



Merry Christmas

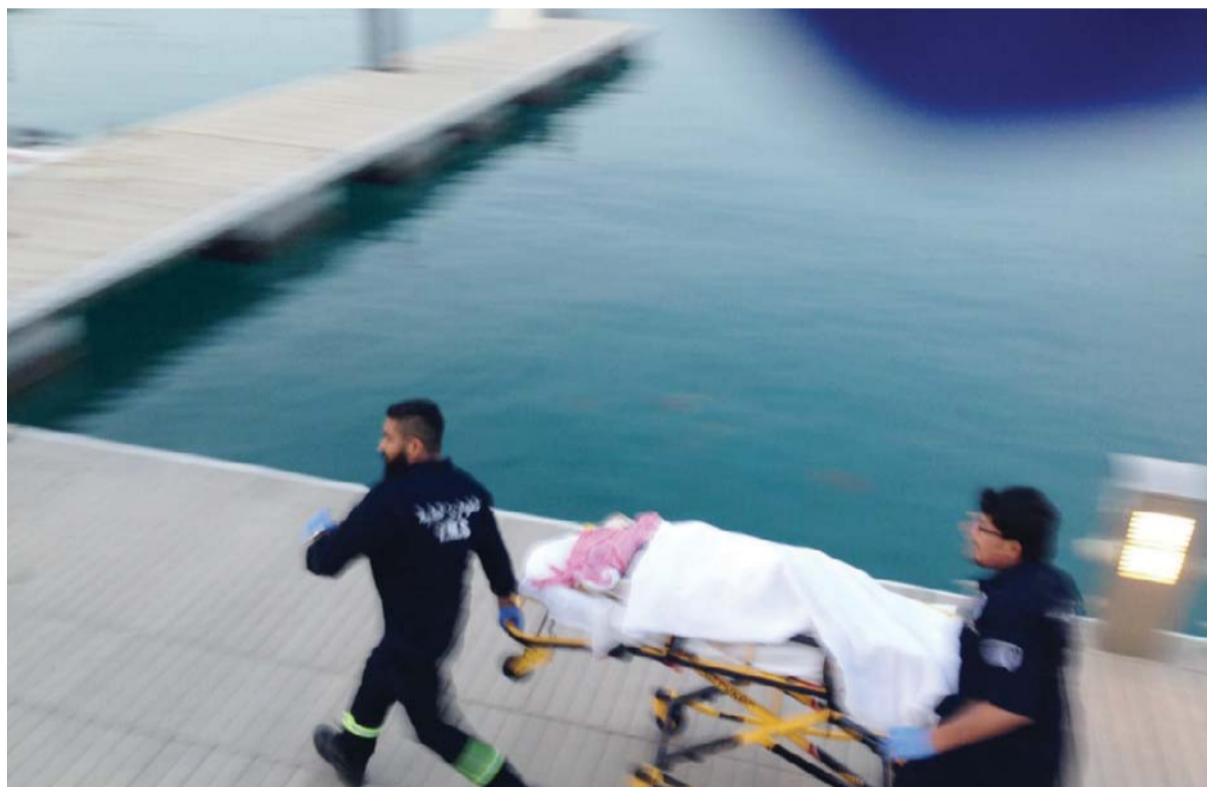
ISRAEL FUMES AFTER US LETS UN DENOUNCE SETTLEMENTS

NETANYAHU SLAMS OBAMA • PALESTINIANS REJOICE • GHANEM HAILS VOTE


 150 FILS
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 40 PAGES

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FIVE KILLED IN DEADLY YACHT BLAZE



KUWAIT: Paramedics rush a victim to hospital following a fire on a yacht off Khairan yesterday.

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Five people were killed and several others wounded in a yacht fire off the southern resort of Khairan

yesterday, the fire department said. Coastguards and firemen managed to control the fire, the department said in a statement, adding investigations are underway to determine the cause of the deadly blaze. Eleven ambulances

and two medevac choppers were dispatched to the scene. The deceased include three unidentified women, a man and a child. Another person was revived by paramedics and airlifted to hospital for further treatment.



JERUSALEM: Israel scrambled yesterday to contain the fallout from a UN Security Council vote to halt settlements in Palestinian territory after lashing out at US President Barack Obama over the "shameful" resolution. The council passed the measure Friday after the United States abstained, enabling the adoption of the first UN resolution since 1979 to condemn Israel over its settlement policy, calling settlements "a flagrant violation under international law".

By deciding not to veto the move, the US took a rare step that deeply angered Israel, which accused Obama of abandoning its closest Middle East ally in the waning days of his administration. The text was passed with support from all remaining members of the 15-member council, with applause breaking out in the chamber. The landmark vote came despite intense lobbying efforts by Israel and calls from US President-elect Donald Trump to block the text.

While the resolution contains no sanctions, Israeli officials are concerned it could widen the possibility of prosecution at the International Criminal Court. They are also worried it could encourage some countries to impose sanctions against Israeli settlers and products produced in the settlements.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected the resolution and criticized Obama in especially harsh language. "Israel rejects this shameful anti-Israel resolution at the UN and will not abide by its terms," a statement from his office said. "The Obama administration not only failed to protect Israel against this gang-up at the UN, it colluded with it behind the scenes," it said. "Israel looks forward to working with President-elect Trump and with all our friends in Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, to negate the harmful effects of this absurd resolution."

Michael Oren, the deputy minister for diplomacy in the premier's office and a former Israeli envoy to Washington, said he saw the resolution as "a lot like anti-Semitism".

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News

in brief

Kuwait to float Zour North One in mid-2017

DUBAI: Kuwait plans to sell shares in the Al-Zour North Independent Water and Power Project to the public in mid-2017, state news agency KUNA reported yesterday. The Al-Zour North One plant has a capacity of at least 1,500 MW and is structured as a public-private partnership (PPP). The project is 40 percent owned by three partners - France's Engie, Japan's Sumitomo Corporation and Kuwaiti firm AH Al Sagar & Brothers. Kuwait's sovereign wealth fund the Kuwait Investment Authority, the Public Institution for Social Security, and the PPP body Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP), together hold 60 percent. A public share sale was a condition for the project, once construction was finished. It was completed on Nov 26, according to Sumitomo's website. The government will offer 50 percent of Al-Zour to Kuwaiti citizens, KAPP General Manager Mutlaq Al-Sanei said.

Saudis to sell 49% of Aramco within decade

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia plans to sell up to 49 percent of its oil giant Saudi Aramco within 10 years as the world's largest crude exporter tries to lower its deficit, local media said yesterday. The Al-Eqtisadiyah daily quoted an unnamed official as saying the sale would raise funds to be spent "at home and abroad" in what is expected to form the world's largest state investment fund. The kingdom is looking to diversify its oil-dependent economy and has already announced cutbacks after its 2015 deficit snowballed to \$97 billion. The IPO for state-owned Aramco could take place in 2018 and an initial sale of a five percent share is expected to form the basis for the fund holding around \$2 trillion in assets. The firm will next year begin publishing quarterly results in a bid to attract potential investors, Aramco chief Amin Nasser has said.

Vacationing Jazeera journalist arrested

CAIRO: Egypt has arrested a journalist with the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera broadcaster, police officials said yesterday, in the latest move against the network it accuses of supporting Islamist opposition. Egyptian Mahmoud Hussein was arrested at his home on Friday, days after he returned to his country on vacation, the officials and Al-Jazeera said. He had been stopped and interrogated in Cairo airport when he arrived on Tuesday but was set free before police raided his house. Al-Jazeera denounced the arrest in a Facebook post. A prosecution official said Hussein is accused of incitement to violence and publishing false news and belonging to the banned Muslim Brotherhood movement.

BETHLEHEM CELEBRATES, EUROPE FEARFUL



BETHLEHEM: Palestinians attend a performance by Christian scouts at Manger Square outside the Church of Nativity during Christmas celebrations in this city in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday.— AFP

BETHLEHEM: Pilgrims gathered in Bethlehem yesterday for Christmas Eve as Europeans worked up some holiday spirit despite tight security in the shadow of the Berlin market attack. Dozens of Palestinians and tourists flocked to Bethlehem's Manger Square near the Church of the Nativity, where celebrations culminated with a midnight mass at the site where Christians believe Jesus (PBUH) was born.

Some snapped selfies near the square's giant Christmas tree and watched the annual Scouts parade in the city, a short drive from Jerusalem in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. "This is Christ's land, the land of peace," said Ramzi Abu Khalil, who was wearing a red Santa hat. "We take pride in him. All Christians should come today to Bethlehem. This is a holy day for us and a day of pilgrimage."

Violence put a damper on celebrations in Bethlehem last year, as a wave of

knife, gun and car-ramming attacks reduced sharply the number of Christmas visitors. The unrest has subsided in recent months and, with major Bethlehem hotels booked up, many in the city were optimistic this year's holiday season would bring more visitors.

In Europe, many preparing to celebrate were still reeling from this week's truck attack on the Berlin Christmas market. Hundreds of investigators were working through the holiday season hunting possible accomplices to Tunisian Anis Amri, who was killed Friday in a shootout with Italian police near Milan. Amri, 24, is believed to have hijacked a truck and used it to mow down holiday revelers at the market on Monday, killing 12 people in an attack claimed by the Islamic State (IS) group. Tunisia said yesterday it had arrested three men suspected of links with Amri, including his nephew.

Continued on Page 13

WOODS HITS GOLF LINKS WITH TRUMP

MIAMI: Tiger Woods, who played golf three years ago with Barack Obama, played 18 holes on Friday with Donald Trump at the real estate mogul's Trump International Golf Club in Palm Beach, Florida. Woods, who will celebrate his 41st birthday on Dec 30, returned to competition this month after a 15-month injury layoff. He joined the president-elect in a foursome, a spokeswoman for Trump's transition team said, with Trump departing via motorcade after the round for his Mar-a-Lago estate.

He planned to go from there to the West Palm Beach Hilton, and had meetings with "high-level staffers" planned later in the day, press secretary Stephanie Grisham said. Trump's transition team didn't offer any immediate details on the round, or what the president-elect and former world number one Woods talked

about. In Feb 2013, 14-time major champion Woods played with Obama at a private golf resort in Florida.

Obama and Woods teamed up to defeat US trade representative Ron Kirk and Houston Astros owner Jim Crane. That golf outing was criticized after it came to light that it ended up costing US taxpayers nearly \$3.6 million, according to a US Government Accountability report published this year. The Trump Organization owns golf courses around the world, including historic Turnberry in Scotland, which has hosted the Open Championship four times.

However, Trump's controversial comments on issues such as immigration during the US presidential campaign strained his relationships with some in the golf world.

Continued on Page 13



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti priest Emmanuel Gharib, head of the National Evangelical Church, leads Christmas Mass at the church in Kuwait City yesterday. There are approximately 200 Christian Kuwaitis in the state, in addition to a large expatriate Christian community, mostly from southeast Asia. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

In Brief

SPEAKER COMMENDS UNSC ANTI-SETTLEMENT RESOLUTION

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti parliament speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem praised a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution Friday that urged Israel to immediately stop Jewish settlement expansion in occupied Palestinian territories. The resolution "is a step in the right direction," Ghanem said in a press statement, and was another tool to exercise pressure upon Israel to abide by UN resolutions related to the Arab-Israeli conflict. He added that the resolution should be followed by other steps in international conferences like the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). — KUNA



KUWAIT CONDEMNS SOLDIERS' BURNING

KUWAIT: Kuwait strongly condemns the heinous terrorist crime of burning two Turkish soldiers by the so-called Islamic State terrorist group in Syria, a senior source at the Foreign Ministry stated Friday. This brutal crime reaffirms that barbarism of this terrorist group whose actions run counter to the teachings and tolerant values of Islam which calls for protection of every human soul, the source said. He emphasized Kuwait's solidarity with Turkey and support to all measures its government takes to maintain the country's security and stability. — KUNA



BOURSA LAUNCHES 'SPECIAL TRADES'

KUWAIT: In line with the company's diligence to address market needs, Boursa Kuwait announced yesterday the launch of 'Special Trades' transactions, after receiving final approval from the Capital Markets Authority (CMA). Boursa Kuwait Vice Chairman and CEO Khaled Abdulrazzaq Al-Khaled said in a release: "Boursa Kuwait seeks to introduce new tools and products that will first and foremost, facilitate the trading process for investors, and enhance the overall status of the exchange by providing long due solutions that will allow them to manage their investments more efficiently." — KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Boats cruise with Kuwait City's skyline in the background. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

OOREDOO SIGNS MEMORANDUM WITH KUWAIT INTERNATIONAL LAW SCHOOL



Ooredoo CEO and General Manager Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani, and the Dean of Kuwait International Law School Dr Mohammed Al-Moqatei sign the agreement.

KUWAIT: Ooredoo, the fastest network in Kuwait in 2016, signed a memorandum of understanding with the Kuwait International Law School last week. The signing ceremony was attended by Ooredoo CEO and General Manager Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani, and the Dean of Kuwait International Law School Dr Mohammed Al-Moqatei. The ceremony was also attended by Chief Corporate Legal and Regulatory Affairs Officer Dr Yousef Al-Sellili, Corporate Communications Senior Director Mijbil Alayoub, CSR, Sponsorship and Social Media Senior Manager Yousef Al-Shallal, Director of Legal Affairs Tamer Al-Shershaby, and Legal Advisor Othman Al-Farhan.

Commenting on this joint initiative, Ooredoo CEO and General Manager Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani said: "We're eager to join hands with a reputable organization such as the Kuwait International Law School. We at Ooredoo Kuwait are invested in youth and are proud to take part in their academic future. Through this program, we hope to expose students to the challenges of working in the dynamic private sector, especially in

the telecom industry which is one of the most fast-paced sectors. We believe in investing in youth, because the future of this country is built with their hands."

The Dean of Kuwait International Law School Dr Mohammed Al-Moqatei on his part lauded the initiative of Ooredoo, and commended their participation in supporting youth through their varied sponsorships and partnerships.

The memorandum of understanding between the two entities gives Kuwait International Law School students the opportunity to intern at Ooredoo Kuwait and get exposed to the various functions fulfilled by different departments across the organization. High-scoring students can also get an opportunity to intern in some of Ooredoo Group's operating companies outside Kuwait.

Empowering youth is among Ooredoo's top priorities through its CSR strategy. The company has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, to support youth projects and initiatives. Ooredoo is continuously working with the Ministry to enrich youth experience in a variety of fields, with a focus on volunteerism.



Sheikh Mohammed Al Thani and Dr Mohammed Al-Moqatei shake hands after signing the agreement.



Dean of Kuwait International Law School Dr Mohammed Al-Moqatei and Chief Corporate Legal and Regulatory Affairs Officer Dr Yousef Al-Sellili.



Ooredoo and Kuwait International Law School officials pose for a group photo.



The officials tour inside the Kuwait International Law School.



KUWAIT: Female security personnel participate in a training course. — KUNA



National Assembly's female guards on duty.

National Assembly's female security force, victory for women empowerment

Reaping the fruits of years of determination

KUWAIT: The inclusion of female security personnel in the National Assembly's Guard is considered as another victory for women empowerment in Kuwait. After reaching several key positions within the public and private domains, the ambition to be included in the state's security and armed forces took years to achieve.



Assistant Secretary for the National Assembly Guard General Khaled Al-Waqeet

With their determination and willingness to protect Kuwait, women finally attained their position alongside men in service of the country. Speaking in separate interviews, a number of female and male security personnel expressed their satisfaction with the current status quo, affirming that they were eager for more gains in the future.

Numerous pressures

Assistant Secretary for the National Assembly Guard General Khaled Al-Waqeet commended the performance of the female unit, saying that the work they have carried

'Tremendous work despite numerous pressures.'

out so far was tremendous despite numerous pressures. "There are five female personnel currently on duty at the National Assembly," said the General, revealing that 14 female cadets were being trained to join the current force.

The National Assembly is one of the most important sites in the country which required a huge amount of effort to secure, said General Waqeeet, adding that female security officers carried out the same duties to inspect visitors, protect officials, and fend off any harm that might be inflicted on parliament. The parliamentary guards will cooperate with Kuwait National Guard (KNG), the Interior and Defense Ministries to further develop the security staff at the National Assembly, said General Waqeeet.

Apprehensive at first

Meanwhile, Officer Entisar Al-Sahli said that the process of becoming a guard involved six months of training. "At first, our male colleagues felt a bit apprehensive, but with time, they began to accept us as their peers," said Sahli, affirming that she gained a lot of experience operating as a parliamentary guard.

'National Assembly requires a huge amount of effort to secure.'

Echoing similar sentiments, Officers Latifa Muftah, Sarah Al-Sarraf, Eman Al-Shaya, and Sherifah Al-Mkaimi said that being part of Kuwait's security apparatus was a life changing experience, revealing that they faced the same kind of uneasiness from their male counterparts when they began working.

Sharing a common goal and purpose really breaks down social and gender barriers, the officers agreed, saying that both male and female personnel were now working side by side and shoulder to shoulder to serve Kuwait.



A National Assembly's female guard is honored for her efforts.

Smooth operation

On the flip side of the coin, National Assembly Officers Jarallah Al-Jarallah, Abdulkareem Nasser, and Abdullah Al-Faraj said that they felt anxious when they began to include female personnel, but all matters went smoothly when they began to cooperate in fulfilling security duties at parliament.

The male security personnel said they were glad to be working with their female colleagues, affirming that the men and women of the National Assembly Guard will stand as one in face of all dangers and adversaries. — KUNA

'At first, our male colleagues felt a bit apprehensive, but with time, they began to accept us'



National Assembly's female guards on duty.



A National Assembly's female guard oversees scanning material before they enter the building.



Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah



A scene from a performance held as part of the 'Kuwait Capital of Islamic Culture' activities.



A performance held during the 'Kuwait Capital of Islamic Culture' activities.

CLOSING CEREMONY AFFIRMED KUWAIT'S CULTURAL MESSAGE: INFO MINISTER

KUWAIT DEPICTS 'BRIGHT IMAGE' AS ISLAMIC CULTURAL CAPITAL: ISESCO

KUWAIT/RABAT: His Highness the Amir's patronization of the ceremony marking conclusion of the festivities for designating the State of Kuwait as the Capital of Islamic Culture affirms the higher leadership's ardent advocacy of culture and its role for the community's progress, the Minister of Information said.

Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, expressed in a statement deep congratulations to 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 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Hamad Al-Sabah who doubled as chairman of the steering committee, for the ceremony's success that affirmed Kuwait's high-esteem cultural message. His Highness the Amir earlier this week patronized the culminating festivity, capping a string of activities, workshops, artistic and poetic events for celebrating the country's designation.

Elaborating, Minister Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem said "selecting Kuwait as the Capital of Islamic Culture 2016 was tantamount to international recognition of

the significant Kuwaiti cultural message; such a message goes deep into history and crosses borders enlightening nations and communities.

Golden age

The Kuwaiti culture, nowadays, is in its golden age due to the unlimited support from the supreme Kuwaiti leadership, he said, lauding year-long creative and serious activities under chairmanship of His Highness the Premier.

He expressed satisfaction for hosting cultural ministers from other countries in the Amir-sponsored closing event, adding that the activities affirmed the Kuwaiti Arab and Islamic cultural identity as well as its interaction with nations of divergent civilizations and cultures. Such a visionary approach at this level had been affirmed by His Highness the Amir at the United Nations in 2008 during the civilizations and religions' summit.

Participation of a large number of personalities and delegations from the other nations in the closing festival boosted values of compassion, brotherhood, openness and co-existence among nations, as well as bolstered the approach to renounce extremism and terrorism, he continued.

More than 800 activities had been held during the year-long celebrations, he said, singling out as a distinguished achievement inauguration of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center. He also indicated at the honoring of Al-Azhar Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Tayeb by His Highness the Amir, and ISESCO's honoring of the General Supervisor Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyah Sheikh Hessa Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Bright image

Meanwhile, ISESCO's Chief said that Kuwait has shown a 'bright image' of the Islamic Cultural Capital concept, which strengthened the organization's objectives. Kuwait carried out a number of cultural events "which have given the concept of Islamic Cultural Capitals a deep meaning and a bright image of the way a Islamic cultural capital should celebrate cultural achievements," Abdulaziz Al-Tuwaijri, ISESCO Director General, said.

Tuwaijri said ISESCO was following the cultural activities held by Kuwait throughout the year, which surpassed a record 800 events. ISESCO, he added, had also implemented a number of activities and programs, like an international seminar about

cultural heritage, the use of technology in museums and a conference on antiquities.

Tuwaijri said Kuwait City has flourished in the past six decades, and has seen tremendous

cultural development. Kuwait, he went on to say, contributed largely to education, culture, science, literature, knowledge, art, publication and human life in general. —KUNA



The daughter of Sheikh Hessa Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, General Supervisor Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyah, receives ISESCO's honoring on behalf of her mother.



Kuwaiti jockey Ali Al-Kharafi



Kuwaiti jockey Marshoud Al-Marshoud

KUWAITI JOCKEY WINS GOLD AT QATAR SHOW

DOHA: Kuwaiti jockey Ali Al-Kharafi won the gold medal late Friday during his participation in Qatar's International Show Jumping Championship which began in the capital Doha on Thursday. Kharafi managed to beat 47 other jockeys to win the medal. There are about 170 jockeys from 12 countries, partaking in the tournament.

Kharafi said that he was glad to have won the competition. He took the time to also commend the performances of his teammates Shaker Al-Khathmi and Marshoud Al-Marshoud who both won the gold and silver medals during Thursday's competition. Kharafi also won a silver medal during the course of the championship.

Unfortunately, the Kuwaiti Jockeys will not be able to record the wins under Kuwait's flag due to the ban imposed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Kuwaiti sports. They competed under the banner of the International Federation for Equestrian Sports (FEI). The tournament concluded yesterday. — KUNA



Kuwaiti jockey Shaker Al-Khathmi

'LEAD THEM TO ZAIN' PROMOTION LAUNCHED FOR POSTPAID CUSTOMERS

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, launched its latest promotional campaign for postpaid customers entitled 'Lead them to Zain'. The promotion offers exclusive and exciting benefits for two existing or new customers when they subscribe to the promotion together. Zain specially designed the new promotion for postpaid users to reward customers who invite their family and friends to be a part of the Zain family, considered the largest in Kuwait. The company is keen on meeting its customers' personal and professional needs on its most advanced nationwide network.

When existing or new customers subscribe to the promotion and invite

a family member or friend to subscribe with them, both customers get to respectively choose from two different packages. Both customers will get the exclusive benefits that come with the first customer's package. The higher the first customer's package, the more benefits both customers get.

The first package of KD 35 monthly (with 24 months commitment) offers KD 100 of free credit if one or both subscribers were new customers, or KD 50 of free credit if both subscribers were non-committed existing customers. The free credit can be used to settle bills, buy smart devices, buy entertainment devices, or buy accessories. The second package of KD 40 monthly (with 24 months commit-

ment) offers KD 150 of free credit if one or both subscribers were new customers, or KD 75 of free credit if both subscribers were non-committed existing customers. The free credit can be used to settle bills, buy smart devices, buy entertainment devices, or buy accessories.

Zain launched this exclusive campaign to show its commitment towards Kuwait's largest family of subscribers. The company will spare no efforts to meet customers' needs and aspirations on its most advanced network. By launching this exciting promotion, Zain continues to reinforce its leadership position and its pledge in offering the best services and offers to its customer base.

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Crime

Report

MOTORIST KILLED IN FATAL ACCIDENT

KUWAIT: A Syrian man was killed after his vehicle flew off Riqqa flyover following a collision with another vehicle along Fahaheel Expressway. Security sources said the other driver, an Indian, was rushed to hospital for treatment. Separately, a citizen escaped death with very serious injuries after he lost control over his vehicle, which turned over along the Fourth Ring Road.

Multiple arrests

Five expatriates were arrested by residency detectives for violating residency laws, said security sources, noting that the suspects were referred to relevant authorities pending deportation. Meanwhile, two citizens were arrested in Ahmadi with meth and two hashish joints.

Children saved

Seven children playing in an elevator in Mahboula were trapped for half an hour after the lift broke down. Firemen rushed to the scene and rescued them.

Drug possession

A Syrian truck driver was arrested on arrival from Iraq at Abdaly land border exit after custom inspectors found four kilograms of hashish hidden in a secret compartment in the truck.

Missing girl found

A Kuwaiti girl who had been reported missing in 2011, when she was 23 years old, was found at a checkpoint in Fintas.

Man stabbed in fight

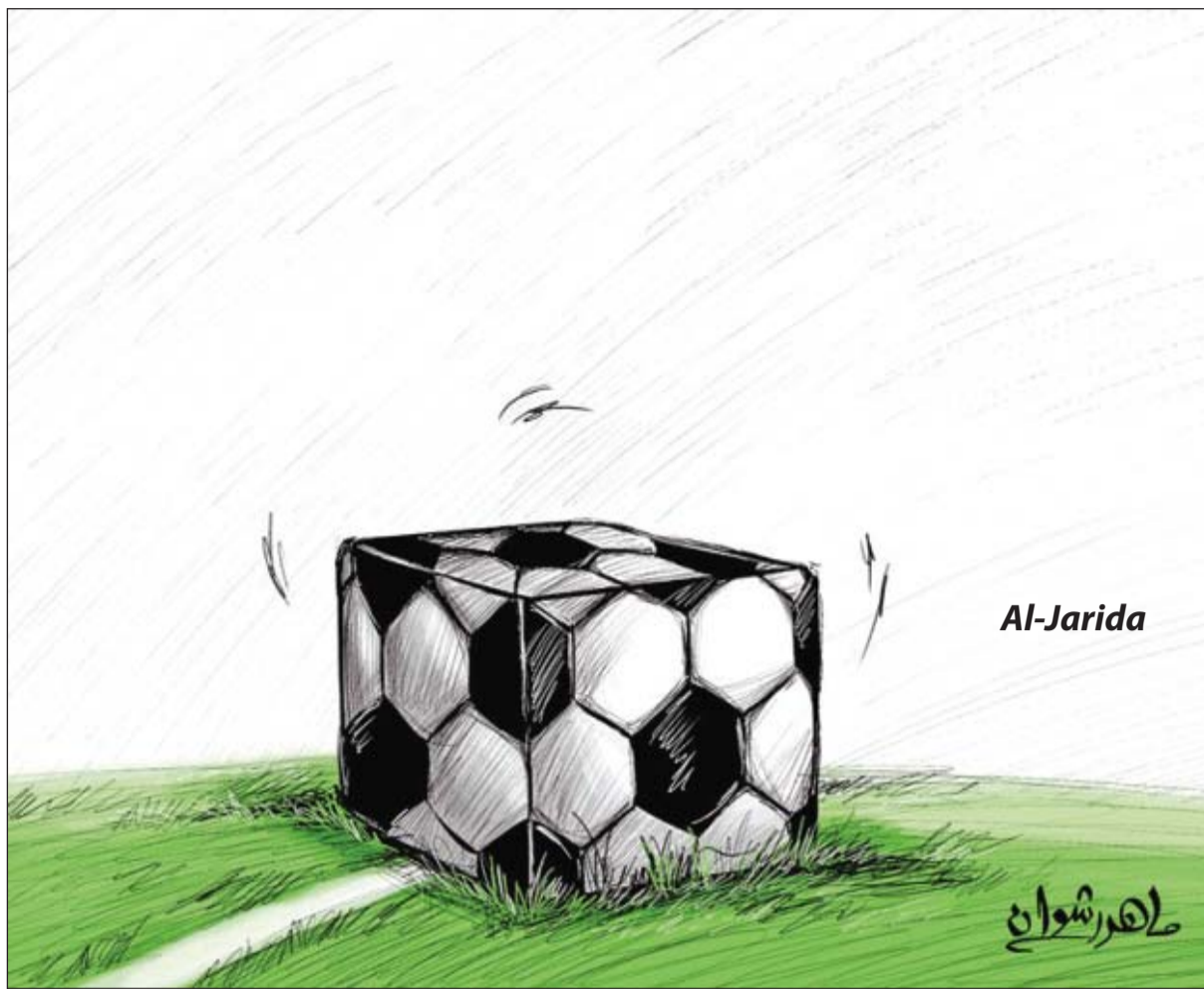
A citizen in his 30s was rushed to Jahra Hospital after he was stabbed in the face during a fight in Qasr.

Neighbors' row

An Iranian woman filed a complaint against her Syrian neighbor in a Hawally building. Further investigations are in progress. —Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa



KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) distributed winter clothes to cleaning workers as part of its charity campaign to help outdoor workers cope with harsh weather conditions throughout the year.



Al-Jarida

الجريدة Al-Jarida

CHRISTIANS IN KUWAIT, PREPARE TO PAY JIZYA!

By Mohammed Al-Weshaihi

Thanks be to Almighty Allah that Islam now has the courageous MP Osama Al-Shaheen, who led a historic battle that should be added to major conquests, after he managed to defeat both the government and the Franks and hoist Islam's flag over Dasma Co-op Society to defend it!

Details of this blessed foray started when Dasma Co-op decided to set up a Christmas tree on the advent of Christmas, which was an attempt to insult

God bless such a fragile government that trembles with fear at the smallest of threats

Islam and humiliate Muslims. This triggered the chivalry in the head of knights - Osama Al-Shaheen - who decided to wage war, and thus dug trenches, bid his folks farewell and got ready to sacrifice his soul. He addressed the minister of social affairs and labor, apparently in an angry manner, which made her, her government, the Christians in Kuwait and the co-op's officials tremble, and they all yielded to his demands and removed the tree from the land of Muslims. This 'trembling' foray will be long recorded in history.

We will soon besiege Christians in Kuwait and Dasma Co-op. We will probably attack it with catapults and cut food and water supplies till we get its keys and enter with cries of Allahu Akbar, carrying Islamic flags. We may also live to see the day when Christians in Kuwait start paying jizya (tax on non-Muslims) in cash or through K-Net.

God bless you, oh courageous knight, tree remover and oyster splitter. And God bless such a fragile government that trembles with fear at the smallest of threats. May God also bless all those who supported this foray on this blessed land!

— Translated by Kuwait Times

الجريدة

Al-Jarida

GRILLING MOTIONS IN THE PAST

By Dr Saleh Al-Ojairi

The first interpellation ever filed in the National Assembly was in the 1960s, when late lawmaker Mohammed Ahmed Al-Rasheed grilled the late minister of social affairs and labor Abdullah Meshari Al-Roudhan. The motion was over cancelling the term 'first category' used to describe houses within Kuwait City's boundaries, which were bought by the government. The grilling also inquired about allocating these houses to those who needed temporary accommodation until all the houses were bought and then demolished to pave the way for new projects.

The third inquiry on the grilling motion's list was about the reasons why the applications filed to get these houses by those with limited income outnumbered the ones that were already available. The session was held in the minister's office instead of the Assembly hall and it was attended by the housing minister, myself and Rasheed, and the matter was settled within an hour. What is wrong with grilling motions filed now? Have they become void of good intentions?

— Translated by Kuwait Times

What is wrong with grilling motions filed now? Have they become void of good intentions?



KUWAIT: Jahra Governor and KFH Group CEO Mazin Al-Nahedh cut the ribbon to mark the opening of the branch.

JAHRA GOVERNOR OPENS KFH BRANCH IN SAAD AL-ABDULLAH

PRaises Bank's Role in Supporting Economy

KUWAIT: Governor of Al-Jahra, the retired Lieutenant General, Fahd Ahmed Al-Amir lauded the significant and important role exerted by Kuwait Finance House (KFH) in supporting and developing the national economy along with the distinctive banking services offered by KFH to its customers. Al-Amir added that such services are distinguished with being competitive, diverse and popular for wide segments of the community.

During his participation in opening the KFH's branch in Saad Al-Abdullah City, Block 2, the Governor congratulated all the staff and officials for opening the branch noting that it will represent an added civilized and service value to the people of the area and meets the needs of a large number therefrom.

Al-Jahra Governor expressed, after he cut the ribbon of opening the branch officially with the attendance of large prominent officials from KFH led by the Group CEO Mazin Al-Nahedh, Group Chief Strategy Officer Fahad Khalid Al-Mukhaizeem, Group GM Retail Banking Fadi Chalouhi and his Deputy Khaled Al-Sebaiei, his sincere wishes for success to KFH Board in its projects and future development plans that will ensure the con-

tinuation of its well-being and distinctiveness. For his part, Al-Nahedh said that the opening of KFH's branch in Saad Al-Abdullah City comes within KFH's policy aiming at expanding the network of KFH local branches so as to provide the best services to its customers in the nearest place to their presence, noting that KFH is continuously keen on providing the best services and products to its customers as per the international standards. Al-Nahedh added that KFH is extensively focusing on upgrading the performance style of its branches and staff to match with the growth in customers' size and meet their needs and demands.

Al-Nahedh stressed the great importance allocated by KFH to its customers, either by providing the best service through the finest professional approaches and methods, or by listening to their views, perceptions and suggestions. Therefore, we are looking forward to a greater role of banking branches.

It is worth noting that KFH branch in Saad Al-Abdullah City is the 65th branch of the Bank. It is situated near the Central Co-Operative Society, Block 2. It opens for customers from Sunday through Thursday 8:30 am-3:00 pm.

CUTTING EXPATS NUMBERS BY ONE MILLION 'INAPPLICABLE'

KUWAIT: A proposal made by MP Khalil Abul to reduce the number of expatriates in Kuwait and make it even with Kuwaitis' numbers is basically inapplicable, government sources said, adding that governmental studies to address the demographic imbalance problem never discussed the possibility of a solution in that format.

"Reducing the number of expats to be equal to the number of Kuwaitis cannot be made," said the sources who spoke to Al-Rai on the condition of anonymity.

Abul had suggested deporting marginal labor, victims of visa trafficking and expats with criminal records, which, according to him, could help cut expats' numbers by around one million.

The sources reiterated that the government studies every proposal made by the parliament "and after that it makes an announcement about it". They noted at the same time that Abul's proposal is inapplicable in principle 'for several considerations,' even within a time-frame of five to ten years. — Al-Rai



AHLI UNITED BANK'S PARTICIPATION AT ELITE PROPERTY SHOW HAILED AS A MAJOR SUCCESS

PROVIDING ADDED VALUE SERVICE TO CUSTOMERS

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) successfully concluded its participation at the recent Kuwait international property show. The Bank's booth witnessed a significant number of attendees, where representatives from AUB provided the latest updates on a wide range of financial solutions, in accordance with Islamic sharia and values that have been tailored to meet customers' real estate needs. The event, which took place from Dec 12th-17th, was held at the Mishref fairground.

Real estate finance is considered amongst the premier services offered across AUB's portfolio. The growth of the Bank's real estate finance capabilities, which provides a broad array of benefits, is attributed to customers' trust and confidence. The Bank also offers personal funding that amounts

to KD 70,000 to salaried account holders, with a flexible repayment period of up to 10 years.

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For further information on the Bank's services, customers may visit any of AUB's branches, call 'Hayakom', the Bank's telebanking service at 1812000 or visit the Bank's website www.ahliunited.com.kw.



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) sponsored a four-month campaign organized by the Capital Governorate to clean the Sulaibikhat, Doha and Ushairej beaches. Capital Governor Lieutenant General Thabet Al-Muhanna honored CBK during a ceremony held recently at the conclusion of the campaign.



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2016

OFFICIALS HUNT SUPPLY NETWORK OF ATTACKER

MILAN: Investigators yesterday sought to hunt down where the Berlin Christmas market attacker got possible logistical support to cross at least two European borders and evade capture for days before being killed in a police shootout during a routine stop in a Milan suburb.

Tunisian fugitive Anis Amri's fingerprints and wallet were found in a truck that plowed into a Christmas market in Berlin on Monday night, killing 12 people and injuring 56 others. Despite an intense, Europe-wide manhunt, Amri fled across Germany, into France and then into Italy, traveling at least part of the way by train, before being shot early Friday on foot outside a deserted train station.

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for the Berlin attack, but so far little is known about any possible logistical network backing the 24-year-old fugitive. Italian investigators were working to see if the Tunisian had any connections in the Milan area. Italy was his port of entry into Europe in 2011 and he spent more than three years in Italian jails on Sicily.

But an anti-terrorism official said there was no evidence that he had ever been in or around Milan before Friday's shootout. In Tunisia, the Interior Ministry announced the arrest Friday of Amri's nephew and two others suspected of belonging to the same extremist network. The ministry said in a statement that Amri, through an alias, had sent his 18-year-old nephew Fedi some money through the post office to join him in Europe and join the Abou Walaa network. Amir claimed to be the network's emir.

IS allegiance

It is unclear whether those suspects were in any position to help Amri flee Berlin. The ministry said during questioning, the nephew said he was in contact with Amri via Telegram's encrypted communications to avoid detection. He told police that Amri had recruited him to jihad and asked him to pledge allegiance to IS. The nephew recorded such a pledge and sent it to Amri via Telegram.

The Tunisian prosecutor's office ordered all three held in pre-trial detention pending further investigation. In Spain, police were investigating whether Amri was in contact with another possible extremist in Spain, on a tip from German authorities. "We are studying all possible connections (between Amri) and our country, above all with one specific person," Interior Minister Juan Ignacio Zoido told Spanish radio.

Italy has found itself at the center of the Berlin attack investigation after the dramatic shootout that ended the manhunt. The deserted train station and the late hour prompted Italian officers to check the North African man's identity, officials said. Instead of pulling out an identity card, Amri produced a loaded .22 caliber gun, shooting a senior officer in the shoulder before a rookie officer killed him with a single shot to the chest.

Amri had arrived in the southern island of Lampedusa illegally in 2011, claiming to be a minor, and quickly landed in jail after setting fire to a migrant center. After he was freed, efforts to deport him failed for bureaucratic reasons. He reached Germany, where authorities were concerned enough about him to put him under covert surveillance for six months earlier this year, ending the operation in September. His request for asylum was refused by Germany in the summer, but the paperwork from Tunisia that was needed to deport him was delayed for months. Tunisian officials say that's because Amri used at least six different names and three different nationalities in travels around Europe, and they had to check each one. — AFP

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INDIA OFFICIAL MEETS TRUMP NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER

WASHINGTON: India's national security adviser made a low-key visit to Washington earlier this week to meet with a senior aide to President-elect Donald Trump, Indian diplomats said Friday, in a sign of New Delhi's desire to forge close ties with the incoming US administration.

India's Ajit Doval met for more than one hour with Michael Flynn, Trump's national security adviser, and they dis-

cussed their respective security priorities, including counterterrorism. The diplomats spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the unannounced meeting. Doval then met Tuesday with current US National Security Adviser Susan Rice and Secretary of State John Kerry.

New Delhi hopes a Trump administration will take a tougher line against Islamist militancy by India's historical

rival, Pakistan, but likely has concerns over a Nov. 30 phone call between Trump and Pakistan's prime minister. In its readout of that call, Pakistan said that Trump described the country as "amazing" and expressed a desire to visit - something that President Barack Obama has not done during his eight years in office, although his predecessor George W Bush did.

Under Obama, there have been peri-

odic strains between the US and India, but relations have picked up since Modi was elected in 2014. When Modi addressed Congress this June, he described the US as an "indispensable partner" and said together they could anchor stability and prosperity from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific.

The world's two largest democracies share strategic concerns about the rise of China. While India steers clear of a formal

alliance with Washington, the two militaries conduct frequent joint drills and India has turned to US suppliers to help modernize its armed forces. During the election campaign, when Trump often used negative rhetoric against foreign nations, he was largely positive about India. He praised Indian nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi for championing bureaucratic reform and economic growth. — AP

BANGLADESH POLICE JAIL LABOR UNREST REPORTER

DHAKA: A local television journalist in Bangladesh has been arrested for inciting unrest in one of the country's biggest garment manufacturing zones, police said yesterday. Nazmul Huda has been accused of "inaccurate reporting" on almost daily protests in Ashulia-home to Bangladesh's biggest garment plants that make clothing for top Western brands like GAP, Zara and H&M-according to a senior officer. "He is accused of inciting illegal protests, holding secret meetings with seven labor leaders whom we've arrested, and trying to destabilize the government," head of Dhaka district police SM Shaful Rahman told AFP.

He added that police have charged Huda under controversial information and technology laws, which have been widely used in Bangladesh to crack down on dissent. Huda's arrest comes after mass protests by thousands of workers prompted the closure of 55 garment factories in Ashulia, on the outskirts of capital Dhaka. Bangladesh's \$30 billion garment industry has a woeful history of poor conditions for its four million workers, who are also among the lowest paid in the world's textile sector.

Those in Ashulia launched a strike two weeks ago to protest the firing of 121 colleagues, and subsequently demanded their

salaries be tripled from 5,300 taka (\$67) — the current monthly minimum wage-to 16,000 taka. Several hundred policemen have been deployed in the industrial zone since the strike began and at least seven people who were leading the strike have been arrested.

Garment manufacturing makes up 80 percent of Bangladesh's exports and a prolonged interruption could have a cascading impact on the impoverished country's economy.

Huda, a correspondent for the private ETV network, was the first journalist to report on the shoddy structure of the Rana Plaza factory, just a day before it collapsed on April 24, 2013 and killed more than 1,100 people in one of the world's worst industrial disasters.

He shot video footage of the cracks that had developed at the Rana Plaza, which was later used as evidence in court. He had also reported on how the owner of the rickety nine-storey garment complex forced thousands of workers to enter the building for their shifts despite cracks in its pillars, less than an hour before it caved in. The tragedy triggered international outrage, forcing US and European clothing brands to improve deplorable safety conditions at the factories that supply them. — AFP



KINSHASA: This file photo taken on December 20, 2016 shows a child staring at the marks of burnt tyres following a protest in the Lingwala neighborhood. — AFP

ALL-NIGHT TALKS FAIL TO REACH DR CONGO DEAL

PRESIDENT JOSEPH KABILA REFUSING TO QUIT POWER

KINSHASA: Hopes of a deal to end DR Congo's dangerous political crisis before Christmas were faltering yesterday after fruitless all-night talks over President Joseph Kabila's refusal to quit power. Kabila's second and final five-year term ended on December 20, but he has shown no intention of leaving office soon, sparking violent protests that have left at least 40 people dead this week, according to the United Nations.

The influential Catholic Church has been brokering talks between the government and opposition and hopes rose this week of an imminent deal, with a draft seen by AFP outlining plans for fresh elections at the end of next year, when Kabila would step down. But that optimism has been slipping, and negotiators from the two camps left church offices in Kinshasa just before 5:30 am (0430 GMT) without a deal to prevent a fresh descent into conflict in a country that has suffered two horrific wars since 1996.

"The work is practically finished-the final touches are all that is left to do before the deal is signed," insisted Marcel Utambi, president of the Congo National Episcopal Conference (CENCO), who had pushed for a deal before

Christmas. But others indicated there was still a long way to go. "Everything is still blocked on how (public affairs) will be managed during the transition period," said opposition delegate Francois Muamba. Two opposition delegates said the squabbling sides could return to the table yesterday morning, but there was no confirmation from CENCO. Negotiators from Kabila's political alliance were remaining tight-lipped.

'Serious mediocrity'

A frustrated CENCO official, speaking on condition of anonymity, blasted DR Congo's political class for "serious mediocrity" in their inability to reach a deal. "They have called into question everything we arranged the day before," the official said as talks stretched into the night. Time is pressing as the bishops overseeing the talks are due to quit the capital yesterday afternoon to return to their congregations in time for Christmas Eve mass.

Tensions are still running high, with security forces spraying live ammunition at a string of anti-Kabila protests in Kinshasa and other towns this week, killing at least 40 civilians, according to the UN. Congolese police put the toll at 20

dead, saying they had largely been killed in "looting" or by "stray bullets". Other sources say somewhere between 56 and 125 people have been killed in a week of clashes, not counting the unknown toll from fighting between security forces and an anti-government militia in the central town of Kananga.

Kabila, 45, has been in power since the 2001 assassination of his father Laurent at the height of the Second Congo War. He was confirmed as leader of the mineral-rich nation in 2006 during the first free elections since independence from Belgium in 1960, and re-elected for a second term in 2011 in a vote marred by allegations of massive fraud.

Constitutionally banned from seeking a third term, he obtained a controversial court ruling in May stating that he could remain in power until a successor was chosen. DR Congo has never seen a democratic transfer of power following polls since independence from Belgium in 1960. Two decades ago, the country collapsed into the deadliest conflict in modern African history. Its two wars in the late 1990s and early 2000s pulled in at least six African armies and left more than three million dead. — AFP



DHAKA: Bangladesh police officials stand alert as bystanders gather at the scene of an operation to storm an alleged militant hideout yesterday, as a team from the counterterrorism unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police cordoned off a two-storey building in the capital. — AFP

2 DEAD IN DHAKA RAID ON MILITANT HIDEOUT

NEW DELHI: A woman and a teenager believed to be linked to a banned Islamist militant group blew themselves up during a police raid on a two-storey house in Bangladesh's capital yesterday, a government minister said. The woman died after detonating explosives attached to her body during the raid, while the teenage boy's bloodied body was found inside an apartment on the ground floor of the building in Dhaka's Ashkona area, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said. Both were tied to the Jumatul Mujahideen Bangladesh group, or JMB, he said.

A 7-year-old girl sustained splinter injuries when the woman blew herself up and was being treated at a hospital in Dhaka, Khan said. Two other women and two children surrendered in the operation earlier yesterday, he said. Bangladesh, a Muslim-majority country, has been experi-

encing threats recently from radical groups targeting atheists, bloggers, writers, foreigners and minority religious groups.

Masudur Rahman, a spokesman for the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told reporters that one of the surrendered women was the wife of a slain JMB military commander who was killed in a police raid in Dhaka in September. He said the women were taken into police custody and would be questioned. The secular government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has blamed JMB for several recent attacks.

In a major attack on July 1, young militants belonging to the group killed 20 hostages, including 17 foreigners, in a restaurant in Dhaka. Since July, police have conducted several raids like yesterday's and killed at least 40 suspects amid a massive manhunt for those responsible for the recent attacks. — AP

SRI LANKA CLEARS SPIES OF KILLING TAMIL MP

COLOMBO: A Sri Lankan court yesterday acquitted five men, including three navy intelligence officers, charged with assassinating an opposition Tamil legislator whose party immediately raised concerns about judicial integrity. Nadaraja Raviraj, who represented the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), was shot dead in 2006 along with his bodyguard as they drove out of his home in Colombo, two and a half years before the end of the country's Tamil separatist war.

Raviraj had been a staunch critic of then-president Mahinda Rajapakse's no-holds-barred offensive that crushed Tamil rebels and prompted

witnesses in the case," the state-run Daily News said.

TNA spokesman and fellow member of parliament MA Sumanthiran said the acquittal confirmed their fears that the victim could not expect a fair trial by a jury consisting only of those belonging to the majority Sinhala-speaking community. "It became an us (majority Sinhalese) versus them (minority Tamils) issue and shows we were right to object to this jury, but our position was rejected by the judge," Sumanthiran told AFP.

He said the court verdict underscored the need for independent international judicial experts to

investigate allegations of war crimes during the 37-year-long Tamil separatist war which ended in May 2009.

He added that the five men were charged with executing the assassination, but those who had ordered it were still at large. Human rights organizations have accused government forces of killing political opponents and suspected Tamil rebel sympathizers during Rajapakse's rule. Sri Lanka's new government, which came to power in January last year promising accountability for wartime atrocities and ethnic reconciliation, has so far refused to allow international judges in any war crimes probe. — AFP

PM MODI LAYS FOUNDATION OF HUGE STATUE AMID CRITICISM

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday laid the foundation stone for a massive memorial of a medieval warrior king that's expected to cost billions of rupees and has come under criticism from environmental activists and others. The memorial, which includes a proposed 192-meter (630-foot) tall statue of Shivaji, a 16th century ruler from western India, will be built off the coast of Mumbai on land reclaimed from the Arabian Sea.

The project is expected to be completed by 2019. The government of Maharashtra state, of which Mumbai is the capital, is expected to spend about 36 billion rupees (\$530 million) on the statue. By midday yesterday, some 25,900 people had signed a Change.org petition asking that the government spend the money on infrastructure and development instead. "Apart from a waste of money, this statue is going to be terrible for the environment, for the traffic situation in South Bombay and a security nightmare," the petition says. Once complete, the statue will be more than twice the height of the Statue of Liberty.

Yesterday, Modi also performed a Hindu religious ritual called "Bhoompujan," or worshipping the land. The ritual is performed by devout Hindus before the start of any construction project. This isn't the first time that a dizzying amount of taxpayer money has been set aside to build a massive statue or memorial to a popular leader in India.

In 2014, shortly after Modi became prime minister, the national budget set aside about 2 billion rupees (\$34 million) to build a massive structure to honor independence leader Vallabhbhai Patel. That project is underway in Modi's home state of Gujarat and once complete is expected to cost about 10 times the amount set aside in the budget. The rest is expected to be filled by private and corporate donations.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party isn't alone in its love of statues. Mayawati, a leader from the populous northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh who goes by one name, had dozens of statues erected honoring her and political mentors during her time as that state's leader. — AP



AMRITSAR: An Indian schoolboy wearing a 'Santa Claus' outfit is mobbed by classmates as he gives out sweets during Christmas celebrations at a school in Amritsar yesterday. Although Indian Christians make up a mere two percent of the country's billion plus population, Christmas has become a popular festival in the Indian calendar. — AFP



A Palestinian man walks on the beach as the sun sets over Gaza City yesterday.— AP

ISRAEL FUMES AFTER US LETS UN DENOUNCE...

Continued from Page 1

"Of all the conflicts in the world, just one party's being singled out, and that's the Jewish party," said Oren. Trump reacted after the vote by promising change at the UN. "As to the UN, things will be different after Jan 20th," he tweeted referring to the date of his inauguration.

It would be virtually impossible, however, for Trump to overturn the resolution. It would require a new resolution with support from at least nine members in the 15-member Security Council and no veto by one of the other permanent members - Russia, China, Britain or France, all of whom supported Friday's resolution.

A spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called the resolution a "big blow for Israeli policies". The move was "an international and unanimous condemnation of settlements and strong support for the two-state solution," said Nabil Abu Rudeina. Hamas, the Islamist movement that runs the Gaza Strip, also welcomed the vote. Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat hailed the result as a "victory for the justice of the Palestinian cause". He said Trump's choice was now between "international legitimacy" or siding with "settlers and extremists". Riyadh Mansour, the Palestinian UN ambassador, urged the Security Council to "stand firm by this decision" and "not be cowed by negative threats or spin".

Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem praised the vote. The resolution "is a step in the right direction," Ghanem said in a press statement, and was another tool to exercise pressure on Israel to abide by UN resolutions related to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Ghanem said the resolution should be followed by other steps at international conferences like the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). He hoped IPU members move to prove how Israel was violating the IPU charter, thus triggering penalties. Ghanem however said these diplomatic moves might not be enough, "but they should be encouraged and supported by forces to expose Israel's practices, which violate all international human rights norms".

The US has traditionally served as Israel's diplomatic shield, protecting it from resolutions it opposes. It is Israel's most important ally, providing it with more than \$3 billion each year in defense aid. That number will soon rise to \$3.8 billion per year under a new decade-

long pact, the biggest pledge of US military aid in history. But the Obama administration has grown increasingly frustrated with settlement building in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied for nearly 50 years.

There have been growing warnings that settlement expansion is fast eroding the possibility of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the basis of years of negotiations. Settlements are built on land the Palestinians view as part of their future state and seen as illegal under international law. "We cannot stand in the way of this resolution as we seek to preserve a chance of attaining our longstanding objective of two states living side by side in peace and security," said Samantha Power, the US ambassador to the UN. "The settlement problem has gotten so much worse that it is now putting at risk the very viability of that two-state solution."

Obama adviser Ben Rhodes said "we cannot simply have a two-state solution be a slogan", but added that "we did not draft this resolution". "We took the position that we did when it was put to a vote," he said. Trump has signaled he is likely to be far more favorable to Israel. David Friedman, his nominee for ambassador to Israel, favors moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and has voiced support for settlement building.

Some 430,000 Israeli settlers currently live in the West Bank and a further 200,000 Israelis live in annexed east Jerusalem, which Palestinians see as the capital of their future state. The resolution demands "Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem." It says settlements have "no legal validity" and are "dangerously imperiling the viability of the two-state solution".

Friday's vote was scheduled at the request of New Zealand, Malaysia, Senegal and Venezuela - each representing a different region and reflecting the wide support for the measure - which stepped in after Egypt put the draft resolution on hold. After the resolution passed, Israel recalled its ambassadors to Senegal and New Zealand for consultations. He also canceled a planned January visit to Israel by Senegal's foreign minister and ended Israeli aid programs to the West African nation. Israel has no diplomatic relations with Venezuela or Malaysia. — Agencies

WOODS HITS GOLF LINKS WITH TRUMP

Continued from Page 1

The PGA of America stripped its 2015 Grand Slam of Golf from Trump National Los Angeles after Trump's comments on Mexican immigrants, and the event was later discontinued. Activist Martha Burk is among those who have called for the US Golf Association to move the 2017 US Women's Open from Trump National in New Jersey, a demand the USGA has rejected.

The US PGA Tour moved its longstanding tournament at Trump National Doral in the Miami area to Mexico City

for the 2016-17 season, although tour commissioner Tim Finchem said in June that the move of the World Golf Championships event was not a "political exercise". However, Finchem acknowledged that having the Trump brand on the host course of the event made it harder to find a sponsor to replace outgoing Cadillac, since Trump would share the limelight with any other corporate backer.

Although Trump blasted Obama during the campaign for playing too much golf, Golf Digest magazine recently listed the president-elect as among the best golfers in Washington with a 2.8 handicap. — AFP

BETHLEHEM CELEBRATES, EUROPE FEARFUL

Continued from Page 1

Locals and tourists in Berlin visited the Christmas market targeted in the attack, and many took a moment to quietly light a candle or lay flowers for the victims. "It's really nice there are so many people here and it's still open," said Marianne Weile, 56, from Copenhagen. "So even though you are really sad about what happened you can still keep Christmas. It's not like this crazy guy ruined it for everybody."

Security was tight elsewhere in Europe for the holidays, including at Milan's cathedral, where police were out in force and concrete barricades had been erected around the Piazza del Duomo, where a Christmas market is held. In France, 91,000 police, gendarmes and soldiers had been deployed to guard public spaces including churches and markets. In the northern city of Lille, concrete blocks had been laid in areas around the city to prevent vehicle attacks, prompting 62-year-old Michelle to ask: "How far are we going to go?"

Despite the security fears, many were braving winter temperatures to take part in traditional markets and other festivities. Among them some 30 hardy Slovaks participated in a winter swim at Bratislava's Zlate Piesky lake, some drinking beer in the nearly freezing water. In London, meat-lovers converged on Smithfield Market for the traditional Christmas Eve auction at butcher Harts, waving banknotes in the air as they bid on turkeys, pork cuts and rump steaks.

Prime Minister Theresa May used her first Christmas message to urge Britain to come together in 2017 after a year of bitter divisions exposed by the Brexit referendum. As families gathered for Christmas, May said "coming together is also important for us as a country." Christians in Syria's Aleppo were looking forward to celebrations after President Bashar Al-

Assad's forces retook full control of the city following a rebel withdrawal this week.

Members of Aleppo's Catholic minority have been preparing for the first Christmas mass in five years at the Saint Elias Cathedral in the Old City. The famed cathedral's roof collapsed years ago under a salvo of rocket fire, but this week members of the community were clearing out debris to prepare for the service. "All our memories are here - this is where we celebrated all our feast days, our joys," said Bashir Badawi, rummaging through rubble for wood and scrap metal to make a crude Nativity scene. "We want to transform all this destruction into something beautiful."

In Bartalla near the Iraqi city of Mosul, Christians were also holding a service for the first time since their town was recaptured from IS. The jihadists destroyed crosses at the Mar Shimoni church in Bartalla and set it alight, but volunteers worked for days to ready it for the first service in more than two and a half years. "We want to deliver the message that we are staying in this country and that these are our roots and our origins," Father Yaqub Saadi, the church's priest, told AFP.

In the mostly Catholic Philippines, authorities began evacuating thousands of people and shut down dozens of ports as a strong typhoon threatened to wallop the country's east coast on Christmas Day. Seafaring vessels in the area were ordered to stay at port, while one airline cancelled 18 Christmas Day flights. "It's sad that I could not join my parents for Christmas," technician Reagan Sumukit told AFP as the coastguard shut down the port of Tabaco. Pope Francis, the leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, was to deliver his traditional "Urbi et Orbi" (To the City and The World) Christmas message from the balcony of Saint Peter's Basilica today. — AFP

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Focus

OPPONENTS, FAMILY FEUD TAKE SHINE OFF LE PEN HOPES

For two years, disaffection with mainstream politics and disarray among her opponents have played to Marine Le Pen's agenda. But as the days tick down to election year in France, events may have started to dim her presidential prospects. Since late November, the anti-immigrant, anti-globalization far-right National Front candidate's showing in opinion polls has slipped from about three out of 10 voters to one in four.

Her niece, the National Front member of parliament Marion Marechal-Le Pen, has re-opened old faultlines within the party. And the policies and personalities of those emerging as Marine Le Pen's main opponents look set to make campaigning tricky for her in the months ahead. The election rules are simple: The two candidates who win the most votes in an April first-round vote go through to a run-off round on May 7. By polling so well for so long, Le Pen's presence in that run-off had been seen as one of the few certainties in the race.

Not any longer. "Le Pen not reaching round two would have been a wild bet even four months ago," the historian Justin Vaisse, director of the French foreign ministry's center of analysis, forecasting and strategy, tweeted this week. "(That's) now credible - even though many unknowns remain." The choice on Nov 27 of Francois Fillon as Le Pen's main conservative challenger in the Republicans party primary was among the first signs of trouble.

She put a brave face on the victory for the former prime minister, whose socially conservative views on abortion and gay marriage are attractive to many Le Pen supporters and helped land him the ticket ahead of the more centrist Alain Juppe. She focused instead on Fillon's aggressive plans to slash public sector spending, calling it an attack on the French workers she and her second-in-command, Florian Philippot, have promised to protect.

But the impact in the polls was immediate. A Harris Interactive survey after the Nov 27 primary put her on 24 percent of voting intentions, behind Fillon on 26 - her lowest score in months, and one that has not improved since. Then her niece Marechal-Le Pen twisted the knife, giving a Dec 10 interview in the Journal de Dimanche Sunday newspaper. The 27-year-old is ideologically much closer to her grandfather Jean-Marie, the party's now ostracized founder, than to her aunt Marine and party's modernizers led by Philippot.

From her Vauluse constituency in the south of France, part of Marechal-Le Pen's line is a form of social conservatism not very different in voters' eyes to that of Fillon - with both expressing clear reservations on abortion and gay marriage. "I am neither in a minority nor am I isolated," she told the newspaper, standing firm on proposals that the state should no longer pay for pregnancy terminations. Just days earlier, party leader Marine Le Pen had made clear that she would not change France's abortion laws.

Marechal-Le Pen has also attacked Philippot, who is gay, over his support for government-funded safe-sex posters depicting gay couples. She called the poster campaign "an embarrassment for children and for homosexuals," and said: "The majority, in the FN, do not share that choice at all." Fillon, a Catholic like Marechal-Le Pen, has said he would not change France's abortion laws, but has said he is personally opposed. He also wants to limit adoption rights of gay couples.

By stepping onto her traditionalist turf, Fillon leaves the Le Pen campaign more dependent on her pro-worker agenda, which includes a lowering of the retirement age, hiking minimum wages and preserving a generous welfare safety net. In that area, she already faces fierce competition from the opposite end of the political spectrum - Jean-Luc Melenchon of The Left Party, a hardliner and former Socialist who is running for president with the backing of the French Communist Party.

Melenchon is much more credible in this area than Le Pen, according to the political commentator Thomas Guenole. "Le Pen is trapped between Francois Fillon and Jean-Luc Melenchon," said Guenole in an editorial for Le Figaro newspaper. Melenchon was eliminated in the 2012 presidential contest but scored a sizeable 11 percent of first-round votes. He is doing at least that well or better in regular polls of voting intentions in 2017.

Macron Factor

Another hurdle for Le Pen is the youthful Emmanuel Macron's announcement on Nov 16 that he too is running for president, as an independent candidate who rejects the traditional politics of Left versus Right. Opinion polls since then show the 38-year-old former economy minister consistently in third place. He is still well behind Le Pen and Fillon, but even before he launched officially, some of her worst scores were in scenarios where he stood against her. — Reuters



ALEPPO SEALS WIN FOR AUTHORITARIAN ALLIANCE

The fall of Aleppo marks the victory of an authoritarian alliance stretching from Tehran to Moscow, analysts say - and the biggest win yet for President Bashar Assad since civil war erupted in 2011. His regime's total control over east Aleppo, declared Thursday, was obtained with pitiless brute force that has reduced much of the country's former economic heart to rubble, in a war that has killed more than 310,000 people nationwide.

"The first lesson this teaches is that brute force pays off, and that abstention has a price," said Bruno Tertrais from France's Foundation for Strategic Research. The force, he said, comes from "the massive involvement of Russia and Iran, who have changed the course of the war" by ploughing air power, weapons, money and might into destroying the rebels. The abstention, he added, was "American non-intervention in 2013", when President Barack Obama failed to follow through on his threat to act if Assad crossed a "red line" by using chemical weapons.

It was in 2013, too, two years after the start of the uprising, that Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah militia, its ally, announced their entry into the conflict on the side of the regime. Russia threw itself into the fight two years after that, turning the tide for Assad. "The Russian involvement was when it really ended, when we knew nothing could be done", one French diplomatic source said bitterly. Analysts say the fall of Aleppo has brought Turkey - which for years backed the opposition against Assad but then helped Russia to organize the final evacuation of the city's rebel zone - into the authoritarian alliance.

Now Ankara sits alongside Moscow, Tehran and Damascus in being able to dictate the terms of a political settlement in Syria in "negotiations between friends", as one European diplomat put it. Each sees its own interests in Syria's future: for Turkey, a stable neighbor on its border, a diplomatic ally for Iran and as a "useful" tool for Russia, notably against US influence.

Pyrrhic victory

Assad, meanwhile, has a long way to go to regain others parts of Syria in the hands of opposition forces, Kurdish fighters, and Islamic State jihadists. Aleppo has suffered such huge devastation because of sustained fighting and massive aerial bombardment that it will take years for the city to recover. "This is a Pyrrhic victory", warns researcher Karim Bitar at the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs. "On the one hand, it has accentuated the

frustration and humiliation felt by Syrians. On the other, the Russians are already starting to feel the consequences", he said, referring to the assassination of Moscow's ambassador to Turkey Monday by a man seeking to avenge Aleppo.

Foreign powers which have backed the Syrian opposition, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and some Western states, come out after the Aleppo defeat weakened, analysts said, consigned to an observer status. Tertrais underscores that Aleppo's fall, and the resurgence of Assad, was

not an "inevitable" outcome of the war but a consequence of inaction by Washington and its allies. "This is not a question of Western powerlessness. It is a question of a lack of willpower," he said. As Elliot Abrams noted in a recent Council of Foreign Relations brief, US policy of non-intervention looks set to continue in the administration of President-elect Donald Trump, which is more likely to see action supporting democracy as a luxury the West cannot afford in the face of Islamist threats. — AFP

IS SCORES 'OPPORTUNISTIC' WINS

The Syrian regime's all-out offensive to recapture Aleppo enabled the Islamic State group to regain territory elsewhere, including the historic city of Palmyra, and has dimmed prospects of defeating the jihadists, experts say. "The resources deployed (by Damascus and its allies) to retake Aleppo have allowed IS to claim a series of opportunistic victories" in Syria, said Charles Lister of the US think-tank Middle East Institute.

During the assault by Syrian, Russian and Iranian forces on rebels in eastern Aleppo, IS jihadists recaptured the historic city of Palmyra on Dec 11 after losing it in March. "Russia and Syria prioritized the defeat of the opposition in Aleppo city over the defense of Palmyra from IS, ultimately enhancing the threat posed by Salafi-jihadist groups in both northern and eastern Syria," Jonathan Mautner of the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) wrote on the Washington-based think-tank's blog.

He said the recapture of Palmyra highlighted "the inability of pro-regime forces to establish security across the entire country without sustained support from Russia and Iran, notwithstanding their recent success in Aleppo city".

IS 'the Big Winner'

IS "appears the big winner from the fall of Aleppo," said Jean-Pierre Filiu, a professor at the Paris School of International Affairs. Not only did the group recapture Palmyra, its propaganda benefitted from "international passivity in the face of Aleppo's suffering", which encouraged the group's followers to launch attacks one after

the other in Jordan and Germany, he said. A shooting rampage in the Jordanian city of Karak left 10 dead on Sunday, the day before 12 people were killed in the truck attack on a Christmas market in Berlin. The main suspect, Anis Amri, was shot dead in Italy on Friday.

Still, IS controls only half the territory it seized in 2014 in Iraq and Syria, with its heaviest defeats coming this year at the hands of coalition forces. In northern Syria, IS lost Kobane and Minbej, as well as Dabiq, a town of major symbolic importance to the jihadists because according to a Sunni prophecy, it will be the site of an apocalyptic battle between Muslim and Christian armies.

Al-Bab, its stronghold north of Aleppo, is under attack by Turkey, which launched an offensive four months ago to chase IS from its southern border. But the jihadists still control Raqa, the Syrian capital of their self-proclaimed "caliphate". They also control the banks of the Euphrates river all the way to the border with Iraq. After the battle of Aleppo, "there is a de-facto division of Syria in two, with the Russians in the west and the Americans in the east", a European diplomat said. Moscow is expected to continue supporting the regime of President Bashar Assad to recapture territory from the Syrian rebels, while Washington continues its fight against IS. "The Russians want to recapture 'useful' Syria and leave the 'IS-land' quagmire to the West," the diplomat said. On Dec 14, US Lieutenant General Stephen Townsend, who commands the air campaign of the anti-IS coalition, said that if the Russians do not try to retake Palmyra, the US-led coalition would "do what we need to do". — AFP

OBAMA LETS ISRAEL FRUSTRATION SHOW

It was only an abstention, but it was a long time coming. With just weeks left in office, Barack Obama finally gave vent to his frustration with Israel. The White House said Obama had decided to allow the UN Security Council to pass a motion condemning Israeli settlement building just hours before the vote. But officials confirmed they had been watching draft resolutions in circulation for a least a year and were ready to take a stand when one made it to the table.

Critics of Obama's Middle East policy allege that he has long been maneuvering to engineer an opportunity to isolate Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. White House aides, however, insist they had simply run out of ways to convince Israel that its building on Palestinian land is sabotaging hopes for peace. Either way, Friday's UN vote ordering a halt to Israel's settlement building will stand as the final word from Obama before Donald Trump takes power.

"Prime Minister Netanyahu had the opportunity to pursue policies that would have led to a different outcome today," Obama adviser Ben Rhodes said. "The fact that this is happening towards the end of our eighth year indicates that it is not our preferred course of action. If it was an outcome that we sought, then we would have done it long ago."

For months, Washington has been warning in increasingly strident tones that Israel's accelerating settlement program is destroying hopes for a two-state peace deal. This month, Secretary of State John Kerry told a US-Israeli forum in Washington that right-wing members of Netanyahu's government are deliberately working to that end. After Friday's UN vote, the US special envoy to the peace process, Frank Lowenstein, said Kerry would in the coming days make a speech laying out ideas to revive it.

'Grudge match'

The White House insists the UN resolution, which Israel wasted no time in rejecting, simply reflects the consensus view of the international community on Israeli settlements. But Obama's abstention came under withering

criticism from across Washington - with both Democrats and Republicans accusing the outgoing president of concluding with a biased world body to betray an ally. President-elect Trump, who had earlier convinced Egypt to postpone the vote from Thursday, implied in a Tweet that he would punish the United Nations.

Democratic senator Chuck Schumer, who had lobbied the administration until the last minute, called the decision to let the vote pass "extremely frustrating, disappointing and confounding". And AIPAC, the largest pro-Israel lobby group in Washington, said: "By adopting this resolution, the United Nations has once again served as an open forum to isolate and delegitimize Israel." And

many suggested Obama's decision, made while the president was on a Christmas break in Hawaii, had as much to do with his bad blood with Netanyahu as with diplomacy.

Jonathan Schanzer, vice president of Washington think tank the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, dubbed the relationship a "grudge match". Netanyahu made no secret of his friendship with Obama's 2012 election opponent Mitt Romney, and last year broke protocol to go behind the US president's back and address Congress to oppose the Iran nuclear deal. The two men have never hit it off, and the White House has never hidden its frustration with the bellicose rhetoric of Israel's rightwing coalition. — AFP



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FIFA LOOKING AT PLAYER BEHAVIOUR: VAN BASTEN

LONDON: FIFA is thinking about introducing new measures to improve player behaviour towards match officials, chief officer for technical development Marco van Basten revealed yesterday. The former Netherlands striker and manager says football's world governing body could follow the lead of rugby union, in which only team captains are allowed to speak to referees. "There are a lot of players now who are complaining during a game," Van Basten told the BBC. "I am sure the behaviour of the players can be better. We are thinking about putting it back in the right direction." Asked if football could learn from rugby, Van Basten said: "I think we can learn from every sport and they can learn from us, but we have to confront the problem." He added: "This is what we have to do to help the referees. We try to make a good product - dynamic, exciting-but in the end also honest. "There's a lot of emotion in the game and that's what's good, but we have to control it also." — AFP



KUWAIT BEAT OMAN IN GCC WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

ABU DHABI: Kuwait beat Oman 55-42 on Friday, the third straight win in the 8th GCC Wheelchair Basketball Championship, held at New York University in Abu Dhabi. Kuwait was quick in their offense and made most of the field goal shots. The Kuwaiti team was also good in transition back to the defense and made a good use of the turnovers committed by the Omanis. Saudi Arabia beat the home team, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), 45-38. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have six points each. Their clash is today and the winner will win the championship. Shafi Al-Hajri, president of Kuwait Disabled Sport Club, commended the players for their performance against Oman. He told KUNA that Saudi Arabia's game would be a tough one, but voiced confidence in ability of the players to make a good game. — KUNA

WEST BROM KEEPER SIGNS NEW DEAL

LONDON: West Bromwich Albion's former England goalkeeper Ben Foster has signed a new 2-1/2 year deal through to 2019, the Premier League club announced yesterday. The 33-year-old Foster, who recently made his 150th league appearance for Albion, has been ever-present this season, helping Tony Pulis' side to eighth place in the table. "We're delighted we've extended Ben's contract," Pulis said on the club website (www.wba.co.uk). "His form this season has been there for all to see and he continues to set the standards at the club all the goalkeepers have to aspire to." Former Manchester United keeper Foster joined Albion on loan from Birmingham City in 2011 before making the move permanent 12 months later. He has made 161 appearances in all competitions, with 41 clean sheets. West Brom visit Arsenal on Boxing Day. — Reuters



CLERMONT-FERRAND: Stade Francais players join a scrum during the French Union Rugby match ASM Clermont vs Stade Francais at the Michelin stadium in Clermont-Ferrand, central France, on Friday.— AFP

LEADERS CLERMONT ROMP PAST STADE FRANCAIS

PARIS: Clermont Ferrand thumped Stade Francais 46-10 and scored six tries on the way as the Top 14 leaders enjoyed a rousing performance on Friday. They now have 46 points from their 14 games ahead of La Rochelle on 41. The big game of the week sees Montpellier host mega-rich Toulon in Friday's late game in an encounter rendered all the more important by each side's European struggles. Clermont's tries were scored by Adrien Plante on 22 and

32, Patricio Fernandez on 43, Noa Nakaitaci on 58, Damien Chouly on 73 and Sitaleki Timani two minute from time. "I'm happy to have done my bit," Plante said after the game. "I'm getting back to my best form." Clermont coach Franck AzEma said his players had been very focussed. "I was also happy to see them enjoying themselves so much too," he said. There was also a big scoring comeback win for La Rochelle, who eventually overran

bottom side Bayonne 42-17 after they had been led 17-0. The win makes La Rochelle, provisionally in second, a serious contender for the play-offs. Racing 92 also bounced back from their European disappointment with a 23-10 win over Castres, although a late try for Castres meant they missed a bonus point. Wenceslas Lauret had a hand in all three tries for Racing and the win, a first in four games, lifted them back to fourth place. "It's a relief, people were starting to worry

about us and so was I," said Racing backs coach Laurent Labit. Brive breezed past Lyon 22-6 leaving the losers hovering near the relegation zone in the early match. Gaetan Germain took 17 points for Brive hitting the target six times out of six, while former French international Frederik Michalak opened the scores for Lyon, who have now lost three games in a row. Thibaud Daubanga and Jale Vatuba grabbed second half tries as confident Pau

beat Bordeaux 18-16 away. The home side got the first try of the game to give Bordeaux a 10-0 lead through Luke Braid but Raphael Ibanez's men had a dreadful second-half. Grenoble climbed off the foot of the table on Thursday with a rousing 26-22 win over a Toulouse still getting over their European exertions. The win ignites vague hopes of escaping relegation for the Alpine hosts and leaves Toulouse rooted outside the end-of-season play-off places. —AFP

JUSTIN TURNER, DODGERS FINALIZE \$64M CONTRACT

LOS ANGELES: Third baseman Justin Turner and the Los Angeles Dodgers have finalized their \$64 million, four-year contract. Turner gets a \$4 million signing bonus, payable Dec. 31, under the agreement completed Friday, and salaries of \$12 million next year, \$11 million in 2018, \$18 million in 2019 and \$19 million in 2020. He would get a \$1 million assignment bonus each time he is traded. Los Angeles also has a pending \$80 million, five-year agreement with closer Kenley Jansen. The deals raise the Dodgers' projected luxury tax payroll to \$230 million next year, in line for a tax of about \$19 million. The 32-year-old Turner spent two sea-

sons with Baltimore and four with the New York Mets, then became a free agent when the Mets failed to offer a 2014 contract. He signed a \$1 million, one-year deal with the Dodgers, hit .340 in 109 games, and took over as the starting third baseman. Turner hit .275 with 27 homers and 90 RBIs this year, batted .400 with five RBIs in the Division Series against Washington, then .200 with three RBIs in the League Championship Series loss to the Chicago Cubs. He failed to accept the Dodgers' \$17.2 million qualifying offer. At the winter meetings, the Dodgers announced a \$48 million, three-year contract with left-hander Rich Hill, acquired from Oakland at the trade deadline Aug. 1. —AP



LOS ANGELES: In this Sept. 5, 2016, file photo, Los Angeles Dodgers' Justin Turner watches his solo home run during the fifth inning of a baseball game against the Arizona Diamondbacks in Los Angeles. Turner and the Dodgers have finalized their \$64 million, four-year contract. — AP



MONTPELLIER: RC Toulon's Australian flanker Liam Gill scores a try during the French Top 14 rugby Union match Montpellier vs Toulon, on Friday, at the Altrad stadium, in the French southern city of Montpellier. — AFP

MONTPELLIER EDGE TOULON

PARIS: Shalva Mamukashvili scored two tries for Montpellier as they led from start to finish to edge a depleted Toulon 33-29 in the big game in France's Top 14 on Friday. In an earlier match Clermont Ferrand thumped Stade Francais 46-10 and scored six tries on the way as the Top 14 leaders enjoyed a rousing performance. They now have 46 points from their 14 games ahead of Montpellier and La Rochelle on 41 while Toulon are fourth on 37. Clermont's tries were scored by Adrien Plante on 22 and 32, Patricio Fernandez on 43, Noa Nakaitaci on 58, Damien Chouly on 73 and Sitaleki Timani two minute from time. "I'm happy to have done my bit," Plante said after the game. "I'm getting back to my best form." Clermont coach Franck AzEma said his players had been very focussed. "I was also hap-

py to see them enjoying themselves so much too," he said. There was also a big scoring comeback win for La Rochelle, who eventually overran bottom side Bayonne 42-17 after they had been led 17-0. The win makes third placed La Rochelle a serious contender for the play-offs. Racing 92 also bounced back from their European disappointment with a 23-10 win over Castres, although a late try for Castres meant they missed a bonus point. Wenceslas Lauret had a hand in all three tries for Racing and the win, a first in four games, lifted them back to fourth place. "It's a relief, people were starting to worry about us and so was I," said Racing backs coach Laurent Labit. Brive breezed past Lyon 22-6 leaving the losers hovering near the relegation zone in the ear-

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TIGERS BRING BACK CATCHER ALEX AVILA WITH \$2M DEAL

DETROIT: Alex Avila got a present of sorts, indirectly from his father, and will host a celebration this weekend with his family minus any potential baseball-related drama.

The Detroit Tigers brought back Avila to play behind starting catcher James McCann, giving him a \$2 million, one-year contract.

Avila's father, Al Avila, is Detroit's general manager. "I don't think he was even part of negotiations," the younger

Avila told The Associated Press on Friday night. Alex Avila spent this year with the Chicago White Sox, then became a free agent for the second straight offseason. Avila said the deal came together between his agent, Matt Laird, and assistant general manager John Westhoff.

"Westhoff contacted my agent and expressed an interest and the last few days, I haven't really slept much because I'm so excited," he said. "I'm sure my dad

was involved at some point. Now that it's done, I talked to him and we'll be together at my house in Florida this weekend. And, we'll have something other than Christmas to celebrate."

Al Avila let his son get away as a free agent last year, and now the organization he leads is putting him back on the roster. The Tigers designated right-hander Angel Nesbitt for assignment to clear a spot.

Detroit drafted Avila in 2008 and he

hit .242 with 66 homers and 282 RBIs with the Tigers from 2009-15. Avila had career highs in 2011 with a .295 batting average, 19 homers and 82 RBIs, earning his only All-Star selection.

"Alex is a left-handed hitter who has some pop in his bat," Detroit manager Brad Ausmus said. "We like his ability to catch and throw, his familiarity with the organization and his leadership qualities, which makes him an asset to the ballclub."

The 29-year-old Avila played in 57 games for the Chicago White Sox this year, hitting .213 with seven homers and 11 RBIs.

"I'll be backing up James and doing whatever I can to help the team win," he said. "I might even play some first place to give Miguel (Cabrera) a break and I'll catch whenever Brad wants me to catch. I love Detroit and I'm really excited to be in that clubhouse and playing with those guys again." —AP

IOC OPENS 28 NEW DOPING CASES FOR RUSSIAN ATHLETES

GENEVA: On yet another doping-tainted day for Russian sport, 28 athletes now face IOC cases linked to cheating at the Sochi Winter Olympics and a major cross-country skiing event was removed from the country. The IOC said Friday it has opened 28 disciplinary proceedings against Russian athletes whose urine samples were likely tampered with at the 2014 Olympics.

Six cases involve cross-country skiers who are now provisionally suspended by the International Ski Federation (FIS), which did not identify them. Six Russian men won five medals, including one gold, in cross-country skiing on home snow at Sochi.

The new wave of Olympic doping cases is set to produce a flow of verdicts and disqualifications next year that could fuel calls for some or all of the Russian team to be banned from the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in South Korea.

The cases are based on evidence provided this month by World Anti-Doping Agency investigator Richard McLaren.

McLaren detailed vast state-backed cheating in Russian sport that included swapping athletes' tainted samples for clean urine through the testing laboratory at Sochi. The Canadian law professor offered evidence of a method for state intelligence officers to break open supposedly tamper-proof glass sample bottles which had scratches behind the lid. Urine samples retained by the IOC since Sochi included some with unnatural levels of salt in healthy humans.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly denied there was a state-backed program, and on Friday blamed the director of the labs at Moscow and Sochi, whose allegations to American media in May led to McLaren's appointment.

MANIPULATION

Putin accused Grigory Rodchenkov of forging doping evidence against Russian athletes at the behest of foreign forces he did not name. Putin said Rodchenkov was forcing Russian athletes to take illegal substances he had brought in from Canada, where the scientist had previously worked.

In further fallout Friday from McLaren's report, the world ski body said Russian officials have handed back hosting rights for the end-of-season World Cup finals in cross-country skiing.

The event was scheduled in March in Tyumen, which on Thursday also lost the right to host a biathlon World Cup event in March.

"The findings in the McLaren Report have seriously damaged the integrity of sport and we are determined to ensure the necessary measures are undertaken to punish the offences," said FIS President Gian Franco Kasper, who is also a member of the IOC's executive board. The IOC said the 28 new cases being examined by its disciplinary commission are not positive doping tests. However "the manipulation of the samples themselves could lead to an Anti-Doping Rule Violation and sanctions."

Samples from Russian athletes at Sochi are now being re-tested at the WADA-accredited lab in Lausanne, Switzerland, the IOC said.

The IOC cites legal reasons for not identifying the athletes. FIS said it was the responsibility of the Russian ski federation and the athletes themselves if they wished to be identified.

On Thursday, the International Biathlon Union said it provisionally suspended two Russians whose cases from Sochi were opened by the IOC.

The re-testing of Russian athletes' samples for traces of steroids and other banned substances now involves all four Olympic Games from 2008 through 2014.

The IOC said Friday that it already disqualified 27 Russian athletes, stripping an array of titles and medals, in re-tests of samples from the 2008 Beijing Olympics and 2012 London Olympics. All Russian samples from the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics are now being re-analyzed.

At Vancouver, an underachieving Russia team placed 11th in the medals table. That performance is often cited as the motive for Russia to orchestrate a doping program to ensure better results in the home Sochi Olympics, which cost \$51 billion to build and run.

Russia did top the Sochi medals table, but looks certain to lose that place to Norway when the IOC processes the disciplinary cases announced Friday. — AP



MOSCOW: In this Dec. 25, 2015 file photo Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko gestures during a news conference in Moscow, Russia. Players from Russia's under-21 national soccer team had suspicious drug-test samples covered up, emails released by a World Anti-Doping Agency investigation show. Another case in the Russian league was allegedly covered up by then-Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko, who is also in charge of the country's World Cup preparations. — AP



REXAS: Navy safety Daiquan Thomasson (26) forces a fumble by Louisiana Tech wide receiver Trent Taylor (5) during first half of the Armed Forces Bowl NCAA college football game, Friday, in Fort Worth, Texas. Navy recovered the ball.—AP

LOUISIANA TECH BEAT NAVY 48-45 ON AF BOWL

FORT WORTH: Jonathan Barnes kicked a game-ending 32-yard field goal and Louisiana Tech beat Navy 48-45 in the Armed Forces Bowl on Friday. The Bulldogs (9-5) drove for the winning score after Navy freshman quarterback Malcolm Perry ran 30 yards for a touchdown on his only play with 3:46 left. Ryan Higgins threw for 409 yards and four touchdowns, two each to Trent Taylor and Carlos Henderson. Taylor, a 5-foot-8 senior, set an Armed Forces Bowl with his 12 catches for 233 yards. Henderson had 10 catches for 129 yards. Navy (9-5), which was trying for its first consecutive 10-win seasons, instead ended with its third straight loss. The Midshipmen lost the American Athletic Conference title game before its first loss to Army since 2001. Perry, whose TD with 3:46 left tied the game for the fourth time, came in after Zach Abey took a shot to the ribs on a play that led to a targeting ejection by Tech defensive tackle Jordan Bradford. Abey, who made only his second start, ran for 114 yards and two scores and threw for 159 yards and another touchdown.

DOLLAR GENERAL BOWL TROY 28, OHIO 23

Jordan Chunn had three short touchdown runs and Troy intercepted four passes in Troy's victory over Ohio. The Trojans

(10-3) finished off their first 10-win season since moving up to the FBS in 2001, thanks largely to a defense that came up with three big fourth-quarter stops. The first Sun Belt Conference team to crack the Top 25, Troy forced 18 turnovers in its last five games. The Bobcats (8-6) settled for field goal attempts twice in the fourth quarter, making one, and got one more chance from their own 15 with 2:20 left and no timeouts. They managed one first down but Greg Windham couldn't throw for another one under heavy pressure.

BAHAMAS BOWL OLD DOMINION 24, EASTERN MICHIGAN 20

David Washington threw three touchdowns passes, Ray Lawry ran for 133 yards and Old Dominion beat Eastern Michigan. Old Dominion (10-3) won in its first bowl appearance in school history. The Monarchs didn't play football for 69 years before restarting the program in 2009. They made the transition to the Football Bowl Subdivision in 2013. Eastern Michigan (7-6) lost in its first bowl appearance since 1987. Brogan Roback completed 26 of 46 passes for 300 yards, two touchdowns and one interception for the Eagles. Roback threw for at least 300 yards in six of his final seven games. Old Dominion had a 10-0 halftime

lead, but Eastern Michigan rallied to tie it at 17 late in the third quarter on Paul Fricano's 24-yard field goal. The Monarchs bounced

back with Washington's third touchdown pass, which went for 5 yards to Jonathan Duhart. — AP



TEXAS: Louisiana Tech head coach Skip Holtz, right, passes the championship trophy to safety Xavier Woods (7) following their win over Navy in the Armed Forces Bowl NCAA college football game, Friday, in Fort Worth, Texas. — AP

COWBOYS KEEP FOCUS ON LIONS WITH DIVISION AND HOME FIELD SECURE

FRISCO: Jason Witten had to figure the questions were coming after the Dallas Cowboys wrapped up the NFC East and home-field advantage in the playoffs with two games remaining.

The last time Dallas had the top seed secured before the end of the regular season, Witten was a fifth-year tight end in 2007. The Cowboys promptly lost their first playoff game to the New York Giants and watched their division rival upset undefeated New England in the Super Bowl.

So now the question is how the Cowboys (12-2) keep their edge with two games that won't change their spot in the playoff bracket - starting Monday night at home against Detroit (9-5) - along with a bye before their postseason opener. The Lions are trying to secure a playoff berth. "I don't think it's entered anybody's minds," Witten said Friday, a day after the Cowboys clinched thanks to the Giants' 24-19 loss to Philadelphia. "I think we're all aware of where it's at. It's a long time away, to think that you would rest or anything like that.

Our job is to go play and coaches will handle those situations."

For instance, will backup Tony Romo - the architect of that 13-3 season nine years ago - get playing time so that Dallas can protect Dak Prescott, the rookie who took the 10-year starter's job with an 11-game winning streak?

What about left tackle Tyron Smith and defensive end DeMarcus Lawrence with their bad backs? Should Darren McFadden, last year's leading rusher for Dallas, get more carries in relief of rookie NFL rushing leader Ezekiel Elliott because the nine-year veteran just returned from an offseason elbow injury?

Sorry. Coach Jason Garrett isn't interested in discussing such things. "We don't really think about that," Garrett said. "We're focused on practicing and playing as well as we can in this game on Monday night against Detroit."

Elliott needs 258 yards to break Eric Dickerson's 33-year-old rookie record of 1,808 yards, and he acknowledged that it

would be special. But the fourth overall pick, whose career took off with a dominant stretch when Ohio State won the first College Football Playoff two years ago, was surprisingly candid when asked what he preferred.

"I think there is a shot to get that rookie rushing record, but it's not worth risking what we have the opportunity to do as a team," said Elliott, who has 1,551 yards. "And I wouldn't want to risk getting it

for something (when) we have the opportunity to go and play for a Super Bowl. Whatever they think is best for our team, then that's what's going to happen." Romo made his infamous trip to Cabo San Lucas with then-girlfriend Jessica Simpson during the bye week in 2007, fuel for criticism after the Cowboys' 21-17 loss to New York. Barring an injury to Prescott, Romo won't have to answer questions about that episode in the Cowboys' return to the top spot in the NFC.

When the bye week arrives, Witten most likely will. But the answers probably won't

be much different than they are now. "I believe you want to build on the way you play in December and go into the playoffs," Witten said. "I think that's how good teams handle this situation. As I said before, that's for people to talk about at the barber shop. Our focus is just on what's going to allow us to win."

Nine years ago, Garrett was the offensive coordinator under coach Wade Phillips. In the regular-season finale at Washington, Romo sat after the first series of the third quarter. Witten recalls getting pulled in the second quarter - but never being told what the plan was. And if there is a plan to start resting players as early as Monday night, the coaches aren't saying. Dallas finishes the regular season at Philadelphia.

"I think you've got to do exactly what we're doing," offensive coordinator Scott Linehan said. "When you put the pads on, you're going out there to win the football game. It doesn't matter what the implications are. We approach it the same way regardless." —AP

ALLARDYCE TAKES CHARGE AT PALACE

LONDON: Premier League strugglers Crystal Palace appointed Sam Allardyce as their new boss on Friday in a swift return to the dugout for the former England manager.

The former Bolton and West Ham manager's one-match reign in charge of the national side ended in September following a newspaper sting. "We are delighted to be able to make an appointment so quickly and fortunate that someone of Sam's calibre and experience was available," Eagles chairman Steve Parish said, a day after sacking Alan Pardew. After agreeing a two-and-a-half-year contract, Allardyce will have his first game in charge on Monday with an English Premier League match at Watford. He was set to take his first training session on Saturday and has the opportunity to remodel the squad once the January transfer window opens. "I hope I can bring some joy, particularly over Christmas and New Year, and over the long term between now and the end of the season," he said. "The club seems to be very ambitious, certainly the chairman and the owners seem to be taking the club forward in the right direction. I like the look of the squad and that's the probably the reason that I'm here, because I feel that the club can go forward from here and hopefully I

can help it go forward.

"With my experience, I think I can us get a few more results on the board." Pardew was sacked on Thursday following a miserable run of results, with the Eagles winning just four of their 17 league matches this season and only one of their last 11.

Palace are 17th in the Premier League, one point above the relegation zone and three points off the foot of the table.

Allardyce has been out of the game since being ditched by England after just 67 days in charge following ill-advised remarks to undercover journalists. Allardyce gave advice on how to circumnavigate transfer rules, criticised the FA's decision to rebuild Wembley and mocked his England predecessor Roy Hodgson while being secretly filmed by reporters from The Daily Telegraph posing as East Asian businessmen.

Though he has never won a major trophy, Allardyce, 62, has proved adept at keeping smaller sides in the Premier League. "Big Sam" has integrated sports science and technology into his training techniques and made his teams difficult to beat, often proving a thorn in the side of the top flight's more glamorous clubs.— AFP



DOHA: AC Milan team celebrates with the trophy after winning the Italian Super Cup soccer match between Juventus and AC Milan, at the Al Sadd Sports Club in Doha, Qatar, Friday. AC Milan won 5-4 following a shootout. — AP

AC MILAN WIN THE ITALIAN SUPER CUP ON PENALTIES

DOHA: AC Milan celebrated wildly after beating Juventus to win the Italian Super Cup in a penalty shoot-out to win their first trophy since 2011 on Friday.

Mario Pasalic blasted home the final spot kick to give AC Milan a 4-3 victory on penalties after a hard fought match was locked at 1-1 on 90 minutes and after extra time in Doha.

Mario Mandzukic and Paulo Dybala missed their spot kicks for Juventus, with Gianluca Lapadula the only Milan player not to convert his penalty. It is the second time Milan have beaten Juventus, who lead Serie A by four points, this season. In October, they won 1-0 in the San Siro. A delighted Milan coach Vincenzo Montella said he hoped the victory would serve as a springboard for his side.

"I would like to think that this match is the beginning of a new era, we would like to consider it a starting point," he said.

"I am sure that this win will give us confidence." The victory was just about merited by Milan who responded well after early Juventus dominance.

Juve, Italian league and cup double winners last season, had taken the lead in 18th minute after Giorgio Chiellini prodded home a Miralem Pjanic corner.

At that stage it was all Juventus and it was not until the 36th minute that Milan had their first shot on target, a tame effort from midfielder Juraj Kucka. But they drew level just before half-time when Giacomo Bonaventura beautifully glanced home a Fernandez Suso cross.

Suso was a constant irritant to the Juve defence and set up several fine chances including an 83rd minute header for Carlos Bacca, who was denied by a great save by evergreen Gianluigi Buffon, making his 600th appearance for Juventus.

Romagnolo also went close, hitting the bar with a header. Juventus also had their chances, most notably in extra time. In the 111th minute Patrice Evra put the ball in the net only to be ruled offside, then Dybala missed a great chance, spooning a shot over when unmarked from just eight yards with only four minutes remaining.

A "very angry" Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri said he was upset at the way his team had lost control of the game and become nervous. "The match started well for us, the first 30 minutes Juventus were at their best," he said. "We should have been more focused."

He added that Dybala should have scored towards the end of extra time. The match, the second time the Super Cup has been played in Qatar, was watched by a near capacity crowd of 11,356. — AFP

BARTON BACK IN TROUBLE FOR BREAKING BETTING RULES

LONDON: English footballer Joey Barton is back in disciplinary trouble after being charged with misconduct for placing 1,260 bets on matches or competitions over a 10-year period. The English Football Association said Friday the bets were made from March 2006 to May 2016.

Barton this week signed a short-term deal with Premier League team Burnley after cutting short his contract at Scottish club Rangers, where he was handed a one-match suspension for breaking Scottish Football Association rules by placing 44 bets on games between July 1 and Sept. 15. That suspension will carry over into his

Burnley career. The 34-year-old Barton has until Jan. 5 to respond to the FA charge.

Barton only left Rangers after having his contract terminated last month, seven weeks after being suspended by the Glasgow club over a training-ground row with his manager and a teammate.

That was the latest episode in a controversial career, which has included spending 77 days in jail in 2008 after a street fight in Liverpool.

In 2012, while playing for Queens Park Rangers, Barton was suspended for 12 matches for violent conduct during a Premier League game. — AP



Joey Barton



SUNDERLAND: File photo shows Sunderland's Adnan Januzaj, centre, talks to manager David Moyes, during the English Premier League soccer match between Sunderland and Watford, at the Stadium of Light, in Sunderland, England, Dec 17, 2016. — AP

MOYES BACK AT OLD TRAFFORD

MANCHESTER: The "Chosen One" banner has gone from the Stretford End. The team has been overhauled through three consecutive off-seasons of lavish spending. Alex Ferguson's shadow no longer looms quite so large.

Yet, when David Moyes returns to Old Trafford on Monday for the first time since his abrupt firing by Manchester United in April 2014, he'll find things haven't changed that much at England's biggest club since his ill-fated 10-month spell there three seasons ago.

In the fourth year of the post-Ferguson era, 20-time champion United is still yearning for its former glories, still searching for that attacking spark of old, and still languishing outside the Champions League qualification positions they once took for granted.

Recent results may have been encouraging for United's latest manager, Jose Mourinho, but a run of three straight wins has only left the team in sixth place heading into the match against Sunderland, the relegation-threatened northeast club coached by Moyes. A top-four finish - and therefore a place in the Champions League - is far from guaranteed for United this season. So Moyes returns to United with a feeling of "What if?"

What if he'd been allowed to see out the six-year contract he was given after being hand-picked as a replacement by Ferguson (hence the "Chosen One" moniker)? Instead, as soon as United could no longer finish in the top four in that 2013-14 campaign, he was fired.

What if he'd been given more than two transfer windows to reshape an aging

squad left behind by Ferguson? Moyes signed two first-team players - Marouane Fellaini and Juan Mata - at a cost of about 65 million pounds, which is nothing compared to the amount successors Louis van Gaal and Mourinho have spent. Moyes said he targeted Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale and Cesc Fabregas, and had finalized a deal for Toni Kroos but was fired before it could go through.

"I was definitely unfairly treated," Moyes said in his pre-match news conference. "Other managers have come and gone and it's been difficult for them as well. I actually think whoever followed Alex Ferguson, whether it be Jose Mourinho then or Carlo Ancelotti or Juergen Klopp, Pep Guardiola or David Moyes, I think it would have been the same. I think it would have taken whoever it was time to change the squad around. It was going to be a rebuilding job and never get done immediately."

Moyes said he was given "plenty of reassurances" he would have longer to carry out the rebuilding job - "I didn't believe I had to do it in nine months, or even 12 months" - but is still happy to have experienced managing such a big club.

"Disappointed I didn't get to see out my contract, that's for sure," he said, "but I'll look back knowing I was really fortunate to have the chance to work with some great players, and to see how, at the real top level, things are. I enjoyed being at Manchester United."

Since leaving Old Trafford, Moyes spent a year at Real Sociedad before getting fired and has been in charge of Sunderland since July. The team is in 18th place in the 20-team standings after 17 games.— AFP

CHINESE PARENTS SHY AWAY FROM WORLD CUP DREAMS

BEIJING: Beijing's dream of making China a football powerhouse depends on millions of children taking up the sport, but even coaches say tradition-minded parents view the game as a wasteful distraction from school.

China's President Xi Jinping, an avowed fan of the game, has declared three goals for the country: to host, qualify, and win a World Cup. But the team are ranked a lowly 83rd in the world by FIFA—just below the Caribbean island nation of Antigua and Barbuda, population 86,295 — and are bottom of their qualifying group for the next World Cup, despite the recent hiring of Italian coach Marcello Lippi.

The Asian giant has made improving youth football programmes a national priority, with an official plan promising 20,000 academies and 30 million elementary and middle school pupils playing the sport within four years.

The goal is to make China one of the world's top sides by 2050, the document said, to bring to life "the sports-superpower dream".

But it faces steep social barriers, with trainers saying traditional attitudes towards education and children's responsibility to support their parents in retirement make it difficult to secure recruits.

"The big challenge is that mindset in general, that football is a distraction to education," said Tom Byer, a Japan-based football consultant hired by the Chinese education ministry to design pilot programmes for young children.

"If you look at families that have just one child it's kind of a no-brainer. If you're thinking about the future of your child, should you put

an emphasis on sports... or should you nurture your child to be better academically?"

To assuage concerns, Byer tells Chinese parents that studies suggest kids who are physically active do better academically. But parents online ask whether it is "irresponsible" for children to play soccer.

'JUST A HOBBY'

At a practice session for a children's football club in Beijing, parents praised the sport for giving seven-year-olds the experience of overcoming challenges and defeat, but said they were wary of letting it interfere with studies.

Song Feng, 41, said soccer was "just a hobby, an exercise" for her 11-year-old son, and that studies would always have to come first "because China's education system is just that way now". Gao Fei, father of another boy, said he "won't let him become a footballer because China's professional soccer scene is no good".

Chinese media have weighed in to try to reassure them. An article on internet portal Sohu cited French philosopher Albert Camus and Danish physicist Niels Bohr, who both played in goal for club sides, as proof that sporting and academic pursuits were compatible. "Playing soccer means falling behind in studies? Teachers and parents wake up, don't waste your child's future!" it said.

While Beijing's plans should see more football played in school, China's education system still revolves around the highly competitive, all-important gaokao graduation exam, which determines university placement and many

career opportunities. That makes it difficult to stimulate a mass craze for football, as the structure "leaves very little space or time for sports," said Mary Gallagher, associate professor of political science at the University of Michigan. "Will parents risk points on the gaokao for the chance to play soccer every day?" The world's most populous nation has 25 times more people than England, but lags far behind its 37,000 football clubs, says Rowan Simons, a football author and founder of a private football club in the capital.

LONG GAME

Without grassroots teams and a deep pool of players, he said, "It's irrelevant how much money the government puts into it-football can never flourish unless people love it."

"In Chinese there's just no history of civic society, that's really at the heart of it," Simons told AFP. "That's why top-down national funding will never work."

One challenge to developing players is China's traditional training methods, says Mark Dreyer of China Sports Insider, in which the coach "is still the military drill sergeant where he's barking orders and having them do repetitive drills. What kid enjoys that?"

In other countries, he said, "they play football with a smile on their face". Chinese Super League clubs are splashing vast sums on foreign coaches and players, many of them from Latin America, where Byer says children learn basic ball-handling skills at a very early age. Countries that want to emulate the success of

Brazil and others have to ensure that football is an activity at home as well as at school, he added. "It will take a couple of decades," he said. "When you're dealing with youth development, we won't know if we're going to reap the benefits for 10 years."

The question is whether the Chinese government's footballing push can last that long.

While President Xi is a soccer fan, he is expected to step down in 2022 and his successor may have entirely different priorities.

"Can they stay the course? It's possible," said Dreyer. "But in five, 10 years, who knows? If Xi Jinping goes, and the next guy doesn't like football, then maybe it's basketball and Yao Ming is going to lead the way."— AFP



BEIJING: This photo taken on December 14, 2016 shows boys practicing during a training session at a football club in Beijing. Beijing's dream of making China a football powerhouse depends on millions of children taking up the sport, but even coaches say tradition-minded parents view the game as a wasteful distraction from school. — AFP

Sports

Leaders Clerment
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AC Milan win the
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IOC OPENS 28 NEW DOPING CASES FOR RUSSIAN OLYMPIC ATHLETES Page 16



BOSTON: Boston Celtics guard Isaiah Thomas (4) dribbles against Oklahoma City Thunder center Enes Kanter (11) in the first half of an NBA basketball game, Friday, in Boston. — AP

WESTBROOK TRIPLE-DOUBLE LEADS THUNDER PAST CELTICS

BOSTON: Russell Westbrook had his 14th triple-double of the season and his third straight 40-point game, finishing with 45 points, 11 assists and 11 rebounds to lead the Oklahoma City Thunder to a 117-112 victory over the Boston Celtics on Friday night. Westbrook missed his first five shots but scored the last seven points of the first half as the Thunder turned a three-point deficit into a four-point lead. He scored 18 points in the fourth quarter, including eight straight during a 10-0 run that flipped a 104-100 deficit into a six-point lead. Rookie Domantas Sabonis topped his career high by halftime and finished with 20 points for Oklahoma City. Enes Kanter also had 20 points. Isaiah Thomas had 34 points and 10 assists for Boston.

WARRIORS 119, PISTONS 113
Draymond Green made a tiebreaking dunk with 1:31 left and Kevin Durant overcame foul trouble to score 32 points, lifting Golden State past Detroit. The NBA-leading Warriors have won seven straight, rolling with their new star, Durant, as they head into their Christmas NBA Finals rematch in Cleveland. The Pistons have lost five in a row. Golden State had a season-high 23 turnovers, surpassing the 20 it had in a 20-point loss Nov. 4 against the Los Angeles Clippers, and Detroit took advantage of them to score 33 points. Stephen Curry had 25 points and eight assists. Tobias Harris had a season-high 26 points for Detroit.

CAVALIERS 119, NETS 99

LeBron James scored 19 points, Kevin Love added 14 points and 15 rebounds, and Cleveland rolled past Brooklyn. The defending champion Cavaliers (22-6) never trailed against the Nets and built a 46-point lead in the third quarter. The lopsided margin gave the Cavaliers a chance to rest their stars heading into their Sunday showdown against Golden State. Brook Lopez had 16 points for the Nets.

GRIZZLIES 115, ROCKETS 109

Mike Conley scored 24 points and Zach Randolph and Marc Gasol each added 16 to help Memphis beat Houston. Memphis snapped a three-game home skid and ended Houston's road winning streak at five. Ryan Anderson led Houston with a season-high 31 points. James Harden had 16 points and 17 assists.

PELICANS 91, HEAT 87

Anthony Davis had 28 points, a career-high 22 rebounds and four blocked shots, and New Orleans overcame a 14-point deficit to beat Miami Heat 91-87 on Friday night. Davis had 19 points and 14 rebounds after halftime to lead the comeback effort. Jrue Holiday added 22 points for the Pelicans. Goran Dragic scored 23 points for Miami.

SPURS 110, TRAIL BLAZERS 90

Kawhi Leonard scored 33 points and San Antonio handed

Portland its fifth straight loss despite resting key players. Patty Mills added 23 points, and former Blazer LaMarcus Aldridge had 18 points and 14 rebounds. The Spurs rested Pau Gasol, Tony Parker and Manu Ginobili. Damian Lillard had 16 points and 10 assists for the Trail Blazers. They have lost nine of 10.

KINGS 109, TIMBERWOLVES 105

DeMarcus Cousins scored 21 of his 32 points in the second half and Sacramento rallied to beat Minnesota. Cousins hit three 3-pointers and added seven rebounds and seven assists. Zach LaVine scored a career-high 40 points and tied a career best with seven 3s for Minnesota.

HORNETS 103, BULLS 91

Nic Batum had 20 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for his first triple-double of the season and seventh overall to help Charlotte beat Chicago. Kemba Walker added 20 points, and Michael Kidd-Gilchrist had 12 points, nine rebounds and four blocked shots. Jimmy Butler had 26 points for the Bulls. They have lost five of their last six.

RAPTORS 104, JAZZ 98

Kyle Lowry took advantage of a depleted Utah guard corps by scoring a season-high 36 points, including 19 in the fourth quarter, to lead Toronto. Lowry was nearly unstoppable as he either pulled up for a 3-pointer or drove the lane unfazed by the lurking Rudy Gobert. The point guard shot 9 for 10 in the final quarter as the Raptors set a franchise record with six straight wins on the road. Gordon Hayward led Utah with 23 points.

MAGIC 109, LAKERS 90

Elfrid Payton had 25 points and nine assists and Orlando blocked nine shots in the first quarter in a victory over Los Angeles. Serge Ibaka added 19 points, 11 rebounds and five blocks for Orlando. Jordan Clarkson had 18 points for the Lakers. They finished a seven-game trip with their 12th loss in 13 games.

HAWKS 109, NUGGETS 108

Paul Millsap capped a 9-0 run in the final 1:43 with two free throws and Atlanta rallied to beat Denver. Dennis Schroder had 27 points and Millsap finished with 20 points and eight rebounds for the injury-depleted Hawks. Atlanta played its third straight game without center Dwight Howard because of lower back stiffness. Danilo Gallinari had 21 points and a season-high 11 rebounds for the Nuggets.

BUCKS 123, WIZARDS 96

Giannis Antetokounmpo had a career-high 39 points to help Milwaukee rout Washington. Antetokounmpo made 12 of 19 shots and 15 of 17 free throws and had eight rebounds and six assists in 33 minutes. John Wall and Otto Porter each scored 18 points for Washington.

MAVERICKS 90, CLIPPERS 88

Harrison Barnes made a 10-foot running jumper with 3.7 seconds left for the last of his team-high 24 points as Dallas beat Los Angeles. Dirk Nowitzki, playing only in the first half in his return from an Achilles strain after missing 14 consecutive games, added 17 points and Wesley Matthews 16 for the Mavericks. Jamal Crawford scored 26 points for the Clippers, who were playing without both of their stars, Chris Paul (hamstring) and Blake Griffin (knee).

SUNS 123, 76ERS 116

Eric Bledsoe scored 16 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter and had 11 assists, leading Phoenix past Philadelphia to snap a four-game losing streak. Devin Booker added 23 points for the Suns. Joel Embiid had 27 for the 76ers. — AP



PORTLAND: San Antonio Spurs guard Patty Mills, left, and center Dewayne Dedmon close in on Portland Trail Blazers guard Damian Lillard during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Portland, Ore., Friday, Dec. 23, 2016. The Spurs won 110-90.— AP

NBA results/standings

Dallas 90, LA Clippers 88; San Antonio 110, Portland 90; Atlanta 109, Denver 108; Toronto 104, Utah 98; Phoenix 123, Philadelphia 116; Milwaukee 123, Washington 96; Memphis 115, Houston 109; New Orleans 91, Miami 87; Sacramento 109, Minnesota 105; Cleveland 119, Brooklyn 99; Oklahoma City 117, Boston 112; Golden State 119, Detroit 113; Charlotte 103, Chicago 91; Orlando 109, LA Lakers 90.

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
W	L	PCT	GB	
Toronto	21	8	.724	-
Boston	17	13	.567	4.5
NY Knicks	16	13	.552	5
Philadelphia	7	22	.241	14
Brooklyn	7	22	.241	14

Central Division				
W	L	PCT	GB	
Cleveland	22	6	.786	-
Milwaukee	14	14	.500	8
Indiana	15	16	.484	8.5
Chicago	14	15	.483	8.5
Detroit	14	18	.438	10

Southeast Division				
W	L	PCT	GB	
Charlotte	17	13	.567	-
Atlanta	15	15	.500	2
Washington	13	16	.448	3.5
Orlando	14	18	.438	4
Miami	10	21	.323	7.5

Western Conference

Northwest Division				
W	L	PCT	GB	
Oklahoma City	18	12	.600	-
Utah	18	13	.581	0.5
Portland	13	19	.406	6
Denver	12	18	.400	6
Minnesota	9	20	.310	8.5

Pacific Division				
W	L	PCT	GB	
Golden State	27	4	.871	-
LA Clippers	22	9	.710	5
Sacramento	13	17	.433	13.5
LA Lakers	11	22	.333	17
Phoenix	9	21	.300	17.5

Southwest Division				
W	L	PCT	GB	
San Antonio	24	6	.800	-
Houston	22	9	.710	2.5
Memphis	20	12	.625	5
New Orleans	11	21	.344	14
Dallas	9	21	.300	15

Kuwait Times 55th Anniversary BUSINESS

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**Qatargas starts up
Laffan Refinery 2**

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**Holiday splurging not
an option for many
workers scraping by**

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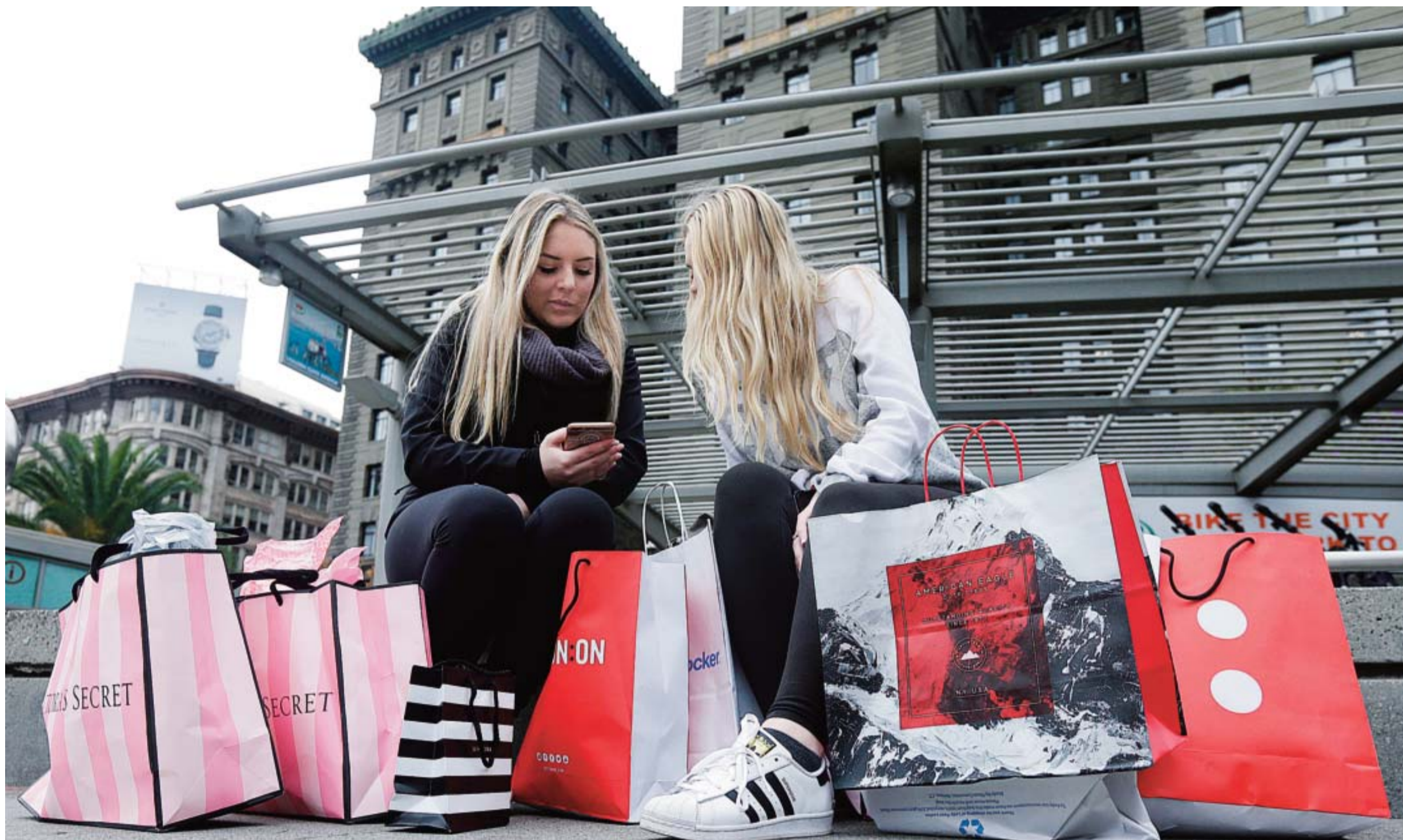


**CFA Society Kuwait
appoints new board
of directors**

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ECONOMISTS: 'AMERICA FIRST' APPROACH COULD HURT IOWA

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SAN FRANCISCO: Maddy (left) and her friend Maggie sit with their shopping bags at Union Square in San Francisco. The holiday shopping season is losing some of its power in the year's sales. November and December now account for less than 21 percent of annual retail sales at physical stores, down from a peak of over 25 percent. The shift is in part because people are spreading out their shopping all year, demanding big discounts and spending more on events rather than more stuff. —AP

WEAK UK DATA RAISES WARNING FLAGS FOR 2017

DOMESTIC DEMAND RISES, BUT TRADE AND INVESTMENT WEAKEN

LONDON: British consumers brushed off June's Brexit vote and drove the economy to expand faster than expected in the third quarter, but a hefty current account gap and weaker trade and investment raised warning flags for 2017.

The economy grew by 0.6 percent in the three months to September, above its long-run average and beating expectations in a Reuters poll of economists who expected the Office for National Statistics to stick with its earlier estimate of 0.5 percent. The ONS also revised down growth for the second quarter to 0.6 percent, meaning there was no slowdown at all following June's Brexit vote - confounding predictions at the time that the 'Leave' vote would push

Britain's economy into recession.

With the large services sector continuing to perform well in October, Britain's economy looks on track to expand by more than 2 percent this year - faster than almost all other big advanced economies except perhaps the United States. Sterling rose against the dollar after the data, having hit a seven-week low earlier in the day. But Friday's figures showed no sign that sterling's sharp fall after the referendum had boosted exports. The picture for trade worsened markedly and growth depended more on domestic consumer demand than previously thought.

"Six months to the day after the Brexit vote, it is clear that 2017 is likely to be a

challenging period for the economy, not least in assessing 'traditional' imbalances in the current account and the household sector," Investec chief economist Philip Shaw said. Economists polled by Reuters expect Britain's growth rate to more than halve next year to 1.1 percent.

Inflation squeeze

Household spending rose at a quarterly rate of 0.7 percent in the third quarter, but at the same time household incomes adjusted for inflation fell 0.6 percent - the biggest drop since early 2014.

Households also ate into their savings, with the savings ratio dropping to its lowest in eight years.

"With high inflation set to weigh further on spending power next year, the consumer is surely set to falter soon," said Martin Beck, economist at consultancy EY ITEM Club. Business investment also disappointed, with the ONS more than halving its estimate for investment growth in the third quarter to 0.4 percent.

Net trade subtracted 1.2 percentage points from third quarter growth, the biggest drag since early 2012 and compared with an initial estimate that trade had offered a 0.7 percentage point boost to the growth rate. This reflected corrections the ONS recently made to trade data due to a miscalculation in the trade of gold.

Britain's current account deficit widened

to 25.494 billion pounds (\$31.23 billion) from a downwardly revised 22.079 billion pounds in the second quarter. While lower than the 27.45 billion pounds expected by economists, it caused the deficit to rise to 5.2 percent of gross domestic product from 4.6 percent - approaching a record 6.0 percent seen in late 2013.

In the run-up to June's referendum, Bank of England Governor Mark Carney said Britain relied on the "kindness of strangers" to meet its financing needs - something that could fade if Britain became a less attractive investment destination. Some economists warn Britain could still be vulnerable if it looks like it will end up with a bad deal in its divorce from the European Union. —Reuters

US ECONOMIC OUTLOOK FOR 2017 BRIGHTENS

WASHINGTON: New US single-family home sales rose more than expected in November and consumer sentiment hovered near a 13-year high this month, strengthening the view that the economy will gain further momentum next year. President-elect Donald Trump's plan to cut taxes and increase infrastructure spending is expected to boost economic growth, though it already has sparked a surge in mortgage rates that could hurt the housing market in the long term.

"Home buyers are confident in their futures and this means the outlook is likely to be brighter next year than we thought," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFG Union Bank in New York.

The Commerce Department on Friday said new home sales increased 5.2 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 592,000 units last month. That was the second highest pace since 2007. Economists had forecast single-family home sales, which account for about 9.5 percent of overall home sales, rising 2.1 percent to a 575,000-unit rate last month.

Sales rose 16.5 percent from a year ago, boosted by a 43.8 percent jump in the Midwest to a nine-year high. Sales surged 7.7 percent in the West, their highest level since January 2008, but fell 3.1 percent in the South. They were unchanged in the Northeast. Separately, the University of Michigan said its consumer sentiment index edged up to a reading of 98.2 from 98 earlier this month. That was

the highest reading since January 2004.

The University of Michigan said a record 18 percent of respondents "spontaneously mentioned the expected favorable impact of Trump's policies on the economy." Consumers anticipated that a stronger economy would create more jobs, with the share expecting higher income rising to a one-year high. "Greater income growth prospects for consumers serves as a good leading indicator of real spending activity," said Michael Brown, an economist at Wells Fargo in Charlotte, North Carolina.

US financial markets were little moved by the upbeat data in light pre-holiday trading. The US dollar was steady against a basket of currencies, while prices of US Treasuries rose. Stocks on Wall Street were little changed.

RIISING MORTGAGE RATES

While Trump's envisaged policies have boosted confidence among households and businesses, his agenda to increase spending is expected to stoke inflation. Mortgage rates have risen rapidly since the business mogul's Nov 8 election victory. The interest rate on a fixed 30-year mortgage has increased more than 70 basis points to an average of 4.30 percent, the highest level since April 2014, according to data from mortgage finance firm Freddie Mac.

Mortgage rates are likely to rise further after the Federal Reserve raised its benchmark

overnight interest rate last week by 25 basis points to a range of 0.50 percent to 0.75 percent. The US central bank forecast three rate hikes for next year. Higher mortgage rates in the near term could boost home sales by luring in buyers who fear further increases in borrowing costs. A report on Wednesday showed sales of previously owned homes rose to near a 10-year high in November.

"We have yet to see any clear signs in the housing data reported to date that higher rates have depressed activity," said Daniel Silver, an economist at JPMorgan in New York. "That said, we think that at some point higher rates will weigh at least somewhat on the housing market."

Higher borrowing costs come at a time when house price increases are outstripping wage gains, which could make purchases unaffordable for many first-time buyers. Despite the rise in sales last month, the inventory of new homes on the market increased 1.6 percent to 250,000 units, the highest level since September 2009. Still, the supply of new houses for sale remains about half of what it was at the peak of the housing market boom.

The inventory rise, if sustained, could slow the pace of house price increases. At November's sales pace it would take 5.1 months to clear the supply of houses on the market, down from 5.2 months in October. A six-month supply is viewed as a healthy balance between supply and demand. —Reuters



WASHINGTON: President Barack Obama steps off the stage after addressing business leaders about the economy in the East Room of the White House in Washington. —AP

WHAT YOU SHOULD AND SHOULDN'T DO WHEN INSTALLING A CAR SEAT

PARENTING PRO TIPS

KUWAIT: Globally, road traffic collisions are the ninth leading cause of death, killing almost 1.25 million people each year—and for children, these numbers are even higher. According to The World Health Organization (WHO), road traffic accidents accounted for 21 percent of fatalities of those aged 0-19. But these tragedies can be easily prevented: WHO states that child restraints, when correctly installed and used, reduce deaths among infants by approximately 70 percent and deaths among small children by between 54 percent and 80 percent.

Child restraints have proven to reduce the risk of death among infants by approximately 70 percent, and deaths among small children by between 54 and 80 percent. When installed correctly child restraints have the ability to reduce injury or prevent death in the event of an automobile accident, but if they aren't installed properly, their effectiveness can be reduced. Even the most well-meaning parents can sometimes have trouble installing child seats

correctly, so Chevrolet has come up with this complete list of car seat dos and don'ts to help you keep your little ones safe.

DO choose the right seat for the child. Research different types of seats and their age, height, and weight guidelines, and keep track of the child's growth in these aspects to anticipate when a new seat or seat modification will be required.

DON'T buy a second-hand car seat. There's no way to know for sure if the seat has been in an accident, if it has missing or outdated parts, has been recalled, or if it has expired (it is recommended to check the car seat expiration date). Saving a bit of money on a used car seat isn't worth the safety risk, so invest in a new one that you know will work well.

DO make sure to position the car seat in the right direction for your child's age, weight and height: forward or backward. Generally, rear-facing child seats are more secure for babies or until they're too big to fit. However, the label on the seat will have

specific height- and weight-related information about when to turn the car seat from rear-facing to forward-facing.

DON'T ever put a child restraint in the front passenger seat—even if it's rear-facing. According to WHO, best-practice child restraint laws restrict children (under 13 years old) from sitting in the front seat at all, so putting an infant or toddler in the front seat is especially risky. A passenger seat airbag, while meant to protect an adult from the impact of a collision, can seriously injure a small child.

Instruction manual

DO thoroughly read the instruction manual that comes with the car seat. Safety-belt attachments should be tight, the tethers should be attached correctly based on the direction the seat is facing in a car that uses the LATCH system, and a brand- and car seat model-specific protective mat should be placed underneath the seat to prevent slippage.

DON'T buckle the child in with bulky clothing or outerwear. These items can prevent you from tightening the straps enough and can allow a child to slip out of their car seat by wiggling too much. If your child is cold, buckle them into their car seat and then lay their jacket or a blanket over them.

DO make sure to buckle the child in correctly. They should be sitting with their back and bottom flat against the seat, the straps should be snug (with no more than a finger's width of slack), and the chest clip should be even with the child's armpits. They should not be able to slip out of the harness or pull the straps far away from their body.

While only 53 countries worldwide have best-practice child restraint laws as laid out by WHO, ensuring a child's safety by properly installing and using a car seat should be a priority. Invest the time and energy into finding the right seat, installing it well, and buckling the child in correctly, and in turn, invest in protecting the child during an accident.

GERMAN CONSUMERS VIEW NEW YEAR WITH OPTIMISM: SURVEY

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: German consumers are looking ahead to the new year with optimism, a leading survey said Friday, though it warned that the impact of this week's deadly Berlin attack had yet to be taken into account. The poll of around 2,000 people, carried out by market research firm GfK, found that consumer morale in Europe's top economy rose for a third consecutive month in December.

"Consumer appetite remains robust," it said in a statement. Looking ahead to 2017, GfK's headline consumer confidence indicator was forecast to rise to 9.9 points in January, it said, up from 9.8 in December. Buoyed by a strong labour market and high wages, Germany's big-spending shoppers appear unfazed by a string of political and financial risks on the horizon, the pollster said.

"Consumers are showing resilience towards a series of risk factors, such as the outcome of the US elections, the Brexit

decision, the flare-up of the Italian banking crisis... and the ongoing terror threat," it said.

In a note accompanying the survey however, GfK said respondents were questioned before Monday's truck assault on a Christmas market in Berlin. "Any possible implications from that will be known in the next survey at the earliest," it added.

Twelve people were killed in the attack, which was claimed by the Islamic State group. The latest snapshot of consumer morale echoed the upbeat findings of a closely-watched business confidence survey released by the Munich-based Ifo institute earlier this week. That poll found that German businesses also expected to end the year on a high note, likewise shrugging off concerns about Brexit or Donald Trump's surprise election in the United States. The German government expects the economy to grow by 1.8 percent this year and 1.4 percent in 2017. —AFP



A shopper at the Brea Mall in Brea, California, carries bags full of packages. Amid the holiday decorations and cheerful ads, splurging is not an option for many Americans struggling to get by. — AP

ICAHN SAYS REGULATION STIFLES US REFINERIES

WASHINGTON: Carl Icahn, a newly named adviser to President-elect Donald Trump, said yesterday that burdensome US regulations were hindering free enterprise, and oil refining in particular. In an interview with CNBC, Icahn, the famed Wall Street activist investor, also suggested he would help push the new Trump administration towards broad-based deregulation, as he is widely expected to do.

Trump said Wednesday that he had named Icahn, 80, as his special advisor to overhaul "strangling regulations." Icahn has significant investments in the energy sector, including the Texas oil refiner CVR Energy, which suffered heavily in recent years as energy prices declined but could stand to gain from an anti-regulation agenda.

In the interview aired Thursday, Icahn said that, under President Barack Obama the United States was "on a fast track to socialism" and businesses suffered under an "absurd regulatory environment."

"I'm not against regulations at all. I sort of believe that you need a rule of law," Icahn said. "But it's become literally absurd in many areas." "There good companies, good CEOs, as there are good regulators," he added. "There are some that

are completely absurd.... Frankly, you almost get enraged by some of the stuff."

He pointed to rules under the Environmental Protection Agency governing oil refineries, asserting that gasoline prices were tied to production limits at refineries on the eastern coast of the United States.

Trump has nominated Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, a close ally of the fossil fuel industry and climate change denier, to lead the EPA.

"You have to have healthy refineries," Icahn said Thursday. "There are refineries on the brink of bankruptcy today." In a statement on Thursday, the organization Friends of the Earth said Icahn's new role in the Trump administration showed that the president-elect was building a "kleptocracy" that would steal from the public and give to the well-connected. "Once again Donald Trump has chosen a billionaire who will make himself rich at the expense of the American people," Ben Schreiber, the organization's climate director, said in a statement. "Carl Icahn's vast fossil fuel holdings should disqualify him from any role in reviewing regulations designed to protect public health and the environment." — AFP

HOLIDAY SPLURGING NOT AN OPTION FOR MANY WORKERS SCRAPING BY

LUXURY STORES PROMOTE 'FEEL-GOOD' GIFTS

ELIZABETH, NJ: At the brightly lit mall, clothing stores highlight holiday sweaters and big signs tout the sales, while Duquan Allen keeps his expectations in check.

Allen, who works full-time cleaning planes at Newark Airport, says his mother doesn't expect anything big, and he usually gets a hooded sweatshirt. He plans to spend about \$150 on presents for his grandmother, mother and 21-year-old sister. "I'm good at budgeting," says Allen, who makes \$10.10 an hour.

Heading into this holiday season, with gas and food costs down, unemployment at its lowest point since 2007 and clothing prices on the decline, economists and retail executives declared it a great time to be a consumer. But seven years into the recovery, there's a stubborn divide that hourly workers see more starkly during the holidays, between themselves and better-off consumers who have benefited more as the economy improved.

"I see people traveling. I wish I could afford it," said Allen. Many workers are indeed earning more. Average hourly earnings have picked up 2.5 percent over the past year, and major retailers have raised wages as competition for workers has increased.

Thanksgiving weekend featured crowds of shoppers at stores and malls, snapping up new TVs and clothing. Luxury stores have promoted "feel-good" gifts like \$1,000 silk pajamas. Americans spent \$3.45 billion online on Cyber Monday, according to Adobe Digital Insights, and nearly that much on Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving. The National Retail Federation trade group expects holiday sales for the November and December period to rise 3.6 percent to \$655.8 billion.

From the data, people seem very able to buy. Overall, people plan to spend about \$935 per

person this holiday season, according to an NRF survey. Behind that figure, though, there's a split.

Consumers with income under \$50,000 plan to spend a little over \$362 on gifts for their family and friends, while for those with income of \$50,000 and higher, that number is about \$768. Throwing in decorations, greeting cards, flowers and food, the difference is even larger - around \$512, compared to about \$1,020. That divide also hasn't budged since the recession.

"The U.S. economy is not creating high-wage jobs for lower- and middle-income consumers," said Ken Perkins, president of research firm Retail Metrics LLC. "This is making it extremely difficult for lower-income consumers to make a living. There's really not a lot left for Santa Claus."

About half of American workers have seen their share of overall income growth shrink since 1980, according to a recent study by economists Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman. In 1980, the top 1 percent of adults earned on average 27 times more than the bottom 50 percent adults; now, they earn 81 times more.

Workers at Wal-Mart Stores Inc., the nation's largest private employer, now earn an average of \$13.38 an hour, while the average hourly pay for cashiers and low-level retail sales staff across the industry is \$9.26, according to a Hay Group survey. But some groups say hourly employees across the board still don't make enough to live on. Their fight will face hurdles with President-elect Donald Trump's pick for labor secretary: fast-food CEO Andrew Puzder, who has been critical of minimum wage increases.

"It's a scary-looking administration," said Scott Courtney, executive vice president of the Service Employees International Union. But he said the "Fight for \$15" campaign that began with retail and restaurant workers is not giving up. "You are

going to see a lot more opposition and a lot more people taking part."

Retail sector

Besides the hourly wage, some workers say an issue is they can't get enough hours. The share of people working part-time because that's all they can get remains at recessionary low levels, according to research by Penn State professor and the University of Illinois' Project for Middle Class Renewal senior research analyst Lonnie Golden, published by the Economic Policy Institute. That level is nearly 45 percent higher than it was in 2008, fueled by a few industries like the retail sector.

Maria Coates, 20, of Elizabeth, New Jersey, works about 35 hours a week at a mall-based clothing store, but would like more hours to make more money. "I wish I could shop for my mother, my grandmother and my sister," said Coates, who plans to spend \$50 for the whole family. More than that, she'd like to be able to afford to study accounting. "What I really want is to go to school so I can get a better job."

After rent and rising health care costs, some workers find there's not much left. Allen says of the \$1,260 per month he takes home, more than half goes toward rent. After food, Wi-Fi, phone and utilities, he has about \$310 per month for any other needs. He doesn't have health insurance and recently paid \$100 to fix an abscessed tooth - the equivalent of about ten hours of work.

"The real story for the economic pinch seems to be the rise in health insurance costs," said economist Michael P. Niemira, who examined 2015 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and focused on the second-lowest income strata, which had an average pretax income of \$28,343 - about \$13.63 an hour for full-time work. — AP



WALPOLE: A "Sold" sign rests in front of a house under construction, in Walpole, Massachusetts. Builders pulled back on constructing homes in November 2016, after ground breakings surged in October to the strongest pace in more than nine years. — AP

1,200 MICHIGAN CUSTOMERS AFFECTED AFTER GAS LINE HIT

L'ANSE, Mich: It could be a cold Christmas for more than 1,000 people in Michigan's Upper Peninsula after a vehicle struck a natural gas line early Friday, causing an explosion and fire in Baraga County.

The sheriff's office says a vehicle went off US 41, struck a Semco Energy gas line and caused a fire at a utility substation in the L'Anse area on Lake Superior. There were no injuries.

The L'Anse Fire Department extinguished the fire, but gas service to about 1,200 gas customers in parts of the village and L'Anse Township will be disrupted for two to three days while repairs are made, Baraga County Sheriff Rick Johnson said.

Utility crews were going door to door to

shut off gas at each home and business, a process that was estimated to take hours. Semco crews also were working to repair the damage at the substation, the utility said. Semco crews from across Michigan were headed to L'Anse to assist with service restoration.

Warming centers were established at a Baraga school, Ojibwa Community College and the Big Bucks Bingo Hall. The National Weather Service predicted low temperatures in the 20s and 30s through Sunday night. Space heaters were also distributed for people who preferred to stay home. At Baraga High School, district Superintendent Richard Sarau turned on Wi-Fi for people staying there. — AP



In this photograph taken yesterday, Afghan labourers sort and pack carrots along a roadside on the outskirts of Mazar-i-Sharif. — AFP



NEW YORK: Traders Fred DeMarco (left) and Greg Mulligan confer as they work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. —AP

US STOCKS INCH HIGHER IN SLOW PRE-HOLIDAY TRADING

WALL STREET WEEKLY REPORT

NEW YORK: Wall Street traders sometimes root for year-end "Santa Claus rallies," but on Friday, hardly a creature was stirring as stocks finished slightly higher on the quietest full day of trading in more than a year. Health care companies brought in most of the gains.

Major US indexes stayed in a narrow range throughout the day. Drugmakers and other companies in health care did the best, while retailers continued to take small losses just before the holiday. Energy companies also slipped, and they took their first weekly loss since the beginning of November. The Dow Jones industrial average, however, rose for the seventh week in a row.

Defense contractor Lockheed Martin fell after President-elect Donald Trump again tweeted that the company's F-35 fighter jet costs too much. The stock is down almost 6 percent this month. "This is a negotiating tactic," said Josh Sullivan, a Seaport Global analyst who covers aerospace and defense companies. "You're seeing the negative portion of the negotiation in public where privately they may be more constructive."

The Dow Jones industrial average picked up 14.93 points, or 0.1 percent, to 19,933.81. The Standard & Poor's 500 index gained 2.83 points, or 0.1 percent, to 2,263.79. The Nasdaq composite rose 15.27 points, or 0.3 percent, to 5,462.69.

Small-company stocks did far better, as the Russell 2000 climbed 8.85 points, or 0.6 percent, to 1,371.51. Fewer than 2 billion shares changed hands on the New York Stock Exchange. That's barely half the volume of an average day. The last full trading day with that little activity was in

October 2015. Lockheed Martin fell after Trump said on Twitter that Lockheed's F-35 fighter jet costs too much and that he has asked Boeing to "price-out" a comparable F-18 jet. Trump complained earlier this month about the costs of the F-35, which brought in about 20 percent of Lockheed's revenue last year. Lockheed gave up \$3.21, or 1.3 percent, to \$249.59.

This month Trump also criticized Boeing for the cost of the next Air Force One. The presidential jet is far less significant for Boeing than the F-35 is for Lockheed, however, and Boeing shares were only briefly affected.

Sullivan, of Seaport, said Trump's tweets are a new type of bad publicity for defense companies. But even if the President-elect periodically criticizes the companies in public, investors are still optimistic about their prospects under his administration. If Trump builds up the US nuclear arsenal, as he proposed doing in a tweet Thursday, that would also involve more military spending.

Defense spending

"Ultimately (Trump) ran on a strong defense spending platform," he said. Defense stocks have done better than the rest of the market overall since the election.

So far, investor optimism that Trump's spending plans could boost economic growth is outweighing any concerns about his trade proposals, brash style and Twitter pronouncements, which have moved company stocks at times. That may change when he's in office and can more easily back up his comments with executive actions and policy shifts. Drug companies

made small gains on Friday. Botox maker Allergan rose \$5.09, or 2.6 percent, to \$199.08. Bristol-Myers Squibb picked up 85 cents, or 1.4 percent, to \$59.61 and health insurer Aetna added \$1.26, or 1 percent, to \$125.95.

Cintas, a uniform rental company, slipped after its second-quarter profit fell short of Wall Street's forecasts. Analysts said its first-aid business, which sells products like first-aid kits, eye-wash stations and emergency cabinets, had a disappointing quarter. The stock lost \$3.73, or 3.1 percent, to \$116.36.

Benchmark US crude added 7 cents to close at \$53.02 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, the international standard, rose 11 cents to close at \$55.16 a barrel in London.

In other energy trading, natural gas prices continued to climb as investors anticipated that colder weather will lead to more demand for home heating. Natural gas futures rose 12 cents, or 3.5 percent, to \$3.66 per 1,000 cubic feet. Wholesale gasoline added 2 cents to \$1.63 a gallon and heating oil stood still at \$2.48 a gallon. The dollar slid to 117.26 yen from 117.60 yen. The euro rose to \$1.0452 from \$1.0433. Bond prices rose. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to 2.54 percent from 2.55 percent. The price of gold rose \$2.90 to \$1,133.60 an ounce. Silver lost 11 cents to \$15.76 an ounce. Copper gave up 2 cents to \$2.48 a pound. Britain's FTSE 100 and the CAC-40 in France both rose 0.1 percent. In Germany, the DAX lost 0.1 percent. The Hang Seng of Hong Kong retreated 0.3 percent and the Kospi in South Korea finished slightly lower. Japanese markets were closed for a holiday. —AP

FITCH DOWNGRADES BELGIAN DEBT RATING; 'STABLE' OUTLOOK

WASHINGTON: The ratings agency Fitch on Friday downgraded Belgium's long-term debt rating one notch to AA-, citing growing levels of sovereign debt, but said the European nation's outlook was stable. Belgian efforts to stimulate growth through structural reforms since a new government took power in 2014 have pushed the country's fiscal targets upward, with gross debt forecast to be 107 percent of GDP in 2016, the agency said in a statement.

"This persistent fiscal slippage moves back the first year with substantial debt reduction to 2019, two years later than previously projected by Fitch in November 2014, when the agency placed

Belgium's rating on negative outlook," the statement said.

With tax revenues falling, the agency is now forecasting a three percent deficit for the Belgian budget in 2016, up three tenths from a prior estimate.

Extraordinary costs associated with the refugee crisis as well as security measures in response to terrorist attacks in France and Belgium also pushed the deficit forecast higher by 0.2 percent of GDP, according to Fitch. "Repeated slippage against government targets is negatively affecting fiscal policy credibility, and reduces confidence in the ability to meet future fiscal targets." — AFP

BRAZIL'S TEMER UNVEILS PLANS TO PRESERVE JOBS

BRASILIA: President Michel Temer vowed to slash credit card interest rates, offer subsidies to companies that retain employees and ease the hiring of workers on temporary contracts in his latest bid to lift Brazil out of a prolonged recession. Temer also said the government will allow some workers to draw on severance fund accounts, known as FGTS, a step which could inject up to 30 billion reais (\$8.98 billion) into the economy.

The president last week announced other moves to boost credit, as Brazil tries to combat a two-year-old recession and 11.8 percent unemployment. Temer's seven-month-old government, which has been buffeted by corruption scandals, has seen its unpopularity increase.

"They are clearly trying to fight the negative agenda," said Alessandra Ribeiro, an economist with Tendencias Consultoria. "But the effect for his popularity could be marginal because the impact of the measures will not appear in the short term." In laying out the latest economic measures, Eliseu Padilha, Temer's chief of staff, said subsidies to companies that reduce working hours instead of firing employees could preserve 200,000 jobs over the next four years.

The government also said it would send a bill to Congress to ease the hiring of workers on a temporary basis. Roberto Setubal, chief executive officer of Ita Unibanco Holding SA, the largest Brazilian private bank, said the changes to the labor law will "certainly generate jobs, allowing negotiation of working conditions according to the economic sector."

Temer said interest rates on revolving credit cards of up to 30 days would be cut by more than half. For longer periods, banks would allow consumers to pay their debt in installments with reduced rates compared with today.

Brazilian interest rates are among the world's highest, with credit cards charging more than 400 percent a year. Credit card industry association Abecs said it expected a drop in default rates following the changes. Regarding the severance funds, workers will be allowed to withdraw all the money from their FGTS accounts if they are inactive for more than three years. Under current law, FGTS money can only be accessed if a worker is fired, retires or acquires property. — Reuters

PUERTO RICO OUSTS DIRECTOR OF INDEBTED WATER, SEWER AGENCY

SAN JUAN: The board of directors for Puerto Rico's heavily indebted water and sewer company has removed the agency's executive director amid a worsening financial crisis. The directors said Friday that they had lost confidence in Alberto Lazaro and also complained about what they called a lack of communication with Puerto Rico's incoming new governor.

The board stressed that its decision was

not based on Lazaro's work. It praised him for accomplishments including strengthening the agency's finances, reducing water loss, improving response times and handling one of the worst droughts that Puerto Rico has faced.

Lazaro said in a statement that he accepted the board's decision. He was appointed in January 2013 and was scheduled to remain in the position until January 2019. —AP



PITTSBURGH: In this July 16, 2015, photo, a customer refuels her car at a Costco in Pittsburgh. US consumer prices rose in November 2016 by the smallest amount in three months as the climb in energy prices moderated a bit and food prices remained flat. — AP

ECONOMISTS: 'AMERICA FIRST' APPROACH COULD HURT IOWA

JOHNSTON: President-elect Donald Trump's "America first" economic nationalism scored well with voters but may not play well with international trading partners, much to the detriment of Iowa, according to economists who monitor the state's economy.

The zero sum trade game - that is, the idea that when American wins, there has to be a loser - that Trump seems to be advocating could hurt Iowa's exports to China as well as to its North American and European trading partners, economists David Swenson of Iowa State University and the University of Iowa and Ernie Goss of Creighton University said Friday during taping of an upcoming "Iowa Press" program. Goss compared Trump's approach to trade to Brexit - Britain's decision to leave the European Union - and similar populism in Europe, saying such "uber nationalism" is not good for the economy.

The impact could be "huge, huge," Goss said, because "the US depends heavily on agriculture, agricultural exports, and agriculture depends heavily on trade." Iowa is among the five states most dependent on agricultural trade, he said. Iowa exports much of its agricultural commodities and manufactured goods to China, so if Trump carries through on his threats to impose tariffs on Chinese goods, Swenson said, it

will "either increase the cost of buying stuff from Iowa or decrease our access to goods and services from other places."

China has played fast and loose on trade in some cases, Goss said, but the Chinese are no longer manipulating their currency to gain an advantage in trade.

And while many Iowans have praised Trump's selection of Gov Terry Branstad as his ambassador to China because of his many trade missions and personal relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping, the economists warned that Branstad can't approach the post as Iowa's trade representative.

"The governor is going to have to learn to be an ambassador and all that entails broadly with regard to traditional State Department activities," he said. "An ambassador isn't a trade representative and so the role is significantly different from being the chief trade representative of the state of Iowa or the Midwest."

"There's no ribbons to cut in China, which is what Terry Branstad loves to do. He's a promoter, and he's a hand-shaker, and he likes to work out arrangements with people," Swenson added. Iowa Public Broadcasting's edition of "Iowa Press" with the economists will air at 7:30 pm Dec 30 and noon Jan 1 on IPTV, 8:30 am Dec 31 on IPTV World and online at IPTV.org. —AP

GM'S KEY CHINA VENTURE FINED \$29M IN ANTI-MONOPOLY CASE

CHINESE ACTION FOLLOWS TRUMP REMARK ON TRADE PRACTICES

BEIJING: General Motors Co's main joint venture in China was fined \$29 million on Friday on charges it suppressed competition by enforcing minimum sales prices for dealers, the latest in a string of penalties against foreign auto brands under the country's anti-monopoly law.

Chinese regulators have punished companies in industries from milk to medical devices under a 2008 anti-monopoly law in what appears to be an effort to force down consumer prices. Friday's announcement followed public criticism by US President-elect Donald Trump of Chinese trade practices but there was no indication the case was linked to that. GM had announced in August 2014 its joint venture, Shanghai GM, was under investigation by anti-monopoly regulators.

The Shanghai Price Bureau said Shanghai GM, a joint venture with state-owned Shanghai Automotive Industries Corp., improperly suppressed competition by enforcing minimum prices dealers were allowed to charge for Cadillac, Chevrolet and Buick models. That "disrupted the normal order of market competition," the statement said.

Setting minimum retail prices is a common practice in many markets but lawyers say Chinese regulators appear to regard it as an improper restraint on competition.

A statement by the price bureau said the penalty was set at 4 percent of Shanghai GM's annual sales, or 201 million yuan (\$29 million). In a statement, GM said: "GM fully respects

local laws and regulations wherever we operate. We will provide full support to our joint venture in China to ensure that all responsive and appropriate actions are taken with respect to this matter."

GM vies with Germany's Volkswagen AG for the status of the top-selling vehicle brand in China.

Sales of GM vehicles in China rose 7 percent in November over a year earlier to 371,740 units. Year-to-date sales rose 8.5 percent to 3.4 million. Audi, VW's luxury unit, was fined \$40.5 million and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles' Chrysler brand received a smaller penalty in 2014 on similar charges of enforcing minimum sales prices.

State media cited an official saying Daimler Benz AG's Mercedes unit was guilty of violations but no penalty was announced. Toyota Motor Corp. said its Lexus unit was under scrutiny but no results have been announced. A dozen Japanese auto parts suppliers were fined earlier on price-fixing charges. The industry-wide investigation began in 2014 following complaints from foreign auto brands were abusing their control over supplies of spare parts to overcharge consumers. In the case of Mercedes, regulators said purchasing the spare parts needed to assemble one car would cost as much as 12 new vehicles.

Foreign business groups welcomed passage of the 2008 law, which they said would help to clarify operating conditions in China's state-dominated economy.

Since then, they have complained about the secretive way investigations are conducted. They say companies are pressured into agreeing to penalties and to avoid disputing any finding of wrongdoing.

In the biggest penalty so far, Qualcomm Inc. was fined \$975 million in 2015 on charges it abused control over patents that are part of global industry standards for mobile phones to charge Chinese handset makers excessive licensing fees. This month, medical device maker Medtronic Inc. was fined \$17 million on charges it suppressed competition by enforcing minimum prices for its retailers. —AP



MIAMI: In this June 28, 2016, photo, shows the front of a 2016 Nissan Altima at a Nissan dealer, in Miami. Black Friday deals were expected to pull US auto sales out of their recent slump in November 2016. —AP

CUT RATES, BRACKETS BUT WHAT ABOUT DEFICIT: GOP ON TAXES

WASHINGTON: Congressional Republicans are planning a massive overhaul of the nation's tax system next year, a heavy political lift that could ultimately affect families at every income level and businesses of every size. Their goal is to simplify a complicated tax code that rewards wealthy people with smart accountants, and corporations that can easily shift profits - and jobs - overseas. It won't be easy. The last time it was done was 30 years ago.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky, and Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., have vowed to pass a tax package that would not add to the budget. The Washington term is "revenue neutral."

It means that for every tax cut there has to be a tax increase, creating winners and losers. Lawmakers would get some leeway if non-partisan congressional analysts project that a tax cut would increase economic growth, raising revenue without increasing taxes.

Nevertheless, passing a massive tax package will require some tough votes, politically. Some key Republican senators want to share the political risk with Democrats. They argue that a tax overhaul must be bipartisan to be fully embraced by the public. They cite President Barack Obama's health law - which passed in 2010 without any Republican votes - as a major policy initiative that remains divisive.

Congressional Democrats say they are eager to have a say in overhauling the tax code. But McConnell, who faulted Democrats for acting unilaterally on health care, is laying the groundwork to pass a purely partisan bill.

Both McConnell and Ryan said they plan to use a legislative maneuver that would prevent Senate Democrats from using the filibuster to block a tax bill. McConnell says he wants the Senate to tackle a tax plan in the spring, after Congress repeals Obama's health law. House Republicans are more eager to get started, but haven't set a timeline.

Some things to know about Republican efforts to overhaul the tax code:

The house plan
House Republicans have released the outline of a tax plan that would lower the top individual income tax rate from 39.6 percent to 33 percent, and reduce the number of tax brackets from seven to three. The gist of the plan is to lower tax rates for just about everyone, and make up the lost revenue by scaling back exemptions, deductions and credits. The plan, however, retains some of the most popular tax breaks, including those for paying a mortgage, going to college, making charitable contributions and having children.

The standard deduction would be increased, giving taxpayers less incentive to itemize their deductions.

The non-partisan Tax Policy Center says the plan would reduce revenues by \$3 trillion over the first decade, with most of the savings going to the highest-income households.

That's not revenue neutral. Small business owners would get a special top tax rate of 25 percent. Investment income would be taxed like wages, but investors would only have to pay taxes on half of this income. — AP



FORT WORTH: This July 7, 2006, file photo, the Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is shown after it was unveiled in a ceremony in Fort Worth, Texas. — AP

ANOTHER TRUMP TWEET JAB, AGAIN IN THE DEFENSE SECTOR

LOCKHEED MARTIN SHARES, BOEING UP

NEW YORK: Shares Lockheed Martin slipped while rival Boeing's rose Friday after a tweet from President-elect Donald Trump appeared to pit the two defense industry giants against one another in a bid to lower prices for government contracts.

It was just the latest targeted jab at US corporations that may have led to volatile trading.

During his campaign, Trump lambasted Ford for beefing up operations abroad. He said he would not eat Oreos cookies that may soon be made in Mexico and vowed to get Apple to make iPhones in the US. Now it's Boeing and Lockheed, the defense contractors, who are defending their business practices after Trump tweeted late Thursday: "Based on the tremendous cost and cost overruns of the Lockheed Martin F-35, I have asked Boeing to price-out a comparable F-18 Super Hornet!"

Trump tweeted earlier this month that he is looking to cut "billions" in costs for military purchases. Boeing Co spokesman Todd Blecher said, "We have committed to working with the president-elect and his administration to provide the best capability, deliverability and affordability."

Lockheed Martin Corp., based in Bethesda, Maryland, said earlier this month that it has worked to lower the price of the F-35 one-seat fighter aircraft by more than 60 percent and that it expects the aircraft to cost \$85 million in 2019 and 2020.

The F-35 program made up 20 percent of Lockheed's revenue of \$46.1 billion last year. And US government orders made up 78 percent of its revenue last year. The F-35 program directly or indirectly supports more than 146,000 US jobs, according to the company's website.

Lockheed Martin's stock declined \$3.21, or 1.3 percent, to close Friday at \$249.59. Two weeks ago, Trump threatened to cancel Boeing's contract to build Air Force One because of "out of control" costs.

Chicago-based Boeing relies less on that contract than Lockheed does on the F-35 program. Its shares ended up 35 cents to \$157.81 Friday after earlier dropping to \$156.51. Trump met with the CEOs of Boeing and Lockheed Martin Corp. Wednesday and CEOs from both companies said that they had discussed lowering costs of the F-35 and Air Force One projects.

Boeing and Lockheed are also among the companies pursuing a contract for replacing Minuteman missiles in the US nuclear arsenal. Representatives for the two companies declined to comment on whether that contract came up during the meetings this week.

CEO response

The chief executive of Lockheed Martin Corp told President-elect Donald Trump on Friday that she was committed to driving down the cost of the company's F-35 fighter jet, a day after Trump

took aim at the cost of the F-35 in a Twitter post.

CEO Marillyn Hewson said she spoke with Trump on Friday afternoon and assured him that she had heard his message "loud and clear" about reducing the cost of the F-35.

Trump, in a tweet posted late on Thursday, suggested that an older aircraft made by rival aerospace company Boeing Co could offer a cheaper alternative to the F-35.

"Based on the tremendous cost and cost overruns of the Lockheed Martin F-35, I have asked Boeing to price-out a comparable F-18 Super Hornet!" Trump said. Hewson, in a statement posted on Twitter, said she had had "a very good conversation" with Trump on Friday.

"I gave him my personal commitment to drive the cost down aggressively," she said in the statement. Lockheed shares closed down 1.3 percent on Friday, nearing their lowest levels since the Nov. 8 election. They were the biggest drag on a basket of defense-related stocks. Boeing's stock ended near the unchanged mark.

Trump had met with the chief executives of both Lockheed and Boeing on Wednesday.

Boeing's F-18 is an older generation aircraft that lacks the stealth capabilities of the F-35.

One US official said it was impossible to tell what Trump meant by his tweet, given the importance of stealth technology as a way to counter advanced defenses of near-peer states, like Russia or China. — Agencies



WASHINGTON: The exterior of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) building in Washington. Congressional Republicans are planning a massive overhaul of the nation's tax system in 2017, a heavy political lift that could ultimately affect families at every income level and businesses of every size. — AP

Revolutionary Geely Emgrand X7 Sport

See it to believe it!



Kuwait Automotive Imports Co (KAICO) along with Geely International Corporation launched the all new Geely Emgrand X7 Sport SUV in Kuwait. This SUV is the latest launch from the synergy of Geely & technology transfer agreement with Volvo. The SUV comes with a remarkable improvement on the exterior and interior appeal bonded with a power train of 2.4L, 4 cylinder engine mated to smooth & responsive 6 speed tiptronic gear box.

Mr Yousef Al Shaya, CEO, KAICO mentioned that KAICO is very excited to launch the new Emgrand X7 Sport in Kuwait after receiving a wide recognition from media and consumers internationally and in GCC too, we received a great feedback from our neighbors in Oman, KSA and Bahrain.

Mr Ashish Tandon, General Manager, KAICO mentioned that the exciting part is that we are already receiving enquiries & bookings for Emgrand X7 Sport before we have even launched it. We are very confident about the Emgrand X7 Sport and looking

forward for record breaking sales. Remarkable influence of European Manufacturing Mr Mohammad Osman Geely Brand, KAICO mentioned that the X7 Sport was designed by the Volvo designer Peter Hurbory, who headed up design at Volvo in the 1990s and oversaw it for Volvo, Jaguar, Aston Martin and Ford's other brands from 2002, is now in charge of Geely's new wave of world class product.

Emgrand X7 Sport is an obvious example of how the company expertise has increased since this partnership considering the design approach, exterior & interior appeal, and body built quality etc.

Design and Power these are the Key word that explain the new Emgrand Success. With technical support from European partners and excellent designers, the Chinese automaker is now producing increasingly competitive and award-winning cars.

Aggressive & Powerful Exteriors:
The SUV is developed around the concept of a

speeding cheetah, strong shoulders of a big cat in motion are shown over the front wheels with strong shoulder line moving throughout the vehicle, creating a strong visual impact and developing a sports sense around the Emgrand X7 Sport. It has a nice stance, a trendy black D-pillar for the floating roof idea, a kinky kink in the bodywork just behind the C, and sleek taillights.

Elegant Interiors:

The elegant interior design of the Emgrand X7 Sport reflects a mix of technology and quality. The three-spoke leather multifunction steering wheel, TFT full-color 3D combination instrument and extended instrument panel have an elegant appearance. The central console arches from the front to the rear passenger area. The seats are well-designed, floating on bridge-like supports and dressed in the style of Chinese clothing.

Power Train:

The Geely Emgrand X7 Sport is a front wheel drive SUV powered by a 2.4 liter 4 cylinder engine produces 160 HP & 210 NM. It is mated to a six-speed tiptronic automatic gearbox. This is good enough to propel the car from 0100- in 8.8 seconds.

Safety & Other Features

The new Emgrand X7 Sport is packed with safety technology that includes ABS, EBD, EBA, Cruise Control, Tyre Pressure Monitoring System, Autohold, Visual Parking System etc, to name a few. The SUV is loaded with latest gizmos to make your drive experience comfortable.

Electronic Parking Brake, Auto hold & Traction Control Intelligent Climate Control

Rear AC Vents
Multi Colored Digital Display

By bringing the Geely range to the Kuwait, KAICO has reinforced its commitment to provide high-quality products and services to its customers in Kuwait. Moreover, KAICO is offering very attractive prices on the Emgrand X7 Sport range of cars along with a warranty of upto 5 years / 150,000 kms. The old English saying "the proof of the pudding is in the eating", test drive the car to experience the style, luxury and performance of the car.



THE SURPRISING TECHNOLOGY BEHIND THE FUTURE OF AUTONOMOUS DRIVING

KUWAIT: As autonomous driving (AD) technology brings new advances and features to mobility, important questions inevitably arise. For example, how will drivers come to trust their autonomous vehicles? How will vehicles communicate with drivers and alert them to the presence of other vehicles on the road? And, what actions will vehicles take after identifying objects, signs and other road infrastructure such as painted lanes? As Nissan's Tetsuya Iijima said in our most recent Medium article on autonomous driving, social acceptance is key to its future.

Takashi Sunda, Deputy General Manager of the Autonomous Drive Technology Development Department at Nissan, and his team of engineers have developed answers to these and other questions through their work on technology that enables communication between drivers and cars. In a world of ubiquitous personal devices, we're already interacting with this sort of technology dozens of times a day? You find it on your smartphone touchscreen, on your computer, and even your home coffee machine. It's already a key technology in your car, where it plays a critical role in instrument panels, navigation touchscreens, and parking assistance features.

Sunda's team is working on a wide range of new technologies that focus on how to better communicate and establish trust between drivers and their cars. Adding to the complexity, researchers must also factor in the many differences in gender, age, experience, terrain, culture? and even different countries' rules of the road. "Driving is so different wherever you go. In France, motorcycles frequently cut across highways, while motorists in the US and UK drive on opposite sides of the road," he said. "There is much to consider on both an individual level and from a cultural perspective. Driving is very personal and unique." And that's, why it's important to gather as many perspectives as possible, he said. "Understanding and considering differences is the most helpful," Sunda continued. "But it can be difficult to grasp at first, so the question becomes: How do you make that universal step to build trust?" Finding the Right Balance For Sunda, transparency holds the key.

But as AD technology advances, so must



the interface between drivers and their cars. Once vehicles begin collecting more information in support of new AD features, the systems will need to be able to recognize and react to a range of situations. What's more, the technology will also need to quickly communicate all information back to the driver in an easy-to-grasp manner. "We want even first-time customers to feel comfortable using AD," he said. "It all must remain simple." Drivers will need to know what information the car is collecting and importantly what the vehicle is going to do with that data to ensure a safe and comfortable ride.

Consider a scenario in which you are changing lanes and are suddenly approached by another car in an adjacent lane: How will your vehicle convey important information about the approaching car quickly, and what will it do in response? Or, think about a city corner, when a lone pedestrian suddenly steps off the curb and starts walking across the street: What will your car need to tell you? In these situations, you need to inform but not overwhelm users. "It's a

delicate balance of how much information to control, and how much to share," said Sunda.

Clearly, autonomous driving will change the relationship between drivers and their cars, but it's a challenge that Sunda is particularly cut out for. Before joining Nissan 16 years ago, he worked on developing aircraft-human machine interfaces. When working on those airplanes, he had the benefit of trained pilots who could not only operate the aircraft, but who offered opinions on design.

For the AD project, Sunda's team members draw on their own driving experiences as well. But he's quick to add that his own personal experience behind the wheel is not necessarily going to reflect another driver's experience. In the end, the big prize for Sunda's team is a chance to reinvent the future of driving. Sunda said as more autonomous features are available, it will have a revolutionary impact on the way people interact with their cars. "The change has already begun," he said. "We are altering the relationship between drivers and their cars and the experience of driving as a whole."

Nissan is a global full-line vehicle manufacturer that sells more than 60 models under the Nissan, Infiniti and Datsun brands. In fiscal year 2015, the company sold more than 5.4 million vehicles globally, generating revenue of 12.2 trillion yen. Nissan engineers, manufactures and markets the world's best-selling all-electric vehicle in history, the Nissan LEAF. Nissan's global headquarters in Yokohama, Japan manages operations in six regions: ASEAN & Oceania; Africa, Middle East & India; China; Europe; Latin America and North America. Nissan has been partnered with French manufacturer Renault since 1999 and Mitsubishi Motors since 2016 under the Renault-Nissan Alliance.



BURGAN BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF YOUTH ACCOUNT QUARTERLY DRAW

Congratulations to the winners

KD 1000

Fahad Naseem Mohammad Alboushi, Abeer Fahad Motaq Almutairi, Lolwa Saad Jasim Alswilem

www.burgan.com

بنك بروطان BURGAN BANK

KUWAIT: Burgran Bank recently announced the names of the three lucky winners of its Youth Account Quarterly Draw. First place winner, Abeer Fahad Motaq Almutairi took home a cash prize of KD1,000, while second and third place winners, Fahad Naseem Mohammad Alboushi and Lolwa Saad Jasim Alswilem, each received a remarkable gift of an "unlimited access" voucher to Grand Cinemas for one year.

Customers transferring their Student allowances to the bank will automatically be enrolled into the draw and with every KD 20 in their Youth account they will get one chance to enter the quarterly draw.

The Youth Account draw was re-launched in response to the increasing market demand for highly innovative offerings which provide a higher incentive of winning for young individuals, between the ages of 15 - 25, who seek to attain a successful future. There is no KD limit to open an account, and no minimum balance required to maintain it. Furthermore, account holders will receive free prepaid MasterCard and an ATM card which entitles them to discounts at selected merchants along with an exclusive discount at Grand Cinemas Theatres in Al Hamra Mall and The Gate Mall.

To receive regular updates about Burgran Bank's Youth Account promotions, customers can follow the Youth Account Instagram page @Burgan_Youth.

CFA SOCIETY KUWAIT APPOINTS NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS

KUWAIT: CFA Society Kuwait, CFA Institute's local association of investment professionals consisting of portfolio managers, financial analysts and investment advisors, has announced the appointment of its new board of directors. Mijbel AlQattan, previously the society's Vice President, was appointed by the newly elected board of directors to take over the role from previous President Rafik Hafez.

The new board, consisting of top professionals from within the local finance industry, reflects both CFA Institute and CFA Society Kuwait's mission of raising professional and market standards to support the growth and development of the country's investment sector. The new members of the board are:

- * Mijbel AlQattan, CFA, President
- * Mohammad AlSarraf, CFA, Vice President and Treasurer
- * Alaa Abdelrahim, CFA, Secretary
- * Anuj Tewari, CFA, Board Member
- * Hargurmit Singh, CFA, Board Member
- * Robin Bhattacharya, CFA, Board Member

Commenting on his new role, Mijbel AlQattan, CFA, President of CFA Society Kuwait said: "I am honoured to be elected as President of CFA Society Kuwait and look forward to

working with the newly elected board, our members, local government entities, regulators, education institutions and the country's top firms as we continue to uphold the highest standards of professionalism in Kuwait's investment community."

He added: "Our priorities for the next year are to continue to serve our members' needs through the delivery of high quality, professional programs and to support global initiatives geared towards investor education, investor protection and ethical investment practices. We have also been proactive in helping aspiring young investment professionals attain the prestigious CFA Charter, which is recognised as the gold standard investment qualification around the world."

AlQattan received his CFA Charter in 2009 and has served CFA Society Kuwait in various roles, including Vice President and Advocacy Chair. He is a Senior Investment Manager with Impulse International for Telecommunications.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank the previous board and especially Rafik Hafez, our previous society President, for all his hard work in making it such an important component of the financial community over the past years.



Mijbel AlQattan, CFA President

He will remain an important part of the work CFA Society Kuwait will continue to do," concluded AlQattan.

CFA Society Kuwait was founded in August 2008 and currently has over 100 members.

ZAIN ANNOUNCES JASSIM ALI THIRD WINNER OF 4 PRIZES IN 'PAY ONLINE AND WIN'

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced the winner of the third week of its "Pay Online and Win" draw that will see a weekly postpaid winner of four valuable prizes when paying their bill using Zain's website or app as well as a grand prize at the final draw at the end of January.

Zain announced Jassim Yousef Yaseen Ali winner of 4 valuable prizes in the third week of the draw, including iPhone 7, Touch Hotspot LTE-A with free 1.5 TB Prepaid Internet line valid for 3 months, and iPad mini 4. The draw, held weekly until the 22nd of January 2017, will see one weekly winner of four valuable prizes, including iPhone 7, Touch Hotspot LTE-A with free 1.5 TB Prepaid Internet line valid for 3 months, and an

entertainment device. The grand prize winner, announced at the end of the campaign, will receive iPhone 7, iPhone 7 Plus, Touch Hotspot LTE-A with free 1.5 TB Prepaid Internet line valid for 3 months, and a PlayStation 4 (1 TB).

Postpaid customers will get one chance to enter the weekly draws as well as the final draw for every KD1 paid through Zain's digital channels, including the company's website (paykw.zain.com) and Zain's app available for iOS and Android. Zain launched this exciting promotional campaign to reinforce its leadership position and its pledge in offering the best products and services to meet its customers' personal and professional telecommunications needs, who are considered Kuwait's biggest family of subscribers.

GENUINE SPARE PARTS FROM CHEVROLET AND CADILLAC ALGHANIM LAUNCH NEW YEAR PROMOTION

KUWAIT: In celebration of the arrival of the New Year, Yusuf Ahmed Alghanim & Sons Automotive, the exclusive distributor of Chevrolet and Cadillac vehicles in Kuwait, as well as the largest distributor of genuine spare parts from General Motors, is happy to launch its festive Genuine Spare Parts promotion in all of the Alghanim Auto Parts outlets. Now with every KD 25 spent, customers will have 4 chances to win an iPhone 7 or the grand prize, the new 2017 Chevrolet Trax LT.

Valid from December 17th, 2016, until March 17th, 2017, the promotion offers customers multiple chances to win valuable prizes. Customers will get the chance to win one of 30 iPhone 7 on a number of draws-the first will take place on January 17th, 2017 and the second on February 16th, 2017. As for the grand draw on the new 2017 Chevrolet Trax LT, the event will

take place on March 20th, 2017.

As the agent of GM in Kuwait, Yusuf A. Alghanim & Sons Automotive provides its customers with world-renowned, genuine spare parts that enhance customers' safety and prolong vehicles' longevity and performance. Yusuf A. Alghanim & Sons Automotive facility is equipped with a modern and air-conditioned warehouse that stocks all the required parts using the latest global systems and processes, which include making deliveries to all parts locations in Kuwait. Customers can purchase spare parts from any of the Alghanim Genuine Spare Parts outlets [Shuwaikh 24967772 - Canada Dry Street (tel. 24834822) - Faheehel, (tel. 23929849) - Sharq (tel. 22460972) and Jahra 24965935] open from Saturday to Thursday, from 8 am to 7.30 pm, with the exception of the Shuwaikh Main Branch (tel. 24969772)

Genuine GM Parts

Get 4 chances to enter a draw and

WIN

With every KD 25 spent on Genuine Spare Parts

Monthly Amazing Gifts

10x iPhone 7

Grand Prize

2017 Chevrolet Trax LT

Draw will take place on March 20th, 2017

Offer Valid From December 17th, 2016 to March 17th, 2017

AUB ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF AL-HASSAD PROGRAM DRAW

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank held its weekly draw of Al-Hassad Islamic Saving program on December 21, 2016. This program offers the biggest prize amount to the largest number of winners. The prize program succeeded in becoming the first prize account in Kuwait compliant with the Islamic Sharia principles. The program has been developed to fulfil the needs of the Bank customers and increase their opportunities in winning sizeable and attractive prizes in addition to enjoying the latest banking advantages that Ahli United Bank provides.

On this occasion, the bank issued the following press release: Al-Hassad Islamic Saving program offers the highest amounts of prizes which amount to KD 3.4 million per year. This Program also offers 26 weekly prizes, with the highest number of weekly winners. The Islamic Hassad Saving Account may be opened by the lowest amount to open an account, which is KD 100. The winner of the weekly grand prize in the amount of KD 25,000 is: Mohammad Abdullah Al Kandari.

The winners of the KD 1,000 prize each: Mohammed Abdul Rauf Ibrahim, Amirah Mohammad Behbehani, Fareeda Abbas Al Saffar, Ali Hajjaj Alazmi, Nabeelah Abdullah Al Matrouk, Jana Baseil Fouad, Sulaiman Adnan Sulaiman, Yaqoub Abdullh Al Qattan, Zakareya Salem AlTaranwah, Ghala Mohammad Al Refaei,

Ghaith M Al-Tayyar, Talal Zaben Al-Arbeed, Siraj Saifuddin, Khalid F M Alabdulhadi, Moudhi Naser Mohammad, Hameed Husain Dashti, Amro Mohammad Al-Sayad, Dhiya Ahmed Al-Mahmeed, Khairiya Abdulla Dashti, Ali Kunhalil, Husain Naser Mohamed, Sabah Salman Jassim, Ahmed Qanber Abdulla, Nabeel Yusuf Sharaf, Taiba Abbas Ebrahim.

The prize program of "Al-Hassad Islamic Saving" from Ahli United Bank offers a weekly grand prize worth KD 25,000 in addition to 25 weekly prizes worth a total of KD 25,000 distributed to 25 prizes, KD 1,000 for each winner.

In addition, prizes of Al-Hassad Islamic



saving program from Ahli United Bank offer 4 quarterly grand prizes announced in quarterly draws. Each is a "Salary for Life" prize which is worth KD 250,000.

In general, Ahli United Bank continues to offer innovative tools and means to meet the needs of its customers to match the Bank's long history of distinctive services which extend over 74 years during which the Bank managed to take the lead among local banks.

MIMECAST APPOINTS CHANNEL DIRECTOR FOR MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA



Jason Roos, Channel Director, Mimecast MEA

Mimecast Limited (NASDAQ: MIMC), a leading email and data security company, today announced an executive appointment to strengthen its leadership team. Jason Roos joins Mimecast from Dimension Data, as the new Channel Director and will lead the channel teams in Middle East and Africa. "Our channel partners play an essential role in how we support our customers and expand our business into new verticals and markets," com-

mented Brandon Bekker, Managing Director of Mimecast Middle East and Africa.

"Having Jason on-board will bolster our existing channel relationships and establish new partnerships across the Middle East and Africa. Especially as organizations continue to migrate their on-premise email environments to cloud services like Office 365," Jason brings 12 years of experience in the ICT industry, leading high-impact sales teams across

the country, across all verticals. He will manage all partner and alliance based engagements, and is tasked with establishing a renewed, energised channel program. In his previous role as Executive of Sales at Internet Solutions, he managed 13 sales teams across SME, Channel, Mid-Market and Enterprise accounts and held several sales leadership roles.

Jason also spent three years in New York working in the Cisco channel with a

Cisco Gold partner. On joining Mimecast, Jason says: "The attraction and excitement for me is in the competency, scale and reach that Mimecast provides customers. Our reputation, strong marketing presence and legendary customer-centric service delivery, will enable an all ready robust partner program. Ultimately we will capitalise on the strong opportunity that exists in the MEA region, for both Mimecast and our Partner ecosystem, around email securi-

POPULAR MOBILE GAME 'POKEMON GO' LANDS ON APPLE WATCH

NEW YORK: The popular mobile game "Pokemon Go" is now available on the Apple Watch, squashing rumors that the game's maker was scrapping such plans. The game involves catching digital pocket monsters in an augmented-reality version of your surroundings. The Apple Watch version will let you discover nearby Pokemon and collect special items, such as potions, from nearby "PokeStops." But once you encounter a Pokemon, you will need to use your iPhone to catch it.

Still, the Apple Watch should make it easier for players to log their steps (needed

to advance in the game and to hatch new Pokemon out of eggs), and to avoid walking around with their phones held out to search for nearby monsters. "Pokemon Go" was a huge success when it came out in July. It's not clear how the Apple Watch version will do, especially now that it's too cold in much of the Northern Hemisphere to be outside catching Pokemon. Plans for the watch version had been announced at Apple's iPhone launch event in September. The game's maker, Niantic, hasn't announced any plans for Android Wear and Samsung Gear smartwatches.—AP

INTO THE BREACH

With more than 3.67 billion data records lost or stolen world-wide, there is greater responsibility than ever before on MENA's CISOs and CIOs to ensure the security of their organizations. Data theft and cyber security - once obscure concepts that were restricted to the IT departments at large corporations - have become common topics of discussion in recent years. Since 2013, more than 3.67 billion records have been lost or stolen worldwide - with almost 233.5 million in December 2015 alone, according to a report by Breach Level Index. This threat has grown increasingly global, with companies in the MENA region also now at risk.

That means it is now more critical than ever before for public and private sector organizations around the world to boost their system capabilities to protect against data loss and ensure consumers remain confident while sharing personal information online. According to a Data Breach Investigations Report from Verizon Communications, the cost of a breach of 100 records can range from \$18,000 to \$555,000. Often the culprits are careless or malicious employees who have stolen or simply lost private records - far from the popular image of sophisticated menacing hackers lurking in the shadows. Against this backdrop, the responsibility resting on

organizations can find themselves entering into a sea of DLP solutions for which they are unprepared.

This means that companies must understand their technologies and the nature of their problems to determine the action required-DLP solutions may not even be the answer. Companies must then develop a clear plan that can evaluate the scope of the threats they face and the most effective way to minimize them. Here, alignment with the organization-wide information governance program is critical. Proper planning and governance can help set the rules for any security solution while ensuring clear objectives and criteria for evaluation.

Know your Data

DLP solutions are designed to crawl through the network using agents to identify structured and unstructured data in a process called fingerprinting. While this is a valuable and time saving feature, it is not necessarily failsafe and can present risks: in the absence of manual processes, sensitive data could be overlooked. Therefore, before embarking on the implementation of a DLP solution, organizing and classifying data's an important first step. If this is done successfully, determining what type of data requires protection-and thus what solution is required-will become a smoother exercise.

Understand the Options

Different DLP solutions come with different capabilities. While many focus on providing endpoint protection for mobile devices, laptops, or other user systems, some protect data at rest, securing databases and online storage while monitoring for data being downloaded or transferred. Meanwhile, other solutions monitor network traffic to protect data in motion. Successful DLP deployment, therefore, requires a complete understanding of an organization's data types and flows.

In summary, the three main DLP solution types includes solutions that secure data in use or storage on endpoints, those that secure data in motion, and comprehensive solutions that protect data both at rest and in motion.

Adopt a Phased Approach

Using a phased approach to the implementation of DLP solutions enables engineers to better assess legitimate data flows within a network and separate them from those that demonstrate data loss. Phasing can also help avert inaccuracies. When implementing DLP solutions, potential impacts to network traffic could derail the solution and inundate security analysts with false positives. Implementing network-based DLP capabilities at egress points-the points through which data leaves one network for another-can allow a system to function passively and facilitate fine tuning over time. It can then become easier to migrate the system to maximize in-line protection.

Ensure Integration

Layering additional security capabilities on top of existing infrastructure will only exacerbate complexities in incident response and mitigation. DLP systems that do not integrate with security information and event management (SIEM) technologies, and that do not support an organization's current security goals and constructs, will only increase the workloads of already over-burdened employees and decrease the effectiveness of the solution. Furthermore, failing to ensure system integration will prevent security staff from using emerging analytics technologies and tactics to combat threats.

As the adoption of digital payment technologies accelerates and contactless payment options become more popular, CIOs and CISOs need to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the risks of data theft. From there, the application of measures to combat those threats can help leaders protect their networks, and consequently, their balance sheets. The key is to reassure customers that their private information ranging from birthdates to credit card data and bank account numbers is stored in a safe place, out of reach of hackers and cybercriminals.



FINLAND: In this photo, reindeer walk across the road in Suomussalmi, Finland.—AP

FINNISH PHONE APP FINDS REINDEER, AVOIDS ROAD KILL

'SO NOW WE KNOW TO BE CAUTIOUS AND LOOK MORE CAREFULLY'

ROVANIEMI, Finland: There's good news for Rudolph and his friends - an app is helping officials reduce the number of reindeer killed in traffic accidents in Finland. Some 300,000 reindeer freely wander the wilds of Lapland in Arctic Finland. An estimated 4,000 are killed every year through road accidents, officials say, and compensation to reindeer herders can be expensive. Most of the accidents occur during the dark winter months when the animals are hard to spot. Several methods to cut road kill have failed, including spray-painting antlers with fluorescent colors, hanging reflectors on reindeer necks and using movable traffic signs to warn of reindeer as they wander through the lichen-covered fields.

In their latest attempt, officials are using a smartphone app called "Porokello," Finnish for "Reindeer Bell." And it seems to be working - at least last month, when there were 300 less reindeer accidents on the roads of Finnish Lapland compared to the same month in 2015. According to Jaakko Ylinampa, head of a local

business center in Rovaniemi, the biggest town in Lapland near the Arctic Circle, the app helps cut costs for herders. A simple, one-button interface allows drivers to tap their smartphone screens to register any reindeer spotted near roads. Using GPS technology, it creates a 1.5-kilometer (1-mile) warning zone that lasts for an hour and warns other app users approaching the area.

"If there are reindeer, (drivers) reduce speed," Ylinampa said. "When they have passed the warning place, then they can get back to the normal speed again." Reindeer often wander onto roads that cut across grazing grounds rather than plowing through the deep snow, said Anna-Leena Jankala, whose family has a reindeer farm in Narkaus, 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of Rovaniemi. When female reindeer are killed, it can be particularly damaging to herders, setting them back years despite government compensation.

"In practice, it's not possible to buy a similar

reindeer, you need to raise it," Jankala said. It's hard to gauge the success of the pilot project that started in June with 1,000 free, app-loaded smartphones delivered to professional drivers, including heavy vehicles, taxis and buses, but those using it at least have a good warning system, says Maria Timo-Huhtala, who helped develop the app. Driving along an icy Lappish road, she looks checks her phone when a warning alerts her.

"We know that we are in the area where reindeer (have) been seen in the past one hour," she said. "So now we know to be cautious and look more carefully." This time the reindeer, which are bred for their meat, milk and fur, have moved on. Timo-Huhtala emphasizes that drivers shouldn't become too reliant on the app. "It's important for the drivers to understand that there might a reindeer even if there is not a warning," Timo-Huhtala said. "We have quite well covered the roads in Lapland with the system, but it's still not 100 percent."—AP



Dr. Mahir Nayfeh



Lutfi Zakhour

the shoulders of Chief Information Officers and Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) now weighs heavier than ever.

And this is where Data Loss Prevention (DLP) technologies come into play. But, for the successful implementation of these technologies, an organization must have a clear idea both of the threats they face and, vitally, how DLP technologies can be properly implemented to protect against them. In simple terms, DLP solutions are designed to protect data against attempts to copy and/or send it to unauthorized entities. These solutions fall into two categories: Those focused on preventing loss from data in motion and those that protect data at rest or in use.

Meanwhile, a growing number of hardware and software vendors are seeking to secure a share of the DLP market - one that research firm Markets and Markets predicts will grow to an annual figure of \$2.64 billion by 2020, up from \$0.96 billion in 2015. However, despite the increasing scale and sophistication of the DLP solution landscape and the existence of skilled information security officers, combating data loss remains fraught with challenges. From demands and weaknesses relating to information security governance to understanding data flows and addressing the lack of information, data loss protection can seem an insurmountable task. However, if suitably armed with knowledge and a solid plan, the objective should be within reach.

The following steps are designed to help set organizations on the right track to security:

Create a Plan

Today's DLP landscape is rife with marketing materials that are masquerading as industry insights, and one-sided opinions that can cloud judgment. As a result,



SAN FRANCISCO: In this file photo, Devin Greene sits in the front seat of an Uber driverless car during a test drive in San Francisco.—AP

ARIZONA GOVERNOR WELCOMES UBER FLEET OF SELF-DRIVING CARS

PHOENIX: Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey on Friday welcomed the arrival of a fleet of Uber self-driving cars delivered via a self-driving truck that transported them from California. Ducey's office says the governor welcomed the truck carrying the self-driving Volvos at the State Capitol in Phoenix. Uber announced Thursday that it was shipping the cars to Arizona after they were banned from California roads over lack of required permits.

Uber made the announcement after Ducey on

Wednesday and Thursday promoted Arizona as an alternative to California for the ride-hailing company to test its self-driving cars.

Uber has not announced when the cars will be tested, nor provided details about how many vehicles arrived in Arizona. Uber previously had 16 self-driving cars registered in California. This story clarifies that Uber's self-driving cars were banned in California because they lacked permits, not solely because of safety concerns.—AP

TURKEY PROBES 10,000 SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

ANKARA: Turkish authorities are investigating some 10,000 people on suspicion of using social media to support terrorism, the interior ministry said yesterday, part of a wide crackdown that has alarmed rights groups and some Western allies. Turkey, which faces security threats from Kurdish and leftist militants and Islamic State, has sacked or suspended more than 100,000 people following an attempted military coup in July. It says the measures are necessary to root out supporters of the putsch and other terrorists.

Rights groups and some European countries have said President Tayyip is using the current state of emergency to quash dissent. Since the coup, more than 150 media outlets have been shut down and 140 journalists arrested. The interior ministry said yesterday the fight against terrorism was being carried out "with determination" in social media. In the last six months, authorities have detained 3,710 people for questioning, the ministry said. Of those, 1,656 have been formally arrested and 84 are still being questioned.

The remaining 1,970 have been released, although 1,203 of those are still being monitored, it said. Access to social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook is commonly blocked, particularly after bombings or other deadly attacks, internet monitoring groups have said. Turkey denies that it blocks the internet, and has previously blamed outages on spikes in usage after major events.

Technical experts at watchdog groups say the blackouts on social media are intentional, aimed in part at stopping the spread of militant images and propaganda.—Reuters



NEW YORK: In this photo, US Secretary of State John Kerry, left, Leonardo DiCaprio, second from left, Piers Sellers and Fisher Stevens, from right, attend the premiere of National Geographic Channel's 'Before The Flood,' at the United Nations headquarters. —AP Photos

NASA CLIMATE SCIENTIST AND ASTRONAUT SELLERS DIES AT 61

'PIERS DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO SAVING THE PLANET'

WASHINGTON: Piers Sellers, a climate scientist and former astronaut who gained fame late in life for his eloquent commentary about the earth's fragility and his own cancer diagnosis, has died. He was 61. Sellers died Friday morning in Houston of pancreatic cancer, NASA said in a statement. Sellers shared his astronaut's perspective on climate change in Leonardo DiCaprio's documentary, "Before the Flood," released this fall. He told DiCaprio that seeing the earth's atmosphere as a "tiny little onion skin" from space helped him gain a fuller understanding of the planet's delicacy.

He also wrote a New York Times op-ed about grappling with the meaning of his life's work after learning he had terminal cancer. In both the film and the op-ed, he was optimistic, arguing that he expected human ingenuity to rescue the planet from a dire future of runaway global warming. "Piers devoted his life to saving the planet," NASA Administrator Charles Bolden said in a statement. "His legacy will be one not only of urgency that the climate is warming but also of hope that we can yet improve humanity's stewardship of this planet."

In the op-ed, Sellers wrote that the best way he could imagine spending his final months was to continue working, despite knowing he would not live to see the worst of climate change or the harnessing of possible solutions. "New technologies have a way of bettering our lives in ways we cannot anticipate. There is no convincing, demonstrated reason to believe that our evolving future will be worse than our present, assuming careful management of the challenges and risks," Sellers wrote. "History is replete with examples of us humans getting out of tight spots."

The British-born Sellers was deputy director for sciences and exploration at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland. He started working for NASA as a scientist in 1982 and joined its astronaut corps in 1996. He made three flights to the International Space Station, the last in 2010. "When I was a kid, I watched the Apollo launches from across the ocean, and I thought NASA was the holy mountain," Sellers said earlier this year when Bolden presented him with the Distinguished Service Medal, the agency's highest honor. "As soon as I could, I came over here to see if I could climb that mountain." —AP



FLORIDA: In this photo, British born US Astronaut Piers Sellers talks with reporters following the safe return of the space shuttle Discovery at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida.

TISSUE RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO BENEFIT INJURED SOLDIERS

CONCORD, New Hampshire: The Department of Defense is providing \$80 million to establish a bio-research and manufacturing institute in Manchester, New Hampshire, to develop transplant tissues and organs for injured American soldiers and other patients. The five-year award was announced Wednesday by Democratic US Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, Republican Sen. Kelly Ayotte and Democratic Gov. Maggie Hassan. All three were strong supporters of locating the institute in Manchester and had urged the Defense Department to support the project.

"This is a monumental investment in the future of New Hampshire and further establishes this region as a hub for scientific research and development," they said in a statement. "This is an immense and critically important mission and we have full faith in this esteemed coalition as they take on this research that will save lives on the battlefield as well as here at home." The Advanced Regenerative Manufacturing Institute will be led by a coalition that includes DEKA Research and Development Corp, the University of New Hampshire and Dartmouth-Hitchcock.

Officials said it will bring good jobs to Manchester and give the state's college graduates opportunities to work on cutting edge biomedical research. Both UNH Manchester and DEKA are in Manchester's Amoskeag Millyard, allowing for efficient communication and coordination, said University of New Hampshire President Mark Huddleston. He said the campus will serve as the

home of a cell culture training facility for students and workers from throughout the region.

Developing techniques

"UNH has vibrant and extensive life sciences research, education and workforce development programs, with particular strengths in cellular biology, biomedical sciences and bioengineering. We are honored by this recognition from the Department of Defense for our leadership in STEM education and workforce development," he said. STEM is an acronym for science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The institute is the 12th manufacturing hub awarded by the Obama administration. According to the White House, it will develop techniques for repairing and replacing cells in tissues, possibly leading to the ability to make new skin for soldiers scarred from combat and technology to preserve organs for those waiting for transplants.

Beyond being economically and scientifically important for the state, the institute's work will be transformational for future organ transplant patients, said Dr. James Weinstein, CEO and President of Dartmouth-Hitchcock. He believes researchers will develop ways to make tissue on structured frameworks that could be implantable within five years. "It's extremely important for our veterans who lose limbs and organs that we might be able to make them new ones using stem cells and 3-D printing," he said. "This is going to be foundational and groundbreaking work for the future of our country and our world." —AP

ANGOLA DECLARES END TO YELLOW FEVER EPIDEMIC

LUANDA: Angola on Friday declared the end of a yellow fever outbreak that killed at least 400 people, after an emergency United Nations vaccination campaign covering 25 million people. The outbreak erupted in December last year in the slums of the capital Luanda, spreading to 16 of Angola's 18 provinces and into neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo. Officials said no new cases had been reported in Angola since June after the mass vaccination campaign was launched in both countries.

The World Health Organization (WHO) described it as the world's worst yellow fever outbreak in a generation. "Since June 23 that Angola has not registered new epidemic cases of yellow fever, everything is under control and it is finished," Health Minister Luis Sambo told a press conference in Luanda. Last month WHO said the outbreak in Angola and DR Congo was "coming to a close" after more than 7,300 suspected cases and a vaccination effort involving 41,000 volunteers.

There is no specific treatment for yellow fever, a viral hemorrhagic disease transmitted mainly by the same species of mosquito that also spreads Zika and dengue. Yellow fever vaccinations are routinely recommended for travelers to Angola, though the country had not previously seen a significant outbreak since 1986. WHO has warned of future outbreaks in Africa due to increased urbanization as transmission rates are higher in densely populated areas. —AFP

CHINA UNCOVERS 500,000 FOOD SAFETY VIOLATIONS IN NINE MONTHS

SHANGHAI: China, rocked in recent years by a series of food safety scandals, uncovered as many as half a million illegal food safety violations in the first three quarters of the year, an official said. Chinese officials have unearthed a series of recent food health scandals, including rice contaminated with heavy metals, the use of recycled "gutter oil" in restaurants as well as the sale of baby formula containing lethal amounts of the industrial chemical melamine in 2008.

Bi Jingquan, the head of the China Food and Drug Administration, told the Standing Committee of National People's Congress on Friday that while significant progress had been made in the food sector, "deep-

seated" problems remained. According to a transcript of Bi's report published on the official website of the National People's Congress, Chinese food safety departments conducted more than 15 million individual inspections in the first three quarters of the year and found more than 500,000 incidents of illegal behavior, he said.

Among the offences were false advertising, the use of counterfeit products and ingredients and the sale of contaminated food products, Bi said. One case in the northeastern province of Jilin involved the use of industrial gelatin in food, while several cases in southwestern Guizhou province involved the use of counterfeit and low-quality salt. —Reuters

TESTING STEM CELLS IN TINIEST HEARTS TO FIGHT BIRTH DEFECT

BALTIMORE: The 4-month-old on the operating table has a shocking birth defect, nearly half his heart too small or even missing. To save him, surgeons will have to totally reroute how his blood flows, a drastic treatment that doesn't always work. So this time they are going a step further. In a bold experiment, doctors injected donated stem cells directly into the healthy side of Josue Salinas Salgado's little heart, aiming to boost its pumping power as it compensates for what's missing. It's one of the first attempts in the US to test if stem cells that seem to help heart attack survivors repair cardiac muscle might help these tiniest heart patients, too.

"We think the young heart is able to be more responsive," said Dr. Sunjay Kaushal, chief of pediatric cardiac surgery at the University of Maryland Medical Center, who is leading the study in partnership with University of Miami researchers. Kaushal bent over the baby's right ventricle, the part of the heart that will take over for the abnormal left side. The surgeon had repaired as much as possible for now. Next he measured where to place eight shots of precious stem cells. Then the bustling operating room went silent as Kaushal helped fellow surgeon Dr. Si M. Pham guide tiny needles into the ventricle's muscle.

"We're not saying we're going to cure it," Kaushal said of the birth defect, called hypoplastic left heart syndrome. But, "my whole quest is to see if we can make these little kids do better." Josue's parents knew there was no guarantee the experimental injections would make a difference. But their son had been hospitalized since birth and needed open-heart surgery anyway for a chance to go home. Teary-eyed, they clasped hands and prayed over Josue's crib moments before nurses wheeled him to the operating room. "We are marching ahead with God," said Josue's father, Hidelberto Salinas Ramos, speaking in Spanish through a hospital interpreter. Nearly 1,000 babies are born with hypoplastic left heart syndrome in the US each year.

Underlying problem

It's the most complex cardiac birth defect. Josue is missing his left ventricle, the main pumping chamber that pushes oxygen-rich blood to the body. Other key structures on his heart's left side are too small or malformed to work. Always lethal until a few decades ago, this defect now is treated with three open-heart surgeries performed between birth and age 3. Doctors route blood around the abnormal left heart and they convert the right ventricle - which normally would shuttle oxygen-poor blood to the lungs - into the main pumping chamber. Today, about 65 percent survive at least five years, and many reach adulthood, said Dr. Kristin Burns, a pediatric cardiologist at the National Institutes of Health.

But too many children still die or require a heart transplant because the right ventricle wears out under its increased workload. That's why doctors are conducting this early-stage study of whether stems cells might help that ventricle work better. "This is very different than

a surgical approach or giving a medicine just to treat the symptoms. This is trying to treat the underlying problem," said Burns, of NIH's National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. "I know you're really nervous," Kaushal told Josue's father, placing a hand on his shoulder. "Everything is going to be fine." Just 4 months old, Josue was undergoing his second open-heart surgery.

The first operation, a day after his birth, was a temporary fix to keep his heart pumping and create an aorta, the main artery leading to the body, big enough for blood to flow. While he babbled happily at his family and nurses, Josue never got strong enough to be discharged to his Edgewater, Maryland, home. This time, Kaushal would take pressure off Josue's right ventricle - and inject those stem cells. Even in adults, stem cell regeneration is highly experimental. But small studies involving heart attack survivors and older adults with heart failure have found what Dr. Denis Buxton, a stem cell specialist at NIH's heart institute, calls a modest benefit in how well their hearts pump blood.

Long safety record

For testing in babies, Kaushal turned to Dr. Joshua Hare at the University of Miami's Interdisciplinary Stem Cell Institute, who researches a specific type of stem cell donated from the bone marrow of healthy adults. Hare's institute freezes these so-called mesenchymal stem cells, which have a long safety record in adult studies, and is providing them free for the baby study. Initially, Kaushal's team tested piglets, whose hearts are similar to humans. When the right ventricle was damaged, they found stem cell injections preserved the piglets' heart tissue. Apparently the cells spurred some of the heart's existing repair mechanisms.

Back in the Baltimore operating room, University of Miami researchers helped Kaushal's nurses thaw the frozen stem cells and prepare injections. A few feet away, Kaushal was moving a large vein so it will drain deoxygenated blood from the top of Josue's body straight to his lungs without having to enter that overworked right ventricle. (When he's 3, Josue will need a final operation to similarly reroute blood returning from his lower body.) Then, just before his chest was stitched back up, Josue became the second baby with this defect to receive the experimental bone marrow stem cells. It's an early-stage study that will compare 30 babies, half given stem cells, to see if the strategy is safe and shows any difference over surgery alone. If so, it could open stem cell research for other pediatric heart problems. Other types of stem cells also are being explored for hypoplastic left heart syndrome. Mayo Clinic researchers have tested stem cells taken from affected babies' umbilical cord blood. Kaushal also plans to try stem cells from affected newborns' own heart tissue, something researchers in Japan are pursuing. It will take several years to know if stem cell experiments work. But, like many babies after their second surgery for the heart defect, Josue bounced back - and a week later, finally got to go home. —AP

EBOLA: PROFILE OF A PROLIFIC KILLER

PARIS: A fact file on the deadly Ebola virus, against which the World Health Organization said Friday a prototype vaccine could be "up to 100 percent effective".

Toll

The worst-ever Ebola outbreak started in December 2013 in southern Guinea before spreading to two neighboring west African countries, Liberia and Sierra Leone. That outbreak killed more than 11,300 people out of nearly 29,000 registered cases, according to WHO estimates. The real figure might be significantly higher, however. More than 99 percent of victims were in the three nations - more than 4,800 in Liberia, more than 2,500 dead in Guinea, and more than 3,900 in Sierra Leone. The WHO declared the epidemic over in January this year, but this was followed by flare-ups in all three countries. Liberia said it was Ebola-free in June, prompting the WHO to declare the official end of the outbreak.

Origins

Ebola was first identified in central Africa in 1976. The tropical virus was named after a river in the Democratic Republic of Congo - then known as Zaire. Four of the virus species are known to cause disease in humans - Zaire, Sudan, Bundibugyo and Tai Forest. The West African outbreak was caused by a variant, called Makona, of the Zaire species which has historically been the most deadly in humans. Before the recent West African outbreak, Ebola had

killed about 1,700 people in four decades.

Transmission

The virus' natural reservoir animal is probably the bat, which does not itself fall ill, but can pass the germ on to humans who hunt it for "bush meat." Other dinner-time favorites in parts of Africa - chimpanzees, gorillas, monkeys, forest antelope and porcupines - are also suspected of transmitting Ebola. Among humans, the virus is passed on by contact with the blood, body fluids, secretions or organs of an infected or recently deceased person. This can include touching a sick or dead person, and likely also sexual intercourse. Those infected do not become contagious until symptoms appear. They become more and more contagious until just after their death, which poses great risks during funerals.

Symptoms

Following an incubation period of between two and 21 days, Ebola develops into a high fever, weakness, intense muscle and joint pain, headaches and a sore throat. That is often followed by vomiting and diarrhea, skin eruptions, kidney and liver failure, and internal and external bleeding.

After-effects

After effects have often been observed in survivors, including arthritis, problems with vision, eye inflammation and hearing difficulties. —AFP

BITE THE DUST: MEEK DINOSAUR LOST ITS TEETH

WASHINGTON: A modest little dinosaur that scampered across northwestern China 160 million years ago boasted a unique trait not seen in any other dinosaur or other prehistoric creature yet unearthed: it was born with teeth but became toothless by adulthood. Scientists on Thursday said fossils of 19 individuals of a dinosaur called *Limusaurus*, ranging in age from under a year to 10 years, showed that juveniles had small, sharp teeth but adults developed a toothless beak.

This cluster of dinosaurs, found in Xinjiang Province, apparently became hopelessly trapped in a mud pit and died. Only rarely have scientists found fossils of a dinosaur species ranging from babies to adults, a sequence revealing various anatomical changes that unfold as an animal matures. *Limusaurus* was a lightly built two-legged dinosaur with short arms and long, slender legs. It may have had down-like feathers covering at least part of its

body. The largest ones were about 6 feet long (under 2 meters).

"It probably looked something like an emu with a long tail," said George Washington University paleontologist Joey Stiegler, one of the researchers in the study published in the journal *Current Biology*. Such tooth loss is called ontogenetic edentulism. Some animals alive today have it, including the egg-laying Australian mammal the platypus. The adult *Limusaurus* individuals also were found with stones called gastroliths that some plant-eating dinosaurs swallowed to grind up plant material in the stomach. The babies lacked these.

The tooth loss and gastroliths indicate *Limusaurus* underwent a dramatic dietary change from birth to adulthood, starting life perhaps eating insects and small vertebrates before later turning to plants. *Limusaurus* is a member of the theropod dinosaur group within which birds evolved.—Reuters

ENDANGERED PUGET SOUND ORCA FOUND DEAD OFF CANADIAN COAST

SEATTLE: Scientists say an orca found dead off the coast of British Columbia belongs to the endangered population of killer whales that spend time in Washington state waters. Center for Whale Research scientist Ken Balcomb said Thursday that he and others have confirmed the whale was an 18-year-old male called J-34. They based the identification on photographs and its unique markings.

The orca was seen floating near the

shore Tuesday near Sechart, about 40 miles northwest of Vancouver. The whale was towed to a beach, and Canadian officials performed a necropsy Wednesday.

The center is awaiting those results for a cause of death. Balcomb said in a statement that at least four members of the J pod, one of three families of southern resident killer whales, have died this year. The population now totals 79 animals.—AP



BANGKOK: This handout shows an infant orangutan at an animal clinic rescued during a sting operation in Bangkok. —AFP

BABY ORANGUTANS RESCUED IN THAI POLICE STING

BANGKOK: Thai police rescued two baby orangutans in a sting operation after undercover officers arranged to buy the primates over a mobile phone messaging app from wildlife traffickers for nearly \$20,000, officials said. An anonymous tip alerted police to an online advertisement for the endangered animals, who are less than one year old and the size of infants. Police then posed as interested buyers and contacted the seller over WhatsApp, according to deputy national park director Adisorn Noochdumrong. "They agreed to buy the two orangutans for 700,000 baht (\$19,400

and transferred a 100,000 baht down payment to a bank account that belongs to a Thai man," he told AFP.

The undercover officers arranged to pick up the baby apes outside a Bangkok supermarket on December 21, where the orang-furred creatures were delivered by a city taxi driver. The driver was arrested but cleared after authorities determined he was not part of the smuggling gang, according to wildlife police officer Anothorn Srithongbai. "As far as the real trafficker goes, that's still under investigation," he added. Orangutans are native to Malaysia and Indonesia but they are often

illegally smuggled throughout Southeast Asia, either for private zoos or as pets.

Thailand has long served as a transit hub for contraband wildlife products bound for major markets like Vietnam and China. Counter-trafficking organization Freeland, which assisted with the orangutan rescue, said the attempted sale was linked to a "major regional criminal syndicate" involved in the lucrative illegal wildlife trade. Social media has become an integral tool for such gangs to set up sales, said Matthew Pritchett from Freeland. "This case is one link in a much larger chain," he added.—AFP



MARYLAND: This file photo shows the Food and Drug Administration campus in Silver Spring, Maryland. —AP

FDA OKS FIRST TREATMENT FOR RARE GENETIC DISORDER

WASHINGTON: The Food and Drug Administration on Friday approved the first treatment for children and adults with spinal muscular atrophy, a rare genetic disorder marked by progressive muscle weakness that's the most common genetic cause of death in infants. The agency that it approved the drug, Spinraza, after granting it fast-track status. It was developed by Ionis Pharmaceuticals Inc. of Carlsbad, California, and Biogen Inc. of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Biogen will market it. The organization Cure SMA says spinal muscular atrophy affects about 1 in 10,000 babies, and about 1 in every 50 Americans is a genetic carrier.

The FDA noted the disorder, which affects the motor nerve cells in the spinal cord, can impact people of any age. Its symptoms and rate of progression also vary. Spinraza is injected into the fluid surrounding the spinal cord. Biogen said that in a clinical study, the drug brought about "meaningful improvement in motor function compared to untreated study participants." With the FDA approval, Ionis will receive a \$60 million milestone payment. It's also in line for royalties on Spinraza sales. It shares rose \$3.69, or 7 percent, to \$57.10 in after-market trading following the announcement of the drug's approval. Biogen rose \$9.47, or 3.3 percent, to \$297.—AP

CANINE PASSENGER GETS LOOSE, SHOT DEAD ON SOUTH KOREA RUNWAY

SEOUL, South Korea: A South Korean airport official said yesterday that airport staff shot and killed a dog belonging to a Thai Airways passenger after it got loose before being boarded onto a plane and ran onto a busy runway. An official from Incheon Airport said that the response on Monday was standard procedure and inevitable because the dog could have threatened the safety of aircraft and passengers. The official said the dog belonged to a passenger who was boarding a flight from Seoul to Bangkok. He couldn't confirm whether the dog's owner filed a complaint with airport management. "It seemed that airline workers didn't properly close the dog's cage, allowing it to escape just before being boarded," said the airport official, who didn't want to be named, citing office rules. "Our staff first ran after the dog trying to capture it, but they couldn't. The dog had to be shot to prevent it from causing a serious safety accident."—AP

BIRD FLU INFECTS SEVEN IN CHINA, KILLING TWO

BEIJING: China has reported at least seven cases of bird flu in humans across the country this month, including two deaths, as authorities take steps to guard against an outbreak. Five cases of H7N9 bird flu infections have been diagnosed in central Anhui province since Dec 8, and two people have died, state media reported. In Shanghai, officials said this week that a man was diagnosed with H7N9 and is being treated in a city hospital. Another case has been reported in Xiamen in coastal Fujian province, where poultry sales have been halted.

In rural Jinzhai county in Anhui

province, local officials on Thursday announced a two-week closure of a meat market after a shopkeeper was diagnosed with H7N9. The provincial government also issued a warning on social media urging residents to avoid buying and slaughtering live chickens themselves. A major H7N9 bird flu outbreak in humans first struck China in March 2013, killing more than 40 people and devastating the poultry industry. The strain is less virulent than the H5N1 strain that the World Health Organization says has killed more than 370 people.—AP

CLINIC

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ICSK AMMAN EMERGES AS WINNERS

ICSK Amman students once again showcased their best talents to bring laurels to the school, during the Indian Schools' Mega Arts Fest 2016 organized among more than 20 Indian schools in Kuwait. The festival of arts was conducted on December 1 and 2 at 5 various stages in ICSK which included more than 80 events in 5 different categories. In this spectacular event the 'Champions Trophy' for Category 3 was procured by ICSK Amman, with commendable scores in oth-

er 3 categories. The winners were honored by the Oscar Award winner, Padmashree Dr. Rasool Pookutty, in the presence of the Ambassador of India to Kuwait, Shri Sunil Jain along with the honorable board members of ICSK. The evening was blessed with a live concert by music maestro Stephan Devassy. This remarkable achievement was made possible because of the continuous support and encouragement of our staff, students and parents community.



CANADIAN EMBASSY AND CANADIAN BUSINESS COUNCIL CELEBRATE HOLIDAY SEASON

Embassy of Canada and Canadian Business Council - CBC celebrated Holiday Season on December 6. Addressing the gathering, Her Excellency Martine Moreau wished season's greetings and expressed gratitude to fellow local business community members for joining this evening. Her Excellency also appreciated the role played by the CBC in promoting trade relations between Kuwait

and Canada. Ishtiaq Malik, President of the CBC, welcomed the gathering and thanked Canadians, Kuwaitis and others for attending this event.

CBC President also thanked the Ambassador of Canada to Kuwait, Her Excellency Martine Moreau for hosting this event and for the support and cooperation extended by the Canadian Embassy to CBC. Malik thanked CBC board members

Dr. Christian Awaraji, Mr. Basil Toutoungi, Dr. David McHardy, Dr. Andrew Gillam and Dr. Jacinthe Lemay for keeping Canadian Business Council connected and active in Kuwait. Special thanks were extended to Tammy Ames-Counsellor (Commercial) at the Embassy of Canada for her support to CBC. The attendees enjoyed the evening and discussed mutual business matters.



BDO HOSTS SEMINAR AT J W MARRIOTT

BDO (Al Nisf & Partners), the fifth member and Kuwait's Member Firm of BDO International, recently hosted a seminar at the JW Marriott about international standards of fiscal reports. The activity also

included a one-day workshop presented by Lebanon's BDO office's executive partner, Antoine Gholam and manager, Rita Rizq in addition to Abdullah Farahat, a partner at Kuwait BDO office.



FAM PRESENTS LIGHT AND SOUND SHOW 'SANTA REDEEMER'

Fraternity of Arabian Malayalis (FAM) presents a light and sound extravaganza 'Santa Redeemer' harnessing the possibilities of light and sound in Kuwait on December 26, 2016 for the first time in Gulf. The show will be presented on the 12 specially designed stages with approximately 35 eye-catching scenes on the open auditorium of the Central School at Abbasiya. Two shows are proposed every day at 6 PM and 8 PM till the 30th of December.

This show is staged by 150 well accomplished artists and musicians

which will tickle the senses of every spectator and stand out as an unforgettable cultural intervention of the expatriates in Kuwait, claimed the office-bearers during a press conference. 'Santa Redeemer', with the support of three months of rehearsals by dedicated artists is expected to attract thousands of spectators during the five days of presentation. The skillful and talented Babu Battery has done the scripting and direction. The associate director is Johnney Kunnil.

Artist Sujathan does the art direction. Costumes are by designer

Pujappura Sasi, sound effects by state award winner Praveen, music direction by Mustafa Amabby. The background score is by Udayan Anchal and Manoj Mavelikkara. The office-bearers of Kuwait sounded confident that the show would be major success with the full cooperation and support of the public. The office-bearers who addressed the press conference included Rev Fr Binoy Kochukarikkathil, Babuji Batheri, George Chacko, Artist Sujathan, Shaji George, Rajan Thottathil, Sunil Paul and Biju George.



RELAX, RENEW AND RING IN 2017 AT MARINA HOTEL KUWAIT

From a New Year's Eve reception and dinner to rejuvenating accommodation package, Marina Hotel Kuwait is offering unique experiences for guests to welcome 2017. When guests choose to ring in the New Year at Marina Hotel, they will have more

to celebrate than the passing of another year. The Hotel offers the perfect venue for New Year's Eve and New Year celebratory fun with your family, friends and loved ones under the twinkling lights and the cool breeze of the Arabian coast.

At Marina Hotel Kuwait each distinctive restaurant, unique in its culinary mastery, will enchant guests with specially-designed menus amid an atmosphere of good cheer and company. What better way than to start the first day of the year with your loved ones

through a delectable selection of special treats and surprises for the entire family at a delightful international lunch buffet at the Atlantis restaurant. Delight yourself in a lavish experience and visit Marina Hotel Kuwait for the fun and festivities.



CELEBRATE NEW YEAR'S EVE AT ZAFRAN WITH LIVE BAND AND FOOD

Watch the New Year unfold at Zafran amidst a live band performance and award winning food. Zafran invites families and friends to enjoy its wide range of deliciously crafted north-west Indian classics all made from fresh, high quality ingredients and seasoned with home-ground spices. Located at Light Complex, Mahboula and led by a team of highly skilled and experienced chefs, the New Year's Eve menu is diverse for those in love with the tastes of Indian cuisine. Zafran focuses on a cuisine with subtle and complex flavors, yet light on the stomach. Guests can choose from a range of

delicious tandoori kebabs and enjoy the taste of the restaurants award winning biriyani and butter chicken, all bursting with authentic flavors. The meal is perfectly complimented with homemade pickles and preserves and a range of signature drinks and desserts with its own Zafran twist. Whether guests choose to dine in the relaxed indoor ambience of the restaurant or opt to revel in the festivity at its stunning terrace, Zafran will certainly set the mood for a definitive New Year's celebration.

Zafran's interiors are stylish with its main signature element of the venue being the 'wow' kitchen,

where guests are able to watch Chefs prepare their food right before their eyes. Zafran's menu is crafted with care and promises to delight its guest with the best of Indian cuisine capturing delicious and unforgettable flavors of the region. Countdown to New Year 2017 while enjoying scrumptious offerings from tandoori kebabs and wholesome curries to regional favorites such as laal Maas and Rogan Josh, fragrant biryani and signature dishes like alao tikki and Butter chicken, enjoy an array of savory delights with heart-warming ambience and service at exceptional value.



Higher officials, diplomats, cross section of the Russian community, religious leaders and media persons sign the condolence book for the slain ambassador of Russia in Turkey at the embassy. Many people sent their condolence messages through email and social media over the weekend.

CLASSIFIEDS

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e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net

KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (22/12/2016 TO 28/12/2016)

Time	Program	Time	Program
12:15 PM	SHARQIA-1 SING	11:45 AM	AL MAA WA AL KHOUDRAH WA AL WAJEH AL HASSAN
2:30 PM	PASSENGERS	12:00 PM	AVENUES-2 PASSENGERS -3D- 4DX
4:45 PM	MOANA	2:00 PM	MOANA -3D- 4DX
7:00 PM	PASSENGERS	4:15 PM	MOANA -3D- 4DX
9:15 PM	PASSENGERS	6:30 PM	PASSENGERS -3D- 4DX
11:45 PM	PASSENGERS	8:45 PM	PASSENGERS -3D- 4DX
		11:30 PM	PASSENGERS -3D- 4DX
12:30 PM	SHARQIA-2 PASSENGERS	12:45 PM	AVENUES-3 SING
3:00 PM	MOANA	3:30 PM	DANGAL -Hindi
5:30 PM	PASSENGERS	5:30 PM	DANGAL -Hindi
8:00 PM	PASSENGERS	8:15 PM	DANGAL -Hindi
10:30 PM	PASSENGERS	10:30 PM	DANGAL -Hindi
1:00 AM	PASSENGERS	12:45 AM	DANGAL -Hindi
12:45 PM	SHARQIA-3 DANGAL -Hindi	12:00 PM	AVENUES-4 DANGAL -Hindi
4:00 PM	MOANA	2:30 PM	ROGUE ONE A STAR WARS STORY
6:15 PM	DANGAL -Hindi	5:00 PM	DANGAL -Hindi
9:30 PM	ROGUE ONE A STAR WARS STORY	7:30 PM	NO THU
12:15 AM	PASSENGERS	10:00 PM	Special Show "THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS"
		12:30 AM	THU
1:00 PM	MUHALAB-1 MOANA		DANGAL -Hindi
	THU+SAT PASSENGERS	11:30 AM	AVENUES-5 PASSENGERS
	NO THU+FRI+SAT PASSENGERS	2:00 PM	PASSENGERS -3D
	MOANA	5:15 PM	PASSENGERS
	DANGAL -Hindi	8:30 PM	SING
	DANGAL -Hindi	11:45 PM	PASSENGERS
	PASSENGERS	12:30 PM	ROGUE ONE A STAR WARS STORY
		3:30 PM	MOANA
11:30 AM	MUHALAB-2 SING	6:00 PM	AL MAA WA AL KHOUDRAH WA AL WAJEH AL HASSAN
1:45 PM	PASSENGERS	8:15 PM	PASSENGERS
4:00 PM	PASSENGERS	10:30 PM	PASSENGERS
6:15 PM	PASSENGERS	1:00 AM	PASSENGERS
8:30 PM	ROGUE ONE A STAR WARS STORY		
11:15 PM	DANGAL -Hindi	12:45 PM	MARINA-1 SING
		3:00 PM	ROGUE ONE A STAR WARS STORY
11:30 AM	MUHALAB-3 PASSENGERS	5:15 PM	MOANA
	PASSENGERS	7:30 PM	PASSENGERS
	PASSENGERS	9:45 PM	MOANA
	THU+FRI+SAT PASSENGERS	12:30 AM	MOANA
	MOANA		THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS
	NO THU+FRI+SAT PASSENGERS		THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS
	PASSENGERS		THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS
	PASSENGERS	11:30 AM	AVENUES-6 PASSENGERS
		1:45 PM	PASSENGERS
		4:15 PM	13 DAYS
		6:45 PM	SING
		9:15 PM	SING
		11:45 PM	13 DAYS
12:15 PM	FANAR-1 MOANA		13 DAYS
	THU+SAT COLLATERAL BEAUTY		13 DAYS
	NO THU+FRI+SAT PASSENGERS		13 DAYS
	MOANA		
	MOANA	12:30 PM	AVENUES-7 MOANA
	AL MAA WA AL KHOUDRAH WA AL WAJEH AL HASSAN	2:45 PM	MOANA
	AL MAA WA AL KHOUDRAH WA AL WAJEH AL HASSAN	5:00 PM	MOANA
	AL MAA WA AL KHOUDRAH WA AL WAJEH AL HASSAN	7:15 PM	MOANA
	AL MAA WA AL KHOUDRAH WA AL WAJEH AL HASSAN	9:30 PM	MOANA

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PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr: 05:15
Shorook: 06:40
Duhur: 11:48
Asr: 14:38
Maghrib: 16:56
Isha: 18:19

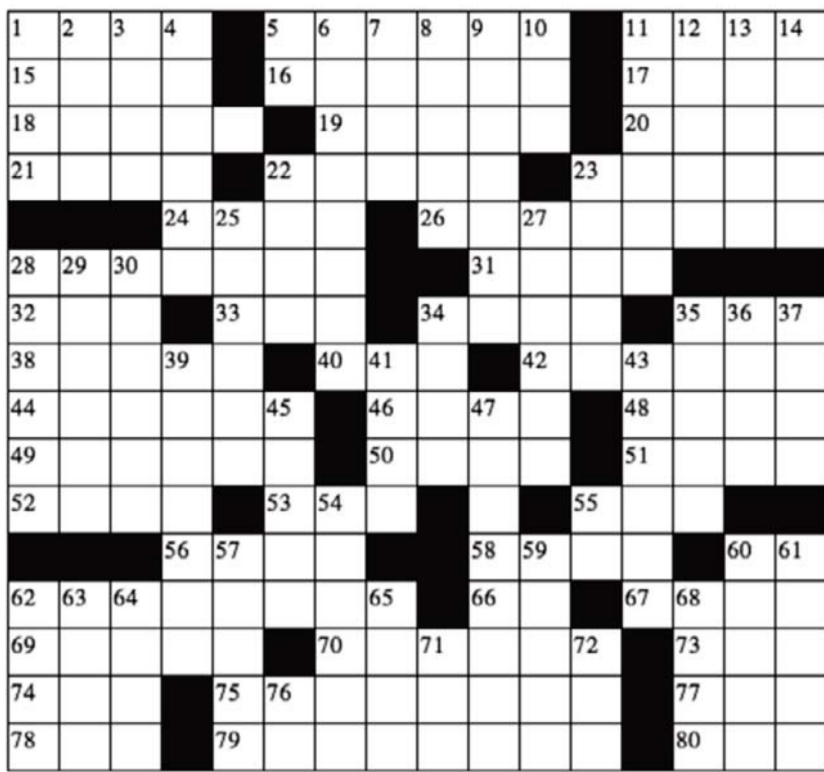
Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

Flight Schedule

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Sunday 25/12/2016				Departure Flights on Sunday 25/12/2016			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
KAC	776	Riyadh	00:20	AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	KAC	513	Tehran	00:10
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40	FDB	072	Dubai	00:40
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:50
KAC	102	London	00:55	KAC	417	Manila	02:00
KAC	742	Dammam	01:00				
RJA	642	Amman	01:05				
QTR	1086	Doha	01:15				
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50				
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00				
JZR	555	Alexandria	02:05				
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:05				
MSC	405	Sohag	02:30				
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30				
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30				
QTR	8511	Doha	05:45				
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55				
KAC	384	Delhi	06:05				
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:20				
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	06:25				
BAW	157	London	06:40				
FDB	5061	Dubai	07:15				
FDB	053	Dubai	07:45				
KAC	302	Mumbai	08:20				
SYR	341	Damascus	08:40				
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40				
KAC	382	Delhi	08:45				
KAC	362	Colombo	09:05				
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05				
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05				
KAC	352	Kochi	09:10				
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30				
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40				
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:40				
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00				
IRC	528	Ahwaz	10:05				
MSC	415	Sohag	10:15				
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40				
KAC	774	Riyadh	11:05				
MSC	403	Asyut	11:15				
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30				
KAC	618	Doha	11:50				
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55				
KAC	744	Dammam	12:10				
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30				
JZR	561	Sohag	12:40				
FDB	075	Dubai	12:50				
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50				
KAC	680	Dubai	12:55				
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00				
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:10				
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:30				
KAC	564	Amman	13:40				
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10				
FDB	059	Dubai	14:20				
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:30				
GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40				
KAC	542	Cairo	14:45				
KAC	672	Dubai	14:50				
KNE	529	Jeddah	14:55				
KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	15:05				
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15				
KAC	286	Dhaka	15:20				

CROSSWORD 1471



ACROSS

- 1. Thin fibrous bark of the paper mulberry and Pipturus albidus.
5. On a ship, train, plane or other vehicle.
11. Not reflecting light.
15. South American armadillo with three bands of bony plates.
16. An overwhelming feeling of fear and anxiety.
17. An ancient ruler or chieftain (especially in Africa or Arabia).
18. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
19. Affectedly dramatic.
20. God of love and erotic desire.
21. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
24. The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
26. Pronounce with a lowered velum.
28. A capacitance unit equal to one billion farads.
31. (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
32. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on the sea or ships.
33. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
38. A Portuguese province on the south coast of China and two islands in the South China Sea.
40. A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
42. Traveling on horseback.
44. Give expression to.
46. (Islam) The man who leads prayers in a mosque.
48. A city of central China.
49. Load anew with ammunition, "She reloaded the gun carefully".
50. A beautiful and graceful girl.
51. An account describing incidents or events.
52. (Greek mythology) Greek god of war.
53. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
56. Informal terms for a mother.
58. An open vessel with a handle and a spout for pouring.
62. Pig-sized tailless South American amphibious rodent with partly webbed feet.
66. Functioning correctly and ready for action.
67. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
69. A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
70. A city in South Vietnam.
73. (prefix) Opposite or opposing or neutralizing.
74. The seat within a bishop's diocese where his cathedral is located.
75. Over the side of a boat.
77. Japanese ornamental tree with fragrant white or pink blossoms and small yellow fruits.
78. A lipoprotein that transports cholesterol in the blood.
79. (botany) Having stalked flowers along an elongated stem that continue to open in succession from below as the stem continues to grow.
80. A rapid bustling commotion.

DOWN

- 1. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
2. Someone who copies the words or behavior of another.
3. A metabolic acid found in yeast and liver cells.
4. A peninsula between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.
5. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
6. Having had the head cut off.
7. Toward the mouth or oral region.
8. German hero.
9. A member of a nomadic people originating in northern India and now living on all continents.
10. Free from liquid or moisture.
11. A mountain in the Himalayas in Nepal (27,790 feet high).
12. Italian violin maker in Cremona.
13. The circumstances and ideas of the present age.
14. Relating to or used in or intended for trade or commerce.
22. A small ball with a hole through the middle.
23. A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
25. A river that rises in northern Colombia and flows generally eastward to the Orinoco in central Venezuela.
27. Highly seasoned fatty sausage of pork and beef usually dried.
29. The soft brown fur of the beaver.
30. Arrived at without due care or effort.
34. Stable gear consisting of either of two curved supports that are attached to the collar of a draft horse and that hold the traces.
35. A male religious of an order of mendicant preachers of the gospel.
36. A male monarch or emperor (especially of Russia prior to 1917).
37. English Quaker who founded the colony of Pennsylvania (1644-1718).
39. Absence of the sense of smell (as by damage to olfactory nasal tissue or the olfactory nerve or by obstruction of the nasal passages).
41. Monotypic genus of palms of Australasia.
43. Ruddy duck.
45. Swelling from excessive accumulation of serous fluid in tissue.
47. A chord whose notes are played in rapid succession rather than simultaneously.
54. A unit of astronomical length based on the distance from Earth at which stellar parallax is 1 second of arc.
55. A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
57. Find repugnant.
59. Concerning or dwelling or situated in a wood.
60. (of complexion) Blemished by imperfections of the skin.
61. The relative magnitudes of two quantities (usually expressed as a quotient).
63. In bed.
64. British politician (1788-1850).
65. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
68. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
71. A belief (or system of beliefs) accepted as authoritative by some group or school.
72. (meaning literally 'born') Used to indicate the maiden or family name of a married woman.
76. A state in the eastern United States.

Yesterday's Solution

A 15x15 grid containing the solution to the previous day's crossword puzzle, with letters filled in and empty cells for clues.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

With your kind of discipline you are able to accomplish quite a lot this day. When it comes to the people you work with, you appreciate what is above-board and straightforward and have a particular distaste for anything that is secretive, intense and private.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

There may be a tiny lazy streak wanting to surface today which could cause you to ignore your responsibilities and do some socializing. However, reality has a way of rearing its head and getting your attention.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

We seldom recapture the past but a friend of yours may say they know just how to return to the days of the past. As it turns out, there may be a new exhibit or play or antique store in town that you didn't know about.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

A co-worker shares a cooking secret and you are impressed. People have been bringing different items to work all winter and it just may be time you thought of something that others could enjoy, particularly a low-fat item.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Cleaning off a desk at work reminds you of plans to rearrange living arrangements. Today you may reassess your attitude toward marriage. If you are engaged, you may add a few more months to the wedding date.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You need freedom and action. You are an optimist. You are open to new ideas. You go through the newspapers and news on the internet and feel ready for any conversation.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This morning is a good time to complete unfinished tasks. Whether you are in the workplace or at home, you seem to make great headway in getting things accomplished. You have to be pushy to get to the top of the professional ladder and if that is where your dreams are headed, this next year ought to be quite beneficial.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You know you are on the right path in order to achieve what is needed and to put you in the best line of growth with the company for which you work. You want to learn as much as you can because one day, when you are ready, you will be able to create your own business.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Financial investments are important for the future but if there is something you want now it would be difficult if your money is in financial investments. This is something you do not want to happen, although the energies show you a bit frustrated over money.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You could be feeling like trying to keep your life a bit more low-key at this time, staying at home more and spending increased time with loved ones and family. It's probably not the best of times to offer practical advice to others, or to try and make career or vocational type of decisions.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Your church or school may encourage the American field service www. Afs. Org. When the time is appropriate you can call or ask someone about the date and place for the next meeting or presentation.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This day begins early and if you show up at the office early, it will allow you to take advantage of some quiet time to catch up on any unfinished projects. Clean up your space, make things look nice and then you are ready for the day.

WORD SEARCH

Baseball

A word search puzzle titled 'Baseball' with a grid of letters and a list of 30 baseball-related words to find and circle.

Yesterday Solution

Back to School

A word search puzzle titled 'Back to School' with a grid of letters and a list of 20 school-related words to find and circle.

The hidden message is: I HAVE NEVER LET MY SCHOOLING INTERFERE WITH MY EDUCATION.

Daily SuDoku

A 9x9 grid for a daily Sudoku puzzle with some numbers pre-filled.

Yesterday's Solution

A 9x9 grid showing the solution to the previous day's Sudoku puzzle.

GOSSIP



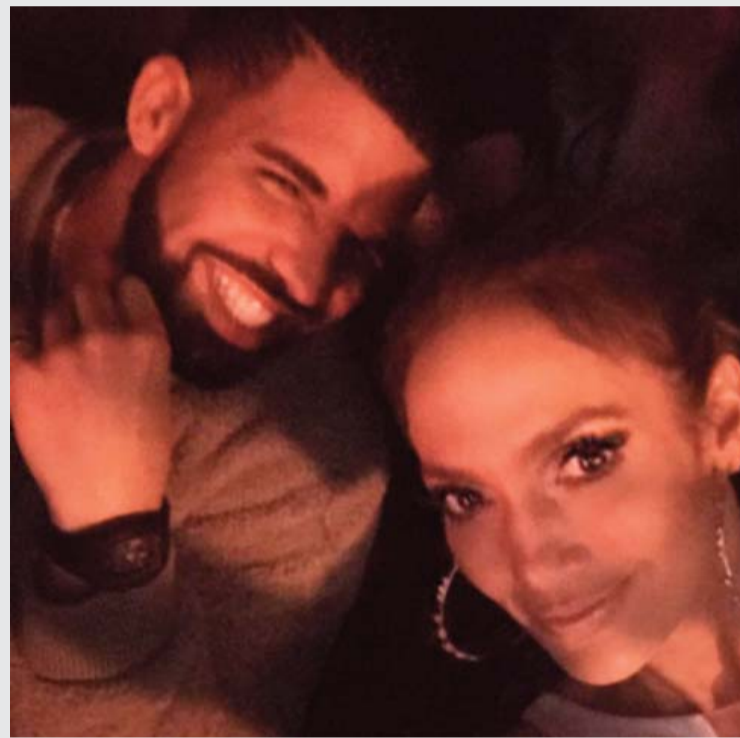
Taylor Swift is calling for parts of her groping lawsuit to be edited for her 'safety'

The 27-year-old singer filed a lawsuit back in July regarding an alleged groping incident involving radio DJ David Mueller - who allegedly groped the 'Bad Blood' hitmaker's behind underneath her dress during a meet-and-greet in 2013 - and has now called for parts of her statement to be redacted due to "safety and privacy concerns" before they are publicly released. In documents obtained by E! News, the pop megastar's lawyers claim: "The transcript contains confidential and sensitive personal information that, if publicly released, could jeopardize the safety of the Parties in this action and run the real risk of tainting the jury pool at the upcoming trial." Taylor's team also state they are concerned that if the statements go public without being edited to protect her, people who doubt her side of the story may "threaten" her. The lawyers added: "The same people who have threatened Ms. Swift in the past, as well as copy cats, may be emboldened by public attention." The 'Blank Space' singer said in her videotaped deposition - which was obtained by E! News in

October - that David's actions were "completely intentional" as he allegedly put his hand up her dress when the pair posed for a photo. She said at the time: "Right as the moment came for us to pose for the photo, he took his hand and put it up my dress and grabbed onto my ass cheek and no matter how much I scooted over it was still there," she revealed. "It was completely intentional, I've never been so sure of anything in my life." And the 'Shake It Off' musician recalled feeling "violated". She added: "I remember being frantic, distressed, feeling violated in a way I had never experienced before. "A meet-and-greet is supposed to be a situation where you're thanking people for coming, you're supposed to be welcoming people into your home, which is the arena for that day, and for someone to violate that hospitality in that way, I was completely stunned."

JENNIFER LOPEZ AND DRAKE ARE REPORTEDLY DATING

The 47-year-old singer and the 30-year-old 'One Dance' rapper are said to be "smitten" with one and other and are not "bothered" by their 17-year age gap. A source said: "Jen and Drake have tried to keep their romance under wraps by suggesting they are just working together, but the truth is they are an item. "They have been seeing each other for a number of weeks and her friends are saying she is already smitten. "The age gap doesn't bother them. "They have fun together and that's all that matters." However, one person who is not so pleased with the 'On The Floor' hitmaker's romance with Drake is his former flame Rihanna, 28. An insider told The Sun newspaper: "People in Rihanna's circle are saying she is very unhappy about the whole thing. "Only a few months ago she and Drake were still together. "Jen is one of her friends in the industry which made her all the more surprised." It comes after the pair were rumored to have gotten close after reportedly working on music together. The 'Hotline Bling' hitmaker was spotted at Jennifer's Las Vegas show on December 10 and also made an appearance at her 'All I Have' concert in Las Vegas. Taking to Instagram both Drake and Jennifer shared a selfie together at the Vegas show. Alongside the photo, the Latino beauty wrote: "Look who rolled up to my show tonight to say hi!! @champagnepapi #lovehim #jlovesgas #ALLIHAVE (sic)" Both the 'Boy Next Door' actress and the hip-hop star are both single after Drake and the 'Work' hitmaker ended their on-off romance in October. And the bronze-haired beauty - who has six-year-old twins Max and Emme with her ex-husband Marc Anthony - called off her relationship with her 29-year-old backing dancer, Casper Smart earlier this year, after four years together.



Chrissy Teigen has ridiculed a Twitter troll who claimed her husband John Legend was 'illiterate'

The 31-year-old beauty - who shares her eight-month-old daughter Luna with the musician - recently ignited controversy when she blasted US President-elect Donald Trump, who said in a tweet that he wanted to make his upcoming Presidential inauguration all about "the PEOPLE" and not celebrities. Chrissy said: "Hi - we are people. You are our president too. I don't want you to be, but you are. Also we ALL know you are dying without the approval, dear. "But have fun with DJ Butcrack spinning the hot s**t and Lil Banana dropping bars at your inauguration. (sic)" Her outspoken comments prompted one Twitter user to fire back at the model, accusing her husband of being "illiterate". They wrote: "AT LEAST WE WON'T BE ALL SUBJECTED TO YOUR NO TALENT ILLITERATE HUSBAND (sic)." But Chrissy refused to let the argument go and was quick to point out that her chart-topping husband - who she married in 2013 - actually attended the same

academic institution as the soon-to-be US President. She wrote on the social media site, referring to the University of Pennsylvania: "John went to the same university as the Donald, silly billy. "Only difference was John went at the young age of 16." Meanwhile, Chrissy recently opened up about the criticism she receives over social media, admitting it can be especially severe when it relates to her daughter. She said: "I can see things coming a mile away. I know that when I post something, if she's in a car seat, I've got to be ready for the million people telling me she's in the car seat wrong, even though she's in there correctly. "At this point, I know what they're going to say before they say it. If I'm holding her while I'm cooking, or if I'm holding her within 10 feet of a stove top, I've kind of just come to expect it."



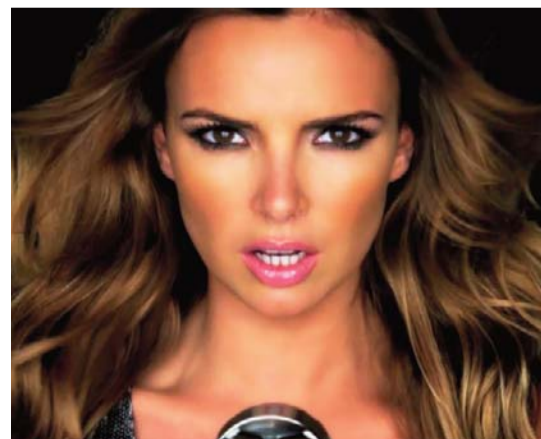
Blac Chyna and Rob Kardashian have shared a loved up snap confirming they are back together

The 'Rob & Chyna' stars - who share one-month-old daughter Dream Kardashian together - have been feuding this week after 28-year-old Chyna split from her fiance Rob over the weekend, but it seems the pair have reconciled for the holidays as they took to Snapchat on Friday night (23.12.16) to share a cute selfie. The picture, posted to Chyna's Snapchat account, sees the model - who has donned the adorable deer filter - cuddled up to 29-year-old Rob. She captioned the photo: "Happy Holidays" The news comes after it was reported that Chyna was "not invited" to spend Christmas with the Kardashian clan, as the rest of the famous family were tired of her and Rob constantly fighting. A source said at the time: "Rob's family is over Chyna. She is not invited to Kris' holiday party. "Rob's family is trying to distance themselves from Chyna. They can't stand the toxic relationship. They very much care about baby Dream though. It's just come to the point when they think Rob is better off

without being in a relationship with Chyna." A second source, however, later claimed that Chyna had nothing to "apologize" for, and was standing her ground on the feud with the 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' stars. They said: "Chyna thinks Rob and his family have a lot of nerve if they think she needs to apologise for anything that she's done in this relationship. "What should she be sorry for? Getting Rob out of his cave and bringing him into the light? Giving him a daughter? Helping him lose weight? Getting him a reality show? "Rob's the one who admitted to having issues, and has since gotten from Chyna. She's so proud of their shared accomplishments, and thinks her behaviour and attitude are completely fine. She's not changing or apologising." It is not yet known if the couple's holiday reconciliation will land her an invite to Kris Jenner's Christmas bash.

Nadine Coyle wants a lie-in for Christmas

The former Girls Aloud singer - who has two-year-old daughter Anaiya with fiance Jason Bell - wants a quiet time over the festive season, and is looking forward to getting chance to relax. She said: "I really want a lie-in for Christmas this year. "I want some peace and quiet, just to relax. "For the past few years, we've celebrated in Ireland, I've never actually done Christmas in England before." But the 31-year-old beauty is unlikely to be able to relax for long, as she is cooking Christmas dinner for her entire extended family. She said: "I always cook Christmas dinner and have the family round. "I couldn't possibly do it without everyone coming over. I'll have friends, family, people from my team. Everyone is invited." And Nadine thinks Christmas is even more magical now her daughter is old enough to understand the special day and can't wait to begin the festivities on Saturday (24.12.16). She said: "Now that I have a two year old, Santa has to visit on Christmas Eve. "So we're putting out biscuits and milk. That's the best bit."



Tamara Ecclestone and her family wear matching Christmas jumpers

The 32-year-old socialite - who has two-year-old daughter Sophia with husband Jay Rutland - insists the festive season is more about being comfortable than looking glamorous, even if her spouse doesn't always agree. She said: "People think I'll be tottering around in a bodycon dress but I spend most of Christmas Day in my pyjamas - I don't even brush my hair. "Before Christmas, I go on Amazon and buy the family lots of matching onesies and Christmas jumpers - the cheesier the better. "I got Jay one with a big reindeer in silly glasses, but he's refusing to wear it. "On Christmas Day, we usually eat way too much and end up falling asleep on the sofa watching TV. We're planning to watch The Queen's Christmas mes-

sage and then my favourite movies, 'Love Actually' and 'The Holiday'. Despite being from one of the world's richest families, Tamara insists they don't exchange extravagant gifts. She said recently: "There's nothing I can buy my parents that they don't already have so we stick to giving sentimental presents from the heart. "I like making my family collages with photos of Sophia. "The best present I ever received was last year. Jay gave me a DVD filled with video clips of the past year of our lives together. "It was so cute - he gave it to me on Christmas Eve and I just sat there bawling my eyes out. I don't think I can watch it again."



Kelly Osbourne is 'sickened' by how much her parents love each other

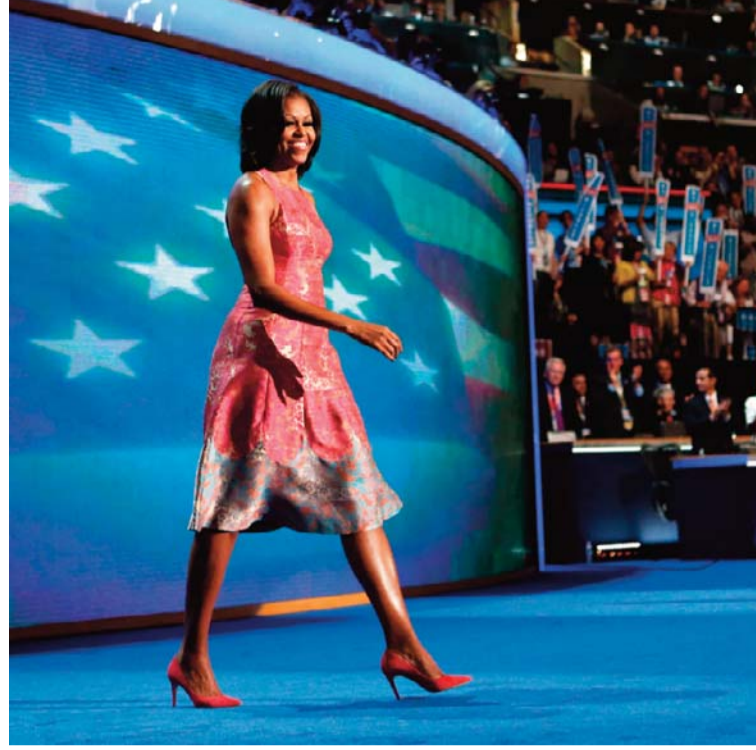
The 32-year-old star thinks it is amazing seeing Ozzy and Sharon Osbourne "fall so deeply in love with each other" time after time. She quipped: "They love each other so much. It's almost sickening. And if they make out in public one more time, I think I'm going to throw up. You should've seen them last night: They have this huge massive mansion house, and they're tucked in a little corner in the kitchen on the couch cuddling and watching TV. "I was like, 'I'm just gonna drop this off and leave you guys to it. I'll see you later!' It's really nice to watch. Everyone goes through hard times, but they're the definition of true love. To see them fall so deeply in love with each other all over again time and time again, it makes me realise how special my family is." And Kelly is looking forward to seeing her parents renew their vows once more and

joked she would love to be a flower girl for the ceremony. She told Wonderwall: "I definitely want to be a flower girl and do like an impromptu dance routine down the aisle ... It's not about me. It's about them." It comes after Sharon revealed the couple plan to renew their wedding vows after they briefly split from in May after she found out he had cheated on her. She shared: "I'm happy and to be honest that's all I want for Christmas this year. Ozzy has asked me to renew our wedding vows and I'd like to ... "In my life I have been so blessed but when one side of your life is so brilliant other things can suffer. It is hard when you are both successful and both working away. It is easy to take each other for granted. We have been married for 35 years and been together 38 years. You have to have some ups and downs."

FEATURE



In this June 3, 2008 file photo, Democratic presidential hopeful, Sen. Barack Obama D-Ill. arrives for a election night rally with Michelle Obama in St Paul, Minnesota.



In this Sept 4, 2012 file photo, first lady Michelle Obama, dressed in a Tracy Reese pink silk jacquard dress, walks on the stage at the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina.



In this Aug 25, 2008 file photo, Michelle Obama, wife of Democratic presidential candidate, Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., and daughters Malia, left, 10, and Sasha, right, 7, wave to the audience at the Democratic National Convention in Denver.

Michelle Obama loved fashion, and fashion loved her back



US President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama wearing Atelier Versace at the final state dinner at the White House in Washington in honor of Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi.

The morning after Michelle Obama's big speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2012, in which she argued passionately for a second term for her husband, designer Tracy Reese's phone was ringing. And ringing.

Mrs Obama's powerfully delivered speech had attracted much attention - but these phone calls were about her dress. A shimmering sleeveless sheath in rose and silvery gray, it was pretty universally considered a fashion slam dunk. And customers wanted it.

There was only one problem, Reese recalls: "We didn't have inventory - we had made that dress custom." And so the label went into production. "And people waited," Reese says. "You know, so many people admire Mrs Obama and they want to dress like her. We sold quite a few of those dresses." She estimates the number at over 2,000.

Reese, who hails from Detroit, is one of the first lady's favored designers - Mrs Obama has been photographed in her clothes some 20 to 30 times. But unlike some past first ladies who favored one or two big-name designers, Mrs. Obama has spread her fashion choices among a huge stable of them - often promoting lesser-known names, and taking care to promote American designers at such high-profile events as inaugurations, conventions and state dinners.

Which is why so many designers and fashion watchers will miss her when she steps away from her post after eight fashion-conscious years, and why they consider her one of the most influential first ladies in fashion, perhaps even more so than Jacqueline Kennedy, because of her broad appeal. "Michelle Obama embraced everyone," says Andre Leon Talley, a fashion editor at Vogue magazine. "She embraced black designers, Asian designers, European designers. ... She was very democrat in her choice of clothes."

Affordable fashion

And that includes wearing fashion that ordinary women could potentially afford - like cardigans from the retailer J Crew. "She's made an effort to wear accessible fashion," Reese says. "I think Jackie (Kennedy) was a great role model but she wore a lot of couture, and things that most Americans could not afford." Mrs Obama, she says, has worn both high-end and moderately priced fashion.

Reese, who is African-American, is particularly proud that one of her designs - a black dress printed with bright red flowers - is on display at the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The first lady wore it to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington.

Mrs Obama set the stage for her broad-based fashion choices with her first inauguration. Previous first ladies had often gone with established luxury designers like Oscar de la Renta. Mrs. Obama wore a two-piece lemongrass-hued ensemble by Cuban-American designer Isabel Toledo for day, and a one-shouldered white gown by New York-based, Taiwanese-Canadian designer Jason Wu at night.

For her husband's second inauguration, she wore a sleek coat and dress by American designer Thom Browne, known for his eclectic talents, and in the evening Jason Wu again. "It was an honor to have the opportunity to dress Mrs Obama," Browne said in an email message. "She is such a stylish individual because of her confidence and intelligence."

For Browne, Toledo, Reese and others, it was never clear until the moment Mrs Obama actually appeared whether she would be wearing their designs. "We would get calls periodically from her team," says Reese. "But we never knew exactly what things were for and when she would be wearing them. And I think that that's just necessary, because you don't know when plans will change."



However it unfolded, it certainly could change a designer's career. "We've been brought to the attention of millions more people than we ever would have reached," Reese says.

David Yermack, a professor of corporate finance at New York University, studied the financial impact of Mrs. Obama's fashion choices in her first year as first lady. He says he found an immediate spike in stock prices of companies whose apparel she wore (he only examined publicly traded companies). "There was a very strong and immediate reaction in the stock prices of the design firms and also the retailers," Yermack says. For major appearances, this could run into the tens of millions of dollars: "That's happened many times with her."

And the public, Yermack says, remembers what Mrs Obama wears. "Do you remember what Pat Nixon or Laura Bush wore? She has the ability to hold the interest of the consumer in a way that almost no one else does. I've looked far and wide - Kate Middleton, Carla Bruni. Nobody begins to approach Mrs. Obama on this."

Yermack thinks what's different about Mrs Obama is that first ladies "have traditionally tried to be nondescript in the way they dressed - they didn't want to overshadow their spouses ... or be seen as spending a lot on clothing. But she had no inhibitions in that sense."

"She really had an impact on how professional women dressed, and how you could have fun with fashion, in a way that you couldn't imagine Rosalynn Carter or Barbara Bush ever doing," he says. "It's a very short list of first ladies who are going to leave that kind of legacy." — AP

In this July 25, 2016, file photo, first lady Michelle Obama blows kisses after speaking to delegates during the first day of the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia.



In this Aug. 28, 2016 file photo, President Barack Obama, right, holds hands with first lady Michelle Obama, wearing a black dress printed with bright red flowers by designer Tracy Reese, as former President Bill Clinton and former President Jimmy Carter, left, arrive at the Let Freedom Ring ceremony at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.



This Jan 20, 2009, file photo shows President Barack Obama with first lady Michelle Obama wearing a two-piece lemongrass-hued ensemble by Cuban-American designer Isabel Toledo on their way to the White House in Washington.



This Jan. 20, 2009 file photo shows President Barack Obama, left, and first lady Michelle Obama, in a one-shouldered white gown by designer Jason Wu, at the Neighborhood Inaugural Ball in Washington.

— AP/ AFP photos

FEATURES



In this Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2005, file photo, the Rockettes perform during the Celebration of Freedom Concert on the Ellipse, with the White House in the background in Washington.



In this June 7, 2016, file photo, dancers from the Radio City Rockettes promote their "New York Spectacular" show by performing on the marquee of Radio City Music Hall in New York. — AP photos

Rockettes' inauguration performance is 'Voluntary,' union confirms

Just when you thought the hullabaloo surrounding who will perform at President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration was dying down, it's now turned into a whole song and dance.

Following an announcement on Thursday that the Radio City Rockettes would be performing at the Jan. 20 event, one dancer took to Instagram to express her "embarrassment" and "disappointment" at what she described as a forced commitment.

"I usually don't use social media to make a political stand but I feel overwhelmed with emotion," Rockette Phoebe Pearl wrote in a now-deleted post on her personal account. "Finding out that it has been decided for us that Rockettes will be performing at the Presidential inauguration makes me feel embarrassed and disappointed. The women I work with are intelligent and are full of love and the decision of performing for a man that stands for everything we're

against is appalling. I am speaking for just myself but please know that after we found out this news, we have been performing with tears in our eyes and heavy hearts. We will not be forced! #notmypresident."

Talk of boycotting

According to BroadwayWorld, the American Guild of Variety Artists, which represents the Rockettes, sent an email to its members that stressed "any talk of boycotting this event is invalid." The email reportedly concluded with the bolded, underlined statement: "If you are not full time, you do not have to sign up to do this work. If you are full time, you are obligated. Doing the best performance to reflect an American Institution which has been here for over 90 years is your job. I hope this pulls into focus the bottom line on this work." The email, authenticated by BroadwayWorld, was reportedly sent by a high-ranking member of the union's administration.

The union has since clarified its position, and confirmed that all members who participate in Trump's inauguration performance will do so voluntarily. In a statement, the AGVA writes that when concern arose from their members and the general public they "immediately contacted Radio City for a meeting" to address the situation.

"Fortunately, the Company has agreed that all participation in this particular event will be voluntary," the statement says, going on to dispute "misinformation" regarding the union's position. "There is a small group of year round Rockettes who are contractually obligated to perform at scheduled events throughout the year. We are pleased that Radio City has agreed that for those Rockettes with year-round employment, participation in this event will be voluntary as well," the union's statement reads.

Madison Square Garden Company, which oversees the Radio City Rockettes, also insists that participation is up to the

performers, the company said in a statement on Friday.

"For a Rockette to be considered for an event, they must voluntarily sign up and are never told they have to perform at a particular event, including the inaugural," the statement, obtained by multiple outlets, reads. "It is always their choice. In fact, for the coming inauguration, we had more Rockettes request to participate than we have slots available. We eagerly await the inaugural celebrations."

The drama unfolded hours after Trump tweeted that "so-called A-list celebrities" want tickets to his inauguration. "The so-called 'A' list celebrities are all wanting tix to the inauguration, but look what they did for Hillary, NOTHING," he wrote. — Reuters



In this Oct. 13, 2016 file photo Columbia University President Lee Bollinger, left, reaches out to Lin-Manuel Miranda, who was recognized for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama for "Hamilton," during the Pulitzer Prize awards at Columbia University in New York.



In this March 14, 2016 file photo shows actors, from left, Okieriete Onaodowan, Lin-Manuel Miranda and Christopher Jackson perform the song "Alexander Hamilton" from the Broadway play "Hamilton" in the East Room of the White House in Washington. — AP photos

Lin-Manuel Miranda named AP Entertainer of the Year

Winning a Pulitzer Prize and a clutch of Tony Awards in a single year would be enough for anyone. Not Lin-Manuel Miranda. Not in 2016. The "Hamilton" writer-composer picked up those honors and also earned a Golden Globe nomination, won the Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama Inspired by American History, wrote music for a top movie, and inspired a best-selling book, a best-selling album of "Hamilton" covers and a popular PBS documentary.

A new honor came Wednesday when Miranda bested Beyonce, Adele and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, among others, to be named The Associated Press Entertainer of the Year, voted by members of the news cooperative and AP entertainment reporters. "There's been more than a little good luck in the year itself and the way it's unfolded," Miranda said after being told of the honor. "I continue to try to work on the things I've always wanted to work on and try to say yes to the opportunities that I'd kick myself forever if I didn't jump at them."

Previous winners

Miranda joins the list of previous AP Entertainer of the Year winners who in recent years have included Adele, Taylor Swift, Jennifer Lawrence, Lady Gaga, Tina Fey and Betty White. The animated Disney juggernaut "Frozen" captured the prize in 2014, and "Star Wars" won last year. (By the way, Miranda wrote one of the songs in "The Force Awakens.")

When he hosted "Saturday Night Live" in October, he somewhat tongue-in-cheek acknowledged the rarity of having a theater composer as host, saying: "Most of you watching at home have no idea who I am."

They surely must by now. Miranda was virtually everywhere in popular culture this year - stage, film, TV, music and politics, while engaging on social media as he went. Like a lyric he wrote for Alexander Hamilton, it seemed at

times that the non-stop Miranda was working as if he was "running out of time."

Julio D. Diaz, of the Pensacola News Journal, said Miranda "made the whole world sing, dance and think. Coupled with using his prestige to become involved in important sociopolitical issues, there was no greater or more important presence in entertainment in 2016."

Among the things Miranda did this year are asking Congress to help dig Puerto Rico out of its debt crisis, getting an honorary doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania, performing at a fundraiser for Hillary Clinton on Broadway, lobbying to stop gun violence in America and teaming up with Jennifer Lopez on the benefit single "Love Make the World Go Round."

He and his musical "Hamilton" won 11 Tony Awards in June, but perhaps his deepest contribution that night was tearfully honoring those killed hours before at an Orlando nightclub with a beautiful sonnet: "Love is love is love is love is love is love is love is love, cannot be killed or swept aside," he said. "Now fill the world with music, love and pride." He started the year onstage in the Broadway hit "Hamilton" (which in 2015 had won a Grammy and earned Miranda a MacArthur genius grant) and ended it with a Golden Globe nomination for writing the song "How Far I'll Go" from "Moana," which was on top of the box office for three weeks this month, earning \$165 million. "I've been jumping from thing to thing and what's been thrilling is to see the projects that happen very quickly kind of exploding side-by-side with the projects I've been working on for years," Miranda said.

Cherishing his fluency

Though theater fans have long cherished his fluency in both Stephen Sondheim and Tupac, "Hamilton" helped Miranda break into the mainstream in 2016. The groundbreaking, biographical hip-hop show tells the true story of an orphan immigrant from the Caribbean who rises

to the highest ranks of American society, told by a young African-American and Latino cast.

The cast went to the White House in March to perform songs from the show for the first family and answer questions from school children. A version of the show opened in Chicago in October and a production is slated to land in California next year and in London soon.

When the gold-winning US women's gymnastics team returned from the Rio Olympics, where do you think they wanted to go? "Hamilton," naturally, which they did in August. The show's effects were felt across the nation this year, cheered by politicians, stars and rappers alike and even helping shape the debate over the nation's currency (Hamilton stays on the \$10 bill, in part due to Miranda's show.)

But the musical also sparked controversy when the cast delivered a pointed message about diversity to Vice President-elect Mike Pence while he attended a performance in November. President-elect Donald Trump demanded an apology, which did not come.

That kerfuffle was part of a "Hamilton"-heavy fall that included an album of celebrity covers and songs called "The Hamilton Mixtape," as well as a documentary on the show that aired on PBS and attracted more than 3.6 million television viewers.

Erin O'Neill of The Marietta Times said Miranda dominated entertainment news this year but, more importantly, "opened a dialogue about government, the founding of our country and the future of politics in America."

There's more Miranda to come in 2017, including filming Disney's "Mary Poppins Returns" with Emily Blunt (due out Christmas 2018) and an ambitious TV and film adaptation of the fantasy trilogy "The Kingkiller Chronicle."

"I'm back in a planting mode after a harvest," Miranda said, laughing. — AP

'SUICIDE SQUAD' TOPS HOME-VIDEO CHARTS

Warner Bros.' "Suicide Squad" was one of four new releases that debuted among the top 20 titles on the NPD VideoScan First Alert sales chart, which tracks combined DVD and Blu-ray Disc unit sales, the week ended Dec. 18.

The comic-book actioner, which earned \$325.1 million in U.S. theaters, also topped VideoScan's dedicated Blu-ray Disc sales chart for the week. The top five on both charts were identical.

Dropping a spot to No. 2 was the previous week's top seller, Universal Pictures' animated "The Secret Life of Pets." Appearing at No. 3 was another new release, 20th Century Fox's "Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children." The fantasy film, directed by Tim Burton based on the novel of the same name, earned \$86.7 million domestically.

No. 4 on both charts was Universal's action sequel "Jason Bourne," followed by Walt Disney Studios' "Finding Dory" at No. 5, both dropping two spots from the previous week. The other new releases in the overall top 20 were Paramount's "Ben-Hur" remake at No. 14, and Universal's "Bridget Jones's Baby," the third "Jones" movie and the first in 12 years, at No. 20.

Blu-ray Disc accounted for 60% of total "Suicide Squad" unit sales, compared with 47% for "Miss Peregrine" and 51% for "Ben-Hur," which was No. 10 on the Blu-ray sales chart. "Bridget Jones's Baby" was the No. 25 Blu-ray, with just 37% of sales in the high-def format.

On Home Media Magazine's rental chart for the week, "Ben-Hur" debuted at No. 1. Universal's "Bad Moms" dropped to No. 2 after three weeks in the top spot. Rounding out the top five rentals were Disney's "Pete's Dragon" at No. 3, Lionsgate's "Mechanic: Resurrection" at No. 4, and "Finding Dory" at No. 5.

John Latchem is Managing Editor of Home Media Magazine. Top 20 NPD VideoScan First Alert, powered by

Nielsen, chart for the week ended 12/18/16:

1. Suicide Squad (new)
 2. The Secret Life of Pets
 3. Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children (new)
 4. Jason Bourne
 5. Finding Dory
 6. Pete's Dragon (2016)
 7. Elf
 8. Star Wars: Episode VII-The Force Awakens
 9. The BFG
 10. National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation
 11. The Polar Express
 12. How the Grinch Stole Christmas (live-action)
 13. Home Alone
 14. Ben-Hur (2016) (new)
 15. A Christmas Story
 16. Captain America: Civil War
 17. How the Grinch Stole Christmas (cartoon)
 18. Deadpool
 19. Star Trek Beyond
 20. Bridget Jones's Baby (new)
- Top 10 Home Media Magazine rental chart for the week ended 12/18/16:
1. Ben-Hur (2016) (new)
 2. Bad Moms
 3. Pete's Dragon (2016)
 4. Mechanic: Resurrection
 5. Finding Dory
 6. Don't Breathe
 7. Sausage Party
 8. Nine Lives
 9. Central Intelligence
 10. The BFG

For complete sales and rental charts, visit HomeMediaMagazine.com. —Reuters



The cast of 'Suicide Squad' in promotional shot.

Carrie Fisher in Intensive Care after suffering heart attack on plane

Carrie Fisher has been hospitalized and is in intensive care after suffering a full cardiac arrest on Friday while aboard an airplane headed from London to Los Angeles.

The actress was in critical condition earlier in the day, an emergency official told Variety on Friday afternoon. She was moved from the emergency room to the Intensive Care Unit hours later, her brother, Todd Fisher, said Friday evening. The actor and filmmaker said his sister is not in stable condition, despite previous reports. "She's in the ICU and everybody's praying for her," he told Variety in a phone interview. "There's nothing new from the doctors. There's nothing new at all. ... There's no good news or bad news."

Todd Fisher said media outlets are "writing between the lines" in reporting that she's now in stable condition. The Associated Press reported earlier today that Todd Fisher said Carrie Fisher was in stable condition and "out of emergency."

'May the Force Be With You'

Airport police responded at approximately 12:15 p.m. PT to a woman with a medical emergency on a plane at LAX International Airport's Terminal 7, public information officer Alicia Hernandez told Variety. Los Angeles County Fire Department paramedics were already on the scene, performing CPR on a female victim who had gone into cardiac arrest, when

airport police arrived. She was transported to a local hospital for medical treatment. Fisher, 60, reportedly went into cardiac arrest about 15 minutes before the plane landed following the 11-hour flight, TMZ first reported. She was reportedly taken to UCLA Medical Center and placed on a ventilator.

LAFD spokesman Erik Scott said paramedics were standing by for the plane's arrival at 12:11 p.m., and immediately provided "advanced life support, aggressively treated, and transported" the patient to a local hospital.

United Airlines released a statement on Friday afternoon. "Medical personnel met United flight 935 from London to Los Angeles upon arrival today after the crew reported that a passenger was unresponsive," the statement reads, which was obtained by Variety. "Our thoughts are with our customer at this time, and any requests for additional information should be directed to local authorities."

According to air traffic control conversation between the tower and the pilot of United 935, at 12:13 pm, passengers and nurses were assisting the unresponsive passenger before the plane landed. Reps for Fisher did not respond to Variety's request for comment. Her "Star Wars" costars, fellow actors, and others in Hollywood took to social media to send the actress well wishes. "Sending all our love" to Fisher, Mark Hamill tweeted. Peter Mayhew, who played Chewbacca in the "Star Wars"

franchise, wrote on Twitter, "Thoughts and prayers for our friend and everyone's favorite princess right now."

Several people who say they were on board the airplane with Fisher broke the news on Twitter. "Don't know how else to process this but Carrie Fisher stopped breathing on the flight home. Hope she's gonna be OK," wrote filmmaker and YouTuber Anna Akana.

Comedian Brad Gage wrote, "I'm in complete shock. Anna Akana and I sat in front of Carrie Fisher on our flight from London and she was just taken off the plane by EMTs."

Fisher, known for playing Princess Leia in the "Star Wars" franchise, has recently been on tour promoting her memoir "The Princess Diarist." She had been filming the Amazon series "Catastrophe," starring Sharon Horgan and Rob Delaney, a few days earlier in London. Fisher plays Delaney's caustic mother, Mia, on the show. She recently reprised her role as Princess Leia (now General Leia) in last year's box office phenomenon "Star Wars: The Force Awakens." — Reuters

In this Sunday, Jan 25, 2015 file photo, Carrie Fisher presents the life achievement award on stage at the 21st annual Screen Actors Guild Awards at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. — AP

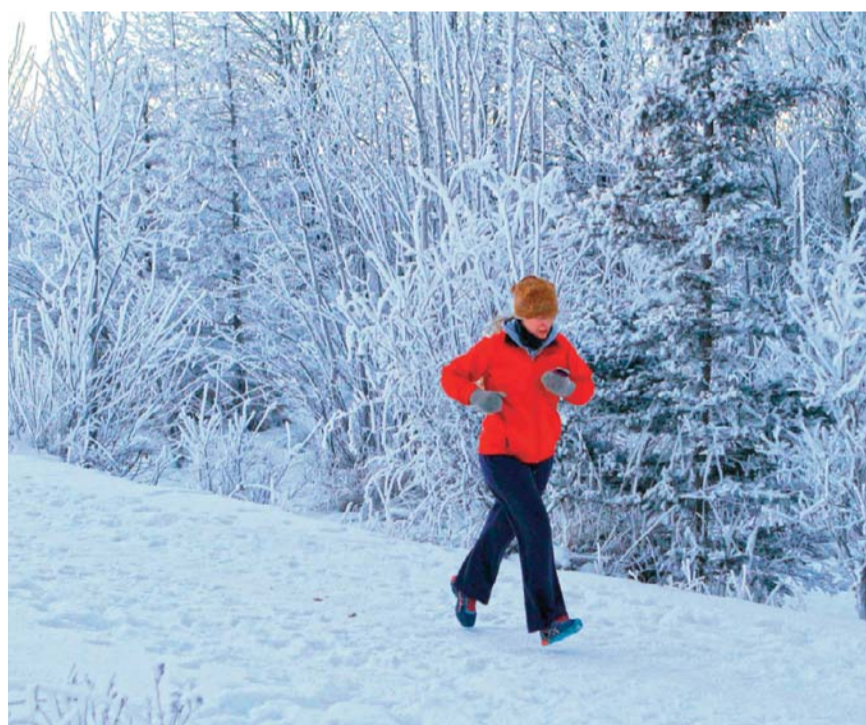


In this Thursday, Nov 10, 2016 photo, a display shows the bottom and back of boots at the KickSpike store in Anchorage, Alaska.



In this Tuesday, Nov 11, 2016, photo, Stewart Valladolid, boot buyer at B&J Sporting Goods, demonstrates a boot by Korkers featuring interchangeable outer soles with and without studs in Anchorage, Alaska.

In icy Alaska, footwear options abound to stay upright



Residents of Alaska's largest city grapple with icy streets up to seven months a year. Fortunately, there are a number of footwear options for staying upright.

A Canadian entrepreneur is offering a new style: boots with a button on the heel that triggers pop-out cleats on the sole. Click the button again and the cleats retract. Darrell Bachmann has opened a store in Anchorage that sells his KickSpike boots. Other Anchorage stores offer running shoes with cleats, overshoes with cleats or cleats that strap onto regular shoes.

The shoe buyer for Anchorage athletic store Skinny Raven says Alaskans embrace any tool that allows them to not only survive longer winters, but to conquer them. — AP

In this Tuesday, Dec 14, 2016, photo, a runner jogs on a trail at Westchester Lagoon in Anchorage, Alaska. — AP photos

Serbian stewardess who survived jet crash in 1972 dies at 66

Vesna Vulovic, a Serbian stewardess who miraculously survived a plunge from 10,000 meters (33,000 feet) after her plane exploded in mid-air in 1972, has died. She was 66.

Serbia's state TV said Saturday Vulovic was found dead by her friends in her apartment in Belgrade. The cause of death was not immediately known. Vulovic was working as a Yugoslav Airlines flight attendant on Jan. 26, 1972, when the Douglas DC-9 airliner she was aboard blew up high above the snowy mountain ranges of Czechoslovakia. All 27 other passengers and crew aboard perished.

Vulovic entered the Guinness Book of Records in 1985 for "the highest fall survived without a parachute." It was suspected that a bomb was planted inside the jet during a scheduled stopover in Copenhagen, Denmark, but no arrests were ever made.

Trapped in the plane's tail cone, she plummeted to earth in sub-freezing temperatures and landed on a steep, heavily wooded slope near a village. The fuselage tumbled through pine branches and into a thick coating of snow, softening the impact and cushioning its

descent down the hill, crash investigators said at the time.

Vulovic was rescued by a woodsman who followed her screams in the dark forest. She was rushed to a hospital, where she fell into a coma for 10 days. She had a fractured skull, two crushed vertebrae and a broken pelvis, ribs and legs.

Initially paralyzed from the waist down, Vulovic eventually made a near-full recovery and even returned to work for the airline in a desk job.

She never regained memory of the accident or her rescue. She told the AP in an interview in 2008 that she could only recall greeting passengers before takeoff from the airport in Denmark - and then waking up in the hospital with her mother at her side.

An instant national heroine, she went on to put her celebrity at the service of political causes, protesting against Slobodan Milosevic's rule in the 1990s and later campaigning for liberal forces in elections. — AP



In this Friday, Feb. 15, 2008 file photo, Vesna Vulovic, an ex-air stewardess, and survivor of a fall from 10,000 meters when in 1972 her plane was blown up in mid-flight by a bomb, gestures as she gives an interview to the Associated Press in Belgrade, Serbia. — AP

'ROGUE ONE' HEADING FOR DOMINANT \$120 MILLION AT US HOLIDAY BOX OFFICE

"Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" is the king of the US holiday box office with early projections of a \$160 million haul over the six-day Dec. 21-26 period though Disney's Friday night projections were significantly more conservative.

Disney's forecast said the six days would top \$120 million. Even at that level, should the projections pan out, the eighth "Star Wars" movie will hit \$350 million by the end of the holiday break, which would be its 11th day of release. Disney had announced Friday morning that "Rogue One" wound up its first week with \$221.9 million domestically, including \$15 million on Wednesday and \$16.7 million on Thursday. Friday's take was estimated at about \$30 million.

Illumination-Universal's animated comedy "Sing" is projected to come in a solid second with about \$71 million over the six days, followed by Sony's Jennifer Lawrence-Chris Pratt sci-fier "Passengers" at about \$31 million and Fox's videogame adaptation "Assassin's Creed" at \$28 million.

James Franco's romantic comedy "Why Him?," which opened with \$975,000 in Thursday night preview showings, is forecast to finish the four-day weekend with about \$16 million. The number for the Fox release is comparable to the ensemble comedy "Office Christmas Party," which generated \$950,000 in Thursday night previews for Paramount on its way to an opening weekend of \$16.9 million on Dec. 9-11.

Location, location

"Rogue One: A Star Wars Story," playing at 4,175 locations, is already the 10th largest domestic grosser of the year after its first week, surpassing "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them." By the middle of next week, it could be in the fifth spot, eclipsing "Doctor Strange" (\$227 million), "Suicide Squad" (\$325 million), "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice" (\$330 million), and "Zootopia" (\$341 million).



This file photo taken on December 13, 2016 shows British actress Felicity Jones (C) as she poses with cast members upon arrival at the UK launch event of Lucasfilm's "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story," at the Tate Modern in central London. — AFP

"Rogue One" was released a year after Disney-Lucasfilm's "Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens" set a record with a \$248 million opening weekend on its way to \$948 million domestic total - also a record. It grossed \$571 million in its first 11 days.

"Sing," playing at 4,022 sites, is performing in line with expectations with an impressive \$14 million projected take

on Friday. The movie centers on a group of animals in a singing competition and has a voice cast that includes Matthew McConaughey, Reese Witherspoon, Seth MacFarlane, Scarlett Johansson, John C. Reilly, Taron Egerton, and Tori Kelly.

The film is the sixth collaboration between Illumination and Universal, the team behind the "Despicable Me" fran-

chise and last summer's "The Secret Life of Pets." "Sing" cost a relatively modest \$75 million to produce.

"Passengers" had been projected to land in third in the \$30 million to \$40 million range at 3,478 sites during the six days. The movie, set in a futuristic world in which the characters played by Lawrence and Pratt are awakened early from suspended animation on a deep space journey, carries a price tag of \$110 million with financing from LStar Capital, Village Roadshow Pictures, and Wanda Pictures.

Action-adventure "Assassin's Creed" had been projected to pick up around \$30 million in its six-day opening at 2,902 sites. Michael Fassbender stars as a criminal sent back by a corporation to the Spanish Inquisition to relive the memories of his ancestors. New Regency produced "Creed" with a budget of \$120 million.

Paramount is opening Martin Scorsese's historical drama "Silence," starring Liam Neeson, Andrew Garfield, and Adam Driver, in a platform release Friday at four sites. Focus is also launching fantasy drama "When a Monster Calls," starring Felicity Jones and Neeson, in four locations Friday.

Paramount is also expanding Denzel Washington's drama "Fences" from four theaters to about 2,200 sites on Sunday. The film has grossed \$175,182 in its first six days. Lionsgate's "La La Land," currently playing at 200 locations, will also widen on Sunday to 733 screens.

Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst with comScore, said that "Rogue One" should give the 2016 box office enough to finish even or slightly above last year's total of \$11.2 billion. He said 2017 is likely to be a record setter with titles including "The Fate of the Furious," "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2," "Spider-Man:

Homecoming," "Fifty Shades Darker," "Wonder Woman," "Despicable Me 3," and "Star Wars: Episode VIII," to close out the year. — Reuters



In a picture taken from the village of Savigny, western Switzerland, light shines through fog and black clouds over the Swiss Alps yesterday. — AFP

Scans unveil secrets of world's oldest mummies

The world's oldest mummies have just had an unusual check-up. More than 7,000 years after they were embalmed by the Chinchorro people, an ancient civilization in modern-day Chile and Peru, 15 mummies were taken to a Santiago clinic last week to undergo DNA analysis and computerized tomography scans. The Chinchorro were a hunting and fishing people who lived from 10,000 to 3,400 BC on the Pacific coast of South America, at the edge of the Atacama desert. They were among the first people in the world to mummify their dead. Their mummies date back some 7,400 years—at least 2,000 years older than Egypt's.

Now, researchers are hoping to use modern medical technology to reconstruct what they looked like in life, decode their genes and better understand the mysteries of this ancient civilization. The 15 Chinchorro mummies, mostly children and unborn babies, were put through a CT scanner at the Los Condes clinic in the Chilean capital. "We collected thousands of images with a precision of less than one millimeter," said chief radiologist Marcelo Galvez. "The next phase is to try to dissect these bodies virtually, without touching them, which will help us preserve them for another 500,000 years."

Using high-tech computer processing, researchers are busy reconstructing the mummies' muscles and facial features. "We

want to see what they physically looked like, to reconstruct them and bring to life someone who died thousands of years ago," said Galvez.

Researchers are also hoping to learn more about how the Chinchorro mummified their dead. The Chinchorro, who apparently had a complex understanding of human anatomy, would carefully remove the skin and muscles of the deceased.

Using wood, plants and clay, they reconstructed the body around the remaining skeleton, then sewed the original skin back on, adding a mouth, eyes and hair. A mask was then placed over the face. The result looks like something in between a statue and a person-eerily lifelike even after thousands of years.

All in the family

Mummification was an intimate process for the Chinchorro, said Veronica Silva, the head of the anthropology department at Chile's National Museum of Natural History. "The family itself would make the mummy," she told AFP. The earliest mummies were unborn fetuses and newborns, she said. The mummies were all made using the same basic process, but each one shows unique "technological and artistic innovations," she said.

It was a process that evolved over time. The newest mummies are the most elaborate. Some 180 Chinchorro mummies have been discovered since 1903. All were found outdoors, placed near the beach. The Chinchorro apparently did not build pyramids or any other structures to house them.

In fact, the Chinchorro civilization left no trace besides its mummies. "We are effectively talking about the oldest artificially mummified bodies in the world," said Silva. "The Chinchorro mummies date to 7,400 years ago. That is to say, this system... existed 2,000 years before the first mummifications even began in Egypt."

Surprises have already begun to emerge from the CT scanner. The smallest mummy, it turns out, was not a mummy at all. "There was no bone structure inside. It was just a figurine, possibly a representation of an individual who could not be mummified," said Silva.

Researchers also took skin and hair samples from the mummies to analyze their DNA, in hopes of identifying genetic links with the modern-day population. "We want to better understand their way of life—from their diet to whether we Chileans still carry their genes," said Silva. — AFP



Chilean anthropologist Veronica Silva shows one of the mummies from the ancient Chinchorro culture at the National Museum of Natural History. — AFP photos



Chilean anthropologist Veronica Silva shows one of the mummies from the ancient Chinchorro culture at the National Museum of Natural History in Santiago, on December 16, 2016.

Inmates bring Christmas cheer to Philippine prison with beauty pageant

Inmates dressed as beauty queens pranced on a makeshift stage for a mock beauty pageant at a Philippines jail yesterday, bringing Christmas cheer to one of the country's most overcrowded prisons.

Thousands cheered and whistled as 11 gay and one transgender prisoner danced and sang at the "Miss Universe" pageant at the Quezon City Jail courtyard, wearing wigs, make-up, gowns and elaborate Mardi Gras attire.

The decaying Manila jail, housing about 3,800 inmates, is infamous for congestion. Men take turns sleeping in the cells, an open-air basketball court and even on stairways of the facility, built to hold 800 prisoners. "It's lonely in here but I'm happy that I won," the winner called Gwen, whose real name cannot be used due to prison policy, told AFP.

Gwen, arrested nearly two years ago and on trial for drug dealing, said his victory had brought "acclaim for my brigade", referring to his gang. All 12 of the gangs in the prison were allowed to enter one contestant to the gay beauty pageant, organized by a jail contractor. "This is part of inmate welfare development. Once they join activities like this they get less jail time through the good conduct time allowance law," said the service provider, Ferdinand Abejon.

The Quezon City Jail holds defendants of criminal cases but who have not yet been convicted. Due to overburdened courts many of the inmates have been locked up there for years. The Philippine penal system is the third most congested in the world, according to the University of London's Institute for Criminal Policy Research.

Jails nationwide have nearly five times more inmates than they were built for, government data shows. The situation is set to get much worse with police having arrested more than 40,000 suspects since Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte launched a war on drugs that has also left more than 5,300 people dead since July.

The real Miss Universe pageant is a popular contest in the Philippines, with Filipina beauty queen Pia Wurtzbach winning the crown last year. Manila is hosting the annual contest next month. — AFP