

FREE

Kuwait Times Friday Times



Min 9°
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Kuwait Times offices will be closed on Friday, Jan 1, 2016, hence there will be no issue published on Saturday, Jan 2, 2016. Our next issue will hit the newsstands on Sunday, Jan 3, 2016. Happy holidays!

**Syrian 'paid
KD 22,000'
to get Kuwaiti
passports**

8

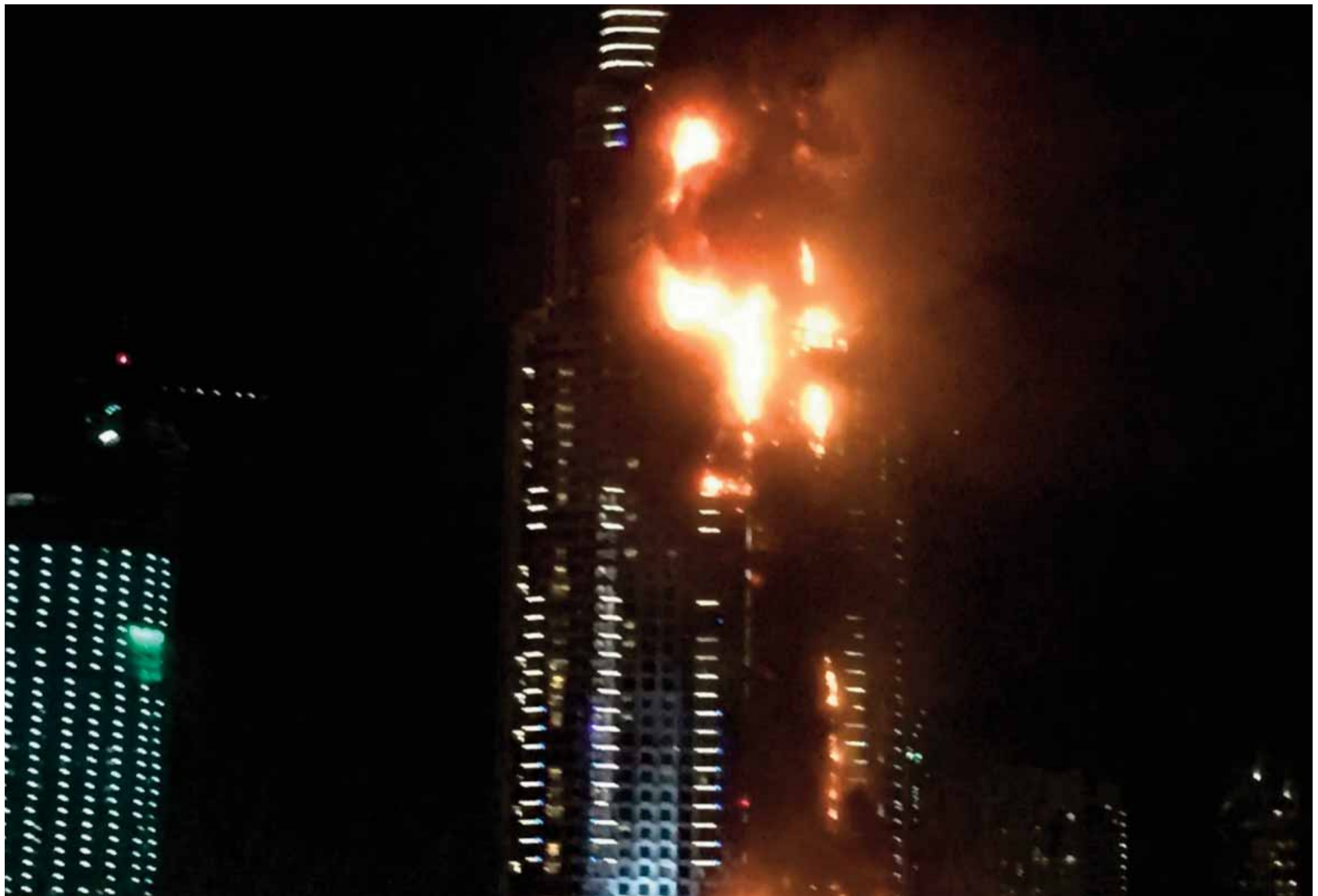


**Messi hits
500 in style;
Barca keep
La Liga lead**

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MASSIVE BLAZE ENGULFS HOTEL NEAR BURJ KHALIFA



DUBAI: The Address Downtown hotel is seen engulfed in flames a few hours before New Year celebrations yesterday. — Photo by Dr M Ziad Al-Alyan

DUBAI: A huge fire ripped through a luxury Dubai hotel yesterday near the world's tallest tower, where people were gathering to watch New Year's Eve celebrations, police said. The Dubai government media office tweeted that a "fire has been reported in the

Address Downtown hotel. Authorities are currently on-site to address the incident swiftly and safely".

Witnesses near the iconic Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, said huge flames could be seen billowing from the hotel.

Images aired on the Dubai-based Al-Arabiya news channel showed a high-rise building with fire engulfing dozens of storeys.

Dubai authorities said earlier yesterday that they had deployed thousands of security personnel to ensure visitors and residents

could enjoy the New Year's festivities safely. The emirate had promising a "spectacular" fireworks display that was set to kick-off at midnight from the Burj Khalifa before spreading to various locations across the city. — AFP

WELCOME 2016!



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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We are in day one of 2016, and should start assessing what we have and haven't achieved in the past 12 months. Some may say: So what, it is just another year. Yes, this is true, but we can dream on how to make this year probably the best year of our lives. We probably miscalculated or misunderstood some people or issues, so maybe the New Year is just the excuse you need to sort things out. Have a theme for this year and work on it. This is my plan for 2016.

Happy New Year everyone! Hopefully, it will be filled with joy, love, happiness, success and great achievements. Now you probably all went late to bed last night, so I thought this Friday Times should be all about 2016's hopes and wishes. With the end of a year, we start to look

back at all the things, people, events, incidents, losses and achievements we made through the year. New friends were made, and lost too. Humanitarian crises were witnessed and tears were shed for their suffering.

Sometimes we must put ourselves in a cage so we don't recognize ourselves. For example, some may say they worked hard, yet without success. Well, maybe you are not doing the right thing - maybe your strategy was wrong or received bad advice or listened to no one. Think of all those failures as lessons learned and not necessarily as disasters. What's the point of another year if we don't become wiser?! Don't look back. This will be my theme for this year. The more you dwell over the past, the more you will start thinking about all those

who cheated, lied, gossiped and mistreated you. Then you will tend to feel depressed and sad. You only lose the moment because life is like a journey. It has its ups and downs.

One of best tips I received for the New Year is to take good care of my health - what a great thing to say! While we all read and hear how much we need to exercise every day and eat healthy food, we rarely do it. Only a sudden illness or doctor's warning will put us on track again. So maybe this is something we should do this year. In fact, exercising pushes out negativity. The list is endless and you can shape it the way you like. But we all need to dream, and dream well.

Happy New Year!



KFSD LAUNCHES NEW BOATS AND VEHICLES

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) held a ceremony to launch Rescue and Fire Extinguishing boats and vehicles yesterday at the Coastguards Department in Salmiya. Director General of KFSD Lieutenant General Yousef Al-Ansari said during the ceremony that the KFSD's projects are part of the Kuwait's development plan. "Today we are celebrating the launch of the new fire extinguish boats and vehicles that are part of the batches from 4-7 of our plan. Without the financial and administrative support of the government, we wouldn't have been able to achieve these goals," he pointed out.

The Kuwait companies are strategic partners with KFSD

in developing its performance and its machines. "We appreciate the partnership of or the local companies and I would like to thank them for their efforts. I would also like to thank all those who participated in making this ceremony successful," Al-Ansari added. Brigadier Jamal Al-Blehis said "KFSD cares about rehabilitating the firefighters and equipping them with the latest machines, vehicles, and boats."

These equipments that are exhibited here today are not the only ones imported. The total number of machines, vehicles and boats is 191. Only 21 of these kinds are on display today. All these equipments will start operating from today and they represent great addition to the KFSD's abilities in dealing with all kinds of land, marine, and airport accidents," he stated.

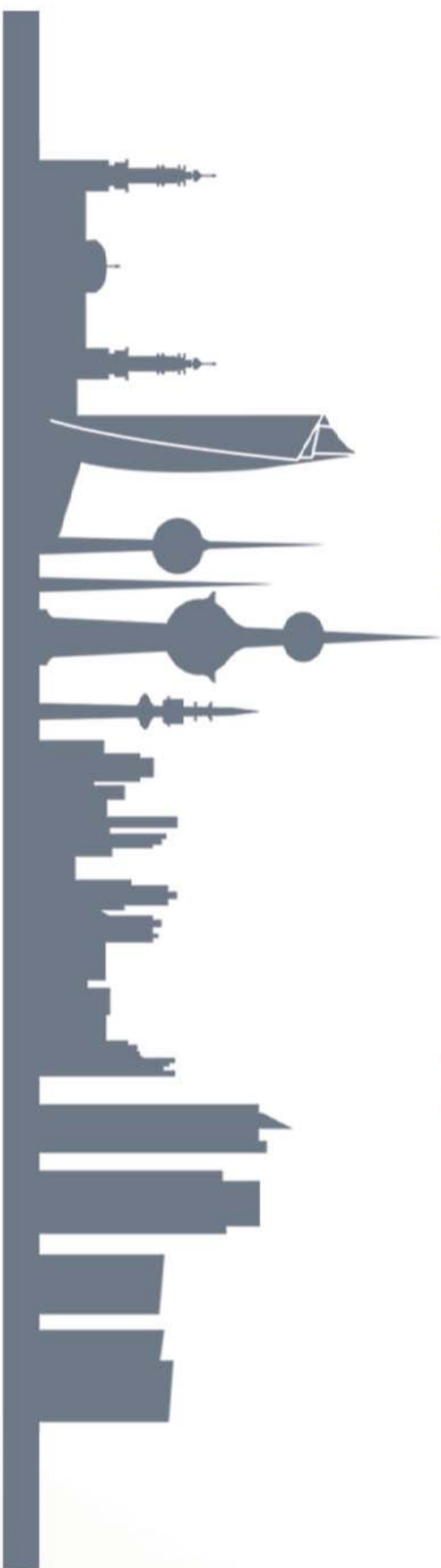




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'South of Sane' revive Kuwait cultural scene

By Faten Omar

If regular art bores you and you want the next best thing or just something a bit peculiar, you've ended up in the right place. With South of Sane, you will find yourself standing in front of their artworks, listening to the sounds of every piece telling its story, expressing pain, happiness and feelings you did not know existed. South of Sane is a local movement by a group of artists, musicians, designers, engineers and architects, who came together to revive the cultural scene in Kuwait. South of Sane has faith in all its members, whether they are engineers or drivers, rich or poor, Kuwaitis or non-Kuwaitis. They do not reveal their real names or faces because they want the world to only know their art - fame is not their goal.

Kuwait Times was the first media outlet to visit South of Sane's studio. It is more like a wonderland where nothing makes sense. Strange artworks and powerful original paintings touch your soul, and creative songs, opera and jazz music go with the mood. It's very interesting how much the imagination and creativity of some people has evolved to create beautiful new art forms. Some of them may be a little strange, but they appreciate what they've achieved.

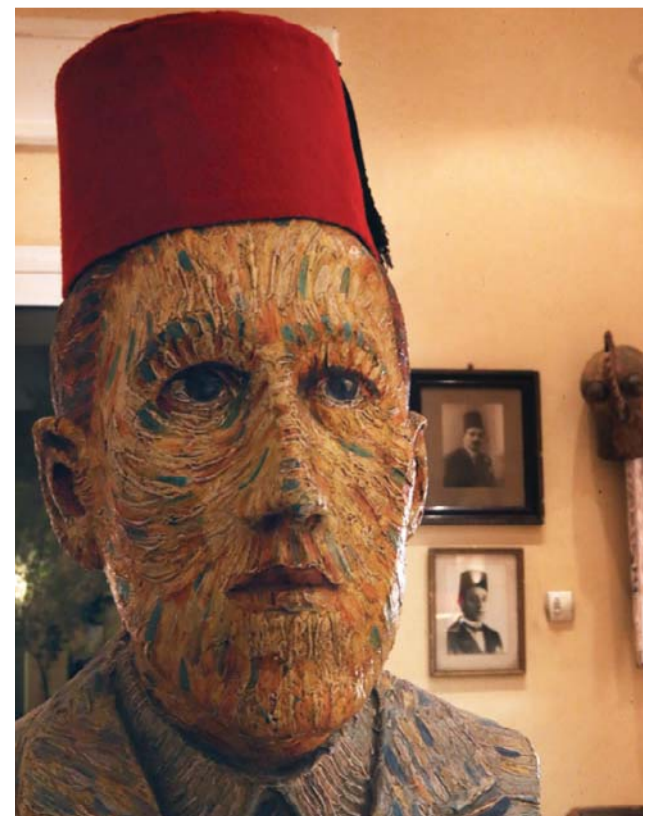
'Ars est celare artem'

"When I was 14 years old, my father asked me to learn to play an instrument, and when I refused, he said, 'A man without passion can never be called a man.' That sentence stuck with me forever," said "Dali", the founder of South of Sane. And that is when he started to follow his passion. Dali told Kuwait Times that when he started out, he wanted to be an

artist, but not a commercial one. "I read a line once that said 'ars est celare artem'. It means 'it is art to conceal art', that is, true art conceals the means by which it is achieved. This means that in the best works of art, the audience is not distracted by the artist's technique, but responds instead to the power of the work (as the artist intended)," he said.

Dali, 35, works as a pilot and is an antique collector too. "Because of my job, I travel around the world. Ten years ago I went to Indonesia, and when I walked into a mall, I found art pieces that you won't find in a museum, at a really cheap price. I could not understand why those artists were not known along with their original pieces. When I asked myself this question, I realized there is a big difference between a painter and an artist. To be a painter is to know how to draw, but to be an artist, you need a vision and make people believe in your vision and imagination," he said.

People in Kuwait who are known as artists are copycats, claimed Dali, adding South of Sane is trying to educate people. "South of Sane is trying to explain what we have been taught in schools and universities about the history of art. You can get inspired or come up with a technique but you can never copy just to be famous and get 'likes' on Instagram, or just to make people call you an artist so you can be cool," he said.



Open-minded people

When Dali started gathering his team, a friend with a passion for art joined him, and they named their team "South of Sane", because people used to tell them that they are insane and what they were doing is not art, since art is beautiful, butterflies and blue skies. Regardless of how open-minded people are, they experience a subtle bias against creative ideas when faced with uncertain situations. Dali claims to be an expert on defining what art is and what it is not. Every artist has his or her own unique taste and ways of expression, and Dali wants people to not define art in a limited manner.

"A generation without culture and art is a violent one; this is evident in how we as a nation have become - more reliant on how our image is perceived on social networks rather than being respected for what we stand for. Kuwait has always been and always will be the land of creation and innovation and a haven in the region for fine arts and humanities. I propose we put an end to 'recycled' art and let the underground come out and show the world that we are not all driven by materialism and trends; that this country has its roots deeply founded in culture and arts; that we as a nation are free in soul and mind. Rejection is how every great inventor starts," asserted Dali.

"Masha", a member of South of Sane, brought Dali's works to the limelight. Masha runs an online blog on art and culture. She started blogging about art in Nov 2011, then launched her first blog, Al-Maha Art, which morphed into an online magazine. In 2013, Dali invited Masha to South of Sane's studio, and Masha described what she saw as most unique and exotic art. They kept meeting back and forth, talking about art in Kuwait and exhibitions, and 2015 saw Dali's latest artworks, one of them an installation, displayed at Nuqat in November.

Copy/Paste Syndrome

"I told him I know you don't want to be considered as an artist, but I want to create a show for you. I said it is time for this to be shared with the public. A month later, Nuqat announced their concept of their 2015 exhibition called 'Copy/Paste Syndrome', and what a coincidence that one of Dali's artworks is called 'Anti-art'. This piece talks about being against the usual, commercialism, mainstream, and tells you not to copy or steal someone's work and give the credit to yourself - someone is going to find about it," Masha said.

Masha told Kuwait Times that 40 years ago, Kuwait was an oasis of creativity. Everybody used to come to Kuwait,



because back then, Kuwait was a welcoming land for talents. The best paintings, music, books and novels were produced in Kuwait for Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis. Even the father of pop art came to Kuwait in 1970s. "It was the first Gulf country he ever visited because we had opened the first commercial art gallery, the Sultan Gallery, and it still open. Sabah and Um Kalthom sang in Kuwait too," she reminisced.

Masha expressed sadness to see young Kuwaitis care more about fashionistas on Instagram rather than knowing real artists. "This is one of the bad sides of globalization - everywhere in the world, people stopped caring for what really matters and shifted their attention to other things that can give them quick fame," she lamented.



Masha and Dali



- ☑ بدون ألوان إصطناعية
- ☑ بدون إضافة غلوتومات
- ☑ أحادي الصوديوم
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‘MA’ HAMAD SHOW’- DREAM COMES TRUE

By Nawara Fattahova

For Hamad Al-Ali, social media was the vehicle to make his dreams come true. Known online as Hamad Qalam, he gained great publicity from social media, mainly Twitter, where he has attracted around one million followers. This online fame was what propelled him to TV, where he has his own talk show now. After graduating from the Faculty of Media at the Kuwait University, Hamad started his career in the private sector, where he worked in banking, telecommunications and a TV channel.

Then he decided to set up his own company, working in marketing and public relations. “Working in the media was my dream since I was a child. I finally realized this dream through my talk show (Ma’ Hamad Show) that I present on Al-Rai TV every Saturday night. The show is unique in the GCC and my guests are from Kuwait and abroad, whose names I announce on social media. According to Al-Rai statistics, my show has the highest viewer ratings. I’m very happy with this show as I have received a lot of positive feedback from my fans and viewers,” Hamad told Kuwait Times.

Popularity

“I started posting on Twitter in 2011 as a regular guy, presenting social issues that people are interested in. I wasn’t commenting on political, religious or sports issues, so I had more followers as I was spontaneous. With the increasing number of followers, my popularity grew, and various companies started to approach me to advertise their goods and services, so I invented indirect advertisements,” Hamad pointed out.

With new apps emerging on social media, Hamad had to be up to date, so he created accounts on Instagram and Snapchat. “Today, I have around one million followers on social media. The goods that I advertise are fast-moving. My way of advertising is like a personal experience rather than commercial, and I never advertise bad products, as I always publicize them after trying the products myself,” he stated.

“For instance, I came up with a story for a new mobile phone in the market, or I visited a restaurant where I had lunch and recommended it to the public. Also, when I travel, I take photos and videos of the entire trip and the hotel to show my followers, and these hotels then tell me that book-

ings have increased. Various airline companies have also invited me to travel with them and share the trip with my followers. I’m also a brand ambassador for Jaguar cars, the first time this automaker has a Kuwaiti ambassador. They gave me a vehicle with a contract that I’m not allowed to drive a different vehicle for one whole year,” Hamad revealed.

Different Activities

According to him, each of the social media apps has a different function or activity. “I express my opinions on Twitter, while I post pictures and videos on Instagram. On Snapchat, I post videos of my personal life. So I use each of these programs in the most suitable way. Most of my followers are from Kuwait, but I also have thousands from the GCC and even some followers from the West,” he said.

Community service, humanitarian work, and volunteering are part of Hamad’s life. “I have participated in various humanitarian activities and also organized a humanitarian campaign called ‘Hamad has a Flower’, in which university students helped me gather clothes and electronic appliances for people in need that we collected from people who donated them. We distributed it to needy people both inside and outside Kuwait, especially in refugee camps in Jordan. Also, I have participated in marathons and presented seminars encouraging humanitarian work. I was also awarded for some of these humanitarian activities in Kuwait and in Qatar as well,” he said.

Paying Back

He likes to share his life with people. “My followers live with me the whole day. Even when I founded my company, I was with my followers and got their opinions when buying the furniture, so they felt that they were a part of me. Today, my company has grown and I also have clients from abroad including Spain and Colombia,” noted Hamad.

“I am keen to interact with my followers, so I hold competitions for them and give them prizes. I prefer to give winners airline tickets rather than mobiles. In fact, these competitions and prizes are a kind of payback, as I don’t forget their role in my life, and my popularity is due to them, so I owe my fans this. It’s my responsibility to make them happy,” he said.



Hamad Al-Ali

“I’m glad when I do something positive in the community. For instance, I was not fastening the seatbelt while driving. Then I realized it’s not correct and started using it, and even did a campaign four months ago promoting it. Till today, I always buckle up. I was happy when many of my followers wrote that they started using seatbelts after they saw me using it,” concluded Hamad.

Photo

o f t h e d a y



KUWAIT: The grey heron (Abu Al-Khaseef) wades in Kuwaiti sea waters - its winter habitat for preying. — KUNA

CUSTOMS OF A PRE-OIL KUWAITI WINTER TIME

KUWAIT: Like all countries in the Arab world, Kuwait has its share of colloquial terms, some of which have disappeared with the introduction of technology and a modern lifestyle in the post-oil discovery era. In the midst of a cold Kuwaiti winter, we highlight some of these words and habits that might seem unfamiliar to locals, let alone the common Arabic speaker.

The pre-oil era delivered words that were necessary for those particular times as precautions, made ahead of the cold and rainy seasons, were of a simpler nature than they are today. In those days, families were known to have purchased specific wood, which they would light up for their central heating and campfires, known as Al-Gorm. Due to the tough desert conditions in the Arabian Peninsula, which make it tough for trees to grow, this wood was imported from India and is known for its distinct and pleasant smell.

Chandals

Lighting this wood up in Al-Dowwa - a practice which is observed to this day, but is now restricted to camp sites - was also common. "As families would suffer from the extreme desert winters, homes - which mostly included only one floor - in those days, had high walls," Kuwaiti historian Adel Al-Saadoun said.

"This is why their walls were high and most rooms did not have windows." Walls would be plastered from the inside, with roofs held up by thick wooden sticks, known as Chandals, painted in a black oil-based paint called Sayali. The Chandal would be placed diagonally to hold up a roof built from palm tree branches which are, in turn, covered with a mixture of plaster and ash, he said.

Families were aware of the arrival of winter, particularly during the time between the beginning of

December and mid-January - a season known as Al-Marbianiya, says historian Saleh Al-Misbah. It is during this season that winds are at their most fierce, as northerly winds shift southwards by noon, he adds.

As winter approaches the Kuwaiti seafaring population would head to Al-Safat Square - located in downtown Kuwait City next to the Gulf coastline. There they would buy their needs of fuel, wood or coal for burning from travelling desert Bedouins in exchange for goods they have manufactured themselves or obtained through sea trade, he said.

Al-Misbah adds that some would assist the burning of fire with dried goat dung, known as Yilla. About professions during the cold season, Al-Misbah explains that the common practice of pearl diving stopped in winter due to the cold waters temperatures. Instead pearl divers would choose between pursuing traditional craftsmanship or trade in foreign warmer waters with an emphasis on purchasing heavy winter clothing.

Bedouin men would wear sheepskin or camel hide while city dwellers would dress in a thick Bisht - a dark cloak-like garment, worn over the traditional dishdasha, woven from wool or fine camel hair. Today the Bisht has come to symbolize a man of high status or the clergy.

As for women, they would wear a thick version of the colorful local dress known as Darraa, covered by their black Abaya, adds Al-Misbah. About local wintertime cuisine, he says these included Aseeda (a sweet or savory dish dumpling made with flour) Khabeesa (a mixed cardamom and semolina pudding) lentil or dry bread (Rigag) soups, boiled chickpeas or fava beans, steamed rice mixed with lentils and hot tea with milk - most of which are still eaten today. — KUNA

'MODERATION, UNDERSTANDING' SHIELD YOUTHS AGAINST TERRORISM, EXTREMISM

CAIRO: Teaching youth moderation and understanding will protect them against terrorism and extremist ideals, said the visiting Kuwait Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Al-Sane. Speaking at a forum organized by the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS) Egypt Branch, held late on Wednesday, the Minister said the advent of social media networks made it

easier for extremists to infiltrate the minds of youth, adding that extremism had many shapes and forms. Freedom of faith and coexistence are the key ingredients for any successful society, said the official, stressing that notions of moderation were already integrated in the message of Islam. Al-Sane was participating in a forum on moderation and understanding within Kuwaiti society. — KUNA



Saqer Al-Bader

TOURISTIC ENTERPRISES WELCOMES ITS VISITORS

Acting Public Relations and Marketing Director at Kuwait Touristic Enterprises Saqer Al-Bader said the Entertainment City will be opened on Friday Jan 1st, and Saturday Jan 2nd, 2016 (from 10 am until 10 pm). It will also receive visitors - Sunday until Thursday - from 4 pm until midnight. Monday is women's only day, every week.

SYRIAN 'PAID KD 22,000' TO GET KUWAITI PASSPORTS FOR HIS SONS

KUWAIT: Two Syrians, who got Kuwait citizenship after paying KD 11,000 each have been arrested. Security sources said that a Syrian made a deal with a Kuwaiti and his brother to add the suspect's children to the file of the first Kuwaiti suspect in exchange of money in 2007. Sources said the two Kuwaiti suspects gave incorrect information and forged official documents to get two Kuwaiti passports and civil IDs for the two Syrian's sons who became 'Kuwaitis' after paying KD 11,000 for each passport.

Sources said security information prompted Assistant Undersecretary for Nationality and Passports Affairs to ask for an arrest warrant

against the two suspects. The Syrian was arrested in Sulaibiya, and a Kuwaiti passport was found in his possession - in the name of one the 'Kuwaiti' sons. The two passports for his sons, and those of their 'Kuwaiti fathers' were seized. Sources said the Syrian father told police about his son who lives in Jaber Al-Ahmad area - he was later arrested. The Syrian father said that he agreed with the Kuwaiti suspects in 2007 to add two of his children to the file of one of them in exchange of KD 22,000. The two kids are twins (born in 2002). The Syrian and his sons have been sent to the Public Prosecution.

News

in Brief

'End of Year Sale'

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Fair (KIF) Company kicked off yesterday, its annual "end of year sale" with an Arab and foreign participation. The sale exhibition consists of 140 pavilions that showcase all families' needs from different countries, most prominently Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and India, KIF said in a statement. The sale event plays an important role in reviving trade and tourism in the country, it added.

PAKISTAN AND KUWAIT DISCUSS COOPERATION IN DIVERSE FIELDS

'MILITANT GROUPS DAMAGING THE IMAGE OF ISLAM'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Kuwait discussed ways to enhance cooperation in diverse fields in a meeting between the President of Pakistan, Mamnoon Hussain, and Ambassador of Kuwait to Pakistan, (His Excellency) Nawaf Abdul Aziz Alenezi. President Mamnoon hosted a special family lunch in honor of the Kuwaiti dignitary at the President House in federal capital Islamabad. In an exclusive interview with KUNA yesterday in this regard, the Kuwaiti envoy said main purpose of the meeting was to extend an invitation to the President to visit Kuwait, on behalf of His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah.

The President expressed gratitude for the invitation and addressed well wishes to His Highness the Amir. He appreciated the efforts of His Highness the Amir for the cause of humanity and its welfare. During the meeting, the envoy recalled the high level visits by Kuwaiti dignitaries including His Highness the Amir in 2006, His Highness the (Deputy Amir) and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in 2013 and Speaker of the Kuwait National Assembly (Parliament), Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanim, in 2015.

Enhancing trade

On a question related to economy, the Ambassador said Pakistan and Kuwait agreed to enhance the trade volume between them. During the meeting, the President urged the chamber of commerce of both countries to increase visits and emphasized introducing each others products to their respective markets and ensuring the product access to the market. Discussing the import of manpower, the ambassador said Kuwait has agreed to import technical manpower from Pakistan and has hired 200 doctors recently from the brotherly country. Commenting on Pakistan-India relationships and recent surprise visit by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Pakistan, the envoy said Kuwait welcomes this visit and considers it as a positive step towards peace process between the two countries.

He expressed hope that this visit will play a significant role in resolving the outstanding issues between the two neigh-



Kuwait Red Crescent Society distributes aid to Syrian refugee families in Lebanon.

KRCS distributes aid

BEIRUT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society announced yesterday distributing aid to 700 Syrian refugee families in various parts of Lebanon as part of the winter campaign "warm winter 2016" that was launched to rescue 30,000 Syrian families that have taken up refuge in Lebanon. KRC envoy to Lebanon Dr Musaed Al-Enezi said in remarks to KUNA that blankets were distributed to 700 Syrian families in Al-Beq'a, in eastern Lebanon, and Akkar, the country's northermost region, besides offering medicines as part of the GCC joint project, executed in coordination with Qatar Red Crescent Society. Continuous relief campaigns carried out by the society, especially in Lebanon, are meant to alleviate suffering of the Syrian families and meet their needs as much as possible, he affirmed. Relief operations coordinator at the Lebanese Red Cross Society Yousef Butrus stressed on the importance of the campaign at such timing as Lebanon is approaching a wave of cold weather, snowfalls and heavy rains. He hailed the great role played by the KRCS in offering aid to people in need despite bad weather conditions.

Image of Islam

In a discussion with President on the issue of current crises faced by Muslim world, the Ambassador said, "The militant groups like so-called Islamic State are damaging the image of Islam and Muslim Ummah (nation) need to maintain a uniform stance against them to combat terrorism." On a question about relaxation of Kuwait visa policy for Pakistani community, the Ambassador said the President emphasized need of relaxation of family visas by Kuwait to Pakistani community. He assured the envoy that no militant would land on the Kuwaiti soil from Pakistan as over 80 percent of the militants are eliminated from Pakistani soil through military operations against them.

Answering a question about the political relationships, the envoy said President Mamnoon was of the view that the political leaderships of the two countries must visit each other more frequently in order to enhance the bilateral ties. "The frequent visits by the political leaders would help both countries to develop a uniform stance on the issues of common interests in the international platforms like United Nations and Organization of Islamic Cooperation," the Ambassador quoted the president as saying.

On a question regarding the enhancement of defense ties between the two brotherly countries, the Ambassador told KUNA, "Kuwait admires the advance military and technological capabilities of Pakistan."

The President briefed the Ambassador about the latest military products of Pakistan including the JF-17 Thunder fighter jets, latest tanks and advance missile/radar system of the country. In this context, the Ambassador also recalled the recent visit of the Kuwaiti Air Force Commander Maj Gen Abdullah Yaqoob Jasim to Pakistan during which both countries agreed to enhance defense ties. The Air Force Commander also visited an exhibition of the latest weapons made by Pakistan and appreciated country's technical advancements in the field of defense.

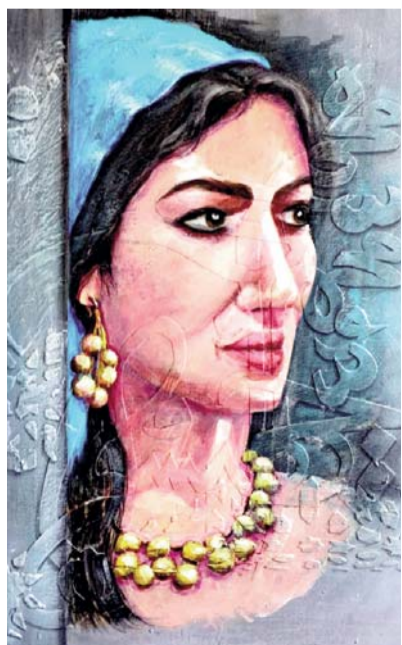


Kuwait Ambassador in Pakistan Nawaf Abdul Aziz Alenezi

boring countries. On the under construction mega project, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the Kuwait Ambassador noted that CPEC will play a vital role in boosting up the trade volume and economic conditions of Pakistan and the central Asian countries. The trade route will cut the distance and save the time resulting in the increase of trade volume and better access of commercial goods to international and Gulf markets, said the Ambassador.

On a question about the overall environment during the meeting, the Ambassador told KUNA that the three-hour meeting with the dignitary was held in a cordial and very friendly atmosphere. The President shared his quality moments spent in the State of Kuwait along with his family and revealed that he has friendly relations with quite many Kuwaiti families. Reiterating Kuwait's stance for supporting Pakistan in efforts against terrorism, the Ambassador expressed his deep gratitude to the President for inviting him and his family over the lunch and wished that peace might prevail in all parts of Pakistan. — KUNA

Kuwaiti wins Dubai award



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti painter Manal Ahmad Al-Shrayaan has come first in the formative arts category at the Arab level in Dubai Cultural Award the contest ninth session. In remarks to KUNA, the painter said she was elated for winning this renowned award noting that she earned it for her work, "in her 40s," a painting depicting an Arab Gulf woman, whose face features beam optimism, but wrinkles indicate undergoing hard living experience. The awards' distribution will be held in January. More than 500 contestants have taken part in the award various categories, such as poetry, short stories, novels, formative arts, dialogue with the west, drama, documentaries, Arab women researches, the year's UAE cultural personality and best writer.

Award winning painting

DUBAI, ISTANBUL 'TOP HOLIDAY DESTINATIONS' FOR KUWAITIS

KUWAIT: Dubai and Istanbul are the top touristic destinations for Kuwaitis during the midterm academic holiday in the country, according to several travel agencies. People choose these two cities due to the low prices offers they provide for tourists as well as the wide selection of attractions suitable for Kuwaiti families, a number of travel agents said yesterday.

There are about 15 flights daily from Kuwait to Dubai and seven to Istanbul, said travel agent Ahmad Farhat, adding

that people usually choose a destination with the most lucrative flight offers. On his part, chairman of a travel agency Ahmad Abdulsattar said that Beirut is the third top destination for Kuwaitis, while GCC tourists are heading to Sharm El-Sheikh once again to enjoy the low prices offered on hotels there. The number of Kuwaitis visiting Europe is not high since the weather is extremely cold and the holiday time is short, he added.

Abdulsattar also noted that ticket prices are not yet fully affected by the

drop in oil prices, while competition between travel agencies to attract tourists is keeping prices reasonable in the holiday season. Meanwhile, a number of citizens said they preferred spending the holiday in Kuwait to enjoy its cold weather and the wide range of offers on renting chalets and camps. Chalets in Kuwait provide different types of entertainment for the whole family, including marine and land activities such as fishing and bike riding, said citizen Ghazi Al-Shammari. — KUNA

International

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 2016

Strange weather brings warm welcome to 2016

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Syrian family finds home, hope in Germany

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Afghan village reveals key for Taliban 'success'

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WORLD WELCOMES NEW YEAR DESPITE FEARS

SYDNEY: New Year's Eve kicked off in Sydney, but tightened security muted revelries in Europe with Brussels scrapping celebrations and fireworks cancelled in Paris as fears of jihadist threats cast a pall. Australia's biggest city, Sydney, traditionally the first to host a major event to ring in the New Year, welcomed 2016 with spectacular midnight fireworks as crowds thronged to harbor-side vantage points.

Pyrotechnics burst over the city in a colorful display which was expected to draw more than one million people, ahead of the chimes of midnight moving across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and finally the Americas. In the heart of Europe, annual festivities and fireworks in Brussels have been cancelled as the Belgian capital-home to NATO and the European Union-remains on high alert. "It's better not to take any risks," Mayor Yvan Mayeur said.

Belgian officials are battling terror on two fronts-with police yesterday detaining six more people over an alleged New Year attack plot in Brussels as well as arresting a tenth suspect over last month's jihadist massacre in Paris. Officials said two men had already been formally charged with terrorism-related offences and that police detained six more people Thursday for questioning over an alleged plot to strike "emblematic sites" in the Belgian capital during the end-of-year festivities.

Paris, still reeling from the November 13 slaughter of 130 people, has also cancelled its fireworks display. But authorities agreed France's biggest public gathering since the attacks can go ahead on the Champs Elysees Avenue, with bolstered security. "The people of Paris and France need this symbolic passage into the New Year," said Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo. "After what our city has lived through, we have to send a signal to the world," she told the weekly Journal du Dimanche.

High security

Hong Kong, Beijing, Singapore and other Asian cities may rival Sydney's pyrotechnic splash, but Brunei will offer a sober evening after banning Christmas in a shift to hardline Islamic law. Jakarta remains on high alert after anti-terror police foiled detailed plans for an alleged New Year suicide attack in the Indonesian capital.

Turkish police have detained two Islamic State suspects allegedly planning to stage attacks in the centre of the capital Ankara which is expected to be packed on New Year's Eve. Meanwhile, in Moscow police will for the first time close off Red Square where

tens of thousands of revelers traditionally gather.

"It's no secret that Moscow is one of the choice targets for terrorists," Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanin said recently. In Britain, Scotland Yard said there will be around 3,000 officers across central London in what is reported to be an unprecedented anti-terror security effort. "Our plans are purely precautionary and not as a result of any specific intelligence," said Superintendent Jo Edwards, spokeswoman for Scotland Yard. Fireworks were banned in towns and cities across Italy, in some cases because of a recent spike in air pollution but also because of fears that, in the current climate, sudden loud bangs could cause crowds to panic.

The number of police on duty in Italy has been increased by 30 percent compared to last year although the Interior Ministry stressed: "There has been no specific alert." In Madrid, thousands of people will flock to Puerta del Sol square, however police will limit the number allowed in to just 25,000. Berliners will do better with about a million expected at the Brandenburg Gate for a free mega-street party.

Party at the pyramids

Cairo meanwhile is trying desperately to attract tourists to bolster the economy. The government is staging celebrations in front of the pyramids near the Egyptian capital, with ambassadors, artists and intellectuals all invited. Egypt has been in turmoil since the 2011 uprising but was further hit by the October 31 crash of a Russian airliner over the Sinai killing 224 people. On the nearby Gaza Strip, the Islamist group Hamas has banned public New Year's Eve parties. Police spokesman Ayman Al-Batinji told AFP such celebrations were "incompatible with our customs, traditions, values and the teachings of our religion".

In stark contrast, Sierra Leone's capital Freetown is hoping to reclaim its mantle as host of the best beach parties in Africa after Ebola scared people away. The city of 1.2 million was deserted 12 months ago during the worst Ebola outbreak ever recorded. "This New Year's Eve I am going to dance and party until the cock crows," said 35-year-old Franklyn Smith. Celebrations away from the palm-fringed beaches will be muted, however, as people remember almost 4,000 victims of the epidemic.


In New York, despite a pledge of tight security for Times Square, another million people are expected to turn out to see the ball descend. This year's show includes performances by artists Demi Lovato, Daya and Jessie J —AFP



BUDAPEST: This long-exposure picture taken in Budapest yesterday shows the New Year 2016 written with a flashlight in front of a Christmas tree. — AFP



Recall
TOYOTA
Avalon
2013-2015

PRODUCT	MODEL NAME MODEL YEAR	FRAME NUMBERS RANGE	
		FROM	TO
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NUMBER OF UNITS: 140			
RECALL REASON	Under certain situations, the PCS (Pre-Collision System) could interpret a steel joint or plate in the roadway as an object that triggers the PCS activation. If this occurs, in rare cases, the system warning buzzer sounds and the system may automatically activate the brakes.		
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NEW YEAR REVELERS UNFAZED BY WORRIES

'WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO LIVE'

NEW YORK: In Bangkok, police-flanked party-goers will ring in the new year at the site of a deadly bombing that took place just months ago. In Paris, residents recovering from their city's own deadly attacks will enjoy scaled-back celebrations. And in Belgium's capital, authorities anxious after thwarting what they say was a holiday terror plot have canceled festivities altogether.

As the final hours of 2015 draw to a close, many are bidding a weary and wary adieu to a year marred by attacks that left nations reeling and nerves rattled. Still, most places are forging ahead with their celebrations as many refuse to let jitters ruin the joy of the holiday. "We still have this fear but we need to continue to live," said Parisian Myriam Oukik. "We will celebrate." A look at how people around the world are doing exactly that:

Australia

Simultaneous fireworks displays erupted along Sydney's famed harbor, where people crowded onto balconies, into waterside parks and onto boats as they jockeyed for the best view, clinking glasses and whooping with joy as the first pyrotechnics exploded. More than 1 million people were expected to watch the glittery display, featuring a multicolored firework "waterfall" cascading off the Harbor Bridge and effects in the shapes of butterflies, octopuses and flowers. Australian officials, struggling to contain the threat from home-grown extremists, encouraged revelers to enjoy the evening and assured them that thousands of extra police were patrolling major cities. "Don't change your way of life," Melbourne Lord Mayor Robert Doyle urged residents of his city. "Don't let events from around the world challenge the way that we live."

Japan

New Year's Eve is Japan's biggest holiday, and millions crammed into trains to flee the cities for their hometowns to slurp down bowls of noodles, symbolizing longevity, while watching the annual Red and White NHK song competition. As midnight approaches, families bundle up for visits to neighborhood temples, where the ritual ringing of huge bronze bells reverberates through the chill. Tokyo is on special alert for security issues this year, with posters in subways and other public spaces warning people to keep their eyes open for suspicious packages or activities.

Koreas

South Koreans mark New Year's Eve with traditional bell ringing ceremonies, fireworks and outdoor music and dance performances. Thousands of people, including North Korean refugees, are expected to gather at a town near the border with rival North Korea to watch one of the ceremonies and wish for peaceful Korean unification. North Korea is expected to mark the new year with a speech by leader Kim Jong Un, which outside observers use to pore over for insight on the reclusive country's policy direction.

China

An official New Year's Eve celebration is planned near Beijing's Forbidden City with performances and fireworks, and one of China's most popular TV stations will broadcast a gala from the National Stadium, otherwise known as the iconic Bird's Nest. For security reasons, Shanghai is closing subways near the scenic waterfront Bund because of a

stampede last New Year's Eve that killed 36 people and blemished the image of China's most prosperous and modern metropolis. Beijing's shopping and bar areas are under a holiday security alert that started before Christmas and has resulted in armed police standing guard at popular commercial areas. Police commonly issue such alerts during holiday periods.

Malaysia

Security has been beefed up in Malaysia's biggest city, Kuala Lumpur, where fireworks will ring in the new year at a historical square as well as at the Petronas Twin Towers, one of the world's tallest buildings. Malaysian authorities have detained more than 150 suspects linked to the Islamic State group over the past two years, some of whom were allegedly plotting to launch attacks in strategic areas of Kuala Lumpur.

Philippines

No specific threats timed for New Year's revelries have been detected in the capital, Manila, or other major cities, although government forces are always on alert due to the presence of small but violent Muslim militant

the exercise a "mockery of a mock drill." She and a friend were shopping when two police officers ran past them. Then a security official said two terrorists had entered the mall. "The whole thing was comical," said Arthur, who was irritated that no information was given to shoppers on where to go or what to do.

UAE

In the megacity of Dubai, three separate firework displays are set to wow spectators. The show starts from the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building at 828 meters (905 yards). Already, organizers say the tower has been fitted with 400,000 LED lights and 1.6 tons of fireworks will be used in the display. From there, fireworks also will light up the sky around the sail-shaped Burj Al Arab and later down near the Dubai Marina. Fireworks also will be on display in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the country of seven emirates. The fireworks will end a year of challenges for the United Arab Emirates, which saw global oil prices drop below \$40 a barrel and dozens of its soldiers killed in the ongoing Saudi-led war against Shiite rebels in Yemen. Meanwhile, the Mideast as a whole still reels from the onslaught of the Islamic State group.

France

The French are still recovering from the Nov 13 attacks that left 130 people dead in Paris, and authorities are preparing for a possible worst-case scenario on New Year's Eve. About 60,000 police and troops will be deployed across the country yesterday. "The same troops who used to be in Mali, Chad, French Guyana or the Central African Republic are now ensuring the protection of French people," said Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian. Paris has canceled its usual fireworks display and will instead display a 5-minute video performance at the Arc de Triomphe just before midnight, relayed on screens along the Champs Elyse. In previous years, more than 600,000 French and foreign visitors gathered on the famous avenue for New Year's Eve. This year, it will be closed to vehicles for just one hour instead of the usual three. "It was a very strange year and we just want 2016 to be different, simply a normal one," said Parisian Francoise Malterre. "It does not need to be an excellent one, but just a normal one."

Belgium

Authorities in Belgium's capital canceled planned New Year's Eve fireworks amid fears of a terrorist attack. The decision came one day after authorities arrested two men in connection with an alleged plot to unleash holiday season attacks against police, soldiers and popular locations in Brussels. Mayor Yvan Mayeur said it would be impossible to screen the thousands of revelers who would otherwise be gathering in Brussels to ring in the New Year.

Brazil

Rio de Janeiro's main soiree on Copacabana Beach will have dual themes: the 100th anniversary of samba music and the kickoff to the Olympics, which the city will host in August. More than 2 million people are expected on the beaches yesterday. Police say more officers will be on hand this year than the 1,600 deployed for last year's bash. Capt. Ivan Blaz, spokesman for Rio's police force, told The Associated Press that they have received no reports of terrorism. The partying will happen at a time when Brazil is mired in crisis. The economy has plunged, the opposition is pushing to impeach President Dilma Rousseff and a host of financial and government scandals have soured Brazilians.

New York

Around 1 million people are expected to converge on New York City's Times Square for the annual celebration. The party begins with musical acts, including Luke Bryan, Charlie Puth, Demi Lovato and Carrie Underwood, and ends with fireworks and the descent of a glittering crystal ball from a rooftop flagpole. This year's festivities will also be attended by nearly 6,000 New York City police officers, including members of a new specialized counterterrorism unit. People usually begin filling the square and adjoining blocks before sundown for the televised spectacle. Everyone arriving gets screened for weapons with a metal-detecting wand. — AP



PARIS: A soldier patrols at the Notre Dame cathedral. France's defense minister has visited troops on duty ahead of unusually tense New Year's Eve celebrations in Paris. — AP

groups in the country's south. Concern on New Year's Eve is instead focused on the use of illegal fireworks, which last year injured more than 850 people. Shopping malls and cities have organized fireworks displays to discourage people from lighting their own firecrackers. A huge religious sect, the Iglesia ni Cristo, will attempt to break the world record for the largest fireworks display and the highest number of sparklers to be lit in one place.

An annual thanksgiving procession of the Black Nazarene, a black wooden statue of Jesus Christ, was held a day earlier than usual yesterday to prevent injuries from mounds of trash and unexploded firecrackers that litter Manila's streets after New Year's revelries. A larger procession of the statue will be held Jan 9.

India

Hotels and restaurants in and around New Delhi have been advertising grand party plans with live bands, dancing and plenty of drinks. With security being a concern, police and anti-terror squads on Tuesday conducted mock terror-attack drills at a crowded shopping mall and food court. Witnesses, however, were unimpressed. Mona Arthur, a Delhi journalist who was in the mall at the time, dubbed

Gaza Strip

Gaza's Islamist Hamas rulers banned New Year celebrations in the Palestinian coastal enclave. Police spokesman Ayman Batniji said hotels and restaurants were allowed to hold parties a day earlier, or a day later. "Celebrating the New Year contradicts the instructions of Islamic religion," Batniji said. "It's a Western custom that we don't accept in Gaza." The militant Hamas group wrested control of Gaza, home to 1.8 million people, from forces loyal to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas of the secular Fatah movement in 2007.

Kenya

Police in Kenya, which has been repeatedly attacked by al-Shabaab militants based in neighboring Somalia, are urging vigilance as many people prepare to celebrate in hotels and watch midnight fireworks displays. Unauthorized fireworks have been banned as a safety hazard "in view of the elevated threat of terrorism," police said.

"Kenyans should remain vigilant at all times and know that we are facing a real terror threat since the split of Al-Shabaab into two groups, one supporting al-Qaida and

TURKEY KILLED 3K PKK REBELS IN '15

ISTANBUL: Turkish security forces killed 3,100 Kurdish militants in 2015, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday, vowing no let-up in a relentless offensive to oust rebels from towns and mountains in the southeast. His remarks, which were part of a televised New Year's address, come as alarm grows over the humanitarian impact of curfews in the southeast to back up the latest military campaign against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) that began earlier this month.

"In 2015, 3,100 terrorists were neutralised in operations at home and abroad," he said referring to the military operations on PKK

strongholds in southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq. "Our security forces are flushing out the terrorists from every inch of the mountains and the towns and will continue to do so," he said. It was not possible to independently verify the toll. Erdogan said another 200 members of the security forces had been killed, as well as an unspecified number of civilians.

A new upsurge of violence between the security forces and Kurdish rebels erupted in July in the wake of attacks blamed on Islamic extremists, shattering a fragile two-and-a-half year truce. The authorities sent tanks into the southeast and also carried out

bombing raids on PKK storage facilities and hideouts in southeast Turkey and northern Iraq.

In the latest operations, curfews imposed on December 14 are still in place in the towns of Silopi and Cizre in Sirnak province which normally have populations of some 100,000. A partial curfew is also in force in the Sur district of the Diyarbakir region which was put in place on December 2. Ankara says the extreme measures are needed to root out the PKK from urban areas where they had erected barricades and dug trenches. But opponents say the use of force has been excessive.

According to the opposition pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP), 56 civilians have been killed during curfews this month alone. "These curfews, whose aims are public order and security, have led to terrorizing the public, the killing of civilians, the destruction of cultural heritage sites, and the ruining of the cities," said HDP MP Ayhan Bilgen. The PKK launched a formal insurgency against the Turkish state in 1984, initially fighting for Kurdish independence although it now presses more for greater autonomy and rights for the country's largest ethnic minority. The conflict has left tens of thousands dead. — AFP

ISRAEL BANS NOVEL ON ARAB-JEWISH LOVE

JERUSALEM: Israel's education ministry has disqualified a book depicting a love story between an Israeli and a Palestinian from school curriculums, sparking an outcry from cultural figures but a boost in sales. The education ministry said yesterday that Israeli author Dorit Rabinyan's "Gader Haya" (translated as "Borderlife" in English) had been rejected for inclusion in school curriculums.

"Officials discussed the matter of including the book in the curriculum," the ministry said in a statement. "After it seriously examined all the considerations, and weighed the advantages and drawbacks, they decided not to include the book in the curriculum." The ministry provided no further details on the rejection of the book, which Israeli media reported had been recommended for inclusion by a ministry-backed committee.

Newspaper Haaretz quoted an education ministry official, Dalia Penig, saying one of the reasons for the exclusion was that the book could undermine the "separate identities" of Jews and Arabs. "Intimate relations between Jews and non-Jews, and certainly the option of formalizing them through marriage and having a family—even if it doesn't come to fruition in the story—are viewed by many in society as a threat to separate identities," she said.

That prompted objections from Israeli cultural figures, many of whom have long been at loggerheads with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who formed a new rightwing government following his re-election in May. Writing in Haaretz, commentator Alon Idan said the move was aimed at "protecting the purity of Jewish blood" and reflected "institutionalized race theory".

"Intimate relations' = sex. 'Non-Jews' = Arabs," Idan wrote. "Now we can reread her words in their simpler form: Jews and Arabs are forbidden to have sex with one another." "Gader Haya", published in 2014, is 43-year-old Rabinyan's semi-autobiographical story of an Israeli who meets and falls in love with a Palestinian artist in New York. The two later part ways as she returns to the Israeli city of Tel Aviv and he to Ramallah in the occupied West Bank.

'Never so much interest'

It was among the winners of the Bernstein Prize for young writers—an annual Israeli award for Hebrew literature. After requests to include it from a number of teachers, a committee initially backed the book's addition to the curriculum but that was later overruled by two senior ministry officials, Haaretz said.

Deborah Harris, Rabinyan's agent, said the book was a success in Israel in 2015 and publishing rights had already been sold in English, French, German and other languages—with publications due in 2016. Rabinyan's previous two novels were translated into 20 languages, Harris said, adding that the controversy would hugely boost sales.

"This is going to be great for us. It is terrible for Israel, it is mortifying, beyond what I ever thought would happen here. But for us it will be a boost." Oria Piccione of Tamir Books in Jerusalem's upscale German Colony neighborhood said the shop had received five or six calls about the book yesterday, having not sold one for weeks.

"We only had one copy in store and it went this morning," she said. "We have never had so much interest in Rabinyan's books." —AFP



DUMFRIES, Scotland: A woman sits inside a Chinese Restaurant watching floodwater race by the window on December 30, 2015 after heavy rainfall brought by Storm Frank. —AFP

STRANGE WEATHER BRINGS WARM WELCOME TO 2016

WORLD BESET BY EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

LONDON: With temperatures above freezing at the North Pole, deadly tornadoes in Texas, extreme heat in Australia and floods in Britain and Missouri, the world is beset by extreme weather events as it welcomes 2016. A powerful and destructive low-pressure system in the North Atlantic has pushed the mercury up to two degrees Celsius (35.6 Fahrenheit) at the pole, 20 degrees above the seasonal norm.

The Arctic has borne the brunt of global warming, with temperatures three degrees higher than the pre-industrial era. But linking the current mild conditions to climate change is premature, warned Natalie Hasell, meteorologist at the Canadian Department of the Environment, saying that scientists do not base their conclusions "on one anomaly".

The North Atlantic depression also brought eastern Canada an unusually warm holiday period, with temperatures hitting 15.9 degrees Celsius in Montreal on Christmas Eve, around 20 degrees

above the seasonal average. This was followed by heavy snow fell that covered the country's eastern half.

In the United States, tornadoes and floods left at least 49 dead. The waters of the mighty Mississippi River have already exceeded overflow levels by four meters in some areas, claiming 13 lives. In the south, spectacular tornadoes devastated parts of Texas. The common cause of the unusual events is a particularly strong El Nino system, amplified by global warming, according to scientists.

El Ninos, which emerge every four to seven years on average and run from October through January, are triggered by a shift in trade winds across the Pacific around the Equator. However, the 2015 episode is "probably the strongest in the last 100 years," said Jerome Lecou, forecaster at Meteo-France. "There is no simple answer" to explain the exceptional conditions, he added.

Strawberries at Christmas

Although centred on the Pacific Ocean, El Nino "has an impact on a global scale," Jean Jouzel, former vice president of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), said. "Generally, El Nino years are warmer than average," he said. In Australia, scorching heat has led to large forest fires and temperatures are forecast to soon hit 38 degrees Celsius in the south. In France, the unseasonably warm weather has baffled Mother Nature with Perigord strawberries, Alsatian asparagus and mimosas all flourishing on the French Riviera. In Spain, higher temperatures and low rainfall have led to an unusual outbreak of wildfires in the north. Several Italian cities have introduced traffic restrictions to combat fine-particle pollution, which has been worsened by the dry and calm conditions. Record rainfall has brought unprecedented flooding to the north of England, leaving the historic city of York under feet of water and thousands evacuated over December.—AFP

EU FACES YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY

BRUSSELS: If the year that was turned out to be daunting, 2016 is shaping up as the European Union's year of living dangerously. The cliffhanger to keep Greece from bankruptcy and in the euro currency during high summer was chilling enough, even before nations like Hungary ramped up their rhetoric over the influx of migrants and razor wire border fences were spun out over hundreds of miles, further highlighting the increasing weakness of the EU to speak with one voice.

Still, 2015 mainly involved minor countries with limited economic and political clout punching - and shouting - well above their weight. The year 2016, however, will center on a juggernaut like Britain and an increasingly assertive Poland, both of which could become much more than a thorn in the EU's side. An economic recovery that keeps stalling on cooling relations with Moscow doesn't help. And none of that takes into account the looming possibility of another terror attack that could further damage the soul of the continent.

'Unexpected plots'

"The past year was full of unexpected plots and turns and the new year will be no different," said Professor Hendrik Vos of Ghent University. Where even to start? Well, British Prime Minister David Cameron made that easy by setting a February summit of government leaders to find a deal on how to revamp the EU so that Britain could remain a member, and a more committed one at that.

"Uncertainty about the future of the UK in the European Union is a destabilizing factor," said EU Council President Donald Tusk ahead of the year-end EU summit. Many differences remain within the realm of compromise but British insistence to make it harder for EU citizens living and working in Britain to get social and welfare benefits remains a fundamental dispute in a bloc that strives for equality



ROSZKE: In this Thursday, Aug 27, 2015 photo, a child is helped cross from Serbia to Hungary through the barbed wire fence. — AP†

among all. Talk is that a referendum on whether to stay in the EU could come as soon as next summer, well ahead of the end-of-2017 deadline, and the result could become the EU's defining moment of the year.

"I certainly don't exclude that the British will decide to leave the EU," said Vos. And, some high up in the meeting rooms of the EU institutions, fear that could be the tipping point that starts the bloc unraveling for good.

The EU has been on a slide after the major expansion into Eastern Europe in 2004 with treaty rejections, financial crises and internal dissent. And after helping new eastern members raise living standards and confidence, it is now getting a backlash of criticism from nations like Hungary, the Czech Republic,

Slovakia and Poland.

EU relations with Poland have taken a dip since a new conservative and nationalist government took office in November and started stressing Polish interests at the cost of the common EU good. As a symbol, Prime Minister Beata Szydlo removed EU flags as a backdrop to weekly government news conferences, saying they will be held only against the backdrop of the "most beautiful white-and-red" Polish flags.

The European Commission, for its part, has started criticizing Poland much like it has Hungary under Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who has consolidated power by weakening the judiciary, the media and other institutions. Germany's EU commissioner, Guenther

Oettinger, told Wednesday's edition of the Bild daily that an increase in populist governments within the EU worries him. "For the first time, I see a serious danger that the EU could disintegrate."

Refugee crisis

When it comes to the refugee crisis, unity was even harder to come by with many eastern nations flat-out refusing to take in a share of refugees who have flocked to wealthy heartland nations like Germany. The 2015 figure of people fleeing conflict or poverty who have arrived in the European Union by sea this year hit the one-million mark and after the traditional winter lull, the challenge will be to keep the number much lower next year.—AP

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SYRIAN FAMILY FINDS NEW HOME, NEW YEAR'S HOPE IN GERMANY

UNFAMILIAR FEELING OF HOPE ENRICHING THEIR LIVES

ZWICKAU: After months of flight and fear, the Habashieh family of Syria is starting to build a new home in Europe's heart and faces 2016 with an unfamiliar feeling enriching their lives. It's called hope. Like so many who crossed continents this year in search of European sanctuary and opportunity, the Habashiehs - mother Khawla Kareem, sisters Reem and Raghad, brothers Mohammed and Yaman - have sacrificed and suffered much along the way. The Associated Press has followed their often demoralizing experiences over the past four months in Germany, a nation toiling hard to shelter this year's record arrival of 1 million asylum-seekers.

At times, sleeping fitfully and bewildered as to where they were or might end up, the Habashiehs questioned whether they had made a mistake to flee the civil war imperiling their Damascus home. They seemed to have traded one barely livable life for a second, more alien one. But now, sharing a meal of tabouleh in the apartment where they've settled, their summertime leap into the unknown has been vindicated.

"I'll always be homesick in some way," says the eldest daughter Reem, 19, as she puffs a gurgling shisha pipe, its apple-scented smoke swirling in the air. "But in another way, this starts feeling like home." Like hundreds of thousands of Syrians over the summer, the Habashiehs arrived in Europe via a smuggler's boat from Turkey to Greece. Crossfire between state and rebel forces had already damaged their Damascus home once and was breaking their spirits. With her husband dead from natural causes, Khawla Habashieh sold the family car and, using the proceeds plus savings from her work as an elementary school teacher, paid for air tickets to Turkey and 12,000 Euros (about \$13,000) for space on a one-way sea journey to the Greek island of Samos.

Soul-testing

Unsure if they would ever return, the Habashiehs toiled as many memories of Damascus as they could. But moments before their August departure, traffickers told them the crowded rubber dinghy couldn't bear the weight. Left behind on the Turkish shore were irreplaceable mementos from their lost lives.

Onward they went by ferry to the Greek mainland; by foot, bus and train through the sun-scorched Balkans; and by another smuggler's minibus from Hungary to Berlin. It took 16 days and nights of almost nonstop travel to reach what they hoped would be their final destination, Germany's immigrant-friendly and cosmopolitan capital. "In Berlin we were comfortable. ... The people in Berlin are nice," Khawla recalled. Alas, Berlin was only the start of an unexpectedly complex and soul-testing German journey.

By early September, refugee housing in the high-demand capital was full and its central registration office for refugees overwhelmed, its ever-lengthening line of applicants snaking daily outside the building. Determined to absorb maximum levels of refugees without fueling an explosion of anti-immigrant sentiment, Germany has tried to disperse asylum-seekers as widely as possible across the map, including to its least salubrious corners.

So, after two weeks of patient queuing at the registration center, the Habashiehs finally got their assignment for asylum housing: Chemnitz in southeast Germany, near the Czech border. Their hearts sank as they understood they were bound for an economically depressed region of the former East Germany where anti-foreigner sentiments run high.

Full of trepidation, off they went on Sept. 16. On the train, before they even reached Chemnitz, a drunken skinhead gave them an icy glare. As the Chemnitz asylum center came into view, the Habashiehs could barely believe their eyes. The prison-style facility, its towering fences crowned with barbed wire, previously served as a barracks for Soviet and Nazi troops.

"I'm scared. I hate this," said the youngest daughter, 11-year-old Raghad, bursting into tears and embracing her mother. Yet soon, the Habashiehs found themselves protesting in vain to stay. Organizers had no beds left for them. They had to spend the night outside, waiting for a bus to take them elsewhere. Nobody could tell them where.

Lacking money

That chilly morning, the bus took them farther east toward Dresden, then to Heidenau, scene of August's anti-migrant riots, when buses filled with newcomers were pelted with rocks. This would be their new home. In its previous life, the German Red Cross-run shelter was a two-story hardware store. Today it's a factory of despondency.

"I keep telling my mom that soon we will be done here and start our lives again," Reem said in an interview a week after arrival. "But really, it's unbearable here." Workers used white sheets to create walls screening steel-framed cots from public view, but they created no sense of privacy. Toilets were too few for the 700 residents and typically filthy. The cavernous concrete hall amplified sounds. At night, as many carried on conversations and card games at a whisper, their layered voices in dozens of tongues combined with the wailing of infants to create a din of sleep-wrecking noise.

Her mother prayed to Mecca each dawn, but the daughter said she was struggling to keep her spirits up. "She is very depressed. She cries every day," Reem said, adding that she too felt her physical health slide and sometimes lacked motivation to get out of bed. While siblings played by day in the parking lot outside, Reem chiefly read books downloaded on her phone. Her brother Mohammed made friends in the shelter who went with him on time-killing treks through a nearby shopping mall, but they lacked money to buy anything substantial. Trips into Heidenau proved nervous affairs, par-



BERLIN: Raghad Habashieh plays on a toy music instrument as she arrives with her family at an asylum seeker's center.

ticularly for Reem and her mother. A man in a coffee shop shouted that they should remove the hijabs covering their hair. Someone in a passing car screamed "Foreigners out!" at them. Tempering the hostility was a volunteer, musician Julius Roennebeck, who plays French horn in Dresden's opera house. He befriended the Habashiehs and brought them blankets, medicine and German books to help them gain needed language skills. He also took them on sightseeing visits to Dresden and the nearby medieval town of Pirna.

"Julius is just wonderful," Reem said. "He has been so kind to us." "I just really like this family so much," Roennebeck said. "They're great



ZWICKAU: In this Dec 8, 2015 file picture Syrian refugee Reem Habashieh stands in front of a traditional wooden Christmas pyramid at the Christmas market. — AP photos

people." After two months without progress, Khawla's day one frosty mid-November began badly - with a gruff translator shaking her from her slumber. But her news was surprisingly good: A taxi was coming within the hour to take them to a proper home.

As the family stuffed clothes and other possessions into plastic bags, they worried, because each move since Berlin had dealt bitter blows. "Every time we get moved to a new, unknown place we have this twisted pain in our stomachs," Reem recalled. Their ultimate destination was Zwickau,

down during afternoon nap time and at night. Others soon notified the family of school places for Raghad and Yaman, her 15-year-old brother, who had grown withdrawn in Germany but now suddenly perked up. Mom and the two older children received places in daily German courses at Zwickau's community college.

Arabic hospitality

On Dec 22, the family finally received the appointment they had sought since Berlin: a formal interview to request asylum. Though that process will take months, Syrians typically receive refugee protection in Germany with renewable residency rights granted for one to three years at a time.

They have enjoyed strolling daily through Zwickau, finding Arabic shops as well as perusing the Christmas market, though shunning the fast food offerings with meats presumed not to be halal. Their growing sense of social ease is evident as Raghad leaps aboard a yellow elephant on a merry-go-round and Yaman replies "Danke" - German for thank you - when ordering sugar-coated almonds from a vendor.

They've decorated their three-bedroom apartment with red plastic baubles, tinsel and other Christmas trinkets, recalling how they used to take curious swings through the old Christian section of Damascus. Though Zwickau has a small mosque, the Habashiehs typically worship at home, with an app on Reem's phone set to sound the call to prayer five times daily. Helping restore a sense of their past life is Khawla's powerful Arabic coffee and the music of Lebanese singer Fairuz in the mornings, and relaxed evenings with the shisha pipe on the balcony.

Arabic hospitality has returned to full flow, too. A dinner of cucumber, garlic and mint tabouleh comes accompanied with rice mixed with minced beef and peas, followed by tea, fruit, cake and more no-nonsense coffee. Talk turns to what they hope the new year will bring. Raghad would like a Barbie doll. Yaman wants recording equipment to produce his own rap music. Mohammed doesn't want anything for himself, simply for peace to return to his homeland.

Reem, who already speaks English fluently and studied economics at Damascus University, says her new year's goal is to learn German and return to college. "I will speak very good German and I am very excited about it," she says. All now realize that, after months of difficulty, Germany already has given them their best present for 2016: refuge from bloodshed. "Sometimes I wake up and I feel like: Thank God I'm alive," Reem says. "I'm lucky." — AP

the town that once built the Trabant auto, a symbol of East German industry under Communism. German unification in 1990 led swiftly to closure of the Trabant line and the town's uranium industry. Mass emigration west followed, leaving 7,000 apartments in Soviet-era residential blocks empty for decades. The Habashiehs now have one. And they love it.

All recall the simple pleasure of their first night's sleep in a proper bed with peace and privacy, and their first meal home-cooked by Khawla, since their escape from Damascus. It has involved a bracing plunge into German order. The social worker who provided the door key explained how to separate garbage into three bins and rules on keeping noise

IRAN DENIES ROCKETS FIRED NEAR US CARRIER

TEHRAN: Iran's Revolutionary Guards yesterday denied that its naval forces had test-fired rockets close to a US aircraft carrier in the strategically important Strait of Hormuz. The Guards naval unit is responsible for securing Iranian interests in the Strait, a vital waterway for a large proportion of the world's oil, regularly patrolling the area and conducting exercises.

"The Guards' naval force had no exercise in the past week when the Americans claim that a missile or rocket was fired in the Hormuz Strait area," said spokesman General Ramezan Sharif. A US military official previously said an Iranian vessel had

test-fired several rockets near three Western warships including the USS Harry S Truman aircraft carrier on December 26. A French frigate and the USS Bulkeley destroyer were also in the area.

Though the rockets were not fired toward any warship their proximity to the foreign vessels and several commercial ships was "highly provocative", said the official, who was not authorized to be named. Sharif, however, accused the United States of lying about the incident—which reportedly occurred after Iranian naval forces announced via radio that the test-firing was to begin.

"Publishing such lies in the current situation is more a psychological operation," Sharif said on the Guards' official website. "The security and peace of the Gulf is of serious strategic importance to Iran. The Guards conduct exercises to increase our required preparedness at due times, based on our own schedule."

New sanctions planned

The alleged incident comes after Iran and world powers led by the United States agreed a landmark deal to limit the Islamic republic's nuclear program in exchange for lifting economic sanctions. While heralded

by moderates, such as Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, hardliners in Tehran have denounced the agreement as being against national interests.

Since the deal was struck on July 14 — it is yet to be implemented—Iran has conducted missile tests criticized by the US and also aired footage on state television of an underground missile base. On Wednesday, the Wall Street Journal reported that the US was preparing fresh sanctions against companies and individuals in Iran, Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates over alleged links to the Islamic republic's ballistic missile program. — AFP



ST LOUIS COUNTY: People look at floodwater from the Meramec River at the intersection of I-44 and Highway 141. — AP

US VOLUNTEERS FIGHTING AGAINST RECORD FLOODS

WAVE OF WILD WEATHER CONTINUES

CHICAGO: Soldiers and volunteers packed sand bags Wednesday in a frantic effort to stave off floodwaters in the US state of Missouri, where 13 people have been killed and several towns have been engulfed.

The Mississippi River is already more than 14 feet above flood stage in some areas and is forecast to rise another eight feet before cresting today, according to the National Weather Service. "We've never seen water this high," Missouri Governor Jay Nixon told CNN.

"We're in a massive flood fight."

Don Smith, the mayor of Rockaway Beach, a small resort town in the southern part of the state, calling the flooding "absolutely devastating" and pleaded for help. "I don't even know how we're going to deal with the clean-up," Smith told CNN. "One of the business owners has an antique shop: there were minnows inside." The images shown by local media were dramatic.

Muddy water inundated homes and businesses nearly to the rooftops. Hundreds of volunteers formed human chains to spread sandbags on levees before the rapidly rising water could overflow them. A man and his dog were rescued by boat from the

roof of a home that was almost completely submerged near the Missouri town of Eureka. Another man was towed out of the floodwaters with his legs dangling out the back window of his pickup. Nixon urged residents to stay out of the frigid and fast-moving waters.

Most of the 13 victims in Missouri died when their cars were swept away. "It's cold," the governor said. "It's dangerous." The United States has been hit by a wave of wild weather—tornadoes, floods and rain—that has claimed at least 51 lives in the past week and stranded millions trying to get home after the Christmas holiday.

Rising Mississippi

So far, the flooding in Missouri has only affected small towns and rural areas. But the Mississippi is forecast to approach or even exceed record highs in the heavily-populated St. Louis area on Thursday, and Nixon said he is "very concerned" about the safety of residents there. "You don't know where that water is going to go," he said. It could take about a week for the river to drop back down below flood level, the weather service forecast.

The flooding began last week after a

massive storm system dumped as much as 10 inches (25 centimeters) of rain in some parts of the state. Nixon declared a state of emergency on Sunday and called in the National Guard Tuesday to help local officials deal with the rare winter flooding—the result of a monster storm system that also unleashed tornadoes and freezing rain.

Neighboring Illinois has also been hard-hit. The storm claimed the lives of five people swept away while driving on a flooded roadway, and a state of emergency was declared in seven counties. The wild winter weather has killed 11 people in Texas, 11 people in Mississippi and six in Tennessee. Alabama and Arkansas each reported two storm-related deaths while Georgia blamed one death on the nasty weather.

More misery came Wednesday as heavy rain led to renewed flash flood warnings in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North and South Carolina and West Virginia. "Numerous roads, bridges, and underpasses are being threatened by heavy rain and rapidly rising streams and creeks," the weather service warned. Flooding was also reported in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana and Ohio. — AFP

AP-NORC POLL: ONLINE SURVEILLANCE IS OK

WASHINGTON: A majority of Americans say they support warrantless government surveillance of the Internet communications of US citizens, according to a new poll by The Associated Press and the NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. It's at least somewhat important for the government to sacrifice freedoms to ensure safety, most say in the survey. Here are some things to know about public opinion on civil liberties from the AP-NORC poll:

Most support warrantless surveillance

According to the new poll, 56 percent of Americans favor and 28 percent oppose the ability of the government to conduct surveillance on Internet communications without needing to get a warrant. That includes such surveillance on US citizens. Majorities both of Republicans (67 percent) and Democrats (55 percent) favor government surveillance of Americans' Internet activities to watch for suspicious activity that might be connected to terrorism. Independents are more divided, with 40 percent in favor and 35 percent opposed. Only a third of Americans under 30, but nearly two-thirds 30 and older, support warrantless surveillance.

The poll finds that for most Americans, safety concerns trump civil liberties at least some of the time. More than half - 54 percent - say it's sometimes necessary for the government to sacrifice freedoms to fight terrorism, while 45 percent think that's not necessary. On a more general level, 42 percent say it's more important for the government to ensure Americans' safety than to protect citizens' rights, while 27 percent think rights are more important and 31 percent rate both equally.

Terrorism concerns rising

Concerns about terrorism have risen since 2013. In the latest poll, nearly 6 in 10 Americans say they are at least somewhat concerned that they or their family might be victims of a terrorist attack, after just 3 in 10 said so two years ago. Six in 10 Americans now think that the recent attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, California, indicate an increased risk of attacks against Western countries, while 37 percent think the risk is about the same as it was before. Three-quarters of Republicans and majorities of both Democrats and independents think the attacks are an indication of increased risk.

Americans are similarly concerned about both domestic terrorism and possible attacks by Islamic extremist groups, with about 6 in 10 saying they're at least somewhat concerned about each. Democrats and Republicans are about equally likely to say they're concerned about domestic terrorism, but Republicans are much more likely than Democrats to say they're concerned about attacks by Islamic extremists, 67 percent to 47 percent.

Mixed opinions on rights

Americans have mixed views of how the government is doing at protecting their rights. Seven in 10 say the government does at least a somewhat good job protecting the right to vote, and nearly 6 in 10 say it's doing a good job of protecting freedom of speech and of the press. More than half say it's doing a good job of protecting religious liberties.

But just 4 in 10 Americans rate the government's performance as good on protecting the right to equal protection under the law, freedom from unreasonable search and seizure, or the right to bear arms. Democrats are significantly more likely than Republicans to say the government is doing a good job of protecting the right to freedom of religion, 64 percent to 49 percent. On protecting the right to bear arms, 46 percent of Democrats and just 33 percent of Republicans think the government is doing a good job. — AP



NEW DELHI: An India traffic policeman stands at a traffic intersection in New Delhi yesterday. Millions of Delhi residents will have to find alternative ways to work from January 1, 2016, when authorities impose draconian restrictions on cars to try to clean up the world's most polluted capital. Private cars will be banned from the roads on alternate days, apart some exceptions such as those that run on CNG, from January 1 as part of a slew of measures aimed at reducing smog levels that include shutting some coal-fired power plants and vacuuming roads to reduce dust. — AFP

AIR INDIA PLANE RETURNS AFTER RAT SEEN ON BOARD

NEW DELHI: An Air India plane flying to London was forced to return to Mumbai after passengers spotted a rat on board, the airline said yesterday. Though the rat was not found, the pilot returned to Mumbai on Wednesday keeping passenger safety in mind, Air India said in a statement.

Passengers were later flown by a separate aircraft to London. The aircraft would be fumigated and checked before it is returned to service. Maintenance workers

would have to make sure that the rat did not damage equipment or chew any wires and the plane is certified to be rodent-free, an airline official said. India's cash-strapped national carrier had two other mishaps the same day. An Air India pilot aborted takeoff from a northern Indian city after a stray dog ran onto the runway as the plane was taxiing. An official at the airport in Amritsar said the pilot spotted the dog running onto the path of the front wheels of the plane. He applied the emer-

gency brakes and returned the aircraft to its parking bay.

All 171 passengers and crew later boarded the same plane which took off for London. In another incident, an Air India plane from Mumbai was hit by a catering van at the Newark, New Jersey, airport in the United States. Two weeks ago, an Air India technician was sucked into an aircraft engine and killed at Mumbai airport in what aviation experts described as a "freak accident." — AFP



NEW DELHI: In this May 18, 2012 file photo, Air India planes are parked on the tarmac at the Terminal 3 of Indira Gandhi International Airport. — AP

MODI HITS OUT AT OPPN OVER STALLED REFORMS

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi hit out at the main opposition Congress party yesterday, accusing it of "disrupting" parliament and stalling key reforms aimed at lifting millions out of poverty. Modi's government enjoys a comfortable majority in the lower house of parliament but needs opposition support to push through laws in the upper house, where it doesn't have the numbers.

Raucous scenes during the most recent parliamentary session saw heckling and rowdy protests from opposition lawmakers prevent the passage of several pieces of legislation. Stalled bills include a key national goods and services tax which the Congress party had supported when in power and a proposed bankruptcy law. "Our government is trying to take steps for the poor. There are many old, outdated laws and many new laws are needed," Modi told thousands attending a public rally in Noida on the outskirts of New Delhi.

"But it is our misfortune that the Indian parliament, where laws are made, is not being allowed to function," he added. India's parliament is notoriously rowdy, and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) employed similar tactics to disrupt the former government before coming to power last year. Modi had taken a conciliatory stance during the last parliament session, hoping to win the opposition's support for his government's reforms. But yesterday he went on the offensive, urging Congress to demonstrate "responsibility towards the people," who elected them as lawmakers in the world's largest democracy.

"Those who have been rejected by the people... are not allowing the parliament to function," he said. "(They) have a responsibility to not put their political interests before national interests," Modi said, referring to Congress. He asked the party to make a new year's resolution "to not disrupt the parliament". In August more than 20,000 Indians including prominent business leaders signed an online petition urging lawmakers to end weeks of rowdy protests that had paralyzed parliament.

Congress, the party of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, slumped to its worst-ever performance last May as the BJP stormed to office with the strongest mandate in three decades. Figures released this November show India's economy grew by 7.4 percent year-on-year in the last quarter, outperforming China. The government says that another wave of legislative reforms are urgently needed to push for an even higher growth rate in the country. — AFP

2 SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR BLOGGER MURDER

DHAKA: A Bangladesh court sentenced two students to death yesterday for the 2013 murder of a secular blogger, delivering the first convictions over a series of brutal killings that have rocked the Muslim-majority nation.

Ahmed Rajib Haider, 35, was hacked to death by machete-wielding attackers in February 2013, in the first of a string of attacks targeting secular writers. The judge in the fast-track court yesterday found both students and one other man, Maksudul Hasan, guilty of murder and convicted another five people on lesser charges related to Haider's death. Hasan, 23, was given a life sentence.

One of the two students, who attended one of the country's top universities, is on the run and was sentenced in absentia. "Two students of North South University, Faisal bin Nayem and Rezwanul Azad Rana, were sentenced to death. Rana has been a fugitive since the trial began," prosecutor Mahbubur Rahman said. Rahman said the two students had been "inspired" by the sermons of firebrand cleric Jashim Uddin Rahmani, 45, who was given five years in prison for abetting the murder.

"I am not satisfied. The judge said it was a pre-planned murder. They should have been given harsher punishments," he added. Five more secular bloggers and a publisher have been brutally killed this year, triggering protests and claims that the government is not doing enough to protect dissident writers and activists.

Police say the banned Islamist group Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) was behind the attacks. Haider, an architect, became a target of the group after he helped launch a massive protest against the leaders of the largest Islamist party, several of whom are accused of war crimes during Bangladesh's 1971 independence struggle against Pakistan. Police said Haider had angered the students by writing against Islam and mocking the Prophet Mohammed on blog sites. They said Rahmani, an ABT leader, had ordered the murders of other secular bloggers from jail while he was being tried for Haider's murder. These include Avijit Roy, a US citizen of Bangladeshi origin who moderated an anti-religion website. He was killed in February. Rahmani had preached that it was legal to kill atheist bloggers who campaigned against Islam, police said.

Growing danger

Haider's father said the sentences against some of those convicted were too lenient. "I am not happy. These people are self-declared killers of my son. Yet not all of them got a death sentence," Nijam Uddin said. However, a lawyer for the defendants said they would appeal the verdict. "In his verdict, the judge admitted there was no eye-witness to the murder. There was no way the two should get death penalty," Faruque Ahmed said. Secular groups have called nationwide protests and rallies to demand more protection for publishers, bloggers and writers, some of whom have fled the country or gone into hiding.

Several foreigners have also been murdered in recent months in Bangladesh, which has also suffered attacks on minority Sufi and Shiites Muslims. A long-running political crisis in the majority Sunni Muslim but officially secular country has radicalized opponents of the government and analysts say Islamist extremists pose a growing danger. Haider was the first secular blogger to be murdered in Bangladesh. After his death, the country's Islamist parties began to protest against other campaigning bloggers, accusing them of blasphemy and calling for their execution. The secular government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina reacted by arresting four bloggers including one who was allegedly attacked by the same group of students accused of Haider's murder. The government also blocked about a dozen websites and blogs to stem the furor, as well as stepping up security for the bloggers. — AFP



DHAKA: Bangladeshi policemen escort three of the eight people accused of killing an atheist blogger in 2013, to a court. — AP



FARYAB PROVINCE: In this photograph taken on October 16, 2015, an Anti-Taleban armed Afghan commander Farooq (2R) speaks with AFP during an interview at his outpost during a patrol against Taleban insurgents at Qara Ghoily in Almar district of northern Faryab province. — AFP

FREED AFGHAN VILLAGE REVEALS REASON FOR TALEBAN 'SUCCESS' RESTORING ORDER THROUGH SHARIA-INSPIRED LAW

QARA GHOILY: Flanked by shaggy-haired gunmen, Commander Ghulam Farooq peered out from a hilltop at the biggest military prize of his storied career as a warlord—a mud-walled Afghan village captured after five years of Taleban control.

The village of Qara Ghoily in the remote northwestern badlands bordering Turkmenistan offers a rare glimpse into life under Taleban rule and encapsulates governance failures that have helped the Islamists gain ground against NATO-backed Afghan forces.

When Farooq, a powerful anti-Taleban militia commander in Faryab province, wrested control of the village in August after a scorched-earth offensive, he found a population deeply disaffected with the government despite years of hardline Taleban rule. "There," said Farooq, pointing down to a patch of clay dirt surrounded by fields of wild grapevines and deserted village roads. "The Taleban had no prison. They didn't need one. They beheaded all their prisoners over there."

They also kept a chokehold on social freedoms, a throwback to their 1996-2001 rule that made them international pariahs, including a ban on music, shaving of beards and hip Hollywood hairstyles. But despite their austere vision of Islam, the Taleban shored up support by restoring a modicum of order in the village through an effective sharia-inspired judicial system, filling a vacuum left by a Western-backed government seen as inept and corrupt.

'Tolerate the cruelty'

Unlike the official legal system, built with millions of dollars of foreign aid, the Taleban's informal court dispensed swift justice on all matters, from adultery to robbery. And one thing in particular set them apart from government officials: they never demanded a bribe. "If you go to a city court, the judge will take your money, the clerk will take your clothes and the guards

will take whatever is left," remarked a village resident, requesting anonymity for fear of retribution. "People prefer to tolerate the cruelty of the Taleban than be robbed of justice and everything they own."

The testimony highlights the anguished choices faced by a population seemingly trapped between two evils and helps explain the insurgency's stunning rise despite a decade of costly Western intervention. The Taleban remain largely unpopular in urban centres, but in many rural areas the puritanical movement has entrenched itself among alienated groups, competing directly with the government for public loyalty.

The Taleban now control more territory than in any year since they were toppled from power in a 2001 US-led invasion, with the UN estimating that nearly half of all districts across Afghanistan are at risk of falling. NATO-backed Afghan security operations that claim to kill scores of militants on a daily basis are causing the "displacement of the insurgency, not its eradication", a Western official in Kabul told AFP.

The Afghan government has frequently lashed out at neighboring Pakistan for nurturing the Taleban, while ignoring their local support base, which the official stressed cannot be uprooted by military force alone.

'Taleban's advantage'

"Insurgency is like a fever," said Sarah Chayes, author of "Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security", which looks at how Taleban propaganda appeals to graft-weary Afghans. "Focusing only on violent insurgents might bring down the fever, but unless you treat the whole patient-by paying as much attention to improving governance-you will never durably stabilise the situation."

Commander Farooq, 49, is part of a

constellation of informal militia groups seeking to bolster Afghan forces struggling to beat back the lethal insurgency as they suffer record casualties and a growing spate of desertions. Unregulated and unaccountable, such groups are often accused of banditry and predatory behaviour that in some areas has driven Afghans into the arms of the insurgents, seeking protection.

But Farooq, a Soviet-era warrior who fought alongside the legendary resistance fighter Ahmad Shah Massoud, styles himself as a formidable bulwark against the Taleban. He managed to do what government forces could not for five years—dislodge the Taleban from Qara Ghoily in an offensive that left an entire terraced hillock in the village gutted after being slammed by rockets.

The insurgents escaped on motorbikes, villagers recalled, planting landmines and booby traps in their homes and backyards as they fled. Joining the Taleban exodus were around 60 families from the village of 2,000 people, which is hemmed between caramel-coloured hills that cut through a hotbed of insurgency.

Those who stayed back are distrustful of Farooq's forces, but also fear the wrath of the Taleban if they return. Pro-government forces have a poor track record of holding territory seized from the Taleban. "I have assured them 'I will be with you when you harvest your grapes, when they shrivel into raisins, when you cook the sacrificial meat of Eid'," said Farooq, sporting a luxuriant silk turban. "We are here to stay."

Farooq gazed from the edge of the wind-swept hill, surrounded by loyalist gunmen who were amused as their hand-held radio crackled with the voice of an eavesdropping Taleban fighter hurling profanities and threats. "It is hard to gain trust as the gap between the people and the government grows," Farooq conceded, impassive to the chuckling. "That works to the Taleban's advantage." — AFP

INDONESIA ARRESTS THREE WITH IS LINKS

JAKARTA: Indonesian police yesterday arrested three men with suspected links to Islamic State as part of an operation in the province of Central Sulawesi to capture the country's most-wanted man, state media reported.

The arrests came as the US embassy in Jakarta issued an "emergency message" for US citizens warning of potential security threats at tourist beaches on the island of Lombok surrounding the New Year's celebrations. Counterterrorism officials believe there are at least 1,000 sympathizers of the radical jihadist group across Indonesia. More than a dozen men suspected of plan-

ning bomb attacks over the holiday period were arrested in a series of raids recently, and the hunt is on for their ringleaders.

"This morning my team just reported that they had captured three more people," the Antara news agency quoted Central Sulawesi police chief Idham Azis as saying. He gave no details of the arrests or the identities of the men, but said they are thought to be linked to militant leader Santoso, who has eluded capture for years and is holed up in jungles near Poso town in Central Sulawesi. A National Police spokesman did not immediately respond to Reuters

requests for comment on the Antara report. Azis said a hunt for Santoso and about 30 of his followers would conclude on Jan. 9. He said seven suspected militants as well as two policemen and an army officer had been killed in the operation.

US authorities on Wednesday noted arrests made by authorities in Turkey, Belgium and Indonesia in connection with suspected plots by Islamic State operatives or sympathizers to launch attacks over the holiday, and said they were monitoring investigations. Analysts say that Santoso, the first Indonesian to publicly pledge loyalty

to Islamic State, may be an inspiration for would-be jihadis and militants returning from fighting with the group in Syria.

However, some believe there is a bigger threat closer to the capital, Jakarta, on the populous island of Java, where most of the recent arrests were made, and say militants could increasingly target Westerners. The US embassy message did not spell out the security threat on Lombok, whose beaches are popular with Western holidaymakers, but it did mention specifically Senggigi Beach, the main tourist strip on the west of the island. — Reuters

EXPELLED JOURNALIST 'SURREAL' AHEAD OF CHINA DEPARTURE 'A VERY STRONG FEELING OF SURREALITY'

BEIJING: A French reporter forced to leave China by authorities after she criticized government policy in violence-racked, mainly Muslim Xinjiang, said she had been left with a feeling of "surreality" yesterday ahead of her departure.

Beijing accused Ursula Gauthier, the China correspondent for France's L'Obs news magazine, of supporting terrorism after she wrote an article questioning official comparisons between global Islamist violence and the unrest in the homeland of the Uighur ethnic minority. It then refused to renew her credentials, obliging her to leave when her visa expires.

Gauthier had "a very strong feeling of surreality" on her last day in Beijing, she told AFP as she carried out her final packing and finished an article ahead of going to the airport for a late-night flight. "Everything which happened was so quick and strange," she added, adding it was hard to take in. In her story for L'Obs, Gauthier questioned China's motives in expressing sympathy for the victims of the November 13 Paris attacks, writing that they were calculated to tie Beijing's harsh policies in Xinjiang into the fight against global terrorism.

The veteran reporter, who has spent years in China, suggested that violence by Uighurs against civilians in the region where clashes have killed hundreds in recent years was in part driven by resentment of government policies. "I didn't write that I supported terrorism, I never supported terrorism in my article," she told AFP earlier. "I was simply explaining that the Uighurs' anger came from somewhere, just like we can explain the origin of the anger of young Arabs who become radicalized, there are roots to it," she added.

'Designed to intimidate'

Gauthier views her treatment as an attempt "to intimidate foreign correspondents in China, particularly on issues concerning minorities, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang". Chinese



BEIJING: This picture taken on December 28, 2015 shows Ursula Gauthier, the Beijing-based correspondent for French news magazine L'Obs, looking on during an interview in her apartment. — AFP

media and officials heavily criticized her article, with the Communist Party-affiliated Global Times saying it "severely distorted the reality in Xinjiang" and represented a "double standard" on terrorism.

The journalist said her home address was posted online alongside death threats from angry readers. China's foreign ministry said she "flagrantly championed acts of terrorism... triggering the Chinese people's outrage". Asked whether Gauthier would ever be allowed to return to China, ministry spokesman Lu Kang left the issue open yesterday, telling a regular briefing: "It entirely depends on her."

Foreign correspondents' visas in China are tied to their official credentials, so that the ministry's refusal to renew her press card meant her right to remain in the country would expire on December 31. The decision to effectively expel Gauthier has been widely

criticized by press freedom groups such as Reporters Without Borders.

"The government is yet again putting pressure on journalists who criticize its policies," the organization said in a statement last week. L'Obs director Matthieu Croissandeau told AFP: "This is an unacceptable attack on freedom of information and creates a real obstacle for journalism in China." France said that the denial of a visa was "regrettable". Le Monde newspaper in an article signed by editors and reporters from multiple French media said the expulsion was "unjustifiable", calling on the French government to make a stronger protest.

France's current focus on improving economic ties with China "guaranteed in a way that Paris would allow Ms Gauthier to be expelled without making too much of a fuss", it said. "The lack of firmness of the French authorities is irresponsible," it added. — AFP

CHINA BUILDING AIRCRAFT CARRIER

BEIJING: China is building its second aircraft carrier, the defense ministry said yesterday, as Beijing expands its naval capabilities amid maritime disputes with neighbors in the East and South China Seas. "This aircraft carrier is being developed according to entirely domestic designs," defense ministry spokesman Yang Yujun told a regular briefing, adding it was under construction in Dalian, a northeastern port.

The official confirmation comes after months of rumors and hints from military officials. Beijing has rapidly expanded its military in recent years, rattling its neighbors and attracting the attention of the United States, which is making a foreign policy "pivot" towards Asia. China's first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, is a second-hand Soviet ship built more than 25 years ago. It was commissioned in 2012 after extensive refits.

"The design and construction of the second aircraft absorbed the useful experience of research and training from the Liaoning," Yang said. "This led to many areas of improvements and enhancements," he added, without providing details. The new vessel will have a displacement of 50,000 tons and use "conventional power", Yang said, as opposed to being nuclear-driven.

It will carry China's indigenous J-15 aircraft along with other planes, he added. Reactions on social media were overwhelming positive and nationalistic. "This is a very good New Year's gift for the motherland!" wrote one commenter on Sina Weibo, a Chinese version of Twitter. But others warned that having just two such ships was not enough to counter the naval power of China's rivals. "Once we have equipped each of our fleets with aircraft carriers, the US and Japan will wake up from their dream," another commenter wrote.

Blue water

Beijing's forces have been involved in sometimes tense confrontations with Japanese and Philippine units over maritime disputes in the East China Sea and South China Sea respectively, prompting fears that the disputes could result in armed clashes. Beijing claims almost all the strategically vital South China Sea, even waters close to the coasts of other states, and has turned a series of reefs and outcrops in disputed waters into artificial islands capable of hosting military facilities.

In recent months, US ships and planes have approached the new islands to assert international rights to freedom of navigation, with a B-52 bomber on one occasion unintentionally flying within two nautical miles of one of them.

"International seas and airspace belong to everyone and are not the dominion of any single nation," US Admiral Harry Harris said at the Stanford Center at Peking University last month. "Our military will continue to fly, sail, and operate whenever and wherever international law allows. The South China Sea is not-and will not-be an exception," he added, according to a transcript.

Beijing is seeking to build a "blue water" navy capable of operating in distant seas and has embarked on an extensive project to modernize its two million-strong military, the world's largest. China legalized overseas counter-terror operations by its military this week as part of a controversial new law, which said Beijing "may send personnel outside the border to carry out anti-terror activities" when the "relevant country" agrees. The measure applies to the People's Liberation Army, which includes the navy, as well as the People's Armed Police and employees of the country's public security organs. — AFP

Lifestyle

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 2016

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New Year's resolutions
for business travelers



Rana Abdelhamid shows how to escape when an attacker grabs your arm during a self-defense class in Washington.



Rana Abdelhamid speaks during an interview in New York. — AP photos

Accosted for her hijab, woman now teaches Muslim empowerment

When she was 16, Rana Abdelhamid was accosted on the streets of New York by a man who tried to pull off the head scarf she wears as a symbol of her commitment to her Muslim faith. Rather than withdraw, as she'd seen other Muslim women do, she turned her anger into a program that is now working with young Muslim women to teach them self-defense while encouraging them to become leaders and role models for others in their communities. Abdelhamid, a graduate of Vermont's Middlebury College who is now a student at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, says the challenge facing Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular has been getting worse, especially since the attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, California.

"It's unfortunate that it's becoming more needed and we're getting so many calls," said Abdelhamid, 22, who grew up in the Queens borough of New York. Robina Niaz, the executive director of the group Turning Point for Women and Families, an organization that works to end domestic violence in New York's Muslim community, said she first met Abdelhamid when she was in high school and participating in programs at the center.

"Rana is a living example of what one can accomplish when we invest in these young girls," Niaz said. "If we believe in them, if we support them, watch their back - they need just a little bit of nudging and mentoring and they are ready." Muslim women in several cities across the country are organizing or taking self-defense classes, but Abdelhamid's organization, the Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment, or WISE, goes beyond the physical self-defense skills to encourage the young women to become leaders and social entrepreneurs. The empowerment lessons can be as simple as showing the young women how to rent or reserve a room in a community center to tips on becoming a confident public speaker.

Basic program

Abdelhamid said her efforts have not been universally well received by the Muslim community. "We have had some challenges and pushback from more traditionalist members of our community who don't necessarily see space for women in leadership, unfortunately," she said. "It's really, really disheartening because you want your allies to be within the community." The program has grown since the first class was offered to about a dozen girls in the basement of a community center in Brooklyn.

The basic program, called Mentee Muslimah (an Arabic word for Muslim women), is a 13-session summer camp attended in New York by about 50 young women of high-school age that follows a 100-page course outline Abdelhamid developed during an independent study course at Middlebury. The organization relies heavily on donated space and volunteers, but it's also received donations and in some cases fees are charged to people taking the program to help defray expenses. She's in the process of setting up a formal non-profit group so WISE can have a permanent home and a budget.

Deeply caring

While an undergraduate at Vermont's Middlebury College, Abdelhamid used a grant from the school's Center for Social Entrepreneurship to expand her organization. "What makes Rana really unique that we saw in her is that this is an issue that is connected to her identity and it drives her all the time," said Heather Neuwirth, the associate director of Middlebury's Entrepreneurship Center. "She took what could have been an experience that could have shut her down, she really realized the power in that and I think the way that she connects to others is deeply caring."

Abdelhamid sometimes travels to lead programs outside New York, but most are led by people who have taken the program and then been trained to teach it. The summer programs outside New York are held in Union City, New Jersey, Washington, Dallas, Madrid, and Edinburgh, Scotland. She's working on setting up programs in Chicago, Dublin and Istanbul. Next month WISE also is planning a three-day program in Boston for Jewish women.

Nitasha Siddique, a 19-year-old student at Princeton, said she got involved with WISE after her junior year in high school when she was accepted into the New York summer programs.

"There were a lot of really important conversations I'd never had before, but had the opportunity to have these conversations and have them with a group of girls who were close to me in age," she said. — AP

Jackie Chan to produce Korea-China sci-fi Film 'Reset'

"Fatal Countdown: RESET," a high profile Korean-Chinese co-production has begun production with Jackie Chan taking a supervisory executive role. The sci-fi tale is directed by Korean filmmaker Chang, who previously directed Cannes Midnight entry "The Target" in 2014. The picture stars Chinese actress Mini Yang ("The Witness") and actor Wallace Huo ("Swordsmen"). The futuristic story involves a single mother and a scientist, who time travel to rescue her kidnapped son.

High-profile Korean technical crew, including cinematographer Choi Chan-min ("KUNDO: Age of the Rampant"), production designer Cho Hwa-sung ("New World"), music director Bang Jun-seok ("The Throne"), and editor Kim Sang-bum ("Veteran"), are also on board. Korean production house The Lamp Films had developed the original script and recruited Korean crew, including the director, while China's New Clues Films and Jaywalk Studios handled script adaptation, casting, investment, marketing and distribution. The two China-based companies had previously worked on "The Witness," which was also a Korea-China co-production.

Sources close to the production say that the film is the biggest budget co-production between the two countries, which are increasingly working as partners. "Mr Go," involving Korea's Showbox and China's Huayi Brothers in 2013 had an announced cost of \$25 million. Currently in production in Busan, "RESET" is set for delivery in the second half of 2016. Distribution companies in Korea and China have not yet been announced. An international sales agent has also not yet been appointed. — Reuters



Jackie Chan



File photo of British actor Idris Elba poses during a photocall prior to a screening of the film 'Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom' at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. — AP

Elba, Staunton make Queen's Honors List

Idris Elba, Imelda Staunton and Barbara Windsor are among entertainment figures who were included in Queen Elizabeth's Honors List for the New Year. Others on the list include actors Sian Phillips and James Nesbitt, "Queen" screenwriter Peter Morgan, Blur frontman Damon Albarn and DJ Clifford Price.

Windsor ("East Enders") and Phillips ("Dune") were made Dames; "Beasts of No Nation" star Elba, Nesbitt ("The Hobbit" trilogy) and Albarn became OBEs (Order of the British Empire); Staunton ("Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix") was made a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire); and Price aka Goldie an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire). They are among 1,196 honorees conferred with titles this New Year's by the queen of Britain. The list comes out twice a year, on her birthday in June and for the new year. — Reuters

New Year's resolutions for business travelers

For some business travelers, the start of a new year offers an opportunity to take stock of ways to improve travel habits. Here are some ideas for resolutions from and for business travelers in 2016.

Make time for fun

Kat Cohen, a university admissions counselor and founder of IvyWise, hopes to build in "time to experience one event that is for pleasure on each business trip," even if it's "just a meal or one museum." Cheryl Andrews, president of Cheryl Andrews Marketing Communications, also hopes to "work at least one event of culture or beauty" into every trip. She started in early on her resolution this past fall, flying in to London ahead of a November business trip to tour the Victoria & Albert Museum and attend a classical concert.

Leon Rbibo, who frequently travels to Tahiti, Japan and Hong Kong for his Los Angeles-based jewelry company, The Pearl Source, says one of his resolutions for 2016 is to "extend my arrival and departure by one day each, landing a day early and staying a day later" in order to "take the time to enjoy some of the places I visit."

Keep calm and stay fit

Jamie Sigler, founding partner of J Public Relations, based in San Diego, plans to "leave time to listen to a daily meditation to keep calm and carry on when I am traveling for work. Two apps

I'm loving are buddhify and Smiling Mind." Sigler's colleague at J Public Relations, Ali Lundberg, pledges to pack her running shoes so she can explore "urban trails in 2016." "With not a lot of time to explore a destination during business travel, and the desire to get my morning fitness routine checked off the list, combining the two is at the top of my resolutions list," Lundberg said.

Protect yourself online

David Grubb, president of CMIT Solutions of Tribeca, an information technology solutions and services company, is encouraging clients to improve their cybersecurity in the new year so that they're as safe online on the road as they are at home. Grubb recommends backing up all data, updating passwords, avoiding public Wi-Fi (including free airport networks) because the networks are not secure, and using two-step authentications for all financial or purchasing transactions. Grubb describes two-factor authentications as "something you know," like a password, plus "something you have," like a one-time code received via text or cellphone, or a fingerprint scan.

Change up your dinner plans, cut out the snacks

Jared Blank, chief marketing officer of Deal News, a shopping comparison site based in Huntsville, Alabama, says travelers who frequent the same cities again and again for work "tend to fall into a rut where they eat at the same restaurants every time they go ... But for the new year make a resolution to avoid the same

places you've always gone. It'll make that 11th trip to Atlanta a little more fun."

Gayle B MacIntyre of Global Ink Communications says that "as a frequent business traveler who works in the hospitality industry, my resolution for 2016 is to cut out the peanuts, pretzels and Biscoff cookies. Empty calories add up for frequent business travelers. Arriving at a destination sans the salt and sugar has got to be a better and healthier way to arrive energized."

Don't rush connecting flights

It might seem counterintuitive to those who hate hanging around airports, but Pamela Wagner pledges to build in three to four hours between flights as a way to cut stress. "Why? I can absolutely calmly go into one of the lounges and enjoy all their facilities, and have a good two to three hours of concentrated, uninterrupted work," said Wagner, who has her own digital marketing business and is currently based in Austria. Even if you're not a frequent flyer on a given airline, Wagner says it's worth the \$25 or \$30 for an airline lounge pass to access "showers, work stations, good food and drinks." Then she calmly boards her next flight, watches a movie, gets some rest and feels ready to work. "It's an ideal rhythm," she said. — AP



Picture taken on January 1, 2012 shows Latvian conductor Mariss Jansons after conducting the traditional New Year Concert with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra at the Vienna Musikverein grand concert hall. — AP

Looks easy, isn't: Lots of work goes into New Year's Concert

A Strauss waltz is as easy as one, two, three, one, two, three. Right? Not even for the members of one of the world's best orchestras. Listening in to the final rehearsal of the Vienna Philharmonic's annual New Year's concert quickly reveals that lots of work goes into the final product of what is the world's most-watched classical music event of the year. "It's very, very difficult," said Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra chairman and violinist Andreas Grossbauer ahead of today's big event. "Take the 'Blue Danube' waltz for instance. To create beautiful phrases here, these are really difficult things."

The effort that goes into each concert is as well hidden to the more than 50 million people tuning in from nearly 100 countries worldwide as the dark origins of the event. It was originally a morale booster staged by the Nazis to draw attention away from a losing war. But now, as then, the music from the Strauss dynasty and their contemporaries is lilting. And the visuals have evolved. The floral arrangements are spectacular, TV audiences are treated to ballet segments and stunning Vienna vistas, while the gilt Musikverein concert hall is the perfect venue for a slickly staged experience that can cost more than 1,000 euros (more than \$1,000) for those lucky enough to get a ticket. But it's a tough slog to get there. For three hours this week, musicians clad in jeans and T-shirts instead of their concert finery repeatedly went over passages during their final rehearsal. Conductor Mariss Jansons was jovial but firm as he cajoled them to do it just a little better each time - more piano here, a smoother passage elsewhere. He and orchestra members picked each of the 18 pieces from an original list of 800. Even the traditionally comic segments needed honing. —AP

Blaring into a plastic horn to emit a discordant triad, Jansons asked

In Peru, ritual fighting with loud music

Renato Nunez was looking for a fight after drinking with his friends. When he found his fight partner, Nunez stood face-to-face with him before taking his mask off. He didn't need much time to defeat his rival, who soon had blood flowing down his face. Music played at full volume during the episode of ritual fighting that locals call Takanakuy, which in the Quechua language means "beat each other up."

While the popular festival is also held in July, the celebration is bigger on Christmas Day. Pretty much anything goes during combat, except for wearing rings on fingers. Women sometimes also participate in the fisticuffs. Fighting is voluntary, and no one is obligated to accept a challenge. But by refusing to participate, the challenged party by default concedes the other's superiority.

"I fight because it is a tradition and to prove my bravery," said Freddy Pacco, who wore a hat decorated with a huge, desiccated bird of prey, its wings spread wide open. The fighters wear birds or other dead animals on their heads for a more intimidating look, he explained. In

the Canto Grande neighborhood on the outskirts of Lima, Peru's capital, a piece of land used on most days as a parking lot is converted into a plaza for bullfights and regional celebrations, including the ritual fights.

Takanakuy has roots in pre-Hispanic and even pre-Incan Andean traditions. The fights are done for sport, to resolve family and personal conflicts, to gain the love of a woman or to defend a relative or friend who was vanquished in an earlier contest. Nestor Gabina and his long-time neighbor, Gabriel Anaya, fought over the exact line between their properties, a dispute that has even been brought before the local courts. The fight lasted only a few minutes before the referee separated them without proclaiming a winner. The men hugged and broke down in tears. Then they calmed the mix of adrenaline and shame with more drink.



A masked fighter wears a dead fox hat before the start of the "Takanakuy".



Dancers wearing traditional Andean dresses eat lunch before the "Takanakuy".



A masked fighter dances as he waits for a volunteer to challenge him at the "Takanakuy".



Mummers costumes are displayed at the Philadelphia Mummers Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. — AFP photos



Mark Montanaro, captain of the "Sometimes Mummers," glues parts of a Mummer costume ahead of the 2016 Mummers Parade.

In 'City of Brotherly Love,' Mummers Parade embraces diversity



David Pina, President of the San Mateo Carnavaleiro, displays parts of a costume ahead of the 2016 Mummers Parade.

For more than a century, New Year's Day in Philadelphia has meant one thing: the flamboyant costumes, boisterous music and exuberant dancing of the Mummers Parade. But the colorful street party attended by tens of thousands—often called the US East Coast city's version of Mardi Gras—has been dogged by repeated claims of racism and insensitivity, so organizers are looking to embrace diversity this year. "We have had a dream for a long time, from when we started doing this carnival in South Philly, to participate in the Mummers parade one day," said David Pina, the president of San Mateo Carnavaleiro, a Mexican organization that has been invited, along with three other new groups, to headline Friday's parade.

"Right now, we have that chance." The Mummers Parade is thought to be the oldest folk parade in the country. Mummery, which comes from the French word 'momerie' and means ridiculous ceremony in fancy dress, first arrived in Philadelphia in the 17th century when immigrant groups gathered informally to celebrate their traditions. The formal New Year's Day parade was

launched in 1901. Every year, thousands of Mummers parade through the city center in outlandish outfits bedecked with sequins and feathers—performing skits, dancing, playing music and doing the signature Mummers Strut down Broad Street for onlookers.

But the parade has remained firmly rooted in Philadelphia's white, working-class immigrant neighborhoods, despite the fact that blacks make up 44 percent of the city's population. "The inclusiveness stopped along color lines and language barriers," said Jesse Engaard, a Mummer and advocate for making the event more diverse. "African-American participation ended around the Depression, partially because of monetary issues, but also because of the prolific use of blackface." Ahead of the 1964 parade, organizers banned the use of blackface, but the festive event was still dominated by white participants—mainly men—and spectators. "It's easy to understand why people of color didn't feel comfortable or welcome or proud of being in the parade," Engaard said.



Montanaro poses during a rehearsal of the 'Sometimes Mummers,' ahead of the 2016 Mummers Parade.



Mark Montanaro (left), captain of the "Sometimes Mummers," constructs a Mummer costume.



Members of the 'Sometimes Mummies' group rehearse ahead of the 2016 Mummies parade.



Mark Montanaro, captain of the "Sometimes Mummies," and museum coordinator, poses in front of the Mummies Museum.



David Pina, President of the San Mateo Carnavalero poses for a photo.



Mark Montanaro, captain of the "Sometimes Mummies," and museum coordinator, displays part of a Mummies costume.

'Wench Lives Matter'

During the 2015 parade, controversy flared anew when a member of the Wench-Brigades, a group dedicated to mocking current events, carried a sign reading "Wench Lives Matter," a satiric reference to the "Black Lives Matter" movement. The incident led parade leaders and city officials to try to broaden the scope of the event. "Everybody wants the parade to grow and progress and to be bigger and better than ever going forward. We want to embrace diversity with the parade and for the full spectrum of Philadelphians to be involved," said George Badey, a spokesman for the Mummies.

Mark Montanaro, a long-time Mummer and a volunteer curator at the Mummies Museum, runs his own comic group made up primarily by members of his family. He says that the parade is simply misunderstood by newcomers to the city. "Mumery has never excluded anybody. It's a people parade. It's done by the people. It's working class people getting together and enjoying themselves," Montanaro said.

Engaard helped to facilitate a series of meetings and workshops that many believe were the catalyst for constructive dialogue around the issues facing the parade. He connected with members of the San Mateo Carnavalero, whose costumes are still largely handmade in Huejotzingo in central Mexico, and invited them to join him in the parade. The group was keen to take part,

and later was asked by the city to be the headliners. An African-American drill team, Second 2 None, and a Puerto Rican performance group, Los Bomberos de la Calle, will also march.

"Being part of the Mummies parade, something that's been going on in the city for over one hundred years-it makes us feel like we belong to a place," said Susana Pimentel, a spokeswoman for the San Mateo Carnavalero. "Immigrants come to get a better life and to share traditions and cultures, and if they can mix and be part of a city, why not?" Pimentel said. "It's what Philadelphia is all about. It's about welcoming whoever is from another place-it's the City of Brotherly Love." — AFP



David Pina, President of the San Mateo Carnavalero, displays parts of a costume ahead of the 2016 Mummies Parade.



Mark Montanaro, captain of the "Sometimes Mummies," spray paints parts of a Mummies costume.



Of Chipotles, Chicken and Slow Cookers

By Katie Workman

One of the greatest secret weapon ingredients I know is chipotles in adobo sauce. These are smoked jalapeno peppers that have been stewed in a sauce of tomatoes, garlic, vinegar, salt and various spices, such as cumin, oregano and paprika. Imagine doing all that yourself! No thanks! Luckily, the whole thing - peppers and sauce - is sold in tiny cans at just about every grocer.

The easiest way to use these peppers and sauce is to puree the whole thing. I just dump the contents of the can right into the food processor or blender. Then I store the puree in a sealed container in the fridge. Whenever a soup, stew or a chili (or anything that calls for a little touch of smoky heat) needs a little something extra, in goes a tablespoon or two of the puree.

Speaking of secret weapons, one of the best appliances to earn that description is the slow cooker. For many of us, this handy kitchen cooker takes up permanent residence on the counter during the colder months. The unparalleled pleasure of walking into your home at the end of a long day to be greeted by the scent of a cooked meal is hard to overstate.

In this chili, these two secret weapons join together to turn juicy and moist boneless, skinless chicken thighs into a somewhat spicy and couldn't-be-easier chili. I often make chili with ground chicken or turkey, which we all love, but it was nice to change it up with real cubes of chicken. This one is a definite weeknight keeper.

SLOW COOKER CHICKEN CHILI

Ingredients

1 cup chopped yellow onion
2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced
4 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons pureed chipotles in adobo sauce
28-ounce can diced tomatoes, with juices
2 tablespoons chili powder
2 teaspoons ground cumin
Two 15 1/2-ounce cans black beans, drained
3 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed of fat and cut into 1-inch pieces
2 scallions, trimmed and chopped
Juice of 1 lime
Salt

Shredded cheddar cheese or Mexican cheese blend
Sour cream

Preparation

In a large slow cooker, combine the onion, carrots, garlic, chipotles in adobo, tomatoes, chili powder, cumin and beans. Stir to combine, then add the chicken and stir again. Cook in the slow cooker on high for 4 to 6 hours, or low for 6 to 8 hours. Stir in the scallions and lime juice just before serving. Taste, then season with salt. Serve with shredded cheese and sour cream on the side.

Some like a hot Cheesecake

By Sara Moulton

Cheesecake is usually served cold. So brace yourself for something a little different. The first time I made this recipe, I pulled it out of the oven and set it on the counter to cool. The plan was to chill it overnight in the refrigerator. But my dear daughter - also known as The Girl with the Sweet Tooth - just couldn't wait to dig in. So I handed her a spoon. And when she started babbling with delight, I tried it, too.

Boing! It was ridiculously good. So good that I now recommend that you serve this cheesecake hot, right out of the oven, topped with a little vanilla ice cream or sweetened

whipped cream. Spring it on your guests during New Year's Eve and see if the party doesn't become even more cheerful.

That said, getting there requires some care. Be sure to buy plain pumpkin puree, which is sometimes labeled solid pack pumpkin. Avoid anything labeled "pumpkin pie filling" or "pumpkin pie mix," both of which contain unwanted sugar and spices. You're much better off adding those ingredients yourself.

Also, don't forget to drain the pumpkin puree. Losing the excess liquid from the puree improves the final texture and flavor of the cake. The cooking also requires some care. You're going to cook the cake in a water bath, which helps to equal-

ize the temperature in the oven and prevents overcooking. But first the springform pan must be tightly wrapped with foil to prevent any water from leaking into the batter while the cake is baking.

Finally, do your best to not over-bake the cake, which will make it dry and crumbly. After the allotted cooking time, it should still be a little jiggly. Worried that the cake might be undercooked at that point? Don't be. The residual heat will continue to cook it even after you pull it out of the oven.

Warm Pumpkin - Bourbon Cheesecake



Ingredients

For the crust:

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, plus extra for the pan
1 1/4 cups gingersnap cookie crumbs (made by pulsing about 25 cookies in a food processor until finely ground)
1/4 cup packed dark brown sugar
1/4 teaspoon table salt

For the filling:

15-ounce can pumpkin puree
3 large eggs
1/2 cup packed dark brown sugar
2 tablespoons heavy cream
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 cup bourbon, dark rum or cognac
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon ground dry ginger
1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
1/2 teaspoon table salt
Three 8-ounce packages 1/3-less-fat cream cheese (Neufchatel), room temperature
Vanilla ice cream or lightly sweetened whipped cream, to serve

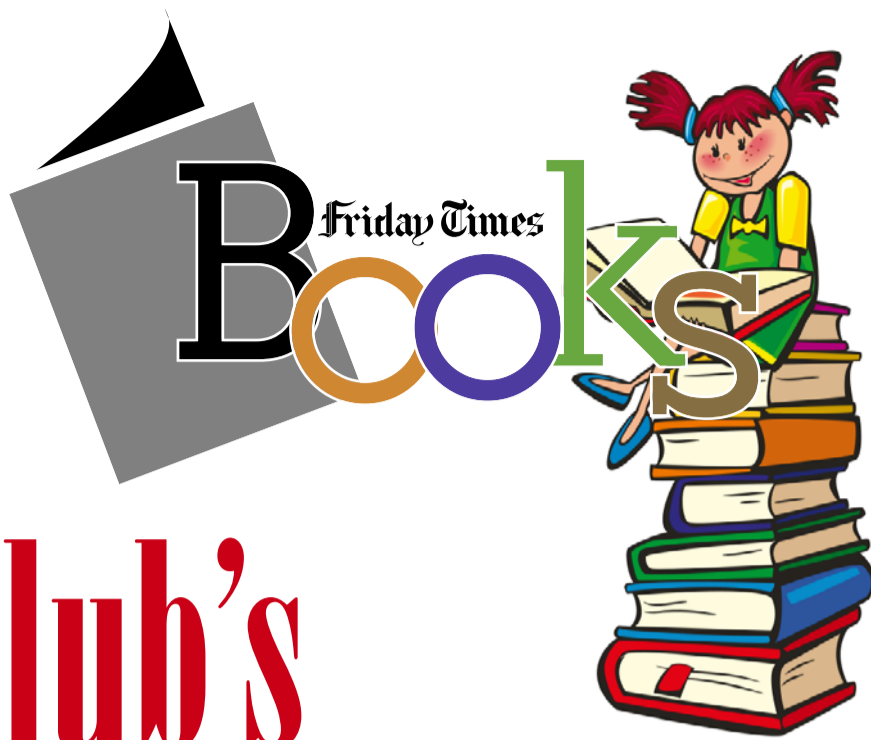
Preparations

Heat the oven to 375 F. Brush the inside of a 9-inch springform pan with melted butter. To make the crust, in a medium bowl, stir together the 6 tablespoons of butter, the gingersnap crumbs, brown sugar and salt until combined well. Pour the crumb mixture into the pan and press it evenly over the bottom of the pan. Bake on the oven's middle shelf for 10 minutes. Transfer to a cake rack and cool for 30 minutes. Reduce the oven to 350 F. Line a mesh colander with a clean kitchen towel. Mound the pumpkin puree into the towel and set over a medium bowl. Bring the ends of the towel up and gently squeeze to remove excess water (you should be able to squeeze out about 1/4 cup of liquid). Discard the liquid. Rinse and dry the bowl, then in it mix together the pumpkin, eggs, brown sugar, cream, vanilla and bourbon. Set aside.

In a large bowl, stir together the granulated sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, allspice and salt. Add the cream cheese, then use an electric mixer on high to beat until smooth, about 3 minutes. Add the pumpkin mixture to the cream cheese mixture and beat on low, just until combined. Bring a large kettle of water to a boil.

Use foil to wrap the bottom and sides of the springform pan. Pour the filling into the pan. Fold a kitchen towel so it fits evenly in a roasting pan just a bit larger than the springform pan. Set the springform pan on top of the towel in the roasting pan. Working quickly, pour enough boiling water into the larger pan to come halfway up the sides of the springform pan. Bake the cheesecake for 65 to 70 minutes, or until it is mostly set but still slightly jiggly at the center.

Spoon some of the cheesecake onto each serving plate and top with a scoop of vanilla ice cream or a spoonful of whipped cream. Alternatively, if serving the cheesecake cold, transfer it to a rack, run a sharp knife around the edge and let it cool completely, about 4 hours, before covering with plastic wrap. Chill. To serve, cut into slices and top each slice with a scoop of vanilla ice cream or a spoonful of whipped cream.



AV club's best books of 2015

So You've Been Publicly Shamed

Jon Ronson

Where Jon Ronson succeeds as a journalist (and where many of his imitators fail) is in his ability to find humanity in the most unexpected and outrageous places. So while his newest book, *So You've Been Publicly Shamed*, is, on the surface, about "them"-people who have been cast out of society due to an insensitive comment, bigoted joke, or some other online transgression—really it's about "us." In the book, Ronson interrogates call-out culture, asking not only what happens to the people who get publicly shamed online, but what our willingness to virtually tar and feather strangers says about those who are doing the shaming. It's enough to make anyone pause before hitting the "retweet" button, and that alone is an invaluable public service. [Katie Rife]



Aziz Ansari Modern Romance



Modern Romance

Aziz Ansari
and Eric Klinenberg

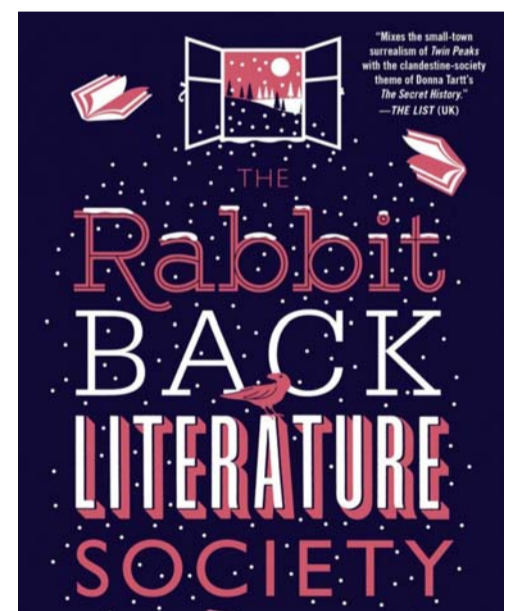
Among the few who didn't like it, the biggest complaint about Aziz Ansari's foray into publishing was that, for a comedian's book, it wasn't very funny. This argument isn't wrong, necessarily, but it misses the point of what he and co-writer Eric Klinenberg were setting out to do, which was to take a fair-minded and scientific look at dating in the 2010s. (Data works, rejoice.) At this, they succeeded magnificently, creating a work that's incredibly insightful, judgment-free, and never less than compulsively readable. As he would also demonstrate in *Master Of None*, Ansari has gotten mature enough to get out of his own way; rather than shoe-horning in jokes, he trusts the strength of his material, making points that are convincing, but never didactic. With *Modern Romance*, Ansari firmly establishes himself as one of the country's best cultural commentators. [Ryan Vlastelica]

THE FIRST BAD MAN A NOVEL BY MIRANDA JULY

The First Bad Man Miranda July

Miranda July's debut novel plays out exactly as anyone who loves her short stories or films might want it to: It's weird and sweet in equal measures, and populated by characters that at first seem unlikable but who prove themselves utterly human in the best ways. Her co-workers think Cheryl Glickman is the most boring person possible, but the main character's interior life lights up every page of *The First Bad Man*, especially as the world starts to encroach on her systematic behaviors. An unwanted roommate, a new therapist, and an ongoing obsession with a soul mate who takes the shape of a baby force Cheryl into the real world, which turns out to be just as weird as the one she's created. [Josh Modell]

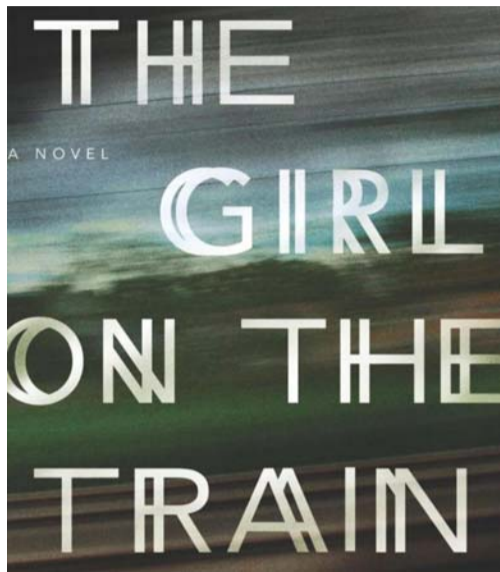
The Rabbit Back Literature Society Pasi Ilmari Jaaskelainen



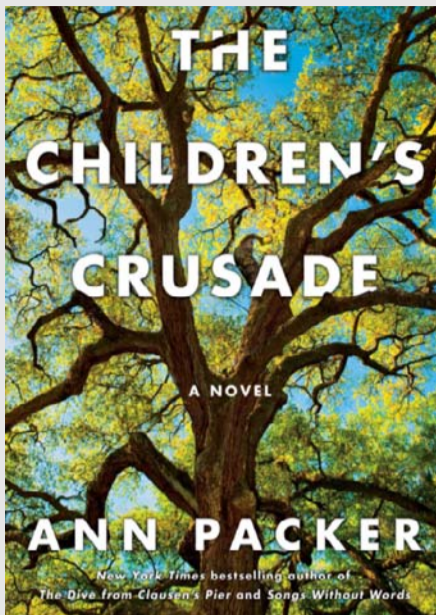
A gripping mystery that haunts the reader in the most pleasant, shivery way, *The Rabbit Back Literature Society* falls into similar terrain as *Twin Peaks*, with unexplained phenomena, a strange town, and bizarre characters. Centering on a Finnish town home to a renowned children's author, the "society" of the title is composed of children the author mentored, now famous as adults for their own literature. But that's all upset when a character disappears just as the narrator is about to be inducted in to the secretive society. The author's website lists particularly illuminating passages in the book that'll help the reader solve the mystery, because it's never explicitly solved. That's what makes this book so compelling: It trusts the readers to figure it out for themselves. [Caitlin PenzeyMoog]

The Girl On The Train

Paula Hawkins



Paula Hawkins certainly doesn't need our help promoting her latest book, the psychological thriller *The Girl On The Train*. After a seemingly unceasing tidal wave of positive reviews and press, the novel about an alcoholic divorcee trying to make sense of the events unfolding in a house near her old residence has become the kind of cultural juggernaut that makes all those *Gone Girl* comparisons a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Her protagonist's penchant for day-drinking and blacking out makes for an interesting angle on the old missing-woman scenario, and the seat-of-her-pants gumshoe work is delivered in taut prose and at breakneck speed. But there's one thing that doesn't change, even after more than 6.5 million copies have been sold worldwide, and the movie version starring Justin Theroux and Emily Blunt began production: It's a gripping mystery and a damn good book. Just make sure you buy the right version. [Alex McCown]



The Children's Crusade

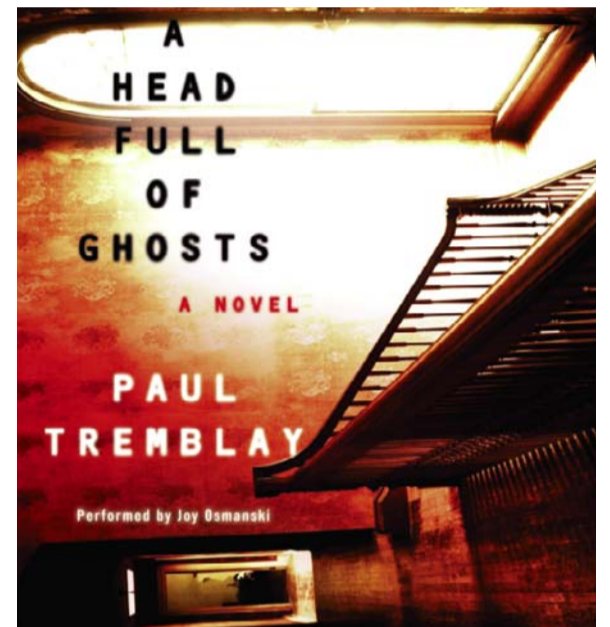
Ann Packer

Look at one in a certain way, and a family is not just a collection of related people but a kind of machine, one where each person serves as an interlocking gear, and one where a single broken piece can make the whole thing seize up. Ann Packer's lovely and quietly devastating *The Children's Crusade* examines such a broken machine, piece by piece, with thoughtful and sympathetic chapters dedicated to each member of a troubled family at different moments in his or her life. Packer probes so gently as she pulls back each layer of dysfunction that it's easy to miss how surely she's laying the groundwork for her powerfully emotional denouncement. Some great books announce their greatness immediately; this one sneaks up on you. [Ryan Vlastelica]

A Head Full Of Ghosts

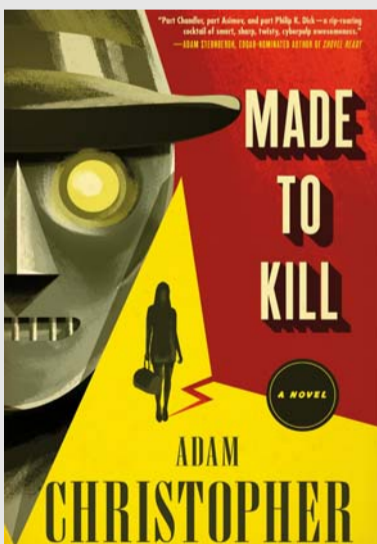
Paul Tremblay

Tales of demonic possession have been a staple of horror fiction since Ray Russell's 1962 novel *The Case Against Satan* (reissued by Penguin Classics this year) and William Peter Blatty's 1971 novel *The Exorcist*. But Paul Tremblay takes the possession story to new dimensions with his latest book, *A Head Full Of Ghosts*. Set in suburban Massachusetts 15 years after a family's alleged possession ordeal was captured by a reality show, Tremblay's intricate, dizzying thriller weaves commentary about social media, blogging, and pop-culture obsession in the internet age into a jaw-dropping reinvention of familiar tropes. And beneath the complexity and exquisite construction is a nerve-shredding odyssey into darkness whose ending will chill the heart. [Jason Heller]



Made To Kill

Adam Christopher

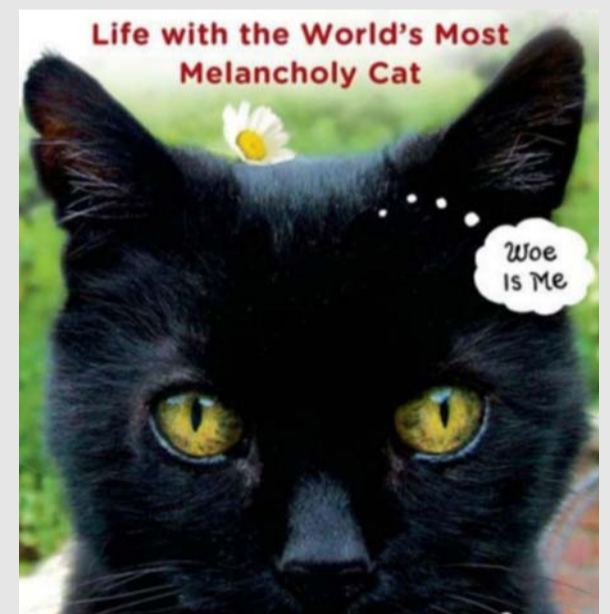
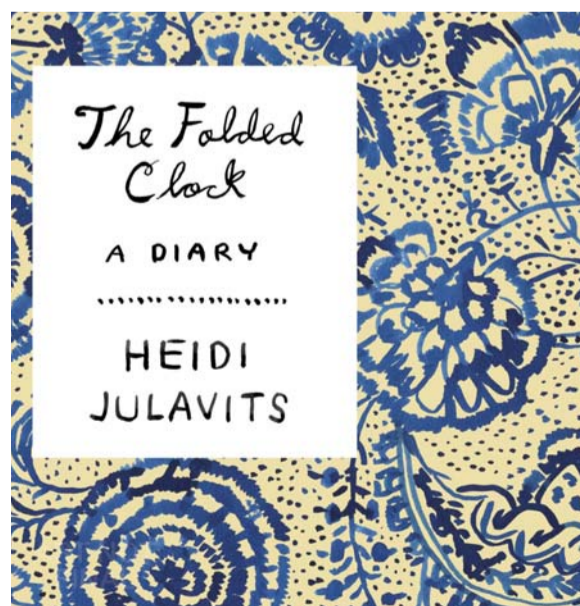


The year is 1965. The city is Los Angeles. President John F. Kennedy is still alive and well, but other than that, America looks quite similar to how history remembers it—oh, except for the robots. In *Made To Kill*, the first installment of a trilogy by Adam Christopher, a failed attempt in the '50s to convert the United States to a robot labor force failed, leaving Raymond Electromatic as the last robot in the country. Installed in a Hollywood office as a private investigator (with no qualms about taking a hit job here and there), Ray becomes embroiled in a wonderfully outrageous plot by Soviet agents, all while trying to plumb the secrets of his own creation. It's 50 percent hardboiled, 50 percent science fiction, and 100 percent retro-pulp spectacle. And in Ray, Christopher has created a mysterious, sympathetic antihero cast in titanium and steel. [Jason Heller]

The Folded Clock: A Diary

Heidi Julavits

The Folded Clock is more than the sum of its parts. It reads as a diary—each short section headed with a date (day and month but no year) and each beginning with the word "today": "Today I was stung by a wasp," "Today I ordered 10 toy stethoscopes from a party supply company," "Today I trespassed at twilight." But the entries are not in any particular order and each transcends its diary-like format to become something of an essay. In these meditations, Heidi Julavits reflects on subjects as varied as depression, modern art, bath salts, desire, and *The Bachelorette*. Read together they become a window into Julavits' thoughtful and thought-provoking mind, a mind you will want to spend time with for a long series of "todays." [Randon Billings Noble]



The Good, The Bad, And The Furry

Tom Cox

Tom Cox writes absurdly charming books, essays, and tweets, and his latest volume to make its way Stateside is a delightful examination of life, cats, and life with cats. Cox delves into the deceptively simple topic of cats to expose deep truths on relationships and death: Don't let the reductive "cat book" subject matter and the author's sizable Twitter following trick you into not taking this book seriously. Cox writes sensitively about the end of his marriage and the beginning of a new relationship, rural English living, and a cross-country move. His many cats become distinct personalities, and anyone who's loved a pet can empathize with the deeply felt portraits he draws of each. It's one of the most heartwarming books of the year. [Caitlin PenzeyMoog] (www.avclub.com)

Friday Times

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 2016

Travel



5 tips for

India

first-timers

Chaotic, bamboozling, intoxicating, crazy, exasperating, wonderful, squalid, beautiful, daunting, overwhelming, and fantastic. India is all these things, and more. How can you possibly prepare yourself? Start with our tips for taking the ultimate travel plunge: going to India for the first time!





1. Pick the perfect route

India packs a lot into a massive space, and you'll never have time to see it all on one trip. Think about what interests you, what you like doing and how much time you have, and tailor your trip accordingly. Be realistic about how much you can fit in. Rather than trying to see the whole country, you may get more out of your trip if you concentrate on the south of the country, or on the north. However, internal flights are plentiful and inexpensive so you can hop from north to south if you want a taste of both worlds. The itineraries section at the front of Lonely Planet's guidebooks to India can be a great help, but here are some possible itineraries to get the ball rolling.

The classics: The most popular India tour is the all-time classic Golden Triangle. If time is short this is a fantastic introduction to three of India's top destinations, Delhi, Agra and Jaipur, and you can squeeze it into a week if you don't mind moving every couple of days. Start in Delhi, with sights such as Humayun's Tomb and the Red Fort, before hitting Agra

and touring the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri. Then it's on to Jaipur to explore the Pink City and the fort at Amber, before returning to Delhi's wonderful bazaars for a final shopping spree before you fly home.

How to eat Indian-style

Religious sites: If it's temples you're after, you'll find them everywhere, but in north and central India, you'll be truly spoiled for choice. There's the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the erotically carved edifices of Khajuraho, Konark's rock-carved Sun Temple, and cohorts of exquisitely hewn milk-white-marble Jain temples in Rajasthan and Gujarat. Temples in the south are something else again, with towering, statue-covered gopuram towers; there are stunning examples at Hampi, Madurai, Tiruchirappalli and Tiruvannamalai, and exquisitely decorated temple caves at Ajanta and Ellora, and Elephanta Island near Mumbai.

Mughal magic: Fans of Islamic architecture will find some spectacular monuments in

Delhi, home to the Red Fort, the mosques and minarets of the Qutb Minar complex and Humayun's Tomb. Nearby you can revel in more graceful Mughal splendour at Fatehpur Sikri and Agra, home of the Taj Mahal, before exploring Rajasthan's captivating collection of Mughal forts, including Jaisalmer, the very vision of an Arabian Nights desert fortress.

Beaches & waterways: Head south to enjoy India's finest beaches. Munch bhel puri (puffed rice, noodles, green mango and a tangy sauce) on Mumbai's Girgaum Chowpatty beach before drifting south to the sand and sun in Goa. Take your pick of the Goan beaches - Arambol, Vagator, and Palolem are top spots - or try the black sand beaches of Kovalam and Varkala in Kerala, as well as lesser-known, golden sand in the north of the state. Kerala is also famous for its meandering backwaters, where you can hire a houseboat or a canoe and let the world glide gently by. Similarly serene is beautiful Dal lake in Srinagar in Kashmir, where - depending on

the security situation - you can watch the mountains rise out of the mist from the walnut windowframe of a traditional wooden houseboat.

Wildlife encounters: Your best chances of spotting a tiger are in the national parks of Madhya Pradesh or Rajasthan, but there are national reserves all over India where you can track down wildlife as exotic as lions (Sasan Gir, Gujarat), wild asses (Little Rann, Gujarat), one-horned rhinos (Assam) and wild elephants (Wayanad, Kerala), as well as abundant birdlife (Bharatpur, Rajasthan). Not quite wildlife, but certainly wild, are camel treks through the desert from Jaisalmer or Bikaner in Rajasthan.

Trekking & mountains: The north is a playground for adrenaline seekers, with pretty much every outdoor activity imaginable on offer in the Kullu Valley and the high reaches of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, from treks to skiing and white-water rafting.



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Travel

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Shimla, the classic hill station, is a great place to start, as is Manali, still further north. Ideal trekking season is in September/October, after the monsoon. To take adventure up a notch, set off from Manali for the epic two-day journey (possible from mid-June to mid-September) to Leh in Ladakh, whose towering mountain peaks are criss-crossed by epic hiking trails. Rishikesh is another top spot for rafting and trekking, with a famous pilgrimage trail to four sacred mountain temples, and more treks await in mountainous Sikkim.

Spiritual India: For religious fervour, Varanasi reigns supreme, with its ancient funeral ghats where Hindus pay their last respects to the dead beside the sacred River Ganges. But you'll encounter India's spiritual side all over the country, particularly at pilgrimage towns such as Ajmer and Pushkar in Rajasthan, or the Sikh holy city of Amritsar in the Punjab. If you want to get more involved, you'll find classes in meditation and yoga almost everywhere, from the Delhi suburbs to the ashrams of Rishikesh. For Buddhist encounters, aim for Tibetan-Buddhist centres such as Leh in Ladakh and McLeod Ganj (Dharamsala), home to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile.

2. Slow down

Many people try to cram too much into a visit to India. To get the best out of your trip, concentrate on a few places rather than trying to tick off as many as possible. Seeing one place slowly can be much more rewarding than seeing loads of places, but not having time to appreciate any of them. Spend a few days in a place and you'll be less stressed, gain a deeper understanding of where you are, and have more time to get to know the people you meet.

3. Escape the crowds

With over a billion locals, many parts of India are certainly crowded. The bustle and mayhem can be fun, particularly if there's a festival in town, but it's easy to reach the point of saturation. Fortunately, India has plenty of quiet retreats, so plan some relaxing escapes into your journey. To keep your bat-



teries charged, spend some days or weeks in a city, followed by some days or weeks in the countryside or in a small town. For inner (and outer) peace, head south to the backwaters and beaches of Kerala, or north to India's captivating hill stations or the Tibetan-influenced valleys of the Himalaya in Ladakh, Sikkim and Himachal Pradesh.

4. Stay healthy

No one wants to get ill, particularly if

you're on a shorter trip, so it pays to take steps to avoid a dodgy tum. Never drink tap water, and steer clear of any food that may have been washed in it. As a precaution, avoid ice, ice cream, and salads and fruit you haven't just peeled yourself. Let your stomach acclimatize for a few days before launching into a street food feast, and whenever buying street food, do a mental assessment of standards of cleanliness. Are the owners freshly cooking the food or has it been



standing there for a while? Is the stall busy with lots of customers or only attracting hordes of flies?

Many travelers go veggie whilst in India, and it's not a bad idea, as a dodgy bit of meat will do you a lot more harm than undercooked vegetables. Plus, many Indians are vegetarian, so the country offers perhaps the world's most fabulous choice of vegetarian food. If you do eat meat, make sure it's well cooked, and stick to stalls and restaurants that are packed with locals (the best barometer for hygiene standards).

When you're on the road, you may well find you have to use some less than sanitary toilet stops, but these don't have to be health hazards. Toilet paper is rarely provided, but the left-hand-and-water-jug method preferred by many locals can be fine if you carry soap with you so you can wash your hands properly afterwards. Anti-bacterial wipes and anti-bacterial gel are also handy to keep in your day bag for a last minute clean up before eating with your fingers.

5. Keep your cool

As well as its beauty and wonder, India has an often deserved reputation for touts, scams, and other hassles. There are ways you can reduce the chances of being overcharged or cheated, but you will have a few encounters with scammers on your trip, so keep your wits about you and remember that deals that sound too good to be true usually are. In particular, be wary of taxi and rickshaw drivers who insist on taking you to specific hotels, shops or travel agencies - the cost of their commission will be added to your bill. The single most important piece of advice for any India first-timer is to try to remain calm, no matter what. Frustrations boil over easily in India, and being able to control them, take a deep breath and move on, is key to enjoying your time here. If you're getting stressed about losing some money or being scammed, take a moment to consider how much you've really lost and whether it's worth getting that fussed about.

Now go out, and claim your piece of the subcontinent!

- www.lonelyplanet.com

WORD SEARCH

Moods & Emotions 2

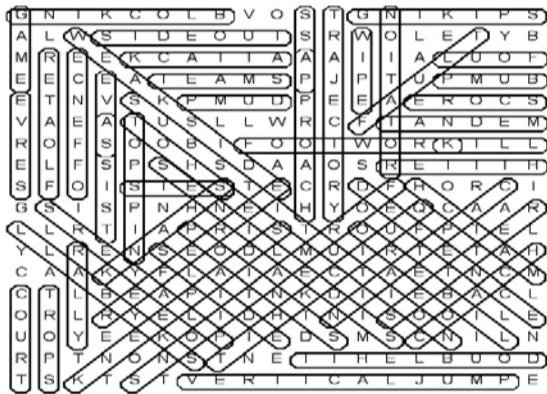
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 11 letters spell an additional word.

Y S T N A I R O H P U E G E A
 D U N C E R T A I N I M N K M
 U P R I D E R T A H T A I I U
 N Y R E E L J S A K R H R L S
 H R K S T S A O C N A S A S E
 A I T L A D T O Y V N E C I D
 P A P E U T H H T O Q O D D S
 P P M H T S I N G C U E Y E O
 Y S E O A I E S S I I S R E S
 H E T R F T R U F F L E U U D
 T D N R N Y O T I I N E L G E
 A O O O I I R R N I E L D L E
 P U C R X A R A T O E D R U R
 M B A N G E G Y W N C E D M G
 E T A E T L I U G R O U C H Y

- AMUSED
- DISLIKE
- HORROR
- SHOCK
- ANNOYED
- DOUBT
- INFATUATED
- SULKY
- ANTSY
- EMPATHY
- JOYOUS
- SULLEN
- ANXIOUS
- ENVY
- LEERY
- TERRIFIED
- CARING
- EUPHORIA
- PRIDE
- TRANQUIL
- CONTEMPT
- GLUM
- RAGE
- UNCERTAIN
- CONTENT
- GREED
- SAD
- UNHAPPY
- CONTRITE
- GROUCHY
- SATISFIED
- WARY
- DELIGHT
- GUILT
- SERENITY
- DESPAIR
- HATRED
- SHAME

Yesterday's Solution

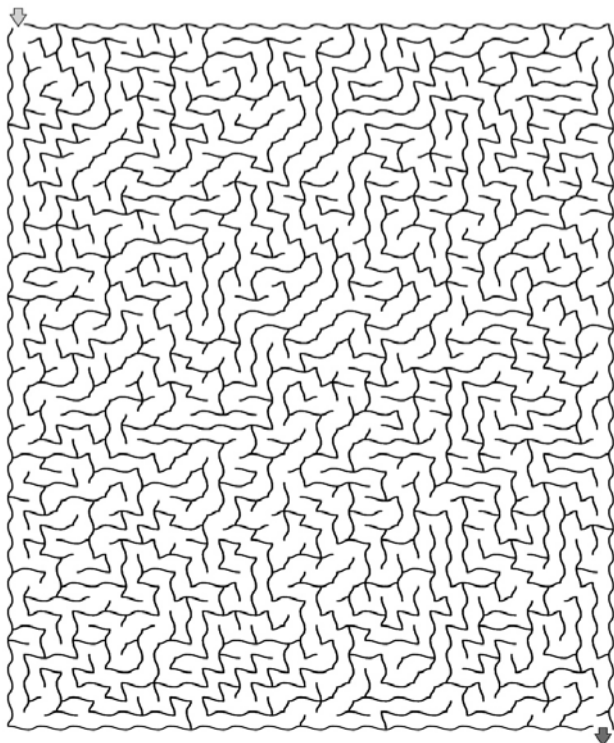
Volleyball



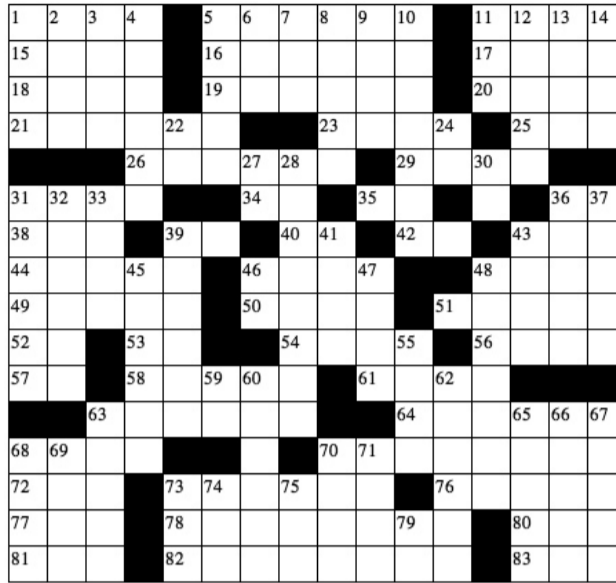
- APPROACH
- ASSIST
- ATTACK
- BLOCKING
- BUMP
- CAPTAIN
- COACH
- COURT
- DEFENCE
- DOUBLE HIT
- DUMP
- FAULT
- FLOATER
- FOOTWORK
- FORMATIONS
- FOUL
- GAME
- HITTER
- KILL
- KNEE PADS
- LIBERO
- MATCH
- OFFENCE
- PASS
- PLAYERS
- POINTS
- QUICK HIT
- RALLY
- REFEREE
- ROTATION
- SAVE
- SCORE
- SERVE
- SETS
- SETTER
- SHANK
- SHOT
- SIDELINES
- SLIDE
- SKY BALL
- SLIDE
- SPIKING
- SPORT
- SUBSTITUTION
- TANDEM
- TEAMS
- TOPSPIN
- TRAJECTORY
- VERTICAL JUMP
- WEAK SIDE
- WIPE

The hidden message is: VOLLEYBALL WAS ORIGINALLY CALLED MINTONETTE

CHALLENGING MAZE



CROSSWORD 1125



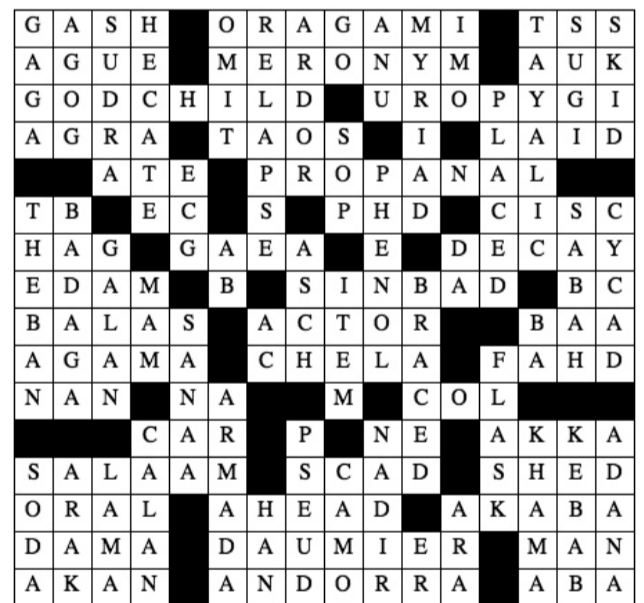
ACROSS

1. An outer garment that has sleeves and covers the body from shoulder down.
5. The person who plays that position on a football team.
11. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
15. Relating to the Urdu language.
16. (Greek mythology) One of the three Graces.
17. Two items of the same kind.
18. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
19. The person who delivers personal property (goods or money) in trust to the bailee in a bailment.
20. (Norse mythology) Goddess of old age who defeated Thor in a wrestling match.
21. Feel admiration for.
23. Strike sharply.
25. (nautical, aeronautical) Situated at or toward the stern or tail.
26. An archaic name for Easter or Passover.
29. Open-heart surgery in which the rib cage is opened and a section of a blood vessel is grafted from the aorta to the coronary artery to bypass the blocked section of the coronary artery and improve the blood supply to the heart.
31. Type genus of the Amiidae.
34. A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
35. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
38. (in golf) The standard number of strokes set for each hole on a golf course, or for the entire course.
40. A heavy brittle diamagnetic trivalent metallic element (resembles arsenic and antimony chemically).
42. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
44. Squash bugs.
49. (astronomy) An indistinct surface feature of Mars once thought to be a system of channels.
50. The rounded seed-bearing capsule of a cotton or flax plant.
51. Swiss mathematician (1707-1783).
52. A metric unit of length equal to 100 meters.
53. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
54. (statistics) Approximating the statistical norm or average or expected value.
56. South African term for 'boss'.
57. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
58. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
61. Prolific Spanish playwright (1562-1635).
64. United States writer of poems and plays about racial conflict (born in 1934).
68. Singing jazz.
72. A tight-fitting headdress.
76. Jordan's port.
77. Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
78. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
80. An adult male person (as opposed to a woman).
81. A master's degree in fine arts.
82. Bell magpies.
83. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

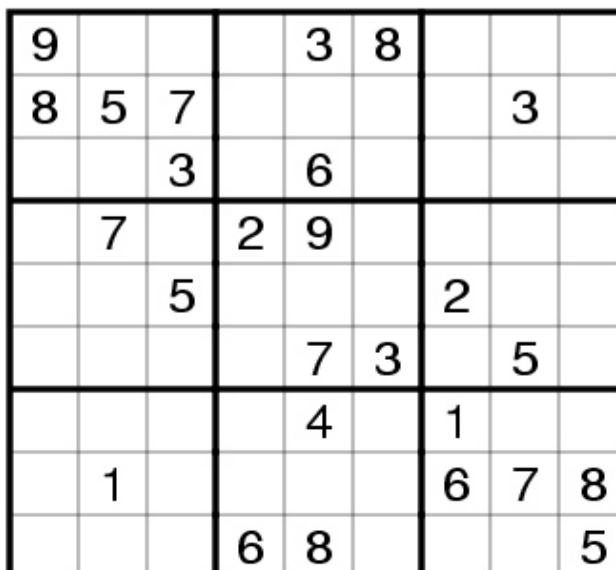
DOWN

1. A communist state in the Caribbean on the island of Cuba.
2. Toward the mouth or oral region.
3. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
4. Eurasian perennial bulbous herbs.
5. Wasting of the body during a chronic disease.
6. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
7. A user interface in which you type commands instead of choosing them from a menu or selecting an icon.
8. The Mongol people living the the central and eastern parts of Outer Mongolia.
9. Large gregarious predatory feline of Africa and India having a tawny coat with a shaggy mane in the male.
10. An ache localized in the middle or inner ear.
11. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
12. A Russian prison camp for political prisoners.
13. Consisting of one of two equivalent parts in value or quantity.
14. A nearly horizontal passage from the surface into a mine.
22. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
24. An informal term for a father.
27. Being ten more than one hundred ninety.
28. Any period of seven consecutive days.
30. A bachelor's degree in religion.
32. The capital of Bahrain.
33. A theocratic republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
36. Low-growing tropical perennials grown for their stingsless foliage.
37. The process of shedding tears (usually accompanied by sobs or other inarticulate sounds).
39. A deep bow.
41. Not in action or at work.
43. The basic unit of money in Western Samoa.
45. A midnight meeting of witches to practice witchcraft and sorcery.
46. A Russian river.
47. Speaking a Slavic language.
48. Egyptian statesman who became president in 1981 after Sadat was assassinated (born in 1929).
55. The compass point that is one point north of northeast.
59. A metric unit of length equal to one hundredth of a meter.
60. Salted roe of sturgeon or other large fish.
62. A member of an agricultural people in southeastern India.
63. Greek mythology.
65. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
66. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
67. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
69. Young of domestic cattle.
70. A short high tone produced as a signal or warning.
71. A river in northern England that flows southeast through West Yorkshire.
73. Syndrome resulting from a serious acute (sometimes fatal) infection associated with the presence of staphylococcus.
74. (usually followed by 'to') Naturally disposed toward.
75. (prefix) Coming before or being preliminary or preparatory.
79. A heavy brittle metallic element of the platinum group.

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





03:40 Auction Hunters
 04:05 Property Wars
 04:30 Storage Wars Canada
 05:00 Carfellas
 05:30 How It's Made
 06:00 Dynamo: Magician Impossible
 06:50 Mythbusters
 07:40 The Carbonaro Effect
 08:05 The Carbonaro Effect
 08:30 You Have Been Warned
 09:20 Dual Survival
 10:10 Dual Survival
 11:00 Predators Up Close With Joel Lambert
 11:50 Deadly Islands
 12:40 Engine Addict With Jimmy De Ville
 13:30 Misfit Garage
 14:20 Wheeler Dealers
 15:10 Engine Addict With Jimmy De Ville
 16:00 Street Outlaws
 16:50 Street Outlaws
 17:40 Street Outlaws
 18:30 Street Outlaws
 19:20 Street Outlaws
 20:10 Street Outlaws
 21:00 Misfit Garage
 21:50 Street Outlaws
 22:40 Engine Addict With Jimmy De Ville
 23:30 Extreme Smuggling



03:42 NASA's Unexplained Files
 04:29 Investigation X
 05:16 How The Universe Works
 06:03 The World's Strangest UFO Stories
 06:50 The World's Strangest UFO Stories
 07:37 Strangest Weather On Earth
 08:00 Strangest Weather On Earth
 08:23 Sci-Fi Science
 08:45 Sci-Fi Science
 09:08 NASA's Unexplained Files
 09:53 Strip The Cosmos
 10:38 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
 11:23 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
 12:08 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
 12:53 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
 13:38 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
 14:23 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
 15:10 NASA's Unexplained Files
 15:57 Strip The Cosmos
 16:44 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
 17:31 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
 18:18 The Ipad Revolution
 19:05 NASA's Unexplained Files
 19:50 Mighty Ships
 20:40 Mythbusters
 21:25 Mythbusters
 22:15 NASA's Unexplained Files
 23:00 Mighty Ships
 23:45 Under New York



03:10 Diabolical
 04:00 Swamp Murders
 04:45 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
 05:10 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 Deadly Affairs
 20:05 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
 20:55 California Investigator
 21:20 The Will
 22:10 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
 22:35 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
 23:00 Gone In Georgia: A Disappeared Special
 23:50 Blood Relatives



03:15 The Hive
 03:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
 03:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
 04:10 Wolfblood
 04:35 Wolfblood
 05:00 Violetta
 05:45 The Hive
 05:50 Mouk
 06:00 Lolirock
 06:25 Hank Zipzer
 06:50 Girl Meets World
 07:15 H2O
 07:40 H2O
 08:05 Austin & Ally
 08:30 Austin & Ally
 08:55 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
 09:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
 09:45 Jessie
 10:15 Jump In
 11:40 Phineas And Ferb
 11:55 Whisker Haven Tales...
 12:00 Jessie
 12:25 Hank Zipzer
 12:50 I Didn't Do It
 13:15 I Didn't Do It
 13:40 Liv And Maddie
 14:05 Liv And Maddie
 14:30 H2O
 14:55 H2O
 15:20 Austin & Ally
 15:45 Austin & Ally
 16:10 Violetta
 17:00 I Love Violetta
 17:10 The Incredibles

19:05 H2O
 19:30 Violetta
 20:20 I Love Violetta
 20:30 A Goofy Movie
 21:45 Get Frozen
 22:00 Binny And The Ghost
 22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
 22:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
 23:10 Wolfblood
 23:35 Wolfblood



03:15 Giuliana & Bill
 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 E! News
 09:15 Giuliana & Bill
 10:15 Giuliana & Bill
 11:10 The Grace Helbig Show
 11:35 The Grace Helbig Show
 12:05 E! News
 13:05 WAGS
 14:05 WAGS
 15:00 WAGS
 16:00 WAGS
 17:00 WAGS
 18:00 E! News
 19:00 WAGS
 20:00 WAGS
 21:00 WAGS
 22:00 E! News
 23:00 House Of DVF



03:00 Man Fire Food
 03:30 Man Fire Food
 04:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 04:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
 06:00 Chopped
 07:00 Man Fire Food

07:30 Man Fire Food
 08:00 Chopped
 09:00 Guy's Grocery Games
 10:00 The Kitchen
 11:00 Barefoot Contessa
 11:30 Barefoot Contessa
 12:00 Chopped
 13:00 Guy's Big Bite
 13:30 Guy's Big Bite
 14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 15:00 Man Fire Food
 15:30 Man Fire Food
 16:00 Chopped
 17:00 The Kitchen
 18:00 Siba's Table
 18:30 Grandma's Secret Cookbook
 19:00 Chopped
 20:00 Guy's Grocery Games
 21:00 Australian Food Adventures With Matt Moran
 22:00 Bite This With Nadia G
 22:30 Bite This With Nadia G
 23:00 Girl Eat World
 23:30 Girl Eat World



03:25 A Merry Murdoch Christmas
 05:15 Come Date With Me Australia
 05:40 Come Date With Me Australia
 06:10 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
 07:05 Coronation Street
 07:30 A Merry Murdoch Christmas
 09:20 Paddock To Plate
 10:10 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
 11:05 Coach Trip
 11:35 Big Star's Little Star Christmas Special
 12:30 Come Date With Me Australia
 12:55 Come Date With Me Australia
 13:25 Emmerdale
 13:50 Emmerdale
 14:20 Coronation Street
 14:45 Paddock To Plate
 15:35 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
 16:30 Grantchester
 17:25 The Syndicate
 18:20 Big Star's Little Star Christmas Special
 19:10 Coronation Street
 19:35 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
 20:30 Grantchester

21:25 The Syndicate
 22:20 Coronation Street
 22:50 Emmerdale
 23:15 Emmerdale
 23:40 Come Date With Me Australia



03:00 Your Family Or Mine
 03:30 Benched
 04:00 Two And A Half Men
 04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
 05:30 Suburgatory
 06:00 Breaking In
 06:30 New Girl
 07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
 08:00 Two And A Half Men
 08:30 Suburgatory
 09:00 Your Family Or Mine
 09:30 Community
 10:00 Baby Daddy
 10:30 New Girl
 11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
 12:00 Breaking In
 12:30 Two And A Half Men
 13:00 Suburgatory
 13:30 New Girl
 14:00 Benched
 14:30 Community
 15:00 Baby Daddy
 15:30 Cristela
 16:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
 16:30 Breaking In
 17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
 18:00 Fresh Off The Boat
 18:30 Black-ish
 19:00 Parks And Recreation
 19:30 Baby Daddy
 20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
 21:00 Cristela
 21:30 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
 22:00 It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia
 22:30 It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia
 23:00 The Big C
 23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers



03:00 Secrets And Lies
 04:00 Switched At Birth
 05:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 06:00 Covert Affairs
 07:00 Switched At Birth
 08:00 Castle
 09:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 10:00 Covert Affairs
 11:00 Switched At Birth
 12:00 Top Gear (US)
 13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 14:00 Castle
 15:00 Live Good Morning America
 17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 18:00 Castle
 19:00 C.S.I. Cyber
 20:00 C.S.I. Cyber
 21:00 Grey's Anatomy
 22:00 Dominion
 23:00 The Strain



03:00 Mistresses
 04:00 Grimm
 05:00 Good Morning America
 07:00 Top Gear (UK)
 08:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 09:00 Parenthood
 10:00 Top Gear (UK)
 11:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 12:00 C.S.I.
 13:00 Marvel's Agent Carter
 14:00 Parenthood
 15:00 Chicago Fire
 16:00 White Collar
 17:00 C.S.I.
 18:00 Marvel's Agent Carter
 19:00 Parenthood
 20:00 C.S.I.
 21:00 Marvel's Agent Carter
 22:00 Mistresses
 23:00 Grimm



04:00 Arachnophobia
 06:00 The Hulk



BETRAYED ON OSN MOVIES ACTION

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 2016

- 08:30 Don't Look Back
- 10:00 Automata
- 12:00 Days Of Thunder
- 14:00 The Hulk
- 16:30 Destruction: Las Vegas
- 18:00 Betrayed
- 19:30 Days Of Thunder
- 21:30 Backdraft

OSN MOVIES HD

ACTION

- 04:00 The Hulk-PG15
- 06:30 Don't Look Back-PG15
- 08:00 Automata-PG15
- 10:00 Days Of Thunder-PG15
- 12:00 The Hulk-PG15
- 14:30 Destruction: Las Vegas-PG15
- 16:00 Betrayed-PG15
- 17:30 Days Of Thunder-PG15
- 19:30 Backdraft-PG15
- 22:00 300-18

OSN MOVIES HD

COMEDY

- 00:00 Happy Gilmore
- 02:00 Baggage Claim
- 04:00 Muppets Most Wanted
- 06:00 Problem Child
- 08:00 Problem Child 2
- 10:00 Muppets Most Wanted
- 12:00 The Misadventures Of The Dunderheads
- 14:00 Cuban Fury
- 16:00 Problem Child 2
- 18:00 The Love Punch
- 20:00 Save The Date
- 22:00 We're The Millers

OSN MOVIES

DRAMA

- 03:00 A Long Way Down-PG15
- 05:00 Draft Day-PG15
- 07:00 Still Mine-PG15
- 09:00 Wrath-PG15
- 11:00 Draft Day-PG15
- 13:00 Jack Strong-PG15
- 15:15 God Help The Girl-PG15
- 17:15 Wrath-PG15
- 19:00 Two Night Stand-PG15
- 21:00 What Maisie Knew-PG15
- 23:00 Sunlight Jr.-18

OSN MOVIES HD

FESTIVAL

- 03:00 True Colors
- 05:00 Won't Back Down
- 07:00 October Sky
- 09:00 Safe Haven
- 11:00 Won't Back Down
- 13:00 I Am Ali
- 15:00 Phantom
- 17:00 Safe Haven
- 19:00 Boyhood
- 21:45 To Write Love On Her Arms
- 23:30 The Departed

OSN MOVIES HD

- 03:00 The Drop-PG15
- 05:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles-PG15
- 07:00 The Hundred-Foot Journey-PG15
- 09:00 Godzilla-PG15
- 11:15 Postman Pat: The Movie-PG
- 13:00 Into The Storm-PG15
- 15:00 Grudge Match-PG15
- 17:00 Godzilla-PG15
- 19:15 Hot Pursuit-PG15
- 21:00 Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2-PG15
- 23:00 Ouija-PG15

OSN MOVIES HD

KIDS

- 04:30 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
- 06:00 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
- 08:00 Mostly Ghostly: Have You Met My Ghoulfriend
- 10:00 Asterix: The Mansions Of The Gods
- 11:30 Blackie And Kanuto
- 13:00 Back To The Sea



300 ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

- 14:45 Kikoriki: Team Invincible
- 16:15 Curious George: Back To The Jungle
- 18:00 Asterix: The Mansions Of The Gods
- 20:00 Jungle Book: Mowgli's Adventure
- 22:00 Kikoriki: Team Invincible
- 23:45 Curious George: Back To The Jungle

OSN MOVIES HD

PREMIERE

- 04:45 Northpole-PG
- 06:15 Salingor-PG15
- 08:30 Escape From Planet Earth-PG
- 10:15 Khumba-PG
- 12:00 Non-Stop-PG15
- 14:00 Befriend And Betray-PG15
- 16:00 Escape From Planet Earth-PG
- 18:00 Last Vegas-PG15
- 20:00 The Calling-PG15
- 22:00 Son Of A Gun-18

OSN NEWS

- 03:00 Live NBC Nightly News
- 03:30 ABC World News With David Muir
- 04:00 Live MSNBC All In With Chris Hayes
- 05:00 Live MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
- 06:00 Live MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
- 07:00 NBC Nightly News
- 07:30 ABC World News With David Muir
- 07:57 NBC Nightly News
- 08:18 ABC World News With David Muir
- 09:06 MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
- 10:00 MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
- 11:00 Live ABC World News Now
- 11:30 Live ABC World News Now
- 12:00 Live NBC Early Today
- 12:30 Live ABC America This Morning
- 13:00 Live ABC America This Morning
- 13:30 Live ABC America This Morning

- 14:00 Live ABC America This Morning
- 14:30 MSNBC First Look
- 15:00 Live NBC Today Show
- 19:38 MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
- 20:19 MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
- 21:00 Live MSNBC Live With Thomas Roberts
- 23:00 Live MSNBC Live With Kate Snow

AMC

- 03:25 Hurly Burlly
- 05:30 Saved!
- 07:00 The Watsons Go To Birmingham
- 08:30 Impromptu
- 10:15 The Man In The Iron Mask
- 12:25 High Spirits
- 14:00 Robinson Crusoe
- 15:30 Saved!
- 17:00 The Man In The Iron Mask
- 19:10 Dirty Rotten Scoundrels
- 21:00 Breaking Bad
- 22:00 Follow That Dream
- 23:50 Kid Galahad
- 01:25 LA Bamba

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 03:35 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
- 04:25 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
- 05:15 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
- 06:02 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
- 06:49 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
- 07:36 Call Of The Wildman
- 08:00 Call Of The Wildman
- 08:25 Into The Pride
- 09:15 Into The Pride
- 10:10 Into The Pride
- 11:05 Into The Pride
- 12:00 Into The Pride
- 12:55 The Lion Queen
- 13:50 The Lion Queen
- 14:45 The Lion Queen
- 15:40 The Lion Queen
- 16:35 The Lion Queen
- 17:30 The Lion Queen
- 18:25 Killer Iq: Lion vs Hyena
- 19:20 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
- 20:15 Queens Of The Savannah

- 21:10 Queens Of The Savannah
- 22:05 Queens Of The Savannah
- 23:00 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
- 23:55 The Lion Queen
- 00:50 The Lion Queen
- 01:45 The Lion Queen
- 02:40 The Lion Queen

BBC entertainment

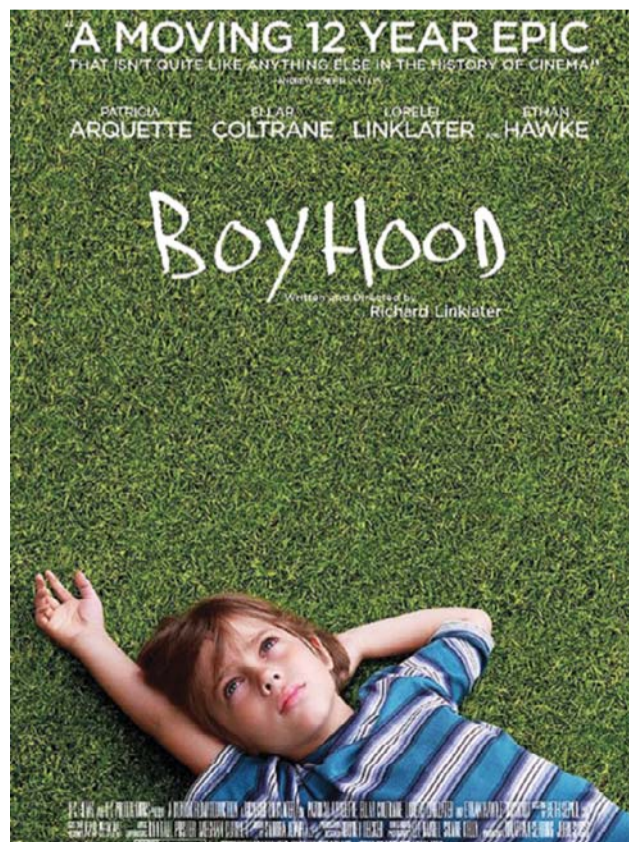
- 03:20 Sally Lockhart Mysteries
- 05:00 Teletubbies
- 05:25 The Green Balloon Club
- 05:45 Nina And The Neurons: In The

- Lab
- 06:00 Nuzzle & Scratch: Frock n Roll
- 06:25 Teletubbies
- 06:45 The Green Balloon Club
- 07:10 Nina And The Neurons: In The Lab
- 07:25 Sally Lockhart Mysteries
- 09:00 Doctors
- 09:30 Eastenders
- 10:00 The Office Specials
- 10:55 BBC Proms 2011: Hooray For Hollywood
- 12:50 Sally Lockhart Mysteries
- 14:25 The Office Specials
- 15:20 Doctors
- 15:50 Eastenders
- 16:20 Doors Open

- 18:00 Absolutely Fabulous: Christmas 2011
- 18:30 Absolutely Fabulous: Christmas 2011
- 19:00 Doctors
- 19:30 Eastenders
- 20:00 The Lady Vanishes
- 21:30 Russell Brand: Messiah Complex
- 23:00 Sherlock
- 00:30 Doctors
- 01:00 Eastenders
- 01:30 The Lady Vanishes

CN

- 03:14 Grojband
- 03:35 Johnny Test
- 05:05 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
- 05:27 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
- 05:50 Regular Show
- 06:00 The Amazing World Of Gumball
- 07:00 Adventure Time
- 07:25 Teen Titans Go!
- 08:10 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
- 08:35 Ben 10 Omniverse
- 09:20 Regular Show
- 10:10 Clarence
- 10:30 Johnny Test
- 11:20 Uncle Grandpa
- 11:40 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
- 12:05 Teen Titans Go!
- 12:50 Steven Universe
- 13:02 Steven Universe
- 13:15 Regular Show
- 14:00 Johnny Test
- 14:50 Adventure Time
- 15:10 The Amazing World Of Gumball
- 15:35 The Amazing World Of Gumball
- 16:00 Ben 10 Omniverse
- 16:45 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
- 17:10 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
- 17:30 Teen Titans Go!
- 18:20 Regular Show
- 19:05 The Amazing World Of Gumball
- 19:30 Johnny Test
- 19:40 Johnny Test
- 19:51 Adventure Time
- 20:15 Steven Universe
- 20:27 Steven Universe
- 20:40 Teen Titans Go!



BOYHOOD ON OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Your emotional orientation today is towards taking care of business. You just want to get things accomplished. It is exciting just knowing about all the new technical fun things that are coming out this next year. Shopping recently, you are constantly surprised at the wonderful technical discoveries. A friend needs advice about a contract and you know just how to help. This should only be a defining of property rights and you would be wise to send this person running to an attorney or the local legal aid society to review the laws with this regard. Money is a powerful force in our lives and our relationships; clarifying issues ahead of time frees one to move forward with a relationship. After such a busy day, you will want to put your feet up and relax.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your mood this morning is one of wanting to be more private and staying at home. This is probably not the best time to make career or vocational decisions or for giving practical advice to those around you. However, if you are working, you will be pleased to find this a relatively fast-moving day. Your ability to use words in a positive way helps you to be successful. Talking should be quite expressive now, as your mind will be quite clear and natural. Ideas come flowing to you with ease. This afternoon you look forward to being with those you love and you head home with that same positive thinking. There is power in the tongue and you are aware of the need that others have to hear your praise as well as your appraisal of an action.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Circumstances may augment and stimulate appreciation and enjoyment of your life situation. Your system of values may deepen, providing you with a better sense of discrimination and good taste. Purchasing, selecting colors, etc., are at a high. Today a co-worker peer may be asking you to help with choices of proper clothing for an upcoming event. You may not have the time to actually point out and approve but you do have time to write down a few stores that will work with this person and the style or type of clothes that would look good on this person's particular frame. Continued success on the career level may point to your relinquishing some of your ideas about plans. A loving friend that lives out of town may visit this evening.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You should find this a good time, when your efforts really pay off and things seem to run smoothly. Now you have the ability for steady work that allows you to coordinate and organize like never before and you bring to close uncompleted tasks. Those that you find nearest and dearest to your heart, like lovers and children, are emphasized at this time. Feeling appreciated and admired for your gifts and talents is a powerful need. Taking chances can bring large rewards. Being in a position to communicate with groups and society in general, is a result of your demonstrated ability to understand and be sensitive to others' needs just now. It is party time soon and you will find this evening a great time to prepare for an upcoming party.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You get busy with duties and tasks at work. There could be some very important matters that require your attention and have you serving as a guide to someone younger than you. Or, you may, at long last, figure out new ways to proceed with plans and decisions that influence a loved one in positive ways. Some in-depth discussions find you at your mental best. Your analytical abilities are at a high point. Expect some good practical job-related thoughts and ideas. The ability to communicate with superiors or describe what you see is strengthened. Having a big understanding of conceptual and spiritual ideas and knowing just how to present them to others goes a long way in increasing your popularity, especially in social circles.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Financial expertise and a practical turn of mind are qualities that take on greater importance in your life. A wheeler-dealer attitude and a knack of knowing how to put people, ideas and things together efficiently, prove profitable. Playing the role of the originator has rewards. Others will discover just how practical you are when it comes to working with you. You seem to have a built-in radar detector that helps you to act without haste or emotion. You may be called upon to utilize your natural abilities. Feeling the need to be respected is important to you and you appreciate acknowledgment. Work, achievement and ambition are the things that mean a lot to you now. Re-mail wrongly addressed snail-mail to your city postmaster.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Taking care of business comes first this morning and you have a lot of incentive to get through your work as quickly as possible. A big wedding or some other celebration is being planned and you cannot wait to be included and helpful. All the family will be involved in helping to make this a great event. There is time this afternoon to run a few errands, including picking up small children from whatever day care is required. You spend a great deal of time on the phone later this evening and may even help in planning the food or entertainment for this special event. The old has become boring and it is high time to upgrade your way of doing and looking at things. You may spend time looking through magazines or articles that will help to guide you.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Knowing that you did a job well gives you lots of satisfaction this morning and is one of your greatest incentives for the next calendar year. Your success creates success for others. This may mean that you cater to parties and do such a good job in whatever you do, that the people who employ you are very successful. This afternoon you become more aware of what young people watch on television and you may do a great deal to help create some positive changes. It is hard to find acceptable viewing, but with other parents making a stand, as a group, you will make a difference. This evening there may be a question over an expensive purchase. Try to justify a major purchase. The important words of this evening are easy-does-it. Share a smile.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Luck fortifies your bank account just now. A large investment is better than several small ones at this time. You spread cheer among your co-workers today. Include a new co-worker in a new project; you will be happy with the outcome. Finding a solution to a difficult situation may take most of your attention later this afternoon. There could be some question over a friend of a child. You are very good at sizing up a situation and coming up with the truth and knowing what to do. Now is the time to concentrate and listen and come to the decision you know you should make. There is never enough time to do everything you set out to accomplish. Today however, there is enough time to do the most important things. Make a list and do the most important things first.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You capitalize on team or group efforts in the workplace today and may become a group leader by the choice of many. Teaching and guiding others delight you. You enjoy providing a service and solving the little problems that are easily overlooked. Impatience was a problem in youth and it amuses you to see impatience surface in the young. You are helpful when it comes to being a leader and today calls for your ability to add your calming ways to a heated conversation. You seem to have gained the patience of job. When someone wants to know your plans for this next birth year, it may spur you into some serious thinking. Pat yourself on the back-you've done well so far and future plans are sure to be successful.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Your management abilities are in full swing today. Remembering people's names can be very difficult and word association seems to help when there are people to manage. You do very well, particularly with people that complain. You are very patient and may find yourself working very well with the elderly. Of course, dealing with children also takes patience and discipline and this is the type of success you have. The invitation you have been waiting for comes this afternoon-you may find yourself in a local store, purchasing gifts or food for a holiday celebration. You will enjoy time with your family and want to do something special for them. Relationships are good-someone may surprise you by treating you and others to a meal away from home tonight.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

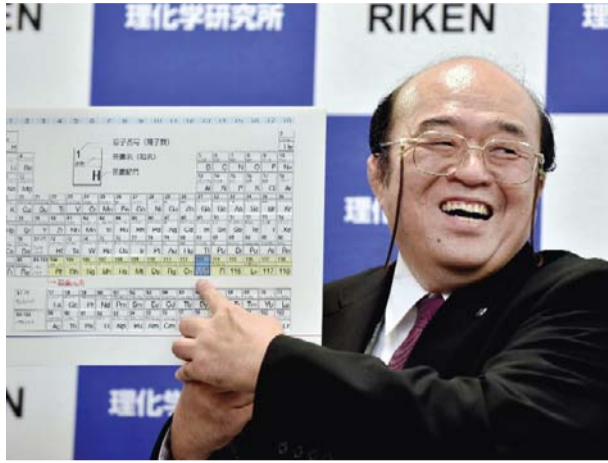
Being able to communicate and get your message across to others is essential now. Your timing should be good for this and those around you will appreciate your effort on their behalf. You may be lecturing today. Getting your message clearly across to others is a talent about which few can boast. Not to worry-people will understand just what you mean. Let's not start any new projects on the home-front just now. Spend some time tidying up and enjoying the surroundings. Too much clutter at this time can cause confusion and be quite messy when trying to entertain guest. Speaking of guest, you may be surprised by a friend from the past this evening. You will enjoy pulling out the old picture albums and reminiscing.

COUNTRY CODES

Afghanistan	0093	Kuwait	00965
Albania	00355	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Algeria	00213	Laos	00856
Andorra	00376	Latvia	00371
Angola	00244	Lebanon	00961
Anguilla	001264	Liberia	00231
Antigua	001268	Libya	00218
Argentina	0054	Lithuania	00370
Armenia	00374	Luxembourg	00352
Australia	0061	Macau	00853
Austria	0043	Macedonia	00389
Bahamas	001242	Madagascar	00261
Bahrain	00973	Majorca	0034
Bangladesh	00880	Malawi	00265
Barbados	001246	Malaysia	0060
Belarus	00375	Maldives	00960
Belgium	0032	Mali	00223
Belize	00501	Malta	00356
Benin	00229	Marshall Islands	00692
Bermuda	001441	Martinique	00596
Bhutan	00975	Mauritania	00222
Bolivia	00591	Mauritius	00230
Bosnia	00387	Mayotte	00269
Botswana	00267	Mexico	0052
Brazil	0055	Micronesia	00691
Brunei	00673	Moldova	00373
Bulgaria	00359	Monaco	00377
Burkina	00226	Mongolia	00976
Burundi	00257	Montserrat	001664
Cambodia	00855	Morocco	00212
Cameroon	00237	Mozambique	00258
Canada	001	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Cape Verde	00238	Namibia	00264
Cayman Islands	001345	Nepal	00977
Central African Republic	00236	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Chad	00235	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Chile	0056	New Caledonia	00687
China	0086	New Zealand	0064
Colombia	0057	Nicaragua	00505
Comoros	00269	Niger	00227
Congo	00242	Nigeria	00234
Cook Islands	00682	Niue	00683
Costa Rica	00506	Norfolk Island	00672
Croatia	00385	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Cuba	0053	North Korea	00850
Cyprus	00357	Norway	0047
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Oman	00968
Czech Republic	00420	Pakistan	0092
Denmark	0045	Palau	00680
Diego Garcia	00246	Panama	00507
Djibouti	00253	Papua New Guinea	00675
Dominica	001767	Paraguay	00595
Dominican Republic	001809	Peru	0051
Ecuador	00593	Philippines	0063
Egypt	0020	Poland	0048
El Salvador	00503	Portugal	00351
England (UK)	0044	Puerto Rico	001787
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Qatar	00974
Eritrea	00291	Romania	0040
Estonia	00372	Russian Federation	007
Ethiopia	00251	Rwanda	00250
Falkland Islands	00500	Saint Helena	00290
Faroe Islands	00298	Saint Kitts	001869
Fiji	00679	Saint Lucia	001758
Finland	00358	Saint Pierre	00508
France	0033	Saint Vincent	001784
French Guiana	00594	Samoa US	00684
French Polynesia	00689	Samoa West	00685
Gabon	00241	San Marino	00378
Gambia	00220	Sao Tome	00239
Georgia	00995	Saudi Arabia	00966
Germany	0049	Scotland (UK)	0044
Ghana	00233	Senegal	00221
Gibraltar	00350	Seychelles	00284
Greece	0030	Sierra Leone	00232
Greenland	00299	Singapore	0065
Grenada	001473	Slovakia	00421
Guadeloupe	00590	Slovenia	00386
Guam	001671	Solomon Islands	00677
Guatemala	00502	Somalia	00252
Guinea	00224	South Africa	0027
Guyana	00592	South Korea	0082
Haiti	00509	Spain	0034
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Sri Lanka	0094
Honduras	00504	Sudan	00249
Hong Kong	00852	Suriname	00597
Hungary	0036	Swaziland	00268
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sweden	0046
Iceland	00354	Switzerland	0041
India	0091	Syria	00963
Indian Ocean	00873	Taiwan	00886
Indonesia	0062	Tanzania	00255
Iran	0098	Thailand	0066
Iraq	00964	Toga	00228
Ireland	00353	Tonga	00676
Italy	0039	Tokelau	00690
Ivory Coast	00225	Trinidad	001868
Jamaica	001876	Tunisia	00216
Japan	0081	Turkey	0090
Jordan	00962	Tuvalu	00688
Kazakhstan	007	Uganda	00256
Kenya	00254	Ukraine	00380
Kiribati	00686	United Arab Emirates	00976



WAKO: Kosuke Morita (second left), of Riken Nishina Center for Accelerator-Based Science speaks in Wako. A team of Japanese scientists have met the criteria for naming a new element, the synthetic highly radioactive element 113, more than a dozen years after they began working to create it. — AFP



WAKO: Kosuke Morita, the leader of the Riken team, smiles as he points to a board displaying the new atomic element 113 during a press conference in Wako, Saitama prefecture yesterday. — AFP

ALASKA'S INUIT LINK STEADY FOOD SUPPLY TO ENVIRONMENT HEALTH

ANCHORAGE, Alaska: Alaska Inuit hunter John Goodwin for decades has hunted oogruk, the bearded seal, a marine mammal prized for its meat, oil and hide.

The largest of Alaska's ice seals uses sea ice to rest and birth pups, and after the long winter, when ice breaks into floes, there's a window of opportunity for Goodwin to leave his home in Kotzebue and motor his boat between ice panels, shoot seals and butcher them before they migrate north through the Bering Strait. A hunting season that used to last weeks, however, has shrunk. Ice that formerly froze 5-feet thick or more is a fraction of that. Ice disappears quickly, and so do the seals.

"As soon as the sun comes out, it starts melting, or we have a heavy rain," Goodwin said. "Basically, it's the rain that deteriorates the ice real quick. We don't have enough time to hunt."

The environment is changing and the Inuit, who consider themselves a part of it, want measures taken to protect their culture. A report issued this month by the Inuit Circumpolar Council-Alaska, which advocates for Inuit coast villages from southwest to north Alaska, calls for policies that protect Inuit traditional food and the Arctic environment that produces it.

"When we say food security, it has to do with the health of all of it," said Carolina Behe, the organization's indigenous knowledge and science adviser. More than 90 percent of the food purchased with cash in Alaska comes in from elsewhere and a reliable food supply in more urban communities like Anchorage means affordable prices and uninterrupted service on groceries shipped north by barge or jet.

Survival and identity

For the Inuit, who have survived for thousands of years in one of the harshest climates on Earth, food is the connection between the past and today's culture, according to the report.

Food is survival and identity. Over millennia, the capturing of caribou or seals, the gathering of salmonberries, how they were processed, stored and shared was incorporated into art, storytelling, dance, drumming, education and language. "Our traditional foods are much more than calories or nutrients; they are a lifeline throughout our culture and reflect the health of the entire Arctic ecosystem," report authors said.

As changes arose, Inuit leaders began talking at public forums about food. Their concept of secure food differed from the concept held by people in academia and government, who spoke of nutritional value and purchasing power. "They were talking two different languages," Behe said. — AP

JAPAN RESEARCHERS TO NAME ELEMENT 113 IN ASIAN FIRST

THE FIRST ON THE PERIODIC TABLE TO BE NAMED BY ASIAN SCIENTISTS

TOKYO: A Japanese research team has been granted the right to name new element 113, the first on the periodic table to be named by Asian scientists, the team's institute said yesterday.

Japan's Riken Institute said a team led by Kosuke Morita was awarded the rights from global scientific bodies—the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) and the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP) — after successfully creating the new synthetic element three times from 2004 to 2012. It is the first element on the periodic table to be discovered and named by Asian scientists, Riken said.

Synthetic elements do not occur natural-

ly on Earth and are produced artificially through experiments. "IUPAC has announced that Morita's group will be given priority for the discovery of the new element, a privilege that includes the right to propose a name for it," Riken said in a statement.

Morita, a professor at Japan's Kyushu University, was informed via a letter from IUPAC yesterday, Riken said. A release on IUPAC's website confirmed the accomplishment. "Several studies published from 2004 to 2012 have been construed as sufficient to ratify the discovery and priority," it said.

The name has yet to be decided, but Riken said that Morita will propose one in 2016.

"I feel grateful that the name will be

included in the table for the first time after this recognition," Morita said at a press conference. The naming right topped the evening news bulletin on public broadcaster NHK television. Japan has a proud research tradition and its citizens have won about 20 Nobel prizes in science and medicine, including two in 2015. The naming right is good news for Riken, which last year was embroiled in scandal after it had to withdraw what was once billed as a scientific breakthrough in stem cell reproduction by a young researcher.

IUPAC also said that Russian and US scientists working together had won the naming rights for three other elements — 115, 117 and 118. — AFP

CLINIC
PAGE



Kuwait Times

Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (31/12/2015 TO 06/01/2016)

SHARQIA-1
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 11:30 AM
 POINT BREAK 1:30 PM
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 4:00 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 6:00 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 9:00 PM
 POINT BREAK 12:05 AM

SHARQIA-2
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 12:00 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 1:45 PM
 JOY 3:30 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 6:15 PM
 JOY 8:00 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 10:45 PM
 JOY 12:30 AM

SHARQIA-3
 BANG BANG BABY 12:30 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 2:30 PM
 BANG BANG BABY 5:00 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 7:00 PM
 BANG BANG BABY 9:45 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 11:45 PM

MUHALAB-1
 SNOWTIME! 12:30 PM
 SNOWTIME! 2:30 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 4:30 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 7:30 PM
 POINT BREAK 10:30 PM
 POINT BREAK 1:00 AM

MUHALAB-2
 BANG BANG BABY 12:00 PM
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 2:00 PM
 EXTRACTION 4:15 PM
 BANG BANG BABY 6:15 PM
 EXTRACTION 8:15 PM
 BANG BANG BABY 10:15 PM
 EXTRACTION 12:15 AM

MUHALAB-3
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 1:00 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 3:00 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 5:45 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 7:45 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 10:30 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 12:30 AM

FANAR-1
 JOY 12:15 PM
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 2:45 PM
 JOY 5:00 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 7:30 PM
 JOY 9:30 PM
 JOY 12:15 AM

FANAR-2
 BANG BANG BABY 11:30 AM
 BANG BANG BABY 1:30 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 3:30 PM
 BANG BANG BABY 6:00 PM
 BANG BANG BABY 8:00 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 10:00 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 12:30 AM

FANAR-3
 SNOWTIME! 12:45 PM
 STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 2:45 PM
 SNOWTIME! 5:45 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 7:45 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 9:45 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 11:45 PM

FANAR-4
 EXTRACTION 11:45 AM
 EXTRACTION 1:45 PM
 POINT BREAK 3:45 PM
 EXTRACTION 6:15 PM
 EXTRACTION 8:15 PM
 POINT BREAK 10:15 PM
 EXTRACTION 12:45 AM

FANAR-5
 THE GOOD DINOSAUR 12:00 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 2:30 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 5:30 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 8:30 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 11:30 PM

MARINA-1
 BANG BANG BABY 12:15 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 2:15 PM
 BANG BANG BABY 5:00 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 7:00 PM
 BANG BANG BABY 9:45 PM
 NO THU
 THE BIG SHORT 11:45 PM
 NO THU

MARINA-2
 POINT BREAK 12:00 PM
 EXTRACTION 2:30 PM
 SNOWTIME! 4:30 PM
 POINT BREAK 6:30 PM
 EXTRACTION 9:00 PM
 EXTRACTION 11:00 PM
 NO THU
 POINT BREAK 1:00 AM
 NO THU

MARINA-3
 JOY 1:00 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 3:30 PM
 THE GOOD DINOSAUR 5:30 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 8:00 PM
 JOY 10:00 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 12:30 AM
 NO THU

AVENUES-1
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 12:30 PM
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 2:45 PM
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 5:00 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 7:15 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 9:15 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 11:15 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 1:15 AM

AVENUES-2
 THE BIG SHORT 12:15 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 3:15 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 6:00 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 8:45 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 11:30 PM

AVENUES-3
 DILWALE - Hindi 11:30 AM
 DILWALE - Hindi 2:30 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 5:45 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 9:00 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 12:15 AM

AVENUES-4
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 11:45 AM
 DILWALE - Hindi 2:00 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 5:15 PM
 Special Show "DILWALE - Hindi" 5:15 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 8:30 PM
 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 11:45 PM

AVENUES-5
 JOY 12:30 PM
 THE BIG SHORT 3:15 PM
 Special Show "JOY" 3:15 PM
 EXTRACTION 6:00 PM
 Special Show "EXTRACTION" 6:00 PM
 JOY 8:15 PM
 EXTRACTION 11:00 PM
 EXTRACTION 1:15 AM

AVENUES-6
 EXTRACTION 12:00 PM
 EXTRACTION 2:15 PM
 EXTRACTION 4:30 PM
 EXTRACTION 6:45 PM
 EXTRACTION 9:00 PM
 EXTRACTION 11:15 PM

AVENUES-7
 SAVVA. HEART OF THE WARRIOR 11:45 AM
 BANG BANG BABY 2:00 PM
 SAVVA. HEART OF THE WARRIOR 4:00 PM
 BANG BANG BABY 6:00 PM
 BANG BANG BABY 8:00 PM
 BANG BANG BABY 10:00 PM
 BANG BANG BABY 12:05 AM

AVENUES-8
 SNOWTIME! 12:00 PM
 SNOWTIME! 2:15 PM

FOR SALE

Chevy Caprice, 1994 model, white, must test. KD 700. Tel: 99058260. (C 5104) 28-12-2015

Lexus RX350 (2009) in excellent condition, smoke gray outside, leather beige inside, services at dealer only, five new tires, insurance and windshield. KD 4500, negotiable. Tel: 99123411. (C 5105) 30-12-2015

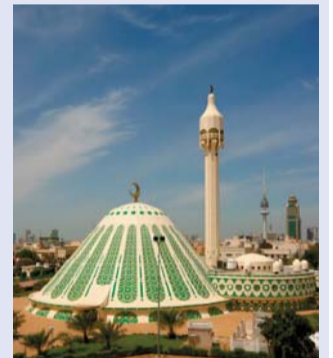
CHANGE OF NAME

I Mikky S/o Akhter Hussain R/o C/4 Advance Builders compound, near Ramleela maidan and Gurdwara, Khairani road, Sakinaka, Mumbai, Maharashtra-400072 have changed my name to **Mujahid Hussain Qurshai** for all future purposes. (C 5106) 1-1-2016

Now you can browse www.kuwaittimes.net
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net

Prayer timings

Fajr: 05:18
Shorook 06:42
Duhr: 11:51
Asr: 14:42
Maghrib: 17:01
Isha: 18:23



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
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381

Friday Times BUSINESS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 2016

GLOBAL MARKETS END 2015 WITH A WHIMPER



ASEAN launches economic bloc but analysts skeptical

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KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti stock trader monitors the stock market activity at the Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) yesterday on the last trading day of 2015. Stock markets in the energy-rich Gulf states ended 2015 in negative territory impacted by a massive decline in oil prices and regional turmoil. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 38)

OIL ENDS 2015 IN DOWNBEAT MOOD

HANGOVER TO BE LONG, PAINFUL • OUTLOOK FOR 2016 REMAINS BLEAK

LONDON: Oil prices headed for a second year of steep losses in their last trading hours of 2015 as record OPEC supply created an unprecedented global glut that may take another year to clear.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures traded 10 cents lower at \$36.50 a barrel at 1221 GMT yesterday and Brent was 4 cents lower at \$36.42 a barrel. Brent prices were set for a third year of declines after ending 2013 slightly lower and falling sharply over the past two years.

Prices fell 3 percent on Wednesday as crude inventories in the United States rose 2.6 million barrels last week, the US Energy Information Administration said, echoing high stocks in Europe and Asia. "We have brimming oil inventories in Europe. And our predictions are that oil inventories in Asia are going to get closer to saturation in the first quarter. Which means that most of the global surplus will have to be stored in still available storage capacity in the United States," Bjarne Schieldrop, chief commodity analyst at SEB in Oslo, said.

The immediate outlook for oil prices remains bleak. Goldman Sachs has said prices as low as \$20 per barrel might be necessary to push enough production out of

business and allow a rebalancing of the market. Morgan Stanley said in its outlook for next year that "headwinds (are) growing for 2016 oil." The bank cited ongoing increases in available global supplies, despite some cuts by US shale drillers in particular, as well as a slowdown in demand, as the main reasons. "The hope for a rebalancing in 2016 continues to suffer serious setbacks," the bank said.

Traders expect some US oil to be supplied into global markets, following the surprise lifting of a decades-old US crude export ban in December, which ended a years-old discount in US crude prices to international Brent.

"At a time when US shale is facing headwinds due to the collapse in crude oil prices... US crude oil exports are likely to help reduce congestion concerns in the US," ING bank said.

INDUSTRY PAIN

Brent prices briefly fell below \$36 per barrel this year, effectively wiping out the gains from a decade-long commodity super-cycle sparked by China's unprecedented energy demand boom.

The downturn has caused pain across the

energy supply chain, including shippers, private oil drillers and oil-dependent countries from Venezuela and Russia to the Middle East.

Analysts estimate global crude production exceeds demand by anywhere between half a million and 2 million barrels every day. This means that even the most aggressive estimates of expected US production cuts of 500,000 bpd for 2016 would be unlikely to fully rebalance the market. Oil began falling in mid-2014 as surging output from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Russia and US shale producers outpaced demand. The downturn accelerated at the end of 2014 after a Saudi-led OPEC decision to keep production high to defend global market share rather than cut output to support prices. OPEC failed to agree on any production targets at its Dec. 4 meeting in Vienna, cementing its decision to protect market share, as the organization braces for the return of Iranian exports to the market after the lifting of western sanctions. Russia and OPEC show no signs of reining in production, leading traders to establish record high active short positions in the market that would profit from further crude price falls. — Reuters

KUWAIT SOVEREIGN FUND POSTPONES SALE OF SUBSIDIARY VIA IPO

DUBAI: Kuwait's sovereign wealth fund is delaying the sale of its holding in Kuwait Investment company (KIC) through an initial public offering due to market conditions, it said in a bourse statement yesterday. The Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), the region's oldest state fund with an estimated \$500 billion in assets, owns 76 percent of KIC.

The KIA's divestiture in KIC was first announced in late October 2014 and initially slated for the first half of this year, according to a report by Moody's Investors Service.

In a filing, the KIA said yesterday it planned to postpone its public share sale until the first half of 2016 "based on market conditions and ensuring the credibility of the sale."

Kuwait's stock market weighted index is down more than 13 percent in the last 12 months amid a raft of company delistings and limited liquidity. — Reuters

KSE WRAPS UP 2015 ON BEARISH NOTE

KUWAIT: Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) ended yesterday's session in the mixed zone capping the year 2015 on a bearish note. The price index gained 2.64 points reaching 5,615.12 points, the weighted index lost 0.14 points reaching 381.7 points and the KXS 15 moved down 1.87 points reaching 900.43. The number of trades was 2,108 transactions with a value of KD 8.5 million and a volume of 78.6 million shares.

Saudi Arabia's stock market opened weak yesterday as petrochemical firms remained soft following gas feedstock price rises in Monday's 2016 state budget. Egypt's bourse continued rallying after breaking technical resistance. The Saudi index was 0.2 percent lower after 40 minutes of trade as the petrochemical sector index slipped a further 0.5 percent.

The biggest stock in the sector, Saudi Basic Industries, was flat but Saudi Kayan lost 2.2 percent and PetroRabigh fell 2.4 percent after saying it would restart only gradually its high-olefin fluid catalytic cracker and subordinate units after an



KUWAIT: Kuwait's stock traders follow the stock market activity at the Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

extended maintenance period. It estimated the cost of the extra maintenance at 200 million riyals (\$53.3 million).

Major construction firm Abdullah Abdul Mohsin Al-Khodari and Sons, which has

been struggling with the costs of labour market reform and government spending cuts, rose 0.9 percent after saying it had taken a 135 million riyal interest-free Islamic loan from its major shareholder.

Egypt's index rose 0.6 percent to 7,023 points after breaking technical resistance on its December peak on Wednesday, triggering a minor double bottom formed by the November and December lows and pointing up to about 7,400 points. Aiwa Food Industries gained 3.5 percent after reporting it swung to a profit in the first nine months of this year from a loss a year earlier.

A Reuters survey of 14 leading fund managers, conducted over the past 10 days and published on Thursday, showed sentiment toward Egypt improving as new central bank governor Tarek Amer partially eases - but does not completely eliminate - investors' worries about the nation's foreign exchange squeeze. The central bank has repaid foreign funds their backlog of hard currency.

Twenty-nine percent of managers now expect to raise their equity allocations in Cairo over the next three months and none to cut them. Last month, 29 percent anticipated reducing allocations and 14 percent raising them. — Agencies

MIDEAST FUNDS MORE BULLISH ON STOCKS MOST FUNDS BEARISH ON BONDS SINCE SURVEY WAS LAUNCHED

DUBAI: Middle East fund managers have become more positive on regional equities with a strong bias towards the United Arab Emirates, and more bearish on bonds, a monthly Reuters survey shows.

The survey of 14 leading fund managers, conducted over the past 10 days, found 50 percent expecting to raise their regional equity allocations in the next three months, and 14 percent expecting to cut them - the largest bullish balance since February 2014. In last month's survey, 29 percent anticipated increasing equity exposure and 21 percent expected to reduce it.

Global markets' positive reaction to the first US interest rate hike in almost a decade, and better regional valuations after a broad Gulf market sell-off in early December, are the main reasons for the change. "Some

stocks have been pressured by aggressive, redemption-driven selling flows after oil prices fell, and this correction offers medium- to long-term investors the opportunity to increase their exposure to fundamentally robust companies," said Sachin Mohindra, portfolio manager at Abu Dhabi-based Invest AD. Meanwhile, 36 percent of fund managers expect to reduce their allocations to regional fixed income, with none planning to raise them - the biggest bearish balance for bonds since the survey was launched in September 2013. Last month, the ratios were 36 percent and 7 percent.

The US rate hike in December was imitated by most Gulf central banks and is expected to be the first in a series. Also, shrunken government revenues in the Gulf due to low oil prices are hurting liquidity at Gulf banks,

pushing up short-term interest rates and reducing local buying support for Gulf bonds. "In the coming US Federal Open Market Committee meetings, we will continue to witness rising rates, which will negatively impact fixed income securities," said Tamer Kamal, head of asset management at Abu Dhabi-based Union National Bank.

SAUDI, UAE, EGYPT

For a third straight month, managers are equally split over the region's largest stock market, Saudi Arabia, with 36 percent expecting to increase their exposure there and the same number to reduce it.

Slightly under half of managers submitted their responses after the government announced on Monday this week its 2016 budget, which included spending cuts, energy subsidy reforms and tax rises designed to bring a huge deficit under control.

While many managers see the budget as positive for the long term, they believe the market could be hurt in the short term by the austerity steps.

"The budget is a positive sign for the long run, but we think that the first three months of 2016 will be an adjustment period for companies as their gross margins are impacted by the higher costs," said Mohammad Shabbir, head of equity funds at Dubai-based Rasmala Investment Bank. He cited companies in the petrochemical, cement and transportation sectors.

The effects of contractionary monetary policy and less accommodative fiscal policy will be visible next year, said Vijay Harpalani, fund manager at Dubai-based Al Mal Capital.

The United Arab Emirates remains by far the favoured equity market among regional bourses with 71 percent of fund managers expecting to increase their exposure there and none to reduce it - the most bullish allocation since the survey was launched. That compares with 36 percent and 7 percent in November. "Technically we are close to stable levels at which markets should pass through a consolidation phase before returning to rally to fair valuation levels in the near term," said Kamal. — Reuters

GLOBAL MARKETS END 2015 WITH A WHIMPER

LONDON: World stock markets yesterday ended 2015 with a whimper after sharp volatility sparked by China's slowdown, euro-zone stimulus, the Greek crisis, rising US rates and a commodities rout.

"After a year that began so promisingly the markets are wrapping up 2015 in the limpest way possible, a collective sigh instead of any attempt at New Year's Eve fireworks," said Spreadex analyst Connor Campbell. Asian equities limped across the finish line after a tumultuous 2015 that also witnessed a Summer meltdown on the battered Chinese stock exchange.

European and US markets had enjoyed a record-breaking run at the start of the year, boosted by the expectation and then delivery of European Central Bank's quantitative easing (QE) stimulus.

Investors fretted on uncertainty over the Federal Reserve's first interest rate hike in almost a decade, but the bank eventually hiked borrowing costs in December amid growing confidence in

the US economic recovery. China's economic slowdown also plagued trading floors in 2015 and sent commodities reeling because the Asian giant is a top consumer of many raw materials.

Oil prices collapsed on global oversupply and demand fears, culminating in an 11-year low for Brent crude last week.

'Euphoric' atmosphere sours

"There have been two distinct periods to the markets this year; the first third ... of 2015 saw the European and US markets all surge to fresh all-time highs, prompted by the promise, and delivery, of (ECB chief) Mario Draghi's long awaited quantitative easing plan," Campbell told AFP. "Yet as the year went on, the euphoric trading atmosphere began to sour, the Greek saga that played havoc with the European indices compounded by the dual pressures of August's dramatic Chinese crash and the impending US rate hike. —AFP

News

in brief

Kuwaiti crude price rises 8 cents to \$28.62 pb

KUWAIT: Price of Kuwaiti crude oil moved up eight cents on Wednesday reaching \$28.62 per barrel in contrast to \$28.54 pb on Tuesday, said Kuwait Oil Corporation (KOC) yesterday. In world markets, the forwards oil prices moved down, more than three percent on Wednesday, after unexpected rise of American crude reserves, amid indications major producers planned further pumping of the oil into markets despite prevailing glut. Brent Blend dropped \$1.33 to settle at \$36.46 pb, followed by the American crude which moved down \$1.27, settling at \$36.60 pb.

US dollar stable against KD at 0.303 fils

KUWAIT: The rate of the US dollar was stable against the Kuwaiti dinar at KD 0.303, the same with the euro which stood at KD 0.331 on Wednesday, said a statement by Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) yesterday. The CBK said the Sterling pound went down to KD 0.449 while the Swiss franc was up to KD 0.307. The Japanese yen remained the same at KD 0.002.

Saudi Q3 GDP growth edges down to 3.6% y/y

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's gross domestic product, adjusted for inflation, grew 3.6 percent from a year earlier in the third quarter of 2015, slowing slightly from 3.8 percent in the second quarter, data from the Central Department of Statistics showed yesterday.

Al-Khodari gets 135m riyal interest-free loan

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia construction firm Abdullah Abdul Mohsin Al-Khodari and Sons said yesterday that it has borrowed a 135 million riyal (\$36 million) interest-free Islamic loan from its major shareholder. The loan from Abdullah al-Khodari Sons Investment Holding Co will be used towards working capital and capital expenditures, and will be repaid before 31 December 2018, the company said in a statement to the bourse.

Saudi stock market says aiming to float itself in 2018

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's Tadawul stock market said yesterday that it planned to launch its own initial share sale in 2018. The initial public offering will be launched after the readiness exercise is completed and necessary approvals are obtained, it said in a bourse statement. The kingdom's stock market, by far the largest in the Gulf Arab region with a market capitalization of 1.57 trillion riyals (\$418.5 billion), said in 2014 that it was looking to go public, without giving a timeframe for the flotation.

MICROSOFT FAILED TO WARN VICTIMS OF CHINESE EMAIL HACK: EX-STAFF

SAN FRANCISCO: Microsoft Corp experts concluded several years ago that Chinese authorities had hacked into more than a thousand Hotmail email accounts, targeting international leaders of China's Tibetan and Uighur minorities in particular - but it decided not to tell the victims, allowing the hackers to continue their campaign, according to former employees of the company.

On Wednesday, after a series of requests for comment from Reuters, Microsoft said it would change its policy and in future tell its email customers when it suspects there has been a government hacking attempt. The company also confirmed for the first time that it had not called, emailed or otherwise told the Hotmail users that their electronic correspondence had been collected. The company declined to say what role the exposure of the Hotmail campaign played in its decision to make the policy shift.

The first public signal of the attacks came in May 2011, though no direct link was immediately made with the Chinese authorities. That's when security firm Trend Micro Inc announced it had found an email sent to someone in Taiwan that contained a miniature computer program.

The program took advantage of a previously undetected flaw in Microsoft's own web pages to direct Hotmail and other free Microsoft email services to secretly forward copies of all of a recipient's incoming mail to an account controlled by the attacker.

Trend Micro found more than a thousand victims, and Microsoft patched the vulnerability before the security company announced its findings publicly.

Microsoft also launched its own investigation that year, finding that some interception had begun in July 2009 and had compromised the emails of top Uighur and Tibetan leaders in multiple countries, as well as Japanese and African diplomats, human rights lawyers and others in sensitive positions inside China, two former Microsoft employees said. They spoke separately and on the condition that they not be identified.

Some of the attacks had come from a Chinese network known as AS4808, which has been associated with major spying campaigns, including a 2011 attack on EMC Corp's security division RSA that US intelligence officials publicly attributed to China. — Reuters

US APPLICATIONS FOR JOBLESS BENEFITS JUMPED LAST WEEK

WASHINGTON: More Americans requested unemployment benefits last week, but the level remains near historic lows in a positive sign for the job market. **THE NUMBERS:** Applications for jobless aid jumped 20,000 to a seasonally adjusted 287,000, the Labor Department said Thursday. The less volatile 4-week average climbed 4,500 to 277,000.

Over the past 12 months, the number of people receiving benefits has fallen 7.1 percent to 2.2 million.

THE TAKEAWAY: The influx of part-time, seasonal jobs during the winter holidays can make the jobless claims figures volatile, but the employment gains of the past year look likely to continue. Applications for benefits are a proxy for layoffs, so the low level indicates that employers are keeping their workers and potentially planning to hire.

KEY DRIVERS: Businesses still view the US economy as growing, despite the manufacturing sector struggling amid a broader global slowdown. Employers have hired about 210,000 workers a month this year. And unemployment last month held at a seven-year low 5 percent.

Despite last week's increase, jobless claims have stayed below the key level of 300,000 for nearly 10 months. Any figure lower than that threshold often corresponds with monthly job gains in excess of 200,000. **BIG PICTURE:** The economy enters 2016 with the job market looking solid. The slow recovery from the Great Recession that ended more than six years ago has found some traction. Americans have increased their purchases of autos, homes, restaurant meals and goods online. Still, low oil prices and weak international demand stemming from Europe, China and several emerging economies such as Brazil are sources of concern. — AP



HYDERABAD: Indian students gather for a protest against Facebook's "Free Basics" in Hyderabad. Promoted by Facebook founder, Mark Zuckerberg, Free Basics offers free Internet access to a few websites to people who do not have any access to the Internet. However, critics of "Free Basics" say, Facebook's plan goes against the principle that the Internet should be available to all and not be limited or determined by a single company. —AP

FACEBOOK BATTLES FOR FREE INTERNET IN INDIA

INDIA ORDERS FACEBOOK TO PUT FREE BASICS ON HOLD

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI: India has become a battleground over the right to unrestricted Internet access, with local tech start-ups joining the front line against Facebook Inc founder Mark Zuckerberg and his plan to roll out free Internet to the country's masses. The Indian government has ordered Facebook's Free Basics plan to be put on hold while it decides what to do.

The program, launched in around three dozen developing countries, offers pared-down web services on mobile phones, along with access to Facebook's own social network and messaging services, without charge.

But critics say the program, launched 10 months ago in India in collaboration with operator Reliance Communications, violates principles of net neutrality, the concept that all websites on the internet are treated equally. It would put small content providers and start-ups that don't participate in it at a disadvantage, they say. "India is a test case for a company like Facebook and what happens here will affect the roll out of this service in other smaller countries where perhaps there is not so much awareness at present," said Mishi Choudhary, a New York-based lawyer who works on technology and Internet advocacy issues.

Also at stake is Facebook's ambition to expand in its largest market outside the United States. Only 252 million of India's 1.3 billion people have Internet access, making it a growth market for firms including Google and Facebook.

RECORD SUBMISSIONS

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of

India (TRAI) said yesterday it had received record submissions for a public consultation that precedes the rule-making process. But more than three quarters of the 1.8 million comments submitted by users via Facebook will be disregarded as they did not follow the proper format, TRAI Chairman Ram Sevak Sharma told a news conference.

In the past week, Facebook has urged users in India to send a response to the TRAI both through its social networking platform and through mobiles by dialling a number that automatically generates a response on the users' behalf.

However, the social media giant faces stiff resistance. In a letter seen by Reuters, the heads of nine start-ups including Alibaba-backed Paytm and dining app Zomato have written to the TRAI urging it to ensure Internet access was allowed without differential pricing.

The executives said in the letter, dated Tuesday, that differential pricing for Internet access would lead to a "few players like Facebook with its Free Basics platform acting as gate-keepers."

"There is no reason to create a digital divide by offering a walled garden of limited services in the name of providing access to the poor," they wrote.

Zuckerberg has got personally involved. "We know that for every 10 people connected to the Internet, roughly one is lifted out of poverty," he wrote in The Times of India newspaper this week. "We know that for India to make progress, more than 1 billion people need to be connected to the Internet."

"What reason is there for denying people free access to vital services for communication, education, healthcare, employment, farming and women's rights?"

BOTH SIDES

A Facebook spokesman said the aim of the Free Basics initiative was to give people a taste of what the internet can offer. And Facebook has issued a series of full-page newspaper advertisements and billboard banners in an aggressive campaign to counter the protests.

"Free Basics is at risk of being banned, slowing progress towards digital equality in India," said an advertisement published in Mumbai newspapers on Wednesday, urging Internet users to support the initiative. Launched last year in Zambia, Free Basics, earlier known as internet.org, has run in to trouble elsewhere on grounds that it infringes the principle of net neutrality. Authorities in Egypt effectively suspended the service when a required permit was not renewed after it lapsed on Wednesday.

The TRAI has asked Facebook and Reliance Communications to suspend Free Basics until a final policy decision is made next month. "In a democracy you have both sides - you have Facebook spending so much on the campaign and on the other side you have internet activists making their own efforts," the TRAI's Sharma told Reuters on Wednesday.

"Our job is to make a policy that is in the interest of telecom operators and end users in India." — Reuters

ENDING OF CHINA'S SUPER-BOOM SPELLS PAIN WITH NO END SEEN YET

SINGAPORE: A decade-old commodity boom came crashing to an end in 2015, hurting energy and mining companies as China's industrial rise and appetite for raw materials slowed. The outlook for 2016 is not much better.

The Thomson Reuters Core Commodity Index fell by a quarter over the year, to hit its lowest level since 2002 in December, as commodities ranging from iron ore to oil took a battering. And there are few bright spots in sight.

"The chances of an optimistic 2016 are bleak," Mark To, head of research at Hong Kong's Wing Fung Financial Group, said. "Slowing economic growth and structural

reforms in China might contribute to decreased demand for commodities."

Further interest rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve will add to the pain, by strengthening the dollar and making many commodities more expensive for international buyers, To said.

Among industrial commodities, iron ore prices have tumbled 40 percent this year due to global oversupply and shrinking Chinese steel demand, for a third year of losses, and the rout is seen stretching into next year.

In coal, thermal prices fell almost a third in 2015, hurt by waning Chinese demand and the rise of renewable energy, with Goldman Sachs and the International Energy Agency

saying China's coal demand has peaked. Both iron ore and coal have shed around 80 percent in value since their respective historical peaks in 2011 and 2008.

The downturn has hammered mining majors like BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto and Anglo American, as well as merchants like Asia's Noble Group and Europe's Glencore, forcing them to slash jobs and sell assets.

Benchmark oil and natural gas prices have also slumped, down a third this year and two thirds since the rout began in 2014, as ballooning supply met slowing demand.

"Headwinds (are) growing for 2016 oil," Morgan Stanley said this week, citing increases in global supply and a slowdown in

demand, reflecting a market consensus that meaningfully higher prices are not expected before late 2016.

FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

The outlook is expected to trigger a fight for survival across the supply chain, including shippers and private oil drillers, while oil-dependent countries from Venezuela and Russia to the Middle East face smaller revenues.

Prices of industrial metals also plummeted this year. Copper and zinc shed a quarter of their value, and nickel collapsed more than 40 percent, hammered by slowing growth in top consumer China. — Reuters

CHINA CRACKS WHIP ON FOREIGN BANKS WITH FOREX SHUT-OUT

BEIJING TARGETS 'AGGRESSIVE' TRADING TO STEM CAPITAL FLOWS

SHANGHAI/HONG KONG: Chinese authorities are starting to police the nation's foreign exchange market in a way currency traders have rarely seen before, levying penalty payments for aggressive trading and prompting some banks to turn down business.

Reuters reported on Wednesday that China's central bank had suspended at least three foreign banks from conducting some of their foreign exchange business until the end of March.

Beijing had turned up the pressure over the past few months following guidelines released in September to strengthen regulation of the market and make forex trades more expensive.

One foreign bank received a warning from the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) regulator and was forced to increase money set aside for trades as a penalty in November due to its "aggressive" business model for forex operations, said a

border currency arbitrage between the offshore and onshore yuan. On Wednesday, the country's foreign exchange regulator also said it would improve its reserve position and contingency plans to curb risks from abnormal cross-border capital flows.

"The main purpose is to crack down on excessive currency speculation and arbitrage, which may hurt the economy," said a senior economist at a think-tank linked to China's Cabinet. "They are worried about falling FX reserves. The yuan faces obvious depreciation pressure as the Fed (US Federal Reserve) may continue to raise interest rates, so policymakers are concerned and intend to take effective measures to respond."

A source at one of the affected banks said China's central bank asked them to disclose the names of their foreign exchange clients buying spot and instructed any state-owned enterprises among them to stop trading.

"The PBOC is robbing us. They're not being reasonable; even if we comply with everything, we provide all the documents, our spot volume is too large," the person said. The PBOC and SAFE did not immediately return requests for comment. The banks targeted were likely picked because of the large scale of their cross-border forex businesses, sources said.

MIND THE GAP

A surprise devaluation of the yuan by nearly 2 percent on Aug. 11 fuelled a wave of capital outflows on fears the economy might be slowing more sharply than thought. The spread between the onshore and offshore yuan has been growing since the devaluation, making it increasingly difficult for the central bank to manage its currency and stem outflows.

China's central bank and commercial banks sold a net 2.19 trillion yuan (\$337 billion) of foreign exchange between Jan-Nov, compared with a net purchase of 897 billion yuan in the same period in 2014. Net sales indicate capital outflows. Another government policy adviser said the direction of China's capital account liberalization reforms was unlikely to change, however, since they were key to greater global acceptance of its currency. "Capital flows depends on China's economic fundamentals; we shouldn't worry too much about short-term capital outflows if we are confident about our economic fundamentals. The direction of capital account reforms will not change," he said. —Reuters

ROLLERCOASTER RIDE LEAVES SHANGHAI INVESTORS FLAT

SHANGHAI: Chinese stocks ended 2015 slightly higher despite a wild ride that saw trillions wiped off market capitalizations in a summer rout that shook global markets and prompted an unprecedented government rescue package.

From January 1 to mid-June the Shanghai market—which had already surged by more than 50 percent in 2014 — leaped by 60 percent again. Then it slumped nearly a third in three weeks, before slowly recovering. After all the gyrations of the most volatile year in the quarter-century history of the modern Chinese stock market, the Shanghai Composite Index closed at 3,539.18 yesterday, up 9.4 percent for the year.

"It was the year of the 'monkey market' for Chinese stocks—jumping up and down like a monkey," said Professor Oliver Rui of the China Europe International Business School. But a small profit will have seemed like a bonus to investors during the depths of the summer turmoil, which prompted an extraordinary government bail-out. Beijing spent as much as \$230 billion buying shares to support the market, according to an estimate by investment bank Goldman Sachs. Early in 2015, the government had urged exchanges yet higher with the People's Daily newspaper, the mouthpiece of the ruling Communist Party, saying: "The 4,000-point level is merely the beginning of the bull market."

Looser controls over margin trading—investors using borrowed funds to trade stocks with only a small portion of money put down as deposit—also fuelled the bubble, and its subsequent burst after regulators cracked down on the practice.

"Everyone took the rollercoaster ride, but in the end the market is still where it began," said Phillip Securities analyst Chen Xingyu. The Shenzhen Composite Index, which tracks stocks on China's second exchange, performed far better for the year as investors chased smaller company shares in the face of Shanghai's weak performance. It surged 63.2 percent for the year, making it one of the world's top performing markets.

Year of volatility

For some analysts, the government bail-out raised deeper questions over its commitment to economic reform, as the moves were widely viewed as anti-market. Regulators barred major shareholders from selling, allowed hundreds of companies to freeze trading in their stock and funded a "national team" to buy for the government. "They stabilised the market, but they've done that at a tremendous cost," said Fraser Howie, an independent analyst and co-author of "Red Capitalism: The Fragile Financial Foundation of China's Extraordinary Rise".

China needs to push stock market reforms, including allowing the China Securities Regulatory Commission to operate more independently, he said. "You've got to have a regulator that's free to make decisions and have independence, rather than being a cheerleader for the market on the way up and a nurse on the way down," he said. State media reported on Sunday that one long-awaited reform, a revamp to the system for initial public offerings, was moving ahead after lawmakers authorized the central government to make changes. Regulators now hand-pick the companies to list and set their flotation prices, instead of the market. The government should also seek to grow the number of institutional traders, experts say, as most investors are individuals bent on short-term gains. The volatility this year was the most severe in the history of the market as it was driven mostly by liquidity and people's emotions, and had very little to do with economic fundamentals," Citic Securities analyst Zhang Qun said. — AFP



SHANGHAI: An investor monitors screens showing stock market movements at a brokerage house in Shanghai. Chinese stocks are set to end 2015 slightly higher despite a wild ride that saw trillions wiped off market capitalizations in a summer rout that shook global markets and prompted an unprecedented government rescue package. — AFP

China's past willingness to tolerate some capital flight has paved the way for locals to take billions from the country for funnelling into assets such as French vineyards and luxury properties in the world's leading cities. But with the country's growth at its weakest in 25 years and the currency heading for a record fall this year, China is aiming to stem the capital outflows, which can be exacerbated by the widening gap between onshore and offshore exchange rates for the yuan, or renminbi. "China is essentially trying to close that gap and it's much more difficult to do that if you have these outsiders coming in and taking advantage of the arbitrage," said Jimmy Weng, Hong Kong-based fund manager at Genesis Capital Investment.

China-based forex market sources said

senior China-based banker in the FX team at a foreign bank. The person's own bank had shut down buy-side forex trades.

"It's possible that the foreign banks did everything right, that they put aside the 20 percent reserve, that they met the 'know-your-client' (KYC) requirements, but are still trading aggressively, which is clearly against what China wants," the person told Reuters.

"We used to make so much money from arbitrage - easy money you know? Now, none."

WE'VE BEEN ROBBED

The latest move comes just three months after the People's Bank of China (PBOC) ordered banks to scrutinise clients' foreign exchange transactions to prevent illicit cross-

BRITAIN TO REVIEW AIRPORT SHOP SALES AS RETAILERS POCKET TAX SAVINGS

LONDON: Britain is to review airport retail sales after some businesses were found to be pocketing about half of tax savings meant for passengers, rather than passing on the discount, the government said yesterday. Most retailers at British airports, who include WH Smith and Dixons Carphone, ask passengers to show boarding cards when paying for goods, typically citing security as the reason. A newspaper reported in August, however, that some use the information to avoid paying 20 percent

value-added tax (VAT) on goods headed outside the European Union.

The report prompted a backlash from consumers, with many refusing to show their boarding cards to retailers. Announcing the review yesterday, the government said in a statement that some airport retailers were keeping up to an estimated 50 pence of every pound of potential sales tax savings, instead of passing them on to consumers. "VAT relief at airports is intended to cut prices for those travellers - not

be a windfall gain for shops," British finance minister George Osborne said in the statement.

Many people could be paying over the odds for their purchases because the tax concession was not passed on, he said. "This is simply unacceptable." A spokesman for WH Smith said it would cooperate fully with the review. The company also said over half of its airport sales comprising items like newspapers, books and sandwiches, did not attract VAT. "The limited benefit that we obtain

in our other product categories, where customers travel outside of the EU only, is reflected in our single pricing policy for all customers, which overall provides better value," a spokesman said. Dixons Carphone said it had no further comment to add.

The review, which will be conducted by Britain's tax agency and will report in early 2016, will consider ways to ensure prices reflect VAT savings, as well as savings on duty, the government said. — Reuters



PHNOM PENH: A Cambodian woman pushes her bicycle loaded with baskets for sales at a market in Phnom Penh yesterday. Southeast Asian nations officially launched an EU-inspired economic bloc yesterday aimed at boosting the region's trading clout and attracting more investment, but analysts said a true single market was still a long way off. — AFP

ASEAN LAUNCHES ECONOMIC BLOC BUT ANALYSTS SKEPTICAL

TRUE SINGLE MARKET STILL A LONG WAY OFF

JAKARTA: Southeast Asian nations officially launched an EU-inspired economic bloc yesterday aimed at boosting the region's trading clout and attracting more investment, but analysts said a true single market was still a long way off.

The ten-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) hailed the project as a "milestone" in combining the economic force of a resource-rich and growing market of more than 600 million people.

The vision for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is a single market with a free flow of goods, capital and skilled labor, which should help the region compete with the likes of China for foreign investment. The new bloc "will contribute significantly to the region's growth and create developmental opportunities for all," said Vivian Balakrishnan, the foreign minister of ASEAN member Singapore.

But experts say such an idea is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve in a region marked by extremes in development levels, democratisation, and institutional capability.

The official launch of the AEC has no prac-

tical effect, and diplomats have said ASEAN-regularly criticized for a lack of concrete achievements-was keen not to miss its own deadline of 2015, set several years ago. Research group Capital Economics said in a note the establishment of the AEC was "no game changer", and it was likely to fall short in tackling major challenges such as reducing non-tariff barriers and improving infrastructure.

"ASEAN, with its tradition of non-interference into the affairs of member countries, an absence of penalties for non-compliance, and a lack of a powerful central bureaucracy, is ill-equipped to tackle these obstacles," it said.

John Pang, a senior fellow at Singapore's S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, said there would be only "slow and incremental progress" in integrating the economies of Southeast Asia. "The AEC will not be raising the curtain on any radical change," he wrote in a commentary.

Diplomats have conceded the single market vision is many years away, but insist the project will help change mindsets and pro-

vide momentum.

ASEAN leaders signed a declaration to establish the AEC at the group's annual summit in November but there was no official ceremony on Thursday to mark the new bloc's establishment.

Southeast Asia has already made progress on lower-hanging fruit like cutting tariffs and removing other hurdles such as clashing customs systems but significant non-tariff and other barriers remain. ASEAN includes wealthy Singapore, one of the world's most developed countries, oil-rich Brunei, developing states such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam, and poorer nations like Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.

Its members range from free-wheeling to controlled democracies, communist-ruled states and an absolute Islamic monarchy. Although ASEAN's plans were inspired by the developed single market of the 28-member European Union, officials insist they want to pursue integration in a way suitable to the region's circumstances, and have ruled out a common currency. — AFP

INDIA TO TIGHTEN RULES FOR CREDIT COOPERATIVES TO PROTECT INVESTORS

NEW DELHI: India will crack down on errant financial firms that raise funds, mainly from millions of rural poor customers, through loosely regulated credit cooperative societies, a senior official in the agriculture ministry said. This follows a Reuters investigation that revealed an expansion in fund-raising by embattled conglomerate Sahara India Pariwar using four credit cooperatives in different parts of the country.

Reuters spoke to dozens of savers who said Sahara had not given them their money when their deposits matured. Instead, they complained, Sahara's agents and branch officials tried to persuade them to switch their matured savings deposits to new schemes offered through credit cooperatives run by Sahara.

Sahara has not responded to requests for comment by Reuters.

The federal government plans to penalize cooperatives that fail to repay investors when deposits come due or engage in other violations of regulations, a senior official from the Ministry of Agriculture's credit cooperatives division told Reuters.

The official, who has direct knowledge of the matter, did not want to be named as he was not authorised to speak to the media. Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh and Secretary Siraj Hussain, the top bureaucrats in the ministry, did not immediately respond to emails seeking comment.

One measure under discussion is to either have an independent regulator supervise credit cooperatives or bring them under the purview of an existing regulator, such as the Securities and Exchange Board of India, which oversees India's stock markets, the official said.

Credit cooperatives are widely used by the rural poor. A lack of banking services in India - nearly two-fifths of its 1.27 billion people have no bank accounts - has helped shadow banks such as the credit cooperatives thrive for decades in Asia's third-largest economy.

"The idea is to make it more stringent by giving more teeth so that we are able to effectively protect investors' interest," the cooperatives division official said. "Various suggestions have been made and the top brass is very serious about this."

CENTRAL BANK REGULATION

Under Indian law, credit cooperatives must be owned by their members, who are also the main customers. Cooperatives operating across state lines are registered not with the central bank, but with the cooperatives division of the Ministry of Agriculture. Multi-state credit cooperatives would be better regulated under India's central bank, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), said Bindu Ananth, head of the IFMR Finance Foundation, a non-profit group that seeks to broaden access to financial services.

"It's an anomaly that you have a class of deposit-taking institutions that is outside the ambit of the RBI," Ananth said. The proposed regulatory changes from the credit cooperatives division in the farm ministry would come after Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched an ambitious project to widen banking services in India called the Jan Dhan Yojana, or People's Wealth Scheme. Since August of last year, it has opened 200 million new bank accounts.

The program seeks to curb the use of cash, limit corruption and rein in the informal, and often illegal, shadow banking activities conducted by some firms mostly in rural areas.

Sahara founder Subrata Roy, whose business empire includes hotels such as the New York Plaza and a Formula 1 racing team, has spent the last 21 months in jail for not complying with a Supreme Court order to return \$5.4 billion to investors who put money in a 2008-11 time deposit plan. The markets regulator SEBI said it was illegal because it did not conform to India's market disclosure requirements. — Reuters

TARGETING THIRD GRAND SLAM WIN OFF WAWRINKA'S RADAR

ABU DHABI: Stan Wawrinka has won more Grand Slams than Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal combined over the past two seasons but the Swiss world number four insists that adding to his Major tally is a goal that is "too far away".

Wawrinka, who handed Novak Djokovic his only Grand Slam defeat in 2015 by stunning the world number one in the French Open final, will kick off his season in Abu Dhabi at the six-player exhibition Mubadala World Tennis Championship on Friday, but said winning a third career Major was

not on his list of goals for 2016.

"It's been only two years and a half, three years that I'm back in the top 10, that I'm in the top five. Yes I know I won two Grand Slams in two years but it's still something incredible for me, something not normal, so it's tough for me to put a goal to win a Grand Slam again," Wawrinka, 30, told reporters in Abu Dhabi yesterday. "I know how difficult it is, I know the challenge is big. That's why it's not my goal. It's too far away to put that as a goal. My goal is to give me the chance to be at my top in Grand Slams and then I know I can beat the

top guys. But for that you need to do all the right things during the year."

Wawrinka spent his off season training in Geneva, where he says he worked hard on his body and his tennis, and will officially inaugurate his ATP season in Chennai next week, where he targets a fourth title there. He remains Swiss number two, behind his third-ranked compatriot Federer, who at 34 is still in peak shape, having made two Grand Slam finals in 2015.

Asked if he sees himself competing at the top level of the sport well into his 30s like Federer, Wawrinka said:

"Hopefully yes, hopefully I can play for many more years. But again, I'm going to try to play as much as I can that's for sure. Where I'll be in a few years, which ranking, what level? I really don't know. I will always push myself to be at my top and we'll see where it will be."

On whether he'll be teaming up with Federer at the Rio 2016 Olympics in doubles - they won gold together in Beijing 2008 - Wawrinka added: "We don't know yet. We haven't decided. We have to talk about the beginning of the year and see what we're going to do." — AFP

MCCOY LEADS BRITISH SPORTS STARS IN HONOURS LIST

LONDON: Legendary jump jockey Tony McCoy was awarded a knighthood in the New Year Honours List out Wednesday, in which British sports stars including Chris Froome were recognised for their achievements.

Two-time Tour de France winner Froome, 1964 Formula One world champion John Surtees and five-time world snooker champion Ronnie O'Sullivan were among those honoured.

Stars from football, tennis and boxing were among those made commanders (CBE), officers (OBE) or regular members (MBE) of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, an order of chivalry.

McCoy, who becomes entitled to use the prefix Sir, rode 4,358 winners in his extraordinary career. The 41-year-old retired from racing in April after being crowned British jump racing champion jockey for a 20th consecutive year. "It is an unbelievable privilege and honour to receive a knighthood in the New Year Honours List. I certainly wasn't expecting it," the Northern Irishman said.

"I consider myself lucky to have had a job I loved. The support from the public and racing community since my retirement has been overwhelming.

"A knighthood really tops off what's been a crazy and memorable year." Tour de France defending champion Froome said he was "extremely humbled and proud" to be made an OBE after he became the first Briton to win cycling's premier road race on two occasions with his victory in July. O'Sullivan, 40, arguably the most naturally-gifted snooker player of all time, was recognised with the OBE.

He won the 2001, 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2013 world crowns. Last year he said he did not feel he had done anything to merit an honour, only snooker titles.

"It came as a great surprise to receive my OBE," he said. "I am extremely grateful for this recognition which is a great honour and has made both myself and my family very proud."

DENIS LAW CBE

Surtees, the only man to win world titles on two and four wheels, has been awarded a CBE in recognition of his services to motor sport. The 81-year-old won seven world motorcycling championships between 1956 and 1960, before switching to car racing, winning the Formula One world title with Ferrari in 1963.



ESHER: A file picture taken on April 25, 2015, shows jockey Tony McCoy holding the jockey championship cup presented to him on his retirement at Sandown Park Racecourse in Esher, southern England. Legendary jump jockey Tony McCoy was awarded a knighthood in the New Year Honours List out Wednesday, in which British sports stars including Chris Froome were recognised for their achievements. — AFP

From the world of football, Denis Law, a star of the 1960s Manchester United teams and Scotland's joint-top scorer with 30 goals, was awarded the CBE. Francis Lee, who won the league title with Manchester City in 1968 and was the club chairman in the 1990s, was also made a CBE. England's women footballers finished third at the World Cup in Canada earlier this year and captain Steph Houghton was made an MBE along with veteran midfielder Fara Williams.

Sue Barker, who won the 1976 French

Open tennis title and is now one of BBC television's main sports presenters, was made an OBE. Carl Frampton, the IBF super-bantamweight champion, was awarded the MBE. "I am happy and proud, and I am pleased that my sport of professional boxing has got some recognition," he said.

Tracey Neville, the England women's netball team coach, was awarded an MBE. She is the sister of former Manchester United and England footballers Gary and Phil Neville. — AFP

BEARS GREAT DOUG ATKINS DIES AT 85

LOS ANGELES: Hall of Famer Doug Atkins, an imposing pass rusher who inspired fear in opposing offenses for 17 NFL seasons, most notably with the Chicago Bears, died on Wednesday at the age of 85. "Doug Atkins is an all-time great who will be remembered as one of the pillars of the 1963 championship Bears," Bears chairman George H. McCaskey said in a statement after the Hall of Fame confirmed that Atkins died in Knoxville, Tennessee. "He had a freakish combination of size and athletic ability and was as tough as anyone who ever stepped on a football field."

At 6-feet-8-inches, Atkins was a towering figure among his contemporaries on the field from the early 1950s to the late 1960s. When he played, quarterback sacks were not yet an official statistic, but Atkins once reckoned that in a few of his 12 seasons with the Bears he might have had as many as 25 — which would be an NFL record today. He won an NFL championship with the Cleveland Browns in 1954 and in 1963 with Chicago, where he starred for 12 seasons before ending his career with the expansion New Orleans Saints.

He helped the University of Tennessee to a national collegiate title in 1951. While at the university in his home state he also played basketball and won a regional high jump title. Among his trademark moves was leaping over offensive linemen to get to the opposing quarterback.

Former Minnesota Vikings quarterback Fran Tarkenton called Atkins a "physical marvel of our era" while he was once described in an NFL Films production as "a storm blowing over a Kansas farm house ... All you could do was tie down what you could and hope he didn't take the roof."

"Doug was a big, tough man whose extraordinary greatness dominated the field of play during a legendary 17-year career that earned him a bronzed bust in Canton," Hall of Fame President David Baker said. "He also possessed a tender heart and always epitomized with grace the many values he learned from the game such as dedication, teamwork, commitment and respect." — AFP



Doug Atkins

LA DODGERS SIGN LEFTY SCOTT KAZMIR TO 3-YEAR DEAL

LOS ANGELES: Left-hander Scott Kazmir agreed to a three-year, \$48 million contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers on Wednesday. The three-time All-Star was among the top names left on the free-agent market after revitalizing his career over the past three seasons with the Cleveland Indians, Oakland Athletics, and Houston Astros. He ranked fourth in the American League with a 3.10 ERA last year while going 7-11 for the Athletics and the Astros.

Kazmir hailed the deal in a post on his Twitter account: "What a great day to officially be a Dodger!" He also wished a happy 80th birthday to Dodgers Hall of Famer Sandy Koufax, whom he called "my lefty idol."

Kazmir's deal includes an opt-out clause after the first year, but his arrival is a highlight in an unusual offseason for the Dodgers, whose fans are still sore about losing superstar right-hander Zack Greinke in free agency to Arizona.

Los Angeles also declined to close a deal with right-hander Hisashi Iwakuma, who resigned with Seattle, and backed out of a trade for Cincinnati closer Aroldis Chapman after learning the Cuban had been investigated over an accusation of domestic violence. Kazmir is headed to the National League for the first time in his six-team, 11-year Major League Baseball career. After deciding not to make a major offseason splash with their ample cash, the three-time

defending NL West champion Dodgers have assembled a potential opening day rotation featuring five left-handers: Clayton Kershaw, Kazmir, Brett Anderson, Hyun-Jin Ryu and Alex Wood.

Right-hander Brandon McCarthy also is expected to return next year after elbow ligament replacement surgery. He greeted yet another lefty's arrival on Twitter with his typical dry wit: "This is blatant handism and I'm filing a hostile workplace grievance." —AP

UCHIYAMA FENDS OFF CHALLENGE TO WBA TITLE

TOKYO: Undefeated champion Takashi Uchiyama of Japan yesterday successfully defended his World Boxing Association super featherweight title for the 11th time, beating Nicaraguan Oliver Flores with a technical knockout.

Uchiyama (24-0-1, 20 knockouts) went into the New Year's Eve bout clearly at ease against his challenger, 24. Victory for the veteran Japanese titleholder, 36, came quickly—one minute and 47 seconds into the third round—when a single left body blow put the Nicaraguan fighter flat on the canvas.

It was a technical knockout as Flores (27-2-2, 17 knockouts) was declared no longer capable of continuing to fight before the end of the count.

"I am in very good condition," Uchiyama said after the bout. "I tried to take it easy in the first few rounds." The headline bout was part of a WBA doubleheader at Ota Ward General Gymnasium in Tokyo. Meanwhile, Filipino boxing icon Manny Pacquiao will return to the ring on April 9 in Las Vegas to take on Timothy Bradley for a third time, promoter Bob Arum said Wednesday. Top Rank promotions chief Arum confirmed to AFP that the bout was slated for the MGM Grand.

While Pacquiao has spoken this year of retiring after an April bout to pursue his political career, Arum said he would not market the bout as Pacquiao's last. "I'm not certain it is his last fight," Arum said. "It may well be his last fight, it may not be his last fight. You cannot in good conscience sell it that way."

A congressman since 2010, Pacquiao announced in October that he would seek a seat in the Philippines senate in 2016.

The 37-year-old, who owns a record of 57-6-2 with 38 knockouts, hasn't fought since a May 2 unanimous decision loss to unbeaten Floyd Mayweather in their long-awaited bout that shattered revenue records for the sport, generating some 4.5 million pay-per-view purchases and \$600 million in gross revenue.

Pacquiao aggravated a shoulder injury in the Mayweather bout and underwent surgery five days later. This week in a question and answer with fans on his Facebook page Pacquiao said his shoulder was "100 percent". Arum, too, said the shoulder "seems to be 100 percent". "He's playing basketball with it, scuba diving with it," Arum said. Although not all the paperwork has been finalized, Arum said there were no obstacles to the fight taking place, with major terms such as guaranteed money and the purse split decided.—Agencies



TOKYO: Nicaraguan challenger Oliver Flores, right, sends a left to Japanese champion Takashi Uchiyama in the first round of their WBA world super featherweight boxing title match in Tokyo, yesterday. Uchiyama defended his title with a technical knockout in the third round. — AP



CHARLOTTE: Head coach Dan Mullen and the Mississippi State Bulldogs celebrate with the trophy after a win over the North Carolina State Wolfpack during the Belk Bowl at Bank of America Stadium on December 30, 2015 in Charlotte, North Carolina. Mississippi State won 51-28. — AFP

PRESCOTT, MISSISSIPPI STATE TOP NC STATE 51-28 IN BELK BOWL

CHARLOTTE: Dak Prescott was determined to put an exclamation point on his impressive career at Mississippi State. He did just that Wednesday.

Prescott threw for a Belk Bowl-record 380 yards and four touchdowns on a rain-soaked field in Mississippi State's 51-28 victory over North Carolina State.

"I wanted to make sure the last time I was wearing maroon and white that people remember me as a winner," Prescott said.

Selected the game MVP, Prescott completed 25 of 42 passes and ran for 47 yards joining Colin Kaepernick, Tim Tebow, Dan LeFevour as the only players in FBS history to throw for 9,000 yards and run for 2,500 yards in their career. "There aren't words to describe what he has done for this program," Mississippi State coach Dan Mullen said. "He has taken a university and a football program and changed the way people think about it. That's pretty unique. I've coached a lot of good football players, and I hate comparing guys, but he could very easily be the best guy I've ever coached." That's some high praise from Mullen, who was Tebow's offensive coordinator at Florida. Prescott threw two touchdown passes to Brandon Holloway in the second half to break it open for the Bulldogs, who

finished the season 9-4 after being picked to finish last in the SEC West in the preseason poll. Wide receiver Fred Ross had seven catches for 74 yards and a touchdown and scored on a 33-yard reverse. De'Runnya Wilson added five catches for 96 yards and a touchdown to help the Bulldogs break the Belk Bowl scoring record.

North Carolina State's Jacoby Brissett threw for one score and ran for another, but had two early interceptions that led to Mississippi State's first 14 points. Brissett had only thrown four interceptions all season coming into the game.

TURNOVER MARGIN

"I thought going into the game the turnover margin would be in our advantage," said Wolfpack coach Dave Doeren. "But turning our twice in the first quarter flipped what we thought would be our strength."

The Bulldogs led 31-14 at the half before Prescott put the game away.

He lobbed his third TD pass of the game to Holloway over a blitzing defense to put the Bulldogs up 37-21 late in the third quarter. The senior quarterback hit Holloway in stride on a go route along the right sideline for a 55-yard touchdown in

the fourth quarter. Holloway finished with 78 yards on four catches. Mississippi State's defense set the tone early. On the first play from scrimmage, defensive end Jonathan Calvin hit Brissett as he released the ball and linebacker Gerri Green came up with the diving interception on the slick field at the Wolfpack 26. Five plays later, Ross hauled in a pass from Prescott in the left flat, turned up the left sideline and raced 14 yards for a score.

Brissett had another pass picked off later in the first quarter and Prescott capitalized by finding Wilson for a 28-yard scoring strike. Mississippi State made it 21-0 when Ross scored on a 33-yard reverse.

"We can't do that to start the game," Brissett said. Added Doeren: "The two picks were not normal for him. ... We had some guys open and he didn't have a chance to find them. They did a good job pressuring him and we didn't do a very good job protecting him at times."

Brissett did battle back. He hooked up with former defensive end Pharoah McKeever on an 82-yard scoring strike on a blown coverage to get NC State on the board, and Jaylen Samuels raced 46 yards for a touchdown to trim the lead to seven. But that was as close as the Wolfpack would get.—AP

US BEATS SWITZERLAND 10-1 IN WORLD JUNIORS

HELSINKI: Auston Matthews had two goals and two assists to help the United States rout Switzerland 10-1 on Wednesday in the world junior hockey championship.

Matthew Tkachuk added two goals and an assist, and Christian Dvorak, Zach Werenski and Colin White each had a goal and two assists for the United States (2-1-0). "It's good that everybody's contributing and that was a good finish for us," Matthews said. "They had a game last night that went into a shootout, so I guess we were a little fortunate and took advantage of that."

Matthews plays for ZSC Lions Zurich in Switzerland, Tkachuk and Dvorak for the London Knights in the Ontario Hockey League, Werenski for the University of Michigan, White for Boston College. Nick Schmaltz, Ryan Donato and Brandon Carlo also scored, and Alex Nedeljkovic made 27 saves. Schmaltz plays for North Dakota, Donato for Harvard, Carlo for the Tri-City Americans



HELSINKI: Canada's Haydn Fleury moves the puck away from Switzerland's Calvin Thurkauf during the third period in the preliminary round hockey game at the IIHF World Junior Ice Hockey Championship in Helsinki, Finland, Tuesday. — AP

in the Western Hockey League, and the OHL. "We wanted to keep the game as simple as possible as long as possi-

ble," US coach Ron Wilson said. "I didn't want anybody to take the puck by themselves and join the parade on the scoreboard. We did try to do something fancy sometimes and do some backhand passes, but it's hard to keep the game plan simple at that point, but we did our best."

Timo Meier scored for Switzerland (0-3-1). Earlier, Sweden beat Denmark 5-0 to improve to 3-0 and lock up first place in Group A. Oskar Lindblom, Adrian Kempe, Gustav Forsling, William Lagesson and Alexander Nylander scored, and Felix Sandstrom made nine saves. Denmark is 1-2-0. In Group B, the Czech Republic beat Belarus 5-3, and Finland topped Slovakia 8-3. Simon Stransky, Yegor Sharangovich, Jiri Smejkal, Radek Vesely and Dominik Masin scored for the Czech Republic (2-0-1). Belarus dropped to 0-4-0.

Tournament scoring leader Jesse Puljujarvi a goal and three assists to help Finland improve to 2-1-0. Slovakia fell to 1-2-0. — AP

CAPITALS SCORE 4 IN THIRD, RALLY FOR 5-2 WIN OVER SABRES

WASHINGTON: Alex Ovechkin scored twice during a four-goal rally in the third period and the Washington Capitals beat the Buffalo Sabres 5-2 on Wednesday night to extend their winning streak to nine games and overtake the Dallas Stars for the NHL points lead. Marcus Johansson put Washington ahead 8:32 into the final period, and Andre Burakovsky scored 1:24 later. Evgeny Kuznetsov had two assists during the third period. Justin Williams had the Capitals' other goal, in the second. The Capitals moved ahead of Dallas with 58 points. Kuznetsov set up Ovechkin's tying goal 1:24 into the third with a perfect pass, then set up Johansson for a re-direct during a power play. Ovechkin's last goal was an empty-netter. Braden Holtby finished with 25 saves and improved to 16-0-1 in his last 17 games. He has not lost in regulation since Nov. 10. Brian Gionta and Zemgus Girgensons scored for Buffalo.

Henrik Lundqvist made 20 saves and moved past Rogie Vachon for 17th place on the NHL's career wins list with 356. Dan Boyle scored in the first period and Mats Zuccarello in the second. Viktor Stalberg and Rick Nash added empty-netters. Jonathan Marchessault and Anton Stralman scored for the Lightning. Ben Bishop lost for the first time to the Rangers after winning his first nine games against them. Moore gave the Rangers a 3-2 lead on a backhand 3:16 into the third after a defensive zone turnover by Tampa Bay. Two of his four goals this season have come against the Lightning.

MAPLE LEAFS 3, PENGUINS 2, SO

P.A. Parenteau and Peter Holland scored in the shootout to help Toronto beat Pittsburgh. Parenteau won it by beating Matt Murray to the glove side with a wrist shot. David Perron scored for Pittsburgh in the shootout, but Jonathan Bernier stopped Sidney Crosby and Kris Letang. Bernier finished with 39 saves while playing for the second consecutive night. Dion Phaneuf and Jake Gardiner both scored, and the Maple Leafs rebounded from a 6-3 home loss to the New York Islanders on Tuesday night. Crosby scored his eighth and Chris Kunitz his fifth, and Murray made 34 saves for Pittsburgh.

DEVILS 3, SENATORS 0

Mike Cammalleri scored twice, Cory Schneider made 36 saves and New Jersey beat Ottawa. Andrew Hammond made 18 saves. The Senators lost for the seventh time in 10 games despite outshooting New Jersey 28-11 over the final two periods. The Devils jumped one point ahead of the Senators and into the second wildcard spot in the Eastern Conference with 45 points. Lee Stempniak had a short-handed empty-net goal with 16 seconds left. Cammalleri scored both his goals in the first period. — AP

RANGERS 5, LIGHTNING 2

Dominic Moore put New York ahead early in the third period, Dan Boyle had a goal and an assist and the Rangers ended an eight-game road losing streak.



WASHINGTON: Goalie Braden Holtby #70 of the Washington Capitals tends the net in the third period against the Buffalo Sabres at Verizon Center on December 30 in Washington, DC. The Washington Capitals won, 5-2. — AFP

NHL results/standings

Toronto 3, Pittsburgh 2 (SO); Washington 5, Buffalo 2; New Jersey 3, Ottawa 0; NY Rangers 5, Tampa Bay 2.

Western Conference							Eastern Conference						
Central Division							Atlantic Division						
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS							
Dallas	27	8	3	132	97	57	Florida	21	12	4	101	84	46
St. Louis	23	12	4	99	93	50	Montreal	21	15	3	111	98	45
Chicago	21	13	4	104	94	46	Boston	20	12	4	115	97	44
Minnesota	19	10	6	95	84	44	Detroit	18	12	7	94	98	43
Nashville	18	12	7	100	96	43	Ottawa	18	14	6	111	115	42
Colorado	18	17	2	106	102	38	Tampa Bay	18	16	4	97	93	40
Winnipeg	17	17	2	97	105	36	Toronto	14	15	7	95	102	35
							Buffalo	15	18	4	87	99	34
							Metropolitan Division						
Los Angeles	23	11	2	98	81	48	Washington	28	6	2	115	74	58
San Jose	18	16	2	100	102	38	NY Rangers	21	13	4	112	100	46
Arizona	17	16	3	100	116	37	NY Islanders	20	12	5	103	88	45
Vancouver	14	15	9	93	109	37	New Jersey	19	14	5	90	92	43
Calgary	17	17	2	96	117	36	Pittsburgh	17	15	4	81	89	38
Anaheim	14	15	6	67	87	34	Philadelphia	15	14	7	78	100	37
Edmonton	15	20	3	97	118	33	Carolina	15	17	5	87	106	35
							Columbus	14	22	3	98	123	31

Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L).

MARSH FINDS PACE TO SCRATCH 'PAD RASH' ITCH

MELBOURNE: Having spent much of the home summer suffering "pad rash" from waiting to bat, Australia all-rounder Mitchell Marsh has put the pent-up energy to good use when thrown the ball.

With paceman Peter Siddle hampered by an ankle injury, Marsh stepped up to take 4-61 to help close out victory in the second test against West Indies on Tuesday on a Melbourne Cricket Ground pitch offering little for bowlers. High-fives from team mates were no doubt plentiful in the dressing room, with Marsh having played a big part in preventing them all from having to come back on a fifth day to take care of the West Indies tail.

His fast bowling colleagues and selectors will also have been impressed with the 24-year-old's pace. The speed gun clocked some of his deliveries at over 140 kph. Australia coach Darren Lehmann remarked that Marsh could shape as a de facto third seamer for the third and final test at the Sydney Cricket Ground if selectors picked two spinners. "It's quite flattering to hear that, but the biggest thing for me is just playing my role," Marsh told reporters in Melbourne.

"Over the last 18 months I've worked really hard with (bowling coach) Craig McDermott to try and get a few extra K's (kph) on my bowling and certainly over the last few months I've felt like I'm just getting a bit faster and faster in every game that I play.

"Obviously the more I bowl the more I'm learning about my body and how far I can go.

"Hopefully I've set the tone now for the rest of the summer." Having succeeded Shane Watson as Australia's first-choice all-rounder, Marsh has been more than just a handy option to tie up an end, taking wickets in all five tests of the home summer. There have been leaner pickings with the bat, though his chances to shine have been limited.

In the first test in Hobart, he waited an eternity for West Indies' bowlers to break a record 449-run stand between Adam Voges and his brother Shaun Marsh before getting his chance. He then scored one run before his captain Steve Smith declared.

Another declaration denied him a bat in the first innings in Melbourne, though he scored an unbeaten 18 in the second after Smith generously promoted him up the order. "I've certainly had a bit of pad rash the last couple of games but I play the game to enjoy team success," said Marsh. "So if I get an opportunity I'll be able to take it in the next test but I don't mind if the blokes keep piling on the runs." — Reuters

SMITH, ASHWIN TAKE ICC HONORS

DUBAI: Australia captain Steve Smith and India offspinner Ravichandran Ashwin have finished the year as the No. 1-ranked batsman and bowler, respectively, in the International Cricket Council test player rankings.

Smith, who last week was named ICC cricketer and test player of the year, entered the Melbourne test against the West Indies in fourth position.

But after scoring 134 not out and an unbeaten 70 in Australia's 177-run win over the West Indies, Smith moved ahead of Kane Williamson of New Zealand, England's Joe Root and A.B. de Villiers of South Africa.

The ICC said Thursday that Ashwin, who started the year ranked 15th, claimed the No. 1 bowling spot for the first time in his career, taking a 2015-best 62 wickets in nine tests, including seven five-wicket hauls. — AP



NELSON: Tillakaratne Dilshan (R) of Sri Lanka plays a shot in front of New Zealand wicketkeeper Luke Ronchi during the 3rd One Day International cricket match between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at Saxton Oval in Nelson yesterday. — AFP

FIERY NET SPELL SEES S LANKA TURN TABLES ON NEW ZEALAND

NELSON: A cracking 91 by Tillakaratne Dilshan after a fiery net session set Sri Lanka up for an eight-wicket victory over New Zealand in Nelson yesterday to keep their one-day series alive.

Sri Lanka knocked off their 277-run target with 22 balls to spare in a remarkable turnaround after being outplayed in the first two matches. In addition to Dilshan's heroics, Lahiru Thirimanne cracked an unbeaten 87 and Danushka Gunathilaka made 65.

Dinesh Chandimal was not out 27 at the end as the match followed the same formula as the first two where the team that lost the toss batted second and dominated.

Gunathilaka said it was a must-win game and non-playing speedster Suranga Lakmal sharpened the players up when he hit several in the nets the previous day. "That's true, we talked about that and how now we are okay," he said. "Angelo (Mathews) and (Milinda) Siriwardana were hit on the head and Dilshan hit in the face.

"We talked about how we have to be positive and we can't have negative thoughts because certainly this New Zealand side is a very strong side and they are a very good bowling attack."

New Zealand now lead the series 2-1 with two matches remaining. Batting first in the opening matches on faster wickets in Christchurch, Dilshan, Thirimanne and Gunathilaka posted a total of 43 runs from their combined six innings. But they were more at home on the accommodating Saxton Oval where Dilshan took 92 balls for his 91 and stood in partnerships of 98 with Gunathilaka and 111 with Thirimanne. New Zealand strike bowlers Tim Southee and Adam Milne were belted out of the attack in five overs.

Doug Bracewell was brought on in the sixth over to arrest the onslaught

only to have Gunathilaka smack his first ball for six to bring up Sri Lanka's 50. It was the introduction of New Zealand's fourth quick, Mitchell McClenaghan, that snapped the opening stand when Gunathilaka was caught by Ross Taylor at first slip for 65.

ROLLICKING PERFORMANCE

Dilshan was run out when turned back by Thirimanne when attempting a difficult single.

In contrast to Sri Lanka's rollicking performance, the New Zealand innings showed signs of rust after so few batsmen had a chance to get in the middle in the first two games.

Kane Williamson's 59 was the only score to better a half-century. Williamson, deputising as captain in place of the injured Brendon McCullum, was dropped on 30 and added a further 29 runs before meekly yielding his wick-

et when he slapped a full toss from Siriwardana to Dushmantha Chameera at mid-on. Chameera had an impressive game, as did the other Sri Lankan novice Jeffrey Vandersay.

In addition to the valuable catch to remove Williamson, the 23-year-old Chameera claimed the wickets of Martin Guptill (30) and Henry Nicholls (20) and ran out Mitchell Santner (38).

When New Zealand looked to be lining themselves up for a big score on a wicket that suggested an innings of 300-plus, Vandersay removed Tom Latham for 42 and Ross Taylor without scoring in three deliveries. They were the first ODI wickets for the 25-year-old leg-spinner playing in his second international.

Bracewell's career best 30 off 34 and Southee's 18 off four balls in the final over gave the New Zealand innings a late boost. The fourth ODI is in Nelson on Saturday. —AFP

SCOREBOARD

NELSON, New Zealand: Completed scoreboard in the third ODI between New Zealand and Sri Lanka in Nelson yesterday:

New Zealand		Sri Lanka	
M. Guptill c Dilshan b Chameera	30	D. Gunathilaka c Taylor b McClenaghan	65
T. Latham c Pradeep b Vandersay	42	T. Dilshan run out Taylor/Ronchi	91
K. Williamson c Chameera b Siriwardana	59	L. Thirimanne not out	87
R. Taylor c Mathews b Vandersay	0	D. Chandimal not out	27
H. Nicholls b Chameera	20	Extras (w6, nb 1)	7
M. Santner run out Chameera	38	Total (2 wickets; 46.2 overs)	277
L. Ronchi c Kapugedera b Pradeep	7	Fall of wickets: 1-98 (Gunathilaka), 2-209 (Dilshan)	
D. Bracewell c sub (Senanayake) b Pradeep	30	Did not bat: A. Mathews, M. Siriwardana, C. Kapugedera, N. Kulasekara, N. Pradeep, D. Chameera, J. Vandersay.	
A. Milne not out	17	Bowling: Southee 6-0-44-0 (w3), Milne 6-0-50-0 (w1), Bracewell 6.2-0-45-0 (w1), McClenaghan 9-0-39-1 (nb1), Santner 10-0-59-0, Williamson 8-0-38-0 (w1), Guptill 1-0-2-0	
T. Southee not out	18	Result: Sri Lanka won by 8 wickets.	
Extras (lb4, w10, nb1)	15		
Total (8 wickets, 50 overs)	276		
Fall of wickets: 1-42 (Guptill), 2-102 (Latham), 3-102 (Taylor), 4-143 (Nicholls), 5-163 (Williamson), 6-191 (Ronchi), 7-215 (Santner), 8-257 (Bracewell)			
Did not bat: M. McClenaghan			
Bowling: Pradeep 10-0-55-2 (w1), Chameera 10-0-38-2 (w1), Dilshan 8-1-43-0, Kulasekara 5-			

NBA results/standings

LA Clippers 122, Charlotte 117; Orlando 100, Brooklyn 93; LA Lakers 112, Boston 104; Toronto 94, Washington 91; Chicago 102, Indiana 100 (OT); Minnesota 94, Utah 80; Dallas 114, Golden State 91; San Antonio 112, Phoenix 79; Portland 110, Denver 103; Philadelphia 110, Sacramento 105.

Eastern Conference				
Atlantic Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB
Toronto	20	13	.606	-
Boston	18	14	.563	1.5
NY Knicks	15	18	.455	5
Brooklyn	9	23	.281	10.5
Philadelphia	3	31	.088	17.5
Central Division				
Cleveland	21	9	.700	-
Chicago	18	12	.600	3
Indiana	18	13	.581	3.5
Detroit	17	15	.531	5
Milwaukee	12	21	.364	10.5
Southeast Division				
Atlanta	21	13	.618	-
Orlando	19	13	.594	1
Miami	18	13	.581	1.5
Charlotte	17	14	.548	2.5
Washington	14	16	.467	5
Western Conference				
Northwest Division				
Oklahoma City	22	10	.688	-
Utah	13	17	.433	8
Portland	14	20	.412	9
Minnesota	12	20	.375	10
Denver	12	21	.364	10.5
Pacific Division				
Golden State	29	2	.935	-
LA Clippers	20	13	.606	10
Sacramento	12	20	.375	17.5
Phoenix	12	22	.353	18.5
LA Lakers	6	27	.182	24
Southwest Division				
San Antonio	28	6	.824	-
Dallas	19	13	.594	8
Memphis	18	16	.529	10
Houston	16	17	.485	11.5
New Orleans	10	21	.323	16.5



DALLAS: Chandler Parsons #25 of the Dallas Mavericks dribbles the ball against Andre Iguodala #9 of the Golden State Warriors at American Airlines Center on Wednesday in Dallas, Texas. —AFP

MAVS DEAL SHORT-HANDED WARRIORS SECOND DEFEAT

DALLAS: The Golden State Warriors flopped without Stephen Curry, getting blown out for just their second loss of the season behind 23 points for Dallas' J.J. Barea in a 114-91 victory for the Mavericks on Wednesday night. Curry missed his first game of the season with a lower left leg bruise that might keep the NBA's leading scorer and reigning MVP out again today at Houston. But the Warriors (29-2) still have the best 31-game start in NBA history, a game better than four teams. Klay Thompson couldn't make up for Curry's absence, going 4 of 15 for 10 points. Ian Clark led the Warriors with 21 points. Zaza Pachulia had 14 points and 15 rebounds, and Dirk Nowitzki added 18 and eight rebounds for the Mavericks. They won their fourth straight game without injured point guard Deron Williams.

LAKERS 112, CELTICS 104

Kobe Bryant had 15 points and 11 rebounds for Los Angeles in likely his final game in Boston. Bryant played 33 minutes and had his first double-double of what he says is his final season. The crowd chanted "Kobe! Kobe!" in the final minute. Jordan Clarkson scored 24 points, and Lou Williams had 19 to help Los Angeles stop a fourgame slide. Isaiah Thomas had 24 points, and Evan Turner added 20 for Boston.

SPURS 112, SUNS 79

LaMarcus Aldridge had 21 points and 12 rebounds and San Antonio routed Phoenix for its 19th straight home win to start the season. The Spurs also extended their franchise-record home winning streak to 28 straight games dating to last season by holding the Suns to several season lows. Phoenix, which has lost six straight, had season lows for total points,

first-half points (33) and points in the opening quarter (12). Kawhi Leonard had 19 points, Manu Ginobili added 13 and Tony Parker had 12 points and seven assists for San Antonio. Tim Duncan missed his third straight game due to right knee soreness.

76ERS 110, KINGS 105

Ish Smith scored five of his 18 points over the final 3 1/2 minutes and Jerami Grant made three late free throws to in Philadelphia's victory over Sacramento. The 76ers have won two of their past three games since acquiring Smith in a trade with New Orleans, improving their NBA-worst record to 3-31. Nerlens Noel had a season-high 20 points and added nine rebounds, and Grant finished with 16 points, a career-best 11 rebounds and five blocked shots. DeMarcus Cousins had 21 points and 11 rebounds for Sacramento but fouled out with 1:47 left.

BULLS 102, PACERS 100, OT

Jimmy Butler tipped in a basket with 1.2 seconds left in overtime and Chicago beat Indiana despite playing without Derrick Rose. On the final play, Butler tipped in Pau Gasol's lob from atop the key. Butler then defended Paul George on a lob to preserve the win. Butler scored 28 points, and Aaron Brooks had 29 points for Chicago. Rose was scratched an hour before the game with right hamstring tendinitis. George Hill led Indiana with 20 points.

RAPTORS 94, WIZARDS 91

DeMar DeRozan had 34 points, six rebounds and five assists in Toronto's victory over Washington. DeRozan went 15 for 15 at the free-throw line as Toronto won its fifth straight regular-season game against the Wizards, who

swept the Raptors in the first round of the playoffs last season. Terrence Ross added 14 points for the Raptors (20-13). Otto Porter led the Wizards with 20 points and nine rebounds. John Wall had 19 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds.

CLIPPERS 122, HORNETS 117

J.J. Redick scored 26 points, Austin Rivers added a season-best 22 and Los Angeles beat Charlotte. Chris Paul had 19 points and 11 assists for the Clippers, and DeAndre Jordan finished with 13 points and 13 rebounds. Kemba Walker scored 29 points for the Hornets. They played without Al Jefferson because of a knee injury that will sideline the center for at least six weeks. Frank Kaminsky had 20 points.

TRAIL BLAZERS 110, NUGGETS 103

C.J. McCollum scored 29 points, Allen Crabbe had 20 and Portland beat Denver for its third consecutive victory. McCollum, starting at point guard for a fourth consecutive game with Damian Lillard sidelined with a left foot injury, hit 12 of 19 shots, Crabbe was 8 of 14, going 4 for 7 from 3-point range. Will Barton, traded by Portland to Denver last season, led the Nuggets with 31 points.

MAGIC 100, NETS 93

Nik Vucevic had 20 points and nine rebounds in Orlando's comeback victory over New York. Evan Fournier added 17 points and five assists for Orlando, which has won seven of nine. Brooklyn led by as many as 13, but fell part down the stretch, going 3 for 20 from the 3-point line. Brook Lopez led the Nets with 24 point and 15 rebounds. Bojan Bogdanovic added 20 points.—AP

VAN GAAL BACK UNDER SCRUTINY AS SWANSEA VISITS MAN UNITED

MANCHESTER: It speaks volumes about Manchester United's current plight that a 0-0 draw at home against a team languishing just above the Premier League's relegation zone represents an encouraging sign of progress.

That's how far a mighty club has fallen, with the stalemate with Chelsea on Monday appearing to give some breathing space for under-pressure manager Louis van Gaal.

Lose to manager-less and relegation-threatened Swansea at Old Trafford on Saturday, though, and United will put Van Gaal even closer to the brink. The record 20-time English champions are winless in their last eight games in all competitions, marking their worst run of form since 1990, and have collected only three points from their last six league games. Almost as worrying for United is that the team has scored only one goal in its last four home games.

Van Gaal may say he enjoys the backing of the United board, and has backtracked on previous comments that he could quit as manager, but there might be no way back if Swansea leaves Old Trafford with three points.

Put simply, 2016 has to start better than 2015 ended for the Dutchman. "If anything, we are all playing for our own futures as well," United defender Chris Smalling said, with the team having fallen five places adrift of the Champions League places.

On paper, Swansea looks the ideal opponent for United to get back to winning ways: No manager following Garry Monk's firing on Dec. 9, one place above the bottom three, only one away win against last-place Aston Villa - this campaign. Yet the Welsh club has won its last three games against United, all 2-1, including a home-and-away league double last season.

What Van Gaal must ensure is that United plays the same way as against Chelsea, when his players were more positive, took more risks with their passing and looked to play more forward. United's fans could see the team was trying and seemed to warm to Van Gaal and his players.—AP

ENGLISH TEAMS SEEK NEW INSPIRATION AS TRANSFER WINDOW OPENS

MANCHESTER: The January transfer window opens for business today, and rarely has so much been at stake for teams in the lucrative English Premier League.

Lagging behind in the race for Champions League qualification, Chelsea, Manchester United and Liverpool could be the most active of the country's major powers as they look for a strong finish to arguably the most unpredictable season in the Premier League's 24-year history.

Then there's the scramble to avoid the costliest-ever relegation from England's top division. Next season ushers in the start of the Premier League's new three-year TV

deal worth a record \$8 billion, and no club will want to miss out on a share of that bounty. So, count on England being the place where most deals are done over the next month, as usual. Last January, English clubs were easily the biggest spenders, splashing out about 130 million pounds (then \$213 million) to shatter the record for the season as a whole at 760 million pounds (then \$1.25 billion).

Top teams operating strategic transfer plans rarely do major deals in this period. Likely targets can be ruled out of the Champions League and managers can be scared off by inflated prices.

This season could be different. Chelsea is in 14th place, three points above the relegation zone, in the most woeful title defense that the Premier League has seen. A top new signing by caretaker coach Guus Hiddink could inspire a revival, and the striker department needs refreshing.

"The window is wide open," Hiddink said Wednesday. Just as it will be at Man United, where Anthony Martial and Wayne Rooney are the only two strikers at a club struggling to score goals. A world-class striker could make all the difference for under-pressure United manager Louis van Gaal, who is likely to add to the \$375 million he's already

spent in his 18 months in charge.

It is Juergen Klopp's first transfer window since becoming Liverpool manager. Will he return to his old hunting ground of Germany to bolster Liverpool's squad? It will also be interesting to see whether Leicester, remarkably in second place after half of the Premier League campaign, splashes out to stay in the title contention. And if the team manages to keep hold of striker Jamie Vardy.

On Wednesday, Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said it would be a "busy" month for his club, with a midfielder needed to solve an injury crisis. — Reuters

BENTEKE LIFTS LIVERPOOL AS SUNDERLAND SLUMP CONTINUES

LONDON: Christian Benteke condemned struggling Sunderland to a 1-0 defeat and sent Liverpool level on points with sixth-placed Manchester United in the last Premier League game of the year on Wednesday.

The Belgium striker broke through 22 seconds after the restart to bag his sixth goal of the campaign, the quickest second-half goal in the Premier League this season.

Nathaniel Clyne's long pass was deflected on by Adam Lallana to the lurking Benteke, who tucked it away from inside the area with Sunderland's defence caught napping.

Liverpool, who beat high-flying Leicester City 1-0 on Saturday with another second-half goal from Benteke, have 30 points from 19 games but Juergen Klopp's side are behind Manchester United on goal difference.

Sunderland remained second from bottom on 12 points after five straight defeats, seven points adrift of safety. "Three points, really hard work," was Klopp's immediate verdict. "It's not the best we can do, we know this, but we had to fight."

"Everyone wants to end the year positively, we can and Sunderland can't but we take those points, go home, sleep two times and on to the next game," he told the BBC.

Sunderland manager Sam Allardyce cursed Sunderland's bad luck. "Such a lucky, lucky goal for Liverpool," he told Sky Sports. "If they'd come out with some of the brilliance they've got from Coutinho or Lallana and beaten a couple of players and wrapped it in the top corner, then you have to hold your hands up," he added.

Goalkeeper Vito Mannone had produced several great saves in the first half including a stunning dive in the 26th minute to deflect a goalbound Roberto Firmino shot against the upright.

The Black Cats, with only three wins this season, also showed fighting spirit with Liverpool keeper Simon Mignolet forced to palm over a Jermain Defoe effort in the 16th.

They suffered a setback on the half hour, however, when England midfielder Jack Rodwell was injured and replaced by Duncan Watmore.—Reuters



SUNDERLAND: Sunderland's Yann M'Vila, top, vies for the ball with Liverpool's Emre Can, left, during the English Premier League soccer match between Sunderland and Liverpool at the Stadium of Light, Sunderland, England, Wednesday.—AP



BARCELONA: Real Betis' goalkeeper Antonio Adan (up) hits Barcelona's Argentinean forward Lionel Messi during the Spanish league football match FC Barcelona vs Real Betis Balompie at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on December 30, 2015.—AFP

MESSI HITS 500 IN STYLE, BARCA KEEP LA LIGA LEAD

BARCELONA: Luis Suarez struck twice and Lionel Messi scored on his 500th appearance for Barcelona who set a new Spanish record of goals in a calendar year with a 4-0 win over Real Betis that lifted them top of La Liga on Wednesday.

Late strikes from Angel Correa and Antoine Griezmann gave Atletico a 2-0 victory over Rayo Vallecano while Cristiano Ronaldo scored a penalty and missed another as Real Madrid beat Real Sociedad 3-1. Barcelona and Atletico have 38 points with the Catalan side having played a game fewer, two more than third-placed Real.

Messi slid home his 425th goal for Barca after 34 minutes to add to their lead which came from a Heiko Westermann own-goal following a controversial penalty.

The Argentine was harshly judged to have been fouled by keeper Antonio Adan and although Neymar slipped and

hit the crossbar with his spot-kick, Westermann put the rebound into the back of his own net.

Suarez pounced twice in the second half to take Barca's goal tally to 180 this year, two more than the previous Spanish record set by Real Madrid in 2014. "It has been a fantastic year and we wanted to finish it the same way," Messi told reporters.

"It will be difficult to improve on what we have done but we will try." Atletico substitute Correa fired home from a Thomas Partey pass after 88 minutes and Griezmann sealed the victory over Rayo.

"It was a tough battle and we managed to break through at the end," Correa told reporters. "He (coach Diego Simeone) just told me to go on and help the team to win and luckily we did." Ronaldo blazed a spot-kick over the bar after 24 minutes but slotted home another three minutes before the break

to put Real ahead.

Sociedad substitute Bruma equalised for the visitors after 49 minutes before Ronaldo struck a volley through a crowded penalty area into the net midway through the second half. Lucas Vazquez sealed the win with a goal after 87 minutes that will ease the pressure on coach Rafa Benitez.

Barca struggled to break down a well-organised Betis until the penalty. When the game opened up, however, Messi quickly added another from close range following an exchange of passes with Neymar.

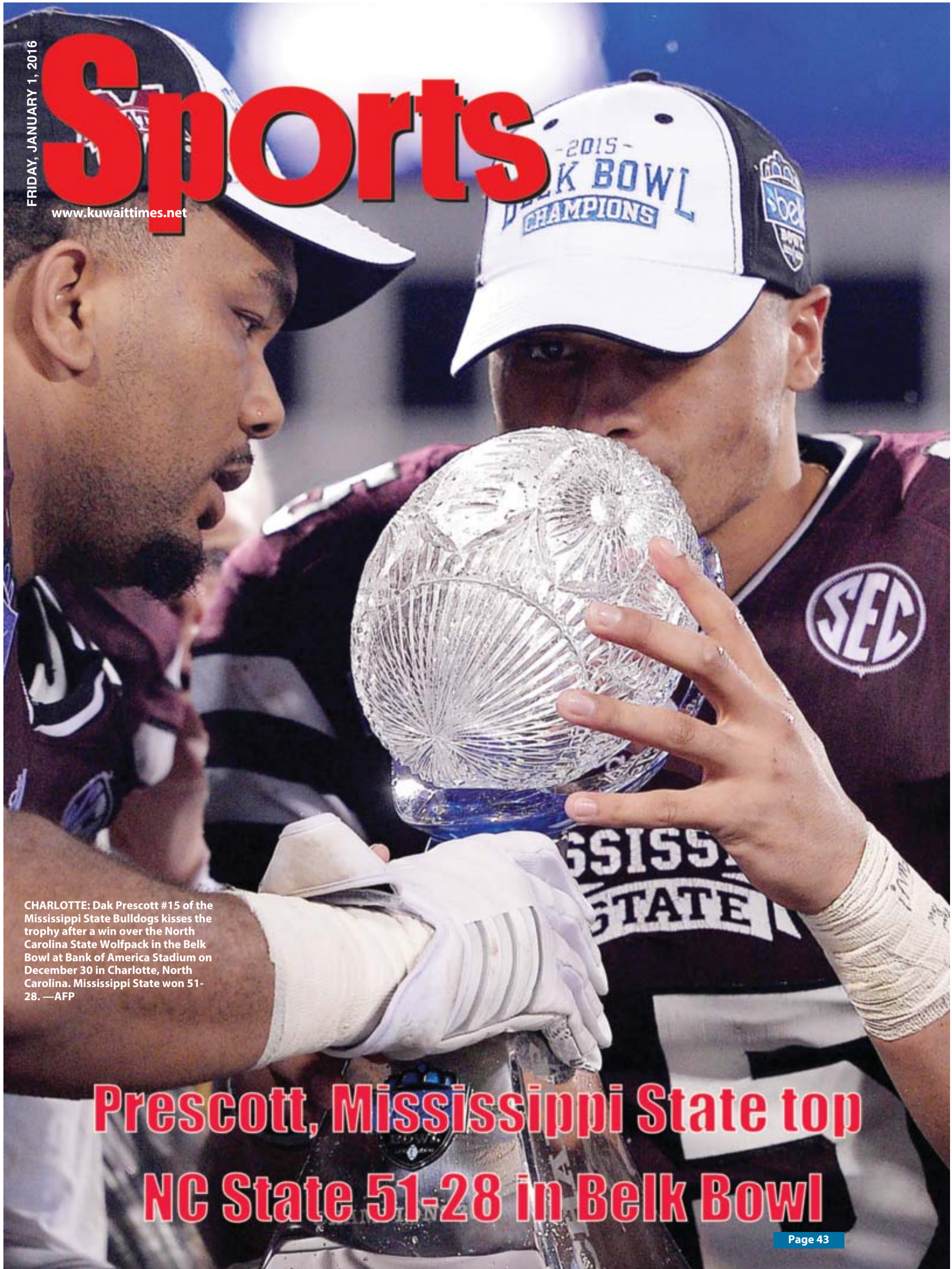
Suarez slotted home a Sergio Busquets pass after the restart and with Betis stretched the chances continued to fall for the Catalan side.

Neymar and Dani Alves both struck the woodwork with shots and Messi's free kick come back off the woodwork before Suarez fired home his second from inside the area.—Reuters

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Sports

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CHARLOTTE: Dak Prescott #15 of the Mississippi State Bulldogs kisses the trophy after a win over the North Carolina State Wolfpack in the Belk Bowl at Bank of America Stadium on December 30 in Charlotte, North Carolina. Mississippi State won 51-28. —AFP

**Prescott, Mississippi State top
NC State 51-28 in Belk Bowl**