



Christians hail religious tolerance in Kuwait

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Pope comforts terror victims in Christmas message

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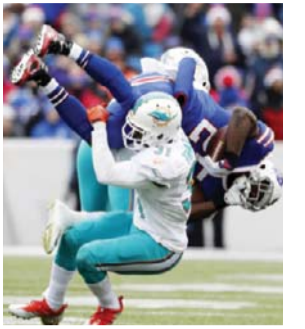
Trump to dissolve foundation amid probe

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Raiders lose Carr as Texans, Falcons, Giants reach playoffs

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COURT UPHOLDS RESTORATION OF SHIMMARI'S CITIZENSHIP

PANEL: 'POLITICAL EXCLUSION' LAW UNCONSTITUTIONAL



Min 14°
Max 20°
High Tide 11:07 & 21:52
Low Tide 04:42 & 15:55

By B Izzak

ISSUE OF ILLEGAL RESIDENTS CONCERNS AMIR

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and top leaders are concerned over the illegal residents' issue, the interior minister affirmed yesterday. Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, who is also Deputy Prime Minister, stressed the necessity of following up and resolving this issue in line with HH the Amir's instructions. The government refers to the country's stateless Arabs, colloquially known as bedoons, as 'illegal residents'.

He was speaking during a meeting of the board of the Central Apparatus for Illegal Residents' Affairs. He expressed gratitude to the board members for their efforts in implementing the approved plans and measures to tackle this subject, according to a statement released by the general director of the public relations and security information at the interior ministry.

HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, through the ministerial commission, continuously follows up on this topic. For his part, the apparatus' executive chairman presented the attendees of the meeting with the commission's work results and statistics it has assembled in preparation for "full implementation of the endorsed roadmap" in this respect.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah, the Cabinet's Secretary General Abdullah Al-Roudhan, Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Suleiman Al-Fahd, Kuwait Army's Deputy Chief of Staff Lt Gen Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah, Acting Secretary General of the illegal residents' apparatus Lt Gen Najib Al-Othman and a number of experts. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah (center) is seen during a meeting of the board of the Central Apparatus for Illegal Residents Affairs yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT: The appeals court yesterday upheld a ruling by the lower court that ordered the government to return the citizenship of pro-opposition media owner Ahmad Jabr Al-Shimmari, which was revoked by the government over two years ago. Shimmari's lawyer and newly-elected MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei described the ruling as historic and called on the new interior minister to implement the verdict as soon as possible.

He threatened to seek court action or use constitutional tools in the National Assembly if interior ministry authorities rejected or delayed the restoration of the citizenship to Shimmari and his four children. In a landmark ruling, the lower administrative court said in October that the revocation of Shimmari's citizenship by the government was oppressive and unfair and demanded its immediate restoration.

Initially, Shimmari's request for restoring his citizenship was rejected by the lower and appeals court on the basis that they were not qualified to look into citizenship issues, which are sovereign matters. But the court of cassation later ruled that courts are competent enough to hear such cases and ordered the case to be looked into from the start.

Shimmari, the owner of Al-Alam satellite television and Alam Al-Youm newspaper, was stripped of his citizenship over two years ago for allegedly threatening national security. Several other opposition leaders saw their citizenships withdrawn as part of a crackdown on dissent. Their cases are being looked into by other courts. Throughout the trial, the government had insisted courts have no legal right to look into nationality cases. Newly-elected MPs have vowed to amend the 1959 nationality law to prevent the government from revoking citizenships without a final court ruling.

Continued on Page 13



JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (center) arrives for a weekly cabinet meeting yesterday. — AP

FURIOUS NETANYAHU SUMMONS US ENVOY

10 OTHERS REPRIMANDED

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday summoned the US ambassador to Israel to discuss the US abstention in a UN Security Council resolution demanding an end to settlement-building. Separately, the envoys of 10 other nations were called in to the Israeli Foreign Ministry to be reprimanded yesterday, and Netanyahu had more harsh words for Washington over Friday's UN vote. An Israeli spokesman gave no details of when Netanyahu would meet US Ambassador Daniel Shapiro.

The resolution was passed in the 15-member Security Council because the US broke with its long-standing approach of diplomatically shielding Israel and did not wield its veto power, instead abstaining. Netanyahu put his personal imprint on Israel's show of anger by repeating at the weekly cabinet meeting what an unidentified Israeli government official contended on Friday - that the administration of US President Barack Obama had conspired with the Palestinians to push for the resolution's adoption. The White House has denied the allegation.

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KUWAIT TIMES EXPLAINS:
NBA POWER RANKINGS

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BANKERS: RAISING RATE BOOSTS COMPETITIVENESS

PAGE 21

SYRIA-BOUND RUSSIA JET CRASHES

ALL 92 ONBOARD KILLED, INCLUDING 64 FROM CHOIR

NOV INFLATION RISES BY 3.4%

KUWAIT: The domestic Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rose 3.4 percent in November compared to the same month of 2015, the Central Statistical Bureau said in a report released yesterday. The figure dropped by 0.14 percent in November on a monthly basis, compared to October.

The monthly consumer index in November showed stability in six main groups, causing the price index in one group to climb and drop in five others. Price index of the main group (food and beverages) climbed in November by 0.19 percent, compared to the same month in 2015. However, the group saw a drop on a monthly basis estimated at 0.06 percent, while the price index climbed 0.2 percent in the second group (tobacco) on a monthly basis.

The index of the third group (clothing, footwear) dropped in November by 1.09 percent year/year and by 0.39 percent monthly. Inflation in the fourth group (housing services) rose by 7.4 percent year/year. In the group, home furnishings, equipment maintenance rose 2.15 percent annually. The health sector witnessed a rise in the inflation index in November by 1.86 percent year/year, while transport jumped by 10 percent yearly, but dropped monthly by 0.64 percent.

Meanwhile, communication climbed by 0.2 percent on a yearly basis. The index of entertainment and culture increased on an annual basis by 0.16 percent, education climbed yearly by 2.7 percent, restaurants and hotels 2.92 percent, and commodities and various services 0.92 percent. — KUNA

MOSCOW: A Russian military plane heading to Syria crashed into the Black Sea yesterday, with no sign of survivors among the 92 on board, including Red Army Choir members on their way to celebrate the New Year with troops. The Tu-154 plane went down shortly after taking off from the southern city of Adler where it had been refueling, defense ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said in a briefing broadcast on the ministry's website.

It disappeared from radar just two minutes after it took off at 5:25 am (0225 GMT).

The ministry told agencies there was no sign of any survivors at the crash site and that 10 bodies had been recovered off the coast of the resort city of Sochi, as authorities pledged to dispatch an additional 100 divers to aid in the search. "Fragments of the Tu-154 plane of the Russian defense ministry were found 1.5 kilometers from the Black Sea coast of the city of Sochi at a depth of 50 to 70 meters," the ministry said.

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SOCHI: Russian rescuers carry a stretcher with a recovered body on a pier after a Russian military plane crashed in the Black Sea yesterday. — AFP

SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TEHRAN

TEHRAN: Tehran might not seem like the most obvious pitstop for Santa Claus, but Iranians love the chintzy side of Christmas and it is also one of the safest places in the Middle East for Christians. The past month has seen shoppers flocking to the Armenian district of Somayeh - the biggest Christian area in the city - to pick up fake trees, and stock up on baubles, reindeer toys and plastic snowmen. "It's really interesting and attractive for us," said Niloufar, a Muslim woman in her thirties who was out shopping with her husband on Christmas Eve. "I love the decorations, the tree. We see it as showing a kind of

respect for other beliefs. And of course I like all the chocolates!"

Shoppers line up for selfies with one of several Santas stationed outside stores on the main drag. One Father Christmas, full of the festive spirit, breaks into an impromptu dance to a popular Iranian pop song playing outside a food stall. Hamed Davoodian owns a grocery store on the street, and says the community never faces any trouble from the authorities. "Why should we? (Armenians) have been here for 400 years. They are great to us," he said, adding proudly that Christians fought alongside their fellow Iranians during the brutal war

with Iraq in the 1980s. "There were 30 to 35 martyrs from our neighborhood," he said.

Thousands of Christians have emigrated to the United States and elsewhere since the Islamic revolution in 1979, leaving only 120,000 Christians according to the last official count. Most are Armenian - who are Orthodox Christian - along with a few thousand Assyrian Catholics. Despite the exodus, Christians are officially recognized and protected - along with Jews and Zoroastrians - under laws introduced by the revolution's founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

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TEHRAN: An Iranian man takes a picture of Christmas decorations outside a shop in the capital on Christmas Eve. — AFP



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a memorial specie from Information Minister Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, in presence of NCCAL officials Ali Al-Youha and Mohammad Al-Asousi. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a memorial specie from Information Minister Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, in presence of NCCAL officials Ali Al-Youha and Mohammad Al-Asousi.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives a memorial specie from Information Minister Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, in presence of NCCAL officials Ali Al-Youha and Mohammad Al-Asousi.

AMIR RECEIVES 'CAPITAL OF ISLAMIC CULTURE' SPECIE

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Minister of Information and State Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters Ali Al-Youha. Sheikh Salman and Youha presented to His Highness the Amir a memorial specie on the occasion of

selecting Kuwait City as Capital of Islamic Culture for the year 2016. They later presented similar memorial species to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Meetings

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir

received His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh

Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Condolences

In other news, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of condolences yesterday to the fami-

lies of Abdullah Nayef Al-Owaihan and Nourah Hamad Al-Qaoud over their death and a number of both families' members in the yacht fire off the southern resort of Al-Khairan on Saturday. His Highness the Amir prayed that Allah Almighty bless their souls and wished a speedy recovery for the injured. His Highness the Crown Prince His Highness the Prime Minister, and Speaker Ghanem sent cables of similar sentiments. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah addresses the guests at a luncheon banquet he held in honor of Kuwaiti ambassadors and chief diplomats. — KUNA

FM HOLDS LUNCHEON FOR KUWAITI ENVOYS

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah held yesterday a luncheon banquet in honor of Kuwaiti ambassadors and chief diplomats who are now in Kuwait on the occasion of the current vacation season. During the banquet, which was attended

by Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah and aides to the foreign minister, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled elaborated on the main goals of Kuwait's foreign policy for the time being and major regional and international challenges. He reiterated His Highness the Amir

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's instructions for working hard to serve Kuwaiti citizens abroad, and for seeking to promote and develop Kuwait's relations with sisterly and friendly countries. The minister hoped that 2017 would witness better events in the international arena. — KUNA

KUWAIT WELCOMES UN RESOLUTION CONDEMNING JEWISH SETTLEMENTS

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait Saturday welcomed UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2334 which condemned Israeli settlement activities and demanded stop of construction on occupied Palestinian lands. This resolution is in harmony with UNSC's "historic responsibilities" to preserve international peace and stability, a foreign ministry source, requesting anonymity, said in a statement.

The source said the resolution affirmed the international community's conviction in illegality of Jewish settlements over occupied Palestinian territories, which have devastating impacts on the peace process in the Middle East.

The UNSC condemns as a "flagrant violation" Israel's settlement construction on occupied Palestinian land.

Fourteen of a total 15 Security Council member states voted in favor of the measure as the US abstained, thus allowing the resolution to pass. According to the resolution, there is "no legal validity" for Israeli settlements built on post-1967 occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

The foreign ministry source hoped the resolution paved way for resumption of peace process towards establishment of independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital in line with relevant UN resolutions and Arab peace initiative. Kuwait, he added, would support all efforts aimed at finding a just and comprehensive solution for the Palestinian cause to end the suffering of the Palestinian people. — KUNA

YOUTH AUTHORITY PLAYS KEY ROLE

KUWAIT: An official of the Public Authority for Youth (PAY) yesterday stressed its significant role in empowering, sharpening skills of the youth and making their time useful for themselves and the Kuwaiti community.

Faisal Al-Dwaihees, PAY's secretary, disclosed at a news conference that the authority planned a variety of activities, addressed to young male and female citizens. The planned 150 sports, cultural, religious, promotional, social, artistic and theatrical programs will be held at PAY's youth centers during the first three months of next year. Night-time activities will be free of charge.

The activities, due to be held in all of the country's governorates, will involve the

Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, the Ministry of Information, the Public Authority for Sports (PAS) and the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL).

Dia Al-Bahr, in charge of development and training at the NCCAL, said the council would take part in the activities with seminars, poetic soirées, workshops and training courses. One of the workshops will address national unity among the youngsters. Meanwhile, Hanan Al-Zayed, in charge of tourism in the Ministry of Information, said the department would hold an educational course for promoting internal tourism. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Faisal Al-Dwaihees, PAY's secretary (center) attends the news conference. — KUNA



ANKARA: KRCS officials attend the first forum on coordinating humanitarian and relief efforts for the Syrian refugees, held in Gaziantep city, southeast Turkey. — KUNA

CHARITIES AGREE TO COORDINATE RESPONSE TO SYRIAN CRISIS

ANKARA: The first forum on coordinating humanitarian and relief efforts for the Syrian refugees highlighted the need of scaling up the humanitarian joint life-saving effort for the displaced Syrians. Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) coordinates with its Qatari counterpart in the delivery of relief aid to evacuees from Aleppo city, north Syria, said director of the KRCS public relations department Khaled Al-Zaid. He made the statements on the sidelines of the forum being hosted by Gaziantep city, southeast Turkey.

"KRCS and Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) set a good example in responding to the tragedies resulting from the armed conflict in Syria. We work together in setting the priorities of aid efforts on the

ground and ensuring the delivery of supplies to those in need without overlapping," he pointed out.

On the forum, Zaid said the conferees stressed the need of networking and sharing information and experience while addressing the complicated situation of the displaced Syrians. "Collaboration helps save time and effort for the aid workers," he explained.

Zaid called for launching a joint information center to facilitate networking by the aid agencies while responding to humanitarian disaster in Syria. He added that the participants in the gathering commended the effective cooperation between KRCS and QRCS in alleviating the suffering of the evacuees from Aleppo.

Besides KRCS and QRCS, the

forum gathered representatives of the Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Organization, Qatar Charity, the Turkish Red Crescent, the Turkish Humanitarian Relief

Foundation (IHH), the Turkish Saed Charity Association, the Iraqi Humanitarian Al-Ethar Foundation and the Riyadh-based Physicians Across Continents. — KUNA



KIB CHAIRMAN COMMENTS ON DISCOVERY OF ATTEMPTED FRAUDULENT TRANSACTIONS

NO LOSS TO BANK, CUSTOMERS • FRAUD UNCOVERED BY ADVANCED PROTOCOLS

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced that it has successfully uncovered a number of attempted fraudulent ATM transactions which took place in the United States over the past few days, using fake cards replicated from the cards of 22 existing customers.

In a statement, Sheikh Mohammad Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Chairman of KIB, announced that upon discovering the attempted fraud, KIB immediately took all necessary actions and coordinated its efforts with all the relevant authorities - including Visa International - in order to trace the source of the replication.

Jarrah said in his statement that owing to KIB's advanced anti-fraud protocols and state-of-the-art IT systems, neither the Bank nor any of its customers suffered any financial loss as a result of these fraudulent transactions, which were all identified and rejected immediately.

Jarrah further noted that through diligent investigations, KIB was able to identify the single ATM where the

replication equipment had been installed. Thereafter, and in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Interior, the Bank's surveillance camera network was upgraded, which led to the perpetrators being captured on video. KIB is currently in the process of pursuing legal action against these offenders, according to the Chairman.

It serves to note that KIB has always maintained the highest levels of safety and security, and the Bank simply does not compromise when it comes to the privacy and confidentiality of its customers. KIB uses the latest anti-fraud protocols and 24/7 video surveillance systems, in order to ensure safe and secure transactions at all of its ATMs across Kuwait.

Jarrah ended by noting that KIB is currently in the process of taking legal action against all those who have sought to circulate a video pertaining to the incident, with the clear intent of harming not only the Bank's reputation, but that of Kuwait's economy and banking industry as well.



KIB Chairman Sheikh Mohammad Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah

Legalese

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas yesterday and I hope your New Year is filled with good health, love, compassion, forgiveness and happiness - for you and your family. There has been a lot of negativity in the news recently. Two headlines particularly caught my attention - "One million expats are going to be deported" and "Celebrating Christmas is not/or is haram". Are these real reports? Or are they exaggerated just because controversy sells?

As a lawyer, it is very difficult for me to grasp such headlines, and this is because I was taught in law school (as one would expect) articles of the Kuwaiti constitution, as follows:

Article 29: "All people are equal in human dignity, and in public rights and duties before the law, without distinction as to race, origin, language or religion."

Article 35: "[The constitution] protects the freedom of practicing religion in accordance with established customs, provided that it does not conflict with public policy or morals."

It is as if the news is tailored to make expats feel uncomfortable in Kuwait. I have said this and I will continue to say this - a lot of people have left their homes, their traditions and their families so they can be with us and work for companies in Kuwait, and are therefore a part of our society and our economy. So we need to make them comfortable. Laws need to change in order for us to accept more traditions and religions. We are blessed to have such a diverse community, so Happy Holidays to everyone. Today I will be answering questions that have been of concern to expats in Kuwait.

Not illegal

Question: Is celebrating Christmas illegal in Kuwait?
Fajer: No. There is no law in Kuwait that makes celebrating other religious festivals illegal. There may be bylaws that restrict celebrations in certain ways, especially in commercial areas, but there is nothing that makes it illegal.

Question: Is it true that they want to deport one million expats from Kuwait and make the number of expats in Kuwait equal to the number of Kuwaitis. Could I suddenly lose my job?
Fajer: Like I mentioned above, there has been a lot of news going around on the deportation of expats in Kuwait, and I just want to make it clear that expats cannot be deported just because they are expats. The government officials were speaking about those who are in violation of immigration law or those involved in criminal activities.

Punishment

Deportation as a punishment has been more and more common in the past year, and this is why it has been focused on by the media, but if you are a law-abiding resident, you have nothing to fear. I know some companies out there are not following the law and are not providing their employees with the proper paperwork/visas, and this may have a negative effect on the employees. Please be careful and always double check that you have the proper documents.

And since it is the season of giving, remember to forgive. Going to court is not always the ideal solution. Let go of some things when you can, and be nice to those around you, regardless of their religion or background. Happy holidays!

For any legal questions, queries or if you need legal assistance, email ask@fajerthelawyer.com

GOVT WORK PLAN SUBMITTED TO CABINET

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Subaih said the government's work plan has been submitted to the Cabinet, but has not been approved, pending hearing ministers' remarks about it. Subaih explained that the bodies subject to the ministry of state for economic affairs so far include the Supreme Planning and Development Council, the Central Statistical Bureau, the privatization apparatus, the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation.

Clean Fuel Project

The Supreme Planning and Development Council's assistant secretary general for planning and follow up Bader Al-Refae said that 75 percent of the Clean Fuel Project was completed by the end of November. During a field visit he made along with the planning and follow up team to the project site escorted by KNPC's deputy CEO for projects Abdullah Fahhad Al-Ajmi, Refae said the project's capacity will be around 800 barrels per day and that it will provide many job opportunities for Kuwaitis. Refae added that the project's total budget is KD 4.7 billion, of which KD 2.1 billion has so far been spent. The project is expected to be completed by mid-2018.

KAC pilots

After agreeing with Kuwait Airways Company's (KAC) board of directors concerning KAC pilots who had been transferred to work in other government bodies and who had not commenced those jobs, the parliament's financial and economic affairs committee decided contacting the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to ask them to consider them as still working for KAC. Committee member MP Ahmad Nabil Al-Fadhli said that the committee followed certain methodology on dealing with the issue with the pilots and administrative staff. Fadhli added that the problem lies in legislations and lack of vision. He added that the situation has now changed at KAC and that the pilots had every right to return to their jobs.

Water pipes

The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) has completed the execution of five contracts related to a project to replace asbestos water pipes with ductile ones in various areas including Sabah Al-Salem, east Hawally, East Ahmadi, Rumaithiya and Dahr. MEW has so far spent around KD 28 million on this project to replace the over 25-year-old pipes that had been cracking and leaking.

Automation

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labors' (MSAL) Undersecretary Dr Mutar Al-Mutairi said the first phase of automation of the cooperative sector will be launched on Jan 2 involving a shareholders' registry through the cooperative portal. Mutairi added that all co-ops had been informed to start automating shareholders' registry systems after linking them with MSAL.

DISABLED AUTHORITY STAFF PROTEST OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE, LOW SALARIES

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: A number of employees of the Public Authority for the Disabled (PAD) staged a brief protest yesterday at the PAD headquarters. "The protest will be for an hour because we are providing humanitarian services to the community and we cannot disrupt them," said Nasser Al-Shelimi, head of the PAD workers' union. He stressed that "any disruption of the authority is disrupting the interests of the disabled, and we just want to deliver our demands through the media."

The sit-in was held after another protest in Irada Square that was attended by a number of MPs, who had promised them that they will question Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Subaih and demand the resignation of the director of the PAD, but they did not do so. "Handicap signs and plates sometimes take up to three months to get ready," complained an activist.

Head of the Anti-Corruption Authority Nawaf Al-Suwait said: "We always wonder why the problem is always at the PAD? The answer is simple - the flaw lies in the lack of acti-

vation of article 27 of the disabilities act, for which the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah should be held responsible." "The article says that the prime minister is the one who will supervise and not the minister of social affairs and labor," he said. Suwait pointed out that Subaih previously had disagreements with her employees in the ministry and the authority, adding that PAD employees are paid low salaries.

The deputy general manager for educational and rehabilitative services at the special needs authority Majid Al-Saleh said that his authority has been increasing the number of employees to serve people with special needs. "We did not and will not be late in serving people with disabilities and we will always facilitate their paperwork in the fastest time," he said.

The PAD employees' demands are to stop outside interference in the work and functions of PAD, stop making arbitrary personnel decisions, stop getting people for PAD supervisory vacancies from outside because they already have expertise within the body, and raise employees' salaries.

MPS PROPOSE SETTING UP TEMPORARY PANELS

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: MP Thamer Al-Suwait announced filing requests in collaboration with a number of lawmakers to a number to form temporary parliamentary committees for human rights, people with special needs, negative phenomena and illegal residents (bedoons). Suwait stressed that these committees are of great significance in order to discuss very important issues, adding that the National Assembly will discuss the requests and vote on them during tomorrow's session.

Meanwhile, chairman of the parliament's budgets and final statement committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad said yesterday that the committee met to discuss its working agenda during the current term. He added that the committee decided to increase its meetings in order to study state departments' final statements as well as the State Audit Bureau's report for the fiscal year 2015-2016. The committee reviewed the results of its activities during the previous term. It also approved a bill on adjusting the assessment of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiary companies on revenues and expenses for the fiscal year 2016-2017.



GCC INMATES WEEK UNDERWAY

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: As part of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries' efforts in the field of human rights, and as they strive to boost civil society's role in protecting inmates' families, the unified GCC Inmates Week began yesterday under the patronage of Interior Ministry's Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Correctional Institutions Affairs Major General Majid Al-Majid.

Majid said the week's activities reflect the volume of care that inmates at correctional institutions receive in GCC countries while serving their sentences. He said the week's slogan "Together We Achieve Reform" reflects rehab activities and programs presented to inmates in GCC countries. He added that Kuwait's Interior Ministry pays great attention to this week, as it joins Gulf interior ministries in related fields. According to him, one of the most notable goals of this activity is reforming inmates through rehab, education and psychiatric programs, and help them reintegrate back into the society to become active elements in serving the country. Another goal is to present the inmate's role and his efforts while in prison, and utilize his experience and profession in the society to be able to provide for his family and meet its needs, he added. Majid said that the qualitative shift in inmates' services is an evidence that reform became an alternative method for punishment.

Meanwhile, Acting Director General of Reform Institutions Brig Adel Al-Ibrahim said GCC countries are proud of the services that aim to reform and rehabilitate, which gained praise from various authorities and human rights organizations. He said that the GCC reform experi-



ence became an evidence of the quality of care as international participations proved, and set an example to be followed by international organizations.

Municipality campaigns

In other news, Kuwait Municipality's Public Relations

announced that Mubarak Al-Kabeer branch removed 3,657 loads of leftovers and collected KD 8,238 in fees. In the meantime, Director of Public Cleanliness and Road Occupancy Department at the municipality Milfi Al-Hawali said that his department removed 307 abandoned vehicles and issued 37 citations that included seven against roaming vendors.



In Brief

KUWAIT HELPS ILLEGAL RESIDENTS

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs addresses humanitarian issues in treatment of illegal residents, the minister said recently. Some aspects of the ministry's plan stipulate employment of this expatriate segment in sectors affiliated to the ministry; in coordination with the Central Apparatus for Illegal Residents' Affairs, said Mohammad Al-Jabri, also Minister of State for Municipal Affairs. — KUNA



MINISTER CONGRATULATES WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL TEAM

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Subaih congratulated yesterday the Kuwaiti team for winning the 8th GCC Wheelchair Basketball Championship. In a statement, the minister also congratulated the technical team supervising the athletes, expressing hope for more achievements in the future. She said that such win was well deserved by this category, pointing out that Kuwait was proud of such win. — KUNA



KUWAITI EXAMINES UAE WASTE MANAGEMENT

SHARJAH: A delegation of Kuwait Municipality on Saturday visited headquarters of the UAE environmental company (Bee'ah), examining latest technologies and solutions to preserve the environment and treat waste. Nadia Al-Shereedah, head of the delegation, said in a statement that the delegation's mission to the headquarters, based in the emirate of Sharjah, aimed at studying technologies employed in the sector of safeguarding the environment, exchanging expertise and discussing ideal solutions in this realm. — KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Flowers blooming in Kuwait's desert following a heavy rain's season. — KUNA



KUWAIT: KFH's Yousef Al-Ruwaieh receives the honor from KU officials.

KFH PARTICIPATES IN IASTE CONFERENCE

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE) 2016 conference held at the College of Architecture, Kuwait University under the patronage and presence of the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Mohammad Al-Fares.

KFH's participation in the fifteenth Conference of IASTE 2016 themed "Legitimation of Heritage", stems from its endeavors to maintain the cultural heritage of the country, and comes as part of its social responsibility and efforts to be present at the cultural events and forums that serve in raising the name of Kuwait high on the local and world levels. It is worth noting that the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE) is headquartered at the

Universities of California, Berkeley and Portland in the USA. The IASTE holds its conference once every two years. The college of Architecture at the University of Kuwait has been assigned to organize this international event that hosts nearly 200 scholars and scientists.

Shield of Honor was introduced from the University's officials represented by Dean of College of Architecture Dr Omar Khattab and Dr Mohammed Al-Jassar to Executive Manager Group Public Relations and Media at KFH, Yousef Al-Ruwaieh in recognition of KFH's participation in the conference that reflects the bank's keenness to support the efforts of the educational institutions. They praised KFH's initiatives and contributions in supporting the activities of Kuwait University which reaffirms its pioneering role in assuming the social responsibility.



KSSC HOLDS KUWAIT 43RD FISHING COMPETITION

KUWAIT: Kuwait 43rd Fishing Competition was recently concluded with the announcement of Mohammed Jassem Al-Sharqawi as the grand prize winner after compiling the highest score of points at 1,610. He was followed by Mahdi Abdul Ghaffar with 1,397 points, and Ali Mohammed Al-Khulaifi and Ali Suleiman Al-Saeed with 980 points each. In terms of the total weight of fish caught during the competition, Fahad Zaid Al-

Samhan finished in first place with a total of 21,900 kilograms of fish, followed by Yousif Al-Majid with 20,900 kilograms and Sami Asaad Michael with 18,250 kilograms.

The one-day competition was organized by Kuwait Sea Sports Club's (KSSC) Marine Heritage Committee on Saturday. It included 52 boats and 88 contestants, and the fishing period lasted from early morning till 4:00 pm. After the fishing

period concluded, the participants' catches were weighed in and classified at KSSC's headquarters on the Salmiya beach, under the supervision of a committee headed by Tareq Al-Towheed from the Kuwait Fishermen Union, Captain Khalifa Al-Rashed, fishing expert Majeed Sahoud and the head of KSSC's Heritage Committee Ali Al-Qabandi; who stressed that the catch mainly comprised of silvery croaker (Nuwaibi).





The NBK Children's Hospital

NBK STEM CELLS HOSPITAL FOR CHILDREN TO OPEN EARLY 2017

KUWAIT: Health Minister Dr Jamal Al-Harbi said he was proud of National Bank of Kuwait's (NBK) major contribution in building a hospital specialized in blood disease and stem cells' transplants for children. The hospital is the first of its kind, located in Al-Sabah specialized medical zone.

Minister Harbi was speaking during an inspection tour of the building, which he carried out recently along with NBK Group's CEO Esam Al-Saquer, Deputy Director of Engineering Department Ezzat Jalal and head of stem cells unit at the hospital Dr Maitham Abdelkareem Hussein.

Meanwhile, Saquer said that the new hospital is scheduled to open during the first quarter of 2017, adding that it will have outpatient clinics, a specialized day treatment unit for blood and blood derivatives' transfusion, chemotherapy transplant unit, an intensive care unit, laboratories, a blood bank unit and a specialized pharmacy.

The hospital cost KD 7 million to build, and will be linked with the current NBK's children hospital with a suspended bridge, Saquer said. In the meantime, Dr Hussein gave a presentation about the departments of the new building, which were planned after a careful review of the activities and needs of blood diseases and cancer.



Health Minister Dr Jamal Al-Harbi, NBK Group's CEO Esam Al-Saquer and other officials pose for a group photo outside the new hospital.

CHRISTIANS ARE HAPPY ABOUT RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN KUWAIT

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Christians felt that this year was the best in Kuwait, because MP Ahmad Al-Fadhli called for a public holiday on Christmas and for setting up a Christmas tree on Safat Square. "More than anything else, we are grateful to the leaders of this country. Kuwait is a tolerant country, and we really hope this will push through in the coming years," said a pastor of a Christian congregation in Kuwait City.

Fadhli had strongly criticized a decision by Social Affairs and Labor Minister Hind Al-Subaih when she ordered to remove a Christmas tree from Dasma Cooperative Society, which is run by a private investor. Fadhli also called for declaring Christmas a public holiday and erecting a large Christmas tree on Safat Square, the largest square in downtown Kuwait City that has important historical significance. He also proposed to allow Christians to mark this occasion and allow them to exchange gifts and greetings.

Kuwait Times' columnist Muna Al-Fuzai also encouraged Muslims to greet and exchange greetings with Christians, arguing it's not 'haram' to greet 'Merry Christmas'. But Arnold, a Filipino convert to Islam, said Kuwait is a Muslim country and expats should respect this. "We already have freedom of religion here. We can see that Christians are not prohibited to worship in their churches. The problem is, if you give too much freedom, it might be exploited," he said. Fatum, a Muslim expat, said the cele-



KUWAIT: Emmanuel Gharib, Chairman of the National Evangelical Church Kuwait and Pastor of the Kuwait Presbyterian Church, leads a Christmas mass at a church in Kuwait City on December 24, 2016. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

bration of Christmas in Kuwait is low-key. "In Jordan, which is also a Muslim country, Christmas is a grand celebration. They have parties, concerts and food fests that don't happen in this conservative country. A holiday is fine, a Christmas tree is also fine, but if given more freedom, they will ask for more," she said. "My family celebrates Christmas even though we are

Muslims. It's not about religion or families - it's about strengthening our relationship with other beliefs, and that's perfectly okay," Fatum said.

There are around 200 Kuwaiti Christians, along with hundreds and thousands of foreign Christians in this country. The state is also home to major churches and Christmas is observed without any problems.

30-MONTH TIMEFRAME FOR SECURITY EDIFICE: MINISTER

KUWAIT: A project to build a national security compound, at a cost of KD 12.74 million, is expected to be completed in 30 months, Minister of Public Works Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa said yesterday. In a speech during a contract-signing ceremony for the project, with Chairman of the National Security Apparatus Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Al-Sabah in attendance, Mutawa noted that expediting the completion of development projects remains the Ministry of Public Works' perennial challenge.

Moreover, he urged increased meticulousness on the part of all those involved in these projects in efforts to ensure continued progress and efficiency. On the security building located in Mubarak Al-Abdullah's diplomatic zone, he revealed that it stretches on 8,000 square meters with six floors, in addition to business offices, a parking lot and three basements. Meanwhile, the ministry's Undersecretary Awatif Al-Ghunaim said that all parties involved in the construction aspect of the project have given their approval "before the contract was signed." — KUNA



KUWAIT: Chairman of the National Security Apparatus Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Al-Sabah (right) shakes hands with Minister of Public Works Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa after the contract's signing. — KUNA



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Crime

Report

MAN 'DRAGS' DAUGHTER'S HARASSER TO POLICE STATION

KUWAIT: A Syrian man spotted two men harassing his daughter, so he dragged one of them to the police station, while the other fled. The man had left his daughter in the car as he entered a store in Bayan, but moments later she called him, saying that someone was asking for her phone number. The man returned to the car and caught the man. Police are investigating.

Inmate beaten

The central prison administration reported to Sulaibiya police station about two Kuwaiti inmates who beat an Egyptian. The medical report states that the Egyptian sustained bruises and grazes in various parts of his body, along with a broken finger in his left hand.

Violent fight

An Egyptian man was arrested and police are looking for four others following a violent fight in a mall, videos of which went viral on social media. The arrested man said the others beat him and he was only trying to defend himself.

Chalets burgled

Detectives are looking for thieves who burgled a citizen's chalet. The chalet owner told Ahmadi police that four television sets, three refrigerators, four receivers, 14 blankets, six boxes of tools, two vacuum cleaners, four outdoor spotlights, three windows, a 150-m cable and 65 lambs, in addition to the entire contents of the kitchen, were stolen.



Drug smuggling foiled

Kuwait International Airport's customs officers arrested a passenger who attempted to smuggle in chocolates, energy drinks and tea containing marijuana and hashish oil. The suspect, who arrived from Europe, was sent to concerned authorities. —Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa



الشمس

Al-Qabas

RACISM AND FOOLISHNESS

By Ahmad Al-Sarraf

Racism is adopted by regimes, groups or individuals to distinguish themselves from others, for biological, cultural, political, tribal, religious and other reasons. Hitler was a racist as he believed in the supremacy of the Aryan race like the Germans and Persians, and this belief was built on nothing, just like the former South African regime believed in the supremacy of the white race over black Africans. Likewise, the people of Esfahan, Iran believe that their city is "nisf jihan" or half the world, maybe because they are not aware of London, Beijing, New York or other cities. Similarly, the Egyptians keep repeating that Cairo is the "mother of the world."

This idea of one group's supremacy over another does not rely on a scientific reality despite the existence of differences and inherited elements of people's nature and their abilities, which if controlled or changed, changes the human being as well. So, it is not fair to treat those belonging to a race, tribe or group with inferiority, or for being socially and legally different only because their religion, tribe or color is different. We see how some people from a humble environment become innovators when they live in a scientifically advanced environ-

ment. It is ridiculous for an individual to consider himself better than others. We are born with a status due to certain factors and there is nothing to be proud about it. It is nice to belong to a peaceful and generous country, but when it acts clumsily and attacks others with no justification, we cannot blame people for not supporting their country. It is also nice to belong to a sports club, political party or a social club and be proud of it, but one should not hesitate backing out when it deviates from its goals. Or belong to any religion or sect and be proud of it, but this does not mean accepting the practices that may be harmful to others. Being proud of religion, sect and race should not be at the expense of others. Material, cultural, art, food, climate and literal wealth is not limited to a certain person or group - it is rather distributed to everyone on earth, which makes us all equal.

If a person believes that financial, racial, tribal and religious status is an advantage, can he live isolated from the world? Of course not - isolation is impossible in today's world, because people need peace, money, food, shelter, beauty and so on to live, so it is foolish for people to act superiorly and believe they are better than others. —Translated by Kuwait Times

الانباء

Al-Anbaa

ALEPPO NOT A KUWAITI CAUSE

By Saleh Al-Shayji

We have never seen so much hateful sectarian divisions as we have been learning about, hearing and seeing in these dreadful days. We have never, either, seen people so attached and cheaply promoting foreign agendas as we see these days, when some of our own sons belonging to two opposite teams are waiting to charge at each other, holding their swords to behead them!

Aleppo is a Syrian, regional, Arab and international cause, but it is definitely not a Kuwaiti one! Kuwait did not become a cause for the people of Aleppo when it was occupied. No group of people from Aleppo went out on the streets demonstrating, condemning the occupation or calling for jihad to liberate Kuwait. No groups went out rejecting the occupation either.

We do sympathize with Aleppo and its people the same way we do with everybody living in the shadows of danger. We do provide them with all we can in the form of money, aid, food, medicines, clothes, and, on top of all, sincere prayers. This is all we can do for any repressed people worldwide, be they Arabs, Muslims or following any other religion or doctrine. They are all alike for us.

We are not a major power or a striking force. We do not have fleets, barges or aircraft carriers. All our military munitions are exactly like what a small shed has of cutting, sawing or hammering gear. We should know better and release the real size of our powers.

So, all those heroic calls and acts made by people on both sides will bring us nothing but catastrophe, and this has to be immediately stopped before its fires grow any larger amongst ignorant zealous people on both sides over a matter they have nothing to do with. Why let a group of hired, deceived and misled people draw our country into such detestable zones full of and controlled by racial, doctrinal and sectarian hate and conflicts?

Why is such tumult being created in Kuwait for a cause of others? We want the new government, namely the new interior minister, to be more accurate, careful and swift. We need him to use his whip before his justice because those are pro-tumult people who hold many grudges, by which they wish to incinerate the country. Such people should not be warned. We must take the first move and tie their hands before they rise from their underground world. —Translated by Kuwait Times



Faisal Al-Ayyar and Abdulsalam Al-Bahar cut the ribbon.



KIPCO Group executives at the opening.

KIPCO'S ALTERNATIVE ENERGY PROJECTS INAUGURATES SHOWROOM IN SHUWAIKH

KUWAIT: Alternative Energy Projects Company (AEP) - a member of the KIPCO Group - has made alternative energy products available to the public at its new showroom in Shuwaikh. AEP is a solar energy provider, specialized in bringing energy efficiency and renewable energy solu-

tions to office buildings, homes and public areas. The inauguration of the showroom was attended by senior executives of the KIPCO Group, those interested in the renewable energy field and representatives of the media. On this occasion, Dr Hassan Qasem, AEP's General

Manager said: "The concept of renewable energy and green buildings is new to Kuwait. We seek to raise awareness about the importance of energy efficiency for the sustainability of our resources. By offering both consultation and execution services, we are helping clients

achieve energy efficiency and reap the benefits on the longer run, especially with the imminent increase in energy costs. At AEP, it is our aim to make innovative, renewable energy solutions readily available in the MENA markets."



KUWAIT: Deputy Chairman of the Municipal Council Meshaal Al-Juwaisri met yesterday with a team from Qatar's Municipal Council led by Deputy Chairman Hamad Al-Muhammadi. Members from Kuwait's Municipal Council also attended the meeting, during which both sides discussed increasing cooperation in the municipal field.

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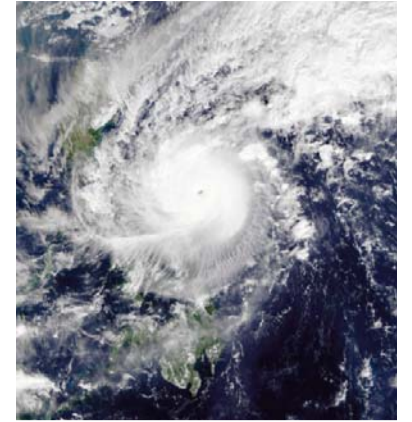
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Scores flee as Christmas typhoon hits Philippines

POWERFUL QUAKE HITS SOUTHERN CHILE



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis delivers his speech from the balcony of St Peter's basilica during the traditional "Urbi et Orbi" Christmas message to the city and the world yesterday in St Peter's Square. — AFP

POPE COMFORTS TERROR VICTIMS

RELIGIOUS LEADERS STRIKE SOMBER NOTE ON CHRISTMAS

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis urged peace in the Middle East as tens of thousands gathered to hear his Christmas address yesterday, while offering comfort to victims of terrorism after a year of bloody jihadist attacks. The 80-year-old Argentine called for guns to fall silent in Syria, saying "far too much blood has been spilled" in the nearly six-year conflict. And he urged Israelis and Palestinians to "have the courage and the determination to write a new page of history" in his message from the balcony of Saint Peter's Basilica to a crowd of 40,000 gathered in the square below which, despite the sunny weather, was far from full.

As Europe ramped up security for the holiday just days after the truck attack that left 12 dead at a Berlin Christmas market, the leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics said he hoped for "peace to those who have lost a person dear to them as a result of brutal acts of terrorism". In Milan, where suspected Berlin attacker Anis Amri was killed in a police shootout on Friday, there was a heavy police presence around the cathedral. The entrance has been protected by concrete barriers since the Berlin attack.

In France, where Berlin has raised grim memories of the jihadist truck rampage in June that left 86 people dead, 91,000 members of the security forces have been deployed to guard public spaces including churches and markets over the weekend. Religious ceremonies in Germany were heavy with the weight of Monday's attack, which was claimed by the Islamic State group. "Christmas this year carries a deep wound - we are celebrating this festival in a different way this year," said Gebhard Fuerst, bishop of Rothenburg in the southeast.

But Baden bishop Jochen Cornelius-Bundschuh offered a note of hope. "At Christmas, a light shines in the world - it shines in powerful darknesses like those we have seen in recent years with the horror of war, civil war and terrorist attacks," he said.

'Closed doors, defended borders'

In Israel, security was tight for Christmas celebrations coinciding with the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. Some 2,500 worshippers packed the Church of the Nativity complex, built over the grotto where Christians believe Jesus was born, for midnight mass in Bethlehem in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa used his homily there to plead for compassion for refugees and for a halt to the violence wracking the Middle East.

"We fear the stranger who knocks at the door of our home and at the borders of our countries," he said. "Closed doors, defended borders, before personal and political choices, are a metaphor for the fear that inevitably breed the violent dynamics of the present time." Pope Francis struck a similar tone in his Christmas Eve mass, urging a 10,000-strong crowd in St Peter's Square to feel compassion for children, notably victims of war, migration and homelessness.

Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury who leads the world's Anglicans, meanwhile said 2016 had left the world more divided and fearful. "The end of 2016 finds us all in a different kind of world; one less predictable and certain, which feels more awash with fear and division," he was due to say in his sermon Sunday.

Icy swim, meat auction

Queen Elizabeth II missed the Christmas Day church

service attended by the British royal family as she suffered from a heavy cold, Buckingham Palace said. The 90-year-old, who is the supreme governor of the Church of England, will join in the family festivities later in the day. 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.

Elsewhere in the world, despite the security fears, many

were braving winter temperatures to take part in traditional revelry. 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. But in the world's conflict-torn countries, there were reminders of the violence that has ravaged the world this year.

Christians in Syria's Aleppo were preparing for Christmas services after President Bashar Al-Assad's forces retook full control of the ruined former economic hub. The

Old City's Saint Elias Cathedral, its roof collapsed under rocket fire, was set to host its first Christmas mass in five years. And in Bartalla, near the Iraqi city of Mosul, Christians filled the pews of the fire-scarred Mar Shimoni church for the first service since the town was retaken from IS jihadists who had seized it in 2014. In the mostly Catholic Philippines, a blast ripped through a police car outside a church as worshippers were arriving for a Christmas Eve mass south of Manila, injuring 13 people. — AFP

TRUMP TO DISSOLVE FOUNDATION AMID NEW YORK INVESTIGATION

WEST PALM BEACH, Florida: President-elect Donald Trump said Saturday he will dissolve his charitable foundation amid efforts to eliminate any conflicts of interest before he takes office next month. The revelation comes as the New York attorney general's office investigates the foundation following media reports that foundation spending went to benefit Trump's campaign.

Trump said in a statement that he has directed his counsel to take the necessary steps to implement the dissolution of the Donald J Trump Foundation, saying that it operated "at essentially no cost for decades, with 100 percent of the money going to charity." "The foundation has done enormous good works over the years in contributing millions of dollars to countless worthy groups, including supporting veterans, law enforcement officers and children," he said in a statement.

"I will be devoting so much time and energy to the presidency and solving the many problems facing our country and the world. I don't want to allow good work to be associated with a possible conflict of interest," he said. Trump said he will pursue philanthropic efforts in other ways, but didn't elaborate on how he'd do so.

The Democratic National Committee criticized Trump for what it called "a wilted fig leaf to cover up his remaining conflicts of interest and his pitiful record of charitable giving." The statement from party spokesman Eric Walker also took a jab at the president-elect over his controversial business holdings: "Shuttering a charity is no substitute for divesting from his for-profit business and putting the assets in a blind trust - the only way to guarantee separation between the Trump administration and the Trump business." A 2015 tax return posted on the non-profit monitoring website GuideStar shows the Donald J. Trump Foundation acknowledged that it used money or assets in violation of IRS regulations - not only during 2015, but in prior years. Those regulations prohibit self-dealing by the charity. That's broadly defined as using its money or assets to benefit Trump, his family, his companies or substantial contributors to the foundation.

The tax filing doesn't provide details on the violations. Whether Trump benefited from the foundation's spending has been the subject of an investigation by New York

Attorney General Eric Schneiderman. In September, Schneiderman disclosed that his office has been investigating Trump's charity to determine whether it has abided by state laws governing nonprofits. Documents obtained by AP in September showed Schneiderman's scrutiny of The Donald J Trump Foundation dated back to at least June, when his office formally questioned the donation made by the charity to a group supporting Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi.

Bondi personally solicited the money during a 2013 phone call that came after her office received complaints from former students claiming they were scammed by

Trump University, Trump's get-rich-quick real estate seminars. The Trump Foundation check arrived just days after Bondi's office told a newspaper it was reviewing a lawsuit against Trump University filed by Schneiderman. Bondi's office never sued Trump, though she denies his donation played any role in that decision.

Trump later paid a \$2,500 fine over the check from his foundation because it violated federal law barring charities from making political contributions. Amy Spitalnick, press secretary for Schneiderman's office, said Saturday that the foundation "cannot legally dissolve" until the investigation is complete. —AP



WEST ALLIS, Wisconsin: In this Dec 13, 2016 photo, US President-elect Donald Trump speaks during a rally at the Wisconsin State Fair Exposition Center. — AP

DISPLACED IRAQIS HEAD HOME FOR 'WARTIME' CHRISTMAS

BARTELLA, Iraq: For the 300 Christians who braved wind and rain to attend Christmas Eve Mass in their hometown, the ceremony evoked both holiday cheer and grim reminders of the war raging around their northern Iraqi town, and the distant prospect of moving back home. Displaced when the Islamic State group seized their town, Bartella, in August 2014, the Christians were bused into town from Irbil, capital of the self-ruled Kurdish region where they have lived for more than two years, to attend the lunchtime service in the Assyrian Orthodox church of Mart Shmoni.

Torched by IS militants, church-supervised volunteers recently cleaned it up after government forces retook Bartella as part of an ongoing campaign to liberate the nearby city of Mosul and surrounding areas in Nineveh province. But the church is still missing its icons, electrical wiring hangs perilously from its ceiling and most light fixtures are gone. The headless statue of a late patriarch stands in the front yard, its pedestal surrounded by shards of glass.

On Saturday, women joyously ululated when they stepped into the marble-walled church. Almost everyone held a lit candle. Many took photos with their mobile phones. A handful of gas heaters were brought in, but they did little to warm the place on a wet and windy December day. For many of them, the sight of their hometown in almost complete ruin was shocking. Only a few homes in the once vibrant town of some 25,000 people stand unscathed. Most have been damaged

by shelling or blackened by fire.

On one street wall, IS's black banner remains visible under the white paint. Next to it, someone wrote: "Christ is the light of the world. Bartella is Christian." "Our joy is bigger than our sadness," said university student Nevine Ibrahim, 20, who was in Bartella Saturday for the first time since she, her parents and four siblings left in 2014. They found their house badly damaged. Everything they owned was gone. "I don't think we can return. The house can be fixed but the pain inside us cannot," she said, seated among three of her siblings. "Who will protect us?"

Halfway through the service, conducted in Assyrian and Arabic, it became something of a wartime mass. Roughly a dozen US military servicemen and a 100-man contingent from the Iraqi military led by several top generals descended on the church in a show of solidarity. Unlike their Americans counterparts, the Iraqi troops came armed. Iraqi soldiers - with one wearing a skull-face balaclava-searched people coming into the church. Inside, soldiers frisked anyone moving close to the Iraqi generals, who arrived in some two dozen armored SUVs and Humvees.

The distant thud of explosions could be heard after mass. But none of that seemed to dampen the worshippers' joyous spirit. The soldiers photographed each other and took selfies. Many of them held lit candles, and the congregation warmly applauded when Bishop Mussa Al-Shamani thanked the Iraqi military for "liberating" Bartella. The Christians of Nineveh are members of an ancient and

once-vibrant community. They enjoyed protection under Saddam Hussein, but their numbers rapidly dwindled after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq toppled the regime of the late dictator in 2003.

Since 2003, militants have targeted Christians and their churches, terrorizing the community and forcing many of its members to flee to the West, neighboring nations or the northern Kurdish region. IS' onslaught across northern Iraq in 2014 devastated the unique communities of Christian-majority towns like Karamlis, Bartella and Qaraqosh - all in the Nineveh plains. Of the estimated 1.5 million Christians who lived in Iraq on the eve of the US-led invasion, about 500,000 are left.

Defiance

"This is the mass of defiance," Assyrian priest Yacoub Saady told the congregation at the end of the service. "We, the Christians, are the oldest component of this country. We are staying put and no power can force us to leave." His words, however, were more hopeful than realistic. The Bartella Christians attending Saturday's Christmas Mass spoke of the community's woes and their slim hopes of returning home.

With the central Baghdad government strapped for cash because of low oil prices and the spiraling cost of the war against IS, it is unlikely that monetary compensation will be dispensed to residents who lost their homes, or that large scale reconstruction will be undertaken in Bartella anytime soon. Residents also have deep security concerns,

arising mostly from the Iraqi military and security forces' meltdown in the face of IS' blitz across northern and western Iraq in the summer of 2014. "People must first be compensated and services like water and electricity restored before they come back to live here," said Ramsen Matti, a 28-year-old accountant who now lives in Irbil with his wife and their only child, a daughter born in Bartella less than two months before they fled the town. Altar boy Masar Jalal arrived

with his father on Saturday, the 16-year-old's first visit to Bartella since he fled with his family to Irbil in 2014. "I cried for what has become of the town," said Jalal. "I will only come back to live here if there is security."

He found some of his old clothes when he visited the family home, but the furniture was gone. "The clothes I found are too small for me now, but I also found a mug with my photo that a cousin of mine snapped. No one took that." —AP



QARAQOSH, Iraq: A US soldier shakes hands with an Iraqi boy during a Christmas Eve service at the Saint John's (Mar Yohanna) church in this town (also known as Hamdaniya), 30 km east of Mosul, yesterday. —AFP



TUNIS: Women demonstrate outside the Tunisian parliament on Saturday. —AP

TUNISIA FORCES WARN OF RETURNING MILITANTS

TUNIS: Tunisia's security forces called on the government yesterday to take "exceptional measures" to combat the return of jihadists fighting for extremist groups abroad. Tunisia has seen a wave of jihadist attacks since its 2011 revolution, including on foreign tourists, and the United Nations estimates that more than 5,000 Tunisians are fighting for extremist outfits, mainly in Iraq and Syria. "The return of terrorists from hotbeds of unrest in Tunisia is worrying and could lead to the Somali-isation of the country," said a statement from the internal security forces' national union, referring to the Al-Qaeda-linked Shabaab group in Somalia.

Battle-hardened fighters "have received military training and have learnt to use all sorts of sophisticated weapons", it added. The warning came a day after the authorities said they had arrested three people including the nephew of Anis Amri, a Tunisian suspected of carrying out a deadly truck attack on a Berlin Christmas market this week. Hundreds of people gathered outside parliament in Tunis on Saturday to protest against allowing jihadists back into the country.

The demonstrators also chanted slo-

gans hostile to Rached Ghannouchi, leader of the Islamist Ennahdha party, who had in the past backed the idea of "repentance" in exchange for renunciation of violence. Yesterday, he said the country should "assume its responsibilities". "This disease has to be dealt with seriously," Ghannouchi told a public meeting, saying his "treatment" was "justice, police, education and therapy".

On Friday, Interior Minister Hedi Majdoub told parliament 800 Tunisians who had fought for extremist groups abroad had since returned home. President Beji Caid Essebsi said earlier this month the authorities would refuse to pardon Tunisians who fight for militant organizations. "Many of them want to return, and we can't prevent a Tunisian from returning to his country," he told AFP in Paris, "but we will be vigilant."

Following a storm of criticism in the press and on social media, on Dec 15 Essebsi told Tunisian television that "we will not be indulgent with the terrorists". Yesterday, the interior minister said five people had been arrested in Ariana, north of Tunis, suspected of "recruiting young people to send them to conflict areas". —AFP



TEHRAN: Iranian Christian worshippers and a priest perform rituals in Christmas mass at the Saint Joseph Chaldean-Assyrian Catholic church, in Tehran, Iran, yesterday. Most Iranian Christians are of the Armenian ethnicity, however and they are mostly adherent to the Gregorian faith. They celebrate the new year and then the Christmas on January 6. Iranian Christians are represented at the country's parliament. According to official figures published in 2011 some 120,000 Christians live in Iran, mostly in central and north-western parts of the country. —AP

POWERFUL EARTHQUAKE ROCKS SOUTHERN CHILE

COASTAL EVACUATIONS ORDERED AFTER TSUNAMI ALERT

SANTIAGO: Chilean authorities ordered coastal evacuations yesterday following a powerful Christmas Day earthquake offshore the south of the country that triggered tsunami alerts. The quake registered 7.7 on the Moment Magnitude scale according to seismologists at the US Geological Survey. Chile's ONEMI national emergencies office ONEMI put it at 7.6. The epicenter was on the southern part of Chiloe island, in a zone of several national parks.

The closest population center was Castro, a town on the island of 40,000 inhabitants. Chile's capital Santiago was around 1,000 km from the epicenter. "The earthquake hit us as we were having breakfast and we immediately ran out of the house because of fears of a tsunami," one man who took his family to high ground told Chilean television. Chilean media tweeted images of roads that had been cracked by the force of the quake. In some cases, part of the bitumen was cleaved away. There were no immediate reports of casualties, though electricity was cut to some communities. Telephone and internet continued to work.

Families celebrating Christmas

The quake struck as Chileans were with their families celebrating Christmas. All shops were closed. ONEMI and the USGS both issued a tsunami alert. Chilean officials called for coastal areas nearby to be evacu-

ated. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Honolulu, Hawaii, said in a bulletin that "hazardous tsunamic waves are forecast for some coasts." The quake had a depth of 15 km according to the PTWC.

Chile is in a quake-prone region,

lying on the so-called Pacific Ring of Fire of frequent seismic activity. As a result, buildings are usually built to resist swaying. The last big quake to shake Chile was on Sept 16, 2015, when an 8.3 temblor followed by a tsunami hit the north of the country,

killing 15 people. A coastal evacuation order had limited the number of casualties. In 2010 another quake measuring 8.8, also followed by a tsunami, struck the center and south of the country, killing more than 500 people. —AFP



CASTRO, Chile: A woman waits in her car to be evacuated due to a tsunami alert on Chile Island off the Pacific coast of southern Chile, after a 7.7-magnitude earthquake yesterday. —AFP

YEMEN PRESIDENT VISITS FORMER QAEDA BASTION

ADEN: Yemen's President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi visited Mukalla on the southeast coast yesterday, an official said, his first trip there since loyalist forces retook it from Al-Qaeda in April. Hadi and Prime Minister Ahmed bin Dagher met political and military officials from across Mukalla's Hadramawt province, the official said. The president praised efforts in the province to "eradicate the forces of evil and terrorism" and bring "security and stability" back to Mukalla.

Quoted by the official news agency Saba, Hadi stressed the need to "tighten our ranks to meet the challenges we face", a reference to Al-Qaeda fighters still active across the vast province. Yemen's internationally recognized government has been based in second city Aden since it was retaken from Shiite Houthis rebels last year.

Retaking Mukalla was facilitated by the intervention of Emirati special forces, members of a Saudi-led coalition that backs Hadi's government. A local official survived an assassination attempt yesterday in Shibam, around 100 km north of Mukalla, in an attack security sources blamed on Al-Qaeda. They said Faraj Neji survived an ambush but two of his guards were killed. Loyalist forces have been struggling to secure territory taken by the Houthis since the summer of 2015.

A military official said yesterday that five rebels were killed in a coalition air raid in the southern Shabwa province. Also in Shabwa, three armed tribesmen were killed in an ambush by fighters belonging to the Yemeni

branch of Al-Qaeda, security officials said. Yemen's conflict has allowed jihadist organizations including Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group to expand, mainly in the country's vast desert east. In the north, a Saudi soldier was killed in a cross-border firefight with rebels, the interior ministry in Riyadh said yesterday.

A border post was attacked overnight by Houthis, a spokesman said, adding that a sol-

dier wounded in the exchange died before reaching hospital. He was the latest of at least 111 Saudi soldiers and civilians to be killed in the country's south since the kingdom launched a coalition to battle the Yemeni insurgents in March 2015. The Yemen conflict has killed some 7,000 people since the Saudi-led intervention, according to the United Nations. —AFP



SANAA: Yemenis walk through a market in the old city of the capital yesterday. —AP

QUEEN ELIZABETH II MISSES XMAS SERVICE DUE TO ILLNESS

SANDRINGHAM, England: A bad cold kept Queen Elizabeth II from attending the traditional Christmas morning church service near her Sandringham estate in rural Norfolk, England, raising some concerns about her health. It's extremely rare for Elizabeth, now 90, to miss the service, which is a cornerstone of the royal family's Christmas celebrations and brings the monarch into contact with locals who gather outside for a glimpse of her.

"The Queen continues to recover from a heavy cold and will stay indoors to assist with her recovery," Buckingham Palace said. "Her Majesty will participate in the royal family Christmas celebrations during the day." Those festivities included a gala lunch. In past years, the royal family would often go for extended walks in the countryside.

Elizabeth has been in generally good health and has maintained an active schedule in the last year despite traveling less often than in the past. Recently

she stepped down as patron for about 20 charities and groups to lighten her workload.

Her husband, 95-year-old Prince Philip, has also cut back on his public schedule and his charitable works in the last few years. He was also suffering from a severe cold earlier in the week, the palace said. Philip did attend the Sunday morning Christmas service, waving to well-wishers on his way out of the church in a car.

Prince Harry spent time talking to locals after the church service and stopped to pet a dog. There was no sign of his girlfriend, American actress Meghan Markle, who recently visited him in London.

Elizabeth and Philip were joined in Sandringham by other senior royals including Prince Charles. Prince William and his wife Kate, along with their two children, Prince George and Princess Charlotte, were celebrating Christmas with Kate's parents at their home in



ENGLEFIELD: Britain's Prince William (right) and Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, center, with their children Prince George and Princess Charlotte, arrive to attend the morning Christmas Day service at St Mark's Church in Englefield, England, with the family of the Duchess of Cambridge, Michael Middleton, James Matthews, James Middleton, Pippa Middleton and Carole Middleton yesterday. —AP

Bucklebury, a village west of London.

The queen used her annual pre-recorded Christmas Day message to praise British Olympic and Paralympic athletes and others who inspired her. The traditional message of goodwill was televised throughout Britain and much of the Commonwealth.

The broadcast included video of her 90th birthday celebrations and a gigantic street party attended by charity workers from across Britain. The soft-spoken queen praised ordinary people for pitching in to do good works. "To be inspirational, you don't have to save lives or win medals. I often draw strength from meeting ordinary people doing extraordinary things - volunteers, carers, community organizers and good neighbors. Unsung heroes whose quiet dedication makes them special," she said.

She also praised the charitable foundations started by Philip and Charles some 60 and 40 years ago, respectively. — AP



MOSCOW: Floral tributes in front of portraits of Russian TV journalists who were aboard the crashes military plane, displayed in Moscow yesterday. —AP

RUSSIA'S TU-154 PLANE: A HISTORY OF ACCIDENTS

MOSCOW: The Tupolev aircraft maker's Tu-154, the type of plane that crashed yesterday in the Black Sea with 92 people on board, is an ageing Russian workhorse whose record is plagued with accidents.

Although Russian commercial airlines are no longer known to use the plane which first flew in 1972 and went out of production in 1994 — it is still used by the military. In spite of the tragedy, Russia's Industry and Trade Minister Denis Manturov told local news agencies Sunday that permanently retiring all Tu-154 aircraft would be "premature."

Similar in size and performance to a Boeing 737, with a range of 4,000 kilometres (2,500 miles), the Tu-154 can carry between 155 and 180 passengers at a cruising speed of 850 kilo-

metres an hour. Russia has experienced several accidents involving the plane, including some that date back to the 1990s.

On January 1, 2011, a Tu-154B belonging to a commercial airline burst into flames before take-off on a runway at an airport in Russia's Far North. Three people were killed and more than 30 injured in the incident, which led to some of the planes being grounded.

On December 4, 2014, a Tu-154 passenger plane broke apart after rolling off the runway at Moscow's Domodedovo airport, killing two people. On April 10, 2010, a Tu-154 carrying Polish president Lech Kaczynski and other top Polish officials came down in fog near the Russian city of Smolensk, and all 96 people on board perished. The delegation was heading to a cere-

mony in Russia's Katyn forest for thousands of Polish army officers killed by Soviet secret police in 1940 — a massacre the Kremlin had denied until 1990.

In July 2009, a Tu-154 belonging to the Iranian company Caspian Airlines crashed in northern Iran, killing all 168 on board. In August 2006, a Tupolev of the Russian Pulkovo airline crashed in Ukraine after trying to fly above a storm, killing 170 people.

In February 2012, a Tu-154 on an Iranian domestic flight crashed in the southwest of the country, killing 117. Other major accidents involving the Tu-154 were in July 2001 in the Siberian city of Irkutsk, with 145 dead, and in August 1996 on the Norwegian island of Spitzbergen, killing 141. —AFP

MURDERED BRITISH MP'S WIDOWER URGES UNITY

LONDON: The widower of murdered British MP Jo Cox yesterday urged people to heed the wake-up call of 2016 and come together in 2017 to fight extremism and terrorism. Brendan Cox in a televised speech called for people to reunite after a divisive year in Europe, the United States and the Middle East. Since 1993, Channel 4 television has shown an alternative Christmas message as Queen Elizabeth II's traditional speech to the Commonwealth is screened on other British channels.

Jo Cox, 41, a mother of two young children, was shot and stabbed to death on June 16 in the days before Britain's EU referendum. Last month Nazi-inspired Thomas Mair, 53, was sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of release after being found guilty of murdering the opposition Labour MP. "2016 has been an awful year for our family. And it's been a divisive one for the wider world," Brendan Cox said.

"A year in which fascism, xenophobia, extremism and terrorism made us divided and feel threatened. From America to Europe to the Middle East and beyond. "And these trends could strengthen, they could gain momentum, they could consolidate. "But that isn't how it has to be.

"Instead of being a turning point for the worse, 2016 could be a wake-up call that brings us back together." He urged people to reach out to those they disagreed with and defend the values of tolerance and fair play.

"I hope 2017 might be the year in which we realise that we have more in common than that which divides us." Previous presenters of the Channel 4 message have included comedy character Ali G, French actress Brigitte Bardot, chef Jamie Oliver, cartoon character Marge Simpson, Iran's former hardline president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and US whistleblower Edward Snowden.

Channel 4's deputy head of news and current affairs Daniel Pear said: "2016 has been one of the most momentous years in recent history-punctuated by political turmoil, conflict and a stream of dramatic events. "Brendan's message references this wider turbulence but is also a very personal reflection." — AFP

MALI'S CHRISTIANS RETURN TO CHURCH UNDER POLICE GUARD

GAO, Mali: As the sun starts to fall, the call to prayer at the mosque echoes throughout Gao, a predominantly Muslim town in northern Mali. At that same moment, a small church bell nearby also rings. It's a reminder that even in a town where just four years ago strict Islamic law was in force, some Christians have returned to rebuild their congregation, which fled the jihadist occupation.

This is the first Christmas they've been able to hold a service at the Catholic church, which was torched in 2012 by the Al-Qaeda-linked militants who took over the major towns in northern Mali that year. Yet even as they celebrate, the fear of persecution is still widespread. Police stood by to protect the church as worshippers met Saturday and they returned again yesterday for the morning service. In a sign of the dangers that lurk, a Swiss aid worker was abducted from her home by armed men on Christmas Eve.

The turnout this year at the Saturday night service was only several dozen people. In total, there are now about 125 to 150 Christians who have come back - though that is still only half of what the population once was, says Philippe Omore, president of the Christian community in Gao.

"The congregants have been fearful - they don't want to come to the church yet so we must raise awareness," he said. Inside the church on Christmas Eve, a small choir of 10 people sang hymns in front of a tree lit up with colorful lights that was set next to a small nativity scene. After the two-hour service, church members met in a dining

area on site to share sandwiches and salad.

Many of the extremists who ruled Gao in 2012 came from outside the country - Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Mauritania - and they enforced their strict interpretation of Islam upon the local community, where tolerance had long reigned between Muslims and Christians.

While the West African country is overwhelmingly Muslim, some Malians converted to Christianity during colonialism when the country was ruled by predominantly Catholic France.

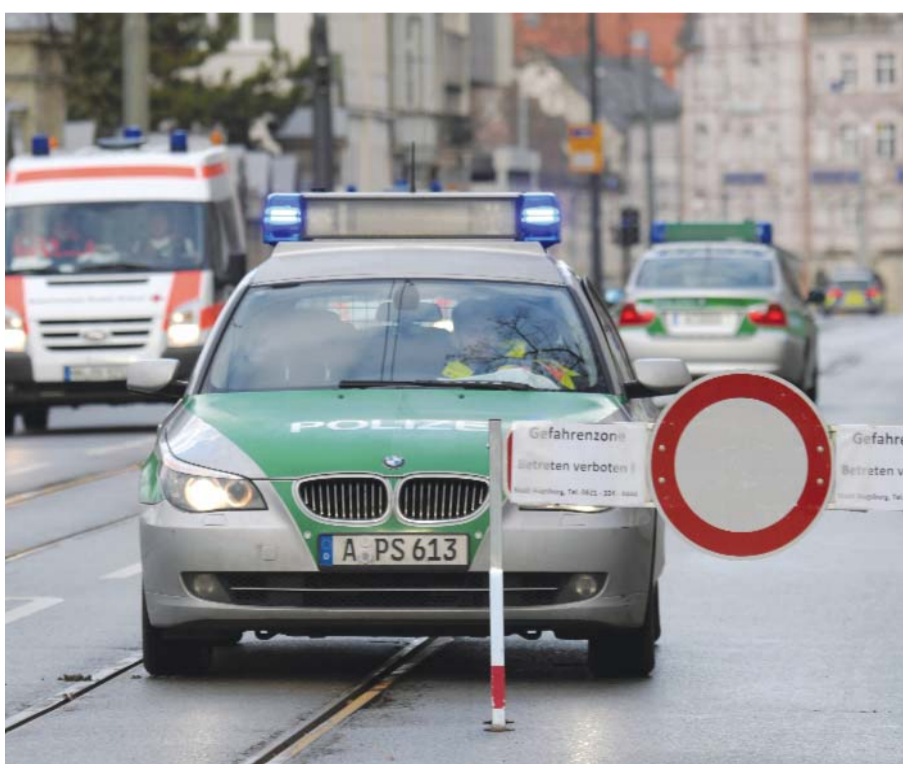
French forces ultimately liberated the town in 2013 but Christians who had fled to central and southern Mali waited about a year to make sure the peace would hold before they returned. Next they had to rebuild the church that had been destroyed by jihadists.

"Christmas brings us joy in spite of the security threats," said the Rev. Afeku Anthero, a priest from Uganda. "On this night, God sent us his son as the prince of peace. Peace should reign in our hearts, in the Christian community and in our country. This is especially important for Mali where we need peace and where it has been difficult to reconcile and unite us."

Still, Omore says life remains tenuous for the Christians who have returned, and peace is a dream at this point. "Before the crisis, we could go walk on the sand dunes outside of Gao but today because of the security situation that is no longer possible. We miss it, and we want to live as we did in the past - free and without fear for our safety." — AP



GAO, Mali: Catholic faithfuls sing during a mass to celebrate Christmas at Philippe Amore Catholic Church in Gao, Mali. — AP



AUGSBURG: Police cars and an ambulance are seen beside a road block on an empty street in Augsburg, southern Germany, during a mass evacuation yesterday. — AFP

GERMAN TOWN EVACUATES ON XMAS FOR WWII BOMB

FRANKFURT: Thousands of people in the German town of Augsburg have left Christmas presents and decorations behind after being forced to evacuate while authorities disarm a World War II bomb.

The bomb was uncovered last week during construction work in the city's historic central district. Police say Christmas Day is the best time to defuse it because there is less traffic and it is more likely people can

stay with relatives. Police vans with loudspeakers urged procrastinators to leave ahead of a 10 a.m. deadline. Some 32,000 homes with 54,000 residents are in the evacuation zone. Christmas morning services at the medieval cathedral with its famed boys' choir were moved. Police aren't making any promises about how long it will take. Schools and sports facilities have been opened as shelters. — AP

S KOREA PROSECUTOR MIGHT RAID PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE

SEOUL: South Korea's special prosecutor investigating a corruption scandal involving President Park Geun-hye said yesterday it was considering whether to raid the presidential offices but if it did so, it had no choice but to do so publicly.

Special prosecutors are investigating allegations that Park colluded with a friend, Choi Soon-sil, and aides to pressure big companies to contribute to foundations set up to back her policy initiatives. In case of raiding the Blue House ... to carry out that, there is no choice but to be make it public," Lee Kyuchul, a spokesman for the special prosecutor's team told reporters in a briefing, referring to the presidential offices. "We are still considering whether the raid is needed and if needed what the raid should be aimed at."

Park, whose father ruled the country for 18 years after seizing power in a 1961 coup, was indicted in a Dec. 9 parliamentary vote. She has denied wrongdoing but apologized for carelessness in her ties with Choi, who is facing her own trial. Prosecutors have said previously they needed access to the presidential offices as part of their investigation. The office has denied access.

Park has immunity from prosecution as long as she is in office even though her powers have been suspended since parliament voted to impeach her. A large crowd of protesters, including about 200 young people dressed as Santa Claus, took to the streets of central Seoul on Saturday for the ninth weekend in a row to demand the immediate resignation of the president. — Reuters

2016 LEAVES WORLD 'AWASH WITH FEAR': ANGLICAN LEADER

LONDON: The leader of the world's Anglicans said 2016 had left humanity "more awash with fear and division", in his Christmas Day sermon yesterday.

Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, said the world's values were "in the wrong place", with economic, technological and communications progress failing to deliver justice.

He said the anxiety of modern times showed that trusting and believing in materialism had not worked. Welby, the spiritual leader of the Church of England and the global communion of 85 million Anglican Christians, delivered his Christmas sermon at the mother church of Canterbury Cathedral in southeast England. "The end of 2016 finds us all in a

different kind of world; one less predictable and certain, which feels more awash with fear and division," he said. "Uncertainty in the midst of much, but far from universal, prosperity is a sign of our trust being in the wrong things."

"That uncertainty of our world, our feelings, tells us that our values are in the wrong place," he said. "Economic progress, technological progress, communication progress hasn't resulted in economic justice. It hasn't delivered glory for us." He spoke about the fate of Aleppo in the Syrian civil war, killings in South Sudan and the Berlin market terror attack, and how globalization was now more associated with insecure employment rather than a new golden era. — AFP

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POWERFUL TYPHOON SLAMS INTO PHILIPPINES, SPOILING XMAS

MANILA: A powerful typhoon slammed into the eastern Philippines on Christmas Day, spoiling the biggest holiday in Asia's largest Catholic nation, where a governor offered roast pig to entice villagers to abandon family celebrations for emergency shelters. Typhoon Nock-Ten was packing maximum sustained winds of 185 kilometers (114 miles) per hour and gusts of up to 255 kph (158 mph) when it made landfall

Sunday night in Catanduanes province, where fierce winds and rain knocked down the island's power and communications, weather forecasters said.

There were no immediate reports of injuries. After Catanduanes, the typhoon, which had a 500-kilometer (300-mile) rain band, was expected to barge westward across the mountainous southern plank of the Philippines' main island of Luzon and

blow close to the capital, Manila, on Monday, before starting to exit toward the South China Sea. Nock-Ten may weaken after hitting the Sierra Madre mountain range in southern Luzon.

Heavy rainfall, destructive winds and battering waves were threatening heavily populated rural and urban regions, where the Philippine weather agency raised typhoon warnings, stranding thousands of people in ports as airlines canceled flights and ferries were prevented from sailing. Officials warned of storm surges in coastal villages, flash floods and landslides, and asked villagers to evacuate to safer grounds. Christmas is the biggest holiday in the Philippines, which has Asia's largest Roman Catholic population, making it difficult for officials to get people's attention to heed the warnings. With many refusing to leave high-risk communities, some officials said they decided to carry out forced evacuations.

In the past 65 years, seven typhoons have struck the Philippines on Christmas Day, according to the government's weather agency. Gov. Miguel Villafuerte of Camarines Sur province, which is in the typhoon's expected path, offered roast pig, a popular Christmas delicacy locally called "lechon," in evacuation centers to entice villagers to move to emergency shelters.

"I know it's Christmas ... but this is a legit typhoon," Villafuerte tweeted on Christmas Eve.

"Please evacuate, we'll be having lechon

at evacuation centers." Camarines Sur officials had targeted about 50,000 families - some 250,000 people - for evacuation by Saturday night, but the number of those who responded was initially far below expectations.

In Catanduanes province, Vice Gov. Shirley Abundo said she ordered a forced evacuation of villagers, saying some "are really hard-headed, they don't want to leave their houses because it's Christmas."

"We need to do this by force, we need to evacuate them now," she told ABS-CBN television. The Department of Social Welfare and Development, which helps oversee government response during disasters, said only about 4,200 people were reported to have moved to six evacuation centers by Sunday morning in the Bicol region, which includes Camarines Sur. "It's difficult to force celebrations when our lives will be put at risk. Please prioritize safety and take heed of warnings by local government units," welfare official Felino Castro told The Associated Press by phone.

Evacuation

Food, water and other emergency supplies had been pre-positioned in areas expected to be lashed by the typhoon, Castro said. His department was to activate an emergency cluster comprising the military, police, coast guard and other agencies Sunday to oversee disaster-response plans.

In the farming town of Guinobatan in Albay province, which is near Nock-Ten's

path, more than 17,600 villagers moved to evacuation shelters without hesitation because of fears of a repeat of a typhoon several years ago that unleashed smoldering mudflows from nearby Mayon Volcano, leaving hundreds dead, the town's mayor, Ann Ongjoco, said by phone. Josefina Nao, who evacuated to a Guinobatan school with her six children, grandchildren and siblings, said that yesterday was one of her bleakest Christmas holidays, but that poor people like her did not have much choice. She said it was tough to replicate Christmas away from home, adding that town officials tried to cheer evacuees by distributing holiday food such as spaghetti.

"We live in a flood-prone community near a river where many had been swept to their deaths by floodwaters during typhoons," the 60-year-old Nao said by phone from a classroom-turned-storm shelter that was void of any Christmas lights or decorations. "I wish it was a merrier Christmas, but this is our best option because we'll all be safe together."

About 20 typhoons and storms, mostly from the Pacific, lash the Philippines each year, making the poor country of more than 100 million people one of the most disaster-prone in the world. In November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan struck the central Philippines with ferocious power, leaving more than 7,300 people dead or missing and displacing more than 5 million after leveling entire villages despite days of dire warnings by government officials. —AP



MANILA: Residents are assisted into a truck after the local government implemented preemptive evacuations at Barangay Matnog, Daraga, Albay province yesterday due to the approaching typhoon Nock-Ten. —AFP

CHINA'S 1ST AIRCRAFT CARRIER HEADS FOR WESTERN PACIFIC

EXERCISE COULD IGNITE RENEWED TENSION OVER SELF-RULED TAIWAN

BEIJING: China's first aircraft carrier will carry out drills in the Western Pacific, in what the navy called part of routine exercises, amid renewed tension over self-ruled Taiwan that Beijing claims as its own. The navy said in a statement late yesterday the Liaoning, along with its accompanying fleet, would conduct "exercises far out at sea," without giving details of the location or route, in what is likely its first blue-water drill far from home waters. State media

time of tension between China and the United States, the Pacific Ocean's dominant power, over the sensitive issue of Taiwan, a self-governing island that Beijing claims as its territory.

President-elect Donald Trump took a congratulatory Dec 2 phone call with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, marking the first time an American president or president-elect has publicly spoken to Taiwan's leader since Washington

Bohai Sea in eastern China and, on Friday, the military announced it had carried out a series of fighter launch, recovery and air combat exercises slightly farther afield in the Yellow Sea.

"This exercise is being carried out in accordance with annual exercise plans," the navy said in a statement also carried on the front page of the official People's Liberation Army Daily. Taiwan's defence ministry said yesterday it had been

China Sea. The navy showed pictures on its official microblog from the drills in the East China Sea, including J-15 carrier-borne fighter jets launching into the sky, overseen by navy chief Wu Shengli.

They conducted aerial refuelling and air combat exercises on Thursday, the navy said. China's growing military presence in the disputed South China Sea in particular has fuelled concern, with the United States criticizing its militarization of maritime outposts and holding regular air and naval patrols to ensure freedom of navigation.

The Western Pacific exercise comes amid new tension over self-ruled Taiwan, following US President-elect Donald Trump's telephone call with the island's president that upset Beijing. China's air force conducted long-range drills this month above the East and South China Seas that rattled Japan and Taiwan. China said those exercises were also routine. China's Soviet-built Liaoning aircraft carrier has participated in previous military exercises, including some in the South China Sea, but China is years away from perfecting carrier operations similar to those the United States has practiced for decades.

The Japanese Defense Ministry said it spotted the Liaoning as part of a fleet of eight Chinese warships that included destroyers and frigates, in the central part of the East China Sea for the first time. It said there was no incursion into Japanese waters. China hasn't described specifically how it intends to use the Liaoning, but it is seen as helping reinforce China's increasingly assertive claims over almost all of the South China Sea, which is home to key shipping lanes, rich fishing grounds and a potential wealth of mineral resources. Five other governments claim the maritime space either in part or in whole, and the Philippines and Vietnam in particular have sought assistance from the US and others in beefing up their ability to resist China, including its construction of seven islands by piling sand atop coral reefs. —Agencies



BEIJING: A Chinese J-15 fighter jet landing on the deck of the Liaoning aircraft carrier during military drills in the Bohai Sea, off China's northeast coast. —AFP

said yesterday that it is the first time that the Liaoning, which was commissioned by the Chinese navy in 2012, has headed to "distant sea waters." The Western Pacific region stretches from China to New Zealand and encompasses countries in the Pacific, Oceania and parts of Asia.

The statement said a navy formation including the Liaoning set off Saturday for training in the Western Pacific, without elaborating on the location, as part of an annual training plan.

The exercise takes place at a

broke of its formal diplomatic relationship with Taiwan in 1979. To outrage in Beijing, Trump later suggested he could reevaluate US policy on Taiwan. China seized a US Navy underwater glider in the South China Sea on Dec. 16 in what was seen by Chinese analysts as a warning to Trump.

China said last month that its aircraft carrier, purchased as an incomplete hull from Ukraine more than a decade ago, was ready to engage in combat. The Liaoning recently completed its first live-fire exercise along with fighters in the

monitoring the drills closely as the Liaoning went through the Miyako Strait, a body of water between the Japanese islands of Miyako and Okinawa, heading into the Pacific. It said it was monitoring whether the aircraft carrier would continue into the Bashi Channel, which lies between Taiwan and the Philippines, on its return.

China's military has conducted its first ever live-fire drills using an aircraft carrier and fighters in the northeastern Bohai Sea close to the Korean peninsula this month, and has more recently been in the East



PEARL HARBOR: The USS Arizona Memorial, marking the resting place of the crewmen killed on December 7, 1941 when Japanese Naval Forces bombed Pearl Harbor, is pictured on Saturday in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. —AFP

AFTER HIROSHIMA, ABE AND OBAMA TO PAY RESPECTS AT PEARL HARBOR

HONOLULU: Seven months after President Barack Obama visited Hiroshima, the city where World War II all but ended, his Japanese counterpart is paying his respects at the site where the brutal conflict began. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is traveling to Pearl Harbor, where he and Obama hope to underscore the alliance between their two nations — 75 years after the Japanese surprise attack that brought America into history's bloodiest war.

The two leaders are meeting Tuesday in Hawaiian state capital Honolulu, on the archipelago's Oahu island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. The visit has particular resonance for Obama, who was born in Hawaii and spent much of his childhood and adolescence here.

Abe and Obama will visit the wreck of the USS Arizona, where 1,177 sailors and Marines died. The ship's rusting remains, still visible, are now a memorial.

On December 7, 1941, "a date which will live in infamy," as then president Franklin D. Roosevelt said, Japan's General Isoroku Yamamoto unleashed a devastating attack on Pearl Harbor's "Battleship Row." The assault caught the Americans off guard, and the Japanese sunk or heavily damaged eight US battleships.

The two-hour offensive killed 2,403 Americans in all and injured more than 1,100 others.

An explosion in the Arizona's ammunition stocks sealed that ship's fate.

'The agony of war'

Just as when Obama visited Hiroshima, the purpose of Abe's tour is not to question decisions made three-quarters of a century ago, or to offer an apology, rather to pay homage to the victims and encourage historical reflection. "It puts a bookend in some ways to this open US-Japan con-

versation about the past and the war," said Japan expert Sheila Smith from the Council on Foreign Relations.

"It puts us on a very different pedestal on the reconciliation side of things which I think is important for the region to see." In Hiroshima in May, during a speech given to a completely silent crowd, Obama launched an impassioned plea for a world without nuclear arms and he wrote a message in the visitor book at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park.

"We have known the agony of war. Let us now find the courage, together, to spread peace, and pursue a world without nuclear weapons," he wrote.

More than 16 million Americans served in uniform from 1941 to 1945 — more than 400,000 were killed. Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima marked the beginning and end of the conflict between Japan and America, but it is impossible to compare the two. One was an attack on the heart of US naval power in the Pacific, the other an atomic bomb over a city. But each event has cemented itself in the hearts and collective memories of the people, and both places remain hallowed sites of pilgrimage to this date. The Arizona memorial attracts almost two million visitors annually, who file through a white building just above the enormous ship's wreck.

Message to Trump

The meeting takes on special significance, coming just four weeks before the swearing in of President-elect Donald Trump, who has sent mixed and sometimes contradictory messages as to the future of US-Asia ties. For Mireya Solis, an expert at the Brookings Center for East Asia Policy Studies, Obama and Abe will be sending a "strong message about the robustness of the US-Japan alliance." —AFP

INDONESIAN POLICE KILL 2 MILITANTS DURING RAID

JAKARTA: Indonesian police killed two suspected Islamist militants in a house in West Java yesterday, a police spokesman said, in the latest in a series of raids aimed at preventing planned attacks in the Muslim-majority nation. Two men had been arrested in Cibinong, in West Java, and led police to a house nearby, at the Jatiluhur dam, where two other men were found, national police spokesman Awi Setiyono said. "They were told to surrender, but they refused and tried to attack officers with machetes, so we fired warning shots. When they still approached, we shot them," Setiyono said. He earlier said that a gunbattle had occurred.

Police seized some weapons and a letter which said the group had planned an attack at an undisclosed location on New Year's Eve (Dec. 31), West Java police spokesman Yusri Yunus told Metro TV. A police bomb squad was still scanning the area for any explosives, Yunus added.

Earlier this week, Indonesian anti-terrorism police killed three suspects in a gunbattle on the outskirts of the capital Jakarta, and said they had foiled a suicide bombing planned for the end of the year.

Police have arrested dozens of suspected militants in recent months, including a cell on Batam island that planned a rocket attack on neighboring Singapore. Indonesia has foiled at least 14 attacks this year alone and made more than 150 arrests. A gun and bomb assault in the heart of Jakarta in January 2016 killed four people and was the first attack in Southeast Asia claimed by Islamic State jihadists. —Reuters



ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Christian women attend the Christmas mass at a church in Islamabad yesterday. —AP

PAKISTAN RELEASES INDIAN FISHERMEN

KARACHI: Pakistan released 220 Indian fishermen yesterday as a goodwill gesture aimed at easing tensions with its neighbor, officials said. The men were arrested more than a year ago, accused of entering Pakistani waters in an area of the Arabian Sea where the border is unclear.

India is also holding Pakistani fishermen for the same reason and Pakistan hopes its gesture - on the birthday of the nation's father, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, which coincides with Christmas Day - will be reciprocated. "We have total of 518 Indian fishermen out of which 220 are being released today as a goodwill gesture of the Pakistan government. In the next phase, 219 fisher-

men will be released on Jan. 5," Shunail Husain Shah, a police assistant superintendent, told Reuters.

Relations between the nuclear-armed neighbors have been more fraught than usual since a crackdown by Indian forces on dissent in Indian-controlled Kashmir began in July. In September militants killed 18 soldiers at an Indian army base, an attack New Delhi blamed on Pakistan.

"We appreciate Pakistan's goodwill gesture of releasing Indian fishermen, but we expect a similar reciprocal move by India, 156 Pakistani fishermen including 13 children are languishing in Indian jails," Muhammad Ali Shah, president of Pakistan Fisher Folk, a fishermen's rights body told Reuters. —Reuters

SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TEHRAN

Continued from Page 1

There are limitations. Converting Muslims is illegal, which leads authorities to crack down on Persian-language Bibles. Services must be carried out in the original language of the ethnic group. Human Rights Watch says Persian-speaking converts face persecution. But there are none of those concerns at St Joseph's Catholic Church in downtown Tehran on Christmas Eve, where it is standing-room only for the midnight mass, delivered in the Assyrian language.

Archbishop Ramzi Garmou tells AFP that Christianity in the region dates back to the second century when St

Thomas passed through on his way to India. Having once numbered in the tens of millions, the Christian community is now tiny, and Garmou says he normally sees only a few dozen for Sunday mass - not least because it's a working day in Iran and traffic is horrendous. "But I've always said that the strength of the church is not in the number of its followers but the faith they show in their daily lives," he said.

And he is grateful that Iran is such an oasis of peace in a region beset by war, and in which Christians face mounting persecution. "Thanks to God, we really live in peace and security, but our neighbors live in anguish and violence. We pray for them tonight," he said. — AFP

FURIOUS NETANYAHU SUMMONS US ENVOY

Continued from Page 1

"According to our information, we have no doubt the Obama administration initiated it (the resolution), stood behind it, coordinated the wording and demanded it be passed," Netanyahu told the cabinet in public remarks. Another official said Netanyahu had ordered that for the coming three weeks, until President-elect Donald Trump takes office, cabinet ministers refrain from travelling to or meeting officials of countries that voted in favor of the resolution.

The envoys from 10 of the 14 countries that voted for the resolution and have embassies in Israel - Britain, China, Russia, France, Egypt, Japan, Uruguay, Spain, Ukraine and New Zealand - were summoned to the Foreign Ministry. Sunday is a regular work day in Israel, but most embassies are closed, and calling in envoys on Christmas Day is highly unusual. At the weekly cabinet meeting yesterday, Netanyahu described a telephone conversation with US Secretary of State John Kerry on

Thursday, when Israel and President-elect Donald Trump successfully pressed Egypt to drop the anti-settlement resolution it had put forward. It was resubmitted a day later by New Zealand, Senegal, Venezuela and Malaysia.

"Over decades American administrations and Israeli governments disagreed about settlements, but we agreed that the Security Council was not the place to resolve this issue," Netanyahu said. "We knew that going there would make negotiations harder and drive peace farther away. As I told John Kerry on Thursday, 'Friends don't take friends to the Security Council,'" he said, switching from Hebrew to English.

Israel has pursued a policy of constructing settlements on territory it captured in a 1967 war with its Arab neighbors - the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, areas Palestinians seek for a state. Most countries view the settlement activity as illegal and an obstacle to peace. Israel disagrees, citing biblical and historical connections to the West Bank and Jerusalem as well as security interests. — Reuters

COURT UPHOLDS RESTORATION OF SHIMMARI'S...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said yesterday that he will not allow a special debate on Aleppo scheduled for tomorrow to turn into sectarian exchanges. He said that if the debate witnesses sectarian tensions, he will adjourn the session.

Separately, the legal and legislative committee yesterday said that a controversial law passed by the previous Assembly that bars people convicted in political cases from running for public office "was unconstitutional". Head of the panel MP Mohammad Al-Dallal said the committee made the decision while reviewing four proposals to amend the law to allow convicted politicians from contesting polls.

But he said the committee rejected all the amend-

ments on the basis that the law itself is unconstitutional. It has referred the issue to the concerned interior and defense committee. The committee also met a number of constitutional experts and former MPs to discuss the controversy over the election of the deputy speaker. It was decided to delay the issue for the next session.

The constitutional court yesterday ordered that ballot boxes for last month's Assembly election in the second and third constituencies be reopened and asked consultants to study them. A number of candidates who challenged the results had demanded that the court order the recounting of votes to ensure that the results are correct. The court will study petitions against results in the fourth constituency today and in the fifth district tomorrow. It deferred petitions in the first constituency until Jan 23.



Workers watch fire billowing from a fuel tank at a refinery in the Israeli northern coastal city of Haifa yesterday. — AFP

SYRIA-BOUND RUSSIA JET CRASHES

Continued from Page 1

Major-General Igor Konashenkov, a ministry spokesman, told reporters that nobody had survived. "The area of the crash site has been established. No survivors have been spotted," he said. An unnamed ministry source told Russian news agencies no life rafts had been found, while another source told the Interfax agency that the plane had not sent an SOS signal.

President Vladimir Putin told state television that Russia will observe a national day of mourning today. The plane had been on a routine flight to Russia's Hmeimim air base in western Syria, which has been used to launch air strikes in Moscow's military campaign supporting its ally President Bashar Al-Assad in the country's devastating civil war. Among the plane's 84 passengers were Russian servicemen as well as 64 members of the Alexandrov Ensemble, the army's official musical group also known as the Red Army Choir, and its conductor Valery Khalilov.

They were headed to Syria to participate in New Year celebrations at the air base. Mourners laid flowers and candles throughout the day in front of the Moscow concert hall where the Red Army Choir usually performs in the Russian capital. Transport Minister Maxim Sokolov, in charge of a state probe into the crash, said on state television that investigators were looking into a "whole spectrum" of theories on the cause of the crash. When asked if a terror attack could have been behind the crash, Sokolov said: "It is premature to speak of this." He added that the aircraft's black boxes had yet to be found.

The passengers also included nine journalists, with state-run channels Pervy Kanal, NTV and Zvezda saying they each had three staff onboard the flight. There were also eight crew members, the ministry said. A list of passengers published by the defense ministry also included Elizaveta Glinka, a doctor and charity worker who serves on the Kremlin human rights council. Mikhail Fedotov, who heads the council, said Glinka was travelling to Syria to bring medication to a university hospital in the coastal city of Latakia near the air base, agencies reported.

Assad, as well as German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim and the US Embassy in Moscow, expressed condolences over the crash. Kremlin

spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Putin was being kept updated on the search operation and was in constant contact with Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu. Konashenkov said that deputy defense minister Pavel Popov had flown to Adler along with a team tasked with clarifying the circumstances surrounding the crash.

He later added that 32 ships, 80 divers, five helicopters and drones had been dispatched to the area to take part in the search operation. Pictures from the scene showed rescue workers carrying bodies on stretchers on a pier in Sochi. The transport ministry said the bodies recovered from the crash site would be sent to Moscow for identification. According to Konashenkov, the aircraft had been in service since 1983 and had flown some 7,000 hours since. The plane last underwent repairs in December 2014 and was serviced in September, he said.

Russia's Investigative Committee said a criminal probe had been launched to determine whether violations of air transport safety regulations had led to the crash. Investigators are currently questioning the technical personnel responsible for preparing the plane for take-off, the committee said. Viktor Ozerov, head of the defense affairs committee at the upper house of Russian parliament, said the crash could have been caused by a technical malfunction or a crew error, but he believes it could not have been terrorism because the plane was operated by the military. "I totally exclude" the idea of an attack bringing down the plane, he said in remarks carried by state RIA Novosti news agency.

Tu-154 aircraft have been involved in a number of accidents in the past. In April 2010 many high-ranking Polish officials, including then president Lech Kaczynski, were killed when a Tu-154 airliner went down in thick fog while approaching Smolensk airport in western Russia.

Moscow has been conducting a bombing campaign in Syria in support of Assad since September 2015 and has taken steps to boost its presence in the country. In October, Putin approved a law ratifying Moscow's deal with Damascus to deploy its forces in the country indefinitely, firming up Russia's long-term presence in Syria. Russian warplanes have flown out of the Hmeimim base to conduct air strikes, and the base is also home to an S-400 air defense system. — Agencies



An Omani man marks his finger with ink after casting his ballot in the municipal elections at a polling station in Al-Suwayq in northeastern Oman yesterday. More than 620,000 voters were registered to take part in yesterday's polls, which will choose councilors for 11 municipalities including the capital Muscat. — AFP

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Focus

**ICAHN REGULATORY
 ROLE GIVES ACTIVIST
 INVESTORS VOICE**

US chief executives, already wrestling with a steady flow of activist investors in their board rooms, face a newly challenging landscape now that the loudest voice of the bunch will have the ear of the next president and his securities' rule makers. The advisory role granted to billionaire investor Carl Icahn by President-elect Donald Trump is a potential blow to CEOs and board directors who hoped the new Securities and Exchange Commission would favor corporate management teams over shareholder proposals that they deem too friendly to shareholders.

Icahn's appointment, announced on Wednesday, spans all regulatory matters. That includes vetting SEC candidates, a significant boost to shareholder activists who want commissioners to keep corporate governance initiatives on the front burner. While Icahn has spent four decades antagonizing CEOs and boards, the extent of his Washington influence and where he will lean on shareholder issues remains to be seen. Still, it is clear that holding the feet of executives and directors to the fire of activists is high on his list of priorities. "We don't hold our managements or boards accountable enough," he said Thursday in a CNBC interview following his appointment.

Icahn's strong support of the "universal" proxy card, a major initiative that activists feared would die in a Trump administration, may help it survive its current SEC review. In a contested shareholder vote on board membership, universal proxy cards allow investors to pick and choose among all nominees, rather than just being able to vote for an entire slate.

But Icahn has thrown cold water on other governance proposals and has yet to voice an opinion on another key initiative: the SEC's adoption of a rule requiring public companies to disclose the ratio of the compensation of their CEOs to the median employee compensation. "The question I have is, which Carl Icahn do we see in this role? Icahn the activist, or Icahn the businessman, advocating for the business community?" said Keith Gottfried, a Washington D.C.-based partner at law firm Morgan Lewis, who specializes in activist defense. "We will probably see more of the latter."

Icahn's support of universal proxy cards pits him against the US Chamber of Commerce, a powerful business lobbying arm, and Republican SEC commissioner Michael Piwowar, who believes the rule favors shareholder activists at the expense of other investors. SEC Chair Mary Jo White outlined the rules in October, but she has said she will leave her post at the end of the Obama administration. With the SEC accepting comments through Jan 9, that leaves only a small window for her to act before Trump takes office on Jan. 20, a prospect most see as slim.

"With Icahn playing a role in selecting commissioners, it's very possible universal proxy cards will remain on the agenda," said Bruce Goldfarb, CEO of Okapi Partners, a proxy advisory firm that represents activists and companies. Icahn may also have influence over the pay ratio rule, which was adopted by securities regulators in 2015 and set to begin next year. Republicans and the Chamber of Commerce have fought the rule, which is seen as being too favorable to shareholder activists who focus on keeping executive pay in check. Icahn has not indicated his view.

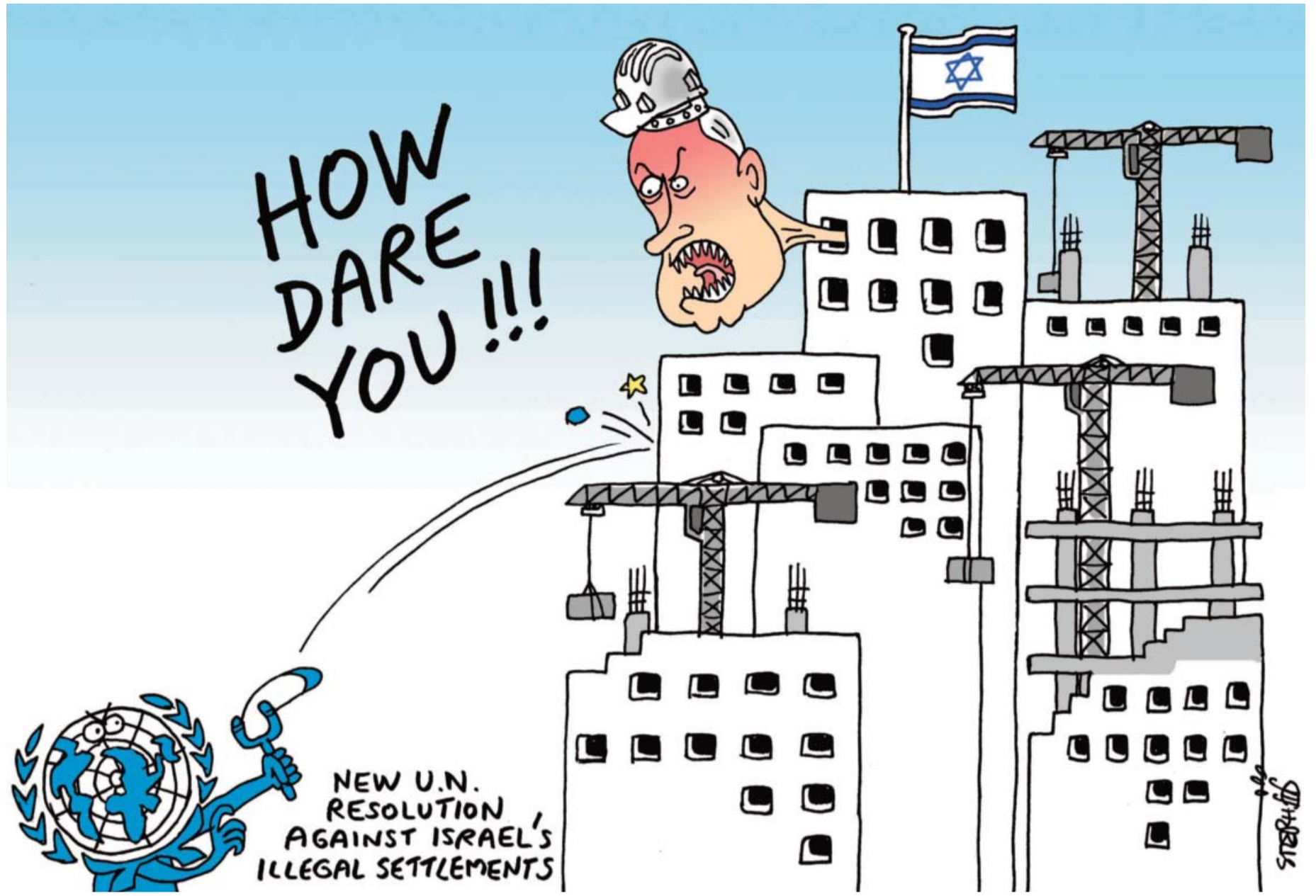
Activist Agenda

Shareholder activists have launched 670 campaigns against U.S. companies since 2015 and have placed 213 directors on boards of companies with a market value of \$500 million or more, data from Lazard show. Icahn, known for inviting CEOs he's targeting to his home and offering them a martini, has placed nine directors on boards this year alone. Icahn's new role is "probably going to be mildly bad news" for most CEOs, said Michael Levin, an activist investor and director on the board of Comarco Inc.

Levin said he does not expect Icahn to have much interest in changes related to social or environmental activism by shareholders. Once seen as a sideshow, the proposals have often drawn traction since the financial crisis. Measures calling on companies to report on sustainability averaged around 30 percent support from shareholders this year for instance, according to the Sustainable Investments Institute.

But critics have pushed back at the ballot questions, often seeing them as nonbinding distractions or unrelated to core business issues and best left for managers to decide. Paul Atkins, a transition adviser and a former SEC commissioner who is one of two leading choices to head the SEC, which regulates how questions can be put on company ballots, has been a steady critic of the trend. In a 2008 speech he referred to "the abusive use of the shareholder proposal process by some institutional investors." — Reuters

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VENEZUELA CLAIM UNLIKELY TO CONVINC US

A legal strategy switch by Venezuela's state-owned oil giant PDVSA to portray itself as a victim in a massive bribery scheme detected by the US government is unlikely to lead to compensation and may even backfire. In a case that shook the local oil industry, two prominent Venezuelan oil businessmen were arrested last year in the United States on charges of violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA). Roberto Rincon and Abraham Shiera have both pleaded guilty to bribing PDVSA officials in order to win juicy contracts and are to be sentenced in June. The case is part of a wider US Department of Justice (DOJ) investigation into corruption at PDVSA.

Socialist-run Venezuela originally slammed the probes as sabotage by the US government, its ideological foe. But in a turnaround, PDVSA said in July it was actually a "victim of fraud" and its procurement arm Bariven last month asked a US court to order Rincon and Shiera to compensate it for \$600 million in losses. The strategy switch is likely to flop, however, according to legal experts familiar with the case.

Under the FCPA, money collected from fines and penalties goes to the US Treasury and appeals for compensation are rare. Allegations of endemic corruption at PDVSA are likely to weigh, too, experts believe. While cash-strapped PDVSA might be motivated by potential compensation or a desire to defend itself, the motion could backfire as the company is more likely to be considered a co-conspirator. The DOJ will probably have to respond to PDVSA, potentially making new revelations

about alleged malfeasance. "It's possible this will come back to haunt PDVSA," said Mike Koehler, an FCPA expert at Southern Illinois University school of law.

Foreign officials who accept bribes are not prosecuted under the FCPA but they can be prosecuted for money-laundering, as happened to three mid-level ex-PDVSA employees in the case. "The greatest risk to the higher-ups is that the proceeds of the bribery can be traced to bank accounts and frozen," said Andrew Spalding, an assistant professor of law at University of Richmond. The DOJ is already chasing the money: \$51 million from Swiss bank accounts linked to Rincon and Shiera was transferred to the United States in October.

Legal experts say the men may also be offered reduced sentences in exchange for their cooperation in the DOJ's broader PDVSA investigation. Venezuela's Information Ministry, PDVSA, and the pair's lawyers did not respond to requests for comment. The DOJ declined to comment.

Magnates of Maracaibo

Two ex-employees of Rincon and Shiera interviewed by Reuters said the businessmen hired former PDVSA employees to help secure kickback-laden contracts for their dozens of companies that sold everything from drilling equipment to pipes. They said the kickbacks included phones or tablets for support staff and commissions of 3 to 10 percent for managers, and that Rincon and Shiera directly negotiated with higher-level executives. "At PDVSA, everyone wanted to work with Rincon," said one of the former employees. Rincon got his big

break during a 2002-2003 oil strike against late leader Hugo Chavez when Rincon's main firm Tradequip Services & Marine stayed open, winning the approval of authorities. He cultivated those relationships, brought Shiera into the fold, and they began splitting overpriced contracts, the sources said.

The two had a reputation for being jovial, dressing in luxury brands, and traveling with bodyguards, according to ex-employees, a half-dozen industry sources, and hotel staff in the oil-rich city of Maracaibo where they were originally based. The men threw corporate parties at swanky hotels in Maracaibo and the Caribbean island of Aruba, luring top Latin musicians and serving fine whiskeys, according to a video of one event, former employees and guests.

But Rincon and Shiera are "the tip of the iceberg," according to a former high-level PDVSA procurement officer, who estimated some 250 other companies receive insider information or pay PDVSA employees for their help in winning contracts. Venezuela's opposition parties say PDVSA has been crippled by financial malfeasance and blames corruption for some of Venezuela's deep economic recession. Food shortages and raging inflation have left many families skipping meals.

A congressional probe in October said \$11 billion was missing from PDVSA, factoring in this FCPA case. "A corruption mess that's this big and now they say no one knew about it? Nobody believes that," said Elias Matta, an opposition lawmaker and vice-president of the energy and oil commission. — Reuters

LAST WILD FRANKINCENSE FORESTS UNDER THREAT

In a tradition dating to Biblical times, men rise at dawn in the rugged Cal Madow mountains of Somaliland in the Horn of Africa to scale rocky outcrops in search of the prized sap of wild frankincense trees. Bracing against high winds, Musse Ismail Hassan climbs with his feet wrapped in cloth to protect against the sticky resin. With a metal scraper, he chips off bark and the tree's white sap bleeds into the salty air. "My father and grandfather were both doing this job," said Hassan, who like all around here is Muslim. "We heard that it was with Jesus" (PBUH).

When dried and burned, the sap produces a fragrant smoke which perfumes churches and mosques around the world. Frankincense, along with gold and myrrh, was brought by the Three Kings as gifts in the Gospel account of the birth of Jesus (PBUH). But now these last intact wild frankincense forests on Earth are under threat as prices have shot up in recent years with the global appetite for essential oils. Overharvesting has led to the trees dying off faster than they can replenish, putting the ancient resin trade at risk.

"(Frankincense) is something that is literally given by God to humanity, so if we don't preserve it, if we don't take care of it, if we don't look after it, we will lose that,"

said Shukri Ismail, Somaliland's minister of environment and rural development. The Cal Madow mountains, which rise from the Gulf of Aden in sheer cliff faces reaching over 8,000 feet (2,440 m), are part of Somaliland, an autonomous republic in Somalia's northwest. The frankincense trade is Somaliland's largest source of government revenue after livestock and livestock products, Ismail said.

Harvesting frankincense is risky. The trees can grow high on cliff edges, shallow roots gripping bare rock slithering with venomous snakes. Harvesters often slip and tumble down canyon walls. "Every year people either break both legs or die. Those casualties are so often," said Hassan, adding that he wished he had proper ropes and climbing gear. "It's a very dangerous job, but we don't have any alternative." Once the resin is collected, women sort the chunks by color and size. The various classes of resin are shipped to Yemen, Saudi Arabia and eventually Europe and America. Besides its use as incense, frankincense gum is distilled into oil for use in perfumes, skin lotions, medicine and chewing gum.

In the last six years, prices for raw frankincense have

shot up from around \$1 per kilogram to \$5 to \$7, said Anjanette DeCarlo, an ecologist and director of Conserve Cal Madow, an environmental group. The rise in demand is the result of stronger marketing in the essential oils industry, which labels frankincense as the "King of Essential Oils," DeCarlo said. The dwindling supply of high-quality resin, and competition between exporters, also are factors.

Now over-tapping is destroying the trees across the Cal Madow, as tappers try to extract as much sap as possible and make too many cuts per tree. They also tap the trees year-round rather than seasonally, preventing the trees from recovering. "The death rate of the adult trees is alarming," DeCarlo said. "There is potential for regeneration, but it takes about 40 years or so for these trees to become viable for tapping if it's done right."

Officials worry the ancient trade could disappear. "Frankincense that the pharaohs were using came from here, so you could imagine it has a history, it has a rich history," Ismail said. "I'm afraid that we will lose that rich history." — AP



In this Aug 6, 2016 photo, a man holds up two large tears of maydi, the large, most expensive chunks of frankincense resin, in Burao, Somaliland, a breakaway region of Somalia. — AP



LEICESTER: In this May 7, 2016, file photo, Leicester's team manager Claudio Ranieri and Leicester's Wes Morgan lift the trophy as Leicester City celebrate becoming the English Premier League soccer champions at King Power stadium in Leicester, England. Leicester City, with a payroll that was spare change compared to the Premier League's big spenders, romped to the first league title in its 132-year history, clinching with two weeks to spare. "Nobody believed we could do it," captain Morgan said, "but here we are." — AP

IN A YEAR OF STUNNERS, SPORTS GOES FOR THE RIDE

NEW YORK: In a year filled with stunners, sports certainly went along for the ride. From the Golden State Warriors squandering a 3-1 lead in the NBA Finals after a record-breaking season to little Leicester City defying insurmountable odds to capture the Premier League title, there were plenty of shocking outcomes in our arenas and stadiums.

Heck, the Chicago Cubs even won the World Series for the first time in 108 years.

Let's take a look at the games and events that left us aghast in 2016:

NOT SO GOLDEN

The Warriors started the season with a 24-game winning streak and finished 73-9, the greatest regular season in NBA history. Led by the incomparable Splash Brothers, Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson, Golden State rallied to beat Oklahoma City for the Western Conference title and was poised for its second straight championship. But, in an astounding twist against Cleveland, the Warriors became the first team ever to blow a 3-1 lead in the NBA Finals - dropping the last two games in Oakland, no less. "It will haunt me for a while," Curry said while the LeBron James-led Cavaliers celebrated the first championship in franchise history.

CUBS WIN! CUBS WIN!

The Chicago Cubs didn't win their first title, but it sure seemed like it. Baseball's lovable losers were favored to finally break through after assembling a powerhouse team that led the majors with a 103-59 record. This being the Cubbies, of course, they had to make their first title since 1908 as difficult as possible. They fell behind 3-1 to another Cleveland team, the Indians. Then, like the Cavaliers, Chicago rallied to win the last three games, including the final

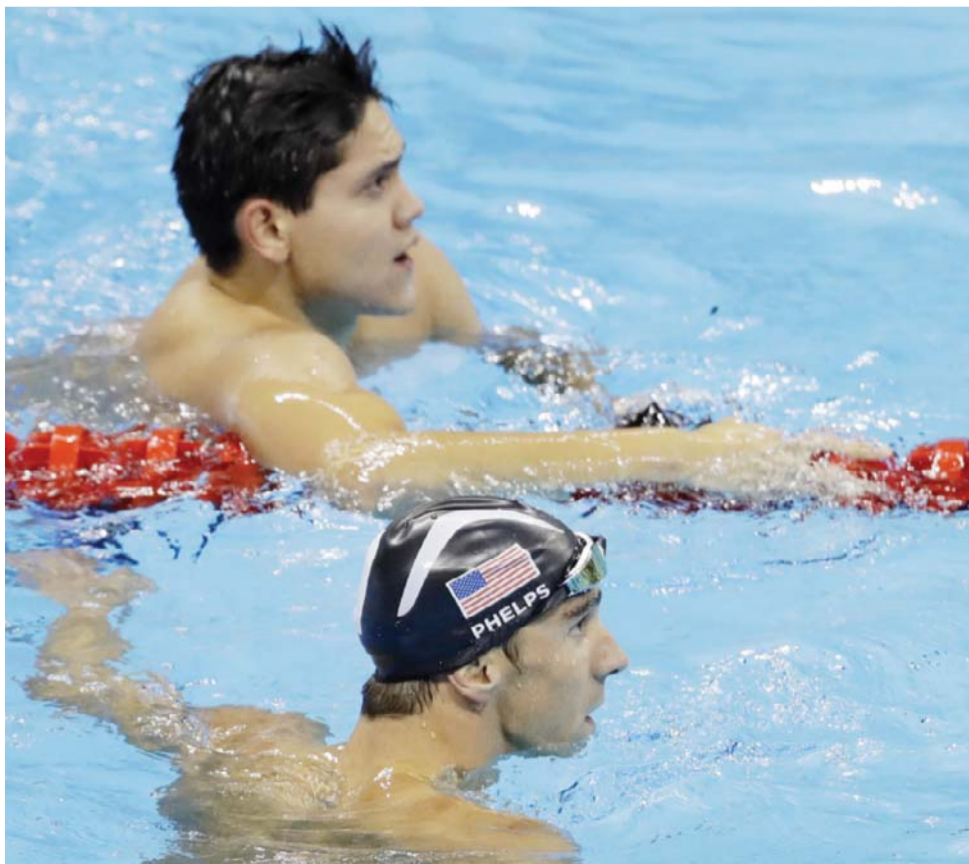
two on the road. Game 7 was a classic that all other classics will be measured by - the Cubs prevailing 8-7 in 10 riveting, rain-delayed innings after squandering a four-run lead. "We did it," first baseman Anthony Rizzo said. "I can't believe it."

FOXY CHAMPIONS

If that seemed unbelievable, check out Leicester City, perhaps the most improbable champion in the history of any major sport. The Foxes began the season as a 5,000-to-1 longshot to claim England's top soccer title, which seemed about right for a club that had been playing in the second division two years earlier and barely avoided relegation in 2015. But Leicester City, with a payroll that was spare change compared to the Premier League's big spenders, romped to the first league title in its 132-year history - clinching with two weeks to spare. "Nobody believed we could do it," captain Wes Morgan said, "but here we are."

BEATING THE G.O.A.T.

Michael Phelps was poised to close his career in a blaze of glory. Then he swam against a boyish, 21-year-old from Singapore who grew up idolizing the most decorated athlete in Olympic history. Joseph Schooling won his country's first gold medal with an upset victory in the 100-meter butterfly. Phelps finished in a three-way tie for second, giving him a silver to go along with five golds in what was again billed as his final Olympics. Phelps wasn't the only star to falter in Rio: Kerri Walsh Jennings failed to win gold in beach volleyball for the first time; Serena and Venus Williams took their first loss ever in Olympic tennis doubles; and the U.S. women's soccer team missed out on a medal of any color and, thanks to Hope Solo, came off like sore losers.



RIO DE JANEIRO: In this Aug. 12, 2016, file photo, United States' Michael Phelps, bottom, and Singapore's Joseph Schooling look at the clock at the end of the men's 100-meter butterfly swimming final at the Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Schooling won his country's first gold medal with an upset victory in the 100-meter butterfly. Phelps finished in a three-way tie for second, giving him a silver to go along with five golds in what was again billed as his final Olympics. — AP

SERENA SLIPS DOWN UNDER

The Olympic defeat wasn't even the most disappointing of the year for Serena Williams, who was knocked off in the final of the Australian Open by Germany's Angelique Kerber. After barely advancing past the opening round, the No. 7 seed took advantage of a rash of unforced errors by Williams to win 6-4, 3-6, 6-4. Williams came back to capture Wimbledon, tying Steffi Graf's record with 22 career major titles, and Kerber added her second major of the year at the US Open. There was also a huge upset in the men's game when two-time defending Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic lost in the third round to Sam Querrey, ending a 30-match winning streak in Grand Slams.

ICING THE ENGLISH

Iceland, a country of roughly 300,000 people, didn't figure to stand a chance against mighty England at the Euros, the most prestigious soccer prize outside the World Cup. But the team playing in its first major international tournament overcame an early deficit for a 2-1 victory. It was one of the humiliating defeats in the history of English football, leading to the immediate resignation of manager Roy Hodgson.

In another European soccer tournament, the Lincoln Red Imps defeated perennial Scottish champions Celtic 1-0 in a first-leg qualifying match of the Champions League. Not bad for a team from Gibraltar that featured a firefighter, a police officer and a taxi driver who had just completed their day jobs. Celtic came back to win the next leg 3-0 to eliminate the part-time pros with a 3-1 aggregate score.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

The 100th Indianapolis 500 was snatched away by Alexander Rossi, a 24-year-old American competing in the race for the first time. After the other leaders pitted for a splash of fuel, Rossi gambled that he could make it to the end. He coasted across the finish line for one of the most stunning gulps of milk in the history of the illustrious race.

NOTORIOUS NO MORE

After Ronda Rousey's defeat the previous year, Conor McGregor became the face of mixed-martial arts. The Notorious looked unbeatable and certainly talked a good game, brutally mocking anyone who got in his way. Then he faced Nate Diaz in a bid to hold UFC titles in multiple weight classes. Despite taking the fight with less than two weeks' notice, Diaz stopped the Irishman with a rear-naked choke submission.

SPIETH TAKES A BATH

After making a run at the Grand Slam in 2015, Jordan Spieth was cruising toward his second straight Masters title when he made the turn on the final day with a commanding five-stroke lead. Not so fast. The young Texan dunked two balls in the water at the par-3 12th for a quadruple bogey that handed the green jacket to England's Danny Willett.

RAIDERS TURN THE SPARTANS BLUE

Michigan State went into the NCAA men's basketball tournament as a popular pick to go all the way. The Spartans didn't even make it past their opening game. Middle Tennessee State, a No. 15 seed, shot 56 percent from the field and knocked down 11 3-pointers for a stunning 90-81 victory that

gave the Blue Raiders one of the greatest upsets in the history of the Big Dance. It fit right in with the rest of 2016.

HONORABLE MENTION: Western

Bulldogs captured their first Australian Football League title since 1954 by knocking off the top three teams in the league standings during in the postseason. —AP



MELBOURNE: In this Jan. 30, 2016, file photo, Serena Williams, of the United States, wipes the sweat from her face during her women's singles final against Angelique Kerber, of Germany, at the Australian Open tennis championships in Melbourne, Australia. The Olympic defeat wasn't even the most disappointing of the year for Williams, who was knocked off in the final of the Australian Open by Germany's Kerber. — AP



NICE: In this June 27, 2016 file photo, Iceland players celebrate winning at the end of the Euro 2016 round of 16 soccer match between England and Iceland, at the Allianz Riviera stadium in Nice, France. Iceland, a country of roughly 300,000 people, didn't figure to stand a chance against mighty England at the Euros, the most prestigious soccer prize outside the World Cup. But the team playing in its first major international tournament overcame an early deficit for a 2-1 victory. — AP



LAS VEGAS: In this March 5, 2016 file photo, Nate Diaz, top, trades punches Conor McGregor during their UFC 196 welterweight mixed martial arts match, in Las Vegas. Diaz defeated McGregor. — AP

SLINGSBY LOOKS TO ADD SYDNEY TO HOBART RACE TO HIS CAREER RESUME

SYDNEY: Australian sailor Tom Slingsby has won the America's Cup and an Olympic gold medal. Still missing from his career resume is a line honors' victory in the Sydney to Hobart race.

Slingsby will be the master tactician aboard super maxi Perpetual Loyal when it leaves Sydney today along with 88 other yachts in the annual 628-nautical mile race to Australia's island state of Tasmania. The owner and skipper of Perpetual Loyal is Anthony Bell, who has made it a priority to raise money for hospital equipment for sick children. Another priority will be to finish the race

after a few years where weather conditions forced the yacht to retire.

"To win the Hobart you've got to get to Hobart, and we're very focused on our leanings around that," Bell told The Weekend Australian newspaper. Slingsby, who won a Laser gold medal at the 2012 London Olympics, has been part of the fund-raising effort for sick kids. "We've formed a really tight friendship and great mateship," Bell said. "Tommy's probably one of the best sailors in the world and refuses to take a cent out of Loyal. He converts his stuff into kids' medical equipment and that is

a good statement about him as a bloke."

Slingsby is also focused on finishing - and winning. "I've won an Olympic gold medal, I've won the America's Cup, the two biggest things in sailing," he said. "But I return back to Australia and I still get the question, 'Have you won the Sydney to Hobart?'"

Slingsby is now based in Bermuda as he prepares to defend the America's Cup title he won as strategist with Oracle Team USA in 2013.

Skippers in this year's Sydney to Hobart were told to expect favorable conditions over the opening day of sail-

ing: A fast start on Sydney Harbour in a brisk north-easterly, and that the breeze will strengthen throughout the afternoon as the boats run down the New South Wales state coast.

That translates to spinnaker sailing in 20 to 25 knots, allowing the super-maxis to pull away from the rest of the fleet and potentially challenge the race record. Earlier in the week, veteran Spanish sailor Juan Vila, navigator aboard race record holder Wild Oats XI, said the winner could finish in around 38 or 39 hours. That would have Wild Oats XI cross the line at Constitution Dock in

Hobart in about 1 day, 14 or 15 hours, well inside Wild Oats' record of 1 day, 18 hours, 23 minutes, 12 seconds in 2012.

There are 12 international yachts, including skipper Jonas Granden on Swedish entry Matador, Richard Stain on Britain's Samskara, Kwanymin Rho aboard Sonic from South Korea and Joseph Mele, skipper of the US entry Triple Lindy. Last year, American yacht Comanche won the storm-wracked race in 2 days, 8 hours, 58 minutes, 30 seconds. It was the first American winner since 1998 and the first foreign winner since Sweden's Assa Abloy in 2001. — AP

PLAYERS, OWNERS, RATIFY NEW NBA DEAL

NEW YORK: NBA players and owners have ratified a new collective bargaining agreement that promises players a significant slice of the billions of dollars being generated by the league, the NBA said.

"The new Collective Bargaining Agreement was ratified this week by the NBA players and NBA Board of Governors," the league said in a statement. "The new agreement will take effect on July 1, 2017 and run through the 2023-24 season." The parties voted based on a term sheet that outlines the key deal points. Once the NBA and NBPA finish drafting and execute the complete agreement, specific details will be released.

While details have not been officially released, US media reported when the deal was tentatively agreed that players will keep between 49 and 51 percent of

basketball related income (BRI), and can expect to see \$1.5 billion more in player salaries in the first year of the new deal than they saw under the 2011 contract soon to expire.

With a nine-year, \$24 billion television deal with ESPN and Turner Sports making for the most prosperous era in the history of the NBA, the parties had reached agreement on the deal last Wednesday, one day before an opt-out deadline.

The new deal also contains an opt-out clause after the sixth year.

The cordial negotiations were a far cry from those leading to the last contract in 2011, when owners locked out players in a work stoppage that lasted more than five months and caused the 2011-12 season to be trimmed to 66 games per team. — AFP



DOHA: File photo shows AC Milan's Italian goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma attends a training session in the Qatari capital Doha. — AFP

YOUTH INFUSIONS AT AC MILAN, ATALANTA KEEP SERIE A FRESH

ROME: A couple of teenagers restoring AC Milan to prominence. A group of local players brought up through Atalanta's youth system leading the Bergamo squad to six straight wins and a nine-match unbeaten run. While Juventus is seemingly marching unopposed to a record sixth straight Serie A title, it's been the unexpected stories of Milan and Atalanta that have kept the Italian league attractive entering the holiday break.

Milan's 17-year-old goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma and 18-year-old midfielder Manuel Locatelli have helped the Rossoneri emerge from three years of mediocrity with a mix of youthful energy and enthusiasm plus exceptional skills. Locatelli's decisive goal in a 1-0 win over Juventus in October was a work of art, while Donnarumma is already drawing comparisons to Juventus and Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon. In Bergamo, Atalanta features nine homegrown players on its first team - the most in Serie A - and regularly uses them. They include 22-year-old defenders Mattia Caldara and Andrea Conti, 21-year-old striker Andrea Petagna - all members of Italy's under-21 squad - and 22-year-old midfielder Roberto Gagliardini, who was given his first call up to Italy's senior national team recently after only nine Serie A appearances.

TITLE RACE
With a 1-0 win over Roma last weekend, Juventus holds a four-point lead over the Giallorossi and a match in hand.

Napoli, last season's runner-up, trails Juve by seven points. Since Serie A was founded in 1929,

no club has won more than five straight titles. Torino won five consecutive titles from 1943-49 (a period disrupted by World War II). Inter Milan took five straight from 2006-10 and Juventus claimed a handful from 1931-35 before its current streak.

PICK OF THE PLAYERS
Roma forward Edin Dzeko is a player transformed this season. Initially a disappointment after transferring from Manchester City in August 2015, Dzeko is now displaying the same ruthlessness in front of goal as in his best seasons in the Premier League. The Bosnia and Herzegovina forward has scored 13 goals in Serie A this season - five more than he netted in 31 appearances in his debut campaign - and is second in the Serie A goalscoring charts, one behind Inter Milan forward Mauro Icardi. Dries Mertens has also been outstanding for Napoli, filling in for the departed Gonzalo Higuain and the injured Arkadiusz Milik at center forward. The Belgium international has scored eight goals in his last three matches.

EMERGING TALENT
After AC Milan goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma burst onto the scene last season, it's now the turn of teammate and fellow teenager Manuel Locatelli. Locatelli, who is already being compared to Andrea Pirlo, scored his first Serie A goal against Sassuolo and netted a spectacular winner against Juventus. They were the first two on-target Serie A shots of his career. The 18-year-old Locatelli was called up for a three-day Italy training camp last month and it surely

will not be long before he joins Donnarumma in the full squad.

SURPRISES
In terms of salaries, Atalanta ranks 15th in Serie A. On the pitch, however, it's been a different story for the provincial club, which has relied on home-grown talent to reach sixth place - only three points from the Champions League spots. Besides the locally grown players, Atalanta has thrown in a couple of talented foreigners like 20-year-old Ivory Coast midfielder Franck Kessie and Slovenia midfielder Jasmin Kurtic, who lead the team with six goals each. Gian Piero Gasperini, Atalanta's first-year coach, was hardly given a chance at Inter Milan, where he was fired after five winless matches in September, 2011. In its 109-year history, Atalanta has spent 56 seasons in Serie A - more than any other club which has never won the top division.

POINTS TO PROVE
Just beginning to rediscover its groove under new coach Stefano Pioli, Inter Milan still has a long way to go to avoid a sixth straight season out of the Champions League. Since Pioli replaced the fired Frank De Boer in November, Inter has lost only once in the league and finally looked solid in a 3-0 win over Lazio this week. Still, there remain questions over the club's management since Suning, the Chinese retail giant, took control of 70 percent of Inter in June. The Nerazzurri are in seventh place. Serie A resumes with a full slate of matches Jan. 7-8. — AP

VETERAN HOPES TO BE ON CUE IN KING GEORGE

LONDON: Doughty stayer Cue Card will endeavour to show his precociously talented novice stablemate Thistlecrack there's still life in the old legs in the King George VI Chase today.

Cue Card has two years and many top class wins under his belt over his fellow Colin Tizzard-trained star but Thistlecrack has taken to the larger obstacles-he had no peers over hurdles last season-with such élan he could even start favourite.

Such is their respective reputations that many have taken fright and only three others will go to post-the smallest field since 1984 — for the winner's prize of £119,000 (140,000euros, \$146,000).

For Cue Card though victory will put him one win away-in the blue riband The Cheltenham Gold Cup in March next year-for a million pound bonus having already won the first of the 'Triple Crown' the Betfair Lancashire Chase earlier this term. His hopes of it last season were dashed when having won the first two legs he came to grief in the Gold Cup.

Tizzard, who has been training since 1994 when he set up on the family farm in the South West of England, says he is blessed to have two such outstanding horses but the 60-year-old has a soft spot for the old warrior.

"Cue Card has always been the apple of my eye since he won the Champion Bumper in 2010," said Tizzard.

"He has been strutting his stuff in the big races for six years now. "He is still a good horse. No doubt if he arrives on his A Game he will take a lot of beating.

"He is just a happy horse." Thistlecrack for Tizzard is an entirely different type of horse and he is not overly complimentary about his looks. "He is a great brute and resembles more a hunter," said Tizzard, whose son former jockey Joe is his assistant. "However, when we get him to the races and we put a saddle on him he looks fantastic." Chief danger to spoiling a Tizzard 1-2 should be the two-time winner of the race Silviniaco Conti trained by champion trainer Paul Nicholls.

He was well-beaten by Cue Card in the Betfair but Nicholls, whose horses are in fine fettle at the moment, believes it was his fault for running him too soon after his previous outing.

"I don't expect him to beat them but he is better racing right-handed and whatever people say you have to stay to be competitive in a King George and we know he stays extra well," said Nicholls, who has given his runner a spin out hunting to keep him focussed. The other two runners are Josses Hill, who tries 3 miles (4800metres) for the first time, and Tea For Two who will be ridden by woman jockey Lizzie Kelly for her stepfather Nick Williams.

Kelly, 23, rode Tea For Two to victory in the Grade One Kauto Star Chase at Kempton last year and despite only three winners thusfar this season she says they are not without hope.

"The race itself should play into his hands," said Kelly. "There's a glimmer of hope there!" — AFP

KUWAIT'S JOCKEYS WIN MEDALS AT QATAR TOURNEY

DOHA: Kuwaiti jockeys have offered distinct performance at the QATAR International Show Jumping Championship 2016, Doha 22-24 December.

Up to 170 horsemen from 12 countries took part in the three-day tournament that wrapped up competition Saturday night.

Kuwaiti Ali Al-Kharafi ranked first and received the gold medal of the 145cm, in faultless round, recording 44.95 seconds. His countryman Rakan Al-Hassawi came fourth with 49.22 seconds. A Russian rider was third and had the bronze medal with 48.64 second, while the Saudi Abdullah Al-

Rajhi ranked fifth with 52.86 second.

In the 135cm event, Kuwait's Nora Al-Qaoud came third and received a bronze in 61.70 seconds. Qatari horsemen Said Al-Qadhi and Rashdi Al-Marri ranked first and second with 59.891 seconds, and 61.08 respectively.

Derin Demirsoy of Turkey snatched the feature event at the Qatar international show yesterday. The 22-year-old Demirsoy put in a clinical run to win the Table A, Two Rounds 140-160cm, with 44.55 seconds. Saudi Arabia's Ramzy Hamad Al-Duhaimi came second with 47.05 second. — KUNA



Rakan Al-Hassawi.



Kuwait's Nora Al-Qaoud came third and received a bronze



Kuwaiti Ali Al-Kharafi ranked first and received the gold medal.

DU PLESSIS LOOKS TO NEGATE SRI LANKAN SPIN

PORT ELIZABETH: South African captain Faf du Plessis said he hoped a grassy St George's Park pitch would negate Sri Lanka's spin threat in the first Test starting today. "There's a little more grass on the wicket than might be normal," Du Plessis said in his pre-match press conference. "That is making sure that we take their most dangerous player out of the game." Du Plessis was referring to left-arm

spinner Rangana Herath, Sri Lanka's match-winner in their only victory in 10 previous Tests in South Africa. Herath took nine wickets when Sri Lanka won in Durban in 2011/12.

But Du Plessis said it was normal for the St George's pitch to help the spinners in the latter stages of a Test match.

"The pitch looks very dry and Sri Lanka brings a different style of play to Australia

(where South Africa won a series last month). They have really good spinners so our focus has been on making sure we prepare for that."

Du Plessis said he was looking for more consistency from the South African batsmen. "As a collective batting unit, each of our top seven has had good games and got hundreds but what we are looking for is more consistency and to push that bar a

bit higher," he said. Du Plessis added that South Africa could not afford to underestimate their opponents, despite their poor record in South Africa and them having a young, largely inexperienced team.

"Young guys can pose the same threat as more experienced players, even more so sometimes because they bring something different."

But he said he expected South Africa's

pace bowlers to pose a challenge to the tourists. "There should be enough in the pitch for the seamers," he said. Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews, meanwhile, said his team had prepared well and that the young batsmen in the side had stepped up to fill the gaps left by Mahela Jayawardene, Kumar Sangakkara and Tillakaratne Dilshan, who have all retired recently. — AFP

KUWAIT SHOOTING SPORTS CLUB TO HOLD GENERAL ASSEMBLY TODAY

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Shooting Sports Club (KSSC) will hold its extraordinary general assembly at 7:00 pm today (Monday) at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex, to discuss procedures related to decree 953/2016.

Secretary General Obaid Al-Osaimi lauded the role of general assembly members who contributed and helped in the Kuwait Shooting Sport and backing the board of directors.

Al-Osaimi said the general assembly will discuss the adoption of the new status for KSSC, which agrees with the Olympic Charter and International Shooting Sport Federation laws. Al-Osaimi invited general assembly members to attend this important meeting.

Al-Osaimi lauded the major support by HH The Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH The Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah for the Shooting sport and encouraging shooters participation in international events.

AUSTRALIA KEEP MADDINSON IN UNCHANGED TEST SIDE

MELBOURNE: Rookie batsman Nic Maddinson will be given another chance to prove himself after Australia yesterday named an unchanged team for the second Test against Pakistan in Melbourne. Maddinson's place at number six for the Boxing Day showpiece was in doubt after scores of 0, 1 and 4 in his first three Test innings, following his debut against South Africa in Adelaide last month.

It meant that Zimbabwe-born all-rounder Hilton Cartwright will not make his first appearance in Monday's Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Paceman Chadd Sayers again also misses out on a Test debut, with Australia sticking with the pace trio of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Jackson Bird. Spinner Nathan Lyon rounds out the attack.

"We brought the all-rounder into the squad because the bowlers had a pretty heavy workload, but they've pulled up well and they're confident they can get through," skipper Steve Smith told reporters yesterday.

"Obviously (Nic) hasn't started the way he would have liked. "I was really proud of him in the second innings in Brisbane to come out and do the thing for the team and try and score quick runs and have a crack."

"That's what we want from our team, to have unselfish players like that, and I thought he did a good job to come out and do that."

The decision to play Maddinson and not Cartwright means the home side will again field six specialist batsmen in what will be heatwave conditions for much of the second Test.

Pakistan's spirited fourth-innings comeback at the day-night first Gabba Test meant that Starc and Hazlewood each sent down 56 overs for the match, while Bird bowled 45.

With plenty of grass on the MCG wicket, Smith indicated he may be tempted to give his bowlers first use of the drop-in pitch should he win the toss. "It's a lot greener than I've seen it in the past couple of years," Smith said.

"The grass dies pretty quickly here and the wicket goes white so we'll sum it up in the morning and see what we want to do from there."

"I think the red ball out here is going to be a lot different to the pink ball (used in the Gabba Test). "It will probably stay harder for a lot longer, so we'll be able to generate that bounce and carry that we couldn't do for long periods of time (in Brisbane)." The unchanged team signals a desire for continuity after a period of turmoil during Australia's recent 2-1 home series loss to South Africa.

Smith faced criticism for his defensive field settings on the final day in Brisbane as Pakistan got within 40 runs of what would have been a



MELBOURNE: Australian batsman David Warner bats in the nets during a practice session in Melbourne yesterday, ahead of their Boxing Day Test match against Pakistan. — AFP

famous victory after being set a world-record 490 target. Australia went on to win by 39 runs and take a one-nil lead in the three-Test series. "People are open to criticise me all they like but in the end, we won the Test match so I'm happy with that," Smith said. "You can always learn from different things."

"I'm really happy we won the Test match and

that's five wins in a row for Australia (including one-day victories over New Zealand), so we're heading in the right direction."

Australia: David Warner, Matt Renshaw, Usman Khawaja, Steve Smith (capt), Peter Handscomb, Nic Maddinson, Matthew Wade, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, Nathan Lyon, Jackson Bird. — AFP

SHELL-SHOCKED N ZEALAND TO BE AGGRESSIVE AGAINST BANGLADESH

WELLINGTON: A thrashing at the hands of Australia had been a salutary lesson for New Zealand captain Kane Williamson and his side would be far more aggressive when their one-day series starts against a confident Bangladesh team today.

Williamson's team had journeyed across the Tasman having beaten Pakistan in two tests and confident they could beat a shell-shocked Australian side who had been humiliated by South Africa and overhauled by the selectors.

Instead, Australia hammered New Zealand 3-0 with an aggressive style of play with Williamson's team failing to capitalise on the few opportunities they did have in the series.

"Hess (coach Mike Hesson) and I have spoken a bit about that series," Williamson told reporters in Christchurch on Sunday ahead of their first game against Bangladesh.

"I suppose when you go away on a tour and get beaten like we did in Aussie there's a number of things you would have liked to have done a little bit better. It's important we learn from it and become a better side going forward." Williamson said his side would be more aggressive than they were in

Australia, with the team's pace bowlers to be asked to put pressure on the Bangladesh batsmen.

The only selection issue at Hagley Oval appeared to be over the balance of the quicks, with rookie Lochie Ferguson and Matt Henry likely to be the toss-up for the third seamer role today. "With the depth in the pace department it is something we're looking at," Williamson said of the makeup of the side. "It's more the balance of the pace bowlers that we're trying to get right."

New Zealand won the last match between the two sides, at Seddon Park in the pool phase at last year's World Cup. Prior to that narrow three-wicket victory, however, they had lost their previous seven completed fixtures against Mashrafe Mortaza's side, albeit all of those games were in Bangladesh.

"At home they're extremely tough to beat," said Williamson, who was mindful Bangladesh in October had recorded their first test victory over England.

"They've turned over nearly everyone in their home conditions and are getting more experienced around the world. "They have been getting better and better every year. We will need to play our best cricket." — Reuters



MELBOURNE: Pakistan cricket captain Misbah-ul-Haq (L) chats with coach Mickey Arthur (R) during a practice session in Melbourne yesterday, ahead of their Boxing Day Test match against Australia. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Pakistan batsman Younis Khan goes through his stretching exercises during a practice session in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

MISBAH MULLS PACE CHANGE AS PAKISTAN SEEK SERIES LEVELLER

MELBOURNE: Skipper Misbah-ul-Haq hinted yesterday that Sohail Khan may come in to break up Pakistan's three-man left-arm pace attack in the second Boxing Day Test against Australia in Melbourne.

The tourists are not expected to tinker with their batting after a heroic effort which took them within 40 runs of what would have been a world record win in last week's Brisbane series-opener.

But there was speculation that Rahat Ali, who took two wickets in Brisbane, could make way for one of the right-arm pacemen—either Sohail or Imran Khan.

Pakistan's three-man left-arm pace attack was criticised at the Gabba for being one-dimensional and lacking variety. Misbah, whose team must win the Melbourne Cricket Ground Test to set up a decider in Sydney in the New Year, was giving little away team-wise but praised Sohail's work ethic.

"Sohail is working hard and he is the guy who gave us five-fors in the previous matches and that's what we look for when he plays," he told reporters on Sunday.

"He bowls the new ball very well and if he gets you two or three wickets with

the new ball it is always helpful for you. He is also good with the reverse swing."

"Obviously he knows that he needs to be good in the later spells because you have to bowl at least 20 overs a day so he is working hard. We are hoping that he will be okay." Misbah said Pakistan's bowling had been as much of a problem as their batting on recent tours of Australia. But he is hopeful for a big response from both his batsmen and bowlers at the MCG. "It's not just a challenge for the batsmen. It's a challenge for the bowlers as well," he said. "The conditions are totally different here,

especially for the Asian teams. "As a bowler you need to adjust to these conditions, otherwise you are giving away too many runs and leaking too many boundaries and not putting any sort of pressure on the opposition."

"You need to be very precise with your lines and lengths in Australia because of the true bounce and pace. That's important for us as a bowling unit."

"To get 20 wickets is always a challenge. But we know and are sure about the bowling combination that we will have tomorrow. We are clear about our strategy." Misbah said spirits were high

in the Pakistan camp after they almost pulled off an epic come-from-behind victory in Brisbane, posting a massive fourth-innings total of 450. "The guys are relaxed and confident that they can perform well here," he said. "You can see that everybody's spending a lot of time in the nets, working on the basics. They won't leave anything behind before we get into the second Test match."

"That's a good sign that we are confident but at the same time, we're focused and determined. "I'm comfortable with the position we're in at the moment as individuals and as a team." — AFP

KUWAIT TIMES NBA POWER RANKINGS



By Ahmad Jabr

KUWAIT: In addition to its usual coverage of the NBA, Kuwait Times introduces a new feature this year: the NBA Power Rankings. It is a weekly list ranking each team based on its performance during the week. The actual record for each team (put between brackets, for games played as of Sunday morning in Kuwait's local time) plays a role in the assessment process but is not the main factor for deciding each team's ranking, thus making it different from traditional league standings. In this week's edition, the Golden State Warriors and Cleveland Cavaliers lead the pack ahead of their highly anticipated finals' rematch in this year's Christmas Day specials. (For any comments or suggestions, e-mail the writer at: a.jabr@kuwaittimes.net)



1- Golden State Warriors (27 - 4) Last week: 1 - During their ongoing seven-game winning streak, the Warriors have shown the type of the offensive juggernaut it was feared to become when Kevin Durant joined the team this past offseason. Their narrow win over the Pistons on Friday brought them down to earth a little, and set up for an exciting Christmas Day clash against the Cavs.



2- Cleveland Cavaliers (22 - 5) Last week: 4 - Speaking of the defending champs, the Cavs entered Sunday's showdown riding their own wave of momentum behind their own four-game winning streak, winning nine of their last 10, and fresh off seeing LeBron James surpass Moses Malone to become eighth in the list of the NBA's career leaders for points.



3- San Antonio Spurs (24 - 6) Last week: 2 - The Spurs ended the Rockets' 10-game winning streak with a road win over Houston Tuesday, before losing to the Clippers in Los Angeles two nights later; only their second road loss this season. Strong performance outside of their home court will come especially valuable come playoffs time.



4- Toronto Raptors (21 - 8) Last week: 5 - The Raptors found some success last week behind solid play from Player-of-the-Week DeMar DeRozan, but it was fellow backcourt teammate Kyle Lowry's heroics that were instrumental in his team's last three wins; especially on Friday against Utah.



5- Houston Rockets (22 - 9) Last week: 3 - Losing to the Spurs at home and seeing their 10-game winning streak get snapped did not probably hurt as much as their loss to the Grizzlies on Friday, which gave them a glimmer of the tough defense they are surely to expect and will have to figure out a way to deal with should they intend to make a deep playoff run.



6- Los Angeles Clippers (22 - 9) Last week: 6 - The Clippers beat the Spurs on Thursday despite playing without injured forward Blake Griffin, then lost to the Mavs the following night when Chris Paul sat out for injury as well. While they hope to stay competitive as Griffin recovers from his mandatory annual long-term injury, the Clippers know for sure they are going nowhere without their star point guard.



7- Memphis Grizzlies (20 - 12) Last week: 8 - Memphis' gritty defense returned to form as of late. The Grizzlies entered Sunday's Christmas Day games ranked first in the NBA in defensive ratings, allowing their opponents to score only an average of 99.7 points so far this season. And while the same cannot be said about their offense, they had no problem outshooting the Rockets in their 115-109 victory on Friday.



8- Oklahoma City Thunder (18 - 12) Last week: 9 - Mr Triple Double is back at it again. In Oklahoma's Friday win over Boston, Russell Westbrook recorded his 14th triple-double this season and 51st in his career, while also snapping the Celtics' streak of 230 straight games without allowing a triple-double.



9- Utah Jazz (18 - 13) Last week: 7 - Injuries have left a dent on an otherwise very solid season so far for the Jazz, leaving us to only wonder where they would have been today with a healthy squad. They entered Sunday ranked eighth in offensive ratings, fourth in defensive ratings and seventh in net ratings.



10- Boston Celtics (17 - 13) Last week: 12 - The Celtics won four of their last five games, with their only loss coming at the hands of Russell Westbrook and the Thunder. Meanwhile, Isaiah Thomas has fared well in that span against elite point guards, including Westbrook, Indiana's Jeff Teague, and Memphis' Mike Conley.



11- Charlotte Hornets (17 - 13) Last week: 13 - After missing his team's loss to the Celtics on Dec 17, Kimba Walker returned to the lineup to lead the Hornets to a three-game winning streak and key victories over fellow Eastern Conference playoffs contenders in the Hawks and Bulls.



12- Milwaukee Bucks (14 - 14) Last week: 10 - Two back-to-back losses to the Cavs prevented the Bucks from having a five-game winning streak, which would have been their longest this season. They rebounded from those losses with a statement win over the Wizards behind Giannis Antetokounmpo's career-high 39 points.



13- New York Knicks (16 - 13) Last week: 14 - Following the fiasco involving Phil Jackson's controversial statements, Carmelo Anthony again found himself in the spotlight with negative comments made about him by his former coach George Karl in his latest book. Meanwhile, Derrick Rose has been very active in fueling his team's latest victories over the Pacers and Magic.



14- Chicago Bulls (14 - 15) Last week: 11 - Frustration is sinking in in the Windy City, as the Bulls scramble to find answers for their recent underwhelming performance that saw them lose five of their last six games. Matches against the Pacers (twice) and Bucks this week offer a chance for Chicago to rebound and reestablish its position in the East's playoffs race.



15- Atlanta Hawks (15 - 15) Last week: 17 - The Hawks are 2-1 since losing Dwight Howard to injury, including a key win over the Thunder. But whether they can find a way to keep winning or not before the Feb 23 trade deadline is likely going to determine if free-



agent-to-be forward Paul Millsap remains with the team or gets traded before then.

16- Indiana Pacers (15 - 16) Last week: 15 - The Pacers entered Sunday holding on to the eighth spot in the Eastern Conference standings, ahead of their matchup against ninth-place Chicago. Their up-and-down season has led star Paul George to proclaim that inconsistency has become synonymous with his team's identity.



17- Washington Wizards (13 - 16) Last week: 18 - The Wizards had a doubtful result in its early test against fellow Eastern Conference playoff contenders, losing to the Bucks and Pacers and beating the struggling Bulls last week. The test continues with matches against the Bucks and Pacers tonight and Wednesday respectively.



18- Detroit Pistons (14 - 18) Last week: 16 - During their current five-game losing streak, the Pistons allowed their opponents to score an average of 117.5, and their defensive woes have drawn the ire of outspoken coach Stan Van Gundy. They pushed the Warriors to the limit on Friday but came up short of securing a victory in the end.



19- Sacramento Kings (13 - 17) Last week: 21 - The Kings have won three straight games and six of their last 10, but most importantly, DeMarcus Cousins has been unstoppable as of late, averaging around 29 points per game in December, and even scoring 32 points (including three 3-pointers) against the Wolves' frontcourt of Karl-Anthony Towns and Gorgui Dieng on Friday.



20- Denver Nuggets (12 - 18) Last week: 20 - The Nuggets gave up an eight-point lead with less than two minutes remaining on Friday, and allowed the Hawks to go on a 9-0 run and snatch a 109-108 victory. A win there would have made Denver winners of four of their last five games.



21- Orlando Magic (14 - 18) Last week: 24 - The Magic blocked a franchise-record nine shots in the first quarter alone (11 total) in their victory over the Lakers on Friday, which is a testimony to their recently improved defense that ranked eighth in the league in the last five games.



22- Portland Trail Blazers (13 - 19) Last week: 19 - Damian Lillard played well for the Blazers over the past couple of weeks, but there is little that he could do when his team allowed their opponents to score an average of 122 (!) points in its last five games - all losses. They will need a lot of luck when they host the league's best offense, the Raptors, on Wednesday.



23- Miami Heat (20 - 21) Last week: 23 - There is no doubt that Shaquille O'Neal deserves to have his no. 32 jersey retired in Miami, as he played an extremely important role in the team's first title win and in setting up a winning culture for the franchise. In four seasons with the Heat, O'Neal averaged 19.6 points, 9.1 rebounds and 1.9 blocks per game.



24- Minnesota Timberwolves (9 - 20) Last week: 27 - With Zach LaVine's 40 points in Friday's loss against the Kings, the Timberwolves became the first team in NBA history to have three players under the age of 22 score 40 points in a game (the two others being Andrew Wiggins and Karl-Anthony Towns), per the Elias Sports Bureau.



25- New Orleans Pelicans (11 - 21) Last week: 25 - Friday's win over the Heat was more about Anthony Davis' dominant performance rather than the team's much-needed victory. Going against one of the league's best shot-blockers in Hassan Whiteside, Davis finished with 28 points on 10-17 shooting (including 2-3 from the three-point line), 22 rebounds (a career high) and four blocks.



26- Dallas Mavericks (9 - 12) Last week: 28 - Dirk Nowitzki returned for the Mavs against the Clippers on Friday after missing 14 games for injury, and his 17 points in 15 minutes provided the spark that ignited Dallas' victory over the team with the league's fifth best record.



27- Los Angeles Lakers (11 - 22) Last week: 22 - The Lakers entered the Christmas Day match against the Lakers on a four-game losing streak, and losing 12 of their last 13 games. Their main issue during that stretch has been their inability to protect double-digit leads, blowing a 19-point lead in both of their losses to the Heat and Hornets last week.



28- Phoenix Suns (9 - 21) Last week: 26 - Coach Earl Watson is still trying to figure out a way to insert Dragan Bender into the rotation, or at least give him any meaningful minutes. The lottery pick prospect played only two (garbage time) minutes in the Suns' last three games.



29- Philadelphia 76ers (7 - 22) Last week: 30 - Coach Brett Brown might want to ponder pairing Joel Embiid and Nerlens Noel together in the frontcourt as both centers mutually desire; at least since Jahliil Okafor has mostly been overshadowed playing alongside rookie standout Embiid.



30- Brooklyn Nets (7 - 22) Last week: 29 - At last teams with bad records like the 76ers and Mavs can look up to a deep NBA Draft class this upcoming offseason. The Nets, who currently share the league's worst record with Philadelphia, are most likely going to lose their lottery pick to Boston, who has the right to swap first round picks in the 2017 Draft, courtesy of the 2013 Kevin Garnett - Paul Pierce trade.



Kuwait Team seen in action at the GCC wheelchair basketball championship.—KUNA

KUWAIT WINS GCC WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

ABU DHABI: The Kuwaiti team on Saturday won the 8th GCC Wheelchair Basketball Championship in a row after beating Saudi Arabia 62-56 in the final. The winners are likely to be honored later in Abu Dhabi following the match between UAE and Bahrain for the third and fourth places. Saudi Arabia dominated today's game at the beginning, but the Kuwaiti players managed to perform well in the second half, raising their points until the end of the match.

There were a number of counterattacks made by both teams, but Kuwaitis could at the end of the match outperform the rivals.

Following the win, Shafi Al-Hajri, president of Kuwait Disabled Sport Club, extolled Kuwaiti players' performance during today's competition so as to maintain the title for the 8th year in a row. He told KUNA in a statement that the Kuwaiti players made a brilliant show, despite the difficulty of the competition and the developed levels of the Gulf teams in this tournament in particular. Today's achievement was made due to excellent team-work and experiences for the



tournament as well as technical skills of Kuwaitis, he said. Fahad Abdullah, a member of Kuwaiti administrative team, told KUNA in a statement that the players won the tournament, thanks to excellent exercises and training. He said the team was determined to snatch the championship and return home with the trophy.

For his part, Ahmad Al-Shatti, the team's assistant coach, lauded the Kuwaiti team for adherence by the directions and instructions made by

the technical and administrative teams that contributed to winning the match. The training camp held in Turkey in preparation for the game helped the team achieve its goals, he stressed. Abdul-Elah Al-Megren, head of Saudi team's delegation, congratulated the Kuwaiti team on maintaining the title, noting that his country's team was about to win the game, but failed as Kuwaitis were determined to snatch the title. Bahrain defeated Oman 54-49 today. — KUNA



PRIZED TRIO FROM SAME HIGH SCHOOL FINALLY TOGETHER AT BYU

PROVO: BYU coach Dave Rose has been waiting for this moment for four years. The program struck recruiting gold when it landed the major pieces from the 2012-13 Lone Peak High School national championship team - four-star recruits Nick Emery, Eric Mika and T.J. Haws. But then the challenges of recruiting to BYU kicked in and all three went on Mormon church missions at different times.

That left Rose waiting for this season, hoping none of them changed their minds and trying to recruit other elite players who knew the Lone Peak trio would be returning. The crew is finally in Provo together, starting for the Cougars and facing high expectations after years of anticipation. "Our patience has paid off," Rose said. "Sometimes you wonder if you made the right decisions in your recruiting process, but I'm glad we got all three of these guys. That's the whole process at BYU. You worry about it until you get them here."

Lone Peak, which is 30 minutes from the BYU campus, has won eight state titles since 2001 and won a national title in 2012-13 with Emery, Mika and Haws. The three also played AAU together and traveled the country. Emery and Haws had been playing together well before high school and the two guards committed on the same day when Emery was a junior and Haws a sophomore. Haws' older brother Tyler is BYU's career leading scorer and Emery's older brother, Jackson, is the Cougars' all-time steals leader. Mika transferred into Lone Peak and the power forward committed later.

"It was definitely a process for sure," Emery said. "We had our dreams and

aspirations of where we wanted to play, but ultimately we just wanted to play with each other. And find a good school that fits within what we do offensively." The plan may have been laid out years ago, but all parties had to be patient.

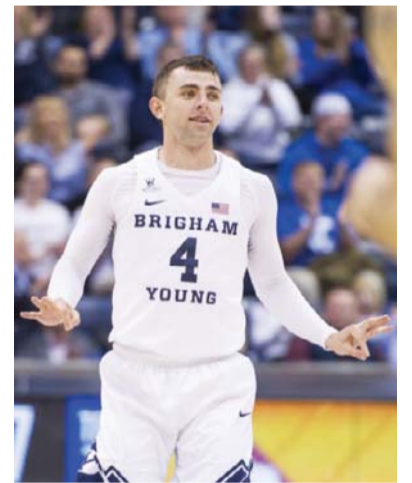
Mika was a senior on the national championship team, then averaged 11.8 points and 6.4 rebounds as a BYU freshman in 2013-14. He served a two-year mission in Spain after his freshman season and returned in late April. Mika now leads the team in scoring and rebounding. Emery served his mission in Germany straight out of high school and was All-West Coast Conference second team as a freshman last year after averaging 16.3 points per game and setting several BYU freshman records. He won three state titles in high school.

Haws won four titles at Lone Peak then immediately served his mission in France. He is averaging 12.5 points as a freshman, BYU's third-leading scorer behind Mika (20.5 points) and Emery (16.0). The three are the headliners, but Rose also hired their high school coach Quincy Lewis as an assistant last year. BYU freshman Zach Frampton was also on those Lone Peak teams, and was a senior in 2013-14 before serving a mission in Chile.

"This is an opportunity, for me, that I never really planned on," Lewis said. "It is neat to see those guys again and guys I never thought I'd really coach again. You reminisce because you're like old friends." The anticipation of having this group together wasn't just a feel-good story of high school buddies playing together. There are high expectations to win big after missing the NCAA Tournament last season. This season is off to a roller coaster start, with BYU winning four straight at the beginning then losing three of four, including an upset loss to Utah Valley. The Cougars are now 9-4.

"There's an excitement around this team from the outside, definitely, but also from within with this group of guys," Mika said. "There's an excitement, an atmosphere and culture that we're creating that I don't think there's ever been. ... It's more exciting than just any regular season because we've been waiting for it for a long time."

"With all the quote-unquote pressure there is to perform well this year, if we can just stay within ourselves and not worry about the outside and worry about performing to the level that people think we should, and put that pressure on ourselves. ... It's definitely there and we can't just completely ignore it, but if we just play hard and play like we



PROVO: In this Dec. 22, 2016 file photo, BYU guard Nick Emery (4) celebrates a 3-pointer against Cal State Bakersfield during an NCAA college basketball game in Provo, Utah. —AP



STOCKTON: In this Feb. 13, 2014 file photo, BYU's T.J. Haws (3) lays up a shot over Pacific's T.J. Wallace (2) in the first half of an NCAA college basketball game in Stockton, Calif. —AP

practice, then we'll be all right." The Cougars roster is stocked overall with newcomers, with Kyle Davis and L.J. Rose the lone seniors. Transfer Elijah Bryant was the Colonial Athletic Association Rookie of the Year in 2014-15 and Rose transferred in after stops at Baylor and Houston. Since the Lone Peak trio has played extensively with each other, the hope is that it will expedite the growth of the entire team. "In high school, Nick and I were complements of each other," Haws said. "I felt like we really made each other better, as well as Eric. Right when we got back together, it was kind of like, 'OK, it's here. Let's do this thing.'" — AP



CHICAGO: In this Dec. 17, 2016 file photo, BYU forward Eric Mika reacts after a foul during the second half of an NCAA college basketball game against Illinois in Chicago. — AP

OZIL AND ARSENAL LOOK TO BOUNCE BACK AFTER MINI-SLUMP

LONDON: Arsene Wenger knows Arsenal have no margin for error when they attempt to revive their Premier League title challenge against West Bromwich Albion today.

The visit of Tony Pulis's side to the Emirates Stadium presents the Gunners with an opportunity to bounce back after successive defeats to Everton and Manchester City that have undermined their claim to be genuine challengers this season. It wasn't simply the defeats, but the manner of the losses in games when Wenger's side led on both occasions only to be overwhelmed by their opponents' greater strength.

The performances led to accusations that, despite a promising start to the season in both the Premier League and the

Champions League, Arsenal remain flawed and incapable of pulling off the right result when it mattered most.

Bearing the brunt of that criticism was Mesut Ozil, the playmaker whose contribution had been praised during the opening months of the campaign before the Germany international produced two sub-par performances.

Wenger, though, is happy with the 28-year-old World Cup winner's contribution-although Ozil is yet to commit himself to a new contract-and insists the explanation for his team's dip lies elsewhere. "I don't give Mesut any leeway when the team doesn't have possession," Wenger told Arsenal Player.

"He has to do his job like everybody else and usually he does it well.

"His main strength is of course when we have the ball and he suffers more when we don't have it. "At City, he suffered more than others because we didn't have enough of the ball. Unfortunately, if you want to have the ball, you have to win it back.

"He is a guy who works much harder than people think and his body language goes a bit against him sometimes. "We are a team who win the ball back high up the pitch very well, which means he and Alexis Sanchez do their part of the job very well. "We have to respond. Mesut Ozil is an important player, a big player, and the big players always respond to criticism on the pitch." Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain is expected to miss out after picking up an injury at City and

Welsh international midfielder Aaron Ramsey faces a fitness test regarding a hamstring problem.

'BOBBING ALONG OKAY'

West Brom head for the Emirates Stadium with boss Tony Pulis happy with his team's form despite a 2-0 defeat to Manchester United last weekend.

Pulis's men have lost just twice in their last seven games but the Welshman is already looking at potential reinforcements in the January transfer window. "I know where we are at the moment and we're bobbing along okay," said Pulis, who could be without key midfielder James Morrison who has had a bout of flu. "What we've got to do is try to improve it this (transfer) window if we

can and keep it going and hopefully every window from that point onwards we will get those one or two quality players that we need all the time."

Pulis, who launched a bid this week for Manchester United midfielder Morgan Schneiderlin, has urged players unable to get into the starting XI at bigger clubs to consider joining the Baggies for regular football. "This is a very good club to be at, it's an opportunity to come here and play," he said. "Jonny Evans is one example of someone who couldn't get into (Manchester) United's team, now he's been talked of in terms of Arsenal and Liverpool, the press are talking about him being one of their targets. "It gives them the opportunity to play and that for me is what it's all about." — AFP

GUARDIOLA PLEASSED WITH REJUVENATED STERLING

KINGSTON UPON HULL: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola believes winger Raheem Sterling has recaptured his best form in time for the club's hectic festive programme in the Premier League.

Sterling, 22, made a superb start to the season under incoming manager Guardiola, but then the England winger endured a difficult period as he struggled to make an impression in games.

He produced a fine display last time out, though, as City came from behind to beat Arsenal 2-1 and ahead of today's trip to Hull City, Guardiola believes he looks back to his old self.

"In the last game, Raheem came back to the level he started the season," said Guardiola, whose side sit third in the table, seven points below leaders Chelsea.

"The last month and a half, he was a little bit down. But you can forget again how young he is and he needs to live a lot of experience to become more stable.

"But in general, his performance was high and we need this guy for one-against-one situations."

Sterling has found the net six times in all competitions for City this season and Guardiola has urged the former Liverpool player to get into the penalty area more often. "Sometimes I say to him, 'You need to play wide, wide, wide and stay there and make action one-against-one,'" said the former Barcelona and Bayern Munich coach.

"When he does that, it's difficult for him to get into the box, but for example the first goal, I think it was against Sunderland, he played wide like a winger, but he arrived on the penalty spot. "I think the strikers and the wingers, they have to move how they feel, especially in the last metres. "Of course, he is not our top scorer, but he has to feel how beautiful it is to score goals, how important it is for the team, but for him as well.

"He scored a beautiful goal in the last game and he gave us a lot, especially during the first month and a half. He was our key, key player in front and of course we need him."

SNODGRASS INTEGRAL

City are still without striker Sergio Agüero as he serves the final match of his four-game suspension, but midfielder Fernandinho is available after a three-match ban.

Captain Vincent Kompany (knee) and midfielders Ilkay Gundogan (knee) and Fabian Delph (groin) will miss out, while right-back Pablo Zabaleta is doubtful

with a knee problem. Hull manager Mike Phelan, who has no fresh injury concerns, thinks Scottish winger Robert Snodgrass will be integral to his side's hopes of avoiding relegation from the top flight.

The Tigers are languishing three points from safety at the foot of the table, but Snodgrass's form in front of goal has been one of the plus points of a testing campaign. "I think he's an important cog in the system. Robert's scored goals, he's played in a couple of positions and he's enjoying it," Phelan said. "From now until the end of the season I think it's important that he continues in that vein. "He's willing, he's capable and he's performed very, very well. He had an injury that question-marked whether he would recover. He has done and performed really well." Phelan is hopeful the Tigers can hang on to the Scotland international, scorer of seven goals in all competitions, when the transfer window reopens in January.

"Any football club should be looking to keep their assets and he's one of them," said the former Manchester United assistant manager. "Because of his contract situation, he's under contract, so unless someone comes in with a huge amount of money which it would take to deliver somewhere else, he's a Hull City player." — AFP

Live Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Watford v Crystal Palace	15:30
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
Arsenal v Albion	18:00
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
Chelsea v Bournemouth	18:00
beIN SPORTS 1 HD	
Leicester City v Everton	18:00
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	
Manchester v Sunderland	18:00
beIN SPORTS 3 HD	
Burnley v Middlesbrough	18:00
beIN SPORTS 9 HD	
Swansea City v West Ham	18:00
beIN SPORTS 5 HD	
Hull City v Manchester City	20:15
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	



LONDON: Chelsea's manager Antonio Conte celebrates with his players after they won the English Premier League soccer match between Crystal Palace and Chelsea at Selhurst Park stadium in London. —AP

MANAGER CONTE REVELS IN CHELSEA'S CHRISTMAS CHEER

LONDON: Antonio Conte's first few months as Chelsea manager could hardly have gone any better as his side head into the holiday period six points clear at the Premier League summit.

The west London club face Bournemouth at Stamford Bridge today seeking a 12th successive league victory, which would leave them two wins short of equalling Arsenal's all-time top-flight record.

After an inconsistent start, Conte has made his mark on the club and while he accepts the extent of Chelsea's recent success has been unexpected, he believes it is fully merited.

"If you ask me this before, I must be honest: it was a bit difficult to believe we would be top of the table at Christmas," said the Italian.

"But I think we are working very well and I'm very happy for the players. The players deserve this. "But in my experience it's important to keep this position. You can keep it only through hard work, to face every game with great concentration and focus and will to fight." The omens are good for Chelsea, who have won the Premier League title on the four occasions they have previously led the table on Christmas Day.

And it is a measure of the current optimistic mood at Stamford Bridge that Oscar's reported £60 million (\$73.7 million) departure to Shanghai SIPG should cause little concern.

Chelsea will face Bournemouth without the suspended Diego Costa and N'Golo Kante, presenting Conte with his first major selection dilemma after a period in which his team has largely picked itself.

Conte must decide whether to hand Michy Batshuayi a first Premier League start following his £33 million move from Marseille in place of Costa. The loss of Kante, meanwhile, will deprive the team of their most consistent midfielder during the recent winning run.

"For sure, Diego is an important player for us," said Conte. "But these days we are working to find the right solution in the squad. I can have different solutions to replace him. I'm working on this."

'RUNNING THROUGH BRICK WALLS'

He added: "This is a good test for us because we play this game without two players who are very important for our team.

"This gives us the possibility to play some players who, until now, haven't played a lot. Or to find another solution."

Bournemouth's impressive recent progress was brought to an abrupt halt in a 3-1 home defeat by south-coast rivals Southampton last weekend. "We've had time to reflect on Sunday's defeat as we always do," said manager Eddie Howe. "We will try and come back a better team from it. We need to do better really and it's a good challenge for us this weekend. "Kante and Costa will be missing, but I saw Cesc Fabregas come on against Crystal Palace and he was excellent, so it will be a

very difficult game regardless of who plays."

In last season's fixture, a late winner from Glenn Murray secured an unexpected victory for Howe's side, but skipper Simon Francis says they will face a very different Chelsea this time around. "In terms of personnel, they haven't changed their players too much, but they've changed their formation and seem to have a manager that they're running through brick walls for," he said. "We were in need of a big away win last season and that came at

Stamford Bridge. "That did all sorts for our season and we had some huge ones after that as well. We'll be going there to win the game. We need some points away from home."

Winger Junior Stanislas and midfielder Andrew Surman could both be in contention for the trip to the capital.

Stanislas has not played since the beginning of the month because of ankle trouble, while Surman has been sidelined since October due to a hamstring injury. — AFP

MAN UTD UPTURN LEAVES MOURINHO FEELING AT HOME

MANCHESTER: Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho says he has started to feel "really at home" at Old Trafford and believes foundations are in place to bring success back to the club.

Mourinho endured a difficult start to life in Manchester after succeeding Louis van Gaal, but the Portuguese's impact has started to be felt in recent weeks.

United head into their Boxing Day fixture against Sunderland on the back of three consecutive Premier League victories and with the Champions League places almost within reach. "What I can say is that in here I felt people with open arms. A very calm, and intelligent, board and owners. They know what they want," Mourinho said.

"They have big experience already. Very calm, very pragmatic, giving me good conditions to work and the players and people that surround me.

"I felt (aware of) some sadness because people that love football, they want to be successful and everybody tries to help to go in the same direction.

"For me it was easy to come. A difficult job, but easy now to feel at home.

"Easy to feel good in the club, easy to feel that the club wants to progress, the people want to be happy again and I felt good immediately. "So five, six months here, but really feeling at home. For me it was quite easy. "Obviously expectations are high, results up and down, we are in a position that is not the position where we want to be. "But in terms of passion for my work, passion for my new club, feeling really happy here, yes."

Mourinho is again set to start with striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic against Sunderland, the 35-year-old having taken his United tally to 16 goals with a brace in last weekend's 2-0 win at West Bromwich Albion.

He paid tribute to the endurance of the former Sweden international and his ability to cope with the rigours of English football

despite his advancing years.

MOYES RETURN

"I think 35 for him is the same as 25," Mourinho said. "He scores goals, plays well, I'm really happy for him because he will end his career on high, not in America or China. He's ending his career at the top.

"His record is good. He can improve. With no penalties, that is amazing too. Normally other guys that are top scorers have a lot of penalties. "He had one penalty in 17 matches. I couldn't be happier with him." Mourinho is still without Luke Shaw (groin), but otherwise has a full complement of defenders to choose from with Marcos Rojo, Daley Blind, Phil Jones, Chris Smalling and Eric Bailly all available.

Sunderland manager David Moyes goes back to Old Trafford in charge of a team for the first time since he was sacked by United in April 2014.

Moyes was given only 10 months to make an impact after he was chosen to replace Alex Ferguson, but has no regrets about leaving Everton to take the job.

"My time there was too short, but as I have said many times, you have to win games and I didn't win enough games," said the Scot. "I would do it again, 100 percent. Very few people are offered the job at Manchester United and I was honoured to be offered the job. "It was a great experience and one I wouldn't change because of the quality of the players and professionalism I found." Former United players Donald Love and John O'Shea could be in the Sunderland side, but Adnan Januzaj, who is on loan from Old Trafford, is not eligible to face his parent club.

"I will feel that I'm going into a difficult game and for us to get a result we will have to play really well," said Moyes. "Nevertheless we are in pretty good shape as well. We have had a pretty good run, so we want to go there and do well." — AFP



VALENCIA: File photo of former Manchester United and England defender Gary Neville and Layhoon Chan, President of Valencia poses for photographers in the Mestalla stadium after a press conference in Valencia, Spain. Chan has apologized to fans for the team's wretched year. Chan, who runs Valencia for Singapore owner Peter Lim, says '2016 has been a difficult year and I want to ask forgiveness from all of Valencia's fans for the poor season.' — AP

Sports

Kuwait's jockeys win medals at Qatar tourney



Kuwait wins GCC wheelchair basketball championship



MONDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2016

AUSTRALIA KEEP MADDINSON IN UNCHANGED TEST SIDE

Page 17



OAKLAND: Oakland Raiders running back Latavius Murray (28) runs against Indianapolis Colts cornerback Vontae Davis during the first half of an NFL football game in Oakland, Calif., Saturday. — AP

BROWNS HOLD OFF CHARGERS TO AVOID WINLESS SEASON

CLEVELAND: The Browns are winless no more. Cleveland avoided that fate Saturday by beating the San Diego Chargers 20-17 for their first victory in more than a year. San Diego's Josh Lambo missed a 45-yard field goal as time expired, giving the Browns (1-14) their first win in 377 days. When the kick sailed right, Cleveland's small crowd erupted in celebration and Browns players poured off their sideline as if they had just won the Super Bowl. The Browns avoided becoming the second team to go 0-15, and no longer have to worry about joining the 2008 Detroit Lions as the only teams to lose all 16 games. Cleveland built 10-point lead in the third quarter and hung on - defensive tackle Jamie Meder blocked a potential tying field goal with 3:49 left - to give coach Hue Jackson his first win with the Browns. The win also snapped Cleveland's 17-game losing streak dating to last season. The Chargers (5-10) lost their fourth straight and one that could sting for a while.

JAGUARS 38, TITANS 17

Blake Bortles' best game of the season helped the Jaguars end a nine-game losing streak. Bortles threw for 325 yards and a touchdown, and was on the receiving end of a 20-yard trick play that sealed the win with 5:25 remaining. Rookie Jalen Ramsey returned an interception 30 yards on the ensuing play to set off a raucous - and long-awaited - celebration in Jacksonville. Bortles and the Jaguars (3-12) played inspired football and won for the first time this season at EverBank Field. Maybe they rallied around interim coach Doug Marrone. Maybe they played for ultra-popular ex-coach Gus Bradley, who was fired six days earlier. Maybe they just wanted to avenge an embarrassing loss to the Titans (8-7) on national television in late October. It was a debacle for the Titans, who had won three in a row and needed a victory to set up an AFC South title game next week against Houston. Titans quarterback Marcus Mariota appears to be done for the season, leaving late in the third quarter with an air cast on his right ankle.

FALCONS 33, PANTHERS 16

The Falcons are back on top of the NFC South, capturing their first division title since 2012. Matt Ryan threw for 277 yards and two touchdowns, Tevin Coleman had 135 yards from scrimmage, including a pivotal 55-yard fourth-quarter TD run. The Falcons then had to wait about 3 1/2 hours to celebrate when the Saints defeated the Buccaneers to seal Atlanta's first playoff appearance in four years. The Panthers (6-9) were officially eliminated from playoff contention after making the Super Bowl last season. Ryan torched the Panthers for the second time this season. He threw for 503 yards and four TDs in Atlanta's Week 4 win over Carolina at the Georgia Dome, a victory that set the stage for the Falcons' playoff push.

SAINTS 31, BUCCANEERS 24

Mark Ingram rushed for two-touchdowns and a game-sealing first down in the final minutes. The Buccaneers (8-7) needed a win to keep pace with Green Bay (9-6) for the final NFC wild card spot, but couldn't keep up with the Saints' explosive offense. And their loss handed the NFC South to Atlanta, while giving the New York Giants a wild-card berth. Drew Brees was 23 of 34 for 299 yards and a touchdown for New Orleans (7-8), which gained 417 total yards and did not have a turnover against a with 26 takeaways - including three interceptions of Brees in the clubs' previous meeting

two weeks earlier. This time, it was New Orleans' defense producing turnovers; Jarius Bryd intercepted Jameis Winston twice. The first takeaway set up Ingram's second TD, and the second stalled a promising Bucs drive into Saints territory. Now Tampa Bay must win the season finale and hope for losses by Washington and Green Bay next week. If that happens, a complicated tie-breaker based on strength of victories will decide the final playoff spot between the Bucs and Packers.

RAIDERS 33, COLTS 25

Derek Carr threw three touchdown passes in the second quarter before leaving in the fourth quarter with an injured right leg. Carr's injury leaves a dark cloud over the best season for the Raiders (12-3) in 14 years. Oakland clinched its first playoff berth since 2002 last week and can win the AFC West and earn a first-round bye by winning next week in Denver or if Kansas City loses one of its final two games. But that is all secondary to Carr's health. The third-year quarterback has led a resurgence in Oakland with 28 TD passes and seven fourth-quarter comebacks this season. Now the Raiders may have to prepare for life with Matt McGloin at quarterback. Carr got hurt with Oakland leading 33-14 early in the fourth quarter when he was sacked by Trent Cole. Carr stayed on the ground for several minutes in pain as trainers came out to treat him. With the crowd chanting "M-V-PI! M-V-PI!" Carr limped off the field without putting any pressure on his right leg. He was then taken away on a cart. Indianapolis (7-8) will not make the playoffs.

PATRIOTS 41, JETS 3

Tom Brady passed for 214 yards and three touchdowns, and the Patriots moved a step closer to securing home-field advantage throughout the AFC playoffs. A loss or tie by the

Raiders against the Colts later Saturday would officially give New England the AFC's top seed. Malcolm Butler added two interceptions and a fumble recovery, and LeGarrette Blount had a pair of 1-yard touchdown runs. New England (13-2) took advantage of New York miscues all day, scoring on three of its first four possessions. The Jets (4-11), who have lost six of seven, had four turnovers. The only really good piece of news for the Jets came before the game, when Todd Bowles rejoined the team and coached from the sideline a day after a medical scare sent him to the hospital.

PACKERS 38, VIKINGS 25

Aaron Rodgers threw for 347 yards and four touchdowns, while Jordy Nelson shredded Minnesota's secondary for 154 yards and two scores. The Packers' fifth straight win set up a winner-take-all showdown next week with Detroit for the NFC North title, while extinguishing the Vikings' faint postseason hopes. Green Bay (9-6) built a 28-13 lead at halftime, with Rodgers accounting for all four scores. He finished 28 of 38, and shrugged off his right calf injury after scrambling for a 6-yard touchdown late in the second quarter and making a rare Lambeau Leap. Rodgers and Nelson connected for scores from 21 and 2 yards in the first half. Playing again without running back Adrian Peterson, the Vikings (7-8) had success through the air after Sam Bradford threw for 382 yards and three touchdowns, including a 71-yard touchdown pass to Adam Thielen in the second quarter. Thielen had a career-high 202 yards and two scores.

DOLPHINS 34, BILLS 31, OT

Jay Ajayi ran for 206 yards and broke loose for a 57-yarder in overtime to set up Andrew Franks' 27-yard field goal. In winning for the ninth time in 10 games, the

Dolphins (10-5) inched closer to their first playoff berth since 2008. Miami can secure the AFC's final wild-card berth as early as Sunday if Denver loses to Kansas City. Denver needs to win its final two games to make the postseason, and Baltimore is eliminated from the wild-card race and can only make the playoffs as the AFC North champion. The Bills (7-8) were eliminated from contention and extended the NFL's longest active playoff drought to 17 seasons. Buffalo's drought is tied for the fifth longest in NFL history, and is the longest since the New Orleans Saints went 20 years before qualifying for the playoffs for the first time in franchise history in 1987. Ajayi is the fourth player in NFL history to have at least three games with 200 rushing yards in a season. Earl Campbell, OJ Simpson, Tiki Barber are the others. Franks forced overtime by hitting a career-best 55-yard field goal with 6 seconds remaining.

CARDINALS 34, SEAHAWKS 31

The Arizona Cardinals continue to give the Seattle Seahawks headaches at home. This time, it will likely end up costing Seattle a first-round bye in the playoffs. Chandler Catanzaro hit a 43-yard field goal on the final play. Seattle rallied from a 31-18 deficit, scoring two touchdowns inside the final three minutes to pull even 31-31. Jimmy Graham had a 37-yard touchdown catch and Paul Richardson's 5-yard TD with 1:06 left tied it. Steven Hauschka missed the extra point that could have given Seattle the lead, but it didn't matter in the end. Arizona went 50 yards in the final minute and Catanzaro's kick was good, delivering a huge blow to Seattle's chances at the No. 2 seed in the NFC. It was the Seahawks' first home loss this season; all NFL teams have now been beaten in a home game.

REDSKINS 41, BEARS 21

Kirk Cousins threw for a touchdown and ran for two more, and the Redskins gave their fading playoff hopes a boost. DeSean Jackson added 114 yards receiving, and Washington (8-6-1) intercepted Matt Barkley five times. Eighth in the NFC behind Green Bay and Tampa Bay coming in, Washington scored 14 points in the first quarter after struggling early in recent games, and never really was threatened by the Bears (3-12). Cousins, shaky against Carolina, was 18 of 29 for 270 yards. He threw a 17-yard touchdown to Chris Thompson in the first quarter and scored on a 9-yard run in the second. He also pushed in from the 1 late in the third to make it 31-14.

49ERS 22, RAMS 21

Colin Kaepernick threw a 10-yard touchdown pass with 31 seconds remaining and scrambled for a go-ahead 2-point conversion as the 49ers overcame a 14-point deficit to end a 13-game losing streak. Kaepernick rolled to his right while looking for a receiver before tucking the ball and barreling into the end zone. That gave the 49ers a sweep in the renewal of the instate rivalry with the Rams' return to Los Angeles this season. Kaepernick threw for 257 yards, two touchdowns and one interception and rushed for a touchdown for the 49ers (2-13). Kaepernick found Rod Streater on a slant pattern to cap a 10-play, 73-yard drive to make it 21-20. Jared Goff was intercepted by Rashard Robinson with 16 seconds left as the Rams again squandered a late two-score lead for the second time in their past three home games. Goff, the No. 1 overall draft pick, has lost all six of his starts for Los Angeles (4-11). — AP

NFL results/standings

Houston 12, Cincinnati 10; New Orleans 31, Tampa Bay 24; Arizona 34, Seattle 31; San Francisco 22, Los Angeles 21; Oakland 33, Indianapolis 25; Miami 34, Buffalo 31 (OT); New England 41, NY Jets 3; Jacksonville 38, Tennessee 17; Green Bay 38, Minnesota 25; Cleveland 20, San Diego 17; Washington 41, Chicago 21; Atlanta 33, Carolina 16.

American Football Conference

	AFC East						
	W	L	T	OTL	PF	PA	PCT
New England	13	2	0	0	406	236	.867
Miami	10	5	0	0	349	345	.667
Buffalo	7	8	0	1	389	348	.467
NY Jets	4	11	0	0	245	399	.267
AFC North							
Pittsburgh	9	5	0	0	341	276	.643
Baltimore	8	6	0	0	306	263	.571
Cincinnati	5	9	1	0	298	305	.367
Cleveland	1	14	0	1	240	425	.067
AFC South							
Houston	9	6	0	0	262	304	.600
Tennessee	7	7	0	0	357	361	.533
Indianapolis	8	7	0	1	387	372	.467
Jacksonville	3	12	0	0	298	376	.200
AFC West							
Oakland	12	3	0	0	410	361	.800
Kansas City	10	4	0	0	319	274	.714
Denver	8	6	0	1	299	258	.571
San Diego	5	10	0	1	383	386	.333

National Football Conference

	NFC East						
	W	L	T	OTL	PF	PA	PCT
Dallas	12	2	0	0	366	258	.857
NY Giants	10	5	0	0	291	274	.667
Washington	8	6	1	0	386	364	.567
Philadelphia	6	9	0	1	340	318	.400
NFC North							
Detroit	9	5	0	0	301	285	.643
Green Bay	9	6	0	0	401	364	.600
Minnesota	7	8	0	1	289	297	.467
Chicago	3	12	0	0	269	361	.200
NFC South							
Atlanta	10	5	0	1	502	374	.667
Tampa Bay	8	7	0	1	337	353	.533
New Orleans	7	8	0	0	437	416	.467
Carolina	6	9	0	0	353	385	.400
NFC West							
Seattle	9	5	1	0	329	269	.633
Arizona	6	8	1	0	374	356	.433
Los Angeles	4	11	0	0	218	350	.267
San Francisco	2	13	0	1	286	455	.133

Kuwait Times 55th Anniversary Small Times BUSINESS

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NEW YORK: People carrying shopping bags along Fifth Ave. on Saturday in New York City. Last-minute shoppers hit the stores the day before Christmas. —AFP

HOLIDAY SHOPPING SEASON IS LOSING ITS STEAM

US SHOPPERS BIDDING TIME FOR HEAVY DISCOUNTING, BIG-TICKET ITEMS

NEW YORK: 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, and experts believe it'll keep dropping. Those extra percentage points would have translated into an extra \$70 billion more in buying for last year, says Michael Niemira, principal at The Retail Economist.

The season had steadily gained in importance and peaked in the early '80s, before the dominance of big discounters like Wal-Mart stalled its growth as shoppers began moving away from department stores. Still, the two-month period held its own through the mid-'90s, when online shopping for deals took hold.

"There was a mindset even before online shopping," said Niemira, whose data goes back to 1967. "But this just accelerated it." In general, many people are shopping for the holidays all year long now, mirroring the trend for back-to-school items. Heavy discounting has diluted sales, and with

big promotions throughout the year, shoppers no longer hold off making their biggest purchases until the holidays.

This year, the contentious presidential election delayed some shoppers, and with Christmas falling on a Sunday, stores are expecting a bigger number of last-minute buyers. At a busy Target store in Brick, New Jersey on Saturday morning, many shoppers seemed to be picking up small items to use as stocking stuffers. Others were hoping to find a last-minute deal.

"I'm pretty much set for Christmas, so I thought I would come down and see what I could find on sale, like maybe a TV," Terry Krefl, 38, said as she strolled through the store. She has spent about \$600 on gifts this year, taking advantage of discounts during the traditional holiday-season shopping days right after Thanksgiving, called "Black Friday" and "Cyber Monday."

"I was pretty much done with my shopping before December got rolling," Krefl said.

But a late rush isn't expected to make up the differ-

ence. "It's no longer a seasonal business," said Marshal Cohen, chief industry analyst at consumer research firm NPD Group Inc. "It's a yearlong investment for the consumer. And retailers need to change. They have to excite shoppers early in the season and later in the season - and all year long." Here's what's behind the shift: Stores now offer good deals throughout the year on products like TVs and appliances, making waiting until the end of the year less appealing. Deloitte LLP found 30 percent of shoppers planned to wait for holiday sales to buy large gifts, down from 35 percent a year ago.

"People are not holding back and waiting because they find a good price for all the things they are looking for," said Rod Sides, vice chairman of Deloitte. Christopher Rogers, a research analyst at Panjiva, which looks at imports, says he has seen a smoothing out of imports during the pre-holiday shopping season from July to November on key items like apparel, toys and furniture.

The shift complicates matters for retailers, which could

usually concentrate their efforts on capturing shoppers during the holiday window.

Heavy discounting

With fierce competition online, particularly from Amazon, stores are constantly trying to outdo each other and even undercutting themselves on prices from the previous year. Shoppers have been trained to demand deals, and won't break the habit. "The heightened competition being driven by the influence of e-commerce largely is driving prices down on popular holiday items," said Traci Gregorski, senior vice president of marketing at Market Track. "Retailers know consumers frequently compare prices on these categories online and are discounting more heavily to drive traffic and sales." One example: The average price for a TV from Oct. 1 through Tuesday was \$829.52, down from \$1,009.41 during the same time last year, according to Market Track, which tracked promoted prices across 40 major retailers on over 19,000 TVs. — AP

IRAN RIAL HITS FRESH RECORD LOW

TEHRAN: Iran's currency plummeted new lows against the dollar yesterday, continuing a six-month decline that has seen the rial lose some 19 percent of its value despite the lifting of sanctions.

The rial was trading at 41,300 to the dollar, down from 34,600 in June, widening the gap with the official government rate which remains fixed at 32,300.

The decline has quickened since the US election of Donald Trump, who has threatened to tear up the nuclear deal with world powers that removed many global sanctions in exchange for curbs to Iran's atomic program. Iran's central bank appears to have slowed its interventions without explanation.

"Before, the central bank was injecting dollars into the market to maintain the level of the rial, but it has greatly reduced its injections in recent weeks," said a currency broker in Tehran, who asked not to be named. The tightening of global sanctions in 2012 had a devastating impact on the rial-which fell to

35,000 to the dollar from around 10,000 just two years earlier.

Experts say much of the current problem lies with the refusal of global banks to return to Iran despite the end of sanctions-making it difficult to secure trade and investment deals.

"The big international banks still refuse to work with Iran, which is preventing the repatriation of petrol money," said the broker.

The banks are reluctant to engage with Iran's opaque economy, and fear they could fall foul of remaining US sanctions that were not affected by the nuclear deal. The worry now is the return of high inflation as importers are forced to pay more for consumer goods and industrial parts. That would reverse one of the few successes of President Hassan Rouhani's government, whose efforts to rebuild trade ties and improve economic management has seen inflation fall from more than 40 percent to 8.6 percent since he was elected in 2013. —AP



Abdul-Majid Al-Shatti



Waleed Al-Awadhi



Ali Al-Mousa

DISCOUNT RATE HIKE TO BOOST COMPETITIVENESS OF DINAR

KUWAIT: The recent decision by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) to raise the interest rate on the Kuwaiti dinar by a quarter percentage point to 2.50 percent from 2.25 percent, was much expected and will enhance the currency's competitiveness, and lure as a saving pot, bankers have agreed.

In separate interviews with KUNA, they ruled out any negative impact on the national economy following the rise of the discount rate on the dinar. The decision was taken after continuous monitoring by the CBK of the local economic, monetary and financial conditions, Executive Director of the CBK's Supervision Sector Waleed Al-Awadhi told KUNA.

He added that the raising of the discount rate was part of the CBK's keenness on guaranteeing the competitiveness and attraction of the dinar as a saving pot, besides further consolidating

monetary and financial stability, as well as providing the various economic sectors with sources of financing. Referring to the consuming loans, usually for a five-year term, Al-Awadhi said the interest rate on them is fixed, and not liable to be altered, even if conditions are most likely to change in the future.

The interest rates on borrowers before the raise decision took effect as one December 15, will remain unchanged, Al-Awadhi stressed. As for the long-term loans, 15 years, he pointed to the CBK's 2008 relevant decisions, which provided for a fixed interest for five years. Then, the bank has the right to review the rate so as to cope with developments of the interest rate. But the rate will see a maximum change of two percent, up or down, the CBK official said.

On his part, Board Chairman of the Commercial Bank of Kuwait Ali Al-Mousa, ruled

out any negative effect on the national economy after the discount rate decision. The decision is one of the tools of the central bank to regulate liquidity on the market, and monetary stability in general, he said. Al-Mousa pointed to the CBK's objectivity and visionary that have been recognized by international institutions. It's always been the case that raising the interest rate by a quarter percentage point does not at all affect the national economy, he noted.

Al-Mousa said that the lending system in Kuwait differs completely from that one applied in the US, for instance, where a similar step would put borrowers off, which does not happen here. Former head of the Kuwait Banking Association, and former board chairman of the Commercial Bank of Kuwait Abdul-Majid Al-Shatti said that the effect on the national economy would be very limited. — KUNA



EGYPT TARGETS 5% ECONOMIC GROWTH BY MID-2018: REPORT

GOVT PLANS TO CREATE 'REAL, PRODUCTIVE JOBS'

CAIRO: Egypt targets a five percent economic growth rate in the year to June 2018, the finance ministry said yesterday as the government seeks to revive an economy battered by political turmoil.

Egyptian authorities have battled high unemployment, inflation and a collapse in tourism income since the 2011 uprising that toppled former president Hosni Mubarak. President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, Egypt's first elected civilian president, vowed to get the economy back on track after his election the following year.

In a statement yesterday, the finance ministry said it aimed to "raise growth for 2017/2018 to five percent" and to create "real, productive jobs that help lower unemployment to 11 percent and raise citizens' incomes."

Consumers have been hit by surging price hikes since November when Cairo floated its currency and slashed fuel subsidies as part of an economic reform package linked to a \$12 billion International Monetary Fund loan.

The Egyptian pound had been pegged at 8.83 to the dollar, but has since weakened to more than 19 pounds to the dollar. Egypt's inflation rate jumped to 19.4 percent in November from 13.6 percent the previous month, according to the central bank.

Despite its woes, the government has projected 5.2 percent GDP growth in the year to June 2017. Economic output grew 4.3 percent in the year to June 2016, the ministry of planning said in November.

The finance ministry hopes to bring unemployment-

which officially stood at 12.6 percent from July to September — down to 11 percent in the year to June 2018. The ministry said it also wants to cut its budget deficit to 9.5 percent of GDP in the year to June 2018, down from 12.2 percent the previous year.

It said it hopes to cut public debt to 94 percent of GDP in the year to June 2018, with a medium-term target of 80 percent. "The government will continue to implement a structural reforms package to support productive sectors especially industry and exports, while attracting investments," the ministry said.

It said it would press ahead with implementing a value added tax and "policies to rationalise spending." — AFP



MAZAR-I-SHARIF, Balkh Province, Afghanistan: In this photograph taken on Saturday an Afghan laborer packs carrots on the outskirts of Mazar-i-Sharif. — AFP

News

in brief

Emaar appoints hospitality and leisure unit CEO

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

Egypt cancels tender to rent third LNG terminal

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

AfDB approves \$500m loan payment to Egypt

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

Qatar November inflation drops to lowest this year

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

ETISALAT AND MOBILY DISCUSS NEW ALLIANCE

DUBAI: United Arab Emirates telecommunications conglomerate Etisalat said yesterday that its management agreement with Saudi Arabian affiliate Mobily had expired and the companies were working on a new arrangement. Etisalat, which owns 27.4 percent of Mobily, helped to found the Saudi company more than a decade ago and has played a major role in its management.

But Mobily has been hit by controversy in the last couple of years after it restated 27 months of earnings to March 31, 2015, citing accounting errors due to premature booking of revenue from a promotional campaign. The restatement slashed Mobily's total profits by 3.63 billion riyals (\$968 million). "Etisalat Group and Mobily are currently working on developing a service and technical support agreement which will take into consideration Mobily's requirements for the coming period given the scale of its operations and customer base," Etisalat said yesterday. Etisalat added in a brief statement, "Etisalat Group and Mobily will continue to work closely and foster the relation between each other to enhance the shareholders' value of both companies." It did not elaborate.

In a brief statement of its own, Mobily said its management agreement with Etisalat had expired on Friday "and Mobily and Etisalat Group agreed on the non-renewal of the same". It did not give any details. Shares in Etisalat closed 0.6 percent higher on Sunday while Mobily shares were flat in late trade, underperforming a 1.5 percent rise in the Saudi stock index. "Mobily has reached a level of growth that offers it the flexibility to work independently, and maybe Mobily does not need micro-management from Etisalat anymore," said Nishit Lakhotia, head of research at Securities & Investment Co in Bahrain. "Whether this has anything to do with the crisis and credibility challenges which Mobily faced over the past few years is difficult to comment upon." He added, "For Etisalat, Saudi is a very important country, and it will remain one of their key international operations outside the UAE."

Etisalat has a substantial representation on Mobily's board and should therefore retain some influence on Mobily despite the termination of their management agreement, he added. — Reuters

BUDGET BOOSTS SAUDI, REST OF GULF SLUGGISH

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's stock market rose sharply yesterday in response to the release of the 2017 state budget, which includes an increase in government spending, while other major Gulf bourses were sluggish and Egypt retreated on profit-taking. The Saudi stock index added 1.5 percent to 7,191 points, nearing technical resistance on this year's peak of 7,235 points, hit earlier this month. Trading volume rose to its highest in over a week.

Financial analysts generally welcomed the budget as balancing the need to continue cutting Saudi Arabia's fiscal deficit with support for economic growth. But many said it would not avert a further slowdown next year from the 1.4 percent gross domestic product growth in 2016.

"We expect that the economy will continue to decelerate in 2017, dragged down by slower growth in the oil sector, while non-oil sector growth is expected to rebound but remain subdued," Jadwa Investment said in a post-budget report. National Commercial Bank predicted the economy would contract by 1.0 percent in 2017 as Saudi Arabia cut oil output in line with an OPEC agreement, and that the non-oil sector would expand only 1.2 percent.

Nevertheless, utility Saudi Electricity jumped 8.7 percent after the government said in the budget it would raise domestic fuel and electricity prices by unspecified margins later this year.

The petrochemical sector was strong, rising 2.2 percent, after the government said it would not raise gas

feedstock prices before 2019. A feedstock price hike in the 2016 budget squeezed some petrochemical producers' margins. Construction firm Abdullah Abdul Mohsin Al-Khodari and Sons gained 1.9 percent after the government pledged to raise infrastructure spending, said it had settled unpaid bills to the private sector, and promised to settle future bills within 60 days of receiving them. Construction was plagued by delays in recovering money from the government this year.

Zain Saudi rose 1.9 percent after saying it was in talks to sell its mobile transmitter towers to a consortium of TASC SAL and ACWA Holding. Rival Mobily edged down 0.2 percent after the United Arab Emirates' Etisalat, which owns 27.4 percent of Mobily, said its management agreement with Mobily had expired and the companies would negotiate a new technical alliance.

Elsewhere in the Gulf, major markets moved little and trade was thin in the absence of foreign investors during the Christmas holidays. Dubai's index edged up 0.2 percent in a broad-based rise although retail and hospitality firm Marka, which surged last week after news that its chief executive Nick Peel had resigned, fell back 3.1 percent. Abu Dhabi inched up 0.1 percent as Etisalat rose 0.6 percent. Qatar's index fell 0.3 percent.

Egypt's index dropped 1.4 percent as Orascom Telecom, the most heavily traded stock, pulled back 4.6 percent. But Arabia Cotton Ginning climbed 5.9 percent

after its board approved splitting the company into two separate entities.

HIGHLIGHTS

SAUDI ARABIA
The index rose 1.5 percent to 7,191 points.

DUBAI
The index edged up 0.2 percent to 3,525 points.

ABU DHABI
The index inched up 0.1 percent to 4,439 points.

QATAR
The index fell 0.3 percent to 10,395 points.

EGYPT
The index dropped 1.4 percent to 12,251 points.

KUWAIT
The index rose 0.4 percent to 5,700 points.

OMAN
The index edged down 0.1 percent to 5,731 points.

BAHRAIN
The index points rose 1.0 percent to 1,211 points. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.615
Indian Rupees	4.534
Pakistani Rupees	2.928
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.064
Nepali Rupees	2.836
Singapore Dollar	213.130
Hongkong Dollar	39.526
Bangladesh Taka	3.847
Philippine Peso	6.156
Thai Baht	8.591

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.895
Qatari Riyal	84.348
ani Riyal	797.557
Bahraini Dinar	815.460
UAE Dirham	83.601

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.990
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	16.755
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.233
Tunisian Dinar	133.840
Jordanian Dinar	432.470
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.046
Syrian Lira	2.188
Morocco Dirham	30.690

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	306.900
Euro	322.710
Sterling Pound	385.160
Canadian dollar	231.100
Turkish lira	881.900

Swiss Franc	300.880
Australian Dollar	225.570
US Dollar Buying	305.700

GOLD

20 Gram	234.93
10 Gram	120.38
5 Gram	61.04

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	306.550
Canadian Dolla	230.500
Sterling Pound	384.385
Euro	322.080
Swiss Frank	300.105
Bahrain Dinar	812.640
UAE Dirhams	83.855
Qatari Riyals	85.080
Saudi Riyals	82.675
Jordanian Dinar	433.540
Egyptian Pound	16.830
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.060
Indian Rupees	4.530
Pakistani Rupees	2.924
Bangladesh Taka	3.887
Philippines Peso	6.143
Cyprus pound	168.345
Japanese Yen	3.600
Syrian Pound	2.435
Nepalese Rupees	3.825
Malaysian Ringgit	69.340

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	31.240
Thai Bhat	9.535
Turkish Lira	87.725

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.371545	0.381545
Czech Korune	0.003871	0.015871
Danish Krone	0.039121	0.044121
Euro	0.316357	0.325357
Norwegian Krone	0.031270	0.036470
Romanian Leu	0.085056	0.085056
Slovakia	0.009215	0.019215
Swedish Krona	0.029340	0.034340
Swiss Franc	0.292878	0.303878
Turkish Lira	0.083732	0.094032
Australian Dollar	0.212617	0.224617
New Zealand Dollar	0.205431	0.214931
Canadian Dollar	0.221563	0.230563
Georgina Lari	0.138615	0.138615
US Dollars	0.302800	0.307200
US Dollars Mint	0.303300	0.307200
Bangladesh Taka	0.003527	0.004111
Chinese Yuan	0.042685	0.046185
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037484	0.040234
Indian Rupee	0.002785	0.005519

Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002534	0.002714
Kenyan Shilling	0.003157	0.003157
Korean Won	0.000245	0.000260
Malaysian Ringgit	0.064809	0.070809
Nepalese Rupee	0.002941	0.003111
Pakistan Rupee	0.002618	0.002908
Philippine Peso	0.006077	0.006377
Sierra Leone	0.000068	0.000074
Singapore Dollar	0.207315	0.217315
South African Rand	0.016364	0.024854
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001649	0.002229
Taiwan	0.009514	0.009694
Thai Baht	0.008222	0.008770

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.807486	0.815986
Egyptian Pound	0.013671	0.023124
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000181	0.000241
Jordanian Dinar	0.427814	0.436814
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000149	0.000249
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020232	0.044232
Nigerian Naira	0.001274	0.001909
Omani Riyal	0.790721	0.796401
Qatar Riyal	0.083486	0.084936
Saudi Riyal	0.080753	0.082053
Syrian Pound	0.001302	0.001522
Tunisian Dinar	0.129004	0.137004
Turkish Lira	0.083732	0.094032
UAE Dirhams	0.082133	0.083833
Yemeni Riyal	0.001016	0.001096

Weekly Indices Performance & their Volatility					Week:	18-Dec-16	to	22-Dec-16
Indices	Week-end Stats				Volatility			
	Current	Previous	Change	Chg (%)	Current	Previous		
KSE Price Index	5,676.22	5,668.49	7.73	0.14%	3.06%	4.08%		
MUDX	582.53	584.85	(2.32)	-0.40%	7.38%	14.05%		
KSE Weighted	376.55	378.35	(1.80)	-0.48%	6.33%	10.84%		
KSX15	882.49	889.68	(7.19)	-0.81%	8.96%	15.59%		

KSE INDICES MIXED AMID LACKLUSTER TRADING

KFH CAPITAL WEEKLY MARKET REPORT

KUWAIT: The KSE Indices witnessed a mixed week as indices edged higher week. The KSE price index closed at 5,676.22 with an increase of 0.14 percent up 7.73 points compared to the previous week. As the MUDX witnessed decrease this week of 0.40 percent to close at 582.53 for the week. While the market blue-chip index the KSX15 closed on an decrease of 7.19 points down 0.81 percent during the week to close at 882.49.

The reported weekly volumes were 734.01 million shares compared to 1,066.9 million shares in previous.

Among the major contributors, the Financial Services Sector (contributing 37.65 percent) witnessed 276.32 million shares of trading compared to 412.73 million shares in the previous week, while Real Estate Sector (contributing 36.78 percent) witnessed 225.89 million shares of trading compared to 390.51 million shares in the previous week.

The overall Market Cap witnessed an decrease this week as it stood at KD 25.99 billion down 0.5 percent on weekly basis. As for the blue-chips, National Bank of

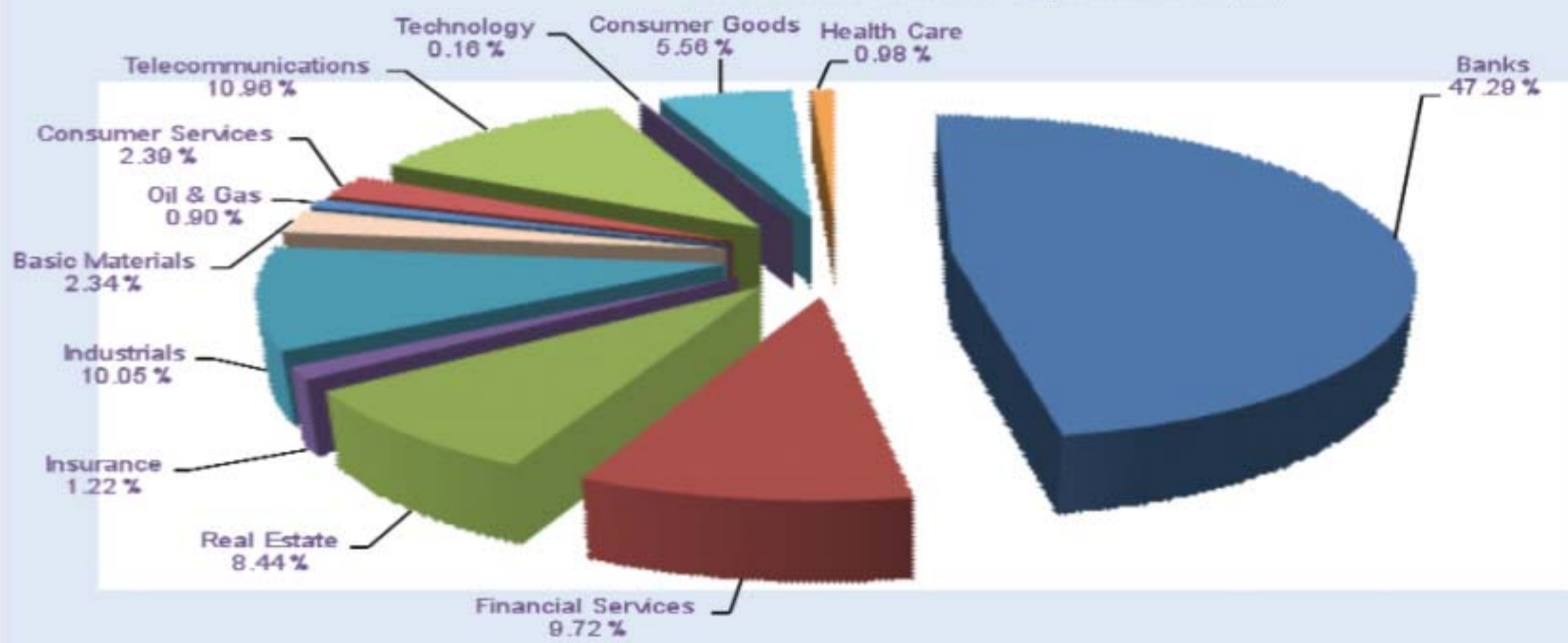
Kuwait - NBK (Mcap - KD 3.606 billion) saw its market cap decreased by 1.54 percent during the week. Furthermore, Mobile Telecommunication Co - Zain (Mcap - KD 1.79 billion) saw its market cap decreased by 1.19 percent. Also, Ahli United Bank - AUB (Mcap - KD 1.32 billion) saw its market cap decreased by 1.02 percent during the week.

On the total market breadth, of the 56 Islamic Companies, 24 advanced while 11 declined during the week. The Islamic universe market cap wit-

nessed its market cap an decrease of 0.47 percent to close at KD 6.989 billion. The universe heavy-weights Kuwait Finance House - KFH (Mcap - KD 2.77 billion) saw its market cap decrease by 1.85 percent during the week. While Boubyan Bank (Mcap - KWD 866.57 million) saw its market cap unchanged during the week.

Furthermore, Kuwait Telecommunication Co. - VIVA (Mcap- KD 459.45 million) saw its market cap unchanged during the week.

Sectorwise - Market Capitalization (%)



Most Active Stocks	Current Week ('000 Share)	Prev. Week ('000 Share)	Chng	% Total Mkt	YTD-Turnover	Price Stats- Weekly		
						Current	Prev.	Chng.
Investors Holding Group @	56,908	164,262	-65.4%	7.75%	237.7%	0.024	0.025	-4.0%
Al-Salam Group Holding Co. @	49,723	8,936	456.4%	6.77%	291.2%	0.052	0.045	16.9%
The Securities House @	35,148	9,888	255.5%	4.79%	144.5%	0.045	0.043	3.5%
Boubyan International Industries Holdin	34,213	90,886	-62.4%	4.66%	240.3%	0.025	0.022	14.0%
Gulf Petroleum Investment Co. @	33,276	21,289	56.3%	4.53%	171.5%	0.041	0.041	1.2%

Top 3 Gainers	C. Mkt Cap	Pr. Mkt Cap	Change %	% Total Mkt	Price Stats- Weekly	
					Current	Previous
Bahrain Kuwait Insurance Co.	23.95	11.30	112.00%	0.092%	0.335	0.335
Salbookh Trading Co. @	7.35	6.09	20.69%	0.028%	0.070	0.058
Kuwait Remal Real Estate Co. @	18.67	15.92	17.31%	0.072%	0.061	0.052

Top 3 Losers	C. Mkt Cap	Pr. Mkt Cap	Change %	% Total Mkt	Price Stats- Weekly	
					Current	Previous
Real Estate Trade Centers Co. @	3.70	4.44	-16.67%	0.014%	0.028	0.033
Future Communications Co. Global @	6.48	7.70	-15.79%	0.025%	0.080	0.095
MENA Real Estate Co. @	4.03	4.42	-8.89%	0.015%	0.021	0.023

@: Islamic Stock @ : Compatible Islamic Stock Market Cap is in KWD million. Market Prices are in KWD

Top KSE Islamic Stocks in terms of Market Capitalization (MC)

Stocks	Current Week	Previous Week	Chg.	% of MUDX	Weekly Volume	YTD-Gain
Kuwait Finance House @	2,778.02	2,830.43	-1.9%	39.7%	10,427,988	11.1%
Boubyan Bank @	866.57	866.57	0.0%	12.4%	1,584,288	-3.4%
Ahli United Bank @	684.29	684.29	0.0%	9.8%	1,236,549	-17.1%
Kuwait Telecommunications Co. @	459.45	459.45	0.0%	6.6%	230,026	-7.1%
GFH Financial Group B.S.C @	356.54	352.03	1.3%	5.1%	5,932,363	315.8%

Market Cap is in KWD Million and Prices are in KWD

MADAGASCAR'S COCOA, A BITTER SWEET CASH CROP

AMBANJA, Madagascar: A massive zebu cow lumbers out of the tropical forest in Ambanja in the north of Madagascar carrying a heavy cartful of cocoa pods destined to become some of the most expensive chocolate in the world.

"These red ones here, they're of the Criollo variety, the most sought-after cocoa in the world," says Cyrille Ambarahova, a local small-scale farmer. Standing in the middle of his single hectare of cocoa trees—"100 percent organic," he says—Ambarahova uses a long, hooked stick to harvest only the most mature pods.

Cocoa arrived in Madagascar in the 1900s, and today is still a low-volume export compared with the country's coffee, vanilla and shellfish

production. With an annual production of 7,000 tons, Madagascar is still a dwarf in the global cocoa market.

But the variety of the crop found on the island—the prized Criollo—has earned Madagascar a reputation for high-quality cocoa. And unlike the other luxury crop on the island, vanilla, cocoa can be harvested year-round.

In Ambanja, where tuk-tuk rickshaws easily outnumber cars, the rhythm of life is dictated by the cocoa market. The zebu's cargo was offloaded in Ambarahova's backyard, and the process of cracking the pods and extracting the beans began.

Sticky and white, it was difficult to imagine

they end up as fine chocolate. Next, they are sold to collectors commissioned by large chocolate producers but small-scale producers complain they have little say in the going price.

Unfair trade?

Ambarahova joined a cooperative with several colleagues to negotiate higher prices, but their efforts have borne little fruit. On the day AFP visited Ambarahova's farm, one international chocolate maker had bought his weekly harvest for 2,600 ariary (80 US cents, 0.75 euros) a kilogram.

"The price that collectors pay now, it's not the true price," rails fellow farmer Remi Jaofeno. "The

price should be tripled, then it would be the right price." A few kilometres away, on the 635-hectare (1,570-acre) Mava cocoa plantation, the era of the zebu has long since passed and staff zip between the trees in 4x4s.

Here, the cocoa is processed along an efficient factory line: an all-male team picks the pods, an all-female team cracks them open, and a third team sorts them into large outdoor trays.

Drying out in the open air, the beans begin to give off the strong smell of the chocolate they will become.

'Cocoa paradise'

"We consider Madagascar to be one of the paradises of cocoa of the world," says plantation manager Thomas Wenisch. "We are relatively free from disease because of our isolation from the rest of the world, and our fairly severe dry season helps slow down the development of mould." But for all its advantages, Madagascar's role in

chocolate production largely ends there.

The bulk of the harvest is exported and processed abroad into the fine chocolate that in the streets of Paris can sell for close to 5 euros (\$5) per 100-gram slab. The little that remains on the island is processed in the capital Antananarivo and sold back to the few locals who can afford it. "Most of the world's chocolate is made with a cocoa that is not fine cocoa," says Wenisch.

"And the companies selling (it) are the big ones—Lindt, Craft, Suchard, Mars—they make chocolate bars, sweets. And they're pushing to bring down the price of cocoa."

Philippe Bastide, a cocoa expert at the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development, says the costs involved in buying and transporting the cocoa did not justify the profit margins that the large manufacturers enjoy.

"There are costs all along the chain of production, but the Malagasy small-scale producers could really get a fairer deal," he says. —AFP

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Sunday 25 December 2016

Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price index	▲ 23.94	5,700.16	5,676.22	5,700.16	5,675.73
Weighted Index	▲ 3.01	379.58	376.55	379.58	377.01
KSX 15	▲ 10.75	893.24	882.49	893.24	884.09

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last
MARIN	67	63	184,500	11,824	14	63 ▼ -5.0
IKARUS	39.0	38.5	130,001	5,070	9	39.0 ▲ 0.0
IPG	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	380 ▲ 0.0
NAPESCO	810	810	1,000	810	1	810 ▲ 0.0
ENERGYH	45.0	45.0	500	23	1	45.0 ▲ 0.0
GPI	41.5	40.5	3,474,489	143,021	63	40.5 ▼ -0.5
ABAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	102 ▲ 0.0
Oil & Gas			3,790,490	160,747	84	778.37 ▼ -7.65

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last
KFOUC	184	182	173,400	31,792	18	182 ▲ 0.0
BPCC	490	490	395,000	193,550	9	490 ▲ 0.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	660 ▲ 0.0
ALQURAIN	232	230	182,896	44,707	21	232 ▲ 2.0
Basic Materials			761,296	270,049	48	1005.12 ▲ 2.71

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last
KCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	420 ▲ 0.0
REFRI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	315 ▲ 0.0
CABLE	380	375	606,032	227,267	18	380 ▲ 5.0
SHIP	170	166	255,000	42,670	6	166 ▼ -4.0
PCEM	910	910	4,075	3,708	3	910 ▲ 0.0
PAPER	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	275 ▲ 0.0
MRC	65	65	10,000	650	2	65 ▼ -3.0
ACICO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	270 ▲ 0.0
GGMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	305 ▲ 0.0
HCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	118 ▲ 0.0
KBMM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	190 ▲ 0.0
NICBM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	206 ▲ 0.0
EQUIPMENT	54	49.5	5,695,195	302,437	179	54 ▲ 4.5
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	50 ▲ 0.0
GYPSSUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	95 ▲ 0.0
SALBOOKH	69	67	332,356	22,446	14	68 ▼ -2.0
AGLTY	630	620	391,852	242,831	10	630 ▲ 0.0
EDU	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	204 ▲ 0.0
CLEANING	45.5	44.0	40,200	1,829	4	45.5 ▲ 0.0
KGL	62	60	596,000	34,882	28	62 ▲ 1.0
KPC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	176 ▲ 0.0
HUMANSOFT	2,320	2,220	186,967	429,842	50	2,320 ▲ 100.0
NAFAIS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	206 ▲ 0.0
SAFWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	385 ▲ 0.0
GFC	30.0	30.0	5,000	150	1	30.0 ▲ 0.0
MAYADEEN	27.5	27.0	339,000	9,305	18	27.5 ▲ 0.5
CGC	600	580	10,000	5,980	4	600 ▼ -10.0
MTCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	56 ▲ 0.0
UPAC	690	690	447	308	1	690 ▲ 20.0
ALAFQ	232	228	81,050	13,929	6	230 ▲ 2.0
MUBARRAD	59	58	967,000	56,388	28	58 ▲ 0.0
LOGISTICS	72	72	503,000	36,216	21	72 ▲ 0.0
SCEM	81	81	205,000	16,805	3	81 ▲ 2.0
GCEM	74	74	30,000	2,220	1	74 ▼ -2.0
QIC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	73 ▲ 0.0
FCEM	77	77	653,472	50,317	8	77 ▼ -1.0
RKWC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	89 ▲ 0.0
SPEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	83 ▲ 0.0
Industrials			10,861,456	1,499,960	405	1311.68 ▲ 12.57

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last
SOKOUK	36.0	35.5	514,750	18,509	11	36.0 ▼ -0.5
KRF	63	62	1,102,200	68,337	24	62 ▲ 0.0
URC	96	96	1,000	96	1	96 ▲ 2.0
NRE	104	102	589,869	60,155	18	102 ▲ 0.0
SRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	365 ▲ 0.0
TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	445 ▲ 0.0
AREFC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	200 ▲ 0.0
MASSALEH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	40.0 ▲ 0.0
ARABREC	29.5	29.0	310,700	9,153	8	29.5 ▲ 0.0
ERESCO	38.5	37.0	9,085,384	338,937	140	37.0 ▼ -2.5
MABANEE	840	840	158,151	132,847	8	840 ▲ 0.0
INJAZZAT	77	76	130,000	9,900	10	76 ▼ -1.0
INVESTORS	24.0	23.0	7,754,984	181,800	76	23.5 ▼ -0.5
IRC	28.0	27.5	385,400	10,589	13	28.0 ▲ 0.0
ALTJARIA	81	80	227,570	18,293	11	81 ▲ 0.0
SANAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	31.0 ▲ 0.0
AAYANRE	64	64	110,877	7,083	5	64 ▲ 0.0
AQAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	69 ▲ 0.0
ALAQARIA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	24.5 ▲ 0.0
MAZAYA	112	112	1,206,300	135,106	22	112 ▲ 0.0
ADNC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	11.0 ▲ 0.0
THEMAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	89 ▲ 0.0
TUJARA	47.5	47.0	69,500	3,268	3	47.0 ▲ 0.0
TAAMEER	22.0	21.0	835,000	17,960	10	21.5 ▼ -0.5
ARKAN	89	88	50,000	4,421	3	89 ▲ 4.0
ARGAN	180	174	350,200	60,936	2	174 ▲ 2.0
ABYAAH	23.5	22.5	3,990,515	91,995	51	23.0 ▲ 0.5
MUNSHAAT	56	54	729,050	40,097	27	55 ▼ -1.0
FIRSTDUBAI	63	60	4,807,482	295,540	128	61 ▲ 1.0
KBT	43.0	42.0	4,821,964	204,043	83	42.0 ▼ -0.5
REAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	196 ▲ 0.0
MENA	21.0	20.0	2,598,673	53,424	81	20.0 ▼ -0.5
ALMUDON	37.5	36.5	2,393,510	88,211	48	37.0 ▲ 1.0
MARAKEZ	29.5	29.0	1,501	44	2	29.0 ▲ 1.5
REMAL	62	61	1,294,398	79,427	47	62 ▲ 1.0
AWJ	65	64	661,932	42,941	28	65 ▼ -1.0
Real Estate			44,178,518	1,973,119	840	871.74 ▼ -0.13

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last
KINV	84	83	710,282	59,146	22	84 ▲ 0.0
FACIL	158	158	1,800	253	2	158 ▲ 0.0
IFA	31.5	31.0	643,222	20,134	23	31.5 ▲ 0.5
NINV	99	97	646,670	63,244	34	98 ▲ 1.0
KPROJ	510	500	154,123	77,382	10	510 ▲ 0.0
COAST	39.0	38.5	261,000	10,049	11	38.5 ▲ 0.0
SECH	46.0	45.0	3,943,130	178,880	82	45.5 ▲ 1.0
SGC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	90 ▲ 0.0
ARZAN	32.5	32.0	73,000	2,364	7	32.5 ▲ 0.5
MARKAZ	82	82	1,900	107	1	82 ▲ 1.0
KMEFIC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	23.0 ▲ 0.0
ALAMAN	51	50	818,001	40,931	31	50 ▲ 0.0
ALOLA	47.0	46.0	592,100	27,513	19	47.0 ▲ 0.5
ALMAL	20.5	19.5	1,861,334	39,077	40	20.0 ▲ 0.0
GIH	31.0	29.0	14,940,118	449,791	170	30.5 ▲ 1.5
AAYAN	33.0	32.0	10,698,402	347,049	142	32.0 ▲ 0.5
BAYANINV	33.5	33.0	273,000	9,059	9	33.0 ▲ 0.0
OSOUL	61	61	500	31	1	61 ▲ 4.0
KFIC	40.0	40.0	15,000	600	1	40.0 ▲ 0.0
KAMCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	118 ▲ 0.0
NIH	62	60	289,100	17,586	9	62 ▲ 1.0
UNICAP	48.0	47.5	28,308	1,355	4	48.0 ▲ 0.0
MADAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	12.5 ▲ 0.0
ALDEERA	32.0	31.0	835,000	26,035	42	31.0 ▼ -1.0
ALSALAM	54	48.5	21,229,917	1,064,493	465	48.5 ▼ -3.5
EKTTITAB	38.5	37.5	2,458,284	93,556	39	38.0 ▼ -0.5
ALMADINA	44.5	43.0	5,353,456	234,182	87	44.0 ▲ 0.0
NOOR	47.0	46.5	280,595	13,048	9	46.5 ▼ -0.5
TAMINV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	280 ▲ 0.0
EXCH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,500 ▲ 0.0
TAIBA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	75 ▲ 0.0
KSHC	29.5	28.5	423,858	12,221	16	29.0 ▼ -0.5
ASIBA	31.5	30.0	250,831	7,789	3	31.5 ▲ 0.0
GNAHC	36.0	35.5	1,200,238	42,609	25	36.0 ▲ 1.0
AMWAL	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	22.0 ▲ 0.0
ALMUTIAZ	98	95				

DOLLAR REMAINS STRONG HEADING INTO HOLIDAYS

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

KUWAIT: Last week, the US dollar remained on the top of the currencies pyramid on the back of good economic data, the support of future interest rate hikes in 2017 and expectations of the fiscal spending plans set by the president elect Donald Trump. The US economy released positive figures across all sectors especially the manufacturing and the real estate sectors which helped the dollar to rally against most major currencies. Additionally, fiscal policy implementations promised by President elect Trump and the Fed's dot plot has dictated the markets' outlook of a strong dollar.

Fed Chair Janet Yellen expressed her trust and optimism in the labor market in the US speaking at the University of Baltimore saying that the jobs market is the strongest it has been in nearly a decade. Yellen cited the unemployment rate of 4.6 percent - a pre-recession low - and wage growth for younger workers. A report the Fed released earlier last week showed that young people were optimistic about their job prospects even though they faced higher unemployment rates than the rest of the population.

The dollar Index opened the week at 102.900 and reached a 14-year high of 103.650 amid upbeat US data as the housing market keeps flourishing whereas the annualized existing home sales increased to 5.61M for the month of November. Furthermore, the index continued the hawkish move following Fed Chair Janet Yellen's positive comments on the labor market. The index closed the week at 102.920.

The Euro opened the week at 1.0442 and continued the free-fall following the previous week downward move. The currency reached a 13-year low of 1.0350 at the end of the week as a strong dollar rally continued. The euro ended the week at 1.0462.

In the UK, the pound sterling opened the week at 1.2491 and traded in a relatively tight range compared to the other major currencies. Cable retracted amid anticipation of the final GDP quarterly figures which came higher than expectations by 0.1 percent to 0.6 percent yet the currency ended the week at 1.2290.

In Japan, the Yen remained relatively flat after losing ground to the dollar for the past month. The economy in Japan has picked up in the third quarter of this year, yet the dollar's

bullish run overshadowed the expansion. Meanwhile, the BOJ kept unchanged its pledge to guide short-term rates at minus 0.1 percent and the 10-year government bond yield around zero percent. The currency closed the week at 117.31.

On the commodities side, oil prices remain in an uptrend above the \$54 per barrel level after OPEC's agreement on production cuts. Brent crude oil futures fell 25 cents to \$54.80 per barrel while West Texas futures were down 20 cents to \$52.10 a barrel. On the oth-

er hand, gold prices continue to remain below 1,140 levels with booming equity markets around the globe.

since February 2007 (5.79 million) and is 15.4 percent higher than a year ago (4.86 million). The healthiest job market since the Great Recession and the anticipation of some buyers to close on a home before mortgage rates accurately rose from their historically low level have combined to drive sales higher in recent months.

Unemployment claims

The number of new claims for state unemployment benefits dropped 4K to a seasonally

adjusted 254K for the week ended December 10th. It was the 93rd straight week that claims were below 300K, indicating a healthy labor market. That is the longest stretch since 1970, when the labor market was much smaller. The four-week moving average of claims rose 5,250 to 257,750 last week.

The US economy grew faster than initially thought in the third quarter, notching its best performance in two years, amid solid consumer spending and a jump in soybean exports. Gross domestic product increased at

a 3.5 percent annual rate instead of the previously reported 3.2 percent pace, the Commerce Department said in its third GDP estimate on Thursday.

Growth was the strongest since the third quarter of 2014 and followed the second quarter's anemic 1.4 percent pace. Output was also lifted by upward revisions to business investment in structures and intellectual property products, underscoring the economy's solid fundamentals, which contributed to the Federal Reserve raising interest rates last week. Economists polled had expected that third-quarter GDP growth would be revised up to a 3.3 percent rate.

Core durable goods

Orders for US business equipment climbed more than forecast in November, a sign corporate investment is starting to pick up. Bookings for non-defense capital goods excluding aircraft rose 0.9 percent, the most since August, after a 0.2 percent gain a month earlier. The median forecast in a survey called for a 0.4 percent increase. Demand for all durables fell 4.6 percent on a slump in orders for planes. Increased business sentiment about the economy following the presidential election has the potential to boost sales of productivity-enhancing equipment. Leaner inventories, resilient household demand and the longer-term prospects of more infrastructure spending may help boost durable-goods orders even as a soaring dollar risks slowing exports.

German IFO

The German IFO index strengthened to 111.0 for December from 110.4 the previous month, which was above the expected reading of 110.7 and the strongest reading since February 2014. The current conditions index rose to 116.6 from 115.6, also above expectations and the highest level since February 2012, while the expectations index only increased marginally to 105.6 from 105.5. There was an increase in the trade and industry sector to 14.8 from 13.7, the strongest reading of 2016 as manufacturing confidence also improved with companies expecting output to strengthen over the next few months. The construction sector continued to strengthen with a fresh post-unification record high as low interest rates provided robust support. Confidence in the retail sector was unchanged,

but the wholesale sector strengthened further to 17.8 from 15.1, which was the strongest reading for close to three years.

UK GDP

UK GDP in volume terms was estimated to have increased by 0.6 percent in Q3 2016, revised up 0.1 percentage points from the second estimate of GDP published on 26 November 2016, due to upward revisions from the output of the business services and finance industries. This is the 15th consecutive quarter of positive growth since Q1 2013. Revisions to GDP quarterly volume growths are small compared with the previously published estimate. There are no revisions to any quarters in 2015. There are small revisions to the quarters of 2016; both Q1 2016 and Q2 2016 have been revised down by 0.1 percentage points, and Q3 2016 has been revised up by 0.1 percentage points.

Optimistic BOJ

The BOJ kept the monetary policy steady reinforcing the market's expectations that the future policy could be an increase, not a cut, in interest rates. "Japan's economy continues to recover moderately as a trend," the BOJ said in a statement announcing the policy decision. The central bank also offered a brighter view on exports and output and iterated that both were picking up. As widely expected, the BOJ kept unchanged its pledge to guide short-term rates at minus 0.1 percent and the 10-year government bond yield around zero percent.

Chinese money

In China money markets are facing a rough transition into 2017 as heavy capital outflows and disruptive bond defaults are creating irregular cash shortages. China's economy remains vulnerable to a strong dollar, after the US Federal Reserve raised interest rates and projected more rises next year. In summary, the market is short of money and people are rushing to sell everything to get liquidity, from money market funds to corporate bonds to treasuries.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30605
The USDKWD opened at 0.30605 yesterday morning.



er hand, gold prices continue to remain below 1,140 levels with booming equity markets around the globe.

Existing-home sales

Total existing-home sales, which are completed transactions that include single-family homes, townhomes, condominiums and co-ops, rose 0.7 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 5.61 million in November from a downwardly revised 5.57 million in October. November's sales pace is now the highest



HARARE: A bag vendor waits for clients, on a street, in Harare. Most people in this once-prosperous southern African country are struggling to afford Christmas as the economy implodes. — AP

IN ZIMBABWE'S ECONOMIC MELTDOWN, CHRISTMAS IS OUT OF REACH FOR MANY

HARARE, Zimbabwe: Naison Makwechede rummages through piles of used clothes at a busy flea market in Zimbabwe's capital in hopes of finding Christmas clothes for his family. This secondhand search is new terrain for the father of three, who always buys new clothes for his children this time of year in line with local holiday tradition.

"The bond note is the only new thing in my possession," said Makwechede, referring to Zimbabwe's latest attempt to address a spiraling currency crisis. Most people in this once-prosperous southern African country are struggling to afford Christmas as the economy implodes.

The US dollar, the main currency used since Zimbabwe abandoned its own in 2009, is in such short supply that some people sleep outside banks in the hope of withdrawing what they can. In this predominantly Christian country, the holiday period is traditionally associated with wild merry-making, travel, family gatherings and new clothes. This year is different.

But not for everyone. The 7,000 delegates who attended the ruling ZANU-PF party's conference last weekend took home good-

ies, including five kilograms (11 pounds) of rice, in a holiday bag decorated with pictures of longtime President Robert Mugabe and his wife, Grace. The political meeting brought a temporary boom to the usually sleepy town of Masvingo, where hotels and lodges were fully booked and usually empty halls teemed. Informal vendors, who now make up the bulk of Zimbabwe's adult population, said they had brisk business of several items, including condoms. The party conference endorsed the 92-year-old Mugabe, who has led the country since its independence from white minority rule in 1980, as its candidate in the upcoming elections.

Mugabe told the delegates the economy was on the mend. But the government, which has failed to pay civil servants on time since June, indicated it will only be able to pay the military, police, prison services and health workers before Christmas. "It is sad. Our members will not have their salaries, so they are foregoing Christmas this year," said Sifiso Ndlovu, the chief executive of the Zimbabwe Teachers Union. — AP

US ECONOMY GREW AT STRONG 3.5% IN Q3

WASHINGTON: The US economy grew at a 3.5 percent annual rate in the July-September quarter, the fastest pace in two years and more than the government had previously estimated. But the growth spurt isn't expected to last.

The gain in the gross domestic product - the economy's total output of goods and services - came from added strength in consumer spending, business investment and the government sector, the Commerce Department said. The government had previously estimated last quarter's annual growth rate at 3.2 percent. The GDP report "paints a picture of a healthy consumer, likely fueled by ongoing gains in employment, modest increases in wages, and solid balance sheets," Michael Gapen of Barclays.

The economy's acceleration last quarter marked a sharp pickup from the tepid annual growth of 0.8 percent in the first quarter and 1.4 percent in the second. Still, growth is expected to slow to a roughly 1.5 percent annual rate in the October-December quarter, reflecting in part less consumer spending and less business stockpiling.

Growth for the entire year, economists say, is likely to be around 1.5 percent. That would be down from 2015 and would be the weakest performance since the economy shrank 2.8 percent in 2009 at the depths of the worst economic downturn since the 1930s. The recovery began in mid-2009, but growth has averaged just over 2 percent, the weakest expansion in the post-World War II period.

President-elect Donald Trump had criticized the sluggish pace of growth during the campaign and said his economic policies would accelerate annual GDP growth to 4 percent or better. To do that, Trump said he would eliminate many government regulations, boost spending on the nation's aging infrastructure and slash taxes.

Most economists don't think 4 percent growth is realistic, given a chronic slowdown in worker productivity and a slower-growing US workforce due in part to retiring baby boomers.

Most forecasters expect growth of around 2.5 percent next year, though they say those estimates could rise if Trump wins congressional support for much of his economic program. Stock markets have surged since Trump's election, partly a reflection of optimism that his proposals would boost growth and corporate profits.

Thursday's report was the government's third and final estimate of GDP growth for the July-September quarter. The upward revision mainly reflected stronger consumer spending, which grew at a 3 percent annual rate, more than the 2.8 percent pace that was estimated a month ago. Consumer spending is closely watched because it accounts for about 70 percent of economic activity.

The government also upgraded its estimate for business investment: It showed an increase at a 1.4 percent annual rate, up from a much smaller 0.1 percent rate in the previous estimate.

Government spending was also revised up to show growth at a 0.8 percent annual rate, an increase that reflected a smaller drag from cutbacks at the state and local level.

The Federal Reserve last week boosted a key interest rate by a quarter-point, just the second increase in the past decade. Fed officials say they think they can begin to gradually raise interest rates as they near their goals for full employment, and inflation increases by about 2 percent a year.

In public comments last week, Chair Janet Yellen made no predictions about Trump's economic program. But Fed officials forecast that they would raise rates three times in 2017, up from their previous forecast of two hikes. — AP

GREEK FIN MINISTER SENDS DICKENSIAN JIBE FOR XMAS

ATHENS: The Greek finance minister's Christmas cards this year feature Ebenezer Scrooge, the tight-fisted protagonist of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol", in a what is clearly a jibe directed at the country's creditors.

Some of Greece's EU partners, especially Germany, objected to tax handouts by Alexis Tsipras' government to islands struggling with an influx of migrants, a measure that has triggered a row with the debt-ridden nation's creditors. The minister, Euclide Tsakalotos, sent e-cards to staff and journalists with an early illustration by renowned caricaturist John Leech for "A Christmas Carol", showing the ghost of Scrooge's dead partner telling him that he must change his ways or face eternal damnation.

"Perhaps in all of our Christmas tales there is a terrifying character like Ebenezer who receives the season's spirit in an immense solitude, and closed like an oyster. And maybe our Christmas tale is no exception," read the card's caption. "But, dear friends and colleagues, our wishes go beyond all the Ebenezers of this world. We don't give up on our wishes," it said.

The tax measure was announced earlier this month, alongside a one-off bonus to the poorest of pensioners, after the government found itself with a 1.0-billion-euro (\$1.04-billion) tax surplus.

Tsipras said it was policy "to return every single euro of surplus to the weakest".

But Greece's international creditors said they had not been fully informed of Tsipras' intentions ahead of the announcement. In response, the eurozone group said it would suspend a recently-announced debt relief scheme for Athens.

In "A Christmas Carol", the miserly Scrooge finally redeems himself, starts lavishing gifts on the poor and treats his fellow humans with kindness and generosity.

It may be a coincidence, but on Christmas Eve cracks also seemed to appear in the Eurogroup's unforgiving stance. Sources there said Saturday their concerns had been "alleviated" by a letter from the Greek authorities explaining the tax measures.

As a consequence, they said, the group would resume working on debt measures for Greece-but only after Christmas. — AFP



NEW AUDI RS Q3 PERFORMANCE ARRIVES IN KUWAIT

NEW COMPACT SUV ON DISPLAY AT AUDI'S FOUAD ALGHANIM AND SONS AUTOMOTIVE CO SHOWROOM

KUWAIT: Fouad Alghanim & Sons Automotive Company, the exclusive dealer of Audi in Kuwait, has welcomed the new RS Q3 performance compact SUV to its range of vehicles.

The premium brand is honing its sporty profile with new RS performance models. The "performance" in the name stands for both significant power boost and exclusive equipment that clearly elevates the respective models above the rest of the portfolio. This also applies to the new RS Q3 performance, whose pulse is driven by the legendary Audi five-cylinder engine. Since 2010, an international panel of automotive journalists has named the 2.5 TFSI "International Engine of the Year" in its category six years in a row. With its pulling power, free-revving character and inimitable sound, goosebumps are guaranteed. Compared with the RS Q3, Audi has bumped up the output of the 2.5 TFSI engine for the performance model, with additional 27 hp.

Commenting on the launch, Tarek Al Shafie, General Manager of Fouad Alghanim and Sons Automotive Company, said: "Outperforming other compact SUV's, the new Audi RS Q3 performance delivers more power, and a dynamic ride, providing an experience like no other. Reaching top speeds of 270 km/h, with 0 to

100 in 4.4 seconds, drivers will be sure to enjoy every aspect of its 2.5 litre, five-cylinder engine, and other dynamic features, elevating the Audi journey."

The standard seven-speed S tronic has also been rigorously tuned for sportiness. The driver can either allow the extremely fast-shifting dual-clutch transmission to do all the work or change gears manually using the shift paddles on the standard RS multifunction steering wheel. In the dynamic mode of the Audi drive select dynamic handling system, each gear change is accompanied by double-declutching.

The quattro permanent all-wheel drive smoothly delivers the engine's power to the road via a hydraulically actuated, electronically controlled multi-plate clutch. Power is distributed automatically between the front and rear axles as needed, and even selectively to each wheel thanks to the networked Electronic Stabilization Control (ESC). Furthermore, the handling controller can be deactivated to access a retuned sport mode.

The taut RS sport suspension on the Audi RS Q3 performance perfectly translates the dynamics of the powerful engine and lowers the body by 20 millimeters compared with the Audi Q3. Audi offers the RS sport suspension

plus with damper control as an option. Its characteristic can be adjusted between the settings comfort, auto and dynamic via the Audi drive select dynamic handling system.

Distinctive appearance

The exterior design with its typical RS design details underscores the distinctive appearance of the Audi high-performance models. These include the sportily designed bumpers with large air inlets up front and the heavily profiled diffuser insert at the rear and the gloss black honeycomb grilles.

The exterior of the RS Q3 performance is also characterized by add-on parts in a matt titanium-look finish that are exclusive to the new top model. The frame of the air inlet duct and the quattro logo within, for example, are finished this way. Other parts finished in matt titanium-look are: The Singleframe, the lateral flaps in the air inlets, the trim strips at the side windows, the exterior mirror housings, the roof rails, the upper edge of the diffuser and the fins of the roof edge spoiler. On top of that, Audi also offers the new paint finish Ascari blue metallic - another feature exclusive to the new RS performance models.

Another highlight are the RS-specific, 20 inch wheels in a five twin-spoke V design. They are available exclusively for the RS performance model in a matt titanium-look finish, matching the standard add-on parts in this same finish. The RS Q3 performance comes standard with red calipers bearing the RS logo. Audi also offers the calipers in black at no extra charge.

The dynamic line of the exterior design is echoed in the interior. The dial instruments feature gray faces, white dials and red needles. Audi offers the sport seats in the color combination black and blue with the optional RS performance design package at no extra charge. Additional elements, such as the RS sport leather steering wheel, the selector lever gaiter, the center armrest and the floor mats feature blue contrast stitching. Inlays in carbon twill blue, in which a blue thread is woven into the carbon material, round out this exclusive combination.

The Audi RS Q3 Performance is exclusively available at Fouad Alghanim & Sons Automotive Company Audi showroom, opens Saturday through Thursday from 9 am to 1 pm and 4.30 pm to 8.30pm.



BURGAN BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF YAWMI ACCOUNT

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the lucky winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners for the daily draws took home a cash-prize of KD 5,000 each, and they are:

1. MOHAMMAD ADEL AHMAD DAMERLI
2. SALEH IBRAHIM MUSTAFA EID
3. NAJI DHAHI OUDAH ALFADHLI
4. JASSIM MOHAMMAD MULLA HUSSAIN
5. MEDYAN MAHMOUD ALQEPLAWI

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, entitling one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers Daily and quarterly Draws, the Quarterly Draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their

account for 2 months prior to draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account, will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances to becoming a winner. The more customers deposit, the higher the chances they receive of winning.

For more information on opening a Yawmi account or about the new quarterly draw, customers are urged to visit their nearest Burgan Bank branch and receive all the details, or simply call the bank's Call Center at 1804080 where customer service representatives will be delighted to assist with any questions on the Yawmi account or any of the bank's products and services.

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank

is the youngest commercial Bank and second largest by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors, as well as having a growing retail, and private bank customer base. Burgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENAT region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Burgan Bank's brand has been created on a foundation of real values - of trust, commitment, excellence and progression, to remind us of the high standards to which we aspire. 'People come first' is the foundation on which its products and services are developed.

RENAULT AL BABTAIN LAUNCHES 'NOW OR NEVER ... AT LESS THAN WHOLESALE PRICE'

KUWAIT: With the end of 2016, Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babtain Co (AABC), the authorized agents of Renault vehicles in the State of Kuwait is ending the year with the best End-Of-year offer on selected Renault vehicles, the most popular French automotive brand. This first of its kind, ten day offer, commenced on 21st of December and ends on 31st of December and is offering exciting discounts on all 2016 Renault models.

Renault Al Babtain continues to offer attractive offers to bring world-class quality cars in more attractive prices. Interested customers can enjoy these fantastic offers on all 2016 vehicles, which includes Renault Captur, Renault Duster, Renault Symbol, Renault Safrane and Renault Fluence.

Renault Al Babtain aims to end 2016 with a positive note by delighting all esteemed customers with a golden opportunity to strike unbeatable deals on their favorite Renault models, urging all customers currently looking to buy a new vehicle to

take advantage of our ten-day campaign. Renault, the world-renowned, French car manufacturer combines comfort with convenient mobility. As for the campaigns' irresistible bargains, taking the spot top within the SUV range is everyone's favorite, Renault Captur, a compact urban crossover and unaggressive and particularly user-friendly SUV with its robust design.

Crafted for explorers, Renault's stylish and spacious SUV, Renault Duster, is designed just for your adventures. A sub-compact from the French manufacturer, Renault Symbol with its dynamic appearance, innovative technologies and advanced safety systems is a favorite of family cars till today.

The campaign also extends to Renault Fluence, the real hallmark of Renault's expertise with its seductive look along with Renault Safrane, an executive car built to echo luxury and commands road presence.

Renault Al Babtain urges all customers to avail this wonderful opportunity as the campaign runs during a short ten days and treat themselves to an unforgettable New Year's gift from Renault Al Babtain. To learn more about the campaign please visit Renault Al Babtain showrooms located in Al Rai and Al Ahmadi.

Al Babtain Group was founded in 1948, to present a model of honesty, integrity and total dedication, gaining a solid reputation in the State of Kuwait and the Middle East area. Today, Al-Babtain Group has licensing rights for some of the world's leading brands stretching the globe from the USA to the Far East.

For more than 60 years, Al-Babtain Group has experienced continued success and a large measure of this success came from the Group's advanced flexible management style and long-term vision. These astounding results were achieved due to a versatile strategic formula focusing on growth amongst its sphere of activities; including automotive, technology, investment, information technology, industrial and Finance.

now... "Yawmi" account offers
KD 125,000 quarterly
 and **KD 5,000** daily

"Yawmi"... changed my day

www.burgan.com

بنك بروغان
 BURGAN BANK
 driven by you

AL-TIJARI ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF AL-NAJMA ACCOUNT

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait held the Al-Najma Account daily draw yesterday. The draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry represented by Abdulaziz Ashkanani.

The winners of the Al-Najma daily draw are:

- Ali Saleh Al-Jaser — KD 7000,
- Ahmed Ali Barakat — KD 7000,
- Abdullah Minshed Awad Al-Zaafere — KD 7000,
- Gladson Mario Lazarino Gomes — KD 7000,
- Ali Mohammad Al-Hareeri — KD 7000.

Al-Najma awards are now brighter and bigger than ever.

With the revamped Al-Najma account, all your dreams will be turned to reality. On top of offering the highest daily prize in Kuwait for KD 7,000, now our Mega prize draws got bigger to reach KD 250,000.

The new prizes scheme for Al-Najma account

- Daily draw to win KD 7000
- Quarterly draws to win great prizes that would start from KD 100,000 to KD 250,000
- 1ST QUARTER KD 100 000,
- 2ND QUARTER KD 150 000
- 3RD QUARTER KD 200 000
- 4TH QUARTER, KD 250 000.

With Al Najma you have more chances to win greater prizes:

- Each KD 25 kept in your account gives you one chance to win
- Each KD 25 kept in your account for one week will give you a chance to enter the daily draw.
- Each KD 25 kept in your account for 3 months will give you chance to enter the quarterly draw.

Additional features:

- ATM card
 - Issue a credit card against your account
 - Obtain all CBK banking services
- You deserve to win! Open an account now with just KD 500 and you will enter all draws.

CELL-TRACKING CASE APPEALED TO FULL US 7TH CIRCUIT COURT

MILWAUKEE: A dissenting opinion by a federal appeals court judge on police use of secret cellphone tracking technology has convinced a Milwaukee man to take his case a step further. Attorneys for Damian Patrick filed a petition this week asking for a rehearing in front of the full US 7th Circuit Court of Appeals, after losing a split decision in November to the court's three-judge panel. It's the first time the use of cell tower simulators, known as stingrays, has reached a federal appellate court, the Milwaukee

Journal Sentinel reported.

"It is time for the stingray to come out of the shadows, so that its use can be subject to the same kind of scrutiny as other mechanisms, such as thermal imaging devices, GPS trackers, pen registers, beepers, and the like," 7th Circuit Judge Diane Wood wrote in her dissenting opinion.

"Its capabilities go far beyond any of those." Stingrays are suitcase-sized devices that imitate a cellphone tower and draw signals from all nearby cellphones, not just the targeted

number. It allows police to zero in on the phone's location, down to a specific apartment in a building. The phones don't have to be in operation, and some versions of the technology can even intercept content, like texts and calls, or pull information stored on the phones.

The case stems from a 2013 incident when Milwaukee police were looking for Patrick on a violation of probation. When they found him in a car, there was a gun on the floor and he was charged with being a felon in possession of a

firearm. Months later, during a hearing on his motion to suppress the evidence, police revealed they had found Patrick not based on a tip, as initially stated, but by using records from Sprint, his cellphone service provider. After he entered a conditional guilty plea and appealed, his lawyers learned police had supplemented the Sprint data with a real-time Stingray trace.

The majority panel ruling in Patrick's appeal concluded that since police had probable cause to arrest Patrick for his probation violation they didn't need a

warrant. And because he was in a public place, he had no privacy interest in his location, Judge Frank Easterbrook wrote. He and Judge Michael Kanne agreed there may be constitutional questions about stingrays, but that Patrick's case isn't the right one to explore them.

A US House committee report issued Monday said clearer guidelines are needed for law enforcement's use of secretive and intrusive cellphone tracking technology, and police and federal agents should be upfront with a judge about their deployment.—AP



FLORIDA: Members of the 601st Air Operations Center watch Santa fly around the world on Christmas Eve with their NORAD Santa tracker in Panama City, Florida.

AFTER ONLINE THREATS, GAMING ENGINEER PLANS RUN FOR CONGRESS

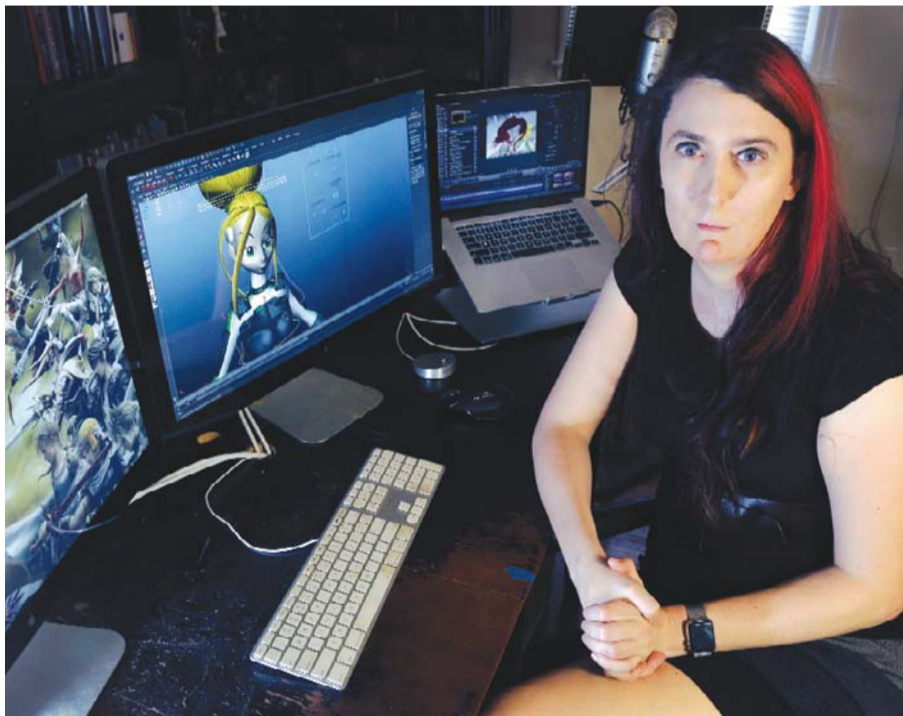
BOSTON: In the gaming world, Brianna Wu has earned a reputation battling the online harassment campaign known as Gamergate, a fight that led to rape and murder threats from the darker recesses of the male-dominated realm. Now the 39-year-old Boston-based software engineer is setting her sights on another male-dominated institution: Congress. Wu, a Democrat and Hillary Clinton supporter, said she made the decision almost immediately after the November election.

"On election night I was standing 30 feet from where Hillary should have accepted the presidency. I had planned to go back to Boston and work on shipping our next game, but I knew I couldn't do that," Wu said Thursday in an email to The Associated Press, calling President-elect Donald Trump "an incredible threat to the United States and American values." She's said she wants her campaign to focus in part on privacy rights and online harassment, but also on the wider economy which she said is

rigged against Massachusetts families.

Wu is lead engineer at the video game company Giant Spacekat. She rose to prominence after becoming a target of Gamergate, which has subjected several women in the video-game industry to misogynistic threats after surfacing in the summer of 2014. The threats became so intense that Wu and her husband had to leave their home. While Wu says she wants to run for one of Massachusetts' nine US House seats, she has not announced which one.

She said it will be in the greater Boston area and she won't challenge Rep. Katherine Clark, whose district covers a swath of the city's northern and western suburbs. Clark has championed bills in Congress aimed at cracking down on the kinds of online harassment that Wu faced. Clark said earlier this year that she began fighting online harassment after hearing Wu's story. As a political novice, Wu faces the daunting challenge of unseating an incumbent Democrat.—AP



BOSTON: In this file photo Brianna Wu, a software engineer and video-game developer, sits at her workstation in Boston.—AP



COLORADO: In this file photo, volunteers take phone calls from children.

MILITARY HELPS KIDS FOLLOW SANTA'S FABLED FLIGHT

'FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA TRADITIONALLY ANSWERS CALLS'

COLORADO SPRINGS: Children from around the world are calling the North American Aerospace Defense Command to ask where Santa is, and they're getting a cheery answer about the mythical route. The wildly popular NORAD Tracks Santa operation is on its 61st run at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado. Volunteers are answering phone calls and emails and posting updates about Santa's storybook world tour on Facebook and Twitter. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Paul Noel said 1,500 volunteers answered nearly 141,000 phone calls and more than 2,800 emails last year. The NORAD spokesman is quick to say his name really is Noel.

Here's a look at the Christmas tradition: How does it work?

Children can call a toll-free number, 877-446-6723 (877-HI-NORAD), or email noradtracksanta@outlook.com to ask where Santa is on his fabled journey. Volunteers work in shifts, taking the last calls at 3 am MST Christmas Day. The volunteers sit elbow-to-elbow in conference rooms at Peterson Air Force Base, NORAD's home, answering phones and checking computer-generated maps projected onto big screens. First lady Michelle Obama traditionally answers calls via a remote hookup, but Noel said it was not yet known if she would participate this year. Elsewhere at the Air Force base, volunteers update NORAD's website (www.noradsanta.org), Facebook page ([facebook.com/noradsanta](https://www.facebook.com/noradsanta)) and Twitter feed (@NoradSanta). Last year, the website had 22 million unique visitors, Noel said.

Why does NORAD 'track' Santa?

It started in 1955 when a Colorado Springs newspaper ad invited children to call Santa Claus but accidentally listed the number for the hotline at the Continental Air Defense



COLORADO: In this file photo, NORAD and US Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Charles D. Luckey joins other volunteers taking phone calls from children around the world asking where Santa is and when he will deliver presents to their homes, inside a phone-in center during the annual NORAD Tracks Santa Operation, at the North American Aerospace Defense Command, at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado.—AP Photos

Command, NORAD's predecessor. Air Force Col. Harry Shoup took a call from a child and thought he was being pranked. When he figured out he was talking to a little boy, he pretended he was Santa.

More children called, and Shoup instructed airmen to play along. It's now a tradition, beloved by kids and the military. Volunteers range from generals and admirals to enlisted men and women, who sometimes report for telephone

duty in military uniform and a Santa hat.

What is NORAD?

The North American Aerospace Defense Command is a joint US-Canada operation that defends the sky over both nations and monitors sea approaches. It's best known for its Cold War-era control room deep inside Cheyenne Mountain — now used only as a backup — and for NORAD Tracks Santa.—AP

WIIDII TO ATTEND CES 2017 IN LAS VEGAS

BORDEAUX, FRANCE: Wiidii is thrilled to be taking part in the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas from January 5th to January 8th, 2017. The startup which created the world's first hybrid personal assistance app that combines artificial intelligence with human savvy, will be participating in this major event alongside other French Tech startups under the ecosystem Le Village by CA. Wiidii offers a B2B2C solu-

tion of personal assistance for customers of partner companies. It has already signed with large groups such as Zodiac Nautic, Transavia, Bordeaux Tourism & Conventions, Welcome Chinese, Palais des Festivals de Cannes, Nice Airport, Beforgo, Paris Inn Group.

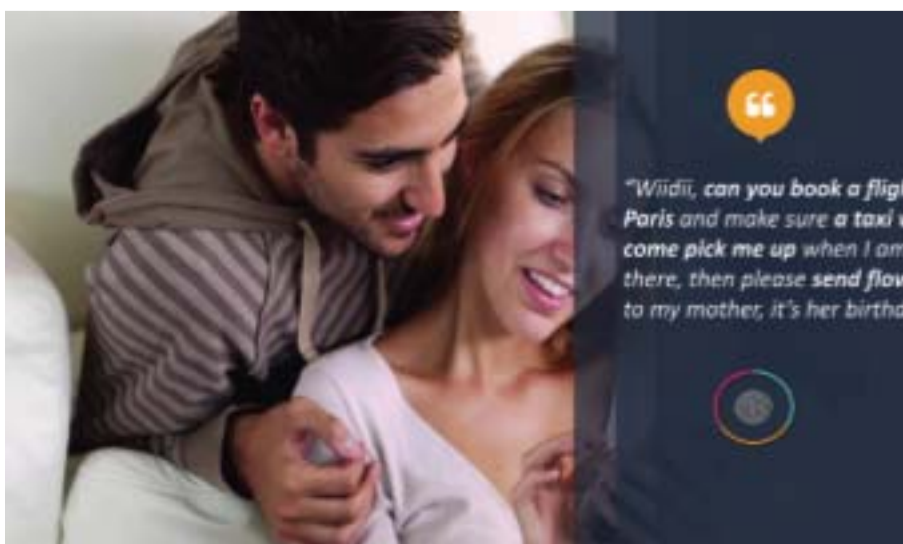
It has been tested by big names such as Air France KLM, Hertz Europe, Renault, Voyages-sncf, EDF and received very posi-

tive feedback. This year, CES celebrates its 50th anniversary. The startup is seeking to show its innovative and unique character that redefined mobile personal assistance with a French touch and know-how. It aims to extend its services to North America and hopes to meet prospective partners. We are happy to be taking part in CES 2017! It is an incredible opportunity for us to present our innovation and to meet large interna-

tional groups in order to build new partnerships around the world.

We truly think that Wiidii could revolutionize the life of many managers and entrepreneurs by making it easier while saving time. A couple of years ago, Wiidii was an ambitious project. Today, it has become a reality! Cedric Dumas, Founder & CEO Wiidii will be exhibiting at booth #51057 in Eureka Park (Hall G, Sands Expo) at CES

alongside five other startups supported by Le Village by CA: Jagger & Lexis, Jooxter, Liva, Sphere and Trovolone. On January 5th, Wiidii will take part in a special event at CES called Eureka Park UpFront at the Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas. Wiidii has been selected as one of the 8 startups that will pitch in front of 50 to 70 retail buyers, investors and other executives who are interested in new and truly innovative product.



Who is Wiidii?

1st HYBRID PERSONAL ASSISTANT

Human concierges

Artificial Intelligence



THE HAGUE: Dutch 3FM DJ's Domien Verschuuren (L) and Frank van der Lende show together with 6-year-old Tijn Kolsteren. —AFP

SICK DUTCH BOY'S NAIL-VARNISH DARE NETS OVER 2.5M EUROS

THE HAGUE: A terminally ill six-year-old Dutch boy, who hoped to raise a few hundred Euros by daring people to paint their nails, has raised more than 2.5 million Euros.

Tijn Kolsteren, who was diagnosed with brain cancer in May, launched the appeal only three days ago, but it fired the imagination of the public. The charity drive ended Saturday and raised over \$2.6 million. "With his nail-painting dare he wanted to help children suffering from pneumonia," the Dutch public newscaster NOS reported. "It was an enormous success—from DJ Armin van Buuren to Prime Minister Mark Rutte and many other famous

celebrities had their nails painted," it said. "Paint your nails, make a donation and then challenge three of your friends to do the same," dared the donation page, which invited participants to share their pictures on social media using the hash tag #lakaan (meaning "the polish is on"). The appeal is part of a traditional event in The Netherlands where radio DJs lock themselves away for several days without food or drink to raise money.

This year, proceeds are going to the Red Cross. Rutte joined the DJs late Friday and opted for a deep blue for his own nails. Tijn's family learned only last week that a

course of chemotherapy had failed to reduce the size of his cancer.

"Despite this bad news, we wanted to do something for children who won't maybe even make it to six," his father Gerrit told the NOS. "We came up with the idea together: Tijn had already painted his nails with a friend and liked it. I wanted to do something similar to the Ice Bucket challenge and men painting their nails is a bit taboo," he added, referring to the internet craze that raised millions.

The Dutch press hailed the boy as a hero, with the tabloid AD on Friday putting a picture of him dressed as a superhero under the headline "SuperTijn". —AFP

CHINA'S SUZHOU CITY TO HALT LIVE POULTRY TRADE OVER BIRD FLU CASES

'SUCH VIRUS MUTATES AND ACQUIRES GENETIC CHANGES'

BEIJING: A Chinese city said yesterday it will suspend the trade of live poultry in the interests of public health after neighboring provinces reported cases of human bird flu infections. Suzhou, the second-biggest city in the eastern province of Jiangsu, will halt trading of live poultry at midnight (1600 GMT), the official People's Daily reported on its website. Two people have died of the H7N9 strain of bird flu in China this winter, the first fatalities among at least seven infections.

In the past week, Hong Kong and Macau have also reported their first human bird flu infections for this season. H7N9 had not been detected in either humans or animals in China until March 2013. The

city of Shanghai, about 100 km (62 miles) southeast of Suzhou, reported last week that a man had been diagnosed with the H7N9 strain after travelling from Jiangsu. The two deaths were in Anhui province, west of both Shanghai and Suzhou. Anhui has reported five human infections since Dec. 8.

Authorities in Anhui, which has a population of almost 60 million, have shut some livestock markets and stepped up sterilization to prevent the virus spreading. "A few" chickens had been culled. In Xiamen, a city in Fujian province also in the east, authorities halted poultry sales in one district on Thursday after a 44-year-old man was diagnosed with H7N9, state news agency Xinhua reported. The

H7N9 strain does not seem to transmit easily from person to person, and sustained human-to-human infection has not been reported, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

The danger with any such virus is that it mutates and acquires genetic changes that might increase its pandemic potential. In China, the WHO confirmed two cases of an emerging strain believed to be a cross-species infection in the past two months. A woman in Hunan province and another woman in Guangxi were admitted to hospital with the H5N6 strain, first reported in China in mid-2014. In Guangdong, a traveler was caught carrying 1.3 kg (2.9 lb) of chicken and duck eggs that

later tested positive for bird flu, the state-run China Economic News reported on its website yesterday.

The eggs found in the luggage of the Vietnamese traveler at Guangzhou airport on Dec 14 tested positive for the H5 strain, according to the report, which cited the provincial quarantine bureau. The most well-known strain of avian influenza is the highly pathogenic H5N1 subtype, which has killed hundreds of people globally since its first human infection about two decades ago in Hong Kong. The last major bird flu outbreak in mainland China - from late 2013 to early 2014 - killed 36 people and led to more than \$6 billion in losses for the agricultural sector. —Reuters



BEIJING: Residents enjoy a clear day near the iconic CCTV headquarters after a cold front pushed out heavy pollution from Beijing, China. —AP Photos

CHINA TO LEVY NEW TAXES IN BID TO STRENGTHEN POLLUTION FIGHT

BEIJING: China's largely rubber-stamp parliament passed a law yesterday that will levy specific environmental protection taxes on industry for the first time from 2018, as part of a renewed focus on fighting the country's pollution woes. Anger has risen in the world's second-largest economy at the government's repeated failure to tackle land, water and air pollution, with large parts of northern China enveloped in dangerous smog in recent days.

"Tax revenue is an important economic means to promote environmental protection," the Finance Ministry said in a statement. The tax rate will be 1.2 Yuan (\$0.17) per unit of atmospheric pollution, 1.4 Yuan per unit of water pollution, 5 Yuan per ton of coal waste and 1,000 Yuan per ton of "hazardous waste." Industrial noise polluters will also be levied 350 Yuan per month if they exceed limits by 1-3 decibels, 700 Yuan for 4-6 decibels and 11,200 Yuan per month for 16 decibels and more.

The law goes into effect on Jan 1, 2018. China has not previously imposed any specific environmental taxes, and the new levy will replace an earlier system of miscellaneous charges that are regarded as far too low to deter polluters. Officials have repeatedly stressed that the new policy is not designed to increase the tax burden on enterprises. "The core purpose

(of the policy) isn't to increase taxes, but is to improve the system, and encourage enterprises to reduce emissions - the more they emit the more they will pay, and the less they emit the less they will pay," environment minister Chen Jining said earlier this year.

The details of the new law have been fiercely contested by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Ministry of Finance, the State Taxation Administration and local governments, and has been subject to repeated delays. Conflicts of interest have emerged as other departments worry about lost revenues once the previous system of emission discharge fees is abolished. Some government researchers have also argued that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases should be included in the plans.

Jia Kang of the Ministry of Finance's Institute of Fiscal Science complained this year that the environmental tax proposals were far too conservative, with the tax rate per ton of sulphur dioxide still much cheaper than paying for the equipment required to stop it entering the atmosphere. He suggested that, in order to avoid increasing the tax burden on firms, other business taxes should be cut and replaced by the environmental tax, which would give authorities a more powerful tool to force a firm to improve its environmental performance. —Reuters



FRANCE: The electronic spy kicks into action if it detects suspicious movement, transmitting an alert to the oyster farmer's phone or computer. —AFP

UNDERSEA ELECTRONIC SPIES TO NAB OYSTER BED RAIDERS

FRANCE: Electronic spies come in all shapes and sizes, but none is as funny looking as an oyster impersonator called the Flex Spy now infiltrating the waters off western France. Looking for all the world like the bivalves it is protecting, the plastic imposter is fitted with a circuit board that allows it to snitch on thieves. Invented by French start-up Flex-Sense, the device has been on the market since September. After the first prototypes were tested in Vietnam, the gadgets are now making their (undercover) appearance in the oyster beds off France's Atlantic coast, with a major deployment planned in February.

Several dozen tons of oysters are stolen each year out of France's total production of 100,000 tons. "It may not be a big proportion, but it is a lot for the operator who is robbed" after seeing much of his production wiped out by a mystery disease for the past several years, said oyster farmer Gerald Viaud, president of the national shellfish farmers' association. Theft is a "real problem" in the sector, which is "always on the lookout

for solutions", from surveillance cameras to ground, sea and air patrols, he said. One quirkier approach is to fill an oyster shell with cement stamped with the farmer's phone number in the hope that a vendor who finds it among stolen oysters will contact the victim.

Enter Flex-Sense, which was founded some 18 months ago specializing in wireless telemetry in complex environments. Initially it was interested in offering shellfish farmers a way to monitor water temperature, salinity and oxygen concentration from a distance to enable them to limit the mortality rates of their mussels and oysters. But customers were also interested in ways to prevent thefts, which spike ahead of the holiday season. After months of development, the electronic oyster was hatched.

'You have to innovate'

Infiltrated into an oyster bed, the waterproof, pressure-resistant Flex Spy is equipped with an antenna, a simple motion detector, a buzzer and a frequency modulator, said

Sylvain Dardenne, co-founder and commercial director of Flex-Sense. The user pulls out a pinhead hand grenade-before setting the energy-efficient device among the oysters. The electronic spy kicks into action if it detects suspicious movement, transmitting an alert to the oyster farmer's phone or computer. The user can then track the oysters' movements for up to a week.

If left to "sleep" without the need to report intruders, the Flex Spy can lurk in its watery field of operations for 60 months with no need for recharging—more than 20 times more than any geo tracker, notes Dardenne. "Since you can't monitor the entire shoreline, you have to innovate," Viaud said. "The electronic oyster may not be the ideal solution, but it's a step in the right direction." It is too early to judge the device's effectiveness, however, since no thieves have yet been caught. So far Flex-Sense claims around 50 clients who pay 10 Euros (dollars) a month for each Flex Spy, Dardenne said. The company wants to go on to adapt the device for use in the construction industry, he added. —AFP



BEIJING: A man wearing a mask for protection against air pollution pushes his luggage at the Beijing Capital International Airport as the capital of China is shrouded by heavy smog.

RAMBO, PET ALLIGATOR CAN STAY, FLORIDA OFFICIALS SAY

LAKELAND, Florida: A Florida woman is being allowed to keep her 6-foot-long pet alligator at home following a fight with state wildlife officials over the growing size of the reptile. A spokesman for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission said Thursday that the agency had reached an agreement with Mary Thorn, allowing her to keep her 125-pound reptile named Rambo at home.

Wildlife officials say alligators that measure more than 6 feet must have 2.5 acres of land. Rambo has earned local celebrity status in Lakeland, which is located between Tampa and Orlando. The alligator has been with Thorn for more than 11 years and wears clothes. Rambo was recently captured wearing a Santa hat. Thorn is not allowed to exhibit Rambo under the terms of the agreement. —AP

FAMILY OF BEARS LIKELY KILLED FROM EATING POISONOUS PLANT

WEST WYOMING: Game commission officials say a poisonous ornamental shrub likely killed a black bear and her three cubs found dead on a church parking lot in northeastern Pennsylvania. The bears were found on the lot of St. Monica's church in West Wyoming, Pennsylvania, on Dec 6.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission says the bears ate the leaves and seeds of an English yew plant before they died. The plant is highly toxic to people and most animals if ingested.

Game Commission veterinarian Justin Brown says he's not aware of another case of black bear deaths from yew poisoning. Officials say the 300-pound sow and her cubs were known to frequent populated areas, where yew typically grow, and the bears were likely foraging for food. They say the bears likely died suddenly. —AP

SINKHOLE FORCES EVACUATIONS OF SOME DETROIT AREA HOMES

FRASER, Michigan: A sinkhole forming north of Detroit forced the Christmas Eve evacuations of more than a dozen homes and the closure of a busy roadway that was expected to collapse due to a possible sewer problem. Police and firefighters were called to the neighborhood in Fraser about 6 a.m. Saturday after a homeowner called authorities and said his house was sinking. "You can hear the basement walls cracking, so we evacuated that family right away," Fraser Public Safety Director George Rouhib told The Macomb Daily in Mount Clemens. "The house is getting worse - the bricks are falling off the side, the sidewalk is lifting." Traffic along 15 Mile Road also was diverted. An underground camera was being used to view any damage to a major sewer line below the road. "It's not a question of whether the road will collapse, but when it will collapse," Fraser Public Safety Lt. Michael Pettyes said.

In 2004, a sewer collapse caused a nearby section of 15 Mile Road in Sterling Heights to cave in. It created a sinkhole 160 feet long, 60 feet wide and 30 feet deep. The 11-foot-wide sewer line is about 55 feet underground. "You get a break in that line - it's just washing away dirt down there," Pettyes told the Detroit Free Press. "It creates a void. When it creates a void, it moves the dirt out. The ground gives way."

Many of the evacuating residents were seen taking their wrapped gifts with them Saturday as they left their homes. "It's devastating to watch people walking out of their homes with their Christmas presents," said Alannah Wood, shift manager at Green Lantern, a pizza restaurant across 15 Mile Road. "It's heartbreaking because some of them will have no place else to go." —AP

EPIDEMIC: DEA CHEMISTS RACE TO IDENTIFY SYNTHETIC OPIOIDS

WASHINGTON: Emily Dye walked down the echoing white hallway and into a dim room known as "the vault." The evidence was wrapped in plastic. She checked it out and placed it into a steel lockbox. New drugs were appearing every other week in the Drug Enforcement Administration's Special Testing and Research Laboratory, an unmarked gray building in northern Virginia. Dye, a 27-year-old DEA chemist, knew her sample could be one of them. "Man," she said. "I've got to figure out what this is."

The proliferation of rapidly evolving synthetic opioids has become so fierce that the DEA says they now constitute an entire new class of drugs, which are fueling the deadliest addiction crisis the United States has ever seen. The fentanyl-like drugs are pouring in primarily from China, US officials say - an assertion Beijing maintains has not been substantiated. Laws cannot keep pace with the speed of scientific innovation. As soon as one substance is banned, chemists synthesize slightly different, and technically legal, molecules and sell that substance online, delivery to US doorsteps guaranteed.

Today, it is almost as easy to order an ever-shifting array of synthetic opioids online from China as it is to buy a pair of shoes. "Right now we're seeing the emergence of a new class, that's fentanyl-type opioids," Dye's boss, Jill Head, said. "Based on the structure, there can be many, many more substitutions on that molecule that we have not yet seen." Entrepreneurial chemists have been creating designer alternatives to cannabis, amphetamine, cocaine and Ecstasy for years. But the new synthetics are far more lethal; in some cases, an amount smaller than a poppy seed can kill.

Mass spectrometer

Dye has recommitted to every safety protocol she was ever taught. One, safety glasses. Two, lab coat, buttoned. Three, powder-free disposable nitrile gloves. Four, face mask. She placed an emergency naloxone injection kit - an antidote for opioid overdose - on her lab bench. Just in case. Then she unwrapped the evidence and pulled out a palm-sized baggie. She scooped up a dot of powder and gingerly placed it in a small vial. As she worked, she treated the material as if it were radioactive. After transferring a few drops of methanol into the vial, she clamped it shut and dropped it into a mass spectrometer.

The machine sucked the evidence through a copper-colored wire and bombarded it with electrons to break it into small pieces. "Kind of like when you drop a puzzle," Dye said. The resulting pattern of peaks is akin to a chemical fingerprint. Dye compared the result with the lab's library of approximately 1,500 known drugs. None matched. This was something new. She and her colleagues ran the evidence through a nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer to map the position of different atoms. Then they guessed. They bought a sample of the compound they thought they had from a legitimate research chemical company.



VIRGINIA: In this photo, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Forensic Chemist Emily Dye, prepares a control reference sample of fentanyl at the DEA's Special Testing and Research Laboratory in Sterling, Virginia. —AP Photos

On July 26, Dye ran that reference standard through the mass spectrometer. The result matched the evidence exactly. "It's 4-fluoroisobutyrylfentanyl," Dye said. Long before Dye made her discovery, Chinese vendors were offering 4-fluoroisobutyrylfentanyl - 4-FIBF for short - for sale. Shanghai Xianchong Chemical Co, a trading company with a spare office in central Shanghai, was one of them. Shanghai Xianchong started fielding requests for 4-FIBF around April, said manager Jammi Gao, a clean-cut man in a white polo shirt. Gao said in an email he could sell 4-FIBF for \$6,000 a kilogram, though later he denied ever brokering a deal.

He refused to ship illegal drugs, but 4-FIBF is so new to the street it is not a controlled substance in either the US or China. Back in the lab, Dye peeled off her gloves. She didn't know users were warning each other not to overdose chasing a heroin high that never kicked in with 4-FIBF. She didn't know about the dosing schedules addicts had already worked out. And she didn't know that 4-FIBF gave some people satisfying, sleep-through-the-night results when inserted up their rectum. Dye would go home, safe, to her dog. Maybe tomorrow she would find the next new thing in an evidence bag on her bench. But elsewhere, all across America, people would not make it through the night. By the time Dye finished work the next day, another 90 Americans would be dead of opioid overdoses. —AP



CLINIC PAGE



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AL-SAYER PARTNERS WITH CSR FOR FIRST KIDS FESTIVAL

As part of its CSR commitment Al-Sayer Group Holding partnered for the 1st Kids Festival on the occasion of Universal Children's Day in association with UNICEF, sponsoring a booth for Al Kharafi Activity Kids Center (AKAKC) Sanad Kuwaiti Foundation for children with special needs. The event was attended by His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Kuwait, representatives of Kuwait Social Development Office, UNICEF delegates, Zainab ToemiBenJlon representative from United Nations, Al-Sayer COO Bengt Kurt Schultz, DGM Corporate Excellence Nehad AlHaj Ali, and Corporate Excellence Team.

During inauguration ceremony, His Excellency Sheikh

Mohammed Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Kuwait honored Al Sayer Group Holding and applauded the selfless stand to support a disability school and UN representative Zainab ToemiBenJlon, and UNICEF delegates appreciated the Al-Sayer Group's approach to promote special needs school, creating awareness on the rights of children.

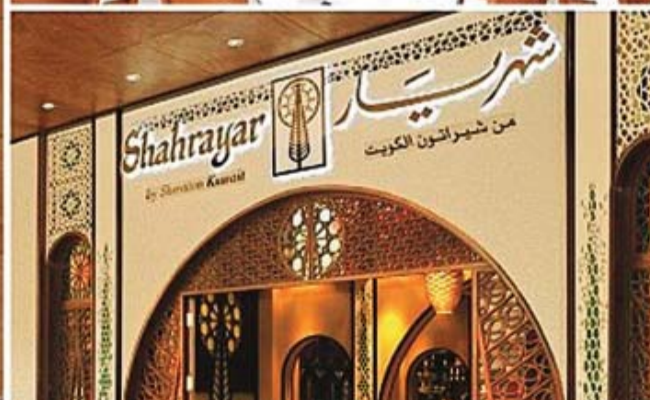
According to Bengt Kurt Schultz, COO Al-Sayer Group Holding "Al-Sayer business is deeply connected with the sustainability vision. Our sustainability thoughts encourage us to spread awareness and build sense of responsibility towards the society we engage with. Such international initiatives to promote social responsibility excites our team, customers and communities to participate

wholeheartedly. We believe every day is a chance to be better, demonstrated through our values and actions as an organization."

The vibrant and jovial event conducted at The Avenues Mall attracted walk-ins of 10,000+ visitors including high ranked personalities, children, parents along with participation from Kuwait Social Development Office, Kuwait National Child Protection Program, Kuwait Red Crescent Society and Corporates to promote UNICEF's child right message. Eng Nehad AlHaj Ali DGM Corporate Excellence mentioned "We are proud to partner for such movement, creating awareness on the need of developing children with special needs, to show their talents and to ensure they receive equal attention and care from the society."

AKAKC performed live activities including making handicrafts, painting on bags and wooden boxes, weaving of shawls and crafting ornaments and display them for sale enabling better engagement. This encouraged visitors to explore services about the school highlighting the caliber of special needs children. AKAKC activities included entertainment, rehabilitation and training services for the special need child from ages 4 to 13. Kids expressed their joy receiving compliments including pack of drawing kits, honey for winter season and preloaded Magic Planet game cards and encouraged them to develop empathy towards disabled as well as raise social awareness to build a promising young generation to support the Al-Sayer Initiatives.

EXCEPTIONAL FESTIVE SEASON AT SHERATON KUWAIT AND FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON KUWAIT



As we start to countdown the last days of the year 2016, Sheraton Kuwait and Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait are thrilled to welcome all of their guests to celebrate the festive season and New Year in a family atmosphere full of fun and superb luxurious hospitality through its diverse restaurants that have been extensively preparing for a remarkable New Year's Eve dining experience. The guests of Sheraton Kuwait can indulge in a luxurious festive season spirit through its prestigious restaurants, which extends from the Sheraton Kuwait to the Avenues, the largest mall in Kuwait, where they can choose from a wide selection of menus around the world in accordance with high level of hospitality standards and outstanding services.

Riccardo Restaurant is welcoming you again to experience the exemplary fine dining of the gen-

uine Italian cuisine whilst listening to live music performed by the Italian duo. Enjoy lavish dining experience with Al Hambra restaurant and savor a variety of international buffets specially prepared for this occasion; Lebanese delicacies in a distinctive traditional ambiance at le Tarbouche restaurant to enjoy the best cold and hot mesas; Also Bukhara restaurant which offers a rich treasure of Indian dishes prepared with the finest types of authentic spices, as well as Shahrayar restaurant, the Iranian cuisine where you relish the most vibrant cuisine and taste the best barbecue with hot Tannur bread.

Enjoy traditional English tea in a luxurious and classic ambiance with original flavors at the English Tea Lounge with a variety of delectable scones and snacks. Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait is welcoming you with distinctive

ambiance at Asseef restaurant, providing International buffets and all day dining. Also, La Mamma Pizzeria is waiting you to enjoy an assortment of appetizing antipasti, freshly prepared pasta and pizza baked on the wood to meet your culinary desire. Special packages offered on rooms and suites are also available to enjoy your holidays and suit your expected desires.

The Sheraton Kuwait restaurants in the Avenues-Grand Avenue are welcoming you to enjoy both shopping and taste the best cuisines in a classy and superior atmosphere. On this joyous occasion, Mr. Fahed Abushaar- the General Manager of Sheraton Kuwait and Mr. Mounir Amer - General Manager of Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait, the Executive Committee and all the associates wish the people of Kuwait and all residents a prosperous New Year 2017.



IWC HOSTS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN COMMITTEE MEMBERS A BREAKFAST

Al-Saha restaurant recently hosted the International Women Committee members for a breakfast during which old and new ambassadors' spouses, including the new Yemeni, Moroccan and Algerian ambassadors spouses, got acquainted. The event was also attended by the committee chairlady, the Russian ambassador's spouse and the committee advisor, Narjis Al-Shatti.



ACK STUDENTS COMPLETE INTERNSHIP WITH AMEED PLAZA



Australian College of Kuwait's (ACK) students had the experience of a lifetime as they completed an internship program with "Ameed Plaza," a company specialized in the fields of trade, food & beverage, marketing solutions, advertising and real estate consultation. As a part of ACK's continuous efforts to improve the skills of its students and in preparing them for the real-world corporate responsibilities, ACK has collaborated with Ameed Plaza to provide training to its students through an internship program. The Acting Associate Dean - School of Business and Assistant professor, Dr. Sam Toglaw, said: "It was a great pleasure working with Ameed Plaza to help prepare our students for future corporate endeavors. The partnership has been a fruitful one that has added another brick to our continuous efforts to add value to the development programs for our students." ACK delivers a unique mix of practical and theoretical learning. Therefore, the College strongly believes in providing

internship opportunities to its students, such as this, to experience things taught in the classroom and how they are applied in a professional setting. In turn, this provides ACK graduates with invaluable skills and knowledge to further their development and prepare them for their professional careers.

Greetings



Happy birthday to Adam Mamdooh Yuri, 4 years old, on 25th December. More birthdays to come, good health and stay humble. Greetings from your friends and family.

ASSE KUWAIT CHAPTER CONDUCTS ASP PREPARATORY WORKSHOP

American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE), Kuwait Chapter organized 4 days workshop on ASP Preparation exclusively for ASSE Members. The program planned to conduct in 4 consecutive Fridays started from 18th November 2016 till 9th December 2016 at Best Western Hotel, Mahboula, State of Kuwait. American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) Kuwait Chapter is Kuwait's premier voluntary and non-profit organization providing professional guidance, training and consultancy; in the field of Health, Safety and Environment; to the industrial and social sectors in the region. ASSE Kuwait Chapter adheres itself to solid social commitment and actively shoulders many socially responsible and community service activities. Rama Krishna Chary, President of ASSE Kuwait Chapter in his welcome note, briefed about the importance of Certifications in Safety Profession. The head of Chapter's Career and Professional Development Committee, Aamir Rasheed, thanked all the participation for their participation and invited the speakers. Khaled Yousry presented the Domain 5 and 6 of Occupational Health and Environmental Management on 18th November 2016.

Khaled Yousry, Certified Safety Professional (CSP), BCSP - USA, Associate Safety Professional (ASP), BCSP - USA, Chartered Safety Practitioner (CMIOSH), IOSH - UK, Awarded NEBOSH International Diploma (International Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety) - Credit, Awarded NEBOSH International General Certificate (International Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety) - Distinction, Awarded International Advanced Diploma in Teaching and Training Assessment, City and Guilds - UK, Certified OSHA trainer, 132 Hours Professional Training (Parallel to OSHA 500 and OSHA 501), ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 Lead Auditor, IRCA and IEMA, Certified Scaffolding Trainer from STI, USA (Scaffolding Training Institute), Certified Defensive Driving Trainer/Instructor, National Safety Council USA, Certified Safety Trainer specialist (STS) from IASP USA and Safety Planning Specialist, Authorized Lead NEBOSH and IOSH Tutor, UK, Rig Pass Trainer, IACD.

N Vasudevan presented Domain 2 and 4 (Safety Management System and Fire Prevention and Protection) on 25th November 2016. N Vasudevan is working in field of HS&E for past 25 years. He is qualified fire Engineer with post graduation certification in safety. He is a certified HAZOP Expert, Lead OHSAS 18001 and ISO14001 auditor. He is a certified safety Professional CSP BCSP USA. Vasudevan has held various positions in ASSE Kuwait chapter Executive committee since year 2004 and is past President (2012-13) of ASSE Kuwait Chapter. He was director of ASSE Kuwait chapter professional development conference in 2015.

He is part of advisory committee of ASSE Kuwait chapter. He started his career as Engineer Trainee in Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Visag refinery and promoted to Deputy Manager- Fire and Safety. He joined Kuwait national Petroleum Company MAA as Safety Engineer in the year 2001. He has wide range of experience in field and has conducted various specialized training program in the field of HSE. He has also presented technical papers



at various forums including at ASSE Kuwait PDC 2009 and ASSE Middle east chapter PDC in year 2011 at Bahrain. He has been actively involved in development of various procedures including Incident investigation, Emergency preparedness plan, Contractor HSE management system and work permit system.

Sajjadusain Siddiqui presented on Domain 1 Mathematics on 2nd December 2016 and Domain 3 Ergonomics on 9th December 2016. Siddiqui is a Chemical Engineer, Associate Safety Professional from BCSP, with more than 14+ years of in-depth experience in Petrochemical Industry and worked in different plants like Polyethylene, Butene-1, Sulfolane Production Units. Detailed study and reviewing of Process Design Package Iso-Pentane purification and storage facility, pre commissioning/commissioning. Involved in revamp of Butene-1 plant. Presently working with EQUATE Petrochemical Company, EHS Department as EH&S Delivery Leader.

Golamari Sampath Reddy presented Domain 7 Training, Education, and Communication on 9th December 2016. Sampath Reddy is working in field of Oil and Gas sector for the past 25 years. Reddy started his career in Upstream Oil and Gas company ONGC a National E&P company in India. He joined ONGC as Graduate Mechanical Engineer in the year 1989 and worked as Mechanical engineer on one of the On land Oil rig for six years. Later in the year 1995 he shifted to HSE and gained maximum experience through participation in Oil and Gas drilling HSE field. For his efforts he has been promoted by the company periodically. In the year 2003 he joined Institute of Engineering and Ocean Technology as corrosion engineer.

During his brief stint up to the year 2006, he was instrumental in diagnosing and analyzing various corrosion related issues in Oil and Gas onshore and offshore pipelines and recommending suitable material of construction.

Later in the year 2006, he joined Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), Kuwait an upstream oil and Gas company, as Drilling HSE Engineer. During the last 10 years he continued his efforts in KOC in implementation of HSE Management system. He is actively involved in developing major HSE MS procedures in Drilling and Well Surveillance.

In addition is one of the key member in the KOC HSE MS Procedural development committee. For his efforts he is being promoted by KOC and he presently designated as Specialist Safety. He is qualified Mechanical Engineer with post graduation in Industrial Metallurgy. He has also completed Diploma in Safety management from British Safety Council. He is also a certified Lead OHSAS 18001 and ISO14001 auditor. He is a certified safety Professional (CSP) by BCSP, USA and Chartered Member of IOSH (CMIOSH), UK. Currently he is holding the position of Advisory Committee member in ASSE Kuwait Chapter. He held all the positions in ASSE Kuwait Chapter since 2006.

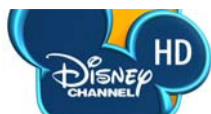
Started as Sub-committee member of Publication Committee, Head of the Publication Committee, Treasurer, Secretary, Vice-President and President. In addition to the above, he was a working Organizing Committee Member of ASSE Kuwait Chapter Professional Development Conferences held during the years 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015. He actively participate in the organizing committee of GCC HSE Excellence Award programs of 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

25 ASSE Members utilized this distinct opportunity and benefitted from the program. ASSE Kuwait Chapter would continue its strive to do their best for the progress of the society and its members in particular, by organizing such beneficial trainings in future too. Details about the training plans would be available to the members and community members through email assekuwait@hotmail.com or phone line: -66846040. For more details visit www.assekuwait.org



- 00:50 Gator Boys
- 01:45 Mountain Monsters
- 02:40 Biggest And Baddest
- 04:25 Venom Hunter
- 05:15 Man, Cheetah, Wild
- 06:49 River Monsters: Lair Of Giants
- 07:36 Swamp Brothers
- 08:25 Groomer Has It
- 09:15 Life On Earth: A New Prehistory
- 10:10 Man, Cheetah, Wild
- 11:05 Tanked
- 12:00 Groomer Has It
- 12:55 Bondi Vet
- 13:20 Bondi Vet
- 13:50 Life On Earth: A New Prehistory
- 14:45 Gator Boys
- 15:40 Man, Cheetah, Wild
- 16:35 Tanked
- 17:30 Ten Deadliest Snakes
- 18:25 Swimming With Monsters: Steve Backshall
- 19:20 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
- 20:15 Tanked
- 21:10 Gorilla Doctors
- 22:05 Into The Pride
- 23:00 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet

- 13:05 How Do They Do It?
- 13:30 Storage Hunters UK
- 13:55 The Liquidator
- 14:20 Railroad Alaska
- 15:10 Deadliest Job Interview
- 16:00 Deadliest Catch
- 16:50 Cuban Chrome
- 17:40 Wheeler Dealers
- 18:30 How Do They Do It?
- 18:55 How Do They Do It?
- 19:20 Deadliest Job Interview
- 20:10 Storage Hunters UK
- 20:35 The Liquidator
- 21:00 Gold Rush
- 21:50 Deadliest Catch
- 22:40 Catching Monsters
- 23:30 Cuban Chrome



- 00:10 Hank Zipzer
- 00:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 01:00 Violetta
- 01:45 The Hive
- 01:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 02:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 02:40 Hank Zipzer
- 03:05 Binny And The Ghost
- 03:30 Violetta
- 04:15 The Hive
- 04:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 04:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 05:10 Hank Zipzer
- 05:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 06:00 Violetta
- 06:45 The Hive
- 06:50 Mouk
- 07:00 Dog With A Blog
- 07:25 Dog With A Blog
- 07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
- 07:55 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 08:20 Elena Of Avalor
- 08:45 Star Darlings
- 08:50 Liv And Maddie
- 09:15 Jessie
- 09:40 Jessie
- 10:05 Jessie
- 10:30 Wizards Of Waverly Place - The Movie
- 12:10 Austin & Ally
- 12:35 Austin & Ally
- 13:00 Liv And Maddie
- 13:25 Liv And Maddie
- 13:50 Shake It Up
- 14:15 Shake It Up
- 14:40 Dog With A Blog
- 15:05 Dog With A Blog
- 15:30 Good Luck Charlie
- 15:55 Good Luck Charlie
- 16:20 Girl Meets World
- 16:45 Girl Meets World
- 17:10 Elena Of Avalor
- 17:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 18:00 The Next Step
- 18:25 Descendants Wicked World
- 18:30 Liv And Maddie
- 18:55 Star Darlings
- 19:00 Suite Life Of Zack & Cody, The
- 19:25 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 19:50 Austin & Ally
- 19:55 Descendants Wicked World
- 20:00 Backstage
- 20:25 Tsum Tsum Shorts
- 20:30 Elena Of Avalor
- 20:55 Best Friends Whenever
- 21:20 Jessie
- 22:35 H2O: Just Add Water
- 23:00 Binny And The Ghost
- 23:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch



- 01:00 Monster Quest
- 02:00 In Search Of Aliens
- 03:00 Engineering Disasters
- 03:50 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
- 04:40 Ronoko: Search For The Lost Colony
- 06:20 America's Book Of Secrets
- 07:10 The Universe
- 08:00 Monster Quest
- 09:00 In Search Of Aliens
- 10:00 Engineering Disasters
- 11:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
- 12:00 Ronoko: Search For The Lost Colony
- 14:00 Monster Quest
- 15:00 In Search Of Aliens
- 16:00 Engineering Disasters
- 17:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
- 18:00 Rome's Lost Legion
- 19:00 Ancient Aliens
- 20:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 21:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 22:00 Warriors
- 23:00 Monster Quest



- 01:00 Jonbenet's Mother: Victim Or Killer
- 03:00 The Killing Of Jonbenet: Her Father Speaks
- 05:00 Jonbenet's Mother: Victim Or Killer
- 06:30 Private Crimes
- 07:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
- 08:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
- 09:00 Homicide Hunter
- 10:00 It Takes A Killer
- 11:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
- 15:00 The First 48
- 16:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
- 17:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 18:00 I Love You But I Lied
- 19:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
- 20:00 Homicide Hunter
- 21:00 It Takes A Killer
- 23:00 The First 48
- 23:00 Homicide Hunter



- 00:40 Blood Relatives
- 01:30 Paranormal Lockdown
- 02:20 The Haunted
- 03:10 The Perfect Murder
- 04:00 Suspicion
- 04:48 I Almost Got Away With It
- 08:00 Obsession: Dark Desires
- 12:10 I Am Homicide
- 13:00 California Investigator
- 17:10 Momsters: When Moms Go Bad
- 17:35 Momsters: When Moms Go Bad
- 18:00 Beauty Queen Murders
- 22:10 Dead On Arrival
- 23:00 Killer Instinct With Chris Hansen



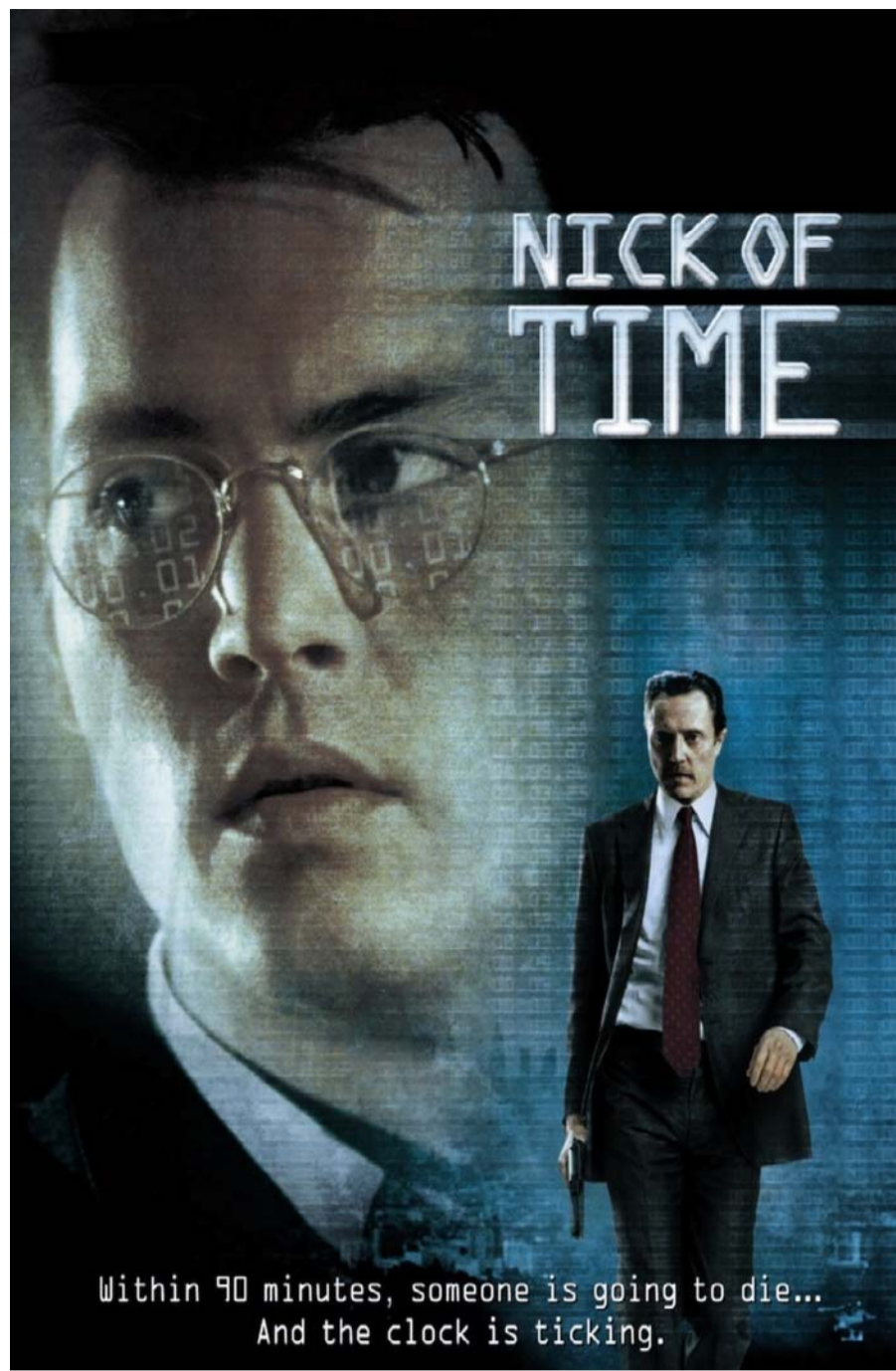
- 00:05 Destroyed In Seconds
- 00:30 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 01:20 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 02:10 World's Toughest Jobs
- 03:50 Ultimate Survival
- 06:20 How It's Made
- 07:00 Kenny The Shark
- 07:25 Awesome Adventures
- 07:50 Bad Dog
- 08:40 How It's Made
- 09:05 How It's Made
- 09:30 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 10:20 Mythbusters
- 11:10 Troy
- 12:00 Troy
- 12:50 Dynamo: Magician Impossible



- 00:00 12 Chefs Of Christmas
- 01:30 Spicy Christmas With Thomasina Miers
- 02:00 Holiday Baking Championship
- 06:00 Chopped
- 07:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 07:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 08:00 The Kitchen



- 00:00 Doc McStuffins
- 00:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
- 00:35 Zou
- 00:50 Loopdidoo
- 01:05 Art Attack
- 01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
- 01:45 Calimero
- 02:00 Zou
- 02:15 Loopdidoo
- 02:30 Art Attack
- 06:00 Supa Strikas
- 06:25 Supa Strikas
- 06:50 Counterfeit Cat
- 07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 07:15 K.C. Undercover
- 07:40 Atomic Puppet
- 08:10 Lab Rats
- 08:35 Danger Mouse
- 09:00 Bob's Broken Sleigh
- 09:50 Kirby Buckets
- 10:20 Kirby Buckets
- 10:45 Gravity Falls
- 11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 11:35 Gamer's Guide To Pretty



Within 90 minutes, someone is going to die... And the clock is ticking.

NICK OF TIME ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

- 20:00 PJ Masks
- 20:30 Sofia The First
- 21:00 Sofia The First: Once Upon A Princess
- 22:00 PJ Masks
- 06:00 Supa Strikas
- 06:25 Supa Strikas
- 06:50 Counterfeit Cat
- 07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 07:15 K.C. Undercover
- 07:40 Atomic Puppet
- 08:10 Lab Rats
- 08:35 Danger Mouse
- 09:00 Bob's Broken Sleigh
- 09:50 Kirby Buckets
- 10:20 Kirby Buckets
- 10:45 Gravity Falls
- 11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 11:35 Gamer's Guide To Pretty

- 06:50 Ax Men
- 07:40 Ice Road Truckers
- 08:30 Storage Wars Texas
- 08:55 Lost In Transmission
- 09:45 Lost In Transmission
- 10:35 Counting Cars: Best Of
- 11:00 Pawn Stars
- 11:25 Pawn Stars
- 11:50 Pawn Stars
- 12:15 Pawn Stars
- 12:40 Pawn Stars
- 13:05 Pawn Stars
- 13:30 Pawn Stars
- 13:55 Pawn Stars
- 16:00 Pawn Stars Best Of
- 16:25 Pawn Stars Best Of
- 17:40 Swamp People
- 18:30 Hoard Hunters
- 19:20 American Pickers
- 20:10 Pawn Stars
- 20:35 Pawn Stars
- 21:00 Sean Bean On Waterloo
- 21:50 Aussie Pickers
- 22:40 Billion Dollar Wreck

- 15:25 Wineroads
- 15:50 Lucky Chow
- 16:20 My Restaurant In India
- 16:45 Grandma's Boy
- 17:15 Grandma's Boy
- 17:40 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
- 18:10 Around The World In 80 Dishes
- 19:05 What's For Sale?
- 19:30 Wineroads
- 20:00 Lucky Chow
- 20:25 My Restaurant In India
- 20:50 Grandma's Boy
- 21:15 Grandma's Boy
- 21:40 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
- 22:05 Around The World In 80 Dishes
- 22:55 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet



- 00:20 Killer Dragons
- 01:10 Animals Gone Wild
- 02:00 Clouded Leopard
- 02:50 Making Panda
- 03:45 The Invaders
- 04:40 Make You Laugh Out Loud
- 05:35 Clouded Leopard
- 06:30 Making Panda
- 07:25 The Invaders
- 08:20 Make You Laugh Out Loud
- 09:15 Big Baboon House
- 10:10 Extreme Animal Babies
- 11:05 World's Creepiest Killers
- 12:00 Life On The Barrier Reef
- 12:55 Original Fight Club
- 13:50 Grizzly Cauldron
- 14:45 How Human Are You?
- 15:40 Animals Behaving Badly
- 16:35 The Monster Project
- 17:30 Extreme Animal Babies
- 18:25 World's Weirdest
- 19:20 How Human Are You?
- 20:10 Animals Behaving Badly
- 21:00 The Monster Project



- 00:10 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
- 01:00 Emmerdale
- 01:30 Emmerdale
- 02:00 Coronation Street
- 02:30 Cash Trapped
- 03:25 Grantchester Christmas Special
- 04:45 Gino's Hidden Italy
- 05:15 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
- 06:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
- 11:50 Cash Trapped
- 12:45 Emmerdale
- 13:15 Coronation Street
- 13:45 Coronation Street
- 14:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
- 15:10 Cash Trapped
- 16:00 Broadchurch
- 16:55 Autopsy: The Last Hours Of...
- 17:50 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
- 18:50 Emmerdale
- 19:15 Coronation Street
- 19:45 Coronation Street
- 20:10 Cash Trapped
- 21:00 Broadchurch
- 21:55 Autopsy: The Last Hours Of...
- 22:50 Emmerdale
- 23:15 Coronation Street
- 23:40 Coronation Street



- 00:10 My Restaurant In India
- 00:35 My Restaurant In India
- 01:00 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 01:25 A Is For Apple
- 01:50 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
- 02:15 Food School
- 02:40 What's For Sale?
- 03:05 What's For Sale?
- 03:30 Wineroads
- 03:55 Lucky Chow
- 04:20 My Restaurant In India
- 04:45 Grandma's Boy
- 05:10 Grandma's Boy
- 05:35 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
- 06:00 Around The World In 80 Dishes
- 06:50 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 07:15 A Is For Apple
- 07:40 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
- 08:05 Food School
- 08:30 What's For Sale?
- 08:55 What's For Sale?
- 09:20 Wineroads
- 09:45 Lucky Chow
- 10:10 My Restaurant In India
- 10:35 Grandma's Boy
- 11:00 Grandma's Boy
- 11:25 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
- 11:50 Around The World In 80 Dishes
- 12:40 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 13:05 A Is For Apple
- 13:35 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
- 14:00 Food School
- 14:30 What's For Sale?
- 14:55 What's For Sale?

FOR A GOOD TIME, CALL ON OSN MOVIES COMEDY HD

- 13:40 Dynamo: Magician Impossible
- 14:30 Dynamo: Magician Impossible
- 16:10 Kenny The Shark
- 16:35 Awesome Adventures
- 17:00 Don't Drive Here
- 17:50 David Baddiel On The Silk Road
- 18:40 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 19:30 How It's Made
- 20:20 Mythbusters
- 21:10 Don't Drive Here
- 22:00 David Baddiel On The Silk Road
- 22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
- 23:15 Destroyed In Seconds
- 23:40 Beyond Survival With Les Stroud
- 09:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 10:00 Chopped
- 11:00 Guy's Big Bite
- 12:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 13:00 Man Fire Food
- 14:00 Chopped
- 15:00 The Kitchen
- 16:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 17:00 Chopped
- 18:00 Iron Chef America
- 19:00 Restaurant Stakeout
- 20:00 Mystery Diners
- 03:00 Calimero
- 03:15 Zou
- 03:30 Loopdidoo
- 03:45 Art Attack
- 04:10 Henry Hugglemonster
- 04:25 Calimero
- 04:45 Loopdidoo
- 05:00 Art Attack
- 05:25 Henry Hugglemonster
- 05:35 Calimero
- 05:50 Zou
- 06:00 Loopdidoo
- 06:15 Art Attack
- 06:35 Henry Hugglemonster
- 06:50 Calimero
- 07:00 Zou
- 07:20 Loopdidoo
- 07:35 Art Attack
- 08:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 08:30 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 08:55 Goldie & Bear
- 09:25 Minnie's Bow-Toons
- 09:30 The Lion Guard
- 10:00 The Lion Guard
- 10:25 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 10:55 Sofia The First
- 11:20 The Lion Guard
- 11:50 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital
- 12:15 Little Mermaid
- 12:45 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 13:00 Sofia The First
- 13:25 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 13:50 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 14:20 Doc McStuffins
- 14:45 The Lion Guard
- 15:15 Sofia The First
- 15:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 16:10 Doc McStuffins
- 16:35 The Lion Guard
- 17:05 PJ Masks
- 17:30 Sofia The First
- 18:00 The Adventures Of The Disney Fairies
- 18:30 Goldie & Bear
- 19:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 19:30 Little Mermaid
- 00:25 Barbarians Rising
- 01:20 Criss Angel: Mindfreak
- 02:10 Storage Wars Texas
- 02:35 Storage Wars Texas
- 03:00 Counting Cars
- 03:25 Counting Cars
- 03:50 Shipping Wars
- 04:15 Shipping Wars
- 04:40 Pawn Stars
- 05:10 Storage Wars Christmas Special
- 06:00 Swamp People



RICKI AND THE FLASH ON OSN MOVIES HD



- 00:10 Desperate Hours
- 00:35 Desperate Hours
- 01:00 Years Of Living Dangerously
- 02:00 Mars
- 02:55 Startalk
- 03:50 Desperate Hours
- 04:15 Desperate Hours
- 05:40 Chasing UFOs
- 06:35 Strippers: Cars For Cash
- 06:35 Beyond Magic With DMC
- 07:30 Inside Turkish Airlines
- 08:25 Mega Factories
- 09:20 Chasing UFOs
- 10:15 Explorer
- 11:10 WW2 Hell Under The Sea
- 12:05 Locked Up Abroad
- 13:00 Mega Factories
- 14:00 Megastructures
- 15:00 Beyond Magic With DMC
- 16:00 Hitler's Jurassic Monsters
- 17:00 WW2 Hell Under The Sea
- 18:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 19:00 Taboo
- 20:00 Hitler's Jurassic Monsters
- 20:50 WW2 Hell Under The Sea
- 21:40 Locked Up Abroad
- 22:30 Taboo



- 00:00 88
- 02:00 Area 407
- 04:00 Swelter
- 06:00 Nick Of Time
- 08:00 Seventh Son
- 09:45 Blown Away
- 12:00 Blunt Force Trauma
- 13:45 Nick Of Time
- 15:30 Forbidden Empire
- 17:45 Blown Away
- 20:00 Survivor
- 22:00 Kingsman: The Secret Service



- 02:00 Ordinary People
- 04:30 A Walk Among The Tombstones
- 06:30 Jack Strong
- 09:00 The Truth About Emanuel
- 10:45 Ordinary People
- 13:00 Batkid Begins
- 15:00 Memories
- 17:00 The Truth About Emanuel
- 19:00 Ironweed
- 21:30 The Village
- 23:30 Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas



- 01:45 The Visit
- 03:30 Ricki And The Flash
- 05:30 Far From The Madding Crowd
- 07:30 Daddy's Home
- 09:15 Ricki And The Flash
- 11:00 Jurassic World
- 13:15 Star Wars: The Force Awakens
- 15:30 Chloe And Theo
- 17:00 Pitch Perfect 2
- 19:00 Pan
- 21:00 San Andreas
- 23:00 Creed



- 00:45 The Three Dogatears
- 02:30 Jingle All The Way 2
- 04:15 The Nutcracker Sweet
- 06:00 Snow Queen
- 07:30 Memory Loss
- 09:00 Jetsons: The Movie
- 10:45 Jingle All The Way 2
- 12:30 Memory Loss
- 14:15 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants
- 16:00 Justice League: Attack Of The Legion Of Doom
- 18:00 Jetsons: The Movie
- 20:00 Jock The Hero Dog
- 22:00 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants
- 23:45 Justice League: Attack Of The Legion Of Doom



- 01:00 Santa's Little Helper
- 03:00 Christmas Trade
- 05:00 Alone For Christmas
- 07:00 Get Santa
- 09:00 Frozen
- 11:00 Alone For Christmas
- 13:00 Bark Ranger
- 15:00 Oz The Great And Powerful
- 17:15 Santa Claws
- 19:00 Diary Of A Wimpy Kid
- 21:00 Captain Sabertooth And The Treasure Of Lama Rama
- 23:00 Oz The Great And Powerful

For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadisiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoum Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaheel Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khalidiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khalidiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlis Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Lithuania	00370
Albania	00355	Luxembourg	00352
Algeria	00213	Macau	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antiga	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Azerbaijan	00994	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahamas	001242	Martinique	00596
Bahrain	00973	Mauritania	00222
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritius	00230
Barbados	001246	Mayotte	00269
Belarus	00375	Mexico	0052
Belgium	0032	Micronesia	00691
Belize	00501	Moldova	00373
Benin	00229	Monaco	00377
Bermuda	001441	Mongolia	00976
Bhutan	00975	Montserrat	001664
Bolivia	00591	Morocco	00212
Bosnia	00387	Mozambique	00258
Botswana	00267	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brazil	0055	Namibia	00264
Brunei	00673	Nepal	00977
Bulgaria	00359	Netherlands	0031
Burkina	00226	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Burundi	00257	New Caledonia	00687
Cambodia	00855	New Zealand	0064
Cameroon	00237	Nicaragua	00505
Canada	001	Niger	00227
Cape Verde	00238	Nigeria	00234
Cayman Islands	001345	Niue	00683
Central African	00236	Norfolk Island	00672
Chad	00235	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
Chile	0056	North Korea	00850
China	0086	Norway	0047
Colombia	0057	Oman	00968
Comoros	00269	Pakistan	0092
Congo	00242	Palau	00680
Cook Islands	00682	Panama	00507
Costa Rica	00506	Papua New Guinea	00675
Croatia	00385	Paraguay	00595
Cuba	0053	Peru	0051
Cyprus	00357	Philippines	0063
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Poland	0048
Czech Republic	00420	Portugal	00351
Denmark	0045	Puerto Rico	001787
Diego Garcia	00246	Qatar	00974
Djibouti	00253	Romania	0040
Dominica	001767	Russian Federation	007
Dominican Republic	001809	Rwanda	00250
Ecuador	00593	Saint Helena	00290
Egypt	0020	Saint Kitts	001869
El Salvador	00503	Saint Lucia	001758
England (UK)	0044	Saint Pierre	00508
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Vincent	001784
Eritrea	00291	Samoa US	00684
Estonia	00372	Samoa West	00685
Ethiopia	00251	San Marino	00378
Falkland Islands	00500	Sao Tome	00239
Faroe Islands	00298	Saudi Arabia	00966
Fiji	00679	Scotland (UK)	0044
Finland	00358	Senegal	00221
France	0033	Seychelles	00284
French Guiana	00594	Sierra Leone	00232
French Polynesia	00689	Singapore	0065
Gabon	00241	Slovakia	00421
Gambia	00220	Slovenia	00386
Georgia	00995	Solomon Islands	00677
Germany	0049	Somalia	00252
Ghana	00233	South Africa	0027
Gibraltar	00350	South Korea	0082
Greece	0030	Spain	0034
Greenland	00299	Sri Lanka	0094
Grenada	001473	Sudan	00249
Guadeloupe	00590	Suriname	00597
Guam	001671	Swaziland	00268
Guatemala	00502	Sweden	0046
Guinea	00224	Switzerland	0041
Guyana	00592	Syria	00963
Haiti	00509	Serbia	00381
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Taiwan	00886
Honduras	00504	Tanzania	00255
Hong Kong	00852	Thailand	0066
Hungary	0036	Togo	00228
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Tonga	00676
Iceland	00354	Tokelau	00690
India	0091	Trinidad	001868
Indian Ocean	00873	Tunisia	00216
Indonesia	0062	Turkey	0090
Iran	0098	Tuvalu	00688
Iraq	00964	Uganda	00256
Ireland	00353	Ukraine	00380
Italy	0039	United Arab Emirates	00976
Ivory Coast	00225	United Kingdom	0044
Jamaica	001876	Uruguay	00598
Japan	0081	USA	001
Jordan	00962	Uzbekistan	00998
Kazakhstan	007	Vanuatu	00678
Kenya	00254	Venezuela	00582
Kiribati	00686	Vietnam	0084
Kuwait	00965	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands US	001340
Laos	00856	Wales (UK)	0044
Latvia	00371	Yemen	00967
Lebanon	00961	Yugoslavia	00381
Liberia	00231	Zambia	00260
Libya	00218	Zimbabwe	00263
Lesotho	00266		

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

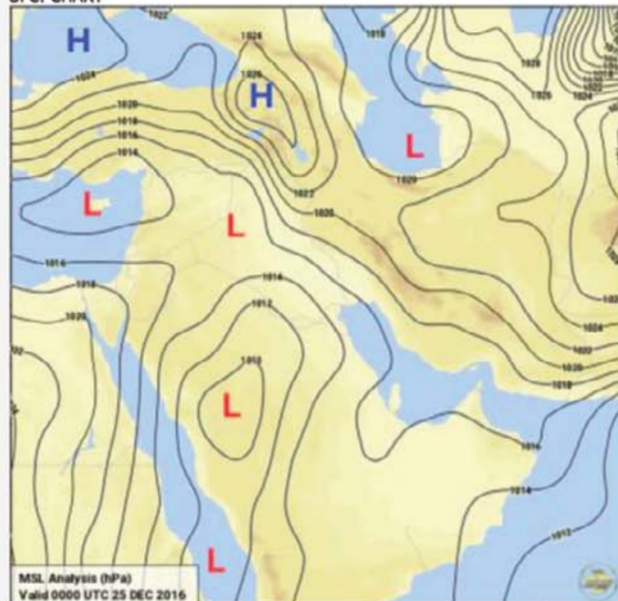
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 25/12/2016-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 26 °C

By Day : Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening gradually at times south easterly changing to north westerly later on wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h causing raising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times
By Night : Partly cloudy with light to moderate south easterly changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 38 km/h with a chance for scattered rain

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Expected Weather	temperature will decrease + scattered clouds	partly cloudy + scattered rain	partly cloudy + scattered rain	cloudy + chance for drizzle
Min Temp °C	13	10	10	09
Max Temp °C	19	20	18	20
Wind Direction	north westerly to northerly	variable	north westerly	north westerly changing to south easterly
Wind Speed km/h	15 - 35	06 - 26	15 - 40	12 - 35

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Weather Watches

Fresh wind

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C	REC	Max °C	EXP
KUWAIT CITY	17		22	
KUWAIT AIRPORT	15		26	
ABDALLY	12		24	
BUBYAN	14		19	
JAHRA	13		23	
FAILAKA ISLAND	15		20	
SALMIYAH	15		20	
AHMADI	16		20	
JAL ALIYAH	13		23	
QAROH ISLAND	19		23	
UMM AL-MARADEM	19		23	
NUWAISIB	13		22	
WAFRA	14		24	
MANAGISH	14		24	
SALMY	15		23	
MUTRIBA	12		23	

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	24
Min Temp (°C)	09
Max Rel Hum (%)	67
Min Rel Hum (%)	22
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	21 S
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

Sunrise	06:39
Sunset	16:56

Prayer Times

Fajr	05:15
Sunrise	06:39
Zuhr	11:48
Asr	14:38
Sunset	16:56
Isha	18:19



PRIVATE CLINICS

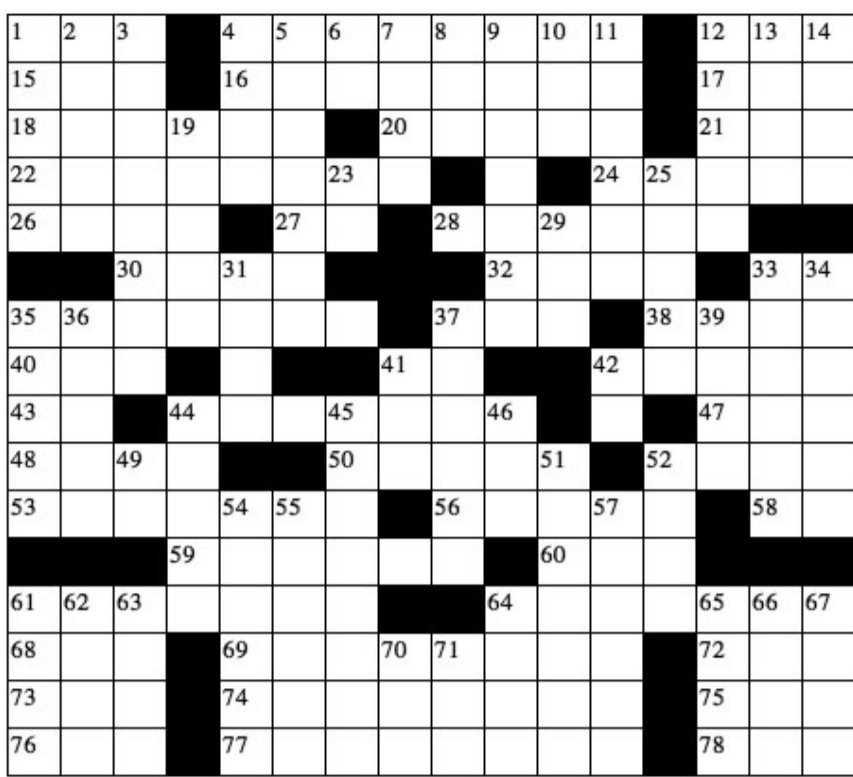
Ophthalmologists	
Dr. Abdallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabeea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghy	25732223
Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)	
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	24555050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	24555050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhazeem	23926920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Refae	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abdallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Plastic Surgeons	
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Family Doctor	
Dr. Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Psychiatrists	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr. Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	
Dr. Adrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s. Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliytami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
General Surgeons	
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
Internists, Chest & Heart	
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisen	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr. Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Paediatricians	
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarouf	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gujare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam	
Bern University	23845955
Dentists	
Dr. Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdallateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisen	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist	
Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924
Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. Musaed Faraj Khamees	22666288
Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Internist, Chest & Heart	
DR. Mohammed Akkad	24555050 Ext 210
Dr. Mohammad Zubaid	
MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC	

CROSSWORD 1472



ACROSS

- An index of the cost of all goods and services to a typical consumer.
- Small family of usually tropical butterflies.
- A federally chartered savings bank.
- Imperial dynasty that ruled China (most of the time) from 206 BC to 221 and expanded its boundaries and developed its bureaucracy.
- Used of idealized country life.
- (informal) Of the highest quality.
- Remote city of Kazakhstan that (ostensibly for security reasons) was made the capital in 1998.
- A shelter with perches for fowl or other birds.
- A slight amount or degree of difference.
- A noisy mock serenade (made by banging pans and kettles) to a newly married couple.
- Tropical American tree grown in southern United States having a whitish pink-tinged fruit.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- A state in midwestern United States.
- Of or like a cecum.
- According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
- Any place of complete bliss and delight and peace.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- An island in the Netherlands Antilles that is the top of an extinct volcano.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- A metric unit of volume equal to one tenth of a liter.
- An association of countries in the western hemisphere.
- French couturier whose first collection in 1947 created a style (tight bodice and narrow waist and flowing pleated skirt) that became known as the New Look (1905-1957).
- Relating to or accompanying birth.
- An ancient kingdom in northern Mesopotamia which is in present-day Iraq.
- Bearded reddish sheep of southern Asia.
- An honorary degree in science.
- (Irish) God of love and beauty.
- A proportion multiplied by 100.
- Dragonflies and damselflies.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- A preacher of the Christian gospel.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- The compass point that is one point east of due south.
- A drug (trade name Antabuse) used in the treatment of alcoholism.
- One of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
- An adherent of any branch of Taoism.
- The spatial property resulting from a

relatively small distance.

78. The compass point midway between south and southeast.

DOWN

- A deep opening in the earth's surface.
- A civil or military authority in Turkey or Egypt.
- The Palestinian uprising (beginning in 1987) against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
- Brazilian tree with handsomely marked wood.
- A state in southeastern United States.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- An artificial language that is a revision and simplification of Esperanto.
- A genus of the family Droseraceae.
- An associate degree in applied science.
- Provoke someone to do something through promises or persuasion.
- Bringing death.
- A fraudulent business scheme.
- English monk and scholar (672-735).
- A genus of Indriidae.
- (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- East Indian tart yellow berrylike fruit.
- A doctor's degree in education.
- Harsh or corrosive in tone.
- On a ship, train, plane or other vehicle.
- A state in midwestern United States.
- The principal evil jinni in Islamic mythology.
- A gaping grimace.
- Highly excited.
- (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
- A doctor's degree in religion.
- Of or relating to the former Indo-European people.
- Moth whose larvae are flour moths.
- The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
- A mouth or mouthlike opening.
- Without a lip or lips.
52. Of or being the lowest female voice.
- 40th President of the United States (1911-).
- Utter monotonously and repetitively and rhythmically.
- Islands in the Atlantic Ocean belonging to Portugal.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- Chocolate cookie with white cream filling.
- Having a color similar to that of a clear unclouded sky.
- A platform raised above the surrounding level to give prominence to the person on it.
- Oval reproductive body of a fowl (especially a hen) used as food.
- Informal terms for a (young) woman.
70. (in golf) The standard number of strokes set for each hole on a golf course, or for the entire course.
- The compass point that is one point north of due east.

Yesterday's Solution

T	A	P	A		A	B	O	A	R	D		M	A	T	T		
A	P	A	R		T	E	R	R	O	R		A	M	I	R		
K	E	B	A	B		H	A	M	M	Y		K	A	M	A		
A	R	A	B		B	E	D	I	M		S	A	T	E	D		
				I	A	E	A			N	A	S	A	L	I	S	E
A	B	F	A	R	A	D				N	A	B	U				
S	E	A		A	D	E				H	Y	L	A		F	T	P
M	A	C	A	U		D	N	A		A	H	O	R	S	E		
E	V	I	N	C	E			I	M	A	M		X	I	A	N	
R	E	L	O	A	D			P	E	R	I		Y	A	R	N	
A	R	E	S		E	P	A			P		B	U	R			
				M	A	M	A			E	W	E	R		A	R	
C	A	P	I	B	A	R	A			G	O		A	L	C	A	
O	B	E	A	H		S	A	I	G	O	N			A	N	T	
S	E	E		O	V	E	R	S	I	D	E			M	E	I	
H	D	L		R	A	C	E	M	O	S	E			A	D	O	

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Something could happen now that will help you understand that you need to make some important changes in your life—fortunately, not all in one day. Perhaps there is a need to break away from some of the old-fashioned ideas you are carrying from your past. You do long to try new projects and stretch your abilities. Your emotional nourishment comes from your friends, values and public involvement. Those around you will be appreciative of your understanding and sensitivity to their needs. This puts you in a win-win position to communicate concerning groups and society as well. If you find yourself invited to a party or festive gathering of some kind, you may be curious as to know why more weekends are not this pleasant.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Celebrate your triumphs and focus your energy on using your influence to inspire growth in yourself and in others. This is a great time to consolidate and organize your private affairs. If you are working, others may see you as the perfect candidate to have charge over some project that requires a conservative mind. This may not be the most advantageous time to make career or vocational decisions or to give rational advice to others. You may prefer to be more private and stay at home with your family or loved ones. If you do have, or attend, a get-together for some end-of-the-year celebration, it will be with close friends or family. Look for ways to make another person's life easier now, toward the end of this year—perhaps a meal for the elderly.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may find yourself marching to the beat of a different drummer today. Ambitious schemes and the pursuit of success and status take on a high priority in your life at this time. This could bring into focus the practical, the successful and the pragmatic—whatever it takes to get you ahead in the end. The meek may inherit the earth, but the shrewd will collect the rent. Wanting and needing to feel good about yourself and the way that you get things done could be instrumental in pushing you into more activities centered on diet, exercise and organizational habits. Your ambition will increase and you will take a more serious approach in taking better care of yourself. You encourage everyone in your household to make long- and short-term goals.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are just where you need to be today. Professionally, you are pleased with your progress. Today you work to end or complete some personal project before the new budget you planned comes into effect. Your family, children or the things that you hold dear and dear to your heart are of great value to you. Knowing that you are loved and appreciated and not taken for granted is the prevailing feeling. You enjoy admiration for the things you have accomplished. You, in turn, give that appreciation to those around you. Taking risks can bring big rewards. You are an entrepreneur at heart. In order for your efforts to gain recognition, it is essential that you allow your creative and intuitive nature to prevail. You enjoy life and so do all who follow you.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

A kind of romantic wistfulness characterizes your approach to life. This could mean the longing for a soul mate or a yearning to save the world. This could mean carrying a torch, as well. As your day unfolds, your good energy stays but your concentration is more toward accomplishing the chores set out before you. Higher education, publishing, broadcasting or advertising is a subject of interest at the gathering for lunch. You may be giving some serious thought about one or two of these subjects. This afternoon your friends find you most gracious. You seem to appreciate inspiring and spiritual ideas and you have the talent for presenting them to others as well. This would be a good time for you and your friends to have a horoscope forecast reading.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Fame, money and happiness are all possible in your lifetime. You will undoubtedly leave a lasting image. It requires an authority or a leader to help you organize grand-scale activities and to build cautiously for the future. Your tact, diplomacy and friendliness add to a positive business arrangement. You are the power behind the throne and bring the flies to the honey, so to speak. You are a perfectionist and have aristocratic tastes. Today, a friend asks you for money and you lend it, but not without some sort of paper that creates an agreed upon process of repayment. You expect to pay your debts and to have others live up to agreements and expectations. The way you handle this transaction is tactful, kind and appreciated as honest.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Freedom, as well as anything unusual or different, is what you value most at this time. You may find a great deal of pleasure in getting away from the routine and doing something completely different for a change. If you find yourself at home today, you may create some time to vegetate and plan the future. You will find phone conversations the order of the afternoon and you may want to offer some options to your loved ones tonight about entertainment on new year's eve. You find yourself understanding those around you and perhaps enjoying a special time with someone you love this evening. A bicycle ride or walk after dinner will give you and a loved one time to communicate. Getting fit and feeling well is in the future for this coming year.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Although this is a busy day, you still find time to do some personal correspondence during the day—perhaps only one or two pieces of mail, but important. Being well thought of is important to you and you want others to feel just as important so expressions of gratefulness are important for you to articulate at this time. You might decide to continue this expression of appreciation throughout the rest of the week. You enjoy getting out-of-doors for a bit of sunshine today. Things that are dear to your heart, as well as loved ones and other people, are emphasized now. Getting things taken care of in an orderly way and establishing some sort of an organized system could keep you very busy at this time. Communications continue to improve.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 19)

Bigger and better is the theme when it comes to creativity, romance and self-expression. This is a time when taking chances in these areas of your life often pays off beyond your wildest imagination. This is a splendid time to plan, read and research or just relax and enjoy these last few days of the year. Your emotions in particular, or the feelings of those around you, could be very clear. Others should find it easy to understand how you feel and will be empathetic to your needs at this time. You could find people will often appreciate your ability to take the lead in difficult situations. One thing that is noticed about you is that if you do not know an answer, you will search to find it. Young people bring laughter your way this evening.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Wanting and needing to feel included in group situations may spur you into accomplishing your chores quickly this morning. A project to get you better organized gets your attention part of the morning; a sense of ambition and practicality takes hold. You work hard and you enthusiastically enjoy your time away from work. A new neighbor may have your attention part of the day and this may include similar likes and fun interactions with each other. You should have no problem in appreciating and valuing your own life situation at this time. You feel especially goodhearted towards a friend or loved one this afternoon and may be wonderfully surprised to also find several additional people want to help you celebrate your special day.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Mentally, you are very perceptive, with sharp ideas and clear thoughts. It should be an excellent time to make decisions and to take care of any mental task. Great practical thoughts and ideas will be yours today. The ability to communicate with difficult people or the ability to describe what you see is a definite asset today. It may come as a big surprise for you to receive some extra support or recognition, perhaps in relation to your many talents. Some kind of little boost will definitely be yours. You should be feeling that those around you are in touch and in harmony with you at this time. You will not want for support, as support will be there for you when you need it. Make some calls for getting together with your friends on new year's eve.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You could be feeling the need to care for other people or to have them care for you. This could mean you may have overextended your energies this last week and are just now feeling the stress. Exercise and movement keeps the energy flowing and positive. Perhaps a friend would like to join you in a brisk walk. Enjoy your own, personal quiet time this afternoon by doing a bit of writing on the accomplishments of this year and what they have meant to you. Getting your message across to others is at a high while you are at home but you could become pushy-readjust. Your timing, however, should be as good as it can get; those around you should find you most natural and vibrant. Soon it will be time to celebrate a new year—are you ready?

Wordsearch Puzzle

Basketball

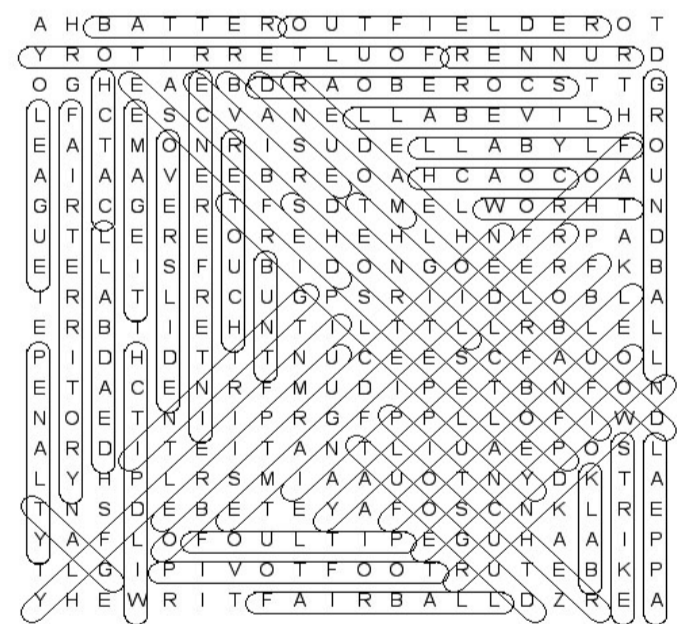
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 39 letters spell a piece of Basketball trivia.



- | | | | |
|-----------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| ASSIST | FOUL | PASSING | SHOOTING GUARD |
| BACKBOARD | FREE THROW | PLAYER | SHOT |
| BALL | GAME | POINT GUARD | SLAM DUNK |
| BASKET | HALF-TIME | POINTS | SMALL FORWARD |
| BENCH | HOOP | POWER FORWARD | SNEAKERS |
| BLOCK | JERSEY | QUARTER | SUBSTITUTIONS |
| CENTER | LAY-UP | REBOUND | TEAM |
| CLOCK | NET | REFEREE | THREE POINTER |
| COACH | OUT OF BOUNDS | RIM | TIME-OUT |
| COURT | OVERTIME | SCOREBOARD | TRAVELING |
| DRIBBLING | | | |

Yesterday's Solution

Baseball



- | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|
| APPEAL | FAIR TERRITORY | INTERFERENCE | RETOUCH |
| BALK | FLY BALL | LEAGUE | RUN DOWN |
| BASE | FORCE PLAY | LINE DRIVE | RUNNER |
| BATTER | FORFEITED GAME | LIVE BALL | SCOREBOARD |
| BUNT | FOUL BALL | MOUND | SHORTSTOP |
| CATCH | FOUL TERRITORY | OBSTRUCTION | STRIKE |
| COACH | FOUL TIP | OFFENSE | TAG |
| DEAD BALL | GROUND BALL | OUTFIELDER | THROW |
| DEFENSE | IN FLIGHT | OVERSLIDE | TIE GAME |
| DOUBLE HEADER | INFIELD FLY | PENALTY | TRIPLE PLAY |
| DUGOUT | INFIELDER | PITCHER | UMPIRE |
| FAIR BALL | INNING | PIVOT FOOT | WILD PITCH |

Hidden sentence: A HOT DOG AT THE BALL PARK IS BETTER THAN STEAK AT THE RITZ

Daily SuDoku

8	3		5		6	2	
		9	3			1	
		8		4			
5	3	6			2	4	7
			7		6		
6			2	7			
4	9		5		7		8

Yesterday's Solution

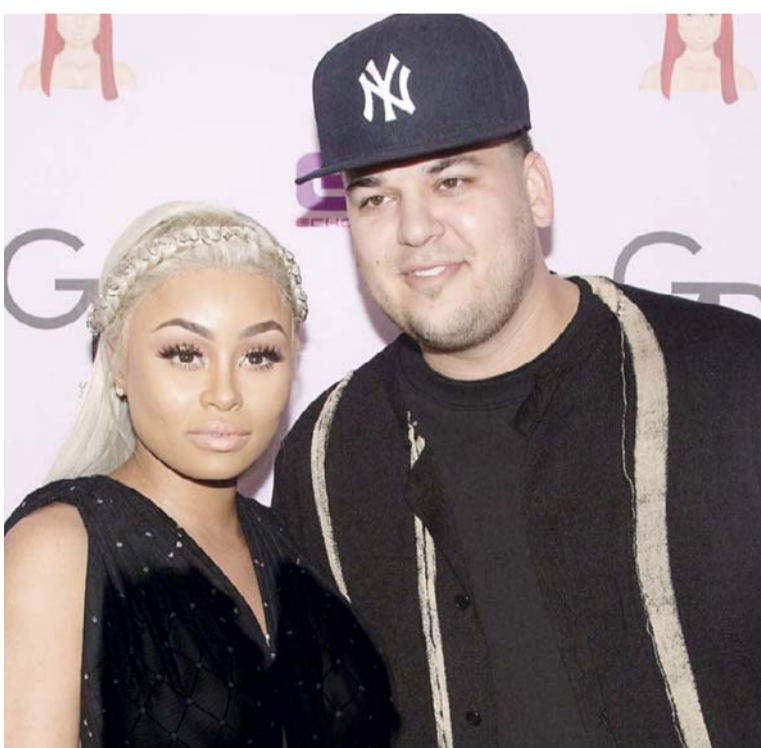
8	5	3	2	1	4	9	6	7
1	7	4	9	5	6	8	3	2
6	2	9	7	3	8	1	5	4
7	3	5	8	6	9	4	2	1
2	8	6	1	4	7	3	9	5
4	9	1	5	2	3	6	7	8
3	6	7	4	8	5	2	1	9
5	1	8	3	9	2	7	4	6
9	4	2	6	7	1	5	8	3



Chris Pratt makes \$500,000 donation in memory of his dad

Chris Pratt has donated \$500,000 to a teen center named after his father. The 'Passengers' actor joined teenagers in his hometown of Lake Stevens, Washington to help break ground for the Dan Pratt Memorial Teen Centre, whilst also presenting the Lake Stevens Boys & Girls Club a cheque for the extraordinary amount. Sharing his story on Facebook, he wrote: "I have never been more grateful in my life. My hometown of Lake Stevens, Washington just broke ground on the Dan Pratt Memorial Teen Centre. Thank you so much to the folks at Omaze for all your hard work, and to all the people around the world who donated through the campaign. We couldn't have done it without you. I just handed the teen center committee a \$500,000 cheque like on publishers clearing house. What a trip! That's half a million dollars! We broke ground! It's gonna be fabulous too! The plans are amazing. (sic)" And the 37-year-old actor - who has Jack, four, with his wife Anna Faris - also opened up about his "funny, thick skinned, hard working" father. He added: "I was raised by one of the toughest SOB's on the planet. Dan Pratt made me who I am. He was a funny, thick skinned, hard working man who commanded respect for authority. My dad coached me and so many other kids in Lake Stevens in every sport and was a pillar of his community. "He affected a lot of young men. Ask anyone who knew him, he was a certified bad ass. And now his memorial teen center will help keep kids out of trouble for many years to come. His legacy will live on. #Godisgood. (sic)"

Rob and Blac confirm they're back together



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 fiancé Rob over the weekend, but it seems the pair have reconnected for the holidays as they took to Snapchat on Friday night 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 Kardashians' stars, 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 "apologise" 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 behavior and attitude are completely fine. She's not changing or apologizing." It is not yet known if the couple's holiday reconciliation will land her an invite to Kris Jenner's Christmas bash.

RICK PARFITT HAS DIED

The Status Quo guitarist passed away in hospital in Spain on Christmas Eve at the age of 68, his manager and family confirmed in a statement. They said: "We are truly devastated to have to announce that Status Quo guitarist Rick Parfitt has passed away at lunchtime today. "He died in hospital in Marbella, Spain, as a result of a severe infection, having been admitted to hospital on Thursday evening following complications to a shoulder injury incurred by a previous fall. "This tragic news comes at a time when Rick was hugely looking forward to launching a solo career with an album and autobiography planned for 2017 following his departure from Status Quo's touring activities on medical advice. "He will be sorely missed by his family, friends, fellow band members, management, crew and his dedicated legion of fans from throughout the world, gained through 50 years of monumental success with Status Quo. "Rick is survived by his wife Lyndsay, their twins Tommy and Lily and Rick's adult children Rick Jnr and Harry. "No further comment will be made at this time and Rick's family, and the band, ask for their privacy to be respected at this difficult time." Earlier this year, Rick - who suffered his third heart attack and spent several days in a coma after a gig in Turkey in June - admitted he was terrified of dropping dead on stage. He said: "I'm just aware of the nervousness I get before I go on stage. It does pump your heart slightly when you start to pace up and down the room,



and you're about to go in front of thousands of people. Obviously it's going to have some effect on you. "I do not want to tax myself in any way. I've been told medically not to. So whether it's a full gig or a cameo I'd still get fairly nervous and I do not

want to get out on stage and drop dead in front of the fans. I do not want to do that." Rick said his latest heart attack has been a "reality check" and he subsequently quit drinking and smoking.

Jesy Nelson looking forward to seeing her family at Christmas



Jesy Nelson cherishes Christmas because she gets to spend time with her family. The Little Mix singer explained that her busy schedule doesn't allow her to see her family as much as she'd like to through the year, but the festive season gives her the chance to head to her home in northern England. The 25-year-old star - who sings alongside Perrie Edwards, Jade Thirlwall and Leigh-Anne Pincock in the chart-topping girl group - shared: "Mine and Perrie's families live up north, so we never get to see them really. "Christmas is like the one time we get to be with our families and see out little nephews and nieces, it's really lovely." Jesy admitted she finds it tough being away from her family for so much of the year, and so she makes sure she makes the most of the time she has with them. She told OK! magazine: "It is hard not seeing your family, especially next year we're touring all year so we're going to be all over the world, but it's worth it, isn't it?" Meanwhile, Jesy - who recently split from fiancé Jake Roche - also revealed she doesn't intend to hold back when it comes to festive treats this year, admitting she plans to indulge her taste buds. The pop singer said: "You've got to be a fatty at Christmas." Leigh-Anne, on the other hand, said she will avoid piling on the pounds over Christmas. She shared: "I do live near a river and it's really scenic so I'm going to go for some jogs and some bike rides and take the dogs out, so I'm going to try and do that."

Stephanie Pratt 'fought' jewelry partner over chokers

Stephanie Pratt "fought" her jewelry partner over including a choker in the MeMe London accessories line. The 30-year-old reality television star - who is known for appearing in the American series 'The Hills' - collaborated with the brand last year, which is continue to expand globally, has admitted she had a long battle with her colleague Andraya Smith over what designs to feature. Speaking exclusively to BANG Showbiz, the blonde beauty said: "And me and my jewelry partner, Andraya, we've got Meme London and we just actually did QVC, and now we're breaking into America, we're in Selfridges, Harvey Nichols, so that's been so much fun to design also. "I actually fought her on this. I wanted to do chokers and she was like 'No no no, it's a fad it'll be gone.' So finally I con-



vinced her. They are so cute." And the 'Made In Chelsea' star has revealed she is desperate to expand the capsule to include a children's line for the brand. She

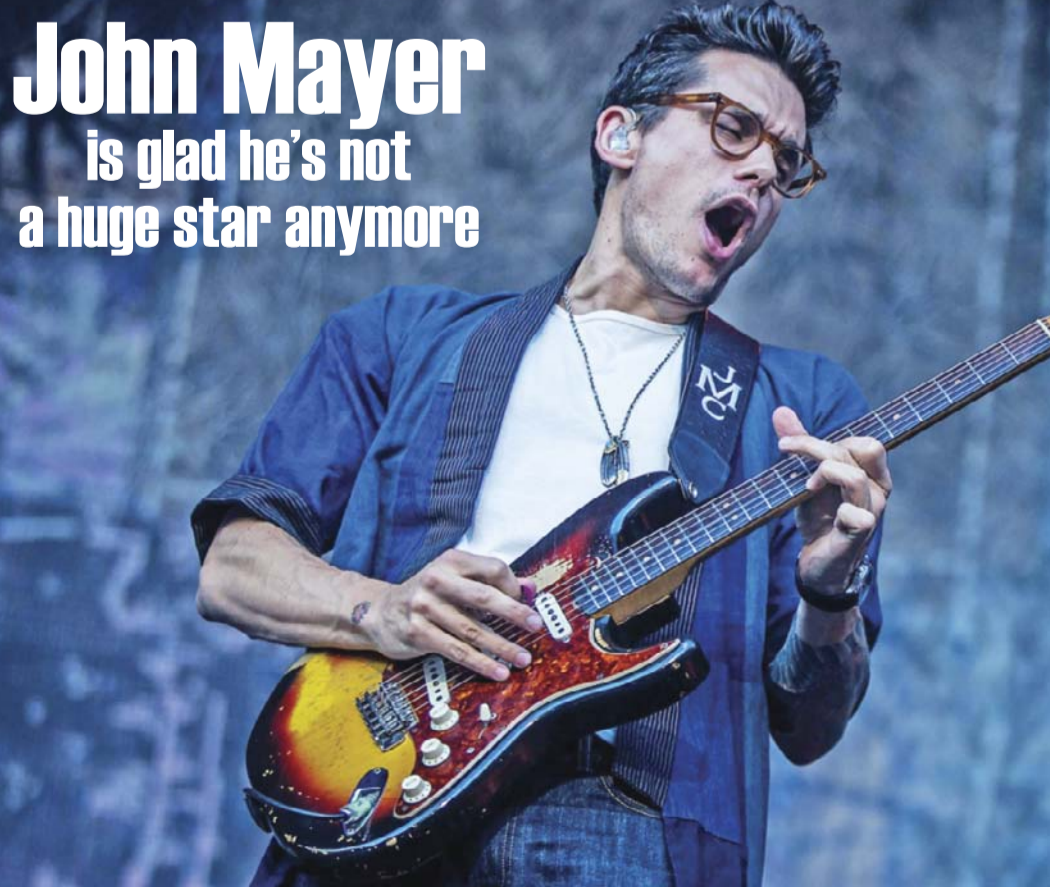
explained: "Well that's we just had our second birthday last month, so we're going to continue doing that, and we just got a men's line that's not as big as women's. But I really want to do kids because my nieces and nephew are always taking my sisters stuff and trying to wear them. So I really want to do this." And Stephanie has revealed she plans to venture more into skin care in the New Year. Speaking about her future plans, she said: "Well I just launched a nutrition company, so it's everything I can't find in LA and then ClaireaBella, and I basically used to take twelve vitamins a day and now I just combine them so it's one capsule and there's one for skin that's what I swear by. "So I would love to do more into skin care, like through this with fitness and mind."

David Beckham earned £71,000 a day last year



The retired sportsman took home the hefty sum after his new company Seven Global LLP managed to make £8.6 million of profit in only seven months. A source told The Sun newspaper: "There is no stopping Brand Beckham. Even though he has long retired from football David's empire keeps on growing. He is a savvy businessman and surrounds himself with like-minded people. The latest figures are staggering but it's no real surprise." The figures come from the £3.8 million, which was paid to Beckham's DB Ventures and lifestyle company Global Brands Group Holding Limited, with the money thought to come from his successful collaboration with brands including clothing retailer H&M. Elsewhere, David also managed to secure another £11.4 million in profit at his Footwork Productions company, which rakes money in for the use of David's name and his image. It comes after the 41-year-old star admitted he isn't into lavish gifts and wants socks for Christmas. He said: "Socks is always a good one. You know, I'm an Englishman so we - us Brits we love nice socks, so I've asked for socks this year. Victoria's list - nice pajamas. She loves some nice PJ's, comfy and cozy." And despite his wealthy status, David much prefers to wear casual clothes like jeans, t-shirts and trainers rather than suits. He added: "[I am a] very casual dresser. I love to wear smart suits and I like to feel smart when I go out for dinner but I also much prefer to wear jeans, T-shirts, trainers, boots, vintage boots and that's kind of how I dress every single day."

John Mayer is glad he's not a huge star anymore



The 'Free Fallin'' hitmaker says there is "humility in knowing" he's not an 'it' celebrity now. Speaking on Todd & Jayde In the Morning on 95.5 PLJ, he said: "I now say, I'm not it, I just do it. There's a difference. People who are 'it', it will kill you. It will kill you if you consider yourself to be it. If you think you are the star, like all the way down to your core that you are just made of star parts, you will die. What I realize now is I have a very cool job. "I get passes that I get to wear around my neck that [allow me to] keep walking to the microphone - and nobody tackles me. And then the show is over, and I go home. There is humility in knowing that you're not popular to the point where people are following you around anymore. They're following new people around. They're not following me around anymore. There's humility in, Yeah, don't worry about it because you're not going to be that hot [forever] anyway." Meanwhile, John is happy to share advice with other songwriters including Shawn Mendes, who sought the 39-year-old singer's thoughts on his new album 'Illuminate'. The 18-year-old singer shared: "I didn't get to work with him, but he listened to a bunch of the songs and gave great pieces of advice through the music and production and lyrics and stuff, especially on songs like 'Three Empty Words' and 'Ruin' and 'Patience.' It was great to have him listening through it all."



A child gets a snack from a volunteer working in the kitchen of 'cafe Rits' in Ritsona refugee camp, some 80 km north of Athens. — AFP photos



Chef Talal Rankoussi puts final touch to the prepared meal in the 'cafe Rits' in Ritsona refugee camp.

Syrian chef serves up slice of home in Greek camp

Before braving a 'trip of death' to escape Syria, Talal Rankoussi was a chef in a Damascus restaurant considered the largest in the world. Bawabet Al Dimashq-Damascus Gate-still holds that distinction in the Guinness Book of Records as it can seat over 6,000 people. So when 41-year-old Talal was asked by a US benefactor to spice up the meals for several hundred fellow Syrians at the Ritsona camp near Athens, the two-decade culinary veteran did not hesitate. The father of three, who crossed the Aegean in February in "a trip of death, riding a plastic tyre in an ocean under the rain", says the food handed out in the camp "is undercooked...with no regard to improving the quality."

Like most refugee camps in Greece, Ritsona receives daily meals from catering companies commissioned by the army. But in terms of quality and nutritional value, it "just covers survival needs," says a camp operator who declined to be named. "It's been a challenge just to get the caterers to send pitta bread instead of white bread," the operator says, adding that "sometimes we have 200 meals left over that nobody wants to eat."

Enter 'Madame Sharba'

Then cameCarolynn Rockafellow, an American former investment banker who



Chef Talal Rankoussi and other Syrian volunteers prepare a meal in 'cafe Rits'.



Children board a bus to get to school as volunteer holds a crate with sandwiches prepared in camp's 'cafe Rits'.

moved to Greece last year after a 30-year career, including two decades at Credit Suisse. Rockafellow, originally from New York, has taken a personal interest in the well-being of Ritsona's 700 refugees, nearly half of them children. With personal funds and donations from friends, Rockafellow has created Cafe Rits, offering alternative cuisine out of one of the camp's few brick-and-mortar buildings. "I feel this story is as much about helping the

Greeks as it is about helping the refugees," Rockafellow says over the sound of Talal furiously chopping vegetables.

"This is a very tough situation for Greece and I think they're doing a great job," says the woman whose nickname around the camp is Madame Sharba, or Mrs Soup. Several times a week, she and a few helpers drive out to a supermarket on the nearby island of Evia and load a van with supplies for the day's meals, plus meat and vegetables for camp families to do their own cooking. About 3,000-5,000 euros (\$3,200-5,300) a week goes into the Cafe budget. "Everyday we have distribution of either vegetables, meats or cooked meals. Meat once a week, vegetables twice or three times a week, cooked food twice a week," says Talal, now keeping a close eye on a bubbling cauldron of onion broth. Staple Syrian recipes include kibbeh, fattoush salad, maqluba rice, muhammara dip-mostly made with locally sourced ingredients, and all a far cry from what Greek catering services can provide.

'Bring back their culture'

Cafe Rits is like an oversized food truck, without the wheels. The walls are lined with pots, pans, tins and cutlery. A long bench where the food is prepared cuts across the room, while gas-fired stoves stand near the entrance. Water is brought in a plastic tub as there is no piping. Or heating. "I wanted to find a way to empower refugees, to bring them back their culture through food," says Rockafellow, who has two grown-up children and was a volunteer chef in the aftermath of

hurricanes Katrina and Sandy in the US. "Syrian people love to offer hospitality and something of themselves through food," she added.

The dozen-strong volunteer team also prepares lunch bags for around 80 of the camp's children who take afternoon classes at nearby schools. "We also host parties. It's important to laugh... and to remember that this, too, shall pass," she says, adding that she wants to use her experience to help her refugee volunteers find jobs once they leave Greece. Talal, who reached Greece in February after a poor experience trying to find employment in Turkey, has applied for asylum in several European countries including Germany, Holland and France. But he would have "no problem" dishing out to patrons in a Greek establishment if given the chance. "This is my interest. This is my job," the stoic chef says with a smile. — AFP



Children eat rice from a meal cooked by chef Talal Rankoussi and volunteers outside the 'Cafe Rits'.



Carolynn Rockafellow (right) and volunteers help chef Talal Rankoussi to cook a meal in the 'Cafe Rits'.



Children board a bus to get to school as volunteer holds a crate with sandwiches prepared in camp's 'cafe Rits'.

Rodrigo Prieto on 'Silence,' Scorsese and J-Law in bed

Mexican cinematographer Rodrigo Prieto has little to prove, having won almost nothing but acclaim over two decades for his collaborations with the very biggest names in filmmaking. Since moving to Hollywood in 2000 he has worked on numerous occasions with Oliver Stone, Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, Ang Lee and Martin Scorsese, and shot movies for Cameron Crowe and Pedro Almodovar. Nominated only once for an Oscar-for Lee's 2006 cowboy love story "Brokeback Mountain"-Prieto has his biggest chance yet to go one better in February.

He is among the early favorites to win a cinematography statuette for his work on Scorsese's religious historical epic "Silence," which features sweeping panoramas of Taiwan's rugged, mist-shrouded coastline. "It's something I'd enjoy, for sure. It's not something I strive for when I'm shooting or when I'm designing a movie," he tells AFP. The 51-year-old, who also filmed Morten Tyldum's 2016 sci-fi movie "Passengers" with Jennifer Lawrence and Chris Pratt, has a reputation for versatility and his unconventional use of lighting and color. But he insists he is never "flashy," bringing what the film demands rather than what will make him look clever. "I don't know if awards and all that recognize that stuff," he says, playing down his chances of an Oscar nomination.

Sin and sacrifice

From his adoptive home of Los Angeles, Prieto has helped lead a renaissance in Mexican cinema alongside Inarritu through films like "Amores Perros," "21 Grams," "Babel" and "Biutiful" (2000-2010). Among his other movies are Ben Affleck's Oscar-winner "Argo," Spike Lee's "25th Hour" and Curtis Hanson's acclaimed "8 Mile."

"Silence" is Prieto's second collaboration with Scorsese since the pair scandalized Hollywood with the sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll story of infamous financier Jordan Belfort in 2013's "The Wolf of Wall Street."

"Here we are-this man from New York City and this guy from Mexico City doing a movie about Portuguese priests in Japan," he recalls. "It was very foreign for both of us but really amazing, quite a journey." With its high-minded meditations on loyalty, faith, sin and sacrifice, "Silence" is tonally the diametric opposite of "The Wolf of Wall Street," which served up three hours of profanity, lawbreaking and nudity. Prieto said filming the love scenes between Lawrence and Pratt in "Passengers" was challenging, especially given it was her first sex scene. "The most important thing is that the actors feel com-

fortable, and I know that Jennifer was... a little nervous about it," he recalls. "Chris Pratt obviously is a gentleman and all of us were very respectful. But it's tricky, it's not easy."

'Opposite styles'

Prieto developed a love of filmmaking as a child in Mexico City, where he and his old-



This file shows cinematographer Rodrigo Prieto attending The Academy Of Motion Picture Arts And Sciences Presents an evening honoring iconic mexican cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

er brother would make monster movies with their father's 8mm camera, learning stop-motion animation by watching 1960s fantasy film "Jason and the Argonauts." It whet his appetite for the movie business and he enrolled in film school, setting him on a path that would see him working with some of his heroes.

Asked what kind of director he prefers-collaborative or dictatorial, meticulous or freeform, a planner or an improviser-Prieto says he appreciates the diversity more than any particular style.

"Ang Lee and Oliver Stone are kind of almost opposite styles and I really enjoy both. Ang is a very precise director, very meticulous. Oliver likes to be surprised," Prieto says. "He thrived on a little bit of chaos on set and you have to be on your toes with Oliver all the time. I think Scorsese is a mixture of both. Same with Inarritu. They both are precise but also let things just happen." — AFP

16-year-old pivots from a Kenyan slum to the ballet stage



Kenyan ballet dancer Joel Kioko, 16, center, dances in a performance of *The Nutcracker* in Nairobi, Kenya. — AP photos

'Star Wars' actress Fisher in intensive care



This file photo shows US actress Carrie Fisher (right) posing with a storm trooper as she attends the opening of the European Premiere of "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" in central London.

Hollywood star Carrie Fisher was spending Christmas Eve in intensive care after suffering a massive heart attack near the end of a transatlantic flight. The 60-year-old "Star Wars" actress was preparing to land in Los Angeles around midday Friday (2000 GMT) when she went into cardiac arrest, and was given CPR by an emergency responder on board. She was removed from the emergency room to an intensive care unit at UCLA Medical Center on a ventilator, her brother Todd Fisher said late Friday. He has been giving regular statements on her health but was unavailable to update the condition of the actress Saturday morning.

"She's obviously a very tough girl who's survived many things. I encourage everyone to pray for her," he told ABC7's Eyewitness News shortly after she was admitted. Harrison Ford, who played swashbuckling smuggler Han Solo opposite Fisher's Princess Leia in the original "Star Wars" trilogy and last year's "The Force Awakens," said he was "shocked and saddened" in a statement released to the press on Saturday. "Our thoughts are with Carrie, her family and friends," he added, describing Fisher as a "dear friend." News reports Saturday said Fisher had just finished filming the third season of her latest screen project, the Amazon comedy television series *Catastrophe* which is set in London. She was catapulted to worldwide stardom as the rebel warrior Princess Leia in the original "Star Wars" trilogy, which has been a cultural phenomenon since the release of the films from 1977 to 1983.

Tributes

Fisher's "Star Wars" co-stars led tributes as Hollywood reacted with shock to news of her collapse. "As if 2016 couldn't get any worse... sending all our love to @carriefisher" tweeted Mark Hamill, who plays her on-screen twin Luke Skywalker in the "Star Wars" saga. There were also posts from "Warwick Davis, who appeared in various 'Star Wars' theatrical and straight-to-TV movies, Peter Mayhew, who plays the Wookiee Chewbacca and Gwendoline Christie, who played Captain Phasma alongside Fisher in 'The Force Awakens.' The American actress has talked and written frequently about her years of drug addiction and mental illness. Fisher is known for her searingly honest semi-autobiographical novels, including her best-selling debut "Postcards from the Edge" which she turned into a film of the same name in 1990.

She has given various interviews over the years about her diagnosis of bipolar disorder and addiction to prescription drugs and cocaine, which she admitted using on the set of "The Empire Strikes Back" (1980). She has also discussed being treated with electroconvulsive therapy, in which small electric currents are passed through the brain, to trigger brief seizures. The technique is used to treat some mental illnesses. Fisher's famous "Star Wars" character features as part of the storyline to spin-off "Rogue One," which is currently riding high in box offices around the globe, although the actress is understood not to have been involved in the production. Her attorney did not respond to a request for comment. — AFP

In a country not usually associated with classical ballet, a 16-year-old dancer leaps onto the stage, his gravity-defying turns taking the audience's breath away. Joel Kioko is arguably Kenya's most promising young ballet dancer. Currently training in the United States, he has come home for Christmas - and is dancing a solo in a Nairobi production of "The Nutcracker" while he's here. "He's the real deal," said Dance Centre Kenya's artistic director, Cooper Rust. "I'm pushing him to go for the stars. Paris Opera, Royal Ballet, here we come! Even if Joel ends up in a more regional company, it will be incredible."

Kioko grew up in Nairobi's Kibera slum and took his first dance class five years ago in a public school classroom, with bare walls, no barre and no mirror, the desks and chairs pushed outside. Now he's teaching holiday classes to aspiring dancers in Kibera, the Kenyan capital's biggest slum. "I don't know what I could have done without ballet, without dancing," Kioko said. "I don't even know if I could have been existing, it's weird to say, but dance, it's everything to me." His encounter with ballet happened by chance when he was 11. He was discovered by a fellow dance student who at age 14 was teaching a class at his school and told her teacher, Rust, about him.

"From the beginning, when he joined



Young ballerinas receive instruction from Kenyan ballet dancer Joel Kioko, right, in a room at a school in the Kibera slum of Nairobi, Kenya.

the ballet, there was nothing else he could talk about," said Kioko's mother, Angela Kamene, who raised him and his sister in a one-bedroom shack shared with an aunt and a grandmother. "It was just ballet, ballet, ballet. So I saw that he was happy, and so I was happy too." Now others are pursuing dance as a way out of poverty. At the beginning of the school year, children in Kibera try out for the ballet classes, which

are funded by charities Anno's Africa and One Fine Day. Michael Wamaya, a finalist for the 2017 Global Teacher Prize, teaches dance to around 100 kids a week in Nairobi's Kibera and Mathare slums.

"At the end of the day, we're not just training them to have dance for fun, we're doing it in a serious level," Wamaya said. "We are doing it to make them have a career at the end." But not everyone is applauding. "I

can see it gives young people opportunities," said Christy Adair, professor of dance studies at Britain's York St John University and a prominent voice on ethnicity in dance. But she added: "I think there's a kind of arrogance in the ballet organizations, where they think theirs is the way for training for dance. ... Contemporary technique is more open to other people's movement patterns and practices and experiences and heritages, which ballet isn't."

Wamaya acknowledged the criticism. "People say sometimes, why are you not teaching them, for instance, African dance or hip hop?" he said. "Yes, it's a Western thing coming in, but it's dance, and dance is diverse, you know? To me, it's not about ballet as a dance style, but it's about the discipline that ballet has in itself as a dance technique." As the only son in a family growing up without a father, Kioko laughed at the notion that some people might consider a man in tights, dancing classical ballet, to be unmanly. He was teased by some in his neighborhood about the dancing, he said, but he never had to fight. "Where I came from there is poverty, there is stealing, there is drugs," Kioko said. "You have to be a man to live in where we live. ... It's like a lion in the jungle, you have to show that you are the male there, you are the one who roars and everyone follows." — AP



Dance Centre Kenya's artistic director Cooper Rust, left, from the United States, holds the hand of Kenyan ballet dancer Joel Kioko, 16, center, as they take a bow at the end of a performance of *The Nutcracker* in Nairobi, Kenya.



Young ballerinas practice under the instruction of Kenyan ballet dancer Joel Kioko, 16, in a room at a school in the Kibera slum of Nairobi, Kenya.



Young ballerinas practice under the instruction of Kenyan ballet dancer Joel Kioko, 16, in a room at a school in the Kibera slum of Nairobi, Kenya.



Kenyan ballet dancer Joel Kioko, center, dances a solo in a performance of *The Nutcracker* in Nairobi, Kenya.



Young ballerinas receive instruction from Kenyan ballet dancer Joel Kioko, 16, in a room at a school in the Kibera slum of Nairobi, Kenya.



This picture shows a reveler walking through a hoop of fire during a Full Moon Party on the southern island of Ko Phangan. — AFP photos



Thousands of partygoers dancing on Haad Rin beach during a Full Moon Party.

Beats, drinks and bodypaint: Full moon party defies Thai troubles



Partygoers taking selfies on Haad Rin beach during a Full Moon Party.



A partygoer wearing a mask during a Full Moon Party on the southern island of Ko Phangan.



A partygoer getting caught by a fiery skipping rope during a Full Moon Party.

For many ravers on the tropical oasis of Koh Phangan, the origins of the Thai island's debauched full moon parties are as hazy as their memories of the beach bash the next morning. Yet Sutti Kursakul, a middle-aged island native with a distinctive black moustache, claims he not only remembers the first moonlit party but organized it. "I held the first full moon party in around 1988. It was a farewell to my Australian friend," Sutti told AFP as neon-clad tourists flowed in and out of his bar, vibing to house music. What started as a monthly gathering for spiritually inclined trance fans in the 1990s has since exploded into a world-famous monument to hedonism.

Up to 30,000 people, mostly young western backpackers, descend on Haad Rin beach each month to guzzle buckets of drinks, knock back drugs and jump through hoops of fire—an increasingly perilous beachside activity as the evening's intoxication takes hold. Now thumping electronic dance music has replaced the psy-trance beats of the 90s, while a cottage industry of neon clothing and body paint vendors has turned the beach into a

one-stop shop for the party faithful. And they keep on coming. That is despite junta-run Thailand's political woes and the October death of beloved King Bhumibol Adulyadej, which was followed by a month-long "toning down" of the kingdom's normally wild nightlife.

Through a decade of military coups and curfews, Thailand's buoyant tourist industry has kept the economy afloat. Thailand has already welcomed more than a record 30 million tourists in 2016. They are expected to rake in more than \$68.5 billion, a figure that will represent 17 percent of the economy.

Can't stop the rave

Over the years the full moon party has often been cast as a depraved, crime-ridden drug fest where foreigners trash their idyllic surroundings and take excessive risks. "The western media is so negative," said Sharon Kahatai, an Israeli hostel owner who made the island his home nearly a decade ago. "I think the full moon (party) is an amazing project. I don't know if there are other projects like that



A partygoer lighting a cigarette on a fiery limbo stick during a Full Moon Party.

which bring young people, 18 to 22, from all around the world to be together." Some old-school ravers say the notoriety and commercialism are changing the event for the worse. But Sutti insists the spirit is the same.

"Nothing has changed about the full moon party—just more people," he told AFP, stressing how the revelers bring crucial cash into the pockets of locals. Thai tourism authorities want to lure wealthier visitors to the kingdom. But hedonistic fixtures of Thailand's nightlife such as the full moon party appear safe. Cyclical crackdowns on Thailand's freewheeling party scene never seem to stick and the beach rave shows no signs of slowing down. "It's obviously popular with many people," said Chattan Kunjara Na Ayudhya, the public relations director of Tourism Authority of Thailand.

He said budget travellers still have an important role to play, despite efforts to develop Thailand as a luxury travel destination. While backpackers may be short on cash, they have pull especially online. "In this world of social media, they see a lot, they share what they see, and we're happy," he told AFP. — AFP



Partygoers ducking under a fiery limbo stick during a Full Moon Party.



Partygoers on Haad Rin beach during a Full Moon Party.

Yes, Virginia, there are surfing Santas in Florida

Yes, Virginia, there are surfing Santas in Florida. Hundreds of surfers in Santa costumes and thousands of spectators descended Saturday on Cocoa Beach for the eighth annual Christmas Eve Surfing Santas extravaganza. The Santas surfed the waves all morning to raise money for two charities by selling T-shirts. One charity is the Florida Surf Museum. The other charity provides financial assistance for cancer patients needing to travel for their treatment.

The first surfing Santas event started in 2009 when George Trosset, his son and daughter-in-law thought it would be funny to dress up as Santa Claus and his elves and go surfing. A photo of them hit the front page of the local newspaper, and a Cocoa Beach tradition was born. — AP



Cocoa Beach City commissioner Ed Martinez participates in the Surfing Santa event in Cocoa Beach, Fla. — AP photos



Thousands gather to watch hundreds of surfing Santas hit the waves during an event in Cocoa Beach, Fla.



People dressed as Santa jump from a helicopter during a surfing Santa event in Cocoa Beach, Fla.

Of drones, toys and hedgehogs: Michelle Obama tracks Santa

For most people, a Christmas Eve phone call with the first lady of the United States is an unexpected surprise. But Austin was holding out for someone else. "I want to hear Santa talk," said Austin, one of a handful of kids who called the NORAD Tracks Santa program on Saturday and found Michelle Obama on the other end of the line. Santa couldn't get to the phone, the first lady patiently explained, "because he's delivering all the gifts" - 3 million as of late morning in Honolulu, where President Barack Obama and his family are on vacation.

There was a bittersweet note this year as the first lady carried out her annual Christmas ritual for the first time, taking calls from kids who wanted to know exactly how much progress Santa had made on his journey. It'll be up to the next first lady, Melania

Trump, to decide next year whether to continue the tradition. But Austin had another concern in mind: Would Santa know where to go? "I'm going to move to another house," said Austin, joined by three other kids in North Carolina. No matter, Mrs Obama replied.

"He's going to be able to find you no matter where you go," she said, according to a transcript released by the White House. "That's the special thing about Santa." The first lady spent roughly a half-hour taking calls before joining her husband, daughters Sasha and Malia and family friends for lunch at Side Street Inn, whose greasy food and low-key atmosphere is popular among Hawaii locals and tourists alike.

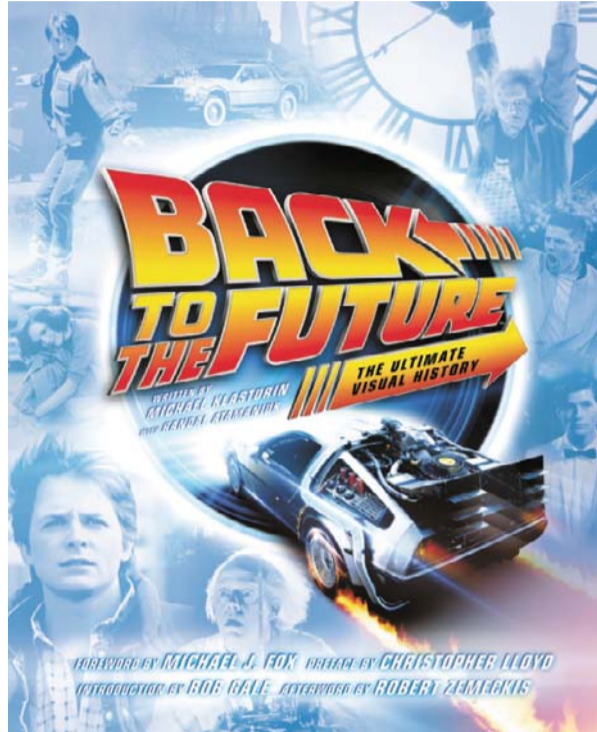
Then the family drove to Breakout Waikiki, a "live action" experience where visitors are "trapped" in a room and must work together to break out. But before



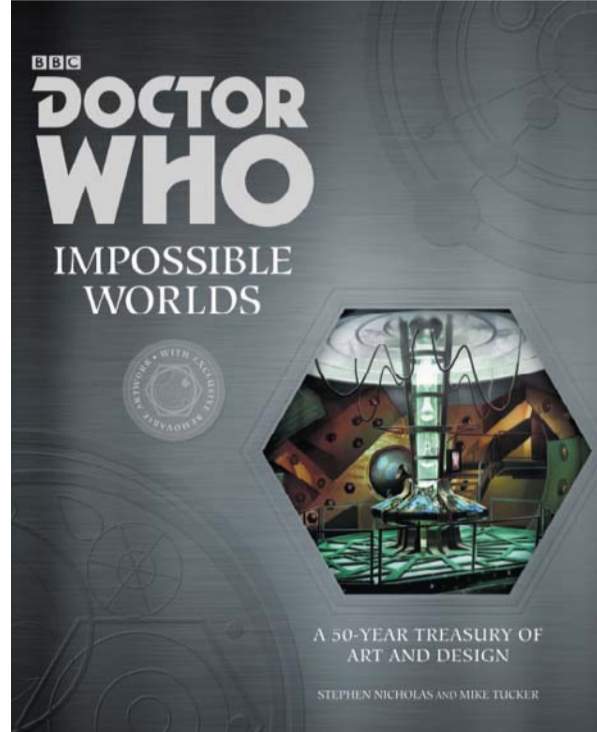
the family fun, there was a geography lesson as the first lady updated children about Santa's most recent locales on his gift-giving voyage: Sardinia, Malta and Hungary, to name a few. If there was a lesson for the first lady, it was a crash course in the latest hot-item gifts. A girl named Kirsten told Mrs.

Obama she wanted a drone from Santa. Joshua wanted a Hot Wheels garage, while Aiden wanted a hoverboard. But it was Adilyn whose gift seemed to catch the first lady off guard. "I'm getting a hedgehog tomorrow," Adilyn said. — AP

In this, file photo, first lady Michelle Obama waves as she departs after a holiday event at Children's National Health System in Washington. — AP



This book cover image released by Harper Design shows, "Back to the Future: The Ultimate Visual History," by Michael Klastorian and Randal Atamaniuk.



This book cover image released by Harper Design shows, "Dr Who: Impossible Worlds," by Stephen Nicholas and Mike Tucker.



This image released by Running Press shows "Fellini: The Sixties," by Manoah Bowman.



This book cover image released by Ten Speed Press shows Dust & Grooves: Adventures in Record Collecting," by Eilon Paz.

Coffee table books are always great gifts

Coffee table books are always great gifts for just the right enthusiast, and they're plentiful at holiday time as quick grabs or advance buys. A few suggestions, based on interest area:

Fashion & celebrity

"Harper's Bazaar: Models," by Derek Blasberg: Christy, Naomi, Linda, Kate, Gisele and more. In all, the magazine's editor in chief, Glenda Bailey, and editor at large, Blasberg, have selected 28 famous faces, with essays, covers and interviews. Abrams, \$65.

"Curves," photographs by Victoria Janashvili: Portraits focused on body esteem for women, all women - short, tall, big and bigger. Janashvili ends with a nude self-portrait to, she writes, "see myself as a beautiful one - like all the women that I photograph." Self-published, \$51 at Curvesthebook.com.

"Creating the Illusion: A Fashionable History of Hollywood Costume Designers," by Jay Jorgensen and



This book cover image released by Earth Aware Editions shows "The National Parks: An American Legacy," with photographs by Ian Shive.

Donald L. Scoggins: The people behind movie fashion get their due in long essays accompanied by production shots, illustrations and behind-the-scenes candids. From the silent era of Greta Garbo to Johnny Depp's pirate. Running Press, \$65.

"Peter Lindbergh: Images of Women II," designed by Juan Gatti, text by Werner Spies, Wim Wenders and Peter Handke: The German photographer's work spanning 2005 through 2014, black and white from the worlds of fashion, society and film. Portraits and nudes include



This book cover image released by Schiffer Publishing shows "Blues Hands," by Joseph A. Rosen.

Nicole Kidman, Tilda Swinton and Kate Winslet - and a few famous men. Schirmer/Mosel, \$99.95.

Photography, film & illustration

"Schatz Images: 25 Years," by Howard Schatz: A stunning, two-volume box set from the award-winning photographer spanning portraits of murderers and athletes, dancers and models, pregnant moms and "interesting nobodies," as the publisher puts it. A limited-edition retrospective. Glitterati Inc., \$365.

"Fellini: The Sixties," by Manoah Bowman: Focused on

the director's most iconic work, including "Dolce Vita," "81/2," "Juliet of the Spirits" and "Fellini Satyricon." Includes some never-before-seen archive photos, along with stills and essays from an array of contemporary writers. A collaboration between Turner Classic Movies and Running Press, \$65.

"Nextinction," by Ralph Steadman and Ceri Levy: A follow to the cartoonist's wild collection of extinct birds. The 192 here, in Steadman's trademark trippy style, are alive but endangered, including the giant ibis, the kakapo and the spoon-billed sandpiper. Steadman and Levy have dubbed themselves the "gonzovationists." Portion of proceeds to BirdLife International. Bloomsbury, \$50.

"Back to the Future: The Ultimate Visual History," by Michael Klastorian and Randal Atamaniuk: Marking the 30th anniversary of the original movie, hundreds of images from all three in the time-travel trilogy. Concept art and storyboards are also included, along with cast and crew interviews. Harper Design, in conjunction with Universal Pictures, \$50.

TV & music

"Dr. Who: Impossible Worlds," by Stephen Nicholas and Mike Tucker: For the hard-core fan, this volume offers a 50-year history of the show in art and design. Extras at the back include sketches, schematics and full-color sets on cards tucked into an envelope. Harper Design, \$45.

"Blue's Hands," by Joseph A. Rosen: The photographer chronicles his own 30-year love affair with blues music focusing on the working hands of some of the greats. In full color close-ups, Rosen sticks to his mission of letting the hands tell the story, with nugget bios of each artist at the back. Schiffer Publishing, \$29.99.

"Bob Dylan All the Songs," by Philippe Margotin and Jean-Michel Guesdon: This is the story behind every track. That's 492 songs. Along with exhaustive notes on players, lyrics and production, the two have included bites of backstory for true "Dylanologists." Photos of the man and his famous friends and collaborators abound. Black Dog & Leventhal, \$50.

"Dust & Grooves: Adventures in Record Collecting,"

by Eilon Paz: One need not be a vinyl head to appreciate this book, but one does need a healthy appreciation of music. This gem reads like "Humans of New York" of the crate-digging scene. Paz first self-published his ode to vinyl collectors, beginning in New York but spreading to collectors from Portugal to Japan to his native Israel and back again to Brooklyn. In all, he tells the stories and lovingly photographs the collections of more than 130 people, including Acid Jazz record label co-founder Gilles Peterson, among other notables. Ten Speed Press, \$50.

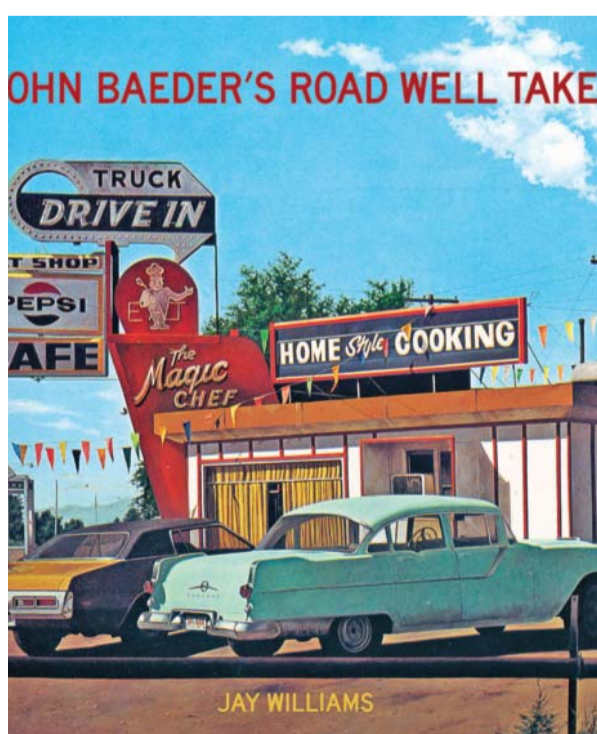
Travel & pop culture

"Passage to Cuba," by Cynthia Carris Alonso: The photographer has spent 20 years shooting Cuba. At a time of openness for American visitors, she captures street scenes, historic moments and beautiful landscapes, from Havana to the sparkling blue shoreline of Varadero Beach. In thoughtful but spare text, she explains the Spanish architecture of Old Havana, poses the dancers of Cuba's water ballet team and shares her shots of a rally celebrating the return of Elian Gonzalez. Skyhorse Publishing, \$45.

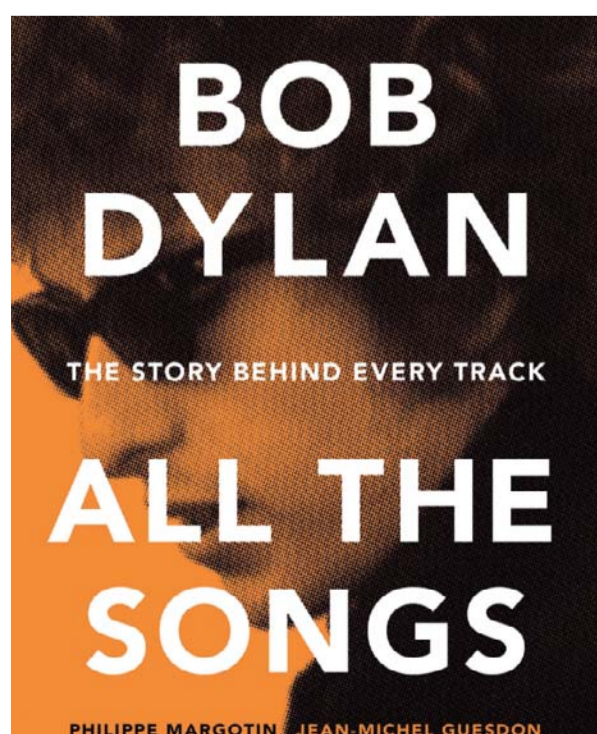
"John Baeder's Road Well Taken," by Jay Williams: Nobody captured "diner consciousness" quite like the realist painter Baeder. In this volume, Williams creates a full account of Baeder's life, including interviews with the artist and nearly 300 images of his collectible diner paintings, watercolors, vintage photos and memorabilia. The Vendome Press, \$45.

"The National Parks: An American Legacy," photographs by Ian Shive: The National Park Service marks its 100th anniversary in 2016. From a portrait of a golden-mantled ground squirrel in Glacier National Park to a serene sunset at Denali, this book includes more than 200 never-before-seen images. A bald eagle guards prey in Olympic National Park, the stark dunes at White Sands create a wind pattern and the sunrise turns peaks yellow in Death Valley. Insight Editions, \$50.

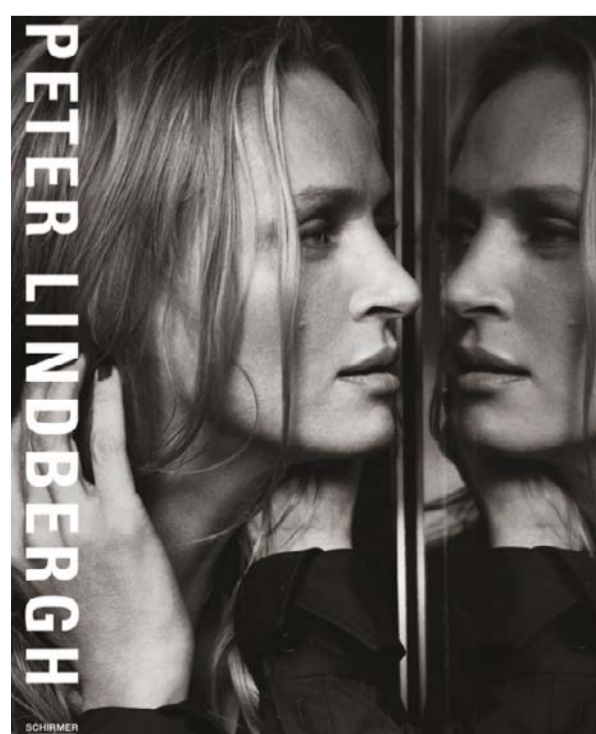
"Revolution: Mapping the Road to American Independence, 1755-1783," by Richard H. Brown and Paul E. Cohen: 60 detailed, full-color maps tell the story of the American Revolution. Many document decisive battles, accompanied by essays putting them into context. Geeks of the period will revel. W.W. Norton & Company, \$75. — AP



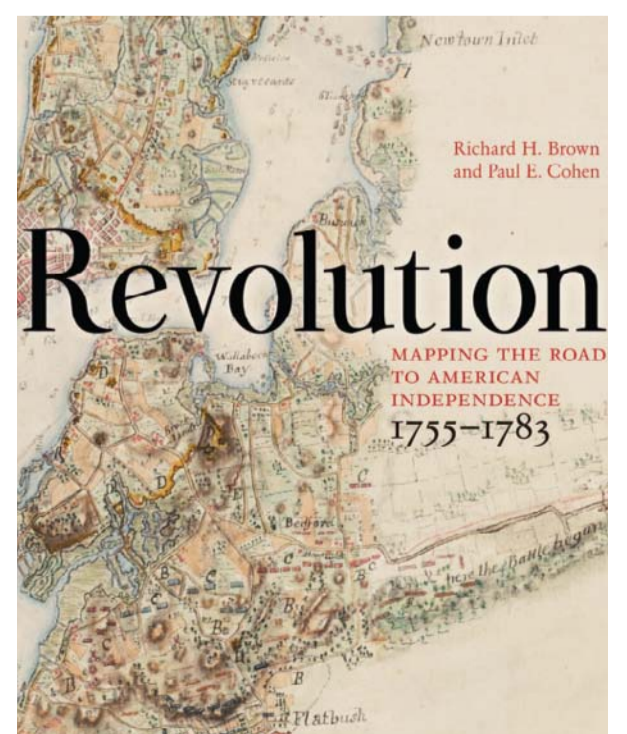
This book cover image released by The Vendome Press shows "John Baeder's Road Well Taken" by Jay Williams.



This book cover image released by Black Dog & Leventhal shows, "Bob Dylan All the Songs," by Philippe Margotin and Jean-Michel Guesdon.



This book cover image released by Schirmer/Mosel shows "Peter Lindbergh: Images of Women II," designed by Juan Gatti, with text by Werner Spies, Wim Wenders and Peter Handke.



This book cover image released by WW Norton & Co shows Revolution: Mapping the Road to American Independence, 1755-1783," by Richard H Brown and Paul E Cohen.

Lifestyle

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2016

Of drones, toys and hedgehogs: Michelle Obama tracks Santa

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Members of the Berliner Seehunde (Berlin seals) swimming club with Father Christmas outfits pose for a picture during their traditional Christmas swimming yesterday at the Orankee lake in Berlin. — AFP

Sri Lanka claims world's tallest artificial Christmas tree

Sri Lanka unveiled a towering Christmas tree on Saturday, claiming to have surpassed the world record for an artificial Christmas tree despite construction delays and a shorter-than-planned finished product. The 73-meter (238-foot) tree, built in capital Colombo, is 18 meters taller than the current record holder, organizers said. The tree's steel-and-wire frame is covered with a plastic net decorated with more than 1 million natural pine cones painted red, gold, green and silver, 600,000 LED bulbs and topped by a 6-meter-tall (20-foot) shining star.

The tree has cost US \$ 80,000. The Catholic Church criticized the tree as a "waste of money" and suggested that the funds better be spent on helping the poor. Mangala Gunasekara, chief organizer of the project claims their tree has beat the existing Guinness record and he hopes it will be declared by the "World's tallest artificial Christmas Tree." His claim is subject to confirmation from Guinness World Records, which said it has received an application from the organizers and that "it is currently pending evidence submission." Gunasekara said that evidence is being gathered and will be sent to Guinness shortly. Currently, the record is held by a Chinese firm that put up a 55-meter (180-foot) tree-like tower of lights and synthetic foliage, ornaments and lamps in the city of Guangzhou last year.

Organizers said they wanted the tree to help promote ethnic and religious harmony in the Buddhist-majority South Asian island nation. "This is just to show the world that we can live as one country, one nation," said Arjuna Ranatunga, the former cricket player and now government minister of ports and shipping in an interview



A Sri Lankan family takes photographs standing near an enormous artificial Christmas tree as others gather around it in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Saturday. — AP

with The Associated Press. Sri Lanka has "issues regarding religion, caste and race," he said. In recent years, Sri Lanka's reputation as an inclusive multicultural country has suffered amid complaints by minority Christian and Muslim communities of state-sponsored discrimination, as well as allegations of widespread abuses against minority ethnic Tamils both during and after the country's civil war against Tamil rebels, which ended in 2009. Since assuming power in January 2015, President Maithripala Sirisena and his government have ushered in an era of transparency and postwar reconciliation, but have yet to make good on many of their promises, including discovering the fate of thousands of people who disappeared during the war or investigating alleged wartime abuses by the military. Hundreds of Sri Lanka's port workers and volunteers struggled for four months to put up a towering Christmas tree in time for the holidays. But work was suspended for six days in early December, when Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith - representing the island nation's 1.5 million Catholics - lambasted the project as a waste of money. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe responded to the criticism by saying the tree was not being built with public money, but with donations from individuals and private firms.

But work suspension forced the workers to miss the initial deadlines set for Dec. 15, and then another on Tuesday and finally reduce the original tall too. "Our target was to go up to 100 meters (325 feet), but due to the construction delays we had to stop at 238 foot as we need to open it on time for Christmas," Gunasekara said. The tree will remain till Jan 6. — AP

7-year-old Santa's helper wipes tables to buy toys for kids

A 7-year-old Indiana boy has been earning money to buy Christmas toys for other children as an honorary employee at McDonald's. The youngster, Trenton Gardner, tells WTHI-TV that wiping tables at the fast food restaurant in Bicknell, Indiana, is the "coolest job" he's ever done. His mother, Lindsey Gardner, says her son's inspiration came from learning some children's families couldn't afford toys.

He wanted to earn money so he could help. It took time to convince McDonald's general manager Rhonda Butler.

She says the boy was so determined she made him an honorary employee and gave him his own apron, name tag and hat. The restaurant donated toys to his effort. Earlier this week, the 7-year-old and his family dropped off a truckload of toys to a local charity. — AP



Members of the volunteer Water Skiing Christmas Show, including a water skiing Santa Claus with elves, reindeer, the Grinch, and others, water ski, on the Potomac River, in Alexandria, Virginia, just down the river from Washington, DC.



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. 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 photos