry into accusations of colluding with a longtime friend, Choi Soon-Sil, to strongarm donations from large companies worth tens of millions of dollars for a couple of dubious foundations that Choi controlled and allegedly plundered. The scandal ignited

STALINIST CRIMES DIVIDE RUSSIA

Andrei Kolesnikov laid out the letters his grandfather sent home from the Stalinist labor camp where he eventually died after eight years as a political prisoner. "It was an everyday case, so common for that period," political analyst Kolesnikov told AFP in his Moscow flat. "My grandfather David Traub was caught up under the wheel of history." It has been eight decades since the start of the Great Terror that saw countless innocent victims across the Soviet Union executed or sent to the Gulag camps - and 25 years since the USSR itself finally ceased to exist.

But a fight over the historical truth - and memory - of the crimes of the Soviet regime still drags on in Russia as the current authorities under President Vladimir Putin stand accused of trying to minimize the dark chapters of the past in a bid to bolster their own grip on power. Earlier this month leading human rights group Memorial - which has been battling for decades to shine a light on Soviet abuses - released a database with the names and some biographical details of around 40,000 people who served in the Stalin-era NKVD secret police from 1935-39.

Kolesnikov was able to find out more about the NKVD agent he had already tracked down in state archives as responsible for the 1938 arrest of his architect grandfather. Some agents, it turned out, ended up being consumed by the very purges they had helped to conduct, arrested and executed along with their victims. Others went on to become decorated heroes in World

War II. "These people all had different fates," Kolesnikov, who works for the Carnegie Moscow Centre, said. Kolesnikov's grandfather was accused of being a political opponent of the Bolsheviks - his grandson guesses either to fulfill an arrest quota or due to a private vendetta. He died in the sick ward of his labor camp, leaving his wife and children.

'Diametrically opposed views'

"Unity" is the current buzzword among Russia's elite - uttered repeatedly by Putin as he tries to forge a sense of national identity that instills loyalty to the Kremlin and smother dissent. The strongman leader - and many of those who surround him - served in the NKVD's successor organization, the KGB, and headed its post-Soviet incarnation the FSB. Central to their push is shaping a vision of the past that emphasizes the USSR's victory in World War II and Stalin's role in achieving it while downplaying the Soviet crimes and repression.

When Memorial released its list of NKVD agents it provoked a level of interest - both positive and negative - that few at the organization had expected. In the first few days after the list was launched the website crashed as hundreds of thousands of people flooded on to search it. "It turned out that for an awful lot of people it was terribly interesting - for the descendants of victims and, however strange it might sound, for the descendants of those who worked in the NKVD," the group's board chairman Arseny Roginsky told AFP. — AFP

US LOSSES TO RUSSIA DISINFORMATION DRIVE

The US government spent more than a decade preparing responses to malicious hacking by a foreign power but had no clear strategy when Russia launched a disinformation campaign over the internet during the US election campaign, current and former White House cyber security advisers said. Far more effort has gone into plotting offensive hacking and preparing defenses against the less probable but more dramatic damage from electronic assaults on the power grid, financial system or direct manipulation of voting machines.

Over the last several years, US intelligence agencies tracked Russia's use of coordinated hacking and disinformation in Ukraine and elsewhere, the advisers and intelligence experts said, but there was little sustained, high-level government conversation about the risk of the propaganda coming to the United States. During the presidential election it did - to an extent that may have altered the outcome, the security sources said. But US officials felt limited in investigating Russian-supported propaganda efforts because of free speech guarantees in the Constitution.

A former White House official cautioned that any US government attempt to counter the flow of foreign state-backed disinformation through deterrence would face major political, legal and moral obstacles. "You would have to have massive surveillance and curtailed freedom and that is a cost we have not been willing to accept," said the former official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "They (Russia) can control distribution of information in ways we don't." Clinton Watts, a security consultant, former FBI agent and a fellow at the nonprofit Foreign Policy Research Institute, said the US government no longer has an organization, such as the US Information Agency, that provided counter-narratives during the Cold War. He said that most major Russian disinformation campaigns in the United States and Europe have started at Russian-government funded media outlets, such as RT television or Sputnik News, before being amplified on Twitter by others.

Watts said it was urgent for the US government to build the capability to track what is happening online and dispute false stories. "Those two things need to be done immediately," Watts said. "You have to have a public statement or it leads to conspiracy theories." A defense spending bill passed this month calls for the State Department to establish a "Global Engagement Center" to take on some of that work, but similar efforts to counter less sophisticated Islamic State narratives have fallen short. The US government formally accused Russia of a campaign of cyber attacks against US political organizations in October, a month before the Nov 8 election.

US 'Stuck'

James Lewis, a cyber security expert at the Center for Strategic & International Studies who has worked for the departments of State and Commerce and the US military, said Washington needed to move beyond antiquated notions of projecting influence if it hoped to catch up with Russia. "They have RT and all we know how to do is send a carrier battle group," Lewis said. "We're going to be stuck until we find a way deal with that."

Watts, who said he has tracked tens of thousands of pro-Russia Twitter handles since 2014, believes many of the most effective stories stoke fear of war or other calamities or promote a narrative of corrupt Western politicians, media and other elites. He and others said Sputnik shows the intensity of the Russian effort. Launched two years ago as a successor to the official Russian wire service and radio network, Sputnik does not merely parrot the Kremlin political line, according to experts. It has gone out of its way to hire outsiders with social media expertise, including left and right-leaning Americans who are critical of US policies.

Sputnik News did not respond to a request for comment. During the election campaign, one of the most prominent fulltime Sputnik writers and commentators, Cassandra Fairbanks, shifted from an ardent anti-police

protestor and supporter of socialist US Senator Bernie Sanders to a vocal backer of Republican Donald Trump. Fairbanks said in an interview with Reuters that Sputnik had not told her to advocate for Trump, now president-elect. She said she was swayed by Trump's opposition to overseas wars and international trade agreements. "I did my best to push for him," Fairbanks said, "but that was of my free will."

A woman in her thirties with more than 80,000 Twitter followers, Fairbanks was an activist with the hacking movement known as Anonymous before she joined Sputnik. The day before the election, Fairbanks said on a YouTube channel that it was "pretty likely" that the authors of emails hacked from the account of Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton's campaign manager John Podesta were using code words for pedophilia when they spoke about pizza.

The assertion fed the falsehood that Clinton supporters were operating a child sex ring out of a Washington-based pizza parlor. The channel, with 1.8 million subscribers, was run by Alex Jones, a radio host who has said the 9/11 attacks were an "inside job". Joe Fionda, a veteran of the Occupy protests who worked briefly for Sputnik in 2015, said the organization's articles and social media efforts overall were aimed at praising Russian President Vladimir Putin's allies such as Syria and dwelling on negative news in the United States, including police misconduct.

Some US officials and political analysts have said Putin could believe businessman Trump would be friendlier to Russia than Clinton, especially when it came to economic sanctions. Fionda said spreading hacked emails was a priority at Sputnik. He said his job included trying to create viral memes on a Facebook page called Mysterious Media, which did not list a Sputnik connection. Former workers of the Democratic National Committee, one of the groups infiltrated by Russian-backed hackers, said the US government should consider providing funding for the technological defense of major political parties. — Reuters

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VARDY BAN 'UNFAIR' SAYS LEICESTER CHIEF

LONDON: Leicester chairman Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha yesterday rated England striker Jamie Vardy's three-match ban as 'unfair'. Vardy received the suspension from the Football Association (FA) for his sending off against Stoke City at the weekend. The FA on Tuesday rejected the ailing Premier League champion's claim of wrongful dismissal which hinged upon Vardy being off balance as he was harried by Glen Johnson when he challenged Stoke forward Mame Diouf just before the half-hour mark. Referee Craig Pawson did not hesitate in showing him a red card for the two-footed challenge. Srivaddhanaprabha wrote on Instagram: "I am so sorry for the unfair judgement of referee to Vardy and more sorry that our appeal was rejected. This kind of judgement distort the charming of English Premier. "I spend a lot of time and effort to make my beloved LCFC a success, but this incident made me feel dispirit from football. — AFP

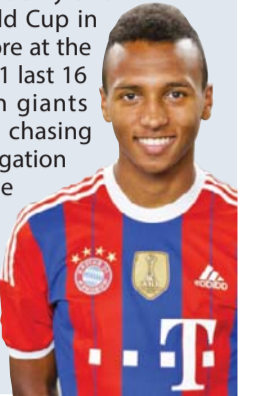


RECORD A\$50M PRIZE PURSE FOR 2017 AUSTRALIAN OPEN

MELBOURNE: The Australian Open has increased its total prize purse by 14 percent to a record A\$50 million (\$36.19 million), with A\$3.7 million up for grabs for the winners of the singles tournaments, organisers said yesterday. The prize money for the season's opening grand slam has more than tripled since 2001, and risen A\$10 million since 2014. Tournament director Craig Tiley said in a statement that organisers were focused on increasing compensation for players in the early rounds and qualifying, with first round losers set for an A\$50,000 windfall, up 30 percent from last year. Similarly, second round prize money has risen 29 percent to A\$80,000, with third and fourth round losers to earn A\$130,000 and \$220,000 respectively. Total prize money for the quarter-finals, semi-finals, runners up and winner is up 9 percent. The Australian Open starts on Jan 16 in Melbourne. — Reuters

US STRIKER GREEN QUITS BAYERN FOR STUTTGART

BERLIN: USA international striker Julian Green will leave Bayern Munich for second division VfB Stuttgart in January's transfer window, the German league leaders announced yesterday. With Poland hot-shot Robert Lewandowski as Bayern's first-choice striker, the 21-year-old Green has struggled for opportunities and has signed a deal with Stuttgart until June 2019. Green spent nearly seven years in Bayern's youth academy and reserve team. He played for the USA at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil and, aged 19, became the youngest player to score at the finals by netting with his first touch of the ball in the 2-1 last 16 defeat to Belgium. Green is relishing joining fallen giants Stuttgart, who are third in Germany's second tier and chasing promotion at the first time of asking following their relegation from the Bundesliga in May. "I came to Bayern in the Under-15 team and dreamed of becoming a professional, which I achieved," he said. "In the last three years, I gained a lot of experience, for which I am grateful. "Now I have new goals with Stuttgart and am looking forward to the challenge-above all to support Stuttgart in the second half of the season." —AFP



NO 25 TOYOTA 86 MC VIVAC BAGS GT300 CLASS

TOCHIGI PREFECTURE: The Toyota camp had reasons to rejoice at the 2016 AUTOBACS SUPER GT series, as a thrilling encounter in the final round (Round 8) resulted in a victorious No. 25 TOYOTA 86 MC VivaC passing the checkered flag, with No. 31 TOYOTA PRIUS apr GT competing brilliantly for a second spot finish. The much-awaited contest was held on a dry course and under bright, clear skies at the Motegi Twin Ring in Tochigi Prefecture, Japan. With this momentous win and overall second win of the season, the No. 25 TOYOTA 86 MC VivaC - expertly driven by Takeshi Tsuchiya and Takamitsu Matsui throughout the series-also bagged the GT300 class Drivers and Team Championship titles. The early stages of the all-important race belonged to No. 31 TOYOTA PRIUS apr GT-driven by Koki Saga and Yuichi Nakayama - that glided comfortably in the leading position through the first turn and beyond. Early threat to its spot came from competitor car No. 65 that made futile attempts to exploit any gaps. Well behind in the competition, the eventual winner of the race had a lukewarm start to the race. No. 25 TOYOTA 86 MC VivaC lost ground in the opening laps and its driver Takeshi Tsuchiya seemed visibly reluctant to increase pace. This caution hinted towards a possible tactical maneuver that would contribute to a strong comeback, and ultimately a victory for the team. Lap 15 into the race marked a pit stop for most cars, but foregoing the regulatory halt was of much tactical interest to the No. 25 TOYOTA 86 MC VivaC that was now lagging behind in the tenth spot. It headed towards the pit lane but took only half the time com-



pared to competitors by skipping the tire-change and bringing Takamitsu Matsui on the driver's seat. He immediately started making an effect on the proceedings by overtaking competing car No. 65 before it could warm up adequately with the fresh tires. His ability to handle the heated contest with calm perseverance was particularly impressive in the last leg of the race, as partner Takeshi Tsuchiya commented in the post-race press conference: "It was great to see how cool Takamitsu Matsui was as he caught up with the leader. I hope we can continue to bring up young drivers like him."

No. 31 TOYOTA PRIUS apr GT, still going strong in the leader's position, mirrored the 'no-tire change' tactic and only switched from Koki Saga to Yuichi Nakayama in a bid to finish strong. Having reserved its full-throttle for the final stages of the race, No. 25 TOYOTA 86 MC VivaC came back from behind to clock an incredible speed with the leaders of the pack. What then ensued was a close contest for the ultimate prize. Takamitsu Matsui held on to the pace while his competitor Yuichi Nakayama tried in vain to hold off the charge. Finally, in lap 34 of the nail-biting contest, No. 25 TOYOTA 86 MC VivaC passed No. 31 TOY-



OTA PRIUS apr GT on a 'V' corner, and retained the marginal lead till it sped passed the checkered flag. The jubilant winner was trailed by the second best racer by a fraction of a second, completing the race with a gap of 0.929 seconds. Takayuki Yoshitsugu, Chief Representative, Middle East and North Africa Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, said: "We are overjoyed with this championship win by the No. 25 TOYOTA 86 MC VivaC team and the podium finish by the No. 31 TOYOTA PRIUS apr GT team. We congratulate the Toyota team for their excellent and inspiring performance

throughout the championship. Finishing on a high will lend the drivers and the support staff a world of confidence and momentum for the next championship." Yoshitsugu added: "Participating and excelling in such racing initiatives lays the foundations in our journey towards building impressive, 'ever-better' cars that bring satisfaction and a smile on our customers' faces. We thank our racers and customers who bestow their confidence in us, and strengthen our research and development efforts with their insights and feedback to push the limits of engineering."

TOULOUSE NOT TAKING GRENOBLE LIGHTLY

PARIS: Toulouse are wary of a backlash from a rested Grenoble as they look to maintain their free-scoring European form when returning to domestic Top 14 duty tonight. Back-to-back thumping victories (36-6 and 54-15) over hapless Italians Zebre in the European Champions Cup, in which they ran in 13 tries, has lifted the struggling giants' spirits ahead of the return to domestic duty. Currently sitting seventh and outside the end-of-season play-off places, Toulouse know a victory against Grenoble is crucial. "We've got a positive dynamic. The players are starting to play well together and we hope to continue in that vein," said Toulouse's forwards coach William Servat. But he knows Grenoble, who have by far the worst defence in the league, will be fired up having rested most of their first team in recent European Challenge Cup action, including last week's humiliating 71-3 defeat to Ospreys, just seven days after losing at home to the Welsh region 59-7. "They chose to manage their squad. They want to survive in the Top 14 and we're expecting a physical battle," added Servat. "They're short of confidence but when they find their game, they can be formidable." The record four-time European and 19-time French champions have fallen on leaner times since their heyday of the 1990s and 2000s. They last won the European title in

2010 and have not lifted the Top 14 crown since 2012. Last year they were battling just to finish in the top six and reach the play-offs. The big game of the week sees second-placed Montpellier host mega-rich Toulon tomorrow night in an encounter rendered all the more important by each side's European struggles. Toulon's shock 22-21 reverse against Scarlets on Sunday means their knock-out stage hopes are hanging by a thread and the three-time champions will almost certainly have to win away to title-holders Saracens next month to stand any chance of progressing. Montpellier likewise lost for a second time in four matches away to Castres 29-23 and face an uphill battle to get through a group in which three-time champions Leinster are flying. Montpellier will have South African No.8 Pierre Spies back but France international week Benjamin Fall is out with a leg injury. Toulon sit fourth in a congested top half in which only five points separate Montpellier and eighth-placed Racing 92, the reigning champions. Racing's recent league improvement - they have lost only one of their last six - is in stark contrast to their poor European form. Three straight Pool 1 defeats means last season's finalists are already out of the Champions Cup. Club president Jacky Lorenzetti called on his players to show humility to get their form back. "We need to rediscover our mental strength," he said. — AFP

NORTHAMPTON SPARED OVER NORTH HEAD INJURY

LONDON: Northampton should not have allowed George North to continue playing after he sustained a head injury but they will not be punished, a concussion review panel announced yesterday. The Wales wing, 24, was injured during an English Premiership game against Leicester on December 3, but although he appeared to have been knocked out, Saints' medical staff allowed him to play on. A Concussion Management Review Group (CMRG) was set up to investigate the incident, the first such review since new concussion rules came into force at the beginning of the season. It found that while there had been "sufficient evidence" to take North out of the game, the club did not "intentionally ignore the player's best interests". "Northampton Saints medical team has accepted that North may have lost consciousness and therefore should not have returned to play," the CMRG said in a press release. "The CMRG considered the welfare of North was always at the centre of Northampton's actions, and does not consider that the medical team (or the club) failed to complete the HIA (Head Injury Assessment) protocol nor intentionally ignored the player's best interests. "In addition and although not a determining factor, the CMRG is aware that the player appears to have had no residual effects in the short term. "For the above reasons the CMRG will not be imposing any sanction against the club or any of its individuals as a result of this incident." Northampton accepted the panel's findings. "Northampton accepts the conclusion that George should not have been allowed to return to the field of play," the club said in a statement. "But we are pleased that the CMRG has reflected our concerns about the current technologies and processes available to medical teams when assessing concussion. "The club believes that this is now an opportunity for the whole rugby community to reflect

on the CMRG's recommendations to ensure the highest levels of player safety and well-being." Rather than instigate disciplinary proceedings against Northampton, the CMRG, set up in partnership by the Rugby Football Union and Premiership Rugby, made nine recommendations. They include a call for the full 13 minutes set aside for Head Injury Assessments to be used unless there is clear reason to shorten it. The CMRG also wants team doctors to review video footage for permanent removal criteria before and after the assessment process. North, who has a history of head injuries, has since returned to training and Saints director of rugby Jim Mallinder said earlier this week that he will play against Sale tomorrow. —AFP



LONDON: This file photo of Wales' George North, right, as he is tackled by England's George Ford during the Six Nations international rugby match between England and Wales at Twickenham stadium in London. English rugby authorities yesterday said it will not sanction Northampton following a review into an incident that saw the club's medical team clear Wales winger George North to continue playing, despite replays suggesting he lost consciousness after a head injury. — AP

BROWNS' THOMAS PICKED FOR 10TH STRAIGHT PRO BOWL

CLEVELAND: Joe Thomas has finally given the Cleveland Browns something to celebrate during a ghastly season. One of the game's elite left offensive tackles, Thomas was selected to his 10th consecutive Pro Bowl last night, becoming just the fifth player in NFL history to be selected 10 straight times to open a career. Thomas, who has not missed a single snap since he was drafted in 2007, also holds the team record for most Pro Bowls, a mark he previously shared with Hall of Famers Jim Brown and Lou Groza.

"It's always an honor to be recognized by the fans, coaches and your peers," Thomas said.

"It is a feeling that never gets old. When I think about Jim Brown and Lou Groza, I think about not just two of the greatest Browns, but two of the greatest players to ever suit up in the NFL. It's humbling to be mentioned in the same sentence as them. Those guys helped the Browns capture championships and that is one of my goals.

"Individual recognition is always nice, but I would trade it all for team success and that is what we work toward every

day." At 0-14, the Browns and their fans have had little to cheer about this season. Thomas, though, is a light in the darkness.

"All right!" coach Hue Jackson said on the prospect of Thomas being honored. "Something to get excited about."

Thomas joined Hall of Famers Merlin Olsen (14), Mel Renfro (10), Barry Sanders (10) and Lawrence Taylor (10) as the only players to make the Pro Bowl in each of their first 10 seasons.

A three-time Walter Payton Man of the Year honoree, Thomas has been on

the field for all 9,791 offensive snaps since the Browns made him the No. 3 overall pick in 2007. He's started 158 games, doing so despite injuries that may have sidelined other players.

Beyond his success on the field, Jackson credits Thomas as one of the players who have kept the Browns together during the worst season in the team's 66-year history.

"There's situations where you'd have a guy maybe that could be going to his 10th Pro Bowl that says, 'I'm doing my part. You guys figure it out,'" quarterback

Josh McCown said.

"And Joe is not that way. He leads the groups. He's involved in every meeting. He's engaged, steps up and speaks and shares what's on his heart if he needs to.

"That's what makes him special and I certainly believe it's why we're all still locked in, because you look no further than Joe to know if that guy's going to his 10th straight Pro Bowl and regardless of the record, he's still putting it on the line and preparing, then I ought to do that." He's a heckuva inspiration to a lot of guys." —AP



TOKYO: President of Tokyo 2020 Olympics organising committee Yoshiro Mori speaks to the media after a Four-Party Working Group meeting to present the first official cost estimate for the 2020 Tokyo Games in Tokyo yesterday. The 2020 Olympics in Tokyo will likely cost as much as \$17 billion, the organising committee said yesterday, an estimate reflecting intense efforts to cut costs that had threatened to spiral out of control. — AFP



TOKYO: In this Dec. 11, 2016 file photo, photographers take a photo of the site of new national stadium after a groundbreaking ceremony in Tokyo. — AP

FARAH'S AWARD FLOP MYSTIFIES FELLOW OLYMPIC HEROES

LONDON: Olympic gold medalists Alistair Brownlee and Nick Skelton expressed their surprise British athletics legend Mo Farah was again snubbed by the public for the prestigious BBC Sports Personality of the Year award.

Brownlee, who retained his Olympic title in Rio and also gained widespread respect for helping his ailing younger brother Jonny across the line in a triathlon in Mexico this year, finished runner-up to Andy Murray in the poll with Skelton, who won showjumping gold at the venerable age of 58, in third.

For Murray who garnered almost 250,000 votes over double the total of Brownlee-it was a historic third BBC award. Farah-despite emulating Finnish icon Lasse Viren (1972/76) as the only athlete to do the Olympic distance double twice (5000/10000 metres) — finished way behind in terms of the popular vote in fourth. Skelton-whose sport gets barely any mainstream coverage apart from the Olympics-received just over

109,000 votes with the much higher profile Farah getting only 54,476.

Both Brownlee and Skelton said they would have voted for him with the former saying Farah's personal story was remarkable being brought to Britain from war-torn Somalia as a young child.

"I'm not sure why that is that he hasn't made the top three," said Brownlee. "Maybe some people don't see him as British. It's really sad because for me he is the perfect British story.

"It's what we should be about: a person who comes to Britain as a young man, as a refugee, and an ex-school teacher identifies something that he's brilliant at and he represents Britain as the best in the world.

"I think that's a fantastic British story. I would have voted for Mo." Farah's best finish is third in the 2011 poll. He has filled fourth spot on two other occasions-including 2012 when he lit up the track in London to secure his first Olympic double-and sixth in 2015.—AFP

TOKYO 2020 SLASHES BUDGET TO \$17 BN

TOKYO: Tokyo Olympics organisers unveiled a smaller budget of up to \$17 billion yesterday after coming under pressure to cut ballooning costs. The figure, down from last month's pledge to cap spending at \$17.78 billion, follows warnings that the bill for the 2020 Games could soar as high as \$30 billion.

Organising committee chief executive Toshiro Muto said the entire Games budget would be between 1.6 trillion and 1.8 trillion yen, which he put at \$15-16.8 billion.

Under the latest exchange rate, the same yen figure is worth \$13.6-15.3 billion. This year's Rio Games cost \$12 billion, while London 2012 came in £8.77 billion or \$13.7 billion under the exchange rate at the time.

Yesterday's figure, the most complete budget yet for Tokyo 2020, comes after officials scrambled to slash the costs of building some venues. It was revealed at talks between the International Olympic Committee (IOC)

and the Tokyo and national governments, who are meeting regularly to try to cut costs. "This does give the overall picture," IOC vice-president John Coates said by videolink from Sydney.

"We are pleased with the progress you are continuing to make," he said, adding: "We think that we can work with you to find... more savings." Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike, who was elected this year vowing to bring down costs, said some 40 billion yen would be saved after a review of the canoeing, volleyball and swimming venues. "The three-party meeting by the committee, the central government and the Tokyo government, will get to work on specifics early next year," Koike told reporters, with "cost-sharing" on the agenda. "I want to strictly check who will pay for what as swiftly as possible." In the battle to cut costs, she had proposed moving the canoeing venue 400 kilometres (250 miles) north of Tokyo

to Miyagi prefecture, one of the areas hardest hit by Japan's 2011 tsunami disaster.

But the idea faced resistance from the organising committee, which argued that changing sites was impractical and could end up costing more. Koike dropped the plan last month and announced that canoeing would stay in Tokyo but with the venue built at a sharply reduced cost. She also said then that Tokyo would build a new aquatic centre with 15,000 seats, smaller and cheaper than the original plan for a 20,000-seat facility.

And last week Koike said the volleyball venue would stay in the capital but be built at a lower cost. In a meeting last month, Muto said the organising committee's working budget was capped at less than two trillion yen (\$1.78 billion) and officials were committed to pushing it lower. But Coates refused to accept the figure and said overall costs would have to come down significantly. —AFP



30 YEARS ON: NISSAN'S ICONIC 1987 PARIS-DAKAR RALLY CAR RIDES AGAIN

DUBAI: After exactly 30 years away from the public eye, Nissan has brought one of its most iconic motorsport machines back to life. The stunning 1987 Nissan Patrol Fanta Limon Paris-Dakar rally car has been fully restored to its former glory, and made an emotional return to its spiritual home in the sand dunes of the Saharan desert.

The car's legendary status is second to none, writing its very own chapter in Dakar mythology. It took victory in the diesel category, and was the first diesel car to ever finish in the race's overall top 10, taking ninth spot. Today, all the top cars are diesels.

The Fanta Limon car has been given a new lease of life thanks to a dedicated team of engineers at Nissan's European Technical Centre (NTCE) in Barcelona, Spain. For more than two years they restored the car after work and at weekends, turning it from a rusting wreck in a Spanish museum to a highly capable off-road racer.

Pedro Diaz Illan is Manager of the Electrical and Electronics Engineering team at NTCE, and the only member of the original 1987 team still working there. "That was a proud moment. Our brains, hearts and souls have gone into this project and it has not been easy. But to see the car in the desert again was just fantastic." The story of the car's success in the 1987 Paris-Dakar rally starts the year before,

when Nissan Motorsport devised a plan to take part in high-profile off-road endurance rallies. The base vehicle was to be the Patrol - Nissan's popular 4x4 vehicle - with the team at NTCE in Spain leading the project.

The sponsorship with Fanta Limon came through links between Nissan Spain and drinks brand Coca-Cola, which was looking to exploit the global publicity generated by the Paris-Dakar race. Success came quickly, with victories in the diesel class in three events during 1986 (see results table, below).

But the main target was the Paris-Dakar. It began on 1 January 1987, with 312 vehicles lining up at the start of the gruelling 13,000 km race through Europe, Algeria, Niger, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal. The Nissan Fanta Limon team entered two vehicles; car 211 with Miguel Prieto and Ramon Termens as driver and co-driver respectively, and car 212, crewed by brothers Jorge and Hansi Babler.

Things did not run smoothly. The team's support truck broke down on the second stage, leaving the pair without spares for the rest of the race. Car 212 was eventually forced to withdraw after rolling down a dune, but 211 battled on to the end. It was the first diesel to finish, in ninth place overall.

Mission accomplished, the cars were retired from racing. The whereabouts of 212 is unknown, but 211 was offered to the Salvador

Claret, a private car collection and automotive museum south of Girona, Spain. There it remained for almost three decades.

The idea for recovering the car came in February 2014, when NTCE technicians spotted images of it on an internet forum. Realising the 30th anniversary was less than three years away, they contacted the museum to ask for it back.

Juan Villegas, an NTCE technician and part of the restoration team, explained: "The engine was in terrible condition. It was impossible to start and many parts were heavily corroded. The front axle was quite damaged, but the worst thing was the electrics, which had been badly attacked by rats."

The wreck was transported to NTCE Barcelona in May 2014 and the eight-strong restoration team began work, using their own time at evenings and weekends. They searched all over Europe for parts, asking Nissan dealers to search their warehouses for old stock. Some components were bought used and also restored.

Juan added: "We wanted the car to be accurate in every way, and were lucky to get the very old drawings and service manuals from NTCE. We followed all the fine adjustments to get the exact Paris-Dakar race set-up."

In November 2016 the Patrol was complete and made a return to its spiritual home - the



sand dunes of the Sahara. It was an amazing moment for the team.

Juan commented: "The spirit of innovation that was at the heart of Nissan's entry into the 1987 Paris-Dakar has been all around us as we have completed this project. We felt inspired by the memory of that team, which decided to

participate in the most challenging race in the world and achieved such success."

The restoration's cost has been covered by Nissan as part of its 'Performance Innovation' fund. It's a pot of money set aside each year for projects which bring the company's brand promise - Innovation That Excites - to life.

HELICOPTER RIDE FOR COFFEE - THE RISE OF RB LEIPZIG

BERLIN: RB Leipzig's billionaire owner Dietrich Mateschitz will hope to continue being his team's lucky charm when they tackle champions Bayern Munich, with top spot the winners' prize.

The 72-year-old Austrian, the co-founder of energy drinks giant Red Bull, is not a man to let obstacles get in his way. In 2012, when he was attempting to recruit Ralf Rangnick, Leipzig's current director of sport, during a telephone conversation, Mateschitz suddenly asked. "Do you have a helicopter landing pad?" Rangnick, in recounting the tale, replied that it was not something he had given consideration to when planning his garden. Nevertheless,

Mateschitz landed his private helicopter a few hours later at a sports field adjacent to Rangnick's house to continue the discussion. Over the course of the next few hours and countless cups of coffee, Rangnick explained what he would do if he was in charge of RB Leipzig, who were down in Germany's fourth division at the time. As he was later to do, Rangnick outlined how he would get rid of any players the wrong side of 30 and sign eager, young talent to nurture.

By the time the coffee went cold, he had the job and Mateschitz flew home. Four promotions in the seven years since they were founded in 2009 saw RB Leipzig join Germany's top flight this

season and got off to a flying start with a record 13-match unbeaten run. The team has never lost when Mateschitz was in the stadium. He made a rare appearance for Saturday's impressive 2-0 win at home to Hertha Berlin and will also be at the Allianz Arena on Wednesday, where his team will hope to make it five wins from five with Mateschitz in attendance. "We like seeing him in the stadium—he's a good omen for us," said Leipzig goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi. With 15 league matches played, they are neck-and-neck on 36 points with Bayern.

In 2014, when RB had just won promotion to the second division, Mateschitz predicted they would soon

be in the top flight now, the Champions League is beckoning. "Doubts do not belong to my character traits," he said, with Leipzig proving that on the pitch. Estimates to his wealth are somewhere around \$9-12 billion (8.7-11.5 billion euros). He was born in the Austrian town of Sankt Marein im Muerztal and later worked for a coffee-producing company, where he came across "Krating Daeng" (Thai for 'Red Bull') on a trip to Asia.

Together with the Thai family Yoovidhya, who first produced the drink, Mateschitz successfully brought Red Bull to Europe. In 2015, their profit was 501 million euros, which is shared between the Yoovidhya family (51 percent) and

the 72-year-old Mateschitz (49 percent). Red Bull no longer just sell cans of the energy drink and are a major brand in the sports world, sponsoring 600 athletes across a variety of disciplines.

Their portfolio includes a Formula One team, successful professional football clubs in the United States, Austria and Germany, as well as ice hockey teams in Salzburg and Munich.

But Mateschitz clearly has plans for RB Leipzig, and that includes Champions League football. "If we didn't want that at some point, then we'd be better off hanging up our boots," he said. Little is known about his private life and he rarely speaks to the media.—AFP

GLADBACH FIRE COACH SCHUBERT

BERLIN: Andre Schubert yesterday became the seventh Bundesliga coach fired since September when Borussia Moenchengladbach dismissed him in the wake of their 2-1 defeat to fellow strugglers VfL Wolfsburg.

The home defeat was the final straw for Gladbach's director of sport Max Eberl, who had said the team needed to win their last three games before Christmas for Schubert's future to be safe.

But after losing to Augsburg and earning a scrappy win over Mainz, Gladbach's defeat to Wolfsburg on Tuesday was their eighth defeat in 16 league games to leave them 14th. They have won just once in their last ten games in all competitions. "We have come to the conclusion that it is better for both parties to end their co-operation now," said Eberl. Schubert's replacement-ex-Wolfsburg coach Dieter Hecking has been linked to the role—now has the four-week winter break to inject confidence in a team which took 16 points from their first 16 league games. "We're looking for a coach who will take us on the right path with young players," added Eberl.

The main task of the new manager will be to pick up points "so we can reach a comfortable level in a relatively short time".

It is a sad end to Schubert's 15 months in charge which saw him take Gladbach from the bottom of the league table, when he replaced Lucien Favre in September 2015, to fourth last season and the Champions League.

The 45-year-old Schubert only signed a contract extension in September, which would have run until 2019, but things went downhill fast this season.

The sales of midfielder Granit Xhaka to Arsenal and defender Hvard Nordveit to West Ham, plus the loss of centre-backs Martin Stranl (retired) and Roel Brouwers, to Dutch side Roda Kerkrade, meant Schubert lost a wealth of experience.

Battling displays in their Champions League group against Barcelona, Manchester City and Celtic saw Gladbach finish third to qualify for the Europa

League's knock-out stages.

But Schubert paid the price for poor Bundesliga form, starting with a 4-0 drubbing by Schalke in early October which saw them pick up just six league points in the next ten games.

Schubert joins Dirk Schuster (Augsburg), Norbert Meier (Darmstadt), Markus Kauczinski (Ingolstadt), Dieter Hecking (Wolfsburg), Bruno Labbadia (Hamburg) and Viktor Skrypnyk (Werder Bremen) who have been sacked this season.—AFP



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE SERIE A

Cagliari v Sassuolo	22:45
beIN SPORTS 5 HD	
Fiorentina v Napoli	22:45
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	
Palermo v Pescara	22:45
beIN SPORTS	
Roma v Chievo Verona	22:45
beIN SPORTS 8 HD	
Sampdoria v Udinese	22:45
beIN SPORTS 6 HD	
Torino v Genoa	22:45
beIN SPORTS	

SPAIN COPA DEL REY

Barcelona v Hercules	0:00
beIN SPORTS 3 HD	
Vigo v Murcia	22:00
beIN SPORTS	
Deportivo v Gimnastica	22:00
beIN SPORTS	
Bilbao v Santander	23:00
beIN SPORTS	
Espanyol v Alcorcon	23:00
beIN SPORTS	



DORTMUND: Dortmund's Christian Pulisic jumps for the ball in front of Augsburg goalkeeper Marwin Hitz during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Borussia Dortmund and FC Augsburg in Dortmund, Germany, Tuesday.— AP

DORTMUND ENDS 2016 TO WHISTLES FROM FANS AFTER ANOTHER DRAW

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund ended 2016 with whistles from its own fans after being held to a 1-1 draw in the Bundesliga by gritty Augsburg on Tuesday. Not even the news of midfielder Julian Weigl's contract extension to 2021 could hide the disappointment of Dortmund's third successive league draw.

It wasn't for lack of effort - the home side had 23 attempts on goal but only Ousmane Dembele's equalizer after the interval to show for it. "I think the game today reflects the whole opening half of the season," Dortmund coach Thomas Tuchel said of a side that beat Bayern Munich and topped a Champions League group containing Real Madrid.

Tuchel had said he was worried by his side's propensity to concede first - since the 1-0 win over Bayern, Dortmund had been left with an uphill task across six competitive games. And it happened again on Tuesday when Ji Dong-won scored against his former club in the 33rd minute. Marc Bartra lost the ball and Martin Hinteregger surged forward despite the attention of five Dortmund players, slipping a pass to Jan Moravek, who noticed Ji free on the left. Goalkeeper Roman Weidenfeller blocked his first effort but the rebound fell kindly for the South Korean to grab his third league goal of the season. Dortmund was dominating possession but struggling to create chances against Augsburg's compact 5-4-1 formation.

Tuchel brought Bartra off for Sven Bender at the break and Dembele equalized two minutes later, sweeping the ball in with his left foot after Shinji Kagawa played him through.

Kagawa might have had a penalty shortly

afterward when it appeared Paul Verhaegh brought him down.

Dortmund pushed hard but couldn't find another breakthrough. The side is fourth in the standings and might be overtaken by Hoffenheim and Hertha Berlin on Wednesday, when league leader Bayern Munich hosts promoted Leipzig for a top-of-the-table clash.

All of Tuesday's games were preceded with a minute's silence for victims of the truck attack at a Christmas market that left 12 people dead and many injured in Berlin the evening before. The players also wore black armbands.

BORUSSIA MOENCHENGLADBACH 1, WOLFSBURG 2

Wolfsburg's short revival under Valerien Ismael continued with its second successive victory after four winless games.

However, it might not be enough to save his coaching job amid reports the club approached David Wagner, the current Huddersfield Town coach, for the position. Wagner opted to stay with the second-tier English side.

Gladbach counterpart Andre Schubert also faces an uncertain Christmas with just one win now from 11 games. His side got off to a bad start when Daniel Caligiuri opened the scoring on a counterattack in the third minute.

Thorgan Hazard equalized early in the second half but Gladbach's defense was caught napping again when Julian Draxler sent Mario Gomez through for the winner five minutes later.

Whistles greeted the final whistle from disgruntled home fans. "Gladbach is just three points above the relegation zone, while

Wolfsburg is only ahead on goal difference.

HAMBURGER SV 2, SCHALKE 1

Bobby Wood came on a substitute and secured a welcome victory for Hamburg with a brilliant late strike against injury-hit Schalke.

Nicolai Mueller made the breakthrough on the hour mark, before Johan Djourou missed the chance to seal it when Ralf Faehrmann saved his weak penalty 15 minutes later.

American forward Wood, who had three league goals already, further endeared himself to the home fans when Mueller sent him through on the right. Still faced by Germany defender Benedikt Hoewedes, he turned inside and unleashed an unstoppable shot inside the far post. Donis Avdijaj claimed Schalke's last-minute consolation with a fine volley for the youngster's first Bundesliga goal.

Hamburg climbed into the relegation playoff place ahead of Wednesday's games.

EINTRACHT FRANKFURT 3, MAINZ 0

Frankfurt completed a fine first half to the season with a victory made easier by Jhon Cordoba's sending off for a stamp on David Abraham in a tussle 10 minutes into the second half. Frankfurt captain Abraham had set up Branimir Hrgota for the opener in the 18th minute, and Hrgota set up Aymen Barkok with 15 minutes remaining. Barkok returned the favor for Hrgota to seal it 10 minutes later as Frankfurt climbed to third before the rest of the 16th round. "Of course I'm satisfied, with the result and the way the season has gone," Frankfurt coach Niko Kovac said.— AP



DOHA: Juventus players attend a training session in Doha yesterday, two days before the Italian Super Cup final football match between Juventus and AC Milan in the Qatari capital.— AFP

KESSIE COMES TO ATALANTA RESCUE AGAINST EMPOLI

MILAN: Ivorian youngster Franck Kessie hit a second-half leveller and set up a dramatic last-gasp winner as Atalanta ended a three-game winless run in a 2-1 win over Empoli on Tuesday.

Atalanta, who last month were being tipped for a place in next season's Europa League, left it late to overcome their Tuscan visitors.

Empoli fired a warning when Levan Mchedlidze got on the end of a free-kick six minutes after the restart to flick the ball past Marco Sportiello at the goalkeeper's far post.

It gave the visitors hope of claiming their first pair of consecutive league wins since December 2015, but Kessie, a towering striker who is already courting interest from a number of top clubs, was a game-changer. After celebrating his 20th birthday on Monday, he replaced Jasmin Kurtic at half-time and on 74 minutes picked up a loose ball on the edge of the area to beat Lukasz Skorupski with a vicious low drive inside the keeper's near post.

Atalanta fought till the bitter end and after Kessie battled to keep possession wide on the left, he whipped in a cross that

came off two bodies before Marco D'Alessandro poked the loose ball into the net for a last-minute winner.

Atalanta finish 2016 among some prestigious company, with only AC Milan, Lazio, Napoli, Roma and champions Juventus above them.

Empoli remain fourth from bottom, five points above the relegation places. Juventus are due to face AC Milan for the Italian Super Cup in Doha on Friday, meaning their respective fixtures have been postponed until February.

Inter Milan host Lazio on Wednesday when a win for the visitors, fourth at eight points behind Juve, could move as high as second with a win.

City rivals Roma, who are without defender Kostas Manolas and midfielder pair Radja Nainggolan and Daniele De Rossi after the trio suffered injuries in a 1-0 defeat to Juventus on Sunday, entertain Chievo with a one lead over the two teams below.

Third-placed Napoli travel to Fiorentina today on the back of a thrilling 5-3 win over Torino that saw Belgian Dries Mertens hit four goals.— AFP



COLONIA: Paraguay's Sportivo Limpeno footballers celebrate after defeating Venezuela's Estudiantes de Guarico in their final match in the Libertadores Women's Cup in Colonia, Uruguay on Tuesday.— AFP

Sports

Tokyo 2020 slashes budget to \$17 bn



Old, new clash as Indonesian weightlifters go for gold



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2016

JAGR TIES FOR SECOND IN CAREER POINTS AS PANTHERS BEAT SABRES Page 18



PHILADELPHIA: New Orleans Pelicans' Anthony Davis, top, goes up for a shot against Philadelphia 76ers' Robert Covington, from left, Ersan Ilyasova and Nerlens Noel during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Tuesday, in Philadelphia. New Orleans won 108-93. — AP

JAMES LIFTS CAVS PAST BUCKS IN OT

MILWAUKEE: LeBron James made a go-ahead 3-pointer with 24 seconds left in overtime as the Cleveland Cavaliers held on for a 114-108 victory over Milwaukee on Tuesday night to avenge a late November loss. Milwaukee took a 108-107 lead on a tip-in by Giannis Antetokounmpo with 1:12 left. Cleveland's Kyrie Irving missed a 3-pointer from the left corner on the next possession but Jabari Parker's lay-in attempt at the other end curled out. James was fouled on the rebound by Antetokounmpo, his sixth. James then hit the deep 3-pointer to put Cleveland up 110-108. Parker was fouled on a layup attempt on the ensuing possession but missed both free throws. Irving hit a pair of free throws with 15.7 seconds left to make it 112-108. James had 34 points and Irving 28 for Cleveland, which had lost at Milwaukee 118-101 on Nov. 29. Parker had 30 points and Antetokounmpo added 25. The two teams meet again Wednesday night in Cleveland.

PELICANS 108, 76ERS 93

Anthony Davis had 31 points and 16 rebounds to lead New Orleans over Philadelphia in a matchup of struggling teams. Davis scored 11 in New Orleans' dominant second quarter and Terrence Jones finished with 17 points and 10 boards for the Pelicans (10-20), who avenged a Dec. 8 home loss to the 76ers while winning for only the third time in 11 games. Ersan Ilyasova had 14 points to pace Philadelphia (7-21).

RAPTORS 116, NETS 104

Kyle Lowry had 23 points while Norman Powell scored a season-high 21 as Toronto defeated Brooklyn. Lowry, who shot 8 of 12 from the field and 3 of 5 on 3-pointers, added eight assists and four rebounds before sitting out the final 6 minutes as the Raptors (20-8) won their second straight. Six different Raptors scored in double figures. Toronto never trailed and led by as many as 23. Rondae Hollis-Jefferson had 19 points, six rebounds and three assists for the Nets (7-20), who lost their third straight and fifth in six games. It was the 10th straight road loss for the Nets. They are 1-13 away from home this season.

KINGS 126, TRAILBLAZERS 121

DeMarcus Cousins returned from a brief ejection and finished with a season-high 55 points, capping a wild day for the hot-tempered big man as Sacramento beat Portland. Hours after he was fined by the Kings for his profanity-laced tirade against a newspaper columnist last week, Cousins pulled down 13

rebounds and made two huge 3-pointers and scored 17 points in the fourth quarter. It appeared Cousins' night was over before the game had ended. In the final minute, he put the Kings back in front when he drove the lane for a layup and was fouled by Mason Plumlee. Cousins initially was given a second technical foul and ejected for spitting his mouth piece in the direction of Portland's bench after making the shot. He ran into the locker room, but the officials huddled and changed the call. Cousins returned to the court and made the free throw for a three-point play, giving the Kings a 122-119 lead with 35 seconds left.

WARRIORS 104, JAZZ 74

Stephen Curry scored 25 points with four 3-pointers while Kevin Durant had 22 points as Golden State whipped Utah after a slow start. Klay Thompson added 17 points and Draymond Green had 15 points, 11 rebounds and five steals as Golden State handed the Jazz their worst defeat of the season. Joe Johnson scored 14 points for Utah in its seventh straight defeat to the Warriors.

CLIPPERS 119, NUGGETS 102

J.J. Redick scored 27 points, including 7-for-9 shooting on 3-pointers while Chris Paul had 16 points, 15 assists and eight rebounds as Los Angeles beat Denver. DeAndre Jordan had 13 points and 13 rebounds and Luc Mbah a Moute added 14 points for the Clippers, who won for the fifth time in six games. Will Barton led the Nuggets with 22 points off the bench, with Danilo Gallinari adding 17 points.

SPURS 102, ROCKETS 100

Patty Mills hit a 3-pointer with 12.9 seconds left to lift San Antonio over Houston. Eric Gordon missed a 3-point attempt after that before Manu Ginobili missed two free throws to give Houston one last chance, but James Harden's 3-point attempt bounced off the rim at the buzzer. The victory is San Antonio's fifth straight and improves the Spurs to 15-1 on the road. It also snaps Houston's NBA-long 10-game winning streak. Kawhi Leonard led the Spurs with 21 points while LaMarcus Aldridge added 17 points with 10 rebounds. Harden finished with 31 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists.

HORNETS 117, LAKERS 113

Kemba Walker had 28 points and 10 assists while Marco Belinelli scored 11 fourth-quarter points as Charlotte rallied from 19 down to beat Los Angeles. Walker had 15 points in the third quarter and a key rebound with 27.9 sec-

onds left in the fourth to set up a tiebreaking jumper by Nicolas Batum with 13 seconds remaining. Batum had 23 points on 8-of-12 shooting and added 10 assists. Belinelli finished with 13 points. Jordan Clarkson paced the Lakers with 25 points with 7-of-9 3-point shooting and Nick Young added 24 points while hitting 5 of 10 from 3-point range. Los Angeles made 16 of 33 3-point attempts (48.5 percent) but the Hornets still secured their second straight victory.

CELTICS 112, GRIZZLIES 109, OT

Isaiah Thomas scored a career-high 44 points, including 36 after halftime, to lead Boston past Memphis in overtime. After the Grizzlies took a 106-105 lead on a rebound basket by Tony Allen with 1:10 left in the extra period, the Celtics scored the next five points. Al Horford had 17 points and 14 rebounds for the Celtics, who overcame a 17-point deficit in the second half to win their third straight. Avery Bradley added 16 points. Thomas also matched his career best for 3-pointers, going 7 of 10 from outside the arc. Marc Gasol and Troy Daniels led Memphis with 24 points apiece. Mike Conley had 19 points and eight assists for the Grizzlies, who lost their third in a row - all at home.

MAGIC 136, HEAT 130, 2 OT

Nik Vucevic had 26 points and 12 rebounds while Evan Fournier scored 26 and hit the 3-pointer that put Orlando up for good as the Magic topped Miami in double overtime. Elfrid Payton scored 22 points and Serge Ibaka added 20 for the Magic, who beat Miami for only the third time in the last 19 meetings. Tyler Johnson had a career-high 32 points, the most any Heat reserve has ever scored in a game. Hassan Whiteside had 32 points and 15 rebounds for Miami, which wasted a five-point lead in the final minute of regulation and a four-point lead in the last 40 seconds of the first overtime.

KNICKS 118, PACERS 111

Carmelo Anthony matched a season high with 35 points as New York used a big second-half turnaround to beat Indiana. The Knicks fell behind by 15 in the third quarter then suddenly seized control to snap a three game losing streak. Anthony scored 26 in the second half. Derrick Rose had 24 points and Kristaps Porzingis added 21 for the Knicks, who returned home after a poor finish to their five-game trip out West. They improved to 10-4 at home. Thaddeus Young and Myles Turner each scored 21 points for the Pacers, who had won seven straight in the series. — AP

NBA results/standings

LA Clippers 119, Denver 102; Golden State 104, Utah 74; Sacramento 126, Portland 121; Cleveland 114, Milwaukee 108 (OT); Boston 112, Memphis 109 (OT); San Antonio 102, Houston 100; Toronto 116, Brooklyn 104; NY Knicks 118, Indiana 111; Orlando 136, Miami 130 (OT); New Orleans 108, Philadelphia 93; Charlotte 117, LA Lakers 113.

Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
Atlantic Division					Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Toronto	20	8	.714	-	Utah	18	11	.621	-
Boston	16	12	.571	4	Oklahoma City	16	12	.571	1.5
NY Knicks	15	13	.536	5	Portland	13	17	.433	5.5
Brooklyn	7	20	.259	12.5	Denver	12	17	.414	6
Philadelphia	7	21	.250	13	Minnesota	8	19	.296	9
Central Division					Pacific Division				
Cleveland	20	6	.769	-	Golden State	25	4	.862	-
Chicago	14	13	.519	6.5	LA Clippers	21	8	.724	4
Indiana	15	15	.500	7	Sacramento	11	17	.393	13.5
Milwaukee	13	13	.500	7	LA Lakers	11	20	.355	15
Detroit	14	16	.467	8	Phoenix	8	20	.286	16.5
Southeast Division					Southwest Division				
Charlotte	16	13	.552	-	San Antonio	23	5	.821	-
Atlanta	14	14	.500	1.5	Houston	21	8	.724	2.5
Washington	12	15	.444	3	Memphis	18	12	.600	6
Orlando	13	17	.433	3.5	New Orleans	10	20	.333	14
Miami	9	20	.310	7	Dallas	7	21	.250	16

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS AS HOOPS CELEBRATES 125TH BIRTHDAY

MASSACHUSETTS: A game drawn up to occupy some bored boys as winter approached at a Massachusetts gymnasium celebrated its 125th anniversary yesterday and basketball's status as the world's second most popular sport.

Basketball began on Dec 21, 1891 at the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) gym in Springfield with rules made up by Canadian physical education instructor James Naismith.

Last year more than one billion people watched National Basketball Association programming, said NBA Deputy Commissioner Mark Tatum, who helps preside over the world's preeminent 'hoops' league.

Springfield's Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame marked the anniversary with celebrations including a Birthday of Basketball college double-header featuring Auburn, Boston College, Fairfield and Oklahoma at Mohegan Sun Arena in Connecticut.

Naismith recalled the sport's primitive beginnings in a New York radio interview in 1939. "I called the boys to the gym,

divided them up into teams of nine and gave them a little soccer ball," he said.

"I showed them two peach baskets I'd nailed up at each end of the gym (about 10 feet above the floor), and I told them the idea was to throw the ball into the opposing team's peach basket.

"I blew the whistle, and the first game of basketball began." Running with the ball was not allowed, only passing or directing it with the hand toward a team mate or the basket. Dribbling and other developments came over time.

The new game quickly caught on after Naismith's 13 initial rules were spread by the YMCA's newsletter. By 1894 basketball was being played in France, China, India and more than a dozen other countries.

It became a favorite in schools, college campuses and playgrounds, and at the Olympics and in professional leagues across the globe.

The NBA includes international players from 41 countries and territories - a contingent making up more than 25 percent of the league. — Reuters



SKODA SUPERB: NEW CLAIM IN THE MID-CLASS SEGMENT



AIZAWL: An Indian Mizo pedestrian walks past a Christian nativity crib in Aizawl, capital of northeastern Mizoram state, on December 21, 2016. Christians, throughout the world, will be celebrating Christmas Day on December 25. — AFP

BITTER BATTLE ROILS INDIA'S BIGGEST CONGLOMERATE

OUSTED CHAIRMAN LAUNCHES LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THE FIRM

MUMBAI: The acrimonious battle for control of India's storied Tata Group is set to get even dirtier as its ousted chairman launches legal action against the firm, marking the latest twist in a months-long saga sully the 150-year-old conglomerate. Cyrus Mistry—the first non-family member to helm the \$103 billion steel-to-salt group—was sacked in October after falling out with company patriarch Ratan Tata.

He has refused to go quietly, making a series of allegations of mismanagement at the helm of the 150-year-old company, before filing a case in court yesterday. And that is where the matter becomes interesting: the Mistry family have been invested in Tata Sons for 50 years and Cyrus's father is the largest non-institutional shareholder with an 18.5 percent stake. "My fight will actually continue, and not only continue, it will strengthen," he told Bloomberg after filing the suit.

Tata Sons says it will contest the petition, which alleges its actions damaged minority shareholders' interests. The feud between Mistry and Tata, the 78-year-old former chairman who has taken interim charge, has already wiped nearly \$9 billion from the collective stock market value of the group's eight main companies.

Experts say it is now damaging one of India's most respected brands, whose image is built on

the Tata family's reputation for probity in a country plagued by corporate corruption. "None of the Tata companies are great performers," said one Mumbai executive who has worked with the group, describing the problems raised by Mistry as a "wake up call" for investors. "(Now), the market won't give them as much leeway for being the Tata group as they had in the past," he told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Ratan, who is credited with building the conglomerate into a global behemoth, says his successor was betraying its legacy. Under him, the organisation went on a global purchasing spree, acquiring major names from Tetley Tea to Jaguar Land Rover and the Anglo-Dutch steel firm Corus in 2007 — a major source of pride for a company founded under British colonial rule.

But parts of the business have been struggling, and the 50-year-old Mistry had tried to reduce its \$30 billion debts by selling underperforming assets.

That is said to have irked Ratan. But Kavil Ramachandran, professor at the Indian School of Business, believes he should have given Mistry freer rein. "When a person is retiring, he has to move out completely," he said. "It's like a relay race. The person handing over the baton has to know when and how to do it."



MUMBAI: This file photograph taken on April 24, 2012, shows Tata Sons chairman, Ratan Tata (L) and deputy chairman of Tata Sons, Cyrus Mistry as they pose during a function to launch the new Cromax e-retail store. — AFP

Drawn-out fight

Both Mistry and Tata are from wealthy Parsi families—followers of Zoroastrianism, one of the world's oldest religions. But executives who know

both men say the similarity ends there. "There's a stark difference in style and judgement and values between the two men," said the Mumbai executive, who worked with both at the company.

Mistry has pulled no punches since his sacking, alleging in a letter to the board that almost every aspect of the business was hampered by debt and poor management. The European steel business, he said, faced potential write-downs of more than \$10 billion, only some of which had so far been taken into account. Mistry had planned to sell off Tata Steel's loss-making British operations, but that decision has since been reversed.

He also questioned the wisdom of continuing with the Nano, a cheap, no-frills car that was a pet project of Ratan but failed to sell. "Emotional reasons alone have kept us away from this crucial decision," Mistry wrote in the letter, which the company says contained "unsubstantiated claims and malicious allegations." Mistry was set to be removed from the boards of companies including Tata Steel and Tata Motors at extraordinary general meetings this week. But he pre-empted that Monday by resigning, although he remains on the board of Tata Sons, which is not publicly listed.

Mahesh Singhi, head of investment banking firm Singhi Advisors, said the saga had "dented the image of India's largest conglomerate in ways that we have not witnessed in corporate history in the country in the recent past." "This is definitely negative for the Tata Group," he said. "Investors will be required to brace for a long-drawn fight!" — AFP

IN THE TOWN OF JESUS' BIRTH, CRAFTSMEN TAKE ON CHINA

BETHLEHEM: Christmas is approaching and pilgrims and tourists have begun to arrive, crowding the souvenir shops that line the narrow streets and alleys of Bethlehem, the biblical town revered as Jesus' (PBUH) birthplace. But when visitors choose to take a piece of the Holy Land back home with them, they better check the labels. Many souvenirs — including the West Bank town's trademark rosary beads — are imported from abroad, mainly China.

A small number of souvenir shops are now trying to fight the trend, stocking their shelves almost exclusively with locally made products. Shopkeepers say that while their wares may be more expensive, the quality is much better and they give an important boost to the struggling economy.

Local economy

"I've got nothing that is made overseas except for one thing, that's the magnets. It's something that sells for cheap and people want them," said Bassem Giacaman, owner of the Blessings Gift Shop and The Olive Wood Factory. "Everything else is made locally so I can keep the local economy working." Some 120,000 people are expected to visit the Holy Land this holiday season, half of them Christian, according to Israel's Tourism Ministry. Many will visit Bethlehem, where globaliza-

tion has left its imprint like everywhere else. Foreign-made crafts, especially Chinese ones, have come to represent a big part of the market here, including Christmas souvenirs. While there are no official statistics, local officials and businessmen estimate that nearly half of the products, perhaps more, are imported. Giacaman keeps just a few imported products in his store, most of them hidden in a small box beneath a counter. He takes them out to show customers and compare them to Palestinian-made ones. "This is a plastic Jesus baby made in China and this is a ceramic one made in Bethlehem, and these are the olive wood rosaries that I make and the Chinese ones," he said, proudly showing what he said was the superior craftsmanship of the locally made goods.

Bethlehem is in the West Bank, occupied territory the Palestinians hope will be part of their future state. Tourism remains strong, but the rest of the economy has long languished, in part because of Israeli restrictions. Tourists must pass through a checkpoint in Israel's separation barrier to reach the town. The "Visit Palestine Center," located in a 200-year-old house along a stone stairway just a few hundred meters (yards) from The Church of the Nativity, promotes a "Made in Palestine" label. "There's a big influx of imported products and a lot of traditional crafts are declining gradual-

ly," said Samy Khoury, the center's founder and general manager.

The Visit Palestine Center, which started as an online store and travel guide five years ago, works with nearly 100 workshops and home-based artisans throughout the Palestinian terri-

tories and in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. It features Palestinian traditional crafts, including Christmas-related ones like olive wood rosaries and mother of pearl ornaments. The center targets independent travelers and takes a fair trade approach to its business.



BETHLEHEM: In this Monday, Dec 12, 2016 photo, a shopkeeper walks through a souvenir shop in the West Bank city. — AP

Palestinian-made products

Trying to sell only Palestinian-made products comes with challenges. "Maintaining consistency and quality, the right lead time, figuring out how much production capacity the producers can give," are some of them, explained Khoury. Then there's the issue of price. Maher Canawati, owner of the Three Arches souvenir shop, sells locally made gifts and even has a wood workshop in the back. But he keeps room for imports as well.

"We have to carry all kinds of merchandise in our shop because we have different markets and different pilgrims with different budgets," said Canawati, whose family has provided services to pilgrims since the 16th century. Canawati said he wants to give his customers options, and he is clear about the differences. "A dozen of made-in-China rosaries sell for \$4 while a dozen of locally made sell for \$25," he said. "The made-in-China Jesus babies sell for \$20 and the Bethlehem ones sell for \$64."

While craft workshop owners grumble about foreign imports, not everyone believes the imports have seriously threatened local merchants and artisans. "It's a business," said Samir Hazboun, Chairman of the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce. "I'm not aware of anyone running out of business because of the imports." — AP

EU STOCKS SLIP, ITALIAN BANK WOES RESURFACE

LONDON: Europe's main stock markets dropped yesterday, with focus once more on Italian bank Monte dei Paschi, whose shares tumbled on fading hopes that it will avoid a state bailout.

In the eurozone, Frankfurt's DAX 30 slipped 0.1 percent and the Paris CAC 40 shed 0.5 percent. The three indices had closed higher Tuesday, with investors looking beyond fatal attacks in Germany and Turkey to focus on an upbeat outlook for the US economy, dealers said.

Stock in Monte dei Paschi di Siena tumbled yesterday as investors feared that the troubled Italian bank's efforts to find billions of euros

quickly are all but doomed. B.M.P.S., the world's oldest bank and Italy's third-biggest, is racing against the clock to raise five billion euros (\$5.2 billion) by the end of next week or face a government bailout. It is due to release the result of a debt-for-equity swap offer open to small bondholders later yesterday, but analysts already warned the take-up at 500 million euros so far was too small for comfort.

"The weak appetite rings the alarm bell as the year-end deadline approaches at a threatening speed," said Ipek Ozkardeska, senior market analyst at LCG. "Failure to save the bank could aggressively shake up the Italian and the European banking sector." Investors duly dumped the stock, which fell more than 12 per-

cent to 16.30 euros in morning Milan trading.

Asia rises

Elsewhere yesterday, most Asian markets turned higher as investors tracked more record highs on Wall Street and refocused on the global economy after two deadly attacks. The Berlin Christmas market horror and the shooting of Russia's Turkish ambassador at the weekend fanned concerns that fresh geopolitical woes could upend a rally in world assets triggered by Donald Trump's election as US president. But the fear did not filter through to New York, where the Dow got within striking distance of the 20,000 mark for the first time.

"Noteworthy is the resilience of equity mar-

kets and low volatility in the face of two horrific terrorist attacks in Europe," Jason Wong, a currency strategist at Bank of New Zealand in Wellington, wrote in a note to clients yesterday. "They seem to have had little impact on the market," he said.

Hong Kong added 0.4 percent yesterday after suffering a four-day sell-off, while Shanghai jumped 1.1 percent and Sydney put on 0.4 percent. But in Tokyo the Nikkei ended down 0.2 percent, having risen for 10 percent in the previous 11 sessions. World markets have been on the rise since Trump's November 8 election win as dealers bet his plans for big state infrastructure spending, tax cuts and deregulation will

fire the US economy, the world's largest and a key driver of world growth.

There are also widespread expectations that his policies will fire up inflation, prompting the Federal Reserve to hike borrowing costs. Last week the central bank said it foresaw three increases next year, surprising markets that had expected just two. The Fed's bullish outlook has pushed the dollar ever higher, sitting at 10-month highs against the yen and heading towards parity with the euro for the first time since 2002. Comments from Fed boss Janet Yellen this week that the US jobs market was at its strongest since before the financial crisis provided support for the greenback. — AFP

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report. Wednesday 21 December 2016. Table with columns: Index, Change, Closing, Last Closing, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes sub-sections for Trades, Basic Materials, Consumer Goods, Health Care, Telecommunications, and Insurance.



TOKYO: A man walks past an electronic stock board showing Japan's Nikkei 225 index at a securities firm. — AP

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report. At 02:00 PM Previous Day. Includes sections for Global Stock Indices, MENA Stock Indices, Global Currencies Exchange Rate, MENA Currencies Exchange Rate, Global Interest Rates, and Commodities.

CAMARO ZL1 SET TO THRILL KUWAIT CUSTOMERS

UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS OF REFINEMENT, TRACK CAPABILITY AND DRAG-STRIP PERFORMANCE

KUWAIT: The 2017 Camaro ZL1 is poised to challenge the most advanced sports coupes in the world in any measure - with unprecedented levels of technology, refinement, track capability and straight-line acceleration. The Camaro ZL1 is the most powerful Camaro in the model's fifty year history and will be made available for sale in Kuwait in April 2017 by Chevrolet Alghanim, the exclusive distributor of Chevrolet vehicles in Kuwait.

Acceleration is delivered via a new supercharged 6.2L V-8 engine, with estimated 650hp. Its 0-100kph time is a mere 3.6 seconds, and it can complete the quarter mile in 11.4 seconds at a speed of 204 kph. It builds on the sixth generation Camaro's segment leadership as the fittest in the segment.

"The Camaro ZL1 is designed to excel at everything, delivering on design, dependability, quality and performance," said Abdallah Madhoun, Regional Sales and Marketing Manager for Chevrolet, GM Middle East. "The ZL1 is the track capable version of the award-winning sixth generation of the Camaro and can challenge the most advanced sports coupes in the world." The Camaro ZL1 is the first production car to use a new, advanced 10-speed automatic gearbox, which offers strong economy and performance benefits. It is also available as a six-speed manual.

Handling capability starts with the lightweight, stiff structure of the all-new sixth-generation Camaro, married with Magnetic Ride suspension and an electronic limited-slip differential. Standard technologies include Driver Mode Selector, dual-mode exhaust and advanced connectivity features. Take a look at the 2017 Chevrolet Camaro in more detail:

Designed for Performance

Functionality defines the Camaro ZL1's form, with the exterior shaped during more than 100 hours of wind-tunnel testing and on-track validation to improve aerodynamics and cooling for track use. Accordingly, its exterior elements all play a part in managing airflow over, under and through the ZL1. "The design supports the Camaro ZL1's exceptional performance and



does so with compelling style," said John Mack, Camaro exterior design manager. "From every angle, the elements coalesce to give the car a purposeful, super aggressive attitude."

The lower grille opening, for example, offers greater airflow compared to the Camaro SS, and the upper grille incorporates a new version of the "flow-tie" open bowtie insignia. There's also a new hood, with a carbon fiber insert and heat extractor that pulls hot air from the engine compartment. Additional changes include a larger front splitter, unique rockers, a wing-style rear spoiler and wider front fenders - all tuned to improve aerodynamics for greater high-speed stability. The Camaro ZL1's interior also features a carbon

fiber instrument panel molding interior trim. Inside, there are standard Recaro front seats, along with a suede flat-bottom steering wheel and shift knob. Chevrolet's Performance Data Recorder is available.

Fast with finesse

A cohesive suite of performance technologies tailors ZL1's performance for street and track. Features include an updated Magnetic Ride suspension, Performance Traction Management, electronic limited-slip differential, Custom Launch Control and Driver Mode Selector. It also has a stronger power-to-weight ratio than its predecessor, weighing 200 pounds less, while offering approximate-

ly 60 more horsepower and 80 more pound-feet of torque. The result is a one-of-a-kind driving experience.

"Driving the Camaro ZL1 is best described as 'fast with finesse,'" said Reuss. "It is beautifully balanced, with perfect damping and isolation for optimal performance and driver confidence in virtually any situation - from the Pacific Coast Highway to Willow Springs to Pomona."

Additional chassis features include:

- Unique 20-inch forged aluminum wheels with 285/30ZR20 front and 305/30ZR20 rear tires
- Goodyear Eagle F1 Supercar tires with a compound and construction developed exclu-

sively for the Camaro to offer exceptional grip on the track

- Brembo brakes with six-piston monobloc front calipers - featuring the ZL1 logo - and massive, 15.35-inch (390 mm) two-piece front rotors.

Supercharged performance and new 10-speed automatic

Underhood, the ZL1 features a supercharged LT4 6.2L V-8 Small Block engine, with intake and exhaust systems tailored for Camaro. It is rated at an estimated 650 horsepower and 650 lb-ft of torque (881 Nm), making this the fastest Camaro ZL1 in the vehicles 50 year history. The LT4 is backed by a standard six-speed manual transmission or all-new, available paddle-shift 10-speed automatic. The 10-speed automatic has 7.39 overall ratio for smaller steps between gears. It enables the LT4 engine to remain at optimal rpm levels during acceleration, particularly when exiting corners, for quicker laps and lightning-quick responses on both up- and down-shifts.

This is the first Chevrolet application of the new quick-shift 10-speed, with unique calibrations and hardware developed exclusively for the ZL1. Finally - and unlike some competitors - there's no need to purchase an optional package to make the ZL1 track ready. Track capability comes standard, with features including an impressive 11 heat exchangers for optimal powertrain cooling.

Chevrolet Care

All customers who purchase a Chevrolet from Yusuf A. Alghanim & Sons will receive the benefits of the Chevrolet Care Program, which entails new levels of post-sale support and trust. The Chevrolet Care is an exceptional customer service that is based on four main pillars: competitive and transparent service costs (especially for four-wheel drive vehicles), scheduled service appointment booking with same day delivery, quality service by certified technicians and 3yr/100,000km warranty with 24x7 roadside assistance for 4 years.

ONLY A NEW LAW WILL GUARANTEE INDIAN WOMEN HAVE LAND RIGHTS

CHENNAI: India must pass a law granting women equal rights to land as men if the country is to ensure more food is grown for its more than 1 billion people and greater respect for the environment, a leading scientist said. MS Swaminathan is known as the father of India's 'Green Revolution' for developing high-yielding varieties of wheat in the 1960s that helped make the country self-sufficient in food.

As a member of the upper house of parliament he drafted a bill in 2011 to protect the rights of women farmers. Although the bill lapsed when his term ended in 2013, Swaminathan, 91, has not given up hope that a similar law will be passed.

"We need to increase awareness of the need for equal rights for women farmers, but we also need a law that guarantees it," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview. India's constitution gives women equal rights but rarely do they exercise those rights when it comes to land ownership - "a complex social issue that is tied to how we treat the girl child versus the boy child," Swaminathan said.

"The father may say: 'I am giving my daughter dowry for her marriage, so I don't have to give her land.' They are afraid they will lose control of the land if they give it to the daughter," he said in an interview at his office in the southern Indian city of Chennai. Women make up more than a third of India's agriculture workforce, yet only about 13 percent of farmland is owned by women, according to official

data. Land is usually transferred through inheritance in India, and it is almost always men who inherit land. While a Hindu woman is entitled to a share of land owned by her father, she is generally under pressure to give up this right when she gets married. Some states issue joint titles when they allocate land to the landless poor. But rarely are women added to old titles.

Destitution

As more men from villages migrate to urban areas in search of jobs, their wives and daughters tend to the land. But land titles are almost always in the man's name, and women farmers are denied loans, insurance and other government benefits because their names are not on the titles. "Men may do the ploughing, but the rest of it - including harvesting, threshing, storage - is done by women," said Swaminathan, who was named by Time magazine in 1999 as one of the 20 most influential Asians of the 20th century.

Women farmers tend to grow more food crops rather than cash crops, and are more sensitive to the environment and to their children's long-term needs, Swaminathan said. "But we are slow to acknowledge the important role of women, and slow to give them rights," he said. India ranked 130 of 155 countries on the UNDP's gender inequality index, worse than countries including Cambodia and Zimbabwe, on parameters such as infant mortality and education. — Reuters



AHMADABAD: Indians through a vegetable market at dusk. — AP

INDIA ROLLS BACK LATEST CURBS ON DEPOSITS OF BANNED NOTES

NEW DELHI: India's central bank yesterday rolled back an order restricting deposits of banned rupee bills into bank accounts, after the move sparked a huge public backlash. Prime Minister Narendra Modi unleashed chaos last month with his shock move to withdraw high-denomination 500 (\$7.50) and 1,000 rupee notes from circulation, in an effort to tackle widespread corruption and tax evasion.

On Monday, just days before the December 30 deadline to swap old rupee bills for new ones, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said that deposits of over 5,000 rupees in old banknotes would only be allowed once before the cut-off date. People would also be required to explain why they had not deposited the money earlier. The RBI reversed its decision yesterday for all "verified" bank accounts, without giving a reason.

"On a review of above, we advise that provisions of the above circular... not apply," it said, citing the Monday order. The restrictions had caused anger and confusion across the country, with local media reporting that some banks had declined deposits higher than 5,000 rupees. Opposition parties had also attacked the move, with many Indians already facing a shortage of cash as ATMs run dry and long queues materialise outside banks across the country as people try to get rid of their old notes-some 86 percent of all bills in circulation.

Modi has repeatedly defended the scheme, saying it will bring billions in so-called "black", or undeclared, money back into the formal system. Political activist and Modi critic Yogendra Yadav lashed out at the government on Twitter. "I was assured by the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister and the RBI that there was no need to rush to the banks and that I had till 30 December for making any deposit. I believed them," Yadav tweeted.

Modi losing friends

Meanwhile, a leading political ally of Narendra Modi has abruptly distanced himself from the Indian prime minister's move to scrap high-value banknotes, as broad initial support for the radical monetary reform showed signs of crumbling. The shift by N Chandrababu Naidu, chief minister of

the southern state Andhra Pradesh, came six weeks after Modi announced to a stunned nation that he would scrap 86 percent of the cash in circulation.

While Modi remains by far India's most popular politician, any crack in his authority could have negative implications in state elections next year that will set the tone for his expected bid for a second term in 2019. Naidu's regional party is allied to Modi's nationalists and he heads a federal committee set up to find ways to soften the impact on ordinary people of the crackdown against tax evaders, racketeers and bribe takers who rely on so-called "black cash". "I am breaking my head daily but we are unable to find a solution to this problem," Naidu told party workers on Tuesday in the city of Vijayawada.

Modi, announcing the reform on Nov. 8, cautioned that people would face temporary hardship. He promised to restore normalcy by the end of the year, when a deadline to deposit old 500 and 1,000 rupee banknotes expires. His announcement enjoyed popular support at first, with many people prepared to endure hardship as long as others are forced to give up their ill-gotten wealth or pay tax.

But continuing shortages of new 500 and 2,000 rupee notes have caused tempers to rise as millions queue at banks and ATMs to draw money. With new 500 rupee notes, worth \$7.50, in very short supply it is hard for people to buy necessities because of a shortage of change. "Modi is now a one-man army, every political ally will blame him if the cash crisis does not come to an end in the next 10 days," said P. Raja Rao, a political science professor in Hyderabad.

Furious over the lack of cash, mobs attacked six bank branches in Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday, forcing police to rescue bank staff. The northern state, home to one in six Indians, is due to hold an election in early 2017 that is increasingly being viewed as a referendum on Modi's demonetization drive. In the last 20 days, Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has won several local elections in western and northern states. Party officials said the wins were a clear endorsement of the new cash policy. "Each and every Indian understands the genuine intention behind the bold move. They trust the prime minister and we hope our political allies put an end to their doubts," said BJP spokesman Siddharth Nath Singh. — Agencies



AIZAWL: An Indian Mizo store keeper hangs Santa hats outside her shop in Aizawl, capital of northeastern Mizoram state, yesterday. Apart from household activities, Mizo women control most of the business in Mizoram state. — AFP

NIGERIA'S ARIK RESUMES FLIGHTS AFTER DEAL SIGNED WITH UNIONS

LAGOS: Nigeria's Arik airline has resumed flights following a deal to end a one-day strike that paralyzed its operation, the company said yesterday. Aviation unions called the strike on Tuesday to protest non-payment of seven months of salaries to Arik workers, non-remittance of taxes and the sacking of five union leaders. Thousands of local and foreign passengers were stranded due to the stoppage. Arik said in a statement on Wednesday that the dispute had been resolved "following the meeting called by the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) to address the airline and the aviation unions."

The airline said it had provided bigger planes to cope with the backlog of passengers whose flights were affected by the strike. Union leader Tokuboh Korodo told AFP the strike had been suspended. "We met the management of Arik last night and they agreed to pay the arrears of salaries by December 31," Korodo said. He said the airline also agreed to recall the five union leaders that were sacked. "If Arik refuses to honor the deal by December 31, we will resume the strike," he warned. Arik, Nigeria's leading carrier, is responsible for 60 percent of flights with an international network that includes Johannesburg and New York. — AFP

NIKE EARNINGS RISE, BULLISH ON CHINA

NEW YORK: Nike reported higher second-quarter earnings Tuesday behind increased sales in key markets, including China, and said it was making progress in cutting inventory in North America. Executives gave an upbeat outlook on China, where sales jumped 12 percent to \$1.1 billion. Net income for the quarter ending November 30 rose seven percent to \$842 million. Sales rose six percent to \$8.2 billion. Participation in the Shanghai marathon was 38,000 and nearly four times that many tried to sign up, said Nike brand president Trevor Edwards.

"It's still early days in unlocking the growth," Edwards said. Executives also touted running shoe launches, a new flagship store in New York and a Michael Jordan-oriented

shop in Paris. Analysts have expressed worry about Nike's profit outlook in North America due to excessive supply of athletics goods apparent in deep discounts in US stores this holiday season.

Gross profit margins contracted company-wide in the second quarter. Nike chief financial officer Andy Campion said the sports giant is in the process of addressing excess supplies and that the key North America region should return to profit-margin growth in the next six months. "You will see evidence of the progress that we've made returning North America to pull market" or a market of strong demand, Campion said. Shares of Nike rose 1.6 percent to \$52.60 in after-hours trade. — AFP

QNB LAUNCHES MOBILE BANKING APPLICATION FOR RETAIL CUSTOMERS

KUWAIT: QNB Kuwait, the local branch of QNB Group, the leading financial institution in the Middle East and Africa, has announced the launch of a mobile banking application with distinctive features that offer more accessibility and convenience for its customers. The QNB Mobile Banking application is available on both

smartphones and tablets. It is downloadable from the application stores of both iOS and Android by searching for "QNB Mobile" or "QNB Mobile for Tablets".

The application offers numerous features such as QNB Global Account view, the ability to pay card balances, view loan details, make transfers within

QNB accounts and to other accounts, request cheque books, quickly apply for products, locate ATMs and branches, as well as check interest rates, among other features. Furthermore, the most notable feature of the QNB Mobile Banking application is "QNB Chat", which customers can use to chat

with a Bank representative and get support around the clock.

In addition to Mobile Banking, QNB Kuwait offers free of charge access to its award-winning Internet Banking, which facilitates access to a wide range of exclusive banking services online, thus giving customers a comprehensive

online banking experience, so that they can stay in control of their finances, wherever they are. It is noteworthy that QNB Kuwait offers a number of products and services that are tailored to suit its customers' needs, such as current, salary, savings, deposit accounts, credit cards, and consumer/installment loans.



THE SKODA SUPERB: NEW FLAGSHIP CLAIM IN THE AUTOMOTIVE MID-CLASS SEGMENT

KUWAIT: The name alone is a commitment - a SKODA Superb has to be something special. In accordance with this task, the SKODA designers and developers have taken the new SKODA Superb to a new level in terms of creativity and technology. The SKODA Superb is driving the brand forward with its new, modern and emotionally-rich design, its above-average spaciousness has once again been improved and it benefits technically from the Group's innovative MQB technology.

Generous dimensions, innovative assistance systems for safety, environment and comfort, engines and 'Simply Clever' details, typical of SKODA, move the brand's flagship to the upper end of the automotive mid-class segment. In short, the new Superb is the best SKODA of all time and is the highlight of SKODA's largest-ever model campaign.

The 'Superb' name has to be earned by a SKODA. Never before have such enormous demands been placed on the design of a SKODA, never before has so much new technology

been incorporated into the design of a new model. Never before have there been so many 'Simply Clever' concepts and never before have the SKODA engineers managed to deliver so much space for driver, passengers and their luggage.

A whole 'phalanx' of new assistance systems from higher vehicle classes is available for more safety, the environment and comfort. The third-generation Superb is more powerful than ever and yet it is up to 30 per cent more economical.

Connectivity attains a new quality: the new SKODA Superb has a new-generation infotainment system which automatically connects to a smartphone via SmartLink.

SmartLink includes MirrorLinkTM, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, which provide easy access to many apps from your personal smartphone on the car's display. In addition, the SmartGate function enables accessing vehicle data via your smartphone and using it intelligently with your own apps. The high-speed



internet connection also turns the Superb into the first SKODA hotspot on wheels. It is clear that the new SKODA Superb with its new and modern SKODA design will be rolling towards the customers. "SKODA is a leading global

automobile brand in the mid-class segment that has successfully presented the fine engineering design, the space and the price" said Tarek Al Shafie, General Manager of Fouad Alghanim & Sons Automotive Company, the

sole dealer of SKODA in Kuwait. "The third-generation model of this SKODA Superb is not only introducing new spacious design but also incorporates cutting-edge features that today's family needs. We are delightedly to bring this new car to our customers in Kuwait".

The SKODA Superb has been at the top of SKODA's model range since 2001. To date, the car manufacturer has delivered more than 700,000 first- and second-generation SKODA Superbs, making the model one of the most popular vehicles in the automotive mid-class segment.

Customers have always valued the vehicle's overall package: extremely generous space, a timelessly elegant design, modern, tried-and-tested technology, top comfort, maximum safety, optimum functionality and very good value for money.

The new SKODA Superb is now available in the showroom at Fouad Alghanim and Sons Automotive Company, the exclusive dealer of Skoda in Kuwait.

TRAVEL LIGHT WITH AMERICAN TOURISTER FUN SHINE

KUWAIT: If you want to add more fun to travelling, check out Funshine's 3 piece luggage. Each soft suitcase brings its own benefits to the mix: the cabin case fits airline hand luggage dimensions, the medium case is great for a 1 week break and the large case is perfect for a 2 week holiday. These matching suitcases also make the perfect set if you're travelling as a couple or want to pack loads of stuff.



Lightness

We use advanced technology to create lightweight suitcases with a tough core, American Tourister's wide range of suitcases and travel bags are easy to handle and maneuver.

Freedom

If you would rather invest in your adventures than in your luggage, American Tourister is the luggage brand for you. With no sacrifice on quality, American Tourister offers no-nonsense, great value for money lightweight cabin luggage for an exciting weekend break, to large suitcases and duffle bags with huge volumes for thrilling long-haul journeys.

Trust

As we have been around for more than 80 years we know a thing or two about travel and pride ourselves on being travel bag gurus. We offer some of the best suitcase and luggage options for the active and enthusiastic globetrotter, determined to explore the world in their own style. American Tourister has long

been at the head of the check-in queue, producing dependable and affordable luggage since 1933. Respected and known across the globe, we consistently provide the most reliable luggage, designed with the eager, impulsive and cost conscious traveler in mind.

Colors

Colorful hand luggage and suitcases in fresh, youthful designs ensure you take on the world in style! We are not afraid of vibrant colors and patterns to let you stand out from the crowd at the baggage carousel.

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Whether you need a secure and robust hard suitcase for a long-haul journey, or a flexible soft suitcase which is easy to squeeze into tight corners, American Tourister has just what you need.

ITHMAAR BANK WINS PRESTIGIOUS WIBC AWARD

MANAMA: Ithmaar Bank, a Bahrain-based Islamic retail bank, was singled out among the world's Islamic banks for a prestigious international award in recognition of its Corporate Social Responsibility and Financial Disclosure.

The independent award was presented at the World Islamic Banking Conference (WIBC) which was recently held in Bahrain in strategic partnership with the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB). The high-profile event, which was attended by leading international banking experts, is widely recognized as one of the most important events on the world Islamic banking calendar.

The award was received by Ithmaar Bank Head of Human Resources, Enas Rahimi, from Sahar Kazranian, CEO of Middle East Global Advisors, WIBC's conveners throughout its 23-year history, in the presence of Ithmaar Bank Chief Operating Officer, Ravindra Khot and General Manager Banking Group Abdulhakeem Al Mutawa.

"The Performance Awards are the WIBC's flagship awards, and are granted to the top financial institutions based on their aggregate performance scores against multiple measures on a global, regional and country level," said Sahar Kazranian. "This year, Ithmaar Bank topped the WIBC Leaderboard in terms of Corporate Social Responsibility and Financial Disclosure when compared to Islamic banks across the world. Its ultimate win is a testament to its commitment to transparency and impact, and I hope their leadership will inspire other banks to follow suit," she said.

"As a pioneering Islamic retail bank, Ithmaar recognizes the important role we must play both in the community in which we operate, as well as in promoting high levels of transparency in



the local banking and finance industry," said Ithmaar Bank Chief Executive Officer, Ahmed Abdul Rahim.

"This is a responsibility we have always taken very seriously, and I am pleased to note that our

efforts, with the blessings of Allah, under the guidance of the Board of Directors and with the continuous support of the Central Bank of Bahrain, are paying off and earning the Bank international praise and recognition," he said.

ZAIN LAUNCHES NEW CAMPING OFFER FOR PREPAID CUSTOMERS

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, launched an all new promotion for prepaid customers in the occasion of the camping season. The new promotion includes two unique packages that suit customers' different needs on the company's most advanced network. Zain designed the new promotion exclusively to serve the needs of prepaid customers who enjoy camping, as it is considered one of the most popular outdoors activities in the Kuwaiti community. The promotion includes two different prepaid Internet packages on Zain's nationwide network.

The new promotion offers the KD 24 package, which includes 1 TB of LTE-A Internet for two months with a free hotspot device and a the ability to renew at KD 7.5 only. Additionally, the KD 27 package includes 1.5 TB of LTE-A Internet for three months and a free hotspot device with the ability to renew at KD 9.5 only. The new promotion was specifically designed to complement the needs and aspirations of the largest family of subscribers in Kuwait. By



launching the new Camping Offer, Zain aims at creating a new concept for the services it offers, as well as offering convenience with flexible plans that meet the different personal and professional needs of customers.

Through this launch, Zain continues to reinforce its leadership position and its pledge in offering the best services and offers to meet customers' practical and personal telecommunications needs.

ARGAN AL BIDA'A LAUNCHES WINTER VILLAGE

KUWAIT: ARGAN Al Bida'a yesterday launched its Winter Village, bringing the spirit of the winter season to life at the popular dining and leisure destination. Planned to run between December 20, 2016, and January 14, 2017, visitors will find the outdoor area transformed, with snow settling across the landscape, icecaps hanging from the roof tops, and various winter themed elements such as penguins and igloos to entertain and delight visitors of ARGAN Al Bida'a.

In a first for Kuwait, children aged three to 12 can enjoy a special snow playground, featuring a safe material to play in, just as if they were living in a winter wonderland. Visitors can find the playground near the Rimal Hotel and Resort at ARGAN Al Bida'a, next to Elevation Burger and Crave Nation. Furthermore, ARGAN Al Bida'a will be offering a special scratch and win promotion to customers. For every KDS spent at participating Winter Village partners, visitors can receive a scratch and win coupon from a special booth next to the snow playground, with hundreds of prizes and exclusive discounts to be used at participating partners at ARGAN Al Bida'a.

Social media competitions have also been included as part of the Winter Village activities, with an iPhone 7 to be won every week throughout the duration of the Winter Village activity, and an iPad



Pro for one lucky winner. To find out more about how to win one of these prizes, follow @arganalbidaa on Instagram.

The ARGAN Al Bida'a outdoor leisure and dining strip comprises restaurants, hotels, activity centers and retail shops that offer visitors a unique atmosphere to dine, shop and live life as they love it. The first concept of its kind in Kuwait, ARGAN Al Bida'a has been entertaining visitors and impacting the surrounding communities since its launch in 2007, and continues to be one of the top leisure destinations in the country. Its unique tenant list includes many of the country's favorite restaurant and cafe brands, the leading Movenpick Hotel and Resort Al Bida'a, and the country's premier social club, the C Club.

DOES A DOCTOR'S GENDER AFFECT YOUR CHANCE OF SURVIVAL?

CHICAGO: What if your doctor's gender could influence your chance of surviving a visit to the hospital?

A big study of older patients hospitalized for common illnesses raises that provocative possibility - and also lots of

questions. Patients who got most of their care from women doctors were more likely to leave the hospital alive than those treated by men.

The differences were small - about 11 percent of patients treated mostly by women died within 30 days of entering the hospital, versus 11.5 percent of those treated by men. But the all-male research team estimated that there would be about 32,000 fewer deaths each year in the US if male physicians performed at the same level as their female peers.

The study didn't probe why there might be these differences in survival. And Dr. Ashish Jha, the lead author, said the study doesn't mean patients should avoid him and all other male physicians. But he said male doctors could take a cue from women doctors' tendencies that might contribute to better care. According to other research, women doctors are more likely than men to follow treatment guidelines, provide preventive care more often and communicate more with patients. Jha said that it was important to better understand the reasons behind the

differences, and to share that information with all physicians to improve care. Jha, an internist and Harvard Medical School professor, said he has not spoken to his own patients about the study - yet. "As a male physician, I have a stake in this," Jha said.

Study data

The study was published Monday in JAMA Internal Medicine. The researchers looked at data involving more than 1.5 million hospitalizations for Medicare patients aged 65 and older between January 2011 and December 2014. Patients' illnesses included pneumonia, heart failure, intestinal bleeding, urinary infections and lung disease. All were treated by general internists in the hospital. The researchers compared results in patients who got most or all of their care from women internists with those who got most or all of their care from men. Most patients survived and were sent home within a month of treatment. But in addition to better survival chances, those treated by women doctors were

slightly less likely to be re-admitted to the hospital within that first month. On average, women doctors were in charge of fewer patients and some of their patients weren't as sick as those of male doctors, but the researchers considered those factors and still found a link between doctors' gender and patients' survival differences.

Dr. Lisa Schwartz of the Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy & Clinical Practice said the study doesn't prove whether doctors' sex accounted for the results. "To make a stronger case, you'd need information on doctors' practices in the study," she said. For example, did women physicians give patients with pneumonia antibiotics sooner than men physicians - treatment that could potentially improve survival chances, she said. For example, did women doctors give patients with pneumonia antibiotics sooner - treatment that could potentially improve survival chances, she said. Dartmouth policy analyst Dr. H. Gilbert Welch called the results "intriguing" but preliminary and "not something for patients to act on." —AP



ALABAMA: This Thursday, July 30, 2015, file photo shows an exam room in a hospital. —AP

AT SOARING RATE, NEPALIS SEEKING JOBS ABROAD COME HOME DEAD WHILE STILL PROMOTING FOREIGN LABOR

KATHMANDU, Nepal: A tiny young woman crouches just outside the airport, crying softly into her thin shawl. It's cold out, but her sleeping toddler is heavy and warm in her arms.

Travelers swarm around: Himalayan trekkers load up expedition backpacks. A Chinese tour group boards a bus. A dozen flight attendants in crisp blue suits and heels click by. Saro Kumari Mandal, 26, covers her head completely, a bundle of grief. Hundreds of young Nepali men excitedly wave final goodbyes to friends and family. On this day 1,500 will fly out of the Kathmandu airport bound for jobs mostly in Malaysia, Qatar or Saudi Arabia - jobs that are urgently needed by the people of this desperately poor country. But on this day, too, six young men will come back in wooden caskets, rolled like suitcases out of baggage claim on luggage carts.

On the wooden lid of one someone has written in black marker: "Human Remains, Balkisun Mandal Khatwe, Male - 26 years - Nepali." Saro's husband

struction boom employs about 1.5 million migrants. The Nepali workers "are comparatively cost effective," says the embassy, and they're experienced at "working in the extreme climatic conditions." The unskilled workers fill a host of global demands: building highways, stadiums and houses in Gulf states and guarding shopping malls, sewing sweatshirts and assembling televisions in Malaysia. Anyone who has bought imported sportswear or electronics, or who plans to go to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, may be using the products of their labor.

Lucky

Nepali law bans recruiters and employers from charging fees. Qatar, where Balkisun was working, prohibits the fees too. But in reality everyone has to pay for these jobs. The men borrow at 36 percent interest rates from money lenders or sell off family land to get the \$1,100 stake needed for recruiters, air-line tickets and more. Conditions vary by

spokeswoman Rama Bhattarai shrugs off the death toll. "I'm not trying to be insensitive but we have sent millions of workers to more than 100 countries, and so yes, sometimes people will die. They die as foreign employees, they die here when a bus goes off a cliff," she says.

Others are more incensed

Krishna Dawadee, acting director of Kathmandu's one-stop work permit center, waves an arm at the hundreds of young men gathered at the service window seeking final work approvals. Outside the gates, life insurance salesmen grab at the prospective workers' arms and sweaters, trying to pull them into their offices to sell policies.

"These are our youth, draining out from our country," Dawadee says. "I am very much worried about these people. Six weeks after Balkisun Mandal Khatwe made the long journey from his village to the employment office, his wife travels back across the country

People are chronically hungry, living on less than \$1 a day.

The Mandals and their neighbors are marginalized in every way: Ethnically, they're from the "untouchable" caste, and they speak Maithili, a language more common in India, just a few miles south.

Family members wrestle Balkisun's coffin off the truck. Mohammed Tohit, 28, watches from across the street, then looks at his hands, the cloudless sky, a distant mango tree. He wipes a wet cheek. "I knew this guy, and the thing is when you see people coming back in a coffin like this, it's hard," he says. He adds quietly: "I'm leaving for Saudi in 10 days."

Tohit is the envy and inspiration of the village. He worked in Malaysia for almost six years sewing clothes for Nike, Lacoste and Columbia Sportswear, saving more than \$20,000. That was enough to build a sturdy, cement two-bedroom house with plaster walls and a brick foundation. He bought a piece of farmland and a television set. There's a cow staked outside his wove fence, among the goats and chickens. His round-cheeked, 6-month-old daughter, Saieha, is shy in the arms of his wife, Jarina Khatun. "I am scared, sure, but I have no way to earn anything here," he says. "I have no choice but to leave again."

Balkisun's brother Ramasis, 35, went for work in Dubai but returned three months later with a debilitating mental illness. Bidhya Nanda, 25, the youngest, is still in the Gulf, working as a janitor in Saudi Arabia. Another brother, 30-year-old Ramkisan, flew back from Malaysia, where he was working in factories making Sony and Panasonic products, when he learned of Balkisun's death.

Their father, Kalaru, hates to see his sons go, but has no option: "We are poor and we don't have any way at all to earn money in our village."

The news of his son's death came in a morning phone call two weeks earlier. It seemed impossible. Here's what people say about Balkisun: He was a good lad. He didn't smoke. He got along with everyone. He was very helpful. He was honest.

Balkisun was working for Habtoor Leighton Group in Qatar, loading trucks to build new highways. The highway was being built as part of broader infrastructure improvements for the 2022 World Cup, said his supervisor Ganesh Khang Mandal, 48. Dubai-based HLG did not respond to requests for an interview. Australia-based CIMIC, a 45 percent owner of HLG, said in a statement that it did not want to comment.

Saro had chatted with Balkisun through Facebook Messenger just the evening before his death.

Although he confided to friends he was having a difficult time with his job, money and housing, he told Saro that everything was going well. He took a selfie in his yellow work hardhat, eyes grinning through protective sunglasses, his face covered in a blue scarf to fend off the harsh climate. He told her about a big festival that day. "OK, I'll call you tomorrow morning" - the last words her husband said to her.

This is what happened, according to his supervisor: "After work he went to dinner at 7 and bed at 10. In the morning we tried to wake him up but he didn't respond. We took the body to the hospital where they did an autopsy and said it was cardiac arrest." He'd been in Qatar less than a month.

Authorities in Nepal say their citizens seem to die abroad more frequently than their equally vulnerable Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi and Indonesian co-workers, but the explanation for the increased mortality has been unclear. "It's usually sleeping disease," said Kumud Khanal, vice president of the Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies, which represents more than 400 registered agents. "We get the report that he was talking with friends in the evening, had dinner and went to bed, and in the morning he was found dead." The deaths are reported as a hypertension problem, he said, like heart attack or cardiac arrest. —AP



SAPTARI DISTRICT, Nepal: In this Wednesday, Nov 23, 2016 photo, a woman breaks down after seeing the body of her son Balkisun Mandal Khatwe, a migrant worker who died in his sleep in Qatar, at Belhi village. —AP

- another victim of a hidden and escalating tragedy.

Promoting foreign labor

The number of Nepali workers going abroad has more than doubled since the country began promoting foreign labor in recent years: from about 220,000 in 2008; last year one out of every 500 died, according to an Associated Press analysis of data released by Nepal's Ministry of Labor and Employment.

In total, over 5,000 workers from this small country have died working abroad since 2008 - more than the number of US troops killed in the Iraq War. The causes, in many cases, have been mysterious. Natural death, heart attack or cardiac arrest are listed for nearly half the deaths. Most families are notified that their loved ones simply went to bed and never woke up. That's exactly what Saro was told.

But now medical researchers say these deaths fit a familiar pattern: Every decade or so, dozens, or even hundreds, of seemingly healthy Asian men working abroad in poor conditions start dying in their sleep. It happened in the US in the late 1970s, in Singapore about a decade later and more recently in China. The suspected killer even has a name: Sudden Unexplained Nocturnal Death Syndrome. Next year, an international consortium is launching to investigate and hopefully offer solutions. For today's arrivals, they're too late. Nepal exports iron and steel, carpets, some vegetables - but mainly, Nepal exports men. It even advertises them.

"Nepalese workers are well known for their hard work, dedication and loyalty," boasts the Nepalese Embassy website in Doha, Qatar, where a pre-World Cup con-

country and employer, but it's not uncommon for workers to find themselves living a dozen or more to a room, sleeping stacked on three-tiered bunks, working 10- to 15-hour days, seven days a week, for years. If they're lucky - and some are - they can send home wads of cash, about \$300 a month. Often, however, they are tricked or cheated out of their earnings.

About 10 percent of Nepal's 28 million residents are working abroad. They send back more than \$6 billion a year, amounting to about 30 percent of the country's annual revenues. Only Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are more dependent on foreign earnings.

Some come back maimed or disabled, like Salit Mandal, who rolled off a third-level bunk in Malaysia and smashed in his skull. He's in debt, partially paralyzed, and lives with his parents. "I have no idea what I'm going to do, how I'm going to raise them, because I can't move," he says, gazing at his three children. "If my hands and legs could move I would do something, but I can't do anything at all."

His family had pinned their hopes on him after he returned from an earlier stint in Qatar with enough money to build a five-bedroom house. Now his mom takes a visitor aside and says the situation is horrible - Salit can't squat by himself over the pit toilet, she says, and she has to clean him up afterward.

His little brother Jamun Mandal, 24, is next in line. He's abandoned his aspirations of going to college and has paid the recruiting broker. He holds up a passport. "I know it sounds weird to be planning to go, because people die, disappear, they come back in comas," he says, "But what to do?"

Sitting behind her tidy desk at the Department of Foreign Employment,

to retrieve his body.

His casket arrives on a 7 p.m. flight. It takes more than three hours to get paperwork sorted out between his barely literate family and the airport bureaucrats who needed a death certificate, identifications, work permits and more.

Finding transport is less complicated: The casket slides easily into a custom-welded coffin rack. The government of Nepal arranged to have 10 trucks so equipped after labor exports - and deaths abroad - began to rise.

The badly rutted and cracked road from the Kathmandu airport to Belhi village is closed after dark because too many buses have plunged off the narrow, steep, sharp curves. But under starry skies, the truck was waved past checkpoints by police who spotted the rooftop coffin while warming their hands over small fires. After death, Hindu funerals must take place as soon as possible, hopefully by the next dawn.

Saro and her son, just 3 years old, jolt around the backseat for a precarious eight-hour journey. They jounce in their seats as the truck bottoms out in potholes, jerk side to side as it races around corners.

When the truck reaches Belhi, hundreds of women in traditional saris, men in their work clothes and children pour into the narrow dirt street, tears streaming down their faces. Everyone pushes and shoves to get close to the coffin. Some stand on rooftops. Others crowd a balcony.

Nepal is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, and Belhi is one of its poorest places. The Mandals live eight people to a room in one of about 700 mud-and-stick homes set among dry, sparse rice paddies. A shared cell-phone is passed from house to house.



ALBION, ILLINOIS: This Sept 15, 2015 file photo shows marijuana plants with their buds covered in white crystals at a medical marijuana cultivation center. —AP

US WOMEN INCREASINGLY USE POT DURING PREGNANCY, STUDY FINDS

CHICAGO: US women are increasingly using marijuana during pregnancy, sometimes to treat morning sickness, new reports suggest. Though the actual numbers are small, the trend raises concerns because of evidence linking the drug with low birth weights and other problems.

In 2014, almost 4 percent of pregnant women said they'd recently used marijuana, up from 2.4 percent in 2002, according to an analysis of annual drug use surveys.

Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, said the results raise concerns and urged doctors and other health care providers to avoid recommending the drug for pregnant women. Volkow commented in an editorial published online Monday with the study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

A separate study in the same journal found that almost 10 percent of adult marijuana users in the United States - 3 million people - have used it at least partly for medical reasons; 20 percent of these users live in states where medical marijuana isn't legal.

Volkow noted that laws legalizing medical marijuana in 29 states and Washington, D.C. do not list pregnancy-related conditions among allowed uses. But the laws also don't prohibit that use and don't include warnings about possible harms to the fetus, she said.

Strong evidence of harms is limited, but besides low birth weights, newborns whose mothers used marijuana while pregnant may face increased risks for anemia and other problems requiring intensive care. Memory and attention problems also been found in older

children whose moms used marijuana in pregnancy, Volkow noted.

How marijuana might lead to those problems is unclear but Volkow said one theory is that it might interfere with formation of nerve cells and circuits in the brain during fetal development.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists discourages marijuana use by women who are pregnant or breastfeeding. Both studies analyzed data from annual US government surveys on drug use that are based on participants' self-reporting.

One focused on 200,510 women of reproductive age who participated in the 2002-2014 surveys. Recent use - within the past month - among non-pregnant women also increased over those years, from about 6 percent to 9 percent, researchers from Columbia University Medical Center reported.

Doctors "should screen and counsel pregnant women and women contemplating pregnancy about prenatal marijuana use," the researchers said. The other study, led by the drug agency's Dr. Wilson Compton, focused on past-year marijuana use by nearly 100,000 adults aged 18 and up who participated in the 2013-14 drug survey.

About 13 percent said they had used marijuana; that translates to about 30 million adults. Overall, 90 percent used it for nonmedical reasons only and 6 percent used it only for medical reasons. Prevalence of medical use was higher in states where that use is legal, but the researchers say the results suggest some doctors in other states may not feel bound by restrictions. —AP

SALES EXECUTIVE PLEADS GUILTY IN FATAL MENINGITIS OUTBREAK

BOSTON: Two men facing multiple murder charges stemming from a national meningitis outbreak that killed 64 people will be tried separately, a federal judge has ruled.

US District Court Judge Richard Stearns said in his decision last week that he severed the trials of Barry Cadden and Glenn Chin reluctantly because their lawyers plan "antagonistic" defenses and because of an "imbalance of evidence." Cadden was the co-founder and head pharmacist of the New England Compounding Center in Framingham. Chin was supervisory pharmacist at the now-closed business.

A company sales executive, Robert Ronzio, pleaded guilty on Monday to conspiring to defraud the US Food and Drug Administration and is expected to testify at the trials of the other defendants, prosecutors said.

The compounding center used expired ingredients and failed to follow

cleanliness standards, resulting in tainted steroid injections, prosecutors said. More than 750 people in 20 states fell ill in 2012, and 64 died.

Cadden and Chin are each charged with 25 counts of murder and other offenses under federal racketeering laws. Lawyers for both men have said federal prosecutors overreached in charging them with murder. Both have pleaded not guilty and are free on bail.

Cadden's lawyers filed the motion for separate trials this month. The motion remains under seal. Cadden's trial is scheduled to start Jan 4. Chin's trial will begin immediately afterward.

Ronzio, of North Providence, Rhode Island, was the company's national sales director. He admitted the company created numerous work-arounds to make it appear to regulators it was dispensing drugs for patient-specific prescriptions when it was actually making them in bulk. —AP

DOCTOR: COMMON BACTERIA CAUSED THANKSGIVING DINNER DEATHS

ANTIOCH, California: A common food-borne bacteria caused an illness that left three people dead and sickened 22 others who attended a dinner at an events hall in the San Francisco suburb of Antioch on Thanksgiving Day, health officials said Tuesday.

Dr. Louise McNitt, deputy health officer with Contra Costa County Health Services, said the deaths and illnesses were caused by bacteria named *Clostridium perfringens*. "Clostridium perfringens is one of the most common foodborne illnesses in the US. It can be found in the human intestine without hurting us, but eating food containing large amounts of this bacteria can cause illness and

in some cases death," McNitt said. The bacteria can be found in the soil, in people and in animals, she said.

Officials identified the three people who died as Christopher Cappetti, 43, Chooi Keng Cheah, 59, and Jane Evans, 69. All were residents of assisted living facilities in Antioch.

The bacteria was likely found in one of the food items that wasn't cooked to the right temperature or held at the right temperature when eaten, McNitt said. It was not determined which dish contained it.

However, officials said that after extensive interviews, it was determined that those who were sickened and died ate turkey and mashed

potatoes. They also ate around the same time of day. Some dishes served at the event, including cooked turkey, were brought to the site after they were prepared in private homes.

McNitt said most strains of the bacteria are harmless and that there is no way to measure what would have been a lethal level in the victims. "This bacteria usually causes fairly mild symptoms, such as stomach cramping and diarrhea that lasts for 6 to 12 hours," said McNitt, adding that it can more adversely impact those with compromised immune systems. "It can vary from person to person as to how they react to illness."

Officials said proper food handling is essen-

tial to prevent foodborne illness, including cooking foods to proper temperatures; cooling and storing them appropriately if they're not going to be eaten right away; separating raw meats from foods that won't be cooked; storing food properly; and washing hands and cooking surfaces often.

"We're saddened for the families that suffered losses this holiday season. We encourage anyone planning charity events where food will be served to the public to contact us to understand the permitting process and to learn about food safety," said Dr. Marilyn Underwood, environmental health director for the county. —AP



CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas: In this Friday, Nov 11, 2011 file photo, a mother holds her newborn baby at a hospital. —AP

HUGE SOLAR PLANT BEAMS POWER, HOPE TO RURAL UGANDA

DANGEROUS WAIT FOR POWER

SOROTI: When power goes out in the rural town of Soroti in eastern Uganda, store manager Hussein Samsudin can only hope it won't go on so long it spoils his fresh goods. Another shop owner, Richard Otekat, 37, has to pay a neighbor hourly to use his generator during blackouts as he can't afford to buy one himself, while others simply go without.

However residents of the town, surrounded by thatched huts, rivers and grasslands, hope a new solar plant, which went into operation last week, will bring an end to their electricity woes. The \$19 million (18-million euro), 33-acre solar plant—the first of its kind in East Africa—can produce 10 megawatts of power that is fed into Uganda's national power grid.

The project is crucial as Uganda seeks new ways to bring electricity to the 80 percent of its 40 million-strong population that does not have access to power. "We are an agricultural economy, the majority live in rural areas," said Ziria Tibalwa Waako, acting head of the national electricity regulator, Uganda Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERA). She said the main source of energy available to most Ugandans is firewood, while others use charcoal and gas, as electricity is just too expensive at around 15 US cents a unit.

It is hoped the introduction of power from the solar plant into the national electricity grid—fed by hydro power and independently run diesel generators—will bring the price down. "Power is costly. It eats into our profit margin," Otekat told AFP. "Unfortunately when power is not there for like six hours that is an automatic loss we are expecting," said fellow shop manager Samsudin, tired of melting ice-cream and meat going off.

"The plant will provide clean, low-carbon, sustainable electricity to 40,000 homes, schools and businesses in the area," said Christophe Florence, vice president of Eren Renewable Energy, one of two private companies operating the plant, funded by EU partners. He said that Soroti, some 300 kilometers (186 miles) from Kampala, was "where the sun is brighter than anywhere in Uganda."

Dangerous wait for power

Uganda has one of the lowest electrification rates in Africa, according to Climatescope, the clean energy country competitiveness index. While the solar plant could ensure businessmen like Samsudin and Otekat have a more steady power supply, those who aren't yet connected to the national grid or cannot afford electricity at

gy investment had doubled from 2014 to 2015 to reach \$5.2 billion in the 58 emerging markets it surveys.

And Bloomberg New Energy Finance released data last week showing that solar had surpassed wind in becoming the cheapest form of new electricity. Aside from Uganda, Senegal, Mauritania, Rwanda and Kenya are among the sub-Saharan African nations invest-

While Uganda is hoping to triple its generation capacity in the next three years, switching on two other solar plants, Waako says it is smaller, mini-grids that are more affordable to power up the most far-flung villages.

"We recognize that the extension of the grid to the rural poor is not financially viable because of the sparse nature of our popula-



SOROTI: Solar Panels are pictured during the inauguration of the Soroti Power plant in Soroti District about 300 kilometers Northeast of the Capital Kampala, on December 12, 2016. —AFP

BRAIN CHANGES SEEN IN PREGNANCY, MAY HELP PREPARING FOR BABY

NEW YORK: Pregnancy affects not only a woman's body: It changes parts of her brain too, a new study says. When researchers compared brain scans of women before and after pregnancy, they spotted some differences in 11 locations. They also found hints that the alterations help women prepare for motherhood.

For example, they might help a mother understand the needs of her infant, Elseline Hoekzema, a study author at Leiden University in the Netherlands, explained via email. The women were also given memory tests, and they showed no signs of decline.

Hoekzema, a neuroscientist, began working on the study while at the Autonomous University of Barcelona in Spain. She and colleagues present the results in a paper released Monday by the journal *Nature Neuroscience*.

The study includes data on 25 Spanish women scanned before and after their first pregnancies, along with 20 women who didn't get pregnant during the study. The brain changes in the pregnancy group emerged from comparisons of those two groups. The results were consistent: A computer program could tell which women had gotten pregnant just by looking at results of the MRI scans. And the changes, first documented an average of 10 weeks after giving birth, were mostly still present two years after childbirth. That's based on follow-up with 11 study participants.

Mother thing

Further work showed they're a motherhood thing: No brain changes were seen in first-time fathers. Based on prior research findings, the researchers think the brain changes happened during pregnancy

rather than after childbirth.

What's going on? Hoekzema and colleagues think the differences result from sex hormones that flood the brain of a pregnant woman. In the 11 places, the MRI data indicate reductions in volume of the brain's gray matter, but it's not clear what that means. For example, it could reflect loss of brain cells or a pruning of the places where brain cells communicate, called synapses.

Losing some synapses is not necessarily a bad thing. It happens during a hormonal surge in adolescence, producing more specialized and efficient brain circuits. The researchers suspect that could be happening in the pregnant women.

Some study results hint that such upgrades may prepare a woman for motherhood. One analysis linked brain changes to how strongly a woman felt emotionally attached to her infant. And when women viewed pictures of their babies, several brain regions that reacted the most were ones that showed pregnancy-related change.

In addition, the affected brain areas overlapped with circuitry that's involved in figuring out what another person is thinking and feeling. That's a handy ability for a mother tending to an infant.

The idea of synapses being pruned in pregnancy makes a lot of sense, commented Bruce McEwen of Rockefeller University in New York, who studies hormonal effects on the brain but didn't participate in what he called a terrific study.

"The brain is being shaped all the time," he said, and "sex hormones are part of the whole orchestra of processes that change the brain structurally." —AP

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IIT-IIM HOLDS 3RD ANNUAL KUWAIT OPEN QUIZ 2016 CONTEST

IIT IIM Alumni Association does it again third year in a row by organizing the biggest quiz event of the Year, in a spectacular style which has won the hearts of all the quizzers in Kuwait. In fact, the onset of winter has become synonymous with this popular Quiz event during which the preparations by the quiz lovers reach highest peaks who defy and overcome all the barriers of age, professional and personal commitments with a sole aim of winning the coveted Mind's honor of this prestigious signature event of this elite IIT-IIM Alumni Association in Kuwait. The Alumni Association of India's Premium Institutions, IITs & IIMs, organized its

spectacular annual open quiz program Q800-2016 for the third year running on 17th December, 2016 at the majestic Auditorium of the Gulf University of Science and Technology, GUST, Kuwait. Though in its third year, IIT-IIM Alumni Association's quiz has become very popular among the quiz enthusiasts and general public alike. This year too, the program popularity rose exponentially to doozy heights and the number of teams reached new scales crossing the high bar set last year in a geometric progression with the enthusiastic participation of over 150 three member teams of quiz cognoscenti and aficionados from all walks of

life, sizes, ages, nationalities including few overseas contestants. The deedy silver sliced shining baldies of baby boomers era, and techno savvy digitally dulled millennials fought with student teams of bubbly budding ankle biters, adolescent avid zany wizards of high schools and universities. The quizmaster too, as always been, was an exception, with his distinctive style of high quality quizzing, great sense of humor, impromptu quick wit and affable amazing personal presence. The quiz participants and the avid enthusiastic audience which included fair share of girls of the houses, were enthralled with a great range of interesting

questions posed. With unique format aided by efficient electronic gadgets and software systems, event was conducted in a flawlessly smooth seamless fashion. The Association President, Peeyush Jain welcomed the dignitaries, quizmaster, and the enthusiastic quiz fraternity and thanked all for making this event a grand success. The Indian Ambassador to Kuwait, His Excellency Sunil Jain in his inaugural speech recalled his nostalgic moments with his alma mater of IIT-Delhi and reaffirmed the grueling at these prestigious IITs prepares them to perform and excel in whatever field they take up. All the dignitaries were felicitated with the

Mementoes. The Program ended with a vote of thanks proposed by General Secretary of the Association Sanjay Fuller. He thanked the Indian Ambassador to Kuwait, HE Sunil Jain and Mrs Jain for gracing the occasion both in his official capacity as well as an avid quiz buff and Alumni member. He further appreciated and thanked all the sponsors and guests. He specially thanked GUST for providing the University Auditorium as the venue of this event with all facilities. Last but not the least; he appreciated the efforts of all the members of the Alumni Association, especially the Core Committee members, for putting up a grand show.

SCORPIONS BEAT FRIENDS KUWAIT IN THRILLING Q7KPL SEASON 8 FINAL

The Grand final of the Q7KPL season 8 took place on 16th December 2016 afternoon at the Jabriya Cricket Ground in Jabriya. It was played between the tournament's two big teams Scorpions and Friends Kuwait and in the neck to neck final Scorpions won by 19 runs. In the morning,

that of South Indian cricket star Sagar Bhandari. Scorpions were making slow progress and were 49 for 2 from 7 overs. Shailesh Kanchan was bowled the following over by Nilantha Kumara - the Malinga of Friends Kuwait - for 25 runs. By the halfway mark, Scorpions were 54 for 3 with Johnson and Nadeem on the

with Mohammed Sadik on 33 and icon player Rajesh Poojary on 5. Poojary was dismissed in the next over for the same score, being caught by Sharath in the bowling of SagarBhandari. The turning point of the match was Umer Khans out in Raees Majeeds over, Umer Khan clean bowled by Raees for 1 run. After Umer Khans dismissal of Sadik played aggressively and scored 19 runs from Sagars over but at the other end wickets was falling. At the end Sadik got run out while trying for second run, and he scored 65 runs with 5 huge sixes. In the last over Friends Kuwait all out for 104 and Scorpions won by 19 runs.

Raees Majeed of Scorpions got Man of the Final award for his all-rounder performance with 24 runs and 3 wickets. Nithin Saldanha of Desert Bulls got Man of the Series award of an Air ticket from Eternity Tours and Travels. All the Top 10 Bowlers and Batsmans got award and distributed by the Guests.

Q7 Mobile partners Hawas, Noushad, Grand hyper Regional manager AyyoobKechery, Mohammed Kunhi, Eternity Travels Branch in charge Jerry George, Winners Int'l Director Faisal M ahmad were attend the prize distribution. The KPL committee members Sameeulla, Niyas and Shabeer handed over the mementos for the guests and Shuaib controlled the prize distribution event.

Nadeem scored 33 from just 18 balls with 3 huge sixes and got out in Gayasinghe Nihals over. Raees Majeeds quick 24 with 2 sixes helps Scorpions to reach a total of 123 for 7 wickets.

Friends Kuwaits start was equally ignominious with Gayasinghe Nihal being caught by Shailesh in Hasan Kazis over. By the end of the 8th over, Friends Kuwait were 58 for 2,



Scorpions overcame Q7 Kuwait to reach the finals & Friends Kuwait defeated Friday Court to reach the ultimate match played at TCR Ground and Teams Abbasiya ground respectively.

Scorpions won the toss and elected to bat first. Opener Ajaya Kumar was bowled in the second over by Mohammed Arif. By the time the second wicket had fallen,



BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN CELEBRATES 'SWARA SANDHYA'

The exceptional school of Kuwait basks yet again a novel and noble cause, as it traverses in its decennial year of its existence in the Middle East with its launch of musical extravaganza on Friday, 16th December 2016 at the SIS auditorium in Jleeb Al Shyukh with the vision to nurture the philharmonic lovers with quality music and help the underprivileged by soulful music through music therapy.

The unique collaboration of Indian Educational School and Smart Indian School won huge plaudits from the visitors as they christened SWARA SANDHYA with an endeavor to train and form Bhavans Band and to facilitate and felicitate the unsung heroes. As rightly said "we make a living by what we get but we make a life by what we give", the Bhavans family

proves it to be a propitious one in this age of metamorphosis.

The lighting of the ceremonial lamp conjointly performed by the legend and the visionary Chairman N.K. Ramachandran Menon, the Principals and Vice-Principals of IES and SIS, marked the significance and solemnity of the occasion. Mr Mahesh Iyer Principal, SIS, proudly introduced the host of the evening - Mr Prem Kumar, Principal, IES who later introduced the co-host Ms Meenakshi, HOD - Social Science, IES on stage who received thunderous applause intermittently as they gave the audience the most far-reaching crescendo in presenting a creative anchoring.

The landmark achieved the largest audience ever for a live-streamed event. This opera witnessed music

artists in the making of the future singers. The program paved its own unique platform to display young dandy artists and to empower attendees with positive and supportive messages so as to send the same to the family of all ages. The commendable contribution of parent community left the faculty of Bhavans in awe. The teaching fraternity kept the flag flying high as they equally contributed to the rhapsodic and euphonious entertainment. The concert-goers truly enjoyed themselves as they remembered listening to good old days karaoke based music and some contemporary songs in Tamil, Malayalam, Hindi and English with an amalgamation of solos and duet. The seamless blending was indeed a howling success.



AMIR HONORS PROFESSOR

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah honored Associate Professor at the Environment Health Dept at the Health Science College of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training Dr Haleema Al-Kandary, during the distribution of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science, as she was the production award for 2016 due to her scientific efforts.



CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR AT INN & GO KUWAIT PLAZA HOTEL

INN & Go Kuwait plaza hotel will be at the center of Kuwait Christmas and New Year celebrations this year, the hotel is offering a luxurious room package, festive menus. On New Year's Eve, it will host a

stunning Countdown Party. INN & GO Kuwait plaza hotel with a prime location in Kuwait's most established business district. The hotel's 154 comfortable and modern rooms and suites are elegantly designed

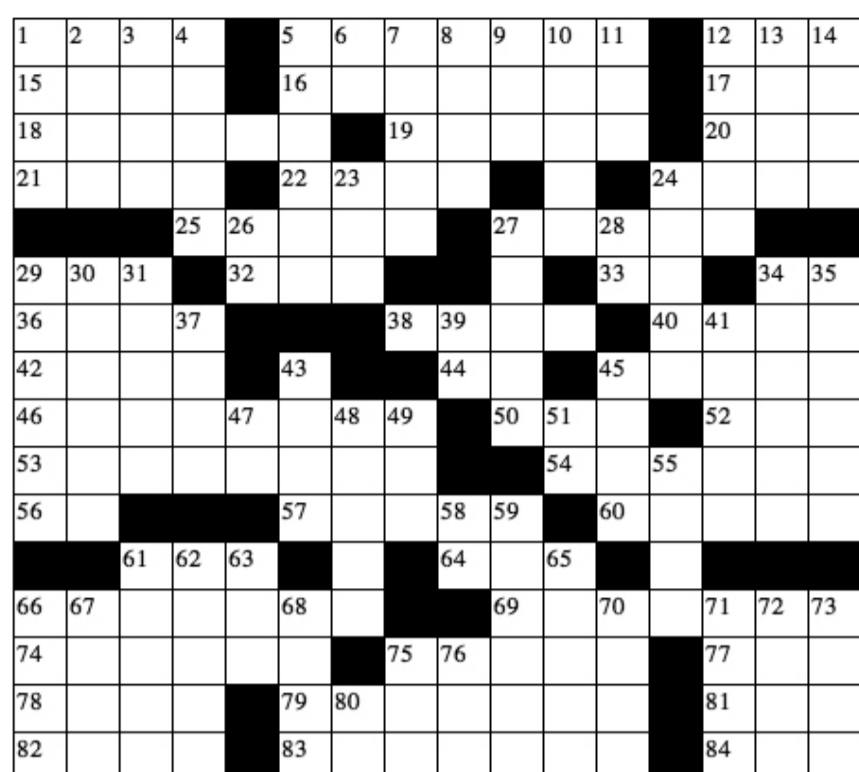
with classic inspiration and contemporary touches, and are the most spacious in the city. Two restaurants will showcase innovative and superlative cuisine Al Dallah oriental and Arirang Korean, together with 2

cafes triangle for shisha lovers and le café for quite break. In addition, the diverse meeting and event spaces will bring a level of sophistication and elegance to any occasion.



KGL Logistics sponsored a Thanksgiving dinner hosted recently for more than 200 US soldiers in Kuwait and families of US embassy staff members.

CROSSWORD 1468



ACROSS

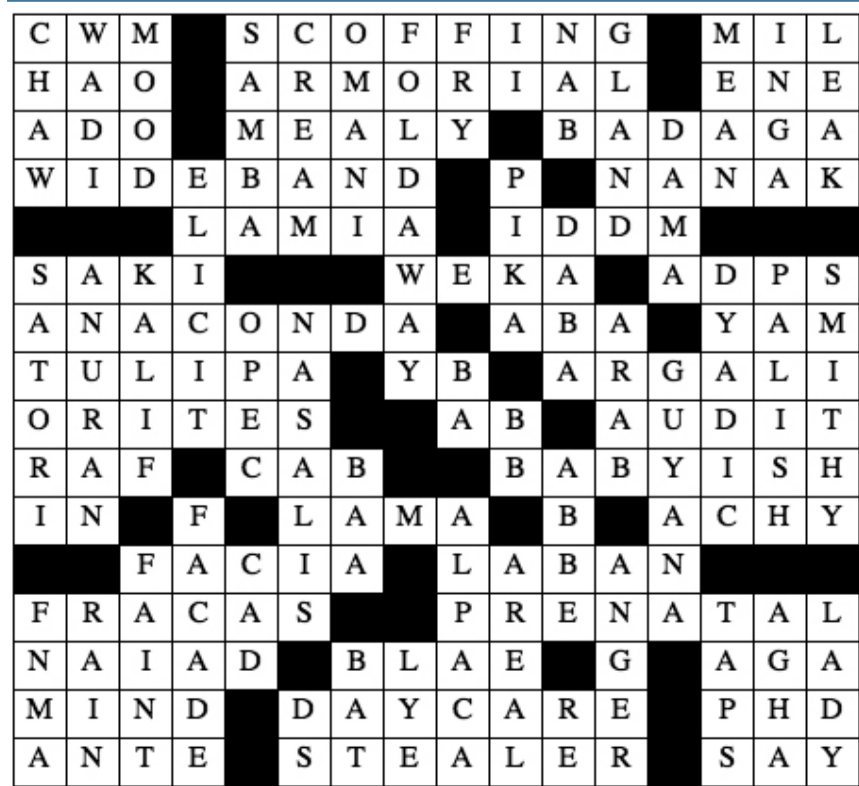
- 1. The template for protein synthesis.
5. Fudge made with brown sugar and butter and milk and nuts.
12. An enclosed space.
15. No longer having or seeming to have or expecting to have life.
16. A word (such as a pronoun) used to avoid repetition.
17. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
18. Some point in the air.
19. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
20. A sign of assent or salutation or command.
21. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
22. Large lipoproteins rich in triglycerides.
25. Perennial mountain rice native to Mediterranean region and introduced into North America.
29. A young woman making her debut into society.
32. A federally chartered savings bank.
33. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
36. A strategically located monarchy on the southern and eastern coasts of the Arabian Peninsula.
38. A branch of the Tai languages.
40. A cloud of fine particles suspended in a gas.
42. (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
44. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
46. Loud confused noise from many sources.
50. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
52. Towards the side away from the wind.
53. Lacking gonads.
54. A member of an agricultural people in southeastern India.
56. A toxic nonmetallic element related to sulfur and tellurium.
57. Jordan's port.
60. The cardinal number that is the sum of five and one.
64. Large northern deer with enormous flattened antlers in the male.
66. A Dravidian language spoken in southern India.
69. Formerly two short sleds coupled together.
74. (of tempo) Leisurely n.
77. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
78. God of death.
79. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
81. Characteristic of a mob.
82. (Greek mythology) Greek god of war.
83. A state in the southeastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico.
84. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.

DOWN

- 1. Designer drug designed to have the effects of amphetamines (it floods the brain with serotonin) but to avoid the drug laws.
2. Scottish philosopher of common sense who opposed the ideas of David Hume (1710-1796).
3. A quantity of no importance.
4. American Revolutionary patriot.
5. A courtyard or portico in front of a

- building (especially a cathedral).
6. An associate degree in nursing.
7. Australian clover fern.
8. A translucent mineral consisting of hydrated silica of variable color.
9. The 22nd letter of the Greek alphabet.
10. A blind god.
11. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
12. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
13. Highly excited.
14. (of a young animal) Abandoned by its mother and raised by hand.
23. A three-year law degree.
24. Soreness and warmth caused by friction.
26. 300 to 3000 kilohertz.
27. Appeal or request earnestly.
28. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
30. Come out into view, as from concealment.
31. Used as a Hindi courtesy title.
34. Naked freshwater or marine or parasitic protozoa that form temporary pseudopods for feeding and locomotion.
35. Read anew.
37. A word that can be used to refer to a person or place or thing.
39. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
41. Cause to feel relaxed.
43. An informal term for a father.
45. Title for the former hereditary monarch of Iran.
47. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
48. Australian shrubs and small trees with evergreen usually spiny leaves and dense clusters of showy flowers.
49. A flat wing-shaped process or wing-like part of an organism.
51. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
55. United States labor organizer who ran for President as a socialist (1855-1926).
58. A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
59. Any of various plants of the genus Albuca having large clusters of pale yellow flowers.
61. Something (often something deceptively attractive) that catches you unawares.
62. A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria and closely related to Hausa.
63. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
65. A member of a formerly tribal people now living in south central India.
67. The sixth month of the civil year.
68. Amino acid that is formed in the liver and converted into dopamine in the brain.
70. A small cake leavened with yeast.
71. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
72. Very dark black.
73. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
75. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
76. Horny projecting mouth of a bird.
80. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may see some positive changes now that have come from some real personal work you have done recently. This may be clearing away some old projects or making the effort to make friends with co-workers. The young people that did not agree with your methods are beginning to see things your way.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Now that your goals are within reach, it is time for some new plans to take form. You enjoy independent thinking and finding solutions with little help. Someone is influential in helping you find exactly what you want in your career or self-improvement program.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Having the ability to get your message across to others is at a high just now. Your timing is perfect. Playing the role of the one who nurtures another, suits you quite well at this time. You may strongly feel the need to care for others.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are feeling upbeat, healthy and natural. Everything points to your taking the first step in a work project. You should enjoy a great deal of support from those around you.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Something may help you to appreciate and discover the beauty that is in your life this day. Perhaps you did not know that there are big owls nested near your walking path.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Professional decisions are good but may take a little more time and patience on your part. You complete your tasks efficiently. Prepare to reorient your viewpoint and direction during the next six months.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This is a good time for clear speculation. You are in a serious frame of mind and find yourself dealing with matters of much concern and responsibility. This is a good time to reorganize.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You communicate effectively, both professionally and personally. You should find that today is one of those super nice days when things just kind of flow along. You will do particularly well in activities that include children, young people and your home and surroundings.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You are an active, imaginative charmer and make social contacts that could take you away from your childhood home. You may leave the nest, but you never let go of your heritage.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Working with others can be quite successful today. You could gain information that a business or legal matter is near an end. You are most persuasive. Combined with your passion for your work and personal issues, you get most of what you want.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Go ahead and allow your creative and intuitive sides to surface-there are rewards coming your way. Watch for new solutions to old problems or something very inventive to evolve as a result of all of this.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

A feeling of peace and stability on the emotional level comes into play at this time. Being stable and permanent satisfies a deep emotional need. Music could also play a more important role for you than usual and you may find a short period of material acquisition satisfying a deep yearning to be free from want.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Baby

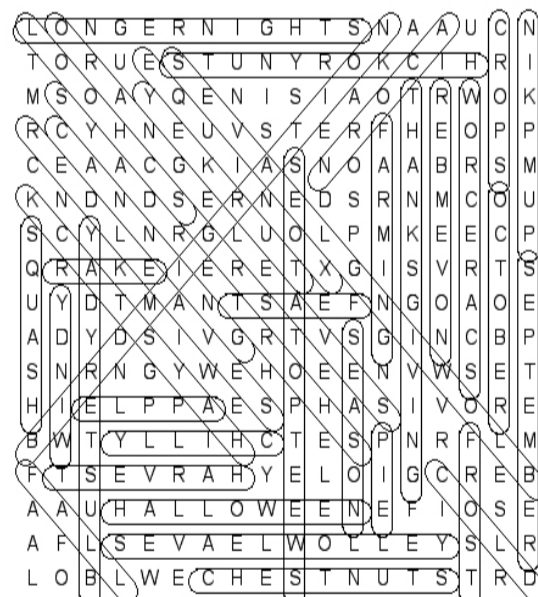
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 50 letters spell a secret message.



- ALERT AWAKE BLANKET BODYSUIT BOOSTER SEAT BOTTLE BOWL CAR SEAT CARRIER COLIC CREAM CRIB CRYING DADDY DIAPER DROOL FEED FORMULA GIGGLE GRIN HIGHCHAIR HOODIE INFANT INNOCENT JUMPER LAUGH LULLABY MILK MOBILE MOMMY MONITOR NURSERY ONESIE PACIFIER PARENTS PLAY INNOCENT POWDER RASH RATTLE RUBBER DUCK SIPPY CUP SKIN CARE SLEEP SMALL SMILE SPOON STROLLER SWING TEDDY BEAR TEETHER TIED TIRED WIPES

Yesterday's Solution

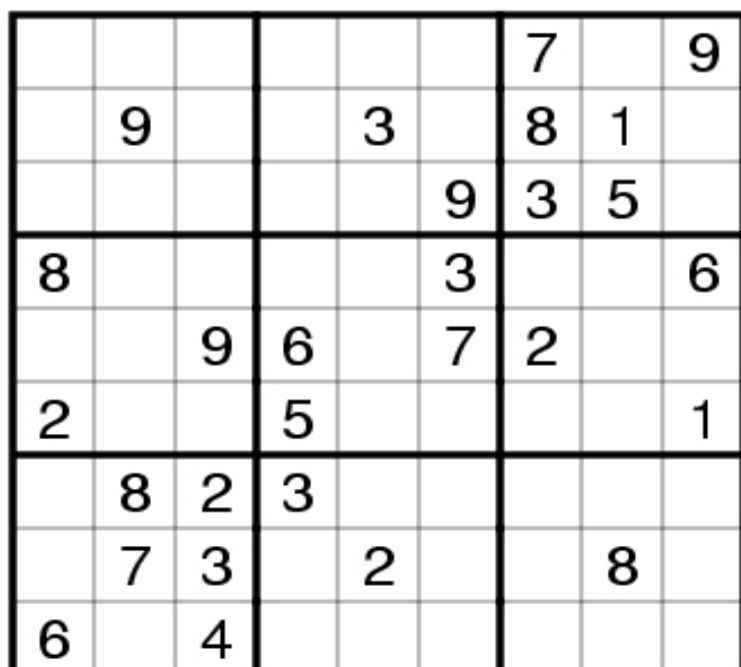
Autumn



- ACORN APPLE BIRD MIGRATION BLOWING LEAVES BLUSTERY DAY CANNING CHESTNUTS CHILLY COLD CROPS EQUINOX FALL FARMING FEAST FROST HALLOWEEN HARVEST HICKORY NUTS LONGER NIGHTS NOVEMBER OCTOBER ORANGE LEAVES PIE PUMPKIN RAKE RED LEAVES SCARECROW SCHOOL SEASON SEPTEMBER SHORTER DAYS SQUASH SWEET POTATOES THANKSGIVING TURKEY WINDY YELLOW LEAVES

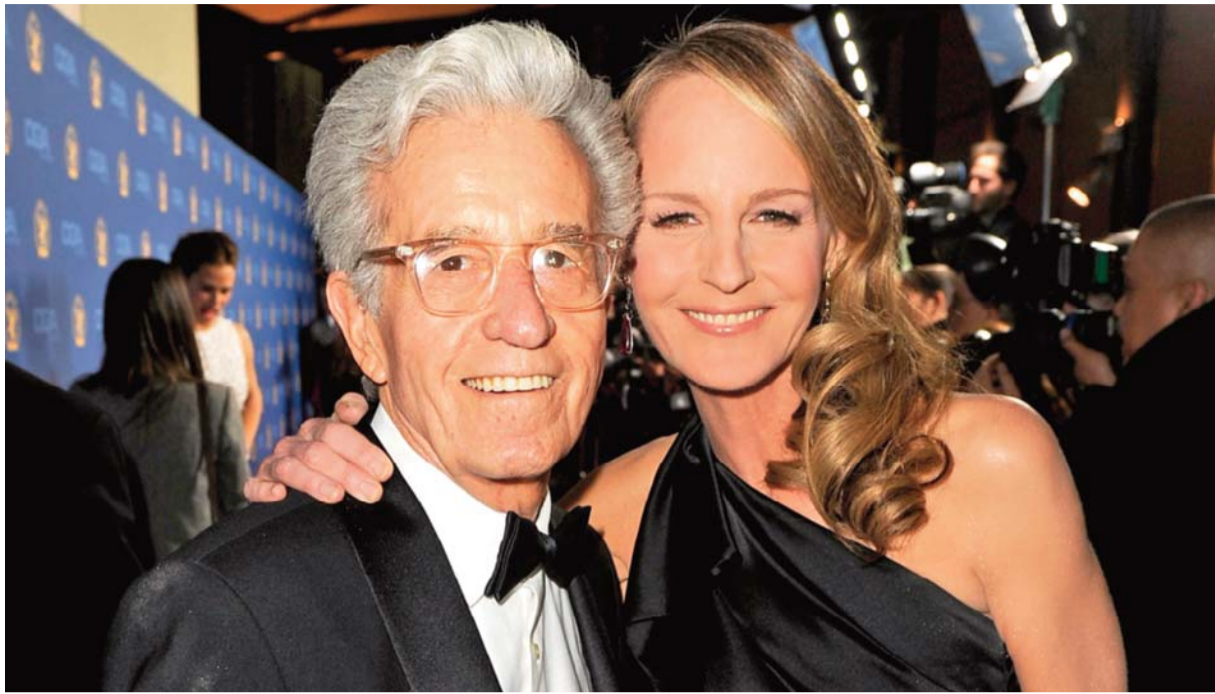
The hidden sentence is: AUTUMN IS A SECOND SPRING WHEN EVERY LEAF IS A FLOWER

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





Helen Hunt's father Gordon, died aged 87

Gordon Hunt, who directed animated productions such as 'The Jetsons', 'The Smurfs' and 'Scooby-Doo', passed away on Saturday at his home in Los Angeles as a result of complications from Parkinson's disease. Paying tribute to her dad, Helen told The Hollywood Reporter: "He was a master of reinvention, a journeyman artist. He knew and taught that the work doesn't always find you. You need to create and re-create the work every day." Helen revealed Gordon had been teaching his decades-long acting class up until very recently. She added: "If you asked 100 people who knew him, 100 of them would say he was the kindest man they ever knew." Gordon also helmed several TV sitcoms, including episodes of 'Frasier' and long-running NBC show 'Mad About You', for which Helen won four Emmy Awards. He received a Directors Guild of America Award for Outstanding

Directorial Achievement in a Comedy Series for the 'Mad About You' episode 'The Alan Brady Show'. Gordon worked for a decade at Hanna-Barbera and was recording director on a number of shows, including 'Richie Rich' and 'The Flintstones', and he even lent his voice to roles at times, such as Wally on series 'Dilbert'. He taught acting for more than four decades and had several star pupils along the way, including Jimmy Fallon, Jonathan Banks, Robert Morse and Robert David Hall. What's more, he voice directed several video games, including 'God of War', 'Final Fantasy XIV', and the 'Uncharted' series. As well as Helen, Gordon is survived by his wife, voice actress B J Ward, who is the 'Twister' star's stepmother, his daughter Colleen, brothers George and Peter, and three grandchildren.

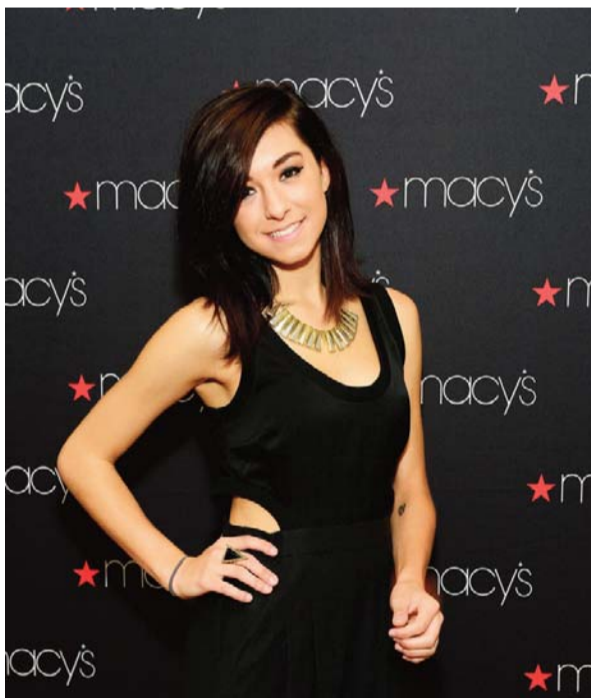
Christina Grimmie's family filed a lawsuit over her death

The 22-year-old star's family are suing concert promoter AEG Live SE and the Orlando Philharmonic, which owns the Plaza Live Theatre, where Christina was gunned down by a crazed fan in June. According to Billboard, the lawsuit states: "The death of Christina was caused by the negligent and culpable conduct of the defendants who failed to provide adequate security measures to protect Christina at the Plaza Live Theatre on June 10, 2016." The security company, who were working the event, have also been named in the lawsuit, with the plaintiffs arguing that only "superficial bag checks" were carried out on the night Christina died. The gunman Kevin James Loibl entered the venue with two handguns, two full magazines and a large hunting knife before shooting Christina in the head and chest. Christina's brother Marcus tacked Loibl and was praised for preventing further injury or loss of life. Her family are seeking damages for their mental pain and suffering, along with compensation for Marcus' emotional and physical trauma. And Marcus and his parents Albert and Tina are also asking for compensation for the loss of future earnings from Christina, who "provided financial support to her parents", along with money for medical and funeral expenses. Previously, Christina's family paid tribute to her "joyful heart and beautiful voice." In a joint statement on a GoFundMe page, they said: "The outpouring of love and generosity that has been displayed to our family throughout these last few weeks has far exceeded anything we could have ever imagined. As we have always known, Christina's life was so very special, not only to us, but to everyone she touched with her joyful heart, beautiful voice and love for life and the Lord. Words cannot express what the many memorials, donations and tributes shared by Christina's fans and those in the media and entertainment industry mean to us. She will live on in our hearts forever."



Chris Pratt will celebrate Christmas on the beach

The 37-year-old hunk and his wife Anna Faris are planning to spend the festive season in their bathing suits under the sun with their four-year-old son Jack in Los Angeles. He shared, "[We] will have a sandy, beautiful, tropical blue Christmas." And the 'Guardians of the Galaxy' actor is determined to make sure his son understands the true meaning of Christmas - like his own parents Kathy and Daniel Pratt did for him. Speaking to the Metro newspaper, he explained: "When I was a kid, we didn't have a whole lot. My parents really played the long game one Christmas, letting us know we just weren't going to be able to get anything for Christmas - we didn't have the money. We all knew that. We just got to the point, don't ask for things. And when we came down on Christmas morning, we got everything. I got a mountain bike, a bow and arrow, a microscope - all the things I had wanted. They had kept the presents from us and let us think for months we wouldn't be having a good Christmas. I think they just saved up, maybe they donated blood or something. It makes me choke up thinking about it." Chris is no doubt looking forward to spoiling his wife - whom he married in 2006 - this year as he's recently rediscovered all the things that made him fall in love with her. He said: "When I recently shot an episode of 'Mom' on CBS, which is my wife's sitcom, that was really fantastic. It's nice, you know, when you've been with someone for years, to see them in a different kind of working an social environment. You get to see a side of someone you don't always see. I got to rediscover things about her that made me love her. We fell in love on a film set and it was nice to see her on a set and how much everyone loves her, how nice she is to everybody. On top of her talent, she'd very much a good person."

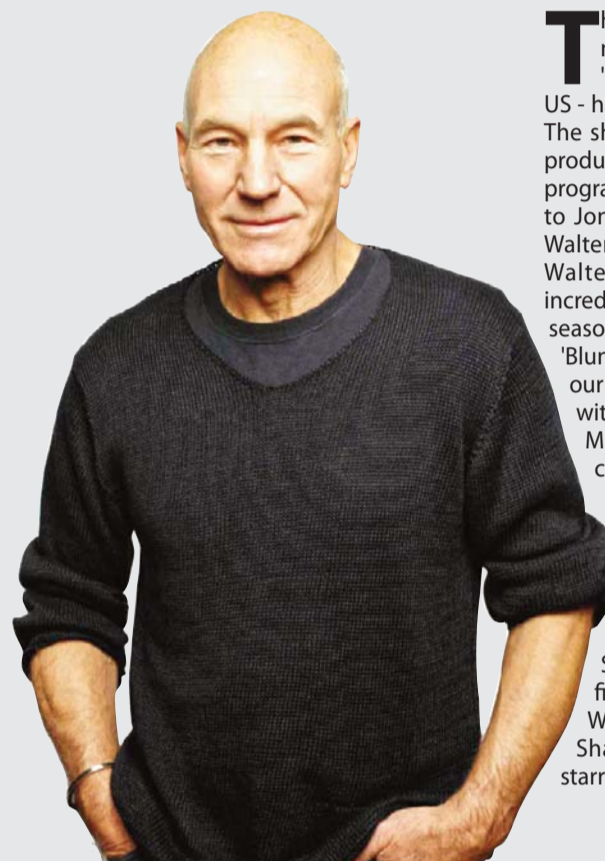


Kourtney Kardashian and her children decorate their own Christmas tree

The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star has revealed she bought four trees for her house this year so her children - Mason, seven, Penelope, four, and Reign, two - can design their own for their rooms. She told Vogue magazine: "We all go to a lot together and have the kids pick out their own trees for their bedrooms; they can decorate them however they want. It's a perfect spot for homemade decorations and allows them to be creative and have fun with it and do something all together as a family. Christmas morning takes place at my house and my entire family comes here, so I also have the responsibility to make it special for all of them. And I love doing it! It's still very festive over here. Christmas music on from the second we wake up until bedtime." Meanwhile, the 37-year-old television personality previously revealed she will be hosting the family's Christmas brunch, where she'll hold a big buffet for her relatives. In a post on her app, she said: "My dining room is one of my favorite rooms in my house. I use the space to entertain - it's perfect for when I have the whole family over... I'll have a big buffet in the kitchen and set up the table for everyone." And Scott Disick is likely to be there for the festive celebrations as they have reportedly got back together. An insider shared: "Their love for each other never went away. He's been trying to win Kourtney over for a while now, but his constant partying was a huge issue. He's been spending a lot more time with Kourtney and the kids and proving himself to show that his family is the priority. He's doing his best to keep himself in check. Kourtney is definitely the reason for that. He still has his own place, but he loves her. He's always loved her and wanted his family back together."



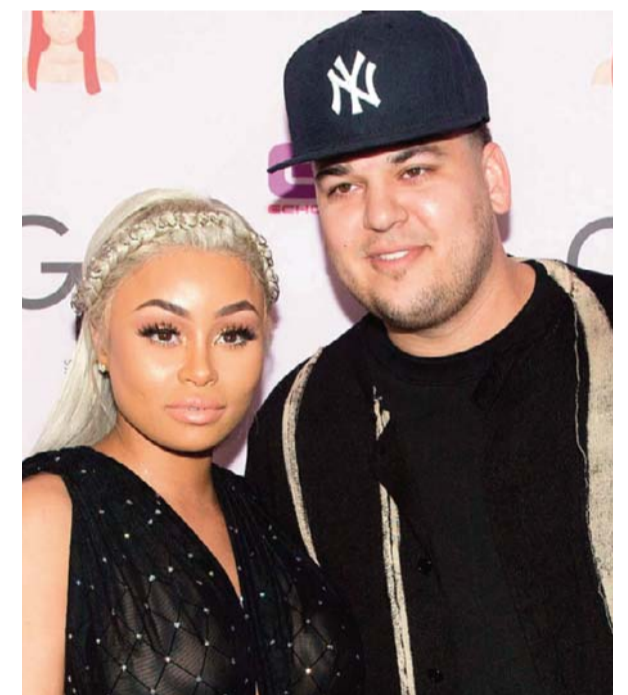
Sir Patrick Stewart's sitcom 'Blunt Talk' has been axed



The 76-year-old actor's show - which followed British newscaster Walter Blunt, who was portrayed by the 'X-Men' star, as he aims to take over cable news in the US - has been shelved by Starz following a 20-episode run. The show was created by Jonathan Ames and executive produced by Seth MacFarlane. Carmi Zlotnik, president of programming at Starz, said in a statement: "We are grateful to Jonathan and Patrick for the tirades and laughs that Walter Blunt delivered to fans with such aplomb. While Walter may not be returning to the airwaves, we are incredibly proud of the work that was done these past two seasons by our wonderful partners and collaborators on 'Blunt Talk,' from Seth MacFarlane and our studio MRC, to our actors, writers and crew. It was a very special show with a heartfelt message. It was an honor serving you, Major." While the reasons for the axing have not been confirmed, it is believed to be due to a struggle to find an audience. Starz initially ordered 20 episodes of the series which were divided into two series. The first season began in August 2015 and the second premiered on October 2, 2016 before concluding on December 11, 2016. Walter Blunt's name was taken from his namesake in William Shakespeare's 'Henry IV, Part 1', which was Patrick's first role with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Jacki Weaver, Adrian Scarborough, Dolly Wells and Timm Sharp also appeared in the sitcom, and Moby guest starred.

Brad Pitt spent his 53rd birthday with old friends

The 'Moneyball' actor - who has kids Maddox, 15, Pax, 13, Zahara, 11, Shiloh, 10, and eight-year-old twins Knox and Vivienne with estranged wife Angelina Jolie, who he is divorcing - celebrated the milestone on Sunday with a low-key meal. An insider said: "Brad Pitt spent his birthday enjoying a mellow dinner in with a few close, old friends. Brad has been working hard on maintaining a low-profile and his plan is to stay out of the spotlight until his divorce and custody issues are finalised. He was not interested in celebrating his birthday out at any hot restaurants." Brad has been granted supervised visits to his six kids since the brunette beauty filed for divorce in September, and he is not thought to have seen them on his birthday. The insider added to HollywoodLife.com: "Brad will not be doing anything that will interfere with his custody battle and does not want it to look like he is busy dating or partying. His primary focus right now is working on himself and working on rebuilding his relationship with his kids." Earlier this month, it was claimed Brad's eldest sons, Maddox - who the 'Fury' actor was accused of striking during a row on board a private jet - and Pax were "refusing" to see him. LA Superior Court Judge Richard J. Burdick Jr. recently denied Brad's request to hold an emergency hearing to keep the details of the custody battle private. A source said: "The judge only denied the request for an emergency hearing and not the actual motion requesting that the case be sealed." A hearing will be held on January 17. In September, the former couple agreed to attend family therapy sessions as part of their temporary custody agreement.



ROB KARDASHIAN'S FAMILY WANT HIM TO LEAVE CHYNA

Some of the 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star's relatives want the 29-year-old star to wipe the slate clean and end his relationship with his fiancée, with whom he has one-month-old daughter Dream. A source told People magazine: "They don't support the relationship. At least some of his family members want Rob to split up with Chyna so they can say, 'We told you so Rob. You deserve better.' But Rob won't listen to them. He wants to be with Chyna." It comes after a source claimed the Kardashians don't want "anything to do" with Rob's relationship with Chyna. They said: "The sisters don't want anything to do with this relationship. They see how fake it is. It's so unhealthy for their brother. They see how Chyna is using their family for fame and money and they aren't going to let it happen anymore. The family accepted her but since Chyna is now showing who she really is, they don't want anything to do with her. They have real-life problems going on and are trying to have a positive New Year and not this drama." And despite Chyna walking out on Rob over the weekend, the insider claims everything is alright between the couple now. They added: "Whatever people might think about the situation, the emotion during the weekend was 100 percent authentic. This argument got a lot of attention, but honestly, this was kind of like a normal tiff for them. They always have these up and downs. Everything is fine between them now. Rob has promised to get some help for self-esteem and jealousy issues. They are both committed to making this work. Ultimately, they both love one another. As for whether they will last, who knows? But they're both going to try."



MOVIES



This file photo shows French actress Michele Morgan and French actor Jean Gabin playing in the film 'Quai des brumes' (Port of Shadows) directed by French film director Marcel Carne. — AFP Photos



This file photo shows French actress Michele Morgan waving to photographers as she arrives in Cannes, to attend the 49th edition of the Cannes International Film Festival.



This file photo shows French actress Michele Morgan posing during the 36th Cannes International Film Festival.

French actress **Michele Morgan** dies, aged 96

French screen legend Michele Morgan, who starred in some 70 movies and took home the best actress prize at the first-ever Cannes film festival, died on Tuesday, aged 96, her family said. An icon of glamour, Morgan was remembered for a regal azure gaze which she first turned on Jean Gabin as an 18-year-old ingenue in "Port of Shadows" ("Quai des Brumes"), a 1938 gangster movie. "You've got lovely eyes, you know," he told her, forever sealing Morgan's fate in French filmography as the "most beautiful pair of eyes in cinema." "It bothers me to hear that repeated so often," she was known to say much later-though she still gave her 1977 memoirs the title "With eyes like that..."

"Michele Morgan was more than just a gaze. She personified elegance and grace, and her legend left its mark on many generations," French President Francois Hollande said in a statement. Claude Lelouch, who directed her in the 1975 "Cat and Mouse," paid tribute to her as "the one we all wanted to hold in our arms." Morgan starred alongside Gabin, Jean

Marais and Michel Simon, as well as Humphrey Bogart, and won her Cannes award in 1946 for her role as a blind woman in "La Symphonie Pastorale," Jean Delannoy's adaptation of an Andre Gide novel.

Nation's most popular

Her career flourished in the 1940s to 1960s, and faded with the arrival of New Wave cinema. Nevertheless, as late as 1975 a poll of French cinema-goers crowned her for the 10th time the "most popular French actress." Born Simone Roussel in the Parisian suburb of Neuilly on February 29, 1920 - a leap-year date which allowed her to joke that they could "age four times more slowly than everyone else"-she spent most of her childhood in the Normandy port of Dieppe.

She left home at 15 in the hopes of reaching fame like American-Swedish actress Greta Garbo, entered drama school in Paris, and soon won a bit part in her first film, "Mademoiselle Mozart." Her first starring role under her adopt-

ed name of Michele Morgan was in Marc Allegret's "Gribouille" (1937). That was soon followed by her momentous encounter with Gabin, with whom she was to appear again in Jean Gremillon's "Remorque," released in 1942 during the German occupation of France.

Hollywood beckons

Later that year Morgan left for the United States after marrying the American actor Bill Marshall. There she made four films, playing opposite Frank Sinatra in "Higher and Higher" (1943) and Bogart in "Passage to Marseilles" (1944), director Michael Curtiz's unsuccessful attempt to repeat the Bogart-Bergman magic of "Casablanca." The war over, and having failed to make a breakthrough in Hollywood, she returned to France in 1946.

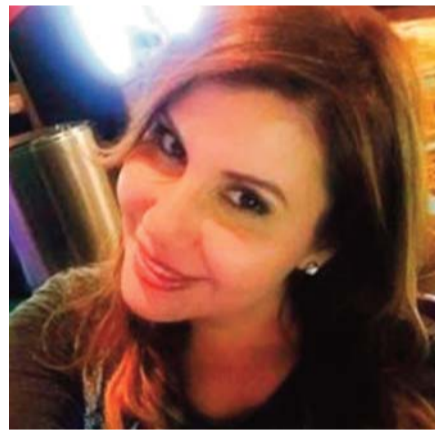
She also starred in an English movie, Carol Reed's "The Fallen Idol" (1948), based on a Graham Greene novel. One of the highlights of Morgan's late career as a stage actress was

her role in Jean Cocteau's "Les Monstres Sacres" in 1992-93, in which she appeared once again alongside that other great veteran of French cinema, Jean Marais, then aged 79. Despite decades of work, Morgan never equaled her role as the slant-eyed waif in Beret and trench coat in the doomed, fatalist world of "Port of Shadows."

She married twice, first to Marshall, who died in 1959, then to Henri Vidal, whom she divorced. Her only child, Mike Marshall, from her first marriage, died of cancer in 2005, aged 60. Morgan was made a commander of the Legion of Honor in 1994 and given the highest rank of the Ordre National du Merite in 2004. In later years, Morgan was a talented painter, saying, "It calms me. At the heart of it, I have always liked being alone. I've never been happier than when I am with my painting." — AFP



Officials investigate a home in the Lennox area of Los Angeles as they search for Lisa Marie Naegle.



This undated photo of Lisa Marie Naegle was provided by her family to police and news media as they and authorities seek the public's help in locating her. — AP Photos

Body found believed to be of ex-reality show contestant

A body found Tuesday in a backyard is believed to be that of a former reality TV show contestant who vanished over the weekend after attending a birthday party at a California beer hall. Police and coroner's officials searched at a home in unincorporated Lennox, near Los Angeles International Airport, after an acquaintance of Lisa Marie Naegle was arrested and indicated her body was there, police said. "We can confirm a body which we believe is Lisa Marie was discovered in a shallow grave at the suspect's home," police spokesman Sal Ramirez said Tuesday night. "The detectives strongly believe it is her." A motive for and cause of her death were not immediately disclosed.

Jackie Jerome Rogers, 34, was arrested Tuesday on suspicion of murder after being questioned about her disappearance. It wasn't immediately clear whether he had a lawyer. Naegle, 36, a nurse who lived in the San Pedro area of Los Angeles, was a los-

ing contestant on the show "Bridalplasty" in 2010. She competed for a dream wedding and plastic surgery. She taught nursing classes at West Los Angeles College, and Rogers was one of her students, according to the Daily Breeze of Torrance. Naegle had gone to a birthday party on Saturday night at Alpine Village, a beer hall and restaurant in Torrance.

Naegle's husband, Derek Harryman, said he texted her around 2 am Sunday to see where she was. "Within a minute or two, she called me," Harryman told the Daily Breeze. "She sounded really, really drunk. She said, 'I'm going to get some food and then I'll be home.' She never arrived and didn't show up to teach. Harryman and Naegle's sister filed a missing person's report and asked for help on social media in finding her. The family said they obtained photos showing Naegle leaving the beer hall with Rogers and video that showed her getting into his sport utility vehicle. "We went and we looked

at the film and she left with him," her brother, Rafael Chavez, told the newspaper.

"He told everybody he left without her." "We begged and pleaded that he'd come to our home to kind of give us details on what time, where were things, and when he left her, but while he was talking to us and telling us his story, multiple different times he said he absolutely did not go home with her, or did not take her home," Naegle's sister, Danielle Naegle-Kaimona, told KABC-TV. After being confronted with information that Naegle was seen getting into his car, Rogers altered his story to say that Naegle had gotten into his car but then got out moments later, the family said. They then contacted police. — AP

Martin Scorsese, 'Cinema is gone'

Martin Scorsese's Manhattan office, in a midtown building a few blocks northwest of the cordoned-off Trump Tower, may be the most concentrated bastion of reverence for cinema on the face of the earth. There's a small screening room where Scorsese screens early cuts of his films and classic movies for his daughter and his friends. There's his personal library of thousands of films, some he taped himself decades ago. Film posters line the walls. Bookshelves are stuffed with film histories. And there are editing suites, including the one where Scorsese and his longtime editor Thelma Schoonmaker regularly toil with a monitor dedicated to the continuous, muted playing of Turner Classic Movies.

"It's a temple of worship, really," says Schoonmaker. Scorsese's latest, "Silence," may be the film that most purely fuses the twin passions of his life: God and cinema. Scorsese, who briefly pursued becoming a priest before fervently dedicating himself to moviemaking, has sometimes seemed to conflate the two. "Silence" is a solemn, religious epic about Jesuit priests (Andrew Garfield, Adam Driver) in a violently anti-Catholic 17th century Japan. Scorsese has wanted to make it for nearly 30 years.

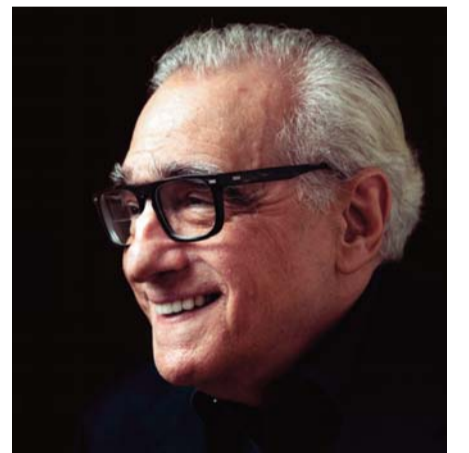
He was given the book it's based on, Shusaku Endo's 1966 novel, by a bishop after a screening of his famously controversial "The Last Temptation of Christ" in 1988. "Silence" is an examination of belief and doubt and mysterious acts of faith. But making the film was such an act in itself. "Acting it out, maybe that's what existence is all about," Scorsese says of his faith. "The documentary on George Harrison I made, 'Living in the Material World,' that says it better. He said if you want an old man in the sky with a beard, fine. I don't mean to be relativist about it.

'Silence'

I happen to feel more comfortable with Christianity. But what is Christianity? That's the issue and that's why I made this film." It wasn't easy. Scorsese, 74, may be among the most revered directors in Hollywood, but "Silence" is almost the antithesis of today's studio film. To make it Scorsese had to drum up foreign money in Cannes and ultimately made the film for about \$46 million. Everyone, including himself, worked for scale. Few today are making movies with the scope and ambition of "Silence" - a fact, he grants, that makes him feel like one of the last of a dying breed in today's film industry.

"Cinema is gone," Scorsese says. "The cinema I grew up with and that I'm making, it's gone." "The theater will always be there for that communal experience, there's no doubt. But what kind of experience is it going to be?" he continues. "Is it always going to be a theme-park movie? I sound like an old man, which I am. The big screen for us in the '50s, you go from Westerns to 'Lawrence of Arabia' to the special experience of '2001' in 1968. The experience of seeing 'Vertigo' and 'The Searchers' in VistaVision."

Scorsese points to the proliferation of images and the overreliance on superficial techniques as trends that have diminished the power of cinema to younger audiences. "It should matter to your life," he says. "Unfortunately the latest generations don't know that it mattered so much." Scorsese's comments echo a tender letter he wrote his daughter two years ago. The future of movies, he believes, is in the freedom that technology has yielded for anyone to make a movie. "TV, I don't think has taken that place. Not yet," adds Scorsese, whose "Boardwalk Empire" was lauded but whose high-priced "Vinyl" was canceled after one season.



In this photo, producer and director Martin Scorsese poses for a portrait in New York. — AP

'Vinyl'

"I tried it. I had success to a certain extent. 'Vinyl' we tried but we found that the atmosphere for the type of picture we wanted to make - the nature of the language, the drugs, the sex, depicting the rock 'n' roll world of the '70s - we got a lot of resistance. So I don't know about that freedom." Since the election of Donald Trump, some have expressed hope for a return to the kind of '70s filmmaking Scorsese is synonymous with. "If the younger people have something to say and they find a way to say through visual means as well as literary, there's the new cinema," says Scorsese.

But the current climate reminds him more of the '50s of his youth. "I'm worried about double-think or triple-think, which is make you believe you have the freedom, but they can make it very difficult to get the picture shown, to get it made, ruin reputations. It's happened before." "Silence," which Scorsese screened for Jesuits at the Vatican before meeting with the pope, remains a powerful exception in a changing Hollywood. "He wanted to make this film extremely differently from anything out there," says Schoonmaker, Scorsese's editor since "Raging Bull." — AP

'JUSTICE LEAGUE': THE FLASH JOINS BATMAN, IN NEW IMAGE

The upcoming "Justice League" is starting to feel almost like a family get-together. Ezra Miller, who plays the Flash, referred to Batman as a "Dad" and Aquaman as "Uncle Fish Curry," in an interview with Entertainment Weekly. So it's probably not a step too far to consider Wonder Woman as a stern mother and the Flash as perhaps a wise-cracking child?

In the interview, which was accompanied by a new still from the film of Batman (Ben Affleck), Wonder Woman (Gal Gadot), and the Flash all suited and booted, Miller described his character as the Ringo Starr of the Justice League crew, explaining that "he annoys everybody, but he doesn't have any specific beef with anyone."

The movie will also see Henry Cavill reprise his Superman role, while Jason Momoa and Ray Fisher will step into the roles of Aquaman and Cyborg, respectively. Back in October, the film's director, Zack Snyder, tweeted a behind-the-scenes video which showed the cast joking around on set. Meanwhile, Wonder Woman is set to get her own standalone adventure on June 2, 2017, before she teams up with the rest of the League. "Justice League" will hit theaters on Nov 17, 2017. — Reuters



MUSIC



A clothing vendor (L) pedals his bicycle past a billboard promoting a planned concert by US singer James Taylor in Manila yesterday.



In this file photo, musician James Taylor performs in Manchester, New Hampshire. — AP Photos

James Taylor cancels Manila show over drug war killings

Grammy award-winning singer James Taylor said yesterday he has cancelled a February 2017 concert in the Philippines in protest at the alleged extrajudicial killings in President Rodrigo Duterte's brutal drug war. "I don't think of my music as being particularly political but sometimes one is called upon to make a political stand," the US star said in social media posts on Twitter as well as on his Facebook page. "For a sovereign nation to prosecute and punish, under the law, those responsible for the illegal trade in drugs is, of course, understandable, even commendable," he said, calling drug dependence a "scourge" and a "world-

wide problem". "But recent reports from the Philippines of summary executions of suspected offenders without trial or judicial process are deeply concerning and unacceptable to anyone who loves the rule of law." Duterte, a fiery populist provincial politician, was elected by a landslide earlier this year largely on a vow to 100,000 criminals. Police or suspected vigilantes have killed more than 5,300 people since July, but the government rejects the allegations of extrajudicial executions and insists those killed by police had resisted arrest and fought police.

Taylor, 68, rose to fame in the 1970s for writing and per-

forming sensitive songs such as "Fire and Rain" and "You've Got a Friend" and has won five Grammy Awards over his long career. In recent press interviews he has openly discussed his recovery from heroin addiction in his teens, just before he became globally famous. Taylor informed local promoter Ovation Productions about his decision late Tuesday and rejected last-minute appeals to reconsider, Ovation president and chief executive Renen de Guia told AFP.

De Guia said Taylor was the first foreign performer he is aware of to have cancelled a Philippine concert over the killings, and hoped he would be the last. "As far as we're

concerned we're pushing through with the others," he said. Taylor was scheduled to have played in Manila on February 25 next year as part of a foreign tour. He said his Manila boycott would not affect the Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand legs of his tour. Asked to comment on Taylor's stand on the drug-related killings, de Guia said: "This is a very sensitive issue and I don't want to say anything more." — AFP

SONY CLASSIC CHIEF TO HEAD VIENNA STATE OPERA

Austria's government named Bogdan Roscic yesterday as director of the prestigious Vienna State Opera from 2020, replacing Frenchman Dominique Meyer. Roscic, 52, is currently president of Sony Music's classical music division and has never run an opera house. He was born in Serbia and grew up in Austria. "I believe we need to look to the future, although that isn't to criticize the status quo," Culture Minister Thomas Drozda said as he announced the appointment. He said he wanted to opera house "to ensure that it can attract the global stars of tomorrow... If you like, a State Opera 4.0." In the age of Broadway and Netflix, "the genre has lost meaning and... faces never-before-seen competition for the public's time and money," Drozda said. — AFP



Bogdan Roscic, designated director of the Vienna State Opera, gives a press conference yesterday in Vienna. — AFP



Danish pop band Lukas Graham discusses Grammy nominations

Danish pop group Lukas Graham were surprised to receive three Grammy nominations for their global hit "7 Years", says frontman Lukas Forchhammer. The group is competing for "Song of the Year," "Record of the Year" and "Best Pop Duo/Group Performance" at the Grammy Awards to be held in Los Angeles on Feb 12. "We hope for everything and we try to work harder than the people we meet on the road but we don't expect to be honored in this way.

And the Grammys mean a lot especially because it is a peer to peer voting system," Forchhammer, 28, told Reuters Television. Forchhammer said he draws inspiration from his past growing up in Christiania, a celebrated hippy enclave within the Danish capital, Copenhagen. The recent birth of his daughter, Viola, added a new element to his writing, he said. "I

write about what my life experiences and my life situation is, so of course there is going to be songs about becoming a father," he said.

"But I feel that having a baby has also opened this other dimension where it is easier for me to write songs where the stories are not necessarily about my life. It's something about what you are looking at," Forchhammer said. "7 Years" went quadruple platinum, reaching No. 2 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart, and is the highest selling single from a debut artist this year. Lukas Graham consists of lead singer Forchhammer, bassist Magnus Larsson, drummer Mark "Lovestick" Falgren and Morten Ristorp on the keyboard. — Reuters



People wearing Santa Claus hats play music outside the Opera House in Paris. — AFP

Kane Brown turned Facebook likes into a country music career

As a kid, Kane Brown and his mother used to sing together as pretend "American Idol" contestants. But when Brown actually tried out for the show years later, he kept getting rejected or stereotyped. "They told me they didn't need another Scotty McCreery," Brown said. "I tried out for 'X Factor' and they put me in a boy band and I ended up quitting." So the 23-year-old singer from the Tennessee-Georgia border near Chattanooga turned to Facebook to find an audience for iPhone videos of himself singing covers of songs like "Check Yes or No," by George Strait, a video that's been viewed 11 million times.

"I had like 3,000 friends on Facebook," Brown said. "I felt like if they thought I was good enough, they would at least help me share my videos a little bit. One day it went viral." Brown turned those popular Facebook videos into a dedicated fan base that propelled him to a No. 1 debut on Billboard Top Country Albums chart in December. He had the best country debut in two years in a genre where fans still primarily discover new artists through the radio. He's had three songs in the top 5 of Billboard's Country Digital Songs Sales, but he's only had one song crack the Top 40 for country airplay.

Learning

Showcasing his deep baritone voice, Brown's revealing self-titled album is mostly autobiographical with songs about his deep love for his grandparents, his struggles with racism and growing up without a

lot of money. One of the standout tracks on the album, "Learning," starts off with his experience of being beaten as a child by a stepdad. "I was honestly nervous about even putting it on the album, but it had such a personal message to me," Brown said. "I just want to help kids that are going through bullying or racism."

Like many social media stars, Brown is engaged with his fans online, often responding to fans' comments, or asking them to share videos and increasing his reach. But as a kid in middle school, he was too shy to sing in public until a close friend convinced him to show off his vocal skills in chorus. "I got him to stay after class one day, and I got him to sing 'I Can Only Imagine,' for me and our teacher," said Lauren Alaina, who later went on to take the runner-up spot on the 10th season of "American Idol." "And the whole rest of the year they had us sing together."

Alaina and Brown got to sing together again years later on the song "What Ifs" on Brown's new record. "I think it's cool because he got found through Facebook and online and I got found on 'American Idol,' and those aren't the traditional ways to get a record deal," Alaina said. Brown's DIY success led him to open for Florida Georgia Line, one of country's biggest tours, and now he's on his own headlining tour. And no one is prouder than his first duet partner. "My mom texted me and said, 'I'm glad you won't have to struggle like we used to have to,'" Brown said. "And that meant a lot to me." — AP



This image taken from video shows Kane Brown during an interview in Nashville, Tennessee. — AP



This picture shows four year-old Sammi Smith carrying Fideo, a three-year-old male albino ferret in her house on the outskirts of Sydney — AFP Photos



This picture shows Brooke Winters with her pet 'Mario', a bearded dragon, sitting on her head at the pet shop where she works in Sydney.

EXOTIC TO MAINSTREAM: AUSTRALIANS WILD ABOUT UNUSUAL PETS

The proud owner of dingo 'Kimba', James Bornstein, is part of the new wave of Australian exotic pet lovers whose unconventional companions are growing in popularity. In a country known for its unusual wildlife, Bornstein says having a sub-species of the grey wolf in his Sydney home is an opportunity to change people's negative perceptions about the native wild dog and apex predator. "Dingoes are so intelligent. We want people to see her (Kimba) and realize they are not vicious animals, they are just like normal dogs," he told AFP.

Dingoes are infamous thanks to the dramatic case of Azaria Chamberlain—a nine-week-old baby snatched by one of the animals during a camping trip in central Australia in 1980, which was made into a movie. Bornstein hopes his efforts will increase support for conservation, as dingo numbers decline amid habitat loss and cross-breeding with domestic dogs. His views are echoed by Ben Dessen, reptile manager at Kellyville Pets store in Sydney, who owned his first snake at just six.

"Now we see every six-year-old that we set up with their first reptile—hopefully they want to go on and protect animals and have an appreciation for how amazing these creatures are," he says. According to the Australian Veterinary Association, exotic pets are becoming "more and more popular", with residents owning millions of birds, fish, small mammals and reptiles.

Ernie Chan, a breeder who has kept up to 130 reptiles, says shrinking homes and urbanization has seen potential owners turn to smaller pets that require less maintenance. "You don't need to take a snake for a walk," Chan says. "Everybody's had dogs and cats for so many years and it's kind of reptiles' time to shine." Brooke Winters is another exotic pet convert in a nation famous for koalas, kangaroos and wombats.

"I grew up with Steve Irwin as my idol, so pretty much everything that he did I just wanted to mimic," Winters said at Macarthur Pets, a large pet store in Sydney that she manages. "I just feel like people don't appreciate

(reptiles) enough and treat them very differently just because they don't have fur." "Crocodile Hunter" Irwin was a world-renowned conservationist whose stunts with dangerous animals drew attention to wildlife Down Under before his death a decade ago.

Despite their growing popularity, there are strict laws across Australia governing what exotic creatures can be kept as pets. Even so, welfare officials warn of backyard breeders or buying an animal that may have been grabbed from the wild. "Those animals can have really special needs and even if they have been bred in captivity, they are generally wild animals with long histories of living in particular environments," RSPCA Australia's Jane Speechley adds. "They don't necessarily adapt very well to being kept as companion animals." — AFP



This picture shows James Bornstein with his pet Dingo named 'Kimba' during her daily walk on a beach on the outskirts of Sydney.



This picture shows reptile breeder Ben Dessen holding a Flinders Ranges scorpion, the biggest scorpion species in Australia, at a pet store in Sydney.



This picture shows reptile breeder Ernie Chan holding 'Luna', an albino short-neck turtle at a pet store in Sydney.



This picture shows Ann Harris playing with her pet Australian miniature pig 'Coco' on her property on the outskirts of Sydney.



This picture shows reptile breeder Ernie Chan with 'Malfoy', an albino Darwin carpet python, in Sydney.

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2016

French actress Michele Morgan dies, aged 96

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The setting sun casts light on lower Manhattan and One World Trade Center in New York City as seen from Hoboken, New Jersey. — AFP

Generation X-Soviet: Young Russians conflicted over past

Just when Irina Chubkovets was coming into the world, the country her parents and grandparents had lived in was slipping out of it. Chubkovets was born in the provincial Russian city of Bryansk on December 25, 1991, the day the last leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, resigned and the hammer and sickle flag atop the Kremlin was replaced by the Russian tricolor. The iconic moment drove the final nail into the coffin of over 70 years of Soviet rule and opened a new era of uncertainty that left an indelible mark on the world map and the people of Russia.

"I received a Soviet birth certificate but it wasn't clear at all what country we were in that day," Chubkovets told AFP. In the 25 years since, Chubkovets and those of her generation have grown up side-by-side with their emerging nation. Together they took their unsteady first steps during the tumultuous 1990s, before finding their feet as Vladimir Putin became president in 2000 and coming of age during the increasingly assertive years of his rule. Chubkovets now is married to an army officer and the mother of a two-year-old son Viktor.

Grandmother's tales

For many of those who grew up after the demise of the

Soviet Union their views of the lost empire are shaped by the memories of the older generations who often paint a rosy picture of life under Communism. "My grandmother always loved to say that things were better in the Soviet Union: people were poor but equal," Chubkovets said. "Now there are all these differences." "I would want everything to be stable so people know what it will be like in five or ten years," she said. "The outlook is still worrisome." A recent survey by the independent pollster Levada Centre found that 19 percent of Russians between the ages of 18 and 24 regret the collapse of the USSR.

One reason for that, experts say, is the resurgent nationalism under Putin that is thrust down the throats of the population by a slavish state media. This month prominent pro-Kremlin talk show host Dmitry Kiselyov praised the Soviet Union as a "grandiose social experiment." "The goal was to create paradise on Earth," he said. "We managed to accomplish a lot." From the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine to the worst standoff with the West since the Cold War, many say the Kremlin strongman is trying to revive the lost glory of Moscow's superpower status. Putin has called the collapse of the Soviet Union a "geopolitical catastrophe" and the Kremlin

turned the USSR's victory in World War II into Russia's defining historical moment.

"The positive, nostalgic perception of the Soviet Union that is sometimes conveyed at the official level is adopted by the young generation," said sociologist Karina Pipiya of the Levada Centre. "This is not because they know about the Soviet Union but because they are loyal to the authorities. If the authorities say it's good, then they think it must be good too." Young Russians also grew up in cities where reminders of the Soviet Union are ubiquitous. Monuments to Soviet founding father Lenin and eponymous streets commemorating the leader of the 1917 October Revolution still dot cityscapes across the country, and his body still lies embalmed in the mausoleum on Moscow's Red Square.

Paternalism 2.0

One major change of attitude among the younger generation appears to be that they are once again relying on Russia's empowered state. While those who cut their teeth in the 1990s usually looked to private business to make a living, those beginning their careers now increasingly eye opportunities with the state. Vasily Koloskov, a recent Moscow gradu-

ate specialized in French literature, shares a birthday with Chubkovets. Currently in search for work, Koloskov says that many of his contemporaries are flocking to the public sector. "We can still feel the Soviet heritage because the state sector is strong and the private one is weaker," he said. Sociologist Pipiya says that Russians under the age of 25 are "very paternalistically oriented" and seek state support like the one found during the Soviet era.

"It's not the case that a significant portion of the young generation grew up with an individualistic orientation and focused on business opportunities," she said. When push comes to shove, however, few of those who have grown up in post-Soviet Russia seem like they actually want the return of the USSR. While a fifth say they regret the Soviet empire's collapse, only three percent wanted to live under Communism. "I like things the way they are now," job hunter Koloskov told AFP. "I wouldn't have wanted to live back then." — AFP



This file photo shows then US President Ronald Reagan speaking with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev during welcoming ceremonies at the White House on the first day of their disarmament summit.



This file photo shows Lithuanians crowding with the Lithuanian flag and a banner which reads "Bye, bye USSR" - in the center of Vilnius, during demonstration asking for the country's independence. — AFP photos