

Alghanim Industries joins UNHCR on visit to Zaatari camp



Trump says UN just a club for people to 'have a good time'



Diamond biz roiled as cash crunch hits India stone cutting



LOYAL smashes Sydney-Hobart record



KUWAIT RECEIVES NEW INFO ON MISSING CITIZENS IN IRAQ

JARALLAH SAYS ONLY FEW ISSUES PENDING BEFORE JOINT MEETING



Min 12°
Max 23°
High Tide 12:35 & 22:53
Low Tide 06:07 & 17:25

ASSEMBLY DEBATES ALEPPO, FORMS NEW PANELS

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A debate called by the National Assembly over the massacres in the Syrian city of Aleppo passed peacefully, with a majority of MPs strongly condemning the indiscriminate killings of civilians in the city. MPs then passed a number of non-binding recommendations calling on the foreign ministry to raise the issue of war crimes in Syria internationally. They also called on the government to resolve residency problems for Syrian nationals in Kuwait and to allow them to bring their families to live with them. They also called for increasing health aid to the Syrian people.

Before the start of the debate, 10 MPs demanded that the discussion be held behind closed doors, but after a secret debate, the proposal failed to get the required support and the debate was held in public. Despite the intense criticism of the regimes of Syria, Iran and Russia, the debate was almost free of sectarian arguments between hardline Sunni and Shiite lawmakers. There were however some minor arguments that quickly ended. Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem thanked the lawmakers at the end of the special debate for not letting the discussion deviate into sectarian rifts.

During the debate, Islamist opposition MP Adel Al-Damkhi condemned the Russian-Iranian-Baathist crimes in Aleppo, adding that the eventual winners in such confrontations are always the people. Islamist MP Mohammad Hayef said the Syrian people are able to resist a huge attack against them by many countries and terrorist organizations. He called for assisting Syrians living in Kuwait.

Continued on Page 13



KUWAIT: MPs Shuaib Al-Muwaizri (center) and Saadoun Al-Otaibi (front) are seen during an emergency session at the National Assembly yesterday to condemn crimes against humanity and mass murder committed against civilians in Aleppo. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

BAGHDAD: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said yesterday that Iraqi authorities have provided him with new information regarding missing Kuwaiti persons, adding that Baghdad "prioritizes this tragic humanitarian issue". The citizens have been missing from the time of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1990/1991. Jarallah made this statement during a meeting of senior officials in preparation for the sixth session of the joint Kuwaiti-Iraqi Higher Ministerial Committee due today.

He noted that he was told by the Iraqi Foreign Ministry's Undersecretary for Legal Affairs Omar Al-Barzangi of "new information on the issue of Kuwaiti missing persons". Jarallah did not disclose the new facts, which he described as a "glimmer of light at the end of a dark tunnel". "We urge you to remedy this humanitarian issue that has greatly distressed all Kuwaitis," he added. He also noted that both nations have mended fences, with only a few issues that need to be sorted out.

A preparatory meeting was co-chaired by Jarallah and Barzangi, with several officials from both sides attending. At the onset of the meeting, Barzangi appreciated Kuwait's humanitarian aid and help in extinguishing oilfield fires, as well as its agreement to delay Iraqi compensations. "The Iraqi people will never forget those who stood side by side with them under such circumstances," the Iraqi official said.

On his country's fight against terrorism, he said the Iraqi army was making significant gains in its war on terrorism, and would fully liberate Mosul very soon. On his part, Jarallah said Kuwait attaches much significance to the joint committee, which constitutes a solid foundation for better relations between both countries, especially as the committee looks into all details that concern both neighbors. He added that Kuwait is proud of its support to Iraq, and is interested in Iraq's stability and prosperity. — KUNA

News

in brief

'Star Wars' actress Fisher dead at 60

LOS ANGELES: Hollywood star Carrie Fisher - best known for her portrayal of Princess Leia in the wildly popular "Star Wars" films - died yesterday, days after suffering a heart attack on a transatlantic flight. The 60-year-old actress had been in intensive care in a Los Angeles hospital after collapsing on the jetliner from London on Friday. Fisher was catapulted to worldwide stardom as the royal rebel Princess Leia in the original "Star Wars" trilogy, which has been a cultural phenomenon since the release of the films from 1977 to 1983. She had just finished filming the third season of her latest screen project, the Amazon comedy television series "Catastrophe", which is set in London. She had also been on a publicity tour for her new book, "The Princess Diarist", which made headlines because she wrote about a three-month affair with Harrison Ford while they were filming the original "Star Wars" trilogy.

Senior IS commander in Syria likely killed

BEIRUT: One of Islamic State's top commanders in Syria was probably killed in combat as the militants sought to stave off an advance by US-backed Syrian forces towards a strategic dam in northern Syria, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said yesterday. The commander, known as Abu Jandal Al-Kuwaiti, was killed as Islamic State fighters tried to drive the Syrian Democratic Forces from the village of Jabar captured from the militants on Monday, Observatory Director Rami Abdulrahman said. The Islamic State counter attack, launched overnight, failed. The Syrian army said Abu Jandal was killed fighting in the Tabqa area near the dam. IS supporters on social media confirmed he was killed.

NBK, KAMCO invited to participate in bond issue

DUBAI: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), the state's largest commercial lender, and investment firm KAMCO said they had been invited by the public debt office at the ministry of finance to participate in a bond issue by the government. A request for proposals has been sent to NBK's subsidiary NBK Capital to help arrange a sovereign US dollar-denominated bond issue, and the deadline to respond is Jan 5, NBK said in a bourse statement yesterday. The request is under study, it added. Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh said in July that the government planned to sell as much as \$10 billion of US dollar-denominated conventional and Islamic bonds in international markets to help plug its budget deficit for the current fiscal year, which will end on March 31.

ROMANIA'S FIRST MUSLIM PM REJECTED



GUNPO, South Korea: Engineers test a four-meter-tall humanoid manned robot dubbed Method-2 in a lab of Hankook Mirae Technology yesterday. — AFP

AVATAR-STYLE MANNED ROBOT TAKES BABY STEPS

GUNPO, South Korea: A giant South Korean-built manned robot that walks like a human but makes the ground shake under its weight has taken its first baby steps. Designed by a veteran of science fiction blockbusters, the four-meter-tall, 1.5 ton Method-2 towers over a room on the outskirts of Seoul. The hulking human-like creation bears a striking resemblance to the military robots starring in the movie "Avatar". It is claimed as a world first by its creators at Hankook Mirae Technology, a South Korean robotics company, where about 30 engineers were hard at work conducting initial tests Tuesday afternoon.

"Our robot is the world's first manned bipedal robot and is built to work in extreme hazardous areas where humans cannot go (unprotected)," said company chairman Yang Jin-Ho. A pilot sitting inside the robot's torso makes limb movements which are mimicked by Method-2, whose metal arms each weigh 130 kg. The robot, more than twice the size of a tall man, is so heavy that it shakes the ground when it takes a step with a loud whirring of motors.

Yang, who dreamed as a child of building his own robot, said he has invested

242 billion won (\$200 million) in the project since 2014 to "bring to life what only seemed possible in movies and cartoons". Building the giant robot was a challenge for the engineers - most of them in their mid and late 30s - as its unprecedented scale meant they had nothing to refer to, said one who declined to be named. So far, it remains unclear how the robot will be used. Method-2 is seen more as a test-bed for various technologies that will allow the creators to build any type and size of robot in future.

While its enormous size has grabbed media attention, the creators of Method-2 say the project's core achievement is the technology they developed and enhanced along the way. "Everything we have been learning so far on this robot can be applied to solve real-world problems," said designer Vitaly Bulgarov on his Facebook page. He has previously worked on film series such as Transformers, Robocop and Terminator.

Yang said they have already received inquiries from industries ranging from manufacturing and construction to entertainment. There have even been questions about its possible deployment

Continued on Page 13

BUCHAREST: Romania's president sparked fresh political turmoil yesterday after blocking a proposal by the leftist party that won elections this month to appoint the EU country's first female and first Muslim prime minister. Klaus Iohannis gave no reasons for his rejection of Sevil Shhaideh, put forward by the Social Democrats (PSD), but there was speculation that it was due to her Syrian husband's background. "I have properly analyzed the arguments for and against and I have decided not to accept this proposal," the president told reporters, calling on the PSD to "make another proposal".

Shhaideh, 52, who has only five months ministerial experience, is from Romania's small and long-established Turkish minority, but her Muslim faith is not thought to have been the problem. Instead the focus was likely on her husband, 54, who worked in the Syrian agriculture ministry for 20 years before emigrating to Romania in 2011 and marrying Shhaideh the same year, according to the PSD.

Non-profit investigative journalism group the Rise Project said that he has several times expressed his support for Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and for Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah. Website HotNews cited unnamed sources as saying that the security services had "strongly cautioned" against



Sevil Shhaideh

Shhaideh's nomination because of the closeness of her husband and his two brothers to the Assad regime. This might have made giving Shhaideh the necessary security clearances to be the NATO member's prime minister problematic. "I suppose that his rejection is linked to questions of national security and because the United States would not have been very keen," political analyst Andrei Taranu told AFP.

The PSD had proposed the previously little-known Shhaideh after its thumping poll victory on Dec 11 when it won 45 percent of the vote, enough to form a majority coalition with its partners ALDE.

Continued on Page 13

EGYPT EASES GAZA PRESSURE

RAFAH: For most of the past decade, Egypt has been a quiet partner with Israel in a blockade on the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip that has stifled the economy and largely blocked its 2 million people from moving in and out of the territory. But after a three-year crackdown, there are signs that Egypt is easing the pressure in a step to repair its shattered ties with the Islamic militant group. In recent months, Cairo has increased the number of people allowed to exit through the Rafah border crossing, Gaza's main gateway to the outside world. It also has begun to allow Gaza to import commercial goods through Rafah for the first time since 2013 and sent public signals that it is interested in improving relations.

"There is a ball of hope that was thrown by Egypt," said Ashraf Jomaa, a Gaza community leader who has taken part in recent meetings with Egyptian officials to discuss the changing ties. "The question is how we, the Palestinians, shall catch that ball and develop the hope." The changes, while

still in their infancy, mark a significant departure from what has been a tough Egyptian crackdown since the military ousted its then-president, Mohammed Morsi, in 2013. Hamas, an offshoot of Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood, enjoyed close relations with him and quickly fell into disfavor with the new government.

Under President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi, the former military chief who ousted Morsi, Egypt all but destroyed a once-thriving network of cross-border smuggling tunnels used by Hamas - robbing the group of its main economic lifeline and a key source of weapons. Targeting Islamic militant groups in Egypt's northern Sinai Desert, it also destroyed hundreds of homes in the volatile border area to create a "sterile zone." Egypt's state-run media have repeatedly accused Hamas of collaborating with militants in Egypt, a charge the group denies.

The crackdown has had a devastating effect on both sides of the border.

Continued on Page 13



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and Expatriate Affairs Nasser Judeh. —Amiri Diwan photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Yemeni Minister of Oil and Minerals Saif Al-Sharif.

AMIR RECEIVES LETTER FROM JORDAN'S KING

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister

of Foreign and Expatriate Affairs Nasser Judeh, at Bayan Palace yesterday. Judeh handed His Highness the Amir a letter from Jordan's King Abdullah II, regarding an invitation to take part at the upcoming meeting of the 28th regular session of the Arab League Council.

Meanwhile, His Highness also received Minister of Oil as well as Minister of Electricity and Water Essam Al-Marzouq and Yemeni Minister of Oil and Minerals Saif Al-Sharif, who

handed a letter to His Highness from Yemeni President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, regarding bilateral ties. The meetings were attended by Amiri Diwan Advisor Lieutenant General Khaled Bodai. —KUNA

KUWAITI GOVT WILLING TO WORK WITH ASSEMBLY OVER 'STRATEGIC ALTERNATIVE'

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah said yesterday the government is ready to cooperate with the National Assembly over pay scale amendments, also known as the 'strategic alternative'.

The minister was responding to a question during an ordinary parliamentary session held yesterday to look into the pay scale of civil servants. He added that the government had voiced its views on the proposed changes to the pay system,

which are still within the purview of the parliament.

Youth development

Meanwhile, Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said yesterday the State of Kuwait had notched up quantum jumps in the Global Youth Development Index (YDI) over the last three years. Speaking during the session, the minister said Kuwait had jumped to the 56th spot in

2016 from the 110th in the previous report issued in 2013.

The minister was responding to a parliamentary request for setting up an ad hoc committee for improving the business environment. "The State has made much headway in the establishment of the National Fund for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises just out of its care and attention to young people," he added. He pointed out that the committee would be certainly in the interest of everyone, mainly young people. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah speaks during yesterday's parliament session. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah addresses the session.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Monther Bader Al-Essa. —Crown Prince Diwan photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Kuwait's Ambassador to Lebanon Abdulaal Al-Qenaie.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Governor of Central Bank of Kuwait Dr Mohammad Yousef Al-Hashel.

KUWAIT AMBASSADOR MEETS PAKISTAN'S ADVISER TO PM

ISLAMABAD: The newly appointed Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Pakistan Nassar Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi called on Pakistan's Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Tariq Fatemi in Islamabad.

According to an official release, during the meetings they discussed matters of bilateral interest and cooperation in different sectors. The Kuwaiti envoy conveyed greetings of Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait to the Adviser and SAPM.

He said that Pakistan and Kuwait enjoyed historical ties, while appreciating that Pakistan has always extended full support and help whenever Kuwait required it. He said that while in Pakistan, he would strive to enhance the existing warm and friendly relationship, to a new level of mutually beneficial cooperation.

According to Pakistan Foreign Office press release yesterday, the SAPM welcomed Ambassador Nassar Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi to Pakistan and wished him success in his new assignment. The SAPM noted that Pakistan and Kuwait had always stood by each other in difficult times and were bonded together through many shared commonalities.

He thanked the Kuwaiti Government for taking care of a large number of Pakistanis living in Kuwait, who served as a strong bridge between two brotherly nations. He appreciated the generous role played by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) in Pakistan.

The SAPM noted that with the megaproject China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) already underway and economic and security situation improving, far greater economic opportunities were available for Kuwaiti investors, especially in the power sector to benefit in a business friendly environment provided by the Government of Pakistan. —KUNA

CROWN PRINCE MEETS KUWAITI AMBASSADORS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Monther Bader Al-Essa and Kuwait's Ambassador to Lebanon Abdulaal Al-Qenaie at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness also met with Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Dr Mohammad Yousef Al-Hashel. —KUNA

NINEVEH TRIBES THANK KUWAIT FOR 'GENEROUS' AID



IRBIL: Arab tribes of Nineveh governorate of Mosul province in northern Iraq expressed their sincere gratitude to Kuwait for providing 'generous' humanitarian aid to the governorate's residents and Mosul's internal displaced persons.

All Nineveh's tribes thank the Kuwaiti leadership, government, and people for helping the city's residents and displaced ones inside liberated areas from the so-called Islamic State (IS), said Mizahem Al-Howait, official spokesman for Nineveh's tribes.

The Kuwaiti humanitarian aid embodied the historical ties between the Iraqi Arab tribes and Kuwait, Al-Howait said, adding that Kuwait has provided food and other humanitarian aid to several liberated areas and districts in Mosul, particularly to displaced persons' camps.

Kuwait has made a historic stand in support of the Iraqi people, he said, pointing out the effectiveness of the Kuwaiti medical aid in treating wounded civilians from severe injuries and wounds they sustained from IS's random firing and bombing on the city. "The Iraqi people will never forget Kuwait's favor on them during these times of distress and difficulty, particularly Nineveh's tribes and residents," Howait affirmed. —KUNA



4,950 STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN 'COLOURS OF AUSTRALIA' ART COMPETITION

HELD FROM DEC 12, 2016 TILL JAN 26, 2017

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Australian Embassy, in cooperation with Kuwait Times, is proud to launch the 'Colours of Australia' drawing competition for students in Kuwait. The competition will see students in Kuwait learn more about different countries, cultures and civilizations, and identify with communities in other parts of the world through arts. Kuwait Times spoke with Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Warren Hauck to learn more about the competition.

Kuwait Times: Tell us about the 'Colours of Australia' art competition. What inspired you to get behind this project?

Hauck: The competition is meant to bring Australia closer to Kuwait. "Australia is a place you feel", so we are trying to get that sense to Kuwaitis and students as well. Colours of Australia can be about landscapes - the red of inland Australia, the blue of the ocean, animals such as kangaroos and koalas, or about the people of Australia, given Australia is one of the most multicultural countries in the world, something we are very proud of.

Multiculturalism

KT: How does Australia celebrate the diversity of cultures and communities within its borders?

Hauck: Over a third of Australians were born overseas. This rich, cultural diversity is one of our greatest strengths. It is central to our national identity, and over 85 percent of people in Australia agree that multiculturalism has been good for Australia.

We officially celebrate this diversity through "Harmony Day", a day marked by people coming together and participating in local activities. The continuing message of Harmony Day is "Everyone Belongs". It is about community participation, inclusiveness, celebrating diversity, respect and a sense of belonging for everyone.

But multiculturalism is more than a government event; it is in the food and in the people of Australia. I myself am as likely to cook a Thai curry,



KUWAIT: Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Warren Hauck speaks to Kuwait Times.

—Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

kebab, or a pizza. Multiculturalism is a part of what we are in the society.

KT: What are some things people should know about Australia? What are the most important facts to know before visiting?

Hauck: Australia is not that far - we are the same distance or even closer than the US. We have over 150 direct

flights per week to the GCC. The visa process is easy. If you are a GCC national, you can apply online - no need to send the passport. It usually takes 24 to 48 hours. Expats can apply at the Australian visa application center at Arraya Tower.

We invented Wi-Fi and Google Maps, so you know our technology

has to be good. The food is fantastic and fresh and we have one of the oldest continuing civilizations in the world in our indigenous population.

KT: What are some cultural points of interest that Australia is particularly proud of?

Hauck: There are so many, I do not know where to start. One of Australia's

most remarkable natural gifts, the Great Barrier Reef, is a breathtaking beauty and the world's largest coral reef. It has over 1,000 species of fish, and to give an idea of its size, is larger than Italy. Inland you have Uluru (Ayers Rock), where you can dine under the stars after watching the sunset. Or head down to Tasmania for unspoiled wilderness.

Equally, visitors should visit Sydney, which was just ranked as the most admired city in the world, as well as Melbourne, which has been voted as the most livable city for the sixth time in a row.

Australian community

KT: How large is the Australian community in Kuwait and what do they do here?

Hauck: We have around 1,100 Australians in Kuwait - they do a bit of everything, from banking, teaching, and engineering in some of the companies here. We have an Australian business group which brings different business networks together.

KT: How many visitors from Kuwait does Australia receive annually? What are the top places they visit?

Hauck: We had about 4,000 Kuwaitis visiting Australia last year. In terms of where they go, the most visited place was Australia's Gold Coast and Queensland. It has entertainment parks and is nice during the Kuwaiti summer, around 25 degrees.

KT: What do you think about Kuwait and the diversity of communities you find here?

Hauck: I have felt very welcomed in Kuwait as an Australian. And it is a diverse society here - I have friends from Syria, India, Kuwait, Australia, America and Britain to name a few. Unfortunately, the recent tragic events in Germany, Turkey, and Jordan erode some of the confidence in having diverse societies, so I am very proud that Australia continues to be a multicultural society.

KT: Tell us more about the Australian Embassy's upcoming events.

Hauck: The Colours of Australia art competition ends on Jan 26, which is

also Australia's National Day. We will around that time be holding a reception, and through January, organize events where Australian executive chefs will promote products and show people how to cook Australian meat. Stay tuned as well for our newspaper supplement, which will have a lot of information on Australia for tourists, students and businesses.

We are also keen to engage more with the Australian universities' alumni here in Kuwait, so if you've studied in Australia, follow us on Twitter or Facebook to make sure you can link with our events. We're also very proud to work closely with our education institutions here in Kuwait - the Australian College of Kuwait, who have sponsored the drawing competition, and Box Hill College Kuwait.

How to apply

The competition is open for all schools that want to participate. The drawing competition is being held from Dec 12, 2016 till Jan 26, 2017, allowing participants from government, special needs and private and bilingual schools enough time to submit their artworks.

On the due date, the drawing sheets will be collected by Kuwait Times, and a jury of professional artists will be selected from the Kuwait Arts Association, who will choose the top 10 winners in each age group. The contest is open to both boys and girls as follows: Elementary (6-9 years), Intermediate (10-13 years) and Secondary (14 years and above), in addition to special needs students.

Valuable prizes, including phones and tablets, will be awarded to the top 10 entrants in each category. Three top winners in each category will be given a plaque and major prizes, while the remaining seven runners-up will receive certificates and prizes. A certificate will also be given to the school as recognition of honorable participation. The competition is sponsored by VIVA and the Australian College of Kuwait, with the awards event to be hosted by Crowne Plaza Hotel Al-Thuraya City.



WORKSHOP HELD ON OBESITY OPERATIONS' COMPLICATIONS

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: A workshop on complications in obesity operations was held over three days at Adan Hospital. International obesity surgeon Dr Sultan Al-Timyat was the chief guest, while doctors Aws Al-Azairi, Alaa Akrof, Nael Al-Shimmari, Mohammad Al-Kandari and Bashayer Al-Kandari were present. Sixteen operations were performed and the most modern techniques and equipment used in the procedures were discussed to reduce complications. The best means to deal with complications during obesity surgeries were also discussed.

"We held a workshop on complicated obesity operations, and we operated on an obese woman who was operated on before, but she wasn't satisfied, so we held corrective surgery," said Dr Shimmari. "Dr Timyat is the number one consultant in obesity operations in the Middle East. He operated on the patient, performing a small bypass after correcting the earlier operation that was done in the US. He used the most modern equipment on the woman, who is an American living in Kuwait," he added. He said the success percentage in such operations is over 95 percent and complications are less than 1 percent. Dr Shimmari said more

than 200 obesity operations have been done at Adan Hospital.

"We have done more than 700 obesity procedures before, and it is known the Arabian Gulf region has a high rate of obesity. Kuwait now leads the world in obesity, and this is due to the adoption of Western lifestyles," said Timyat. He said the obesity rate in Kuwait is 48.8 percent, which is a very alarming figure, and is more prevalent in the younger generation. Youth make up 60 percent of Kuwait's population. Dr Timyat said surgery is one of the means but not the first option for fighting obesity. "You will not be able to fight obesity only with surgery," he cautioned.

PAAET PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR HONORED

KUWAIT: Dr Ahmad Al-Athari, Director General of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), recently honored Fatma Al-Azmi, Director of Public Relations and Media at PAAET, who recently graduated from the London School of Public Relations with honors for her researched titled 'The Law of E-Media and Cybercrimes in Kuwait, Between Users and Recipients.' Azmi received the honors after passing an intensive course in public relations and reputation management at the school, which is located in London, the United Kingdom. The research was about new media and the use of social media as an effective form of media. It also discussed social media policy that regulates its uses, and the role of spokespersons and how they can benefit from these laws in Kuwait.



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INSURANCE BUYERS ADVISED TO BE CAREFUL BEFORE BUYING POLICIES

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Insurance policies are of great use during unexpected circumstances. But some people have faced problems. In the Philippines, many people were traumatized after buying educational policies for their children, but suffered great losses after the companies declared bankruptcy, leaving their investments in disarray.

"I bought three educational policies for my children, but none of them were used. The company went bankrupt and promised to return the money, but not a single

penny was returned," Cyril Mansueto, an insurance policy buyer, told Kuwait Times. He bought the education policy in Kuwait from a Manila-based company in late 1990s. The value of the policies was more than KD 8,000.

Nita, an Indian secretary, also bought a life insurance policy in Kuwait. After being pestered by the agent, she decided to buy a policy. "He visited my office almost every day, and was very persistent. I started paying towards the policy in 2008. He insisted that on my death, my family will receive \$50,000. Also, in case of an accident, my

expenses will be taken care of. I agreed to pay KD 200 on a quarterly basis for the next 15 years," Nita said.

However, after losing her job, she could no longer afford to pay regularly. "I had no money to continue my insurance policy, so I stopped after paying for seven years. They said I will get the money back after the cancellation fee is deducted," she said. "I had signed the contract in Kuwait, but when I cancelled it, I was told to contact Dubai, as it was an international insurance company. Ten days later, I received only KD 1,800 out of around KD 7,000. I was expecting at least

50 percent of what I paid. This was really very disappointing," she said.

The rules

The US-based insurance company in Kuwait explained the rules of the company and how her money shrunk to this meager amount. "She came to the office three times or more, and she knew the rules. Our company will not get a single penny from her investment. The type of insurance she took had a condition that if you surrender the policy, the company will charge her, which is mentioned in the

contract. We've been in the market for the last 62 years and never had any problems with our customers. We follow the laws of Kuwait and the US - both countries have strict regulations for insurance. I assure you that my company isn't into any irregular dealings, and people trust us," the company's representative told Kuwait Times.

He stressed the buyer understood that her money would be invested in international markets and that if the market investments are down, it would reflect on her claim; which was clearly mentioned in the contract she signed.



KUWAIT: Officials pose for a group picture outside the Kazma Fire Station.

KAZMA FIRE STATION OPENED

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Kazma Fire Station on Subbiya Road was opened in the presence of Jahra Governor Lt Gen (Rtd) Fahd Ahmad Al-Amir. The event was held under the patronage of State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. Director General of the Kuwait Fire Services Directorate Lt Gen Khalid Al-Mikrad opened the station.

Deputy director general for the firefighting sector Maj Gen Jamal Al-Bulaihees said the station aims to protect people and property. "We proudly continue on the road of those who came before us and who worked sincerely, as the country's security is above everything, and there is no room for laxity in any part of it," he said. Blaihees said the Kazma station is in a vital area that will be a bridge for the most important city in Kuwait.

UNION CHIEF REITERATES OIL WORKERS' DEMANDS

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: In April, thousands of employees in the oil sector went on a strike protesting against any deduction in their salaries and other benefits as part of the new strategic payroll alternative, and after a drop in oil prices, which strongly affected national income. After the strike in Kuwait, many oil companies started taking measures by cutting their expenditures. The government wants to introduce a new payroll scheme for all public employees including the 20,000 oil workers, which means an automatic cut in wages and incentives.

After the three-day strike, which dropped local oil production by 60 percent, the demands made by the workers were met. After the formation of the new government and parliament, this issue could be raised again. Kuwait Times interviewed Saif Al-Qahtani, Head of Kuwait's Oil Union, who spoke about various issues related to the rights of oil workers.



Saif Al-Qahtani

KT: What challenges do workers face?

Qahtani: The government's poor performance is the biggest obstacle. The government is not able to develop or increase national income. In addition, it wrongly understands rationalization, and blames citizens for its failures. Such officials should be terminated from their posts.

Economic reform

KT: What about the strategic payroll alternative and the economic reform document?

Qahtani: Till now, the government or the parliament has not officially explained the strategic alternative. According to some people, this scheme should equalize the salaries of all employees in the public sector, which will be a disaster. The wages should be set according to equity in duty responsibilities and its importance. The labor market all over the world doesn't follow such random labor rules, through which we might lose experienced skilled staff in all fields.

Regarding the economic reform document, we haven't seen any real reforms and development. The reforms should start with stopping wastage of public funds and corruption and by not selling the only source of income of the country, which is the oil sector. This option should be far from consideration, and this sector should be completely controlled by the state, while the private sector can be a partner in other sectors.

Bad reality

Kuwait Times: What are your views about the new Cabinet?

Qahtani: The new Cabinet does not change the bad reality. If the new Cabinet doesn't present a clear work plan soon, then it won't be any different than the previous one. Yet we are optimistic and with time we will be able to evaluate and judge it.

ASSOCIATION DEMANDS MORE PROTECTION FOR MEDICAL STAFF ANGRY PATIENT ASSAULTS HOSPITAL OFFICIAL

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Medical Association (KMA) strongly condemned the assault against an Amiri hospital official and called for holding the assailant legally accountable. KMA Secretary General Dr Mohammad Al-Qena'e said that assaulting doctors and medical staff proves that the current law is incapable of protecting them. Qena'e demanded using harsh punishments against those who assault doctors and medical staff on duty and urged the health minister and the parliament to pass the medicine practice bill that had been prepared by a joint ministerial committee over a year, which includes penalties for the assailants. Qena'e called for increasing security at various hospitals and urged all assaulted doctors to sue the assailants noting that KMA provides lawyers to do so free of charge. A patient who had insisted on getting a restricted medicine had attacked the director of Amiri Hospital Ali Al-Alanda with a stick. Alanda, who suffered a broken arm as a result of the attack, had explained to the patient that the medicine is dangerous and must be administered by a doctor, but he was not convinced and attacked him, according to the police report. The patient was charged accordingly.

New hospital

Headed by Director of the Plan Preparations and Follow-up Soad Al-Awadh, The Supreme Council for Planning and Development's follow up team visited the new Al-Sabah Hospital project's site yesterday. Awadh stressed that over 21 percent of the project has been completed and that it is expected to be finished on schedule by August 2018. She added that the project's total cost is KD 179 million and that the hospital will include four buildings and parking spaces for over 1,275 vehicles. "The hospital will include 617 beds and serve large numbers of patients in Al-Sabah Medical Zone and the surrounding areas."

Jaber Causeway

Assistant Undersecretary for Road Engineering at the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) Ahmad Al-Hassan said that 71 percent of the Jaber Al-Ahmed Causeway (Subbiyah Spur) project design, construction and main-



KUWAIT: Ongoing construction works at the new Sabah Hospital's project. — KUNA

tenance had been completed so far.

Hassan added that minister Abdul Rahman Al-Mutawa gave orders to cooperate with other state department and remove all obstacles that might delay the project. The Project will act as Kuwait's gateway into developing the northern regions of the country, and help realize His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's vision to turn Kuwait into a regional and international commercial and financial hub.

He added that the spur will link Kuwait to the projected Madinat Al-Harir (Silk City) megaproject with a total cost of KD 738,750,000. It will include a sea bridge that starts from Shuwaikh Port and the Free Trade Zone, goes through Kuwait Bay to the west, passes by the Um Al-Namel Island to Doha, then links with Doha Expressway, with a total length of 12.4 km. Hassan said the project consists of a seven-km sea bridge with two intersections, and has the same specs of the

main causeway (Subbiyah Spur).

The list

The National Assembly's Secretary General Allam Al-Kandari strongly denied social media reports about a list including the names of previous ministers and lawmakers that are allegedly issued by the secretariat general. "The parliament is not responsible for statements made from unofficial sources," he said, urging users of social media networks to verify and be more accurate on reporting about the parliament activities.

Licenses' validity

The Journalism and Publication Sector at the Information Ministry issued ministerial decision number 176/2016 upon which the validity of licenses given to individuals and companies (as per article 3 of the publications law) will be doubled from two to four years to be renewed for similar periods.

INDIVIDUAL LABOR DISPUTES CAN BE SUBMITTED ON WEEKDAYS

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Manpower adjusted the mechanism of receiving individual disputes over work permit transfers with the aim of facilitating procedures and saving time. According to the old mechanism, an individual had to submit his transaction in person at the Hawally labor department from 10 am till 12 noon on Saturdays, while according to the new rule, individuals can do so during all official working days at the labor department where the company he/she wishes to transfer to is registered. The fees will be paid at the same department, so that the transaction could be later - when the automated system starts working - checked by the computer to make sure it matches all the

needed conditions stipulated in ministerial decision number 57a/2016, such as paying the new fees and having worked at least six months for the current sponsor.

Surveillance cameras

The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) is currently in the process of preparing the specifications of a tender to install surveillance cameras at main power transform units with the aim of preventing cable theft and protect the power grid. Informed sources said that tender will include installing cameras in around 700 units and that a special team was currently working on setting the specifications as well as attending presentations made by local telecom companies about the technologies they could provide in this regard.

DGCA STRESSES NORMAL TRAFFIC AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said yesterday that traffic at Kuwait International Airport is going on normally. The DGCA's Spokesman Mansour Al-Hashemi dismissed social media reports claiming that there was an air problem at Kuwait airport, urging everyone to check information before posting them.

But, he admitted that a local carrier's plane only had to remain flying midair for a few minutes before landing due to bad weather conditions. Hashemi added in

statements to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that it was a very normal thing and the plane then safely landed.

Earlier reports had indicated that a pilot 'averted disaster' when he steered his passenger plane back up after noticing that a plane was already in the runway that he was given instructions from the Control Tower at Kuwait International Airport to use. The plane landed safely after the runway was cleared, according to the original reports.



NO INJURIES IN SUBHAN FIRE

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A fire broke out at a restaurant complex in Subhan, prompting Subhan fire station to respond. The fire was put out and no injuries were reported.

Expired food destroyed

Kuwait Municipality campaigns in Mirqab and Shuwaikh resulted in the confiscation and destruction of four tons and 31 kg of expired foodstuff and banned products, 38 citations were issued and two warehouses and a grocery store were administratively closed.

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Lt Gen (Retd) Sheikh Khalid Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah issued a ministerial decision related to types of driving licenses:

1- Private license: It is given for private cars of not more than seven passengers and transport vehicles of not more than two tons, as well as taxis. Validity of this license for Kuwaitis and GCC nationals is 15 years, and for non-Kuwaitis, it will be according to the residency validity.

2- Heavy duty license:

Category (A): For passenger vehicles of more than 25 passengers, transport vehicles and trailer trucks of more than eight tons, hazardous material transport vehicles and for teaching driving.

Category (B): For passenger transport vehicles of more than seven passengers and up to 25 passengers and transport vehicles of more than two tons up to eight tons. Both categories are valid for 10 years for Kuwaitis and GCC nationals, and according to the residency

validity for non-Kuwaitis.

3- Motorcycle license: **Category (A):** For all types of motorcycles, and to teach motorcycle riding including ATVs.

Category (B): For all motorcycles of three wheels or more. Validity of this license for Kuwaitis and GCC nationals is three years, and according to the residency validity for non-Kuwaitis.

4- Industrial, construction or agricultural driving license is valid for three years for Kuwaitis and GCC nationals and according to the residency validity for non-Kuwaitis.

IICO REITERATES CRUCIAL ROLE OF CHARITY ORGANIZATIONS, INITIATIVES

MANAMA: The multitude of humanitarian crises and the escalating dangers revealed the importance of the initiatives and programs adopted by charity, donor, and humanitarian institutions, said Chairman of the Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq.

Maatouq made the statement at the opening of the second conference for the donor institutions in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states in Manama yesterday. These programs and initiatives reflect an image of civilized practices of the society, the Kuwaiti Amiri Diwan Advisor said during the session. Maatouq is the honorary president of the OIC conference.



MANAMA: Chairman of the Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq speaks during the conference. — KUNA

According to the UN Humanitarian Envoy, the UN endorsement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda gave a momentum to these humanitarian societies and organizations. The practices and applications of the institutional humanitarian and social work are no longer a luxury or a national affair, but a human necessity, playing a leading role to contribute to sustainable development, he said.

Maatouq lauded the significant role of the donor bodies in the Arab and Islamic countries, both government and private.

They have been playing a great role through partnerships and positive interaction with people's social needs both at home and overseas, he said.

He highly appreciated the GCC charity and humanitarian organizations for launching a multitude of relief and development projects,

which have had positive effects, both on the regional and the global scenes.

Professional response

Meanwhile, Chairman of Bahrain Shura Council Ali bin Saleh Al-Saleh addressed the conference on the numerous crises that have hit the Arab nation. He said that they have necessitated a positive and professional response, through effective partnerships, to them to fulfill the needs of those harmed by wars and disasters.

Saleh reaffirmed the major role of the donor institutions, both official and private ones, amid the current situation. He called for improving the efficiency of these institutions to fulfill their role, through building human and institutional capabilities, working in line with the internationally acknowledged criteria. Addressing the conference, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Islamic Council of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Humanitarian Fund (OICHF), Dr Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan Al-Thani, stressed the necessity of establishing a strong and effective partnership among the Arab donor institutions to consolidate the charity efforts.

He added that the Manama gathering, and the intensive meetings that preceded it, reflected the achievements realized for supporting the humanitarian and charity efforts around the globe. The conference organized by the OICHF to discuss the best methods and practices for managing donor institutions.

Excellence award

The donor institutions later conferred an annual award for exemplary work towards global relief efforts to Maatouq, who expressed gratitude for being the recipient of the 2016 edition of this 'prestigious prize.'

Moreover, he noted that the prize is an honor for Kuwait and the country's diligent humanitarian efforts, underscoring the nation's penchant for philanthropy and illustrious history of benevolence. He pressed the international community and humanitarian organizations to step up efforts to put an end to destruction and violence in Syria and other nations embroiled in war. On an aid campaign earmarked for the people of the war-torn Syrian city of Aleppo, Maatouq said that Kuwait is eager to lend a helping hand to the hapless victims of a war that has remained unabated. The Chairman of IICO also thanked Bahrain for the country's contributions to humanitarian causes, as the Gulf island nation has hosted numerous events dealing with human rights.

On a related note, donor institutions of the OIC have bestowed a similar prize upon Kuwait's Zakat House, in addition to other awards given to other Arab and global institutions. The conference featured various sessions over practices and methods to better manage donor institutions. — KUNA



A photo of the camp showing its size.

ALGHANIM INDUSTRIES JOINS UNHCR OFFICIALS IN A VISIT TO ZAAATARI REFUGEE CAMP IN JORDAN

CRISIS PRESENTS DISRUPTION TO FUNDAMENTALS OF MENA ECONOMY: ALGHANIM

KUWAIT: Alghanim Industries, one of the largest private companies in the region, has been engaging with the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) to work on a joint initiative to help aid Syrian refugees. Vice President of Corporate Affairs and Chief of Staff, Dari Al-Reshaid Al-Bader, visited the Zaatari refugee camp located in Jordan, to observe the current conditions of the Syrian refugees and the efforts made by the UNHCR, to better their daily lives.

The Zaatari refugee camp is the largest Syrian refugee camp in the world, spread on more than seven-square-kilometers of desert just across the Syrian border, housing more than 75,000 people in sheltered areas. The camp has turned into a semi-permanent city divided into 12 districts with schools, hospitals, playgrounds, mosques and over three thousand businesses within the camp.

Serious disruption

Commenting on this visit, Chief Executive Officer of Alghanim Industries, Omar Kutayba Alghanim said: "The humanitarian crisis faced by the refugees presents a serious disruption to the fundamentals of the MENA economy. There is an entire generation that is growing up with minimum access to education and healthcare. We realize if the current situation remains unresolved, the region will face dire consequences in the future. We have a responsibility as

business leaders and citizens of this region to support the UNHCR's efforts in ensuring these vulnerable families have their basic needs met, and are able to maintain proper living conditions with a hope for a better future."



Alghanim Industries' CEO Omar Kutayba Alghanim

After his visit to the Zaatari refugee camp, Bader said: "It is remarkable having seen firsthand the outstanding effort made by the UNHCR. Their capabilities extend beyond crisis management and humanitarian aid, having built a resettlement space to accommodate Syrian refugees in the aftermath of the conflict. I interacted with Syrian refugee families and witnessed their daily struggles and sacrifices. We look forward to cooperating with the UNHCR in addressing this regional crisis."

Keu partner

Dr Hanan Hamdan, Head of the UNHCR office in Kuwait commented: "UNHCR continues its engagement with the private sector in Kuwait, which had a great and positive influence on our demarches to support refugees and persons of concern. We look at the private sector in Kuwait as a key partner that reinforces our humanitarian efforts."

The private sector is often able to provide UNHCR with innovative and creative solutions for the humanitarian crisis faced by the refugees. We aim to build a long lasting partnership with Alghanim Industries to implement and expand projects in areas and sectors of mutual concern, given the company's track record of charity work and concern about the macro economy of the region."

Alghanim Industries is committed to its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program, which focuses on giving back to the community, supporting education and encouraging entrepreneurship. Last year, the company was named 'Diamond Partner' by Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KCRS) in recognition of its efforts to support KCRS by facilitating treatment for needy patients in Kuwait, and by helping Nurture and Educate Students Today (NEST), which aims to raise awareness and support education of underprivileged children, both locally and internationally. And this year, the company participated in the



A small store in the camp set up by the refugees.

'Give Them a Chance' campaign launched by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, with the aim of providing quality education opportunities to 13,000 non-Kuwaiti children living within the country whose families are not able to afford paying school fees. The company also covered the expenses of restoring houses for the Children's Home - an orphanage launched by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's Social Welfare Sector for all orphans in Kuwait.



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Crime

Report

WOMAN KILLED IN HIT-AND-RUN

KUWAIT: An Indian woman was killed when she was run over by a car, whose driver escaped in Sulaibkhat. The body was recovered by the coroner, and detectives are investigating the incident.

Search for reckless driver

A reckless driver fled, leaving his car behind, following a heated chase in Sabah Al-Ahmad. An officer was on a routine patrol when he noticed the reckless behavior by the suspect, so he ordered him to stop, but he did not, and a chase began until the suspect got out of the car and disappeared between houses. Investigations are underway.

Mechanic, client fight

A citizen and a Syrian mechanic exchanged blows over a dispute related to repairing the citizen's car. The repair had a high cost, so the citizen attempted to convince the mechanic to work with a used spare part, but the mechanic told him this will cause more problems to the car. The citizen insisted, adding that he will take responsibility and agreed to pay KD 110. When the citizen left the shop, the car broke down and smoke came out from the engine, so he returned to the mechanic, insulted him and a fight ensued.

Officer insulted

An Egyptian woman was detained at Jabriya police station for insulting a public employee on duty and threatening to harm him. A police captain and a corporal lodged a complaint stating that they were attacked by an Egyptian man (A N) and a woman (A M), who uttered indecent words and claimed "I have big wasta (connections) and you are not up to them". Both officers said they do not know why this happened.

Physical assault

A citizen accused a compatriot of beating her following a dispute in Salwa. The woman did not explain the relationship or the reason that prompted the man to beat her. The woman submitted a medical report along with details of the alleged attacker.

Drivers' dispute

A citizen submitted a medical report to Zahra police which stated he suffered from a swollen and broken nose. He said that a driver attacked him following a dispute over the right of way near Shuhada.

Forgery

An Asian man was arrested for forging entry visas and making authorities believe they were genuine. A security source said the Asian charged large amounts of money from Asians who wanted to illegally enter the country because they are banned. The man was caught red-handed in his home, from where he ran the scam. — Translated by Kuwait Times from the Arabic press

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Grain plants pictured with date palms in the background. — KUNA

الجريدة Al-Jarida

68 YEARS OF PAIN

By Ghanem Al-Najjar

A few days ago, the world commemorated the 68th anniversary of the issuance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Dec 10, 1948; the very same year when the Palestinian catastrophe started and then retreated to no longer exist on international or regional lists of interests. The same year also witnessed the issuance of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (genocide convention), which was adopted by the UN's General Assembly on Dec 9, 1948. It might be also noteworthy to mention that Dec 9 also marks International Anti-Corruption Day, which makes us assert the close relation between the spread of corruption and the corrupt on the one hand and the prevalence of human rights violations on the other.

Deprivation of human dignity and destruction is on the increase in the Arab world. Whenever we have the slightest hope, it gets reversed with justifications of imposing more repression and humiliation. What is happening in Syria is probably a reminder of the magnitude of this tragedy which will soon become an ordinary thing and people will forget it.

We are currently witnessing the worst refugee crisis in human history, and the world is still incapable of overcoming it. Refugees crossing international waters and oceans on death boats have exceeded 65 million, which is more than those registered after World War II. What makes things even worse is the number of children amongst them, as the total number of children without access to schooling in only five Arab countries has exceeded 13 million. We do not, of course, need to explain what this means in terms of the continuation of terrorism by recruiting most of these young people to carry out killings or destructive operations within and outside their own societies.

I do not think that we are talking here about measures and methods to stop the continuous waste of human capabilities and the amount of indifference prevailing amongst human beings who have grown more senseless, and scenes of bloodshed no longer touches their feelings, except maybe in cases of political tension where we only express concern when that blood or the victim belongs to our group, sect, doctrine or race, and 'to hell with others'. This applies for both minorities and majorities.

Assuming that this world does have a head, the entire world from head to toe suffers from a moral crisis. It has been snobbishly and arrogantly dealing with the human dispossession prevailing worldwide and will only lead us to more crises.

On the 68th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international politics seems to be deadlocked, extreme and lenient over shedding of others' blood. It seems that there is no hope that the wounds of the innocent will heal. Peace and humanity dignity advocates will have to cooperate and combine efforts and develop their tools to deal with more tragedies yet to come more effectively and devastatingly - a thing which seems so difficult, yet achievable!

—Translated by Kuwait Times



الجريدة

Al-Jarida

HIDING MY FACE IN SHAME, OH KUWAIT!

Amid huge international rejection and condemnation, and during its reign in Afghanistan, the Afghan extremist movement Taliban destroyed Buddha statues that were over 2000 years old. These statues were part of the World Heritage sites, and their destruction sparked a wave of rejection and condemnation from all over the world to such an unethical and barbaric action. In 2016, Kuwait destroyed a Christmas tree that symbolizes the festival as well as our relation with the Christian brothers and sisters living here. Tell me the difference between what Taliban and Kuwait did?

Some people believe that Taliban's actions are religiously justified, and that the Buddha statues were only idols that are religiously prohibited and do not represent any human achievements. But what about Kuwait; a democratic constitutional state that protects everyone's rights, spreads equality and justice and respects all faiths, as stipulated by its constitution?

Taliban assaulted Heathen symbols, but Kuwait assaulted those of a heavenly religion. Taliban assault-

ed a religion with no believers on their soil, but Kuwait assaulted a religion that almost half its population believes in. Kuwait stabbed each and every Christian living in it by doing this, and also insulted those living worldwide. What difference did this action make? How can a state that represents democracy and constitutionality do this to their fellow human beings?

We feel so ashamed and cannot face or look at any Christian living in Kuwait or elsewhere in the eye. Is not it enough that Christians are being killed in their own countries by a handful of lunatic criminals? Has Kuwait forgotten that it was invaded and occupied by a Muslim neighbor using the cries of 'Allaho Akabr' and that those who liberated it from that Muslim neighbor were the followers of Christ; whom they have insulted and humiliated on the day of their festival? This reminds me of poet Ghazi Al-Qossaibi's words "Hiding my face in shame, oh Baghdad" and say the same: "I am hiding my face in shame, oh Kuwait."

—Translated by Kuwait Times

الجريدة Al-Jarida

WELCOME TO WORLD WAR III

By Thaar Al-Rasheedi

Before inquiring about the start of World War III, we better know that we already have been living in World War III since 2001. World War means international cartels attacking certain countries, killing millions of people. This has already been happening in the Middle East and its surroundings for the past 15 years. What is happening here is not a World War according to the conventional meaning, which means a war that happens between the allies and the axis

World War III has already started, and its battles are going on around us. And this time, no one will survive it.

powers such as the case in the first World War, or between the Soviet Union and the allies led by US against Fascism, Nazism and Japan as the case in the second World War. What is happening today is a gradual war with destruction parallel to that caused in both World Wars, especially in terms of millions of people who have been killed and displaced under a pretext of democratization and fighting dictatorships, with slight differences in concepts and balance of power.

World War III has already started, and its battles are going on around us. And this time, no one will survive it. It started with conflicts and proxy wars in Syria, Libya, Afghanistan and Iraq. All these hotspots are closely related. Therefore, those who believed that assassinating the Russian ambassador in Turkey by a Turkish policeman would trigger World War III are absolutely delusional and incapable of perceiving the surrounding military and political changes since 2001, when the first spark started and was continued by a second wave in 2011. We are witnessing the indications of the third wave and the fourth is inevitable. But since it's gradual, most of us never felt its weight, as these waves are moving from one country to another, forming regions and creating warriors with a time gap in between. A war of this magnitude will leave disastrous results, and will go on until God Almighty knows when.

—Translated by Kuwait Times



\$120m worth of 'shabu' seized

TRUMP: UN IS JUST A CLUB FOR PEOPLE TO HAVE A GOOD TIME



ISTANBUL: Turkish special force soldiers stand guard next to the courthouse as a vehicle transporting prisoners passes. —AFP

TRIAL BEGINS OF TURKEY COUP SUSPECTS

THE MOST FAR-REACHING LEGAL PROCESS IN TURKISH HISTORY

ISTANBUL: Almost 30 Turkish police went on trial in Istanbul yesterday charged with involvement in the July 15 coup, the city's first trial of alleged putsches in the massive crackdown that followed the failed bid to oust President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. With some 41,000 coup suspects under arrest in a state of emergency, the nationwide trials of the accused are set to be the most far-reaching legal process in Turkish history.

Five months after the coup, small-scale trials of suspects have already begun in the provinces and on Monday 60 people went on trial in the south-western city of Denizli. But the trial in Istanbul-taking place in a gigantic courthouse outside the Silivri prison in Istanbul-is the most significant to date and the first in the Turkish metropolis.

The accused are charged with seeking to overthrow the government as well as allegedly being members of the group led by US-based preacher Fethullah Gulen who the authorities accuse of leading the plot. Gulen, who Ankara wants to see extradited from the United States, vehemently denies the charges.

'Heaviest punishment'

The trial got under way with the reading out of the names of the accused and judge Fikret Demir reading the indictment, the state-run Anadolu news agency said. This was expected to be fol-

lowed by arguments for the defense. Initial hearings are expected to last until Friday. Amid tight security, Special Forces in camouflage gear stood guard outside the courthouse.

Of the 29 police set to go on trial in Silivri yesterday, 24 are under arrest, one on the run and the rest on bail. If convicted, 21 suspects each face three life sentences and the other eight officers could be handed prison terms of between seven-and-a-half and 15 years. Those accused are alleged to have refused to protect Erdogan's residence in Istanbul on the night of the coup. "We will make sure the guilty-within the framework of the law are punished and given the most heavy punishment possible," said lawyer Orhan Cagri Bekar, head of the July 15 Association, which represents victims of the coup.

'Dirty organization'

However there has been growing international alarm over the extent of the crackdown amid the state of emergency imposed after the coup, with critics concerned it has been used to target Erdogan's opponents. With the crackdown showing no sign of relenting, the interior ministry said 1,096 people suspected of Gulen links were detained in the last week alone.

The coup plotters killed 248 people, according to the presidency, and Erdogan has said there are

strong public demands for retribution even extending to reimposing the death penalty. Erdogan said last week that the assassination of the Russian ambassador to Ankara was carried out by a Turkish policeman loyal to Gulen, a claim not yet accepted by Moscow. He said that allies of Gulen-who over decades built up strong networks of influence within Turkish institutions-still needed to be weeded out of the security services.

"This dirty organization is still within the military, still within the police," Erdogan said. Following the start of the Istanbul trial, several others will get under way in the coming months including of the alleged military ringleaders in Ankara. The trial of 47 suspects accused of trying to assassinate Erdogan at a holiday resort on the Aegean Sea is due to begin in Mugla on February 20.

The courthouse in Silivri has huge resonance for Turks after it was also used in trials against suspects in 2013 accused of a separate coup plot known as Ergenekon. That case, which was strongly supported by Gulen, saw 275 police officers, journalists, lawyers and academics indicted for allegedly conspiring to oust Erdogan. But the suspects were then released and their convictions quashed earlier this year, with the authorities accusing Gulen of perverting the legal process and fabricating evidence. —AFP

JET AIRWAYS PLANE SKIDS OFF RUNWAY

MUMBAI: A Jet Airways Boeing 737 aircraft with 161 people on board veered off an airport runway in Goa shortly before take-off just before daybreak yesterday, crossing a field before spinning into a ditch on the side of a service road. A dozen people suffered injuries as the 154 passengers and seven crew on the Mumbai bound flight were evacuated, Jet said in a statement. "The flight 9W 2374 from Goa-Mumbai skidded off the runway at Dabolim airport this morning due to a technical glitch while aligning for take-off," the statement said.



DABOLIM: Indian officials gather beside a Jet Airways Boeing 737 aircraft after it skidded off the runway following an aborted take-off at the Goa Airport. —AFP

appeared to have lost its front undercarriage, and damaged a wing as it rested on its belly and engine casings.

Some passengers said they saw smoke in the cabin as the aircraft began taxiing on the runway. One of the injured described how the acci-

dent unfolded. "I fractured my leg," said Dinesh Kumar, a passenger on Times Now TV channel. "The moment the plane started running on the runway, it slipped into the nearby field and there was smoke inside the flight." A Jet Airways spokeswoman

said the carrier was looking into how the incident occurred.

"It needs time for proper investigation to go on and we are cooperating with the DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation)," she said. The airline is India's second largest passenger carrier. In a separate incident in New Delhi airport, a Spicejet airplane was preparing to take off at the same time as a flight run by Indigo had landed and was headed to the runway's taxiway, but the pilots avoided a collision and no-one was injured, the two companies said in separate statements.

Indigo and Spicejet said they were working with authorities investigating the incident. Air travel is surging in India, one of the world's fastest growing economies. Passenger numbers on domestic flights jumped 21 percent in 2015 to more than 80 million. The government foresees that number growing to 300 million by 2022. —Reuters

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ISRAEL PUSHING FOR MORE SETTLER HOMES DESPITE VOTE

JERUSALEM: Israel could advance plans this week for thousands more settlement homes in annexed east Jerusalem in defiance of a landmark UN resolution demanding an end to such activity. It would mark the first such approvals since Friday's UN Security Council vote demanding a halt to Israeli settlement building in Palestinian territory. The resolution, which passed after the United States took the rare move of abstaining, infuriated Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who lashed out at President Barack Obama and vowed not to abide by it.

A Jerusalem planning committee is to discuss issuing building permits for 618 housing units in the mainly Palestinian eastern sector of the city today, according to the Ir Amim NGO, which monitors settlement building. Jerusalem deputy mayor Meir Turjeman, who also heads the committee, has reportedly also spoken of seeking to advance plans for some 5,600 other units

at earlier stages in the process. Yesterday he told AFP there were no plans to call off discussions in response to the UN vote. The hundreds of building permits were on the agenda before the resolution was passed. "We'll discuss everything that's on the table in a serious manner," he said. And on his Facebook page Turjeman: "I'm not concerned by the UN or anything else trying to dictate our actions in Jerusalem. I hope the government and new US administration will give us the momentum to continue and make up for the shortage created over the eight years of the Obama administration," he said of settlement construction.

Diplomatic reprisals

Israel has already taken diplomatic steps in response to what it calls the "shameful" resolution, which passed with support from all the remaining members of the 15-strong Security Council. Yesterday, the foreign ministry said it was "temporarily reducing"

visits and work with embassies of nations that voted for it. On Christmas Day it summoned ambassadors of countries that voted for the resolution while Netanyahu met US ambassador Daniel Shapiro on Sunday.

Security Council members such as Russia, China and Britain are key to Israeli diplomacy or trade and some analysts suggested the measures being taken were more symbolic than substantive. Washington is Israel's most important ally and provides it with more than \$3 billion per year in defence aid. By declining to use its veto, the US enabled the adoption of the first UN resolution since 1979 to condemn Israel over its settlement policy.

Obama's administration has been frustrated with settlement building in east Jerusalem and the West Bank, which Israel occupied in 1967. Israel later annexed east Jerusalem in a move never recognized by the international community. Settlements are built on land the Palestinians view as

part of their future state and seen as illegal under international law. Some 430,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank and 200,000 Israelis live in east Jerusalem, which Palestinians see as the capital of their future state.

New 'Dreyfus trial'?

The UN resolution demands "Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem." It says settlements have "no legal validity" and are "dangerously imperiling the viability of the two-state solution" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the basis of years of negotiations.

The resolution contains no sanctions but Israeli officials are concerned it could widen the possibility of prosecution at the International Criminal Court. They are also worried it could encourage some countries to impose sanctions against Israeli settlers

and goods produced in the settlements. Plans by France to hold an international Middle East peace conference on January 15 — opposed by Israel which has called for direct talks with the Palestinians — is another point of concern.

Officials fear the conference could be lead to further action against Israel that would then be taken to the Security Council for approval before Donald Trump takes over as US president on January 20. Palestinian leaders support the conference, saying years of negotiations with the Israelis have not ended the occupation. Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas on Monday said the UN resolution "paves the way for the success" of the conference. He said he hopes it "comes out with an international mechanism and a timeline to end Israeli occupation of our country". Israeli hardline Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman dubbed the conference a new "Dreyfus trial" and urged French Jews to move to Israel. — AFP

IS 'SUMMARILY EXECUTED' 13 IRAQI CIVILIANS: HRW

BAGHDAD: Islamic State group fighters "summarily executed" 13 civilians after villagers rose up against them at the start of the Iraqi army's offensive to retake Mosul, Human Rights Watch said yesterday. The killings took place in the villages of Al-Hud and Al-Lazzagah, 50 kilometers south of Mosul on October 17, the day government forces launched the massive operation to oust the jihadists from the city.

"ISIS responded to the village uprising by unlawfully executing people captured in the uprising and civilians who weren't involved," Lama Fakih, deputy Middle East director at HRW, said in a statement. "Security forces who capture ISIS fighters should properly investigate their participation in alleged war crimes like these," she said, using an alternate acronym for the jihadist group.

In total, the IS fighters "summarily executed at least 13 people including two boys," HRW said. The report included the picture of one of the slain boys, a 13-year-old who had not been involved in the uprising, it said, citing his father Muhammad. IS

had captured Al-Hud and Al-Lazzagah in June 2014, with villagers saying they lived in constant fear of punishment, including death, for activities like smoking and using mobile phones, said HRW.

As Iraqi forces closed in on the morning of October 17, about 30 villagers attacked the jihadists, killing 19 of them, said the New York-based watchdog. IS fighters began the execution-style killings in the afternoon, leaving bodies lying in the streets. Iraqi forces entered Al-Lazzagah that evening and Al-Hud the next morning.

Human Rights Watch called on Iraqi security forces to "appropriately investigate incidents of alleged war crimes so that those responsible, if in government custody, can be fairly prosecuted".

After seizing control of large parts of Iraq and neighbouring Syria in mid-2014, IS declared a cross-border "caliphate", imposed its harsh interpretation of Islamic law and committed widespread atrocities. Iraqi forces have been tightening the noose around Mosul since launching the offensive. — AFP



TUNIS: This file photo taken on December 24, 2016 shows Tunisian women shouting slogans during a demonstration outside parliament against allowing Tunisians who joined the ranks of jihadist groups to return to the country. — AFP

FEARS MOUNTING AS TUNISIA AWAIT RETURN OF JIHADISTS

UN SAYS 5,500 TUNISIANS ARE FIGHTING ALONGSIDE EXTREMIST

TUNIS: Fears are mounting in Tunisia that the return of jihadists from foreign battlefields could destabilize a country already reeling from a wave of attacks since its 2011 revolution. Concern has increased after a Tunisian was identified as the suspected attacker who mowed down 11 people with a hijacked truck at a Berlin Christmas market last week and also killed the driver.

The rampage was claimed by the Islamic State group in a video showing Anis Amri pledging allegiance to IS chief Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. Days later Tunisia said it had arrested Amri's nephew and two others it said were linked to the Berlin attack suspect but not to the assault itself. Tunisia has witnessed an emergence of extremism since the 2011 revolution that toppled longtime dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, as well as a wave of jihadist attacks on foreign tourists and security forces.

The United Nations estimates that more than 5,500 Tunisians are fighting alongside extremist groups, including in Syria and Iraq and Libya where IS seized swathes of territory. "The issue of returning jihadists is acute because the noose is being tightened around IS in Syria, Iraq and Libya," said political analyst Hamza Meddeb. He was referring to ground being lost by IS fighters in Syria and Iraq under an onslaught by the US-led coalition and the fall of their Libyan bastion Sirte which pro-government forces retook in early December.

These setbacks have sparked concern that tens of thousands of jihadists could head back to their

home countries, including to Tunisia. Last week interior minister Hedi Majdoub told parliament that 800 jihadists have already returned from the frontlines, stressing however that the authorities have them on their radar. His words failed to appease politicians, security forces and citizens who over the past few days have publicly voiced their fears and warned against returning jihadists.

On Saturday, hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside parliament in Tunis to protest against allowing jihadists back into the country. They also chanted slogans 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.

According to contemporary history professor Abdelatif Hannachi, Tunisia has the capacity to deal with returning fighters, "but it is necessary to work in stages". "First investigate, then refer them to the courts and isolate them if necessary, then finally begin their rehabilitation," he told AFP. On Sunday, Ghannouchi said he opposed a ban on returning Tunisian jihadists and that the country should "assume its responsibilities".

"This disease has to be dealt with seriously," he told a public meeting, saying his "treatment" was "justice, police, education and therapy". But Tunisia's security forces warned in a statement that the possibility of battle-hardened jihadists returning was "worrying and could lead to the Somali-isation of the country." Experienced fighters "have

received military training and have learnt to use all sorts of sophisticated weapons," they said. The security forces urged the government to take "exceptional measures" to combat the return of jihadists and strip them of their nationality.

'No indulgence'

Article 25 of Tunisia's new constitution specifically states that no citizen shall be deprived of their nationality, exiled, extradited or prevented from returning to their home country. President Beji Caid Essebsi said in early December that his country was "taking all the necessary measures" to ensure that jihadists returning from Syria and Iraq are "neutralized".

Citing the constitution he said "we can't prevent a Tunisian from returning to his country." "We will not put them all in prison because we would not have enough prisons... but we will monitor them," he added. Following a storm of criticism in the press and on social media, Essebsi later told Tunisian television that "we will not be indulgent with the terrorists".

On Monday his former campaign manager Mohsen Marzouk warned in a statement posted on Facebook that "every returning jihadist" was like a "time bomb". In November Tunisia's national Security Council announced the adoption of a strategy to fight extremist violence. The analyst Meddeb said the plan remains "polarizing" because authorities have not released details. — AFP

INDIA: EFFORTS ON TO FREE PRIEST IN YEMEN

NEW DELHI: India said yesterday it will "spare no effort" to secure the release of a priest kidnapped in Yemen, after video footage showing him pleading for help was circulated on social media. Indian priest Thomas Uzunnail was abducted during a deadly attack by Islamist militants on a care home operated by the Missionaries of Charity group in the southern Yemeni port city of Aden in March. The five-minute video, the provenance of which is unknown, shows him appealing to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pope Francis to secure his freedom.

"My captors have made many contacts with the government of India to get me released. I am very sad that nothing has been done seriously in my regard," Uzunnail said.

In response, India's foreign minister Sushma Swaraj tweeted that New Delhi would "spare no effort to secure Fr (father) Tom's release from captivity", but

gave no details. "I have seen the video from Fr Tom. He is an Indian citizen and the life of every Indian is most precious for us," she said.

Joseph Chinnayyan, the deputy secretary general of Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, said it was not possible to verify the authenticity of the video. "Even if it is authentic, whatever he is saying is still in duress. We are certain that he is under in captivity and efforts are on to free him," Chinnayyan said.

The video was posted on social media sites Youtube and Facebook on Monday but it is not clear when it was shot. In it the 56-year-old priest said his nationality remained the main reason that world leaders remained unsympathetic. "If I were a European priest, I would have been taken more seriously by authorities and people would have got me released," he said. Yemen is in midst of a civil war and has seen a growing presence of Al-Qaeda and Islamic State militants. — AFP



BAGHDAD: Iraqi security forces search cars in Baghdad's southwestern Saydiyah neighborhood a day after journalist Afrah Shawqi Al-Qaisi was kidnapped. — AP

IRAQI FEMALE JOURNALIST KIDNAPPED BY GUNMEN

BAGHDAD: Gunmen have kidnapped an Iraqi female journalist after posing as members of the security forces and bursting into her home in Baghdad, authorities said yesterday. Afrah Shawqi Hammudi was abducted on Monday at around 10:00 pm (1900 GMT) from her home in a southern neighborhood of the capital, said Ziad Al-Ajili, head of the Journalistic Freedoms Observatory.

"Eight armed men burst into her house in Saidiya dressed in plain clothes and entered by pretending to belong to the security forces," he told AFP. "They tied up her son and stole mobile phones, computers and cash before kidnapping Afrah and fleeing." The report was confirmed by a source in Iraq's interior ministry who

spoke on condition of anonymity. Hammudi, 43, is employed by Asharq Al-Awsat, a London-based pan-Arab newspaper, as well as a number of news websites, including Aklam.

On Monday she published a stinging article on the website in which she hit out at the armed groups which "act with impunity" in Iraq. Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi condemned her abduction and ordered the security services to do their utmost find her and track down those responsible. Iraq is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. Seven journalists have been killed in the country in 2016, press freedom group Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said last week. — AFP

RUSSIA CALLS US MOVE TO ARM SYRIAN REBELS A 'HOSTILE ACT'

MOSCOW: Russia said yesterday that a US decision to ease some restrictions on arming Syrian rebels had opened the way for deliveries of shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles, a move it said would directly threaten Russian forces in Syria. Moscow last year launched a campaign of air strikes in Syria to help President Bashar Al-Assad and government forces in a conflict with rebels, some of whom are supported by the United States.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the policy change easing some restrictions on weapons supplies to rebels was set out in a new US defense spending bill and that Moscow regarded the step as a hostile act. US President Barack Obama signed the annual defense policy bill into law last week.

"In the administration of B Obama they must understand that any weapons handed over will quickly end up in the hands of jihadists with whom the sham 'moderate' opposition have long acted jointly," Zakharova said in a statement. "Such a decision is a direct threat to the Russian air force, to other Russian military personnel, and to our embassy in Syria, which has come under fire more than once. We therefore view the step as a hostile one." Zakharova accused the Obama administration of trying to "put a mine" under the incoming

administration of President-elect Donald Trump by attempting to get it to continue what she called Washington's "anti-Russian line." During his election campaign, Trump said he was keen to try to improve relations with Moscow and spoke posi-

tively about President Vladimir Putin's leadership skills. A back-and-forth exchange between Trump and Putin over nuclear weapons last week tested the Republican's promises to improve relations with Russia. — Reuters



DAMASCUS: Syrian youths collect wood from rubble to be used for heating and cooking, on December 27, 2016, in the Damascus rebel-held eastern suburb of Zamalka. — AFP

OBAMA AND ABE TO SEEK RECONCILIATION

HONOLULU: Putting 75 years of resentment behind them, the leaders of the United States and Japan are coming together at Pearl Harbor for a historic pilgrimage to the site where the bloodshed of surprise attacks thrust America into World War II.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit with President Barack Obama is powerful proof that the former enemies have transcended the recriminatory impulses that weighed down relations after the war, Japan's government has said. Although Japanese leaders have visited Pearl Harbor before, Abe will be the first to visit the memorial that now rests on the hallowed waters above the sunken USS Arizona.

For Obama, it's likely the last time he will meet with a foreign leader as president, White House aides said. It's a bookend of sorts for the president, who nearly eight years ago invited Abe's predecessor to be the first leader that Obama hosted at the White House. For Abe, it's an act of symbolic reciprocity, coming six months after Obama became the first sitting US president to visit Hiroshima in Japan, where the US dropped an atomic bomb in hopes of ending the war.

"This visit, and the president's visit to Hiroshima earlier this year, would not have been possible eight years ago," said Daniel Kritenbrink, Obama's top Asia adviser in the White House. "That we are here today is the

result of years of efforts at all levels of our government and societies, which has allowed us to jointly and directly deal with even the most sensitive aspects of our shared history."

Sorry but not sorry

More than 2,300 Americans died on Dec 7, 1941, when more than 300 Japanese fighter planes and bombers attacked. More than 1,000 others were wounded. In the ensuing years, the US incarcerated roughly 120,000 Japanese-Americans in internment camps before dropping atomic bombs in 1945 that killed some 140,000 people in Hiroshima and 70,000 in Nagasaki.

Abe will not apologize for Pearl Harbor, his government has said. Nor did Obama apologize at Hiroshima in May, a visit that he and Abe used to emphasize their elusive aspirations for a nuclear-free future. No apology needed, said 96-year-old Alfred Rodrigues, a US Navy veteran who survived what President Franklin D. Roosevelt called a "date which will live in infamy." "War is war," Rodrigues said as he looked at old photos of his military service. "They were doing what they were supposed to do, and we were doing what we were supposed to do."

After a formal meeting in the morning, Obama and Abe planned to lay a wreath aboard the USS Arizona Memorial, which is accessible only by boat. Then

they'll go to nearby Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, where both leaders will speak. Obama and Abe signed off on the visit last month when they met in Peru on the sidelines of an economic summit. Though the parallels with Obama's Hiroshima visit are palpable, both governments said that one visit wasn't contingent on the other.

Meanwhile, China criticized Abe's visit as an insincere attempt to absolve Japan of its wartime aggression. "Trying to liquidate the history of World War II by paying a visit to Pearl Harbor and consoling the dead is just wishful thinking on Japan's part," said Hua Chunying, a Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman in Beijing, at a regular briefing.

"Japan can never turn this page over without reconciliation from China and other victimized countries in Asia," she said. "Japanese leaders should stop being so evasive and dodging, and instead take a responsible attitude toward history and future, deeply and sincerely reflect upon the history of aggressive war, and draw a clear break with the past."

Political risk

Abe's visit is not without political risk given the Japanese people's long, emotional reckoning with their nation's aggression in the war. Though the history books have largely deemed Pearl Harbor a surprise attack, Japan's

government insisted as recently as this month that it had intended to give the US prior notice that it was declaring war and failed only because of "bureaucratic bungling."

"There's this sense of guilt, if you like, among Japanese, this 'Pearl Harbor syndrome,' that we did something very unfair," said Tamaki Tsukada, a minister in the Embassy of Japan in Washington. "I think the prime minister's visit will in a sense absolve that kind of complex that Japanese people have." Since the war, the US and Japan have built a powerful

alliance that both sides say has grown stronger during Obama's tenure. There are questions about what the relationship will look like under President-elect Donald Trump.

During the campaign, Trump suggested that Japan and South Korea should obtain nuclear weapons so the US would no longer be burdened with costs of defending them, a disquieting notion in many Asian capitals. But after Trump's election, Abe became the first foreign leader to meet with him, sitting down in Trump Tower with the business mogul

and Trump's daughter, Ivanka.

Though no Japanese prime minister has visited the USS Arizona Memorial, former Japanese leader leader Shigeru Yoshida visited Pearl Harbor in 1951, six years after Japan surrendered. He stopped there on his way home from signing the San Francisco peace treaty with the US and others, and paid a courtesy visit to the office of Adm Arthur WR Radford. Other prime ministers have since visited Pearl Harbor and the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, known as Punchbowl. —AP



PALM BEACH: In this December 26, 2016 US Navy handout photo, Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe (C) arrives at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. —AFP



MEMPHIS: Police officers continue to patrol the area as people linger in the parking lots around Oak Court Mall after the mall was closed due to a disturbance. —AP

MALL FIGHTS SEND POST-HOLIDAY SHOPPERS SCRAMBLING FOR EXITS

BEACHWOOD: Fights broke out at malls around the country Monday night sending shoppers, who were looking for post-holiday deals, scrambling for the exits. No one was seriously injured in the mall melees, which, during the panic, also prompted numerous false reports of gunfire.

Police in Ohio told Cleveland.com that officers used pepper spray to disperse a large crowd following a fight at an upscale shopping mall in Beachwood, just outside of Cleveland. A report of shots fired was later determined to be unfounded. One male juvenile was arrested for allegedly trying to hit an officer during the incident, which police said appeared to have been "loosely organized on social media."

There were similar disturbances at malls around the country including in New York, New Jersey and North Carolina, where chaos erupted at a mall in Fayetteville and

emergency medical personnel were called in to assist someone who had a medical episode while fleeing. In Memphis, Tennessee, police arrested several people following fights at two malls there. No one was injured and no gunshots were fired, despite reports indicating otherwise.

"Somebody yelled 'gun!' and youths stampeded through the mall," Deputy Chief Terry Landrum told The Commercial Appeal. Police in Aurora, Colorado, near Denver, evacuated a mall due to multiple skirmishes. In Aurora, Illinois, outside of Chicago, a mall there was temporarily shut down due to a large disturbance. Videos posted on Twitter showed mall security trying to get the situation under control. There was no official word on whether any of the fights, which were also reported in Arizona, Texas, Indiana and Connecticut, were connected. —AP

OFFICIALS: US, RUSSIAN MILITARY TALKS QUIETLY PROVING USEFUL

WASHINGTON: US-Russian talks on their separate fights against the Islamic State group are improving and becoming more frequent, American officials said, with each side trading information in real time and even outlining some of their strategic objectives in the months ahead. The progress dispels the notion that ties between the former Cold War foes are "frozen."

In the discussions, Russia has made clear its counterterrorism priority in Syria is retaking the ancient city of Palmyra, officials said. The US is determined to pressure IS' headquarters in Raqqa. The closer contacts have developed despite the former Cold War foes' bitter accusations against one another over the devastation in Aleppo and Moscow's claim that relations are now "frozen on all practical levels."

The confidential military discussions aren't focusing on the two countries' opposing positions in Syria's civil war, where Russia is fighting alongside the government and the United States has backed rebel groups, officials said. But US officials with knowledge of the ongoing conversations are crediting both sides with putting aside much of the public animosity, which has included Washington's accusations of Russian war

crimes in Aleppo and Moscow's charges of American support for terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda.

Immediate operations

Much of the talk has concerned the two nations' immediate operations. Since Dec 15, the US-led coalition has conducted airstrikes on about two dozen locations around Palmyra, destroying air defense weapons, tanks, aircraft shelters, storage bunkers and other vehicles and equipment. At the same time, US and Russian officials have been ensuring that the two militaries' don't cross paths in the airspace above the city that IS militants seized for the second time earlier this month, and that American strikes don't mistakenly hit Russian or Syrian forces.

But the talks have gone beyond the granular and even touched on broader US and Russian plans, according to several US officials, who weren't authorized to speak publicly on the confidential discussions and demanded anonymity. The Russians have spelled out that after they retake Palmyra, they want to move on IS militants congregated in Deir el-Zour, a city closer to the Iraqi border. Succeeding in Deir el-Zour, according to one US official, could take Russia several months. —AP

TRUMP: UN IS JUST A CLUB FOR PEOPLE TO HAVE A GOOD TIME 'SO SAD!'

WEST PALM BEACH: Donald Trump is questioning its effectiveness of the United Nations, saying it's just a club for people to "have a good time," after the UN Security Council voted last week to condemn Israeli settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. The president-elect wrote Monday on Twitter that the UN has "such great potential," but it has become "just a club for people to get together, talk and have a good time. So sad!"

On Friday, Trump warned, "As to the UN, things will be different after Jan 20th," referring to the day he takes office. The decision by the Obama administration to abstain from Friday's UN vote brushed aside Trump's demands that the US exercise its veto and provided a climax to years of icy relations with Israel's leadership.

Charity in question

Meanwhile, the billionaire businessman took to Twitter Monday evening to say he believes his election as president has benefited the economy. "The world was gloomy before I won - there was no hope," he said in a verified post on his Twitter account. "Now, the market is up nearly 10 percent and Christmas spending is over a trillion dollars." Markets are up since Trump won the general election, although not quite by that much. The Standard & Poor's 500 is up about 6 percent since Election Day, while the Dow has risen more than 8 percent.

As for holiday spending, auditing and accounting firm Deloitte projected in September that total 2016 holiday sales were expected to exceed \$1 trillion, representing a 3.6 percent to 4.0 percent increase in holiday sales from November through January. Trump also used social media to complain anew about criticism of the Donald J Trump Foundation. In one post, he said, "The DJT Foundation, unlike most foundations, never paid fees, rent, salaries or any expenses. 100 % of the money goes to wonderful charities."

He also tweeted that "I gave millions of dollars to DJT Foundation, raised or received millions more. ALL of which is given to charity, and media won't report." Trump had said Saturday that he wanted to dissolve his charitable foundation amid efforts to eliminate any conflicts of interest before he takes office next month.

He 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. The Democratic National Committee criticized him for what it called "a wilted fig leaf to

cover up his remaining conflicts of interest and his pitiful record of charitable giving."

A 2015 tax return posted on the nonprofit 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

New sanctions

Trump's tweet Monday about the UN ignores much of the work that goes on in the 193-member global organization. This year the UN Security Council has approved over 70 legally binding resolutions, including new sanctions on North Korea and measures tackling conflicts and authorizing the UN's far-flung peacekeeping operations around the world. The General Assembly has also approved dozens of resolutions on issues, like the role of diamonds in fueling conflicts; condemned human rights abuses in Iran and North Korea; and authorized an investigation of alleged war crimes in Syria.

Trump's criticism of the UN is by no means



PALM BEACH: In this Dec 21, 2016, file photo, President-elect Donald Trump speaks to members of the media at Mar-a-Lago. —AP

investigation by New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman. On the Middle East, Trump told The Associated Press last December that he wanted to be "very neutral" on Israel-Palestinian issues. But his tone became decidedly more pro-Israel as the presidential campaign progressed. He has spoken disparagingly of Palestinians, saying they have been "taken over" by or are condoning militant groups.

unique. While the organization does engage in large-scale humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts, its massive bureaucracy has long been a source of controversy. The organization has been accused by some Western governments of being inefficient and frivolous, while developing nations have said it is overly influenced by wealthier nations. The president-elect is spending the holidays at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida. —AP

NEW SUBWAY STATION HAS PUBLIC ART RARELY SEEN: A GAY COUPLE

NEW YORK: The sight of two men holding hands is far from uncommon, but a mural of two men doing just that is showing up in an unusual place - on the walls of a new subway station in New York City. That depiction of love between gay men is a rarity in public art, experts say.

"It was like winning the lottery," Thor Stockman, 60, said of finding out that he and his husband of 3 1/2 years, Patrick Kellogg, were going to be part of artist Vik Muniz's "Perfect Strangers," a series of life-size mosaic portraits of everyday New Yorkers gracing the walls of the new subway station at 72nd Street. But "part of me wishes that it wasn't a rarity, that it wasn't remarkable."

The station on the city's long-awaited Second Avenue subway line is scheduled to open Jan 1. Muniz said it made sense to include the two men in a project intended to show the different people that riders are likely to encounter on their daily commutes. "They are just people you would

expect to see," Muniz, who divides his time between New York and Brazil, said in phone interview from Rio de Janeiro. "You would expect to see men holding hands."

Jonathan David Katz, an expert in queer art history, said he could find no other example of a permanent, non-political LGBTQ public artwork in New York City. He mentioned George Segal's "Gay Liberation Monument" near Stonewall Inn, the site of the 1969 riots that launched the gay rights movement. But that work, featuring two men standing and two women sitting, is expressly commemorative of a political moment.

Long overdue

A work like Muniz's is long overdue in a city "ostensibly the epicenter of both the art world and the gay movement," said Katz, director of the doctoral program in visual culture studies at SUNY Buffalo and the former executive coordinator of the Larry Kramer Initiative for Lesbian and

Gay Studies at Yale University.

"What makes it a turning point is it isn't gayness singled out and made the theme. On the contrary, the work naturalizes gayness within the fabric of the city, and in so doing, that's actually an even more powerful message," he said. Nicholas Baume, public art fund director and chief curator, agreed. "The work reminds me that it's a common occurrence to see a gay couple holding hands waiting on a subway platform in New York City. It's great that it's no longer a taboo for men to show this kind of everyday affection."

Stockman and Kellogg said they took the photo that is the basis for the mosaic by chance more than three years ago; they had gone to Brooklyn to meet up with a friend who was working on the project, and a photographer asked if they wanted to be photographed. Stockman assumed plenty of people were being photographed, and "we were hoping maybe we'll get a nice portrait print out of this by standing there for five minutes." —AP

GERMAN LAWMAKERS URGE TOUGHER SECURITY MEASURES AFTER ATTACK

BERLIN: Politicians on both sides of Germany's governing coalition, reacting to last week's Christmas market attack, called for more state powers to deport potentially dangerous failed asylum seekers, with some also pushing for enhanced surveillance. Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose open-door migrant policy critics say has put Germany's security at risk, promised after the Berlin attack - which killed 12 people - to introduce new laws if needed.

The suspected perpetrator, 24-year

old Tunisian Anis Amri, was an asylum seeker who had escaped deportation after his application was rejected. He was shot dead by Italian police yesterday. Merkel's conservative allies in the state of Bavaria, the CSU, called for greater powers for the police and intelligence agencies and improved data exchange between them. "We need new grounds to arrest dangerous people," they said in a paper seen by Reuters entitled 'Security for our Freedom', which they will discuss at a party gathering early next month.

It says intelligence agencies should be able to monitor individuals as young as 14 to avoid radicalisation, and calls for greater powers of detention for people due to be deported. Some 550 people are registered with German security services as potentially violent. Polls indicate that Germans' deeply entrenched opposition to state monitoring, a legacy of widespread surveillance in Communist East Germany and in the Nazi era, may be waning.

While several Greens politicians have argued since the Berlin attack that more

video surveillance of public places is not the answer to Germany's security problems, a YouGov poll showed 60 percent of Germans were in favor. A deputy leader of the Social Democrats (SPD), the junior partner in Merkel's governing coalition and which is traditionally more reticent on security issues, also demanded detention before deportation for some failed asylum seekers.

"We must make sure dangerous people have no opportunity to disappear," Ralf Stegner told Die Welt daily. "Anybody who puts general security at

risk must not be allowed to be at large." Pressure is also mounting on Merkel to seal agreements with northern African countries to send rejected asylum seekers back - one of the obstacles to expelling Amri to Tunisia, which refused to accept him. However Merkel, who plans to run for a fourth term in office in federal elections next year, remains the best hope for the future for many voters. An Emnid poll showed that 56 percent of Germans think she can solve major political problems, a higher score than any other politician. — Reuters

'IT WAS A DECEPTION:' EX-SOMALI REFUGEES REGRET COMING HOME

CONDITIONS ARE DIRE AT SOMALI CAMP

MOGADISHU: "I was betrayed," lamented Madino Dhurow of her return to Somalia from the world's largest refugee camp, Dadaab, where she lived for 12 years. She said she was assured safety and support back home but she found those promises to be empty. She is among thousands of Somalis who left the sprawling camp of some 260,000 in neighboring Kenya, sometimes under pressure, after the Nairobi government announced it would close Dadaab, calling it a recruiting ground for Somalia's Al-Shabab Islamic extremists and a base for launching attacks.

Al-Shabab has carried out several assaults in Kenya in retaliation for sending Kenyan troops to Somalia in 2011 to fight the extremists, who are waging an insurgency against Somalia's weak Western-backed government. The insurgents' deadly attacks in Somalia also threaten the lives of those returning from Dadaab. "All the security improvement and welfare information we were told we would find here turned out to be false," Dhurow said, watching her six children wade through dirty, stagnant water in the Mogadishu displaced persons' camp that is their current home. "We got many promises, but it was a deception meant to make us leave."

Dire conditions

Conditions are dire at the Somali camp, called Daryeel. Families live in makeshift homes of sticks and plastic sheets that are unfit to protect them from the upcoming monsoon rains, not to mention the armed gangs that often prey on the camp at night. Refugees said each family received \$400 support cash from the United Nations once they agreed to return home to Somalia, but the money has not gone far.

It is not what those living in Dadaab expected when they were pressured to



MOGADISHU: Somali children who were repatriated to Somalia from Kenya's Dadaab camp, stand by their makeshift shelter in the Daryeel camp for the displaced. — AP

leave, sometimes after spending their entire lives in the refugee camp. Some Somali refugees have been living in Dadaab in eastern Kenya for more than 20 years, since Somalia descended into chaos following the 1991 ouster of longtime dictator Siad Barre by warlords who then turned on each other. Somalia is trying to rebuild and faces a presidential election that has been delayed several times amid security and other concerns.

Some 35,000 Somali refugees have been supported in returning voluntarily to Somalia since 2014, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. But some Somali refugees report harassment and intimidation by Kenyan security agents to leave Dadaab quickly and speed up the repatriation process. "Many of us had a

deadline to leave. Personally, I didn't want to leave Dadaab but I had no choice to stay on," said Halimo Abdow, a mother of nine who returned to Somalia in August.

Once they reached Somalia, Abdow and her children were driven from place to place by violence and financial crisis. They first went to a camp in Mogadishu but soon moved to her hometown, Afgoye, complaining of a lack of assistance by aid agencies. Then Al-Shabab attacked a police station in Afgoye last month, triggering hours of clashes that left at least six people dead. A mortar shell hit near Abdow's home, leading her to move again to a nearby nomadic village where water supplies are usually scarce.

Amnesty International and other rights groups have said Kenya is coercing resi-

dents of Dadaab to return to Somalia where they risk getting killed or forcibly recruited into Al-Shabab. Some returnees also blamed aid agencies, saying the insufficient and wrong information they provided made them to return to Somalia. The returnees say they now face hunger despite promises that they would be assisted.

Forced repatriation

"As opposed to what we were told, what we found here is all about insecurity incidents during the day and gangs preying into our camps to rob us of the little things we were given before," said Ali Haji, a father of five who returned to Somalia after eight years in Dadaab. "Whoever ventures to go outside will be killed," he said.

Somalia's government has criticized the decision by Kenya's government to close Dadaab camp and warned that forced repatriation of refugees would only worsen the security situation there. For a while earlier this year, the Jubbaland State government based in Somalia's third-largest city, Kismayo, stopped accepting refugees because of a lack of resettlement plan by aid agencies. It later accepted them after talks with aid agencies.

Last month, the Kenyan government announced it was extending by six months its deadline for closing the camp and sending the refugees home. Aid groups called the delay a short relief but said that with the new May 31 deadline hanging over them, Somali refugees will continue to feel they have to leave. "As long as Kenya denies Somali refugees secure legal status and threatens to close camps and deport them, refugees will feel they have no choice but to go home with UN return support cash instead of being forced out with nothing," said Gerry Simpson, a senior refugee researcher at Human Rights Watch. — AP



STRASBOURG: This file photo taken on June 20, 2016 shows the 35-year-old army helicopter pilot, Ukrainian Nadiya Savchenko elected as a Ukrainian MP in absentia during almost two years in a Russian jail, delivering a speech at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. — AFP

UKRAINE INSURGENTS RELEASE 2 WOMEN THANKS TO SAVCHENKO

DONETSK: Ukraine's pro-Moscow insurgents yesterday released two women they had held captive thanks to the intervention of Nadiya Savchenko—a Kiev-born female combat pilot who spent nearly two years in a Russian jail. The freeing of the women—a judge and a journalist—came after Savchenko, now a member of parliament, held a private meeting with the heads of the separatist regions of Lugansk and Donetsk earlier this month.

Savchenko has fervently taken up the cause of winning back the freedom of some 110 people believed to still be held by the militias in their industrial enclave in the southeast of Ukraine. But her trip to the war zone created controversy in Kiev because it was not authorized by President Petro Poroshenko. The Ukrainian leader refuses to have formal contacts with the rebellion's commanders because they lack legitimacy in his eyes. An AFP correspondent saw two women—regional judge Anzhelika Presnyakova and journalist Olga Svorak—handed over to a Ukrainian envoy who came to the rebels' de facto capital of Donetsk. It was not immediately clear how long they had been held captive or under what circumstances they were captured.

Refusing to negotiate

They were taken back to Ukrainian-held territory by Volodymyr Ruban, the head of a non-governmental organization involved

in prisoner swaps. Ruban told reporters that Savchenko's visit to the separatist region "helped ease the prisoners' release". But her trip has been condemned by some Ukrainian officials because it contradicted Kiev's line of refusing to negotiate with the insurgents but communicating with them through Western mediators.

The 35-year-old Savchenko initially became a symbol of Ukraine's resistance to what Kiev considers Russia's occupation of the east. Poroshenko and his Western allies view the separatists as Russian proxies who have been fighting a 31-month war that has claimed nearly 10,000 lives to destabilise the Ukrainian government and keep it dependent on the Kremlin's whims. Moscow denies interfering in the conflict but international monitors have seen tanks and other heavy military equipment enter the Ukrainian war zone from Russia throughout the war.

Yet Savchenko's political star has fallen since her release from Russia in May. She had been sentenced for alleged complicity in the murder of two Russian state television journalists in the war zone in June 2014 — a charge she denied and which led her to hold a series of hunger strikes. Savchenko has now taken on views that forced her to leave the populist political party of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko that she originally headed. — AFP

WHO'S BEHIND THE MASSACRES IN DR CONGO'S BENI REGION?

BENI: The official explanation for a two-year wave of massacres in a restive corner of DR Congo centers on a shadowy rebel group accused of having ties to the global jihadist underground. But some basic details about the alleged killers of more than 700 victims the latest over the Christmas weekend haven't quite convinced observers and experts.

The truth, they say, is more complicated and may lead all the way to the halls of power in the vast, mineral-rich and chronically unstable central African nation. UN experts, referring to the claimed jihadist links in past reports, have simply stated: "There is no proof of this allegation." But that has not stopped the Democratic Republic of Congo's leadership and the UN peacekeeping mission MONUSCO from blaming the bloodbath around the town of Beni, in the country's strife-torn northeast, on the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Secrecy shrouds the group, which is dominated by hardline Ugandan Muslims who were initially focused on overthrowing Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni. The group went on to absorb other rebel factions into its ranks and started carrying out attacks in 1995. Gradually pushed westwards by the Ugandan army, the ADF relocated most of its activities to DR Congo. When the Beni massacres started in October 2014, with most of the victims hacked to death, the ADF was quickly branded the culprit by both Congolese authorities and MONUSCO. More than two years on, the government and the UN have been

unable to protect civilians from the attacks, and the ADF remains the only official explanation-with Kinshasa insisting on a jihadist link to the killings.

Army troops involved?

Many ADF recruits—who were drawn this year from Tanzania, Burundi, Kenya and as far as Somalia—were not hardcore ideologists but young Muslims lured by the promise of going to study in Saudi Arabia, an intelligence agent and civil society source told AFP. Meanwhile, the ADF has not claimed any of the Beni massacres, and no experts working on DR Congo have found a link between the group and the global jihadist underground. "It's paradoxical," a civil society source in Beni told AFP, pointing to groups like Islamic State's claims of violence committed in its name.

Pinning the blame on jihadists "seems too simplistic," he said on condition of anonymity fearing for his safety, like most Congolese who spoke to AFP. Others have gone further, alleging that government agents have a role in the killing. A group run by US researcher Jason Stearns published a report in March claiming several distinct groups "appear to be involved in the massacres", including soldiers from the regular army.

It said members of the Congolese army, former rebels from the RCD-K/ML group who held the area during the 1998-2003 Second Congo War and local militias were all involved in the mass killings. — AFP

'REBEL' VILLAGERS JAILED

BEIJING: Nine residents of the Chinese "rebel" village of Wukan have been jailed for "disrupting social order" after September protests against officials turned violent, leading police to shut down the settlement and impose a media blackout. Wukan, a 13,000-strong fishing village in the southern province of Guangdong, became a symbol of resistance against corruption after a mass uprising over allegedly illegal land grabs propelled it onto global front pages in 2011.

Last September local police detained 13 residents for "disturbing public order", a move that triggered mass protests in the village, including clashes with the police who quickly put the area on lockdown. Now nine villagers have been jailed for between two and ten years for staging an unlawful assembly, parade and demonstration which "severely disrupted social order" and for disseminating false information, according to a statement posted Monday on the website of the People's

Court of Haifeng. "The circumstances were so serious that manufactures and business could not operate and severe losses were caused," the statement said. Other charges included disturbing public transport and disrupting public services. Several of the nine were among the 13 village residents detained in September.

The arrests and demonstrations that month followed the jailing of village chief Lin Zulian, who played a key role in the 2011 protests. He was sentenced to three years in prison after confessing to accepting bribes worth some \$590,000 Yuan (\$90,000), the official Xinhua news agency reported. The 2011 protests in Wukan were initially seen as just another bout of social unrest in China, where tens of thousands of such incidents occur each year. But when a protest leader died in police custody, residents stepped up their demonstrations, barricading roads into Wukan, and effectively expelling security forces for more than a week. — AFP

News

in brief



TOBA TIK SINGH: Pakistani Christians gather as they mourn the death of relatives who were killed by toxic liquor on Christmas Eve in a Christian colony. — AFP

Moonshine kills 23 In Pakistan town

LAHORE: A toxic homemade Christmas liquor killed at least 23 people, mostly from Pakistan's Christian minority community, and made dozens sick, police said yesterday. At least 45 people were treated for poisoning after drinking the moonshine in the town of Toba Tek Singh, Punjab province, about 315 km (195 miles) south of Islamabad. "The maker and supplier of the toxic liquor is also included among the dead," senior police official Bilal Kamyana told Reuters. "The maker prepared liquor at home and sold it in polythene bags for 500 rupees (about \$5) each."

Deaths from tainted liquor, often home-brewed, occur periodically in Muslim-majority Pakistan, often around religious festivals. In March, at least 40 people, mostly Hindus, died after drinking toxic liquor days ahead of the festival of Holi. It is illegal for Muslims to buy or consume alcohol in the country, and minorities need permits to buy it in restricted quantities. Christians make up about 1.6 percent of Pakistan's 190 million people, with most living in Punjab.

Low-caste pregnant woman husband beaten with sticks

AHMEDABAD: A low-caste pregnant woman and her husband were beaten with sticks after refusing to allow a group of higher-caste men to graze cattle on their farmland in India, police said yesterday. The alleged attack in western Gujarat state is the latest incidents of violence against Dalits, who lie at the bottom of India's deeply entrenched social hierarchy system. Police said Rekha Sankhat, who is six months pregnant, and her husband were recovering in hospital after the assault in the town of Una, and had registered a complaint.

"Babu and his wife were abused by the upper-caste members," local sub-inspector MA Vala told AFP. "A complaint has been registered. Further investigation will be conducted," he said. Vala said the unborn child was unharmed in the attack, but Rekha has sustained injuries on her legs and shoulder. In a similar case in September, a low-caste pregnant woman and her family were attacked for refusing to clear away a cow carcass. Dalits, formerly known as "untouchables," are commonly tasked with removing dead cows from streets, where the animals often roam freely.

Anger and protests erupted among the community in July after cow-protection vigilantes wrongly accused four Dalit villagers of killing a cow-considered sacred in India—and stripped and publicly thrashed them. A video of that incident, which also took place in Gujarat's Una town, had gone viral and prompted enraged Dalits to call for an end to outlawed but still practised caste discrimination. Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi has since urged a halt to attacks on Dalits and an end to all caste discrimination.

India intervenes in Norway abuse row

NEW DELHI: India's foreign minister yesterday urged Norway to return a five-year-old boy to his Indian-origin parents after authorities took the child into their custody over suspected abuse. Sushma Swaraj said India's ambassador would meet the Norwegian authorities later yesterday to discuss the case, promising to take a "firm stand". The two countries had a major falling out in 2011, when Norwegian welfare authorities removed two young Indian children from their parents.

"I refuse to accept that foster parents can take better care of the child than the natural parents," tweeted Swaraj, who said she was intervening on behalf of the boy's mother, an Indian national. The father and the child are believed to be Norwegian nationals. "The foster parents are totally ignorant of Indian culture and our food habits. We want restoration of Aryan to his natural parents," Swaraj said in the tweet.

Indian media quoted the child's father as saying Aryan had been removed from his school without warning on December 13 and was now living in a children's home outside Oslo. Police later went to the family home and interrogated his wife, accusing the couple of beating their son, the father said, calling the allegation "baseless". The 2011 case drew widespread media attention in India, much of it critical of the Norwegian authorities, and sparked a diplomatic row. The family blamed it on cultural bias and different attitudes toward childcare. The children eventually returned to India after the parents agreed they should be transferred to the custody of a relative. — Agencies

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TAIWAN WARNS OF GROWING THREATS FROM CHINA'S SHIPS

TAIPEI: Taiwan's defense minister warned yesterday that enemy threats were growing daily after China's aircraft carrier and a flotilla of other warships passed south of the island in an exercise as tensions rise. After sailing south of Taiwan itself, the Liaoning and five other warships on Monday passed the Taiwan-administered Dongsha Islands in the South China Sea also claimed by Beijing, according to Taiwan's defense ministry.

The naval drills are seen as a show of strength by Beijing as its relations worsen with Taiwan and the United States, following a protocol-breaking telephone conversation between Taiwanese

President Tsai Ing-wen and US President-elect Donald Trump. Chinese media had earlier reported that the carrier was headed for the Pacific on exercise for the first time along with its escort ships.

It was the latest in a series of recent exercises staged by China, after its military aircraft passed near Taiwan on December 10 for the second time in less than a month. Taiwan's defense minister Feng Shih-kuan said yesterday, during a promotion ceremony for generals, that threats from the enemy were growing daily.

"I ask for strict training... We train the soldiers so they can not only survive the war but also destroy the enemies and

accomplish their missions," he said, without referring to China by name. "The threat from our enemy is increasing day by day. We need to maintain combat vigilance at any time. This is my expectation of you all." Feng confirmed that Taiwan sent RF-16 reconnaissance aircraft to monitor the Chinese warships.

Closely monitoring

His ministry estimated that the Liaoning would arrive at a base in China's southern island province of Hainan around yesterday evening. "The ministry has been tracking the Liaoning carrier's movements so the public can rest

assured... and will closely monitor its movements in the future," it said in a statement. Recently the Liaoning has been involved in exercises in the Yellow Sea, with J-15 fighter jets taking off from it and conducting air refueling and combat drills, according to China's state news agency Xinhua.

Earlier in the month the Liaoning led large-scale exercises in the Bohai Sea that included live ammunition for the first time. Ties between Taiwan and China have turned increasingly frosty since Tsai's election victory in January. Beijing has cut off official communication with her government, which took

office in May, after it refused to publicly accept the "one China" concept.

Under Taiwan's previous government the two sides had stuck to the "1992 consensus", in which they agree there is only one China without specifying which is its rightful representative. China poses the main military threat to self-ruled Taiwan. Beijing sees the island as part of its territory awaiting reunification-by force if necessary-even though the two sides have been ruled separately since the end of a civil war in 1949. It has more than 1,000 missiles aimed at the island, according to Taiwan's defense ministry. — AFP

S KOREAN RULING PARTY SPLITS OVER IMPEACHED PRESIDENT

PARTIES, POTENTIAL CANDIDATES POSTURE FOR ELECTIONS



SEOUL: A man walks by a bus stop displayed with posters depicting impeached South Korea's President Park Geun-hye in pink manipulating three of her aides while she is also manipulated as a marionette by her jailed confidante Choi Soon-sil, seen above Park's left shoulder. — AP

OFFICIALS SEARCH FOR CREW OF SHIP SUNK BY TYPHOON

MANILA: The Philippine coast guard pressed its search yesterday for 18 crewmen from a cargo ship that sank at the height of Typhoon Nock-Ten, which struck the country on Christmas Day. Coast guard spokesman Armand Balilo said 14 other crewmen have been rescued and one died after the M/V Starlite Atlantic sank off Mabini town in Batangas province, where the powerful typhoon passed Monday on its way out of the country into the South China Sea.

President Rodrigo Duterte flew to typhoon-hit provinces and warned in a speech in Camarines Sur that he'll throw out of a helicopter anybody who would steal the financial aid he brought for storm survivors. "I've done that, why won't I do it again?" Duterte said in a threat that won applause from typhoon survivors. The Starlite Atlantic sought cover in an anchorage area as the typhoon passed and its crew decided to move to safer waters but encountered huge waves and fierce winds, causing their ship to sink, Balilo said, adding that another passenger and cargo ship ran aground in Mabini, south of Manila.

Hard-hit town

At least seven people died from the typhoon, including the sunken ship's crewman and villagers who drowned from flooding or were pinned by fallen trees or a collapsed wall in Albay and Quezon provinces. Duterte flew to the hard-hit town of Virac on the eastern island province of Catanduanes, where the typhoon made landfall on Sunday night, to witness the distribution of food packs to residents. Ahead of the president's visit, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and top military officials flew to Virac and were stunned by the extent of devastation.

"Their common perception is that Virac is completely devastated," military spokesman Brig Gen Restituto Padilla said of the coastal town of more than 70,000 people. The province's coconut plantations, the primary

industry, were destroyed and may take five to 10 years to recover, he said. From a helicopter, "we saw the devastation of coconuts, abaca and the forests. There are lots of houses without roofs," Lorenzana said by text message. "There is no electricity yet in all of Catanduanes."

In Camarines Sur, Duterte warned that whoever touches the financial aid for the typhoon-battered province, "I will fetch you in a helicopter and on the way to Manila, I'll throw you out." He said without elaborating that "I've done that," suggesting they were kidnappers who killed or raped captives even after being paid ransoms. "I'll throw you at a low altitude, not that high, because in the length of the fall you may be able to develop wings, just at the right (altitude) so the impact of your crash won't be heard."

The president's past extreme comments against suspected drug pushers and corrupt officials have left many wondering if he was exaggerating, and administration officials have said he often uses hyperbole as a scare tactic. Still, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein last week called on Philippine authorities to investigate Duterte for murder after he claimed to have personally killed people in the past.

Nock-Ten, locally known as Nina, forced more than 420,000 villagers to abandon their Christmas celebrations for emergency shelters and other safer grounds. Power was knocked out in several provinces and flights and ferries were grounded, stranding would-be passengers. About 20 typhoons and storms lash the Philippines each year. In the past 65 years, seven typhoons have hit on Christmas Day, the Southeast Asian nation's biggest holiday. The storm was one of the strongest to hit the Philippines since Typhoon Haiyan left more than 7,300 people dead or missing and displaced over 5 million in 2014. — AP



ALBAY PROVINCE: Motorists ride past electric posts damaged by Typhoon Nock-Ten yesterday. — AFP

SEOUL: While lawyers desperately tried to restore the impeached South Korean president's powers, politics advanced without her yesterday as parties and potential candidates postured for elections that could take place in just months.

Dozens of lawmakers split from the conservative ruling party and likely will try to create a party fielding outgoing UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as its presidential candidate. Ban's potential rivals reacted by questioning his presidential credentials and touting their own ideas, including significant policy changes in regard with relations with nuclear-armed North Korea and allies United States and Japan.

Choung Byoung-gug, one of the 29-lawmakers who left the Saenuri Party accused President Park Geun-hye's loyalists in the party's leadership of "neglecting the values of real conservatism" and "shamelessly defending the historically worst infringement of constitutional values." More Saenuri lawmakers may leave the party in the coming weeks.

The split came as investigators widened their inquiry into the scandal surrounding Park, who has been accused of allowing a longtime confidante of manipulating government affairs and colluding with the friend to extort money and favors from the country's biggest companies. The special prosecution team planned to summon the president's jailed friend, Choi Soon-sil, but she requested a delay citing health reasons.

Complicated politics

Ban is seen as the best hope for conservatives to win the Blue House after Park's collapse complicated politics for her party. Recent opinion polls show voters slightly favor Ban ahead of liberal politician Moon Jae-in, who conceded the presidential race to Park four years ago. In a recent meeting with South Korean reporters in New York, Ban described the political turmoil at home as heartbreaking and said he was ready to "burn" his body in devotion for South Korea, his strongest hint yet that he would run for president.

Kim Kyoung-soo, an opposition lawmaker who serves as Moon's spokesman, dismissed the plans by the Saenuri defectors to create a new party for the presidential race, saying "watermelons can't be made by drawing lines on zucchinis." Kim said voters "will not approve a political reshuffle that lacks sincere remorse and self-reflection, and only chases the delusion of recreating a pseudo conservative government."

Moon likely would have to withstand a challenge from outspoken Seongnam city mayor Lee Jae-myung in the Democratic Party's primaries. Lee, who brands himself as an anti-establishment figure and is compared to both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders, saw his popularity rise amid the rage over Park's scandal. He calls for stronger policies to reduce the widening gap between rich and poor and curb the excesses of "chaebol" - the large, family-owned conglomerates that dominate the country's economy.

In a meeting with reporters yesterday, Lee said Ban's popularity could soon decline over allegations that he "used a high-profile post to gain personal profits," apparently referring to allegations raised by news reports that he took bribes from a businessman in 2005 and 2007. Ban has denied the claims.

Lee also said South Korea should stop the deployment of an advanced US missile defense system to defend it from North Korea. Echoing Moon's position, Lee said the security benefits of having Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, are diminished by worsened relations with China. The planned deployment has angered China, which suspects that the system would allow US radar to better track its missiles.

Sexual slavery

Lee also criticized Park's agreement on compensation for South Korean women forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military in World War II and says Seoul should allow a new military intelligence-sharing pact with Tokyo to expire. Lee said South Koreans still distrust Japan because it never sincerely apologized for invading and colonizing the Korean Peninsula in the early 20th century.

The date of any early presidential election is depended on the outcome of the impeachment case against Park. Parliament voted on Dec 9 to impeach her, and the Constitutional Court has up to six months to decide whether Park should permanently step down or be reinstated. Her presidential powers are suspended until then, with the prime minister serving as the government caretaker. If the court formally removes Park from office, a presidential election must be held within 60 days.

At the court's preparatory hearing yesterday, Park's lawyers challenged whether she had to attend the trial. Her lawyers also asked the court to request 16 organizations and companies to submit reports answering whether they were really forced into giving money and favors to foundations controlled by Choi, as has been alleged. Lawmakers, who are acting as the prosecutors in the case, said the request shouldn't be made because it could pressure the companies. The requests were seen as an attempt to buy time for Park. The court said it would hear pleadings in the case on Jan 3. — AP



MANILA: National Bureau of Investigation officials display nearly one metric ton of seized methamphetamine during a press conference. — AP

\$120M WORTH OF 'SHABU' SEIZED IN THE PHILIPPINES

MANILA: Philippine authorities have seized about 6 billion pesos (\$120 million) worth of methamphetamines in a series of anti-narcotics operations this month that have yielded the biggest haul in the country's history, the justice minister said wednesday. The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) conducted the operations, including one on Monday in San Juan City in the capital Manila where drums of chemicals used to produce methamphetamines, or "shabu" as it is known, were seized.

That followed a raid on Friday in a quiet neighborhood in the same city, when six people were arrested and 560 kg (1,200 lb) of suspected methamphetamines was found, worth an estimated \$67 million. "It is not only the biggest haul this year, but the biggest so far in history," Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre said in a news

conference. The seizures will be a boost for President Rodrigo Duterte, who is facing allegations of widespread human rights violations in a bloody war on drugs dominated by killings of drug users and pushers, with few known arrests of major drug lords. Duterte has expressed his frustration at the failure of anti-money laundering authorities to chase the trail of drug money, accusing them of helping to fuel corruption and threatening to charge them with crimes.

Agents of the NBI said their latest operation involved an apartment rented by a Chinese national, who was not there when the raid took place. More than 6,000 people have been killed in the crackdown since Duterte took office in July, roughly a third in police operations. The other deaths are classified as under investigation, many believed to be the work of vigilantes. — Reuters

INDIA CENTRE TO GET TRANSGENDER SCHOOL DROPOUTS READY FOR JOBS

MUMBAI: A centre for transgender school dropouts is set to open this week in India to help address the challenge of a lack of formal education that forces them into low-paid jobs. The Sahaj Alternate Learning Centre in the southern state of Kerala will initially house 10 transgender students taught by volunteer teachers and social workers.

"This is a centre for those transgender students who had to drop out of school because they were abused or because they were kicked out by their families or school authorities," said activist Vijayaraja Mallika, a founder of the centre. "We want to try and mainstream them, and integrate them into society with a complete education and some skills with which they can find a job and be independent," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

India is estimated to have about 2 million transgender people. In 2014, the country's Supreme Court ruled that they had equal rights under the law, and granted legal status to the third gender. Alongside the right to marry and inherit property, they are also eligible for quotas in jobs and educational institutions. But

abuse and exploitation are common. Often thrown out of home by their families, many lack a formal education and are denied jobs, forced into sex work, begging, or dancing at weddings to make ends meet.

Recently, there have been moves to extend more benefits to the community, with Odisha state becoming the first to give transgender people welfare benefits such as pension. Bollywood is also lending a hand, with 6 Pack Band, a pop band of transgender women featured on the soundtrack of a Bollywood movie this year. It was hard to find a property for the centre in Kerala, and the founders were rejected by more than 50 owners, Mallika said.

"This centre is very important because despite the laws, social acceptance is still low and we are discriminated against by employers and our own families," said transgender activist Kalki Subramaniam, who is inaugurating the school on Dec 30. The curriculum will also include some vocational skills. "Education is the only tool we have to advance, to support ourselves and to make something of ourselves," she said. — Reuters

N KOREA PLANS NUCLEAR PUSH IN 2017 SAYS TOP DEFECTOR

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un is planning a "prime time" nuclear weapons push in 2017 to take advantage of leadership transitions in South Korea and the United States, a high-ranking defector said yesterday. In his first press conference since fleeing his post as North Korea's deputy ambassador to Britain in August, Thae Yong-Ho said Kim had issued a directive at a rare ruling party congress in May to "complete" nuclear development by the end of next year.

"With South Korea holding presidential elections and the US undergoing an administration transition, the North sees 2017 as the prime time for nuclear development," Thae told local reporters. "That's based on a calculation that the US and South Korea will not be able to take physical, military measures because they are tied up with domestic politics," he added.

North Korea carried out two nuclear tests in 2016 and numerous missile launches in pursuit of its ultimate goal of a deterrent capable of delivering a nuclear warhead to the US mainland. Analysts are divided as to how close Pyongyang is to realizing that ambition, especially as it has never successfully

tested an inter-continental ballistic missile. But all agree it has made enormous strides in that direction since Kim took over as leader from his father, Kim Jong-Il who died in December 2011.

According to a transcript of his press conference, Thae said Kim would never trade away the North's nuclear arsenal-no matter how large a financial incentive might be offered. The North Korean leader's main aim is to open a new dialogue with the US from the position of a confirmed nuclear power, he said.

Washington has repeatedly vowed that it would never accept the North as a nuclear state. Thae said he was ignorant of how much progress the North had really made with its nuclear weapons program, saying such information was not given to diplomats. "Even the foreign minister doesn't know," he added. Thae was living in London when he escaped to the South with his wife and two sons-becoming one of the highest-ranking diplomats ever to defect. The North's state media denounced him as "human scum", and accused him of embezzling state funds, raping a minor and spying for South Korea in exchange for money. — AFP



A Kashmiri fisherman rows his boat on a partially frozen Anchar Lake, on the outskirts of Srinagar, yesterday. A severe cold wave has gripped the Kashmir valley, with the region's main Dal Lake and other water bodies seen partially frozen. — AP

BLACK BOX OF CRASHED RUSSIAN PLANE FOUND

SOCHI: Russian rescuers working round the clock have found the main black box from the Syria-bound military plane that crashed into the Black Sea with 92 people on board, authorities said yesterday. The defense ministry said the box, which could provide vital clues as to why the Tu-154 jet crashed, was discovered early yesterday only 1,600 m from the shore and 17 m under the surface and was in "satisfactory condition". Investigators were also looking at a witness video of the abortive flight and the plane's plunge into the sea.

The Tu-154 jet, whose passengers included more than 60 members of the internationally renowned Red Army Choir, was heading to Russia's military airbase in Syria on Sunday when it went down off the coast of Sochi shortly after take-off from a refueling stop at the airport. Investigators said they have sorted and documented thousands of passengers' personal items and identification documents, questioned locals and are checking the fuel equipment at the airport. One witness "filmed the takeoff, flight and fall of the plane into the sea", the Investigative Committee said in a statement.

The discovery of the black box comes as searchers scramble to recover bodies and remaining debris from the aircraft in an operation involving divers, deep-water machines, helicopters and drones. The defense ministry said that five plane fragments, including part of the fuselage and engine, were found overnight 30 m underwater at around 1,700 m from the shore. Searchers later found an additional three fragments, including landing gear and a portion of the engine, the ministry said.

Four scenarios

Russia's federal security service has said it is looking into four suspected causes of the crash, namely pilot error, technical failure, faulty fuel and an object in the engine. The defense ministry said a total of 12 bodies and 156 body fragments had been recovered from the sea since the crash, all of which are being sent to Moscow for DNA identification. The Kommersant daily newspaper reported that investigators are relying on a witness statement by a coastguard member who saw the plane in its final moments descending towards the sea with its nose tilted sharply upward. Authorities have not said how long

it would take to decipher the black box.

Choir to be restored

The Tu-154 jet went down on Sunday morning minutes after taking off at 5:25 am (0225 GMT) from Sochi's airport, where it had stopped to refuel after flying out from the Chkalovsky military aerodrome in the Moscow region. The FSB said one customs officer and one border guard coming on board as it was being fuelled while the captain and one other crew member came out. Onboard were 64 members of the Alexandrov Ensemble - the army's official musical group, also known as the Red Army Choir - and their conductor Valery Khalilov.

The choir was set to perform for Russian troops at the Hmeimim airbase in Syria, which has been used to launch air strikes in support of Moscow's ally President Bashar Al-Assad. Defense minister Sergei Shoigu has pledged to restore the choir "in the nearest future". Other passengers included military officers, journalists and popular charity worker Yelizaveta Glinka, affectionately known as "Doctor Liza", who was bringing medical supplies to a hospital in the coastal Syrian city of Latakia.

Russia observed a day of mourning Monday and Sochi's administration announced yesterday that it is cancelling the New Year's Eve celebration on its main square due to the tragedy. People have been bringing flowers to improvised memorials at the port in central Sochi and the city's airport, as well as to the Moscow headquarters of the Red Army Choir and the office of Fair Aid, the NGO that Glinka headed, which primarily worked with Moscow's homeless.

Tu-154 aircraft have been involved in a number of accidents in the past, including the April 2010 crash killing then-Polish president Lech Kaczynski and his delegation. They are no longer used by commercial airlines in Russia. Asked whether all Tu-154 planes would be grounded, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov referred journalists to the transportation ministry, while Transport Minister Maksim Sokolov called the model "rather reliable". — AFP

AVATAR-STYLE MANNED ROBOT TAKES BABY STEPS

Continued from Page 1

along the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone with North Korea. But the robot, tethered by a power cable and still a bit wobbly on its feet, is far from finished. More work is needed on its balance and power systems, according to

its creators. "The robot is one year old so it is taking baby steps," Yang said. "Just like humans, it will be able to move more freely in the next couple of years." He said the robot will be ready for sale by the end of 2017 at a price of around 10 billion won (\$8.3 million). — AFP

ROMANIA'S FIRST MUSLIM PM REJECTED

Continued from Page 1

The leader of the PSD, Liviu Dragnea, had withdrawn his own bid to become prime minister because of a conviction that bars him from office. Shhaideh's personal closeness to Dragnea - he was a witness at her wedding - has led to accusations that he will remain in charge behind the scenes.

Yesterday, after her rejection, Dragnea said the PSD was considering its options including moving to suspend Iohannis or going to the constitutional court. "In our opinion the president is determined to set off a political crisis," Dragnea said. "If our conclusion is that it is in the country's interest to suspend

Mr Iohannis, I won't hesitate." However, Taranu said that any attempt by the PSD to remove the head of state was problematic because Iohannis is entitled to request a second proposal for premier.

The PSD's election triumph came barely a year since anger over a deadly nightclub fire that killed 64 people forced it from office. The inferno was blamed on corruption - something Brussels has long complained about since Romania joined the EU in 2007. But during the campaign Dragnea focused instead on the economy, vowing to boost salaries and pensions in the EU's second-poorest country. — AFP

EGYPT EASES GAZA PRESSURE

Continued from Page 1

The olive and palm trees that once lined the 40-km road from Rafah to El-Arish, the provincial capital of North Sinai, have been razed and even small bushes have withered. The road is littered with checkpoints, tanks and mobile artillery units, manned by anxious young soldiers.

In the town of Sheikh Zuwaid, where travelers used to stop to buy Egyptian mobile phone cards and snacks, stores were gutted, their doors bombed out. The bullet-riddled houses above them were turned into military positions, with sandbags covering the windows and snipers stationed on the roofs. The US-based Human Rights Watch estimates that thousands of people have been displaced - most of whom moved either elsewhere in town or to El-Arish.

In Gaza, years of Egyptian restrictions, coupled with an Israeli blockade and three wars between Hamas and Israel, have devastated the economy and weakened Hamas. The UN and other international bodies estimate unemployment to be 43 percent, and Hamas has struggled to pay the salaries of the 40,000 police and civil servants it hired after seizing Gaza in 2007. An Israeli naval blockade, which Israel says is needed to prevent arms smuggling, means that most goods enter Gaza through Israeli-controlled cargo crossings. While most consumer goods are freely available, prices of fuel, cigarettes and other items have spiked because of limited supplies. Construction materials, badly needed to rebuild damage from a 2014 war, remain in short supply.

But Egypt's recent turnaround has begun to bring some relief. In the past six months alone, Rafah crossing has been opened more than 40 days, compared to just 26 in all of 2015, allowing thousands of people to leave for jobs, medical care, family visits and studies abroad. Last month, it allowed a top Hamas leader, Ismail Haniya, to travel abroad for the first time since Morsi was toppled. In addition, it allowed a Malaysian official to enter Gaza to meet with Hamas officials. In another first, it allowed cargo to be shipped into Gaza through

Rafah, including 40 new cars, painting materials and tar.

In recent months, Egypt has invited three delegations of businessmen, academics, community leaders and journalists from Gaza for semiofficial conferences in Cairo. Participants said the issue of creating a trade zone between Gaza and Egypt was raised. Hamas has begun paving a patch of land on the Palestinian side of the crossing for what local media say will be an area to contain more imports from Egypt.

At a recent meeting, Egyptian officials said they were interested in "opening a new chapter" with Gaza, said one official, who was not allowed to be identified under the briefing guidelines. "We are still evaluating the situation, and this is a long dialogue until we reach better relations." Hamas has welcomed the moves, saying it is ready to shutter the tunnels if commercial activities increase above-ground. Senior Hamas official Mahmoud Zahar said, "If the (Rafah) crossing opened commercially, what's the need for the tunnels?"

But Hamas, an armed group sworn to Israel's destruction, has repeatedly seen its hopes dashed as it tries to emerge from isolation. It remains unclear how far Egypt is willing to help the group, especially if it continues using tunnels to bring in arms. "If the tunnels are used by the Palestinian resistance, then this is something else that doesn't harm the Egyptian security," Zahar said.

Beverly Milton-Edwards, a visiting fellow at the Brookings Doha Center, said any Egyptian moves toward Gaza are to promote its own national security interests. With Egypt still locked in battle against extremists in Sinai, any change will likely be slow and cautious, and could depend greatly on Hamas' own actions. Egypt still fears Sinai militants will use the tunnels to escape or to bring in explosives from hardliners within Hamas' armed wing. "The signaling of intent is carefully calibrated to remind the Gaza government of the levels of control and power that Egypt can exert positively or negatively," Milton-Edwards said. "If there is not enough evidence of compliance by the Hamas government then Cairo will not hesitate to halt all alleviating measures." — AP

ASSEMBLY DEBATES ALEPPO, FORMS NEW PANELS

Continued from Page 1

Islamist MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei said that heroes in Aleppo have been facing Russia and Iran, adding that the city has not failed, but masks have dropped from the faces of many groups like Hezbollah and Islamic State. Opposition MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei criticized the silence of the international community over the crimes in Aleppo and the whole of Syria. Shiite MP Khaled Al-Shatti however said that many of the videos coming out of Aleppo are fake and fabricated, adding that Aleppo has been liberated from terrorist groups.

Several MPs praised the humanitarian stance of the Kuwaiti government, which has already contributed around \$1.6 billion in aid to the Syrian people and for hosting three Syria donors' conferences to raise funds for Syria. Before the debate on Aleppo, MPs elected members

for six temporary committees including one for sports and youth, which is expected to play an important role in lifting the suspension on Kuwaiti sports. The Assembly also elected a committee for stateless people, locally known as bedoons. It also elected a committee for human rights and one for promoting business in Kuwait.

But a controversy erupted over a demand to form a committee to combat negative practices in the society, as a number of liberal lawmakers feared it could be used to suppress public freedoms in Kuwait. But the government welcomed its formation, with the interior ministry expecting it to help in confronting bad phenomena like drug addiction. The panel was finally formed with Islamist MPs taking the majority of its five seats. MPs also passed a recommendation asking the concerned committees to complete their reports on proposed amendments to nationality laws within two months.

Kuwait Times

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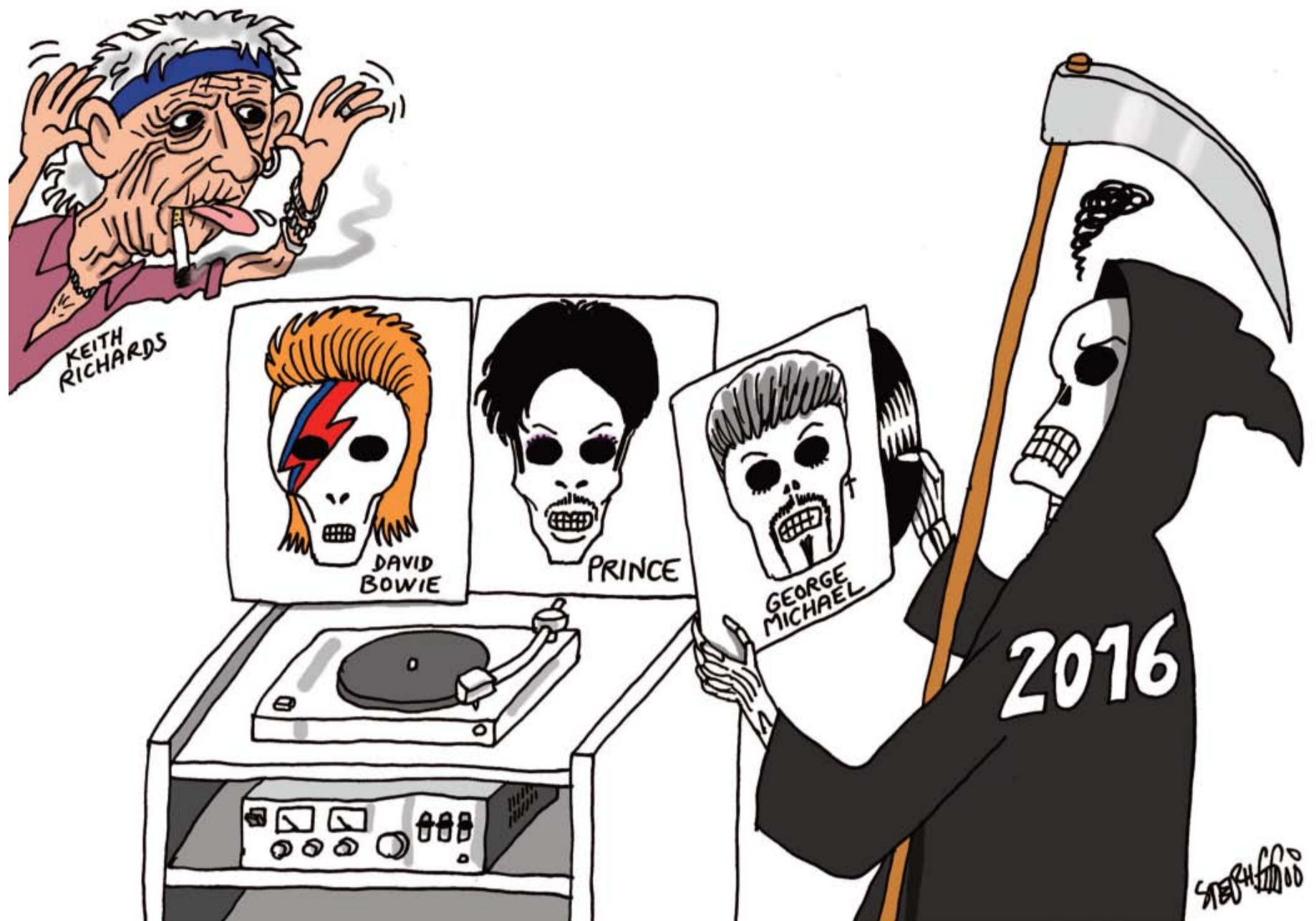
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LOW-COST AIRLINES SLOW TO TAKE OFF IN LATAM

A cheap flight from Paris to Madrid will set you back about \$100. But it costs six times that to cover the same distance in Latin America, where low-cost airlines are only just taking off. Latin America has long lured travelers with its history, music and natural beauty spanning from Mexico's deserts to the Amazon rainforest to the glaciers of Patagonia. But air travel largely remains a privilege for the rich.

French couple Martin Rotig and Helene Le Bras discovered how expensive it is to fly in the region when they began pricing the Latin American leg of their world tour. The 20-something architects, who put their lives in Paris on hold last July to travel, relied on low-cost airlines to make their way across Asia. But eye-watering airfares mean they will be stuck taking the bus when they travel South America next year, they said.

"We're going to take the fewest planes possible, because they're a lot more expensive than in Asia," said Rotig. He reminisces fondly about fares like the round-trip tickets from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to Osaka, Japan they booked for 225 euros (\$235) apiece. A similar flight - seven hours - costs many multiples of that in Latin America.

Frustrated wanderlust

Travel forums and tourist blogs are awash with comments on Latin America's sky-high airfares, compared to those in Europe, the United States and Asia. Latin America has few of the secondary airports that low-cost airlines love, and the distances tend to be longer. The lack of a common market like the European Union also means more

burdensome regulations for airlines. Brazil, Mexico and Colombia are the only countries in the region with established low-cost airlines. They run mostly domestic flights, at higher prices than in Europe.

"The business environment isn't very favorable" for low-cost airlines in Latin America, said Bertrand Mouly-Aigrot, an air travel specialist at Archery Strategy Consulting in Paris. "But it's changing," he added. "You've got a large population pool, mostly growing economies, a true middle class and a developing tourism sector. There's no reason the low-cost phenomenon, which is sweeping every other region in the world, will not hit Latin America."

Upstart startups

Several startups are poised to change the landscape. A low-cost company called Flybondi is set to launch soon in Argentina with a dozen domestic routes. Its majority shareholder is Julian Cook, founder of Swiss budget airline FlyBaboo. Another company, Viva - which already offers budget flights in Mexico (VivaAerobus) and Colombia (VivaColombia) - launched a new subsidiary, Viva Air Peru, last month.

One of its shareholders is Irelandia Aviation, the investment firm of Ryanair co-founder Declan Ryan - who has already exported his low-cost model from Ireland to Asia (Tigerair) and the United States (Allegiant). "Today, one in four airline passengers worldwide takes a low-cost flight. However, Latin America still has exorbitant prices for very short distances. It's deplorable," said William Shaw, founder of VivaColombia. His company is eyeing expansion

opportunities in Chile, Argentina, Venezuela and Central America, he said.

Taking to the skies

More than 96 million tourists visited Latin America in 2015, a number set to grow by four to five percent in 2016, according to the World Tourism Organization. Plane manufacturer Boeing is betting passenger numbers in the region will grow by 5.8 percent in the next two decades, said its president for Latin America, Donna Hrinak. "The majority of these deliveries are expected to be in the single-class segment, reflecting the continued growth of low-cost carriers," she said.

In a region where tens of millions of people have escaped poverty since the turn of the millennium, "there's a lot of potential" for low-cost airlines, said Carlos Ozores of US consultancy ICF. "In markets where low-cost has developed, like Mexico and Brazil, many customers were taking buses before," he said. "Once they start flying, they don't want to go back."

Let's talk prices

Here are several price comparisons for round-trip tickets in Latin America and elsewhere for the week of March 13 to 19.

- * 1,000 km: Paris-Madrid = \$106 (Transavia), Lima-La Paz = \$599 (Latam)
- * 2,000 km: Dallas-Los Angeles = \$293 (Spirit Airlines), Rio de Janeiro-Buenos Aires = \$475 (Gol)
- * 3,000 km: Kuala Lumpur-Taiwan = \$86 (AirAsia), Bogota-Mexico City = \$470 (Avianca)

GOP VEXED BY FACTIONS ON REPLACING HEALTH LAW

Republicans are united on repealing President Barack Obama's health care law, but ideologically and practically speaking, they're in different camps over replacing it. Getting the factions together won't be easy. Some Republicans would revise and rebrand "Obamacare," junking unpopular provisions like its requirement that most Americans carry health insurance, while preserving well-liked parts. Others would rip up the Affordable Care Act, or ACA, and not replace it.

President-elect Donald Trump and Republican congressional leaders will have to unite the groups on complicated changes affecting the financial and physical well-being of millions of people. For some constituents in fragile health, it's literally a life-and-death debate. Republicans have "a really narrow path," says Grace-Marie Turner of the Galen Institute, a free-market health care research organization. "They've got to deal with the politics of this, they've got to make sure they come up with good policy, and they also have process challenges."

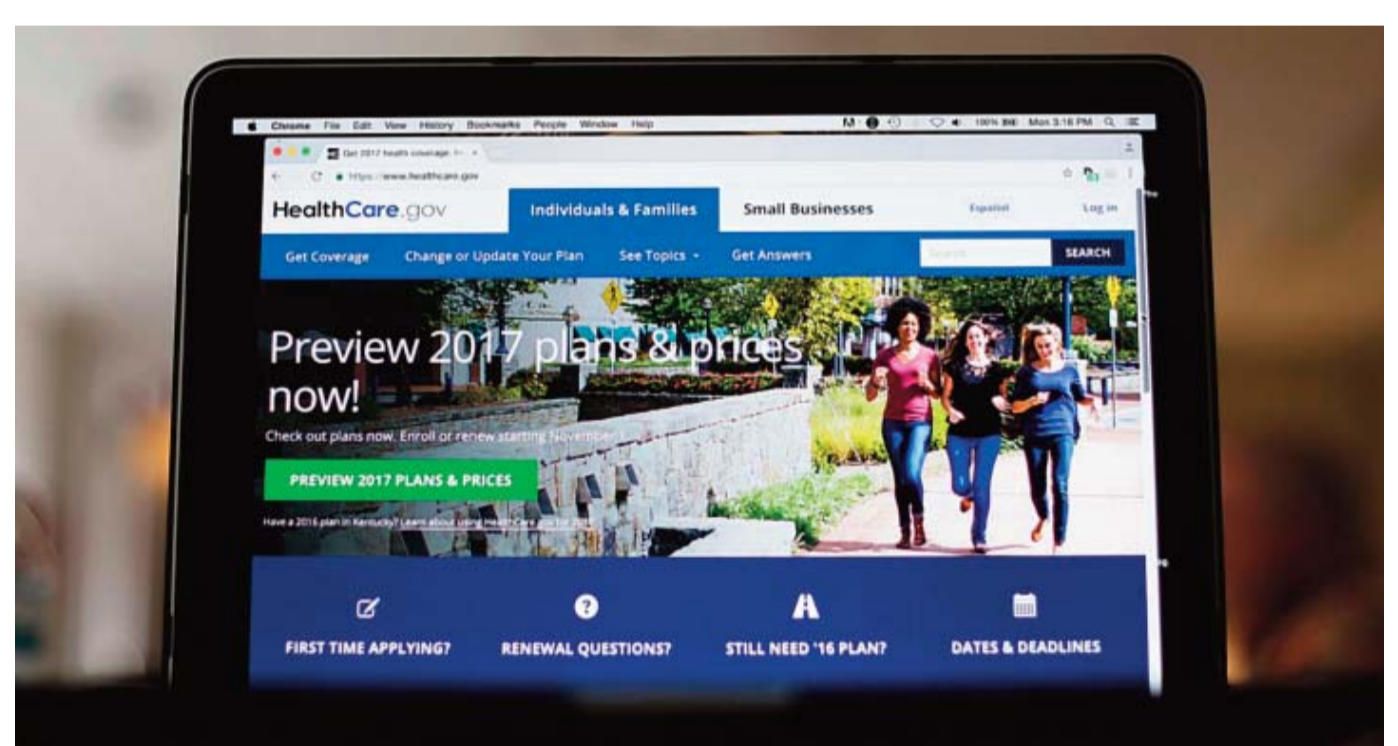
Success is not guaranteed, and Republicans may come to regret that their party defined itself as totally opposed to "Obamacare." Yet House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady seems unfazed by the challenge. "It's like tax reform," says Brady, explaining that many pieces will be pulled together. "Unlike Obamacare, which ripped up the individual market, this will be done deliberately, in an appropriate timetable." Republicans say they will move quickly to repeal the ACA, while suspending the effective date to allow them to craft a replacement. Here's a look at the GOP camps and who's in them:

Revise & rebrand

Many Republicans may quietly be in this contingent, but fear being accused of promoting "Obamacare-lite." They'd strip out some of the ACA's taxes and requirements. The unpopular "individual mandate" to carry health insurance or risk fines could be replaced with other persuasion short of a government dictate. Rules on insurers would be loosened.

But popular provisions such as protecting those with pre-existing health conditions would be retained in some form, as well as financial assistance for low- and moderate-income people. The requirement that health plans cover adult children until age 26 would be fairly easy to preserve, since employers have accommodated it.

A rebranded version of Obama's law may well cover fewer people. But its GOP advocates



In this Oct 24, 2016 file photo, the HealthCare.gov 2017 website homepage is seen in Washington. —AP

believe most Americans will find their goal of "universal access" politically acceptable when measured against the Democratic ideal of "universal coverage" underwritten by government. Many GOP allies in the business community favor revising the ACA. That includes major players among hospitals, insurers and pharmaceuticals. Trump may have given this group some cover by saying that he wants to keep parts of the law, but his bottom line remains unknown.

Budget hawks

For budget hawks, unwinding the Obama health law is a beginning. Next they could move on to much bigger objectives like restructuring Medicaid and Medicare, and placing a cost-conscious limit on tax breaks for employer coverage. Budget hawks see health care as the main driver of government deficits, and they are loath to address that imbalance by raising taxes. Instead they want to rewrite the social compact so individuals accept more responsibility and risk for their health care.

House Speaker Paul Ryan is the most prominent member of this camp, and his "Better Way" agenda is its roadmap. Georgia Rep Tom Price, Trump's nominee for Health and Human Services,

is a budget hawk. Vice President-elect Mike Pence has been in the same orbit throughout his career. The problem for budget hawks is that the 2016 political campaign did not give them a mandate. Issues like Medicare and Medicaid were scarcely discussed. Trump said he wouldn't cut Medicare, and sent conflicting signals on Medicaid. Many Democrats can't wait for Republicans to follow the call of the budget hawks. Betting that will backfire, House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi is rallying her lawmakers against "attacks on the ACA and Medicare."

The rip-it-up society

The most conservative lawmakers want to "pull Obamacare up by the roots as if it never existed," says Republican political consultant Frank Luntz. That sentiment is embodied by the 40 or so members of the House Freedom Caucus, and it's probably broadly shared among conservatives. Some do not believe the federal government should be involved in health care, and they couldn't care less about replacing the ACA. "They would say that Obama's plan has failed," said Luntz. GOP leaders may need these lawmakers to advance on replacement legislation; coaxing them to a middle ground might

not be possible. Trump calls the ACA "a disaster," and that's pleasing to those farthest on the right. It's unclear if he'd walk their walk.

Pragmatists

At the core of this small group are legislative veterans who understand the excruciating difficulties of getting major bills to a president's desk. GOP Sens. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee and Susan Collins of Maine are pragmatists. They may find support from Republican governors who expanded Medicaid under the health law. GOP congressional leaders could gravitate to this camp. The biggest challenge for pragmatists will be to win over some Democrats for replacement legislation. While repealing most of "Obamacare" is possible with a simple majority in the Senate, 60 votes would probably be needed for a replacement. There will only be 52 GOP senators next year.

"Republicans need a fancy Rose Garden repeal ceremony...and I expect them to have one," said Dan Mendelson, CEO of the consulting firm Avalere Health. "On the other hand, there's 20 million people with health insurance under the ACA, and they don't want to dump them. There's no clear path for how to square that conflict." —AP

Focus

ONCE A BEACON
OF HOPE, KURDISH
SCHOOL SHUT DOWN

When it opened three years ago in Turkey's biggest Kurdish-majority city, it was a symbol of Ankara's changing - and more liberal - attitudes toward Kurdish-language education. The school in the southeastern city of Diyarbakir was one of five primary schools since 2013 that offered a fully Kurdish-language education. From 2014 onwards, it was also the first school in Turkey to give parents their children's report cards in the Kurdish language.

But that has now come to an end after it became the first Kurdish school to be closed down in October by the governor. All five such schools in the southeast have now been shut. Some 238 students aged between five and 11 have been left without a school place in the new academic year. The move comes after a fragile ceasefire collapsed last year with Kurdish militants waging an insurgency inside Turkey and a crackdown since the July 15 failed coup on those suspected of links to rebels.

'Unauthorized activities'

Parents and teachers only discovered the school had been shut down when a seal was placed on the door by police saying it was closed due to violations of Turkish laws. But the school's defenders say it was always acting outside of the law against offering a fully Kurdish language education but with the state's knowledge and tacit approval. Kurdish language education had been forbidden under the Turkish constitution, which states: "No language other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institution of education."

Some Turkish officials also feared the use of the Kurdish language would divide the country along ethnic lines. But in June 2012, then-prime minister now President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Kurdish could be taught in public schools as optional courses if there was a sufficient number of students. It was part of a number of government reforms under Erdogan to ease restrictions on the Kurdish language and Kurdish broadcasts under pressure from the European Union as part Ankara's membership bid.

Sources in the governor's office told AFP the school was closed because of "unauthorized activities", while the latest report by the schools management board on it was critical. The school was named after Ferzad Kemangar, an Iranian Kurdish primary school teacher executed by Tehran in 2010 on charges of membership in the outlawed Kurdish militant group PEJAK, which his supporters have always vehemently rejected. Two days before closing on Oct 9, the inspectors visited the school and their report said the education provided was "contrary to national education regulations and legislation". Despite reforms, the status of such schools was never made legal officially.

'Waiting for my school'

Adil Ercan, a teacher at Ferzad, said inspectors did not have anything "unfavorable or unsuitable" to say about the school. He added they were told on Oct 7 the school would be closed and would have 15 days to challenge the decision. But two days later, parents called teachers in the evening asking what had happened after the school was sealed with only a piece of cardboard with a red seal. "We arrived in the morning and it was sealed. They did not give us any reason. We will seek our legal rights," Ercan said.

Disappointed students and parents told AFP that they would wait at home until it opened again, including seven-year-old Sarya Alici. "I am waiting for my school. Whenever it opens, I will go. What will I do if it doesn't open? I will wait at home." Cihan Koyun said her family would not send children to another school. "We are waiting for our school to open. Whatever happens, our school must open."

Since the attempted putsch, pro-Kurdish media outlets have been shut down, mayors in majority Kurdish cities arrested and lawmakers from the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) also jailed under the state of emergency imposed late July. They are accused of acting as propaganda for the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a proscribed terror group by Turkey and its Western allies.

The Kurdish militants are not linked to the attempted coup and critics say that the government is using the state of emergency to intimidate all its critics. The government insists it is not attacking the Kurdish community, an estimated 20 percent of the population - but dealing with PKK "terrorists" fighting against Turkey since 1984. —AFP

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TOURE HAPPY TO COME IN FROM THE COLD

LONDON: Yaya Toure admits he feels reborn after returning from exile to play a key role in Manchester City's Premier League title challenge. Toure, 33, appeared destined to leave City after being frozen out by new manager Pep Guardiola earlier in the season. But the Ivory Coast midfielder has enjoyed a remarkable renaissance in the space of just six weeks. Surprisingly brought in from the cold by Guardiola after the resolution of a row with his agent in November, Toure has regained his old place at the heart of City's midfield engine room. The former Barcelona star delivered his latest impressive display as City overcame Hull 3-0 at the KCOM Stadium on Boxing Day to stay in touch with leaders Chelsea. "I look like a kid, just enjoying playing football and helping my team-mates and the fans. It's very important to me," Toure said. — AFP



CONTE HOPES RECORD RUN SPARKS TITLE GLORY

LONDON: Antonio Conte has challenged his Chelsea stars to use their club record run of 12 successive victories as the foundation to win the Premier League title. Conte's side moved seven points clear at the top after a 3-0 win over Bournemouth on Monday and they are now just two more victories away from equalling Arsenal's Premier League record of 14 consecutive wins. Should the Blues defeat Stoke and Tottenham in their next two games, they will have earned a significant statistical landmark. But it is trophies that matter most to former Juventus and Italy boss Conte and he has set his sights on leading Chelsea to the Premier League crown they last won in May 2015. "I prefer to win the title than the record," Conte told Chelsea TV. "Records are important, but not all. It's important to write history only when you win. "To be in the history of the club and to win 12 games in a row is fantastic. But with the players we want to continue." Bournemouth switched to three at the back to try to match the Chelsea formation that has proved such a success since Conte first deployed it earlier this season. — AFP

BOWLER GILES HIRED AS WARWICKSHIRE CHIEF

LONDON: Former England spin bowler Ashley Giles was appointed as Warwickshire's sport director yesterday after quitting his role as Lancashire coach. Giles had served as Warwickshire director of cricket between 2007 and 2012 and he returns to Edgbaston in a more wide-ranging role. The 43-year-old will oversee all the English county's professional teams as well as the academy, high performance and development of excellence programmes. "The new role at Edgbaston is a great opportunity and I am delighted to return to Warwickshire," Giles told Warwickshire's website. "Whilst I have a lot of history with the Bears and have previously enjoyed success as a player and a coach, this is a brand new challenge and I look forward to meeting up with all the players and the new management team in January." Giles played for Warwickshire for 13 years and, as director of cricket, led the team to the English County Championship title in 2012. — AFP



KUWAIT'S VICTORIOUS WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL TEAM RETURNS HOME



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait's wheelchair basketball team returned Monday from Abu Dhabi after winning the eighth Gulf tournament there and continued its dominance over the tournament since its launch 16 years ago.

The team was received at the airport by Director General of Disability Public Authority

Dr Shaifqa Al-Awadhi, Deputy Director of Public Authority for Sports Dr Humoud Fulaiteh, Deputy Chairman of Kuwait Disabled Sports Club Nasser Al-Ajmi, Secretary Abdallah Al-Azmi and a large crowd.

Dr Fulaiteh lauded the achievements of Kuwait Disabled athletes, adding that this latest achievement was made due to the distinguished performance of KDSC board of directors

and the efforts of the team's members. He said this win comes as a completion of the successful march of the disabled sports in foreign participation.

Meanwhile, KDSC Chairman of the Board dedicated the win to HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince and all Kuwait people and lauded the performance of athletes during the tournament which witnessed four consecutive

wins. He said the tournament was tough and competitive, adding that Kuwait's win over Saudi Arabia with the score of 62/56 was the key for Kuwait's win of the title for the 16th year. He pointed to the support of Information Minister, Sports Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and PAS which resulted in the club's winning of many tournaments.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's team captain Essa Al-Fadhly said, he along with his teammates are happy for winning the tournament for the eighth time, adding the team is looking forward for more wins in the future. Kuwait won the title with four wins and 8 points, followed by the Saudi team with 7 points, Bahrain was third with 6 points, UAE fourth with 5 points and Oman fifth with four points.



JANSRUD CLAIMS SANTA CATERINA SUPER-G

SANTA CATERINA VALFURVA: Not since Hermann Maier has a skier dominated in super-G the way Kjetil Jansrud is doing this season.

The Norwegian yesterday became only the second man to win the first three super-G races of the season after Austrian great Hermann Maier, who accomplished the feat twice - in 1997-98 and 1999-2000.

"Looking at his career and mine, I'm not even comparable to him," Jansrud said. It was the 18th win of Jansrud's World Cup career, matching him with Lasse Kjus for third place among Norwegian men - behind Aksel Lund Svindal (32) and Kjetil Andre Aamodt (21).

While Svindal and Aamodt may still be in range for Jansrud, catching Maier, who is second on the all-time list with 54 wins, is unlikely. "Just to be mentioned together with his name is quite unbelievable," Jansrud said.

Jansrud, the Olympic champion, finished 0.60 seconds ahead of Hannes Reichelt of Austria and 0.65 in front of Dominik Paris of Italy. "Standing here with three wins is quite extraordinary," Jansrud said. "But I've got to stay humble because I know there are a lot of great skiers around. For sure I'll try to continue winning but I've got to take one day at a time."

In another strong day for Norway, Jansrud's teammates Aleksander Aamodt Kilde finished fourth and Adrian Smiseth Sejersted was a career-best ninth.

Svindal is sitting out this week's races to rest a sore knee. It's been an up-and-down year for the 36-year-old Reichelt, the reigning world champion in super-G.

In January, Reichelt sustained bruises and a mild concussion in a crash at the classic race in Kitzbuehel. Then shortly after getting married over the summer, he had

surgery to repair a herniated disk in his back in September.

"I'm really pleased to be back on the podium so soon," Reichelt said. "My goal was to be back in top shape for January so this gives me a lot of confidence."

It was the second podium result for Paris in super-G this season. "I love downhill but lately I've been doing better in super-G," the Italian said. As usual in Santa Caterina, visibility was difficult with the Deborah Compagnoni course almost entirely in the shade. The top American was Tommy Biesemeyer in a career-best eighth, which was quite an achievement with the No. 45 bib. Also, two-time Olympic super-G medalist Andrew Weibrecht finished 12th.

Biesemeyer was also quick in downhill training a day earlier. The Keene, New York, skier is starting to see the results of focusing exclusively on the speed events of downhill and super-G this season, having previously also raced giant slalom.

"This kind of hill, this kind of snow and course set plays into my favor," Biesemeyer said. "I look at this kind of course and see confidence, whereas some other courses I don't and that is a reflection of my results. It's a huge step. And I think there's more speed out there and that's very motivating."

Not a speed specialist, overall World Cup leader Marcel Hirscher finished 47th and failed to gain any points. Still, the Austrian holds a comfortable lead of 151 points over Jansrud in the overall standings.

In the super-G standings, Jansrud has a perfect 300 points and is 148 ahead of Paris. This was the first time that a men's super-G was contested on the Compagnoni course. The race was originally scheduled for Lake Louise, Alberta, earlier this season but was moved due to a lack of snow in the Canadian resort. — AP



SEMMEERING: United States's Mikaela Shiffrin, center, winner of an alpine ski, women's World Cup Giant Slalom, celebrates on the podium with second-placed France's Tessa Worley, left, and third-placed Italy's Manuela Moelgg, in Semmering, Austria, yesterday. — AP

SHIFFRIN BEATS WORLEY FOR SECOND CAREER GS WIN

SEMMEERING: A few days after Mikaela Shiffrin spent Christmas at Manuela Moelgg's home in Italy and trained with her, the American and the Italian finished first and third in a women's World Cup giant slalom yesterday.

Shiffrin held on to her first-run lead on the icy Panorama course to beat Tessa Worley of France by 0.78 seconds. The result ended Shiffrin's 26-month wait for a second GS win after celebrating her maiden triumph in the opening race of the 2014-15 season.

Moelgg came 1.09 back in third for the Italian's first podium in nearly six years. "It's so cool. She and her family were so inviting for Christmas. It made it feel more like home for us," said Shiffrin, adding "it's so special" that Moelgg also made the top three - for the first time since placing third at a slalom in Zagreb, Croatia, in Jan. 2011. "We have been training at her home," Shiffrin said. "We really only had Christmas Day off. But it was OK, I had a restful day. And sometimes it is like when you take a break, then your body says, 'Oh, it's a break!', and then you get sick. I tried to fight that off but I feel good right now. My energy is good."

Shiffrin's 24th career win extended her overall

lead to 55 points over defending champion Lara Gut of Switzerland, who finished yesterday's race in fourth. At the previous GS in Sestriere two weeks ago, Shiffrin also held a first-run lead but dropped to sixth after a disappointing final run. It made her skip the speed races in Val d'Isere, France, the following week in order to put in extra GS training. The sessions with Moelgg at Kronplatz, which will host a World Cup GS in January, have paid off immediately.

"But it feels like it's taking forever. I want to get better in GS for five years now," said the American slalom specialist, who won Olympic gold, two world championships and three World Cup season titles in her favorite discipline.

Moelgg was all smiles after sharing the podium with Shiffrin and Worley, the GS world champion in 2013. "To be here with them is a dream," said the Italian, who is still seeking a first win after 258 World Cup starts. "I had a good feeling, I raced well." Worley was only sixth after the opening run, 0.80 seconds behind Shiffrin. She hardly won time on the American in the final run and missed out on her third straight GS win after triumphing in Killington, Vermont, and Sestriere over the last few weeks.

"I am happy because in the first run I lost so much time on the top section," Worley said. "In the second run I was just attacking the whole way down." Returning from a 14-month injury layoff, two-time former overall champion Anna Veith finished 3.21 seconds off the lead and failed to qualify for the final run. The Austrian caught a stone which damaged the edge of a ski early in her run. "Unfortunately, this was not how I thought it would be," Veith said about her first race since March 2015. She missed last season to recover from knee surgery.

"But I am happy that I was back at the start again even though the skiing was far off from where I want it to be," Veith said.

The final run was interrupted for a few minutes after Maria Pietilae-Holmner lost her right ski as she went through a gate and crashed full-speed into the safety boarding near the end of her run, though the Swede seemed to have avoided serious injuries.

The race replaced the GS that was canceled because of high winds in Courchevel, France, last week. Another GS in Semmering is scheduled for Wednesday, followed by a flood-lit slalom the next day. — AP



SANTA CATERINA: Norway's Kjetil Jansrud celebrates winning during an alpine ski, men's World Cup Super G, in Santa Caterina, Italy, yesterday. — AP

KIB SPONSORS KUWAIT NATIONAL CYCLING TEAM



KUWAIT: As part of the Bank's mission to support Kuwaiti champions and athletes, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) offered its exclusive sponsorship to the Kuwait National Cycling Team, who recently competed in the Tour Gulf 9 Cycling Championship which took place in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

Featuring an elite group of professional cyclists, the Kuwaiti champions gave a tremendously solid performance throughout the different legs of the competition. One of the biggest standouts of the tournament proved to be Kuwaiti cyclist Said Jafar Ali, who received the Fighter Jersey (also known as the Red Jersey) in recognition of his outstanding performance and fierce competitive spirit, as he went up against some of the biggest names in cycling in the GCC. Speaking about the sponsorship, Nawaf Najia, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at the Bank, said: "KIB has always been an ardent supporter of Kuwaiti athletes and champions, and we are especially proud of our sponsorship of the National Cycling Team. We have always

believed that our national champions are capable of achieving great victories on a regional and even international level, through their passionate dedication and sophisticated sportsmanship. These talented young stars are playing a very important role in propelling Kuwait to the forefront of many different sports, bringing much deserved international glory to themselves and their country."

Najia concluded by saying: "KIB is keen on sponsoring local sporting initiatives and supporting local athletes, as we believe that sports is a vital cornerstone of any developed contemporary society."

On his part, Abdullah Al-Shammari, General Secretary of the Kuwait Cycling Federation, said: "KIB's embracing support of the Kuwait National Cycling Team was truly a key component driving the team's strong performance, enabling our athletes to achieve excellent results in Tour Gulf 9. We are very grateful for the Bank's ongoing efforts to support the athletes of Kuwait, helping Kuwait's name to shine across many different fields of sports."



KSSC GENERAL ASSEMBLY APPROVES NEW CLUB STATUTES

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Shooting Sport Club Extraordinary General Assembly unanimously approved the new club statutes in compliance with decreed law 953/2016, and agrees with the Olympic charter and ISSF laws.

KSSC Chairman of the Board Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi thanked the General Assembly members for attending the meeting, adding that contacts with them are beneficial to hear their opinions and proposals. He said we wish the

country all success under the leadership of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile Secretary General Obaid Munahi Al-Osaimi lauded the role of General Assembly members and their contribution to the development of the sport of shooting in Kuwait. He said the board of directors is keen on implementing decisions made by the gov-

ernment for the sake of the general interest of our beloved country.

Al-Osaimi said the most notable amendments in the new statutes is full membership of specialized clubs in Kuwait Olympic Committee, because those clubs were not recognized before at KOC despite their international and Olympic achievements.

Al-Osaimi said the new statutes recognize Kuwait's sovereignty, preserves public funds through having supervision over sports entities by public authority for sports.



GREEN LIGHT FOR RUSSELL'S BLACK BAT IN BIG BASH

SYDNEY: West Indies all-rounder Andre Russell was given the all-clear to use his black bat in Australia's Twenty20 Big Bash League yesterday after it was initially banned for leaving marks on the ball. Russell was banned from using the distinctive bat after it discoloured the white ball during the derby between his Sydney Thunder

and the Sydney Sixers last week. Cricket Australia reversed the ruling yesterday after assurances that the bat had been modified with the addition of a "clear laminate cover" to prevent the problem recurring.

"We're now satisfied that the bat will not compromise the integrity of the game by dis-

colouring the match ball and we have granted approval for Andre to use the bat in any future BBL matches," said league chief Anthony Everard. The decision fits with the Big Bash League's embrace of novelty to attract and entertain crowds but it appears the arrival of the touted Dec. 25 match might have to wait until

the 2018-19 season. Christmas Day has traditionally been a day of rest even for professional sportsmen and women in Australia but Cricket Australia chief James Sutherland, the driving force behind day-night test cricket, is clearly open to the idea. "I'm not sure we'll be ready for it (next year)," he told ABC Radio yesterday. "I

think there is a growing sentiment that it is a possibility. We need to think about the right venue for it and we also need to consult widely.

"I think it is an opportunity, and it'll be a good thing for the game and for cricket fans around the country." The Big Bash League runs until Jan. 28. — Reuters

AZHAR'S TON FOR PAKISTAN AMID RAIN IN AUSTRALIA TEST

MELBOURNE: Opening batsman Azhar Ali led the way as Pakistan consolidated their first innings on a rain-hit second day of the second Test against Australia in Melbourne yesterday.

Only 50.3 overs were possible after 50.5 overs were bowled on Monday's opening day as rain again curtailed play. At the close after rain forced an early finish, the tourists resuming at 142 for four were 310 for six with Azhar providing the foundations.

Azhar was unbeaten on 139 with Mohammad Amir hitting a breezy 28 off 23 balls with six fours trying to lift the scoring rate after the dismissals of Asad Shafiq and Sarfraz Ahmed. Australia still believe the weather won't prevent a result in the match. "Knowing the MCG quite well, it's usually good to bat day three and four so we're still well and truly in the game," Australia bowling coach David Saker said. "We can't control the weather. There's still a lot of time left in the game."

Azhar, playing in his 56th Test, raised his 12th Test century and third against Australia with two runs behind the wicket to fine leg. Azhar's hundred came off 218 balls in 338 minutes and consolidated his position as Pakistan's leading runscorer this calendar year.

At the close Azhar had scored 1089 runs for the fifth highest aggregate for the year. The last Pakistan opener to carry his bat through a Test innings was Imran Farhat (117 not out) against New Zealand in Napier 2009. It has never been done in Pakistan's Tests against Australia.

Only Mohsin Khan with scores of 152 and 149 back in 1983 has posted higher scores than Azhar as an opening batsman for Pakistan in Australia.

Pakistan will look to push their first

innings total on beyond 350. "Tomorrow, let's see how the weather is, whether it's going to be hot or cloudy as well, so it depends how the wicket will react," Pakistan paceman Wahab Riaz said.

"Obviously we're going to bat for a bit and then we can analyse how the wicket is behaving."

SHAFIQ HALF-CENTURY

Shafiq reached 50 before he gave skipper Steve Smith his third catch of the innings ending an 115-run partnership with Azhar. Jackson Bird got one ball to seam away and Shafiq was forced to play a shot and edged to Smith at second slip for his third wicket.

Shafiq, who scored a fighting 137 in Pakistan's narrow loss in the first Gabba Test, faced 123 balls for his 18th Test half-century over three hours.

Josh Hazlewood got his reward for his nagging accuracy with the wicket of Sarfraz Ahmed for 10, snapped up by Matt Renshaw at first slip. Hazlewood sent down 26 overs for the miserly figures of two for 33 with 11 maidens.

Mitchell Starc had problems with his front landing foot and struggled wicketless for 77 runs off 23.2 overs. Light rain sent the players from the field midway through the opening session, before play resumed and was then stopped again just before lunch. It intensified during the lunch break and prevented any play to tea after washing out play post-tea on Monday's opening day. A total of 78 overs have been lost so far, but play is scheduled to start 30 minutes earlier each day for the remainder of the match. But more showers and storms are forecast over the remaining three days. — AFP



PORT ELIZABERT: South African bowler Vernon Philander (R) celebrates the dismissal of Sri Lanka's batsman Dinesh Chandimal (L) during the second day of the first cricket Test match between South Africa and Sri Lanka yesterday at the Port Elizabeth cricket ground in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. — AFP

DE SILVA DEFIES SOUTH AFRICAN PACE ATTACK

PORT ELIZABETH: Dhananjaya de Silva kept Sri Lanka's hopes alive with a defiant innings on the second day of the first Test against South Africa at St George's Park yesterday. De Silva made 43 not out as Sri Lanka struggled to 181 for seven - still 105 runs behind South Africa's first innings total of 286 - before bad light ended play.

South African new ball bowlers Vernon Philander and Kyle Abbott put the Sri Lankan batsmen under pressure in seam-friendly conditions, with the first three wickets falling for 22 runs. It looked as though a full-scale collapse was possible but Sri Lankan captain Angelo Mathews made a solid 39 before De Silva came out to bat at number seven and played an impressive innings, with assistance from Dinesh Chandimal and Rangana Herath.

It was not a wholly impressive performance by the South African bowlers. Philander and Abbott both bowled well, taking three for 35 and two for 49 respectively, but rising star Kagiso Rabada had an off day. Rabada struggled to find his rhythm and conceded 63 runs in 13 overs, although he did take the key wicket of Mathews, caught low down at third slip by Dean Elgar.

De Silva, playing in only his sixth Test, showed some of the quality that has already brought him centuries against Australia and Zimbabwe, although he survived a caught and bowled chance to left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj when he was on 27. When play ended he had faced 69 balls and hit five fours. The day started well for Sri Lanka when fast bowler Suranga Lakmal, playing in his 32nd Test, took his first five-wicket haul in Test cricket, finishing with five for 63, as South Africa lost their last four wickets for 19 runs. The previous Test best for Lakmal, 29, was four for 78 against Pakistan in Dubai in January 2014. Philander was caught at deep square leg when he top-edged a pull against Nuwan Pradeep in the fifth over of the morning after

SCOREBOARD	
PORT ELIZABETH: Scoreboard yesterday at stumps on Day 2 of the first cricket test between South Africa and Sri Lanka at St. George's Park.	
South Africa 1st Innings	Herath 20-4-48-2, Dhananjaya de Silva 3-0-12-0.
Stephen Cook c Chandimal b Lakmal	59
Dean Elgar c Chandimal b Lakmal	45
Hashim Amla c Chandimal b Lakmal	20
JP Duminy lbw b Herath	63
Faf du Plessis c Karunaratne b Lakmal	37
Temba Bavuma lbw b Herath	3
Quinton de Kock b Pradeep	37
Vernon Philander c Chameera b Pradeep	13
Keshav Maharaj c Chandimal b Lakmal	0
Kyle Abbott run out Perera/Chandimal	0
Kagiso Rabada not out	0
Extras (3lb, 1w, 5nb)	9
TOTAL: (all out)	286
Overs: 98.5	
Fall of wickets: 1-104, 2-105, 3-178, 4-213, 5-225, 6-253, 7-276, 8-276, 9-281, 10-286.	
Bowling: Suranga Lakmal 27-9-63-5, Nuwan Pradeep 21.5-5-66-2 (2nb), Angelo Mathews 13-5-26-0 (1w), Dushmantha Chameera 14-1-68-0 (3nb), Rangana	
Sri Lanka 1st Innings	
Dimuth Karunaratne b Abbott	5
Kaushal Silva lbw b Philander	16
Kusal Perera c De Kock b Philander	7
Kusal Mendis c De Kock b Abbott	0
Angelo Mathews c Elgar b Rabada	39
Dinesh Chandimal lbw b Philander	28
Dhananjaya de Silva not out	43
Rangana Herath lbw b Maharaj	24
Dushmantha Chameera not out	7
Extras (4lb, 5w, 3nb)	12
TOTAL: (for 7 wickets)	181
Overs: 57.	
Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-19, 3-22, 4-61, 5-94, 6-121, 7-157.	
Still to bat: Suranga Lakmal, Nuwan Pradeep.	
Bowling: Vernon Philander 16-7-35-3 (2nb), Kyle Abbott 18-3-49-2, Kagiso Rabada 13-3-63-1 (1nb, 1w), Keshav Maharaj 10-3-30-1.	



MELBOURNE: Australia's Nic Maddinson (L) attempts to run out Pakistan batsman Asad Shafiq (R) on the second day of the second cricket Test match in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

MELBOURNE: Scoreboard at the close on the second day of the second Test between Australia and Pakistan at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday.

Pakistan first innings (142-4 overnight)	Extras (b4, lb9, w5, nb1)	19
S. Aslam c Smith b Lyon	Total (6 wickets, 101.2 overs)	310
A. Ali not out	Fall of wickets: 1-18 (Aslam), 2-60 (Azam), 3-111 (Khan), 4-125 (Misbah-ul-Haq), 5-240 (Shafiq), 6-268 (Sarfraz)	
B. Azam c Smith b Hazlewood	To bat: S. Khan, W. Riaz, Y. Shah.	
Y. Khan b Bird	Bowling: Starc 23.2-6-77-0 (1w), Hazlewood 26-11-33-2, Bird 29-5-91-3 (1nb), Lyon 17-1-69-1, Smith 3-0-9-0, Maddinson 3-0-18-0.	
Misbah-ul-Haq c Maddinson b Bird		
A. Shafiq c Smith b Bird		
S. Ahmed c Renshaw b Hazlewood		
M. Amir not out		

South Africa had resumed at 267 for six.

Maharaj edged an away swinger to wicket-keeper Dinesh Chandimal to give Lakmal his fifth wicket and Abbott was run out after a mix-up with Quinton de Kock.

Quinton de Kock was last man out for 37, trying to keep the strike and playing across the line of a yorker from Pradeep. But the hosts hit back almost immediately as Philander and Abbott ripped into their batting. Both gained appreciable movement through the air and off the pitch as three wickets fell in the first eight overs before captain Mathews joined a patient Kaushal Silva

to add 39 runs for the fourth wicket. Silva was the only one of the top four in the Sri Lankan batting order to show a solid defensive technique in tricky conditions.

But he made only 16 off 108 balls before he was leg before wicket to Philander, who produced a ball that cut back after a succession of deliveries that left the batsman.

Mathews, who needed treatment after a rising delivery from Philander struck his right forearm early in his innings, made 39 off 69 deliveries before pushing at a ball from Rabada to be caught at third slip. — AFP



Champions AECK celebrating with Chief Guest Tapan Ramesh (GTE).



Tibu Thomas (Secretary-CETAA) handing over the Runners-up Trophy to KEA skipper Binu Kailas.

AECK DESERVING CHAMPIONS IN 19TH EDITION OF RMC

KUWAIT: The final of the 19th Prof Ramachandran Memorial Cricket Tournament (RMC) conducted by College of Engineering Trivandrum Alumni Association (CETAA) and sponsored by GTE Olayan Co was held at the beautiful boulevard cricket stadium in Salmiya on Dec. 23. AECK deservedly became champions against a below par KEA by 23 runs in a day-night match watched by a large crowd of cricket enthusiasts and team supporters.

AECK started on the right note by winning the toss and batting first. But it was not all plain sailing as AECK lost star batsman Mahesh in the 2nd over for 6. Soon the other opener Nimish too fell in the 4th over lbw to the dangerous Nasif with the score reading just 15. And when in-form Shameer fell in the next over, KEA had the initial advantage. The run rate too was only just above 4 at the end of the

5th over. And when Nithin fell for a duck in the 6th over bowled by Syam, the KEA supporters were "cock-a-hoop". But this brought in the classy Rafi to join experienced Remon and AECK had the most productive partnership (28 runs) of the innings for the 5th wicket. Rafi (15) was in his elements driving fluently on both sides of the wicket. They were also aided by a plethora of wides and byes and KEA steadily lost the initial advantage.

Another crucial partnership of 16 runs for the 8th wicket between Shabeer and Vineesh took AECK to a challenging score of 77 runs which didn't seem possible at the half way stage. The plucky display of the AECK batsman and the untidiness of KEA in the field were a telling factor. For KEA Nasif was once again the star performer with 4 wickets while Arjun took 3 wickets. Sabin, Ajin and

Syam chipped in with a wicket each to get AECK all out in less than their allotted overs.

In reply, KEA started disastrously losing their prolific scoring Govind run out for 0 off the very 1st ball. And when Ajin was bowled by Remon in the second over, it was danger time for KEA. Their main remaining hopes Nithin and Renju tried to repair the damage but the accuracy and quality of the AECK attack pinned them down. In the 5th over Renju skied a catch while trying to hit his way out of trouble with the score reading a mere 16. And when the accurate Nimish got Nithin LBW in the 7th over, the writing was on the wall for KEA. Nasif (11) was the only one to reach double figures but his hefty blows were few and far between. With the asking rate mounting, the lower order could not cope up with the fine all

round attack of AECK and KEA were all out for 55 in the last over leaving AECK deserving winners by 23 runs. For AECK, Nimish (3 for 7) and Shameer (2 for 11) were predictably the star performers ably supported by Remon, Munaz and Rinaz with a wicket each. The absence of any productive partnership by the top order while chasing a stiff target hurt KEA and in the final analysis proved crucial.

Rafi (AECK) was named man of the match for his classy innings. Special prizes for the tournament were also awarded to Nimish (AECK - best player), Nasif (KEA - best bowler) and Govind (KEA - best batsman). The chief guests Tapan Ramesh (GTE), Vipul Patel (Advanced Engineering), Daniel George (GBM) and Shyam Mohan (Al Noun Est) gave away the prizes while the organizers distributed Christmas cake for one and all.

MAN CITY FACE SERIES OF 'FINALS', SAYS GUARDIOLA

KINGSTON UPON HULL: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola believes that every game in the second half of the season will be like a cup final for his title hopefuls. An impressive and hard-earned 3-0 win at Hull kept pace with leaders Chelsea after Antonio Conte's side beat Bournemouth earlier on Monday.

The Blues had opened up a 10-point gap over Guardiola's team for whom defeat at Hull would have spelled disaster. The Catalan admitted that the pressure was on following that result although a Yaya Toure penalty, a tap-in from substitute Kelechi Iheanacho and an own goal from Curtis Davies ensured he eventually enjoyed his first Boxing Day in English football with a comfortable win.

But he also conceded that such pressure will be routine for his side in the new year, especially with title rivals Chelsea and Liverpool not encumbered by having to play in European competition.

"Sometimes you play before, sometimes you play later," said Guardiola. "But it doesn't matter whether you are seven points or 10 points behind when one team has won 12 in a row. We have one game to finish the first half of the season and then the second starts and it's like a final for us if we want to be there until the end of the season."

"Liverpool went so close one year because they had one game a week and last year Leicester it happened the same. This time Chelsea and Liverpool are the ones."

"We have played seven more games than

them and important ones like the Champions League. That is why it will be tough, it will be hard but we have to do absolutely everything to be there."

"After that, football is unpredictable. Sometimes you believe something is done and it is not done. What we have to do is win every game and play like this last one. We're going to try and, after that, we will analyse whether it has been enough or not enough. But that's the goal."

OPTIMISM OVER STONES

Guardiola had further good news when he learned that his England defender John Stones will not face a long spell on the sidelines following injury. Recalled after being dropped for City's last two games, Stones

lasted less than 20 minutes before suffering a knee injury but one which should not see him sidelined for long.

"He had a huge kick on his knee and couldn't run," explained Guardiola. "When you look at his knee, it is badly swollen but it is just a kick, not something serious like ligaments." Even without Stones, City kept a clean sheet for just the second time in nine away league games so far this season, a decent achievement given a strong, physical and direct approach from Hull.

"Like always," smiled Guardiola when asked about the direct style his team faced. "Watford play like this, Arsenal play like this, with Giroud, West Brom, all the teams play direct. But I'm not worried about that long ball. I'm worried about the second one, the

third one, sometimes the fourth one. That's the important thing."

Hull's hopes of becoming the fourth team in a quarter of a century of Premier League football to survive after being bottom at Christmas look ever distant although manager Mike Phelan could be justifiably proud of their latest effort.

"I thought to take on City the way we did was the right thing to do and there was a bit of anguish and frustration from their dugout at times," he said.

"But that first goal is massive. We tried to have a go after that but it is just a case of can we manage the game better. We need to learn from that as we are on the end of another defeat - a harsh defeat because I don't think it was a 3-0 game." — AFP

WENGER SALUTES 'FIGHTER' GIROUD

LONDON: Arsene Wenger hailed Olivier Giroud's fighting spirit after the Arsenal striker marked his first Premier League start of the season with the winning goal against West Bromwich Albion. Giroud headed home four minutes from the end of a game that had seemed destined to finish goalless at the Emirates Stadium.

Before Monday's 1-0 victory, Giroud had come off the bench 10 times in Premier League games this season and scored three goals, making his only club starts in the Champions League. But Gunners boss Wenger insisted that Giroud had not had anything to prove to him despite his repeated absence from the starting line-up.

"He always makes a point when he comes on because he has scored many times when he comes in," Wenger said. "He has qualities in our squad that are needed and that the other players have not. He's a fighter too, Olivier, and has a fantastic mentality. It has been frustrating for him because he didn't always play but I think we have an honest relationship."

"I have big respect for him and he knows that he was not always playing but despite that he kept a strong motivation level. Part of the job of a player is to be always ready, the players who are always ready will be there and the players who feel sorry for themselves get their chance and they give you one more reason to justify why you didn't select them. The fighters are always ready."

Giroud has been kept on the bench by the fine form of Chile forward Alexis Sanchez and just as he finally gets a chance to make his mark, he may also have to compete with fit-again forward Danny Welbeck.

'RIGHT DECISIONS'

"We are competing and I think if I only have one striker everybody says: 'What are you doing?'" Wenger said. "We need two or three strikers and we have Welbeck coming back so most of the time we have to make the decision depending on our opponent."

"Like today I knew they would play deep, and in the air Giroud could be the solution so I have to make the right decisions. We kept going and in the end when we couldn't make a difference on the ground we made it in the air with maybe the only player in our team who can do that."

Despite being left frustrated by Giroud's late intervention, which came after his physical challenge on Albion defender Gareth McAuley, Baggies boss Tony Pulis agreed with Wenger's assessment of the striker's qualities.

"Gareth has got pinned by Giroud and you can't allow him to do that because he's such a strong player," he said.

"He is excellent in the air and is untypical of what Arsene wants in lots of respects, but he has won them three points today."

The fact that Wenger is able to use an established international so sparingly is one reason why Pulis regards Arsenal as potentially strong challengers to leaders Chelsea in the second half of the season.

Albion have lost 1-0 to both teams in successive away matches and Pulis believes Chelsea will have to spend during the January transfer window to match Arsenal's depth. "If you look at the players who were not playing and not in the team today, and then you look at Chelsea's, I think Arsenal have definitely got the stronger squad," Pulis said. — AFP



Mauricio Pochettino

POCHETTINO RELISHES SOUTHAMPTON RETURN

SOUTHAMPTON: Tottenham Hotspur manager Mauricio Pochettino returns to former club Southampton today with a feeling of gratitude, but also a burning desire for a return to form on the road. The north Londoners have not claimed an away victory since September, a run that has left them outside of the Premier League top four.

But they have won four of their last five games overall, which Pochettino, who left Southampton for White Hart Lane in 2014, believes can be the springboard to a title challenge. "It's always special to go back," said the Argentine, who joined the south coast club in January 2013 before leaving 16 months later.

"It was a special place for me and my family to have the possibility to start my career in the Premier League. It will always be a special place for me and a lot of people I still have a relationship with. It will be a good opportunity to see all the friends there."

"(Southampton manager) Claude Puel has done a fantastic job. I know him well from France. He's a great coach, doing a fantastic job. They're playing very well, with good results."

Spurs go into the game a mammoth 13 points below leaders Chelsea, having played a

game more, but Pochettino refuses to give up on the title. "We can fight for the title at the end of the season. It's up to us to fight and be ambitious and try to be our best," he said.

"With 17 games played, we have more than half the season ahead. All is possible in football. We are confident. We are working hard. We are focused on trying to win points. This is a very important period. We want to attack the last three or four months with the possibility to try to fight for the top four."

Pochettino still keeps in contact with former player Jay Rodriguez, who scored twice against Bournemouth last week to signal his return to form after over a year out with a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament.

'TOP PERSON'

"I'm very happy for him," the Spurs manager said. "I sent the text. I was happy to see him on the pitch again. He suffered a very bad injury and I remember, fresh in our minds, that day at Man City. He's a top player, a top man and we were happy to see him score against Bournemouth. Now we will suffer him because he will be our enemy and our opponent."



LISBON: In this file photo dated Tuesday, Sept. 13, 2016, Benfica's Victor Lindelof, right, stops Besiktas' Talisca during the Champions League group B soccer match between Benfica and Besiktas at the Luz stadium in Lisbon. Benfica seems to be staying atop the Portuguese league yesterday, although central defender Lindelof is rumoured to be likely to make a move away from the club when the January transfer market opens. — AP

RANIERI DEMANDS MORE FROM MAHREZ

LEICESTER: Claudio Ranieri has told Algeria winger Riyad Mahrez he needs to provide more graft and guile as Leicester try to pull away from the relegation fight. Ranieri's struggling champions slumped to a 2-0 defeat against Everton on Monday which kept them just three points above the Premier League's bottom three.

And although Ranieri was without suspended striker Jamie Vardy, Mahrez, last season's PFA Player of the Year, didn't even make the starting line-up at the King Power Stadium. It was a far cry from last term when everything Mahrez touched turned to gold during Leicester's fairytale title triumph. Ranieri explained the winger's omission by demanding he give more for the Leicester cause. "Because he's not in good form now and I wanted to stimulate him," Ranieri said when asked why he was left out. "I didn't see him do well during the training sessions and he must give more for the team. I want more."

Leicester face a rejuvenated West Ham on Saturday with tensions rising around the King Power Stadium. Ranieri had predicted a tough campaign back in September, although the reality of a relegation dogfight is biting hard.

"If you remember well, I think three months ago, I told everybody we are in the battle but I want to fight and I want to stay very concentrated on the little details," he said. "The little details are like the first goal, to react early."

Ranieri will have been dismayed by the

manner of Everton's goals, scored by Kevin Mirallas and Romelu Lukaku.

Mirallas' strike was especially bad as it came from a huge punt up field from goalkeeper Joel Robles which put the Belgian striker clear of the two centre-backs. Three touches is all it took and the ball deflected into the net off Marcin Wasilewski. "We reacted a little late from the long kick but that is football," Ranieri said.

CHRISTMAS CHEER

In contrast, Everton boss Ronald Koeman was full of Christmas cheer as he hailed the defensive spirit of his team in their first away win since September.

"The team organisation defensively was outstanding," Koeman said. "Maybe they had one chance with a free header but it was not really a big chance. Idrissa Gueye (had) a fantastic opportunity to kill the game and finally Romelu did but it was important also to have a clean sheet for confidence. We showed the aggression in the performance that we want."

As for the rather direct nature of the goals, Koeman explained it had all been worked out on the training pitch. "We like to play from the back but if the opponent is pressing then we don't take risks," he said.

"Finally in the last part of the second half they did more pressing and then you need to play the long ball and you need to push up and you need to fight for second balls. I think we won a lot of battles in the second half which was good and then you make it very difficult." — AFP

MANCHESTER: Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho is looking forward to working with Zlatan Ibrahimovic again next season after declaring the striker's contract extension will be a formality. Ibrahimovic, 35, arrived from Paris Saint-Germain in July on a one-year deal with an option for a further year, which Mourinho in November indicated United would look to take up. After Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored once and made two goals in United's 3-1 Boxing Day win over Sunderland, Mourinho said the clause had not been activated yet, but would be.

"It is activated in his brain and it is activated also in my decisions and in the owners' and the board's. So it is no problem," said Mourinho. Ibrahimovic's goal against Sunderland means that he has scored 50 times across all competitions for club and country during 2016, the year he retired from international football with Sweden.

"I am not really surprised because he is a very intelligent guy and a very proud man," Mourinho said. "He decided to come to Manchester United and to the Premier League, to a club with the level of expectation of Manchester United, in the most difficult league in the world for a striker."

"When he decides to come here, it is because he knows he can do it. When we contacted him and he said, yes, he will come, I was sure that he was not coming here to leave the Premier League without proving himself."

"To leave the Premier League having failed at Manchester United? No way. When such a guy

decided to come, I was completely clear that he would be ready and he is ready for more next season. He will be here again."

Ibrahimovic set up Daley Blind to put United ahead in the 39th minute and then ran through to score from Paul Pogba's pass before setting up Henrikh Mkhitaryan for a spectacular 'scorpion kick' volley. United secured a fourth successive Premier League win, and extended their unbeaten record in all competitions to 11 matches, in the absence of captain Wayne Rooney. The United captain was withdrawn from the squad after suffering a thigh muscle injury in training.

RELEGATION TUSSLE

Mourinho said the England captain was a doubt for United's home match against Middlesbrough on New Year's Eve. Asked if Rooney would be fit, Mourinho said: "I don't think so. I hope so."

I would like him to be. "He is always a player I would like to be available. Let's see. It is not a big deal, but in four days, I have my doubts."

Sunderland manager David Moyes suffered defeat on his first return to Old Trafford since United sacked him in April 2014.

Moyes, whose team remain in the Premier League relegation zone, said he enjoyed his return, despite the publicity that surrounded him in the days before the fixture.

"When you are in football, what comes around goes around," said the Scot, whose team replied through Fabio Borini's long-range effort.

"I knew that some day I would come up against the Manchester United players or work with some of them. I think that's what happens when you're in football. I enjoyed coming back. I have always enjoyed coming here. It's a hard place to come, a hard place to get a result, and that showed today."

From chasing titles at Old Trafford, Moyes now finds himself locked in a relegation tussle with Sunderland, who lie two points from safety.

"We are going to have to try to galvanise from within," said the former Preston North End, Everton and Real Sociedad manager.

"It is not a situation I am necessarily used to, but some of the players are used to it here. I hope together we can find a way of being good enough and strong enough in the games that really matter."

"Did this game matter? It definitely mattered. But there will be games maybe more so that will be important for us." — AFP



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Southampton v Tottenham
beIN SPORTS 2 HD

22:45

Shiffrin beats
Worley for second
career GS win



Hotspur manager
Pochettino relishes
Southampton return



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2016

HOBART RECORD SET TO FALL AS FAVOURITE RETIRES Page 18



LIVERPOOL: Stoke City's Senegalese striker Mame Biram Diouf (R) and Liverpool's English midfielder James Milner (L) contest a high ball during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Stoke City at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England yesterday.— AFP

LIVERPOOL COME ROARING BACK TO DEMOLISH STOKE



LIVERPOOL: A fine finish by Roberto Firmino helped Liverpool to come roaring back from behind and beat Stoke City 4-1 as they reclaimed second place in the Premier League table yesterday.

Jürgen Klopp's side were rattled for a spell after Jonathan Walters headed Stoke into an early lead at Anfield, but Adam Lallana restored parity before Brazilian striker Firmino netted with a minute of the first half remaining. A Giannelli Imbula own goal and a first Premier League goal of the season for Daniel Sturridge in the sec-

ond half put the seal on a third straight victory for the Reds, who are still unbeaten at Anfield this season.

The win allowed the Reds to move back to within six points of Premier League leaders Chelsea as they moved back above Manchester City, who they host at Anfield on New Year's Eve. Without a win in four games, Stoke are 13th.

Klopp stuck with the same team that had beaten Middlesbrough and Everton away in their last two outings as Simon Mignolet was again preferred to Loris Karius in goal. The Belgian had kept clean sheets in each of these games but he was beaten here inside 12 minutes as Stoke stunned the home fans.

Erik Pieters was quicker onto a loose ball than either Sadio Mane or Nathaniel Clyne just outside the area and his cross from the left was met by Walters at the near post. Mignolet got a touch to his header but could not keep it out.

Stoke were the last visiting team to win at Anfield when they beat Liverpool 1-0 in the League Cup semi-final, sec-

ond leg, back in January—although they eventually lost on penalties that night.

Their boss Mark Hughes had never won away to Liverpool as a manager in the Premier League but Stoke had their hosts on the ropes for a while after going in front.

Back at Anfield for the first time since leaving Liverpool in the close season, Joe Allen engineered himself space in the box before seeing his shot saved by Mignolet as Stoke almost doubled their lead. There were groans coming from the Kop but Firmino lifted the home fans in the crowd of over 53,000 when his shot was blocked on the line by Peter Crouch and the equaliser then arrived after 34 minutes.

Glen Johnson appeared to want to control the ball inside his own six-yard area and Lallana pounced to tuck a low shot from a tight angle between goalkeeper Lee Grant and the near post and in for his seventh goal of the season.

Boosted by that, Liverpool ended the first half on top and they went in front just prior to the interval, Firmino collect-

ing a James Milner pass in the box, taking a touch to control and another to tee himself up before firing across Grant and in off both posts.

It was a sixth goal of the season for him and came three days after he had been arrested and charged for drink driving in the centre of Liverpool.

Mane almost made it 3-1 seconds later with a shot that slid just wide but Liverpool ran away with the game in the second half. Their third goal arrived just before the hour mark, as Divock Origi latched onto a Jordan Henderson pass and delivered a low ball in from the left that Imbula turned into his own net under pressure from Mane.

Sturridge had been on the field a matter of seconds in place of Origi when he broke his duck for the season.

Pouncing on a careless blind back-pass by Ryan Shawcross, the England striker's first touch took him round Grant before he rolled the ball in to complete the victory. — AFP

DAK AND DEZ FIRE AS DALLAS DENY DETROIT

ARLINGTON: The Dallas Cowboys entered their final regular-season home game with the NFC East title and home-field advantage in the playoffs in their back pocket. Even so, Dallas showed no signs of slowing down as it raced past the Detroit Lions in the third quarter on the way to a 42-21 victory on Monday night at AT&T Stadium. The Lions (9-6) were the team trying to lock up a playoff berth, but they couldn't keep up after halftime with Dallas (13-2), which had all of its stars on display.

Cowboys rookie quarterback Dak Prescott passed for 212 yards and three touchdowns. Wide receiver Dez Bryant caught a pair of TD passes and threw another, and rookie running back Ezekiel Elliott rushed for 80 yards and two scores on 12 carries.

The only sign that Dallas might have let its hair down a bit, with the NFC East title in hand, came in the third quarter when Bryant threw a 10-yard touchdown pass to tight end Jason Witten.

On first-and-goal from the Detroit 10, Bryant took a pitch going to his left on a reverse and appeared headed upfield. But just before Bryant reached the line of scrimmage, he tossed to a wide-open Witten in the end zone for the score.

The Bryant-to-Witten connection put an exclamation point on the Cowboys' domination of the third quarter.

After going to halftime tied at 21, Dallas won the third 14-0 by moving the ball efficiently and shutting down the Lions' offense.

Cowboys safety J.J. Wilcox ended Detroit's second-half-opening possession by intercepting Matthew Stafford at the Lions 46-yard line.

Dallas stopped Detroit's second series of

the third quarter at the Lions 36, and Detroit kicker Matt Prater missed a 47-yard field goal on the Lions' third and final offensive series of the period.

The Cowboys responded to Prater's miss by driving 63 yards in seven plays. Prescott hit Bryant for a 19-yard touchdown that put Dallas ahead 42-21 and in total command with 12:12 left.

Stafford finished 26 of 46 for 260 yards and the one interception. Detroit running back Zach Zenner produced two touchdowns and 67 yards on 12 carries, while tight end Eric Ebron had eight receptions for 93 yards. Bryant made a juggling one-handed touchdown catch, despite being interfered with by Lions cornerback Johnson Bademosi, to tie the game at 21 going into halftime. Prescott converted a third-and-7 by hitting Bryant for the 25-yard touchdown with 1:04 left in the second quarter.

Detroit scored on its first three possessions to take a 21-14 lead with 7:40 remaining in the half. Zenner ran 7 yards for the Lions' first touchdown and 5 yards for the third. Stafford plunged forward 1 yard to convert a fourth-and-goal and tie it at 14.

Dallas struggled for most of the first half to stop the Lions' combination of Stafford and Zenner. Stafford finished the first half with 137 passing yards, and Zenner rushed for 64 on 10 carries before intermission.

However, Prescott and Elliott helped the Cowboys keep pace. Prescott hit wide receiver Brice Butler for a 21-yard touchdown to give Dallas a 7-0 lead after its first drive. Elliott broke loose for a 55-yard touchdown run late in the second quarter to put the Cowboys back in front 14-7. Elliott finished the first half with 74 yards on eight carries. — Reuters



ARLINGTON: Dez Bryant #88 of the Dallas Cowboys pulls in a touchdown pass against Johnson Bademosi #29 of the Detroit Lions in the second quarter at AT&T Stadium on Monday in Arlington, Texas. The Dallas Cowboys, already assured of home field advantage throughout the playoffs, didn't let up Monday in a 42-21 rout of Detroit that prevented the Lions from clinching their own NFL post-season berth. — AFP

Kuwait Times 55 BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2016

Kuwait economic activity resilient

Page 25

Landmark Al-Sayer Toyota City project bags GORD Award

Page 26



KFH Capital acquires office tower in US for \$165 million

Page 23

BANKS BOOST SAUDI; REST OF GULF SLUGGISH

Page 22



HONG KONG: A man walks past a mosaic mural at the wholesale fruit market in the Yau Ma Tei district of Hong Kong yesterday. — AFP

INDIA CASH CRISIS HITS GLOBAL DIAMOND INDUSTRY

STONE-CUTTING IN THE THROES AS MODI MOVE THROWS CRAFTSMEN OUT OF JOB

SURAT, India/TORONTO: The global diamond industry is facing disruption that could stretch through the first few months of next year, including Valentine's Day in February, as a result of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's radical move to abolish most of the nation's cash overnight.

In the western Indian city of Surat craftsmen usually spend 10-12 hours a day in small mills or grimy sheds cutting and polishing 80 percent of the world's diamonds but the business is based on cash and the demonetization of the high-value banknotes from Nov. 8 has prevented many from operating. Thousands of diamond brokers in the area's narrow lanes are also doing little business.

The lack of cash is not the only problem for an industry that employs 1 million people in India, most of them in this city. Modi's shock treatment is intended to make it much more difficult for those laundering ill-gotten gains or evading taxes, and that means diamond buyers are demanding proof of tax payments that are often not available, the traders said.

Top diamond miners, such as Anglo American-owned De Beers and smaller Canadian producers such as Stornoway Diamond and Dominion Diamond are seeing weaker demand and prices for cheaper stones used in lower-priced jewellery.

The picture for retailers and consumers of diamonds is less clear. The cash crunch has also badly hurt consumer demand for diamond jewellery in India, the world's third-biggest market. That means there are more of the cheaper finished stones to export, helping to create a temporary glut and lower prices at wholesaler and store level. However, that may not last if the cutters and polishers of India can't get back to work soon.

But the luxury buyer doesn't have to worry. Much of the higher-value jewellery business, with the highest grade one-carat stones usually costing more than \$14,500, is protected because cutting and polishing is also done in Israel, Belgium and by bigger Indian companies that rely on bank transactions.

"The knock-on effect of Indian demonetization has meant a reduction in the prices of lower quality diamonds," said Tobias Kormind, managing director of 77 Diamonds, an online jewellery retailer based in London. "As a result, we've seen an increase in demand for those kinds of diamonds as our clients have snapped up these favorable deals."

In India, jewellery demand typically climbs in the winter months' wedding season. But this year sales are plunging as nearly two-thirds of jewellery is usually purchased with cash, which is in short-supply. Ishu Datwani, owner of Mumbai-based Anmol Jewellers, says his sales are down nearly 70 percent since the government scrapped the high-value notes. The demand is unlikely to revive any time soon as India struggles to dispense enough new notes, industry officials say.

"During the cash crunch, diamonds are one of the last things people want to buy. At least for the next six months demand will remain weak," says Praveenshankar Pandya, head of India's Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC).

The crisis hit at a time when there were plenty of stones in the retail pipeline or being processed. India's rough diamond imports between April and November jumped 30.5 percent, while exports of cut and polished diamonds during the period rose 12.2 percent, GJEPC data shows. Diamond processors bought rough diamonds aggressively, expecting a jump in



An Indian craftsman works on a piece of diamond at a mill in Surat.

exports and rising Indian demand, but now they are struggling, said trader Dharmesh Navadiya. In trading hubs like Hong Kong, many retailers are stuck holding diamonds they bought three years back at higher prices expecting robust demand from China that didn't materialize.

"There has been no supply crunch as the market is already flooded, especially the low carat diamond," said Jonathan Rotbart, a distributor of gems in Hong Kong.

Shock to the market

"The market is frozen. We don't have cash to buy diamonds," said Kalpesh Savaliya, a trader for 25 years who was

sitting cross-legged on a mattress behind a low wooden desk in Surat. As small operators close, India's rough diamond imports could decline by up to 25 percent between December and March, said Mehul Choksi, chairman of Gitanjali Gems, India's biggest diamond jeweller.

Miners are already feeling the pain with some lower-quality stones being discounted by more than 25 percent from prices before demonetization, said Panmure Gordon analyst Kieron Hodgson, in a recent note to clients. In its final 2016 tender, De Beers said sales were affected by a slowdown in lower-value rough stones, a trend Hodgson expects to see repeated for at least the next three months.

Dominion Diamond, with stakes in two Canadian mines, expects its sales in its fourth quarter ending Jan. 31 will be hurt by the Indian cash crisis, and sees weaker demand for small stones extending to its fiscal first quarter. Demonetization was a "shock to the market," said Chief Executive Brendan Bell. Stornoway, which this year finished building Quebec's first diamond mine, withdrew smaller, lower-quality stones from its first-ever tender in November due to poor demand and prices.

But Mountain Province Diamonds, which owns 49 percent of Canada's newest diamond mine, Gahcho Kue, indicated it isn't overly worried. "Small diamonds are roughly 80 percent of your production and 20 percent of your revenue - and the demand for the large diamonds remains robust," said CEO Patrick Evans. "The diamond market is fine. Average prices are up 7 to 9 percent this year, but small diamonds are down about 50 percent." — Reuters

IRAN'S RIAL AT ALL-TIME LOW OVER TRUMP FEARS

TEHRAN: At money changers across Tehran, shouting voices accompany each change of the signboards out front showing the value of the Iranian rial, which slips ever lower against the US dollar. This week saw Iran's currency fall to 41,600 rials to \$1, its lowest point ever. While making Iranian exports more attractive to the world market in the wake of the nuclear deal, it also means people's savings continue to lose value in the Islamic Republic. Meanwhile, concerns gather about what US President-elect Donald Trump might mean for the atomic accord going forward, even as most Iranians have yet to feel any change from it. "Surely this negatively impacts people's lives. Lots of foreign goods are imported into our country, and many of the things people need come from abroad," said a Tehran resident who only gave his name as Babaei. "It also has a very negative psychological effect on the people."

In that last 10 years, Iran has seen the rial go from around 9,200 to \$1 to 41,600 to \$1, a depreciation of some 450 percent. Much of that collapse came in 2012 over the country's contested nuclear program, when the US banned the world's banks from taking part in Iran's oil economy and the European Union imposed an oil embargo. Under the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, international

sanctions against the country were lifted in exchange for it limiting its enrichment of uranium. In the time since, Iran has rushed to increase oil production to regain its lost market share while simultaneously signing deals worth tens of billions of dollars with airplane manufacturers Airbus and Boeing Co.

But the rial, initially buoyed by the accord,

has now fallen. While those who could long-ago offloaded their rials for other investments, average Iranians have faced harder times.

"This is tragic to me," said Ahmad Heidari, a 64-year-old retiree. "I have lost 20 percent of my purchasing power with this exchange rate because all prices are going up harshly."

There are a host of reasons contributing to

the rial's descent. Since Trump's election, the US dollar has been strengthening. Meanwhile, Trump's unelaborated campaign promise to renegotiate the Iran deal has sparked uncertainty. However, Iran's government in the past has manipulated its currency market to cover government budget deficits. It does that through using the difference between the lower government exchange rate and the higher market exchange rate to gain rials from oil sales, a move known in the financial world as arbitrage.

Hassan Salimi, the head of the Investment Group of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, has suggested arbitrage might be at play, according to the semi-official Fars news agency. "The government believed that it could sell a barrel of oil from \$65 to \$70 in 2017, but now it is certain that the price of oil will stay around \$50," Salimi said Dec. 3. "Therefore, to make up for the deficit, it has increased the exchange rate."

Government spokesman Mohammad Bagher Nobakht on Monday, however, tried to ease concerns over the rial drop. "The government is discontent over (the) increasing of the exchange rate," the state-run IRNA news agency quoted Nobakht as saying. "Our colleagues in the Central Bank are utilizing every instrument with economic logic to moderate and rationalize the currency exchange rate." — AP



TEHRAN: A currency exchange bureau owner counts US dollars in downtown Tehran. Iran's currency has struck an all-time low this week, trading at 41,600 rials to \$1. — AP

DOW NEARS 20,000, NASDAQ HITS RECORD

NEW YORK: Wall Street opened slightly higher yesterday, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average resuming its march towards 20,000 and the Nasdaq hitting a record, helped by gains in technology shares. Energy stocks also rose, supported by oil prices. US crude was up 0.94 percent at \$53.52, while Brent crude inched towards \$56 as a deal to limit supply comes into effect on Sunday. The Dow Jones industrial average marked its seventh straight week of gains on Friday, feeding on optimism that President-elect Donald Trump's plans for deregulation and infrastructure spending would bolster the economy. "The first day of trading in the final week of 2016 is not likely to reverse form last week's trading sessions," Peter Cardillo, chief market economist at First Standard Financial wrote in a note.

Global markets made small gains on data that showed Chinese industry racked up its strongest profit growth in three months in November, suggesting the world's second-largest economy was improving. Ten of the 11 major S&P 500 sectors were higher, with technology and energy stocks giving the broader index its biggest boost.

At 9:36 a.m. ET (1436 GMT), the Dow Jones was up 29.42 points, or 0.15 percent, at 19,963.23. The index was just 13 points away from the psychological milestone of 20,000 last Tuesday.—Reuters

TEPCO, INVESTORS WEIGH FIRST BOND SALE SINCE FUKUSHIMA

GOVT MOVES INCREASE INVESTOR COMFORT WITH TEPCO RISK

TOKYO: Tokyo Electric Power (Tepco) is gauging demand for its first bond offering since the 2011 Fukushima nuclear calamity, with some market participants expecting a sale as early as February, people familiar with the plans said. Once-skeptical investors are now more comfortable with the utility's outlook after government moves to reassess decommissioning and compensation costs, bankers and investors who asked not to be identified told Thomson Reuters DealWatch.

Tepco is likely to have to pay investors a 1 percentage point premium above Japanese government bonds, considered a rich yield pick-up, as potential buyers see an implicit government guarantee for the basically nationalized company, the people said. That's about three times more yield pick-up than on other electric utility bonds, they said. While the sale's size has not been decided, potential maturities are three-, five- and 10-years, the people said. The company was in discussions last year with

investors to sell as much as 330 billion yen (\$2.8 billion) of bonds.

A Tepco spokesman said the company plans to issue bonds by the end of March but declined to comment on specific target dates or sizes.

A change in timing?

The timing could be pushed back as the Japanese government wants Tepco to delay the bond sale until after April, when legal changes that let it give more financial support to the utility are enacted, said a person familiar with the government's thinking. But the company may have to hurry as gains in financial markets since Donald Trump's election as US president may falter, said one investor.

"If investors switch to risk-off mode because of a waning of the Trump rally in the New Year or the market enters an adjustment phase, selling bonds may be more difficult, so an issue by the end of this year would have been ideal," Hiroaki

Hayashi, director of the investment department at Fukuokushinrai Life Insurance Co said. Seen as unrealistic only weeks ago, Tepco has a better chance of raising debt after a government panel recently updated its estimates on what compensation the company owes and how costs for decommissioning the wrecked Fukushima plant will be shared. Tepco was once Asia's biggest electricity utility and one of Japan's largest corporate borrowers. But the March 2011 nuclear crisis at Fukushima, sparked by an earthquake and tsunami, brought the company to its knees.

Before the calamity, Tepco a frequent bond issuer with a credit rating as high as the government, and considered a corporate benchmark.

It has 3.45 trillion yen of bonds outstanding with 625 billion yen due in 2017 and 570 billion yen due in 2018, according to its website. In the year starting April 2010, which ended with the meltdowns at its Fukushima Daiichi station, Tepco sold

235 billion yen of bonds, slightly less than a year earlier.

Junk rating

The Fukushima losses caused its credit rating to be cut to junk by most agencies and led to a bailout by the government, which took a controlling 50.1 percent stake. With the government considering splitting Tepco's nuclear business and forming alliances with other atomic operators, the issue of restarting the utility's Kashiwazaki Kariwa nuclear plant, the world's biggest, has faded.

While oil and gas prices have risen in recent weeks, they are still well below highs in the aftermath of the nuclear disaster that led to a shutdown of most of Japan's reactors, so Tepco's costs remain manageable. Tepco is aiming to sell the debt through a unit in charge of its power transmission business, Tepco Power Grid Inc, to separate risks from operations dealing with the disaster. — Reuters

News

in brief

US dollar stable against KD at 0.306

KUWAIT: The exchange rate of the US dollar was stable against the Kuwaiti dinar at 0.306 while the euro went down to KD 0.219, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) yesterday. The CBK added that the rate of the pound sterling was stable at KD 0.375 while the Swiss franc went down to KD 0.297. The Japanese yen was still at KD 0.002.

Egypt buys 55,000 tons of sugar directly

CAIRO/HAMBURG: The purchase of 55,000 tons of sugar by Egypt's state commodity buyer GASC on Monday was a direct, non-tender deal, traders said yesterday. GASC, the General Authority for Supply Commodities, said on Monday had bought the white sugar for delivery between Jan 7 and Jan 20. Dealers said on Tuesday the purchase was made in Egyptian pounds from Multitrade/ED&F Man. No price was available. "This was direct purchasing without a tender being issued," one European trader said. "We did not know anything about it before it was reported on Reuters." GASC was not immediately available for comment yesterday. GASC had cancelled to previous international tenders to buy 55,000 tons of white sugar on Dec. 10 and Dec. 21. Traders said that only one supplier submitted an offer in each of the cancelled tenders. "One offer is not sufficient to constitute a tender and GASC has been struggling to attract more offers," another European trader said. "I suspect a decision was made to undertake a direct, non-tender purchase." "We do not have the details but my feeling is that GASC may well have paid more in the private deal than in an international tender," the trader said.

Parmalat shares jump on buyout offer

PARIS: Shares in Italian dairy Parmalat soared 10 percent yesterday after its leading investor offered to buy out other shareholders and take the company private. Lactalis, one of the world's biggest dairy groups, offered to buy the remaining 12.26 percent of the company it took control of following a 3.4-billion-euro hostile takeover in 2011. "After more than five years as leading shareholder of Parmalat, Lactalis Group intends to provide Parmalat with a new dynamic, which can be more easily and effectively achieved in the long term without recourse to the stock market," said the French group, the world's top producer of cheese and the company behind President camembert. Lactalis said the offer price of 2.80 euros per share was a premium of almost 15 percent over Parmalat's average stock price during the past three months, and was at a level unseen since 2011. If successful, Lactalis will spend 636 million euros to gain full control.

SABB offers 0.35 riyals/share dividend for H2 2016

DUBAI: Saudi British Bank (SABB), the kingdom's sixth-largest bank by assets, said yesterday its board had proposed a cash dividend of 0.35 riyals (\$0.0933) per share for the second half of 2016. This is in line with the bank's payment of 0.35 riyals for the same period last year.



TOKYO: Women walk past an electronic stock indicator of a securities firm in Tokyo yesterday. Shares are mixed in Asia as the last week of trading for the year began yesterday after most markets were closed for Christmas. — AP

BANKS BOOST SAUDI; REST OF GULF SLUGGISH

DUBAI: Banking shares boosted Saudi Arabia's stock index yesterday to its highest level this year, while other Gulf markets moved little in quiet trade with some foreign investors absent for New Year holidays. The Saudi index closed up 1.3 percent at 7,257 points in its highest trading volume for two weeks, rising above technical resistance at this year's previous peak of 7,235 points hit in early December.

The banking sector surged 1.8 percent as the biggest lender, National Commercial Bank, climbed 2.1 percent. Banks underperformed the market in the initial reaction to the 2017 state budget at the start of this week, when activity focused on other sectors including petrochemicals. The budget was generally viewed as positive by analysts because it was modestly expansionary while including a further cut to the deficit. But the economic climate next year is expected to be difficult because of fresh austerity measures.

Saudi Electricity, which has been buoyed by plans in the budget to raise power tariffs later this year, rose 1.8 percent. Much activity focused on second- or third-tier stocks favoured by local retail investors, including Tihama Advertising which jumped its 10 percent daily limit. It resumed trading this week after being suspended because it delayed announcing its financial results.

Dubai's index fell 0.3 percent as DXB Entertainments pulled back 1.5 percent. Abu Dhabi rose 0.3 percent on the back of a 0.9 percent gain by Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank.

Boursa Kuwait ended yesterday in the

green zone, as the price index gained 30.66 points reaching 5,745.04 points, the weighted index gained 0.92 points reaching 380.76 points and KSX 15 gained 2.02 reaching 893.61 points. The number of trades was 4,514 transactions with a value of KD 19 million and a volume of 206 million shares.

Egypt's blue-chip index closed flat in heavy trading volume, with foreign investors net buyers by a small margin. Egypt Gas Co surged 5.3 percent after it predicted lower net profit but higher revenues in 2017.

HIGHLIGHTS SAUDI ARABIA

The index rose 1.3 percent to 7,257 points.

DUBAI

The index fell 0.3 percent to 3,542 points.

ABU DHABI

The index rose 0.3 percent to 4,469 points.

QATAR

The index fell 0.4 percent to 10,305 points.

EGYPT

The index was flat at 12,182 points.

KUWAIT

The index rose 0.5 percent to 5,745 points.

OMAN

The index gained 0.6 percent to 5,761 points.

BAHRAIN

The index rose 0.3 percent to 1,211 points. — Agencies

OIL EDGES FURTHER ABOVE \$55 AHEAD OF SUPPLY DEAL

LONDON: Oil edged further above \$55 a barrel yesterday, drawing support from expectations of tighter supply once the first output cut deal between OPEC and non-OPEC producers in 15 years takes effect yesterday. Jan 1 is the official start of the deal agreed by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and several non-OPEC producers to lower production by almost 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd).

Brent crude was up 17 cents at \$55.33 a barrel at 1340 GMT. The global benchmark reached \$57.89 on Dec. 12, the highest since July 2015. US crude gained 30 cents to \$53.32. There was no trading on Monday after the Christmas holiday, and volume was light yesterday. Crude may struggle to rally much further before evidence is available of OPEC's compliance with the cuts, analysts said. "To go above \$60 is going to be difficult. We're already close to the top rather than the bottom of the range right now," said Olivier Jakob, oil analyst at Petromatrix.

"From January, we'll start to have a better idea about the level of OPEC production. That is going to be more and more of a focus." Russian oil producer Gazprom Neft said yesterday it planned to increase oil pro-

duction by 4.5-5 percent next year, less than it had intended before Russia joined the supply cut deal. Major OPEC members such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq have informed customers of lower supplies. But Libya and Nigeria - which are exempt from reductions because conflict has curbed their output - have been increasing production.

Libyan output was 622,000 bpd on Monday, up slightly from levels recorded before an armed faction agreed to lift a two-year blockade on major western pipelines on Dec. 14, the National Oil Corporation (NOC) said. While the outright price of crude is being supported by the prospect of lower supplies, the impact in the physical market will probably differ according to the type of crude.

Price differentials for lighter crudes could weaken once the supply cut comes into force as producers are expected to trim back output of their heavier grades, analysts at JBC Energy said in a report. "Going into 2017, we expect that the premiums for light, sweet grades may be increasingly pressured as a result of the joint OPEC and non-OPEC output cut agreement which is supposed to reduce primarily the availability of medium-sour crudes," JBC said. — Reuters



SRINAGAR: A Kashmiri woman carries freshly smoked fish in a basket on the outskirts of Srinagar yesterday. The smoked fish which is known locally as 'Fahre' is prepared by slowly smoking over grass, is one of the traditional foods in the Himalayan state, and is usually consumed as part of the Kashmiri winter cuisine. —AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.612
Indian Rupees	4.532
Pakistani Rupees	2.930
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.055
Nepali Rupees	2.837
Singapore Dollar	213.190
Hongkong Dollar	39.549
Bangladesh Taka	3.880
Philippine Peso	6.158
Thai Baht	5.573

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.921
Qatari Riyal	84.375
ani Riyal	797.817
Bahraini Dinar	815.730
UAE Dirham	83.628

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.750
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	15.740
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.233
Tunisian Dinar	133.890
Jordanian Dinar	432.610
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.047
Syrian Lira	2.189
Morocco Dirham	30.547

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	307.000
Euro	322.350
Sterling Pound	381.140
Canadian dollar	229.620
Turkish lira	87.920

Swiss Franc	300.980
Australian Dollar	224.111
US Dollar Buying	305.800

GOLD

20 Gram	232.84
10 Gram	119.34
5 Gram	60.51

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
Swiss Krona	0.029340	0.034340
Swedish Krona	0.292878	0.303878
Swiss Franc	0.292878	0.303878
Turkish Lira	0.083732	0.094032
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.212617	0.224617
New Zealand Dollar	0.205431	0.214931
America		
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
Asia		
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

PAKISTAN REJECTS CALL TO DEMONETIZE 5,000-RUPEE NOTE

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's government has dismissed a recommendation from the upper house of parliament to scrap the 5,000 rupee (\$48) bank note to cut the flow of illicit money and reduce the size of the informal economy. India scrapped its two biggest currency bills - the 1,000 rupee (\$15) and 500 rupee notes - in November in a bid to flush out money hidden from the tax man, leading to acute currency shortages and raising concern about growth there.

Pakistan's Senate passed a non-binding resolution this month calling for the government to follow suit to "reduce illicit money flow, encourage the use of bank accounts and reduce the size of the undocumented economy". But the finance ministry ruled out such a demonetization, saying it would hurt business. "Given the continuing use of cash in transactions, the government believes that discontinuation of the 5,000 rupee note would adversely affect the efficiency of exchange in business," the ministry said in a

statement, seen by Reuters yesterday. The 5,000 rupee note is Pakistan's biggest. During the last financial year, 17 percent of currency notes printed were of the 5,000 denomination, the finance ministry said. Pakistan has a huge informal economy and transactions are often handled in cash, partly because much of the population is not in the formal sector.

The government frequently offers tax amnesties to encourage people with hidden wealth to declare assets and enter the banking system, hoping to expand an extremely narrow tax base.

But governments have struggled for decades to boost a meagre tax-to-gross domestic product ratio of only about 10 percent. The ministry said the government hoped to encourage digital banking to "reduce the dependence on currency". "This is the way to move forward for promoting documentation in the economy rather than by cancelling any existing denomination," it said. — Reuters

LUXEMBOURG TO SHARPEN CORPORATE TAX RULES

BRUSSELS: Luxembourg yesterday said it would sharpen its corporate tax rules, making it more difficult for large corporations to avoid tax by channelling funds through the small European country, a practice exposed in media reports known as "LuxLeaks".

The rules, entering into force on Jan 1, firm up the "arm's length principle", meaning financing between different units of the same company should be carried out as if they were unrelated firms.

Tax rulings made before the new law enters into force will not apply after the 2016 tax year, Luxembourg's tax authorities said. Tax rulings by which officials assured multinationals of advantageous treatment of funds moving through Luxembourg, created outrage in 2014 when the "LuxLeaks" reports unveiled how such deals were brokered for glob-

al companies. Those reports overshadowed the start of Jean-Claude Juncker's term as EU Commission President, as he was Luxembourg's Prime Minister for almost two decades before taking office in Brussels.

The European Commission, which enforces competition rules in the European Union, welcomed the new rules but would not say how they would affect its ongoing investigations. "The general, forward-looking change of approach announced by Luxembourg is very welcome," Commissioner Margrethe Vestager said in a statement.

Last year, the Commission ordered Luxembourg to recover 20 to 30 million euros (\$21-\$31 million) from Italy's Fiat, saying the carmaker had benefited from illegal tax deals with the Grand Duchy. — Reuters

TATA SUES EX-CHIEF FOR BREACH OF CONFIDENTIALITY

MUMBAI: Indian salt-to-steel conglomerate Tata upped the ante in their bitter dispute with ousted former chairman Cyrus Mistry yesterday, saying they were suing him for breach of confidentiality.

Tata Sons, the holding company of India's sprawling \$103 billion Tata Group, accused Mistry in a legal notice sent to his lawyers of causing "irreparable harm and damage" to the company by making public sensitive documents, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported. In the latest twist in an increasingly acrimonious battle between Mistry and India's most famous family conglomerate, Tata said its ex-chief had acted recklessly in providing financial information and minutes from board meetings to a companies' dispute hearing last week.

"By passing on confidential and sensitive information accessed by you in your capacity as a director of Tata Sons to companies owned and controlled by your family... you have acted in complete violation of your confidentiality undertaking to Tata Sons, your fiduciary duties towards Tata Sons and your obligations under the Tata Code of Conduct," read the legal notice, according to PTI.

"Such reckless failure on your part... has caused irreparable harm and damage to Tata Sons and Tata Group," it added. Tata said they intended to pursue all means available under law with regard to the alleged breach of confidentiality, according

to PTI and other reports. Neither Tata Sons nor Mistry were immediately available for comment. Mistry was sacked as chairman of Tata Sons in October. His dismissal shocked India's business community and saw family patriarch Ratan Tata take interim charge of the sprawling conglomerate that he led for more than two decades.

Tata, who made way for Mistry in 2012, was said to be unhappy with the direction his successor was taking India's most famous family conglomerate but the latter claims he was illegally dismissed and accused the group of corporate malpractice at last week's National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) hearing in Mumbai. Tata and Mistry, pillars of India's proud but dwindling Parsi community, have been engaged in an undignified public battle since the ouster, releasing accusations and counter-accusations against each other almost daily, plunging the world-renowned group into turmoil.

The 150-year-old conglomerate, which was founded under British colonial rule has long been a source of pride for India but the Tata-Mistry feud is threatening its reputation and has wiped around \$9 billion from the collective stock market value of the group's eight main companies.

Tata owns Britain's Tetley Tea and Jaguar Land Rover, and the Anglo-Dutch steel firm Corus. It operates in more than 100 countries. — AFP

US HOME PRICES RISE 5.1% IN OCTOBER

WASHINGTON: US home prices rose again in October as buyers bidding for scarce properties drove prices higher. The Standard & Poor's CoreLogic Case-Shiller 20-city home price index, released Tuesday, rose 5.1 percent in October from a year earlier after climbing 5 percent in September. Prices for the 20 cities are still 7.1 percent below their July 2006 peak.

The broader Case-Shiller national home price index was up 5.6 percent in October and has fully recovered from the financial crisis. Prices rose 10.7 percent annually in Seattle, 10.3 percent in Portland and 8.3 percent in Denver. New York registered the smallest year-over-year gain: 1.7 percent. Home sales and prices have been helped by healthy demand, tight supplies and low mortgage rates.

The National Association of Realtors said

last week that fewer than 1.9 million homes were on the market in November, down 9 percent from a year earlier. The tight supply pushed the median price of existing homes to \$234,900 last month, up 6.8 percent from a year ago.

But the cheap loans may be vanishing. The rate on the benchmark 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage last week reached 4.30 percent, the highest since April 2014. Rates have surged since the Nov. 8 election of Donald Trump. Investors have bid rates higher because they believe the president-elect's plans for tax cuts and higher infrastructure spending will drive up economic growth and inflation.

And the Federal Reserve, citing improvement in the US economy, this month raised short-term US interest rates for only the second time in a decade. — AP



The building

KFH CAPITAL ACQUIRES OFFICE TOWER IN US FOR \$165 MILLION

AL-MARZOUQ: TOWER NEAR MANHATTAN LEASED TO PANASONIC

KUWAIT: KFH Capital Investment Co, a subsidiary of Kuwait Finance House Group KFH-Group, has announced the successful acquisition of an office tower in New Jersey, USA for \$165 million as part of KFH Capital's plans aiming at investing in good income-generating assets.

Abdul-Aziz Nasser Al-Marzouq, KFH Capital's CEO, said in a press release that an investment fund managed by KFH Capital successfully closed the deal of acquiring the tower that houses Panasonic Corp of North America's headquarters in New Jersey for \$165 million. Al-Marzouq added that such kind of deals are deemed as a qualitative and successful investment as they enjoy several advantages in terms of the worthy yields and excellent location.

Al-Marzouq said that the property is an office building of 12 floors with total rental space of 337,543 square feet and located in an area surrounded by major markets. The building is about 8 miles away from west of Manhattan in New York City.

He added that the building construction was completed in late 2013. It is fully rented by Panasonic Corporation of North America for a period of 15 years started from last May, the matter that guarantees regular cash flows as Panasonic Corporation of North America is a full-

ly owned subsidiary for the parent company, Panasonic Corporation that enjoys the credit profile of A- rated by Standard & Poor's. The building is also considered as a significant center for Panasonic Corporation in terms of marketing, sales, services, research and development throughout North America.

Moving forward, Al-Marzouq emphasized on the continuing keenness of KFH Capital to enter into income-generating investments with high quality assets as a part of the efforts aiming at achieving the best returns, noting that the aforementioned property is an attractive investment opportunity with added value.

Moreover, he said that the Panasonic building is one of the properties that has an advanced technology and has received a number of certificates and awards such as LEED Platinum Interiors as well as LEED Core and Shell.

KFH was established in Kuwait in 1977 and is enlisted in the Kuwait Stock Exchange. KFH Group is a global pioneer in the field of Islamic banking services, where it offers a wide array of Islamic products and services, not to mention a high standard of innovation and client service.

KFH manages its operations in the GCC, Asia, and Europe through over 446 branches, including KFH-Turkey, in order to offer services for the



Abdul-Aziz Al-Marzouq

bank's clients in Turkey, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Germany, Jordan, and Dubai.

KFH's mission is to achieve highest levels of excellence and innovation in the field of client service, while developing common interest for all those concerned with the financial institution. KFH's vision is to spearhead the global development in Islamic financial services, and to upgrade the bank into the level of becoming the most sustainable profitable Islamic bank in the world.



BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's President Mauricio Macri (center) walks with Finance Minister Alfonso Prat-Gay (left) and Cabinet Chief Marcos Pena, to a press conference at the presidential residence in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Macri is shaking up his economic team a year into an administration that has struggled to spur growth and lower inflation. — AP

88.9% OF RESPONDENTS IN ME AGREE LOYALTY FUELS PRODUCTIVITY AT WORK

BAYT.COM 'EMPLOYEE LOYALTY IN MENA' POLL

DUBAI: When it comes to success indicators that companies look for, employee loyalty is among the most prominent. According to a new poll by Bayt.com, the Middle East's #1 job site, titled 'Employee Loyalty in the Middle East and North Africa': more than three quarters (76.6 percent) of respondents agree that their managers are interested in having loyal employees. Nearly nine in 10 respondents said that loyalty is tied to productivity. Moreover, respondents said that the top benefits of employee loyalty include higher efficiency (32.1 percent), stronger team relationships (30.8 percent), and higher employee satisfaction (25.3 percent).

Employee Loyalty in the Middle East

In the Middle East, high employee engagement and loyalty are consistent. More than nine in ten (91 percent) respondents agree that they are highly engaged at work, with half (50.1 percent) strongly agreeing. Further, more than three quarters (79.4 percent) of poll takers say that they are very loyal or extremely loyal to their current company, and more than half (55.3 percent) agree that they are satisfied with the company they work at.

According to the Bayt.com poll, employee loyalty means maintaining the company confidentiality even after resigning (33.3 percent),

being dedicated and abiding to the company's values and rules (30.3 percent), being proactive and invested in promoting the company's vision (25.3 percent) and staying with the company for many years (11.1 percent).

What Influences Employee Loyalty

When it comes to factors influencing employee loyalty, respondents cited salary (28 percent), top management (19.1 percent), compensation and benefits (19.2 percent), team members (17.4 percent), and direct managers (16.3 percent). When asked specifically about office environments as a loyalty factor, the overwhelming majority (83.2 percent) of respondents in the MENA said that it is important.

In order to increase employee loyalty, respondents said employers should treat all employees equally and fairly (22.4 percent), reward employees for their achievements (21.9 percent), and help them achieve work-life balance (18.1 percent). Four in ten (40.6 percent) respondents believe that for better employee loyalty, management should listen to and align employees' goals with company goals, and another quarter (25.7 percent) believe that management should help employees understand the company's mission and values.

Conversely, according to respondents, what is likely to damage employee loyalty the most

is a lack of promotions and career development (38.2 percent) and low salaries (28.2 percent), followed by unfair division of work and responsibilities (22.1 percent) and biased or subjective feedback (11.6 percent).

"Employers in the Middle East and North Africa should be well aware that granting opportunities for growth and advancement and truly listening to what matters to the employee are among the best ways to win their loyalty and support," said Suhail Masri, Vice President of Employer Solutions at Bayt.com, Bayt.com. "We are not simply talking about retention here. Employee loyalty is parallel to dedication, trustworthiness, and positive work ethics. Targeting loyalty plays a central role in furthering the success strategy of any organization or company, regardless of size and activity sector. At Bayt.com, we recommend and empower employers to utilize Bayt.com's online learning portal for training and enhancing their employees' potential."

Data for the 2016 Bayt.com 'Employee Loyalty in the Middle East and North Africa' poll was collected online from November 4, 2016 to December 10, 2016. Results are based on a sample of 8,223 respondents. Countries that participated are the UAE, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Tunisia, Qatar, KSA, Yemen, and others.



This Wednesday, Dec 7, 2016, photo, shows a house for sale in Miami. The Standard & Poor's Case-Shiller 20-city home price index for October was released yesterday. — AP

GLOBAL STOCKS INCH HIGHER IN HOLIDAY LULL

LONDON: Share prices inched higher yesterday as trading in some of the world's major financial markets resumed after a Christmas break, with oil and the dollar also rising marginally. Concerns about Italian banks, Chinese growth and US President-elect Donald Trump's protectionist bent look set to keep investors on edge into the start of 2017.

But expectations the new administration will splash out on a fiscal boost for the US economy also has markets expecting inflation and more growth overall that should benefit companies globally. Data on Tuesday showed Chinese industry racked up its strongest profit growth in three months in November, suggesting the

world's second-largest economy was improving. In Japan, however, core consumer prices fell in annual terms for the ninth month as household spending slumped. "Markets have calmed down a lot since the US election and the decisions by the ECB and Fed (earlier in December)," said Daniel Lenz, a bond market strategist with DZ Bank in Frankfurt.

"There is a feeling that some of the expectations after the Trump election may have been exaggerated and now it is a question of waiting to see what the US government will look like when it finally takes shape," Germany's DAX and France's CAC 40 both gained just over 0.1 percent and US markets were seen opening similar-

ly. British markets were closed for a holiday, along with those in Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong.

Earlier, MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan had risen 0.2 percent while Japan's Nikkei closed little changed. "It is the time of the year when markets trade with hushed tones," Jingyi Pan, market strategist at IG, wrote in a note. "The magnitude of moves could remain capped with thin market trades expected to remain the case."

China's CSI 300 index was down 0.1 percent and the Shanghai Composite slipped almost 0.2 percent, despite the upbeat industrial data.

The yen fell following the inflation numbers

but was still around 1 yen stronger than lows hit after the US Federal Reserve raised dollar interest rates two weeks ago. In a currency market expected to trade conservatively into the end of the year, strategists say they will be watching chiefly for any sign of a squeeze in the cost for banks of borrowing dollars relative to other currencies.

Such costs - called the cross currency basis - have been rising and could support the dollar over the next few days. "The rise in the euro dollar basis is an argument for dollar strength. Plus you have the fundamental factors going into the beginning of next year that point (that way)," said Lutz Karpowitz, a strategist with Commerzbank in London. The dollar inched higher against

the yen and a handful of other major currencies in holiday-thinned trade yesterday, with sterling by far the biggest faller as concerns over next year's Brexit negotiations continued to weigh heavily. Going into the final week of 2017, the trend remains towards a stronger US currency, although a 1 percent retreat for the greenback before Christmas suggested any attack on 120 yen and parity with the euro may have to wait until January.

Those bankers at their desks in continental Europe, with London on holiday, said they would be watching chiefly for any sign of a year-end squeeze in the cost for banks of borrowing dollars relative to other currencies. —Agencies

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report



Tuesday 27 December 2016

Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price index	▲ 30.66	5,745.04	5,714.38	5,748.03	5,708.14
Weighted Index	▲ 0.92	380.76	379.84	382.23	379.48
KXS 15	▲ 2.02	893.61	891.59	899.25	889.91

Volume	210,705,196
Value (KWD)	20,270,368
Number of Trades	4,582

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
MARIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	63	▲ 0.0
IKARUS	39.0	39.0	511,871	19,963.9	9	▲ 0.5
IPG	0.0	0.0	0	0	365	▲ 0.0
NAPESCO	820	810	8,000	6,530	3	▲ 10.0
ENERGYH	43.5	42.0	203,500	8,552	22	▲ 43.5
GPI	42.0	40.5	8,145,037	337,729	143	▲ 0.5
ABAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	102	▲ 0.0
Oil & Gas			8,868,408	372,774	177	▲ 4.10
KFOUC	182	178	69,915	12,501	9	▲ 2.0
BPCC	500	495	163,921	81,141	9	▲ 15.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	660	▲ 0.0
ALQURAIN	232	230	130,165	30,077	19	▲ 0.0
Basic Materials			364,001	123,719	37	▲ 8.94

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
SOKOUK	37.0	36.0	354,582	129,235	37	▲ 0.5
KRE	62	61	969,342	59,714	6	▲ 1.0
URC	94	94	25,137	2,363	2	▲ 0.0
NRE	108	100	7,114,426	742,417	127	▲ 2.0
SRE	360	360	75,000	27,000	2	▲ 5.0
TAM	475	465	30,100	14,158	6	▲ 10.0
AREEC	194	190	45,000	8,610	5	▲ 4.0
MASSALEH	0.0	0.0	0	0	40	▲ 0.0
ARABREC	30.5	30.0	1,041,127	31,271	23	▲ 0.0
ERESCO	38.0	37.5	631,920	23,698	24	▲ 0.0
MABANEE	850	840	230,542	195,792	12	▲ 0.0
INJAZAT	75	75	35,000	2,625	3	▲ 1.0
INVESTORS	23.5	22.5	2,734,448	62,800	56	▲ 0.5
IRC	28.0	27.5	240,020	6,601	8	▲ 0.0
ALTJARIA	82	81	56,600	4,588	5	▲ 0.0
SANAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	31	▲ 0.0
AAYANRE	64	64	133,536	8,546	5	▲ 1.0
AQAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	69	▲ 0.0
ALAQARIA	24.5	23.5	17,000	401	5	▲ 0.5
MAZAYA	112	110	599,829	66,321	29	▲ 0.0
ADNC	0.0	0.0	0	0	11	▲ 0.0
THEMAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	89	▲ 0.0
TJARA	48.5	45.0	114,550	5,175	9	▲ 1.5
TAAMEER	22.0	21.0	745,000	15,765	11	▲ 1.0
ARKAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	92	▲ 0.0
ARGAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	174	▲ 0.0
ABYAAR	23.0	22.0	3,996,072	89,025	31	▲ 0.5
MUNSHAAT	58	54	3,356,221	188,960	94	▲ 1.0
FIRSTDUBAI	66	60	10,947,276	691,378	223	▲ 6.0
KBT	42.0	41.0	3,619,606	149,426	65	▲ 5.0
REAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	196	▲ 0.0
MENA	20.0	19.5	776,945	15,265	32	▲ 0.5
ALMUDON	38.0	37.0	4,330,230	163,166	78	▲ 1.5
MARAKEZ	27.0	27.0	5,000	135	3	▲ 2.5
REMAIL	66	64	2,799,776	181,911	89	▲ 1.0
AWJ	65	64	312,500	20,140	14	▲ 6.0
Real Estate			48,527,685	2,906,484	1,004	▲ 6.24

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
KCEM	395	395	21,658	8,555	2	▲ -25.0
REFRI	315	315	700	221	1	▲ 0.0
CABLE	380	375	195,655	73,736	11	▲ 0.0
SHIP	172	168	71,718	12,198	4	▲ 2.0
PCEM	910	910	27,500	25,025	6	▲ 0.0
PAPER	0.0	0.0	0	0	275	▲ 0.0
MRC	0.0	0.0	0	0	65	▲ 0.0
ACICO	270	270	35,000	9,450	3	▲ 0.0
GGMC	305	300	1,000,000	302,500	4	▲ 0.0
HCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	118	▲ 0.0
KBMMK	0.0	0.0	0	0	190	▲ 0.0
NICBM	210	206	150,422	31,507	8	▲ 4.0
EQUIPMENT	61	57	10,632,252	633,013	255	▲ 0.0
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	50	▲ 0.0
GYPSUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	95	▲ 0.0
SALBOOKH	69	65	359,714	24,034	23	▲ -2.0
AGLTY	640	620	3,434,687	2,169,586	73	▲ -0.0
EDU	204	204	3,000	612	1	▲ 204
CLEANING	47.5	45.0	2,537,160	118,226	78	▲ -1.0
KGL	69	64	2,205,008	147,396	95	▲ 4.0
KPCP	172	172	30,000	5,160	3	▲ 1.0
HUMANISOFT	2,500	2,420	200,348	498,619	32	▲ 100.0
NAFAIS	0.0	0.0	0	0	206	▲ 0.0
SAFWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	385	▲ 0.0
GFC	30.0	28.5	356	10	2	▲ 0.0
MAYADEEN	27.5	27.0	2,405,432	64,947	33	▲ 0.5
CGC	600	580	48,150	28,449	16	▲ -20.0
MTCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	56	▲ 0.0
UPAC	670	670	4,500	3,015	1	▲ -10.0
ALFAFO	244	234	1,667,812	403,963	56	▲ 2.0
MUBARRAD	59	57	990,212	57,080	32	▲ 5.0
LOGISTICS	75	72	3,069,804	225,849	56	▲ 1.0
SCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	81	▲ 0.0
GCEM	74	74	70,000	5,180	1	▲ 74
QIC	70	70	20,000	1,400	1	▲ -3.0
KCEM	76	76	1,073,000	81,548	7	▲ -1.0
RKWC	0.0	0.0	0	0	90	▲ 0.0
SPEC	80	80	500	40	1	▲ -3.0
Industrials			30,254,388	4,931,320	805	▲ 1332.23

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
KSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	136	▲ 0.0
NSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	64	▲ 0.0
PAPCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	95	▲ 0.0
CATTL	240	226	2,097	487	6	▲ -10.0
DANAH	88	87	413,314	36,172	17	▲ -1.0
POULT	200	200	21,100	4,220	1	▲ 200
FOOD	0.0	0.0	0	0	2,600	▲ 0.0
Consumer Goods			436,511	40,878	24	▲ -2.21

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
MHC	0.0	0.0	0	0	240	▲ 0
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	920	▲ 0
YIACO	0.0	0.0	0	0	375	▲ 0
Health Care			0	0	1239.82	▲ 0.00

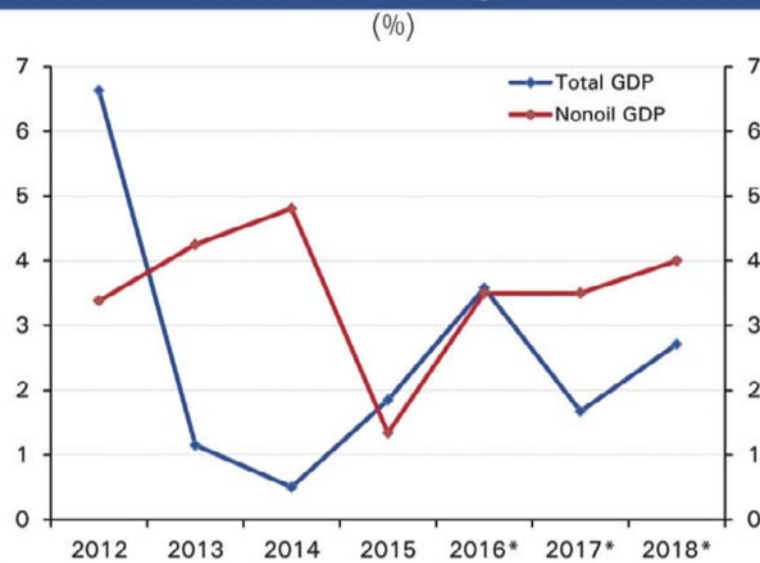
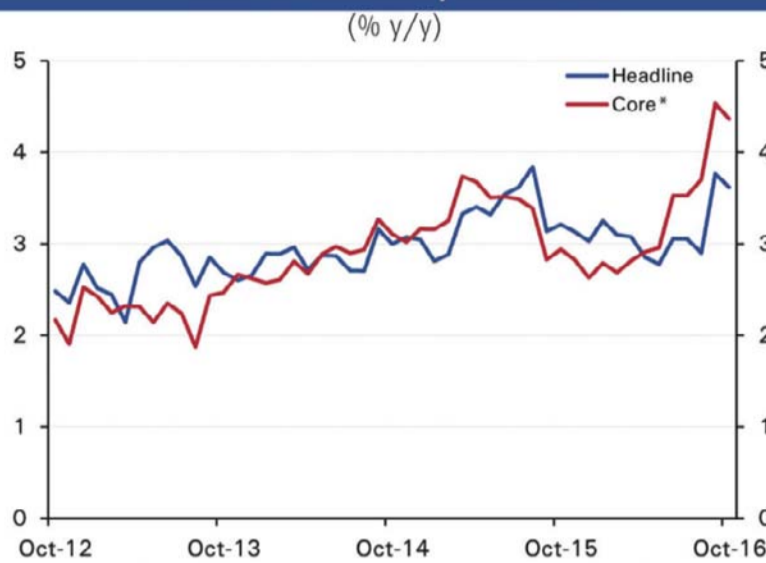
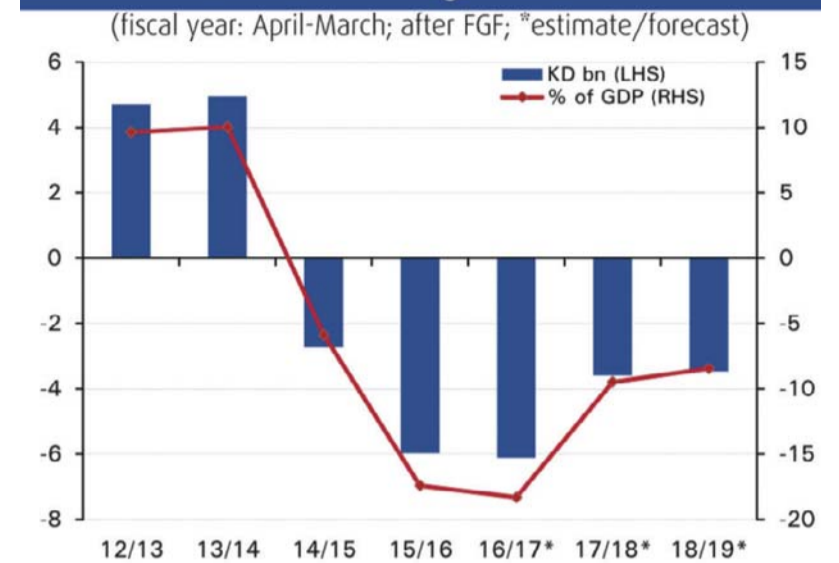
Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
KCIN	1,180	1,080	16,975	19,627	13	▲ -20
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	265	▲ 0
SULTAN	61	57	518,074	30,807	19	▲ 0
CABLETV	0.0	0.0	0	0	61	▲ 0
EYAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	385	▲ 0
IFAHR	162	158	16,709	2,668	7	▲ 162
QULAFUEL	120	118	18,913	2,258	12	▲ 2
MUNTAZAHAT	85	81	6,745,400	560,780	93	▲ -2
JAZEERA	770	770	273,000	210,210	18	▲ 770
SOOR	116	114	41,291	4,784	16	▲ 114
FUTUREKID	0.0	0.0	0	0	106	▲ 0
ALRAI	140	140	28,000	3,920	3	▲ 140
ZIMAH	42.5	42.0	336,000	14,115	13	▲ 42.0
Mezzan	940	930	94,655	88,933	16	▲ 930
Consumer Services			8,089,017	938,101	210	▲ 933.09

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
ZAIN	420	410	2,861,242	1,189,053	90	▲ -5
QOREDOO	1,120	1,120	168	188	1	▲ 1,120
HITSTELEC	42.0	41.5	1,091,608	45,302	26	▲ 41.5
VIVA	940	930	50,149	46,789	39	▲ 930
Telecommunications			4,003,167	1,281,331	156	▲ 628.85

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Change
NBK	660	650	639,010	417,894	32	▲ 660
GBK	240	240	607,000	145,680	14	▲ 240
CBK	0.0	0.0	0	0	410	▲ 0
ABK	0.0	0.0	0	0	300	▲ 0
ALMUTAHED	405	400	9,10			

KUWAIT ECONOMIC ACTIVITY RESILIENT

PROJECTS DRIVE NON-OIL ACTIVITY AS PRIVATE CONSUMPTION SLOWS

Chart 1: Real GDP growth

Chart 2: Consumer price inflation

Chart 3: Budget balance


NBK REPORT ON MACROECONOMIC OUTLOOK

- **Non-oil to maintain growth of 3.5-4% in 2017 and 2018 on strong investment, though softening consumer spending weighs on activity.**
- **Fiscal deficit to narrow in 2017 and 2018 on some fiscal adjustment and a rising oil price.**
- **Deficit manageable thanks to large financial buffers and ample borrowing capacity; strong credit rating maintained.**
- **Liquidity remains comfortable despite lower oil price.**
- **Dinar strengthened late in 2016 on rallying dollar.**

KUWAIT: Economic activity has remained quite resilient despite the lower oil prices in 2016 and the vulnerability of the domestic economy. Non-oil growth is expected to hold up well under current conditions, especially in comparison to GCC peers, and it is expected to continue on an improving trajectory. Relatively limited fiscal adjustment and a strong government-led investment program should support non-oil growth at 3.5-4 percent in 2017 and 2018.

Still, not all sectors are expected to be doing well in Kuwait in the coming two years. Indeed, household spending appears to have slowed more quickly than anticipated. Consumer confidence appears to have taken a hit following the recent hike in fuel prices. Further subsidy cuts, this time in electricity and water tariffs, are expected next year. As a result, consumers have tempered spending growth significantly in 2016. We expect something similar in 2017 before things begin to improve again in 2018.

Nonetheless, the fiscal deficit is expected to narrow in 2017 as the price of oil gradually improves and the government implements some fiscal reform. We see Brent averaging around \$55 a barrel in 2017 and \$60 in 2018. As a result, Kuwait's budget deficit will narrow to around 8-9 percent of GDP. Nonetheless, the risk of weaker oil prices is a downside risk for the outlook. While unlikely in our view, weaker prices would put added pressure on the fiscal and external positions and could force the government to cut spending further, possibly at some point reducing or delaying capital spending plans.

Non-oil activity

Overall GDP growth accelerated to 1.8 percent in 2015 from 0.5 percent in 2014, boosted by record high investment. While the figures show non-oil GDP growth slowing to 1.3 percent in 2015, we think growth will likely be revised higher when final figures are published. Data also show domestic demand growth improving in 2015, with stronger investment growth making up for some weakness in government and private consumption.

We estimate that non-oil GDP growth remained robust at 3.5 percent in 2016 and expect it to improve slightly towards 4 percent in 2017 and 2018. The pace of growth is seen improving, supported by the faster pace of execution of the government's capital projects. Preliminary figures indicate that aggregate investment received a strong boost in 2015. Also, project awards remained relatively strong in 2016, indicating the investment boost is likely to persist into 2017 and 2018.

Private credit growth has reflected the improvement in economic activity, having accelerated to 7.2 percent year-on-year (y/y) through September 2016. Credit growth has been particularly strong in the "productive" business sectors. There, lending excluding personal facilities, financial companies and the real estate sector grew 13.6 percent y/y, compared to growth of 6.4 percent y/y the year before. Total credit is likely to end 2016 with average growth of around 7.2 percent, up from 6 percent in 2015.

Overall GDP growth will likely slip slightly in 2017 to 1.8 percent in 2016 before improving again in 2017 to 2.7 percent. The weaker growth in 2016 is largely due to flat real GDP in the oil sector which is expected to be impacted by Kuwait's adherence to the recent OPEC decision to cut production; for Kuwait, that could imply a cut of around 4.5 percent initially, though we are unlikely to see that cut sustained through the year. In 2018, we expect growth in the oil sector to resume to around 1.5 percent.

Capital spending

The outlook for economic growth is driven largely by an improving pace of implementation of government-led infrastructure projects. The government's development plan targets investment of KD 34 billion through 2020 and includes significant private investment. Among the projects are a number being implemented as public-private partnership projects (PPP), including the Al-Zour North and Khairan integrated power generation and water desalination projects.

A clear pickup in the pace of project implementation has been visible since 2013. In 2014, more than KD 7.5 billion in projects was awarded with another KD 12 billion signed in 2015. Project awards in 2016 have kept up the pace, with KD 3.6 billion awarded through September 2016. Recent awards included the new airport terminal, which hopes to more than triple capacity by 2022, at an estimated cost of KD 1.3 billion.

The national accounts data have reflected the improvement in project implementation, with investment seeing a strong boost in

2015 and 2016, following the persistent decline in oil prices when households took a more cautious view of things. While the sector continues to be supported by steady growth in employment and salaries, particularly in the government sector and among Kuwaiti households, it has exhibited clear signs of softness.

Consumer sector

The consumer, or household, sector has long been a robust and reliable source of growth in Kuwait. This began to change in

2015 and 2016, following the persistent decline in oil prices when households took a more cautious view of things. While the sector continues to be supported by steady growth in employment and salaries, particularly in the government sector and among Kuwaiti households, it has exhibited clear signs of softness.

Weaker sentiment has been a key factor in this change. The Ara Research & Consultancy consumer confidence index, which had been retreating consistently over the last year, fell

notably in August just as the government announced plans to hike fuel prices and has remained depressed since. The index average for 2016 through November was down by 8.9 percent y/y compared to the same period in 2015. At the same time, card spending data has also been weak; total point-of-sale spending contracted by 0.7 percent in 3Q16. Until just recently, growth was in the double-digits. Household debt growth has also slowed in recent months, slipping to 7.2 percent y/y at the end of September 2016 (Chart 7), down from over 12 percent growth a year ago.

Real estate weak

Activity in the real estate market has been relatively weak. Sales during the 12 months through November 2016 were off by 27 percent y/y. Most of the weakness was in the residential and investment sectors, with both seeing 12-month trailing sales down by 32 percent y/y. Commercial activity, which had seen sales down in 2015, has done better in 2016. Sales in that sector were up by 5 percent y/y.

The cooler real estate market has coincided with the decline in the price of oil and may reflect a more cautious investor. It has also coincided with a concerted effort by the government, since 2014, to increase the distribution of subsidized housing plots and built homes. The government nearly tripled its annual housing distributions to over 15,000 units in 2015 from around 5,000 the year before. In 2016, it plans to distribute more than 12,000. Expectations of an imminent increase in supply in the market may have helped cool market activity.

The drop in sales activity has helped precipitate an orderly correction in real estate prices. The sectoral price indices developed by NBK indicate that price growth has turned negative in the investment buildings and residential sectors. Prices were down by 9.5-12.6 percent y/y in November 2016 in the various sectors.

Inflation rises

Inflation eased initially during most of 2016, as most sectors saw inflationary pressures diminish. However, the fuel price hike in September pushed inflation higher. Headline inflation rose to 3.6 percent y/y in October 2016. Services excluding housing have been a main source of reduced inflationary pressures, with inflation in this segment declining to 1.6 percent y/y in October 2016, compared to 4 percent the prior year. Meanwhile, housing services inflation has been easing, as housing rents finally lose steam. Average inflation is likely to remain steady at around 3.4 percent in 2017, on further hikes in energy and water subsidies. In 2018, we expect inflation to ease its way back to around 3 percent.

Fiscal deficits will persist

Government finances are expected to remain in deficit in the medium term, with the price of oil staying around \$55-60 per barrel. A deficit of 18 percent of GDP is expected in FY16/17, after the mandatory allocation to the Future Generations Fund (FGF). The deficit is likely to narrow to around 9 percent of GDP in FY17/18 and to 8 percent in FY18/19 as oil prices improve and further fiscal reforms begin to take effect. With Kuwait's massive sovereign wealth fund and low debt level, Kuwait is expected to weather lower oil prices relatively well without having to make large cuts in spending. Nonetheless, the government is taking steps towards fiscal adjustment. In March 2016, the government proposed a number of fiscal reforms. The package included cuts in energy and water subsidies, and the introduction of a corporate income tax and a value added tax (VAT). In April 2016, the National Assembly (NA) approved increases in electricity tariffs to take effect gradually from May 2017. The cuts could save the budget around KD 500 million, or 1.5 percent of GDP.

In September 2016, the government went ahead with plans to cut fuel subsidies, a move which did not require legislation. Gasoline prices were lifted by 42-62 percent for the various octane grades. The most popular 95

octane fuel, accounting for 80 percent of consumption, will see the price rise to 105 fils, a 62 percent increase. The annual savings to the state will be around KD 160 million, or 0.5 percent of GDP.

The government is also looking to introduce new taxes to boost non-oil revenues, though not before 2019. The government is proposing a 10 percent corporate income tax on local and foreign companies. The new tax is expected to replace several existing levies on corporate earnings in a measure that will broaden the tax base. Authorities are also preparing to introduce a 5 percent VAT in conjunction with other GCC countries. While the VAT measure is aimed for 2018, we expect it is likely to be delayed at least into 2019. Both measures will require legislation.

Kuwait's deficits remain relatively manageable given the state's substantial overseas financial assets and ample capacity to borrow. Kuwait's sovereign wealth fund assets are estimated to be near 450 percent of GDP. While the bulk of the assets are in the Future Generations Fund (FGF) and cannot easily be tapped, the General Reserve Fund (GRF), whose holdings are mostly liquid are available to finance the deficit; holdings in the GRF are thought to be around KD 25-30 billion.

Bond issuance

Despite Kuwait's substantial sovereign wealth fund assets, the government has chosen to rely on debt issuance to finance part of the deficit in FY16/17. We estimate the government will need to finance around KD 6.1 billion in FY16/17 after the mandatory payment into the FGF. Another KD 3.5 billion will be required in each of 2017 and 2018. The government has indicated it will issue around KD 5 billion in domestic and international debt in FY16/17. Issuance is likely to be toned down subsequently, though we think the government might still finance around 50 percent of the deficit through debt in 2017 and 2018.

By the end of November 2016, the MOF issued around KD 1.5 billion in domestic bonds and Islamic paper. The debt level rose to KD 3.1 billion or an estimated 9.4 percent of GDP. The issued debt varied in maturities between one and seven years and included a few first-time issuances of floating rate notes.

There are also preparations to tap the international debt market. The MOF has stated it plans to issue up to \$10 billion (KD 3 billion) in foreign currency debt in FY16/17. Such a step will allow Kuwait to capitalize on its solid credit rating (Moody's: Aa2, S&P: AA, Fitch: AA) and low international rates. An international bond issue is now expected to happen sometime in 1Q17.

Liquidity comfortable

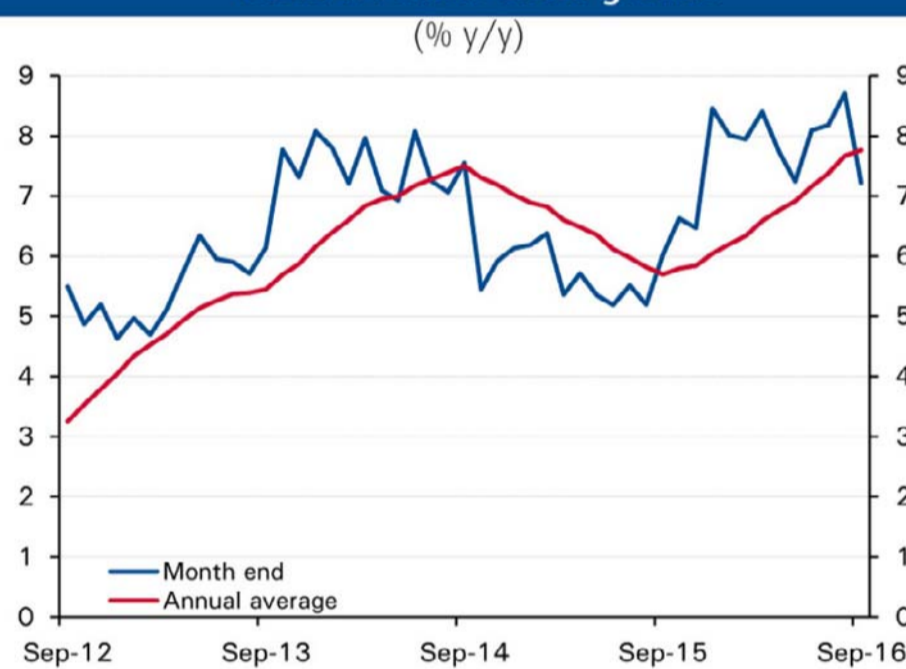
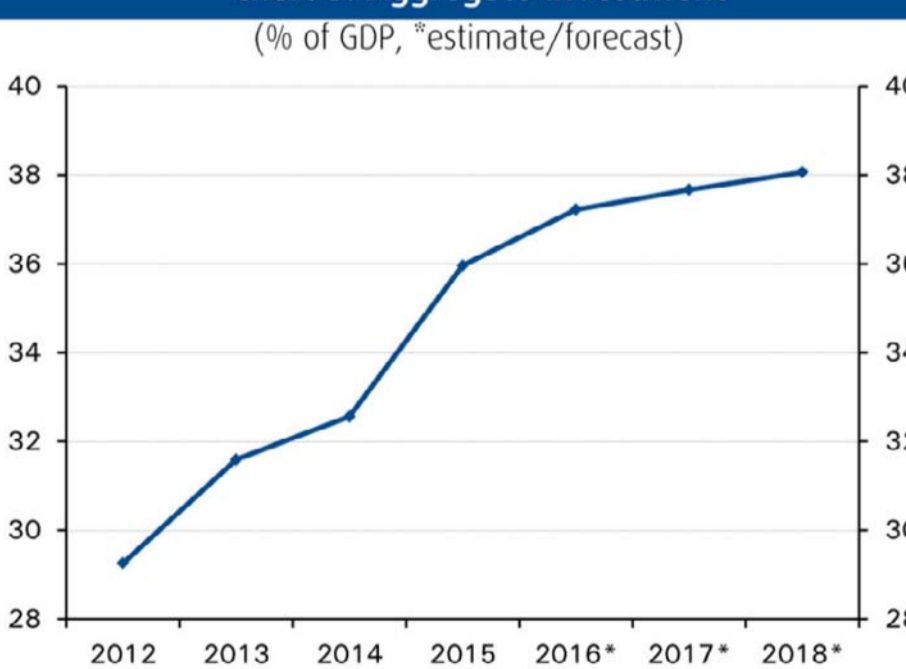
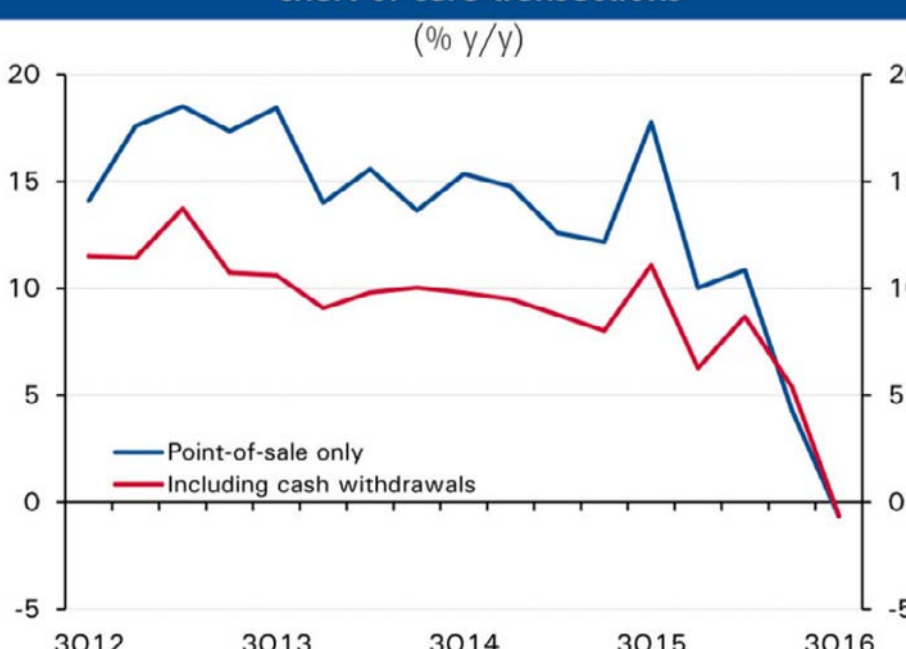
International debt issuance will also help relieve the pressure on domestic liquidity. With the government running a deficit and the current account seeing its surplus narrow considerably, system liquidity has come under some pressure. Money supply (M2) slowed to 2.6 percent y/y in September 2016, down from double-digit growth before 2014 (Chart 13). Still, liquidity levels remain relatively healthy. Money supply (M2) to non-oil GDP is estimated at 137 percent in September.

Domestic interbank rates retreated during most of 2016, as the spread to US Libor tightened considerably. The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) hiked the discount rate by 25 basis points (bps) in December 2016 to 2.50 percent, immediately following a similar rate hike by the US Federal Reserve. The 3-month interbank rate rose 10 bps to 1.44 percent after the rate hike, but remained well below recent highs reached in March 2016.

Strong dollar

The Kuwaiti dinar (KWD) saw another year of strengthening in 2016, on the back of US dollar strength following the 2016 US elections. The dinar index, which reflects the trade-weighted value of the currency, rose by 3 percent year-to-date (ytd) through 18 December, after having registered gains of 2.9 percent and 2.8 percent in 2014 and 2015, respectively. The dinar, which is pegged to a basket of major currencies with the US dollar having the largest weight, declined by 0.8 percent against the US currency ytd.

Kuwaiti equities, which have typically lagged the region, outperformed during the last few months of 2016. The long-awaited catalyst was the acquisition of Americana by a UAE-based investor, a deal finalized in October 2016. Following declines during most of 2016, the Boursa Kuwait value-weighted index (IKW) gained 7.5 percent during 4Q16 through 18 December 2016, though it remained down by 0.9 percent ytd. The MSCI total return index was up 5 percent ytd, reflecting the larger gains made by bluechips stocks.

Chart 4: Private credit growth

Chart 5: Aggregate investment

Chart 6: Card transactions




Model of the new sustainable Energy City in Qatar.



LANDMARK AL-SAYER TOYOTA CITY PROJECT BAGS GORD AWARD RECOGNITION FOR STRATEGIC COMMITMENT TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

KUWAIT: Al-Sayer Group Holding was bestowed with the prestigious Sustainability Award for 2016 from Gulf Organization For Research and Development (GORD) under commercial sector for their leadership and commitment to adopt sustainability best practices in the design and construction of their upcoming landmark project Al-Sayer

and Eng Nehad AlHaj Ali Deputy Group Manager Corporate Excellence.

Sustainability Across Every Business Dimension: Al-Sayer continues to be committed towards sustainability practices doing best to adopt the green energy model reducing carbon footprint and build optimistic space for our next generation. This is reflected in Toyota City Green building initiatives with ecological sustainable design, use of ecofriendly construction materials and renewable energy solutions. Innovative sustainability solutions include increased energy efficiency through natural, LED and induction lighting and service stations supported by oil & water separators, steam wash technology etc.

According to Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer CEO Al-Sayer Group Holding "We are extremely glad to cooperate with GORD who actively involve to create awareness and promote innovative green building ideas in GCC & MENA region to strengthen the resilience to climate change by moving to low-carbon societies, reducing emissions and improving the understanding of climate science to realize a greener world. At Al-Sayer we strongly believe it is a collective effort, our partnership demonstrate our commitments towards the sustainability business aligning with the message of renewable energy and environmental friendly approach deeply interwoven to tackle current challenges mainly pollution and global warming".



Bader Faisal Al-Sayer receiving sustainability award.



Al-Sayer's Toyota City, large private investment in the GCC to build 1st industrial green building to adopt GSAS in Kuwait as a best model for Sustainable and energy efficient building. At full run it is expected to produce 1 mWp to cater 8 percent of total power required for the building. Toyota

showrooms, insurance units, service stations, body paints and accessories under one roof to take the bold front by ASGH to lead Kuwait's green building concepts and renewable energy vision.

"We foresee Toyota City as a platform of exchange between researchers and practitioners of

the construction industry to foster the implementation of sustainability standards. They can also experience energy technology and policy aspects of built environment, urban planning and integration of energy systems are well synchronized" Mubarak Al-Sayer added.



Toyota City. GORD is recognized as the first performance-based system in the MENA region, developed for rating the green buildings and infrastructure. The awarding ceremony part of the Sustainable Built Environment Conference held at Qatar was attended by Eng Ibrahim Al-Fouzan Business Director Toyota Group Service Division, Bader Faisal Al-Sayer Deputy Marketing Manager



Hamed Abu-Saadeh - Manager and Acting Head of the Online Trading E-Brokerage (Mutadawil)

KFIC PARTICIPATES IN INTERNATIONAL DERIVATIVES INVESTMENT SUMMIT

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance and Investment Company (KFIC) in the International Derivatives Investment Summit of 2016 which was held in the Chinese city of Shanghai under the theme "Regulation, Innovation, Opportunity under New era."

In this regard, Hamed Abu-Saadeh - Manager & Acting Head of the Online Trading E-Brokerage (Mutadawil) expressed his delight to be part of the summit which was attended by more than 200 professionals in the Banking, Institutional and governmental sectors from 13 different countries. Abu-Saadeh participated as a panelist in a discussion panel entitled "Matters of International Derivative Trading and Risk Management." He added: "The summit was beneficial in learning about the safe and professional means of utilizing derivatives on the local and international levels through the experiences of professionals from all over the world."

Abu-Saadeh further added that the summit's key focus was on the trend of International derivatives market environ-

ment forecasting and harmonizing regulations, Initiation and implementation of new derivatives products and its risk management, Algorithmic and high frequency trading deep discussion of trends and focus on options, futures and interest rate derivatives, the influence of New technology on latest derivatives innovation investment as well as means to Improve the Margin Trading.

He concluded that the summit provided him with an excellent opportunity to build professional relationships and networking with a diverse base of experienced cadres in the banking and investment sectors. "We met a lot of professionals who worked in different areas which enriched the experience. Throughout the conference, we exchanged our experienced and challenges that we face in the port-recession era." Finally, he expressed his optimism that "KFIC" will be a pioneer in utilizing derivatives in a safe and responsible manner that puts the best interest of Kuwait and its clients at heart.



GULF BANK OBTAINS INVESTMENT LICENSES FROM CMA, KUWAIT GULF BANK IS THE FIRST KUWAIT BANK TO OBTAIN SUCH LICENSES

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is proud to announce that it is the first Bank to officially obtain investment licenses from the Capital Market Authority (CMA) in Kuwait, last week.

The licenses that were granted to Gulf Bank will enable the Bank to practice the following activities: Portfolio manager, Custodian, Investment Controller, Subscription Agent, in addition to the initial approval to perform as an Investment Adviser. These licenses will run for

three years starting from the date of the issuance.

Tareq AlSaleh, Gulf Bank's Assistant General Manager-Investments, Consumer Banking, commented on this occasion by saying that: "The granting of the licenses to Gulf Bank is an important milestone that will enable us to better serve our customers and meet their investment needs."

AlSaleh added: "Gulf Bank will soon unveil a distinguished and specific investment service allowing our

customers to invest in a unique way across the region. This service will enable customers to invest in global markets safely based on their personal needs and efficiently to reach optimal return on their investment."

To find out more about the Bank's latest news, customers can visit the bank's bilingual website at www.gulfbank.com, call the Customer Contact Center on 1805805, or visit one of Gulf Bank's 56 branches in Kuwait.



Tareq AlSaleh



VIVA ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 'MORE' PRIZES CAMPAIGN

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, announced 9th week draw's winners of KD 100, of "more" prizes campaign for postpaid customers.

The names of daily prize winners, KD 100, from 18 December until 24 December, were as follows: Nabeel Khaleel Al-Naboot, Ravi Sankar, Eid Mohammad Abdulsalam Mohammad, Ahmad Saber Jad Alkareem Maqboul, Sarah Naser Mashaan Almaymouni, Sameerah Khaleel Eissa Alsairafi, Najem Ayedh Najem Hhunaim.

VIVA gives the customers a wonderful opportunity to win amazing cash prizes, KD 100 daily and KD 1000 at the end of each month, once they pay their VIVA bills through Direct Debit, VIVA website, VIVA's Kiosks, VIVA App or by calling 102. Customers earn one chance for each KD 1.

VIVA is the fastest-growing telecom operator in Kuwait. Launched in December 2008, VIVA makes things Possible for its customers by transforming communication, information and entertainment experiences. The company has rapidly established an unrivalled position in the market through its customer centric approach. VIVA's quest is to be the mobile brand of choice in Kuwait by being transparent, engaging, energetic and fulfilling. VIVA continues to take a considerable share of the market by offering an innovative range of best value products, services and content propositions; a state of the art, nationwide network and world-class service. VIVA offers internet speeds of more than 100 Mbps, due to the implementation of the most advanced fourth generation (4G LTE) network in Kuwait resulting in superior coverage, performance and reliability.

TOSHIBA MAY BOOK WRITE-DOWN OF SEVERAL BILLION DOLLARS

TOKYO: Toshiba said yesterday it may book a one-time loss of several billion dollars over a US subsidiary's acquisition of a nuclear service company. The Tokyo-based conglomerate said in a statement that costs linked to the 2015 transaction will possibly come to "several billion US dollars, resulting in a negative impact on Toshiba's financial results". The exact figure of the potential write-down is still being worked out, Toshiba President Satoshi Tsunakawa told reporters after the announcement. "The amount hasn't been determined," he said.

Tsunakawa apologized for "causing concern" and answered in the affirmative when asked if Toshiba is considering boosting capital. The announcement came after Toshiba shares closed nearly 12 percent lower on media reports about the potential loss earlier in the day.

Toshiba said the possible write-down was related to the valuation of the purchase by its US subsidiary Westinghouse Electric of the nuclear construction and services business of Chicago Bridge & Iron.

Westinghouse and Chicago Bridge & Iron have turned to an independent accountant to resolve a dispute over differences in asset

valuations, Toshiba said earlier this year. "Westinghouse has found that the cost... will far surpass the original estimates" of \$87 million, Toshiba said, adding that will result "in (a) far lower asset value than originally determined".

As a result, Westinghouse and Toshiba may both book one-time losses for this fiscal year ending March 2017, it said, adding it will announce a revised earnings forecast as soon as possible.

Toshiba is currently expecting an annual net profit of 145 billion yen (\$1.24 billion), up 45 percent from an earlier estimate, on sales of 5.4 trillion yen. The announcement is the latest blow to Toshiba, a once-proud pillar of corporate Japan. It has been besieged by problems, most notably a profit-padding scandal in which bosses for years systematically pushed subordinates to cover up weak financial results. In an intensive overhaul, the company has been shedding businesses and announced the sale of its medical devices unit to camera and office equipment maker Canon. Investors had welcomed the makeover, with Toshiba shares climbing 77.3 percent this year through Monday. — AFP



TOKYO: Toshiba Corp President Satoshi Tsunakawa (right) bows at the end of a press conference at the company's headquarters in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

CYBERSECURITY NEEDS TO BE ON EVERY ORGANIZATION'S AGENDA FOR 2017

There's no reason to believe that 2017 will be any better for cybersecurity than it was in 2016. If anything 2017 will be even worse as cybercriminals continue to leverage social engineering and phishing techniques to find new vulnerabilities to exploit, develop new ways to monetize their activities and get through corporate defenses and target individuals. In 2017, cybersecurity battles favor criminals even more as vulnerable Internet of Things (IoT) devices will continue to expand the possible platform of attack. Gartner estimates that by 2020 more than 25% of attacks in enterprises will involve IoT devices.

This past year, we saw cybercriminals becoming more sophisticated, threats becoming more advanced and cyberattacks causing more damage to organizations. So as we approach 2017, let me share a few cybersecurity predictions which we, at Mimecast, see becoming even larger issues as we enter the New Year:

Ransomware becomes more regular and sophisticated

Ransomware will become one of the biggest threats that organizations will need to address, fuelled by an increasing multitudes of attackers using off-the-shelf kits and leveraging a vast network of cybercrime service providers to run their ransomware campaigns. Ransomware represents an easy, cheap, and low risk attack method that produces significant profits for the attackers. In addition few organizations have effective defences against ransomware and now with Bitcoins and other anonymous payment systems enabling the perpetrators to get paid more easily, without being traced, it has never been so easy to make a good living off of ransomware.



Matthew Gardiner, Senior Product Marketing Manager of Mimecast

Impersonation attacks in the spotlight

The media in 2016 have been very focused on ransomware attacks. However, one of the lesser publicized problems (but by some measures is larger in terms of its negative impact to organizations) are email impersonation attacks. Sometimes called whaling or CEO fraud attacks, these attacks can cost organizations hundreds of thousands in financial losses. In fact, according to the FBI, impersonation attacks led to more than \$3 billion in losses over the last three years. We expect to see these attacks,

because of the associated fraud and loss that they cause, as the next "it" attack flooding the media. There is nothing cheaper, easier, and less risky for attackers to do than just send well-crafted and timely emails which creatively requests for money to be sent to them. The attackers don't even need to use malware for this, they just need to be clever with their social engineering.

Macro malware still in the game

Once thought of as a thing of the past, macro malware which often hides in Word or Excel files, has re-entered into the ring of popular attack methods. While most organizations choose to block executable email attachments at their security gateways by default, they generally still allow potential work-related files, such as Microsoft Office documents, to pass freely. Attackers exploit this by weaponizing files in these common Office formats. According to Mimecast research, 50 percent of firms have seen email attacks that use attached macros increase over the last year. Why? It works well and can get through traditional AV-based defenses. And that's why we'll continue to see waves of macro malware into next year and beyond.

Reigning-in data residency and governance

Increased state-sponsored attacks will lead to more stringent requirements around data residency and governance, as well as increased focus on national-level firewalls to mitigate threats but allow regional business activity to continue uninterrupted. Advancements in managing internet traffic from different geographies may also become a focus as the global trade landscape changes. Unfortunately this

comes with the risk of 'balkanizing' the Internet and restraining the free exchange of information.

Focus on data mining

One theme that is still overlooked, but should come into greater focus in 2017, is that cybercrime is not just about wire transfers and immediate and direct monetization of stolen information. Attackers are increasingly focused on data mining and will use the data they gather in more advanced future attacks, or sell it on the Dark Web for others to do the same. While more direct attacks such as email impersonation and wire transfer fraud is, and will continue to be an issue in the future, organizations need to also think about where else they're susceptible and ensure they have the appropriate protective measures in place against these longer tail attacks. Organizations need to determine which data of theirs could possibly be used to attack them or other organizations at a later time, and then take increased measures to secure it.

Cyber espionage to cause political disruption

Nation states and their sponsored operatives will increasingly use cyber espionage to cause political shifts, disruption of adversaries, and to gain economic advantage in particular strategic areas. This will involve, but will not be limited to, email-based hacking and the disclosure of other forms of private communications, and the disruption of and interference with critical national infrastructures. Employee education and taking adequate measures to protect organizations from cyber attacks will continue to be of high importance during the course of 2017 as cyber criminals continue to target the weakest link in an organization's security: its employees.

CHINA RENEWS CALLS FOR TIGHTER CYBERSPACE SECURITY

BEIJING: China's top cybersecurity body reaffirmed its commitment to heightened cybersecurity surveillance yesterday, calling for increased scrutiny of local and foreign technology used in industries deemed critical to the national interest. A strategy document, released by the Cybersecurity Administration of China (CAC), laid out the framework for a controversial cybersecurity law released in November, which foreign business groups say could bar overseas firms from competing in the market.

The CAC has previously countered these claims, saying the measures are not designed to target foreign enterprises, but to counter rising threats of terrorism and cyber-theft. The paper said key Chinese industries must "carry out a security

review" of technology to prevent providers and other groups from "implementing unfair competition" and "harming the interests" of users. Critics say vague wording in the November law raises red flags and could potentially legalize requirements to hand over intellectual property.

The latest strategy document also renewed calls for foreign countries to respect China's cyber-sovereignty, an idea that permits states to individually police internet services within their own borders. China has employed a handful of other measures alongside the law, including plans to launch a specialized college within the Chinese Academy of Sciences to train professionals for national cybersecurity projects. —Reuters

EHOSTINGDATAFORT AND SYMANTEC HOSTS EXCLUSIVE SEMINAR ON CYBER SECURITY

eHostingDataFort (eHDF), the region's leading Managed Hosting and Cloud Infrastructure services provider, along with Symantec, recently hosted a seminar titled 'Stay ahead of cyber security threats' in Dubai. Senior representatives from eHDF and Symantec presented at this exclusive gathering and shared their insights on the regional threat landscape. The seminar highlighted the importance of Managed Security Services in the modern-day context, the need for advanced Cloud security services through a Cloud Access Security Brokerage (CASB) solution.

Topics like advanced threat protection and securing enterprise applications were also covered. "The threat landscape in the Middle East is rapidly evolving as a result of the increased sophistication of cybercrimes across the globe. In fact, cybercrime has become a heavily globalized industry, with many attacks happening across borders via the internet. Cyber security threats remain the biggest challenge for organizations today. Internet facing and mobile enabled applications, along with the fast adoption of Cloud services have complicated things further.

Organizations seek the agility and efficiency promised by Cloud Computing yet still need to retain the visibility and control they have in their traditional Data Center environments. From a security point of view, organizations now have to manage these expanded environments as well as secure what is known in the industry as "Shadow IT". "Shadow IT is essentially end user driven, Cloud based IT environments that do not pass through the rigorous scrutiny of the IT and security teams as it is procured directly by the end users," said Yasser Zeineldin, CEO of eHostingDataFort.



Yasser Zeineldin addresses the audience at the eHostingDataFort seminar.

"With cyber threats becoming sophisticated, security standards even more complex and IT budgets shrinking further, organizations are forced to look for cost-effective solutions, and Managed Security Services fits the bill perfectly. With this seminar, we wanted to educate our customers about the evolving threat landscape, share how they can secure their data on the Cloud and how we can help them secure and manage these environments through round-the-clock Managed Security Services," Zeineldin added. Seeking to highlight the growing importance of Managed Security Services to an audience of CIO's in the UAE, eHDF also conducted a survey to track various trends in the region. Among the findings of the survey, 17 percent indicated interest in Managed Data Loss Prevention, 17 percent in Cloud Security and 33 percent in SIEM in 2017. 25 percent and 33 percent respondents also indicated interest in Advanced Threat Protection and Mobile Security respectively.



WASHINGTON: In this photo, Mount Rainier fills the sky behind as a group of snowshoers head out of the Paradise area for an outing at Mount Rainier National Park, Washington. (Inset) A group of people huddle together to take a selfie on a cell phone at the Paradise area. —AP

CELL SERVICE AT RAINIER: DO YOU WANT TO HEAR ME NOW?

'WE SPEND TOO MUCH TIME ON CELLPHONES, TECHNOLOGY, ON COMPUTERS'

SEATTLE: On a recent snowshoeing trip on Mount Rainier, Nancy Spears brought her cellphone along but was happy not to have coverage: It gave her time to connect with her snowy surroundings rather than her social media accounts. Spotty or no cellular service has been the norm at the nation's fifth oldest park south of Seattle, but that could change soon. Mount Rainier National Park is considering proposals by two carriers to provide cellular service in the park, setting off debates about whether people enjoying the park and surrounding wilderness areas should have access to calls, Facebook, Instagram and other technology while communing with nature.

Verizon Wireless and T-Mobile have applied for right-of-way permits to install telecommunications equipment on the visitor center at Paradise, one of most heavily used

areas in the park. No towers would be built; antennas would be located below the roofline of the visitor's center. There are currently no cellular installations in the park. Some say cell service would improve safety and provide a convenience for visitors. Others don't want it, saying the proliferation of phones will distract from the natural beauty of the surroundings.

Spears, a Seattle nurse, has mixed feelings. For safety reasons, she'd like to call for help if needed. But the 33-year-old, who grew up with the internet, also appreciates having time away from it. "The inner part of me just says peace and quiet and the beauty is all we need," Spears said. "But cellphone use kind of drives us now, so it's kind of what everybody is on all the time, including myself, so as much as I'd like to say peace and quiet there's also part of me that wants reception." "Part of

me fights that second impulse to check, but I do really like being free from it," she added.

Nice to be disconnected

Park officials say they are required by federal law to consider all telecommunications proposals on park lands. "We can certainly see both sides of it at the park. It's a complicated issue," said Tracy Swartout, park deputy superintendent. "My belief is that it will improve safety on the whole." Park rangers use radios for communication, but other search teams and law enforcement may not have them, she said.

Diane Lynch, 58, favors enabling cell service, particularly after coming upon an incident where a man had fallen through snow. When she and her hiking partner heard the cries for help, her friend ran to the scene while she ran toward a

climbing class where a mountain guide had a radio and was able to call for help.

Lynch said people who want a wilderness experience can choose to leave their cellphones behind. "Anybody has that choice if they want to have a true wilderness experience. Leave it in your car," but phones can help those who are lost or injured in the backcountry, she said. Daniel Zilcsak, 38, also supports cell service as a matter of safety though he's relieved the proposal doesn't include a visible cell tower or antennae.

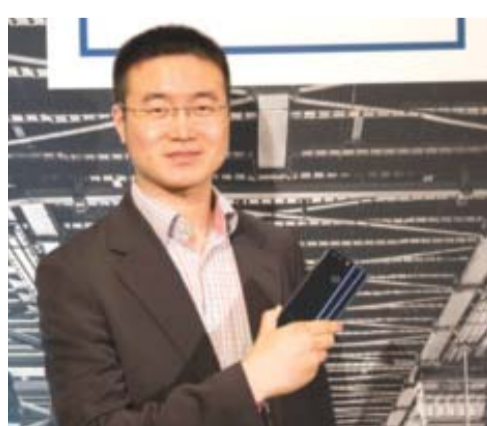
"Yes, people can abuse it and talk on the phone loudly, disturbing other hikers, but they can talk loudly with a partner too, or they can play loud music too, regardless of whether they have an internet connection or not," said Zilcsak, who writes a blog about his outdoor adventures. —AP

HUAWEI HONOR SET ON CHANGING THE SMARTPHONE INDUSTRY IN 2017

Honor, the world's number one smartphone brand from Huawei, has recorded solid growth over 2016 and has established itself as a truly global player in the smartphone industry in just 3 years. Underpinned by an unwavering commitment to innovation and quality, Honor's footprint has increased considerably in the space of just three years to span 74 different countries and regions to this day, with sales revenues topping US\$6 billion and 40 million units shipped globally in 2015.

In 2016, it witnessed record sales across its range of technology-packed devices, solidifying Honor's position as a leading global smartphone brand. The brand's third-year anniversary caps another successful year for the millennial-centric brand as it continues its drive for innovation, and will kick the New Year off with exciting news that will propel the smartphone success story to higher standards of success within the industry in 2017. This past year has been a triumphant one for honor, starting with the launch of the street smart honor 5X. The flagship device scooped an impressive seven accolades including 'Top Pick for CES 2016' by Android Central and featured in the Top 10 smartphones that 'stole the show' by CRN.com.

Soon after that in April, Honor brought the



Chris Sun Baigong

biggest global online sales bonanza "Honor World Carnival" to the Middle East for the first time; achieving ground-breaking results for its initiative. In just three days Honor achieved 100 percent increase in online sales in the Middle East where the high volume of traffic to the website led to continuous restocking for the limited-edition products.

In August 2016, honor broke records with the launch of its flagship beauty; the honor 8 that registered an unprecedented 100% increase in sales

within Gitex; the eight-day electronic retail show in the UAE. The Honor 8 offers even more value to the end user: It has phenomenal aesthetic appeal, boasting a carefully polished 15-layer craftsmanship; a 12 MP dual camera with one RGB and one monochrome sensor, as well as the Smart Key function that allows users to access Instagram with a single click and double-click for Twitter; at an astonishing price of AED 1,599. Honor 8 is available in gold, black, white and the highly desired sapphire blue which drove 70% of the honor 8 sales at Gitex.

Chris Sun Baigong, Vice President Huawei honor Middle East CBG commented: "2017 is going to be an exciting year for honor. We are looking at breaking norms and showing our users that premium quality is now within their reach. In the Middle East we see great potential for our brand; this is particularly so due to the predominance of digital natives and high incidence of early adopters that impact the way in which we approach this highly sophisticated market. For 2017, we are looking forward to bringing more smart phones to the region that meet and exceed users' expectations, we urge the digital natives to look out for our surprise at CES 2017 and to visit our website to know more www.hihonor.com."





NAMIBIA: This file photo shows a captive cheetah performs a mock run, to keep up with the hunting instinct, in an enclosure at the Cheetah Conservation Fund in Otjiwarongo, Namibia. —AFP Photos

CHEETAHS 'SPRINTING' TOWARDS EXTINCTION: WILDLIFE STUDY

'SECURING PROTECTED AREAS ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH'

LONDON: Cheetahs are "sprinting" to extinction due to habitat loss and other forms of human impact, according to a new study out this week which called for urgent action to save the world's fastest land animals. Cheetah numbers in Zimbabwe have plunged by more than 85 percent in 16 years and fewer than 50 individuals survive in Iran, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL)

and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) warned. The report's authors said cheetahs should be listed as "Endangered" instead of "Vulnerable" on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. The study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, estimated that just 7,100 cheetahs remain in the wild, occupying just

nine percent of the territory they once lived in.

"The cheetah is sprinting towards the edge of extinction and could soon be lost forever unless urgent, landscape-wide conservation action is taken," ZSL said in a statement. There were an estimated 100,000 cheetahs at the beginning of the 20th century, according to previous estimates. "Given the

secretive nature of this elusive cat, it has been difficult to gather hard information on the species, leading to its plight being overlooked," said Sarah Durant, the report's lead author and project leader for the Range wide Conservation Program for Cheetah and African Wild Dog.

"Our findings show that the large space requirements for cheetah, coupled with the complex range of threats faced by the species in the wild, meant that it is likely to be much more vulnerable to extinction than was previously thought," she said. Cheetahs travel widely in search of prey with some home ranges estimated at up to 3,000 square kilometers (1,158 square miles). The study found that 77 percent of the animal's remaining habitat falls outside protected areas, leaving it especially vulnerable to human interference. The main risks are humans hunting their prey, habitat loss, illegal trafficking of cheetah parts and the exotic pet trade, according to the study.

Durant hailed recent commitments taken by the international community, including on stemming the flow of live cats from the Horn of Africa region. "We've just hit the reset button in our understanding of how close cheetahs are to extinction," said Kim Young-Overton, from the wild cat conservation organization Panthera. "Securing protected areas alone is not enough. We must think bigger, conserving across the mosaic of protected and unprotected landscapes that these far-reaching cats inhabit," she said. —AFP



NAMIBIA: This file photo shows a captive cheetah licking her sibling in an enclosure at the Cheetah Conservation Fund in Otjiwarongo, Namibia.

SOUTHEAST ASIA, SUBCONTINENT FIGHTS HUGE BIRD FLU EPIDEMIC

BEIJING: China's Xinjiang region has culled more than 55,000 chickens and other poultry following an outbreak of a highly virulent bird flu that has infected 16,000 birds, the Ministry of Agriculture said yesterday. The H5N6 strain of the virus was confirmed in Yining, a city of 500,000 people, and has killed 10,716 birds, the ministry said. It is the fourth flu outbreak among poultry since October and brings the total cull since then to more than 170,000 birds. Flocks are particularly vulnerable to avian flu during the winter months and sporadic outbreaks are relatively common. The culling comes amid fears about the spread of avian flu across Asia, with South Korea battling its worst-ever outbreak and Japan and India also killing flocks.

South Korea is currently trying to contain the H5N6 strain, which has caused 10 human deaths in China since April 2014. At least seven people in China have been infected this winter with the H7N9 bird flu strain and two have died. To bolster their defense against infection, Chinese poultry farmers have scrambled to give their chickens more vitamins and vaccines in recent weeks. Beijing has banned poultry imports from more than 60 countries and said any countries with highly pathogenic cases will automatically go onto that list. Regional authorities in three provinces have curbed live poultry trading in some cities to prevent the spread of the disease.

The last major bird flu outbreak in China in 2013 killed 36 people and caused more than \$6 billion in losses for the agriculture sector. In a statement on its website on Sunday, the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention warned that the issue warrants greater attention this year, because the disease is developing earlier than in previous years, and cases are increasing more quickly in some districts. Delegations from Japan, South Korea and China gathered in Beijing earlier this month for a symposium on preventing and controlling bird flu and other diseases in East Asia, the Agriculture ministry's website showed.

Bird flu hits South Korea

The year of the rooster looks set for a gloomy start. Egg prices are soaring and New Year's festivals are being canceled as South Korea fights its worst bird flu outbreak in a decade. South Korea's government said yesterday that about 26 million head of poultry will be culled by Wednesday, including about one-third of the country's egg-laying hens, after the H5N6 strain of avian influenza was found in farms and parks. The latest outbreak, first reported on Nov 17, is the worst in South Korea among six since 2003.

The highly contagious influenza has spread to all provinces including a major park in south of Seoul and a scenic wetland area in the south. No human cases have been reported. The bird flu and the subsequent slaughters have reduced supplies: As of Friday, egg prices paid by wholesalers had almost doubled from a year earlier while prices paid by consumers jumped 30 percent. The government plans to subsidize shipping fees and temporarily lift tariffs on imported eggs to ease shortages. Officials said the government might buy eggs from overseas if prices continue to rise.

It all spells an inauspicious start to the year of the rooster, or chicken, according to the Asian zodiac. One of the most popular end-of-year activities in South Korea is to climb a mountain or visit the seashore to watch the last sunset of the year or the first sunrise of the New Year. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people gather in the eastern county of Ulju in the city of Ulsan to watch the sunrise from a seaside park. That event will not be held this weekend, the county said, one of many festivities cancelled to minimize the risk of the flu spreading.

Indian state orders poultry cull

Meanwhile, an eastern Indian state ordered the cull of more than 2,500 chickens and other poultry after four dead crows and three dead poultry tested positive for the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus, officials said yesterday. The bird flu virus was confirmed at Keranga village, about 35 km from Bhubaneswar, the capital of Odisha state, veterinary officials said, days after dozens of crows and chickens were found dead. More than 30,000 birds were culled in a similar outbreak in the region in 2012.

"We have issued an advisory to follow immediate measures to complete culling operations, surveillance and sanitization in the infected area," Commissioner-cum-Secretary of the state's Fisheries and Animal Resources Development Department Bishnupada Sethi said. "Over 2,500 poultry birds are being culled within one kilometer of the epicenter for control and containment of bird flu. It's the first time in the current season that this type of bird flu was detected in the state and in the same area." The H5N1 strain is considered as highly pathogenic.

It can also transmit to animals such as pigs, horse, large cats, dogs and occasionally humans. China reported two fatalities from H7N9 bird flu last week, its first fatalities among this winter's cases, stoking fears the virus could spread at a time when other Asian nations are battling to control outbreaks of the diseases. —Agencies



JAPAN: This undated handout shows local officials, wearing avian flu anti-virus suits, using carbonated gas to kill chickens in Nankan town in Kumamoto prefecture. —AFP

GAY RIGHTS GROUPS BRAVE ABUSE, VIOLENCE TO FIGHT HIV IN CAMEROON

YAOUNDE: Sitting in a circle with several other young men in a charity's offices in Cameroon's capital, Fleur listens intently to the speaker talk about gay sex before slowly raising his hand. "Can we catch AIDS by swallowing sperm?" he asks, prompting laughter from his peers at the group discussion held by Alcondoms, an organization promoting the rights and health of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. Yet HIV and homosexuality are no laughing matter for men like Fleur in a country where being gay is illegal and LGBT activists face rising hostility and violence. Cameroon has the second highest HIV prevalence rate in West and Central Africa, after Nigeria, and men who have sex with men are hit the hardest, says the UN AIDS program (UNAIDS).

While one in 25 people in Cameroon are living with HIV, almost a quarter of men who have sex with men in Yaounde have the virus which causes AIDS. The prevalence of HIV among this group in Douala, the economic capital, is even higher with two in five men who have sex with men (MSM) infected, according to the state's national AIDS control committee. The committee says it has developed various strategies in recent years to reduce the number of new infections, such as making antiretroviral treatment free and setting up support programs for patients.

But the fear of discrimination and threat of five years in prison are driving MSM and LGBT people away from hospitals and state programs, according to civil society groups who say they fill the gap by providing condoms, counseling and healthcare. However, their work in improving access to healthcare for these marginalized communities has also had an unforeseen and adverse impact,

according to gay rights activist Lambert Lamba. "People feel that taking MSM into account in health policy is a way to legalize homosexual behavior," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in Yaounde. "This has resulted in more and more attacks on gay people and human rights defenders."

Climate of fear

Animosities is growing between a largely conservative society and a younger generation less concerned by homosexuality in a country which prosecutes people for being gay more aggressively than almost any other nation in the world, LGBT activists say. At least 50 people were convicted of homosexuality between 2010 and 2014 - for acts ranging from cross-dressing and wearing make-up to a man texting 'I love you' to another man - according to data collected by The Cameroonian Foundation for AIDS. While there have only been a handful of convictions since 2014 - a drop activists attribute to their work, intervention by LGBT-friendly lawyers and the advocacy of Western diplomats - discrimination towards MSM and LGBT people remains rife.

Evvard, who attended the group discussion along with Fleur, said he would never return to a state hospital when ill. "When I went once with my partner, the disapproving look of the medical staff, the murmurs and the mocking laughter discouraged me," he said. "I will never relive this experience." Police last month arrested 12 men for homosexuality because they were in possession of condoms and lubricants, while the offices of several LGBT groups have been vandalized and burgled in recent years, said legal charity Human Dignity Trust. —Reuters

VERA RUBIN, WHO DID PIONEERING WORK ON DARK MATTER, DIES



WASHINGTON: In this image provided by the Carnegie Institution of Washington, Vera Rubin uses a measuring engine. —AP

PRINCETON: Vera Rubin, a pioneering astronomer who helped find powerful evidence of dark matter, has died, her son said Monday. She was 88. Allan Rubin, a professor of geosciences at Princeton University, said his mother died Sunday night of natural causes. He said the Philadelphia native had been living in the Princeton area. Vera Rubin found that galaxies don't quite rotate the way they were predicted, and that lent support to the theory that some other force was at work, namely dark matter. Dark matter, which hasn't been directly observed, makes up 27 percent of universe - as opposed to 5 percent of the universe being normal matter.

Scientists better understand what dark matter isn't rather than what it is. Rubin's scientific achievements earned her numerous awards and honors, including a National Medal of Science presented by President Bill Clinton in 1993 "for her pioneering research programs in observational cosmology." She also became the second female astronomer to be elected to the National Academy of Sciences. "It goes without saying that, as a woman scientist, Vera Rubin had to overcome a number of barriers along the way," California Institute of Technology physicist Sean Carroll tweeted Monday.

Rubin's interest in astronomy

began as a young girl and grew with the involvement of her father, Phillip Cooper, an electrical engineer who helped her build a telescope and took her to meetings of amateur astronomers. Although Rubin said her parents were extremely supportive of her career choice, she said in a 1995 interview with the American Institute of Physics that her father had suggested she become a mathematician, concerned that it would be difficult for her to make a living as an astronomer. She was the only astronomy major to graduate from Vassar College in 1948.

When she sought to enroll as a graduate student at Princeton, she learned women were not allowed in the university's graduate astronomy program, so she instead earned her master's degree from Cornell University. Rubin earned her doctorate from Georgetown University, where she later worked as a faculty member for several years before working at the Carnegie Institution in Washington, a nonprofit scientific research center. During her career, Rubin examined more than 200 galaxies. "Vera Rubin was a national treasure as an accomplished astronomer and a wonderful role model for young scientists," said Matthew Scott, president of the Carnegie Institution. "We are very saddened by this loss." —AP



CHINA: In this file photo released by Xinhua News Agency, ground crew check on the re-entry capsule of Shenzhou 11 spacecraft, which brought back a pair of Chinese astronauts from a month long stay aboard China's space station, after it landed in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. —AP photos



CHINA: In this photo, the supermoon rises over a logo for AVIC, or Aviation Industry Corp, a state owned enterprise involved in China's manned space mission in Beijing.

CHINA PLANS TO LAND PROBES ON FAR SIDE OF MOON, MARS BY 2020

BEIJING: China vowed yesterday to speed up the development of its space industry as it set out its plans to become the first country to soft land a probe on the far side of the moon, around 2018, and launch its first Mars probe by 2020. "To explore the vast cosmos, develop the space industry and build China into a space power is a dream we pursue unrelentingly," read a white paper setting out the country's space strategy for the next five years. It says China aims to use space for peaceful purposes and to guarantee national security, and to carry out cutting edge scientific research. The white paper released by the information office of China's Cabinet points to the growing ambitions of China's already rapidly advancing space program.

Although the white paper doesn't mention it, China's eventual goal is the symbolic feat of landing an astronaut on the moon. While Russia and the United States have more experience in manned space travel, China's military-backed program has made steady progress in a

comparatively short time. Since China conducted its first crewed space mission in 2003, it has staged a spacewalk and landed a rover on the moon in 2013 - the first time humans had soft landed anything on the moon since the 1970s. Last month, two astronauts returned from a month-long stay aboard China's Tiangong 2 experimental space station, the country's sixth and longest crewed mission.

A fully functioning, permanently crewed space station is on course to begin operations six years from now and is slated to run for at least a decade. The white paper reiterated China's plans to launch its first Mars probe by 2020, saying this would explore and bring back samples from the red planet, explore the Jupiter system and "conduct research into major scientific questions such as the origin and evolution of the solar system, and search for extraterrestrial life." The paper says the Chang'e-4 lunar probe will help shed light on the formation and evolution of the moon. —AP

PERU BRAIN MUSEUM PUTS COMPLEX ORGAN ON DISPLAY

'WOMEN'S BRAINS ARE MORE EVOLVED THAN MEN'S'

LIMA: It powers everything we do, yet remains one of our biggest mysteries. But thanks to an unusual Peruvian museum dedicated entirely to the brain, visitors can get up close and personal with the most complex organ in the human body. The "brain library" at the Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo Hospital in Lima has a massive collection of diseased and healthy brains, giving researchers and also the general public a glimpse of what is going on inside our heads. It is the only museum in Latin America, and one of the few in the world, with a large collection of brains that is regularly open to the public.

The hospital, which was founded more than three centuries ago, has a total of 2,912 brains collected over the years, nearly 300 of which are on display in a mind-opening exhibit. Some 20,000 people visit the museum each year. "Touch a real skull," the museum invites them on arrival, proffering a specimen so visitors can feel the cranial bone structure and imagine how it holds two square meters (22 square feet) of intricately folded brain matter. The brains of this operation, so to speak, is neuropathologist Diana Rivas, who is hovering over an icy steel table choosing scientifically interesting specimens to add to the museum's collection.

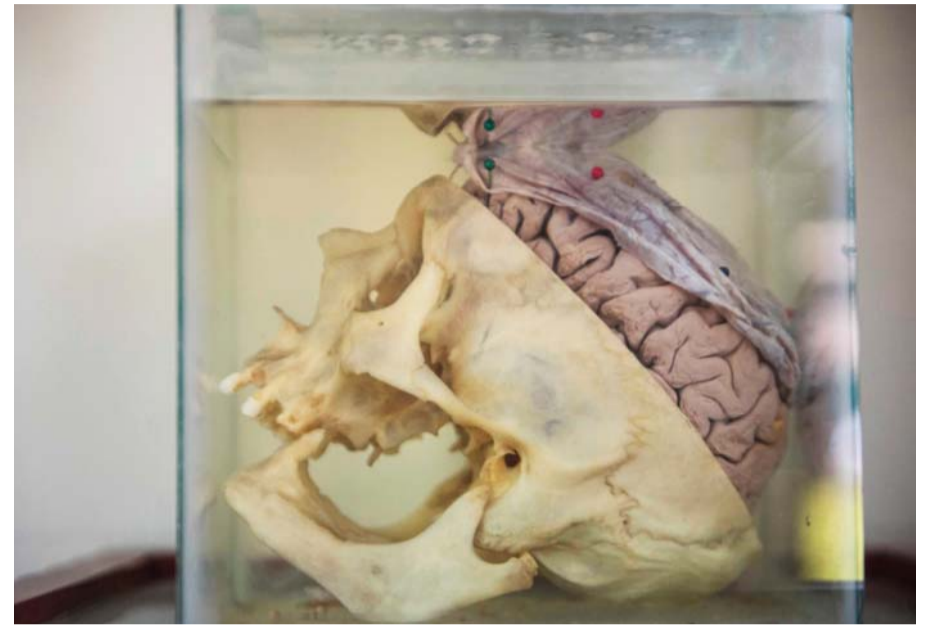
"This is where we do the autopsies. I handle them myself," she tells AFP, barely looking up from the brain she is holding in her gloved hands. She has just removed this particular specimen from a jar of formaldehyde. It is about the size of a deflated football, and "has the consistency of a rubber eraser," she says. She examines the brain's two hemispheres, which resemble giant walnuts, then carefully removes the thin layer of three membranes that hold them together, the meninges. Once open, the organ's fascinating geography is on full display: a labyrinth of gray and white tissue that holds the mysteries of thought, language and virtually every bodily function inside.

Food for thought

Rivas gives a lesson as she dissects. "A human brain weighs between 1.2 and 2.4 kilos (2 pounds 10 ounces and five pounds four ounces), depending on the height and weight of the person, and on the sex," she says. "Women's are more evolved than men's. What differentiates us is the evolution of language, which we use much more than men." The museum is divided into three parts: neuroanatomy, birth defects and brain damage caused by diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer's and the Zika virus.

"We show students what a healthy brain looks like, and then a sick brain, like this one with cysticercosis, which causes convulsions," she says, pointing to a brain stained with marks left by invading tapeworms. The parasites are present in pork and can also be transmitted when people fail to wash their hands properly, she explains. Offering more food for thought, she points to another sick brain affected by arteriosclerosis—the result of eating too much fatty food, which clogs the arteries, including the ones feeding the brain.

"This is to remind us not to get carried away with the hamburgers. It's not good to abuse fatty foods," she says, pointing out the brain's blackened blood vessels. Speaking of food, she warns that visitors need a strong stomach for some parts of the exhibit, such as a display on encephalocele. The fatal birth defect happens when the "neural tube" that becomes the brain and spinal cord fails to develop normally during pregnancy, leaving the brain and the membranes around it hanging out through an opening in the baby's skull. "Around five percent of students are afraid when they see it. Some faint, others vomit," Rivas says matter-of-factly. —AFP



LIMA: A glass container with a human skull and brain immersed in formaldehyde is displayed at the "Museum of Neuropathology" in Lima. —AFP Photos



LIMA: Three human fetus presenting different brain pathologies is displayed at the "Museum of Neuropathology" in Lima.



LIMA: Doctor Diana Rivas opens a jar containing a human brain immersed in formaldehyde at the "Museum of Neuropathology" in Lima.

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248 33 199





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ACK ORGANIZATION IN KUWAIT TO RECEIVE THE 'INVESTORS IN PEOPLE' ACCREDITATION

The Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) is the first organization in Kuwait to receive the internationally recognized accreditation from "Investors in People" (IIP), a global standard for best practices in people management. With over 400 employees, ACK is recognized as a pioneer in providing higher education in the areas of Engineering, Business and Aviation studies. Moreover, ACK strives to achieve excellence in its Human Resources functions and in parallel continues to produce knowledgeable, skilled and professional graduates for Kuwait's growing economy.

IIP is the international standard for people management, defining what it takes to lead, support and manage people effectively to achieve sustainable results.

Underpinning the Standard is the IIP framework, reflecting the latest workplace trends, essential skills and effective structures required to outperform in any industry. The accreditation enables organizations to benchmark against the best in the business on an international scale.

Commenting on the award, Abdullah Al



Sharhan, Chairman of ACK said, "We are extremely proud to be the First organization in Kuwait to receive the IIP accreditation.

This is another crucial step towards our goal of enabling human potential within a culture of care." Paul Devoy, Head of IIP

said, "We'd like to congratulate ACK. IIP accreditation is the sign of a greater employer, an out performing place to work

and a clear commitment to success. ACK should be extremely proud of their achievement."



CANADIANS CELEBRATE HOLIDAY SEASON



Canadians in Kuwait, CiK enthralled the members and guest of it organization by holding a grand event to celebrate this holiday season. CiK is a social networking organization for Canadian expat community in Kuwait. CiK shares Canadian culture with other expats communities in Kuwait, utilizing the talent and efforts of its members. CiK's aim is to promote Canada's national traditions and events in Kuwait. Many Events are held by CiK Executive Board on different occasions to make feel "Home away from home" as its tag line.

Ishtiaq Malik, CiK President welcomed dignitaries, members and guests on behalf of CiK. He thanked Ambassador of Canada - H.E. Martine Moreau, Australian Ambassador H.E. Warren Hauck and Deputy Chief of Mission at US Embassy Joey Hood for joining CiK event. Ambassador of Canada H.E. Martine Moreau addressed the audience by greetings Canadian

community in Kuwait with season's greetings and appreciated CiK for holding this event.

Australian Ambassador H.E. Warren Hauck addressed the gathering and wished season's greetings. Deputy Chief of Mission at US Embassy Joey Hood in his speech also wished season's greetings. Ishtiaq Malik thanked Chair - American Business Council Kuwait (ABCK) - Dr. Juliet Dinkha and President - Association of the United States Army (AUSA) Kuwait Chapter - Dr. Rania Azmi for joining. CiK President gave a brief about past one year activities. The membership to CiK website is proven to be very informative with weekly news updates and is beneficial to its members.

Ishtiaq Malik appreciated the CiK Executive Board for their relentless efforts, energy and enthusiasm towards CiK. Reza Mehrabi, Managing Finance, MOE, Events planner, Moly Hinh, Membership, Christophe Holdrinet,

Jolanta Dziadkowiec, Zeze Dotseth and volunteer Angelina Lantaca. Special thanks to Tanya and Fahreen Dawood for the entertainment, Milton Dana and Rowena Tinio with her group to support CiK. Thanks to CiK Sponsors for their generous support to make event successful.

The Bridge Co, Fouad Rouh and Dana Majthob, Auto PRO Software Solutions, Richard Kelly and Soraya Bendimerad, EBLA Computer Consultancy, Hilal Arnaoot, MJW General Trading & Contracting Co, Reza Mehrabi, Royal Digital Computer Center, Dr. Abdul Malik and Marafie Kuwaitia, Shahid Islam, Qazi Fakhru Alam, Sudarshan Bhandarkar. Thanks to Charbel Abi Nader and Martin from Holiday Inn Hotel - Salmiya for their hospitality and organizing this event. Canadian Community in Kuwait enjoyed the holiday seasons party with their families and friends.



ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF KUWAIT CONTINENTAL HOTELS GROUP CO



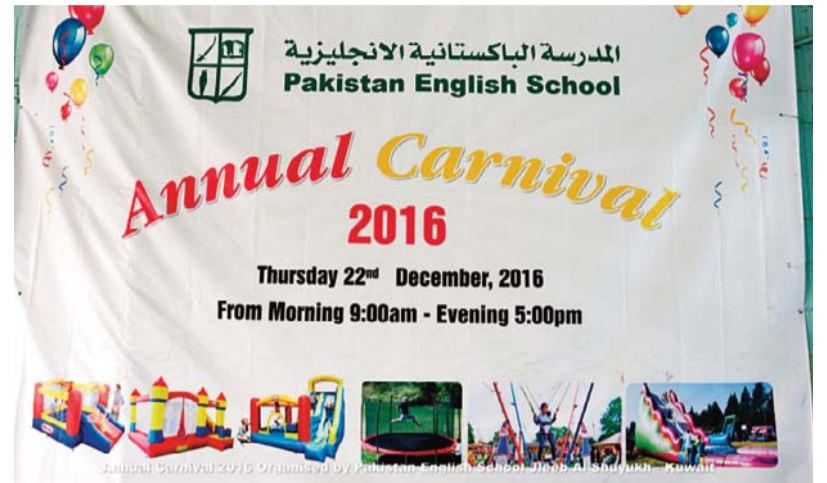
The management of Kuwait Continental Hotels Co. held the usual annual celebration of the hotels' staff and their families to strengthen the loyalty of them and to highlight their role in advancing and success the work during 2016. The ceremony was held in renovated and charming restaurant of Darbar, the reception was opened by the hotel general manager, Kamal El-Din Hussein, who explained how the development and expansion witnessed by Darbar restaurant and some of big and royal suites in the hotel during 2016 year which become a glorious place recently and so on Kamal Hussein thanked and honored the employees of the Hotels' group.

Kamal Hussein thanks and commends the staff for their efforts during 2016 which was impact on the sales last year with 10 percent and average occupancy rate of over

75 percent, despite stiff competition and the emergence of many new Hotels. Kamal Hussein has honored group of staff from all departments as being ideal employees during all year of 2016, before leaving them to enjoy the ceremony, which included some of children's competitions, Staff competition, and the great & exciting game of the wonderful magician.

Kamal Hussein also honored the companies who shared to present gifts to the staff that also contributed to the success of the concert such as Al Hazeem Co, Seven Seas Co., Safat Co., First Trading Co., Al Najm Print Co., Beirut Est., Al Herz Co., CocaCola Co., Kuwait Dairy Co. & Crown Cartridge Co. At the end of the ceremony, the General Manager, Kamal Hussein delivered the annual bonus; a month's salary for all staff of the hotel which was ordered by Fouad Al-Ghanim the CEO.





PAKISTAN ENGLISH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE CELEBRATES ANNUAL CARNIVAL 2016

Kuwait- The Annual Carnival 2016 was celebrated in Style by the Management of Pakistan English School and College, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Kuwait. Principal Sanober Farrukh Sultan, Vice Principal Muhammad Ahsan Raza, Abdul Rehman, Manager School Activities, Qaiser Mushtaq, Discipline In-charge & other Ajjal National Education Co. Kuwait. It was a fantastic and a lovely day where the Family Entertainment held on December 22, 2016. A large number of old and new students and their families came to the carnival. The Annual Carnival became more colorful when different Pakistani School's Principals attended, by the invitation of Sanober, Tariq Iqbal Chief Executive of Voop Media, multiple Communities also participated.



AL KOUT MALL SURPRISES WITH LIVE MUSICAL AND KIDS SHOWS

This Winter season, Al Kout Mall launched its two months of exciting weekend activities and events for its visitors, from young to old, taking place every weekend during November and December. The winter program featured a variety of family geared activities and entertainment shows around the Al Kout fountains, helping its visitors enjoy Kuwait's winter season in a beautiful waterfront outdoor setting. The program, which started Nov 3, and runs all the way to the New Year, has host-

ed different musical performances of different genres, such as Lebanese, Egyptian, Yemeni, and of course traditional Kuwaiti. It also featured kid's entertainment shows such as the much loved Dora the Explorer, Barney, Frozen, as well as local and traditional character shows. In addition, there were several expos and exhibits held, such as classic car shows, modified motorbike exhibit and big truck displays. The weekend festivities, which continued throughout the month of

December, are leading up to a finale of a larger than life Circus performance set for New Year's weekend running from Dec 29 to the Jan 1, with a fireworks display taking place at midnight on December 31st. And as it is customary during Al Kout's events, a range of prizes and giveaways were distributed during the weekend festivities, from games and toys for the young ones, to shopping vouchers and valuable gifts from Al Kout's retail stores for the adults.



'AIP AWARD NITE 2016' VENUE AND TIME CHANGED

Association of Indian Professionals (AIP), Kuwait announced yesterday that AIP would organize the 'AIP Meritorious Award Nite 2016' a mega event to honor meritorious Indian students, on December 30, 2016 from 11 am to 2 pm at the auditorium of the Indian Community Senior School, Salmiya, Kuwait, instead of the Indian Embassy auditorium. The AIP Kuwait was compelled to change the venue and time due to certain unforeseen circumstances, a press release issued by the association said.

Awardees have been selected based on CBSE examinations results of class XII declared for the academic year 2015 - 2016 from all Indian Schools in Kuwait which are affiliated to CBSE system of education of India. This may be noted that AIP awards have become synonym of excellence and parents of meritorious students eagerly look forward to this event. Ambassador of India Sunil Jain will be the chief guest.

As you are aware, AIP is a non-profit, non-religious, non-political & non-governmental organization in Kuwait engaged in service of the Indian community through many ways. AIP awardees are presented with Gold, Silver and Bronze medallion each one with a certificate of merit. List of awardees is given below at the end of this press release. AIP started running (rolling) trophy for the best performing school in 2010 for class X & XII in order to recognize the efforts and contributions of the teaching staff of the school.

Best performing school is calculated on the basis of weighted average system. Details are given in the souvenir. However, we had to discontinue this award for class X due to introduction of the continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) system by CBSE which made class X Board examination optional. In lieu of that we started runners up trophy to the best performing school of class XII. All Indians are cordially invited to attend. Prior confirmation of attendance will help us to make suitable arrangements accordingly. You may register through AIP website www.aipkuwait.com. All AIP awardees must report latest by 10.30 am.

EMBASSY OF INDIA CELEBRATES PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS 2017

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated on 9th January every year to mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India. Since 2003, every year the Government of India holds the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in India to provide a platform to the overseas Indian community to engage with the Government and people of the land of their ancestors for mutually beneficial activities. All Indians residing in Kuwait have been contributing richly in their own way to the growing relations in all spheres between India and Kuwait.

To mark the occasion, the Embassy of India will be commemorating Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2017 (PBD 2017) at its auditorium on Monday, 9 January 2017 from 1500-1730 hrs under the theme 'Redefining engagement with Indian Diaspora.' All non-resident and visiting Indians, PIO and OCI card holders and their friends in Kuwait are cordially invited to participate for a meaningful discussion on the issues related to the Indian Diaspora.

OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 00:00 Pusher
02:00 Age Of Ice
04:00 Legendary: Tomb Of The Dragon
06:00 S.W.A.T.
08:00 Panic Room
10:00 Deep Rising
12:00 Apocalypse Pompeii
14:00 S.W.A.T.
16:15 Panic Room
18:30 Deep Rising
20:45 Faster
23:00 Mercury Rising

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 00:50 Swimming With Monsters: Steve Backshall
01:45 Bondi Vet
02:10 Bondi Vet
02:40 Lone Star Law
03:35 Tanked
04:25 Wildest Africa
05:15 Gator Boys
06:02 Swimming With Monsters: Steve Backshall
06:49 Lone Star Law
07:36 Swamp Brothers
08:00 Swamp Brothers
08:25 Groomer Has It
09:15 Lone Star Law
10:10 Into The Pride
11:05 Tanked
12:00 Groomer Has It
12:55 Bondi Vet
13:20 Bondi Vet
13:50 Lone Star Law
14:45 Gator Boys
15:40 Into The Pride
16:35 Tanked
17:30 Wildest Africa
18:25 Swimming With Monsters: Steve Backshall
19:20 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
20:15 Tanked
21:10 Wildlife SOS
22:05 Into The Pride
23:00 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
23:55 Gator Boys

crime investigation network

- 00:30 Private Crimes
01:00 Deadly Wives
02:00 Killer Kids

Discovery Family

- 22:18 Another Period
22:42 Tosh.0
23:05 South Park
23:30 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
00:30 World's Toughest Jobs
01:20 Guinness World Records
Smashed UK
02:10 Incredible Food Race
03:00 Destroyed In Seconds
03:25 Destroyed In Seconds
03:50 Beyond Survival With Les Stroud
04:40 How It's Made
05:05 How It's Made
05:30 World's Toughest Jobs
06:20 Mythbusters
07:00 Kenny The Shark
07:25 Awesome Adventures
07:50 Bad Dog
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
10:20 Mythbusters
11:10 Hello World!
11:35 Hello World!
12:00 Hello World!
12:25 Hello World!
12:50 Hello World!
13:15 Hello World!
13:40 Keiko: The Untold Story Of The Star Of Free Willy
14:30 Dogs: The Untold Story
15:20 Dogs: The Untold Story
16:10 Kenny The Shark
16:35 Awesome Adventures
17:00 Dogs: The Untold Story
17:50 Finding Bigfoot
18:40 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Mythbusters
21:10 Dogs: The Untold Story
22:00 Finding Bigfoot
22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
23:15 Destroyed In Seconds
23:40 Beyond Survival With Les Stroud

ID

- 00:40 Unravell'd
01:30 A Crime To Remember
02:20 Las Vegas Law
03:10 I Am Homicide
04:00 Unravell'd
04:48 I Almost Got Away With It
05:36 I Almost Got Away With It

Disney XD

- 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 A.N.T. Farm
19:25 Disney Mickey Mouse
19:30 Austin & Ally
19:55 Descendants Wicked World
20:00 Backstage
20:25 Tsum Tsum Shorts
20:30 Elena Of Avalor
20:55 Best Friends Whenever
21:20 Jessie
21:45 Jessie
22:10 Jessie
22:35 H2O: Just Add Water
23:00 Binny And The Ghost
23:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

Disney Junior

- 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
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

Cuban Chrome

- 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 K.C. Undercover
09:25 K.C. Undercover
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 Much Everything
12:00 Counterfeit Cat
12:30 K.C. Undercover
12:55 K.C. Undercover
13:20 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
13:45 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
14:40 Counterfeit Cat
14:50 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
15:05 K.C. Undercover
15:30 Atomic Puppet
15:55 Lab Rats
16:25 Danger Mouse
16:50 Future-Worm!
17:15 K.C. Undercover
17:40 K.C. Undercover
18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
18:10 Becoming
18:35 Supa Strikas
19:00 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
19:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
19:55 K.C. Undercover
20:20 Counterfeit Cat
20:45 Mighty Med
21:10 Pickle And Peanut
21:20 Pickle And Peanut
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Guardians Of The Galaxy
22:10 Ultimate Spider-Man
22:35 Booster
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA

food network

- 00:00 Man Finds Food
00:30 Man Finds Food
01:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
02:00 Man Fire Food
02:30 Man Fire Food
03:00 Chopped
04:00 Guy's Grocery Games
05:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
05:30 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
06:00 Chopped
07:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
07:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
08:00 The Kitchen
09:00 Anna Olson: Bake
09:30 Anna Olson: Bake
10:00 Chopped
11:00 Guy's Big Bite
11:30 Guy's Big Bite
12:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
12:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
13:00 Man Fire Food
13:30 Man Fire Food
14:00 Chopped
15:00 The Kitchen
16:00 Anna Olson: Bake
16:30 Anna Olson: Bake
17:00 Chopped
18:00 Iron Chef America
19:00 Chopped
20:00 Chopped South Africa
21:00 Kitchen Inferno
22:00 Iron Chef America
23:00 Chopped

itv HD CHOICE

- 00:10 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Emmerdale
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Cash Trapped
03:25 5 Star Family Reunion
04:20 Doc Martin
05:15 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
06:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
07:05 Cash Trapped
08:00 5 Star Family Reunion
09:00 Doc Martin
10:00 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
11:00 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
11:50 Cash Trapped
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Coronation Street
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
15:10 Cash Trapped
16:00 Jericho

Royal Stories

- 17:25 Royal Stories
17:50 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Coronation Street
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 Cash Trapped
21:00 Jericho
21:55 Royal Stories
22:25 Royal Stories
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Coronation Street
23:40 Coronation Street

H2 HD

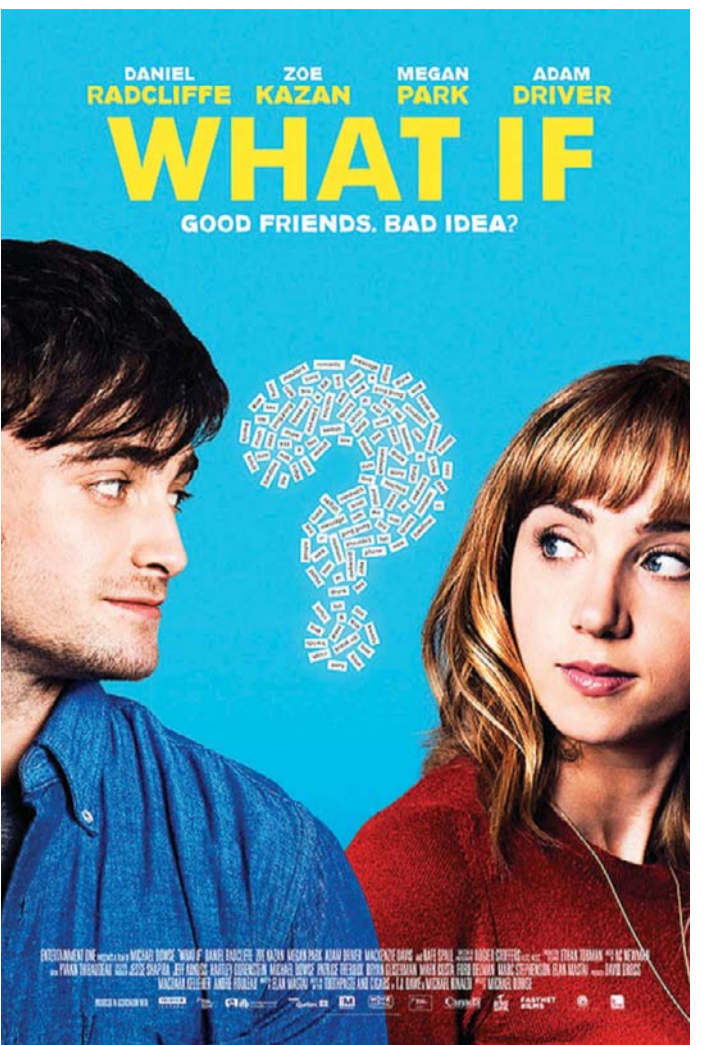
- 00:00 In Search Of Aliens
01:00 Ancient Aliens
02:00 America's Book Of Secrets
03:00 Ancient Discoveries
03:50 Warriors
04:40 In Search Of Aliens
05:30 In Search Of Aliens
06:20 America's Book Of Secrets
07:10 The Universe
08:00 Ancient Aliens
09:00 America's Book Of Secrets
10:00 Ancient Discoveries
11:00 How The States Got Their Shape
12:00 In Search Of Aliens
13:00 In Search Of Aliens
14:00 Ancient Aliens
15:00 America's Book Of Secrets
16:00 Ancient Discoveries
17:00 How The States Got Their Shape
18:00 In Search Of Aliens
19:00 Ancient Aliens
20:00 America's Book Of Secrets
21:00 Ancient Discoveries
22:00 Warriors
23:00 Blood And Glory: The Civil War In Color

HISTORY HD

- 00:25 Barbarians Rising
01:20 Criss Angel: Mindfreak
02:10 Storage Wars Texas
02:35 Storage Wars Texas
03:00 Ultimate Wheels
03:50 Ultimate Wheels
04:40 Pawn Stars
05:10 Ozzy & Jack's World Detour
06:00 Swamp People
06:50 Ax Men
07:40 Ice Road Truckers
08:30 Storage Wars Texas
08:55 Car Hunters
09:20 Car Hunters
09:45 Car Hunters
10:10 Car Hunters
10:35 Counting Cars: Best Of
11:00 American Pickers
11:50 American Pickers
12:40 American Pickers
13:30 American Pickers
14:20 American Pickers
15:10 American Pickers
16:00 American Pickers
16:50 American Pickers
17:40 Swamp People
18:30 Ozzy & Jack's World Detour
19:20 American Pickers
20:10 Pawn Stars
20:35 Pawn Stars
21:00 Counting Cars
21:25 Counting Cars
21:50 Fifth Gear
22:40 Time Team
23:30 Barbarians Rising

nick jr.

- 00:15 Louie
00:22 Louie
00:30 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
00:53 Olive The Ostrich
00:58 Olive The Ostrich
01:03 Max & Ruby
01:26 Wanda And The Alien
01:37 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
01:48 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
02:00 Blaze And The Monster Machines
02:22 Blaze And The Monster Machines
02:45 Zack & Quack
03:05 Team Umizoomi
03:28 Louie
03:35 Louie
03:40 Olive The Ostrich
03:44 Olive The Ostrich
03:49 Paw Patrol
03:49 Paw Patrol
04:24 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
04:25 Dora The Explorer
04:59 Max & Ruby
05:07 Bubble Guppies
05:29 Little Charmers
05:41 Shimmer And Shine
06:05 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
06:27 Zack & Quack
06:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
07:00 Paw Patrol
07:13 Paw Patrol
07:36 Dora The Explorer



WHAT IF ON OSN MOVIES COMEDY HD

- 08:00 Wanda And The Alien
08:11 Zack & Quack
08:22 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
08:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
09:10 Paw Patrol
09:35 Shimmer And Shine
09:58 Dora The Explorer
10:21 Paw Patrol
10:45 Little Charmers
10:57 Bubble Guppies
11:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
11:40 Zack & Quack
11:52 Team Umizoomi
12:15 Louie
12:22 Louie
12:30 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
12:53 Olive The Ostrich
12:58 Olive The Ostrich
13:03 Max & Ruby
13:26 Wanda And The Alien
13:37 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
13:48 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
14:00 Blaze And The Monster Machines
14:22 Blaze And The Monster Machines
14:45 Zack & Quack
15:05 Team Umizoomi
15:28 Louie
15:35 Louie
15:40 Olive The Ostrich
15:44 Olive The Ostrich
15:49 Paw Patrol
16:01 Paw Patrol
16:24 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
16:35 Dora The Explorer
16:59 Max & Ruby
17:07 Bubble Guppies
17:29 Little Charmers
17:41 Shimmer And Shine
18:05 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
18:27 Zack & Quack
18:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
19:00 Paw Patrol
19:13 Paw Patrol
19:36 Dora The Explorer
20:00 Wanda And The Alien
20:11 Zack & Quack
20:22 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
20:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
21:10 Paw Patrol
21:35 Shimmer And Shine
21:58 Dora The Explorer
22:21 Paw Patrol
22:45 Little Charmers
22:57 Bubble Guppies
23:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
23:40 Zack & Quack
23:52 Team Umizoomi

OSN FIRST HD

- 00:00 The Last Kingdom
01:00 Pitch
02:00 Supergirl
03:00 The Strain
04:00 Good Morning America
06:00 Prison Break
07:00 The Amazing Race
08:00 The Night Shift
09:00 C.S.I. Cyber
10:00 Prison Break
11:00 Pitch
12:00 Shark Tank
13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
14:00 The Amazing Race
15:00 Live Good Morning America
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
18:00 The Night Shift
19:00 Chicago Med
20:00 C.S.I. Cyber
21:00 Marvel's Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.
22:00 Scream Queens
23:00 The Strain

OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY

- 01:00 Beyond The Mask
03:00 Asterix: The Mansions Of The Gods
05:00 Paddington
07:00 Capture The Flag
09:00 The Adventurer: The Curse Of The Midas Box
11:00 Paddington
13:00 Big Baby
15:00 One Christmas Eve
17:00 Minions
19:00 Clockstoppers
21:00 Batman Unlimited: Animal Instincts
23:00 One Christmas Eve

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 02:15 Slow West
03:45 Where Hope Grows
05:30 Christmas Eve
07:15 Steve Jobs
09:15 Where Hope Grows
11:00 The Martian
13:30 Miss You Already
15:30 The End Of The Tour
17:30 Spotlight
20:00 Run All Night
22:00 The Adrenal Diaries
23:30 Sisters

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 00:00 Three Night Stand
02:00 Shanghai Noon
04:00 Lovesick
06:00 Jack
08:00 Accidental Love
10:00 Lovesick
12:00 Shanghai Noon
14:00 Passed Away
16:00 Accidental Love
18:00 The Invention Of Lying
20:00 What If
22:00 Superbad

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 00:30 Happy Endings
01:00 Happy Endings
01:30 Bordertown
02:00 Bordertown
02:30 The Detour
03:00 Last Man Standing
03:30 Baby Daddy
04:00 Better With You
04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
05:30 Breaking In
06:00 My Big Fat Greek Life
06:30 Living With Fran
07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
08:00 Better With You
08:30 Breaking In
09:00 Last Man Standing
09:30 Truth Be Told
10:00 Young & Hungry
10:30 Living With Fran
11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
12:00 My Big Fat Greek Life
12:30 Better With You
13:00 Breaking In
13:30 Living With Fran
14:00 Baby Daddy
14:30 Truth Be Told
15:00 Young & Hungry
15:30 Happy Endings
16:00 Happy Endings
16:30 My Big Fat Greek Life
17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
18:00 Last Man Standing
18:30 Baby Daddy
19:00 Truth Be Told
19:30 Young & Hungry
20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
21:00 Happy Endings
21:30 Happy Endings
22:00 Silicon Valley

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL

- 01:00 The Informant
03:00 The Girl
05:00 Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon
07:00 Hard Eight
09:00 Listen To Me Marlon
10:45 The Girl
12:30 The Imitation Game
14:30 Interstellar
17:30 Listen To Me Marlon
19:15 Almost Famous
22:00 Mystic River

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

- 01:00 Ghatokach - Master Of Magic
02:45 K-9 Adventures: Legend Of The Lost Gold
04:30 Marco Macaco
06:00 Bolts And Blip
07:30 Blue Elephant 2
09:15 Evolution Man
11:00 Blackie And Kanuto
12:30 K-9 Adventures: Legend Of The Lost Gold
14:15 Pixies
16:00 Jungle Book: Mowgli's Adventure
18:00 Evolution Man
20:00 Daddy I'm A Zombie
22:00 Pixies
23:30 Jungle Book: Mowgli's Adventure



FASTER ON OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 03:00 The Jail: 60 Days In
04:30 Private Crimes
05:00 Deadly Wives
06:00 Killer Kids
07:00 The First 48
08:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
09:00 Homicide Hunter
10:00 It Takes A Killer
10:30 It Takes A Killer
11:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
12:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
13:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
14:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
15:00 The First 48
16:00 Fred Dineage: 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
21:30 It Takes A Killer
22:00 The First 48
23:00 My Crazy Ex
06:24 I Almost Got Away With It
07:12 I Almost Got Away With It
08:00 Beauty Queen Murders
08:50 Beauty Queen Murders
09:40 Beauty Queen Murders
10:30 Beauty Queen Murders
11:20 Beauty Queen Murders
12:10 Dead On Arrival
13:00 I Almost Got Away With It
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:40 I Almost Got Away With It
15:30 I Almost Got Away With It
16:20 I Almost Got Away With It
17:10 Disappeared
18:00 I Was Murdered
18:25 I Was Murdered
18:50 I Was Murdered
19:15 I Was Murdered
19:40 I Was Murdered
20:05 I Was Murdered
20:30 I Was Murdered
20:55 I Was Murdered
21:20 I Was Murdered
21:45 I Was Murdered
22:10 Swamp Murders
23:00 Suspicion
23:50 Murder Among Friends

COMEDY CENTRAL

- 00:00 Hannibal Buress: Animal Furnace
00:50 Tosh.0
01:15 Tosh.0
01:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
02:05 Arlie Lange: Stench Of Failure
03:00 Nathan For You
03:25 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
04:15 Key And Peele
04:40 Impractical Jokers
05:05 Ridiculousness
05:30 Coaching Bad
06:20 Urban Tarzan
06:50 Urban Tarzan
07:15 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
08:05 Impractical Jokers
08:30 Ridiculousness
08:55 Tosh.0
09:20 Key And Peele
09:45 Nathan For You
10:10 The It Crowd
10:35 Ridiculousness
11:00 Coaching Bad
11:50 Brotherhood
12:15 Workaholics
12:40 The It Crowd
13:05 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
13:55 Ridiculousness
14:20 Coaching Bad
15:10 Brotherhood
15:35 Ridiculousness
16:00 Impractical Jokers
16:30 Nathan For You
16:55 Tosh.0
17:25 Workaholics
17:50 Lip Sync Battle
18:39 The It Crowd
19:03 Coaching Bad
19:50 Brotherhood
20:13 Impractical Jokers
20:37 Ridiculousness
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 Key And Peele
21:54 The Half Hour

Disney Channel HD

- 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 Teen Beach Movie
12:20 The 7D
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

Discovery Channel HD

- 00:20 Wheeler Dealers
01:10 Still Alive
02:00 Kings Of The Wild
02:50 Venom Hunters
03:40 Cuban Chrome
04:30 The Liquidator
05:00 How Do They Do It?
05:30 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Deadliest Catch
06:50 Wheeler Dealers
07:40 Cuban Chrome
08:30 Deadliest Job Interview
09:20 The Liquidator
09:45 How Do They Do It?
10:10 How Do They Do It?
10:35 Survive That!
11:25 Kings Of The Wild
12:15 Venom Hunters
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 The Weapon Hunter
20:10 Storage Hunters UK
20:35 Shake It Up
21:00 Blue Collar Backers
21:50 Bear's Wild Weekend With Stephen Fry
22:40 Sydney Harbour



THE MARTIAN ON OSN MOVIES HD

CLASSIFIEDS

Kuwait Times

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2016



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

THU-SAT	THU-SAT	SING	SING
SHARQIA-1 SING SING SING SING PASSENGERS PASSENGERS	12:15 PM 2:30 PM 4:45 PM 7:00 PM 9:15 PM 11:45 PM	COLLATERAL BEAUTY NO THU-FRI-SAT MOANA MOANA AL MAWA WA AL KHOUDRAH WA AL WAJEH AL HASSAN AL MAWA WA AL KHOUDRAH WA AL WAJEH AL HASSAN	12:15 PM 2:45 PM 5:15 PM 7:45 PM 10:00 PM 12:15 AM
SHARQIA-2 PASSENGERS PASSENGERS MOANA PASSENGERS PASSENGERS PASSENGERS	12:30 PM 3:00 PM 5:30 PM 8:00 PM 10:30 PM 1:00 AM	FANAR-2 SING SING SING SING ROGUE ONEA STAR WARS STORY ROGUE ONEA STAR WARS STORY	11:45 AM 2:00 PM 4:15 PM 6:30 PM 8:45 PM 11:30 PM
SHARQIA-3 DANGAL-Hindi MOANA DANGAL-Hindi ROGUE ONEA STAR WARS STORY PASSENGERS	12:45 PM 4:00 PM 6:15 PM 9:30 PM 12:15 AM	FANAR-3 ROGUE ONEA STAR WARS STORY 13 DAYS ROGUE ONEA STAR WARS STORY 13 DAYS COLLATERAL BEAUTY 13 DAYS	12:45 PM 3:30 PM 5:30 PM 8:15 PM 10:30 PM 12:45 AM
MUHALAB-1 MOANA THU-SAT PASSENGERS NO THU-FRI-SAT MOANA DANGAL-Hindi DANGAL-Hindi PASSENGERS	1:00 PM 1:00 PM 3:30 PM 6:00 PM 9:15 PM 12:45 AM	FANAR-4 PASSENGERS PASSENGERS PASSENGERS PASSENGERS PASSENGERS PASSENGERS	12:00 PM 2:30 PM 5:00 PM 7:30 PM 10:00 PM 12:30 AM
MUHALAB-2 SING SING SING SING ROGUE ONEA STAR WARS STORY DANGAL-Hindi	11:30 AM 1:45 PM 4:00 PM 6:15 PM 8:30 PM 11:15 PM	FANAR-5 MOANA DANGAL-Hindi DANGAL-Hindi DANGAL-Hindi DANGAL-Hindi	11:30 AM 2:00 PM 5:15 PM 8:30 PM 11:45 PM
MUHALAB-3 PASSENGERS PASSENGERS THU-FRI-SAT MOANA MOANA NO THU-FRI-SAT PASSENGERS PASSENGERS PASSENGERS	11:30 AM 2:00 PM 4:30 PM 4:30 PM 7:00 PM 9:30 PM 12:05 AM	MARINA-1 ROGUE ONEA STAR WARS STORY MOANA MOANA AL MAWA WA AL KHOUDRAH WA AL WAJEH AL HASSAN PASSENGERS PASSENGERS	12:30 PM 3:30 PM 6:00 PM 8:15 PM 10:30 PM 1:00 AM
FANAR-1 MOANA	12:15 PM	MARINA-2 SING SING	12:45 PM 3:00 PM
		AVENUES-1 COLLATERAL BEAUTY SING SING TAHT AL TARABEZA AL MAWA WA AL KHOUDRAH WA AL WAJEH AL HASSAN 7:15 PM AL MAWA WA AL KHOUDRAH WA AL WAJEH AL HASSAN 9:30 PM AL MAWA WA AL KHOUDRAH WA AL WAJEH AL HASSAN 11:45 PM	12:30 PM 2:45 PM 5:00 PM 7:45 PM 10:15 PM 12:45 AM
		AVENUES-2 PASSENGERS-3D-4DX MOANA-3D-4DX MOANA-3D-4DX PASSENGERS-3D-4DX PASSENGERS-3D-4DX	12:00 PM 2:45 PM 5:15 PM 7:45 PM 10:15 PM 12:45 AM
		AVENUES-3 SING DANGAL-Hindi DANGAL-Hindi DANGAL-Hindi	11:30 AM 1:45 PM 5:00 PM 8:15 PM 11:30 PM
		AVENUES-4 DANGAL-Hindi ROGUE ONEA STAR WARS STORY DANGAL-Hindi NO THU Special Show "THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS" THU DANGAL-Hindi ROGUE ONEA STAR WARS STORY	11:30 AM 2:45 PM 5:30 PM 8:45 PM 12:05 PM
		AVENUES-5 PASSENGERS PASSENGERS-3D SING PASSENGERS	12:45 PM 3:15 PM 5:45 PM 8:00 PM

APARTMENT FOR RENT

- AL MAHBUOLLA AREA**
 ♦ Sea View ♦ Featured Site
- AL JABRIYA AREA**
 ♦ Featured Site
 ♦ Near Royale Hayat Hospital
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 ♦ Features Site, Near from Al Mowasat Hospital, near from seaside.
- AL SALMIYA (Amman Street)**
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PRADO 4 cylinder, Model GX-L 2005, Golden color (wheel Rim-CD-Rear A/C) good condition, no damage, 174000 km, Cash KD 3000. Call: 97800987. (C 5251)
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For sell new white faux fur (artificial) coat size M and pre owned like new black leather coat size M made in Turkey. Tel. No: 55020291
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CHANGE OF NAME

I, SHEEMA ALTAF SAIN W/O ALTAF ABDUL WAHAB SAIN, holder of Indian Passport No. J3509095 and Civil ID No. 282102803398 want to change my name to

ACCOMMODATION

For Filipino Bachelor ONLY near Big Jamiya Farwaniya. Available on December 25, Contact 66826412 or 97512782
22-12-2016

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr: 05:16
Shorook: 06:41
Duhr: 11:49
Asr: 14:39
Maghrib: 16:58
Isha: 18:20

EMERGENCY 112

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is **1889988**

Flight Schedule

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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 28/12/2016				Departure Flights on Wednesday 28/12/2016			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	KAC	693	Muscat	14:30
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40	KAC	792	Hanoi	14:30
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	KNE	382	Taif	14:50
KAC	102	London	00:55	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
FDK	803	Damascus	01:00	KAC	561	Amman	15:00
QTR	1086	Doha	01:15	KAC	060	Dubai	15:05
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	785	Jeddah	15:15
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:20
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:05	ABY	127	ABD	15:25
MSC	405	Sohag	02:30	QTR	1079	Doha	15:40
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	SVL	501	Jeddah	15:45
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	619	Doha	16:00
KKK	6506	Istanbul	02:55	KAC	777	Riyadh	16:00
FDB	069	Dubai	03:05	KNE	684	Madinah	16:00
RJA	644	Amman	03:05	JZR	554	Alexandria	16:10
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:30
CEB	0018	Manila	03:15	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	MSR	576	Sharm el-Sheikh	16:50
KAC	358	Kochi	03:30	SAW	706	Damascus	16:55
KAC	784	Jeddah	03:55	SVL	505	Madinah	17:00
KAC	1544	Cairo	03:55	JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	JZR	240	Amman	17:15
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	FDB	052	Dubai	17:25
KAC	344	Chennai	05:35	KAC	363	Colombo	17:40
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:45	QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55	JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:20	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	06:25	RJA	641	Amman	17:55
BAW	157	London	06:40	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
FDB	5061	Dubai	07:15	SVL	511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC	204	Lahore	07:15	KAC	353	BLR	18:15
FDB	053	Dubai	07:45	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	302	Mumbai	08:20	JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40	SVR	342	Damascus	18:55
KAC	382	Delhi	08:45	FDB	064	Dubai	19:05
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	JZR	124	Bahrain	19:15
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	362	Colombo	09:05	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
KAC	352	Kochi	09:10	QTR	1081	Doha	19:50
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
IRC	6511	ABD	09:55	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
MSC	415	Sohag	10:15	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:55
IRA	665	Shiraz	10:40	KAC	545	Cairo	21:00
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	OMA	648	Muscat	21:10
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	KAC	205	Islamabad	21:25
IRM	1188	Mashhad	11:15	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	21:30
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	QTR	1089	Doha	21:35
MEA	404	Beirut	11:30	DLH	634	Doha	21:35
IAW	157	Al Najaf	11:55	MSR	619	Alexandria	21:45
KAC	744	Dammam	12:00	FDB	5054	Dubai	21:50
JZR	1331	Al Najaf	12:20	QTR	1077	Bahrain	21:50
JZR	561	Sohag	12:40	DHX	171	Mumbai	21:55
IRM	1186	Tehran	12:45	JAI	571	Kochi	22:00
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	351	Dubai	22:00
FDB	075	Dubai	12:50	KAC	203	Lahore	22:15
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:15
CLX	792	Luxembourg	13:15	KAC	413	Bangkok	22:15
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:30	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
KAC	564	Amman	13:40	JZR	528	Asyut	22:25
KNE	231	Riyadh	13:55	ALX	230	Colombo	22:25
KAC	514	Tehran	13:55	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10	KAC	301	Mumbai	22:40
SVL	500	Jeddah	14:15	KAC	381	Delhi	22:45
FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	JZR	502	Luxor	22:55
KAC	414	Bangkok	14:35	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
				ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
				QTR	1083	Doha	23:20

CROSSWORD 1474



ACROSS

- Committee formed by a special-interest group to raise money for their favorite political candidates.
- Make used (to something).
- The part of the nervous system of vertebrates that controls involuntary actions of the smooth muscles and heart and glands.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
- A university town in western Montana.
- The last (12th) month of the year.
- West Indian tree having racemes of fragrant white flowers and yielding a durable timber and resinous juice.
- The younger brother of Edwy who became king of Northumbria when it renounced Edwy.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- Pertaining to or containing any of a group of organic compounds of nitrogen derived from ammonia.
- American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
- A person who tells or invents fables.
- Norwegian mathematician (1802-1829).
- The template for protein synthesis.
- A clique that seeks power usually through intrigue.
- Apathy demonstrated by an absence of emotional reactions.
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- 100 puls equal 1 afghani.
- A Lolish language.
- Goddess of fertility.
- A genus of Strigidae.
- Relating to of containing or affecting blood.
- The general activity of selling.
- Lower in esteem.
- A statement that deviates from or perverts the truth.
- Half the width of an em.
- (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
- The principles of right and wrong that are accepted by an individual or a social group.
- Being ten more than one hundred.
- Radish of Japan with a long hard durable root eaten raw or cooked.
- Administer an oil or ointment to.
- Ctenophore having short tentacles.
- The network in the reticular formation that serves an alerting or arousal function.
- A movie with synchronized speech and singing.
- Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
- The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
- Prohibited by law or by official or accepted rules.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- A member of the Dravidian people living in southeastern India.
- The shape of a bell.
- Type genus of the Rutaceae.

DOWN

- Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
- The biblical name for ancient Syria.
- City in southwestern Colombia in a rich agricultural area.
- A platform raised above the surrounding level to give prominence to the person on it.
- An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
- A soft silver-white ductile metallic element (liquid at normal temperatures).
- The act of using.
- Surface layer of ground containing a mat of grass and grass roots.
- A major waterfall in southern Africa.
- Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
- Small bitter fruit of the maraschino cherry tree from whose juice maraschino liqueur is made.
- The sixth month of the civil year.
- (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
- The act of scanning.
- A gliding joint between the distal ends of the tibia and fibula and the proximal end of the talus.
- A rotating disk shaped to convert circular into linear motion.
- Inability to coordinate voluntary muscle movements.
- The Creator.
- Not made with leavening.
- A landlocked principality in the Himalayas northeast of India.
- The twelfth month of the civil year.
- Any of several Old World tropical aromatic annual or perennial herbs of the genus Ocimum.
- Pertaining to one of the small sacs (as in a compound gland).
- (trade mark) Yarn that has an elastic core wound around with cotton or silk or nylon or rayon threads.
- United States naval officer and historian (1840-1914).
- A doctor's degree in optometry.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- A car that is closed and that has front and rear seats and two or four doors.
- Of or relating to whales and dolphins etc.
- A derogatory term used by Jews to refer to non-Jewish women.
- At or near the north pole.
- Step on it.
- A peasant farmer in the Scottish highlands.
- True mosses.
- The most northwestern Hawaiian island (beyond Kauai).
- (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
- The basic unit of money in Western Samoa.
- A large round wicker basket (used on farms).
- A small narrow pointed missile that is thrown or shot.
- A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
- An advanced law degree.
- One of the most common of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
- A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.

Yesterday's Solution

E	F	T		B	A	H	A	M	A	S		B	A	A	S	
A	A	R		S	C	A	P	U	L	A		A	C	N	E	
S	H	A	M	E		V	I	R	A	L		O	M	A	N	
E	D	D	A		B	E	A	D		A	B	B	E	S	S	
				T	A	A	L		O	S	A	K	A			
A	H	E	A	D		E	C	C	M		B	L	A	B		
T	A	N	K	A		M	A	H	A		E	A	R	E		
T	I	T	A	N	I	A		D	U	S	T	M	A	N		
A	R	O	M	A		M	A	D		R	A	R	I	N	G	
I	E				A	B	C			G	U	I	N	E	A	
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I	O	N	I	C		W	A	T	T	L	E		A	B	A	
R	U	T	A		A	B	R	E	A	C	T		L	E	M	
D	E	A	L		K	W	A	N	Z	A	A		F	D	A	

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Ideas and communications are about topics of interest and concern just now. Getting the facts and making sure that people get your message straight are important parts of your job. This is a time when new information becomes known. You could move into a better paying position within the company for which you work. Keep aware-you are in a learning phase now, and that means adapting to changing circumstances. If possible-you may want to postpone travel plans until the office or workplace gets back to some semblance of a smooth running organization. Then the powers that will be most pleased to consider your needs. If you see that this is a good time to travel... Pack lightly and carry small bills and plenty of change.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are mentally very sharp. Consider expanding your mind through furthering your education-make your plans. Open up your belief system, your whole base of knowledge and experience. Time's a wastin'-let no grass grow between your toes! This is an excellent time to make decisions and take care of any mental work. If you teach, this is a good time to plan an outstanding winter or spring program of study. Things are working with rather than against you now. There are some old traditions that you may have in your past that you will want to reinstate now. This is a high-energy day and much is accomplished. A little shopping in preparation for a day off with friends and family tomorrow and you prepare for the celebrating tonight!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Fate sends opportunity your way-careful, you could pass this up if you are not paying attention. New information can change your outlook and your life, but you must be on the lookout for it. Money, sensuality and health can be a focus for this-travel may help you to decide the outcome. Gurus and ideologies of one kind or another-religious, political, philosophical and such-may seem to have all the answers at this time. Be very careful whom and what you believe in, as you could be deceived or you might even deceive yourself. The easy answers may seem so wonderful, careful. There is nothing wrong with having your head in the clouds, but it is a mistake to try to live there. A sweet little animal is yours for the asking today.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Travel in your professional life may be on hold for a bit but this may be a blessing. This day however, may have opportunities for travel. A stay at a lakeside cabin, motel, hotel, etc., may be planned or a call ahead may find an opening just for you and a loved one this next weekend. Whatever the case, today is not such a busy day... You have done your work and now all you need to do is ring up the sales or be available to help a client. Take a step back and jot down a few goals on next year's calendar. Consider hanging a red pencil from a string near this calendar and check off these goals as time goes by... You will really be pleased with yourself by this time next year. New and perhaps unusual ways of appreciating and loving may become possible soon.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You will gladly accept a job or an assignment that could take you off the beaten path. Do not go too far though-you will want to be home in time for the big social you and your family or friends usually enjoy at this time of the year. You should find yourself having a clear vision into your own inner sense of values, how you appreciate and love. This is a good time to examine and ponder what is most important to you. This should be a great time for new goal planning. You may find new wisdom and discovery in organization and perception. Social life is going to increase in the next few days. Get plenty of rest and drink lots of water. If you have decided to move your residence, you could make that jumpstart now-don't make any other jumps.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You could be thinking about past loves and fun places from time-to-time today. Pay attention to your chores or work during the day. The afternoon is great for visits and relaxed interaction with co-workers or friends. Ask about recipe favorites and request that each person bring three recipes that their families enjoyed during the holiday season-share. Whether you are a cook or your specialty is some other thing, some of these old family favorites would be wonderful to have in an album for all to enjoy and perhaps make additions to from time to time. At the first of the year you may want to have a party for your co-worker friends and perhaps a little booklet of these recipes would help you start the year out with good connections, new friends, and a positive aura.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Any form of legal controversy is best avoided now. It would be far better to settle out of court than to fight to the bitter end. A change of residence is something that has been on your mind lately. You may find this move a possibility during this upcoming weekend. Educational plans need changing, as you may now realize the education you have now does not suit you as well as you would like. Anything connected with publishing, advertising or broadcasting requires reexamination. A change of plans or perspective gives you the upper hand. This is a good time for you-a time you are free to make any sort of change that you might want to try out for yourself. This holiday season also becomes one of the most memorable ones in your life.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This is a time when you could be contemplating some changes and examining your responsibilities and basic security. You can get rid of all that is unsound, leaving only that which has been properly determined or solid. Get down to the basics. Meaning, if you are working it would be good to clean out your desk, make a full effort to get rid of the trash and file away folders that are just sitting around. If you are in retail, look around and pick up, put up and create a good presentation. You may find that you are more organized than before, able to reach new levels of self-discipline. Voices fill the air this evening as you and a group of your friends enjoy some fun interactions. Careful with your diet; there is a lot of food to savor. Take little bites.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Missing information is likely when someone is in an extreme hurry-make sure it is not you that is in a hurry! Today seems to be the type of day where everybody works toward getting things completed. Be sure that you get all of the facts and be sure that you understand a situation before you become involved. This may not be the most opportune day for making plans. It could be hard for you to figure out the right move. Go with the flow and enjoy the day for the day's sake. You will find new opportunities to be surrounded by busy, happy people: shopping, grocery store errands, etc. You enjoy performing simple acts of altruism. Make a donation to an organization to which you feel a kinship; for instance, if you are adopted, perhaps an adoption group, etc.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

In youth, discipline, economy and practicality are stressed. You are certainly disciplined and the people in your workplace put a great deal of trust in your professional expertise. If you find yourself working today, you will be happy to know that someone new and trustworthy will be coming under your tutelage. The hard work in becoming educated brings more remuneration your way as you realize you have a better understanding of human nature. To teach, to expand the knowledge of others, is a great accomplishment and may become one of your goals this next year. You might want to think along the lines of entertaining because you have a way with words and you could teach through entertaining. Celebrate tonight.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You are very clearheaded and able to view all of the alternative paths and are in a planning mood. Go ahead and make those decisions. You can see the road ahead and will make the right choices. Someone will understand just how you feel and be on your side today; you feel appreciated and valued for your ability to get things accomplished. Along with your humor, others may see your somewhat eccentric nature. In a group effort this afternoon you can see a breakthrough in a few changes that may be needed around the office. Expressing your thoughts may be better written out for a presentation at next month's meeting. It is a super time to be constructive with others and to work together. Home life is a bash! One of your family members has a game ready.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your career may be quite different next year. It is time to enjoy what you have learned and put it into action. All that education, training or experience is paying off. You are helping others and superiors will soon be reassessing and deciding the best place for you to be working next. You may even have your own office. There always seems to be something new or a new experience just around the corner. Keep moving and making new goals; you are the fortunate one. If you are considering some type of management or investigative work, you are the one that will discover problems and find the answer that could put a problem right in no time, a true benefit. It would be good to count your blessings today. Laughter comes from young people this evening.

WORD SEARCH

Beatles Songs 2

Find and circle all of the songs by The Beatles that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of an additional Beatles song.

Grid for word search containing Beatles song titles and names. The grid is a 20x20 grid of letters. The words to find are: E V N O W H E R E M A N I N E E D Y O U, E E L O V E M E D O C T O R R O B E R T, W O T R E T L E K S R E T L E H S R I E, H W H R E H E V O L I D N A Y U B F A B, A I I S O D Y S P E N N Y L A N E M L L, T L S M N G O T A H E L L P C S E E U O I, G D B O A W M E P T H I E N L I E V M G, O H O N D R O W E H T B I F G J E S O C, E O Y O U N D T R G T A I G A Y O L O E, S N O I J U O T H B H R N A Y O T D M L G, O E E T O O R E A D E M W U I E E F Y N, N Y U U Y C I N C M L A T R N T F T O I, R P L L S C V O K I E Y O E S O U S I D V, E I B O E A E O W E E D L G R E N G X O, S E U V V R M N R C E U E T J O P I T L, O M O E O Y Y R I E M T Y A S A N D D Y, L G Y R L K C O T B H O M S R M Y M O M, A I R N E C A F E E V R A E B T I T E L, M R O K H O R R A E L S E I G G I P L, I L F E S R S Y S H G O O D N I G H T A.

- ALL MY LOVING AND I LOVE HER BECAUSE
- BLUE JAY WAY COME TOGETHER DIG IT
- DOCTOR ROBERT DRIVE MY CAR FOR NO ONE FOR YOU BLUE
- GIRL GLASS ONION GOLDEN SLUMBERS GOOD NIGHT HELP
- HELTER SKELTER HER MAJESTY I FEEL FINE I NEED YOU I'M A LOSER
- I'M SO TIRED LET IT BE LOVE ME DO LOVE YOU TO MAGGIE MAE MARTHA MY DEAR NOWHERE MAN OLD BROWN SHOE PAPERBACK WRITER PENNY LANE
- PIGGIES RAIN REVOLUTION ROCKY RACCOON SAVOY TRUFFLE SHE LOVES YOU THE WORD THIS BOY WHAT GOES ON WILD HONEY PIE

Yesterday Solution

Beatles Songs 1

Grid for word search containing Beatles song titles and names. The grid is a 20x20 grid of letters. The words to find are: A N O T H E R G I R L, A S K M E W H Y B I R T H D A Y, B L A C K B I R D, C R Y B A B Y C R Y, D A Y T R I P P E R, D E A R P R U D E N C E, D I G A P O N Y, E L E A N O R R I G B Y, F I X I N G A H O L E, F L Y I N G, G E T B A C K, G E T T I N G B E T T E R, H E L L O G O O D B Y E, H E Y B U L L D O G, H O N E Y P I E, I M M I N E, I W I L L, I F I F E L L, I N M Y L I F E, J U L I A, L A D Y M A D O N N A, L O V E L Y R I T A, M I C H E L L E, N O R E P L Y, O H D A R L I N G, P L E A S E P L E A S E M E, P O L Y T H E N E P A M, S E X Y S A D I E, S O M E T H I N G, S U N K I N G, T A X M A N, T E L L M E W H Y T H E E N D, T I C K E T T O R I D E, T W O O F U S, W A I T, Y E R B L U E S, Y E S T E R D A Y.

The hidden song is: SHE CAME IN THROUGH THE BATHROOM WINDOW

Daily SuDoku

9	6	5					1	7
			9	1				8
			2		9			
	1			2				
3								1
		4					5	
	7			6				
8			9	5				
2	5					3	7	6

Yesterday's Solution

6	1	8	2	5	7	9	3	4
2	9	7	6	3	4	5	8	1
4	5	3	9	8	1	6	7	2
1	8	6	4	7	2	3	5	9
3	2	4	5	9	6	8	1	7
5	7	9	3	1	8	2	4	6
9	4	1	8	6	5	7	2	3
7	6	5	1	2	3	4	9	8
8	3	2	7	4	9	1	6	5

GOSSIP



Cannon spends Christmas in hospital with Hart at his side

Kevin Hart visited Nick Cannon as he spent Christmas in hospital. The 'Americas Got Talent' judge has been forced to spend the holiday season in hospital after complications relating to his autoimmune disease Lupus, but didn't have to spend the festive day alone surrounded by medical staff as he was visited by the actor and 84-year-old activist Dick Gregory. Taking to his Instagram account on Boxing Day to share a shot of the three men together, 37-year-old Kevin wrote: "So happy to see my brother @nickcannon getting back to himself. Nothing but love for you man.... #GetWellNick #Ncredible (sic)" Nick then posted the same photo to his own page on the photo-sharing website, where he thanked everyone for their support during his recovery. He captioned the photo: "Man, so many loving strong vibrations came to visit me in the hospital today! Thank you to EVERYONE for all the gifts, messages, comments, the time, the love and the prayers... I'm getting there!!! And once I'm back... it's about to be #Ncredible

(sic)" The 36-year-old star revealed on Thursday that he would be spending the holiday season in hospital, after he took to Instagram to share a photo of his arm hooked up to a monitor in Los Angeles' Cedars-Sinai Hospital. He wrote beside the photo: "For all who have been trying to contact me the last few days this is where I've been. And I will be in the Hospital through Christmas. "All good though, Doctors say I will be back to normal before the New Year. #LupusSucks #ncredible #warrior.(sic)" Nick - who was diagnosed with the disease in 2012 - was also hospitalised over the summer for exhaustion and vowed at the time to take better care of himself. He wrote at the time: "Don't worry, Temporary pit stop... Sometimes I can be a little too bull headed and stubborn. I gotta stop running my body to the ground."



Emilia Fox took famous guests for granted

Emilia Fox wishes she'd made the most of having famous guests round for Christmas when she was younger. The 42-year-old actress - who is the daughter of actors Edward Fox and Joanna David - always "took for granted" the people her parents invited over to join their family for the festive season, and though she thinks their lives influenced her chosen career path, she admits she regrets not quizzing them more. She said: "Christmas always sticks in my mind as my mum would always do big Christmases with such a variety of people. "Amazing actors like Lindsay Anderson or Fred Zinnemann, who directed my father in 'The Day of the Jackal'. "As a child you just take them for granted as your mum's friends, but now I wish I could sit down with them and ask them all these questions because I'm fascinated by their lives. "When people say to me, 'Do you think acting is in your blood?' I always said no but I definitely feel the people I met and the stories they had to tell has given me a better understanding of the highs and lows of acting. That's what acting is - telling stories." The 'Silent Witness' actress has a six-year-old daughter, Rose, with ex-boyfriend Jeremy Gilley, and despite her own background, admits it would be her "worst nightmare" if the youngster grew up wanting to be an actress. She said: "I always think it is a parent's worst nightmare when their child says they want to be an actor. It is such a precarious profession to choose..." "I feel that I want to give Rose as wide of a spectrum to give her the chance to do what she wants to do. She might want to do something completely different."

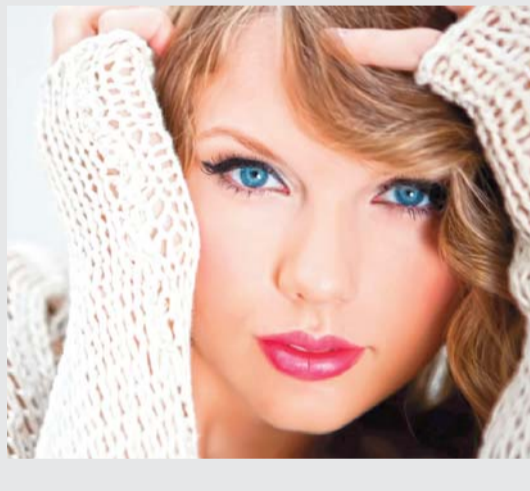
Taylor Swift surprises 96-year-old veteran with home visit and performance

Taylor Swift has surprised a 96-year-old World War II veteran with a visit to his home. The 27-year-old singer-songwriter travelled to Missouri on Monday to pay a special visit to the home of Cyrus Porter, who had previously attracted attention for watching Taylor in concert and claiming that her music had brought him closer to his grandchildren. In a clip posted online, the chart-topping star is seen walking into a house jam-packed with people and greeting her elderly fan with gifts. Taylor posed for photographs and even performed a few tunes for Cyrus, who previously claimed that the 'Bad Blood' hitmaker stages shows that no other entertainer can match. He said: "I've been to two concerts. Memphis and St Louis. Look what she does ... she puts on a show no one else puts on. I just enjoyed going to see 'em and her. I would as soon go see her right now as anybody!" Earlier this month, Jaime King hailed Taylor as an "amazing" godmother to her and husband Kyle Newman's 17-month-old son Leo Thames, saying she couldn't have picked anyone better for the role. Asked how Taylor is with Leo, Jaime explained: "She's amazing. She's great! As she is with everybody around her." Meanwhile, actress Jessica Alba is the godmother of Jamie's three-year-old son James - and she previously explained the logic behind her decisions, insisting it had "nothing to do" with their celebrity status. She said: "It really has nothing to do with the fact they're Taylor Swift or Jessica Alba. "It's a collective way of raising your children that has to do with the fact that you're choosing people who will help spiritually guide them and be there."



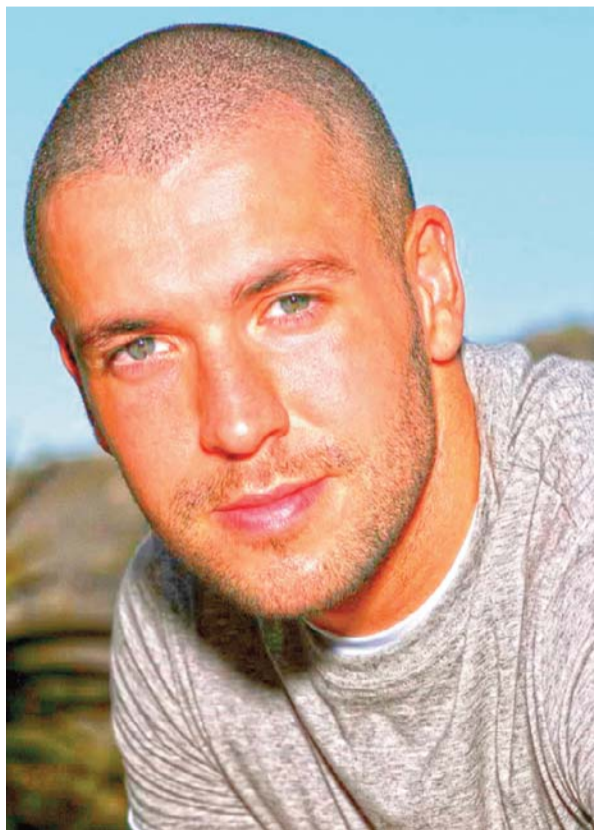
No festive holiday for Kevin Simm

Kevin Simm's wife wouldn't let him go on holiday over Christmas. The 'Voice' winner is looking forward to a break over the festive period with spouse Laura and their young sons Charlie, five, and Oliver, three, but despite his suggestion they go on vacation, they are planning to stay at home. He said: "I'm not doing pantomime this Christmas but I am looking forward to spending time with the family [as I've been] gigging most nights, so I would barely see the kids. I think this Christmas I'll just be spending as much time with my wife and kids. "I mentioned trying to go abroad with my wife, but I don't think I'll win that battle; after all Xmas is all about family." Kevin's latest album, 'Recover', is largely inspired by his family, with the title track dedicated to his spouse. He exclusively told BANG Showbiz: "The majority of the inspiration is down to my family. There's a song with the title 'Recover' which is specifically about his wife. But the title of the album is about me feeling that I wouldn't be in this position with a new album out at this time of my life." The 35-year-old singer shot to fame as a member of Liberty X - comprised of the losing finalists on 2001 reality TV show 'Popstars' - but insists his life hasn't always been glamorous. He said: "I've had so many jobs... the worst job would probably be when I was doing shop fitting and I did it with my brother. With all the different bits in aisles in supermarkets, you would fit them and it was horrendous, heavy and boring."



Shayne Ward's allergic reaction

Shayne Ward had an allergic reaction to a Santa suit that left him vomiting. The 'Coronation Street' actor is thankful he has never had a disastrous Christmas but the worst thing that has happened to him during the festive season was his unusual response to the dressing up costume. Asked if he's ever had a Christmas disaster, he said: "No but I once wore a Santa's outfit from America that gave me a weird reaction. "I had to take it off and I was throwing up." Shayne, 32, shot to fame when he won the 'X Factor' in 2005 and admits he always associates the Christmas period with his stint on the show because he was crowned the winner in late December. He said: "December 17, 2005. 'Over the Rainbow' was my final song on 'The X Factor' and it was a brilliant moment for me. "It's crazy but it was one of the most amazing times I've had. I loved it on there." Singing and acting are both very different professions but the 'That's My Goal' hitmaker enjoys both aspects. He said: "I like both. Singing is a huge passion of mine but acting is a completely different challenge. "With a script, you do it once and it's gone. "It's a different mindset and I love that." Shayne previously expressed a desire to become 'Coronation Street's' biggest heartthrob. Speaking about his role, which saw him secure the National Television Awards' Best Newcomer gong, he shared: "It would be mint to play a heartthrob. I just love any type of challenge and roles because every day I'm learning, I'm watching, observing all the actors. That's the great thing about it. I'll have anything thrown at me. I'd like to give everything I possibly can and push myself as much as I can. I want to be thrown from pillar to post by women."



Kelsea Ballerini has got engaged



The 23-year-old country singer was proposed to on Christmas Day by her boyfriend of just nine months, Morgan Evans, who popped the question while the blonde beauty was burning food. Sharing the romantic moment on Instagram, she wrote: "This morning, 9 months and 13 days later, he got down on one knee in the kitchen while I was burning pancakes and asked me to marry him. Loving him has been the greatest gift of my life. And now I get to do it for life. #HECALLEDIDBS. (sic)" Kelsea also took to Twitter to share a close-up of the stunning ring. Alongside the pic, she wrote: "I GET TO MARRY MY AUSSIE. my heart is bursting from loving this human so much. luckiest girl in the world. (sic)" Morgan - who is also a well-respected musician - had her diamond sparkler custom made in Nashville, Tennessee and said he wanted something "classic and beau-

tiful" just like his wife-to-be. He told PeopleStyle: "I had the ring custom made with a diamond I picked from a local designer here in Nashville. I wanted it to be classic and beautiful, like her." And Kelsea now has another reason to keep in shape, fitting into a wedding gown, and she will also need to choose a dress to wear to the 2017 Grammy Awards on February 12, where she is nominated for Best New Artist. The 'Love Me Like You Mean It' hitmaker previously admitted she had only recently taken up regular exercise so she can stay in great shape on tour. At the time, she spilled: "I just started working out a month ago, because I hate it. I don't love cardio, but I want to feel stronger and I want to feel toned, so we do smaller weights and a ton of reps. I noticed I have more endurance now when I'm running around performing." Kelsea and Morgan are yet to set a date for their big day.

Mariah Carey is getting serious about her toyboy

The 46-year-old singer spent Christmas with backing dancer Bryan Tanaka, who she started dating after splitting from billionaire businessman James Packer in October, and friends say she is head over heels for him. A source told Entertainment Tonight: "She's into him now. He gets along really well with her twins, Moroccan and Monroe. "She bought him lavish designer Christmas gifts from the Aspen boutiques. "They walk around holding each other's hands and are always very affectionate. [They're] always smooching." Mariah, Bryan and her twins, whose father is Mariah's ex-husband Nick Cannon, are staying in a beautiful house in Aspen, courtesy of AirBnB and there is plenty of space for each of them to relax in as the property has no less than five bedrooms, five bathrooms, two living rooms as well as a games room, a cinema room, a gym and a sauna. Meanwhile, Mariah's ex-husband Nick Cannon, who is the father of her five-year-old twins is spending the festive season under the care of medical staff as he is currently being treated for complications relating to autoimmune disease Lupus. He posted a picture of himself hooked up to a monitor in Los Angeles' Cedars-Sinai Hospital and wrote: "For all who have been trying to contact me the last few days this is where I've been. And I will be in the Hospital through Christmas. "All good though, Doctors say I will be back to normal before the New Year. #LupusSucks #ncredible #warrior.(sic)" The 36-year-old star - who was diagnosed with the disease in 2012 - was hospitalised over the summer for exhaustion and vowed at the time to take better care of himself. He wrote at the time: "Don't worry, Temporary pit stop... Sometimes I can be a little too bull headed and stubborn. I gotta stop running my

body to the ground." Earlier this year, Nick insisted he was healthier than he's ever been because he has done so much research into Lupus. He said: "I'm healthier now than I've ever been before, because of the research, because of the education that I've received on the proper things to eat and the proper things to put into my body - what can cause flare ups and what can't, and preventative measures and all of these things. And when you can share that information and share knowledge and research, I think that helps more than anything. "You learn that this is something that you can live with and actually overcome with the proper research and with the proper support system." — Bang Showbiz



GOSSIP



MARGOT ROBBIE

'TATTOOS WEDDING DATE ON CLOSE FRIENDS'

Margot Robbie has reportedly tattooed the date of her wedding on some of her close pals. The 26-year-old actress tied the knot with Tom Ackerley on December 19th at a private property in the Byron Bay Hinterland, and has now ensured that some of her guests will never forget the date by having 19 in Roman numerals inked on their skin, according to the Courier Mail newspaper. The 'Suicide Squad' star announced her shock marriage last week via Instagram, sharing a picture of herself and new husband Tom - who she has been dating for three years - complete with her pear-shaped diamond wedding ring. In the widely-shared photograph, the image of the couple is blurred out apart from her left hand which features the eye-catching sparkler on her wedding finger, which she is pointing towards the camera. Around 50 guests were reportedly in attendance at their wedding, which began at 4pm and ended with a disco which finished around 11pm. The couple - who are said to have got engaged over the summer - were so determined to keep their big day a secret they even told guests to meet at different locations, from the Gold Coast to Byron Bay, before they were collected by bus and transported to the venue. Guests were also asked to hand in cameras and mobile phones to ensure a social media blackout was adhered to. Guests at the ceremony included the star's brothers Lachlan and Cameron, and her sister Anya. However, the Hollywood star is estranged from her dad Doug so mother Sarie is thought to have given her away. The 'Wolf of Wall Street' star confessed she would love to have kids with Tom one day and revealed they would move back Down Under when that time comes. She said: "They'll be here. The kids will be in Australia."



Harry collaboration with Fairey on new clothing line

Debbie Harry has teamed up with Shepard Fairey for a new women's line for his alternative label OBEY. The 71-year-old Blondie singer has been "hands-on" with every detail of the creative process, and the 46-year-old designer is thrilled to be working with the 'Call Me' hit-maker and says her involvement has showcased her "incredible talent". On collaborating with the punk rock fashionista, Fairey told WWD.com: "I've been a Blondie fan my whole life and have collaborated with them in past, which has been a dream come true. But working with Debbie on this project has been totally inspiring. "She's been very involved and hands-on for the whole process, just another display of her incredible talent." Fairey previously designed Debbie Harry-inspired OBEY hoodies and a screen print of the buxom blonde and her band mate Chris Stein. To this day Harry continues to inspire with her unique rock style. The 'Heart of Glass' singer is known for her famous pout, chiselled bone structure and bleached white hair. She has inspired endless pop stars of today with her style including 'Wrecking Ball' hitmaker Miley Cyrus and 'After the Afterparty' star Charli XCX. However, Harry doesn't think she is a "stylish person". She previously said: "I like clothes but I don't think I am a particularly stylish person, I'm kind of an anti-style at this stage, I think it's absurd that I'm still celebrated as a style icon - I'm really not very stylish." Meanwhile, Fairey has teased that he also has "a big solo project" that he will be working on in Los Angeles and will see light of day in 2017. Harry and Fairey's OBEY line is expected to drop next autumn.

Kylie gave North West & Penelope custom lip kits for Christmas!

Kylie Jenner gifted her nieces Penelope Disick and North West their own lip kits for Christmas. The 'Keeping Up With the Kardashians' star shared pictures of the two custom made sets, which contain beauty products in four-year-old Penelope - her half-sister Kourtney Kardashian's daughter - and Kim Kardashian West and Kanye West's three-year-old daughter North's favourite shades; pink and purple respectively. Alongside a picture of the boxes posted on Instagram The 19-year-old beauty mogul wrote: "Kylie's custom gifts to Penelope & North. A whole set in their favourite colour (sic)" It comes after Penelope's mother Kourtney Kardashian revealed her little girl and North both have their own vanity cases. The 37-year-old star's mother Kris Jenner bought her grandchildren individual make-up bags to store their beauty products for their dress-up fun. Kourtney is very happy for her daughter to play with make-up, despite being so young, because she just wants to copy her mum and famous family members who love to get glamorous. She previously said: "Penelope is into make-up and beauty I think just from seeing me, we get

our hair and makeup done a lot and usually we try to do it at our house so I feel like she's around a lot. My mum got Penelope and North these little vanity cases for Christmas, filled it with make-up, and I try to get them as much natural make-up products as possible, but I love to let them experiment and play and have fun with it." Kourtney - who also has sons, Mason, seven, and two-year-old Reign, with her ex-partner Scott Disick - wants Penelope and North to learn about makeup from her and Kim because both of them and their sisters Khloe, Kendall Jenner and Kylie Jenner all benefited from beauty tips from Kris, 61. She shared: "I would say that my mum is the one who really started it all with all of us, I think because she is so into beauty I think watching her as a little girl that is really how you learn. She always loved makeup and my sisters and I would play with her make-up."



Twiggy has 'never' faced ageism or sexism

The 67-year-old modeling icon insists she hasn't ever been discriminated against, though she finds it frustrating when young models are chosen to promote products for older people. Asked if we live in an ageist world, she said: "Probably, but I'm not the one to ask as my life has been so bizarre and I have been given such wonderful opportunities, to model, work in films, become a recording artist, work on Broadway, do my range..." So I feel blessed to be given these chances. "I have never faced ageism or sexism in my life, but I am sure they exist. "I hate it when 19 year olds are used to sell anti-ageing creams. When I see pictures of myself, I want to see my real face." And Twiggy insists she'd rather age naturally than have cosmetic surgery or treatments like wrinkle-smoothing Botox injections. She said in a recent interview: "I'm a coward, I had an operation once years ago because I had to and the anaesthetic was horrible. "I also work in the US a lot and I don't like some of the faces I see - they are like creatures. I have friends who have had great, really subtle work done by great surgeons, but still it's not for me. "Am I tempted by Botox? No, never. Why would I inject a poison into my face? I've got friends who can't frown and that's weird. "But the worst thing is those fillers - people look ridiculous. "Especially the chimpunk cheek and lips - I just don't get it at all. "Where people slip up is they think they're going to look younger. I don't want to look 35 because I'm not - I just want to look good for my age."

KYLIE JENNER HELPING BLAC CHYNA WITH KIDS

Kylie Jenner has been a "huge help" to Blac Chyna by looking after her son King Cairo. The 28-year-old model has been busy since she gave birth to her second child Dream Kardashian - whom she shares with Rob Kardashian - last month, and sources say she is thankful to the 19-year-old reality star for keeping her four-year-old son King Cairo - whom she shares with Kylie's boyfriend Tyga - "happy and satisfied". A source said: "Kylie can't do any wrong where Chyna's concerned. Kylie's been a huge help to her by watching King and keeping him happy and satisfied as she deals with her two little babies who require so much of her attention, by the name of Dream and Rob." The news of Chyna's friendship with the 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star comes as it was recently claimed members of the famous family - which include mother Kris Jenner, and sisters Kim, Khloé, and Kourtney Kardashian weren't happy with the tumultuous relationship between her and Rob. The source added to HollywoodLife.com: "Still, she feels salty that Kris, Kim, Khloe and Kourtney aren't supporting her relationship with Rob Kardashian and she's equally mad at them for excluding her from family functions." The engaged pair - who have their own reality show 'Rob & Chyna' - separated last week after constantly fighting with one another, but reconciled just before Christmas to spend the holiday with their new-born daughter. Recently, it was claimed Chyna had been left off the guest list for Kris' annual Christmas bash as the family "can't stand" the constant arguments between the new parents. An insider 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."



Tom Fletcher is selfish Christmas host

Tom and Giovanna Fletcher host Christmas at their house for "selfish" reasons. The McFly singer and his author wife - who have sons Buzz, two, and Buddy, eight months together - are happy to host the festivities at their home because it means they don't have to go anywhere. Tom said: "We're really selfish and make our families come to us. But I don't think the decorating work at the house will be finished this year." Giovanna added: "It's usually me who cooks but Tom has taken over in the last few years because I've been pregnant. I just sat there eating chocolate." The couple are particularly excited about this Christmas because it is the first time their older son has been old enough to understand what is happening. Tom said: "Last year Buzz wasn't old enough to have conversations about Santa but this year he can really get into it because we've been talking about it loads." Giovanna added: "It's going to be so magical. We need to start thinking about the traditions we're going to do for Buzz and Buddy." The pair's family Christmases now are a far cry from the wild celebrations they used to enjoy with Tom's McFly bandmates when they were younger. Tom said: "We used to live next door to Danny [Jones] and one Christmas he had everyone over to his." Giovanna added: "We had this really big drunken night and the police ended up being called. We weren't being that loud."

Nick and Vanessa Lachey welcome their baby boy

Vanessa and Nick Lachey have welcomed a baby boy. The celebrity couple - who already have a four-year-old son called Camden and a daughter Brooklyn, 20 months - have announced that their third child was born on Christmas Eve. Vanessa, 36, wrote on Instagram: "It's a very Merry Christmas indeed! We had our Christmas Miracle. Phoenix Robert Lachey decided to show up early and was born on Christmas Eve. Mommy, Daddy, Camden & Brooklyn LOVE You very much! #LacheyPartyOf5 (sic)." Both Vanessa and Nick, 43, have previously spoken about the joys and the responsibility of being parents. Vanessa explained back in May 2015: "When I introduced Camden to Brooklyn, I had my doctor give me some tips. "I had Camden give a gift to Brooklyn - we laid out three stuffed animals, we said, 'Which one do you want to pick for Brooklyn?' He goes, 'That one, that one!' and so he picked the little giraffe." Meanwhile, Nick admitted that

although parenthood has taken some adjusting to, he has relished the challenge. He said in 2013: "It's just all-encompassing. You would do anything for your children - not that you wouldn't for your wife or someone else you love, but there's a sense of protectiveness and responsibility that comes with your child which you don't feel in any other relationship. "[Becoming a dad] has changed my life in every possible way." Last month, Vanessa shared a video on Instagram, taken earlier this year, where she told Nick the baby was a boy She wrote in the caption: "I have so much to be Thankful for this year... especially our littlest Lachey. When Daddy came home from tour this Summer and we were moving into our new house I shared the news! Now I'm sharing it with you! I am so very Thankful and Grateful for this family of mine! And Thankful for YOU! All your Love & support makes what we do FUN and worth it! Happy Thanksgiving Everyone! Love, V (sic)."



FEATURE



People attend the 15th birthday party celebrations of Rubi Ibarra in Villa Guadalupe, San Luis Potosi State, Mexico. — AFP photos



Rubi Ibarra dances during her 15th birthday celebrations in Villa Guadalupe.



Rubi Ibarra dances with a singer during her 15th birthday celebrations.

Huge crowd joins Mexican teen's party after invite goes viral



Rubi Ibarra dances during her 15th birthday celebrations in Villa Guadalupe.

A huge crowd turned out Monday to celebrate the 15th birthday of Rubi Ibarra, a small-town Mexican girl though it was fewer than the 1.3 million people who said they were coming after the invitation went viral online. Girls' 15th birthday parties are often a huge affair in Latin America, when families pull out all the stops to welcome them to womanhood. But Rubi's "quinceanera" party took the phenomenon to a whole new level, after the invite became an off-beat internet sensation. "We found out through social media and we said 'Let's go. Everyone is invited? Let's go,'" said Tania Rodriguez, who traveled five hours by car to attend the party held in a large field in Villa de Guadalupe, in San Luis Potosi state.

"With all the coverage on her, Rubi felt like part of the family," added her husband Gonzalo Torres, before heading off in search of "more drink." About 10,000 partygoers of all ages came to see Rubi, who danced the night away in a bejeweled floral princess gown with a dramatic red skirt. The teen was the center of attention on a rock concert-style stage set up in the field, as journalists jostled to capture her every move. The evening featured fireworks, a banquet sponsored by a food company and a concert broadcast on a giant screen. Rubi danced with friends, as well as the men of her family, receiving a rose from each, in keeping with tradition.

Viral invite

"Hi, how's it going? We would like to invite you this December 26 to our daughter Rubi Ibarra Garcia's 15th birthday party in La Joya," her dad, Crescencio, said in the video

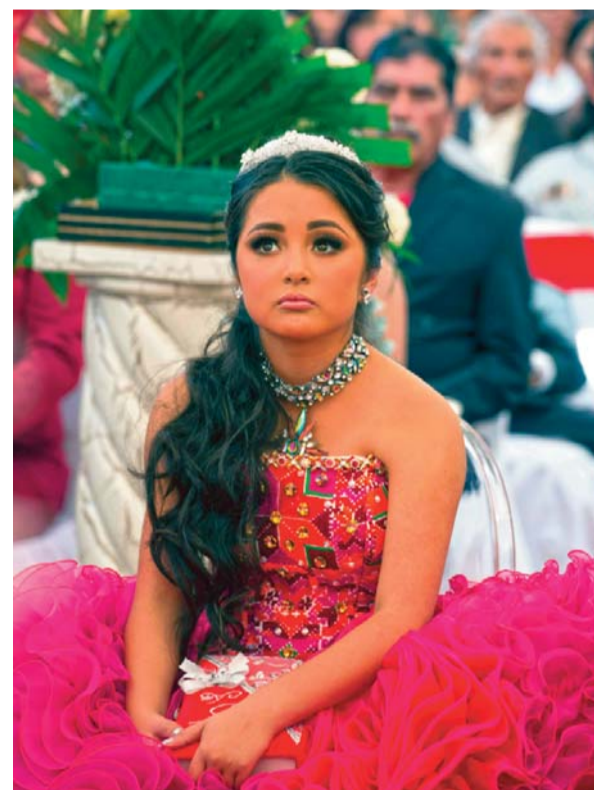
invitation that went viral. Dressed in a cowboy hat typical of northern Mexico, he ticked off the names of the bands that would play at the party and announced a horse race with a 10,000-peso prize (about \$500), as his wife and the now-famous Rubi stood at his side. "Everyone" is invited, he said. About 1.3 million Facebook users replied that they would attend the party originally set to be in La Joya, a village of 200 people near the city of San Luis Potosi.



Horsemen take part in a race for the 15th birthday celebrations of Rubi Ibarra.



Rubi Ibarra (left) dances with her father Crescencio Ibarra during her 15th birthday celebrations.



Rubi Ibarra is pictured during a mass for her 15th birthday celebrations.

"This all got out of control," Crescencio said in one of the many media interviews he has since been asked to give. "That doesn't mean we didn't want to invite everyone, of course, but here our parties are regional... This is something we weren't expecting." Rubi fielded numerous interviews herself, becoming a national sensation with her dark hair, cute smile and braces. An airline turned the commotion into free publicity, offering discount tickets to get to the party. And a video game has emerged in which a teenage girl runs down a red carpet, tossing invitations to all and sundry. The family said they were originally expecting around 800 people for the party. Local authorities moved it to the large field and sent a security detail for what Mexican media were calling "the party of the year."

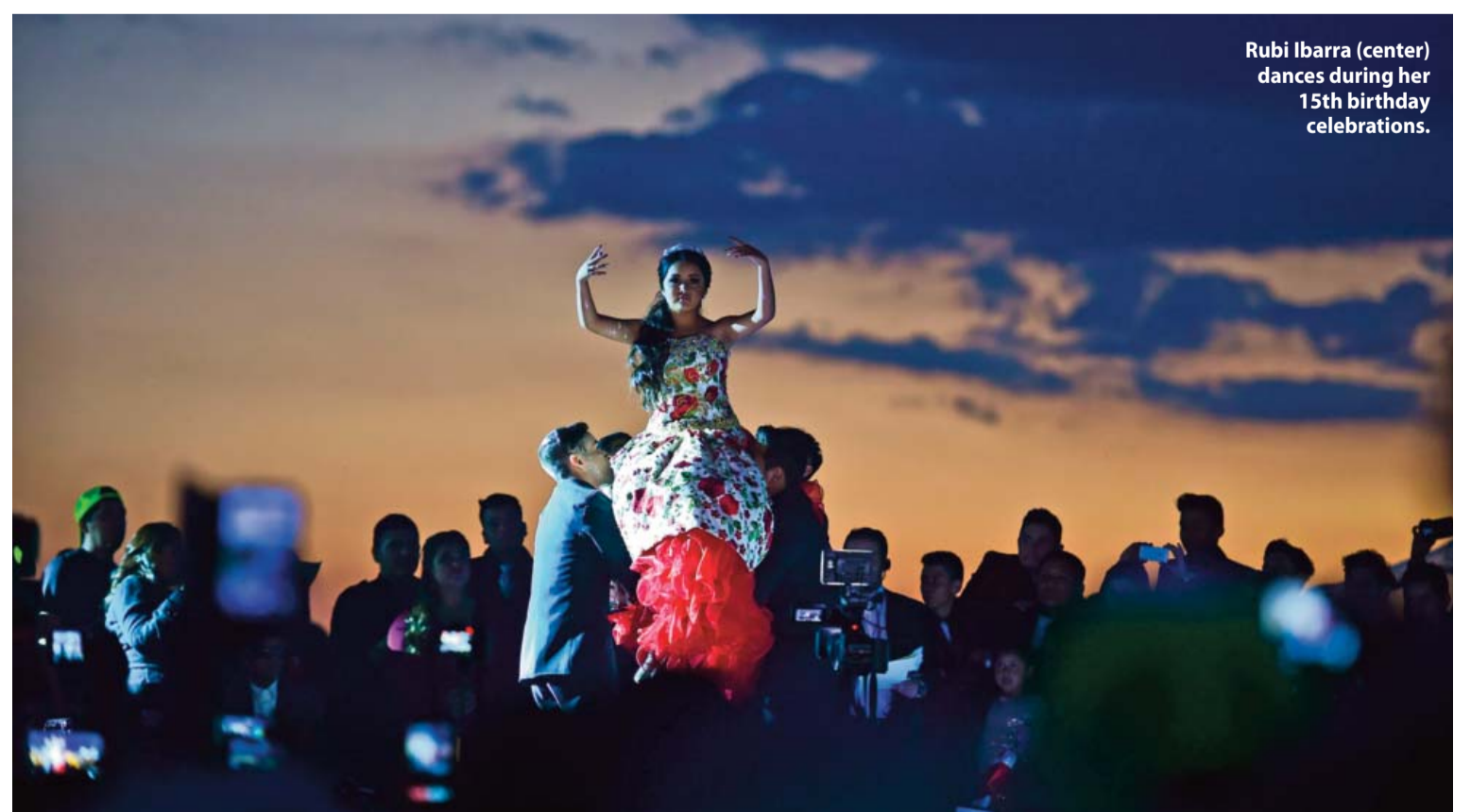
Tragedy marred the horse race that had taken place earlier in the day. "Two people entered the track and were hit by the horses... One of them died and the other was hospitalized with a broken leg," the state of San Luis de Potosi in a statement. But the party continued as planned. As the sun set, Rubi shared a dance with her father. "We love you, Rubi!" guests shouted as a band began playing traditional Mexican music, with some donning paper masks of the teen's face. But not everyone in Mexico found the fuss amusing. "This has taken on completely scandalous proportions," said Mercedes Poire, head of the Center for Public Opinion at the Universidad Del Valle de Mexico. "We face the gigantic risk of falling into a society of the absurd." — AFP



People attend the 15th birthday party celebrations of Rubi Ibarra.



Rubi Ibarra poses during her 15th birthday celebrations.



Rubi Ibarra (center) dances during her 15th birthday celebrations.

FEATURE



Photo shows a sign for 'Sweep the Country,' an exhibition at the Heritage Center of the Union League in Philadelphia. — AP photos



Photo shows Betsy Cook in the 323 Arch Street Fashion Collective in Philadelphia, holding up a 'Hilladelphia' shirt she made.



A donkey outside the Union League in Philadelphia.

Presidential footsteps in Philadelphia? They're everywhere



Visitors pose for photos with the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia.

Philadelphia has a long history as a center of politics, going back to the 18th century when the Founding Fathers met here to sign the Declaration of Independence and write the US Constitution. Even presidential conventions are nothing new: The 2016 Democratic National Convention is the city's 12th since the Whig Party met here in 1848. Visitors can sample Philly's political history any time at landmarks like Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell (still cracked!). But special exhibitions themed on conventions and campaigns are also on view this summer, including shows at the Heritage Center of the Union League, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and National Constitution Center.

And while you're at the Constitution Center, don't miss Signers' Hall, a recreation of the room where the Constitution was written. It's crowded with 42 life-size bronze statues of the Founding Fathers. You can shake their hands, whisper in their ears or pose for selfies. There's also something to be said for simply wandering the streets of Historic Philadelphia, the neighborhood around Independence Hall. You'll find pennies on Ben Franklin's grave, the story of a president's runaway slave, and the house where George and Martha Washington danced the night away.

called the President's House on Market Street, marked by brick walls and white columns, reveals the foundation of the official presidential residence where Washington and his successor, John Adams, lived. Washington's household included nine slaves, two of whom ran away. One escapee, Oney Judge, fled with the help of Philadelphia's free black community and lived out her life in New Hampshire.

At Christ Church Burial Ground on Fifth Street, Franklin's grave is strewn with pennies in homage to his famous saying, "A penny saved is a penny earned." Christ Church also offers a "Founding Mothers" tour, celebrating colonial heroines buried there, July 22-30, every half-hour, 11 am-3:30 pm, \$7, and Fridays in July, 5:30 pm, \$10.



Visitors look at the grave of Benjamin Franklin in Christ Church Burial Ground in Philadelphia.

Convention City
"Sweep the Country," an exhibition at the Heritage Center of the Union League, surveys Philadelphia's history as a convention host through stories, images, and objects like an 1858 campaign handkerchief and a 1936 board game. The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts hosts "Happiness, Liberty, Life? American Art and Politics," with 100 works exploring themes like the cult of presidential personality and art as protest. Artists include Gilbert Stuart, Andrew Wyeth and Kara Walker.

At the National Constitution Center's interactive "Headed to the White House" exhibition, you can practice your presidential handshake, listen to speeches and contemplate artifacts like mac-and-cheese with "Democrats in 2008" printed on the box. The Constitution Center is also the hub for "PoliticalFest," a festival of exhibits, games and theater celebrating American history, and running from July 22-27. Donkeys have symbolized the Democratic Party since Andrew Jackson's enemies called him a jackass in 1828. Look for 57 fiberglass donkeys on the streets of Philadelphia through the end of July.



One of those "Founding Mothers" is Elizabeth Powel, who hosted salons, dinners, and other social gatherings for colonial-era movers and shakers in her home at 244 S Third St, now a historic site called the Powel House. Powel's husband was Philadelphia's mayor; they were the power couple of their day, and she helped persuade Washington to serve a second term. Artifacts include a letter describing a night of dancing at a 20th wedding anniversary party for George and Martha Washington in 1779, and framed paper silhouettes that guests made of each other - including one of Washington.

Photo shows a display that tells the story of Oney Judge, who was one of nine slaves who worked at the President's House in Philadelphia, which was the official residence of George Washington when he was president.



Photo shows life-size bronze sculptures of the signers of the US Constitution in the Signers' Hall at the National Constitution Center.

Presidential footsteps
Independence Hall is an essential stop for history buffs, but you can only go inside on a National Park Service tour; free tickets are distributed each morning at the visitor center, or reserve online for \$1.50. But even outside the building, you'll be standing in impressive footsteps. Plaques show where Abraham Lincoln and John F Kennedy delivered speeches. Other visitors have included Ronald Reagan, George W Bush, Jimmy Carter, George H W Bush, Bill Clinton and Gerald Ford.

Elsewhere, Philadelphia has hosted numerous presidents. Every president from Theodore Roosevelt through Ronald Reagan stayed at the Bellevue Hotel, now a Hyatt, at 200 S Broad St. The National Constitution Center's famous visitors have included Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Bill Clinton and George HW Bush. And Donald Trump graduated from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business.

Hidden stories
You don't have to walk far from Independence Hall to find fascinating but less familiar stories. An open-air site

At the Betsy Ross House, 239 Arch St, a costumed reenactor tells her story: Ross, an upholsterer by trade, was persuaded by Washington and others to sew an American flag. But she had to work in secret because British colonial officials would have considered that treason.

A block away from the Ross House, another story unfolds: A modern-day seamstress named Betsy Cook channels the spirit of her famous namesake at the 323 Arch Street Fashion Collective, selling handmade clothing like a T-shirt that says "Hilladelphia 2016." Introducing herself to visitors, Cook says simply: "I sew. My name is Betsy." — AP



Visitors walk in view of Independence Hall in Philadelphia.



Photo shows a cut-out paper silhouette of George Washington on display at the Powel House, a historic site in Philadelphia, with site manager Jennifer Davidson reflected in the glass.

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2016

Huge crowd joins Mexican teen's party after invite goes viral

38



A photograph of British singer George Michael is seen among floral tributes and candles outside Michael's north London home, after news of the singer's death broke. Tributes poured in from the music world on December 26 after British pop superstar George Michael, who rose to fame with the duo Wham! and a string of smash hits including "Last Christmas", died aged 53. Michael died of apparent heart failure on Christmas Day at his home in Goring, a village on the River Thames in Oxfordshire, west of London, after an award-winning career spanning more than three decades. — AFP



A portrait of late British singer George Michael sits next to bouquets of floral tributes outside the singer's home in north London. — AP/AFP photos



Pictures of British singer George Michael are seen among candles and floral tributes piled against the door of Michael's home, where the singer died on Christmas Day, in the village of Goring, southern England.

An Appreciation of **George Michael:** He let superstardom slip away, but his pop artistry sounds more sublime with time

By Owen Gleiberman

From his earliest days as a booty-shaking teen-pop sensation—"Make It Big," the Wham! album on which he made it big, was released in October 1984, when he was just 21 -- George Michael did more than hunger for stardom. He craved credibility as a pop musician. He didn't have to wait long for it either. In 1987, "Faith," his first solo album, was a critical/commercial/cultural smash, a record that blew away any doubts as to whether he was a truly ambitious and elevated pop-musical artist. It was his grown-up statement (made at the age of 24), his English-boy version of a DIY-in-the-studio Prince album, his ritual of graduation into the big leagues of the funk-pop sublime.

And yet...the old image hung around. He still wasn't quite on that Madonna/Prince/Michael Jackson level. Maybe that was because in his videos (this was the era when how you looked on MTV was half of who you were), it was clear that Michael was still obsessed with micro-managing how he came across. To a degree, the fussiness of his presentation undercut the image he was now trying to present. The '80s were the high era of manly stubble, but no one ever had stubble like George Michael in the videos for "Faith" or "I Want Your Sex": It was like a sculpted charcoal shadow that had been airbrushed on. His too-perfect version of too-rough-to-care facial hair was of a piece with his too-shiny leather jacket (marked with the word Revenge) that looked like a promotional collaboration between Kenneth Anger and Members Only; his too meticulously torn jeans; his too perfectly frosted hair; his too-tough aviator sunglasses. In those videos, Michael was working so hard to make us take him seriously that he still kept a lot of folks from taking him seriously.

When I heard the news of his death, the first thing I did was to reach for the song that, over the years, I've come to believe is Michael's most incandescent track: "Freedom '90." At the time, it was a song that was hard not to experience through the video: those fashion models lip-synching to Michael's voice (whatever that meant), the Revenge jacket set ablaze, the whole teasing significance of it-his "rejection" of the image-making machinery of pop stardom, the underlying message of the lyrics "I think there's something you should know, I think it's time I stopped the show. There's something deep inside of me, there's someone I forgot to be." Whether or not Michael intended those words as a sly signal of his sexuality, it certainly sounds that way now.

Rockier vibe

Yet whatever he felt trapped in (the corporation of pop, the fashion-mall rough-trade rebel imagery of his own devising, the agony of a hidden existence), the sound of "Freedom '90" channels a liberation as thrilling as any in the history of pop. It's a rockier vibe than he usually laid down—a propulsive, rollicking groove that sweeps the listener along like a gospel river, the sound built around crystalline piano chords that are woven right into the center of the mix, the way they were in mid-period Rolling Stones ("Sympathy for the Devil," "Loving Cup"). It's one of those songs, like Dylan's "Absolutely Sweet Marie," where the more it goes on, the more addicted you get to it. After the exuberance of the early Wham! songs and the meticulous dance-pop passion of "Faith," "Freedom '90" seemed to erupt out of some new dimension of George Michael. It was his exhilarating goodbye to the '80s, and no one could have guessed that the decade he was now treating as a trap would remain his one true contained period of pop glory.

The way we remember the pop culture of the '80s is still shaped, to a degree, by the Gen-Xers who came up during that decade. They were the first ironic generation, so they helped to place a certain guilty-pleasure, it's-trash-but-I-love-it aesthetic at the center of things. That sensibility seems made to order when it comes to remembering Wham! The songs were bouncy and effervescent, George Michael was a pretty boy with a swarthy wide baby face, and the girls thrashed and screamed. In this case, though, the teen-pop puppet master was George Michael too. He wrote and produced the songs on "Make It Big," a creative feat that marked him as a pop prodigy. Yet we still tend to put those songs in a throw-away box marked "Pop It's Embarrassing To Admit You Take Totally Seriously." That judgment, with 30 years' hindsight, now looks far too easy, too dismissive, too automatic, too snobbish, too untrue to the joys embedded in George Michael's exuberant gift for melody, and in his smooth-as-silk soaring angel's croon.

Jingle of love

Take a song that's the clear Exhibit A of what I'm talking about: "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go." No, it's not "When Doves Cry" or "A Day in the Life." It's a jingle of love, a ditty. Thirty years ago, I would never have defended it (much). Yet I wonder if anyone has had an experience like this one. "Wake Me Up" has been used in many movies, and earlier this year it was used-as a joke-to accompany a flashback in "Zoolander 2," during which Derek Zoolander remembers his carefree younger days (before a car crash puts an abrupt end to the memory). A true confession: I'm sitting there watching the movie, in a theater with about five other people in it, and that unmistakable blast of "Jitterbug!" comes on the soundtrack, it's supposed to sound dippy as hell, and all I can think is "This song f---in' kicks!" It cartwheels right through your defenses. I'm supposed to add, of course, that it's a "guilty pleasure," but what does the "guilt" even mean anymore? It's just a tic.

Other songs from that period need less defense. We've all just finished listening to "Last Christmas" two dozen times over the past three weeks, and each time I hear it I can never get over what a supremely tender song it is, and how gorgeously George Michael sings it, with a voice that seems lit from within. "Everything She Wants" is a cynical moody classic, like the guy version of "Smooth Operator," and though "Careless Whisper" doesn't achieve the sheer rapture of melody that Michael broke through to three years later in "Father Figure," its sentimental sadness is indelible. The track from "Make It Big" that may most spectacularly confirm Michael's songwriting and producing gifts is "Freedom," with its exhilarating, reconfigured Motown groove and its plea for fidelity ("I don't want your freedom, I don't want to play around") that, in hindsight, contained, at least in coded fashion, one of Michael's earliest (clandestine) acknowledgments of-and counterreactions to-the proud sexuality of gay culture.

Rare exception

When a pop star is a major sex symbol, it can seem as if he's ruling the world, but once he gets a little older and turns his back on that side of himself, it's like a magical suit of clothing he's decided to leave on the hanger; he becomes just another person. In 1991, I was invited to a generic movie premiere party (for "A League of Their Own"), and at one point I glanced to the side and noticed, to my shock, that David Lee Roth was standing there, all by himself, like someone who'd been a rock star about a hundred years ago. His days of gigolo prancing weren't that far behind him, but hardly anyone noticed

him. It's not that he looked so much older-it's that the aura was gone. And once George Michael let that dimension of himself go, he seemed to relinquish much of his passion as an artist too. Despite the majesty of "Freedom '90," "Listen Without Prejudice Vol. 1" was not a success, and that appeared to confirm-at least, in his own mind-that the George Michael era was over. Maybe he wanted it to be over.

It takes something more-a superhero drive-to sustain a heightened career over the decades, the way that Madonna has (or that Prince did). On his rare later solo albums, like "Older," Michael's songwriting may on some level have "matured," but it lost its pop command. A song like "Fastlove" was the rare exception, and even that seemed, more than not, an over-produced echo of glories past. Each time, it was as if he was coming out of retirement and didn't have his heart in it. The moment I'll



Genny Di Virgilio shows a figurine of British musician George Michael in his artisan shop specializing in nativity scene's figurines, in Naples, southern Italy.



This file photo taken on May 25, 2007 shows pop singer George Michael performing on stage in Bratislava during his concert as part of his European Tour.



Mourning fans have put down flowers and letters outside the home of British musician George Michael in London.

remember George Michael most by is his March 23, 1991 in-concert cover rendition of "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me," the one where Elton John joins him onstage at Wembley Arena halfway through. (The two first performed the song together at Live Aid in 1985.) It's a slow-burn performance that positively glows with emotion, delectably smooth on the surface yet suffused with what now seems a lifetime of longing, love, and loss. If I had to point to the single greatest achievement of George Michael's career, apart from his creation of "Freedom '90," I might say that it's the sheer rapturous pouring of his performance of this song-and in particular, near the end, the godly way that he takes flight into the line "I'd just allow a fragment of your life...to wander free." That was a major dimension of George Michael's quest-to wander free-and it was part of the lure of his music, which sings and pulses with a freedom it would be foolish to deny, or resist. — Reuters