

MP wants Hala Feb concerts canceled, fears 'punishment'



Castro in historic visit to France



Top chef's suicide casts pall over new Michelin stars



Guardiola to take over at Man City



SUBSIDY CUTS LOOMING AS GOVT, ASSEMBLY TO MEET

MINISTER REASSURES MPs WILL BE CONSULTED



Min 02°
Max 19°
High Tide 05:53 & 17:43
Low Tide 00:01 & 11:25

GUNVOR COMPLETES ACQUISITION OF Q8 ROTTERDAM REFINERY

LONDON/DUBAI: Swiss trader Gunvor Group has completed the acquisition of its third European refinery from Kuwait Petroleum International (Q8), it said yesterday. The value of the deal was not disclosed. Gunvor said the 88,000 barrels per day KP Europort would be renamed Gunvor Petroleum Rotterdam and would be linked to its two other refineries in Antwerp, Belgium and Ingolstadt, Germany.

The refinery will continue to operate in line with Gunvor's integration and optimization strategies, Q8 said in a statement to KUNA, adding that the company will, as part of the deal, will maintain a research and development center in Rotterdam. The refinery consists of several units for refining crude oil, a gasoline production facility and a lube oil plant, the statement said, adding that it produces a large range of oil products for a wide variety of markets, within and beyond Europe.

Gunvor also said it would maintain running the refinery. The refinery's union had previously told Reuters Gunvor planned to close one crude distillation unit at the plant which would mean cutting 25 percent of the refinery's roughly 350-strong workforce. "The Rotterdam refinery will enhance Gunvor's existing refining operations, particularly through synergies with our Antwerp facility, while complementing our global trading activities," said Gunvor Chief Investment Officer Gia Mai said. The move to buy a third refinery marks a major turnaround for the Swiss trading house since its deep links with Moscow nearly brought it to collapse over 18 months ago. — Agencies

AMIR IN LONDON FOR SYRIA DONORS' MEET



LONDON: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is welcomed as he arrives at Heathrow Airport yesterday to head the Kuwaiti delegation to the 4th international donors' conference to support Syria and the region. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The issue of cutting subsidies on commodities and services will take the driver's seat in Assembly-government discussions next week as all looks set for a decision to raise the prices of petrol, electricity and water. State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah reiterated that the government will not take any measures on the issue before consulting the Assembly.

Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said the Assembly bureau will meet with the Supreme Planning Council's economic committee on Sunday, instead of tomorrow, to discuss "rationalizing" subsidies on public services. The meeting will discuss planned government measures to deal with the budget deficit due to the drop in oil prices, Ghanem said. The Assembly will then discuss the issue on Feb 9 in an open meeting.

The speaker said that the plan to deal with the deficit is based on a comprehensive vision that can be implemented, adding that the Assembly will not accept harming low-income people under any future arrangements. Asked about proposals made by MPs about financial costs, Ghanem said that the concerned Assembly committees will study those proposals and the Assembly will take the final decision on them. The speaker said that the plan is to tackle legislation related to the judiciary in the month of March, adding that the Assembly is expected to debate a draft law on the multibillion-dinar Silk City project.

Meanwhile, a number of MPs yesterday criticized MP Saleh Ashour for threatening that nine MPs could resign over alleged discrimination. MP Faisal Al-Kandari said that Kuwaitis have lived together without any discrimination and those who want to resign can do so and others will replace them.

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LESBOS, Greece: This Jan 25, 2016 image shows Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei posing as he lies face down on the beach on this Greek island. — AP

13 STUDENTS DROWN OFF INDIA BEACH

UK ALLOWS GENETIC MODIFICATION OF HUMAN EMBRYOS

LONDON: Britain yesterday granted its first research license to genetically modify human embryos to a project that aims to give hope to women struggling to conceive, raising ethical concerns about "designer babies". The decision makes Britain one of the first countries in the world to grant this type of authorization on one of science's new frontiers and follows months of deliberation by the British embryology regulator.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) said it had approved an application from Dr Kathy Niakan of the Francis Crick Institute for a new laboratory research license "to include gene editing of embryos". Researchers explained that the embryos used will be spare ones donated by women receiving In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) treatment who do not need them. Any modified embryos have to be destroyed within 14 days and cannot be implanted in a woman. The research will examine embryos in their first few days.

"Dr Niakan's proposed research is important for understanding how a healthy human embryo develops and will enhance our understanding of IVF success rates," said Paul Nurse, director of the Crick Institute.

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MUMBAI: A college picnic to the beach turned into a tragedy yesterday when at least thirteen students drowned off India's west coast after they went swimming, police and officials said. The tragedy was the latest drowning incident in India, where many people are unable to swim and lax safety standards mean beaches are often without lifeguards. Dozens of students from Pune city were on an excursion to Murud beach in the Raigad district of the western Indian state of Maharashtra when disaster struck on Monday.

"A total of 155 students from Pune went to Murud main beach and some of them went swimming around 3.30 pm (1000 GMT) this afternoon," assistant inspector of Raigad police Arvind Patil told AFP. "Thirteen students are dead due to drowning. The victims were all aged between 19 and 23," Patil said, adding that 10 women and three had men died. The victims were enrolled at Abeda Inamdar College, an arts, science and commerce institute in Pune.

Continued on Page 13



MURUD, India: People gather on the beach after more than a dozen college students were swept away on the Arabian Sea coast yesterday. — AP

CHINESE ARTIST IMITATES PHOTO OF DEAD TODDLER

NEW DELHI: Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei has recreated the famous image of a 3-year-old Syrian child who drowned in Turkey last year by staging a photo of himself lying face down on a beach in Greece. The photograph last year of the child lying on a Turkish beach triggered international outrage as people saw the helpless toddler as the devastating human face of the refugee crisis in Europe.

Ai posed last week on a pebbly beach on Lesbos island for the picture for one of India's largest English-language news magazines, India Today. Rohit Chawla, the magazine's photographer and visual director, traveled to Lesbos to take the picture. The photograph was displayed at an art fair in New Delhi over the weekend and many visitors took pictures of it.

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KAC TO CHARGE FOR ADDITIONAL CHECK-IN BAGS

KUWAIT: Effective from February, passengers flying Economy Class on Kuwait Airways will only be entitled to check in one piece of baggage not exceeding 23 kg in weight for free on all flights to all destinations except the US. Passengers flying to the US will be allowed two pieces of baggage of 23 kg each. Any excess baggage will incur charges of KD 35 for one additional bag, KD 60 for two bags and KD 100 for three additional bags. All additional baggage should also not exceed 23 kg in weight.

First Class passengers will be allowed two pieces of baggage of 32 kg each, while Business Class passengers will be allowed two bags of 23 kg each for all destinations. Infants will be allowed one bag of 10 kg.



An Emirati man inspects a houbara bustard hunted by a falcon yesterday at the Al-Marzoon hunting reserve, 60 km south of Madinat Zayed. — AFP

UGANDA WOMEN STUNNED TO BE DUPED BY OTHER WOMEN

KAMPALA: At first, Sarah Nakintu was grateful to her friend for alerting her to job opportunities in marketing and retail in Dubai. Nakintu, a 27-year-old woman from the Ugandan capital Kampala, trusted her friend, who had worked in the United Arab Emirates and seemed successful with plenty of money. She followed her friend's instructions. Present a valid passport to the recruiter who would organize airline tickets and a visa. Once the documents were in order, Nakintu paid the recommended "token of thanks" to her friend - \$200 in cash.

Nakintu (who requested her real name not be used) was advised to only keep her boarding pass to Kigali, Rwanda, in sight and hide her connecting pass to Dubai as immigration officials stop migrants who bypassed government recruiting agencies

to seek employment. But when Nakintu was met at Dubai airport by a Ugandan woman going by the name Jane Saad, she was told to hand over her passport and then informed she would be working as a sex escort.

"From the start I was terrified and tried to protest but she threatened us and said there were no alternatives as she had invested a lot of money in our trip," Nakintu told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "Slowly we resigned and started following her instructions." Nakintu is just one of thousands of women every year to be trafficked into sex slavery, with the Australia-based anti-slavery campaign group Walk Free estimating there are 36 million people trapped in modern-day slavery around the world.

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KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Imam of the Grand Mosque in Makkah Sheikh Dr Khalid Bin Ali Al-Ghamdi.— KUNA

CROWN PRINCE MEETS IMAM OF MAKKAH'S GRAND MOSQUE

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Al-Sane, accompanied by the Imam of the Grand Mosque in Makkah Sheikh Dr Khalid Bin Ali Al-Ghamdi and his accompanying delegation.

Meanwhile, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf received Saudi Prince Saud bin Abdul Mohsen bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, Governor of Ha'il and his accompanying delegation, as well as Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud

Al-Malek Al-Sabah. Protocol Chief at His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah attended both meetings. Later, His Highness received President of the National Security Apparatus Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Also yesterday, Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem received Sheikh Dr Khalid Al-Ghamdi on the occasion of his visit to the country. The meeting was attended by MPs Faisal Al-Kandari and the parliament's Secretary General Allam Al-

Kandari. Ghanem also received Chairman of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij Al-Ibrahim Al-Sabah, who gave him a copy of a book marking the 10th anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's assumption of power titled "Sabah Al-Ahmad.. A Decade of Achievements." Meanwhile, Ghanem received Central Bank Governor Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel, who presented to him an engraved commemorative award on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of His Highness the Amir's ascension. — KUNA



KFH's PR team are pictured with the Minister of Information.

KFH PARTICIPATES IN HERITAGE VILLAGE OPENING CEREMONY

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the opening ceremony of the Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village in Al-Salmi area. The opening ceremony kick-started in the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Speaker of National Assembly, the Prime Minister and a number of Ministers.

The events in the village will continue until

mid-March. The Kuwait national heritage festival will be held for the fifth consecutive time which makes the village a perfect destination for visitors. The events coincide with the celebration of Kuwait's national days, and the anniversary of naming the Amir as 'Humanitarian Leader'.

Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village is viewed as one of the top tourist destinations in Kuwait. It bears the heritage of old values in revelation of the new age. It is located on a wide area and

encompasses all fundamental elements of heritage and entertainment; traditionally-designed gates, bazaars, family tents, local and international restaurants, cafes, GCC pavilions, old souks, lake, competitions and sports. KFH is keen on sponsoring and supporting what contributes in achieving development and prosperity, be it in developing the infrastructure or assuming the social responsibility in all fields, education, environment, health youth and sports.

KUWAIT REITERATES SUPPORT TO PALESTINIAN CAUSE



KUWAIT: Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Aziz Al-Daihani speaks at the ceremony. — KUNA photos



Palestinian Ambassador Rami Tahboub speaks.

KUWAIT: Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Aziz Al-Daihani reiterated firm support to the Palestinian cause, which represents an "essential principle in Kuwait's foreign policy." Kuwait has embraced the Palestinian cause and struggle since the beginning, as the Palestinian revolution started its drive from Kuwait, Ambassador Daihani said during a reception held recently at the Palestinian embassy in Kuwait to mark the International Day for 1948 Arab Rights.

He reminisced the year 1936 when Kuwaitis formed a committee to support the Palestinian people through collecting donations and sending them to the fighters there back then.

"Again, and after the Palestinian exodus in 1948, Kuwaiti official and popular sympathy with their brethren manifested when Kuwait became home for many Palestinians, including the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which headquartered in Kuwait since 1964," Daihani said.—KUNA

INTERVIEW WITH LAURENCE TUBIANA

KUWAIT: The following are scripts from an interview conducted by the French Embassy in Kuwait with Laurence Tubiana, Special Representative for the 2015 Paris Climate Conference, on the COP21 Conference:

Question: How do you assess the Paris climate conference and the COP21 treaty?

Tubiana: The agreement includes many elements. It sets a clear framework on reducing emissions, rehabilitation, funding, transparency and periodic reviews and assessment starting in 2018. Our mission now is to resume communications with all negotiating teams and governments to make sure we share the same interpretation of the agreement, which is no less important than the agreement itself, and to continue working with the Paris spirit.

Question: Do you have any concerns that the enthusiasm might fade after signing the agreement on concluding COP21?

Tubiana: This is not likely to happen because many steps have been set to take place by 2020. We must decide what is to be included in the international assessment of the progress achieved. We must negotiate these tangible points as soon as possible. Therefore, we must resume high-level political efforts. Laurent Fabius' presidency of COP21 is due to end in Nov 2016 and he will have many chances to keep the torch lit. Negotiators are now putting the final touches on the agenda with full collaboration with Morocco, where COP22 is due to be held. Non-official meetings continue to be held to prepare the Marrakesh agenda in a good way.

Question: A team entrusted with executing the Paris agreement will be formed in May. Will this team follow the same working pattern the Durban program (ADP) followed?

Tubiana: Some actions will definitely resemble the Durban platform but it is important to follow a different working pattern that is more confident, active and productive. We had to negotiate a more binding agreement over the past few years

and we have to deal with more limited elements, but we need to define the negotiating team agenda. Consultations will start by the end of February and the first round of the non-official negotiations organized by Japan and Brazil will start as usual in Tokyo by then and we will then start setting the Marrakesh and the APA agendas.

According to the French presidential view, which is due to be very active, a working pattern ought to be created now, as long as we have exchanged political capitals and more trust amongst peoples. We need to advance faster while prioritizing a number of issues such as what to start with in 2016 and in 2017 while taking into consideration that a very significant phase will start in 2018 when commitments will be first reviewed. At that time, we will encourage and attract countries that can and are capable of taking more ambitious and complementary measures.

Question: Laurent Fabius wishes to make Dec 12, 2016 historically remarkable. One year from the agreement, will that be the first assessment date?

Tubiana: The minister's idea is to maintain that date and then look into approvals and whether we are far from actual execution. In France, we ought to pass a bill on the agreement before summer and the question is knowing whether the project will be referred to the parliament at the same time or will it need more European coordination.

Question: How can Kuwait contribute to this agreement?

Tubiana: Kuwait has launched several projects like Al-Shaqaya project, for instance. Launched in 2011 by the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), Al-Shaqaya project aims at developing the use of renewable energy in Kuwait as a special plant for renewable energy would be built to the west to cover 15 percent of Kuwait's needs of energy. Al-Shaqaya project will reduce burning oil causing more pollution, and thus will reduce CO2 emissions by 5 million tons.

WRITER CELEBRATES AMIR'S ANNIVERSARY

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Writer Abdullah Buwair celebrated the 10th anniversary of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's reign on Sunday evening at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. During this celebration, he distributed the English version of his book 'HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, Leader of Humanitarian Work'. He also announced his preparations to publish a new book, 'Speeches of HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad'.

Sheikha Fariha Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, President of the Kuwait Society for the Ideal Family, President of the Girl's Club, goodwill ambassador and sister of HH the Amir, attended the event. "We are proud to celebrate the 10th anniversary of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah being in power as these years were full of achievements and giving, not only for Kuwait but also for many other countries, so he was chosen as the Humanitarian Leader for his continuous support for humanitarian works for the United Nations to protect lives and relieve suffering," she said.

"This expresses the active role of Kuwait that supports human economic and social development as Kuwait is a part of the world community and nobody can deny its role. This international recognition of Kuwait came after the great role of HH the Amir and his continuous humanitarian work that strengthens the leading role of Kuwait in helping poor countries when facing disasters and to help them develop. We consider this honor is a medal of merit for every Kuwaiti," added Sheikha Fariha.

Generosity

The organizer of this event and author, Buwair, stated that this celebration and Jan 29 is not a normal day, as on this day in 2006, HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad became the ruler of Kuwait. "The Al Sabah ruling family is known for its generosity. During the reign of various rulers, many Amiri grants were given to the nation, yet he gave the biggest grant in Kuwait history to all citizens of a total value of KD 1.2 bil-

lion, which came after the first grant of KD 200 for each citizen," he noted during the event.

"Despite the unstable situation of the region during the past few years that negatively affected some Arab countries, HH the Amir ruled the country successfully and didn't give a chance for those who wanted to harm the country. Furthermore HH the Amir also engaged in many diplomatic efforts in consolidating relations between Arab and Gulf countries. Also, Kuwait opened a new page in relations with Iraq which appears to resolve various issues including borders, compensations and investment between the two countries," Buwair said.

Donations

HH the Amir has also sent donations to various countries. "In 2007, during the OPEC summit held in Saudi Arabia, HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad announced Kuwait's donation of \$150 million for finance scientific research related to energy, environment and climate change. In May 2008, Kuwait established the 'Decent Life Fund' due to the price hike of foodstuff and energy internationally, with a capital of \$100 million. In 2009, HH the Amir launched the 'Support Small and Intermediate Enterprises' initiative with a value of \$2 billion, as he ordered to grant \$500 million to launch this initiative. These are a few of the many other donations and grants including the Syrian Donors' Conference. So HH the Amir was honored as the Humanitarian Leader due to these achievements," stressed Buwair.

Iman Eriqat, Chief of Mission at IOM Kuwait, spoke about HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the support that he provided for the United Nations and other humanitarian work. Businessman Jawad Bukhamseen also addressed a speech on HH the Amir and some of his achievements inside and outside Kuwait. After awarding the participants the attendees were invited to a dinner banquet.



Iman Eriqat, Chief of Mission at IOM Kuwait speaks at the event.



KUWAIT: (From left) Mustafa Behbehani, Sheikha Fariha Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Jawad Bukhamseen and Abdullah Buwair attend a ceremony held to celebrate the 10th anniversary of HH the Amir's assumption to power. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

LAWMAKER WANTS HALA FEBRUARY CONCERTS CANCELED, FEARS 'DIVINE PUNISHMENT'

EIGHT FAMILIES STILL LIVE IN SAWABER

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: MP Ahmad Mutee' Al-Azmi urged Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah to call off Hala February concerts because of the religious and moral violations committed during them. He justified his call by showing respect to feelings of Muslims in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq and other places. "We fear that Almighty Allah will punish us for hosting such concerts in a conservative country like Kuwait," he underlined, referring to recent videos showing what he described as "acts of corruption." "Unfortunately, this is happening at a time when thousands of Muslims are suffering from hunger, injustice and killings in Syria, Iraq, Myanmar and other places," he said, reminding of how the information ministry suspended such concerts when the Syrian 'revolution' started.

Sawaber complex

The finance ministry's assistant undersecretary for expropriation affairs Fahd Al-Sho'la announced that eight Kuwaiti families still inhabited the Sawaber residential complex because they had lost their apartments' deeds and that the issuance of alternative deeds was in progress pending expropriating those apartments. "The Cabinet's instructions mandate evicting the complex by March 31 and those who refuse eviction will be evicted by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare," he explained, noting that 40 citizens had already been given replacement apartments in the West Sulaibikhat project. Sho'la added that KD 130 million had been allocated for purchasing the Sawaber apartments, of which 450 had already been bought so far. He explained that Sawaber apartment prices have varied on a yearly basis compared to when the process started in 2012, when a unit cost KD 226,000, while it now costs KD 256,000.

Former MP fined

A court yesterday fined former MP Abdulrahman Al-Anjari KD 2,000 in a case filed against him for slandering His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah, who had sued him over a tweet on the Dow Chemical issue.

Voters' registration postponed

Well-informed sources at the elections department said that registration and transfer of voters this year would be postponed until concluding the by-elections in the third electoral constituency. The sources added that the date of resuming registrations would be declared later by the Mol.

e-cigarettes

A citizen was arrested on attempting to smuggle 43 electronic cigarettes at Nuwaiseeb land border exit, said security sources, noting that custom inspectors foiled his attempt, confiscated the seized



MP Ahmad Al-Azmi

items and referred him to relevant authorities.



ACADEMICS CALL FOR DEVELOPING EDUCATION FOR KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

JOBS CONFERENCE CONCLUDES FIRST-DAY SESSIONS

KUWAIT: Eminent academics called on Monday for evolving all levels of education in the country to be a leading factor for knowledge-based economy. Speaking at the last session of the national conference on modern state jobs from an economic point of view, Dr Adel Al-Huseinan, Vice President of Kuwait University for Planning, said efforts directed to education should focus on providing knowledge to students. This goal should be achieved through an optimal use of available infrastructure of education to cover all levels of education, he added.

Dr Bibi Al-Ajmi stressed on the importance of listing curricula coping with a perspective of knowledge-based economy to move to a creative education, indicating that there are programs focusing on knowledge-based economy.

Meanwhile, Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD) Khaled Mahdi said Kuwait's development plan embraces the promotion of the effective role by knowledge-based economy.

This can be notched up by means of encouraging innovation, buttressing creativity, change and development, as part of a societal culture, Mahdi said, addressing the conference on functions of a modern state through the perspective of the knowledge-based economy. The SCPD chief called for setting out blueprints and programs of action for addressing the major challenges the State is facing for the time being, considering the country's decision-making process as "complicated".

Privatization

Director-General of the Arab Planning Institute Bader Malallah said in the meantime that it is necessary to promote and consolidate the concept of privatization and governance in the diverse sectors of the State. The economies of developing countries need a quantum shift in order to keep abreast of the global economy, he said, pointing out that developing countries suffer a deep gap between economy and knowledge.

Malallah further indicated that knowledge-based economy would be listed in development plans through programs focusing on evolving national economy and enhancing growth in the country. He added that the event discusses a key issue represented in searching for alternatives for activating national economy amid the current economic phase which has many challenges and difficulties.

Kuwait's institutions and bodies, specialized in knowledge-based economy, are available, but they need improvement in their performance, and further cooperation and coordination, he said. Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), Kuwait University, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research and Arab Planning Institute are key institutions in the area of knowledge-based economy, he noted.

He said that these institutions, through partnership based on knowledge-based economy, will work on promoting scientific research and improving the country's economy through knowledge and the localization of technology. Producing knowledge and turning it into a commodity in the country needs paying much attention to these institutions and enhancing the use of information in

national economy, he said, indicating that this move faces many challenges on national and Arab levels.

He called for increasing the budget of scientific research as it is very low in Kuwait and Arab countries, stressing the need to reform knowledge institutions, mainly the area of scientific research and educational system.



KUWAIT: Minister Hind Al-Subaih speaks at the conference. — KUNA

Legislations

Meanwhile, MP Khalil Abdullah said that the National Assembly has enacted a set of legislations aimed at boosting knowledge-based economy at the national level and is ready to examine any new ones the government may forward to it. He said "the initiative in this regard is in the government hands because it possesses the apparatuses and specialized authorities for forwarding bills on knowledge economy." The Parliament is ready to discuss and endorse any bill intended to bolster the national economy, particularly in the realm of knowledge and technological economy, he added.

Khong Ming, CEO of the Singaporean systems institute, said that his country, due to shortage of natural resources, was compelled in the 80s to shift to the knowledge-based economy, with focus on overhauling teaching and technology sectors.

Ming added during the session, chaired by Advisor of the Amiri Diwan Dr Yousef Al-Ibrahim, that concentration on teaching ensures progress of internal investments, particularly in engineering and advanced technologies. Singapore, in the 80s, had only 1,800 technology experts, thus a special plan was mapped out to develop the sector, and in the early 90s, the figure reached some 150,000.

Yousef Shahid of the World Bank said global economic challenges compelled nations to focus on developing internal trade, noting necessity to stimulate private enterprise in productive sectors, in shadow of technological changes. He also called for increasing research for investment in new innovations. However he cautioned that

expanding technology had deprived a large number of personnel of their jobs.

Basic factors

Further, Amani Al-Baddah, Director of International Relations at Kuwait Foundation for Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), underscored Kuwait's strategic location, available human and financial resources; basic factors for pressing ahead with the knowledge-based economy.

UN Development Program Resident Representative Zineb Touimi-Benjelloun stressed the UN readiness to provide support for Kuwait so as to promote its efforts in development and knowledge-based economy through certain programs. She said the UNDP is a strategic partner at the conference which sheds light on the importance of knowledge economy in achieving sustainable development. She added that the event will focus on government efforts seeking to create jobs for youth within the framework of the concept of knowledge economy.

On his part, Trevor Liu, CEO of Huawei Technologies in Kuwait, said that knowledge-based economy based on information technology is built through joint innovations and open partnerships. Huawei has expanded its branches for the first time in 16 years in external markets and managed to make success that helped it be an international technological company which provides services to a third of the world's population, he added. This move was made by setting up open partnerships across the globe through innovation and competition, he noted.

The State of Kuwait provides several privileges as it has a strategic location, a political democratic regime, skilled workers, an infrastructure and information technology, he said, indicating that all these privileges contribute to promoting the State's knowledge-based economy. Huawei will continue cooperation with the Kuwaiti Government through providing technologies which can meet the State's needs, he stressed.

Re-organized jobs

Earlier yesterday, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, and Minister of State for Planning and Development Affairs Hind Al-Subaih said Kuwait's jobs sector must be re-organized to follow up with the developments in the modern world.

The country can re-organize jobs by following a draft law called (Economic Activities Law), which allows national economic bodies to be independent on financial and administrative levels, while also granting them the right of self-financing, Al-Subaih, representing His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the conference, said. The two-day conference aims at introducing the country into the field of knowledge economy, which is part of Kuwait's development plan, said the minister.

Subaih, meanwhile, stressed the importance of investing in knowledge to develop the administrative and technical side of jobs, by creating partnership with the private sector as well as foreign investors. Knowledge economy focuses on turning leading ideas and research into vital products that can contribute to the country's GDP and support the budget, she added. — KUNA

INJURIES REPORTED IN ACCIDENTS

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Farwaniya firemen dealt with several traffic accidents reported yesterday, including a collision on Ghazali Road where a person was trapped in his vehicle. Firefighters cut the vehicle open to help the driver out before handing him over to paramedics. Meanwhile, Kuwait Fire Services Directorate's (KFSD) operations received a call about a vehicle which flipped over on Sixth Ring Road. Firemen managed to free several people who were trapped inside their vehicles. An unidentified number of persons were sent to the nearest medical facility with various injuries.

Explosives found

Security authorities found explosives in a boat near Fintas beach yesterday. A civil ID was also found next to the explosives. The ID was sent to Fintas police station.

News

In brief

Ongoing security campaigns reduce crimes: Official

KUWAIT: Ministry of Interior's Undersecretary Lieutenant General Sulaiman Al-Fahad said yesterday that security campaigns that have been going on lately lead to reduction of crime rates and some negative phenomena in the country. He added that enforcing the law is everyone's responsibility, with no exceptions, and should come along with right legal procedures for arrests. Lately, Mol has been conducting a wide-scale security campaign, by increasing checkpoints and security patrols all over the country, arresting thousands of law offenders and fugitives, which had a huge impact and relief for everyone in the country. — KUNA

Bedoons' rights guaranteed

KUWAIT: The rights of education and treatment are guaranteed to all segments of illegal residents in Kuwait, "regardless of lack of some of their papers or files," Yousef Saleh Al-Fadallah, the Executive Chairman of the Central Agency for Remediating Illegal Residents Status said yesterday. Fadallah said in a statement following a meeting with a visiting US Human Rights Watch delegation, which included Joe Stark, deputy director of the Middle East division at Human Rights Watch and Yemen and Kuwait Researcher, Middle East and North Africa Division, Belkis Wille. Fadallah added that he explained efforts to implement road map and techniques to address the living conditions of illegal residents. — KUNA

Cold weather at nights

KUWAIT: Kuwait Civil Aviation's Meteorologist Essa Ramadan expected a decrease in the effect of the Siberian high pressure in the upcoming days with continuation of cold weather at night until Thursday. The light to moderate Northwesterly wind movement will continue until today and will be active on Wednesday evening and Thursday, while the temperatures will rise back to normal rate during the weekend, Ramadan said. During the past few days, Kuwait witnessed a severe cold front, where temperatures recorded below zero for three days. The lowest was three degrees below zero in the border area of Al-Salmi and some of the western areas in the country. — KUNA

Schools' medical records

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health announced yesterday a uniform e-medical record system would be applied at school clinics involving, public, private and special education schools in the coming few days. The move will be initially put in place at Farwaniya schools, and then schools at other educational areas will follow suit as per a definite timeframe, Assistant Undersecretary of the Health Ministry for Technical Affairs Qais Al-Dweiri said in a press statement. The Ministry's School Health Department has already completed all necessary requirements for all grades at six educational areas, he added. — KUNA

CABINET CONDEMNS MOSQUE ATTACK IN SAUDI ARABIA

JAIL SENTENCES APPROVED FOR BUILDING SYSTEM VIOLATORS

KUWAIT: The Cabinet yesterday reiterated Kuwait's condemnation of a recent attack targeting a mosque in the east of Saudi Arabia, which left a number of innocent people dead or wounded, terming it as a 'terrorist act'.

The cabinet's condemnation came during its customary weekly meeting held in the cabinet's hall at the Kuwait International Airport under chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Four people were killed on Friday when a suicide bomber attacked a mosque in Saudi Arabia's eastern governorate of Al-Ahsa. Another 18 people were injured in Friday's attack, the Saudi Interior Ministry announced in a statement.

The Cabinet reaffirmed Kuwait's denunciation of such terrorist acts that run counter to all heavenly religions and humanitarian values and norms, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Electricity and Water Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah said in a press statement following the meeting. It also offered condolence and sorrow to the Saudi leadership and people over the victims of this human tragedy, wishing the injured swift recovery, he said.

Donors conference

At the onset of the meeting, the ministers were apprised of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's departure to the UK to attend the fourth international donors conference on Syria.

His Highness the Amir is accompanied by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of Oil Anas Al-Saleh, and several senior officials. The Cabinet hoped that the conference would come up with fruitful steps that could effectively help the Syrian people and alleviate their bitter sufferings and woes.

The ministers were also apprised of a letter received by His Highness the Amir from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who appreciated His Highness the Amir and government of Kuwait for efforts in the field of climate change, and invited His Highness the Amir to attend the signing ceremony of the Paris Agreement on climate change due at the UN headquarters next April. His Highness the Amir was sent another letter from

Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Iyad Madani.

Building system

Locally, the cabinet approved a draft law revising Law No. 5/2005 aiming to revise some articles pertinent to the regulation of the work of the Kuwait Municipality and Municipal Council, and punishing violators of the building system by sentencing them to a term ranging between six months and seven years in jail, fining them or facing other penalties.

It also consented to a bill revising Article 16 of Law No. 106/2013 regarding money laundering and financing of terrorism, and another draft law amending the agreement on the protection of nuclear materials.

The ministers further approved recommendations on a draft decree amending the bylaws of Law No. 116/2014 on partnership between the public and private sectors, together with another draft decree endorsing a trade cooperation agreement between Kuwait and Iraq and a Kuwaiti-Estonian agreement on visa-exemption for holders of diplomatic passports. — KUNA



Ooredoo Kuwait's General Manager and CEO, Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdullah Al Thani with Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Sheikh Salman Al-Homoud Al-Sabah.



Al Thani at the Hala February 2016 Carnival with Ooredoo



Mijbil Alayoub and Dr Hamad Al Nuaimi



Firemen at Hala February 2016 Carnival with Ooredoo

HALA FEBRUARY 2016 CARNIVAL ATTRACTS THOUSANDS OF PARTICIPANTS

AL THANI: WE SEEK KEY ROLE IN KUWAIT'S NATIONAL CELEBRATIONS

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of the international Ooredoo group, participated in Hala February's 2016 street carnival, which was held on Gulf Road next to Kuwait Towers on Friday. The event attracted thousands of revelers who enjoyed the national celebrations.

This year's carnival was attended by Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Sheikh Salman Al-Homoud Al-Sabah, and Minister of State for Cabinet

Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah. Ooredoo Kuwait's General Manager and CEO, Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdullah Al Thani attended the carnival along with company's executives and department heads.

"We have sought and will continue to seek taking key role in Kuwait's national celebrations. As partners, it was our pleasure to see people of Kuwait actively participating in this year's Hala February carnival, organized annu-

ally as part of Hala February Festival, which have always attracted citizens and residents alike. Folks have enjoyed a special day and many shows," said Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdullah Al Thani.

The annual carnival is one of the festival's most attractive events. This year, the carnival had special international performances, as well as a gliding show, a parade of government vehicles, and many other entertaining

activities. Kuwaiti national flags strung up all over the carnival's location, covering the entrances and exits in the area. Through its designated booth, Ooredoo was able to communicate with visitors, offering them its latest services and answering their enquiries about products. Ooredoo also presented gifts to all visitors.

On the sidelines of the event, Kuwait Television, which broadcasted these activities

live, interviewed a number of Ooredoo representatives, who talked about the Hala February festival activities and the company's efforts to take part in national celebrations.

Ahmad Al-Moussaoui, the renowned host of "Alo February" daily radio show, interacted with visitors through competitions and games. Ooredoo presented many prizes to winners, filling the air with more joy, fun and entertainment.



Participants celebrating



ANNUAL SURGEONS CONFERENCE, SYMPOSIUM UNDERWAY

ORGANIZED BY SURGERY COLLEGE AT KUWAIT INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL SPECIALTIES



KUWAIT: Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-in-Chief Dr Ziad Al-Alyan (left) and Central Circles Company's team are seen at the conference. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



A general view of the audience.

KUWAIT: The 14th Annual Surgeons Conference and the third symposium of the Kuwait Surgery Society opened Sunday, organized by the Surgery College at Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialties, with the participation of international, Arab and Gulf experts in various surgical fields. The conference and symposium will discuss the field

international experts. He said KIMS will adopt the recommendations and scientific papers the conference will come out with in order to enhance the performance of Kuwaiti doctors, adding that the conference will bring all what is new in the field of surgery through hosting world renowned experts in this field besides training students of the Kuwaiti board.

specialties such as obesity, neck tumors, colon, GI tract, emergencies and other means of advanced surgeries. He said that many duties that are given to doctors aim to develop the medical surgical performance in a way that goes with the most recent advances as well as the developmental plans.

Continuous education

Meanwhile, President of Kuwait Surgeons Society and head of the conference Mousa Khorsheed said the conference has sought since its start 14 years ago to instill a nucleus for continuous medical education program in the field

of general surgery and its delicate specialties, adding that the organization committee took clear steps that agrees with those concerned with surgery such as medical students, fellows and board doctors as well as consultants. He said the conference will host Dr Abe Fingehut from France, Alain Saber, Lawrence Sandz, Natan Zundel from the US, Dr Ali Khamas from UAE, Dr Amer Al-Darzi from Bahrain, Dr Fahim Basyouni, Hassan Shaker, Mohammad Hiqqi from Egypt and Dr Hisham Muhanna from UK. The conference will also host Dr Mohammad Al-Kawari from Qatar, Dr Paolo Miccoli, and Marco Anselmino

from Italy, Dr Raad Al-Mahdi from Oman, Dr Richardo Cohen from Brazil and Dr Sandro Rizoli from Canada.

He said the conference discussed surgeries of obesity and the surgical solutions for complications such as gastric stapling, bypass and the precautionary measures that lead to the best results and identifying reconstructive surgical alternatives. Surgical workshops were held on the sidelines of the conference that were broadcast to several hospitals in Kuwait, by international surgeons and the participation of Kuwait board doctors. —KUNA



Speakers seen at the 14th annual Surgeons Conference and the third symposium of the Kuwait Surgery Society

of extreme obesity, neck tumors, upper GI, colon, rectum and anus, as well as surgeries of abdomen wall such as hernia, weak muscles and accident surgeries, in order to develop the health system in the country.

KIMS Secretary General Dr Ibrahim Hadi said KIMS is keen on developing health services in Kuwait by enhancing doctors' levels and train them by an elite group of

New generation

Hadi stressed the importance of having these experts train doctors who are members of local specialties' programs in order to form a new generation of Kuwaiti surgeons who have the experience of approved international systems. He said KIMS is now receiving applications for 2016-2017, as all interviews and admission tests must be over within two weeks, adding that the institute will accept between 150-170 doctors in various programs and specialties.

About scholarship programs KIMS offers, Hadi said scholarships are continuing, and there will be fixed seats to send doctors, adding that Canada's Ottawa University was contacted to designate 10 seats for Kuwaiti doctors in the general surgery, internal, gyn/obs, pediatrics, ENT, orthopedic, anesthesia, urology and dermatology specialties. Hadi said the institute was keen to include new scholarship programs in blood diseases in children, leukemia and some children's delicate specialties as well as internal medicine within its work. He added that the National Assembly will soon discuss the mechanism of including those programs.

In his opening speech, Dr Hadi spoke about the importance of consolidating efforts to reform and develop basic systems with regards to general surgery and its delicate



Officials visit Central Circles Company's booth.



Kuwaiti neurosurgery consultant Dr Yousef Al-Awadhi (center) is honored.



Officials listen to a demonstration given by a representative of a participating company.



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Crime

Report

TWO QUESTIONED FOR BEATING OWN MOTHER

KUWAIT: A citizen in her sixties told Salam police that she was insulted and beaten by her two sons in the presence of their father. The mother said her ex-husband, the father, defended her. The woman presented a medical report, and police authorities are investigating.

Husband, wife trade charges

A woman who works for health ministry, and her husband who works for defense ministry, traded charges at Salam police station. The wife said she was beaten by her husband, but he said this was untrue and that his wife caused the marks on her body to get him in trouble. He argued that he was the victim as he was insulted and threatened by her, and showed them a text message as evidence.

Unidentified person

State security men are looking for an unidentified person, who may be abnormal, following information from a citizen who saw a man carrying a bag in Mangaf while screaming "Daesh... Daesh." Meanwhile, explosives experts went on alert after suspecting sticks similar to explosive ones, then later found they were copper rolls.

Drone

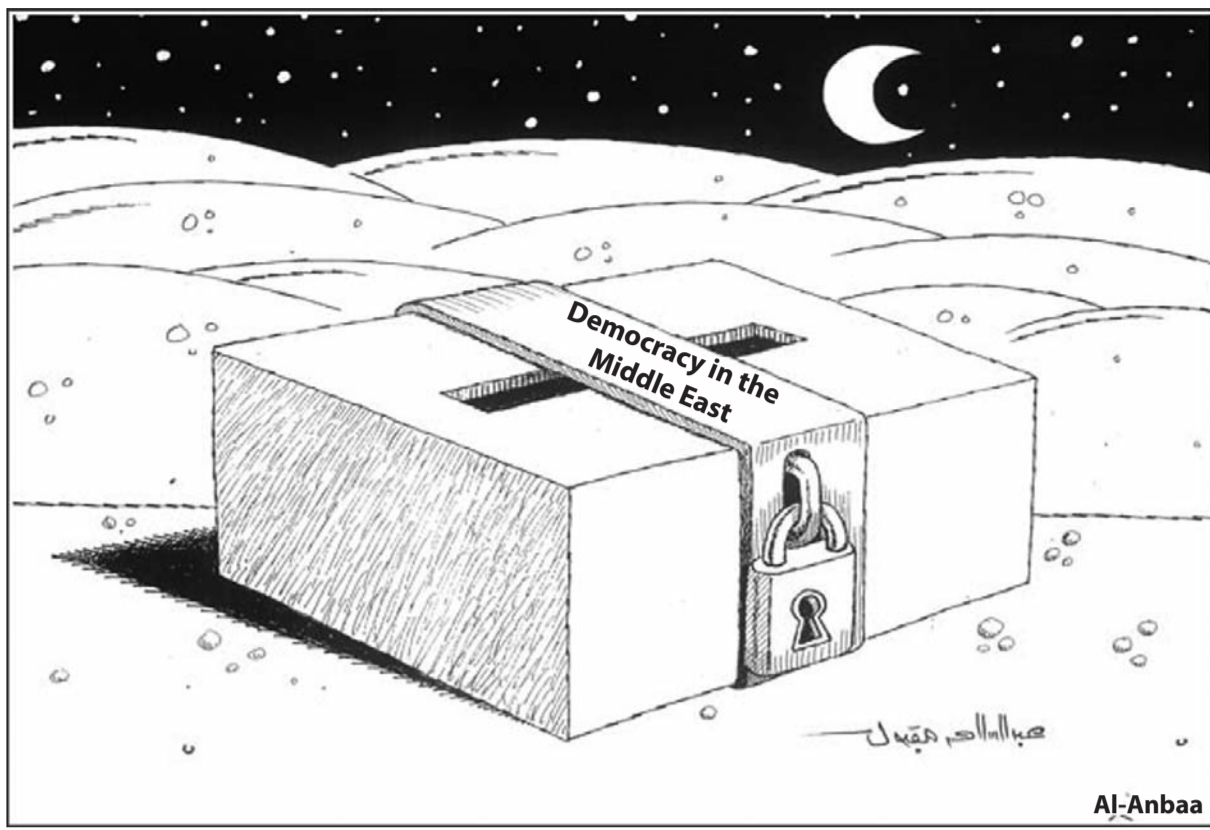
A citizen was sent to concerned authorities after being seen flying a remote controlled drone equipped with a camera over the Interior Ministry's building. State security was informed.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN SHOWS PRESENCE OF CORRUPTION

KUWAIT: There is a clear admission in the 2017-2018 development plan that there is corruption in the country. The government administration faces some challenges, that were reflected in the drop in the relative ranking of Kuwait in the effectiveness of policies, and this is the result of the drop in some sub-indicators making up the guide.

Government system burdens indicators, as Kuwait took the 125th rank in 2015 out of 140 countries, due to the burden of governmental rules and regulations, administrative problems in the investment environment and the works related to the length of the documentary cycle, as well as inflated employment in government.

Decision making transparency indicator: Kuwait ranked 96th in 2015 out of 140 due to corruption, weak transparency and accountability and lack of objective evaluation of government leaderships, according to their contribution to implementing projects of development plans according to the time schedule for them. —Al-Qabas



Al-Anbaa

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM DOES NOT ALLOW SKIPPING STAGES: MINISTER 'BRILLIANT BOY' SENT TO JORDAN TO DEVELOP HIS SKILLS

KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa said that Kuwait's educational system does not allow high-achieving students to skip school stages, similar to other countries. The minister made his statements to reporters after receiving a 2nd grade student who speaks Arabic, French and English.

The talent of Abdullah Rashid Al-Marri from Al-Fawares Primary School, in Farwaniya, was discovered by the special education manager Dr Kholoud Al-Jowayyan, who invited him and his father to the minister's office. Essa expressed great admiration of the boy's talent, and stressed that his wit surpasses his age. "The ministry cares for brilliant students and works on developing their talents in a way that benefits them and their country," Essa underlined, pointing out that this was the first time he had ever seen a pupil with such high IQ at this very early age. "Abdullah's IQ qualifies him for higher grades but our educational system does not allow skipping

grades upwards," Essa remarked.

Abdullah had responded to several questions the minister asked to check his general knowledge, answering them correctly.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Jowayyan said that the minister promised to take care of Abdullah, adding that contacts had been already made with a specialized center in Jordan so that Abdullah could join it and develop his talents and skills through a specialized program.

Old schools

In other news, the Municipal Council finally decided that all schools established earlier to the council's decision issued on May 9, 1983 on banning the construction of private schools in private and ideal residential areas, would be exempted from closure. The decision came in reference to violations committed by some private schools located in residential areas allocated for construction of citizens' houses only. —Al-Anbaa, Al-Rai

MASTERS, PHD SCHOLARSHIPS SUSPENDED

KUWAIT: Education Ministry has decided to stop all scholastic scholarships and leaves for Masters' degrees and PhDs for the next academic year 2016/ 2017. Education Ministry Undersecretary Dr Haitham Al-Athary said the decision to stop scholarships was taken for more studies to find the extent of benefit the ministry has gotten from it during the past years.

Athary said when the study is complete, the ministry will concentrate on the specialties that the educational field needs, especially science and natural science such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and others that contribute to the development of the educational process and scientific research in the ministry. —Al-Qabas

Al-Qabas

STOP SQUANDERING

By Qais Al-Usta

All Kuwaitis are in agreement that squandering must be stopped, but this squandering is present in more than one place. Some measures that are not in the right place, such as the announcement by the Civil Service Commission to stop masters and PhD scholarships, or halting training courses outside the country, without showing the amount of money such measures will save.

If you want to stop squandering, you should look into touristic treatments abroad, provided the decision will not affect the treatment of cancer, heart and liver patients. Furniture spending of some officials costs the state huge amounts of money, just because colors do not agree with the mood of this official or his office manager.

Freezing the decision of authorities that were created lately, because those authorities will require buildings, logistics services and appointments of undersecretaries and managers, without getting into discussions on the feasibility of those newly created authorities, and adding them to the documentary cycle such as the financial auditors authority. Add to this board members' rewards, and those equal to them and benefits for relatives and friends in the chalet - everyone knows this story. What I did not understand until now is the KD 250 travel allowance for officials, bearing in mind that their movement does not include remote areas.

All this and other things all people know are to reduce the budget deficit and the squandering in it, instead of looking into what the simple citizens get, as if they are applying the popular saying "they envy the poor man for dying on Friday!"

A last word: The Civil Service Commission is headed by a team that has been there for three decades, and despite this, holidays are given in a wrong way, and cadres burden the state with unlimited problems and contribute to dangerous social discrimination. If you want to save and stop squandering, you should give some officials rest, who have become a burden on the government apparatus.

Was the message delivered? I hope so.

—Translated by Kuwait Times

KIB SPONSORS AL-SIDRA ASSOCIATION'S ACTIVITIES

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced its sponsorship of the activities and initiatives of Al-Sidra Association for Psychological Care of Cancer Patients that offers psychological care for cancer patients and their relatives throughout the stages of the disease, as part of its preminent CSR program that aims at supporting the civil society organizations and their health, medical and awareness raising services.

The Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia, stated "The sponsorship of Al-Sidra activities is within a series of initiatives adopted by the bank to support the civil society institutions. Whereas the bank's recent sponsorship of the association's activities attempts to support its mission of creating a positive environment for patients to cope with the possible side effects and reinforce the success of their treatment through organizing various educational seminars and workshops."

Najia praised the association's role in tailoring programs and services like educating patients and providing them with information that helps them understand cancer, its treatment and the mental and physical challenges that the patient might go through. In addition to providing adequate advice about

how to cope with the disease, as well as promoting the physical, mental and emotional well-being of the female patients. Also giving them a chance to meet other survivors who have been through similar experiences to learn from one another and communicate with the healthcare professionals for psychological support.

Driven by its humanitarian and national commitment that aims at raising the know-how of the community's members to cultivate their potential for more progress, KIB strives to adopt a comprehensive development plan that takes in various social initiatives; such as cultural, educational, sports, health, youth and others.

On the other hand, Sheikha Azza Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Chairperson of Al-Sidra Association for Psychological Care of Cancer Patients and all the staff of Sidra Centre have expressed their gratitude for KIB participating in accomplishing the Association's goals that focus on enhancing the psychological status of cancer patients as this may positively reflect on the treatment of the patient. As a result its ability to provide and have positive reinforcement on the society. Consequently their ability to take and give with the society.



WARBA BANK HONORS 2015 DISTINGUISHED EMPLOYEES

KUWAIT: Having as its fundamental principle and conviction that the workforce is part and parcel of the Bank's success and high achievement, Warba Bank - the fastest growing bank in Kuwait, which provides a wide spectrum of Shariah compliant banking and investment - held its annual Employee Excellence Awards on January 27th at the exquisite seaside venue Sheikhah Salwa Sabah Al-Ahmad Hall at the Marina Hotel to recognize and reward high achievers of its various Group departments for their outstanding efforts and their exemplary contributions to the Bank's success.

Valued efforts

Highlighting the occasion, Warba Bank Vice Chairman and CEO Jassar Dakheel Al-Jassar, addressed the employees and said, "we at Warba Bank value the efforts

of our employees whom we have always viewed as the essential element in the successful progress of the Bank since its inception in 2010 and, thus, we are always keen on encouraging and motivating them for their strong efforts to drive more positive results that add to Warba Bank's success records so we all can achieve distinction and greatness with the Bank. Today, the efforts of our employees have been fruitful and are realized in the growth that the Bank has achieved in its operational revenues and financing portfolio."

Jassar added, "we will not spare any effort in supporting our employees to help them become more creative and great in order to reach this noble goal, god willing. We are keen on positive investments in our employees and workforce and will implement trainings in the Islamic banking industry to

ensure they can deliver superior services to our customers in line with standards of quality and excellence."

Jassar congratulated the winners for their outstanding achievements and their realization of the tasks and goals entrusted to them, which reflected their commitment to the bank and their contribution to improving the work environment that resulted in raising morale and the spirit of competitiveness at the Bank.

Competent talent

Jassar emphasized that Warba Bank will continue to recruit competent Kuwaiti talent - a pivotal principle in the Bank development strategy. He also stressed the Bank's commitment to strengthen local expertise from its leadership and rewarding them adequately. The evening commenced with

an opening speech by the MC, followed by a short video of various achievements and the awards handouts to winners who gathered in the ceremony to receive their recognition awards and certificates of appreciation from Warba Bank CEO. Photos were taken to commemorate the occasion.

In addition to the awards and to engage the audience; the evening also included some competitions and games revolved around the bank's latest services and products resulted in prizes being awarded to winners. Following these recreational activities, the evening was concluded by raffle draws, prizes and a dinner.

Warba Bank continues its strategy to develop and reward its workforce; in line with its fundamental belief that its employees are its partners in success and the basis of its continued distinction.



LANDLINES TO BE PRIVATIZED

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Information Technology and Telecommunications plans to privatize the communication sector at the Ministry of Communication, including the needed infrastructure, landlines, long distance cables and telephone exchange centers, Board chairman and CEO Salem Al-Othaina.

Othainah added that landlines are no longer run by governments anywhere in the world. Further, Othainah said that all executive, administrative and technical preparations have been done to allow launching the authority as soon as possible to be the sole executor of all the measures to be taken by telecom providing companies.

Othainah added that the telecom authority would, from now on, take all responsibilities of the ministry and other relevant authorities concerning information technology and telecommunications as per law number 37/2014 that was amended by law number 98/2015 with the aim of developing the service and protecting subscribers' interests. —Al-Jarida



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait distributed gifts to construction and cleaning workers, as part of the fifth edition of their annual campaign that involves helping laborers cope with harsh weather conditions.





Cuban president makes historic trip to France

IRAN GRABS OVER \$100 BILLION IN ASSETS UNDER NUCLEAR DEAL



GENEVA: Overview of the Syria peace talks at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland yesterday. — AP

SYRIA PEACE TALKS STRUGGLE TO GET OFF GROUND

UN RIGHTS CHIEF SOUNDS WAR CRIMES WARNING

GENEVA: The UN special envoy for Syria faced an uphill task in Geneva yesterday to get talks to end the brutal civil war off the ground, as the opposition hesitated to join negotiations with the regime. The urgency to find a solution to the four-year war was brought home Sunday when multiple explosions killed 71 people near a revered Shiite shrine outside the capital Damascus, according to a Britain-based monitor. The blasts were claimed by Islamic State, the extremist group that is running swathes of Syria and Iraq which has launched attacks worldwide, including in Paris in November when 130 people were murdered.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said the new atrocity in Syria was "clearly aimed to disrupt the attempts to start a political process". The deaths added to the more than 260,000 people to have perished since 2011 in a highly complex conflict sucking in a host of outside powers and on different sides. Half the population has been displaced, seeking refuge in neighboring countries or risking their lives to make it to Europe, creating a major political headache there.

Present in Geneva are the main opposition umbrella group the High Negotiation Committee (HNC) and representatives of President Bashar Al-Assad. Under an ambitious roadmap agreed in November in Vienna by all the outside powers embroiled in the war, the "proximity talks" - so not face-to-face - are due to last six months. The plan envisions elections within 18 months, but the key question of the

future of Assad-backed by Iran and Russia was left until later to resolve. But the Saudi-backed HNC is refusing to play ball unless Assad's regime first allows humanitarian access to besieged towns, stops bombarding civilians and releases prisoners.

A Western diplomat said that on Sunday UN envoy Staffan de Mistura made proposals to a mistrustful HNC in talks in a Geneva hotel, but that they were still hesitating. "We only came to Geneva after written commitments on the fact that there would be serious progress on the humanitarian issues," HNC spokeswoman Basma Kodmani told reporters on Sunday. "We are here for political negotiations but we cannot start those until we have those gestures," she said. But Damascus's chief negotiator Bashar Al-Jaafari - who met de Mistura on Friday - on Sunday called the opposition "not serious". "We do not know who is the other side. They don't even have a final list," the tall and stern Syrian ambassador to the UN told a packed news conference.

Kerry appeal

US Secretary of State John Kerry urged on Sunday both sides "to make the most of this moment" in an online statement broadcast from Washington. Kerry urged the opposition to drop their preconditions, but also had hard words for their foes, accusing Assad's forces of deliberately starving besieged towns. He described the talks in Geneva as being at a "pivotal phase" and said the HNC represented an "inclusive opposition." Another thorny

issue is which rebel groups will be involved in the talks, although all sides agree on the exclusion of IS and Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaeda's Syrian branch.

War crimes warning

Meanwhile, UN human rights chief said yesterday those committing crimes against humanity in Syria's brutal war should not be let off under any deal, as peace talks struggled in Geneva. "We do have a principled position in the United Nations that no amnesties should be considered for those suspected of having committed crimes against humanity or war crimes," UN rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein told reporters in Geneva. The Geneva talks represent the biggest push to date to chart a way out of the tangled almost five-year-old Syrian war that has killed more than 260,000 people and forced millions from their homes.

The urgency to find a solution was brought home Sunday when multiple explosions killed 71 people near a revered Shiite shrine outside the capital Damascus, according to a Britain-based monitor. The blasts were claimed by Islamic State, the extremist group that is running swathes of Syria and Iraq and which has launched attacks worldwide, including in Paris in November when 130 people were murdered. UN envoy Staffan de Mistura's aim is to coax the warring sides into six months of indirect "proximity talks" as part of an ambitious roadmap agreed by the many outside powers embroiled in the war. — Agencies

UK MOTHER GETS SIX YEARS FOR JOINING ISLAMIC STATE

LONDON: A mother who took her toddler to Syria and joined the Islamic State (IS) group was sentenced to six years in prison yesterday after becoming the first British woman to be convicted after returning home. Tareena Shakil, 26, was found guilty by a court in Birmingham, central England of IS membership and encouraging terror-

ism in posts on Twitter before leaving Britain. "You were well aware that the future which you had subjected your son to was very likely to be indoctrination and thereafter life as a terrorist fighter," Judge Melbourne Inman said.

The court heard that Shakil was radicalized online and in October 2014 told her family she was going to

Turkey for a beach holiday. Instead, she crossed the border into Syria and went to IS stronghold Raqa. "I left to build us all a house in heaven, Allah promised us heaven if we sacrifice our worldly life," she wrote in a message to a relative. "I'm not coming back." In Raqa, she was kept in a large house with other single women and posed with her son for a selfie while wearing a black balaclava branded with the IS symbol.

Other pictures found on her phone showed her posing with an AK-47 assault rifle and a handgun. However, Shakil found life under IS rules too strict. In January 2015, after repeatedly looking up "I want to leave ISIS" on the Internet, she and her son travelled by road to the Turkish border. They ran one kilometre (about half a mile) to escape into Turkey, dodging a three-man IS patrol before handing themselves in to the Turkish military, she told the court.

She was arrested when police boarded her flight home at London's Heathrow Airport last February. During her trial, Shakil claimed she only travelled to Syria because she wanted to live under sharia law. — AFP

INDIAN TRAIN RUNS OVER TEENAGER TAKING SELFIE

CHENNAI: An Indian teenager was struck and killed after he tried to take a photo of himself in front of an oncoming train, police said yesterday, in the latest deadly accident involving selfies. The passenger train ran over the boy shortly after he stepped onto railway tracks to snap the picture in the southern city of Chennai, while walking home with friends on Sunday evening. "It was a freak accident. More youngsters are now addicted to taking selfies," railway police officer S Ramuthai from the Chennai suburb of Tambaram told AFP.

The boy, reportedly aged 16, who had spent the day at the zoo, had walked in front of the train, waiting for it to get closer to take the photo, accord-

ing to local media reports. The accident comes just weeks after police in the western city of Mumbai moved to crack down on dangerous selfies after a man drowned trying to save a girl who fell into the sea snapping one. Police identified 16 dangerous selfie spots in Mumbai and have asked the local council to erect warning signs and deploy lifeguards.

In May last year a Russian woman accidentally shot herself in the head with a pistol while posing for a selfie with the weapon. And US investigators last February said a pilot's repeated snapping of selfie photos caused a small plane to crash, killing both people on board. — AFP

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SUDAN TROOPS SUFFOCATED 50 PEOPLE IN A CONTAINER

News

in brief

S African court jails men for immigrant's murder

JOHANNESBURG: Two South African men were yesterday jailed for killing a Mozambican street vendor in an attack captured in graphic photographs during a wave of anti-immigrant violence last year. The images, taken by a press photographer, showed Emmanuel Sithole being stabbed to death with a small knife in Alexandra township, northern Johannesburg. Johannesburg magistrate Lucas van der Schyff jailed the main accused Mthintso Bhengu for 17 years, and his co-accused Sifundo Mzimela for 10 years. Their underage accomplice received a five-year suspended term and was released under supervision. In handing down the sentences, Van der Schyff said Bhengu was a danger to society and did not show real remorse. Bhengu was identified as the man wielding the knife in pictures that caused a national outcry amid a spate of deadly attacks against immigrants in townships. Sithole died of his wounds in hospital. The magistrate described the murder as "senseless, brutal and unnecessary". Attacks against immigrants often flare up across South Africa, where poor locals accuse them of taking their jobs.

Saudi man executed; 56 executions in 2016

RIYADH: Saudi authorities yesterday executed a national for murdering a compatriot, bringing to 56 the number of convicts put to death in the kingdom this year. Ahmed Al-Harbi was found guilty of stabbing and shooting Fahed Al-Balawi in a dispute, the interior ministry said in a statement carried by state news agency SPA. He was executed in the northern city of Tabuk. Most executions in Saudi Arabia are done by beheading with a sword. Last year the kingdom executed 153 people, mostly for drug trafficking or murder, according to an AFP tally. On a single day last month it put 47 people to death for "terrorism", including influential Shiite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr. Amnesty International says the number of executions in Saudi Arabia in 2015 was the highest for two decades. The kingdom practices a strict Islamic legal code under which murder, drug trafficking, armed robbery, rape and apostasy are all punishable by death.



KABUL: Afghan security personnel gather as victims are treated at the site of a suicide car bomb next to a police base in Kabul yesterday. — AFP

Taleban suicide bomber kills 9 near police base

KABUL: A Taleban suicide bomber struck a police base in central Kabul yesterday, killing at least nine people just days before a fresh round of international talks aimed at reviving dialogue with the Islamist group. Scores of people were also wounded in the bombing at the entrance of the base, which left several bodies and charred debris strewn around the area. The attack comes amid the Taleban's unprecedented winter offensive despite a renewed push to restart formal peace talks. The interior ministry initially reported the attack as a suicide car bomb, but later said the attacker appeared to be on foot and detonated himself in a queue of people waiting to get inside the base. "Ten people were reported killed and 20 others were wounded in a suicide attack in Deh Mazang square of Kabul city," deputy interior minister Mohammad Ayoub Salangi said on Twitter. "Most of the victims were civilians." Kabul police spokesman Basir Mujahid reported a death toll of nine, adding that as many as 12 people including a woman were wounded. The health ministry said some of those wounded were hit in the chest by flying shrapnel and are in critical condition.

Armed robbers target paramedics in S Africa

JOHANNESBURG: Paramedics on duty were robbed at gunpoint in two major cities in South Africa in recent days, raising concerns about the safety of emergency responders in a country with a high crime rate. Two paramedics from ER24, a medical care group, were robbed Friday night in the Khayelitsha area of Cape Town after going to a home to help a person reported to be ill, the group said in a statement. One of the paramedics said a gunman "jumped into the back of the ambulance and held a firearm to the front of his forehead while demanding his cellphone," ER24 said. In a separate incident, authorities in Johannesburg said a gunman robbed three municipal paramedics who were treating a patient in an ambulance early Thursday. Paramedics are "quite an easy target" because they often rush into potentially risky areas at night, ER24 spokesman Russell Meiring said Monday. Paramedics are working with police to get escorts for some assignments, and are also appealing to the public to keep them safe by reporting any suspicious activity, Meiring said. Also Thursday, an ER24 ambulance was broken into and vandalized in Durban on South Africa's east coast.

Egyptian students stand trial for insulting Islam

CAIRO: An Egyptian lawyer says three Coptic Christian students face charges of insulting Islam and will stand trial this week after appearing in a video mocking Muslim prayers. Maher Naguib, a lawyer from the southern city of Minya said yesterday that the students, all in high school, will stand trial on Thursday. The students' teacher, also a Christian, was tried separately over the same charges. He fled the town and was sentenced to three-years imprisonment in absentia last year. Naguib said he will appeal. The students appeared in a video pretending to pray and reciting Quranic verses. Christians make up 10 percent of Egypt's population. Egypt has witnessed a surge in blasphemy charges in recent months at a time when President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi vowed to modernize religious discourse.

ADDIS ABABA: South Sudan government troops killed some 50 people by stuffing them into a shipping container in baking heat, ceasefire monitors have said in a report noting the latest atrocities in two years of war. Despite an August peace deal, fighting continues, and the conflict now involves multiple militia forces who pay little heed to paper peace deals, driven by local agendas or revenge attacks. The report, by the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), was submitted to the African Union (AU) summit and made public late Sunday.

The atrocity, titled "concerning the killing of civilians in Unity State", was one of several listed as examples of ceasefire violations carried out by forces on both sides. "About 50 people suffocated in a container on about 22 October. The investigation was protracted. Attribution of responsibility: Government Forces," the report read. In South Sudan, metal containers are often used as makeshift prison cells. Temperatures in the northern battleground state of Unity regularly top 40 degrees Celsius (100 degrees Fahrenheit).

Other crimes listed include rape and murder, and the capture and looting of UN



YIDA, South Sudan: A bus departs from Ajuong Thok refugee camp in South Sudan, less than 100 kms away from the border with Sudan. The bus will travel to Yida, the last village in South Sudan, before eventually crossing the border. Sudan ordered the reopening of the country's contested borders with South Sudan. Relations between Juba and Khartoum had been tense since South Sudan's secession split in 2011 under a peace deal that ended a bloody 22-year civil war, with disputes over several areas along the border. — AFP

river barges. There was no immediate response from South Sudan's army, but spokesmen have rejected a long list of previous reports detailing accusations of atrocities. Last month, a UN panel of experts said South Sudan's President Salva Kiir and rebel chief Riek Machar should face sanctions for their role in the war. JMEC chief Festus Mogae, a former Botswana president appointed to the role by regional bloc IGAD, warned that efforts to force through a unity government had stalled after Kiir nearly tripled the number of regional states, undermining a fundamental pillar of the power-sharing deal.

"The government's action has led to an impasse," Mogae said, in an appeal to the AU. "Given the fragility of the security situation in South Sudan, the renewed risk of conflict, and continued insecurity affecting the humanitarian relief effort, emphatic, stern measures should be taken by the African Union... rhetoric alone can only do so much," Mogae said. Both the government and rebel sides have been accused of perpetrating ethnic massacres, recruiting and killing children and carrying out widespread rape, torture and forced displacement of populations to "cleanse" areas of their opponents. — AFP

IRAN GRABS OVER \$100 BILLION IN ASSETS UNDER NUCLEAR DEAL

UN CHIEF URGES COMPROMISE, REALISM BETWEEN SAUDIS AND IRAN

TEHRAN: Iran said yesterday it now has access to more than \$100 billion worth of frozen overseas assets following the implementation of a landmark nuclear deal with world powers. Government spokesman Mohammad Bagher Nobakht said much of the money had been piling up in banks in China, India, Japan, South Korea and Turkey since international sanctions were tightened in 2012 over Tehran's nuclear program.

Iran's semi-official ISNA news agency meanwhile quoted central bank official Nasser Hakimi as saying nine Iranian banks are now reconnected to SWIFT, a Belgian-based cooperative that handles wire transfers between financial institutions. No foreign banks operate in Iran, and ATMs in Iran are not yet linked to the global system. The historic agreement brought about the lifting of international sanctions last month after the UN certified that Iran has met all its commitments to curbing its nuclear activities under last summer's accord.

"These assets (\$100 billion) have fully been released and we can use them," Nobakht said in comments posted on the website of state-run Press TV. He said much of the money belongs to CBI and the country's National Development Fund. He said Iran will not bring all the money back because it can be spent on purchasing goods. Iran expects an economic breakthrough after the lifting of sanctions, which will allow it to access overseas assets and sell crude oil more freely. Mohsen Jalalpour, the head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, said on state TV Monday that Iranian businessmen are already able to open letters of credit for transactions in other countries.

Saudis and Iran

Meanwhile, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has used a stopover in the Middle East yesterday to urge Saudi Arabia and Iran to compromise and interact responsibly, seeking to calm a flare-up in tensions between the two regional rivals. Ban made the comments during a two-day



TEHRAN: Schoolgirls hold national flag in front of a giant board as Iranians mark the start of 10 days of celebrations for the 37th anniversary of the Islamic revolution yesterday at the Behesht-e Zahra (Zahra's Paradise) cemetery in southern Tehran. — AFP

visit to the sultanate of Oman, which borders Saudi Arabia and shares control of approaches to the Persian Gulf with Iran.

"I hope that both Iran and Saudi Arabia, despite mistrust and difficulties, will bring realism, responsibility and compromise to their dealings, and to the region," Ban said during an address to Oman's National Defense College, according to a text of his remarks provided by the UN. He also expressed hope that last month's lifting of sanctions on Iran following its

landmark nuclear deal with world powers will lead to "increasingly responsible behavior in the region." Long-simmering tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran escalated last month after Saudi authorities executed a prominent Shiite cleric, sparking protests in Iran.

Oman has long maintained contacts with its powerful neighbors, and frequently acts as a discreet mediator to some of the region's thornier disputes. It hosted secret talks between Washington and Tehran in the lead-

up to last year's landmark nuclear deal and, more recently, negotiations aimed at resolving the civil war in neighboring Yemen. It has also helped secure the release of a number of captives held by Yemeni rebels. Ban praised Oman for its "unique role of bringing people together ... facilitating dialogue and finding common ground." His visit included talks with senior Omani officials including Yusuf bin Alawi, the minister responsible for foreign affairs. — Agencies

IRAN'S FORMER PRESIDENT CRITICIZES HARDLINERS FOR ELIMINATING RIVALS

DUBAI: Former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani yesterday criticized the disqualification of reformist candidates by hardliners from national elections next month, deepening a dispute between the two factions. The Guardian Council, a vetting body made up of clerics and jurists, excluded thousands of parliamentary hopefuls and four-fifths of the candidates for the body that will choose Iran's next Supreme Leader. The move was a setback to moderate President Hassan Rouhani and his powerful ally Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who was president between 1989 and 1997.

Among those excluded was Hassan Khomeini, grandson of the Islamic Republic's first Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who has close ties to reformists.

"They disqualified the grandson of Imam Khomeini, who is the most similar person to his grandfather," Rafsanjani said, according to ISNA news agency, at a ceremony commemorating the anniversary of Khomeini's return to Tehran from France during the 1979 revolution. "Who decided you are qualified to judge the others? Who gave you the right to take all the guns, have all the Friday prayer platform and run state television?" he added, referring to hardliners.

Rafsanjani's comments indirectly target Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who is commander-in-chief of the armed forces and who appoints the head of state television, the Friday prayer leaders around the country and half of the members of the Guardian Council.



TEHRAN: Iranian soldiers walk past giant boards displaying pictures of the late founder of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, as Iranians mark the start of 10 days of celebrations for the 37th anniversary of the Islamic revolution yesterday. — AFP

Rafsanjani, 78, was Friday prayer leader in Tehran but was dismissed from the position when he backed the opposition movement whose protests were crushed after the last, disputed election in 2009. The Guardian Council disqualified him from the next presidential election. Elections to the 290-seat parliament and 88-member Assembly of Experts are due

to take place on Feb. 26.

Iran's success in winning an end to international sanctions in exchange for curbing its disputed nuclear program is expected to intensify a power struggle within an elite split into conservative and moderate-reformist factions. Khamenei grudgingly allowed Rouhani to negotiate the nuclear deal after the moderate cleric

won a landslide election in 2013 on a pledge of easing Iran's isolation abroad and repression at home. But hardliners now fear that voters, hoping living standards can rise with sanctions out of the way, will reward pro-Rouhani candidates in the elections, with the vote for the Assembly of Experts in particular crucial in shaping Iran's future path. — Reuters

WITH INMATES BACK IN JAIL, FOCUS TURNS TO HOW THEY ESCAPED

SANTA ANA: With all three violent inmates who escaped from a California jail back in custody, authorities are beginning to examine how they carried out the jail break and what they did during their week on the run. Orange County Sheriff Sandra Hutchens vowed over the weekend to fix the security lapses that allowed the escape. Early on Jan 22, the men sawed, crawled and climbed their way out of the maximum-security Central Men's Jail and used a rope made of bedsheets to

rappel four stories to the ground.

Their escape triggered an intense manhunt. On Friday, of the inmates, 43-year-old Bac Duong, surrendered after walking into an auto repair shop in Santa Ana just a few miles from the jail. The last two escapees, Hossein Nayeri, 37, and Jonathan Tieu, 20, were arrested Saturday after a civilian flagged down officers near San Francisco's Golden Gate Park and pointed out a parked van that looked like one believed stolen by

the inmates after the escape.

The three did not know each other before being housed in the Orange County jail. They were awaiting trial on charges including murder, attempted murder, torture and kidnapping. Duong and Tieu have ties to street gangs that operate in the shadows of Orange County's thriving Vietnamese community. While behind bars, the three were housed together in a large jail module that held 65 other men, about half of whom were in

custody for violent felonies. A woman who taught English at the jail, and is accused of giving Nayeri a paper copy of a Google Earth map that showed an aerial view of the entire jail compound, is also in custody.

Nooshafarin Ravaghi, a 44-year-old children's book author, was arrested Thursday and booked on suspicion of being an accessory to a felony. She is being held pending a court appearance set for Monday. Authorities say she and

Nayeri - who both were born in Iran - exchanged letters and had a relationship that was closer than it should have been, but stopped short of calling it romantic. Nayeri is a former Marine who grew up in the Fresno area, and authorities say it's unclear why as an English speaker he was in her class that teaches English as a second language. Built in 1968, the jail that housed the men holds about 900 inmates. It was the first breakout from the facility in nearly 30 years.—AP

ISRAEL BLOCKS NON-RESIDENTS FROM RAMALLAH AFTER ATTACK

RAMALLAH: Israel blocked non-residents from Ramallah yesterday after a checkpoint shooting wounded three soldiers, keeping commuters out of the West Bank city where the Palestinian Authority is based. The unusual move also applied to foreigners, although United Nations officials, international NGOs and diplomatic staff were being allowed in, diplomatic and UN sources said. Palestinians seeking to leave Ramallah were also undergoing security checks, leading to frustration in lengthy queues. "In accordance with situation assessments following yesterday's shooting attack in Beit El, security measures have been taken in the area and only residents of Ramallah are allowed to enter the city," a military spokeswoman said.

Sunday's attack saw a Palestinian who had worked as a guard for the attorney general's office in Ramallah open fire at a checkpoint outside the city, wounding three Israeli soldiers before being shot dead. It was the latest in four months of Palestinian knife, gun and car-ramming attacks targeting Israelis. Most of the attacks have been stabbings, though shootings have occasionally occurred. The military spokeswoman said yesterday a decision on when to lift the measure would depend on security assessments, with Israel seeking to halt the wave of attacks.

It was not clear when the last time such a move had been taken by Israel, though heavy restrictions were put in place during the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising, between 2000 and 2005. Sunday's shooting marked at least the second time a Palestinian security officer had been implicated in an attack in the current wave of violence. The checkpoint where it occurred, regularly used by diplomats, journalists and humanitarian workers, was closed yesterday morning, an AFP journalist reported. A number of other roads connecting Ramallah with the northern West Bank were also closed or restricted, although checkpoints near Jerusalem were open. Later in the day, it appeared that enforcement of the measure varied between locations.

'Only the people'

A large number of Palestinians, aid workers and diplomats commute to Ramallah for work or other reasons on a daily basis. While diplomats were not directly impacted, "the travel restriction on Palestinians is having an effect in terms of our ability to engage", one Western diplomat said. "A number of meetings have been called off because Palestinian interlocutors have not been able to get to the meeting site." Palestinians queuing to leave Ramallah said they considered the measure to be punishment for Sunday's attack.

One woman in her 30s waiting in a taxi gave her name as Aline and said she was missing a court date in Nablus in the northern West Bank. "The question is until when this will happen?" she asked. "Every time someone has a gun and goes to shoot the Israeli army? Neither the (Palestinian) president is harmed or anyone else. Only the people are harmed." Violence since October has killed 25 Israelis, as well as an American and an Eritrean, according to an AFP count. At the same time, 161 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces, most while carrying out attacks but others during clashes and demonstrations. The checkpoint shooting was one of two attacks on Sunday. Later in the day, an attempted car-ramming occurred at a military checkpoint in the West Bank north of Jerusalem, with the attacker shot and taken to hospital for treatment, Israel's military said. No Israelis were reported wounded.

Yesterday morning, a 17-year-old Palestinian was shot dead after trying to stab soldiers near the Jewish settlement of Salit in the West Bank, Israel's army said. Salit is near Israeli territory, not far from Tel Aviv. Some analysts say Palestinian frustration with Israel's occupation of the West Bank, the complete lack of progress in peace efforts and their own fractured leadership have helped feed the unrest. Israel blames incitement by Palestinian leaders and media as a main cause of the violence. Many of the attackers have been young people, including teenagers, who appear to have been acting on their own.—AFP



ABIDJAN: People attend a live broadcast of the trial of former Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo in front of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. — AFP

FRANCE AIDED OUATTARA TO TAKE 'POWER BY FORCE'

GBAGBO'S DEFENSE LAWYERS BLAST IVORIAN PRESIDENT

THE HAGUE: Defense lawyers for fallen Ivorian leader Laurent Gbagbo yesterday accused his bitter rival President Alassane Ouattara of seizing power by force aided by former colonial ruler France after disputed 2010 elections. In an opening statement on the third day of Gbagbo's landmark trial on charges of crimes against humanity, defense lawyer Emmanuel Altit sought to unmask what he called a deliberate "smear campaign" against his client. "Ouattara and his supporters wanted to seize power by force and the battle of Abidjan was, simply put, the very implementation of this strategy," defence lawyer Emmanuel Altit told the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Gbagbo and his co-accused Charles Ble Goude, a firebrand militia leader, have denied four charges of crimes against humanity after 3,000 people were killed following a disputed Ivory Coast vote. Their highly-anticipated trial opened on Thursday at the court based in The Hague and is set to last three to four years. Gbagbo declared himself the winner of the vote in late 2010, but major powers including France and the United States, as well as the United Nations, backed Ouattara, who had snatched a narrow victory.

The row triggered a bitter standoff that saw Gbagbo holed up in the fortified presidential palace and Abidjan-the country's main city and commercial capital-turned into a war zone. "France did not want peace to be negotiated," Altit said. Then French president

Nicolas Sarkozy "had shown unwavering support for his friend Ouattara," defense lawyer Jennifer Naouri told the court. Gbagbo became the first ex-head of state to go on trial at the ICC and Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda painted a vivid picture of the turmoil saying "the Ivory Coast descended into chaos and was the theatre of unspeakable violence."

She alleged on Thursday that Gbagbo, aided by the military, police and a youth militia group organised by Ble Goude, had clung to power by "all means necessary". But Altit countered Monday that there had been a deliberate campaign to make Gbagbo "out to be some of kind demon" and "paint Ouattara as the good guy."

"This is nothing more than a political narrative that has been heated up and re-served," Gbagbo lawyer Agathe Bahi Baroan added that Gbagbo was "not a despot." "All his life he fought to defend democracy in the Ivory Coast," she said.

'Crafty plotters, schemers'

"Perhaps someone wants us to forget" alleged abuses committed by pro-Ouattara forces, Altit said, adding that even before the elections Ouattara had been recruiting mercenaries in neighboring Burkina Faso, where preparations for the assault on Abidjan were made. "The plans for military action had been drawn up by the plotters and schemers ... in cooperation with French military leaders dur-

ing the entire crisis," he said.

"A fleet of French military aircraft delivered heavy weapons to pro-Ouattara combatants in the north of Cote d'Ivoire in February and March 2011, once again breaking the UN embargo," he said, using Ivory Coast's French name. If the two men are convicted, the maximum penalty is usually up to 30 years in prison. Judges can impose a life sentence "when justified by the extreme gravity of the crime", according to the court's guiding statute. Prosecutors are focusing on four specific incidents in the orgy of violence in the world's top cocoa producer, once held up as a beacon of democracy in a troubled continent.

One incident is the shelling of a market in the northern Abobo suburb on March 17, 2011 when pro-Gbagbo forces are alleged to have killed 40 people and injured 60 others. Altit recalled how the incident had been loudly condemned at the United Nations. But it led to a "ground offensive which had been prepared well in advance, craftily, sneakily, by French forces," he said. And he regretted that no French witnesses had been called by the prosecution, saying only they "have the information needed to get" to the truth of what happened. The ICC is accused by some African leaders of unfairly targeting them. On Sunday, during an African Union summit, several continental heads of state backed a Kenyan proposal to pull out of the ICC on the ground that it is biased.—AFP



EIN SINYA, Palestinian Territories: An Israeli soldier checks the vehicles of Palestinians on their way out of the West Bank village of Ein Sinya, northern Ramallah yesterday. —AFP

KADYROV ISSUES VIDEO OF OPPN LEADER IN SNIPER'S CROSSHAIRS

MOSCOW: One of Russian President Vladimir Putin's most loyal allies has stirred fear among Kremlin critics by releasing a video showing opposition leader Mikhail Kasyanov in the crosshairs of a sniper's rifle. The video, released on social media by Ramzan Kadyrov, the Kremlin-backed leader of Chechnya, follows weeks of increasingly hostile rhetoric towards the liberal opposition from the former rebel fighter, who has called Putin's opponents "enemies of the people" who deserve to be tried for sabotage.

The video, which Kasyanov, a former prime minister, said he regarded as "incitement to murder", was issued weeks before the first anniversary of the murder of Boris Nemtsov, another prominent liberal opposition leader. Police have charged a group of Chechen men with that killing, one of whom Kadyrov praised for his patriotism after the murder. But Nemtsov's allies say the mastermind has not been found and that a cover-up is underway.

They want Kadyrov questioned. Kadyrov, 39, has said the idea that he is a suspect in the Nemtsov killing is nonsense. Kasyanov, who

once served as prime minister under Putin only to become one of his biggest critics in opposition, said he hoped the Russian president would speak out against Kadyrov. The Kremlin said it had not seen the video but would look into it. "I assess Kadyrov's move as incitement to murder a state or civil society leader," Kasyanov, who is chairman of the opposition PARNAS party, told the Ekho Mosky radio station. "It's a straightforward criminal offence."—Reuters

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SNOWDEN, COLOMBIA, GREEK ISLANDERS AMONG NOBEL PEACE PRIZE TIPS



Edward Snowden

OSLO: Former US spy agency contractor Edward Snowden, peace negotiators in Colombia or Greek islanders helping Syrian refugees were among tips for the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize at the deadline for nominations yesterday. Nobel watchers also speculated that negotiators of an accord over Iran's nuclear program could be in the running after a surprise award last year to a coalition of Tunisian democracy campaigners, the National Dialogue Quartet.

"2016 may finally be Edward Snowden's year ... His leaks are now having a positive effect," Kristian Berg Harpviken, head of the Peace Research Institute, Oslo said, putting him top of his list of candidates. Harpviken said many nations were now reforming laws to restrict intelligence gathering, helping human rights, in the wake of Snowden's leaks in 2013 of details of the US government's surveillance programs.

Washington has filed espionage charges against Snowden, who has been granted asylum in Russia. An award of the \$930,000 prize to Snowden, by a Nobel committee in NATO

member Norway, would be a huge snub for President Barack Obama, the 2009 Nobel laureate. Asle Sveen, an historian and expert on the prize, said he reckoned the "obvious choice" for 2016 would be to honour Colombia's government and FARC rebel group - if they succeed in peace talks launched in 2012 to end five decades of war. He noted Norway's government had been involved in organizing peace talks, perhaps swaying the five-member Norwegian Nobel committee which is appointed by parliament. Feb. 1 is the annual deadline for nominations.

Harpviken placed Colombian peace negotiators third on his list, behind US Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz and Ali Akbar Salehi, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, for their role in negotiating a deal last year to limit Iran's nuclear program. That accord led to a lifting of sanctions by major powers on Tehran last month. Other candidates include Greek islanders who have helped Syrian and other refugees - a campaign by grassroots group Avaaz has collected 635,000 online signatures for a prize to islanders who "have

opened their homes and hearts". But it could be difficult to identify Greek winners under the plans set out by Alfred Nobel, the Swedish founder of the prize. The award can be split up to three ways, to individuals or organizations.

Sveen said other candidates may include Russian human rights groups such as Memorial, nominated by Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg before she took office in 2013. "Huge numbers of nominations are still coming in," said Olav Njøelstad, Director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute. The committee will have its first meeting on Feb 29 and announce the winner in October. Thousands of people, including members of all national parliaments, former laureates and university rectors, can make nominations. Last year there were 273 nominees. Harpviken said a US nominator, whom he did not identify, had proposed US Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump for his "vigorous peace through strength ideology". He did not list Trump among those with a chance of winning. —Reuters

BRITAIN, EU HOLD CRUCIAL TALKS ON THE 'BREXIT' DEAL

EU STRUGGLING WITH BIGGEST INFLUX OF MIGRANTS SINCE WWII

BRUSSELS: European Union and British diplomats held "intensive" talks in Brussels yesterday in a race against time to seal a deal on changes to Britain's membership of the crisis-ridden bloc by the end of the day. British Prime Minister David Cameron and EU President Donald Tusk failed to reach an agreement over dinner in London on Sunday and so decided on a 24-hour extension for further discussion in a bid to reach an accord by the self-imposed deadline. But with only one of the four policy areas or baskets demanded by Cameron having been agreed so far, according to EU officials, the negotiations to keep Britain in the 28-nation bloc promise to be difficult.

The turmoil over Britain's membership

comes as the EU is struggling with the biggest influx of migrants since World War II, and the ongoing fallout over the euro-zone debt crisis. "Intensive work in next 24 (hours) crucial," Tusk wrote on Twitter on Sunday night. "Only one basket is really 'closed,'" an EU source said. "Negotiations continue." Failure to reach an agreement on Monday will mean that Tusk is likely unable to issue a draft proposal for other EU leaders this week, in time for a full deal at an EU summit in Brussels on February 18-19.

'Significant breakthrough'
Cameron, whose Conservative party has long been split by the issue of Europe, had hoped for a deal at the summit to

give him time to call a referendum on Britain's membership of the EU this June, the first since 1975. Although he has set a deadline of the end of 2017 to hold a referendum, he is keen to push a vote through before any new flare up in the migration crisis and before British eurosceptics, particularly in his own party, become even more unruly. His main goal is to exclude EU migrants from benefits such as income top-ups for low-paid workers until they have paid into the British system, under a so-called "emergency brake" system. Downing Street insisted there had been a "significant breakthrough" on Sunday, with the European Commission having agreed the brake could be applied immediately

under a rule that would require countries to show their welfare system was under strain. According to government sources, Cameron is prepared to accept the "emergency brake" in place of a previously proposed four-year curb on EU migrants claiming benefits. Other countries had objected strongly that this was discriminatory and could require change to the EU's founding treaties, a very difficult procedure. "The prime minister intends to leave Tusk in no doubt that he will not do a deal at any price," a senior British government source said. But underlining the challenges ahead, Paris warned London that it would block a separate proposal to protect EU countries like Britain that are not part of the euro single currency. "To French officials, any provisions giving non-euro countries power to indefinitely stall euro-zone votes are unacceptable," the Financial Times reported, saying France would reject any "backdoor veto" for the City of London finance hub.

Anti-EU sentiment

The other areas-ensuring greater economic competitiveness in the EU and giving Britain guarantees against further European integration-are seen as easier to agree on. Without a deal in February, the next EU summit is in March, but that would likely not leave time for Britain to arrange the referendum in June, with the next available dates not until September or even next year. Cameron, who was re-elected in May, insists he is willing to hold out for as long as it takes to secure the right package of reforms, if necessary delaying the referendum until September or even next year. The number of European job seekers has become a hot political issue in Britain and key driver of anti-EU sentiment-a phenomenon increasingly seen across the bloc. Opinion polls are largely split on whether Britons would vote to leave the EU in a so-called "Brexit". —AFP



BRUSSELS: The British (right) and EU flags flap in the wind outside of EU headquarters in Brussels. —AP

COLOGNE ON EDGE AFTER SEX ASSAULTS, BEEFS UP SECURITY

BERLIN: Cologne is on high alert ahead of its giant carnival festivities since a shocking spate of sexual assaults, with German authorities anxious to prevent a repeat of the rampage and ward off potential jihadist attacks. Police in the western German city have been struggling to restore public confidence after it emerged that hundreds of women were groped and robbed in a mob of mostly North African and Arab men during New Year's celebrations.

Around 1,000 complaints have been filed over the crime spree that has also ignited an intense debate about Germany's ability to integrate 1.1 million asylum seekers it took in last year. The carnival festivities kick off on Thursday with street parties-a week-long binge of beer, song and dance by revelers in fancy dress-and run through Ash Wednesday on February 10. In the run-up to carnival, German authorities are determined to put on a good show. Some 2,500 police officers have been called in to patrol the streets, three times as many as last year, as the security budget reached 360,000 euros (\$390,000).

Closed-circuit television cameras have been installed and bans imposed on known petty thieves, including suspected pickpockets who took part in the crime spree on New Year's Eve. A "security point" for women will be set up in the city, to be staffed by social workers and psychologists and the local judicial system geared up to accelerate the processing of any potential offenders during the festivities. As doubts surfaced over the cultural differences of the mostly Muslim newcomers, carnival's organizers have even printed a leaflet in both Arabic and English explaining the party to newcomers, including whether alcohol was a must.

"While many Cologne locals drink beer or other alcoholic beverages during carnival, it is of course not compulsory. You can have fun, sing and dance just as easily without alcohol," according to the flyer. The neighboring city of Bonn was more explicit in its advice to refugees, explaining that the word "buetzen" means "kissing somebody on the cheek, one of our carnival customs,"

but adding that "sexual overtures are strictly prohibited. Women and men must always consent to the 'buetzen'. No means no!"

'Don't dress up as jihadists'

But a repeat of the New Year debacle was not the only threat. Security forces are also battling to prevent a possible terror attack, with Germany's domestic intelligence chief Hans-Georg Maassen reiterating in a report that the situation remained serious after the Paris jihadist atrocities in November.

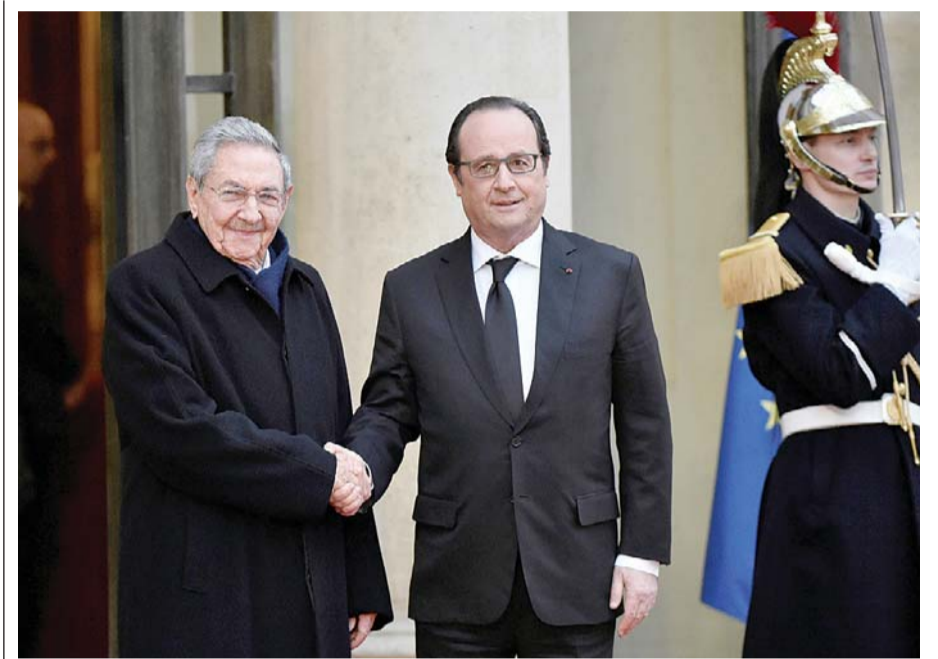
The wider area around Cologne in North Rhine-Westphalia state is home to Germany's biggest concentration of radical Islamists. It is also where the man who tried to attack a Paris police station on January 7 lived. The attacker, identified as Tarek Belgacem by Tunisian authorities, was shot dead by French police as he

attempted his assault on the one-year anniversary of the jihadist attack on satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo in Paris. He had lived at an asylum-seeker shelter in Recklinghausen, said German police, who however found that he was not linked to any Islamist networks.

Underlining the nervousness surrounding potential threats, Cologne's police chief Juergen Mathies "strongly discouraged" revelers from "dressing up as jihadists or from carrying weapons that you are unable to tell whether they are real or not". Authorities were apparently not taking any chances, and had even issued a public alert after a man of "Middle Eastern appearance" bought chemicals that could be used to make improvised explosives in a hardware store. That eventually turned out to be a case of a drug-making home factory rather than explosives. —AFP



COLOGNE: File photo shows carnival revelers celebrating the launch of the so-called "Fifth Season", the carnival season in Cologne, western Germany. —AFP



PARIS: French President Francois Hollande (right) welcomes Cuban President Raul Castro upon his arrival yesterday at the Elysee Presidential Palace in Paris. —AFP

CUBAN PRESIDENT MAKES HISTORIC TRIP TO FRANCE

PARIS: Cuba's President Raul Castro began an official state visit to France yesterday, his first ever to Europe, which is being seen as a key step in rebuilding his island nation's ties with the West. The Cuban leader was welcomed under the Arc de Triomphe in Paris before being driven down a virtually deserted Champs-Elysees avenue, decked out in Cuban flags. Police severely restricted access to spectators, and just a few groups of supporters of the Cuban regime were present.

Castro, 84, is on his first official trip to the European Union since taking over from his elder brother Fidel in 2006, and spent the weekend in the French capital on a private visit. France has led the way in welcoming Cuba back into the diplomatic fold since it restored relations last year with the United States after they were broken off for more than half a century. French President Francois Hollande, who was to hold talks with Castro later, has described the visit as "a new stage in the strengthening of relations between the two countries". It builds on Hollande's own state visit to Cuba last May, the first by a head of state from the West in more than half a century.

Castro is the second former pariah to be welcomed to Paris in a matter of days, after Hollande hosted Iranian President Hassan Rouhani last week. "This visit is important for Cuba's image," said Eduardo Perera, an international relations expert at Havana University. "It will undeniably make Cuba shine on the international stage." Havana hopes the visit will allow Cuba to "widen and diversify its relations with France in all possible areas-politics, economics, trade, finance, investment, culture and cooperation," said Rogelio Sierra, Cuban deputy foreign minister. Although Washington has yet to lift its trade embargo on Cuba, US and European businesses are jockeying for a place in the market as the island's economy gradually opens up.

Hollande urged an end to the blockade, which was imposed in 1962, on his Havana visit. Trade delegations have been flocking to Cuba, hoping to cash in on its highly trained workforce and natural assets such as its sun-drenched Caribbean beaches, a draw for tourists. Cuba, meanwhile, needs to tap new sources of income as its main ally and financial backer, Venezuela, is mired in economic and political crisis. Trade between the two countries currently adds up to a modest \$195 million (180 million euros), which is "not in line with our ambitions," France's minister of state for foreign trade Matthias Fekl told L'Humanite newspaper.

Debt write-off

The French trip is the first by a Cuban head of state since Fidel Castro visited then president Francois Mitterrand in 1995. Castro will also attend a state dinner before meeting various French officials on Tuesday. France recently engineered an agreement among the Paris Club of international creditors to write off \$8.5 billion of Cuba's debt. It could now agree to further debt relief, potentially widening Cuba's access to international financial markets.

France is also taking a leading role in strengthening Cuba's political ties with Europe as a whole. Human rights remains a sensitive issue, with international authorities accusing the Castros of repressing and harassing their political opponents. A diplomatic source in Paris said human rights "will be discussed" during the talks. Hollande faced criticism from rights groups after meeting with Fidel Castro last year. There were also demonstrations against Rouhani's visit last week, although Hollande hailed a "new relationship" after sealing a slew of lucrative trade deals drawn up after nuclear sanctions on Iran were lifted. —AFP

AL-QAEDA MILITANTS SEIZE SOUTHERN YEMENI TOWN

SANAA: Al-Qaeda's Yemeni branch seized another town yesterday, setting up checkpoints at its entrances and besieging government buildings before dawn after days of fighting with southern separatists, officials said. The capture of Azzan marks the latest advance for Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP, which has exploited the chaos of Yemen's civil war to expand its reach. The security officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they are not authorized to brief reporters. The group captured the southern port city of Mukalla last year and has seized a number of towns as it has moved west toward Yemen's second city of Aden, where the internationally backed government is based.

Yemen's conflict pits a loose array of government-allied forces against the Shiite Houthi rebels and troops loyal to a former president. A Saudi-led and US-backed coalition have intervened on the government's side, but the Houthis and their

allies still control the capital, Sanaa, and much of the north. The Al-Qaeda affiliate has clashed with the Houthis, but the areas it has captured are under the government's nominal control. An Islamic State affiliate has also emerged in recent months, carrying out a series of attacks on Shiites and government officials.

Azzan, with a population of 50,000, is at a crossroads between Aden and the oil and gas-rich Hadramawt province, of which Mukalla is the capital. Officials and witnesses say Al-Qaeda has a presence inside Aden as well, where it has set up training camps and smuggling operations in the city's port. Washington has long viewed AQAP as the global network's most dangerous branch. It has been linked to several attempted attacks on the US homeland and claimed responsibility for the attack on a satirical French magazine's Paris offices a year ago, which killed 12 people. —AP

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CHINA: US ISLAND SAIL-BY IS 'DANGEROUS, IRRESPONSIBLE'

BEIJING: China yesterday condemned as "dangerous and irresponsible" the weekend transit of a US warship within 12 nautical miles of a disputed island in the South China Sea. Tensions have mounted in the Sea over Beijing's construction of artificial islands. The Pentagon said the guided missile destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur made the "innocent passage" Saturday off Triton Island in the Parcel island chain, which is claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam.

The US action was "highly dangerous and irresponsible", Beijing's foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang told a regular press briefing, adding it "gravely harmed the peace and stability of the relevant region" in the pursuit of "American naval hegemony". A commentary by the official Xinhua news service said the sail-by "violated both Chinese and international law".

"It is advisable for Washington to contribute more to regional peace and cooperation, rather than making waves in the South China Sea and then pointing a finger at others on trumped-up charges," it said. China claims virtually all of the South China Sea, while the

Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan all have rival claims. Beijing has asserted its claims by rapidly building artificial islands in another South China Sea island chain, the Spratlys, raising tensions in the region. Port facilities, airstrips and military buildings have gone up on the man-made islands, prompting US warnings that it would assert its rights to "fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows".

While the United States takes no position on the various claims to the islands, it does not recognize any claimant's right to territorial waters. In October the US Navy sent a guided missile destroyer within 12 nautical miles of one of the Spratlys to press home the point. The US has said that China's construction has led to militarization of the region, and threatens free access to its waters and airspace. China denies the claims, saying the facilities are mainly for civilian and defensive purposes. "The US flexing of military muscle under the banner of 'freedom of navigation', its manufacturing of tensions, these are precisely the greatest causes currently pushing forward militarisation in the South China Sea", Lu said.—AFP



NEW DELHI: Policemen try to stop Indian students as they march towards the office of Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) or the National Volunteers Association's office during a protest against the death of 26-year-old doctoral student Rohith Vemula in New Delhi, India.—AP

TOUGH ROAD AHEAD FOR MYANMAR'S SAN SUU KYI

NAYPYIDAW: Aung San Suu Kyi's party has taken an unprecedented public mandate into parliament. But popularity and power are only the beginning for the Nobel laureate and her hundreds of new MPs, many of whom have no experience of public office. Here are a few of their main challenges: Picking a president Suu Kyi's party can form a government, but who will lead it? The Nobel laureate is barred from the presidency by a clause in the junta-drafted constitution because her children are British.

Many believe it was scripted specifically to block her path to power. She has said she will rule "above" a puppet president, who will replace outgoing President Thein Sein in late March. If she does, that position is not covered in the constitution and could rile the powerful military who have ceded some powers but retain 25 percent of seats in parliament—and with them an effective veto on major charter change.

Military still in play

Given the presidency issue, Suu Kyi may need to sweeten up an army which held her prisoner for some 15 years. Observers say good relations between Suu Kyi and the military will be crucial to get anything done. That is because the military's political powers are not limited to parliament. The 2008 constitution that was scripted under ex-dictator Than Shwe hands the army chief control over three key ministries: home affairs, defense and border affairs. Home affairs is a bureaucratic juggernaut and includes the police force and the sprawling General Administration Department (GAD), a vast network that forms the backbone of the civil service. Beyond this soldiers are also in active combat as civil war continues to rage in parts of Myanmar's ethnic minority borderlands.

Uncertain peace

Myanmar's ethnic minorities have fought for greater autonomy for more than 50 years. Thein Sein signed ceasefires with

several of the country's major ethnic armed groups, but heavy fighting continues, particularly in Kachin and Shan states. As a member of the ethnic majority Bamar, Suu Kyi has sometimes been viewed with suspicion by these groups. But the NLD won handsomely in ethnic states and Suu Kyi has pledged to work towards a federal system. She also must tackle the scourge of anti-Muslim sentiment that has fomented since an explosion of unrest in Rakhine state in 2012 between Buddhists and minority Rohingya communities. Tens of thousands of Muslim Rohingya are still trapped in bleak displacement camps and the next government faces pressure from the international community to find a solution for them. But they will be wary of enraging Rakhine Buddhists, who largely see the Rohingya as illegal immigrants from neighboring Bangladesh.

Economic development

Myanmar's economy has surged under reforms by Thein Sein's government. Foreign investment swept in as most Western sanctions were lifted. Mobile phones are now ubiquitous, car imports are rising fast and several special economic zones are in the pipeline. The economy grew at 8.5 percent in the 2014/15 fiscal year, but the World Bank expects this to moderate to 6.5 percent this year. But poverty is still a problem for huge swathes of a country that relies on agriculture. With many of the previous government's so-called "quick win" policies already enacted, the NLD has said it will focus on luring more international investment. Speedy development is held back by patchy electricity supply, poor road and rail networks and an unskilled workforce. Graft is also endemic. Myanmar ranked in joint 147th place out of 168 in Transparency International's 2015 corruption perception index. There is also the question of febrile relations with China-Myanmar's biggest trading partner.—AFP



Myanmar's National League for Democracy (NLD) chairperson Aung San Suu Kyi

CHINA ARRESTS FOURTH JAPANESE OVER SPYING

TOKYO: Japan yesterday denied that it carries out espionage activities abroad as it announced that Chinese authorities have formally arrested a fourth Japanese citizen on suspicion of spying. China and Japan have been taking steps for more than a year to improve relations that remain plagued by tensions over the legacy of World War II as well as a maritime dispute. Ties, however, remain shaky and the Chinese allegations of spying by Japanese nationals have become a new irritant.

The arrests also come as China has detained people of other nationalities on security-related suspicions. Yoshihide Suga, Japan's top government spokesman, said China informed Japan last month that a fourth Japanese had been formally arrested after being detained in Beijing in June. "Japan does not engage in spying activities in any country," Suga told reporters. "The government is preparing to support (those citizens) properly through

diplomatic offices overseas." Few details have been released about the detained Japanese. Suga previously announced that three are men and one is a woman. All were apprehended last year, with news of the formal arrests coming in stages.

The arrests of the Japanese came after China in 2014 detained a Canadian missionary couple for alleged espionage. China said Friday that it has charged one of the Canadians with spying and stealing state secrets. Last month Swedish activist Peter Dahlin was held on suspicion of endangering national security, apparently caught up in a crackdown on human rights lawyers. He was deported last week. China passed a new "national security" law in July that was criticized by rights groups for the vague wording of its references to "security". This raised fears it could give police wide-ranging discretionary powers over civil society.—AFP

DELHI POLICE UNDER FIRE

VIDEO OF DEMO VIOLENCE GOES VIRAL

NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal accused the city's police yesterday of terrorizing protesters after video footage of them belting university students with sticks at a peaceful demonstration went viral. Delhi University students staged a protest in the Indian capital last weekend over the death of a young Dalit scholar who committed suicide after he was suspended from a campus in the country's south. Video of the protest held outside the headquarters of a right-wing Hindu outfit shows police hovering around the placard-waving and chanting students before suddenly beating them with wooden sticks and their fists. The students are heard screaming and running away as police chase them, with some grabbing protesters by the hair and pinning them to the ground.

"There was no provocation from the side of the protesters. It was a small group, non-violent and unarmed. The police could have easily managed such a small crowd without using brute force," photographer Vikas Kumar, who covered the protest, said on the Catch News website. Police have ordered an inquiry into the violence which sparked outrage on social media Monday, while the video was being played repeatedly on India's TV news channels. "We have ordered an inquiry into the incident and are analyzing the video," police spokesman Rajan Bhagat said. Kejriwal claimed officers were being manipulated by his arch rival, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which rules at national level and is in charge of the city's police force.

The protest on Saturday was held outside the offices of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the hardline ideological parent of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP. "Del pol being used by BJP/RSS as their pvt army to terrorize a teach lesson to anyone opposing BJP/RSS. I strongly condemn attack on students," Kejriwal tweeted. Protests have been staged in cities

throughout India in recent weeks over scholar Rohit Vemula's death, a highly emotional case that some have blamed on caste discrimination. Vemula, a member of India's lowest Dalit social

caste, was among a group suspended by the University of Hyderabad after they were accused of assaulting the head of the BJP's student wing there—a charge they denied.—AFP

CHINA TO EXECUTE 2 MEN FOR KILLING BRITISH MONK

BEIJING: China has sentenced two men to death for stabbing to death a British monk who founded Europe's first Tibetan monastery over a financial dispute, state media said. Akong Tulku Rinpoche, co-founder of Scotland's Samye Ling monastery, was found dead with multiple stab wounds at his home in the southwestern city of Chengdu in 2013. A court in the city sentenced two men, named in Chinese as Tudeng Gusang and Tsering Banjue, to death for the murders of Akong and two other men, while an accomplice was sentenced to three years in jail, the state-run China News Service reported late Sunday. It cited authorities as saying that Gusang, who had worked at the Scottish monastery and Banjue had stabbed Akong, his nephew and a driver to death in a dispute over a 2.7 million yuan (\$410,000) payment.

The verdict, posted by the court on social media, said the murders were "brutal" and that the suspects would be "treated severely in accordance with the law". Britain said in a statement that it communicated its opposition to the death penalty to Beijing. Akong, who was in his early 70s, took British citizenship after fleeing Tibet in 1959, and founded

the facility in rolling Scottish hills in 1967. He had the title of Rinpoche, an honorific given to the most respected teachers in Tibetan Buddhism, and his monastery said at the time of his killing that he had been "assassinated". The institution was a pilgrimage site for artists and musicians including Leonard Cohen as well as senior Tibetan monks including the Dalai Lama.

Despite fleeing China, Akong had maintained a relationship with authorities in Beijing, regularly returning to Tibetan regions. Many Tibetans say that China represses their religious freedom and culture. Beijing says it has brought massive investment to the relatively undeveloped region. Rights groups say China executes more people than the rest of the world combined, though the annual number sentenced to death has declined significantly over the past decade. Beijing regards the figure as a state secret and does not release it. The British embassy in Beijing said it was aware of the outcome of the trial, adding: "The British government maintains its longstanding opposition to the death penalty, and has formally communicated this to the Chinese government."—AFP

NEW ERA DAWNS AS SUU KYI'S PARTY STRIDES INTO MYANMAR PARLIAMENT

NAYPYIDAW: Myanmar entered a new political era yesterday as Aung San Suu Kyi's pro-democracy MPs took their seats in parliament, bearing the hopes of a nation subjugated for decades by the military. Wearing pastel orange uniforms, lawmakers from the National League for Democracy (NLD) arrived for their first day of work in the capital Naypyidaw, buoyed by a massive popular mandate from November's election. That poll saw the NLD wrest a majority from the army establishment and has spurred hopes of a new political dawn in the long-repressed nation. Suu Kyi, the centrepiece of Myanmar's struggle for democracy, entered the cavernous parliament building without comment.

She took a seat alone for the short opening session which saw the lawmakers sworn in and the appointment of a close ally, Win Myint, as lower house speaker. "Today is a day to be proud of in Myanmar's political history and for the democratic transition," Win Myint said in an acceptance speech. The new government faces a daunting rebuilding task in one of Southeast Asia's poorest countries, whose economy was crushed by almost half a century of junta rule. Many NLD MPs are also political novices, unskilled in the business of government. They must swiftly adapt to a difficult decision-making process in a legislature where unelected soldiers occupy 25 percent of all seats. "It's a historic moment for the country," said Myanmar political analyst Khin Zaw Win.

The country will now choose a new president to succeed President Thein Sein, the former general who in 2011 launched dramatic political and economic reforms which culminated in the election. Suu Kyi herself is barred from the post by a military-scripted constitution because she married and had children with a foreigner. The 70-year-old has vowed to sidestep this hurdle by ruling "above" a proxy president, although she has yet to reveal her choice for the role. While there is no clear schedule for the selection of candidates, it could be within days. Elected members of both houses and the military will nominate three candidates to replace Thein Sein, who retains his post until the end of March. The

new president will then be chosen by a vote of the combined houses.

Great expectations

Observers are closely watching Suu Kyi's relationship with the still-powerful military, which holds key ministries as well as the 25 percent parliamentary bloc. Suu Kyi may try to persuade the army to help her change the charter clause that blocks her path to power, analysts say, although it has so far balked at any attempt to redraft it. After decades under the military yoke, Myanmar's people queued in their thousands to cast ballots for Suu Kyi and her party last November, throwing their support behind her simple campaign message of "change". With a resounding parliamentary majority, her lawmakers are at least initially expected to act as a rubber-stamp for her government. While the NLD majority will need to time to find their feet, the

military has had plenty of time to prepare for the handover.

A quasi-civilian government has steered reforms since outright army rule ended in 2011. The military has appointed "more senior and experienced, and probably better prepared" soldiers to parliament, according to Renaud Egretteau, an analyst who has studied Myanmar's legislature. Thein Sein has led the opening up of the long-isolated country, spurring international investment with sweeping political reforms. But Myanmar remains blighted by civil wars and ethnic and religious divisions. Poverty rates are high and the bureaucracy is poorly funded and riven with corruption. On the streets of Yangon, however, ordinary people were optimistic about what Suu Kyi could achieve. "We have been hoping for an NLD government for a long time. I feel happy now," said 22-year-old dentist Kyaw Htet.—AFP



NAYPYIDAW: A woman carries her baby as she works at brick factory on outskirts of the Naypyidaw yesterday. Myanmar entered a new political era yesterday as Aung San Suu Kyi's party took their seats in a parliament dominated by pro-democracy MPs who carry the hopes of a nation subjugated for decades by the military.—AFP



This handout picture taken and obtained from the Marine Nationale (French Navy) yesterday shows the Panamanian-registered cargo ship 'Modern Express' being towed away from France by a tugboat, preventing it from crashing into the country's picturesque Atlantic coast. The 22 crew of the Modern Express were evacuated by helicopter in dramatic scenes on Jan 26 after an unexplained breakdown caused the boat to tilt dangerously. — AFP

CHINESE ARTIST IMITATES PHOTO OF DEAD...

Continued from Page 1

Ai has set up a studio on Lesbos where he is working on several projects with refugee-related themes. Lesbos is the main entry point for refugees seeking a better life in Europe. Ai said last Thursday that he had

decided to withdraw his works from two Danish museums out of deep anger at a new law allowing Denmark to seize valuables from migrants. The Chinese artist is famous for works addressing human rights abuses, official corruption and the collision between Chinese culture and Western consumerism. — AP

13 STUDENTS DROWN OFF INDIA BEACH

Continued from Page 1

P A Inamdar, a trustee at the college, told AFP that the students had been on a picnic to Murud, which had been arranged by the educational institute. "They were on an excursion and must have gone into the sea against the advice of the teachers. They were swept away by the tides," Inamdar said. He said that 14 people had drowned, ten women and four men, although police insisted that the death toll was still at 13 late yesterday.

Inamdar said all other students had been accounted for while Patil also said everyone else on the excursion was "safe" after a massive rescue operation involving the Indian coast-guard and navy. Commander Rahul Sinha, a spokesman for the navy, said up to 18 students had got into difficulty in the water and that six of them had been rescued and taken to hospital. Murud sits on the Konkan coast, which has dozens of beaches popular with locals who prefer it to the internationally renowned tourist state of Goa. Murud is around 140 km south of Mumbai.

Inamdar said between eight and ten college staff had

accompanied the students on their trip and he had been told that there hadn't been any lifeguards on duty at the time of the tragedy. "I don't think there were lifeguards on the beach. That is the basic problem," he said. In a statement, the governor of Maharashtra, C Vidyasagar Rao, expressed his condolences to the families of those who died. "I am deeply aggrieved and shocked to know about the drowning of 13 students... who had gone to the Murud beach in Raigad district for a picnic," he said. "My heart goes out to the near and dear ones of all students who lost their life."

Yesterday's incident comes a few weeks after a man drowned off Mumbai trying to save a girl who fell into the sea while taking a selfie. The girl and two friends fell off rocks into the Arabian Sea while clicking photos of themselves. A passerby, 37-year-old Ramesh Walanju, jumped in and helped save the two friends but was washed away by the choppy waters and his body was found floating in a nearby creek. The girl is still missing. In Feb 2014, 29 people died when a passenger boat capsized in the eastern state of Orissa. A month prior to that incident, 21 people were killed when a tourist boat capsized off India's remote Andaman Islands. — AFP

UK ALLOWS GENETIC MODIFICATION OF HUMAN...

Continued from Page 1

The project, which could start within months, would use CRISPR-Cas9, a technique allowing scientists to insert, remove and correct DNA within a cell. The technique was developed by US chemistry professor Jennifer Doudna and Emmanuelle Charpentier of France and could also be used to treat illnesses like sickle cell diseases, cystic fibrosis and some cancers.

Charpentier told AFP last year the technique was "a little bit like a Swiss knife that cuts DNA at a precise point and can be used to introduce a series of changes in the genome of a cell or an organism". In a research paper published in April, Chinese scientists described how they were able to manipulate the genomes of human embryos for the first time using CRISPR-Cas9, raising ethical concerns.

Campaigners criticized yesterday's decision. "This is the first step in a well mapped-out process leading to GM babies, and a future of consumer eugenics," said David King, director of the watchdog group Human Genetics Alert. A UNESCO panel of scientists, philosophers, lawyers and ministers last year called for a halt to genetic "editing", warning of the danger of tampering with hereditary traits that could lead to eugenics. UNESCO's International Bioethics Committee (IBC) said gene therapy could be "a watershed in the history of

medicine" and genome editing "is unquestionably one of the most promising undertakings of science for the sake of all humankind". But the experts warned that genetic editing required "particular precautions" and raised "serious concerns". There were particular grounds for concerns if the modifications "introduce hereditary modifications, which could be transmitted to future generations," they said.

But many researchers welcomed the ruling. The project should "assist infertile couples and reduce the anguish of miscarriage," Bruce Whitelaw, professor of animal biotechnology at the University of Edinburgh, told the Science Media Centre. Darren Griffin, professor of genetics at the University of Kent, said the ruling was "a triumph for common sense". "While it is certain that the prospect of gene editing in human embryos raised a series of ethical issues and challenges, the problem has been dealt with in a balanced manner," he said.

"It is a clear example how the UK leads the world not only in the science behind research into early human development but also the social science used to regulate and monitor it," he added. Sarah Norcross, director of Progress Educational Trust, a charity, said: "This decision by the HFEA is a victory for level-headed regulation over moral panic". — AFP

UGANDA WOMEN STUNNED TO BE DUPED...

Continued from Page 1

Like many others, Nakintu said she had not suspected her friend or other women from her own country would trick her into sex work and this approach meant she had let her guard down. An annual report on human trafficking by the US State Department in 2015 commented on the network of Ugandan women coordinating the sending of Ugandan women for sex exploitation. It listed the top destination countries as Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Kenya.

On her first day in Dubai, Nakintu was told that she owed Saad around \$8,000 in recruitment fees that had to be paid back in instalments as well as costs for accommodation and meals. The cost was high for a newly-arrived immigrant. A bed in a room housing up to three women typically costs Dh1500 (\$400). To meet the target income, Saad told her she had to entertain about 10 men in the first two days. In addition to turning over her passport, Nakintu had to undergo a witchcraft ritual during which she swore to hand over her life to her pimps with the threat of death in 10 days if this order was defied.

The US State Department Trafficking in Persons 2014 report noted that sex traffickers had been using voodoo rituals and violence to coerce Ugandan women into trafficking schemes. "The pimps were ruthless women who sold our passports and return tickets to old prostitutes who wanted to retire and return to Uganda," said Nakintu. Nakintu was moved by Saad to Abu Dhabi where sex workers can earn more as she was deemed a good sale for higher-end clients. There she met another Ugandan woman, identified as Maydina, who had worked her way up from being a night club prostitute in Abu Dhabi to a pimp married to a high-level business executive.

Maydina told Nakintu that the secret of wealth in Abu Dhabi's sex work was white male clients - and to ensure she got their phone numbers supposedly for repeat business. A few days after the first encounter, the worker would call the client to say she was pregnant, demanding cash not to expose his identity or \$10,000 to return to Uganda for an abortion. The sex workers could then continue the ruse, ask-

ing their clients for more money because of medical complications.

Nakintu said new workers were expected to target three men in their first month with these schemes and few women resisted because this was often the only way they could repay their debt. "We were just desperate," said Nakintu. Nakintu managed to leave Abu Dhabi in May last year having been there for just short of a year and having paid off most of her debts. She returned to Uganda, devastated by the way she had been tricked and mistreated.

Some of her roommates did not hesitate in becoming recruiters themselves once back home, targeting other young women in Uganda tired of limited wages and high unemployment. "Pimping was easy as one would ask friends to look for victims and pay that friend \$100 for each victim they brought on board. I refused to do this," Nakintu said during an interview in a small shop she now runs in Kampala selling household goods.

The US State Department lists Uganda as a Tier 2 nation in its annual trafficking report, meaning its government does not fully comply with the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standards, but is making significant efforts to do so. Moses Binoga, the police commissioner who heads the Uganda National Counter Human Trafficking Task Force, said the government has boosted vigilance on all exit ports to protect vulnerable young women such as Nakintu from sex trafficking. Last year, the government stopped about 300 young women from exiting the country after ascertaining that they were being sent abroad specifically for the sex trade. Binoga, whom the US State Department has recognized for his efforts to combat human trafficking, said the government had also prosecuted and convicted several traffickers but it was complicated to combat the problem. "The main challenge we have is that although we can prosecute traffickers on Ugandan soil we don't have jurisdiction to prosecute those in the receiving states," he said. "Also when we're prosecuting traffickers we have to distinguish between victims coerced into sex trade and those who agreed to a deal to go to Arab states and work as prostitutes." — Reuters

SUBSIDY CUTS LOOMING AS GOVT, ASSEMBLY...

Continued from Page 1

Ashour complained in brief statements that his community was not being treated fairly and alleged discrimination in various aspects of life.

The nine MPs had boycotted Jan 27 session in what appeared to be a protest against verdicts passed on members of an Iran-linked cell, two of whom were sentenced to death and one was handed a life term. Nineteen of the remaining 23 members of the alleged cell were handed jail terms from two to 15 years while four were acquitted. The appeals court is scheduled to start hearing their case on Feb 17.

MP Majed Mousa also criticized Ashour and said if he wants to quit his Assembly seat, he can do so at any time. But MP Abdulhameed Dashti came to the defense of Ashour, saying that what he said was part of his right of freedom of expression. Dashti said Ashour's remarks reflect his views on the presence of discrimination against his community.

In another case, liberal MP Rakan Al-Nasef called on the Assembly's public funds defense committee to decide on corruption allegations against the CEO of Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA). Nasef said that if sufficient evidence was found against the KIA chief, he should be immediately referred to the public prosecution to launch an investigation.

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 ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
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 CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
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Focus

PREMIER LEAGUE SPENDS £1BN-PLUS IN CASH SCRAMBLE

By Tom Williams

Fear of missing out on the English Premier League's huge television money bonanza in 2016 has propelled transfer spending beyond £1 billion (\$1.43 billion) for the first time. England's 20 elite clubs have collectively spent more than £1 billion on new players in the season's two transfer windows, financial consultants Deloitte revealed as the mid-season transfer deadline neared yesterday. "We've seen Premier League clubs again use the January window to invest significantly in playing talent," said Dan Jones from Deloitte's Sports Business Group.

"With a day left, the total gross spending this season has already reached £1 billion for the first time. Last January saw £45 million spent by Premier League clubs on the final day of the transfer window and with further spending expected over the coming hours, Premier League gross transfer spending looks set to comfortably exceed the £1 billion mark for the 2015-16 season."

English top-flight clubs broke new ground by shelling out £870 million on new talent in the 2015 close-season transfer window - a rise of four percent on the previous record, established the previous summer. Together they had splurged £130 million on players prior to yesterday's final day of trading, tipping Premier League spending into 10-figure territory and further confirming England's status as football's financial powerhouse, where 17 of the world's 30 richest clubs reside according to the latest data.

But whereas close-season spending was driven by the leading clubs - Manchester City twice breaking their transfer record to sign Raheem Sterling (£44 million rising to £49 million) and Kevin De Bruyne (£55 million); Manchester United betting the house on unheralded French teenager Anthony Martial (£36 million rising to £61.5 million) - in January it has been a different story.

Sky and BT Sport's blockbuster £5.14 billion domestic TV rights deal kicks in at the start of next season, with the sale of overseas rights - expected to be confirmed in the coming weeks - set to swell that figure to £8 billion for the period 2016-2019. It means that the cost of relegation has never been higher, and it is the clubs at the wrong end of the Premier League table who have been opening their wallets the most eagerly during the mid-season transfer period.

Newcastle Splash Out

Newcastle United, third from bottom ahead of the mid-week fixtures, have been the top spenders, parting with around £29 million to sign England pair Andros Townsend and Jonjo Shelvey and Senegal midfielder Henri Saivet. They were also reported to have tabled a £21 million bid for unsettled West Bromwich Albion striker Saido Berahino. The Premier League's other northeast representatives, Sunderland, have brought in five players, including a £9 million swoop for Tunisian playmaker Wahbi Khazri from Bordeaux.

Bournemouth broke their transfer record by paying around £10 million to Wolverhampton Wanderers for former Arsenal youth-team striker Benik Afobe, while Norwich City, Swansea City and Watford have also been active. "We've seen some quite robust activity from the teams at the lower end of the Premier League and they are spending relatively large fees on selected players," football finance expert Rob Wilson from Sheffield Hallam University told AFP.

"There is a pressing need to stay up this year to receive the TV money. It's also interesting to see some of the top teams in the Championship (second tier) spending, too. This is also a reaction to the revenues on offer for promoted teams next season." Although surprise front-runners Leicester City have bolstered their ranks by signing Ghana defender Daniel Amartey and 19-year-old English winger Demarai Gray, the big boys have largely kept their powder dry.

Arsenal, Chelsea and Liverpool have made low-key additions, while United and City have done no business of note. In the Premier League of 2016, it is fear of the void, rather than the pursuit of glory, that is driving spending to new heights. —AFP

THE FREQUENT-FLYER US CONGRESS

By Susan Cornwell and Megan Cassella

Anyone seeking a table at Carmine's Italian restaurant near Capitol Hill on a Tuesday or Wednesday needs to battle a midweek crush of Congress members and their staff. But Mondays are far quieter - just like the floor of Congress. There are usually around nine events on a Monday, compared to as many as 30 on a midweek day, says Kelly Fitzgerald, Carmine's director of special events and catering.

The midweek crunch at Carmine's underscores a trend: Members of the US Congress have been spending fewer days working in Washington since the late 2000s, according to a Reuters review of congressional records going back 18 years. Lawmakers increasingly try to cram their legislative work into the middle of the week in Washington and then rush back home. Their absence from the capital reinforces the effects of a deepening partisan divide in recent years that has led to high-profile deadlocks over legislation previously seen as routine, according to some former lawmakers and political analysts.

Under pressure to spend more time in their home constituencies, often fund-raising for campaigns, members have less time to attend debates and mingle with other lawmakers. "In any work setting, if you don't know your colleagues, it makes it much more difficult to get things done," said Dan Glickman, who was a Democratic House member from Kansas for 18 years until the mid-1990s and recalls more working days and fuller debates than the current Congress. "...It makes it more difficult to build relationships," said Glickman, who was US secretary of agriculture after Congress. He was a member of the Bipartisan Policy Center's Commission on Political Reform, which recommended in 2014 that Congress be in

session conducting legislative business for 180 to 200 days a year.

In 2015, the first year of a two-year Congress, the House of Representatives put in 130 working days, the Reuters review found. Compared with the first years of recent Congresses, that number has declined steadily since 2007, when the House worked 153 days - the high since 1998. House members typically meet more often in the first year of a Congress because in the second year they have to run for reelection. This year, an election year, the House calendar foresees 111 working days in Washington, in line with the total in recent election years.

The House cancelled its entire schedule last week after a snowstorm hit the East Coast. The Senate's annual working days have not risen above 156 since reaching a peak of 188 in 2009. The decline in working days in recent years has coincided with a slide in Americans' approval rating for the legislature as the reputation of a "do-nothing" Congress has taken hold. Since fiscal 1997, Congress has failed every year to enact on time all of the government appropriations bills needed for a full federal budget, the Congressional Research Service said.

More recently, polarized lawmakers often have been unable to find middle ground on pressing issues such as immigration, tax reform and gun safety. As of the end of 2014, about 75 percent of major issues were in deadlock, according to a calculation by Sarah Binder of the Brookings Institution think tank.

Midweek Squeeze

To be sure, members of the House and the Senate, who are paid \$174,000 a year, do important work outside of Washington. They meet with constituents in their home districts and raise

campaign money by appearing and speaking at events. Representative Ryan Zinke, a freshman Republican and former US Navy Seal, said Congress could use more "team-building" activities, but he has not felt the need for more days in legislative session. Zinke is the only House member representing the large, sparsely populated state of Montana, and says he needs lots of travel time just to see his constituents. "Last week I think I put on about 2,500 miles (4,000 km) traveling around Montana, and I saw about a third of the state," he said.

Staying in legislative session more does not necessarily equate to getting more work done, said Don Stewart, spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Republican. "It's a matter of what you do with the time you are here, not just the total time you are here," he said. The Republican-led Congress had a relatively productive year in 2015, fixing a funding formula for Medicare doctors, passing a highway bill and approving fast-track authority for trade deals. In 2011 and 2013, the total number of bills passed by Congress dipped below triple figures to 90 and 72 respectively. Last year's Congress managed to enact 113. Many bills are minor, however, so the total number does not necessarily correspond to productivity.

'Pro-Forma' Sessions

The recent decline in overall working days does not tell the whole story. There has also been a rise in so-called "pro-forma" days when lawmakers go into session sometimes for just a few minutes or even seconds, for procedural reasons. They are formally counted as sessions of the House and Senate, but Reuters did not include them in its tally. Last year the House had 27 pro-forma days, none of which lasted more than seven minutes,

the Reuters review found. In each of the last five years the House had more pro-forma days than in previous Congresses going back to 2002.

Those days are usually scheduled for Monday or Friday, enabling lawmakers to fly in and out of Washington without missing midweek votes. The typical House member returns to their district 40 or more times a year, said Brad Fitch of Congressional Management Foundation, a non-profit that advises lawmakers on managing their offices. It did a study showing that in 2013, the average House freshman spent \$53,170 of taxpayer money on travel.

These days, fewer lawmakers move their families to the capital to live, said John Fortier, director of the Democracy Project at the Bipartisan Policy Center, a Washington think tank. Paul Ryan, the Wisconsin Republican who has been Speaker of the House since October, sleeps on a cot in his Washington office during the congressional workweek and flies home to his family in Wisconsin on the weekend.

Vin Weber, who was a Republican congressman from Minnesota in the 1980s and 1990s, said that in the attempt to juggle all the demands they face at home and in Washington, today's lawmakers have set themselves an impossible schedule. "They are on planes constantly, back and forth, all the time," he said. "There's no rationality to it at all."

The rising cost of election campaigns mean lawmakers have to devote more time to fundraising outside Washington, said Glickman, now a senior fellow at the Bipartisan Policy Center. As a congressman, Glickman said, he often went to the House floor just to listen to the debate. "If I did that now, I would be guilty of malpractice," he said. "You need to be either in committee doing your work or raising money." —Reuters

BATTLE TO HONOR NEMTSOV UNFOLDS NEAR KREMLIN

By Andrew Osborn

As the Kremlin clock inched towards midnight and the ice-bound river beneath their feet melted, a group of Russians silently stood on the bridge where Boris Nemtsov, the Putin critic and opposition leader, was killed nearly a year ago. "This is about remembering," Boris Kazadayev, 73, part of the small crowd, told Reuters. "If there is no collective memory, the country won't have a future." Moments later, a snow plough mounted the pavement forcing the crowd to the kerb. Two trucks then reversed within inches of people's backs and trapped them before dumping piles of snow around them.

"Nemtsov Bridge" - activists' nickname for the spot where the Putin opponent was shot dead on Feb. 27 last year - has become the scene of a cat-and-mouse struggle between the authorities and the liberal opposition who want to honor a man some Russians say the Kremlin would rather forget. Supporters bring flowers for a makeshift shrine; the authorities sweep the site clean; his supporters rebuild. It's a sequence that has played out repeatedly, in all weathers, for at least 300 days. "It is a model of peaceful resistance that is unique for modern Russia," said Olga Shorina, a Nemtsov ally. "It has become a symbol of the fact that there's a desire for an alternative."

Activists say they will continue until a plaque is erected on the bridge to honor Nemtsov, a former deputy premier turned tenacious opposition leader. The authorities have refused. Some activists also want the bridge to be renamed after him. That too has been rejected. In a country where the Soviets airbrushed people out of history but immortalized their heroes by burying them at the foot of the Kremlin wall or, in Vladimir Lenin's case placed him in a mausoleum on Red Square, the battle is seen by some as one for Russians' memories that could help determine their future.

"The authorities are doing everything they can to ensure Russians forget about my father," Zhanna Nemtsova, 31, told Reuters. "Their aim is not only to control the state but also to control people's minds and hearts." The nearly year-long standoff has had an unexpected consequence: The spot where Nemtsov was murdered has become a unique if modest rallying point for the liberal opposition in what they say is an otherwise bleak political landscape. Passers-by stop to look, opposition-minded Russians gather there to exchange ideas, and the Russian flag can sometimes be seen defiantly flying, visible from Red Square. "It's an island of freedom in a zombie country," said Sasha Chernyavsky, a 29-year-old DJ.

Opposition Star

The location, so close to the Kremlin's terracotta walls and the phantasmagorical onion domes of St Basil's Cathedral, packs rare symbolic punch. "We will not allow, in the centre of Russia, in the very heart of Moscow, next to the Kremlin, for a bridge to be named after a person who always supported the interests of America and spat on the interests of Russia," SERB, a nationalist group that vandalised the site at least twice, has complained. In flux due to its regular destruction, the makeshift memorial has a few constants: flowers, icons, candles, written tributes and portraits.

"I don't like being shot in the back," reads one note, a reference to the fact that Nemtsov was shot from behind. Each day at 23.31, the time Nemtsov was killed, his supporters observe a minute of silence. Nemtsov, 55, was killed as he walked home with his girlfriend after dinner. Putin, after his murder, described him as one of his fiercest critics. Nemtsov helped found the country's main anti-Kremlin movements and spoke at opposition rallies. He had authored an excoriating report into Putin's tenure, and shortly before he was killed was working on a report examining the Russian military's role in Ukraine. Revered by his supporters as an unpretentious man of the people, some Russians disliked him, associating him with the 1990s, a period of food shortages when he was a deputy prime minister. "What did he do for Russia?" Valentina Arsentieva, a reader of pro-Kremlin lifenews.ru, wrote the day after his killing. "We were eating animal feed in the 1990s while THEY were selling Russia out to the West."

State TV largely ignored him in recent years. But his profile in the 1990s meant he remained a household name. Within hours of his murder, hundreds of Russians flocked to the scene to leave flowers. The authorities downplayed his significance. Putin's spokesman cast Nemtsov, once spoken of as a contender to succeed Boris Yeltsin as president, a job Putin got, as "quite an average citizen" who was no political threat. Putin said something similar about reporter Anna Politkovskaya after she was murdered on his birthday in 2006.

Battle of the Bridge

What looked like a campaign to erase Nemtsov's memory soon began. A month after his murder, activists arrived to find that the flowers and other tributes had vanished. It is a routine that has been repeated, by conservative estimates, at least 15 times. Some say the real number is double that. The first clearance, before the end of the 40-day mourning period observed by Russians, caused particular offence. "Some people told me they felt as if Boris had been killed a second time," said Olga Lehtonen, 38, who would later protect the site. Since that first clearance, on March 28, around 30 unpaid volun-

teers have mounted a round-the-clock vigil. Sometimes braving temperatures of minus 20 Celsius, some have been arrested and jailed. "We don't have any other avenues to express ourselves," said Andrei Margulev, who spends 26 hours on the bridge a week. He was arrested for reciting poetry there in September and fined 10,000 roubles (\$130.93) by a court.

Pro-Kremlin activists have trashed the site at least twice, throwing eggs, smashing tributes, and trying to urinate on the shrine. But it is the Moscow authorities who have regularly sought to remove clues that Nemtsov was killed there. They say they want the area to stay clean, that the Stalin-era bridge on which amateur German pilot Mathias Rust famously landed a small plane in 1987, is a monument of cultural importance, and that the shrine is illegal. Yuri Ivankov, head of the city's bridge maintenance division in a statement spoke of "banal vandalism." His office declined to comment for this article. Putin said last year he saw no problem with people leaving tributes. He promised to speak to Moscow's mayor to ensure people were not prevented from doing so. Activists said the clearances became less frequent after Putin's words but continued nonetheless. When asked about a plaque for Nemtsov, Putin cited a rule stating that 10 years must first pass. Nemtsov's supporters say Putin and Moscow's mayor could easily bypass that rule as was done for Venezuela's Hugo Chavez who had a street named after him. The mayor's office did not respond to written questions about the proposal.

Battle for the Future

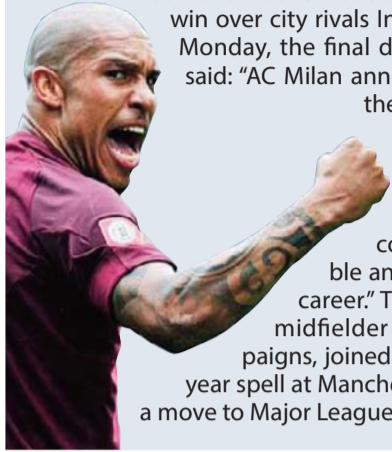
Nadezhda Prusenkova, a colleague of slain reporter Anna Politkovskaya at the Novaya Gazeta newspaper, said the way the Kremlin was handling the situation was "a test for the authorities and for society". "It is a defining moment for self-identification," she said. More than 21,000 people have so far signed an online petition supporting a plaque. "Monuments have an importance not only for the past but also for the future," said Alexander Cherkasov, a historian at human rights group Memorial. "We are choosing from a huge number of events and people to build our futures looking back at certain reference points."

Ilya Yashin, an opposition politician, said that was why there was so much official resistance to the idea of commemorating his murdered friend. "Nemtsov as a symbol was and is very dangerous for the Putin regime," said Yashin. "But the more they destroy his memorial, the brighter a symbol he will become." Meanwhile, the investigation into his murder has run into the sand with police charging a group of Chechen men with carrying out the killing for cash. No other motive has been suggested. —Reuters

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MILAN CONFIRM DE JONG EXIT, MLS DEAL LOOMS

MILAN: Dutch midfielder Nigel De Jong will leave AC Milan with immediate effect after negotiating his exit from the San Siro, the Serie A club announced yesterday. De Jong has made only five appearances for the Rossoneri this season and was left out of Sinisa Mihajlovic's squad for a 3-0 derby win over city rivals Inter Milan on Sunday. A club statement on Monday, the final day of the winter transfer window in Italy, said: "AC Milan announces that Nigel De Jong's contract with the club has been mutually terminated today. "AC Milan would like to thank the Dutchman for his determination, commitment and professionalism shown during his time with the red and black colours. "We wish him all the success possible and all the very best for the next stage of his career." The 31-year-old De Jong, a tough-tackling midfielder who has played in two World Cup campaigns, joined Milan in 2012 following a three and a half year spell at Manchester City. He has recently been linked with a move to Major League Soccer side Los Angeles Galaxy. — AFP



FINCH AVOIDS SURGERY ON INJURED HAMSTRING

SYDNEY: Australia's Aaron Finch will not require surgery on his injured hamstring, the country's cricket board said yesterday, raising hopes that the captain will be fit for next month's World Twenty20 in India. The opening batsman, who leads Australia in the shortest format of the game, injured his left hamstring while trying to complete a quick single in the second T20 match against India in Melbourne on Friday. The 29-year-old has a history of hamstring problems and required surgery after a sustaining a tear while playing for Mumbai in last year's Indian Premier League T20 competition. "Aaron had scans on his injured left hamstring that confirmed a moderate grade hamstring injury," Cricket Australia physiotherapist Alex Kountouris said in a statement. "This is not a recurrence of the previous hamstring injury that required surgery in April 2015. Although this current injury doesn't require surgery there is a period of rehabilitation required before he can resume playing. "We are aiming to have Aaron fit for the ICC World T20 in India but will have better idea about his fitness for that tournament in the coming weeks once we see how he responds to treatment and a rehabilitation program." — Reuters

MCGEADY SET FOR LOAN SWITCH: MARTINEZ

LONDON: Midfielder Aiden McGeady is on the verge of leaving Everton on loan for a team in the Championship (second-tier), manager Roberto Martinez has said. The Ireland winger, who joined Everton from Russian side Spartak Moscow in 2014, has made just one appearance for the club this season and is seeking more regular playing time with one eye on this year's European Championship. McGeady has attracted interest from Sheffield Wednesday, Leeds United and Blackburn Rovers and Martinez revealed that Everton had already agreed terms with two clubs. "It seems very close. We've agreed terms with two teams in the Championship. It's just a matter of time before one of the deals is clinched," Martinez told the club's website (www.evertonfc.com). "Aiden needs to play and it's a really good opportunity for him to do that in a very demanding fixture list for a team that can get a really good tempo into Aiden for the Euros." — Reuters



BANGLADESHI 'TIGER' DESPERATE TO EARN OLYMPIC STRIPES

SINGAPORE: While former world number one Adam Scott dismisses the value of an Olympic gold medal, Bangladeshi golfer Siddikur Rahman is unequivocal about its importance to the wider world ahead of the sport's return at the Rio Games later this year.

The self-taught world number 310, dubbed the 'Bangladeshi Tiger Woods' at home, has never competed at one of golf's four major championships, meaning the Olympics, should he qualify, would easily stand out as the pinnacle of his career.

"Wow, yes, it would be very exciting for me if I can get in," the 31-year-old told Reuters during a rain delay at the recent Singapore Open.

"Obviously I have a target for that, I just need to play better to get in. It would be a very good impact for my country to get into it."

The top 15 players in the world rankings on July 11 will qualify automatically for the Aug. 5-21 Games but only four can come from any one country.

The remainder of the 60-man field will be determined by the rankings, with a maximum of two players from each country that does not already have two or more players among the top 15. Siddikur currently sits 58th on the list, just inside the qualification spots.

EMERGING MARKETS

Bangladesh's Olympic record is far from spectacular since it first sent athletes to the 1988 Seoul Games following invites from the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The country of 160 million is frequently described as the largest to never win an Olympic medal, with sport too expensive for most and a low priority for many others.

Siddikur, though, is hoping to change that and the "village boy" who started playing at eight with a homemade iron and was 15 before he got his hands on an authentic set of clubs, could become the first Bangladeshi to qualify for an Olympics.

"Maybe I could be the first. I hope I will get in, let's see, there is a long way to go. If I can play my own game, I think it won't be a problem," the former child caddy said after he missed the cut in Singapore.

Australian Scott, a three-time winner of the Singapore title and also the 2013 U.S. Masters, has been dismissive of the first Olympic golf event since the 1904 Games, describing it as an exhibition that did not merit a place.

For Siddikur, the first Bangladeshi to play and win on the Asian Tour, the opportunity is a welcome one for both him and his peers from other emerging golf markets. — Reuters



SINGAPORE: Song Younghan poses with his trophy after winning the SMBC Singapore Open golf tournament at Sentosa Golf Club's Serapong Course yesterday, in Singapore. — AP

HYO JOO KIM WINS LPGA TOUR OPENER IN BAHAMAS

PARADISE ISLAND: Hyo Joo Kim won the season-opening Pure Silk-Bahamas LPGA Classic yesterday, relegating Stacy Lewis to yet another second-place finish. Kim rebounded from a bogey on the 16th hole with a 9-foot birdie putt on the par-3 17th and closed with a par for a two-stroke victory over Lewis, 2015 champion Sei Young Kim and Anna Nordqvist.

Hyo Joo Kim shot a 7-under 66 at the breezy Ocean Club to finish at 18-under 274. The 20-year-old South Korean player has three LPGA Tour victories, also winning the 2014 Evian Championship and 2015 Founders Cup.

Needing an eagle to force a playoff, Lewis parred the par-5 18th for a 68. She has nine runner-up finishes in a 40-event victory drought that dates to June 2014. The 11-time tour winner has 22 career second-place finishes.

Sei Young Kim also shot a 68, and Nordqvist had a 69. Hyo Joo Kim made three straight birdies - holing putts of 18 feet on the par-3 12th, 15 feet on the par-4 13th and 5 feet on the par-4 14th - to open a three-stroke lead. After the bogey on the difficult par-4 16th, she hit a slight draw

with a 4-iron to set up the birdie putt on the 171-yard 17th.

She had four birdies on the front nine, making three in a row on Nos. 4-6 and adding another on No. 8. The nine-time Korean LPGA winner parred all three par 5s on the back nine. The third-ranked Lewis parred the final three holes after birdieing Nos. 13-15. After missing long birdie tries on 16 and 17, she hit a 3-wood into the light rough near the right-side front bunkers on 18, flopped 8 feet past and two-putted for par.

Sei Young Kim had a double bogey on the par-4 ninth, then rallied with four back-nine birdies. Nordqvist, tied with Charley Hull for the third-round lead, birdied the final two par 5s.

Pornanong Phatlum matched the tournament record with a 65 to tie for fifth with Paula Creamer (66) and 2013 winner Ilhee Lee (68) at 15 under. Brittany Lincicome also shot a 65 to join Hull (71) and Min Seo Kwak (67) at 14 under.

Megan Khang, playing her first event as an LPGA Tour member, bogeyed the final hole for a 60 to drop into a tie for 11th at 13 under. — AP



PARADISE ISLAND: Hyo Joo Kim of South Korea reacts after being sprayed with Pure Silk shave cream after winning the Pure Silk Bahamas LPGA Classic at the Ocean Club Golf Course on Sunday in Paradise Island, Bahamas. — AFP

SONG EDGES SPIETH TO WIN SINGAPORE OPEN

SINGAPORE: South Korea's Song Young-Han won the \$1.0 million SMBC Singapore Open yesterday, edging out world number one Jordan Spieth in a nail-biting finish.

Song shot a one-under-par 70 over the final round to finish the tournament at 12-under 272, one stroke ahead of the American who wrapped up a 66 yesterday.

China's Liang Wen-Chong (69) was alone in third place on 274, while Miguel Tabuena (68) of the Philippines and Japan's Shintaro Kobayashi (71) were tied fourth on 275.

The final round at the Serapong Golf Course on Sentosa Island was suspended Sunday because of thunderstorms just as Spieth was lining up a five-foot birdie putt on the 18th green.

Spieth got his birdie when play resumed Monday morning but Song, playing two groups behind, refused to buckle and parred his final three holes to secure the title. It was Song's first career victory after six second-place finishes in Japan and Korea since 2013.

Song became the first Asian to win the Singapore Open since India's Jeev Milkha Singh took home the trophy in 2008. The South Korean never relinquished the lead after Friday's second round when he fired a blistering eight-under 63 that equalled the course record.

Spieth was playing in Singapore for the first time, but the co-sanctioned Asian Tour and Japan Tour event was no easy ride for the world number one. Playing in his seventh competition in nearly four months, the 22-year-old Texan was plagued by inconsistent form and entered the final round trailing the South Korean by five strokes. Song said Monday he had felt the pressure building overnight. "Last night felt like a week," the 24-year-old said. "I couldn't eat because the whole night I was thinking about the 16th green. "I hated' Jordan last night," he added. "The situation made me very nervous and I just left it to luck and the golfing gods." It was also a restless night for Spieth as he awaited the cliff-hanger finale. "It was tough to sleep on a putt that you have to come back (to), even though it wasn't the most challenging putt," he said.

"Still a very nerve-wracking one to hit, knowing that you have to make it for what you think will be the play-off. I'm really happy I put a good stroke on it."

Despite his less-than-perfect week, the American said he enjoyed playing in the tournament, which returned from a three-year hiatus under a new sponsor.

"Overall, great experience and I had a really great time here. I fought hard in the final round but (I) was just a little too far back," Spieth said.

Selected scores:

- 272 - Song Young-Han (KOR) 70-63-69-70
- 273 - Jordan Spieth (USA) 67-70-70-66
- 274 - Liang Wen-Chong (CHN) 71-67-67-69
- 275 - Miguel Tabuena (PHI) 69-67-71-68, Shintaro Kobayashi (JPN) 66-69-69-71
- 276 - Wang Jeung-Hun (KOR) 73-67-67-69, Hideto Tanihara (JPN) 68-67-71-70
- 277 - Lee Won-Joon (AUS) 71-69-67-70, Chapchai Nirat (THA) 69-70-71-67, Brett Munson (USA) 71-67-70-69. — AFP

WALKER LEADS AS FINAL ROUND GOES TODAY AT TORREY PINES

LA JOLLA: Five-times PGA Tour winner Jimmy Walker led by one stroke when rain and extremely strong winds forced the suspension of play for the day during the final round at the Farmers Insurance Open on Sunday. Competition will resume on Monday at 8AM local time (1600 GMT), at which time strong winds are forecast to continue blowing at Torrey Pines next to the Pacific Ocean. Walker was seven-under through 10 holes, while fellow American Brandt Snedeker fired a brilliant 69 in the difficult conditions to post the clubhouse lead at six-under 282. South Korean K.J. Choi was also six-under, after 10 holes, while American Kevin Streelman (13 holes) and Swede Freddie Jacobson (11 holes) were next at five-under. Snedeker, the 2012 champion, is sitting pretty after making four birdies and just one bogey on a day when the scoring average was 78 in the wild weather as winds gusted at times to more than 45 miles per hour (72 kph). Whether his score holds up for victory might depend on whether the winds abate overnight, or continue to blow as forecast. "I couldn't do it again. I don't know how I did it," Snedeker told reporters. "I didn't get off to the best of starts, kind of

hung in there, but I made a long putt for par on four, about a 45-footer. Then holed a 15-footer for par on five. Then got the rain delay.

"(I) came back out, started hitting the ball a little bit better and kind of got the day going on 10 with a birdie and kind of got some good stuff going from there. Just one of those freak days where you just got to get lucky, I got lucky, I hit some good shots."

Searching for an eighth tour win, Snedeker admitted that not making birdie on the par-five 18th could come back to haunt him. "Hopefully it won't come back and bite me, but it's something I'm going to regret for the next couple of hours here," he lamented after his greenside chip ran long and he could not coax in his putt from the fringe. "But to have a chance to win from where I started today, that's probably a pretty good day."

Walker, meanwhile, is looking for a sixth win in the last three seasons. "It played really tough into the wind, even downwind, it played very tough," he said. "It was tough to putt on the greens and when it's blowing (hard), I think that's why you see guys making lots of bogeys. "We'll go back out tomorrow and get after it." — Reuters



SAN DIEGO: Jimmy Walker hits out of the sand on the 4th hole during the final round of the Farmers Insurance Open golf tournament at Torrey Pines in San Diego yesterday. — AP

LORENZO KICKS OFF MOTOGP 2016 TEST SEASON ON TOP

SEPANG: Reigning MotoGP World Champion Jorge Lorenzo riding a Yamaha was fastest on day one as the 2016 test season got off to a blistering start at Malaysia's Sepang circuit yesterday.

With the track temperature reaching 52 degrees Celsius, Lorenzo, chasing a fourth MotoGP world championship title, overcame the tough conditions to clock 2min 00.684sec, 1.033 seconds quicker than his Italian team-mate Valentino Rossi, giving a strong start for

Yamaha.

Rossi, the charismatic 36-year-old, remains the biggest draw in MotoGP and is eyeing a 10th world title this year after losing out in 2015 to team-mate Lorenzo amid an ugly rivalry.

Tyres and electronics are likely to be the focus of this year's season and Lorenzo said he was pleased with the way his new Michelin tyres were performing. Michelin has replaced Bridgestone as MotoGP's official tyre supplier from 2016. "I can go fast. I was

a second ahead of everyone," a beaming Lorenzo told reporters. Spain's Dani Pedrosa, racing a Honda, was third, 1.096 seconds slower than the 28-year-old Lorenzo.

Italian Danilo Petrucci on a Ducati was fourth, 1.127 seconds slower than Lorenzo. Fellow Italian Andrea Iannone on another Ducati was fifth at 2:01.912 while Spaniard Hector Barbera, also riding for Ducati, was sixth at 2:02.002.

Honda's double MotoGP World Champion Marc Marquez was seventh-

fastest, 1.594 seconds off the pace. "We still have a (big) job to do, like being able to accelerate out of a corner faster. I am trying to learn how to ride with the Michelin tyres," he said at the end of the first of the three days of the test session, which ends tomorrow.

Australia's Casey Stoner, who won the first of his two MotoGP world titles with Ducati, has returned to the Italian team for 2016 as a test rider and is expected to race in Sepang again on Tuesday.

Stoner, 30, rejoins Ducati after a five-year spell with Honda, with whom he won the 2011 world championship, four years after his first title.

From Malaysia, MotoGP riders will head to Australia for three days at Phillip Island from February 17 to 19. After the first two tests, the premier class will head to Qatar from the second to fourth of March for their final official test. The MotoGP world championship begins in Losail, Qatar, on March 17. —AFP



NASHVILLE: John Scott #28 of the Arizona Coyotes celebrates after scoring a goal in the first period of the Western Conference Semifinal Game between the Central Division and the Pacific Division as part of the 2016 Honda NHL All-Star Game at Bridgestone Arena on Sunday in Nashville, Tennessee.—AFP



NASHVILLE: John Scott #28 of the Arizona Coyotes of the Pacific Division All-Stars poses with his 2016 Honda Pilot as a reward for being named 2016 Honda NHL All-Star Game MVP in the 2016 Honda NHL All-Star Final Game between the Eastern Conference and the Western Conference at Bridgestone Arena.—AFP

ALL-STAR JOURNEYMAN SCOTT STEALS THE SHOW

WASHINGTON: NHL journeyman enforcer John Scott, beloved by players and fans but unwanted by league officials, had the last laugh Sunday by taking Most Valuable Player honors at the NHL All-Star Game. The 33-year-old Canadian left wing, an unlikely write-in All-Star voted to the event by fans thanks largely to an internet campaign, scored twice and was hoisted onto the shoulders of his superstar teammates after helping the Pacific division win the \$1 million top prize up for grabs. "This has been great. You guys have blown me away," Scott told fans as they chanted "M-V-P" while every player tapped his stick on the ice in tribute to an everyman living a career moment.

NHL officials tried to discourage Scott from

taking part, he detailed in an essay on the Players Tribune website, citing one who asked him, "Do you think this is something your kids would be proud of?"

"That's when they lost me. That was the moment," Scott wrote. "Because while I may not deserve to be an NHL All-Star, I know I deserve to be the judge of what my kids will and won't be proud of me for." Scott skated with them on the ice after the game as his pregnant wife Danielle cried.

"I'm so amazed," she said. "At first we didn't take it super seriously but when it started to come through we were really excited." NHL officials apparently feared ridicule to honor a player with a mere five goals in 285 games with six teams and a recent trade to a seventh,

the Montreal Canadiens, that sent him to his current club, the developmental St. John's IceCaps in distant Newfoundland.

"While I don't deserve to be an All-Star, I also don't think I deserve to be treated like I've been by the league throughout this saga," Scott said. "When I'm on the ice or just the bench I make my teammates feel safe to do what they do best."

So it had to be a bodycheck to the NHL when commissioner Gary Bettman handed Scott an oversized \$1 million check on the ice. "If the league thought this was an embarrassment, pretty much all of the players I've encountered have thought otherwise. And that didn't happen because of the internet. I busted my ass to be one of them," Scott wrote.

NO GOLDEN TICKET

"This isn't Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. I'm not some random person off the street and I didn't win a golden ticket to 'play hockey with the stars.'"

Scott, a 6-foot-8 (2.03m) and 270 pound (120kg) man-mountain who typically keeps foes from manhandling skilled teammates, has been defying the odds since youth coaches told him he was too big and slow to succeed. "To have Johnny play like he did and show what kind of player he is, that's a great thing," said Pacific defenseman Brett Burns, a Canadian backliner for San Jose.

"That was a special moment. That showed a lot of people he has got great skill. He just chooses to protect his guys and

we think a lot of him." A new event format saw four teams drawn by NHL divisions, with lineups playing 3-on-3 in two 20-minute mini games and winners meeting in the final. Scott scored twice for the Pacific in a 9-6 victory over the Central division to set up a winner-take-all match with the Atlantic stars, who beat the Metropolitan side 4-3.

Pacific right wing Corey Perry, a Canadian who plays for Anaheim, scored the only goal while goaltenders Jonathan Quick and John Gibson blanked the Atlantic division in the 1-0 final.

"It was the best possible outcome," Scott said. "Everybody had fun and we ended up winning." —AFP

MURRAY INSISTS HE'S NOT FAR OFF DJOKOVIC

MELBOURNE: Andy Murray insisted he wasn't far away from matching Novak Djokovic despite his fourth defeat to the runaway world number one in the Australian Open final.

Dad-to-be Murray paid the price for a slow start as he went down 6-1, 7-5, 7-6 (7/3) in a one-sided men's final Sunday which only underlined the Serb's supremacy.

But Murray, before making a dash to the airport to fly home to his pregnant wife, said he felt he remained in touch with Djokovic despite their widening head-to-head statistics.

"I don't know how far off I was tonight. The first set, you know, I wasn't there, but the second and third sets I do think were very close," said the British world number two.

"I do think I could have played a bit better. I didn't think I hit my forehand as well as I could have done. When I did in the third set, that helped me out a lot. I was able to get myself into the net more. I was able to play more offensive tennis then."

"I mean, most of the matches we played in Slams I think have been competitive. Whether that looks the same from the outside or not, I don't know."

Murray's latest defeat to Djokovic made him only the second man in the Open era—after Ivan Lendl, his former

coach—to lose five finals at the same Grand Slam tournament.

Murray lost to Roger Federer in the 2010 final, and he was also runner-up in 2011, 2013, 2015 and now 2016, watching Djokovic lift the winner's trophy each time.

His head-to-head record with the Serb moves to 22-9 in Djokovic's favour, including 11 of their last 12 matches and their last four Grand Slam meetings, going back to Murray's Wimbledon win in 2013.

Murray and Djokovic, both 28, were born a week apart and have known each other since their junior days, and while they are both at the top of men's tennis it is the Serb who has accelerated in front.

Djokovic has 11 Grand Slam titles to Murray's two, 61 career trophies to 35 and \$97 million in prize money compared to \$44 million for the Scot.

However, it seemed to matter little to the Scot, whose first priority was catching the first plane out of Melbourne to be reunited with his wife, Kim Sears.

It has been a tough fortnight for Murray, who almost pulled out of the tournament when his father-in-law Nigel Sears, Ana Ivanovic's coach, collapsed at Rod Laver Arena last week.

"I'm proud that I got into this position," Murray said. "Just quite looking forward to getting home now." —AFP

DJOKOVIC NAMES HIS 2016 GOAL THE DJOKER SLAM

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic has a new goal for the year. He calls it the Djoker Slam. The No. 1-ranked player has one thing missing from his fast-growing collection of 11 Grand Slam trophies.

"The French Open. It's the one I never won," Djokovic said early yesterday, after winning his record sixth Australian Open, but already casting an eye toward Paris. "I'll try to put myself in a position to get that trophy."

Djokovic's relentless desire for tennis perfection has pushed him to a brilliant level, one that was too high for Andy Murray who lost Sunday's final 6-1, 7-5, 7-6 (3). The straight-sets win highlighted Djokovic's dominance and Murray's shortcomings: the No. 2-ranked Murray has now played five finals in Melbourne and lost them all — including four to Djokovic.

It also stamped Djokovic's imprint on the tournament, tying him with Roy Emerson for the most singles titles in the event's long history. Emerson played in the 1960s and won his Australian titles in the amateur era.

Djokovic's strong start to the season comes after a year that has been described as one of the finest in tennis history. He finished 2015 at No. 1 for the fourth time in five years. He won the Australian Open, Wimbledon and the US Open.

He reached the final at the French Open, but lost to Stan Wawrinka. It was his third runner-up trophy at Roland Garros. "Each year when I go back I feel like I'm a step closer," Djokovic said during a TV interview after the final. He was asked, if he does win at the French and manage to capture four consecutive major championships, would he give it a name? On the women's side, Serena Williams has done it before and her feat was called the "Serena Slam."

"Djoker Slam. Not bad, I like that one," said the 28-year-old Serbian, referring to his nickname, the Djoker. "No doubt that I'm playing the best tennis of my life in the last 15 months," Djokovic said. "The results are showing that. I'm just trying to keep it up."

With his 11th major title, Djokovic is steadily gaining on Rafael Nadal's 14 and Roger Federer's record 17. The so-called Big Four of men's tennis — Federer, Nadal, Murray and Djokovic — has been looking more lopsided with Djokovic's winning record. He now leads the pack with head-to-head wins over them all — Federer (23-22), Murray (22-9), Nadal (24-23).

In Melbourne, Djokovic beat Federer in straight sets in the semifinals before moving on to Murray. Nadal lost in the first-round, raising

more questions about whether his Grand Slam winning days have passed. Last year was the first season since 2004 that Nadal did not win a major title.

Throughout the tournament, Djokovic was repeatedly asked about the increasingly wide gulf between him at No. 1 and the rest of the players. At his final news conference, Djokovic answered the question with a metaphor.

The wolf that is running up the hill is much hungrier than the wolf standing at the top of the hill, Djokovic said. "I believe that all the guys that

are out there fighting each week to get to No. 1 are very hungry to get to No. 1," he said. "I want to enjoy, and I will, but it's not going to go for more than a few days. After that, I'm already thinking about how can I continue playing well through the rest of the season at each tournament."

Returning to the metaphor, how hungry is the wolf for Paris, he was asked.

"Very hungry," Djokovic smiled. "But the wolf needs to eat a lot of different meals to get to Paris. Paris is a dessert." —AP

UCI PROMISES TOUGH RESPONSE TO MOTORISED DOPING SCANDAL

PARIS: International cycling authorities have promised to step up testing for mechanical doping after an electric motor was found in an elite rider's bike, signalling decisive action after struggling for decades to combat illegal drug use.

Stewards at the world cyclo-cross championships found the motor on Sunday in the bike of Belgian teenager Femke Van den Driessche, the first such finding during a competitive race.

"We will be testing more bikes, more often," International Cycling Union (UCI) boss Brian Cookson said following the discovery. "Our message to those choosing to cheat is that we will catch up with you sooner or later."

For decades, cycling authorities did little to combat the use of performance-

enhancing drugs. It was only with the intervention of outside agencies in the 1990s that the culture and effectiveness of testing began to change, culminating in Lance Armstrong being stripped of his seven Tour de France titles in 2012.

Cookson said the UCI was "trailing new methods" to catch mechanical dopers, but declined to elaborate. The organisation has previously used X-rays or dismantling bikes to look for the tiny motors.

They can be hidden in the downtube, seat-tube or hub and drive the back wheel to give riders a possible speed boost of about 4-5 kilometres (2-3 miles) per hour for up to an hour. A tiny battery can be activated from an easily disguised button on the handlebars.—Reuters



MELBOURNE: Serbia's Novak Djokovic poses for photos with his Australian Open trophy at Government House in Melbourne, Australia, yesterday. Djokovic defeated Britain's Andy Murray in the men's final at the Australian Open tennis championships on Sunday.—AP

PAKISTAN'S AJMAL TARGETS WORLD T20 RETURN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's discarded off-spinner Saeed Ajmal says he is hopeful of proving his form in a forthcoming domestic league as he targets a return to national colours in the World Twenty20 this March. The 38-year-old, whose accuracy and deceptive doosra helped drive his team to victory in the 2009 edition, has struggled to make an impact since coming back last February from a five-month ban for chucking. He took just one wicket in two ODIs when he last played, against Bangladesh, in April, and a paltry 16 wickets at 55 apiece for his English county side Worcestershire.

But speaking on the sidelines of a launch event for Islamabad United, one of five teams taking part in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) to be held in the UAE this month, Ajmal said he had worked on technical flaws and rediscovered his old menace.

"I've gotten a good platform and working on my goals. You are going to see the Saeed Ajmal of old," he said. "The World Cup is after this, and I want to perform well and make myself available for the team."

Ajmal, who was picked as a last minute 'supplementary player' by the capital's team, pointed to better showings in Bangladesh's T20 league last November as proof the magic had not deserted him.

Before being suspended in September 2014 for exceeding the 15-degree elbow flex limit set by the International Cricket Council, Ajmal was ranked the world's number one bowler in ODIs and was almost as impressive in Tests. He famously captured 24 wickets in three Tests against England in 2012. "When I made my comeback against Bangladesh I was lacking match practice," he said. "I needed some time. Now I've had some time and I've been able to work on myself. I've got my variation back and you will see the results in the PSL. "There were several issues. My arm was falling off too much to the side and I've worked on that and straightened it up. I've worked on my main ball and my doosra as well as my arm ball."

"The variation I got from the revolutions I'd put on the ball in the air-I've got that back and you're going to enjoy watching it." Despite his optimism, it is unclear how much opportunity Ajmal will get to play as he competes for a place against teammate Samuel Badree, the West Indian leg spinner who is currently the world's number one Twenty20 bowler.

But with Pakistan's favoured slow bowler, leg spinner Yasir Shah, currently suspended for a doping offence, the door could remain ajar for an improbable comeback. —AFP

INDIA REST IN-FORM KOHLI FOR T20 SERIES V SRI LANKA

NEW DELHI: India are resting batting mainstay Virat Kohli for the three 20-over matches against Sri Lanka this month with an eye on the Twenty20 World Cup on home soil.

Kohli, the world's top-ranked Twenty20 batsman, enjoyed a prolific run of form to help India complete a 3-0 series whitewash in Australia on Sunday.

With Mahendra Singh Dhoni's men kicking off their bid for a second Twenty20 World Cup in six weeks, the team have decided to rest Kohli who was top-scorer in the series in Australia. India recalled Bhuvneshwar Kumar after the paceman

sustained a thumb injury in Australia and missed the Twenty20 series. Left-arm spinner Pawan Negi received his first call-up to the India squad who play Sri Lanka in the first Twenty20 International in Pune on Feb. 9. Ranchi and Visakhapatnam host the other matches.

Squad: Mahendra Singh Dhoni (captain), Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan, Ajinkya Rahane, Manish Pandey, Suresh Raina, Yuvraj Singh, Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Jasprit Bumrah, Ashish Nehra, Harbhajan Singh, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Pawan Negi. —Reuters



CENTURION: South African bowler Kagiso Rabada (top) celebrates the dismissal England's batsman Jonny Bairstow (not in picture) during the fourth Test match between England and South Africa at Supersport stadium. — AFP

SA SEEK REDEMPTION IN ONE-DAY SERIES

BLOEMFONTEIN: South Africa will be keen to avenge a Test series defeat when they meet England in five one-day internationals, starting at the Mangaung Oval tomorrow. "There are no soft series or less important series, they are all important, particularly coming off a Test series loss," said South African coach Russell Domingo.

Both teams will be looking to build on recent good results following disappointing campaigns in the 2015 Cricket World Cup in Australia and New Zealand. South Africa showed patchy form in the World Cup but reached the semi-finals, where they were beaten by New Zealand. Since then, they have won a home series against the Black Caps and an away series in India. England had a poor World Cup, failing to reach the knock-out stage after losing all their matches against other Test nations. But they then beat New Zealand 3-2 in a home series, lost by the same margin against Australia and beat Pakistan 3-1 in the United Arab Emirates.

Several of England's leading one-day players did not appear in the recent Test series against South Africa, including wicketkeeper-batsman

Jos Buttler, who hit England's fastest one-day century off 46 balls in the series decider against Pakistan in Dubai.

Other new faces include captain Eoin Morgan, opening batsman Jason Roy and bowlers Reece Topley, Chris Jordan, David Willey and Adil Rashid, who all had some success in England's comfortable win in a warm-up match against South Africa A in Kimberley on Saturday.

RETURN TO FORM

South Africa's one-day specialists include hard-hitting left-handed batsmen David Miller and Rilee Rossouw, all-rounder Farhaan Behardien and leg-spinner Imran Tahir.

South African captain AB de Villiers, the world's number one-ranked one-day international batsman, will hope for a return to form after making three ducks in his last three Test innings against England.

South Africa added fast bowler Marchant de Lange to their squad following the injury-forced withdrawal of Dale Steyn and the unavailability through injury for the first match of Kyle Abbott.

"Marchant gives us more options with our fast bowlers because there is no Steyn, no (Vernon) Philander, no Kyle Abbott," said Domingo, who expressed concern about the workload of Morne Morkel and new star Kagiso Rabada. "The big concern is the fact that Rabada and Morkel have played a lot of cricket of late and have bowled so many overs, we need to manage them over the next few days," said Domingo. All-rounder David Wiese was added to the squad yesterday.

SQUADS:

South Africa: AB de Villiers (captain), Kyle Abbott, Hashim Amla, Farhaan Behardien, Quinton de Kock (wkt), Marchant de Lange, JP Duminy, Faf du Plessis, Imran Tahir, David Miller, Morne Morkel, Chris Morris, Kagiso Rabada, Rilee Rossouw, David Wiese.

England: Eoin Morgan (captain), Moeen Ali, Jonny Bairstow, Stuart Broad, Jos Buttler (wkt), Alex Hales, Chris Jordan, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Jason Roy, Ben Stokes, James Taylor, Reece Topley, David Willey, Chris Woakes. — AFP



Jasprit Bumrah

UNORTHODOX BUMRAH GIVES DHONI WELCOME OPTION AT THE DEATH

NEW DELHI: By capitalising on his chance selection in Australia, India paceman Jasprit Bumrah has afforded his captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni a rare pleasant feeling-of having a settled bowling unit at his disposal. India's bowling frailties were laid bare in the one-day series in Australia where their inability to defend scores around 300 in the first three ODIs cost them the five-match series.

A consolation win in the final one-day in Sydney and the 3-0 clean sweep of the subsequent 20-over series have, however, convinced Dhoni that he now has an attack that can help him land a second Twenty20 World Cup when the tournament gets underway in India next month.

And much of his optimism stems from the emergence of a 22-year-old Gujarat fast bowler with an awkward action, who would not have made the squad in the first place but for injuries to pacemen Mohammed Shami and Bhuvneshwar Kumar. "The find (of the tour) for me was Bumrah. The way he has bowled in the last three games was really good," said

Dhoni, particularly impressed by the right-arm bowler's ability to bowl yorkers.

"I've always said that to be successful in the shorter format you have to execute the yorkers. "Whether you choose to bowl it or not that's up to you, but if you don't have that option, then definitely at some point of time, you will be under pressure."

Bumrah credits Mumbai Indians team mate and Sri Lankan speedster Lasith Malinga-also known for an unorthodox bowling action-for helping him master the art and practises yorkers placing a shoe on the pitch.

His death bowling in his Sydney ODI debut, when he took 2-40 in his 10 overs, impressed many and barely six weeks before India begin their Twenty20 World Cup campaign, Dhoni was satisfied with the look of his bowling unit. "I don't have to worry about the bowling line-up. There might be one or two changes here or there: we might pick another spinner or maybe get a medium-fast bowler of a quick, but overall it has been a good set-up." — Reuters

N ZEALAND PRIME TRIPLE-SPIN THREAT FOR WORLD T20

WELLINGTON: New Zealand will be hoping to stifle their opponents by taking pace off the ball with the inclusion of three frontline spinners in their 15-man squad for next month's World Twenty20 in India.

Off-spinner Nathan McCullum, left-arter Mitchell Santner and leggie Ish Sodhi all found a place in the Kane Williamson-led side for the March 8-April 3 tournament, and the trio can expect to see plenty of action on the host nation's slow pitches.

"With the Indian conditions in mind, the plan has always been to take three frontline spinners, and all three bring something different," coach Mike Hesson said in a New Zealand Cricket statement yesterday.

"It's great to have Nathan available again and his experience in the foreign conditions will be invaluable.

"Both he and Mitch Santner have the ability to bowl in the first six overs, which gives Kane a number of options to work with."

McCullum has not played for New Zealand since August but is also handy with the bat, as is Santner, who impressed during the recent limited-overs series at home against Pakistan.

Left-handed batsman Henry Nicholls, yet to play a T20 for New Zealand, was also rewarded with a spot for his match-winning 82 against Pakistan in the first ODI.

"Henry has shown his talent and versatility with the bat this summer and has also been used as a wicketkeeper for New Zealand A," Hesson added.

Pacemen Tim Southee and Mitchell McClenaghan, and batsman Ross Taylor were also included in the squad despite carrying injuries with all three expected to be fit for the tournament, NZC added in the statement.

New Zealand, who will be aiming to win a first limited-overs World Cup, have been drawn with Australia, India, Pakistan and a yet-to-be-confirmed qualifier in Group 2 of the Super 10 round of the tournament.

"On top of our four genuine pace bowlers and Corey (Anderson) as all-rounder, Colin (Munro) and Grant (Elliott) are also options with the ball for us with their change of pace," Hesson said.

New Zealand open their campaign against the hosts in Nagpur on March 15.

Squad: Kane Williamson (captain), Martin Guptill, Ross Taylor, Henry Nicholls, Grant Elliott, Corey Anderson, Colin Munro, Luke Ronchi, Mitchell Santner, Nathan McCullum, Tim Southee, Trent Boult, Mitchell McClenaghan, Adam Milne, Ish Sodhi. — Reuters



AUCKLAND: Martin Guptill (L) and Corey Anderson (R) celebrate the wicket of Wahab Riaz of Pakistan during the third one-day international cricket match between New Zealand and Pakistan at Eden Park in Auckland on Sunday. — AFP

AFGHANISTAN'S 'LITTLE MESSI' LONGS TO MEET IDOL

KABUL: Kicking a bright yellow football on a gravel-covered Kabul hilltop, an Afghan boy whose pictures in a plastic Lionel Messi jersey went viral evinced excitement yesterday at the prospect of meeting the Barcelona star.

Five-year-old Murtaza Ahmadi shot to global fame after his brother posted pictures of him dressed in the blue-and-white-striped plastic shirt with Messi's name scrawled in marker pen on Facebook in mid-January.

Murtaza idolises the Argentine soccer star but a jersey of his favourite player is beyond the means of his poor family in

the Taliban insurgency-hit province of Ghazni near Kabul.

The Afghanistan Football Federation (AFF) yesterday said Messi was in contact with them to arrange a meeting with Murtaza as soon as possible, though no date or venue has so far been finalised.

"I want to meet Messi, spend time with him, I love the way he plays football," the boy told AFP during a visit to Kabul yesterday with his family.

"I love him very, very much," he said, his cheeks flushed with excitement. AFF said it was working to see whether Messi could visit Afghanistan or the five-year-

old could travel to Spain or meet his idol in a third country.

Setting up a meeting in Afghanistan, in the grip of a fierce Taliban insurgency, is fraught with security challenges. The Spanish embassy in Kabul told AFP it would do whatever possible to facilitate a meeting in a European destination.

A source close to Messi's entourage said they could neither confirm nor deny the speculation regarding a possible meeting. "We will work towards making his wishes come true," the source said, adding that a jersey would be sent to the five-year-old.

'LITTLE MESSI'

Photos of the boy wearing the improvised Messi jersey-made from grocery bags discarded by their neighbour-was touched a chord with football fans around the world.

And it has earned Murtaza the sobriquet "little Messi" on social media. Murtaza's father, a poor farmer in Ghazni's Jaghori district, admitted he could not afford to buy him a replica jersey. "He insisted many times to buy him a Messi jersey but it is too expensive for me," Mohammad Arif Ahmadi told AFP.

As members of the historically perse-

cuted Hazara community, Ahmadi said an opportunity to meet Messi would bring a glimmer of hope to their lives. "We live in an area surrounded by Taliban and Islamic State jihadists. We face lots of daily struggles," he said. "If a poor boy like my son manages to meet Messi, it will be a proud moment not just for us but all of Afghanistan." Sport was rarely played under Taliban rule, and the football stadium in Kabul was a notorious venue for executions, stonings and mutilations. Football and cricket are the two most popular sports in the war-ravaged country. —AFP

BARCA PRESIDENT MAINTAINS SILENCE IN NEYMAR CASE

MADRID: Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu and his predecessor Sandro Rosell refused to testify before a judge yesterday for suspected irregularities in the transfer of Brazilian star Neymar, insisting on the version of events they had given for a previous hearing, according to judicial sources.

Bartomeu and Rosell were called to give evidence at Spain's national court in Madrid over a complaint for fraud and corruption brought by Brazilian investment fund DIS, which held 40 percent of Neymar's sporting rights when he played at Santos before joining Barca in 2013.

Neymar and his parents have been called to give evidence today. "Before saying nonsense - that we hid this, or hid that - they should prove it," Neymar told Brazilian TV station Globo on Sunday.

"My father is doing everything to ensure that I can just focus on playing football. He handles the books. But in the moment when you see someone you love suffering, it starts to hurt."

The deal was originally valued at 57.1 million euros (\$62.1 million) by Barca, 40 million of which was paid to the N&N company owned by the player's father with Santos receiving just 17.1 million.

However, Spanish judicial authorities have estimated the number of simultaneous deals in the transfer amounted to at least 83.3 million. DIS has claimed it was cheated of its real share of the benefits of the 23-year-old's move firstly because part of the transfer fee was concealed by Barcelona and Santos.

Moreover, they also believe a pre-contract agreement between Neymar and Barca impeded other clubs from making offers for the player affecting the value of the transfer fee.

DIS received just 6.8 million from the deal - 40 percent of the 17.1 million paid to Santos. Bartomeu and Rosell ratified what they had declared to the court in February

2015 and July 2014 respectively in a separate case in which they and Barcelona as a club face charges of tax fraud.

In that case Bartomeu laid the responsibility at Rosell's door, saying the latter "led the negotiations with the player's father".

For his part, Rosell - who resigned amidst the scandal over how much Neymar cost the club in January 2014 - insisted the "contracts were done perfectly."

The judge has also called representatives and the presidents of Santos when the deal took place Odilio Rodriguez and Luis Alvaro de Oliveira, who have requested to make their declarations in Brazil.

Brazilian authorities have also taken action freezing \$47 million in assets belonging to Neymar over tax evasion allegations between 2011 and 2013.

In another case on Thursday a Brazilian court rejected the player's appeal against tax fraud when he was still a Santos player, imposing a fine of \$112,000.

And on Sunday Brazilian magazine Veja reported the Brazilian tax authorities had reported the player and his father for tax evasion and falsifying documents in the tax declarations of his salary at Santos and his signing for Barcelona.

"There is nothing against us. The trial is an investigation to know what happened in Neymar's transfer," Neymar's father told Globo. "If we committed any tax error then tell us, but to accuse us of tax evasion or falsifying documents goes beyond the limits." The controversy surrounding the deal hasn't affected Neymar's performances on the field as he helped Barca to a treble of Champions League, La Liga and Copa del Rey last season.

Brazil's golden boy is expected to captain his country on home soil at the Rio Olympics later this year, and his rising status was confirmed as he made the three finalists for the Ballon d'Or to crown the world's best player for the first time in January. —AFP

KLOPP FEELS SQUEEZE AS LEADERS LEICESTER LOOM

LEICESTER: Jurgen Klopp's most significant challenge as Liverpool manager at the moment is figuring out how to manage his squad in the face of an ever-expanding fixture list. Having played nine games in January-more than any other Premier League team-Klopp's side's trip to leaders Leicester City today is the first of at least seven matches in February.

That tally will rise to eight if they beat West Ham United in next week's FA Cup fourth-round replay. Saturday's 0-0 draw against the Hammers was Liverpool's 37th fixture of the campaign, and it is mathematically possible that they could end up playing 69 competitive matches this season.

With that in mind, Klopp rested as many of his senior players as he possibly could at the weekend, making 10 changes to the side who had secured a League Cup final place by overcoming Stoke City on penalties at Anfield four days earlier.

Teenager Cameron Brannagan, making only his fourth senior start, took the opportunity to make a positive impression against West Ham, as did other players with limited experience such as fellow midfielders Kevin Stewart and Joao Teixeira and full-back Brad Smith.

But Klopp has indicated that he will return to his tried and trusted senior players to face Leicester.

"Those players are in our squad because

they are an option for us," Klopp said. "But we have to decide if it is the right moment or not. "Young lads often have waves in their development. They have ups and downs, and if you bring them in at the wrong moment, then it's not too good for their development."

"They have time to develop. That's the best thing. They have enough pressure. You don't need to make that pressure bigger." One player set to retain his place is central defender Dejan Lovren, who took the opportunity to build up his match fitness after recovering from a recent hamstring injury.

TAXING FIXTURES FOR LEICESTER

He played his part in a Liverpool clean sheet at the weekend; only their third in nine matches.

Liverpool are one of only two clubs to have beaten Leicester in the league to date, so today's game gives Claudio Ranieri's men an opportunity to avenge that defeat in December and offer further proof of their title credentials. A 3-0 win against an in-form Stoke last week answered many of the doubts about the Foxes, but their next three games will ask more taxing questions. After facing Liverpool they will take on Manchester City and then Arsenal, the only other club to beat them in a league game in 2015-16. Defender Christian Fuchs said: "We've got three games against big teams and they are important. —AFP



SAINT-ETIENNE: Paris Saint-Germain's Swedish forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic (L) vies with Saint-Etienne's French midfielder Renaud Cohade (C) and Saint-Etienne's Senegalese defender Moustapha Bayal Sall (R) during the Ligue1 football match between AS Saint-Etienne and Paris Saint-Germain, on Sunday at the Geoffroy Guichard stadium in Saint-Etienne, central France. — AFP

IBRAHIMOVIC BLASTS PSG INTO RECORD BOOKS

PARIS: A Zlatan Ibrahimovic brace saw Paris Saint Germain stretch their lead atop Ligue 1 to a massive 24 points on Sunday in a 2-0 away win over a spirited Saint Etienne.

Not only was this a club record 13th straight win, it also sees the rampaging Paris side equal Nantes' 20-year-old record of 32 league games without defeat. PSG have not lost in Ligue 1 since a 3-2 defeat to Bordeaux on March 15 last year.

"There's been a great deal of talk about the record and it helped me motivate the players, even if they don't really need that," PSG coach Laurent Blanc said after the game.

"I ask a lot from the players, I demand it. And what I take away tonight as much as the record is the way this team never gives up." Saint Etienne coach Christophe Galtier joked before the game that Ibrahimovic must hate his team so often does he score against them. And the giant Swede duly clinched his 18th league goal of the campaign on the hour with a certain venom before scoring his 19th, a simple tap in, with the last kick of the game.

"This team seems unbeatable," Galtier said. "We've never seen anything like it in this

league, not even Lyon when they were dominating everything." Paris now have 63 points from 23 games after twenty wins and three draws, while in second Monaco have 39 points after losing 3-0 to third placed Angers, who now have 37, on Saturday.

The hosts threw everything they had at the champions and drew several key saves from 'keeper Kevin Trapp, notably through captain Franck Tabanou. "My players showed great courage and we shook them up. But we came up against a good 'keeper," added Galtier.

PERFECT CROSS

PSG's Argentine winger Angel di Maria was a constant menace with his runs and passes and set up Ibrahimovic for a cheeky back-heel shot by lobbing the static defence. But the opener came when Ibrahimovic ran onto a perfectly weighted Serge Aurier cross to fire home at full stretch from the six yard line just after the hour.

The clincher came in the closing moments after a sobering exhibition of PSG's masterful passing game found the striker unmarked at the back post. Earlier Sunday, Caen continued their fine season by beating Nice 2-0 as the visi-

tors, who sold 49 percent of their shares to a mystery Saudi prince and English businessman this week, failed in their bid to move second. The hosts took the lead when Julien Ferret teed up Rony Rodelin to drive in his sixth league goal of the season. Andy Delort doubled the lead from the penalty spot before half-time to leave Nice in disarray. Bordeaux's lanky striker Cheick Diabate, who scored a brace in last week's 2-2 draw with Nantes, grabbed another two in a 4-0 romp over Rennes. His aerial strength saw him power home a well placed header to grab the opener on the half hour and he then drilled a sharp left-footed snap-shot past Rennes 'keeper Benoit Costil just after the restart to make it 2-0, setting his side up for a deservedly clear win.

Surprise package Angers inflicted a 3-0 defeat on Monaco on Saturday to reignite their unlikely challenge for a Champions League spot. Cheikh N'Doye deflected in Romain Saiss's effort after Monaco failed to clear a corner, N'Doye doubled the advantage before half-time as Angers took utter control, before gloss was added to the scoreline in the second period by Mohamed Yattara. — AFP

CHINA FIRMS SPEND BIG AS XI DREAMS OF GLORY

BEIJING: Chinese football clubs are splashing their cash in Europe, as wealthy owners embrace President Xi Jinping's vision of the sleeping Asian giant becoming a new heavyweight in the sport.

As January's European transfer window began to swing shut on Monday, clubs in the top two tiers of Chinese football had spent more than 200 million euros (\$216 million) collectively on players, according to website transfermarkt, which tracks commercial developments in the sport.

That was more than 60 percent higher than the total they lavished in the winter transfer market last year. But critics say that owners are motivated more by a desire to curry favour with political power than by a love for the Beautiful Game.

Questions have also been asked whether Chinese clubs are paying over the odds for players who may be past their best-many of the new arrivals are in their late 20s-and if European clubs are seeking to unload overpaid stars on willing buyers.

The three highest individual fees in the window so far were all paid by Chinese clubs, transfermarkt's figures show. "There is one new reason for Chinese billionaires to invest in football inside China-to build political capital in uncertain times," Rowan Simons, author of a book on Chinese football, told AFP.

The spending spree comes after a powerful Communist Party committee chaired by Xi declared: "Revitalising soccer is a must to build China into a sports powerhouse as part of the Chinese dream."

As vice-president in 2011, Xi said he wanted

China-currently languishing in 82nd place in the FIFA world rankings-to qualify for, host and ultimately win a World Cup.

The committee last year approved a 50-point plan to put Xi's sporting ambition into effect, including establishing 50,000 soccer schools within 10 years, making the game compulsory for some elementary and middle-school students, and separating the Chinese Football Association from government bureaucracy.

Companies and businessmen have since rushed to put money into football. "It's what their president wants," says Tony Rallis, who brokered a deal to sell Australian international Trent Sainsbury to Jiangsu Suning.

"Why is it any different from the Chinese government encouraging them to buy Australian farms, invest in African countries? To me that's an example of due diligence and proper planning. "It's not about individuals, it's about the broad picture here."

BILLIONAIRE BACKERS

In January, Chelsea's Brazilian midfielder Ramires went to Jiangsu Suning for a Chinese Super League record 28 million euros, Hebei China Fortune bought Ivorian striker Gervinho from AS Roma for 18 million euros, and Shanghai Shenhua took Inter Milan's Colombian international Fredy Guarin for 13 million, according to transfermarkt's figures.

Suning, a privately-held retail conglomerate that sells appliances at more than 1,600 stores, only bought the Jiangsu team in December, and subsequently renamed it.

The company's billionaire founder, Zhang Jindong, is a member of the government's

Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee, a Communist-controlled debating chamber.

Hebei China Fortune are owned by a Beijing-based developer of industrial parks, founded by billionaire Wang Wenxue, while Shenhua are owned by Greenland Holding Group, a real estate investment company that focuses on high-rise complexes.

"When the Chinese government says they are setting their mind to something, it means 'This is how you're going to get on our good side,'" said David Hornby, sports business director of the Mailman brand management group in Shanghai.

Mark Dreyer, a sports blogger in Beijing, compares the football gold rush to the flood of money into China's notoriously volatile stock market.

When "they announced the soccer reforms, the very next day there were dozens of people registering football clubs," he said. "Clearly none of them had anything to do with the sport, but thought, 'This is my opportunity, I can get a piece of the next pie'"

UNCERTAIN TIMES

But experts say the avalanche of cash is unlikely to turn into trophies for the national team-and could even be counter-productive.

Foreigners coming to play in the Chinese Super League often earn millions of dollars, and Gao Zhaoyu, an expert on Chinese sport at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, said club money that could be spent on training young players was instead going into transfer fees and salaries-while China's salary cap only applied to domestic players, rather than foreigners, and owners had ignored it in any case. —AFP



MOREIRA DE CINEGOS: Benfica's Brazilian forward Jonas (L) controls the ball next to Moreirense's Serbian goalkeeper Igor Stefanovic to score a goal during the Portuguese league football match Moreirense FC vs SL Benfica at the Comendador Joaquim de Almeida Freitas stadium in Moreira de Conegos on Sunday. — AFP

DZEKO ADDS TO ROMA WOES AHEAD OF SASSUOLO TRIP

MILAN: Misfiring Bosnian striker Edin Dzeko has added to Roma's injury crisis after being ruled out of the matchday squad for their league trip to Sassuolo today. Roma claimed their first win in five league games with a 3-1 defeat of Frosinone on Saturday, their first under new coach Luciano Spalletti.

But Spalletti, in his second spell at Roma following the recent sacking of Rudi Garcia, faces a forwards crisis with club captain Francesco Totti ruled as doubtful after suffering a muscle problem on his comeback from a lengthy

injury lay-off. "Dzeko won't be travelling because he received a knock on Saturday and it quickly flared up. To play him would be too risky," said Spalletti yesterday.

Totti came off the bench to replace Dzeko 14 minutes into the second half at the weekend but has "a problem with his gluteus", according to Spalletti. "We're monitoring his condition, but we'll let the doctors decide if he can play," he said. It could force Spalletti into some last-minute tinkering, with on-loan AC Milan forward Stephan El Shaarawy and

lago Falque his only available strikers. Although Nigerian starlet Umar Sadiq scored twice during a handful of appearances under Garcia, Spalletti played down his possible inclusion.

"We only have Sadiq left to us as a lone striker. He doesn't have great technique, but he knows how to get in behind the opposition defence," said Spalletti.

El Shaarawy hit his maiden Roma goal on Saturday with a deft flick that he said was inspired by Sweden striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic, but the Italy international is

likely to be kept on a tight rein on Tuesday night.

Sassuolo are enjoying a great season so far and sit in seventh place, 17 points behind leaders Napoli but only a handful of points adrift of the European places.

Part of that success is down to their formidable form at home, where they suffered their first defeat of the season to Bologna eight days ago. At their Mapei Stadium, Sassuolo have so far beaten Napoli, Lazio and Juventus and drawn with Fiorentina, and on their travels have beaten Inter Milan and held Roma to a 2-

2 draw at the Stadio Olimpico.

Spalletti said Sassuolo coach Eusebio Di Francesco deserved praise for helping raise the game's standard in Italy.

"He is one of the coaches who has helped improve our level of football," added Spalletti.

"Sassuolo, Fiorentina, Empoli and Napoli all have coaches who have made significant contributions to our game. "Sassuolo is a really organised club and everyone knows it. They've beaten a lot of big teams and so they deserve to be complimented." — AFP

IN-FORM ROONEY SEEKS TO KEEP HEAT OFF VAN GAAL

LONDON: Wayne Rooney can help ease the pressure on beleaguered Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal and move closer to Bobby Charlton's club scoring record if he maintains his hot streak against Stoke City in the Premier League today.

United forgot their league woes on Friday when they won 3-1 at Championship side Derby County in the FA Cup with Rooney's superb curling shot taking his tally to six in six games and 243 for the club, six behind Charlton.

Van Gaal's team return to league action for the first time since losing 1-0 at home to Southampton, lying fifth in the table on 37 points — 10 adrift of leaders Leicester City and five away from the top four.

Leicester will continue their unlikely push for a first-ever title when they face 18-times champions Liverpool at the King Power. Second-placed Manchester City go to Sunderland, third-placed Arsenal host Southampton and fourth-placed Tottenham Hotspur visit Norwich City.

The spotlight will be on Van Gaal, however, and Rooney is hoping he can take the heat off his Dutch manager when they face a Stoke side managed by former United striker Mark Hughes.

Stoke have lost all seven Premier League matches they have played at Old Trafford and have not won there for almost 40 years.

CLUB RECORD

Rooney overtook Charlton's record of 49 goals for England this season and he told the United website (www.manutd.com) he could not help but have one eye on the club record now.

"Of course, I'm well aware of it" he said. "Like the England record, when it was getting closer, it was coming up every week, so I'm sure it will now." Rooney said it was unfair to lay all the blame for the team's struggles on the manager.

"The players have to take a lot of responsibility for performances and results," he said.

"We have to stand up and take criticism when it's there."

Leicester have confounded expectations to move to top spot, losing only twice in the league all season. Liverpool inflicted their last league defeat with a 1-0 win at Anfield on Boxing Day, but Leicester have

maintained their form since and sit three points clear of Manchester City and Arsenal after 23 matches.

Arsenal, without a win in their last three league games, face Southampton at the Emirates and their long injury list is finally showing signs of shrinking with striker Alexis Sanchez scoring in the 2-1 FA Cup win over Burnley on Saturday.

City, with 13 goals in their last four league and Cup games face relegation-threatened Sunderland while Spurs, rounding out the top four on 42 points, will seek to extend their 10-match unbeaten league away run at Norwich. —Reuters

Live Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE	
Arsenal v Southampton	22:45
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
Sunderland v Man City	22:45
beIN SPORTS 3 HD	
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
Leicester v Liverpool	22:45
beIN SPORTS 11 HD	
beIN SPORTS 3 HD	
West Ham v Aston Villa	22:45
beIN SPORTS 8 HD	
Norwich City v Tottenham	22:45
beIN SPORTS 5 HD	
beIN SPORTS 11 HD	
Man United v Stoke City	23:00
beIN SPORTS 7 HD	
West Bromwich v Swansea City	23:00
beIN SPORTS 9 HD	
Crystal Palace v Bournemouth	23:00
beIN SPORTS 13 HD	
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE	
Sassuolo Calcio v AS Roma	22:45
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	
FRENCH LEAGUE	
AS Monaco v Bastia	21:00
beIN SPORTS 6 HD	
Montpellier v Olympique	23:00
beIN SPORTS 6 HD	



MADRID: Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo, right, heads the ball to score his side's fifth goal past Espanyol's Giedrius Arlauskis "Arla" during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Real Madrid and Espanyol at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid, Sunday. Ronaldo scored a hat-trick in Real Madrid's 6-0 victory. —AP

RONALDO HITS 35TH HAT-TRICK AS REAL CRUSH ESPANYOL

MADRID: Prolific Cristiano Ronaldo hit a 35th hat-trick for Real Madrid who swept aside Espanyol 6-0 in a ruthless attacking display in La Liga on Sunday.

The Portuguese led the way as Real sought to keep in the title chase after an inconsistent season so far that still leaves them in third place, four points behind leaders Barcelona.

Karim Benzema headed in a whipped cross from James Rodriguez after seven minutes and then Ronaldo won and struck home a penalty.

A Rodriguez strike was deflected in after 16 minutes and Ronaldo showed a sublime touch to beat two players and curl a 20 yard shot into the corner before halftime.

Ronaldo headed in from close range after 82 minutes and is now joint top scorer in La Liga on

19 goals with Barcelona's Luis Suarez.

Espanyol's misery was complete with an own-goal from Oscar Duarte.

Barca are three points clear, on 51 points, after their 2-1 victory in the top of the table clash with Atletico Madrid on Saturday.

Ronaldo gave his backing to coach Zinedine Zidane with the side having scored 16 goals in three home games since he took over from Rafa Benitez.

"Zidane is doing well and you can see the results on the pitch," Ronaldo told reporters.

"Zidane has come with a different idea of work and the atmosphere is better. We are winning by big margins.

"We will keep chasing Barcelona and Atletico, and see where we are at the end of the

season." Valencia manager Gary Neville's wait for a first La Liga win continued after a 1-0 home defeat by lowly Sporting Gijon.

Former England and Manchester United defender Neville, who took on his first head coaching job at the start of December, has gone eight league games without a victory.

Valencia have slipped to 12th place and have not won in 11 La Liga games in total, including under previous coach Nuno Espirito Santo, their worst run since 1986.

Antonio Sanabria's 50th-minute penalty gave Sporting victory.

Kevin Gameiro, Vicente Iborra and Yevhen Konoplyanka were on target for in-form Sevilla who moved up to fifth with a 3-1 victory over Levante. —Reuters

MILAN STUN INTER IN DERBY THRILLER

MILAN: Carlos Bacca and M'Baye Niang hit second half goals as AC Milan ended their long wait to celebrate victory in the city derby with a crushing 3-0 win over Inter Milan on Sunday.

Title-chasing Inter had the chance to move up to third in Serie A to close the gap on leaders Napoli to six points. But after a bright start, Roberto Mancini's visitors took their foot off the gas to go into the dressing room 1-0 down after Alex's 35th minute header.

Inter spurned the chance to pull level 20 minutes from the end when second-half substitute Mauro Icardi hit the post from the penalty spot.

It proved the turning point of the game and Milan, who suffered a 1-0 defeat to Inter earlier this season but last won the 'Derby della Madonnina' by three clear goals in 2011, doubled their lead on 73 minutes when Bacca kneed Niang's delivery past Samir Handanovic from close range.

Four minutes later, the stadium erupted for a fourth time when Niang found the roof of the net at the second attempt to secure the points for Sinisa Mihajlovic's men. Mihajlovic admitted Icardi's penalty miss had been "decisive", adding: "It's the greatest joy I've experienced since I've coached, because when you win a derby like this it enters the history books.

"I'm happy for the club president (Silvio Berlusconi), the players and the fans." Seven-time European champions Milan are bidding to qualify for the Champions League next season after a two-year hiatus and although they remain 14 points behind leaders Napoli, they are only six points behind third-placed Fiorentina, who drew at Genoa earlier Sunday.

Inter have now failed to win their last three games meaning the Nerazzurri, who invested heavily in new players during the summer, are nine points off the pace.

GUILT ADMITTED

Mancini, who was sent off for showing his middle finger to fans who were insulting him, later admitted his guilt.

"I did it to eight fans who were insulting me, I admit it. I was being verbally abused

and ended up doing what I did," he said, "I don't agree with a lot of the referee's decisions tonight, some of them were disastrous. In saying that, we lost 3-0 and so we have some problems to resolve."

With his strikers misfiring, Mancini beat Leicester City to sign Sampdoria striker Eder on Friday and the Brazil-born Italy international had a bright start in what must have been a baptism of fire.

Nearly 78,000 fans were in attendance and Eder showed promise early on but notably skewed a flying header wide from a Juan Jesus cross.

When Eder set up Marcelo Brozovic on the edge of the box, Milan 'keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma was forced down low at his far post to save at the second attempt.

There were few clear chances in a nervous opening half, although Keisuke Honda was unlucky when he just failed to make good contact with a cross in to the six-yard box.

When the ball fell to the Japan midfielder moments later, he made no mistake, curling a perfect cross over the Inter defence for Alex to bundle a header into the net in the 35th minute.

Milan suffered a scare early after the restart when Donnarumma spliced an attempted clearance, prompting the 'keeper to clash with Eder as the Italy international came in to challenge.

Penalty claims were waved away, but an increasingly angry Mancini was sent to the stands moments later for dissent. Inefficient Inter striker Stevan Jovetic was replaced by Icardi just after the hour, but the game soon turned in Milan's favour when Donnarumma got down low to stop the Argentine's angled drive from inside the area.

As the ball bounced up, it came off the hand of Alex and a penalty was awarded. Icardi stepped up but saw his strike hit the right post. The miss left Inter deflated and minutes later Bacca escaped his marker on the edge of the box to kneed Niang's inviting cross into the net.

Inter's defence was even more absent four minutes later when Niang beat Handanovic at the second attempt after picking up his own rebound. —AFP

GUARDIOLA TO SUCCEED PELLEGRINI AT MAN CITY

LONDON: Outgoing Bayern Munich coach Pep Guardiola will take over from Manuel Pellegrini at Manchester City on a three-year deal from the end of the season, the English club announced yesterday.

"Manchester City can confirm that in recent weeks it has commenced and finalised contractual negotiations with Pep Guardiola to become MCFC head coach for the 2016/17 EPL season onwards," the club said in a statement.

"The contract is for three years. These negotiations were a re-commencement of discussions that were curtailed in 2012. "Out of respect for Manuel Pellegrini and the players, the club wishes to make its decision public to remove the unnecessary burden of speculation.

"Manuel, who is fully supportive of the decision to make this communication, is entirely focused on achieving his targets for the season ahead and retains the respect and commitment of all involved with the leadership of the club."

Guardiola announced in December that he would leave current club Bayern Munich in May after three years at the helm, with an intention to coach in England next season.

The 45-year-old Guardiola notched up the treble of Champions League, German Cup and Bundesliga titles in 2013, but in the last two seasons, Bayern have exited the Champions League at the semi-final stage.

The ex-Spain international previously coached Barcelona from 2008-12, leading the Catalan giants to domestic and Champions League glory in a remarkable run of success.

The much-travelled Pellegrini, 62, signed for City in 2013, becoming the first Chilean to coach in the Premier League as he took over from Roberto Mancini.

During his tenure, City have won 64 of the 99 games played. The only coach to have won more in his opening 99 Premier League games is Jose Mourinho (73).

Manchester City, who currently sit second in the Premier League behind Leicester, remain in the running for four trophies this season. Pellegrini guided them to Premier League and Capital One Cup success in his first season, but the team failed to defend their title last season.

Pellegrini announced his departure at the end of a standard press conference to preview Tuesday's Premier League game at Sunderland. That was quickly followed by the club statement.

Pellegrini said: "Before we finish I will tell you that I talked with the club and I will finish

my contract on the original date in June.

"We extended the contract one year more but with the clause that one of the club or me may not use that extended contract. So, I will finish here on the original date, June 30.

"There has been a lot of speculation about things, but they (the club) are not doing anything behind me. I knew this one month ago. I don't think it is good to have speculation about different things. I prefer to finish (by announcing) today - that is why I have told the press and told the players.

"I told the club two weeks ago that I would do it." — AFP



HANNOVER: This file photo taken on December 19, 2015 shows outgoing Bayern Munich's coach Pep Guardiola prior to the German first division Bundesliga football match Hannover 96 vs FC Bayern Munich in Hannover, central Germany. Pep Guardiola will take over as coach of Manchester City on a three-year deal, the English club said yesterday after announcing the departure of incumbent Manuel Pellegrini at season's end. — AFP

Sports

Song edges
Spieth to win
Singapore Open



Guardiola to
succeed Pellegrini
at Man City



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2016

AFGHANISTAN'S 'LITTLE MESSI' LONGS TO MEET IDOL

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NEW YORK: Lance Thomas #42 of the New York Knicks heads for the net as Brandon Rush #4 of the Golden State Warriors defends at Madison Square Garden on Sunday in New York City.—AFP

WARRIORS BLOW OUT KNICKS 116-95

NEW YORK: Klay Thompson woke the Warriors from their slowest start of the season with 17 of his 34 points in the second quarter, Draymond Green tied Tom Gola's franchise record with his ninth triple-double of the season, and Golden State beat the New York Knicks 116-95 on Sunday night for its seventh straight victory. Green made all nine shots as the Warriors (44-4) wrapped up January at 40 games over .500 even with a quiet 13 points from Stephen Curry. Green finished with 20 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for the Warriors, who were held to a season-low 18 points in the first quarter. They charged back with 64 over the middle two quarters - the Knicks had only 65 total through three - and looked back to normal after a sluggish Saturday in Philadelphia. Carmelo Anthony had 24 points and 10 rebounds for the Knicks, who lost for the fifth time in six games.

points, seven rebounds and six assists for the Hornets, who wrapped up their four-game road trip with a decisive win over the Western Conference's worst team.

TRAIL BLAZERS 96, TIMBERWOLVES 93

CJ McCollum and Damian Lillard scored 21 points apiece, and the Portland Trail Blazers handed the Minnesota Timberwolves their 11th straight road loss. Portland extended its winning streak to four and improved to 3-0 against the Timberwolves this season. Karl-Anthony Towns, a contender for Rookie of the Year, was the first player on the court in double figures and finished with 21 points and 13 rebounds for the Timberwolves. It was his 25th double-double, the most of any rookie this season.

CLIPPERS 120, BULLS 93

Jamal Crawford scored 12 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter, leading a dominant bench effort for the second straight game, and the Los Angeles Clippers defeated the Chicago Bulls for their fourth consecutive victory. J.J. Redick added 21 points and DeAndre Jordan had 17 points and 20 rebounds for the Clippers, who improved to 15-3 without Blake Griffin. Their four-game streak has coincided with Griffin being out at least a month after breaking his right hand while punching the team's assistant equipment manager. Jimmy Butler scored 23 points for the Bulls, who have lost four of

six and dropped to 10-11 on the road.

HEAT 105, HAWKS 87

Chris Bosh scored 18 points and the Miami Heat extended their winning streak to four games with a victory over the Atlanta Hawks. Dwyane Wade and Luol Deng each had 17 points and Amar'e Stoudemire finished with 13 points and 12 rebounds for the Heat, who led by as many as 22 and never trailed. It is Miami's first four-game winning streak in the regular season since March 28 to April 2, 2014. Paul Millsap and Al Horford each scored 17 for Atlanta, which has lost three straight.

MAGIC 119, CELTICS 114

Evan Fournier scored 24 points and Aaron Gordon had 19 points and 14 rebounds as the Orlando Magic snapped an eight-game losing streak with a win over the Boston Celtics. Rookie Mario Hezonja scored 17 points, Tobias Harris had 16 and Nikola Vucevic had 16 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists for the Magic. Marcus Smart led Boston with 26 points. Isaiah Thomas added 23 points and Avery Bradley scored 22. The loss stopped a five-game win streak for Boston, which had beaten Orlando 113-94 two nights earlier.

MAVERICKS 91, SUNS 78

Deron Williams scored 27 points and the Dallas Mavericks won without Dirk Nowitzki, surging past

the lowly Phoenix Suns. Dwight Powell had six straight points for all his scoring to give the Mavericks the lead for good in the fourth quarter. Nowitzki sat out the opener of a back-to-back set and the first of Dallas' five games in seven nights. The Mavericks were hoping they could rest their 37-year-old leading

scorer and still beat a team with 13 straight road losses. Dallas did that thanks to a 23-5 run over the final 9 minutes and gave up its fewest points in the fourth quarter this season, outscoring Phoenix 23-9. Rookie guard Devin Booker led the Suns in scoring for the third straight game with 19 points.—AP

NBA Results/Standings

New York 95, Golden State 116; LA Lakers 82, Charlotte 101; Miami 105, Atlanta 87; Orlando 119, Boston 114; Portland 96, Minnesota 93; Dallas 91, Phoenix 78; LA Clippers 120, Chicago 93.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference					
Atlantic Division				Northwest Division					
W	L	PCT	GB						
Toronto	32	15	.681		Oklahoma City	36	13	.735	—
Boston	27	22	.551	6	Portland	23	26	.469	13
New York	23	27	.460	10.5	Utah	21	25	.457	13.5
Brooklyn	12	36	.250	20.5	Denver	18	30	.375	17.5
Philadelphia	7	41	.146	25.5	Minnesota	14	35	.286	22
Central Division				Pacific Division					
Cleveland	34	12	.739	—	Golden State	44	4	.917	—
Chicago	26	20	.565	8	LA Clippers	32	16	.667	12
Indiana	25	22	.532	9.5	Sacramento	20	27	.426	23.5
Detroit	25	23	.521	10	Phoenix	14	35	.286	30.5
Milwaukee	20	29	.408	15.5	LA Lakers	9	41	.180	36
Southeast Division				Southwest Division					
Miami	27	21	.563	—	San Antonio	39	8	.830	—
Atlanta	27	22	.551	0.5	Memphis	28	20	.583	11.5
Charlotte	23	25	.479	4	Dallas	28	22	.560	12.5
Washington	21	24	.467	4.5	Houston	25	25	.500	15.5
Orlando	21	25	.457	5	New Orleans	18	28	.391	20.5

INFANTINO MAY LOOK OUTSIDE EUROPE FOR FIFA RIGHT-HAND MAN

LONDON: FIFA presidential candidate Gianni Infantino said yesterday he would not automatically choose a European to be his secretary general if he wins the election to lead world soccer this month, breaking a pattern dating back more than 100 years.

Infantino, who appears to have widespread backing in Europe and promised support from South and Central American countries, hinted he could appoint an African to

run FIFA's day-to-day administration if he wins the election in Zurich on Feb. 26. Speaking at London's Wembley Stadium, he gave no specific indication why he would seek to broaden FIFA's power base as he launched his action plan for his first three months in office, should he win the vote.

But with outgoing president Sepp Blatter banned from soccer, and secretary general Jerome Valcke sacked as part of the corruption allegations engulfing the sport, all eyes are on candidates' reform proposals to clean up soccer and keep big money sponsors on side.

The 45-year-old Swiss, currently general secretary of European body UEFA, does not want FIFA to be seen as being Euro-centric. "What we want to do is open the doors of the FIFA administration to the most able people around the world," he said.

"I am convinced the general secretary of FIFA should not

be an European. Why not an African?" he told reporters as he detailed the 11 key points he would focus on in office. Since FIFA was founded in 1904, it has had 10 secretary generals-the official who runs the day-to-day-operations-and all of them have been European.

Infantino is one of five men standing to become only the ninth elected president in FIFA's 112-year-history. The current incumbent is acting president Issa Hayatou of Cameroon, while FIFA also has an acting secretary general, Markus Kattner, who stepped in to replace Valcke who was sacked last month after being implicated in the illegal sale of World Cup tickets in Brazil in 2014. Blatter, who has been banned from soccer for eight years pending an appeal, and Valcke are among the highest profile casualties of the corruption and bribery scandal that has roiled FIFA since May. Both deny wrongdoing.—Reuters



LONDON: UEFA general secretary Gianni Infantino (L) watches as Fabio Capello (C) speaks with former Chelsea coach Portugal's Jose Mourinho after a press conference at Wembley stadium in London yesterday. A stellar cast of football figures including Jose Mourinho and Luis Figo appeared in support of Gianni Infantino's FIFA presidential bid at an event at London's Wembley Stadium yesterday.—AFP

IOC BOSS KICKS OFF LA VISIT WITH LAKERS GAME

LOS ANGELES: International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach kicked off a visit to 2024 bid city Los Angeles with a visit to a Lakers basketball game on Sunday.

Bach and other IOC officials are in Los Angeles to meet with the city's candidature committee and visit proposed Games venues, which include the Staples Center near downtown where the NBA's Lakers and Clippers play.

On Sunday night, Bach exchanged greetings with Lakers star Kobe Bryant, a five-time NBA champion and two-time Olympic gold medalist who will retire at the end of the season at the age of 37.

On Monday, Bach and his colleagues were to meet with Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, City Council President Herb Wesson and LA 2024 leaders.

They will also visit the University of Southern California, the University of California at Los Angeles and the Getty Center museum.

LA bid officials last week announced they were shelving plans for a \$1 billion athletes village and would instead house athletes on the UCLA campus in the western neighborhood of Westwood.

A media village would be based at USC, near Staples Center and the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum which is planned as the main venue for the Games.

Los Angeles, which hosted the Olympics in 1932 and 1984, is competing against Paris, Rome and Budapest for the right to stage the Games. The IOC will select the host at a meeting in Peru in September of 2017.

The United States last hosted a summer Olympics in Atlanta in 1996.—AFP

REQUIRED HEAVY & LIGHT DRIVERS

- Having not less than 5 years experience.
- Transferable residence.
- Knowing all areas in Kuwait.

Pls Fax CV details: 22455770

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

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US consumer spending softens; savings jump

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Afraid to speak out, Kazakhs let numbers talk for them

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KUWAIT'S CONSUMER SECTOR GROWTH ROBUST

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Biggest 'Kuwait Yacht Show' kicks off



BOSTON: Primer is applied to the midsole of a military tested New Balance 950v2 sneaker under ultraviolet light before the outsole is attached at one of company's manufacturing facilities in Boston. The Institute for Supply Management, a US trade group of purchasing managers, issued its index of manufacturing activity for January. — AP

FACTORIES PARCHED FOR DEMAND, EYE STIMULUS

CHINA PMI DIPS, US FACTORY MOMENTUM REMAINS WEAK, EUROZONE SLOWS

LONDON/SYDNEY: January surveys of global factory activity released yesterday showed the new year began much as the old one ended - with too much capacity chasing too little demand.

China was again the epicenter of Asian disappointment. The official measure of manufacturing fell to its lowest since mid-2012. The weakness also encompassed such bellwethers of high-tech trade as South Korea and Taiwan. Manufacturing growth also slowed in the eurozone at the start of 2016. Incoming orders showed no meaningful increase, even though companies cut prices at the deepest rate for a year. US manufacturing activity appeared to stabilize a bit in January, but a recovery is unlikely in the near term as factories grapple with a strong dollar and lower oil prices force energy firms to further cut spending. The Institute for Supply Management said its index of national factory activity increased 0.2 percentage point to a reading of 48.2 last month, the fourth straight month of contraction.

A reading below 50 indicates a contraction in manufacturing. However, the index remains above the 43.1 threshold which is associated with a recession.

British factories

British factories did enjoy a faster start to the year than expected, but companies cut staff at the fastest rate in three years and export orders fell despite a weaker sterling. "It wasn't the best start to the year, but it wasn't awful. Markets are pricing in a worst-case scenario and we are not seeing that yet," said Peter Dixon, an economist at Commerzbank.

Stock markets, commodities and oil prices have been battered since the start of the year by concern the Chinese economy, the world's second largest, is struggling. Such concern has eroded expectations for how fast the Federal Reserve will raise US interest rates, after its first increase in almost a decade in December. Forecasts for Bank of England tightening have also been pushed well back.

A dearth of demand and resulting downward pressure on inflation was why the Bank of Japan felt moved enough to cut interest rates below zero last week. Meanwhile, having failed to get inflation anywhere near its target - and with demand so low - the European Central Bank is likely to cut its deposit rate in March, and possibly increase its monthly asset purchases. "It's less to do with what is happening with the real economy and more to do with inflation. It's more of an inflation story than a growth one," Dixon said. Markit's manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index for the euro zone will bolster those expectations. It sank to 52.3 from December's 53.2, in line with an earlier flash estimate and above the 50 mark that separates growth from contraction.

January's weakening came as companies offered steep discounts on their goods. A sub-index measuring output prices plummeted to its lowest reading since January 2015. Consumer prices rose just 0.4 percent last month on a year earlier, official data showed on

Friday, nowhere near the ECB's target of close to but just below 2 percent. Markets got February off to a cautious start after a rocky January, as expectations of more cheap money from some of the world's top central banks were validated by the fresh signs of weak global growth.

Asian woes

The official version of China's PMI survey for manufacturing slipped to 49.4 in January from 49.7 the month before, missing forecasts of 49.6. The services index also disappointed, challenging hopes consumption would take over from industry as the driving force. A private survey, the Caixin/Markit China Manufacturing PMI, underscored the trend by showing factory activity shrinking for an 11th month.

Japan's results were more encouraging. Its factory barometer slipped only a tick to 52.3 in January as exports picked up. The gains in exports relied on a weak yen, hinting at another reason the BOJ acted so boldly when easing policy last week. India also recorded an un-

expected return to growth. Its erratic PMI jumped to a four-month high after slumping to a 28-month low in December.

Other countries in the region were not so fortunate. South Korea's manufacturing index slipped into contraction. Its exports suffered their sharpest annual fall since August 2009.

China is South Korea's largest market, taking about a quarter of its exports. Smartphones, cars, semiconductors and flat-screen displays all fell in January, boding ill for the companies that usually prop up the economy. The story was much the same for another electronics hub, Taiwan, where factory growth slowed amid lacklustre demand. Steep falls in selling prices and input costs also underlined the risks of deflation across the region and the need for yet more stimulus. "Shipments being this weak means a recovery in consumption is urgently needed. If you look at the economy as a whole, this might boost the need for policy easing," said Lee Sang-jae, chief economist at Eugene Investment & Securities. — Reuters

STC TAKES CONTROLLING STAKE IN KUWAIT'S VIVA

KUWAIT: Saudi Telecom Co (STC) said yesterday it has raised its share in Kuwait Telecom Co (VIVA) to a controlling stake after acquiring 25.8 percent of shares for \$425 million. STC, the largest Arab telecommunications firm in terms of capitalization, had held a 26-percent stake in VIVA since its establishment in 2008 and was running the company. In December, STC made an optional bid to purchase all other shares for \$3.30 each. The offer ended on January 31.

STC said in a statement posted on the Saudi and Kuwaiti stock markets yesterday that holders of 128.8 million shares, or 25.8 percent of the company, accepted the offer, raising its stake in VIVA to 51.8 percent. VIVA is Kuwait's third mobile operator along with Zain and Qatar-held Ooredoo. It has a customer base of 2.4 million clients. STC has more than 100 million customers and operates in nine countries including Turkey, South Africa, India and Malaysia. — AFP

GULF LOSES STEAM AS OIL SLIPS

DUBAI: Most Gulf stock markets lost steam yesterday as oil prices pulled back although strong fourth-quarter earnings at two major banks boosted Abu Dhabi, while Egypt resumed falling because of currency jitters. Bourses in the Gulf had surged over the past few days as an oil price rebound encouraged investors to return to buy beaten-down stocks. This buying quickly diminished yesterday as Brent crude slipped 2 percent to below \$35.50 a barrel.

The Saudi Arabian index edged down 0.2 percent as petrochemical stock retreated, with Saudi Basic Industries down 1.8 percent. Construction company Jabal Omar Development Co dropped

2.5 percent, after slipping 1.6 percent on Sunday when it said it was in talks with creditors after failing to make the first repayment of 650 million riyals (\$173 million) on a 3 billion riyal loan from the government.

Saudi builders are among the companies hardest hit by cuts in government spending due to low oil prices, as well as by rising labor costs. Abu Dhabi's index climbed 1.3 percent as First Gulf Bank jumped 3.1 percent. Late on Sunday it reported an 11 percent quarterly profit rise to 1.72 billion dirhams (\$468.4 million), well above analysts' average forecast of 1.46 billion dirhams. — Reuters

NO DECISION YET ON ANY OPEC, NON-OPEC MEETING

LONDON/DUBAI: OPEC and non-OPEC countries have not yet agreed to hold a meeting to discuss action to support oil prices, two OPEC delegates said yesterday, nearly a week after Russian officials said Moscow should talk to OPEC.

In addition, a decision on whether to hold a standalone gathering of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries as proposed by Venezuela has yet to be taken, the delegates said, but a number of countries have responded coolly to the idea.

OPEC delegates said last week a gathering of OPEC and non-OPEC oil officials could take place in February or March, perhaps at an expert rather than ministerial level. "It is all in the hands of the Russians now," an OPEC delegate said. Last Wednesday, the head of Russia's pipeline monopoly said Russian officials had decided they should talk to Saudi Arabia and other OPEC countries about output cuts, remarks that helped spur a rally in oil prices.

Meanwhile, oil fell 2 percent yesterday as weak economic data from China, the world's largest energy consumer, weighed on prices

and an OPEC source played down talk of an emergency meeting to stem the decline. China's manufacturing sector contracted at the fastest pace since 2012 in January, adding to worries about demand from the world's second-biggest economy at a time when the market is already weighed down by a large supply overhang.

"The weak China PMI (purchasing managers' index) is driving down prices because China weighs on the entire commodities sector from the demand side of the equation," said Carsten Fritsch, senior oil analyst at Commerzbank in Frankfurt.

Brent April crude futures were down 1.8 percent, or 64 cents, at \$35.35 a barrel at 0905 GMT. The March Brent contract, which expired on Friday, settled at \$34.74 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) was down 2 percent, or 68 cents, at \$32.94 a barrel. A senior OPEC source told a Saudi Arabian newspaper it was too early to talk about an emergency meeting of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Oil prices jumped last week after Russian energy officials said they had received pro-

posals from OPEC lynchpin Saudi Arabia on managing output and were ready to talk.

"We do not expect such a cut will occur unless global growth weakens sharply from current levels, which is not our economists' forecast," investment bank Goldman Sachs said in a report.

OPEC member Iran, which last month was allowed to return fully to markets after years of sanctions, is so far unwilling to participate in cuts. Partly because of Iran's return, OPEC production has jumped to 32.60 million barrels per day (bpd), its highest in years, adding to a global glut of over 1 million bpd in excess of demand, which has pulled down oil prices 70 percent since mid-2014.

BMI Research has cut its oil price outlook for Brent to a 2016 average of \$40 per barrel from \$42.5 previously, and said WTI would average \$39.50. "Counteracting oil's upside momentum in 2016 will be the weakness of the Chinese yuan, lingering concerns over global economic growth and the well-stocked inventories of crude and fuels," BMI said, adding that a gradual price rise was expected in the second half of the year. — Reuters



KUWAIT'S CONSUMER SECTOR GROWTH ROBUST DESPITE SOME MODERATION

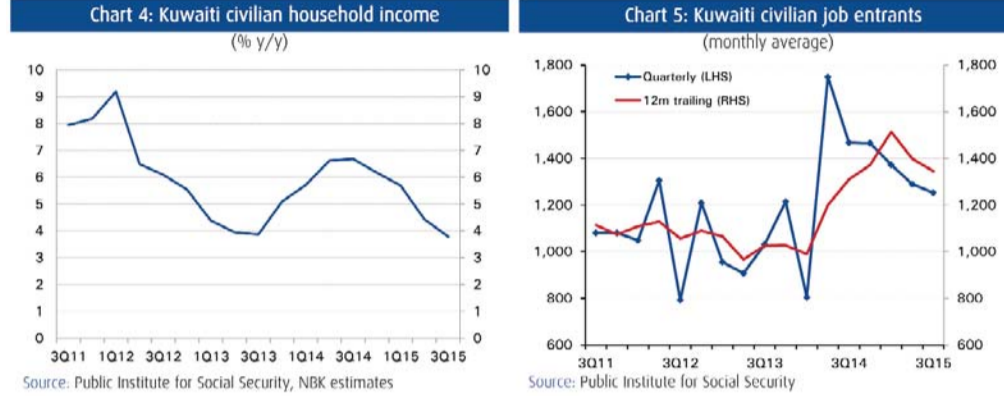
NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

KUWAIT: Growth in the consumer sector remained relatively robust, though the sector might be showing some signs of moderating. Household debt growth remained in the double-digits, with the pace even picking up slightly during the last six months. Consumer spending growth has also maintained a robust pace despite a slowdown in household income growth. Meanwhile, further declines in the consumer confidence index during 4Q15 could point to some softening in the coming period.

Household debt growth has maintained a robust pace in recent months, with the pace accelerating over the last six months following nearly two years of moderating growth. Growth came in at 12.9% year-on-year (y/y) in November 2015. Personal facilities excluding credit for the purchase of securities rose to KD 10.8 billion. Installment loans, which largely finance home acquisition, remained the only source of growth, having risen by 15.9 percent y/y in November 2015.

Growth in consumer card spending saw a notable pick up in 3Q15 after a period of easing growth. The value of point-of-sale (POS) transactions grew by 17.8 percent y/y in 3Q15. Growth in spending including consumers' ATM cash withdrawals also picked up to 11.1 percent y/y. These figures indicate that consumer spending behavior has not been dented so far by the decline in oil prices seen since the middle of 2014.

Despite the robust borrowing and spending figures, consumer confidence appeared to soften during the second half of 2015. The overall ARA confidence index dropped to 95 in December 2015, its lowest reading in nearly six years and the second consecutive month it comes in below 100. The durables goods and employment components were particularly weak, recording relatively large declines over the



last few months. Employment growth among Kuwaiti nationals slowed in 2015. More than 16,100 new civilian jobs were added over the 12 months ending in September 2015, slightly higher than the 15,700 added during the comparable period the year before. Still, net employment growth slipped to 1.3 percent y/y compared to 5.3 percent y/y growth registered a year before.

Most of the weakness in employment growth was in the private sector and could be the result of the government's efforts to clamp down on phantom employment. Private employment declined by 10 percent y/y, with the loss of around 6,500 jobs over a 12-month period. The decline in private sector employment, which is in its third quarter, is likely related to recent efforts by authorities to go after so-called phantom employees, who seek to obtain the generous government allowances received by private sector workers without being genuinely employed.

The one-time drop in employment has caused growth in household income among

Kuwaitis to slow in 2015 as well. We estimate that the aggregate household income of Kuwaitis working in non-military jobs grew by 3.8 percent y/y through 3Q15, based on data from the Public Institute for Social Security (PIFSS). Growth had peaked at 6.6 percent a year before. The slowdown in household income growth is due to reduced employment during the period and not to slower growth in pay. In fact, growth in average pay has been accelerating over the last two years and continued to do so through 3Q15, rising to 2.4 percent y/y; still, growth remains well below the pace seen in 2011.

Consumer sector growth is likely to remain healthy, though there are some signs that the pace could moderate. Employment growth among Kuwaitis, combined with strong housing demand, is likely to continue to support household debt growth in the coming period. Meanwhile, the drop in private sector employment is likely to be temporary, with employment expected to be well-supported in the coming period by steady government hiring and accelerating growth in the private sector.

DUBAI AIRPORT 2015 TRAFFIC UP 10.7%, WORLD'S BUSIEST

DUBAI: Dubai International Airport remained the world's busiest for international passengers in 2015 as traffic grew 10.7 percent, boosted by the addition of new airlines and routes, the airport's operator said yesterday.

Annual traffic rose to 78 million passengers from 70.5 million in 2014. In the month of December alone, traffic climbed 8.5 percent to 7.05 million people. The addition of 12 new passenger destinations from Dubai International lifted traffic through the airport as local carriers Emirates and flydubai expanded. Air Canada, Germany's Eurowings and China Southern also began operating in Dubai.

Last year saw regional tensions and conflicts in countries including Yemen, Iraq and Syria, but Dubai Airports Chief Executive Paul Griffiths said in a telephone interview: "We haven't seen any impact from regional conflicts." Dubai initially overtook London's Heathrow to become the world's busiest airport for

international traffic in 2014. Heathrow saw 75.0 million passengers pass through its doors in 2015, up 2.2 percent, according to figures on its website.

India retained its position as Dubai's single largest destination country in 2015 with 10.4 million passengers, up 17 percent. The airport operator is currently testing its new \$1.2 billion Concourse D, which will accommodate foreign airlines that now use Concourse C, giving Emirates room to grow.

Concourse D is expected to start operating this quarter; Griffiths said the exact date would depend on the results of a public trial set to begin in a few days.

Cargo volumes at Dubai International grew 3.4 percent to 2.51 million tonnes last year despite the transfer of all pure cargo operations to the new Dubai World Central airport. December freight volumes rose 5 percent year-on-year to 218,408 tons, the operator said.



DUBAI: An aerial view of Dubai international airport, home to the national carrier Emirates Airways. Dubai International remained the world's busiest airport last year with a 10.7 percent rise in passenger numbers, its operator said yesterday. —AFP

HOW SAUDI DEFENDED ITS US OIL MARKET SHARE

LONDON: Saudi Arabia has successfully defended its share of the US oil market even as rising domestic production from shale and growing pipeline imports from Canada have cut seaborne imports from other countries.

Saudi crude exports to the United States have remained relatively constant at around 1.2 million barrels per day since 2009, even as tanker arrivals from other countries have halved from 6 million to 3 million bpd. The Saudis have defended their market share through a combination of luck, strategic relationships and skilful marketing, a model the kingdom is now seeking to replicate in fast-growing fuel markets such as China.

CRUDE OIL QUALITY

Saudi Arabia has been fortunate in that the oil produced from shale is not in direct competition with its own crude exports. Shale oils are very light with a density of only 780-825 kg per cubic metre. The crude Saudi Arabia exports to the United States is much heavier, with an average density of around 860 kg per cubic meter.

Refineries are highly selective about the crude they process since it has a big impact

on how efficiently and profitably they can operate as well as problems with equipment fouling and product quality. Most US refineries have therefore opted to make space for increasing shale production by cutting the amount of other light crudes they buy from countries in West Africa and Latin America.

Imports of medium and heavy crudes from Saudi Arabia and other countries around the Persian Gulf have not been affected to anything like the same extent.

MOTIVA ENTERPRISES

Saudi Arabia's oil exports have also been protected by the long-standing strategic relationships the country has with refiners and marketers in the United States. Saudi Aramco, which handles the marketing of Saudi Arabia's crude, is the successor to the Arabian American Oil Company, a partnership between Chevron, Texaco, Exxon and Mobil established in the 1930s and 1940s.

Chevron (which later acquired Texaco) and Exxon (which acquired Mobil) remain some of the largest importers of Saudi crude into the United States, according to customs records.

In 1988, Saudi Aramco bought a 50 per-

cent stake in Texaco's refining and marketing operations in the eastern United States and on the Gulf Coast, which was named Star Enterprises ("Saudi Arabia, Texaco join forces" Los Angeles Times, 1988). In 1997, Royal Dutch Shell joined the joint venture, subsequently renamed Motiva. When Chevron merged with Texaco in 2001, Texaco's interest in the combined refining and marketing operations was sold to Shell and Saudi Aramco and reorganised as a 50:50 joint venture between them.

Motiva operates three large refineries in Louisiana and Texas (Convent, Norco and Port Arthur) with a combined refining capacity of 1.1 million bpd. Motiva also as a network of refined product storage terminals across the eastern United States and markets gasoline, diesel and other refined products in 26 states and the District of Columbia under the Shell brand as well as through unbranded wholesalers.

Motiva's refineries have been optimized to run on the medium-density crude oils Saudi Arabia exports, and the joint venture remains one of the largest importers of Saudi oil, according to the US Energy Information

Administration. Saudi Aramco is hoping to replicate the same sort of strategic downstream integration in China's fuel market.

The company's chairman told reporters earlier this month that Saudi Aramco is in advanced talks to invest in refineries in China and the company is also in talks with CNPC and Sinopec about joint investment opportunities in refining, marketing and petrochemicals ("Saudi Aramco in advanced talks to buy China refinery stakes" Reuters, Jan. 20).

COMPETITIVE MARKETING

Saudi Aramco has also defended its market share through skilful and competitive marketing of crude to independent refiners in the United States, including Valero, Phillips 66 and PBF Energy.

Aramco prices competitively via monthly adjustments to official selling prices linked to regional benchmarks designed to protect market share and target sales volumes. The company also stresses its importance as a reliable supplier and strategic partner for refiners. Unlike some rivals, Aramco does not rely on the spot market to place its oil.

Exports are almost all sold to refiners on

term contracts and protected by destination clauses which limit secondary trading in Aramco crude. Historic ties, downstream integration, strategic marketing relationships and competitive pricing have all helped Saudi Arabia to maintain its share in the U. market, which is important for both commercial and political reasons ("Texas refinery is Saudi foothold in US market", New York Times, 2013).

The company has also benefited from a good dose of luck in that its crude is quite distinct from shale, a good fortune that has not been shared by producers in West Africa.

Saudi Aramco has similar strategic ties to refineries in Japan and South Korea. Now it wants to build them in China as well to protect the company's long-term future.

The importance of these relationships is one reason why Saudi officials continue to stress their determination to protect their market share and refuse to cut production to support prices unless rivals follow suit. Russia, Iran and Iraq are the most direct competitors for the crude grades that Saudi Arabia markets so their willingness to match output cuts as part of any agreement is a priority for the kingdom. —Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.		
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
ASIAN COUNTRIES		
Japanese Yen	2.509	
Indian Rupees	4.493	
Pakistani Rupees	2.896	
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.114	
Nepali Rupees	2.807	
Singapore Dollar	214.560	
Hongkong Dollar	39.097	
Bangladesh Taka	3.872	
Philippine Peso	6.363	
Thai Baht	8.532	
GCC COUNTRIES		
Saudi Riyal	81.097	
Qatari Riyal	83.537	
Omani Riyal	789.891	
Bahraini Dinar	807.630	
UAE Dirham	82.798	
ARAB COUNTRIES		
Egyptian Pound - Cash	31.975	
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	38.885	
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.419	
Tunisian Dinar	149.360	
Jordanian Dinar	2.609	
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.167	
Syrian Lira	428.370	
Morocco Dirham	31.015	
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES		
US Dollar Transfer	303.950	
Euro	331.150	
Sterling Pound	434.950	
Canadian dollar	218.180	
Turkish Lira	102.720	
Swiss Franc	298.870	
Australian Dollar	216.410	
US Dollar Buying	302.750	

GOLD	
20 Gram	228.820
10 Gram	117.330
5 Gram	59.510

UAE EXCHANGE CENTRE WLL	
CURRENCIES	
Australian Dollar	201.43
Canadian Dollar	220.46
Swiss Franc	301.85
Euro	332.89
US Dollar	304.15
Sterling Pound	436.27
Japanese Yen	2.55
Bangladesh Taka	3.877
Indian Rupee	4.493
Sri Lankan Rupee	2.114
Nepali Rupee	2.805
Pakistani Rupee	2.896
UAE Dirhams	0.08277
Bahraini Dinar	0.8083
Egyptian Pound	0.03874
Jordanian Dinar	0.4326
Omani Riyal	0.7898
Qatari Riyal	0.08386
Saudi Riyal	0.08107
TELEX TRANSFER PER 1000	
Australian Dollar	201.43
Canadian Dollar	220.46
Swiss Franc	301.85
Euro	332.89
US Dollar	304.15
Sterling Pound	436.27
Japanese Yen	2.55
Bangladesh Taka	3.877
Indian Rupee	4.493
Sri Lankan Rupee	2.114
Nepali Rupee	2.805
Pakistani Rupee	2.896
UAE Dirhams	0.08277
Bahraini Dinar	0.8083
Egyptian Pound	0.03874
Jordanian Dinar	0.4326
Omani Riyal	0.7898
Qatari Riyal	0.08386
Saudi Riyal	0.08107

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD	
Rate for Transfer	
US Dollar	304.200
Canadian Dollar	219.220
Sterling Pound	431.475
Euro	332.340
Swiss Franc	311.775
Bahrain Dinar	804.775
UAE Dirhams	83.065
Qatari Riyals	84.280
Selling Rate	
US Dollar	304.200
Canadian Dollar	219.220
Sterling Pound	431.475
Euro	332.340
Swiss Franc	311.775
Bahrain Dinar	804.775
UAE Dirhams	83.065
Qatari Riyals	84.280

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY		
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.426677	0.435677
Czech Korune	0.004166	0.016166
Danish Krone	0.040065	0.045065
Euro	0.323875	0.331875
Norwegian Krone	0.030983	0.036183
Romanian Leu	0.071930	0.071930
Slovakia	0.009078	0.019078
Swedish Krona	0.031387	0.036387
Swiss Franc	0.290809	0.301009
Turkish Lira	0.096997	0.107297
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.206853	0.218353
New Zealand Dollar	0.190597	0.200097
US Dollar	0.211777	0.220277
US Dollars	0.299850	0.304350
US Dollars Mint	0.300350	0.304350

Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003518	0.004118
Chinese Yuan	0.044657	0.048157
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036967	0.039717
Indian Rupee	0.004203	0.004593
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002419	0.002599
Kenyan Shilling	0.002964	0.002964
Korean Won	0.000243	0.000258
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069426	0.075426
Nepalese Rupee	0.002882	0.003052
Pakistan Rupee	0.002590	0.002870
Philippine Peso	0.006267	0.006547
Sierra Leone	0.000070	0.000076
Singapore Dollar	0.210151	0.216151
South African Rand	0.013110	0.021610
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001763	0.002343
Taiwan	0.009011	0.009191
Thai Baht	0.008197	0.008747

Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.799344	0.807344
Egyptian Pound	0.034957	0.039293
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000200	0.000260
Jordanian Dinar	0.424705	0.432205
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000151	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021508	0.045508
Nigerian Naira	0.001256	0.001891
Omani Riyal	0.783060	0.788740
Qatar Riyal	0.082776	0.083989
Saudi Riyal	0.080167	0.081117
Syrian Pound	0.001288	0.001508
Tunisian Dinar	0.146059	0.154059
Turkish Lira	0.096997	0.107297
UAE Dirhams	0.081773	0.082922
Yemeni Riyal	0.001374	0.001454

INDIA'S JAITLEY COULD SQUEEZE BUSINESS TO BALANCE BOOKS

NEW DELHI: India's finance minister wants to present a credible budget this month with realistic targets for tax revenues and asset sales, people involved in the process say, but businesses may end up picking up much of the tab.

Arun Jaitley is staring at a big revenue shortfall as India again misses an unrealistic target for raising cash from selling off state assets, while sliding commodity prices and exports have dented revenues.

His boss, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has questioned whether businesses should continue to benefit from tax "incentives" worth 624 billion rupees (\$9.2 billion) that he described as subsidies in all but name. "My aim is not to eliminate subsidies, but to rationalize and

target them," Modi said in a keynote speech last week.

Those familiar with the budget process said Jaitley may pare tax breaks on capital investment, research and development, and projects in underdeveloped regions. As of now, the government is not considering raising its deficit target. They declined to estimate how much those measures would raise, but one said they would more than offset revenue losses from cuts in India's corporate income tax announced a year ago.

Then, Jaitley promised to bring down the tax to 25 percent from 30 percent over four years, pruning exemptions as he goes. Businesses have hailed the promised tax cuts but they, and their advisers, say closing loopholes too

aggressively would hamper Modi's "Make in India" drive to attract foreign investors and boost export industries.

"If Mr. Modi is talking about Make in India, it has to be the foreign multinational companies setting up manufacturing facilities in India and using it as an export hub like China," said Rahul Mitra, a tax partner at KPMG. "If you want to do that you can't wish away the necessary exemptions for exports."

The statutory burden of all taxes on the typical Indian company is about 34 percent. That's relatively high by international standards, but tax breaks bring the effective rate down to 23 percent.

Getting the balance right will be key for Jaitley even though, as a Reuters poll of economists shows, financial markets

would give him a free pass if he backslides a bit on next year's deficit goal of 3.5 percent of GDP. Jaitley may set an economic growth target of 7.5 to 8 percent for the fiscal year starting in April, an official said, while the asset-sale target could be halved to some 350 billion rupees (\$5.17 billion).

PUTTING THE BRAKES ON TAX BREAKS

The corporate income tax breaks make up a relatively small part of \$80 billion in business giveaways, the lion's share of which comes from incentives on customs and excise duties.

"With unsatisfactory growth in tax receipts, the finance minister doesn't have much choice except to cut most corporate tax exemptions," said another

official who, like his colleague, was not authorised to speak on the record. To give one example, the government estimates that a tax break on capital depreciation cost it 370 billion rupees (\$5.47 billion) in revenues in the last fiscal year.

In some cases companies, particularly those in IT, pharmaceuticals and some manufacturing sectors, get exemptions of up to 200 percent on the sum invested. That could be scaled back to 60 percent. Jaitley could also put a "sunset clause" on tax exemptions where there is now no timeline, while allowing others to die a natural death, the sources said.

A delegation of industrial chambers met Jaitley last month and asked him to balance cuts in tax exemptions with lower tax rates. —Reuters



WASHINGTON: A passenger talks on the phone as American Airlines jets sit parked at their gates at Washington's Ronald Reagan National Airport. —AP

AIRLINES RESTORE TINY PERKS TO PACIFY FLIERS

NEW YORK: After 15 years of near austerity, US airlines are restoring some small perks for passengers crammed into coach. Don't expect ample legroom or free checked bags. But fliers will find improved snacks, a larger selection of free movies and - on a few select routes - the return of free meals.

Yesterday, American Airlines became the latest carrier to add something back. It announced the return of free snacks in the economy section and more free entertainment options on some aircraft. American, which recently merged with US Airways, hasn't offered free snacks since 2003. US Airways stripped passengers of snacks in 2008.

Following the Sept 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the subsequent recession, US airlines removed almost every perk imaginable on domestic flights. Hot meals disappeared along with legroom, blankets and pillows. "It was really about survival," says Fernand Fernandez, vice president of global marketing at American.

When Continental Airlines stopped giving out free cookies and mini bags of pretzels in 2011 - after its merger with United Airlines - it said the move would save \$2.5 million a year.

Since then, mergers have created four mega-carriers that control more than 80 percent of the domestic market. They started charging \$25 for each checked suitcase. And more seats have been crammed into planes to maximize profits. Now the industry is making record profits.

"What has changed," Fernandez says, "is that the airlines have been able to fix our core business and be able to reinvest in our customers." That means new

planes, larger overhead bins and for a long time, nicer first class cabins. Now a bit of that wealth is trickling back to coach.

This month, American will start offering Biscoff cookies or pretzels to passengers flying between New York and San Francisco or Los Angeles. By April, those snacks will expand to all other domestic routes. In May, American will bring back full meal service for coach passengers between Dallas and Hawaii.

"We know that we have customers who select our airline based on price and we're really excited to offer them a product that is superior to choosing an ultra-low cost carrier," Fernandez says. United recently announced the return of free snacks on its flights starting in February. Delta Air Lines - the other big legacy carrier - never removed snacks, even during bankruptcy.

American is also expanding its complimentary entertainment on domestic flights with in-seat TVs. Passengers will be able to choose from up to 40 movies, 60 TV shows and 300 music albums. Delta has taken a different path, focusing more on entertainment that passengers can stream to their own devices. It now offers about 67 movies and 138 TV shows for free.

"These are token investments in the passenger experience that will not cost airlines a lot of money but are small ways to make passengers a little bit happier," says Henry Hartevelde, the founder of travel consultancy Atmosphere Research Group. "American and United realized: We don't let other airlines have an advantage on price, why let them have one on pretzels." —AP

RYANAIR Q3 PROFITS MORE THAN DOUBLE

DUBLIN: Irish no-frills airline Ryanair said yesterday that third-quarter net profit more than doubled on surging passenger numbers, and unveiled an 800-million-euro (\$866-million) share buyback program.

Earnings after taxation rocketed 110 percent to 103 million euros in the three months to the end of December, or third quarter of its financial year, compared with 49 million euros a year earlier, Ryanair said in a results statement.

Customer traffic jumped by a fifth to 25 million people in the reporting period.

The Dublin-based carrier added it would return 800 million euros to investors via a share buyback, and cited its rising profitability and improving cashflow. Price promotions and heavy discounts offset the impact of weaker demand following last November's deadly Paris attacks.

"Following a strong first half of Q3, we noted weaker pricing and bookings immediately after the terrorist events in Paris and Brussels," said chief executive

Michael O'Leary.

"We reacted to this softness by running price promotions and discounted fares to stimulate double digit traffic growth." The company added that a modest dip in average fares was offset by lower costs, largely because of tumbling oil prices.

Looking ahead, Ryanair predicted that fourth-quarter traffic would grow by 26 percent. That marked an increase of four percentage points on its previous forecast.

Full-year net profits were expected to sit towards the upper end of a forecast range between 1.175 billion euros and 1.225 billion euros.

Analysts welcomed the quarterly results and accompanying share buyback. "Ryanair continues to deliver very strong profit," said Davy Stockbrokers in a note to clients, adding that the airline's cash generation was "spectacular."

The global airline sector has meanwhile won a massive boost from collapsing oil prices because kerosene, or jet fuel, is refined from crude. —AFP

US CONSUMER SPENDING SOFTENS; SAVINGS JUMP

MONTHLY INFLATION RETREATS ON WEAK CONSUMPTION

WASHINGTON: US consumer spending was unchanged in December, but a jump in savings to a three-year high suggested consumption could rebound in the months ahead. The Commerce Department said yesterday the unchanged reading in consumer spending followed an upwardly revised 0.5 percent increase in November. Spending on long-lasting manufactured goods such as autos dropped 0.9 percent. Purchases of nondurable goods also declined 0.9 percent.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of US economic activity, edging up 0.1 percent in December after a previously reported 0.3 percent gain in November.

When adjusted for inflation, consumer spending edged up 0.1 percent after a 0.4 percent gain in November. Consumer spending increased 3.4 percent in 2015 after advancing 4.2 percent in 2014. That data was included in last Friday's fourth-quarter gross domestic product report, which showed consumer spending growth slowed to a 2.2 percent annual rate from the third quarter's brisk 3 percent pace.

Moderate consumer spending, weak export growth and ongoing efforts by businesses to reduce unsold merchandise piled up in warehouses helped restrict economic growth to a 0.7 percent pace in the fourth quarter. More cutbacks in investment by energy firms struggling with lower oil prices also hurt GDP growth.

The dollar slightly pared losses against a basket of currencies after the data, while US stock index futures were trading lower. Prices for shorter-dated US Treasuries fell.

ROBUST SAVINGS

In December, income rose 0.3 percent after a similar gain in November. Wages and salaries increased 0.2 percent after shooting up 0.5 percent in November. Income in 2015 was up 4.5 percent, the largest increase since 2012, after rising 4.4 percent in 2014.

Income at the disposal of households after accounting for inflation in 2015 recorded its biggest increase since 2006. With income outpacing spending in December, savings surged to \$753.3 billion, the highest level since December 2012, from

\$717.8 billion in November.

Higher savings and rising house prices should help to soften the blow to household wealth from a recent stock market sell-off and drive spending in early 2016.

With consumption soft, inflation retreated in December. A price index for consumer spending slipped 0.1 percent after ticking up 0.1 percent in November. In the 12 months through December, the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, however, rose 0.6 percent after increasing 0.4 percent in November.

That was the largest increase since December 2014. Year-over-year inflation rates are rising as the weak readings during the year drop out of the calculation.

Excluding food and energy, prices were unchanged after rising 0.2 percent in November. The so-called core PCE price index increased 1.4 percent in the 12 months through December after a similar gain in November. Core PCE is the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation measure and remains well below the US central bank's 2 percent target. —Reuters



NEW YORK: Shoppers carry their shopping bags as they leave the Aeropostale clothing store in New York's Times Square. Yesterday, the Commerce Department issued its December report on consumer spending, which accounts for roughly 70 percent of US economic activity. —AP

EGYPT TO LAUNCH AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES BOURSE IN 2016

CAIRO: Egypt plans to launch an agricultural-focused commodities trading exchange, the first of its kind in the Middle East, by the end of 2016, Supplies Minister Khaled Hanafi said yesterday. Egypt announced plans to set up a global commodities centre in 2014, but gave few details at the time.

Hanafi said that a feasibility study had been completed and the next step was to draw up regulations and establish the electronic infrastructure to connect farmers with traders. "We're going to set up the first commodities exchange in Egypt and the Middle East," Iman Al-Mutlaq, chief executive of Sigma Investments, which is involved in the project, said. The bourse would begin with eight

commodities-six agricultural commodities, oil and gold-and that this small number would help promote high initial volumes, she added.

"We aren't going to simply copy and paste other exchanges. This is going to be an Egyptian exchange. There will be price discovery, and we will put prices in Egyptian pounds," said Mutlaq.

The exchange will feature spot, derivative and futures trading. As part of the exchange's launch, a mobile application will be offered to Egyptian farmers that will allow them to have their agricultural output tracked by the market, electronically linking their crops to the exchange, Mutlaq said. —Reuters



MADRID: Executive chairman of Bankia Jose Ignacio Goirigolzarri gestures as he speaks during a press conference held to announce the bank's results annual report in Madrid yesterday. —AFP

News

in brief

USD stable against Kuwaiti dinar at 0.303

KUWAIT: The exchange rate of the US dollar against the Kuwaiti dinar was stable at KD 0.303, the euro was at KD 0.328 compared to the exchange rates for Sunday, said a statement by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) yesterday. According to the CBK, the exchange rate of the Sterling pound went up to reach KD 0.432 while the Swiss franc stabilized at KD 0.296. Exchange rate of the Japanese Yen remained the same at KD 0.002.

Emirates NBD investment banking unit head resigns

DUBAI: The chief executive of Emirates NBD Capital, Mohammad Kamran Wajid, has resigned from the bank to pursue other opportunities, a spokesman for Dubai's largest lender confirmed yesterday. Wajid had been head of the investment banking arm of Emirates NBD since 2012, part of a 17-year career with the bank. An announcement on his successor would be made in due course, the spokesman added.

Iraq's January oil exports rise slightly

BAGHDAD: Iraq's southern oil exports rose slightly in January to an average of 3.285 million barrels per day (bpd), from 3.215 million bpd the previous month, the oil ministry said yesterday. Production from southern fields averaged 3.9 million bpd, according to oil ministry spokesman Asim Jihad, down from a record high the previous month. All of the exports were from Iraq's southern ports, he said. For a fourth consecutive month, Baghdad exported no oil via its northern pipeline to Ceyhan in Turkey.

Iran bans state imports of all foreign wheat

DUBAI: Iran banned state imports of wheat for a year starting on March 20, Tasnim news agency reported yesterday, ordering officials to stop registering new purchase orders. "There is no need for wheat imports in coming year. Please avoid registering any order for wheat (imports) from this date," Iran's Ministry of Agriculture, Mahmoud Hojati asked Mohammadreza Nematzadeh, the minister of industry and trade last week in a letter published on Tasnim yesterday. Iran aims to be self-sufficient in wheat by improving yields but will continue to be reliant on imports for maize and barley, its agriculture minister said on Jan 28.

STOCKS CAUTIOUS AFTER ROCKY CHINA DATA

LONDON: Markets got February off to a cautious start yesterday after a rocky January, as expectations of more cheap money from some of the world's top central banks were validated by fresh signs of weak global growth.

Friday's surprise move by Japan to negative interest rates sent its bond yields to new lows. Then came data that showed Chinese manufacturing slowed last month at its fastest pace in more than three years. Europe saw a steady open, but London, Frankfurt and Paris turned 0.3 to 0.4 percent lower as surveys showed price cutting hadn't prevented euro zone factory

growth from slowing as well. That bolstered expectations the European Central Bank will cut rates again next month. German five-year bond yields fell to record lows of -0.318 percent as debt markets rallied in the euro zone and elsewhere.

"Rate cut speculation looks set to continue after the BOJ went negative," said Commerzbank rate strategist Rainer Guntermann.

In currency markets, Japan's yen started to steady at around 121.20 to the dollar and 131.40 to the euro. Friday's BoJ move set off its biggest one-day fall - roughly 2 per-

cent - in over a year. Oil-rich Canada's dollar fell half a percent against its US counterpart after the weak economic data dragged oil prices off overnight highs of as much as \$36 a barrel. Fellow oil exporter Norway's currency slipped 0.3 percent versus the euro. The weakness in European stock markets was expected to extend to Wall Street later. Early futures prices indicated openings around 0.5 percent lower for the S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrials.

A rise in the shares of major banks such as Bankia was offset by declines for telecoms after

Nokia settled a dispute with Korea's Samsung. The terms of the settlement disappointed investors.

OPEC debate

In Asia, MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan had edged up a modest 0.1 percent, after losing 8 percent in January. Australia and Japan led regional markets with gains of 0.8 and 2 percent, respectively. Chinese stocks slipped 1.5 to 1.7 percent after the weak data there.

January was the Shanghai market's worst month since the 2008 financial crisis with more than a 10 percent loss. Yesterday's economic data from China added to worries about the world's second-largest economy and increased calls for more policy easing from China. Growth slowed in both manufacturing and services in China.

"In the short term, the surprise move by Japan will be a catalyst for global equities, but it only underlines the weakness of the global economy and we need to see some strong economic data for a sustainable rally," said Cliff Tan, head of global markets research with Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ.

Shanghai, HK hit

Shanghai and Hong Kong stocks fell after a gauge of Chinese factory activity hit a more than three-year low, but the Nikkei soared following Japan's decision to slash some interest rates to negative.

In another example of weakness in China's economy, the official Purchasing Managers Index showed its manufacturing sector shrank in January for the sixth

straight month and was now at its weakest since August 2012. A separate reading from China's financial magazine Caixin showed a minor improvement but also pointed to contraction.

The latest news follows a string of data indicating that the once-mighty growth rates in the Asian giant are well in the past. "The manufacturing sector will likely face a tough year ahead on the back of overcapacity, weakening global demand and the government's plans to tackle pollution," ANZ economists Liu Ligang and Louis Lam said in a report.

Worries about the slowdown in the world's second biggest economy-and its leaders' handling of it-were among the key reasons for a rout across global markets in January that wiped trillions of dollars off valuations.

"The headline number is a disappointment to the market as output and new orders show no signs of a rebound," said William Wong, head of sales trading at Shenwan Hongyuan Group in Hong Kong.

"Trading this week will remain shallow ahead of the Chinese lunar new year holiday," he told Bloomberg News. Shanghai ended 1.8 percent lower and Hong Kong closed down 0.5 percent.

However, Tokyo soared two percent, extending a 2.8 percent gain Friday following the shock announcement from the Bank of Japan that it would effectively start charging lenders to park their cash with it. The move-intended to expand lending to people and businesses in order to kick-start the economy and fend off deflation-spurred a rally across world markets and sent the yen tumbling. —Agencies

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report
Monday 01 February 2016
Index: Price index, Weighted Index, KXS 15
Trades: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change
SOKOUK, KRE, URC, NRE, SRE, TAM, AREEC, MASGALLEH, ARABREC, ERESO, MADANEC, INJAZZAT, INVESTORS, IRC, ALTIJARIA, SANAM, AAYANRE, AQAR, ALAQARIA, MAZAYA, ADNC, THEMAR, TIJARA, TAAMEER, ARKAN, ARGAN, ABYANR, MUNSHAAT, FIRSDUBAI, KBT, REAM, MENA, ALMUDON, MARAKEZ, REMAL, MASHAER, Real Estate, KINV, FACIL, IFA, NINV, KPROJ, COAST, SECH, SOG, ARZAN, MARKAZ, KMEFIC, ALAMAN, ALOLA, ALMAL, GH, AAYAN, BAYANINV, OSOUL, KFC, KAMCO, NIH, ISKAN, MADAR, ALDEERA, ALSALAM, EKTITBAR, ALMADINA, NOOR, TAMINV, EXCH, TAIBA, KSHC, STRATEGIA, ASIYA, GNAHC, AMWAL, ALMINTIAZ, MANAZEL, NIND, BIHC, SENERGY, AGHC, KPPC, TAHSSILAT, JEERANH, EKHOLDING, GHF, INOVEST, Financial Services, Investment Instruments, ASOS, OSOS, FUTURE, HAYATCOMM, Technology, BAREEQ, AFAQ, ALSHAMEL, SAFRE, AJWAN, MASAKEN, DALQAN, ALFID, MIDAN, FLEX, THURAYA, KCLINIC, AMAR, Parallel Market

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report At 02:00 PM Previous Day
Global Stock Indices: Dow Jones, NASDAQ, S&P 500, Financial Times, DAX, CAC 40, Swiss, Nikkei 225, Topix, Hang Seng, Straits Times
MENA Stock Indices: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia
Global Currencies Exchange Rate: Kuwait Dinar, Saudi Riyal, US Dollar, Euro, Sterling Pound, Swiss Franc, Japanese Yen, Australian Dollar
MENA Currencies Exchange Rate: US Dollar, Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, Bahraini Dinar, Qatari Riyal, Omani Riyal, Emirates Dirham, Egyptian Pound
Global Interest Rates: Kuwait Dinar, US Dollar, Euro, Sterling Pound, Swiss Franc, Australian Dollar, Canadian Dollar
Global Bond Yields: United States, Europe, United Kingdom
Commodities: Kuwait Oil, Brent, West Texas, Gold, Silver

For more information, call Global Investment House on 1 80 42 42, www.globalinv.net

Source: National Bank of Kuwait

INDIAN MILLS SET TO SELL 1M TON MORE SUGAR AS EXPORTS HEAD FOR CHINA

DUBAI: Indian sugar mills have contracted to sell one million tons of sugar in the 2015/2016 season and expect to sign deals for another million tons this season as exports head for China, the president of an industry body said yesterday.

"One million tons have been contracted and another one million tons will be contracted," Tarun Sawhney, president of the Indian Sugar Mills Association told a conference in Dubai.

Of the total 1 million tons contracted, around 700,000 tons have already moved

out of the country.

Sawhney said many of the current and future contracts were with Myanmar, where they are expected to be smuggled into China, the world's top importer.

"It will go to China," he said. "The contracts are all through Myanmar and from there its just being taken up country." The smuggling of agricultural products along China's borders with Vietnam and Myanmar has long been a problem.

China's sugar industry has urged the government to tackle a resurgence in

smuggling across the country's southern borders, after huge volumes of cheap sugar were estimated to have illegally entered the country in recent months.

Sawhney also said domestic sugar production would reach 26 million tons in the 2015/2016 season, which runs from October to September and would probably see the same figure for the coming 2016/2017 season. India produced 28.3 million tons in the 2014/2015 season.

"It is too early to tell but most likely

there will no decrease and no increase," Sawhney said. "Uttar Pradesh will most likely compensate for the drop in Maharashtra and Karnataka," he said.

The first back-to-back drought in nearly three decades has hit cane plantation in India's key producing states Maharashtra, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh.

One Indian official previously estimated that the drop in plantings for the 2016/17 season means that acreage could fall by about a third after a faltering monsoon damaged thousands of

hectares of cane in the world's second-biggest producer. Sawhney said India would meet its target of blending 5 percent ethanol in all gasoline sold this year for the first time and surpass it.

"We can cross 5 percent ethanol blending," he said. Oil companies have never met the current 5 percent blending target as ethanol derived from molasses, the thick syrup produced by boiling down sugarcane juice in sugar refining, costs more than gasoline without including taxes. —Reuters



Ding Ning, owner of Ezubao, is escorted by policemen in an unknown location. —AP

CHINA COMPANY ACCUSED OF FLEECING INVESTORS OF \$7.6BN

BEIJING: Police arrested the maverick founder of China's largest online finance business on suspicion of fleecing 900,000 investors of \$7.6 billion, in what could be the biggest financial fraud in Chinese history.

State media outlets reported the arrest of Ding Ning and 20 of his employees late Sunday. State broadcaster CCTV aired purported confessions from two former employees at Ezubao, an Anhui Province outfit that rose from obscurity to become China's largest online financing platform in the span of about 18 months. Ezubao was the most spectacular player in a booming online investment industry that Chinese authorities have been struggling to regulate. Firms ranging from established Internet companies such as Alibaba to virtually unknown upstarts have flooded into the business, promising higher returns than those at state-run banks, which often offer interest rates below inflation.

Ezubao promised investors that borrowers would pay back loans at interest rates between 9 percent and 14.6 percent, but 95 percent of those borrowers were fictional entities created by Ezubao, a former company executive told investigators. Behind the firm's rise was 34-year old Ding Ning, an Anhui native who dropped out of school at 17 to work at his mother's hardware factory, where he first gained experience running online sales, according to media reports.

With no technical or financial training, Ding launched Ezubao in July 2014 and opened multiple marketing offices across China. The venture bought expensive ad spots that aired just before the widely viewed nightly CCTV newscast, the state broadcaster's flagship program.

Ezubao appeared to gain Beijing's imprimatur when the gov.cn government website published an interview with Ding in July discussing his life as an entrepreneur. The interview has since been removed from the site. State media took a far different tone on Sunday as CCTV aired Ding's confession and footage of officials hauling away bags of

cash from his home. The Xinhua news agency detailed Ding's extravagant lifestyle and the gifts he lavished on a business partner Zhang Min, including a \$20 million villa in Singapore and a \$1.8 million pink diamond ring.

"The truth is that it's a fraud ... it's a typical Ponzi scheme," Zhang, the associate, said in her aired confession. Despite the vast sums cited in the case, Ezubao, which also went by Ezubo on its website, represented just a sliver of China's shadow banking industry estimated to be worth \$1.5 trillion as of the end of June, according to Chinese banking regulators.

Independent economists and party officials alike have warned about the danger of unchecked private lending and the political spillover of a large-scale collapse.

After police shut down Ezubao in December, scores of protesters gathered outside a Beijing government building to demand their money back. Simmering anger on social media also spurred public security officials to phone Internet users to warn them against criticizing the Communist Party online. One investor from Northeast China who lost close to \$80,000 told The Associated Press in December that police confiscated her computer and cell phone after she posted online that she might file a petition with the central government.

Fu Weigang, a researcher at the Shanghai Institute for Finance and Law, said difficulty obtaining financing in a state-dominated banking system has for decades driven Chinese citizens into underground borrowing and lending, which also gave rise to countless Ponzi schemes.

But Ezubao was able to take advantage of an influx of mom-and-pop investors in recent years using an Internet model, Fu said, effectively pushing small-scale scams to a countrywide level. "What they were doing was nothing new in China," Fu said. "But how they were doing it online, and the scale, was unprecedented." —AP

RUSSIAN FINANCE MINISTRY READIES FOR FIGHT WITH BIG OIL OVER TAX

MOSCOW: Russian oil firms would have to pay more tax on some of their fields under reforms being prepared by the finance ministry, which is seeking to get more revenue into the budget, according to three officials and a draft of the plans seen by Reuters. The proposal will be a test of whether the ministry, which has been lobbying for austerity in the face of an economic slump, can stand its ground against the powerful energy lobby, which argues it needs support not higher taxes.

According to the officials, who belong to two different ministries and spoke to Reuters on condition of anonymity, a consequence of the tax reform would be the de facto cancellation of the tax breaks on some fields. That could affect all greenfield, or newly developed, oilfields that currently enjoy various tax breaks, the sources from the finance ministry and the energy ministry said. According to Vygon Consulting, a total of 198 fields, including brownfields, or long-operating oil fields, currently benefit from various tax breaks.

Among the greenfields with tax breaks are those operated by oil majors such as Surgutneftegas and Gazpromneft. The cancellation of the tax breaks on fields is part of a broader reform of the way energy companies are taxed. The main measure will be a profit-based tax in addition to those used now: mineral extraction tax (MET) and oil export duty.

Oil MET and export duty on oil and oil products contributed 6.6 trillion roubles (\$87 billion) to the budget in 2014, or 46 percent of total revenues.

The sources could not say how much tax would be raised by the new proposal as discussions are ongoing. Sergey Yezhov, Chief Economist at Vygon Consulting, said that

under the proposed system, greenfields in their early stages would benefit: they will pay no tax compared to 10 percent of the oil price now under the tax break regime.

According to Yezhov, fields with no tax breaks are paying around 42 percent of the oil price in the form of export duty and MET.

But under the new system, a 40 percent tax will apply to all fields once they become profitable, whether or not they previously enjoyed tax breaks, plus a profit-based tax of 70 percent of positive cash-flow.

ENERGY SECTOR

Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose allies hold leading posts in the energy sector, had previously promised not to increase taxes on all economic sectors before 2018.

In a sign of the pressure on the Russian budget caused by the falling oil price, compounded by Western sanctions, Putin's government had to change tack last year.

De facto increased tax on energy companies by delaying a promised cut in export duty, which brought the budget around 200 billion roubles. The finance ministry, custodian of the battered Russian budget, argues there is a strong case for getting the energy companies to pay more still.

"Amid severe problems in the economy, Russian oil companies could be seen as fat cats" and there is no need to keep giving them tax relief on fields, said one official, who is not associated with the ministry of finance. Oil companies have revenues in dollars and pay most of their costs in roubles, so they have benefited from the falling currency, as well as from progressive taxes which fall as a share of revenue as oil prices drop. —Reuters

CHINA MANUFACTURING INDEX FALLS TO THREE-YEAR LOW

DATA SHOWS UNDERLINING WEAKNESS IN CHINA ECONOMY

BEIJING: Manufacturing activity in China contracted at its fastest pace in more than three years in January, government data showed yesterday, underlining weakness in the world's second-largest economy.

The official Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), which tracks activity in factories and workshops, fell to 49.4, figures from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed.

It was the lowest figure since 49.2 in August 2012, and was below the median forecast of 49.6 in a Bloomberg survey of economists. PMI readings above 50 signal expanding activity, while anything below indicates shrinkage, and investors watch the figures closely as the first available indicators of the country's economic health each month.

Chinese shares closed down as the weak figures weighed on sentiment, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index falling 1.78 percent and the Shenzhen Composite Index, which tracks stocks on the country's second exchange, retreating 1.04 percent.

The manufacturing slowdown "points to weaker growth momentum," said Yao Zhang, China economist at Nomura Holdings in Hong Kong. "We believe economic growth may start to lose steam again, after stabilizing a little." It was the sixth consecutive month that the official index showed contraction, which Bloomberg said was the longest such series on record.

"The manufacturing sector will likely face a tough year ahead on the back of overcapacity, weakening global demand, and government's plans to tackle pollution," ANZ economists Liu Ligang and Louis Lam said in a report. China's economy, which is a vital driver of global expansion, grew 6.9 percent last year, its weakest rate in a quarter of a century. China's leaders—who targeted growth of "about seven percent"—are looking to transform the economy away from

the investment and exports of the past to one more oriented towards domestic consumer demand, but the transition is proving bumpy, and the growth slowdown has alarmed investors worldwide.

'Manufacturing doldrums'

The private Caixin Purchasing Managers' Index, which has a greater emphasis on smaller firms, came in at 48.4 for January, slight-

ly up from 48.2 in December, the Chinese financial magazine said in a joint statement issued with data compiler Markit.

Liu Dongliang, an analyst with China Merchants Bank (CMB), said as the official PMI covers more big companies, it showed that "the

manufacturing doldrums spread from small- and medium-sized firms to larger ones". With excess manufacturing overcapacity, authorities are pushing for so-called "supply side reforms" that focus on reducing stockpiles and debt.

"The domestic economy is yet to show signs of a bottoming out while the capacity reduction moves may add more turbulence to economic indicators," CMB's

Analysts expect the government to further loosen its monetary policy by cutting the amount of cash banks must keep in reserve or even the interest rate to boost growth.

"Refraining from further easing could risk an even weaker economy, which will then intensify depreciation expectation and capital outflows," ANZ's Liu and Lam said.

Around \$1.0 trillion left China



TENGZHOU: Workers sort parts at an electronics company in Tengzhou, in China's eastern Shandong province yesterday. Manufacturing activity in China contracted at its fastest level in more than three years in January, government data showed yesterday underlining weakness in the world's second-largest economy. —AFP

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Liu said. In the official survey, the new orders sub-index fell to 49.5 from 50.2 in December, "suggesting falling demand in the manufacturing market," while that for employment remained in contraction territory at 47.8, the NBS said.

last year, according to Bloomberg Intelligence. In December alone capital outflow from the country was nearly \$160 billion, reflecting growing concern about the economy against a backdrop of volatility in the foreign exchange and stock markets. —AFP

AFRAID TO SPEAK OUT, KAZAKHS LET NUMBERS TALK FOR THEM

ALMATY: In Kazakhstan, where people worry they may lose their jobs or be jailed for criticizing the authorities, some have found a new way to express the economic pain they are feeling: A web site whose name roughly translates as "Oh My God!"

The site, entitled oibai.kz, shows nothing but updated rates for the ex-Soviet oil producer's tenge currency and the world oil price - both of which have been plummeting - against a gloomy black-and-white photo of government buildings.

The only commentary is a soundtrack of sad piano music, while sharing a link to the site on social media adds an exclamation mark and an icon of a man in a traditional Kazakh hat, his hands framing his open mouth in shock. "There is so much I would like to say, but I can't," complained one Facebook user, explaining in private that she fears speaking negatively of the government would jeopardize her employer's business and the careers of her relatives. "Don't blabber, my relatives tell me," she said, adding that she reserves her views for "the kitchen," a reference to the Soviet-era tradition of discussing sensitive topics only with one's family and closest friends.

Kazakhstan, ruled by President Nursultan Nazarbayev for 26 years, is one of a clutch of oil exporting countries whose economies are in crisis now the price of crude is so low. Fellow ex-Soviet states Russia and Azerbaijan are also experiencing hardship, and further afield, countries such as Algeria and Nigeria are struggling too. The oil price crash has slashed Kazakhstan's total exports by more than 40 percent. The Kazakh tenge has lost nearly half of its value against the dollar since August when the authorities abandoned their pegged exchange rate policy.

According to government estimates, economic growth slowed to 1.2 percent last year from 4.4 percent a year earlier. But indicators such as electric power output point to a contraction, something which has not been officially registered since 1998.

In other countries, people have taken to the streets to protest but in Kazakhstan, demonstrations are small and rare, even though the downturn has hit hard. Most Kazakhs apply self-censorship in public and on online social networks. It is acceptable, for instance, to criticize or ridicule the central bank head, but not the president.

The authorities are keeping a tight lid on any display of dissent that crosses those invisible lines.

Nazarbayev, who has been in power since 1989 and navigated the late 1990s oil crash, warned the nation last month against seeking culprits for its economic woes, describing them as a global phenomenon and urging Kazakhs to rebuff "provocations".

Also last month, police said they were looking for the source of a widely circulated WhatsApp message urging Kazakhs to stock up on groceries before prices jump. And a court in the capital Almaty sentenced government critics Serikhan Mambetalin and Yermek Narymbayev to two and three years in prison respectively on charges of "inciting hatred" in Facebook posts about a banned book.

SELF-CENSORSHIP

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GROCERY BILL

For ordinary Kazakhs, the economic crisis has mostly meant price increases and the loss of confidence in the future.

Recruiter Madina, 39, says summer vacations in Europe are now out of question for her family of four. Her typical bill for weekend grocery shopping has almost doubled to about 14,000 tenge (\$38.41) since last August, while her commission-based pay is falling, says Madina, adding that some of her customers are downsizing or even shutting down.

State-controlled oil firm KMG EP warned the government in January that without tax breaks its OzenMunaiGas upstream unit would not make enough money to keep carrying its "big social burden" which includes employing 14,000 people.

The warning has ominous undertones because in late 2011, OzenMunaiGas workers were among strikers who clashed with police after protests over pay cuts; at least 11 people died. The only noticeable protests over the latest tenge slide involved a few dozen people in Almaty in January who had taken out dollar mortgages and were struggling to repay them. Several protesters have since been fined on charges of hooliganism. —Reuters



SEOUL: A man carries boxes at a traditional market in Seoul yesterday. South Korea's exports, the main driver of the national economy, suffered their sharpest drop in more than six years in January, extending what is now a 13-month losing streak. —AFP



KUWAIT: State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohamed Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah along with other officials during the inauguration of the fourth edition of the Kuwait Yacht Show yesterday.—Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



BIGGEST 'KUWAIT YACHT SHOW' KICKS OFF

VALUE OF VESSELS TOTALS MORE THAN \$100 MILLION

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The biggest and probably the most grandiose 'Kuwait Yacht Show' kicked off yesterday at the Marina Crescent under the patronage of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, represented by State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohamed Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. The value of the vessels in this fourth edition of the show totals more than \$100 million. The show is open daily till Thursday, Feb 4, from 4:00 pm to 9:30 pm.

"We started the annual yacht show in Kuwait in 2013. Last year, we were able to secure membership of the International Federation of Boat Shows Organizers. They have been very supportive and we have certain requirements and standards that we have to fulfill in order to be certified by the IFBSO, and we delivered that, so we got the membership. The IFBSO is monitoring our work - it is giving us advice, especially on the standards necessary for a boat show. So you'll see a biggest difference compared to year," said Sara Mukadam, head organizer. "It



has improved a lot, from registration to the display, and the entire environment is really world-class."

The Kuwait Yacht Show is a high-profile national event, and one that engages all the various entities of Kuwait's society, from private to public, from companies to individuals, from marine to luxury lifestyle and across to the media sector and more. As such, the yacht show is giving back to Kuwait. The

income from all tickets sold will be donated to the Dasman Diabetes Institute. "The ticket is at only KD 1, and you'll see the boats, from the smallest to the biggest and expensive. There are displays of accessories too and equipment used for the boat," Mukadam said.

According to Mukadam, Kuwait is the best place for such a huge yacht show as its coastline is one of the longest in the GCC with a rich marine

history and heritage. "Kuwaitis are sea lovers. So they spent money on the best boat. They used to visit other countries to get the best boats, but now they are here and it is necessary to help them decide on the best options and variety for their convenience and benefit. We have more than 70 companies participating in the show, and have visitors from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain and UAE," she said.

Tarek Aleryan, PR Director of the Dasman Diabetes Institute, said, "the institute, which was established by KFAS, believes in combining efforts for the advancement of research, health, science and humanity. We always appreciate when a private entity takes the initiative to get involved in a national cause. We commend the organizers for their efforts and look forward to seeing the yacht show

grow year after year."

KYS has grown through the support of the marine sector, the governmental sector and the media. Adel Al-Sumait, Ahmad Al-Ameeri, Thunayan Al-Ghanim, Fahad Al-Ghareeb, Alain Mouarawi, Mohamad Karam, Talal Al-Sabih, Essam Al-Gharabally and many of those who exhibited from the first edition continue to be at the forefront and the backbone of KYS.



CITI NAMES ELISSAR FARAH ANTONIOS AS CEO OF CITI UAE

DUBAI: Citi recently appointed Elissar Farah Antonios as Chief Executive Officer of Citi UAE. Antonios transfers from Citi Lebanon where she has been the Bank's CEO since 2012.

Antonios is a seasoned banker with extensive experience in Wealth Management. She started her career in 1990 in London and had served at several global banks with a focus on Arab private banking clients. She joined Citi in 2005 as Head of Private Banking in Abu Dhabi and later across all the UAE before assuming her Lebanon role.

Commenting on her new role, Antonios said: "I am delighted to have the opportunity to lead Citi UAE. We have a very strong franchise in the country and will continue to provide the highest standards of products and services to our clients, while fulfilling our role as an active member of the UAE banking community."

Antonios will report to Atiq Rehman, Head of Citi's Middle East and Africa Region. Rehman's responsibilities were recently expanded to include leadership

of the bank's business in Sub Saharan Africa in addition to Middle East and North Africa. He will continue to be based in Dubai.

"The UAE is Citi's largest and most diverse franchise in the Middle East and Africa regions, and a key market for Corporate & Investment Banking as well as Wealth Management businesses," commented Rehman. "I am confident that Elissar's leadership will add material value to our clients in the UAE, and help the firm develop more growth opportunities in the country."

Citi is present in twenty four markets in the Middle East and Africa regions. Its operations in the UAE include a full spectrum of wholesale financial services namely Corporate & Investment Banking, Capital Markets, Sales & Trading, Transactions Services, Private Banking and Islamic Banking. Citibank, the consumer banking arm of Citi, is currently a major player in the UAE's credit card market and a leading provider of Wealth Management and Consumer Credit services.



NCR APPOINTS NEW MD TO DRIVE FINANCIAL SERVICES BUSINESS IN GULF

DUBAI: NCR Corporation (NYSE: NCR), yesterday announced a new senior sales executive appointment to drive its financial services business growth in the Saudi and Gulf area. Wael Elaawar, current managing director for Saudi and North Gulf, will take up additional responsibilities as managing director for financial services sales in the Gulf, reporting to George Flouros, vice president, MEA sales for NCR Financial Services.

"Saudi and Gulf are strategic markets for NCR MEA growth strategy and this appointment reinforces our commitment to have the best leadership team on the ground to meet our customers' needs at all times," said George Flouros, NCR vice president, MEA sales for Financial Services. "Wael has a sound track record of building collaborative partnerships, understanding market needs and focusing on assisting our esteemed customers by promoting innovative solutions to help them address their business problems. I am confident that, with his solid experience, he will

drive our business in the area to a new level of success."

In his new role, Wael will be relocating to Dubai and will be responsible for driving NCR's strategy to leverage new growth opportunities for financial services business in Saudi and Gulf area.

Wael brings with him a wealth of knowledge and experience in self-service across a number of different industries such as Retail, Travel, Government as well as Financial. During his 22 years tenure with NCR, he has held various senior sales roles of increasing responsibilities and under his leadership NCR introduced a number of new innovative solutions in the region such as the first self-checkout implementation in retail stores, the first mobile check-in of the Travel industry in Saudi, the e-Government kiosk project in Saudi Arabia and the first intelligent deposit and interactive services implementations across various financial institutions.



GULF BANK'S PREMIUM CREDIT CARDS OFFER EXCEPTIONAL BENEFITS

KUWAIT: As the year 2016 kicks off, Gulf Bank announced that its customers can enjoy a multitude of exceptional benefits through its premium credit cards, VISA Infinite and MasterCard World.

Customers holding Gulf Bank's VISA Infinite and MasterCard World credit cards will be granted automatic enrollment to the LoungeKey Airport Lounge program, providing customers with unlimited complimentary access to over 500 airport lounges worldwide. Gulf Bank's VISA Infinite and MasterCard World cardholders can use the LoungeKey mobile app or login to the LoungeKey website to navigate the list of participated lounges.

Gulf Bank's VISA Infinite and MasterCard World cardholders can also enjoy the Gulf Points Program, the fastest rewarding program in Kuwait. Membership gives customers the benefit of instant points that can be redeemed online for each and every transaction made with their credit cards. Customers can redeem their points to fly free anytime, anywhere, and to stay free in one of 300,000 hotels worldwide. Additionally, customers earn even more points when they use their credit cards for international transactions. For every KD1 spent, customers will earn 3 points locally and 5 points internationally.

With Gulf Points Program it is easy for customers to use their points. To ensure the redemption procedure is as straight forward as

possible, Gulf Bank has created a dedicated webpage on its website at www.e-gulfbank.com, where customers can view their points, check their balance, redeem points instantly online for flights and hotel stays, and benefit from frequently advertised special offers.

In addition, Gulf Bank had recently launched the 'Entertainer' app, an exciting new addition to Gulf Rewards. The 'Entertainer' app is Kuwait's first geo-locator based mobile application that gives customers instant exclusive offers in Kuwait, the UAE, and London. The offers are available instantly on your mobile phone and include deals at restaurants, hotels, spas, as well as offers on children's activities and interests.

In addition to the 'Buy 1, Get 1 Free' offers from participating retail merchants in Kuwait, the UAE, and London, customers can also benefit from offers from free hotel nights at participating international hotels in over 25 countries including Malaysia, Thailand, UAE, Indonesia, Egypt, and other countries.

Customers are able to locate participating merchants through the geo-locator on their mobiles using Google Maps. Through the system they will receive instant offers at restaurants, entertainment venues, spas, and kid's activities. Every time a customer makes a payment transaction with a participating Gulf Bank credit card through the 'Entertainer' app, they will also earn

points in the Gulf Rewards loyalty program, the fastest and most rewarding program in Kuwait. These Gulf Rewards points can be redeemed at any time for free travel and hotel stays worldwide.

The Gulf Bank 'Entertainer' app is available for existing Gulf Bank credit card holders to download at App Store for iOS/iPhone and the Google Play Store for Android. You can also visit www.e-gulfbank.com to receive an activation code.

Gulf Bank's credit card holders can also enjoy a wide variety of discounts through its discounts program, which enables customers to enjoy discounts at over 100 outlets in Kuwait as well as seasonal discounts and promotions throughout the year.

Gulf Bank takes into account the importance of safety when travelling for its customers. Gulf Bank's customers will enjoy Free Family Travel Insurance and benefit from complimentary travel Insurance upon purchasing 100 percent of the air tickets' value using their VISA Infinite or MasterCard World credit cards. The Bank's VISA Infinite credit cardholders will benefit from full coverage of up to USD 1 million for themselves, their spouse and children. While MasterCard World credit card holders will benefit from free travel insurance with coverage of up to USD 2 million for travel accidents, travel medical benefits, trip inconvenience, and luggage protection.

ETIHAD AIRWAYS BOOSTS ABU DHABI-CAIRO FLIGHTS TO FOUR-A-DAY

ABU DHABI: Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, yesterday announced an increase in capacity between Abu Dhabi and Cairo with the introduction of a fourth daily scheduled flight, effective 27 March 2016.

The route has grown to become one of the most popular in Etihad Airways' network, building on strong commercial ties between the capital cities of the UAE and Egypt. With a large Egyptian population in the UAE, more flights provide greater options for expatriates travelling back home for work or holiday.

Etihad Airways' services are conveniently timed to offer enhanced travel options for business and leisure travellers between the UAE and Egypt with greater choice of flights across the day. Additionally, passengers travelling between Egypt and the GCC, South and North East Asia, and India will benefit from increased and better connecting options over the airline's Abu Dhabi

hub. To India, Etihad Airways and its strategic equity partner Jet Airways offer more than 250 weekly flights across 15 destinations.

Over two million guests have flown on the Cairo route since its launch in 2004, becoming a key market among the 116 global destinations served by Etihad Airways.

Kevin Knight, Etihad Airways' Chief Strategy and Planning Officer, said: "Etihad Airways is focused on offering guests more choice. The introduction of a fourth daily flight to Cairo demonstrates our commitment to a market that has shown strong growth in passenger and freight traffic since the route was launched almost 12 years ago. "Attracting both commercial and leisure business, the additional flights linking Cairo and Abu Dhabi with connections beyond will help cater for the growing demand on one of our most popular North African and global routes."

RENAULT OPENS FIRST CHINA FACTORY

FRENCH CAR GIANT LOOKS TO TAP INTO WORLD'S BIGGEST AUTO MARKET

WUHAN, China: French car giant Renault opened its first car factory in China yesterday, the last major manufacturer to set up a plant in the country as it looks to tap into the world's biggest auto market.

The \$1.2-billion facility in Wuhan, a car-making hub in the central province of Hubei, is a joint venture with Chinese manufacturer Dongfeng and will have an initial production capacity of 150,000 vehicles a year. China's total auto sales grew at their weakest pace in three years in 2015, as a slowing economy and a stock market rout slammed into demand.

But the country remains "a growth driver for the global auto industry", Renault CEO Carlos Ghosn said at the inauguration. The factory was a "first big step" for the development of the Dongfeng-Renault joint venture and for the growth of Renault, he added. China is crucial to foreign auto makers, both as the world's largest market and a key source of revenue outside Europe and the United States, but until now, the French firm has largely allowed its Japanese alliance partner Nissan to take the lead. Renault sold a mere 15,850 vehicles in China last year, down 50 percent on 2014, mostly SUVs built in South Korea. That gave it a market share of less than 0.1 percent. But Ghosn said the country was a "core part of Renault's strategic plan", and that its long-term goal was a market share of an ambitious 3.5 percent.

'Right product'

Renault and Dongfeng have invested 7.6 billion yuan (now \$1.2 billion) in the plant,



WUHAN: Chinese workers stand next to a Kadjar car at the production line of France's Renault and China's Dongfeng Group factory in Wuhan, Hubei province yesterday. —AFP

which is spread over a 95-hectare (235-acre) site and currently employs 2,000 people. At first the Wuhan factory will build Kadjars, Renault's latest crossover model, a key sector for Chinese consumers.

"We see this niche exploding in China, and it's not going to stop," said Jacques Daniel, CEO of the joint venture. "We're arriving late, but with the right product."

But he acknowledged that the current situation in China was challenging. A total of

24.60 million cars were sold in 2015, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM) up 4.7 percent on the previous year, but only about a third of the near-14-percent growth seen in 2013.

Also, the economy, the world's second largest, grew 6.9 percent in 2015, its slowest pace in 25 years.

Car makers responded by slashing prices while some even cut production. The market for high-priced luxury cars has been hit by a



WUHAN: CEO of Renault Carlos Ghosn is guided to his seat during the opening ceremony of France's Renault and China's Dongfeng Group factory in Wuhan, Hubei province yesterday. —AFP

government crackdown on corruption and an austerity campaign, launched after President Xi Jinping took office three years ago.

The Chinese industry group forecasts sales will still gain around six percent to top 26 million units this year. US auto giant General Motors was the top foreign brand in China last year, delivering a record 3.61 million vehicles, to beat German rival Volkswagen, which is struggling with a glob-

al scandal over emissions cheating.

Renault's French rival PSA Peugeot Citroen, which is long established in China and also has a joint venture with Dongfeng, with three factories in Wuhan, sells 700,000 units a year in the country.

Renault will start producing electric vehicles in Wuhan next year, and Ghosn said the firm was considering developing an "affordable" electric car aimed at Chinese and developing world markets. —AFP



KYOTO: An indoor lettuce farm of Spread company at its Kameoka factory in Kameoka city, Kyoto prefecture. A Japanese firm said on February 1, 2016 it would open the world's first fully automated farm with robots handling almost every step of the process, from watering seedlings to harvesting crops. —AFP

WORLD'S FIRST 'ROBOT RUN' FARM TO OPEN IN JAPAN

TOKYO: A Japanese firm said yesterday it would open the world's first fully automated farm with robots handling almost every step of the process, from watering seedlings to harvesting crops.

Kyoto-based Spread said the indoor grow house will start operating by the middle of 2017 and produce 30,000 heads of lettuce a day. It hopes to boost that figure to half a million lettuce heads daily within five years. The farm, measuring about 4,400 square metres (47,300 square feet), will have floor-to-ceiling shelves where the produce is grown.

"Seed planting will still be done by people, but the rest of the process, including harvesting, will be done (by industrial robots)," company official Koji Morisada told AFP.

The move to robot labor would chop personnel costs by about half and knock energy expenses down by nearly one third, Morisada added. The pesticide-free lettuce will also have more beta carotene than other farm-grown lettuce, the company said.

Robot-obsessed Japan has repeatedly turned to automated workers to fill labour shortages that are projected to get worse as the country rapidly ages. —AFP



KYOTO: A worker checking lettuces at the indoor farm of Spread company in its Kameoka factory in Kameoka city. —AFP

VIRTUAL AGENTS NEED TO EVOLVE TOWARDS SMART VIRTUAL INTELLIGENCE: TURGEON

KUWAIT: Virtual agents need to evolve towards Smart virtual intelligence, delivering big data through real-time smart analytics, said Jean Turgeon, Avaya's VP & Chief Technologist, Software Defined Architecture, World Wide Sales, during an interview. Excerpts:

Q: Scanners, CCTV, detectors, are all in place to prevent crime, loss of lives, etc. What is the advantage of all this data?

A: While various technologies continue to evolve and are 'coming online' today to address specific security or business needs, the real impact on citizens will only be seen when analytics allow them to be combined in real-time, simultaneously with a layer intelligence over it. Virtual agents need to evolve towards Smart virtual intelligence, delivering big data through real-time smart analytics.

For instance, somebody going to an ATM machine at midnight and being captured on a CCTV system is hardly unusual, but if that same individual was to withdraw the maximum amount from all their accounts, it could be a trigger that there may be something suspicious. Further analytics can be quickly applied - what if those analytics now confirm this person has outstanding infractions, has not paid their loans or has a criminal record?

What we want is for the system to be able to notify the police, inform them of the exact location of the individual, enable tracking through their mobile device by enabling GPS location overriding settings from the Service Provider's network, automatically update or create a record for tracking, and document actions for future analytics.

Through this, the technology elements on the city-wide network feed in data to a centralized intelligence centre, which can then look at patterns, trends, and identify the best approach. Essentially, it's about bringing it all together to a difference.

Q: Can technology really be deployed to prevent human mistakes?

A: In some cases it certainly could, as virtual intelligence takes emotions out of the equation. When you have a sophisticated database generating the best possible outcomes based on past experience and lessons learned, there is definitely a strong possibility of eliminating human error. Imagine a person responding to a critical situation where their stress levels are at the highest, you can easily imagine that they may react quickly to a noise or movement in a way that doesn't generate the desired outcome.

Now picture the same scenario, but this time with a robot, which would be directed by a system devised for these situations, with the backing of a wealth of data. This could definitely give us a much better outcome. If you apply this to an enterprise under cyber-attack, an automated business workflow could be triggered as the attack is detected, enabling the system to take the necessary action to either redirect, isolate, quarantine, or even stop the attack - and also possibly notify a government security agency to also take action.

Q: How do we define security in today's threats: Public security, business security, national security, personal security? What can governments, businesses large and small, do to proactively manage security?

A: Cyber security impacts everyone in this connected world. Every time you connect to an infrastructure you have potential threats - that doesn't mean we should be paranoid about it, but it is a fact in this hyper-connected world. The old approach of relying on perimeter defense and rule-based security are now inadequate, especially as organizations consider deploying a hybrid cloud model with potentially open APIs accessible to partners and customers to easily integrate with their systems in the new SD-x (Software Defined Everything) world.

At a personal level, think of all the ways you may be connected as you read this article. You could have a range of devices at hand, and even an access card, a Bluetooth headset and so many more things that connect near and wide. Each of these is potential for a personal security

breach, if you think of it.

Public or national security is clearly different to business security but all of them impact personal security in some ways. Public security is often related to the transportation industry such as trains, airports, and highways, while national security is typically associated with much broader-impact events we see around the world.

While business security is related to protecting intellectual property or customer data, the key is to ensure reduced surface exposure (meaning all the entry points that an attacker can use to enter an environment) to the public infrastructure, without losing sight of the number of attacks originating from within private infrastructures. Some necessary steps are:

- * Reducing surface exposure: No statically accessible services (functionalities that are less used or unnecessary)
- * Strong authentication factors (minimum of three) should always be used before extending services to a human being or a machine.
- * Frequent monitoring

Take the example of connecting at a hotel - there are now solutions to deliver a secure personal Wi-Fi experience and provide guests with completely isolated zones that

in many cases more difficult to deal with, but when one looks into it, the industry makes it way too easy for people to penetrate an internal infrastructure. Just simply look at various institutions and how easy it is to get into the building, or once you are in the building how you can easily have access to the entire facility, connect via wi-fi or ports pre-configured for a specific service such as a phone, video conferencing unit, and so on.

You should also be implementing stronger multi-factor authentication systems while you leverage the technology to track people and automate security response based on intelligent real data analytics. We have GPS, Wi-Fi triangulations, iBeacons, RFID, Video Surveillance Systems with sophisticated movement, gesture or presence detection, in addition to biometric systems to control access to areas or systems.

All of these can provide much stronger security implementation but yet, the market seems resistant to changes where the legacy IT is holding businesses back for the wrong reasons. The world has moved to the human and device mesh, the infrastructure supporting the connectivity can't continue to be based on a legacy client/server architecture. The technology is here today, but too many



Jean Turgeon, Avaya's VP & Chief Technologist.

others guests cannot access. This is the type of model we must extrapolate and apply to reduce the risk associated with potential cyber-security.

Q: In many countries, there are a number of social and political security issues that come to mind - While there is no magic fix, can you give examples on how technology can be built to solve some of our most pressing issues (national, social and environment related disasters for example)

A: Well, as you state there are no magic fix to these on-going threats but the best way in my view is to continue to reduce the services exposure to the public internet, while imposing stronger authentication methods - even to services you want your citizens or customers to use. While at first it may appear to be annoying to some, the benefits and ability to track individuals or machines trying to gain access to confidential or corporate information will substantially out-weight the few steps individuals or automated system would have to go through to reduce the risk.

External threats are in fact in my view sometimes easier to prevent: I am not suggesting in any way it is easy, but you typically know where the entry point is and what information they are trying to get to. Internal threats are

vendors try to continue to convince customers the old way is good enough, it is NOT the case and government, businesses and citizens have the right to demand a change.

For instance, why can't I have a one-click button to push at any time on my smart phone to call for help, why do governments continue to tolerate service providers not allowing data services on mobile devices which MUST be used to provide exact location and ability to deliver content or enable the smart devices as video inputs for the emergency response team?

The same applies to the transportation industry. Why is it we let citizens head down a highway when we know there is an accident and the highway is fully congested? Why is it we don't inform the population when a storm is nearby through all the mode of communications we have? It is great to use radio or TV for this, but why can't the government mandate service providers to immediately send an SMS to ALL of their subscribers when a critical situation is on-going?

We need to see changes in this space, some countries are further along but there are still too many organizations living in the past and not taking full advantage of the technology available to them. The status quo is NOT acceptable.

CUBA TO LAUNCH BROADBAND HOME INTERNET PROJECT

HAVANA: Cuba announced on Sunday night that it is launching broadband Internet service in two Havana neighborhoods as a pilot project aimed at bringing home access to one of the world's least connected nations.

State telecommunications company ETECSA said it would allow Cubans in Old Havana, the colonial center that is one of the island's main tourist attractions, to order service through fiber optic connections operated with Chinese telecom operator Huawei.

Odalys Rodríguez del Toro, ETECSA director for Havana, told state media that the government would also begin allowing cafes, bars and restaurants to begin ordering broadband service.

Del Toro offered no timeline for the pilot project or rollout of broader access and said prices would be announced in the future. Still, any fiber-optic home connections would be an important milestone in Cuba, where broadband home service is currently legal only for diplomats and employees of foreign compa-

nies who pay hundreds of dollars a month for Internet links that are a fraction of the average speed in other countries. Some Cuban citizens have dial-up home service or restricted mobile phone connections that allow access only to state-run email.

General public access to broadband Internet began only last year, with the opening of dozens of public WiFi spots that cost \$2 an hour. That is about a tenth of the average monthly salary in Cuba.

Del Toro said ETECSA would open 30

more WiFi spots in Havana alone in 2016, which by itself would double the number of access points in Cuba. She did not say how many more were planned for other cities. The United States has been pushing Cuba to show that it is improving conditions for its citizens as President Barack Obama loosens the half-century old US trade embargo on Cuba through a series of executive actions.

Obama hopes to travel to Cuba this year to celebrate his re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the island but

has said he would visit only if he believed his presence would help improve the lives of ordinary Cubans by moving the island toward greater freedom. US Federal Communications Commission chairman Tom Wheeler traveled to Havana this month to meet with Cuban officials about increasing Cuba's connections to the Internet. Last week, the FCC gave US companies blanket permission to provide voice and data connections to Cuba, doing away the requirement for special FCC permission. —AP

SHRIMP FARMERS RESTOCK MANGROVE 'SUPERMARKET' BY GOING ORGANIC

LAEM FA PHA: Surakit Laeaddee walks along the narrow banks of earth dividing his organic shrimp and fish ponds, rests under the shade of a tree he recently planted, and points to the lush mangroves marking out his plot. Too many trees invite birds that prey on his seafood stock. But planting just enough, on a fifth of his 10 hectares, cools the ponds and improves soil and water quality, boosting the health, reproduction and survival of his shrimp and fish.

"I hope the community will become more conscious about the importance of planting trees and looking after the ecosystem in order to raise seafood sustainably and prevent coastal erosion," he said, looking toward the Gulf of Thailand, which has gnawed away at the shore, bringing the sea ever closer to his home. Since the 1980s, a boom in shrimp farming has decimated mangroves around the world. The trend has destroyed a key ecosystem for carbon storage, added to emissions of planet-warming carbon dioxide, and exposed shorelines and communities to storm surges and erosion. Now, growing consumer demand for organic and sustainable foods has spurred interest in shrimp farms like Surakit's that may stem mangrove loss and encourage planting in areas long devoid of trees. "A shift from intensive farming to more natural farming is more sustainable in the long run," said Supraanee Kampongsun, mangroves and markets project coordinator for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). "It gives marine species natural spawning grounds and improves the mangrove ecosystem. If individual farmers consider having trees on their land, it will contribute to a growth in overall coverage in the area."

Land grabs and investors

A 1961 survey along Thailand's 3,100 km coastline tallied 368,000 hectares of mangrove forests, which include more than 70 tree species - from typical mangroves hov-



KABUL: An Afghan vendor displays fish for sale along the Kabul-Jalalabad highway in Sorubi district of Kabul, Afghanistan yesterday. — AP

ering above water with buttressed roots to giant nipa palms. Over half a century, a third of that area has been lost, leaving 246,000 hectares, according to the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources. About 70,000 hectares are used for seafood farms, mostly shrimp.

Similar declines have been documented across Asia and Latin America. A 2012 UN-backed study found a fifth of mangroves worldwide had been lost since 1980, mostly for intensive shrimp farms that often become choked with waste, antibiotics and fertilizers. In Thailand, the destruction of mangroves for shrimp leveled off about 10 years ago, but the government is struggling to restore the barren lands, said Somsak

Piriyayota, director of the mangrove resource conservation office. "The issue today is how do we change that land for shrimp back into mangroves," Somsak said in an interview, noting some mangroves have been inhabited by communities for generations.

"We've never been strict. The policy has allowed for them to live there, but the ecosystem is deteriorating, so we have to solve this problem, yet we have to give them the right to a livelihood as well." A key challenge is sorting out real land ownership from profit-driven land grabbing. "We have a government policy to reclaim forests - from investors, but not from poor people. With shrimp farmers, it's generally investors,"

Somsak said. A new mixed land-use policy will allow communities in southern Nakhon Sri Thammarat province to use degraded mangroves for income, on the condition that half the area is maintained as mangroves or converted back to them, he said.

Healthy and sustainable

Once the leading exporter of shrimp, Thailand has been hit hard in the past few years by a deadly disease called early mortality syndrome that wiped out shrimp populations, as well as by widespread reports of migrant labor rights abuses. The government and seafood industry have scrambled to bring in measures to clean up labor violations in their supply chains. On

the farming front, the Thai Department of Fisheries is encouraging more environment-friendly production systems to avoid disease and decrease pollution. That includes planting trees to act as a filtration system, using natural rather than artificial feed, and steering clear of pesticides, fungicides and antibiotics.

The IUCN is working with shrimp farmers in Thailand, Vietnam and Bangladesh to restore mangroves and use them sustainably. With support from the conservation agency, farmers like Surakit are sharing best practices with their neighbors and across the country. Surakit's marine shrimp farm is among the first to be certified organic by the Thai government. Fifteen other farmers living nearby are on track to be certified this year, which would increase the organic shrimp farming area in the community tenfold, to almost 100 hectares. Organic yields are much lower, but each shrimp grows much larger. Surakit says he raises two to five shrimp per square meter, compared to 20 to 30 per square meter on intensive farms.

His organic shrimp sell at a higher price - up to \$27 per kg, compared to \$14 per kg for the largest shrimp from an intensive farm. Furthermore, input costs are lower, and organic ponds have a longer lifespan than intensively farmed ponds, which often become so overrun by disease and pollution they are abandoned. The plush JW Marriott Hotel in Bangkok buys shrimp from Surakit. In Vietnam, where the IUCN piloted its mangroves and markets program, more than 700 farmers are certified organic and selling to European markets. "Mangroves are a supermarket for humans," said Somsak of the mangrove conservation office, describing a food chain from leaves and parasites to crabs, fish and humans. "The main producer is the trees, and everyone else is in the chain of consumers. When humans cut the trees, it's the end. The food chain is broken." — Reuters

MAURITANIA DEPLETED SEAS HIGHLIGHT THE NEED FOR FISHING TRANSPARENCY

OVERFISHING BY FOREIGN BOATS THREATENING THE WAY OF LIFE

LONDON: Mauritania has some of West Africa's richest fishing waters yet overfishing by foreign trawlers means that hundreds of pirogues, or wooden canoes used by small-scale fishermen, must go further out to sea to net ever smaller catches. Fishing is an important part of the mostly desert country's economy, accounting for 7 percent of gross domestic product and providing about 40,000 jobs, according to the World Bank.

Last week, Mauritania's minister for economic affairs, Sid'Ahmed Ra'Os, warned that as West Africa's chronic food insecurity forces more people to try their hand at fishing, "overfishing by foreign boats is threatening our way of life." "Other countries in the Sahel show us, for example, how poverty and unemployment make fertile ground for organized crime and terror. Take fisheries away from our people, and they will have little else to lose," he said in a statement.

More people could benefit from fisheries in Mauritania and elsewhere if there was better governance of the sector with greater transparency over licenses and concessions agreements, the founder of Transparency International said in an interview. "The benefits of good governance would be tremendous if the illegal and unreported fisheries were reduced. Many countries could have millions and millions of tons of fish or (millions of dollars in) revenues at their disposal," Peter Eigen told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by telephone from Berlin.

West Africa alone loses at least \$1.3 billion a year from illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, according to a 2014 report by the Africa Progress Panel, which campaigns for sustainable development in Africa. Widespread corruption and few resources for enforcement mean huge foreign trawlers often venture into areas near the coast which are reserved for artisanal fishermen. This allows them to drag off tons of catch in waters rich in snapper, sardines, mackerel and shrimp - putting the livelihoods and food security of millions of locals at risk. The importance of the world's oceans was recognized last year when the United Nations adopted a set of goals aimed at fostering sustainable development, including one dedicated to the conservation of oceans, seas and marine resources.

Poorly governed

One way of improving governance is for more information to be disclosed on the quotas being sold to foreign fishing firms and how licensing agreements are being implemented, Eigen said. This could lead to wider discussions on whether companies were fishing outside the fishing season, using the proper equipment or landing a portion of their catch to allow locals to benefit from income earned through processing, he said. "All this will be very helpful in creating peer pressure among various actors for better governance ... in a sector which is presently very poorly governed," Eigen said. A former World Bank manager, Eigen was also founding chairman of the Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), a pioneering project that sets standards for companies to publish what they pay for oil, gas and minerals and for governments to disclose what they receive.

Modelled on EITI, a Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FITI) is in the works with Mauritania due to announce this week that it has set up a group of government officials, industry figures and campaigners to promote transparency in fisheries contracts. "This will only work if not



KUALA LUMPUR: A Malaysia Muslim woman (left) buys fish at Kuala Lumpur's popular Chow Kit market. — AFP

only one country does this but also if neighboring countries, regional countries, global institutions participate," Eigen said, adding that he hoped Seychelles, Indonesia, Costa Rica and Senegal would set up similar groups by the end of the year.

Some experts say EITI - a voluntary effort - lacks teeth and argue that it has allowed companies with dubious track records on the environment to say they are acting responsibly. They also say revenue transparency does not always translate into greater government

accountability, especially in countries that stifle freedom of speech. "Transparency is just one component," said Andre Standing, who works for the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements. "A lot depends on how people are able to use that information and whether they can put pressure on governments and companies to change behaviors where needs be," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. However, Eigen said "information transparency creates a momentum" which can eventually lead to meaningful change. — Reuters

SWAN SONG: HUMANS IMPLICATED IN HUGE AUSTRALIAN BIRD'S DEMISE

WASHINGTON: The mystery behind the extinction of a huge flightless bird called Genyornis that flourished in the grasslands and woodlands of prehistoric Australia may have been solved, with burned eggshells as the clue and people as the culprits. Scientists said on Friday burn patterns detected on eggshell fragments indicate that the humans who first arrived in Australia roughly 50,000 years ago gathered and cooked the big bird's eggs, playing havoc with its reproductive success.

The study is the first to provide direct evidence that these early human inhabitants preyed on the remarkable large animals that once thrived in Australia but disappeared after people got there, University of Colorado geological sciences professor Gifford Miller said. Genyornis, at almost 7 feet tall (2 meters) and perhaps 500 pounds (225 kg), was much bigger than today's large flightless birds like the ostrich or emu. It possessed powerful legs, small wings, large claws and a big beak for eating fruit, nuts and maybe small prey. It was a member of a family of giant birds called dromornithids, some reaching 10 feet (3 meters) tall and 1,100 pounds (500 kg), that was related to ducks, geese and swans. Genyornis vanished around 47,500 years ago, Miller said. The researchers analyzed burned Genyornis

eggshell fragments, some only partially blackened, discovered at more than 200 sites. The eggs were the size of a cantaloupe, weighing about 3-1/2 pounds (1.5 kg). "We conclude that the only explanation is that humans harvested the giant eggs, built a fire and cooked them, which would not blacken them, then discarded the fragments in and around their fire as they ate the contents," Miller said. "Wild or natural fires could not produce such patterns. We have no direct evidence that humans hunted the adults, but loss of eggs certainly reduced reproductive success."

There has been a long-running debate over whether people caused the extinction of Australia's unique collection of large animals, also including a 25-foot-long (7.5 meters) monitor lizard called Megalania, a nearly rhinoceros-sized wombat called Diprotodon, large marsupial predators and 1,000-pound (450-kg) kangaroos. More than 85 percent of Australia's large mammals, birds and reptiles disappeared after people arrived. Some expert blame human hunting, while others blame climate shifts, in particular continental drying from about 60,000 to 40,000 years ago. With the new study, published in the journal Nature Communications, the case for a human role becomes stronger, Miller said. — Reuters



LES TROIS-ILETS: A photo shows a billboard reading "You have a guest..." and featuring a picture of a mosquito as part of a campaign to fight against the Zika virus in Les Trois-Ilets, in the French overseas department of Martinique. — AFP

WHO MULLS DECLARING GLOBAL HEALTH EMERGENCY OVER ZIKA

GENEVA: World Health Organization experts began emergency talks yesterday on whether a Zika virus outbreak suspected of causing a surge in serious birth defects in South America should be declared a global health emergency. The UN health agency warned last week that the mosquito-borne virus was "spreading explosively" in the Americas, with the region expected to see up to four million cases this year.

The WHO is under pressure to act quickly in the fight against Zika, after admitting it was slow to respond to the recent Ebola outbreak that ravaged parts of west Africa. Although symptoms of the mosquito-borne virus are relatively mild, it is believed to be linked to a surge in cases of microcephaly, a devastating condition in which a baby is born with an abnormally small head and brain. While it has yet to be definitively proven that the microcephaly cases are caused in some way by the Zika virus, WHO chief Margaret Chan warned last week that a causal relationship was "strongly suspected".

Zika is also believed to be linked to a neurological disorder called Guillain-Barre syndrome. Brazil sounded the alarm in October when a rash of microcephaly cases emerged in the northeast. It has since become the country worst affected by microcephaly, with 270 confirmed cases and 3,448 suspected cases, up from 147 in 2014. As alarm grows over the surge in number of cases, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Jamaica and Puerto Rico have warned women to delay conceiving until the Zika outbreak is brought under control. Jitters over Zika have spread far beyond the affected areas to Europe and North America, where dozens of cases have been

identified among people returning from holiday or business abroad.

Resolute action

In a bid to forge a response to the outbreak, Chan called Monday's closed-door meeting of the WHO's emergency committee to determine if Zika should be considered a "public health emergency of international concern". The emergency meeting - a global telephone conference grouping senior WHO officials, representatives of affected countries, and international experts - began shortly after 1200 GMT. No decision is expected before Tuesday at the earliest. Such consultations are relatively rare, underlining the scale of concern felt by the organization. The UN agency will be looking to take resolute action on Zika after coming in for stinging criticism over its initially sluggish response to the devastating west Africa Ebola outbreak. Ebola, which has killed more than 11,000 people in west Africa since late 2013, was declared a global health emergency in August 2014 and continues to carry that label.

As for Zika, there is currently no treatment and the WHO has said it would likely take more than a year to develop a vaccine. The virus is transmitted by the Aedes aegypti mosquito, which also spreads dengue fever and the chikungunya virus. It produces flu-like symptoms including a low-grade fever, headaches, joint pain and rashes. WHO has so far refrained from issuing travel warnings related to Zika, stressing that the most effective form of prevention is getting rid of stagnant water where mosquitoes easily breed, and using personal protection against mosquito bites such as using repellent and sleeping under mosquito nets. — AFP

CHINA-BASED STARTUP AIMS TO MONITOR AIR POLLUTION

BEIJING: A China-based startup firm launched a campaign Monday to fund a project which would allow people to monitor air pollution locally, and to crowd-source data on the problem in many countries around the world. Airvisual.com, based in Beijing, has designed a personal pollution measuring device that can feed air quality data into a worldwide network, providing up-to-the-minute information on local conditions as well as three-day forecasts.

The company launched a campaign Monday on crowdfunding web site indiegogo.com to try to fund production of the device called the "Node", which can track levels of CO2 and PM2.5, harmful microscopic particles that penetrate deep into the lungs. Users outside China can opt to send informa-

tion from the device to the company, from which it can develop its pollution modeling and forecasting capabilities.

But the feature will not be available for Chinese users, the website said, due to government regulations preventing individuals from sharing outdoor air quality information "publicly". Air quality information is published on an hourly basis in many parts of China, but there are currently few options for people to monitor conditions in their home or workplace. Although the company is based in China, its devices will be available for sale around the world. The company describes itself as a "social enterprise". Its goal is not profit but to let people "help protect themselves and thrive in a polluted environment", said company co-founder Yann Boquillod. — AFP

HENKEL APPOINTS HANS VAN BYLEN TO SUCCEED KASPER RORSTED AS CEO

MANAGEMENT BOARD CHANGES AT HENKEL

KUWAIT: Henkel announced yesterday that CEO Kasper Rorsted, who has decided not to renew his current contract beyond 2017, will leave the company at his own request as of April 30, 2016. He served on the Henkel Management Board for 11 years, thereof



8 years as CEO. Effective May 1, 2016, Hans Van Bylen has been appointed as his successor. His successful career at Henkel started in 1984 and he serves as member of the Management Board since 2005, responsible for the Beauty Care business.

The appointment to CEO already in spring will enable him to leading the

by the confidence which is expressed through this appointment. I am looking forward to shape the future of our company together with my colleagues at the Management Board and an excellent global team. We have strong brands and technologies, leading positions in many markets and categories around the world and a strong innovation power. Building on this foundation, together, we will successfully lead Henkel into the future", said Hans Van Bylen.

Successful company performance under Kasper Rorsted's leadership "Kasper Rorsted has achieved a lot for Henkel. Under his leadership since 2008, the company has delivered a successful performance in a challenging market environment. Sales and profitability increased significantly and our top brands have been strengthened. This is also reflected in a significantly increased market capitalization which has been more than tripled since Kasper Rorsted



development of the new strategy which Henkel will announce at the end of this year and driving its successful execution. "With the appointment of Hans Van Bylen as new CEO we have named a strong successor to the CEO position at an early time - as it is common practice at Henkel. Hans Van Bylen is an excellent choice as he has long-standing, international experience in managing brands and markets as well as a Management Board member at Henkel.

On behalf of our governance committees and employees I wish Hans Van Bylen all the best and much success in his new role", said Dr Simone Bagel-Trah, Chairwoman of the Supervisory Board and the Shareholders' Committee. The successor of Hans Van Bylen as Executive Vice President Beauty Care will be announced in due course. "I am honored

took the helm. I would like to sincerely thank Kasper Rorsted on behalf of all governance committees, employees and shareholders of Henkel", Dr Simone Bagel-Trah further said.

Kasper Rorsted (53) joined Henkel as member of the Management Board in 2005. He was appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Management Board in 2007 and has been appointed CEO following the 2008 Annual General Meeting. "I would like to thank all colleagues at Henkel for their commitment and dedication as well as the governance committees for their advice and support over the past years. Together, we have delivered an excellent performance for our company", said Kasper Rorsted. "I am convinced that Henkel will continue to excel under the leadership of Hans Van Bylen as CEO."



NEW DELHI: An Indian Army soldier stands guard as children get their photographs taken in front of the Republic Day Tableau of Indian state of Madhya Pradesh depicting models of white tigers at the Red Fort grounds, in New Delhi. — AP

RUBBISH PILES UP IN POLLUTION-HIT DELHI

INDIA CITIES GET FUNDS TO TACKLE WOES FROM SEWAGE TO TRAFFIC

NEW DELHI: Rubbish piled up on New Delhi's streets yesterday as refuse collectors vowed to push ahead with a nearly week-long strike, the latest crisis to hit the world's most polluted city. Already reeling from dangerously high levels of toxic smog, the Indian capital is now grappling with uncollected garbage that has been mounting in parts of the city since January 27.

Sanitation workers yesterday dumped rubbish outside a Delhi government minister's home, one of several targeted as part of the protest over unpaid salaries. "The Delhi government spends millions on advertisements, why can't it release the funds for our salaries," said Sanjay Gehlot, president of an umbrella group of 60,000 to 80,000 protesting municipal workers. "Today we dumped garbage outside the Delhi tourism minister's residence in our symbolic protest and caused roadblocks in other parts of the city," he said, adding such protests would continue.

Using brooms and shovels, Delhi government ministers, along with other officials and volunteers from the Aam Aadmi Party, took to the streets at the weekend to clean up the rubbish. The Delhi government has blamed the city's three municipal corporations, controlled by its arch rival, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which rules at the national level, for the crisis. Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia reiterated yesterday his accusation that the corporations were withholding funds handed over by the government that were meant for workers'

salaries. "We have said this repeatedly that we have given the dues to the civic agencies," Sisodia, whose home has also been targeted with piles of rubbish, told reporters. "Now, the civic bodies must give accounts of what they did with the money and why aren't the workers getting paid," he said. There was no immediate comment from the corporations on the strike, the second to hit the city in the last year. It comes as Delhi has been shrouded in a toxic soup during the recent winter months, sparking government action to improve the air quality, which regularly exceeds the World Health Organization's safe limit. A 2014 WHO survey of more than 1,600 cities ranked Delhi as the most polluted, partly because of the 8.5 million vehicles on its roads.

Sewage to traffic

Meanwhile, India took a step toward modernizing its cities on Thursday by awarding 20 with funds to solve problems from shoddy sewage treatment to snarled traffic. The government eventually plans to spend \$15 billion to remake 100 cities over five years, Urban Development Minister Venkaiah Naidu said. The first 20 to receive financing include the capital of new Delhi, the western cities of Pune, Jaipur and Ahmadabad, and the southern cities of Chennai and Kochi. Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi first touted his vision for creating so-called smart cities across India, there has been little clarity over what "smart" actually means beyond a better life for the country's 400 million city dwellers.

While India has rapidly urbanized in recent decades, most towns and cities still lack basic infrastructure like running water or stable electricity. Many feature huge slums housing millions of poor. The cities were selected based on their proposals after more than 15 million Indian citizens weighed in on which problems should be solved first, marking "a paradigm shift" in having India's development guided by the public, Naidu said. Some sent ideas to city officials via social media. Others entered local contests for designing logos or writing essays. Bhubaneswar, the capital of the eastern state of Orissa, unfurled a 10-kilometer-long (6-mile-long) canvas banner across the city and invited residents to scroll down their suggestions.

"We are big believers in the power of competition to spur bottom-up creativity, citizen engagement, and stronger proposals," said James Anderson of Bloomberg Philanthropies, which advised the government on the program.

Some of the proposals mentioned a need for better transportation, sewage treatment, security or trash management. Many envisioned funding through public-private partnerships. The Rajasthan heritage city of Jaipur wants to improve waste management, while New Delhi plans to install underground fiber-optic cables for more Internet connectivity. The traffic-clogged city of Chennai has plans for improving public transportation as well as dealing with disasters like last year's devastating floods. — Agencies

DROUGHT HITS S AFRICA'S BIGGEST WILDLIFE PARK

KRUGER NATIONAL PARK: Hippos in South Africa's biggest wildlife park are increasingly grazing during the day rather than staying in rivers and pools as usual, a sign of an intensifying drought expected to kill some animals in the weeks ahead. However, officials in Kruger National Park described the extremely dry period as a natural way of regulating wildlife popu-

lations. And while the park's management makes water available to animals in some parts of the park, they don't plan any major intervention to try to save animals from a drought afflicting southern Africa.

Buffalos are also expected to suffer heavily if substantial rains don't arrive soon, according to authorities in Kruger park, which borders

Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Rainfall in Kruger is 40 to 50 percent of the average for this time of year. Park officials told journalists who recently visited Kruger park, a major tourist attraction, that lions and some other predators should benefit from the drought by taking advantage of weakened prey. "You've got winners and you've got losers. This is nature's regu-

latory thing," said Izak Smit, an ecologist for the national parks service.

Hippos are in particular trouble because they can't graze as widely as other animals and are very territorial, always returning to the same spot, he said. Hippos, which tend to graze by night and stay in water by day, have been seen grazing during the daytime more often in

Kruger as they struggle to find food, according to Smit. A drought in the early 1990s reduced Kruger's buffalo population by more than half to about 14,000, but the buffalo population has since rebounded to more than 40,000, according to park data. "You end up with a stronger genetic pool in the end, with the animals surviving these dry periods," Smit said. — AP

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TSC'S AUSTRALIAN FESTIVAL RETURNS

FROM JANUARY 27TH TO FEBRUARY 6TH

Following the success of last year's event and the positive feedback received from the community, The Sultan Center (TSC) is "Bringing you food from the heart of Australia" to celebrate the Australian Food Festival from January 27th to February 6th across TSC's Salmiya, Sharq, Hawally, Shaab and Al-Kout locations.

The Australian Food Festival was inaugurated under the patronage of the Australia Ambassador to Kuwait Warren Hauck, along with TSC's Group International and Non-Food Commercial Director, Makram Malaeb and Commercial Director, Bassam Zantout. Attendees also included TSC management team and members of the Kuwait community.

Wide selection

Following the inauguration, attendees toured the store and had an opportunity to sample a wide selection of Australian food products. According to Makram Malaeb, "Given Australia's natural resources, it's no surprise that it produces some of the world's best quality agricultural, dairy and meat products. TSC organizes the Australian Food Festival to

highlight the large variety of premium-quality, direct imports. Our exclusive Australian range is comprised of over 1,000 products spread amongst a variety of categories: Wagyu meat, veal, organic lamb and beef, fruits and vegetables, bakery items, dairy products, frozen foods, dry foods, beverages, confectionary and many more." Malaeb added: "Addition to importing more than 1,000+ products and in line with TSC's continuous focus on healthy living, we are expanding our range to include more organic and gluten free products, not only from Australia but from other global markets as well.

"Australian produce is fresh, it is clean, and it is some of the best in the world" said Ambassador Hauck. "I am very pleased that as part of the celebrations around Australia Day, we have been able to partner with the Sultan Centre to showcase our products" Hauck added.

Attendees expressed their satisfaction and appreciation for the tasting stations and for the extensive selection of products on display and highlighted throughout the store. The store ambience evoked a true Australian

down under theme, bringing food from the heart of Australia to the Kuwait community.

Trip to Australia

Throughout this festival, shoppers who use their TSC Rewards card and spend KD 10 or more have an opportunity to enter a draw and win a round trip ticket for two from Etihad Airways including an eight day seven-night stay at a luxury hotel in Australia. TSC Reward card holders will also receive triple the points on any Australian product purchased from TSC participating stores during the festival.

To mark the closing of the event, officials from the Australian embassy, management and media representatives, were invited to a reception at Jeans Grill, a restaurant known for its wide array of international cuisine and local dishes with specially prepared Australian dishes served for the occasion.

The various theme week events hosted by TSC across the year have been extremely successful and reaffirm TSC's continued commitment to providing its customers quality international goods.



EMIRGAN SUTIS HOSTED LUNCH FOR JOURNALISTS

In an Upscale atmosphere filled with glamour and originality, the Mohammed Nasser Al-Hajiri and sons Company hosted a lunch in

honor of journalists and media professionals at the Turkish Restaurant 'Emirgan Sutiş' in Menus complex- Mangaf. The restaurant is a fine and

delicious Turkish cuisine with the highest standards of hospitality. The audience was greeted by company officials in addition to the full market-

ing team, who celebrated with the invited guests the occasion of the release of new and innovative Turkish dishes to the restaurant's menu.

Mohammed Nasser Al-Hajiri and sons Company is a leading company in food and management of restaurants and cafes in the State of Kuwait.

CBSE APPOINTS DR BINUMON AS PRE-EXAM COUNSELLOR

Dr V Binumon, the Principal of The Indian Community School Kuwait, has been appointed as a counsellor for Kuwait region as part of the CBSE annual pre-examination coun-



selling. This is the 19th consecutive year that CBSE will provide psychological counselling services to students at the time of preparation as well as during the examinations to overcome exam related stress. The Pre-Examination counselling for students and parents will begin from the 1st of February and will continue up to 22nd April, 2016. The counselling session will be carried out telephonically and Dr V Binumon can be reached at the mobile number 00965 98821027 between 8:00 pm and 10 pm on all days from 2nd February, 2016 to 20th April, 2016. Dr V Binumon is trained personnel who has a brilliant record as an Education Counsellor and is empathetic to the needs of students. He has undergone courses and training in Neuro-Linguistic Programming and Hypnotherapy as well. Simultaneous to the counselling session, students and parents shall be instructed on techniques of

harnessing stress and stress-related problems.

The CBSE annual counselling is an outreach program which is carefully designed keeping the heterogeneity of students' population and geographical spread. Multiple modes of communication such as telephonic counselling, Question Answer columns in newspapers and online counselling through CBSE website are used to reach out to more and more examinees during this phase.

CBSE Tele-Counselling is offered by Principals and trained counsellors from within CBSE affiliated schools located inside and outside India. It is a voluntary, free of cost service provided by the counsellors. This year 76 Principals, trained counsellors from CBSE affiliated government and private schools and few psychologists will participate in Tele-Counselling and address exam related psychological problems of the students. 60 of them are available in India while 16 are located in Nepal, Japan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Jeddah, Sultanate of Oman, Al Khobar), UAE (Sharjah, Dubai, Ras Al-Khaimah) and Kuwait.

For the seventh year CBSE has arranged to provide counselling to differently abled children to take care of the needs and anxiety of special children. CBSE experts will answer queries of students through weekly Question Answer columns to be published in major national dailies during the month of February. Information related to examinations and techniques to cope with exam related anxiety is also provided at the CBSE website www.cbse.nic.in through micro link Helpline.

As challenges are a part of one's life at different stages, one of the challenges during school years is learning to handle examination pressure. Therefore, equipping oneself to form these emotions in simple

ways is the wisdom to move ahead in life with a healthy competition. When the students are writing exams, what one writes is not as important as how one writes. The students who are stressed should have a fear-free environment to produce great results in exams. This is the purpose of providing one with the pre-exam counselling. Students who have any stress related issues regarding the examinations may feel free to contact Dr V Binumon between 8:00 pm and 10 pm on all days from 2nd February, 2016 to 20th April, 2016.

ARAB CULTURE DIWANIYA

Gain insight into Arab culture through our free weekly diwaniya, where you will discover and celebrate anything Arab through art, history, language, food, and traditions, past and present. After a 15-minute presentation on a selected topic by local professionals, you will have the chance to apply new skills, ask questions, practice Arabic and socialize among friends over refreshments.

Wednesdays at 7pm
Wellness Circle: Stress Relax. You deserve it, it's good for you, and it is easier than you think. You don't need a spa weekend or a retreat. You will learn a new way of thinking, which will help you get rid of stress.

Tuesday, February 9 and 23 at 7pm
Villa No 67, Street 413, Block 4, Shuhada

THE CENTER FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION AT AUK ORGANIZES A CMA OPEN SEMINAR

The Center for Continuing Education (CCE) at AUK will be holding a Certified Management Accountant (CMA) informative session next Tuesday, February 2nd. The seminar is an initiative from CCE to raise awareness among the professional community about the CMA credential and professional value at both personal and corporate levels.

The seminar will take place on Tuesday at 1:45pm- 3:15pm at room number B-205 at the AUK campus. The seminar will be open to public and free of charge. Following the introductory Seminar, CCE will be launching its first CMA course, starting February 9th.

The course is designed to prepare participants for the CMA (Certified Management Accountant) test, enabling professionals to master finance functions and deliver value within their organizations, as well as equipping them with a competitive advantage in today's complex business environment.

The aim of the CMA program is twofold; at a corporate level, it is aimed at enhancing the knowledge base and professional recognition of expertise acquired in the manage-

ment accounting domain; and at a personal level, it provides professionals with higher opportunities for career promotion in the management accounting positions, together with higher job packages

The CCE CMA program is suited for university graduates or working professionals, with at least two years of professional experience in Management accounting and or financial management or in the areas specified by IMA.

The CMA courses will be delivered by Dr Ayman Haddad- Associate Professor of Accounting at AUK; Robin Bhattacharya - CMA, CFA, recipient of Gold Medal Award for attaining the world's highest exam scores; and Yaser Al-Natour - CMA, CPA

CCE was established in 2004 and, in addition to offering language courses in Arabic, English, French and Spanish, offers an array of courses and workshops aimed to assist in the personal and professional development of individuals and groups within the public and private sectors. Course offerings are specifically tailored to meet the needs of their clients, whether they are independent groups or corporations.

SHERATON KUWAIT AND FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON KUWAIT WINS 14 MEDALS AT HORECA KUWAIT 2016

Sheraton Kuwait and Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait participated in Horeca 2016 exhibition specialises in the field of food and beverage and hotels equipment winning 14 medals, including six gold, three silver and five bronze medals in addition to the 7 merit certificates in live cooking competition. The contests had over 250 participating chefs from inside and outside Kuwait, noting that these contests were evaluated by a group of international referees and media specialists in the art of cooking and its origins.

Various awards were presented to the contestants where the hotel managed to get two gold medals, one silver and one bronze medal in the "Live meat competition" and two gold medals, one bronze medal and a merit certificate in the "Competition from basket" contest. In regards to the "Live traditional mezza" chefs were awarded with one bronze medal and a merit certificate, for the "Cold platter of fish, poultry meat" they gathered one silver medal and two merit certificates in addition to merit certificates for each "Six plated dinner set menu" and "Sushi competition" contests and a silver medal in the "Cold canapes".



Moving to the "Plated dessert presentation" and "Chocolate showpiece" each chef competing received bronze medals; in addition to gold medals for "Ice carving" and "Fruit and Vegetable carving" where they showcased their talent as an art signature. And finally the last merit certificate for the "Cold sandwich competition".

Fahed Abushaar - General Manager of Sheraton Kuwait praised the efforts made by the culinary team of Sheraton Kuwait and Four Points by

Sheraton Kuwait who have always distinguished themselves with the keenness to provide the highest standards of quality. Fahed bestowed the medals and merit certificates to the team of cooks in the presence of the departments' heads and many employees thanking them for their desire and passion to accomplish a great work. Abushaar thanked as well Chef Frank Noack - Director of Culinary for his successful team management and guidance which have strengthened the presence of Sheraton Kuwait and maintained the high level of quality service; and this is what the hotel assures through a message extended to fifty years of success and excellence.



HORECA - 2016 Winners



Chef Crishan Shanilka



Chef Hussein Haydar



Chef Nishad Sasiharan



Chef Nuan Sanjeewa



Chef Priyashantha Samparth



Chef Raja Solaiyappan



The winners celebrating with the team

HOLIDAY INN SALMIYA WON 15 AWARDS AT HORECA KUWAIT 2016

Holiday Inn Salmiya won 15 awards in eleven different culinary competitions that were held during the Horeca Kuwait 2016 exhibition for Hospitality and Food companies as they were competing with a number of talented chefs and participants and evaluated by international referees, the event was attended by the leading hotels, food companies and suppliers.

Holiday Inn Salmiya chefs were

able to achieve two golden medals in two different competitions awarded to Chef Nuan Sanjeewa in the Live Fruits and Vegetables Carving Competition and Chef Priyashantha Samparth in the Cold Canape Competition.

Also the team of Chefs were able to achieve four silver medals two of them awarded to Chef Nual Sanjeewa in the Three Plated Dessert Presentation and The Chocolate

Showpiece Competitions, and one for Chef Ranga Gayan in the Three Tier Decorated Wedding Cake and the last for Chef Sampath Priyashantha in the cold platter competition.

Another four bronze medals were awarded to Chef Ranga Gayan in the Single Tier Novelty Cake competition, Chef Sampath Priyashantha in the Six Course Dinner Menu Competition and Chef Nishad Sasiharan and Hussein Haydar in the Arabic Live Cooking

Competition.

The team of chefs in Holiday Inn Salmiya also has achieved five Merit Certificates in the Bread Creation competition awarded to both chefs Ali Gaber and Raja Solaiyappan, Three Tier Decorated Wedding Cake competition and Single Tier Novelty Cake awarded to chef Nuan Sanjeewa, Chef Crishan Shanilka in the Cold Sandwich Competition, The management of the Holiday

Inn Salmiya celebrated with all their talented chefs this great achievement which in turn reflects the reasons behind the hotel standing out in hospitality and outside catering fields. For all types of events either grand or intimate, the Holiday Inn team is always delighted to bring to your event the finest ingredients, highest level of Hospitality and personalized services to ensure your event is an overwhelming success.



Chef Ranga Gayan

MARINA HOTEL KUWAIT SCOOPED 6 MEDALS AT HORECA KUWAIT 2016

The talented chefs of Marina Hotel Kuwait scooped six medals at Horeca Kuwait 2016. The hotel participated in Horeca Kuwait 2016 for the fifth year in a row. This year's exhibition saw the participation of all the leading hotels, food industries and food companies in Kuwait.

A culinary competition was organized for chefs attracting a large number of participants during the event. Marina Hotel chefs participated in this competition with great interest and enthusiasm and won six medals, two of which were gold medals.

Talking about their participation in the exhibition, Nabil Hammoud, General Manager of the hotel said: "We consider HORECA to be an important event and hence participate every year; it provides us with a platform for future business opportunities. We pride ourselves on the talents of our professional chefs."

Horeca Kuwait, the Hospitality and Food Exhibition, is a comprehensive event covering the hospitality, catering and food industry sectors in Kuwait and the region. The Culinary Art Show, which is part of the exhibition, displays the latest culinary concepts and trends, bringing together talented chefs to compete in the different food categories.





- 00:50 River Monsters
- 01:45 Call Of The Wildman
- 02:15 Call Of The Wildman
- 02:45 Dinosaurs In The Outback
- 03:35 Tanked
- 04:25 Gangland Killers
- 05:15 Gator Boys
- 06:02 Treehouse Masters
- 06:49 Dinosaurs In The Outback
- 07:36 Call Of The Wildman
- 08:00 Call Of The Wildman
- 08:25 Too Cute!
- 09:15 Dinosaurs In The Outback
- 10:10 Treehouse Masters
- 11:05 Tanked
- 12:00 Too Cute!
- 12:55 Bondi Vet
- 13:50 Dinosaurs In The Outback
- 14:45 Gator Boys
- 15:40 Treehouse Masters
- 16:35 Tanked
- 17:30 Gangland Killers
- 18:25 River Monsters
- 19:20 Bugging Out
- 19:50 Bugging Out
- 20:15 Tanked
- 21:10 Gangland Killers
- 22:05 Treehouse Masters



- 00:20 Misfit Garage
- 01:10 Gold Rush
- 02:00 Gold Divers
- 02:50 Catching Monsters
- 03:40 Storage Hunters
- 04:05 The Liquidator
- 04:30 Auction Hunters: Pawn Shop Edition
- 05:00 What Happened Next?
- 05:30 How Stuff Works
- 06:00 Siberian Cut
- 06:50 Cuban Chrome
- 07:40 Misfit Garage
- 08:30 Storage Hunters
- 08:55 The Liquidator
- 09:20 Auction Hunters: Pawn Shop Edition
- 09:45 What Happened Next?
- 10:10 How Stuff Works
- 10:35 Gold Rush
- 11:25 Gold Divers
- 12:15 Catching Monsters
- 13:05 Storage Hunters
- 13:30 The Liquidator
- 13:55 Auction Hunters: Pawn Shop Edition
- 14:20 Siberian Cut
- 15:10 Cuban Chrome
- 16:00 Misfit Garage
- 16:50 What Happened Next?
- 17:15 How Stuff Works
- 17:40 Running Wild With Bear Grylls...
- 18:30 Dual Survival
- 19:20 Troy
- 20:10 The Liquidator
- 20:35 Auction Hunters: Pawn Shop Edition
- 21:00 The Island With Bear Grylls
- 21:50 Sean Conway - Running Britain
- 22:40 River Monsters



- 00:35 Weird Or What?
- 01:20 How It's Made
- 02:08 Strangest Weather On Earth
- 02:55 How The Universe Works
- 03:42 Mythbusters
- 04:29 Weird Or What?
- 05:16 Strangest Weather On Earth
- 06:03 How The Universe Works
- 06:50 Prototype This
- 07:37 How Do They Do It?
- 08:23 Weird Or What?
- 09:08 Mythbusters
- 09:53 Prototype This
- 10:38 How It's Made
- 11:23 Stephen Hawking's Universe
- 12:08 How The Universe Works
- 12:53 Prototype This
- 13:38 Weird Or What?
- 14:23 How It's Made
- 15:10 Mythbusters
- 15:57 Stephen Hawking's Universe
- 16:44 How The Universe Works
- 17:31 Prototype This
- 18:18 Mythbusters
- 19:05 Weird Or What?
- 19:50 Food Factory
- 20:40 How The Universe Works
- 21:25 How It's Made
- 22:15 Mythbusters
- 23:00 Food Factory
- 23:45 How The Universe Works



- 00:15 California Investigator
- 00:40 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 01:30 The Haunted
- 02:20 Ghost Lab
- 03:10 House Of Horrors:
- Kidnapped
- 03:35 House Of Horrors:
- Kidnapped
- 04:00 California Investigator
- 04:45 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 05:30 The Haunted
- 06:20 Deadly Affairs
- 07:10 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
- 08:00 Dr G: Medical Examiner
- 08:50 On The Case With Paula Zahn
- 09:40 Fatal Encounters
- 10:30 Murder Shift
- 11:20 Deadly Affairs
- 12:10 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
- 13:00 The Will
- 13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
- 14:40 California Investigator
- 15:05 Dr G: Medical Examiner
- 15:55 Fatal Encounters
- 16:45 On The Case With Paula Zahn
- 17:35 Murder Shift
- 18:25 I Almost Got Away With It
- 19:15 The Will
- 20:05 Deadly Affairs
- 20:55 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
- 21:45 California Investigator
- 22:10 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 23:00 Deadly Sins
- 23:50 Deadly Women



- 00:00 Violetta
- 00:45 The Hive
- 00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 01:40 Hank Zipzer
- 02:05 Binny And The Ghost
- 02:30 Violetta
- 03:15 The Hive
- 03:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 04:10 Hank Zipzer
- 04:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 05:00 Violetta
- 05:45 The Hive
- 06:00 Mouk
- 06:00 Lolirock
- 06:25 Sofia The First
- 06:50 That's So Raven
- 07:15 Gravity Falls

- 07:40 Jessie
- 08:05 Shake It Up
- 08:55 That's So Raven
- 09:45 Austin & Ally
- 10:35 A.N.T. Farm
- 11:25 Jessie
- 12:20 Hank Zipzer
- 12:45 Fish Hooks
- 13:10 Good Luck Charlie
- 13:35 I Didn't Do It
- 14:00 Dog With A Blog
- 14:30 H2O: Just Add Water
- 14:55 Girl Meets World
- 15:20 Liv And Maddie
- 15:45 Jessie
- 16:10 Violetta
- 17:00 The Next Step
- 17:25 Liv And Maddie
- 17:50 Jessie
- 18:15 Austin & Ally
- 18:40 I Didn't Do It
- 19:05 H2O: Just Add Water
- 19:30 Violetta
- 20:20 The Next Step
- 20:45 Good Luck Charlie
- 21:35 H2O: Just Add Water
- 22:00 Binny And The Ghost
- 22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 22:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch



- 00:00 Christina Milian Turned Up
- 00:55 The Grace Helbig Show
- 01:25 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 02:20 El News
- 03:15 Hollywood Cycle
- 04:10 E! Entertainment Special
- 05:05 E! Entertainment Special
- 06:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 06:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 07:50 Style Star
- 08:20 El News
- 09:15 Giuliana & Bill
- 10:15 Giuliana & Bill
- 11:10 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
- 12:05 El News
- 13:05 House Of DVF
- 14:05 Fashion Bloggers
- 14:30 Fashion Bloggers
- 15:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 16:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 17:00 Giuliana & Bill
- 18:00 WAGs
- 19:00 WAGs
- 20:00 Christina Milian Turned Up
- 21:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 22:00 Fashion Police
- 23:00 Dash Dolls



- 00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 01:00 Staten Island Cakes
- 02:00 Mystery Diners
- 03:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
- 04:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 06:00 Chopped
- 07:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
- 08:00 Chopped
- 09:00 Grandma's Secret Cookbook Special
- 10:00 The Kitchen
- 11:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 12:00 Chopped
- 13:00 Guy's Big Bite
- 14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 15:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
- 16:00 Chopped
- 17:00 The Kitchen
- 18:00 Siba's Table
- 19:00 Grandma's Secret Cookbook
- 20:00 Chopped
- 21:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 22:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 23:00 Man v Food
- 23:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin



- 00:10 The Chase
- 01:05 Emmerdale
- 01:30 Coach Trip
- 02:00 Coronation Street
- 02:30 Murdoch Mysteries
- 03:25 Vera
- 05:15 Pick Me!
- 06:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
- 07:05 Coach Trip
- 07:30 Vera
- 09:20 Murdoch Mysteries
- 10:15 The Chase
- 11:10 Coach Trip
- 11:35 Pick Me!
- 12:30 Who's Doing The Dishes?
- 13:25 Emmerdale
- 13:50 Coach Trip

- 14:20 Coronation Street
- 14:45 Murdoch Mysteries
- 15:35 Pick Me!
- 16:30 Shetland
- 17:25 Chasing Shadows
- 18:20 Who's Doing The Dishes?
- 19:10 Coronation Street
- 19:35 Pick Me!
- 20:30 Shetland
- 21:25 Chasing Shadows
- 22:20 Coronation Street
- 22:50 Emmerdale



- 00:10 Lawless Island
- 01:00 Taiwan: Island Of Fish
- 02:00 Taiwan: Island Of Fish
- 02:55 Planes That Changed The World
- 03:50 Lawless Island
- 04:45 Ancient Megastructures
- 05:40 Britain's Greatest Machines
- 06:35 Cold Water Gold
- 07:30 Monster Fish
- 08:25 World's Creepiest Killers
- 09:20 The Known Universe
- 10:15 Big Fish, Texas
- 11:10 Air Crash Investigation
- 12:05 The Border
- 13:00 Zeb's River Journey Thailand
- 14:00 Monster Fish
- 15:00 Cold Water Gold
- 16:00 Big Fish, Texas
- 17:00 Air Crash Investigation
- 18:00 Drugs Inc
- 19:00 The Border
- 20:00 Cold Water Gold
- 20:50 Air Crash Investigation
- 21:40 Drugs Inc
- 22:30 Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey
- 23:20 Britain's Greatest Machines



- 00:00 Marry Me
- 00:30 Mr. Robinson
- 01:30 South Park
- 02:30 Man Seeking Woman
- 02:30 The Big C
- 03:00 Last Man Standing
- 03:30 The Goldbergs
- 04:00 Men At Work
- 04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 05:30 My Big Fat Greek Life
- 06:00 T! Death
- 06:30 Community
- 07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 08:00 Men At Work
- 08:30 My Big Fat Greek Life
- 09:00 Last Man Standing
- 09:30 The Grinder
- 10:00 Melissa & Joey
- 10:30 Community
- 11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 12:00 T! Death
- 12:30 Men At Work
- 13:00 Cristela
- 13:30 Community
- 14:00 The Goldbergs
- 14:30 The Grinder
- 15:00 Melissa & Joey
- 15:30 Mr. Robinson
- 16:30 T! Death
- 17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 18:00 Last Man Standing
- 19:00 The Goldbergs
- 19:30 Modern Family
- 20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 21:00 Mr. Robinson
- 21:30 The Tonight Show With Larry Wilmore
- 22:00 South Park
- 22:30 You're The Worst
- 23:00 The Big C
- 23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers



- 00:00 Chicago Fire
- 01:00 Quantico
- 02:00 Rosewood
- 03:00 Allegiance
- 04:00 Good Morning America
- 06:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 07:00 Royal Pains
- 08:00 American Crime
- 09:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 10:00 Quantico
- 11:00 Royal Pains
- 12:00 Coronation Street
- 12:30 Coronation Street
- 13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 14:00 American Crime
- 15:00 Live Good Morning America
- 17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 18:00 American Crime
- 19:00 Complications
- 20:00 The Night Shift
- 21:00 The Night Shift
- 22:00 Supergirl
- 23:00 The X-Files



- 00:00 Chicago Fire
- 01:00 Quantico
- 02:00 Rosewood
- 03:00 Allegiance
- 04:00 Good Morning America
- 06:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 07:00 Royal Pains
- 08:00 American Crime
- 09:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 10:00 Quantico
- 11:00 Royal Pains
- 12:00 Coronation Street
- 12:30 Coronation Street
- 13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 14:00 American Crime
- 15:00 Live Good Morning America
- 17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 18:00 American Crime
- 19:00 Complications
- 20:00 The Night Shift
- 21:00 The Night Shift
- 22:00 Supergirl
- 23:00 The X-Files



- 00:15 13 Sins
- 02:00 Mama
- 04:00 Guardians Of The Galaxy
- 06:15 The Bourne Legacy
- 08:30 The Hulk
- 11:00 Days Of Thunder
- 13:00 The Marine 4: The Moving Target
- 14:45 The Bourne Legacy
- 17:00 The Hulk
- 19:30 Days Of Thunder
- 21:30 The Hunger Games: Catching Fire



- 00:00 Mama-18
- 02:00 Guardians Of The Galaxy
- 04:15 The Bourne Legacy-PG15
- 06:30 The Hulk-PG15
- 09:00 Days Of Thunder-PG15
- 11:00 The Marine 4: The Moving Target-PG15
- 12:45 The Bourne Legacy-PG15
- 15:00 The Hulk-PG15
- 17:30 Days Of Thunder-PG15
- 19:30 The Hunger Games: Catching Fire-PG15
- 22:00 DragonWolf-18



- 00:00 Ride Along
- 02:00 Pitch Perfect
- 04:00 Encino Man
- 06:00 Orange County
- 08:00 Streetdance: All Stars
- 10:00 Encino Man
- 12:00 Pitch Perfect
- 14:00 Planet 51
- 16:00 Streetdance: All Stars
- 18:00 The Love Punch
- 20:00 Cadillac Man
- 22:00 The Starving Games



- 01:00 My Piece Of The Pie-PG15
- 03:00 Crawl-PG15
- 05:00 Yellow Rock-PG15
- 07:00 Return To Nim's Island-PG
- 09:00 Foreverland-PG15
- 11:00 Yellow Rock-PG15
- 13:00 Stone Markers-PG15
- 15:00 The Railway Man-PG15
- 17:00 Foreverland-PG15
- 19:00 Kill The Messenger-PG15
- 21:00 I Will Follow You Into The Dark-PG15
- 23:00 Jamie Marks Is Dead-PG15



- 01:00 Jodorowsky's Dune
- 03:00 White Bird In A Blizzard
- 05:00 The Fold
- 07:00 Awakenings
- 09:00 A Beautiful Mind
- 11:15 The Fold
- 13:00 Manny
- 15:00 So Proud... Dirijal
- 16:45 A Beautiful Mind
- 19:00 Jersey Boys
- 21:15 What's Love Got To Do With It
- 23:30 Gainsbourg: A Heroic Life



- 00:45 A Fighting Man-PG15
- 02:15 Admission-PG15
- 04:15 Fatal Instinct-PG15
- 06:00 Next Goal Wins-PG
- 08:00 Non-Stop-PG15
- 10:00 In My Dreams-PG15
- 11:45 Ashes-PG15
- 13:30 The Amazing Spider-Man 2-PG15
- 16:00 Non-Stop-PG15
- 18:00 Curve-PG15
- 20:00 The Limitation Game-PG15
- 22:00 Unbroken-PG15



- 00:30 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
- 02:00 Egon And Donci
- 03:30 The Tale Of The Princess Kaguya
- 06:00 Echo Planet
- 08:00 Cher Ami
- 10:00 The Heart Of The Oak
- 11:30 The Olsen Gang In Deep Trouble
- 13:00 Egon And Donci
- 14:30 Blackie And Kanuto
- 16:00 The Adventures Of Don



BRICK MANSIONS ON OSN MOVIES HD

- Quixote
- 18:00 The Heart Of The Oak
- 20:00 Daddy I'm A Zombie
- 22:30 Blackie And Kanuto
- 23:00 The Adventures Of Don Quixote



- 00:45 A Fighting Man-PG15
- 02:15 Admission-PG15
- 04:15 Fatal Instinct-PG15
- 06:00 Next Goal Wins-PG
- 08:00 Non-Stop-PG15
- 10:00 In My Dreams-PG15
- 11:45 Ashes-PG15
- 13:30 The Amazing Spider-Man 2-PG15
- 16:00 Non-Stop-PG15
- 18:00 Curve-PG15
- 20:00 The Limitation Game-PG15
- 22:00 Unbroken-PG15



- 00:45 Curvy Brides
- 01:10 Curvy Brides
- 01:35 Long Island Medium
- 02:00 Body Bizarre
- 02:50 My Five Wives
- 03:40 Secret Eaters
- 04:30 Jon & Kate Plus 8
- 05:00 Little People, Big World
- 05:30 Cake Boss
- 06:25 Randy To The Rescue
- 07:15 Hoarding: Buried Alive
- 08:05 Extreme I Do's



- 00:15 China Moon
- 01:55 Intacto
- 03:45 The Sharkfighters
- 05:00 Duplex
- 06:30 The Man In The Iron Mask
- 08:40 Miracles
- 10:05 Seven Years In Tibet
- 12:20 George Washington
- 13:45 Impromptu
- 15:30 Music Of The Heart
- 17:35 The Beautiful Country
- 19:35 Puckoon
- 21:00 Dracula 2000
- 22:40 Four Rooms



- 0:00 Motive For Murder
- 01:00 Jack The Ripper
- 02:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 03:00 Motive For Murder
- 04:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
- 05:00 Jack The Ripper
- 06:00 Killer Kids
- 07:00 The FBI Files
- 08:00 The FBI Files
- 09:00 Private Crimes
- 09:30 Frenemies
- 10:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 11:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
- 12:00 Beyond Scared Straight
- 13:00 I Didn't Do It
- 14:00 Crime Stories
- 15:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 16:00 Private Crimes
- 16:30 Frenemies
- 17:00 The FBI Files
- 18:00 Beyond Scared Straight
- 19:00 Crime Stories
- 20:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
- 21:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 22:00 Private Crimes
- 22:30 Frenemies
- 23:00 Bill Cosby: The Women Speak



- 00:00 Jungle Cubs
- 00:25 Aladdin
- 00:50 Gummi Bears
- 01:20 Lilo And Stitch
- 01:45 Cars Toons
- 01:50 Zou

- 02:05 Henry Hugglemonster
- 02:30 Calimero
- 02:50 Zou
- 02:50 Loopedoo
- 03:05 Art Attack
- 03:30 Henry Hugglemonster
- 03:45 Calimero
- 04:00 Zou
- 04:15 Loopedoo
- 04:30 Art Attack
- 04:55 Henry Hugglemonster
- 05:05 Calimero
- 05:20 Zou
- 05:30 Loopedoo
- 05:45 Art Attack
- 06:10 Henry Hugglemonster
- 06:20 Calimero
- 06:35 Zou
- 06:45 Loopedoo
- 07:00 Art Attack
- 07:25 Henry Hugglemonster
- 07:35 Calimero
- 07:50 Zou
- 08:00 Loopedoo
- 08:15 Art Attack
- 08:35 Henry Hugglemonster
- 08:50 Calimero
- 09:00 Zou
- 09:20 Loopedoo
- 09:35 Art Attack
- 10:00 Calimero
- 10:10 Zou
- 10:25 Loopedoo
- 10:40 Miles From Tomorrow
- 11:05 Sofia The First The Floating Palace
- 11:45 Jake & The Never Land Pirates
- 12:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 12:35 Doc McStuffins
- 13:00 Sofia The First
- 13:30 Jake & The Never Land Pirates
- 14:00 Miles From Tomorrow
- 14:25 Special Agent Oso
- 14:40 The Hive
- 14:50 Handy Manny
- 15:15 Jungle Junction
- 15:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 16:00 Sofia The First
- 16:25 Jake & The Never Land Pirates
- 17:15 Doc McStuffins
- 17:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 17:55 Loopedoo
- 18:10 Miles From Tomorrow
- 18:35 Jake & The Never Land Pirates
- 19:00 Sofia The First
- 19:25 Jungle Cubs
- 19:50 Aladdin
- 20:15 Gummi Bears
- 20:40 Jake & The Never Land Pirates
- 21:05 Miles From Tomorrow
- 21:30 Sofia The First
- 21:55 Doc McStuffins
- 22:10 Jake & The Never Land Pirates
- 22:35 Miles From Tomorrow
- 23:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 23:30 Sofia The First



MAMA ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD



- 00:00 Programmes Start At 7:00am KSA
- 07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 07:25 K. C. Undercover
- 07:50 Supa Strikas
- 08:15 Annedroids
- 08:40 Lab Rats
- 09:10 Kirby Buckets
- 09:35 Wander Over Yonder
- 10:00 Rocket Monkeys
- 10:25 Ultimate Spider-Man
- 10:50 Boyster
- 11:45 Pair Of Kings
- 12:35 Lab Rats
- 13:30 Phineas And Ferb
- 14:20 Kickin' It
- 15:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 15:15 Rocket Monkeys
- 15:40 Wander Over Yonder
- 16:05 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 16:30 Kirby Buckets
- 16:55 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything

CLASSIFIEDS



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (28/01/2016 TO 03/02/2016)

SHARQIA-1	SHARQIA-2	SHARQIA-3	MUHALAB-1	MUHALAB-2	MUHALAB-3	FANAR-1	FANAR-2	FANAR-3	FANAR-4	FANAR-5	MARINA-1	MARINA-2	MARINA-3	AVENUES-1	AVENUES-2	AVENUES-3	AVENUES-4	360-1	360-2	360-3	AL-KOUT.1	AL-KOUT.2	
AMERICAN HERO ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO	CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION	STANDOFF STANDOFF STANDOFF STANDOFF THE BOY STANDOFF THE BOY STANDOFF	EXPOSED EXPOSED NO FRI+SAT ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP FRI+SAT ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP EXPOSED EXPOSED EXPOSED	AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO SAALA KHADOOS - Hindi AMERICAN HERO RIDE ALONG 2 AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO	CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION	AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO THE REVENANT AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO	STANDOFF ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 2:45 PM 2:00 PM 4:00 PM 6:00 PM 8:00 PM 9:45 PM 11:30 PM 1:15 AM	RIDE ALONG 2 MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic RIDE ALONG 2 MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic RIDE ALONG 2 MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic	CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION	THE BOY THE BOY THE 5TH WAVE THE BOY THE 5TH WAVE THE BOY	AMERICAN HERO THE 5TH WAVE AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO THE 5TH WAVE AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO	CONCUSSION ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION	EXPOSED EXPOSED ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP RIDE ALONG 2 EXPOSED	RIDE ALONG 2 RIDE ALONG 2 RIDE ALONG 2 RIDE ALONG 2 LOST IN THE SUN RIDE ALONG 2 RIDE ALONG 2	MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic	AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO	CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP DARKNESS DESCENDS DARKNESS DESCENDS	EXPOSED EXPOSED DARKNESS DESCENDS EXPOSED EXPOSED	STANDOFF STANDOFF ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP STANDOFF STANDOFF STANDOFF	CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION	RIDE ALONG 2 RIDE ALONG 2 RIDE ALONG 2 RIDE ALONG 2 RIDE ALONG 2 RIDE ALONG 2 RIDE ALONG 2	MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic

FOR SALE

Toyota Yaris 2013 Saloon, dark grey color, excellent condition. KD 1950. Mob: 50994848. (C 5123) 2-2-2016

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Abdulla Khan Munirudeen, S/o Abdulla Khan, holder of Indian Passport No: J5547890, D.O.B. 02.12.1965, residing at No. 204B, 5th block, 7th street, Bharathwaj Nagar, Mudichur, Chennai 600048, shall henceforth be known as Abdulla Khan Kaleem Ullah Khan. (C 5124) 2-2-2016

I, Ameya Makarand Dhongade, holder of Indian Passport No: M1041651, R/o 5, Runanubandh Society, Park Avenue, D.P. Road, Aundh, Pune 411007, Maharashtra, changed my name as Amey Makarand Dhongade. (C 5121) 1-2-2016

ACCOMMODATION

Sharing accommodation available for decent executive bachelors/ family at Abbasiya. Separate bathroom/ balcony. Near United Indian School. Contact: 50903076. (C 5122) 1-2-2016

Prayer timings

Fajr:	05:16
Shorook	06:37
Duhr:	12:02
Asr:	15:05
Maghrib:	17:27
Isha:	18:46

APARTMENT FOR RENT IN SALMIYA



AVAILABLE FOR RENT
2 BEDROOM
1 MASTER BED WITH BATHROOM
LIVING ROOM
FITTED KITCHEN
COMMON BEDROOM & BATHROOM
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REQUIRED TYPIST

English & Arabic
• Only Indian or Pakistani
• Experience not less than 5 years
• Experience of computer (English & Arabic)
• Must read and write and speak English and Arabic well
• Must have Transferable visa No. 18
• Bring your C.V with photo
Kuwait city behind Municipality bldg.
Ground floor Samsung (Centro) - AQSA int'l Est. 1st floor
Sulaiman Al-luhaib bldg. No.2
Contact No. 65189946

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Local Sponsor,
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FOR RENT

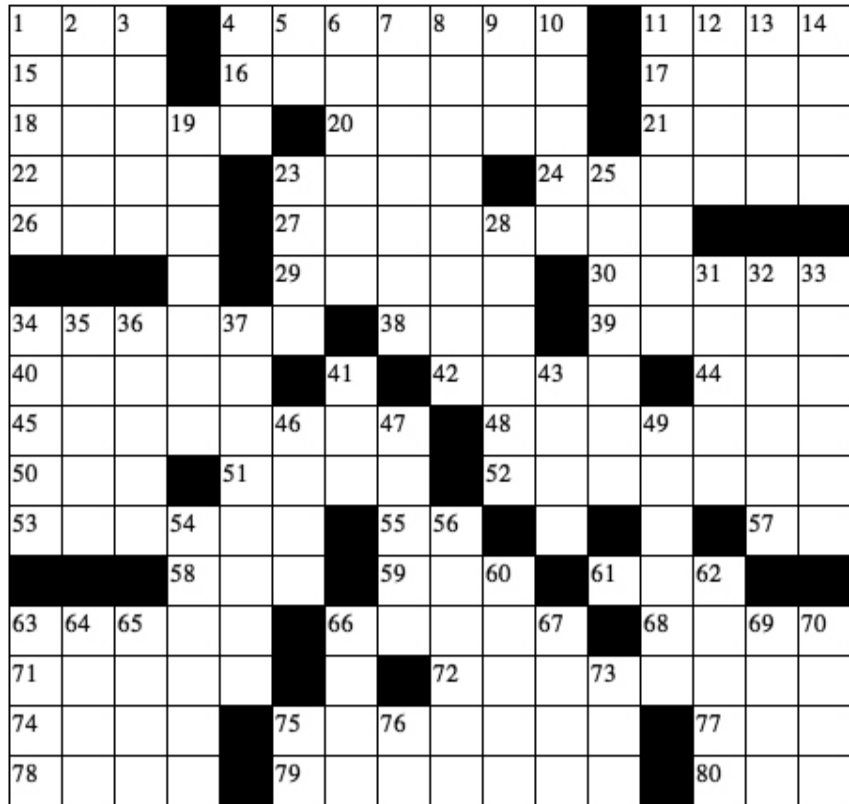
For rent new high end apartment
2B + 2B + kitchen,
living room.
Behind 4th Ring Road (Maidan Hawally)
Tel: 65797760



Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)
In case you are not travelling, your proper cancellation of bookings will help other passengers to use seats

Arrival Flights on Tuesday 2/2/2016				Departure Flights on Tuesday 2/2/2016			
Airlines	Ft	Route	Time	Airlines	Ft	Route	Time
BBC	143	Dhaka	00:05	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
MSC	415	Sohag	00:05	FDB	072	Dubai	00:40
KLM	411	Amsterdam/Dammam	00:20	MSC	404	Asyut	00:55
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:55
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40	MSC	416	Sohag	01:00
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55	BBC	143	Chittagong/Dhaka	01:35
THY	772	Istanbul	01:05	KLM	411	Amsterdam	01:35
DLH	635	Doha	01:35	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:45	DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:35
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	02:45
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30	KAC	381	Delhi	03:30
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	UAE	854	Dubai	03:45
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	PGT	859	Istanbul	03:55
FDB	067	Dubai	03:05	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
RJA	644	Amman	03:05	FDB	068	Dubai	04:00
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10	MSR	613	Cairo	04:10
QTR	1076	Doha	03:15	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:15
KKK	6507	Istanbul	03:20	KKK	6508	Istanbul	04:20
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:25	QTR	1077	Doha	05:00
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00
JZR	503	Luxor	04:25	THY	765	Istanbul	05:15
THY	6376	Istanbul	05:05	JZR	560	Sohag	06:10
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:40	FDB	070	Dubai	06:30
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55	THY	6376	Dubai/Istanbul	06:35
FDB	5061	Dubai	06:30	JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
BAW	157	London	06:40	RJA	645	Amman	07:05
PAL	668	Manila/Dubai	06:55	THY	771	Istanbul	07:05
KAC	416	Jakarta/Kuala Lumpur	07:15	FDB	5062	Dubai	07:10
KAC	412	Manila/Bangkok	07:20	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
QTR	1086	Doha	07:40	FDB	054	Dubai	08:30
FDB	053	Dubai	07:45	QTR	1087	Doha	08:40
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50	BAW	156	London	08:45
SVA	512	Riyadh	07:50	SVA	513	Riyadh	08:50
OMA	641	Muscat	08:00	OMA	642	Muscat	08:55
KAC	354	BLR	08:15	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:25
KAC	206	Islamabad	08:25	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
KAC	352	Kochi	08:30	KAC	513	Tehran	09:45
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40	UAE	856	Dubai	09:55
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:50	KAC	541	Cairo	09:55
KAC	362	Colombo	08:50	KAC	101	London/New York	09:55
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC	561	Amman	10:00
KAC	284	Dhaka	09:10	KAC	671	Dubai	10:05
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:20	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:25
QTR	1070	Doha	09:25	KAC	501	Beirut	10:30
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
IRC	6507	Shiraz	10:30	QTR	1071	Doha	11:00
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	165	Rome/Paris	11:00
IRA	675	Lar	10:40	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
UAE	873	Dubai	11:05	IRC	6508	Shiraz	11:30
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:15	IRA	674	Lar	11:40
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	RBG	554	Alexandria	11:55
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:20
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25	UAE	874	Dubai	12:30
MSC	401	Alexandria	12:30	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	KAC	679	Muscat	13:00
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	785	Jeddah	13:00
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	FDB	076	Dubai	13:10
KAC	382	Delhi	13:50	MSC	402	Alexandria	13:30
FDB	057	Dubai	14:10	JZR	176	Dubai	13:45
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10	MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
KAC	514	Tehran	14:10	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
FBA	831	Al Najaf	14:15	JZR	324	Al Najaf	14:25
AXB	393	Kozhikode	14:20	PAL	669	Dubai/Manila	14:55
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:30	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
KAC	672	Dubai	14:45	QTR	1079	Doha	15:10
KAC	788	Jeddah	14:50	FDB	058	Dubai	15:10
GFA	221	Bahrain	15:00	FBA	832	Al Najaf	15:15
KNE	472	Jeddah	15:05	AXB	394	Kozhikode	15:20
OMA	645	Muscat	15:30	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
NIA	251	Alexandria	15:30	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:45
KAC	562	Amman	15:40	KAC	617	Doha	15:45
ABY	127	Sharjah	15:45	KAC	613	Bahrain	15:50
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45	KAC	773	Riyadh	15:50
JAD	301	Amman	15:55	KAC	741	Dammam	15:55
QTR	1072	Doha	16:10	KNE	473	Jeddah	16:05
FDB	051	Dubai	16:30	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:25
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	16:40	NIA	252	Alexandria	16:30
KAC	542	Cairo	16:55	OMA	646	Muscat	16:30
RJA	640	Amman	16:55	JAD	302	Amman	16:40
SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15	JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	17:30
JZR	325	Al Najaf	17:50	JZR	238	Amman	17:30
MSR	614	Cairo	17:50	FDB	052	Dubai	17:35
JZR	777	Jeddah	17:55	QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
UAE	875	Dubai	18:00	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	502	Beirut	18:00	JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
FDB	063	Dubai	18:05	RJA	641	Amman	17:55
JZR	177	Dubai	18:20	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC	680	Muscat	18:25	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	786	Jeddah	18:30	JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
ABY	123	Sharjah	18:45	MSR	615	Cairo	18:50
QTR	1080	Doha	18:55	JZR	124	Bahrain	19:10
KAC	742	Dammam	19:05	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
KAC	614	Bahrain	19:10	ABY	124	Sharjah	19:25
KAC	774	Riyadh	19:25	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	166	Paris/Rome	19:30	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30	KAC	283	Dhaka	20:35
KAC	618	Doha	19:35	KAC	361	Colombo	20:45
KAC	104	London	19:40	KAC	351	Kochi	20:50
KAC	674	Dubai	19:45	QTR	1081	Doha	20:50
MSR	618	Alexandria	20:05	KAC	343	Chennai	21:00
FDB	061	Dubai	20:20	MSR	607	Luxor	21:05
OMA	647	Muscat	20:20	KAC	331	Trivandrum	21:10
FDB	5053	Dubai	20:50	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
DLH	634	Frankfurt	20:55	FDB	062	Dubai	21:20
JAI	572	Mumbai	20:55	DLH	634	Doha	21:45
QTR	1088	Doha	21:00	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20	FDB	5054	Dubai	21:50
MEA	402	Beirut	21:20	JAI	571	Mumbai	21:55
ALK	229	Colombo	21:25	QTR	1089	Doha	22:00
UAE	859	Dubai	21:40	KAC			

CROSSWORD 1156



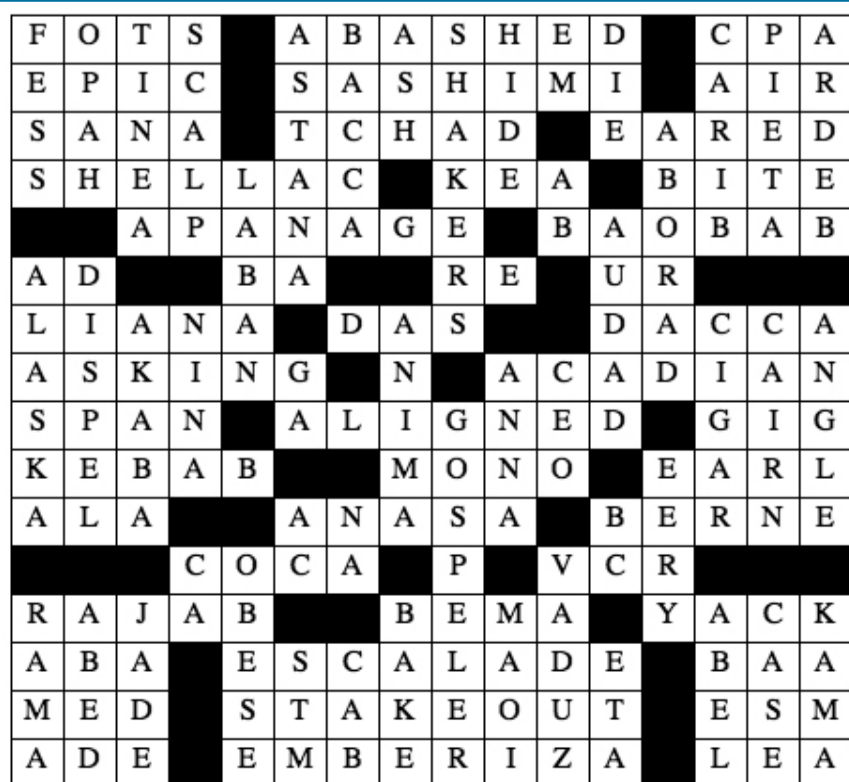
ACROSS

1. A numbered compartment in a post office where mail is put to be called for.
4. Realize beforehand.
11. Showing your contempt by derision.
15. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
16. Make sharp or sharper.
17. (prefix) Indicating difference or variation.
18. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
20. An extended area of land.
21. Adherents of an exclusive system of religious beliefs and practices.
22. A river that rises in northeastern Turkey (near the source of the Euphrates) and flows generally eastward through Armenia to the Caspian Sea.
24. Of or related to a musical scale.
26. A lawman concerned with narcotics violations.
27. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
29. Earlier a god.
30. (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
34. Salted roe of sturgeon or other large fish.
38. A unit of length equal to one thousandth of an inch.
39. Flesh of any of various freshwater fishes of the families Centrarchidae of North America or Cyprinidae of Europe.
40. (law) A defense by an accused person purporting to show that he or she could not have committed the crime in question.
42. (Scottish) Bluish-black or gray-blue.
44. The compass point that is midway between north and northeast.
45. Civilians trained as soldiers but not part of the regular army.
48. An early French settler in the Maritimes.
50. (usually followed by 'to') Naturally disposed toward.
51. A tax on employees and employers that is used to fund the Social Security system.
52. Marked or decorated with stripes.
53. (Greek mythology) The Muse of comedy and pastoral poetry.
55. The district occupied entirely by the city of Washington.
57. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
58. The fatty flesh of eel.
59. 10 hao equal 1 dong.
61. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
63. An upright tripod for displaying something (usually an artist's canvas).
68. Danish philologist whose work on Old Norse pioneered in the field of comparative linguistics (1787-1832).
71. A large number of things or people considered together.
72. Low stinging nettle of Central and South America having velvety brownish-green toothed leaves and clusters of small green flowers.
74. The basic unit of money in Western Samoa.
77. A barrier constructed to contain the flow of water or to keep out the sea.
78. Be obedient to.
79. The dead body of an animal especially one slaughtered and dressed for food.
80. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. Large dark brown North American arboreal carnivorous mammal.
2. A drama set to music.
3. An imaginary elephant that appears in a series of French books for children.
4. A federally chartered savings bank.
5. A midwestern state in north central United States in the Great Lakes region.
6. Common house rats.
7. A mistake in printed matter resulting from mechanical failures of some kind.
8. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
9. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
10. The Uralic language spoken by the Yeniseian people.
11. Tropical American insectivorous bird having a long sharp bill and iridescent green or bronze plumage.
12. The twelfth month of the civil year.
13. (Norse mythology) Goddess of old age who defeated Thor in a wrestling match.
14. A training program to prepare college students to be commissioned officers.
19. Attribute to a source or cause.
23. (botany) Of or relating to the axil.
25. A purplish dye obtained from orchil lichens.
28. Greek coloratura soprano (born in the United States) known for her dramatic intensity in operatic roles (1923-1977).
31. Tropical American tree bearing a small edible fruit with green leathery skin and sweet juicy translucent pulp.
32. Fairly small terrestrial ferns of tropical America.
33. A sum of money paid in compensation for loss or injury.
35. The 1st letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
36. The visual percept of a region.
37. A place where planes take off and land.
41. An acute inflammatory disease occurring in the intestines of premature infants.
43. A hormone produced by the anterior pituitary gland that stimulates the adrenal cortex.
46. A small bottle that contains a drug (especially a sealed sterile container for injection by needle).
47. (Hinduism) An ascetic holy man.
49. Remove offensive capability from.
54. (of a ship or plane) Sideways drift.
56. A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
60. Port city on southern Honshu on Osaka Bay.
62. A member of a seafaring group of North American Indians who lived on the Pacific coast of British Columbia and southwestern Alaska.
64. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
65. Being the only one.
66. A three-tone Chadic language.
67. Type genus of the Anitidae.
69. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
70. God of love and erotic desire.
73. An edge tool with a heavy bladed head mounted across a handle.
75. Date used in reckoning dates before the supposed year Christ was born.
76. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

At this time, you may actively be concerned about the welfare of others in your business-or people who work under you. Your creative ideas are good-ready to be applied to any situation. You are buoyed with confidence to succeed at any project you attempt. This is an excellent time to sway others to your cause through speeches or arguments-your thinking is most lucid. In addition, this is a good time to lead the way on a project, for your originality is unusually heightened. Companionship with others is most rewarding. To you dreamers of impossible dreams, you just might make them come true today. Do not let your high spirits get too far ahead of the discipline and attention to detail necessary to make any dream a reality.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are realistic about your abilities and expectations for success. Your nature will most likely be very calm, as you take a serious attitude to your life. This is an excellent time to set aside some time alone and get many things accomplished. You feel that you are able to handle difficult situations. Good advice is available if you need it. Something electric is in the air and your charisma shines! Your ability to effectively communicate with friends and colleagues is increased. The practical use of your time and passion will most certainly pay off nicely. This evening is a good time to be with friends or loved ones. You may attract a new love interest-if you are interested. If you are not involved in a love relationship, you could be soon.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Someone may try to fool you this morning-careful! On the positive side, it is a good day to just reflect or help others. On the negative side, there may be a failure to communicate. Do not be afraid to ask questions. Also, it's important at this time not to let personal relationships interfere with your work. You might accomplish more to sit alone as you work. If possible, save the new projects for another day just now. Leisure activities could be enjoyed after your workday has ended. Playing side by side in a close relationship or with close friends builds fun memories: fishing, sports, cooking, crafts, etc. Do not hide beneath a shell-open up to loved ones this evening. Ask questions, become involved in their daily concerns.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your search to find ways in which to add to the finances is becoming successful. It may be possible that a part-time job opportunity has surfaced. While in the middle of a project today you will want to put in some effort to not become distracted. If you have a door, close it or push it almost closed and place a note on the door that says, "hard at work no interruptions please." This is a feel good day and much will be accomplished! The time is ripe for a sudden and unexpected change in the normal routine of family life. You could be planning a move soon, or a family member pitches in to help you with your extra job.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You should take note not to be controlling with superiors. You will find yourself a magnet to others and may enjoy a group luncheon today. People just flock to you and enjoy your company. Interactions with the opposite sex on a professional level may occur often today. All of the world loves a lover and today that is you! What a day to declare your love for someone! This is a great time for new beginnings! Your awareness of relationships far outstrips your ego's needs. Do not waste a day like this by being alone. You are very congenial-smile! Once you clear away the more base feelings of love, you will turn a relationship into a higher, more meaningful one. Your relationship grows deep.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Keep marching; you must keep moving in order to keep up today. This is one of those days when the leads keep coming in to reach the sales quota you have always wanted to make. Hey, the total sales by the end of your day could be expanded if you tape your card to the bottom of the products you sell. Your name will be passed around to lots of people and your customers count will continue to grow. Parental instincts may come to the forefront now and you make every effort to please most anyone. With your additional earnings this month you will be able to purchase that large television. You may purchase flowers for the folks this afternoon. You may even find that you are quite talented at entertaining young folks. Future plans are developing.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Relations with a spouse or business partner are on solid ground. Mental stimulation from others is most helpful for you right now. It is a good idea to make every effort to move with gentle action and low tones when communicating with others. A heavy-duty project should have great success when you give it your attention. You may experience some negativity during a group discussion this afternoon-patience; this is short-lived. You will find good results happen when you find extra time to spend with a difficult person-listening is a good thing. At home this evening you find enjoyable interactions with young people. Stability and permanence satisfy a deep emotional need. Expressing affection should come easily and is good for your disposition.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

There is a perfect balance between your career needs and personal needs today. Neither side of you has to struggle with the other. You have a supersensitive awareness of the moods and needs of others, making this an excellent time to run seminars or work with groups. This evening there may be offers to expand your talents-learn or express yourself in writing, music, poetry, etc. We are always evolving into a new cycle, learning, moving and encountering new experiences. You may feel as though you are blocked if you do not put forth the effort to go for the whole experience. You are extremely creative and when given the opportunity to excel in your field of talent-you excel! Trust in your wonderful self! This is an extremely creative period.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Job interviews or proposals for advancement can be positive and possible now. You may experience a great deal of misunderstanding in your professional life at this time. There may be conflicts about the direction of certain projects or... People working under you may not perform to your standards. This may also be a magical time for you. The situations of today point to the exact changes you must make to really feel that you are on the right path of your life journey. Opening up to a close friend may help you gain a focus. You may find yourself helping a young person with a project or homework this evening. You will be inclined to engage in conversations of a serious matter with loved ones. Relationships are in good shape!



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

There is much contemplative thinking about your work today. There should also be a great deal of communication, which could prove most beneficial with people of the opposite sex. Problems in the workplace may surface-or emotional problems at home may seriously interfere with your concentration at work. Concentrate on the job at hand first! There are opportunities later to clear away any problems. You will notice some financial growth that has not been previously available. You may, however, have to move quickly in order to secure a tidy profit.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Business dealings may be particularly fruitful today. You may find that many projects come to completion, especially the large ones. Finally, you will be able to work on a new project. A co-worker or a customer needs help and you have the appropriate understanding and knowledge. Most would not find a volunteer bone in their bodies, too many other things on the agenda. You however, quickly volunteer to help and lend your expertise to the needs of another. Without asking, you will pitch in and solve problems quickly. This is a time when you can expect a little boost; some recognition from those around you is certain. There is plenty of fun to go around... Enjoy. In addition, romance is heightened in your personal relationships.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This is not a good time to make any concrete decisions about a relationship or business deal. The decisions and actions of today will have long-lasting effects. Think things through and give your answer or thinking on a particular matter later. Your path of self-development and expression is becoming more and more unusual-setting you apart from the crowd and from all that is traditional. This may mean a shift from your normal job description-an opportunity to excel. You show a great deal of interest in all family matters, particularly the general living environment in the home. Further, you may find yourself talking or listening to the family members of your household on a one-on-one basis. A new understanding is unfolding.

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Computer Jargon 1

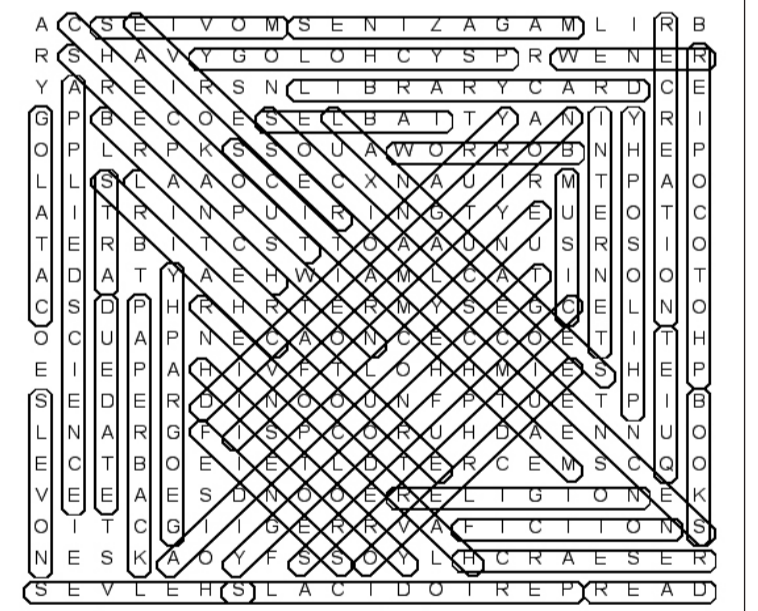
Find and circle all of the computer words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional word.



- | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------|--------------|-----------|
| APPLICATION | DEFRAGMENT | GOOGLE | NANOSECOND | SCANNER |
| BACKUP | DIRECTORY | HTML | NETWORK | SECURITY |
| BINARY | DISK DRIVE | ICON | PARTITION | SHAREWARE |
| BLUETOOTH | DOS | INTERNET | PASTE | SOFTWARE |
| BOOT | DRAW | JAVASCRIPT | PDF | SPAM |
| BYTE | EMAIL | KERNAL | PIXEL | TASKBAR |
| CHAT | ENCRYPTION | LCD | POWER SUPPLY | THUMBNAIL |
| CLICK | FILE | LOGIN | PROGRAMMER | UNIX |
| COOKIE | FIREWALL | MEMORY | ROUTER | WALLPAPER |
| CURSOR | FOLDER | MONITOR | SAVE AS | WIRELESS |
| DATA | GIF | MOUSE | | |

Yesterday's Solution

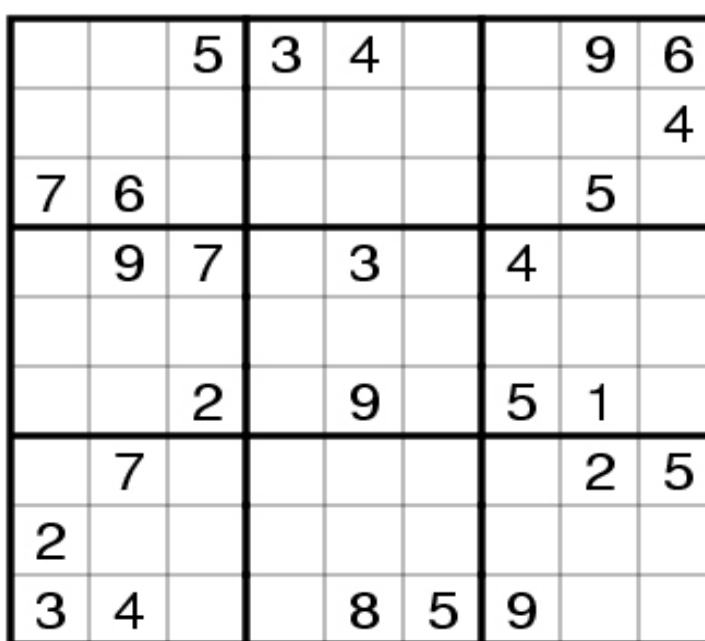
Public Library



- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|
| APPLIED SCIENCE | ENCYCLOPEDIA | MAGAZINES | QUIET |
| ARTS | FICTION | MATHEMATICS | READ |
| BIOGRAPHY | FINES | MOVIES | RECREATION |
| BOOKS | GEOGRAPHY | MUSIC | RELIGION |
| BORROW | HARDCOVER | NEWSPAPERS | RENEW |
| BRANCH | HISTORY | NOVELS | RESEARCH |
| CATALOG | INFORMATION | OVERDUE | RESERVE |
| CHAIRS | INTERNET | PAPERBACK | SHELVES |
| CHECKOUT | LANGUAGES | PERIODICALS | SOCIAL SCIENCES |
| COMPUTERS | LIBRARIAN | PHILOSOPHY | TABLES |
| DICTIONARY | LIBRARY CARD | PHOTOCOPIER | TECHNOLOGY |
| DUE DATE | LITERATURE | PSYCHOLOGY | |

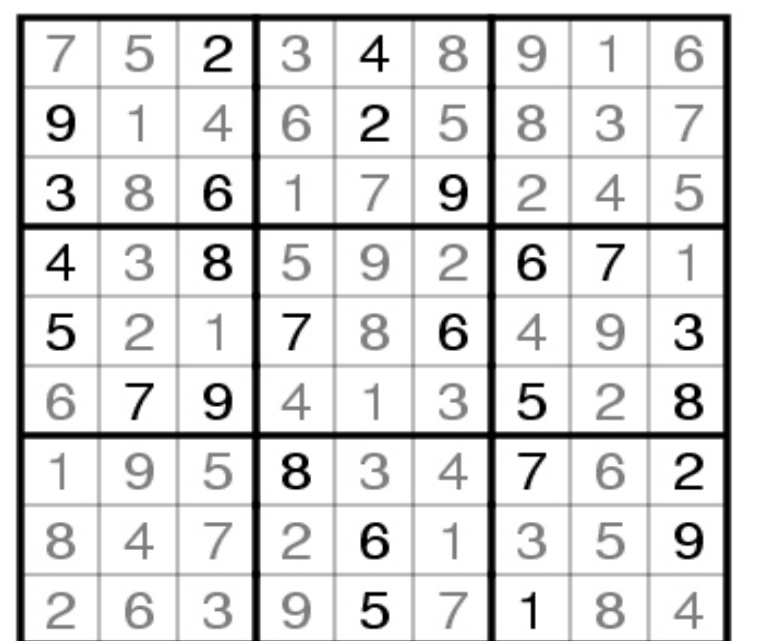
The hidden message is: A LIBRARY IS NOT A LUXURY BUT ONE OF THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE

Daily SuDoku



very hard

Yesterday's Solution



medium

For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128



PHARMACIES
ON 24 HRS DUTY

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadisiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaeel Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours
Issued 01/02/2016-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 19 °C

By Day : Sunny with light to moderate north westerly to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h
By Night : Very cold with light to moderate north westerly to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h

SFC. CHART

MSL Analysis (hPa)
Valid 0000 UTC 01 FEB 2016

Four-Day Forecast

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Expected Weather	partly cloudy	sunny + scattered clouds	sunny	sunny
Min Temp °C	03	05	06	06
Max Temp °C	20	20	21	22
Wind Direction	north westerly to light variable	north westerly	north westerly	north westerly to light variable
Wind Speed km/h	08 - 28	15 - 40	20 - 45	06 - 28

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C REC	Max °C EXP
KUWAIT CITY	10	18
KUWAIT AIRPORT	02	19
ABDALY	02	18
BUBYAN	05	16
JAHRA	05	19
FAILAKA ISLAND	06	17
SALMIYAH	10	17
AHMADI	09	16
JAL ALIYAH	04	17
QAROH ISLAND	14	16
UMM AL-MARADEM	13	17
NUWAISIB	05	19
WAFRA	03	19
MANAGISH	03	16
SALMY	04	16
MUTRIBA	03	18

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	18
Min Temp (°C)	00
Max Rel Hum (%)	65
Min Rel Hum (%)	18
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	28 NW
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm
Sunrise	06:37
Sunset	17:26

Prayer Times

Fajr	05:16
Sunrise	06:37
Zuhr	12:02
Asr	15:05
Sunset	17:26
Isha	18:45

Afghanistan	0093	Luxembourg	00352
Albania	00355	Macau	00853
Algeria	00213	Macedonia	00389
Andorra	00376	Madagascar	00261
Angola	00244	Majorca	0034
Anguilla	001264	Malawi	00265
Antigua	001268	Malaysia	0060
Argentina	0054	Maldives	00960
Armenia	00374	Mali	00223
Australia	0061	Malta	00356
Austria	0043	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahamas	001242	Martinique	00596
Bahrain	00973	Mauritania	00222
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritius	00230
Barbados	001246	Mayotte	00269
Belarus	00375	Mexico	0052
Belgium	0032	Micronesia	00691
Belize	00501	Moldova	00373
Benin	00229	Monaco	00377
Bermuda	001441	Mongolia	00976
Bhutan	00975	Montserrat	001664
Bolivia	00591	Morocco	00212
Bosnia	00387	Mozambique	00258
Botswana	00267	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brazil	0055	Namibia	00264
Brunei	00673	Nepal	00977
Bulgaria	00359	Netherlands	0031
Burkina	00226	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Burundi	00257	New Caledonia	00687
Cambodia	00855	New Zealand	0064
Cameroon	00237	Nicaragua	00505
Canada	001	Niger	00227
Cape Verde	00238	Nigeria	00234
Cayman Islands	001345	Niue	00683
Central African	00236	Norfolk Island	00672
Chad	00235	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
Chile	0056	North Korea	00850
China	0086	Norway	0047
Colombia	0057	Oman	00968
Comoros	00269	Pakistan	0092
Congo	00242	Palau	00680
Cook Islands	00682	Panama	00507
Costa Rica	00506	Papua New Guinea	00675
Croatia	00385	Paraguay	00595
Cuba	0053	Peru	0051
Cyprus	00357	Philippines	0063
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Poland	0048
Czech Republic	00420	Portugal	00351
Denmark	0045	Puerto Rico	001787
Diego Garcia	00246	Qatar	00974
Djibouti	00253	Romania	0040
Dominica	001767	Russian Federation	007
Dominican Republic	001809	Rwanda	00250
Ecuador	00593	Saint Helena	00290
Egypt	0020	Saint Kitts	001869
El Salvador	00503	Saint Lucia	001758
England (UK)	0044	Saint Pierre	00508
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Vincent	001784
Eritrea	00291	Samoa US	00684
Estonia	00372	Samoa West	00685
Ethiopia	00251	San Marino	00378
Falkland Islands	00500	Sao Tome	00239
Faroe Islands	00298	Saudi Arabia	00966
Fiji	00679	Scotland (UK)	0044
Finland	00358	Senegal	00221
France	0033	Seychelles	00284
French Guiana	00594	Sierra Leone	00232
French Polynesia	00689	Singapore	0065
Gabon	00241	Slovakia	00421
Gambia	00220	Slovenia	00386
Georgia	00995	Solomon Islands	00677
Germany	0049	Somalia	00252
Ghana	00233	South Africa	0027
Gibraltar	00350	South Korea	0082
Greece	0030	Spain	0034
Greenland	00299	Sri Lanka	0094
Grenada	001473	Sudan	00249
Guadeloupe	00590	Suriname	00597
Guam	001671	Swaziland	00268
Guatemala	00502	Sweden	0046
Guinea	00224	Switzerland	0041
Guyana	00592	Syria	00963
Haiti	00509	Serbia	00381
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Taiwan	00886
Honduras	00504	Tanzania	00255
Hong Kong	00852	Thailand	0066
Hungary	0036	Togo	00228
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Tonga	00676
Iceland	00354	Tokelau	00690
India	0091	Trinidad	001868
Indian Ocean	00873	Tunisia	00216
Indonesia	0062	Turkey	0090
Iran	0098	Tuvalu	00688
Iraq	00964	Uganda	00256
Ireland	00353	Ukraine	00380
Italy	0039	United Arab Emirates	00976
Ivory Coast	00225	United Kingdom	0044
Jamaica	001876	Uruguay	00598
Japan	0081	USA	001
Jordan	00962	Uzbekistan	00998
Kazakhstan	007	Vanuatu	00678
Kenya	00254	Venezuela	00582
Kiribati	00686	Vietnam	0084
Kuwait	00965	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands US	001340
Laos	00856	Wales (UK)	0044
Latvia	00371	Yemen	00967
Lebanon	00961	Yugoslavia	00381
Liberia	00231	Zambia	00260
Libya	00218	Zimbabwe	00263
Lithuania	00370		



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	
Dr. Abdallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223
Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)	
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	24555050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daary	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	24555050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhaezem	25732920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoubi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Rafea	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abdallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Plastic Surgeons	
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Family Doctor	
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Psychiatrists	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	
DrAdrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s.Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliyami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
General Surgeons	
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
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Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Paediatricians	
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarouf	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gujare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam	23845955
Bern University	
Dentists	
Dr Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdalateef Al-Katrah	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist	
Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924
Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288
Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Internist, Chest & Heart	
DR.Mohammed Akkad	24555050 Ext 210
Dr. Mohammad Zubaid	MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC
Assistant Professor Of Medicine	Head, Division of Cardiology
Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital	25339667
Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Farida Al-Habib	2611555-2622555
MD, PH.D, FACC	
Inaya German Medical Center	
Te: 2575077	
Fax: 25723123	

Psychologists / Psychotherapists	Soor Center Tel: 2290-1677 Fax: 2290 1688	info@soorcenter.com www.soorcenter.com	Kaizen center 25716707	Noor Clinic 23845955	William Schuilenberg, RPC 2290-1677 Zaina Al Zabin, M.Sc. 2290-1677
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Omer Eltigani (center), a young British Sudanese pharmacist, and his relatives eat the Sudanese 'Mahshi' (stuffed vegetables) that he prepared at his aunt's house in Khartoum. —AFP photos



Omer Eltigani serves Sudanese "Mahshi" (stuffed vegetables) that he prepared.

In a Khartoum kitchen, a pharmacist serves up a Sudanese rarity: A cookbook



Omer Eltigani prepares Sudanese "Mahshi" (stuffed vegetables), at his aunt's house.



Omer Eltigani prepares Sudanese "Mahshi" (stuffed vegetables), at his aunt's house.



Omer Eltigani serves Sudanese "Mahshi" (stuffed vegetables) that he prepared.

Preparing vegetables in a quiet Khartoum neighborhood, pharmacist Omer Eltigani hopes not just to serve up the dish an aunt is teaching him, but also the first cookbook to bring Sudanese cuisine to the rest of the world. Straddling Africa and the Arab world, Sudan's cooking has not tickled foodies' palates as much as its Ethiopian neighbors or Levantine rivals. But with his aunt Salwa watching on from the corner of the kitchen in his grandparents' house as he stuffed courgettes, aubergines and tomatoes, Eltigani said he hopes to change this with his cookbook, the country's first not written in Arabic and aimed at foreign diners.

The project-dubbed Sudanese Kitchen—was originally born of his homesickness. Eltigani, who was born in Dublin, then lived in Khartoum until he was seven, when he moved to Britain. Wherever the family went he had his mother's home cooking until he went to

Manchester to study pharmacy. "I was living at uni and I really missed my Mum's food, so I would go home and ask her for recipes that were my favorite things," the lean, unshaven 31-year-old said, taking a break in the kitchen. "I just got the idea of writing down what I was taking with me and making it while I was at uni." He learned to cook from scratch, starting with the dish he missed the most: the local variant of lamb meatballs popular across the region, served in a thick Sudanese tomato and garlic sauce. He started sharing his recipes with cousins, eventually setting up a website and found people from all over the world were interested in trying his recipes. In October, he decided to dedicate himself to writing the book, quitting his job and travelling to Khartoum in January for a 10-day research visit.

Politics at the table
From his aunts' house, he has been collecting

family recipes, cooking with his two aunts, and visiting restaurants, markets and museums to gather background he hopes to include in the book. "It's about placing the food in its context," Eltigani said. The book will include around 40 recipes and is aimed at foreigners and also Sudanese looking to learn more about their country's cooking. But his insistence on tying cooking to Sudan's turbulent history has made difficulties in finding publishers in Britain, who would prefer just a book of plain recipes, he said.

"You can't really not talk about politics and talk about Sudan," he shrugged. Mixing Arab and African influences, Sudan was colonized in the 19th century by the Ottomans and then by Britain and Egypt jointly until 1956. Its post-independence history has been blighted by civil war, military dictatorship, unrest and poverty. Each period has affected the way Sudanese people eat, Eltigani said, a fact he wants to be central to his book. But he also hopes the richness of

Sudan's cuisine will win it fans around the world. "What grows in the area, that definitely shapes what is made here," he said, heading back to the kitchen in his aunts' house. In the troubled Darfur region, the locally grown sorghum grain is milled to form assida, a porridge-like lump served with stews, while groups living along the Nile eat tilapia and Nile perch caught from the river, marinated and often served with a rocket salad.

'Made for sharing'

The importance of cooking with his family is that Sudan's best food is not to be found in restaurants or at food stalls lining the capital's streets. "For me Sudanese cooking is from the home," Eltigani said after he had finished stuffing the vegetables with rice, minced meat, dried coriander and raisins. Foreigners in Khartoum can enjoy delicious Nile fish or fuul-cooked fava beans flavored with cumin and

olive oil-in restaurants but they will never try the best unless they eat with a family, he says. Eltigani's aunt Salwa, dressed in bright traditional robes, has been happy to help out, and thinks the project is "excellent".

"It's a strange thing, something nice," she smiled. With the stuffed vegetables cooked, Eltigani carried them on a tin dish to his young cousins and aunts sitting round a table in the house's communal courtyard in the early evening light. They helped themselves to the dish in appreciative silence, as Eltigani said he hopes to finish the book around April. As the family ate from the shared tin tray, he admitted that his favorite part of Sudanese cooking will be hard to convey in his book. "The dishes made are made for sharing," he said, wiping his fingers after taking a bite from a stuffed potato dripping with red sauce. "When you're eating together you feel like you're part of a community." — AFP

Michelin crowns Paris hotels under cloud of top chef's suicide

France's Michelin guide gave the country's most famous chef a much-prized third star but stripped another of his establishments of its top ranking yesterday as the restaurant world reeled after the apparent suicide of the "world's best chef" Benoit Violier. Alain Ducasse, 59, picked up the highest rating for his restaurant at Paris' swish Plaza Athenee hotel while he lost a star for another of his tables in the French capital at the equally opulent Le Meurice hotel.

But with the pressure top chefs face highlighted by the death of French-born Violier on Sunday—just two months after his Swiss restaurant was named the best in the world—the guide raised eyebrows by stripping a star from another restaurant whose founder had also killed himself. Bernard Loiseau shot himself with his hunting rifle in 2003 after another guide, the Gault & Millau, lowered the rating of his renowned establishment in the Burgundy region.

Loiseau's widow Dominique said yesterday she was "shocked and disappointed" by the decision to reduce the Relais Bernard Loiseau to two Michelin stars after 25 years at the top of the table. But the guide's US-born international director Michael Ellis defended his inspectors' judgment. "It was a difficult decision but it is part of the job," he said. "We made numerous visits to be absolutely sure... I hope the Relais Bernard Loiseau gets the star back as soon as possible."

Ramsay loses out

Big name British chef Gordon Ramsay's Trianon restaurant at Versailles was also downgraded, dropping to just one star. Police are still investigating the circumstances of Violier's death near Lausanne in Switzerland. Like Loiseau, he was found with his hunting rifle by his side. Several of France's greatest chefs have pulled out of the Michelin in the past, claiming the pressure it puts on them and their staff was too great. Violier retained his three Michelin stars for the Restaurant de l'Hotel de Ville at Crissier when its Swiss guide was published in November.

Even so, his death cast a shadow on the announcement of the new French guide, the biggest day in the country's gastronomic calendar. The big winners this year were luxury hotels in the capital, with chef Christian Le Squer bringing a third star to the George V, a



In this Dec 17, 2015 file photo, French Swiss Chef Benoit Violier of the restaurant Hotel de Ville in Crissier, Switzerland, poses with his trophy for the best restaurant of the World during the award ceremony of "La Liste" (The List) at the French Foreign Ministry in Paris.

stone's throw from Ducasse's Plaza Athenee outpost. But Le Squer told AFP he was not in a mood to celebrate after Violier's death. "The whole gastronomic world is in tears because we lost a great colleague and friend," he told AFP. Ellis praised Ducasse for his "brave decision to come up with a style of cooking around the idea of 'naturalness'" at the hotel, while he described Le Squer as "a real virtuoso. "Every dish by Christian Le Squer is a real work of art, a shining example of what French gastronomy does best," he added.

Robuchon on the up

While Ducasse has built a global restaurant brand on the reputation he has won in France, the British-based World Best Restaurant list has been skeptical of his genius. His Plaza Athenee restaurant languishes at 47th in its rankings, although the alternative French-based La Liste—which claims a more scientific basis for its ranking system—placed his Monaco restaurant Louis XV as the world's 17th best. Joel Robuchon, who was La Liste's highest rated chef overall, was one of the biggest win-



This file photo taken on March 15, 1984 in Saulieu, central France, shows late French chef Bernard Loiseau in front of his restaurant, as France's Michelin guide reduced "Le Relais Bernard Loiseau" from three to two stars yesterday. — AFP photos

ners in the new Michelin ratings, going straight in with two stars for his Grande Maison restaurant, which opened in Bordeaux 18 months ago. Ducasse said it had deserved three stars. Ellis said the guide's feared army of anonymous inspectors notorious for punishing the slightest slippage in its exacting standards, had found French gastronomy to be in

rude good health. Paris-long criticized for the quality and value for money of its cuisine in comparison to the provinces—has made particular progress, he claimed. "Of the 380 tables that have entered the guide for the first time, 100 are in Paris. It is proof that the city is more than ever a place where chefs want to cook," he said. — AFP



International director of the Michelin guide book Michael Ellis (center) and the director of Communications and Brands, and Executive Committee Member of the Michelin Group, Claire Dorland-Clauzel (3rdR) pose with newly named France's three-stars, two-stars and one-star chefs, yesterday in Paris, during the launch of the 2016 France's Michelin Guide.

Women's rock climbing gains foothold in Iran



Iranian female rock climber, Farnaz Esmailzadeh, scales a natural cliff in a mountainous area outside the city of Zanjan. — AP photos



Farnaz Esmailzadeh, scales a natural cliff in a mountainous area outside the city of Zanjan.



Farnaz Esmailzadeh, warms up in a gym ahead of rock climbing training session.



Farnaz Esmailzadeh approaches cliffs in a mountainous area outside the city of Zanjan.

In the mountains of northwestern Iran, Farnaz Esmailzadeh clings to a sheer rock face, ignoring the dizzying height and icy wind as she searches for the next handhold. The 27-year-old, who has been rock climbing since she was 13, has distinguished herself in international competitions despite the barriers she faces as a female athlete in conservative Iran. Gyms in the Islamic Republic, including the facility where she practices on an artificial climbing wall, have separate and limited hours for women. Rock climbers, like other female athletes, must adhere to the country's conservative dress code by wearing long, loose garments and covering their hair.

"For me, climbing rocks is part of life, a symbol of overcoming the barriers of life," Esmailzadeh said. "What I do is to change things that people think are norms. I feel there is no difference between men and women." Some 200 Iranian women compete in nationwide rock climbing events, and many more climb recreationally. Up in the mountains, away from the morality police, women and men can climb together. But women are not allowed to work with male coaches, denying them access to the country's most experienced trainers.

Esmailzadeh has nevertheless competed in two World Cups held by the International Federation of Sport Climbing and is ranked 21st worldwide in women's speed climbing. She gives climbing lessons to other women in order to raise money to take part in international competitions, but she is worried she won't be able to afford to compete in the IFSC World Championship held in Paris in September. "International championships begin in about three months, and my biggest mental concern is whether I can afford to participate at all," she said. Here is a gallery of images by AP photographer Ebrahim Noroozi of Esmailzadeh training at the gym and in the mountains outside her hometown of Zanjan, Iran. — AP



Farnaz Esmailzadeh, scales a climbing gym in the city of Zanjan.

Farnaz Esmailzadeh, top left, scales a wall in a rock climbing gym as her mother and her friend support her.



Eric Church, Chris Stapleton lead ACM nominations

Eric Church and Chris Stapleton lead the nominees for the 51st annual Academy of Country Music Awards with five nominations each, including male vocalist and album of the year. In nominations announced yesterday, Church earned a first-time nod for entertainer of the year, along with Jason Aldean, Garth Brooks, Luke Bryan - co-hosting the show with Dierks Bentley - and Miranda



Lambert. Church also earned nominations for video of the year for "Mr Misunderstood," and vocal event of the year for "Raise 'Em Up" with Keith Urban. Stapleton earned two nominations for album of



In this file photo, Eric Church performs at the 49th annual CMA Awards at the Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, Tenn. — AP

This file photo taken on January 26, 2014 shows Tony Iommi (left), Ozzy Osbourne (center) and Geezer Butler (right) of Black Sabbath posing in the press room after winning Best Metal Performance for "God is Dead?" during the 56th Grammy Awards at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

Black Sabbath postpone shows on final tour as Ozzy ill

Heavy metal pioneers Black Sabbath have postponed two shows on what they say will be their final tour after frontman Ozzy Osbourne fell ill. Black Sabbath scrapped plans to play Saturday in Edmonton, Alberta and announced that the band would also push back another Canadian show scheduled in Calgary. The band said in a statement that it was postponing the shows as Osbourne suffers "extreme sinusitis" and that the concerts would be rescheduled, with dates to be announced later.

Black Sabbath on January 20 opened a tour in Omaha, Nebraska that will crisscross the world before ending back in the United

States on September 21 in Phoenix, Arizona. The British band, whose influential first album came out in 1970, has vowed that the concerts will be the last and called the tour "The End." Osbourne, 67, is one of the quintessential figures in heavy metal, known for his fascination with the occult and on-stage theatrics. He has gone on to have a successful solo career. Previous efforts for a final tour were clouded by concerns over the health of guitarist Tony Iommi, who has suffered lymphoma. Iommi was one of the creators of the heavy metal sound, taking the blues as the musical base but tuning his guitar down to a dark minor key with intense distortion. — AFP

the year category for his "Traveller," as both artist and co-producer. Chris Young, Thomas Rhett and Sam Hunt are also nominated for album of the year. Stapleton, 2015's breakout country artist with four Grammy nominations, also earned nominations for new male vocalist of the year and vocal event of the year for "Hangover Tonight" with Gary Allan. Bentley, Aldean and Brett Eldredge also are vying for male vocalist. Lambert, who earned three nominations overall, including new female vocalist and video of the year for "Burning House." The single also earned Cam a dual nomination for artist and producer in the single record of the year category. Singer Chris Young also received four nominations, for his work as artist and co-producer on his latest album, "I'm Comin' Over," and for single record of the year for the album's title song. Little Big Town

earned a 10th nomination for vocal group of the year, as well as nominations for single record of the year and video of the year for "Girl Crush." As a group, they also earned a nomination for vocal event of the year for "Smokin' And Drinkin'" with Miranda Lambert, while singer Karen Fairchild received an individual nomination in the same category for "Home Alone Tonight" with Luke Bryan.

Eli Young Band, Old Dominion and Rascal Flatts all earned nominations for vocal group of the year. New singer Chris Janson earned three nominations for his work as artist and co-producer on "Buy Me a Boat," up for single record of the year, and for new male vocalist. Rhett earned his first album of the year nomination for "Tangled Up," as well as nods for his No. 1 hit, "Die a Happy Man," for single record of the year and new male vocalist of the year. In the vocal duo category, wife and husband duo Joey + Rory earned a nomination as Joey Feek is struggling with terminal cancer. Also nominated in that category were Brothers Osborne, Florida Georgia Line, Dan + Shay and Maddie & Tae. —AP



Muslim Woman Show



Non-professional models present hijabs and dresses during the Muslim Woman show in Dakar, on the eve of World Hijab Day. — AFP photos





Doll collector, producer and trader, Mananya Boonmee holding a "luuk thep" (child angel) doll as she offers prayers during a religious ceremony at the Bangchak Buddhist Temple in Nonthaburi on the outskirts of Bangkok.



"Luuk thep" (child angel) dolls sitting on a table as doll collector, producer and trader, Mananya Boonmee (center) talks on the phone as she and friends order food at a restaurant after a ceremony.

Lucky or Chucky?

Thai spirit dolls delight and disturb



Mananya Boonmee holding a "luuk thep" (child angel) doll after a religious ceremony.



Mananya Boonmee (center) holding a "luuk thep" (child angel) doll as she makes offerings during a religious ceremony.



A student and helper holding a "luuk thep" (child angel) doll in a car on the way to a Buddhist temple.

Driving to a Buddhist temple on the northern fringes of Bangkok, beauty salon owner Natsuda Jantapim is running through her youngest daughter's likes and dislikes. "We sleep in the same bed together, she has her own pillow and blankets," she told AFP, her daughter sitting quietly in the front passenger seat. "We didn't switch the air-con on two nights ago because she was cold. In the morning, she likes to drink strawberry milk," she added. On first reckoning, it sounds like the everyday observations of a dedicated mother.

Except the daughter Natsuda refers to isn't real. Certainly not in the living, breathing flesh and blood sense. She is a meticulously groomed plastic doll, part of the latest celebrity-fueled superstitious craze that has swept the country-much to the dismay of the kingdom's conservative military rulers. Known in Thai as "luuk thep" (child angels), the pricey dolls, which can cost up to \$600, were first popularised a little over a year ago by celebrities who claimed dressing up and feeding the dolls had brought them professional success.

Believers say the dolls-many of which are blessed and have sacred scripts drawn on them by a monk-contain the spirit of a real child and must be treated as a living being. The theory runs that those who look after their dolls like members of the family will see good fortune returned to them. As a result, plastic dolls are now taking their seats at restaurant tables, cinemas and even on airplanes.

Luck, magic and belief

Natsuda, 45, lives with her very real 21-year-old daughter. But that has not dimmed her affection for the doll, auspiciously named 'Ruay Jang' (So Rich). "Since I got 'Ruay Jang' my life has really changed. For example I won the lottery which I had never won before," she explained. After praying for help from her doll, she added, a friend paid back a significant loan after years of fruitless efforts to chase it down. Asked what she would say to those who think her credulous she replied: "It's a personal belief, I cannot blame those who don't believe in it but I believe in what I worship."

In many ways Thailand's child angel craze is simply the latest manifestation of a deeply superstitious society that places enormous emphasis on warding away bad luck and mak-



A collection of "child angel" dolls are displayed at the clothing store of their owner Supavadee Tapmalai.



A child angel doll sits on a chair in Bangkok.



A "child angel" doll is offered food by its owner Supavadee Tapmalai at a Japanese restaurant in Bangkok, Thailand.



"Luuk thep" (child angel) dolls sitting on a sofa.

ing good merit. More than 90 percent of Thais identify themselves as Buddhist. But the country's Buddhism is known for its syncretism, comfortably blending many animist and Hindu traditions into daily worship. Many Thais fervently believe in good and malevolent spirits-

and that offerings or the latest lucky charm will ward off bad karma.

In the late 2000s a style of large amulet became the latest "must have" item-often selling for thousands of dollars each-following the death of a popular police officer who claimed

the charms helped him solve a murder case. The luuk thep craze appears to have divided Thais. Some see it as a natural extension of their merit-making traditions while others deride it as a commercial ruse and symbol of the dumbing-down of Buddhism.

"I freak out sometimes when I see them on the train," admitted Lakkhana Ole, a 31-year-old graphic designer from Bangkok who says she spots dolls increasingly often around the city. A poll this week by Bangkok's Suan Dusit Rajabhat University found two thirds of Thais saw the dolls as something positive if it gave them direction or helped alleviate loneliness. But the same poll also found that 72 percent of respondents dismissed them as the hocus-pocus of overly superstitious people.

'Damn you, you idiot'

"It reflects that society is perverse," Phra Buddha Issara, a conservative nationalist monk, famous for his fiery denunciations of commercialism with mainstream Thai Buddhism told AFP. "If you're lonely... you can just go out and talk to your neighbors, interact more with others, do good things for public, help the blind, sweep floors or grow plants," he added. Asked if he would he bless someone's doll he replied: "The only thing they would receive from me is: 'Damn you, you idiot.'"

Issara's criticism has been matched by Thailand's justice minister, a former general, and the country's top police officer, both of whom have publicly fretted that the craze is getting out of control. Phra Ajarn Supachai, a monk in Nonthaburi's Bangchak temple has no such qualms. He regularly conducts prayer sessions for luuk thep dolls and their owners-for a donation.

"People began turning up with the dolls about three years ago," he told AFP. "Now we get around ten people a week." Natsuda's friend Mae Ning is a regular. Last week she took Natsuda to chant prayers as the saffron-robed Supachai anointed all those present, dolls included, with a stick soaked in sacred water. Mae Ning, an avid collector and trader in luuk thep dolls, believes many Thais are looking for comfort in uncertain times. "Some people are stressed about Thailand's bad economy, its politics, their jobs and finances, so they want something to attach to," she explained.

"When people have the dolls, they feel that they are happy just like they are in another world," Natsuda, admits many find her attachment to Ruay Jang unusual. "But honestly I don't care because what I do doesn't cause anyone trouble," she said. — AFP



"Luuk thep" (child angel) dolls sitting on a sofa at the house of doll collector, producer and trader, Mananya Boonmee (not pictured) in Nonthaburi on the outskirts of Bangkok.



A student and helper arranging the necklace of a "luuk thep" (child angel) doll at the house of doll collector, producer and trader, Mananya Boonmee (not pictured).



A costumed reveler blows bubbles while waiting for the performance of the "Angel flight" or "Flight of the dove" from the bell tower of Saint Mark's square (Piazza San Marco) to officially launch the Venice Carnival. The 2016 edition of the Venice carnival has for theme "Creatum" and runs until February 9. — AFP

WWI 'spy' Mata Hari brought to life in new Dutch ballet



Turkish police from the Istanbul Police Department Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime Unit, hold-up an original painting by Spanish artist Pablo Picasso, "Woman Dressing Her Hair", in Istanbul. — AP

Turkey police recover stolen Picasso in Istanbul

Turkish police have recovered an original painting by Spanish artist Pablo Picasso in an undercover operation in Istanbul, state-run Anatolia news agency reported on Saturday. The operation targeted alleged art thieves attempting to sell the painting "Woman Dressing Her Hair" which was stolen from a collector in New York, Anatolia said. Turkish police, posing as potential buyers, met the prospective sellers at a hotel and then at a yacht in an Istanbul marina, the report revealed.

The suspects are alleged to have initially demanded 8 million dollars for the painting but later settled on 7 million. The officers then arranged a meeting Friday at a cafe, where they arrested two people, Anatolia said, citing police sources. The woman who appears in the 1940 painting is Dora Maar-Picasso's lover and long-time muse, who is depicted in grotesque fashion, with sunken ribcage, swollen stomach and enormous feet. The painting was sent to Istanbul's Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University for examination, Anatolia said. — AFP

Nearly a century after she was shot as an alleged spy, the story of the world's ultimate femme fatale, Mata Hari, is to be staged for the first time as a ballet in her native Netherlands. "Mata Hari" will open to an already sold-out premiere at the Dutch National Ballet in Amsterdam on February 6, aiming to bring to life through dance the woman whose name has become synonymous with unbridled sensuality and ultimately, fatal betrayal.

Frisian-born Margaretha Geertruida Zelle, known by her stage name Mata Hari, was executed by a French firing squad on October 15, 1917 after being accused of spying for Germany during World War I. She was just 41. In the years before the war, her daring exotic striptease act had brought her notoriety, fame and adoration and she's widely regarded as one of the world's first-ever exotic dancers. Her Oriental "sacred dances" act in pre-war Parisian halls pushed the boundaries of the buttoned-down mores of the late Victorian era and often saw her stripping to little more than a bejeweled brassiere and a silk veil-making her an overnight sensation in the French capital and elsewhere in Europe.

'Dramatic ballet'

Now her story is being told "en pointe" for the first time. "I wanted to make a dramatic ballet... and I was looking for a subject matter to create dance, so there had to be a connection with dance," said Ted Brandsen, Dutch National Ballet director and the show's choreographer. "Mata Hari was a person who always fascinated me and she was Dutch. A lot of people actually don't know that," Brandsen told AFP. The idea of creating a major new ballet began



Dutch National Ballet principal dancer Anna Tsygankova performs during the rehearsal of "Mata Hari". — AFP photos

four years ago and when Brandsen shared his plans with two-time Grammy-nominated British composer Tarik O'Regan, it all came to life.

More than 60 dancers will perform during the two-hour production featuring a kaleidoscope of experiences from Mata Hari's life. Much of the ballet is set in Paris, where she kept a string of lovers said to include famous Italian composer Giacomo Puccini. "Much like Mata Hari had a fast-paced life, so do we want to tell her story in a fast-paced way on stage," said Brandsen. Richly complementing the dance, is a wardrobe of more than 300 lavish costumes designed by Francois-Noel Cherpin—who began working on the designs three years ago.

Deep inside the company's building next to the Amstel River, Brandsen and his co-producers are hard at work. Principle dancer, Russian ballerina Anna Tsygankova, glided effortlessly through rehearsals to which AFP was given special access. "To touch upon her life story is a great opportunity for me to get to know Mata Hari better," Tsygankova, who trained at the Bolshoi ballet, told AFP between sessions. "She is an enigma to me. Who can say for sure? Was she just a dancer? Was she really a spy, or perhaps a victim of her circumstances?"

Exotic dancer

After a rancorous divorce from a Dutch officer in the colonial army left Zelle penniless, she fled to Paris in 1904 to start a new

life. There she quickly reinvented herself as "Mata Hari", an Indonesian word for "Eye of the Day" and adopted Javanese dancing in an erotic act that often left little to the imagination. Fame of her "exotic beauty" quickly spread across Europe and almost overnight she became a celebrity, who also raised eyebrows for her many affairs. "She went to Paris and completely reinvented herself. That idea is what intrigues me about her," said Brandsen. "She became comparable to somebody like Madonna, or Lady Gaga today. She became famous very quickly," he said.

By 1914 however her popularity was waning and she found herself in Berlin when war broke out. She was recruited by the Germans to spy on France and Britain. But today it is widely believed she never really took the deadly business of spying seriously, but rather agreed because of the money—and the glamour. After trying to reach the front to meet a young Russian officer, her lover at the time, Mata Hari was arrested by a French officer and charged with being a double agent.

On a cold October morning she was shot in the Parisian suburb of Vincennes. Her iconic status as the ultimate femme fatale was cemented in 1931 when Swedish actress Greta Garbo played her in the film "Mata Hari". Brandsen and Tsygankova say they are telling a story of a free-spirited woman who got caught up in a changing world she didn't understand. On the day of her execution, Mata Hari is said to have declined a blindfold and blew kisses to her executors. "She died with her head held high," Brandsen said. Mata Hari runs from February 6 to 26 at the Dutch National Ballet in Amsterdam. — AFP



Anna Tsygankova (center), principal dancer of the Dutch National Ballet, has a costume fitted during a rehearsal of "Mata Hari".



Anna Tsygankova (right), principal dancer of the Dutch National Ballet, speaks with artistic director and choreographer Ted Brandsen during a rehearsal of "Mata Hari".