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KUWAIT RECALLS ENVOY AS SAUDI-IRAN CRISIS WIDENS

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conspiracy theories

TALK OF THE TOWN

By **Badrya Darwish**
badrya_d@kuwaittimes.net

For the last couple of months, we are all hearing rumors here and there in diwanias, social media and gatherings about the government's intention to lift all subsidies on fuel, food, water, electricity, etc. Many have questioned whether the impact will be fairly distributed on citizens and expats or if the latter will bear the brunt.

First of all, I'm against any price rises or subsidy removals. Because the study that suggested such measures was done in 2013 - before the drop in oil prices which happened recently.

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KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Sulaiman Al-Jarallah (center right) meets Iranian Ambassador Ali Reda Enayeti (center left) after summoning the envoy at the foreign ministry yesterday. — KUNA

By B Izzak and agencies

RIYADH: The diplomatic crisis surrounding Saudi Arabia and Iran widened yesterday as Kuwait recalled its ambassador to Tehran and Bahrain severed air links in the face of growing international concern. Joining Riyadh and its Sunni Arab allies in taking diplomatic action, Kuwait said it was withdrawing its envoy over weekend attacks on the Saudi embassy in Tehran and consulate in Mashhad. Kuwait's move came after the UN Security Council strongly condemned the attack, carried out by protesters angry over Saudi Arabia's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric.

Also yesterday, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Sulaiman Al-Jarallah summoned Iran's ambassador to Kuwait Ali Reda Enayeti and handed him a written protest note over the attacks. Jarallah said in the protest note that such action by Iran constituted a flagrant violation of international conventions and norms. The protest note reiterated the condemnation of Kuwait of the flagrant violations, stressing the need for Iran to respect its international commitments towards accredited diplomatic missions and safeguarding their staff.

Jarallah pointed out that the note also included an assertion of Iran's responsibility to fully protect foreign diplomatic missions in accordance international conventions regulating diplomatic and consular ties based on respect of sovereignty of states and non-interference in their internal affairs, a principle he said would guarantee peace and security in the region and contribute

Continued on Page 13

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AMIR OFFERS CONDOLENCE TO BOSNIAN CROAT LEADER

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences yesterday to the leader of the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina Dr Dragan Covic, over the passing of his mother. His Highness Deputy Amir and the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cable of condolences. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets former US Ambassador to Kuwait Edward Gnehm. — KUNA

CROWN PRINCE RECEIVES FORMER US AMBASSADOR

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday former US Ambassador to Kuwait Edward Gnehm and the current Ambassador Douglas A Silliman. His Highness welcomed Gnehm and applauded the role he played in strengthening the bilateral ties between both nations, and his positive diplomatic and political contributions during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The meeting was attended by the Head of His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Mubarak Al-Faisal Al-Saud Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Malik Al-Sabah lauded Gnehm for his support to the Gulf country, especially during the Iraqi aggression of 1990. This remark was made by Sheikh Faisal during meeting with Gnehm and current US Ambassador Silliman, the Farwaniya Governorate said in a statement yesterday. It added that the meeting reiterated strong and strategic ties between Kuwait and the US and tackled various regional and international issues. The two envoys reciprocated same sentiment of strong ties. — KUNA



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Malik Al-Sabah meets with Former US Ambassador to Kuwait Edward Gnehm and US Ambassador to Kuwait Douglas Silliman.



KUWAIT DELIVERS FOODSTUFF TO CYCLONE-HIT YEMENIS

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) has handed out 2,000 food packages to the people of Yemen's cyclone-hit Socotra Island. This humanitarian aid, which was donated by Kuwaiti people, has been distributed in the Yemeni island in collaboration with local civil society organizations, KRCS Deputy Chairman Anwar Al-Hasawi said yesterday. By doing so, the KRCS is seeking to ease out the reflections

of recent bad weather conditions that have caused serious damage to houses in the affected area, he added. Kuwait's humanitarian and relief aid to Yemeni people come upon directives from the country's political leadership, the KRCS official said. Over 7,000 houses have been wholly or partially damaged and up to 1,000 families have been displaced due to the hurricane that hit Socotra Island. — KUNA

INDIAN SOCIAL ACTIVIST DR SRIKUMAR DIES

KUWAIT: Well-known Indian community leader and president of National Forum (NAFO) Kuwait Dr TS Srikumar, 59, passed away yesterday morning in India. He was working as the chief technologist at Faculty of Medicine in Kuwait University over the last 18 years. He hailed from Trivandrum, Kerala.

As a leading socio-cultural activist among the Indian expat community in Kuwait, Dr Srikumar was instrumental in establishing many humanitarian and charity projects in India. He was also the key architect of many educational and social innovation award programs organized by NAFO and the Association of Indian Professionals (AIP), Kuwait over the past several years, including Yousuf Alyan Memorial Educational Excellence Award in 2009, instituted by AIP, Kuwait.

Dr Srikumar breathed his last at 7.30 am (IST) yesterday at KIMS Hospital, Trivandrum. His last rituals were performed yesterday evening at Santhi



Dr Srikumar

Kavadam, Trivandrum. He is survived by his wife Preetha and children Balagopal and Kavitha. NAFO Kuwait convened an emergency meeting yesterday and paid rich tribute to its departed president.

DEPUTY SPEAKER AFFIRMS SUPPORT OF SAUDI ARABIA

GULF FMS MEET TO DISCUSS EMBASSY ATTACK

KUWAIT: National Assembly Deputy Speaker Mubarak Al-Khuraiej yesterday affirmed Kuwait's unwavering support of Saudi Arabia, in light of recent attacks on the Kingdom's diplomatic missions in Iran. In a press statement, Khuraiej said that the Kuwaiti government strongly condemns the attacks on Saudi Arabia's embassy in the Iranian capital, Tehran and its Consulate in Mashhad.

Earlier yesterday, Kuwait had recalled its Ambassador to Iran and handed the Islamic Republic's Ambassador to the country, a complaint notice over the incident. Kuwait's stance is indicative of the cohesion of Gulf Cooperation

Council (GCC) nations in the face of any threats, Khuraiej added.

Emergency meeting

Meanwhile, Secretary General of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) Dr Abdullatif Al-Zayani announced that GCC Foreign Ministers will hold an emergency meeting on Saturday to discuss the recent attacks on Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran. In a press statement, Zayani said that meeting will be held in Riyadh under the Chairmanship of Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir.

On Saturday, angry demonstrators in Tehran attacked the Saudi embassy, setting fire in the



Mubarak Al-Khuraiej



Dr Abdullatif Al-Zayani

building and destroying furniture. Saudi Arabia has fully severed all ties with Iran after a

crowd of protestors stormed and set ablaze the Kingdom's embassy in Tehran. — KUNA

CONDOLENCES



Dr. T.S. SRIKUMAR (59)
President, National Forum (NAFO) - Kuwait

With profound grief, we announce the sad and sudden demise of our beloved President and a well-known social activist in the community Dr. T.S. Srikumar on the morning of Tuesday, January 05, 2016, at KIMS Hospital, Thiruvananthapuram; Our heartfelt condolences.

We sincerely pray the Almighty to give strength to his family to overcome this great loss.

NAFO - Kuwait
E-mail: contact@nafoglobal.com



The first batch of staff of the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises

NATIONAL FUND EMPLOYS FIRST BATCH OF NATIONAL COMPETENCIES

KUWAIT: The National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises has announced recruiting the first batch of national manpower who have passed all the tests and personal interviews deservedly. In this regard, the Executive Director of Support Services Sector, Mohammed Abdullah, said that the National Fund aims to attract young competencies and utilize their skills in accordance with their aspirations and vision.

In this context, the new employees were briefed on the nature of the work at the National Fund. Also, they have been provided with the required skills and experience, in which it will qualify them and assist them to perform the tasks assigned to them optimally; through a

comprehensive training course that was provided to the new employees when they joined the workforce. Abdullah then explained, that after adopting the organizational structure by the Civil Service Bureau in May 2015, the first batch of staff were recruited then in December of the same year. Where the recruitment included experienced staff and fresh graduates. Hence, came the need for dividing the new employees into two groups based on their expertise. Where the senior positions will be appended to experienced staff, and junior positions will be entrusted to the fresh graduates, in accordance with their skills and interests. This step is considered as one of the most significant steps, as it prepares the fund for the next operational phase.

Abdullah stressed that the vision of the National Fund is focused on building a working environment that stimulates creativity and creates productive employment opportunities for Kuwaitis in the private sector. And through the employment of the first batch of staff, we reaffirm our commitment to our endeavors. As we keep our promises to the national manpower who deserve our endless support.

Abdullah then concluded with emphasizing the keenness of the Fund to employ young national competencies. In order to build a work environment that stimulates creativity and is able to keep abreast of the best technical and management practices that are consistent with the nature of their work.

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MIXED REACTION TO FORCED RETIREMENT OF EXPATRIATES AGED OVER 50 YEARS

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: From March 1, 2016, expats aged above 50 will be forced to retire from public sector jobs under a new measure announced to reduce the number of foreign workers in government establishments. The new measure, to be implemented by the Civil Service Commission (CSC), will help Kuwaiti graduates who need jobs and are on the CSC waiting list to gain employment.

The decision though will not be implemented until the new manpower is hired and trained accordingly. The ministry of education held a press conference last week, where public education undersecretary Fatma Al-Kandari reiterated the sincerity of the Kuwaiti government to implement the new rules. She announced 25 percent of expat teachers at the ministry will be laid off by the end of 2017 (the end of the new academic year). She said expat teachers that can be replaced by Kuwaiti teachers like those for social studies, Arabic and Islamic subjects will be

notified three months prior to the termination of their contracts.

Mixed reaction

The new measure elicited mixed reaction from the expat community in Kuwait. An Egyptian teacher, aged 53, told Kuwait Times yesterday he won't be affected. "I am safe from the new rules because I teach specialized English literature," he said. "There are shortages of Kuwaiti English teachers, so we are okay. But I have heard they have a list of expats teachers who will be gradually terminated because they said they are serious on implementing the new guidelines, so we just have to face the reality."

An Egyptian lawyer who spoke on condition of anonymity does not believe anything will happen. "I don't think it is possible. Fifty years is too early to retire - it is when they are just starting to be productive and serious in their line of work. We don't see it happening soon. We know they cannot implement it because I think it is

hard on their part, as they will be forced to cut short the services of many expats who have experience which could be used by the ministries for better services and functions. They need the expertise and experienced old workers, and if you remove them from the workforce, your department will be in trouble in the short term," he added.

Preparation

A dentist from the Philippines, aged 51, said he is readying for the moment when Kuwait kicks him out from the ministry of health. "This is exactly what I am preparing for nowadays. I am in the mood to work, but in order to accept fate, I am also preparing myself for my eventual reintegration back in my home country," he said.

The dentist said he has bought several dental chairs so he could prepare in the event that the new rules will be implemented. "I am now preparing to set up my own dental clinic in Manila. All of us expats must understand that we

are foreigners and we serve at the mercy of our employers and the country we live in. Our mindsets should be that we are not permanent in this country - eventually, we are heading home, so my fellow countrymen should prepare for relocation to our home country, either by saving or readying ourselves. We cannot blame Kuwait for its decision since it has to prioritize its workforce that needs jobs, especially since many are graduating yearly and are ready to work, but there are no vacancies for them. I personally believe older workers must give way to younger ones - you'll be getting rid of older but experienced ones but you'll be welcoming new and dynamic blood as well," he said.

Young, qualified and unemployed Kuwaitis with university, medium and lesser degrees number more than 20,000. Earlier regulations allowed expats to work till the age of 60 or more in both private and government sectors, provided they are still able to do so. The new CSC order is only for public sector jobs.

SHEIKH NASSER SUES BLOGGER

KUWAIT: Former prime minister His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah's lawyer Emad Al-Saif yesterday said that he filed a case yesterday against blogger Hamed Buyabes for posting a tweet holding his client responsible for wasting KD 11 billion in public funds during his premiership.

'Fintas Group'

The criminal court yesterday sentenced the prime suspect in the 'Fintas Group' case, Hamad Al-Haroon, and three other citizens who helped him escape to 10 years in jail with labor. Notably, the Fintas group was exposed when security forces arrested a demonstrator at Irada Square and found slanderous and false information and provocations against security sources on his mobile phone. Thirteen people, including lawyers, media figures and others are accused in the case.

Labor guarantee

Ahmed Al-Moussa, Acting Director of the Public Authority for Manpower said that upon instructions from Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Planning and Development Hind Al-Subaih to reconsider a decision about imposing financial guarantee conditions on certain activities and companies, the authority decided limiting this condition to employers contracted to provide activities like cleaning, handling and security services for various government projects. Moussa added that a list with the activities included and those to be exempted had been issued and that exempted employers could check with various labor departments to get a refund of the guarantees they had already paid.



KUWAIT: Government employees protest against labor unions in front of the Public Authority for Manpower headquarters.



Young people are seen among the protestors.



Salem Al-Ajmi, Chairman of Kuwait Trade Union Federation speaks to reporters.

GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATORS BACK MANPOWER OVER UNIONS YOUTH HIRED AS PROTESTORS?

KUWAIT: Dozens of government employees held an anti-union demonstration yesterday in front of the Public Authority for Manpower headquarters in Jabriya. According to eye witnesses, tens of youth were also on the scene and at least one claimed they were paid to 'show up and support the protestors.'

The demonstrators intended to show support for a recent Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor decision aimed at reorganizing unions and labor syndicates in the country. The decision set up a new 'unions' executive' chart and has been widely condemned by unions.

Salem Al-Ajmi, Chairman of Kuwait Trade Union Federation (KTUF) called for the implementation of the new 'executive chart' in order to break the monopoly of unions. The new regulations would allow others to run for general assembly elec-

tions and cancel what they described as 'impossible' conditions set to prevent citizens from running for board elections. Ajmi added that the new chart was approved by the KTUF and that it matched all international agreements and union work. He also noted that the numbers of syndicate demonstrating against the new chart was very limited.

Several labor unions have held protests in front of the Manpower Authority in recent weeks against the new regulations. Labor syndicates of the State Audit Bureau, Kuwait Municipality and the Ministry of Electricity and Water have accused the Public Authority for Manpower of interfering in unions' internal affairs. They further warned that such interference would lead to a 'catastrophe' because it violates the constitution as well as international laws and agreements signed by Kuwait.

OFFICER ACQUITTED OF ABUSE OF POWER

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A misdemeanor court yesterday acquitted a police captain of abusing his powers and assaulting a citizen after arresting him for reckless driving. Case papers indicate that the citizen and four of his friends were stopped by police for reckless driving and were arrested after one of them tried to escape. After he was placed in a patrol car, the police captain and his colleague allegedly assaulted the men and the captain strangled the detainee although he is asthmatic. The claimant also provided a medical report and said that the accused and his colleagues had also kicked him. However, the court found the accusations false and vexatious, especially since the claimant had threatened the police captain and his friends. "I will show you all, I have memorized your features," he told them.

Fake claims

In an unusual case, a citizen, who had been wanted for several financial claims, tried to prevent losing everything to pay off his debts and nominally sold his house to his wife allegedly for KD 500,000. The lawyer of one of the debtors, Hisham Al-Fahd, said that the accused was indebted to his client for KD 230,000 and that he faked a contract selling the house to his wife to escape paying the debt when a court decided confiscating his possessions and property to do so. The lawyer argued that the documents the accused presented had been issued on the same day and shortly before going to court. Accordingly, the court decided rejecting the documents and carrying on with proceedings.

ONE KILLED, THREE INJURED IN CRASH

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: One woman died while Qurain firemen freed three others who were trapped in a car following an accident. The four women's car hit a light pole, and the impact left one of them dead while the others survived. An investigation was opened to determine the circumstances which led to the accident.



The victims' car pictured after the accident.



Municipality officers carry out a campaign on stores in industrial Sharq.

Smuggler caught

Customs officers at Kuwait International Airport arrested an Asian man who attempted to smuggle four kilograms of marijuana by hiding them in packs of an Indian brand of cigarettes. The man was sent to concerned authorities.

No injuries in fire

Industrial Shuwaikh and Ardhya fire centers responded to a call about a

fire in a factory in Rai. The fire was contained and put out successfully. No injuries were reported.



Firefighters tackle a blaze at a factory in Rai.

Municipality crackdown

Kuwait Municipality's Public Relations Department announced that municipality officers carried out a campaign on stores in industrial Sharq area, which resulted in confiscating eight truck-loads of material, in addition to issuing seven citations and removing 11 abandoned cars.

NINE PROCEDURES TO REDUCE EFFECTS OF FALLING OIL PRICES: STUDY

KUWAIT: Kuwait can apply nine procedures that will reduce the negative impact of lower oil prices on Kuwaiti economy, according to a specialized study. The study, which was carried out by The Industrial Bank of Kuwait and published by Kuwaiti Arabic-language daily newspaper Al-Qabas yesterday, said that the procedures include reforming the government's expenditure, reforming the tax system and improving the efficiency of government spending on state's projects, as well as salary and wage adjustments.

The study added that the fifth procedure is to reform the subsidy system, then focus on the labor market reforms, and reduce the dependence on oil as well as supporting the industrial sector in Kuwait, as well as creating the right incentives to develop the role of the private sector.

The study called for improving the efficiency of the capital expenditure to boost stronger growth in non-oil economy besides diversification of the state income. The study expected that the increase in the price of fuel will positively affect the long-term economic growth in Kuwait and will create more opportunities for investment in the private sector.

The Industrial Bank's study said that the impact of the declines in government revenues in Kuwait is less compared to other GCC countries, because Kuwait uses a flexible exchange rate denominated in a basket of other currencies, which reduce the negative impact of lower oil prices on the budget. - KUNA



In Brief

ROAD PROJECTS

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Public Works has invited 48 construction groups that include local and international companies to present offers by April 3, 2016 to carry out three major road projects in Kuwait. The roads include the southern regional road connected Kabd and Salmi, the South Surra road which includes the Fifth Ring Road, as well as the northern regional road extending to the Salmi border outlet.



GOVERNMENT SUED

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: A lawsuit was filed yesterday against the government and the Ministry of Public Works regarding damages sustained by roads following recent rainfalls. The complainants demand compensation for damages they say their vehicles have sustained after being hit by gravel from the damaged streets.



RENT ALLOWANCE

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Official spokesman of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) Ibrahim Al-Nashi refuted rumors on social media which speculated that the rent allowance for Kuwaitis was going to be stopped. The PAHW continues to accept applications to receive the allowance from those eligible for housing welfare, Nashi said.



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Kuwait City's landmarks, including Al-Hamra Tower and Kuwait Towers, are seen in a picture taken from a high place in the nation's capital. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

NINE EXPERTS TO JUDGE HORECA 2016'S COOKING COMPETITION



Nabila Al-Anjeri

KUWAIT: As companies' registration to participate in the Horeca Kuwait 2016 exhibition is not closed, Nabila Al-Anjeri, General Manager of Leaders Group, the event's organizer, announced that the exhibition is set to feature several activities including a number of cooking competitions with participation of over 300 chefs from local and Middle Eastern restaurants and hotels. The jury panel for these competitions consists of nine international cooking experts selected from different world cuisines, Anjeri said, adding that the panel is headed by chef Sam'an Hilal. Further, Anjeri indicated that the cooking competitions would be of great significance for all participants interest-

ed in creativity and exploring their own potentials in order to ultimately maintain the high status of Kuwait's hospitality sector. Notably, Horeca 2016 has attracted over 60 participants of the world's leading hospitality, food industries and hotel equipment companies in addition to several travel agencies and offices. The exhibition, organized in collaboration with Hospitality Services Company, is due to be held January 18-20, 2016 at Badriya Ballroom in Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa. It takes place under the auspices of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.



Members of the judging panel for Horeca's cooking competitions

BIRDS, LIVESTOCK BANNED FROM GERMANY, GREECE

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) has temporarily banned live bird imports from Germany and livestock from Greece. Deputy PAAAFR Director General Hanadi Bastaki said in a press statement yesterday that all incoming consignments from these two countries will be subjected to PAAAFR's requirements and restrictions, in line with the relevant procedures of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and the veterinary quarantine systems in Kuwait and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). In case infectious or epidemic diseases are spotted, a shipment will be rejected and the importer will be committed to return it to the source country, Bastaki said. The decision was taken against the backdrop of OIE recent reports on outbreak of bird flu in Germany and livestock disease in Greece. — KUNA

KUWAITI PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION TO SUDAN

KUWAIT: President of Association of Secretary Generals of Arab Parliaments and Secretary General of Kuwait's National Assembly Allam Al-Kandari will leave to Sudan today to participate in the 4th annual Arab Inter-parliamentary Union (AIPU) conference which will be held on January 7-8. The AIPU conference will take place in Sudan for the 1st time under the auspices of Chairman of the ruling National Congress Party in Sudan Ibrahim Ahmed Omer. Workshops on smart halls and new electronic systems used in the legislative councils will be in the first day, whereas the 34 general assembly for the AIPU will be held on the second day. —KUNA



Allam Al-Kandari

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FAYEZ AL-KANDARI RETURNS JAN 9: ODAH

KUWAIT: Chairman of the popular committee for defending Kuwaiti Guantanamo detainees, lawyer Khaled Al-Odah, said that preparations were in progress in Kuwait to receive Faye Al-Kandari, and that a special flight with medical and security personnel onboard had already left to bring him back home within two days. "He will be in Kuwait on January 8, unless something urgent happens," he added.

Speaking about Kandari's release procedures, Odah said the US defense minister had sent the release decision to the US Congress on Dec 8, and according to regulations, the release takes place after 30 days from the sending date. He also noted that Kuwait's embassy in the US and Kuwaiti officials had been notified to make the arrangements needed to send a plane and secure its route.

Odah explained that on arrival at Kuwait airport, Kandari would be taken to the military hospital where he would be welcomed by his parents and family to undergo some medical tests and that he would then be taken to Al-Salam Center to start his rehabilitation program while regularly receiving visits from his family. — Al-Anbaa

NEW CITIZENSHIP FORGERY CASE DISCOVERED

KUWAIT: A former employee at the nationality department used his position to forge nationalities, and kept doing so after he escaped after a ruling against him as he has another nationality, in another country with a different name.

Security sources said that based on instructions by Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid and Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Suleiman Al-Fahd, detectives uncovered forgeries in nationality and official documents. Investigations revealed that a former Kuwaiti employee at the Nationality and Travel Documents Department, called A.M.A. and born in 1975, was arrested in 2007 after adding non-Kuwaitis to the files of Kuwait nationals and committed forgeries in official documents (nationality and travel documents) in exchange of money. He escaped after a sentence against him, yet he did not stop the forgeries and received large amounts of money for it. Investigations also revealed that he has another nationality with a different name.

Sources said the follow up department found that this employee had added two Arabs to a nationality file, and the case was sent to concerned authorities. Further investigations showed that he carried out forgeries with the help of his elder brother (M.M.A.), and added non-Kuwaiti children in their own Kuwaiti nationality files. Sources said that among the two brothers' forgeries was adding a Syrian born in 2001 after an agreement with his father (A.R.H.) to add him a few years earlier to a Kuwaiti nationality file in 2010 for KD 20,000. The father of the Syrian expat, who is the brother of the two suspects and was arrested for the same crime at a previous time, gave the two brothers photographs of his son, and (M.M.A.) handed him a Kuwaiti passport and a civil ID along with a Kuwaiti birth certificate in the name of (D.A.M.) and carried the picture of the son of the Syrian father. Arrests were made and investigations are ongoing. — Al-Rai

EDU MINISTRY REMOVES 'UNSUITABLE' BOOKS FROM PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES

KUWAIT: The Education Ministry removed eight books from school libraries following complaints from parents of students that the books contained unsuitable ideas and photos. All books including textbooks and library books are first reviewed by an 'inspection committee' within the Ministry of Education and must be approved before being allowed to be stocked in public school libraries.

Educational sources said Director of Libraries Department Ahmad Al-Kandari wrote to the directors of Kuwait's educational zones and the religious institute to remove the controversial books from school libraries. He said comments about some unsuitable ideas and pictures in some books that were approved by the inspection committees and were distributed to school libraries, adding that the concerned books will be re-examined.

Al-Kandari said school libraries recsors should set seven books aside until a decision is made on correct procedures, the books included: Picasso (Asma Series), Shakespeare (Asma Series), Cleopatra (Asma Series) for all school



stages in addition to the books "Haifa confesses to you," "Midnight crimes," "My talk with my son and My talk with my daughter" in the intermediate and secondary stages. He said that libraries were informed about the removal of the book "Memories after me."

It was not immediately clear what material specifically was deemed offensive. Kuwait strictly censors both public and private school textbooks and libraries and material including nudity, profanity, discussions of Israel and other issues are banned. — Al-Qabas

EGYPTIAN JUDGES DID NOT ASK FOR RAISES: MUTAW'AH

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Supreme Judiciary Council and the head of the cassation court Yousef Al-Mutaw'ah said that statements published in some local dailies quoting Egyptian judges working in Kuwait could not be taken seriously because they came from anonymous sources without mentioning specific names. He also noted that heads of various courts had not received any pay hike requests from Egyptian judges. "Such matters cannot be resolved by statements and through the press," he said, underlining that Kuwaiti-Egyptian judicial and brotherly relations were deep-rooted.

Mutaw'ah added that within a judicial agreement that had been in effect since the 1980s, Egypt had loaned Kuwait a large number of judges to work in all three courts. He also stressed that Egyptian and expatriate judges in general were welcome as brothers in Kuwait and that they have the same status and immunity as their Kuwaiti colleagues. "But financial matters are governed by laws and contracts," he remarked. — Al-Rai



Yousef Al-Mutaw'ah



Crime

Report

Business told to change name tied to Amir mosque bombing comment

KUWAIT: The Commerce and Industry Ministry asked the owner of local business, a car repair shop to change its name after it was discovered that the business was called "Hatholy Eyali." The phrase was used by His Highness the Amir when he visited the Imam Al-Sadeq mosque after it was attacked by a suicide bomber on June 26, 2014. The Arabic phrase means "those are my children." Sources said that there is nothing in the law that prohibits issuing a business license in this name but because of the special considerations, the Commerce Ministry will reconsider the name.

Man beaten in his home

A Jordanian man was beaten by two citizens in his house, as he knows the two and have financial disputes with them. The Jordanian went to Nugra police station and reported that he was beaten and threatened by two citizens who came to his house to talk over their problems. When police called the two they did not answer, so the case was referred to detectives.

Missing boy found, youth help search

Kuwaiti youth in Mutla area helped police find a missing child and return him to his family. Policemen received a report about the missing boy and set up a search. They were then joined by local youth who had heard about the missing child. The boy was found unharmed an hour after his disappearance was reported. A security source said the boy is in good condition and was handed back to his family.

Haris attacked, robbed

An Egyptian haris (building janitor) was stabbed by a man who claimed to be looking for an apartment, then took the building revenue of KD 3200. The man told police that a thief attacked him in his room after pretending to be interested in renting a flat in the building. The thief stabbed the haris and fled with the money. Detectives are working on the case.

Man caught with helpers

A citizen caught his Indian driver with his Ethiopian domestic helpers and reported the incident at the Hadiya police station. Policemen went to the house and were allowed in and arrested the two. They were sent to residency detectives to be deported.

Woman pregnant after being drugged

A Filipina woman accused an Egyptian man of making her pregnant after giving her a cup of juice laced with a tranquilizer and complained against him. Detectives are looking for the suspect. In another incident, an Indian man sought the help of police in Kheitan as two persons threatened him with an axe and robbed him of his wallet and mobile phone. He said the two, wearing training suits, stopped him and asked him for the money he had, so he handed them his wallet. Detectives are working on the case.

96,000 REGISTERED 'BEDOONS' IN KUWAIT

KUWAIT: The Central System for Remedy of Situation of Illegal Residents said the number of those registered at the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), and has the system's ID is 96,000 individuals until Dec 2015. President of the body Saleh Al-Fadhlah said the number of bedoons in the country before the Iraqi invasion and before the creation of the system was 220,000, and dropped to 96,000 with children below five years and others registered in PACI, adding that the number may increase or decrease due to the number of births and deaths.

He said the number of those registered at PACI and do not have an ID is nearly 1,000, while the number of those who revealed their original nationalities is 7,243 individuals since the establishment of the apparatus.

Meanwhile, the sorting and inspection process by the body resulted in dividing the illegal residents into 11 groups:

- 1- Individuals who have a relation to a Kuwaiti father or grandfather.
- 2- Individuals who have a relation to a Kuwaiti son, brother or uncle and were included in the 1965 state census or before.
- 3- Minor and adult children of Kuwaiti widows whose husbands' death took place five years earlier, in agreement with Kuwait nationality law.
- 4- Minor children of Kuwaiti divorced women with the elapsing of seven years since their divorce, in agreement with Kuwait nationality law, provided that the children's residence in Kuwait continued since their birth, and in case there are adult children, they will be considered for naturalization according to Kuwait nationality law.
- 5- Spouses of Kuwaitis who were included in the 1965 census and have children and 10 years have passed since their marriage.
- 6- Individuals who have a relation to a dead naturalized mother, son, brother, or uncle, and were in the 1965 state census or before.
- 7- Individuals who were in the 1960 state census or before.
- 8- Individuals who were counted in the 1965 census or before who actually participated in military operations and were approved by the defense and foreign ministries.
- 9- Workers in the military, government sector, government companies and banks, and served before the invasion, that is at least 16 continuous years or 20 intermittent years, and were in the 1965 state census or before.
- 10- Individuals who were in the 1965 state census or before who have post-graduate degrees and skills the country needs.
- 11- Those who served the country with significant services that help the state's higher interest according to rules and standards approved by the apparatus. — Al-Qabas

ARABS, SAVE TUNISIA!

Al-Anbaa

By Saleh Al-Shayegi

I do not like going into politics because I do not play 'politics' or sail in its waters. Yet, there is a very clear and obvious thing that needs to be highlighted and warned of. Iran is the unrivaled master of the Middle East. It is leading various incidents, redrawing maps and creating real life facts on the ground. I am not saying this out of love or praise of Iran nor out of hate and antagonizing it. Unfortunately, this is a fact. Iran has been tampering with surrounding regional countries and managed to control three of them - Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.

Iran is absolutely the master of wars, while, if it wished to do so, it can be the master of peace in those countries. I need not mention any further details because many politicians and other writers are more capable of doing so in detail and more because it is facts that speak for themselves, not fantasies nor wishes.

What I strongly want to warn of today is Iran's expansion outside the immediate region and into Tunisia. Yes, oh Arabs. Iran is in Tunisia and has already started acting there, extending its arms beyond many limits. Are you

aware of that? Does Tunisia mean anything to you? Well, even if you do not care about Tunisia, at least have some fear of Iran's possible extension and expansion to the doorsteps of Arab Africa after their project in Egypt failed with the fall of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Tunisia is a poor country with limited resources and ever since its revolution, it has been suffering from financial and economic problems. It is bordered by a country on fire and is afraid that such fire might blow into its borders. Arabs can save Tunisia from the Iranian ghoul by financially and economically supporting it through investments the way they did with Egypt, though Tunisia is not as politically, militarily, humanly and demographically significant as Egypt. However, this does not justify ignoring it, and let us take the example of Lebanon that had been considered so weak that it eventually fell into Iranian control and became soft dough in Iranian hands.

Arabs...save Tunisia before it is too late!

— Translated by Kuwait Times

ZAIN KUWAIT RANKED FOURTH AMONG TOP 10 MENA COMMERCIALS IN 2015

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, was ranked fourth among Campaign Middle East's list of the Top 10 Middle East and North Africa commercials of the year 2015. Campaign ME is the Middle East edition of the UK's leading magazine for the advertising and media industry.

During Ramadan 2015, Zain launched its acclaimed TVC "We Know You Well" in two versions, one with a male leading role, and the other with a female leading role. Combined, the two versions achieved nearly 1.5 million views on YouTube. The idea behind the TVC reflects Zain's role as a leading Kuwaiti company that understands the needs and interests of the local community. The TVC was created by Bustop, Directed by Abdulaziz Al Jasmii, and produced by Cinemagic.

This ranking comes in light of Zain's distinguished advertising and media involvement, and it further showcases the company's role as a leading private sector company launching several advertising campaigns all year round. Zain will continue supporting this very important field which carries significant and informative messaging to the public at large and the communications world as a whole, whether through traditional or modern



media tools.

It is worth noting that Zain Kuwait recently received four titles as part of the Advertising Creativity Award 2015, which was organized for the third year by the Arab Media Forum. Zain was awarded with four titles as part of the Creativity, Effect, Voluntary, charitable, and humanity, as well as the top brands of 2015 categories. All Zain TVCs can be found on Zain's official YouTube channel by visiting youtube.com/zaintelecom.

FUEL PRICE DISCRIMINATION UNFAIR: HAMADA 12% OF KUWAITI FAMILIES DESERVE SUBSIDIES

KUWAIT: Finance Ministry Undersecretary Khalifa Hamada stressed that recommendations made by international advisor Ernst & Young on subsidies were still being reviewed and studied by two committees from the finance ministry and the subsidies committee. "Submitting recommendations and studies to the Cabinet does not mean a decision will be made. The study recommended using the new prices by the beginning January, but what the government decides is something else," he underlined, noting that there was a huge difference between recommendations, studies and decisions.

Hamada added that according to the study, energy consumed 70 percent of the total subsidies and that fuel and electricity prices would be prioritized, though the Cabinet's final decision had not been made yet. However, he stressed that the new fuel prices were not yet set. Hamada also noted that 85 percent of vehicles in Kuwait consume special (95 octane) petrol and that this was more than what is being locally produced, and thus the government imports the balance at high prices.

Moreover, Hamada denied intentions to discriminate between



Khalifa Hamada

Kuwaiti and expat consumers in terms of fuel prices and that this was not recommended by the study as it would lead to misusing the dual prices. "Fuel prices will be the same for both citizens and expats," he emphasized. Speaking about electricity, Hamada also stressed that the tariffs would be set according to consumption rates and that prices would get higher the higher those rates were.

12 percent

Meanwhile, well-informed sources said that the study on financial reform and subsidies' rationalization submitted by the finance ministry to the Cabinet estimated subsidies-related inflation at 2.2 percent and

that Kuwaiti families deserving subsidies would be financially compensated.

The sources explained that according to the study, Kuwaitis were divided into four groups according to their monthly and annual incomes. The first category was those with limited income of less than KD 1,500 a month or KD 18,000 a year. "This category forms 12 percent of Kuwaiti families and will still receive subsidies," stressed the sources, noting that the second category included families with incomes between KD 1,500-3,000 a month, who formed 41 percent of Kuwaiti families. "Subsidies for these families will be considered according to some factors such as the number of family members," explained the sources.

On the other hand, the sources explained that the third category in the study included Kuwaiti families with above-medium monthly income of KD 3,000-4,500, that formed 28 percent of Kuwaiti families, who would not deserve any subsidies. The fourth and last category included Kuwaiti families with above KD 4,500 in monthly income, who formed 19 percent of Kuwaitis, and would not receive subsidies either. — Al-Rai, Al-Jarida



Deliberate acts cause more airline deaths than crashes

TALEBAN PUBLISHES FIRST ANNUAL REPORT AS SECURITY IMPROVES



DAIH: Bahraini women run from approaching riot police who were chasing protesters against Saudi Arabia's execution of Shiite cleric Sheikh Nimr Al-Nimr in Daih, Bahrain, a largely Shiite suburb of the capital. Graffiti on the wall reads, "we will not forget you," beneath pictures of people killed in previous unrest. — AP

'CUTTING OFF HEADS' NO RESPONSE TO CRITICISM

SAUDI ARABIA CANNOT COVER 'CRIME' BY CUTTING TIES: IRAN

MILITANT IN ISLAMIC STATE VIDEO BELIEVED TO BE BRITISH 'BOUNCY CASTLE' SALESMAN

LONDON: The masked militant in an Islamic State video showing the killing of five men accused by the group of being Western spies is believed to be a Londoner known as Sid who once sold inflatable bouncers. Siddhartha Dhar, who left Britain for Syria while on police bail after his arrest on suspicion of belonging to a banned group and encouraging terrorism, has been identified by media as the spokesman in the militant organization's latest film.

The video also features a young boy wearing a black bandanna around his head and army-style camouflage clothing, threatening in English to "kill the kafir (unbelievers) over there".

Sunday Dare, a Londoner of Nigerian origin, identified the child as his four-year-old grandson Isa. Dare told British media his daughter, who grew up a devout

Christian named Grace before converting to Islam and changing her name to Khadijah, had taken London-born Isa to Syria with her to join Islamic State.

The video revived memories of "Jihadi John", another British IS member who appeared in several videos in which hostages were murdered before he himself was believed to have been killed in an air strike late last year.

Dhar, who is also known as Abu Rumaysah, is one of Britain's most high-profile Islamists and an associate of Anjem Choudary, Britain's best-known Islamist preacher who is due to go on trial next week accused of terrorism offences. A convert from Hinduism who lived in east London, Dhar regularly attended protests staged by the now banned organization Al-Muhajiroun and had often spoken to the

media in support of radical Islamic causes. Since leaving Britain he gained further attention through online videos in which he exhorted life under Islamic State.

'Oppressive'

Khadijah Dare is also a keen propagandist for the group who has posted images of herself and her toddler son pointing rifles on social media. Reported to have been radicalized online, Dare left London for Syria in 2012 with Isa, then a baby. Having made her way to territory controlled by Islamic State, she married a jihadi of Swedish origin known as Abu Bakr, now thought to be dead.

The couple appeared together in footage filmed in Syria in 2013, joking about which of them had the best AK47. A trail of videos also offers some insight into Dhar's world view.

In one posted on his YouTube website, titled "The beauty of the Shariah and the Caliphate", he said: "I've grown up in the West, I've lived in the United Kingdom all my life, I've seen what a democracy has to offer and quite frankly it's quite oppressive." His sister Konika told British media the man in the video sounded just like her brother, echoing the views of others who knew him well. However, neither she nor security experts said they could be certain it was him.

British intelligence officials are analyzing the film and a security source said they had not yet reached a conclusion as to the man's identity. British officials say up to 800 Britons have travelled to Iraq and Syria, some to join Islamic State, and around half had returned home. About 70 were believed to have been killed.

In the 10-minute video released on Sunday, the masked man speaking with a clear British accent threatens British Prime Minister David Cameron before shooting one of the alleged spies in the head. The footage was reminiscent of the gruesome beheadings shown in videos featuring Londoner Mohammed Emwazi, who gained worldwide notoriety as "Jihadi John".

Robb Leech, who got to know Dhar while making a documentary about his own stepbrother who was jailed for terrorism offences in 2013, said the militant in the video looked and sounded like Dhar.

He said Dhar had never struck him as violent, and had always been friendly. British newspapers said he used to sell children's inflatable bouncers, known as bouncy castles in Britain, and was a fan of Arsenal soccer club and the rock group Nirvana. "The last time I saw him it was about two months before he left and joined so-called Islamic State and we were laughing. It was very good natured," Leech told BBC radio.

"To remember him like that and then see him supposedly in this video, I don't understand that," he said, adding that Dhar must have had some very significant experiences in Syria with Islamic State to make him capable of doing what he did. "Because the guy who I knew was no more capable of it than you or I as far as I could tell." In one video on his YouTube site, Dhar distances himself to some extent from the killing of US and British citizens who were apparently beheaded by Jihadi John.

"I don't want to see another James Foley or Steven Sotloff or David Haines but unfortunately the way the West and the Europeans are going about things in terms of their policies with air strikes and intervening in the caliphate, sadly I can't see an end to this," Dhar said. — Reuters

TEHRAN: Saudi Arabia cannot respond to criticism of its regime by cutting off heads, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday following Riyadh's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric. "One does not respond to criticism by cutting off heads," Rouhani said as he welcomed visiting Danish Foreign Minister Kristian Jensen. "I hope that European countries who always react on human rights matters will meet their duties." He was referring to the execution for "terrorism" Saturday of Nimr Al-Nimr, who had been behind anti-government protests among Saudi Arabia's Shiite Muslim minority.

Officials have never said how Nimr was put to death, but beheading by the sword is common in the conservative Sunni Muslim kingdom. At the same time, Rouhani said: "Saudi Arabia cannot cover its crime of having cut off the head of a cleric by cutting relations" with Iran. Protesters angered over Nimr's execution attacked and burned the Saudi embassy in Tehran and its consulate in the northeastern city of Mashhad, which prompted Riyadh to sever diplomatic relations with the Islamic republic. Earlier yesterday, Iranian government spokesman Mohammad Bagher

Nobakht said the cutting of diplomatic ties would not hurt Iran or damage its development. Bahrain and Sudan also broke diplomatic relations with Iran, and a number of other Arab countries have recalled their envoys, in sympathy with Riyadh. The deterioration of relations with Saudi Arabia "will have no impact on Iran's national development," Nobakht said, without elaborating.

Instead, "it is Saudi Arabia that will suffer", Nobakht said. The spokesman also reiterated Tehran's harsh criticism of Nimr's execution. "We condemn the inhumane, barbaric and Daesh-like execution of the cleric Sheikh Nimr," said Nobakht, using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group. Riyadh is trying to compensate for its political failures in regional conflicts, according to Nobakht. "This is a reaction to their failures in Iraq, Syria, and... Yemen, which Saudi Arabia wants to compensate for," he said, without elaborating. Saudi Arabia, the leading Sunni Muslim power in the Middle East, and Shiite power Iran have long competed for influence in the region. Even before Nimr's execution, relations were strained over the two nations' backing opposing factions in those three countries. — AFP

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US-BASED CLERIC ON TRIAL OVER ERDOGAN GRAFT CLAIMS

ISTANBUL: The US-based cleric who has emerged as the arch foe of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan goes on trial with dozens of former police officers today over the publication in 2013 of graft claims that rocked Turkey's strongman. The trial at Istanbul's main courthouse is part of a crackdown against the movement of cleric Fethullah Gulen, which the government describes as a battle against a "parallel state" but opponents say amounts to repression of critics. Gulen, 74, was an ally of Erdogan when his Islamic-rooted Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in 2002.

But the two fell out as Gulen's own influence increased and the government blamed his movement for the stunning corruption allegations against Erdogan's inner circle, including his own son Bilal, that broke in

December 2013. Gulen, who lives in exile in a secluded compound in the US state of Pennsylvania, will be tried in absentia. He stands charged of "attempting to bring down the government" and "running a terrorist group", his lawyer Nurullah Albayrak said. Gulen is accused of giving orders to allies in Turkey's police force to launch the probe. But Albayrak said that the evidence offered by the prosecutors in the 1,453 page-long indictment failed to support these claims.

"There is no evidence that this was a terrorist organization. The charges are based on assumptions and on simple declarations and these are not enough," he said. "The only proof they have is a single phone call made by my client (Gulen) to a police officer the day the scandal broke, and in that one, there is no indication that he is giving orders to

anyone." Prosecutors are seeking an aggravated life term—the highest penalty possible in Turkey—for Gulen and two former police chiefs. The other 66 suspects in the case, most of them police officers charged with being members of an armed organization, face jail time ranging from seven years to 330 years.

'280 suspects in jail'

Gulen is currently being investigated in two other cases but today's trial is the most high-profile as it directly concerns the corruption scandal, which posed one of the biggest challenges to Erdogan in his career first as premier and now as president. Gulen has been based in the United States since 1999 when he fled charges against him laid by the former secular authorities. Turkey has asked

the United States to extradite him but Washington has shown little appetite for doing so. Despite living outside of Turkey, Gulen built up huge influence in the country through allies in the police and judiciary, media and financial interests and a vast network of cramming schools designed to make up for deficiencies in the state education system.

Ankara now accuses Gulen of running what it calls the Fethullahaci Terror Organization/Parallel State Structure (FeTO/PDY) and seeking to overthrow the legitimate Turkish authorities. Gulen supporters decry the accusations as ridiculous, saying all he leads is a more informal group known as Hizmet (Service). The authorities have in the last months stepped up investigations into companies with ties to Gulen,

including a series of raids on pro-Gulen media that have raised fears about the government's commitment to democracy.

According to the state-run Anatolia news agency, around 1,800 people, including 750 police officers and 80 soldiers, have been detained as part of a crackdown against the followers of Gulen since arrests began in the summer 2014. Some 280 of them are still in jail pending trial, Anatolia said. Supporters of Gulen are currently being investigated over a number of controversial cases including the interception of trucks belonging to Turkey's secret service allegedly carrying arms bound for Syria, as well as illegal eavesdropping of top officials including Erdogan. "We promise that the gang leaders and others will be brought to justice," Erdogan said late last month. — AFP



INMA: Fighters loyal to Yemen's President Abdrabbo Mansour Hadi check the destroyed vehicle of the newly appointed Aden Governor Aidarus Al-Zubaidi after he was targeted alongside two other senior south Yemeni officials in a bomb attack in the Inma district, north of the southern Yemeni city of Aden, on January 4, 2016. — AFP

SAUDI RIFT WITH IRAN LIKELY TO HINDER PEACE EFFORT IN SYRIA

US ARMS SALES TO SAUDI EXPECTED TO CONTINUE UNABATED

WASHINGTON: Beneath this weekend's rupture in Iranian-Saudi relations lies a deeper fault line between the United States and Saudi Arabia that may hamper US President Barack Obama's efforts to end Syria's civil war, current and former US officials said. The Saudi government's decision to execute Shiite cleric Sheikh Nimr Al-Nimr on Saturday, despite US warnings, illustrated the limits of US influence over the kingdom. And the Saudi decision to cut diplomatic ties to Iran after outraged Iranian protesters entered, and set fire to, the Saudi embassy in Tehran, runs directly counter to US efforts to promote contact between the two nations, particularly on Syria.

US Secretary of State John Kerry's longshot effort to bring the nearly five-year Syria civil war to an end may be the first casualty of the latest tensions. The Saudi ambassador to the United Nations, Abdullah Al-Mouallimi, on Monday said the Saudis will attend UN-sanctioned talks set to begin in Geneva Jan. 25, but held out little optimism for their success. US officials acknowledged the Saudi-Iran diplomatic rift diminishes chances for the peace process. "It's going to make it a lot harder," said an official who spoke on

condition of anonymity. "It's obviously very fragile," said a second senior US official.

Arms sales moving forward

Current and former US officials said they believed Riyadh and Washington have too many shared interests, from ensuring the flow of oil, to fighting Al-Qaeda and Islamic State militants and completing huge arms contracts, to permit a fundamental breach. US and Saudi officials are continuing to work on a \$1.29-billion sale of US precision munitions approved in November, according to military and industry sources. The deal, which seeks in part to replenish bombs and missiles used in the Saudi battle against Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, should be finalized in coming months.

A separate, \$11.25-billion Saudi purchase of four Lockheed Martin Corp surface warships, approved in October, also is expected to move forward on its years-long schedule, the sources said. "The Saudi-US defense relationship is a juggernaut," said Michael Knights, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy think tank. "It survives endless presidents and kings and it just keeps rolling and that's what's

going to happen this time."

Looking past Obama?

Despite the Saudis' ultimate reliance on US security guarantees, the kingdom in the last year repeatedly has signaled a willingness to act independently of the US on national security matters. Saudi Arabia gave the US scant notice last March when, with Arab allies, it launched air strikes in Yemen against Houthi rebels it said are supported by Iran. And last month, the kingdom announced the formation of a 34-nation Islamic military coalition to combat terrorism.

The United States is not among the members. Riyadh has also made little secret of its opposition to Obama's nuclear deal with Iran, a hallmark of the US president's foreign policy. With Obama in his last year as president, Saudi Arabia seems to be looking past Obama, toward the next US president, said one analyst with deep ties to Saudi officials. "There are no expectations left with this administration," said Nawaf Obaid, a visiting fellow at Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. "Things will start from zero once he (Obama) leaves." — Reuters

SYRIAN GOVERNMENT BASTION WELCOMES RUSSIAN 'FRIENDS'

LATAKIA: In the windows of his father's shop in coastal Syria, Ihab replaces bottles of the national tippale arak with vodka, hoping to please his growing customer base of Russian soldiers. "In the past the demand was more for whiskey and arak, but with the Russians arriving in Syria, it's changed to vodka," Ihab, 32, says inside the "Crown" store in Latakia province. "So I put these bottles in the front so they can grab them first," he says with a smile. Ihab's storefront is one of many shops and restaurants hoping to attract the Russian soldiers who have arrived in Latakia since Moscow began a military intervention in Syria in late September.

Russia has stood firmly by its long-time ally President Bashar Al-Assad since an uprising against his regime began in March 2011, providing political and military support to a government that has become an international pariah. On September 30, Moscow began air strikes in support of the government, dispatching warplanes and several thousand servicemen to Syria, according to Russian officials. The planes and soldiers are based at the Hmeimim military airport deep in Assad's heartland, south of the provincial capital of Latakia. Russian soldiers go into the city for food, drink and entertainment, creating a new customer base with different demands for Latakia's businesses. To make what he calls his "new friends" feel comfortable, Ihab has begun learning a few Russian words from his father.

'Sales are up'

"The Russians are a profitable economic presence, and our sales have gone up more than 20 percent since they don't argue about prices," Ihab says. Russia's ties with Syria go back decades, with Moscow long maintaining a naval facility in the coastal town of Tartus. Many Syrian military officers have trained in Russia, and it is not uncommon to find Syrians married to Russians or who speak the language.

Elsewhere in Latakia, Mohammad is arranging a display of camouflage jackets in "Commandos", a shop that sells military-style clothing and accessories. The 26-year-old employee says sales are up and he now has more Russian customers than Syrians. Pocket-sized portraits of Assad-stacked next to boxes of combat boots under a large Russian flag on the wall are in particularly "high demand by Russian soldiers", he says. Mohammad is also learning some

Russian words and is pleased to see Russian soldiers learning Arabic words such as "salam", which means "peace" and is used for both hello and goodbye.

"They've become our friends," he says. "They pass by to say hello or they wave at me from afar as they pass by the place." Haidar, 29, is so enthusiastic about the Russian presence that he has named the restaurant he opened last month "Russia". "I've loved Russia and Russians since my childhood, and now is the time to express my love for them through my restaurant," he says. The Russian flag billows in the breeze outside and the walls inside are covered with Russian sayings. "Spasiba, spasiba," he calls out to his customers with a wide smile as they leave the restaurant. "Thank you, thank you."

On the house

Haidar has hired a Russian language professor to teach his staff how to communicate with their new guests and hopes to find a chef who can make dishes for an all-Russian menu to please his new customers. "The Russians have revived both the nightlife and daytime businesses," Haidar says. But a Syrian soldier sitting nearby says the fuss over the Russians is "exaggerated". "The whole world is focusing on the Russian army and has forgotten all about the Syrian army," he says. "We have been fighting for nearly five years and I haven't seen a single place called 'Syria' or 'The Syrian Army'." And not everyone in Latakia's business community sees the Russians as paying customers. Tarek Shaabo, 30, says he opened his coffee shop Moscow Cafe-in 2012 as a sign of gratitude to Russia for vetoing UN Security Council resolutions on Syria's war. "Since then, I swore to myself I would never let a Russian customer pay," he says.

When he first opened, only a few Russian military advisers would come to the shop, but now he says he serves Russians "nearly every day". Another coffee shop nearby offers Russians drinks at half price, but at Moscow Cafe they are free. "They came to defend us," Shaabo says. "The least I can do is host them in my small cafe." He lights a cigarette using a lighter emblazoned with the Russian army's logo and extends an invitation to President Vladimir Putin, fondly nicknamed by some Syrians as "Abu Ali". "Tell Abu Ali Putin he's got a place to stay in Latakia... Moscow Cafe is his home." — AFP

A LOOK AT WHERE COUNTRIES STAND IN SAUDI-IRAN DISPUTE

DUBAI: Diplomatic tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which began with the kingdom's execution of a Shiite cleric and later saw attacks on Saudi diplomatic posts in the Islamic Republic, have seen countries around the world respond. Some nations have followed the Saudis' lead in severing or downgrading ties with Iran, while others have offered words of caution aimed at cooling the war of words before it escalates further. Here's a look at where countries and other regional actors stand at this point:

THE MAIN ACTORS: SAUDI ARABIA

The kingdom severed ties to Iran after attacks on two of its diplomatic posts following its execution of a Shiite cleric last weekend; it also later cancelled all flights between the two nations.

IRAN

Since the attack on the diplomatic posts, Iran says it has made arrests and has criticized the violent protesters. However on Tuesday, President Hassan Rouhani took a slightly harder line, saying Saudi Arabia's move to sever ties with his country couldn't "cover its crime" of executing Shiite cleric Nimr al-Nimr.

COUNTRIES BACKING SAUDI

BAHRAIN - The tiny, Shiite-majority island kingdom off the Saudi coast, which long has relied on Saudi Arabia for support of its Sunni rulers, was the first to cut ties with Iran. Bahraini officials repeatedly have accused Iran of training militants and attempting to smuggle arms into the country, which hosts the US Navy's 5th Fleet.

SUDAN

The African nation cut its diplomatic ties to Iran and gave Iranian diplomats two weeks to leave the country. Sudan once tilted toward Iran, but has been

looking to Saudi Arabia for aid since the secession of oil-rich South Sudan in 2011.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The oil-rich country of seven emirates says it will reduce the number of diplomats in Iran, recall its ambassador and focus only on business relations. While backing Saudi Arabia, it may have chosen to reduce - rather than completely sever ties - because of a long trading history with Iran.

KUWAIT

The oil-rich country is recalling of its ambassador from Tehran, but it isn't immediately clear how Kuwaiti-Iranian diplomatic ties will be affected. Tiny Kuwait is home to both Shites and Sunnis living in peace and has the most free-wheeling political system among all Gulf nations.

JORDAN

Overwhelmingly Sunni Jordan is a close ally of Saudi Arabia in the region and a beneficiary of Gulf aid. Jordan's government spokesman, Mohammed Momani, has condemned the attack on the Saudi Embassy in Iran.

THE MEDIATOR - OMAN

The sultanate has long historical ties to Iran and served as the base for secret talks between Iranian and US officials that jump-started the deal reached between Iran and world powers over the Islamic Republic's contested nuclear program. Those backing Iran:

HEZBOLLAH MOVEMENT

Hezbollah was founded in 1982 with the help of Iran's Revolutionary Guards after Israel invaded Lebanon. The group is one the main Iran-backed factions in the region.

SYRIA'S EMBATTLED PRESIDENT

Iran has been one of the biggest supporters of Syria since the 1980s and has stood by Assad's government in his country's grinding civil war. Saudi Arabia has been one of the biggest benefactors of those trying to overthrow him.

IRAQ'S SHIITE-LED GOVERNMENT

Even as Iraq is embroiled in a major war against the militant Islamic State group, al-Nimr's execution sparked outrage among the country's majority Shites who have taken to the streets in Baghdad and the south, calling for an end to ties with Saudi Arabia. The Shiite-led government has warned Riyadh that such executions "would lead to nothing but more destruction."

OTHER REGIONAL ACTORS:

ISRAEL - Israel considers Iran to be its greatest regional threat because of its nuclear program, its arsenal of long-range missiles, its support of anti-Israel militant groups and its repeated threats to destroy it. While Israel has no direct ties to Saudi Arabia either, the countries have come closer because of a shared concern over Iran's growing influence.

THE PALESTINIANS

The Palestinian Authority issued a statement after the execution of Al Nimr saying that it stands alongside the Saudis in their fight against "terrorism." The Saudis are the largest donor to the Palestinian Authority in the Arab world, providing them some \$200 million annually. The PA, and the Fatah faction that leads it, has had a strained relationship with Iran because of its support of its rival, Hamas.

YEMEN

The Arab world's poorest country is torn by a civil war pitting its internationally recognized government, backed by a Saudi-led coalition, against Shiite



TEHRAN: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani (right) speaks with Danish Foreign Minister Kristian Jensen during their meeting in Tehran yesterday. Iran's president said that Saudi Arabia cannot "cover up" its crime of executing a leading Shiite cleric by severing diplomatic relations with the Islamic Republic, even as the kingdom's allies began limiting their links to his country. — AP

rebels known as Houthis, who are supported by Iran.

THOSE URGING CAUTION: UN

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has urged Saudi Arabia and Iran to support peace efforts in Syria and Yemen and avoid escalating tensions.

EUROPEAN UNION

The 28-nation bloc, which opposes the death penalty, criticized Saudi Arabia's mass executions and said al-Nimr's case undermined freedom of expression and basic political rights in the kingdom. Since tensions flared between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the EU foreign policy chief has had phone contact with both sides, fearing an escalation would further destabilize the whole region.

THE UNITED STATES

The White House has urged Saudi Arabia and Iran to not let their dispute derail efforts to end the Syrian civil war, while President Barack Obama's administration also hopes to see the Iranian nuclear deal through.

UNITED KINGDOM

Britain and Iran reopened their respective

embassies in 2015, four years after hard-line protesters stormed the British embassy in Tehran. Saudi Arabia is a key diplomatic and economic ally of Britain, though Middle East Minister Tobias Ellwood said Britain told the kingdom about its "disappointment at the mass executions."

TURKEY

Turkey has urged both Saudi Arabia and Iran to ease tensions, saying the Middle East region is "already like a powder keg" and cannot withstand a new crisis.

GERMANY

Berlin has called on Saudi Arabia and Iran to work to mend their diplomatic ties, while condemning both the mass executions in the kingdom and the storming of the Saudi missions in Iran.

RUSSIA

State news agency RIA Novosti quoted an unnamed senior diplomat as saying Moscow is ready to act as a mediator between Iran and Saudi Arabia. It's unclear whether Russian officials have made a formal offer to work with the two nations. — AP

ORDER TO REMOVE HOMELESS FROM NY STREETS FACES CHALLENGES

NEW YORK: As bitter winter weather arrived in the Northeast, New York's governor issued an executive order requiring the homeless to be forcibly removed from the streets in freezing temperatures, an unprecedented government interjection that faced immediate legal questions and backlash. The order, believed to be the only one of its kind in any city or state, would require communities to reach out to their street homeless populations and take those people to shelters, voluntarily or not, once the temperature drops to 32 degrees Fahrenheit or below.

"We have to get people in off the streets," Democratic Gov Andrew Cuomo said. But the order faced resistance, including from New York City officials, who threatened not to comply. The prospect of forcible removals from the streets also raised deep worries among advocates for the homeless. "Put simply, being homeless is not a crime," said Mary Brosnahan, president of the Coalition for the Homeless in New York, who warned that aggressive measures would push "the most marginalized homeless men and women further away from the very net-

works needed to engage them."

That sentiment was echoed by some homeless men interviewed by The Associated Press on Monday. Eddie Rouse said he feels safer and more comfortable riding subway trains for warmth on frigid New York City nights than he would in a shelter. "I've been in a shelter, and I'm telling you, a lot of those people need to be in mental institutions," said Rouse, who's 64. "You've got drug addicts. You have to wake up at a certain time and leave at a certain time. So they'll put you back in the cold. You can't stay in the shelter. It's not a safe haven."

Under current state law, a police officer or outreach worker can take people from the street only if they appear to be in imminent danger or display signs of mental illness. Maria Foscarinis, the executive director of the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, said there was no other US municipality that had adopted a broad rule of removing people from the streets when it gets cold. "The approach of the order is misguided," Foscarinis said. "It's a positive thing that (Cuomo) understands the urgency of doing something to help



NEW YORK: A pedestrian drops money in a cup for a homeless man near Times Square in New York. — AP

homeless people. But what's needed is permanent housing and services, not these kind of tactics."

Cuomo was moved to act amid a growing homelessness crisis in New York City, which houses about 58,000 people in shel-

ters and has another 3,000 to 4,000 people living on the streets. Six homeless people suffered cold-weather-related deaths in the city during the winter of 2013-14, the last season for which statistics are available. Thirty years ago, then-Mayor Ed Koch tried to relocate the city's homeless but faced massive legal obstacles. The state's Mental Hygiene Law requires police to interview and determine mental capacity before taking a homeless person into custody; if the person appears to suffer from mental illness, he could be taken to a hospital or mental institution for evaluation.

Cuomo aides said Sunday, shortly after the order was issued, that state officials were interpreting the law to mean anyone who chose to turn down shelter in favor of sleeping outside in freezing temperatures inherently displayed some degree of mental illness and could therefore be removed. The governor's office later appeared to walk back that interpretation. "Obviously, the order does not mandate involuntary commitment for competent individuals," Cuomo's counsel, Alphonso David, said in a written statement. — AP



HASSANA: File photo shows the tail of a Metrojet plane that crashed in Hassana, Egypt. — AP

DELIBERATE ACTS CAUSE MORE AIRLINE DEATHS THAN CRASHES

FLIGHT SECURITY REMAINS A CONCERN

WASHINGTON: There were more airline deaths worldwide due to deliberate acts in 2015 than from accidental air crashes, for the second year in a row, according to an industry tally. There were only eight accidental airline crashes last year, accounting for 161 passenger and crew deaths - the fewest crashes and deaths since at least 1946. The tally by Flightglobal, an aviation news and industry data company, excludes a German airliner that was deliberately flown into a mountainside in the French Alps last March, and a Russian airliner packed with tourists that exploded over Egypt in October.

The toll for those two incidents was 374 killed. In 2014, the toll from a Malaysia Airlines plane that disappeared and another that was shot down over Ukraine in 2014 was 537 deaths compared to 436 accident deaths that year. "In recent years, airline safety has improved very considerably to the point where, typically, there are now very few fatal accidents and fatalities in a year," said Paul Hayes, Flightglobal's director of air safety and insurance. "However, flight security remains a concern."

A far cry

Although some years are better than others, the fatal accident rate has been improving for many years. The global fatal accident rate for all types of airline operations in 2015 was one per 5 million flights, the best year ever. The previous best year was 2014, with a

fatal accident rate of 1 per 2.5 million flights. Airline operations are now about four or five times safer than they were 20 years ago. Those tallies are for all types of airline flights, including cargo, positioning, training, and maintenance flights. There were just 98 paying passengers killed last year in accidental crashes compared to 790 in 2007. A far cry from 1970s, when the annual average of passengers killed in accidental crashes was 1,289.

A big reason for the improving record is better engineering. Today's airliners and aircraft engines are far safer than earlier generations of planes. They are more highly automated, which has reduced many common pilot errors. They have better satellite-based navigation systems. They are made of stronger, lighter weight, less corrosive materials. And they're equipped with safety systems introduced in recent decades, and repeatedly improved over time, that have nearly eliminated mid-air collisions between airliners and what the industry calls "controlled flight into terrain" - pilots who lose situational awareness and fly their planes into a mountainside or into the ground.

Higher accident rate

The aircraft improvements are due primarily to lessons learned from crash investigations that are taken into account when new planes are designed, said John Goglia, a former National Transportation Safety Board

member. As older planes are replaced with newer planes, aviation becomes safer, he said. "We're now up to about the 7th generation of jet airplanes," he said. "We know the first generation - DC-8s, 707s - had a higher accident rate than the second or the third or the fourth generations, and it just moves on up."

But more needs to be done to weed out disturbed pilots and guard against acts of terrorism, experts said. The Germanwings case is especially perplexing, said John Cox, a former airline pilot and aviation safety consultant. Pilot Andreas Lubitz managed to conceal his troubles even though airlines are continually evaluating pilots for signs of trouble. Pilots evaluate each other as well. It's not known what caused Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 to disappear while flying from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, but many aviation safety experts theorize that it was mostly likely the result of deliberate acts, probably by one of the two pilots.

"Pilots from day one are so ingrained with protecting the passengers, with learning skills to deal with unanticipated events ... and evaluated on how well you deal with stress," Cox said. "Those who don't do well with it don't survive as professional pilots." The Islamic State has claimed credit for a bomb suspected of blowing apart a MetroJet A320 over Egypt. Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 was shot down by a Russian Buk surface-to-air missile fired from rebel-held territory in Eastern Ukraine, according to Dutch crash investigators. — AP

TRUMP EMBRACES MUSLIM BAN IN OPENING TV ADVERT

MANCHESTER: Republican presidential hopeful Donald Trump is giving some of the most divisive proposals of his campaign a starring role in his first major television ad, as the unsettled race for the party's nomination swirls around security concerns. With the opening 2016 primary contest four weeks away, the billionaire businessman is spotlighting his plan to ban Muslims from entering the United States - temporarily and with exceptions, he says - and to build a wall along the southern border.

Trump's campaign says he plans to spend \$2 million a week on the ad, set to begin airing today across the first two states to cast votes in the Republican nominating contest. Iowa hosts the nation's kickoff presidential caucuses on Feb 1 and New Hampshire follows with the opening primary election on Feb 9. The real estate magnate, who leads the Republican field nationally, is fighting for a good showing in the leadoff states against several rivals, particularly Sen Ted Cruz. Trump's proposal on Muslims has been condemned by Republicans and Democrats as un-American and counterproductive, yet the headline approach to immigration has fueled his popularity among the overwhelmingly white Republican primary electorate.

The new ad features dark images of the San Bernardino shooters, who were Muslims, and body bags. "The politicians can pretend it's something else. But Donald Trump calls it radical Islamic terrorism. That's why he's calling for a temporary shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until we can figure out what's going on," a narrator says. Video footage later in the ad shows people apparently streaming freely across a border as the narrator says Trump will "stop illegal immigrants by building a wall on our southern border that Mexico will pay for."

Facing questions from news outlets, the

Trump campaign acknowledged in a statement Monday that the border images were of a Spanish enclave in Morocco, not the US-Mexican border. "I think it's irrelevant," Trump said in an interview on Fox News Channel's "The O'Reilly Factor" Monday night. "So you can just take it any way you want, but it's really merely a display of what a dumping ground is going to look like. And that's what our country's becoming very rapidly." His campaign elaborated in a statement, saying the selection of footage was intended "to demonstrate the severe impact of an open border and the very real threat Americans face if we do not immediately build a wall and stop illegal immigration."

The ad, posted on Trump's website Monday, is a departure from the typical introductory campaign spot, which often features a candidate introducing himself voters or sharing her life story. But Trump already is well-known to voters. He was the star of the popular "The Apprentice," his name is plastered on high-rise and hotel buildings across the country and he has dominated news coverage over the last six months.

Republican pollster Frank Luntz, at times a Trump critic, predicted the new ad would help Trump among the slice of Republican voters who participate in early voting contests. "This may not be a majority position in the country," Luntz said of the Muslim ban. "It may not even be a majority position within the Republican Party, but among those who will vote in the caucuses and the primaries it is a popular position, and he will benefit from it." An ABC News/Washington Post poll conducted in December found that 6 in 10 Americans think a ban on Muslims entering the United States is the wrong thing to do. Among only Republicans, however, 6 in 10 say they would support such a policy. — AP



LOWELL: Supporters cheer prior to an address by Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump during a campaign stop at the Tsongas Center in Lowell, Mass. — AP

CHICAGO LAWYER ACCUSED OF HIDING EVIDENCE QUILTS

CHICAGO: A top city of Chicago lawyer stepped down Monday after a federal judge accused him of hiding evidence in a fatal police shooting, the latest allegation of wrongdoing amid ongoing scrutiny of how the city deals with such cases. Separately, the city agency that investigates police shootings vowed greater transparency, saying Monday that it would start divulging some details of active cases as it tries to bolster public confidence in the process.

Since November, Chicago has been dealing with fallout from the release of a video showing a white officer fatally shooting black teenager Laquan McDonald. The video prompted protests and led to a wide-ranging civil rights investigation of the entire police department by the US Department of Justice. Monday's 72-page opinion from US District Judge Edmond Chang was part of a civil lawsuit brought by relatives of Darius Pinex, a black man, who was shot and killed by police during a 2011 traffic stop in Chicago.

The officers, Raoul Mosqueda and Gildardo Sierra, said they opened fire as Pinex refused orders and put his car in reverse. The officers had said they stopped Pinex because his car matched a description they heard on their police radio of a car suspected of involvement in an earlier shooting. But records emerged after the trial began that officers weren't listening to the channel broadcasting the radio traffic about the suspect's car. The judge said a city lawyer "intentionally

concealed" that evidence. The judge on Monday tossed a jury's finding in April that the police shooting was justified, ordered a new trial and instructed the city to pay attorney's fees to the plaintiffs.

"Attorneys who might be tempted to bury late-surfacing information need to know that, if discovered, any verdict they win will be forfeit and their clients will pay the price," the judge wrote. He said Jordan Marsh, a senior corporation counsel, also later lied about when he was aware of the evidence. The judge also accused the law department, which defends city employees accused of wrongdoing, of shoddy record-keeping, saying it contributed to the problem in the Pinex case. The city law department announced Marsh's resignation later Monday, saying it "does not tolerate any action that would call into question the integrity of the lawyers who serve" Chicago. It also said it was reviewing its training and evidence-gathering procedures.

But a lawyer for the Pinex family, Steve Greenberg, said Marsh's actions reflect on the city law department as a whole. He accused the department of not acting quickly enough when it realized its attorney wasn't forthcoming about critical evidence. "It shows the city hasn't just fought to protect officers, it also fights tooth and nail to protect its lawyers," he said. "I don't think they cared that (Pinex) got killed, they didn't care what the truth was and they didn't care they cheated (with the evidence). — AP

DRUG GANG SUSPECTED IN MEXICO MAYOR'S SLAYING

CUERNAVACA: The Mexican drug cartel known as Los Rojos is suspected of being behind the murder of a mayor who was gunned down a day after taking office, authorities said Monday. The killing of Gisela Mota, 33, has shocked the nation, putting a spotlight on the violence plaguing the central state of Morelos and the dangers mayors have

faced across Mexico.

The left-of-center former member of Congress was shot in her house on Saturday, barely 24 hours after taking her oath of office in Temixco, about 90 kilometers south of Mexico City. Nearly 100 mayors and more than 1,000 municipal workers have been attacked in Mexico in the past decade, mainly by

organized crime groups, according to the Association of Local Authorities of Mexico. "The lines of investigation indicate that the criminal group Los Rojos was responsible for the murder of Gisela Mota," Governor Graco Ramirez wrote on Twitter.

He told local radio that Mota was killed by a Rojos cell because she was "against letting them having a presence" and she backed the installation of a "unified command" between the state and municipal police in her city of 100,000 people. Ramirez, who like Mota is a member of the leftist Democratic Revolution Party, said that Mota's murder was a "clear threat" by the gang for mayors to reject the police reform. Morelos State Security Commissioner Alberto Capella told Radio Formula that Mota's murder could be linked to the killing of a person whose dismembered body was found on a highway on December 31 and to three other cases.

Father chased killers

Two suspects, including the cell's leader, were killed in a shootout with police just minutes after Mota's killing while three others, including a 17-year-

old boy and a 32-year-old woman, were detained, authorities said. Ramirez said the assassins burst into Mota's home and killed her in front of her family, and her father then "courageously ran after them" after them. Authorities are seeking to arrest more suspects. Los Rojos (The Reds) and their archrivals, the Guerreros Unidos (United Warriors), have sought to "generate terror through kidnapping or control of certain areas" in Morelos, Capella said. The Guerreros Unidos became notorious as the prime suspects in the presumed killing of 43 students who disappeared in the neighboring state of Guerrero in 2014.

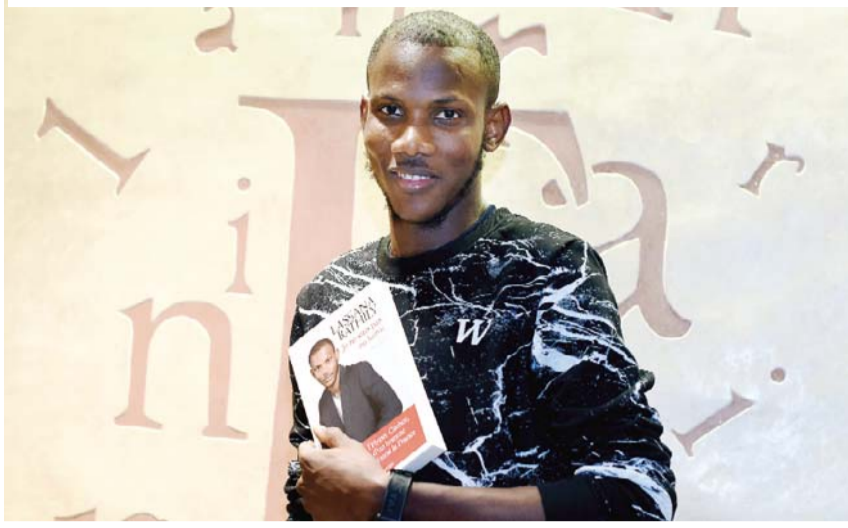
Governor vs football legend

Ramirez ordered state police to place 15 municipalities, including Temixco and the neighboring state capital, Cuernavaca, under the unified command following Mota's murder. Ramirez has clashed with the new mayor of Cuernavaca, former football star Cuahtemoc Blanco, over the police scheme and their conflict re-ignited on Monday. Ramirez said that when he met with Blanco over the issue, the sports legend was "rude" to him. — AFP



TEMIXCO: Supporters and family accompany to the cemetery the coffin of Gisela Mota, newly elected mayor of Temixco, Morelos state, Mexico, murdered on Saturday by hitmen. — AFP

ACCIDENTAL HERO: THE MUSLIM WHO SAVED JEWS IN PARIS ATTACK



PARIS: Lassana Bathily - the employee of the Hyper Cacher Jewish supermarket in Paris who helped shoppers hide in a cold storage room from an Islamist gunman who attacked the store on January 9, 2015, poses with his book "Je ne suis pas un héros" (I Am Not A Hero). — AFP

PARIS: Lassana Bathily was an undocumented migrant from Mali until he became an unlikely hero by saving shoppers' lives during the jihadist attack on a Jewish supermarket in Paris a year ago. The 25-year-old became the one positive story to emerge from the three days of violence in January, when jihadist attacks on the Charlie Hebdo satirical weekly, police and the Jewish Hyper Cacher supermarket in the east of the capital killed a total of 17 people. "Ah, here is my favorite Frenchman," cried President Francois Hollande when he received Bathily at the Elysee Palace a fortnight after the carnage.

Bathily, a shelf-stacker in the supermarket, helped save shoppers from gunman Amedy Coulibaly on that fateful day, January 9, 2015. The narrative of a Muslim saving Jews from a jihadist made him a positive symbol of France's diversity. But as he writes in his book "I'm Not a Hero" to be published Wednesday, heroism has been an uncomfortable mantle for Bathily. "The next morning, I turned on Facebook and 800 people had asked to be my friend," he said.

"In the days that followed I said 'No, I'm not a hero. I did something that had to be done.'"

Bathily was just a few minutes from the end of his shift at the supermarket, unpacking frozen items in the basement, when he heard a flurry of gunfire upstairs and saw around a dozen people fleeing down the stairs. Coulibaly, who claimed he was working in the name of the Islamic State group, had taken several shoppers hostage upstairs and ordered a cashier to go round up the others. Some of those who were huddled downstairs obeyed, but others refused to go and Bathily urged them to use the goods elevator to escape.

When no one wanted to take the risk, he ushered them into the refrigerated room, flicking off the light and the motor, and then made his own escape via the elevator and a fire escape. "My heart was beating so hard that I was scared I'd be heard," he said. Once outside, he helped police sketch out the layout of the shop and prepare their raid. A few hours later, they stormed in and shot Coulibaly dead.

Some say Bathily's role was exaggerated by

media and officials hungry for a good news angle. "The media and officials wanted to paint this pretty picture, that he helped us escape downstairs, that he hid us, and so on. Which wasn't really true, but that's not Lassana's fault at that moment, we needed a hero," one of the former hostages later told the Liberation newspaper. Bathily is not bothered by the backlash. "If they now say that I didn't do anything for them, that's their problem. I won't play their game," he said.

Hero's welcome

Several days after the violence, Bathily was granted French citizenship by the president himself, something he says had been a dream since his childhood in a small village on the Mali-Senegal border. But Bathily was passed over for a Legion d'Honneur, France's highest award, according to nominations published Friday. He returned to a hero's welcome in Mali, where he was offered free rooms in top hotels and was received by President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. — AFP

SOUTH AFRICAN RACE STORM OVER BLACK 'MONKEY' FACEBOOK SLUR

WHITE REALTOR COMPARED BLACK BEACHGOERS TO MONKEYS

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's ruling ANC party yesterday launched legal action over a white realtor's Facebook comments that compared black beachgoers to monkeys in a growing row about post-apartheid racism. The African National Congress, which led the struggle against white-minority rule, said it was pursuing a case against Penny Sparrow and a recent spate of other allegedly racist online postings. Sparrow's comments sparked a storm of protest and renewed debate about racism among white people in the country 22 years since Nelson Mandela came to power vowing national reconciliation.

The ANC said in a statement that it was laying "charges of crimen injuria (intentionally impairing the dignity of others) against a number of South Africans who have made racist remarks on a number of social

media." Sparrow, a real estate agent from Park Rynie in the southern province of KwaZulu-Natal, complained on Facebook about black people littering beaches during New Year's celebrations. "From now I shall address the blacks of South Africa as monkeys as I see the cute little wild monkeys do the same-pick and drop litter," she said in the posting on Saturday.

The ANC said it would also lodge a complaint with the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) because such comments "belittled" and "insulted" black South Africans. "It is troubling that bigots who once kept their views to themselves now seem emboldened," party spokesman Zizi Kodwa said. Sparrow later deleted the post and apologized, saying she did not "mean it to be a personal insult to anyone". Several other white South Africans have also been subject to fierce criticism over tweets with

allegedly racial connotations.

Prominent economic analyst Chris Hart was suspended by Standard Bank for what it said were "racist undertones" in a tweet suggesting there was a growing "hatred towards minorities", seen as referring to the treatment of whites. The furor has highlighted racial divisions and sensitivities in South Africa, which faces a dire economic outlook as growth slows sharply and mass unemployment persists. A survey in December by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation concluded that most South Africans felt "race relations have either stayed the same or deteriorated" since the first democratic elections in 1994. The main opposition Democratic Alliance party, of which Sparrow is a member, stressed it abhorred racism and laid criminal charges against her for "dehumanizing black South Africans". — AFP



Photo shows packs of cocaine found in a van in Northwestern Spain. — AFP

THREE TONS OF COCAINE SEIZED IN MAJOR SPANISH DRUGS BUST

MADRID: Spanish police said yesterday they had seized three tons of cocaine and arrested twelve suspected drug smugglers from Spain, Britain and The Netherlands in a major drugs bust in the north of the country. The seizure in the northwestern Galicia region was "the biggest for this type of drug on Galician soil since 1999", the police said in a statement, without revealing when the operation took place. The cocaine was bound for an important smuggling ring based on the Costa del Sol in southern Spain, the statement added. "Twelve people were detained including those transporting the merchandise, who were Spanish, and the sellers and buyers of the drugs, who were Dutch and British respectively."

Spain's proximity to north Africa, a key source of hashish, and its close ties with former colonies in Latin America, the world's main cocaine-producing region, have made it a major gateway into Europe for drug consignments. Last month, police said they had seized 40 pallets made out of 1.4 tons of compressed cocaine made to look like wood that arrived on a shipping container from Colombia. And in November,

police announced they had arrested Michael Roden, a suspected drug trafficking boss who is listed among Britain's 10 most wanted fugitives. Roden, also known by his nickname "Dodge", was wanted by British police in connection with the importation of 70 kilos of cannabis into Britain from Spain in 2013.

That same month, police also detained fellow Briton Robert Dawes, one of Europe's most wanted drug lords, who was arrested at his luxury villa on the Costa del Sol after an eight-year probe into his alleged links to the Italian mafia and South American cartels. He has since been extradited to France, where he is wanted in connection with the discovery of 1.3 tons of cocaine in a Paris airport in 2013. Spain's southern Costa del Sol- once dubbed the "Costa del Crime" - has been known as a hideaway for British criminals in the past, especially in the late 1970s and 80s when there were no extradition agreements with Britain. But the situation changed in 2004 with the introduction of European arrest warrants, making it easier to bring British criminals home to face justice. — AFP

TURKISH AUTHORITIES FIND BODIES OF 27 MIGRANTS, SEARCH FOR SURVIVORS AROUND 1 MILLION MIGRANTS REACHED EUROPE IN 2015

ISTANBUL: Turkish authorities said they found the bodies of 27 migrants, at least three of them children, at two separate locations on the Aegean coast yesterday after a migrant boat apparently capsized as it tried to reach the Greek island of Lesbos. The flow of mostly Syrian refugees and migrants braving the seas to seek sanctuary in Europe dipped towards the end of last year coinciding with colder weather, but the total figure still reached 1 million in 2015, nearly five times more than in the previous year. Seventeen of the bodies were discovered on the shoreline in the district of Ayvalik, while ten others were found in the district of Dikili, a gendarmerie official in the local headquarters told Reuters.

Reuters TV footage showed a body in an orange life jacket lying at the grey water's edge in Ayvalik, lapped by waves. The nationalities of those drowned were not immediately clear. "We heard a boat sank and hit the rocks. I surmise these people died when they were trying to swim from the rocks. We came here to help as citizens," an unnamed eyewitness said. Increased policing on Turkey's shores and colder weather conditions have not deterred refugees and migrants from the Middle East, Asia and Africa from embarking on the perilous journey in small, flimsy boats. The coast guard and gendarmerie rescued 12 people from the sea and the rocks on the Ayvalik coastline. A coast guard official said three boats and a helicopter were searching for any survivors.

In a deal struck at the end of November, Turkey



IZMIR: The body of a migrant lies on the beach in Dikili, Izmir, Turkey yesterday. — AP

promised to help stem the flow of migrants to Europe in return for cash, visas and renewed talks on joining the EU. Turkey is host to 2.2 million Syrians and has spent around \$8.5 billion on feeding and housing them since the start of the civil war nearly

five years ago, but it has been criticized for lacking a longer term integration strategy to give Syrians a future there. Almost all of the refugees have no legal work status and the majority of children do not go to school — Reuters

NORTHERN IRISH CHRISTIAN PREACHER CLEARED OVER ANTI-ISLAMIC REMARKS

BELFAST: A Northern Irish Evangelical Christian preacher who described Islam as "satanic" and "the spawn of the devil" during one of his sermons was found not guilty yesterday of broadcasting grossly offensive remarks. Pastor James McConnell, who has been supported by some leading politicians in the British province, was charged over his comments in the 2014 sermon, which was delivered in the independent church he founded and streamed live on the internet.

Judge Liam McNally said McConnell was "entitled to criticize Islam in a robust manner", and that his comments amounted to "nothing other than a bout of name calling". The case comes against the background of growing anti-Islamic sentiment from some quarters in Europe, particularly far-right parties such as France's National Front.

The 78-year-old pastor, who recently retired after 60 years of preaching, denied the charges of improper use of a public electronic communications network and causing a grossly offensive message to be sent by means of a public electronic communications network, citing freedom of expression. The judge said he

believed the preacher did not set out to cause offence and was "preaching to the converted rather than the worldwide internet". "The court needs to be very careful not to criminalize speech which, however contemptible, is no more than offensive. It is not the task of the criminal law to censor offensive utterances," he said.

McConnell was initially defended by Northern Ireland First Minister Peter Robinson and called upon another senior minister of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) - which shares power in Northern Ireland's devolved government - as a character witness. Mainly Catholic Irish nationalists and pro-British unionists, most of them Protestants, are obliged to rule the province together under a 1998 peace deal that ended three decades of sectarian violence during which more than 3,600 people died. McConnell, whose 2600-capacity Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle in Belfast is recognized as a Protestant church but also has Roman Catholic members, said he was very pleased with the verdict. "I am very happy. I thought I was going down," he told Reuters after the judgment. — Reuters

A YEAR AFTER ATTACK, FRANCE'S JEWS LEARN TO LIVE UNDER ARMED GUARD

PARIS: Ever since a jihadist attack on a kosher store left four people dead a year ago, France's Jews have grown used to soldiers patrolling their neighborhoods and schools. While a comfort to some, the fact that the large Jewish community is forced to live under armed guard only heightens the sense of being a target. "I don't feel safe here anymore. As Jews we are a preferred target, in a country which itself is a target" of jihadists, said Noemie, 27, who escaped the bloody hostage drama.

Paris was shaken and on edge two days after 12 people were gunned down at the Charlie Hebdo satirical weekly when Noemie went to the Hyper Cacher supermarket on January 9 to buy some groceries for her grandmother. It was a day of high drama. Said and Cherif Kouachi, the two brothers who waged the Charlie Hebdo attack, were under police siege in a small town near Paris where they had taken a hostage after two days on the run. Then, in the early afternoon, a gunman burst into the Jewish supermarket on the eastern edge of the French capital and opened fire.

The man was identified as Amedy Coulibaly, who phoned a French television station and said he was carrying out the attack in the name of the Islamic State extremist group. He said he had coordinated his atrocities with Cherif Kouachi, who himself had said he was backed and financed by al-Qaeda in Yemen. Coulibaly threatened to kill all the hostages inside the supermarket if police launched an assault on the Kouachi brothers. At around

5:00 pm, French commandos launched an assault on the building where the Kouachi brothers were holed up, killing both suspects.

Then, 15 minutes later as Coulibaly knelt for his evening prayers on the other side of the city, commandos launched their assault on the Jewish supermarket, killing the jihadist. It was later revealed that police were able to track his actions as he did not hang up the phone properly

after talking to reporters at the French TV station BFMTV. Coulibaly was later found to have killed a policewoman a day earlier when he was involved in a car accident, and also shot and injured a jogger.

'Breaking point'

A year later the Hyper Cacher has been fully renovated, and its clients have returned. "It took me six months to be able to come back," said Samuel, 24, a regular at

the kosher store. "There has been a real breaking point. Now we know we can be killed while doing our grocery shopping, or walking in the street," he said. Two days after the attack, on January 11, leaders from across the globe gathered in Paris to head a march of 1.6 million people united against terrorism. For France's 500,000-strong Jewish community it was a long-awaited show of solidarity after years of rising anti-Semitism in the country.

Just two years earlier Mohamed Merah, a self-described Al-Qaeda sympathizer, shot a rabbi, three Jewish schoolchildren and three French paratroopers in the city of Toulouse. In July 2014 a pro-Palestinian march turned violent in Paris, with looters destroying Jewish businesses and shouting anti-Israeli slogans. According to French government statistics, anti-Semitic acts have soared in recent years, with the number reported between January and May 2015 increasing 84 percent compared with the same period in 2014. The growing insecurity has also pushed many to make "aliyah" and emigrate to Israel, with record departures in 2015 of 7,900 people, according to official figures. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came under fire for urging French Jews to move to the Jewish state after the Hyper Cacher attack. "To all the Jews of France, all the Jews of Europe, I would like to say that... the state of Israel is your home," he said at the time. "All Jews who want to immigrate to Israel will be welcomed here warmly and with open arms. — AFP



PARIS: French President Francois Hollande kisses late police officer Ahmed Merabet's mother during commemorations in Paris yesterday. — AP

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DESPITE CEASEFIRE, SYRIANS STARVE IN BESIEGED TOWN

BEIRUT: In the besieged Syrian town of Madaya, skeletal residents are braving landmines and snipers to scrounge for food despite a rare ceasefire deal that was meant to allow aid to enter. "We've forgotten what bread tastes like," 27-year-old Mohamed said from the town near the Lebanese border. People trapped in Madaya are starving to death, Mohamed and other residents said in interviews, and few have any hope. "The situation has become very tragic," he said.

Some 40,000 people, mostly civilians, are believed to be in the town in Damascus province, many of them displaced from the neighboring rebel stronghold of Zabadani. Both Zabadani and Madaya are under the control of a loose alliance of opposition forces, including secular rebels and Islamist groups. They are encircled by regime forces, and last year were part of a deal, along with two rebel-besieged villages in northwestern Syria, to allow aid in and the exit of civilians and the wounded. But so far Madaya has seen only a one-off aid delivery three months ago, and residents, activists, and aid agencies describe dire conditions in the town now.

"There's nothing to eat anymore. Nothing but water has entered my mouth for two days," 32-year-old Mamina said. "We just want someone to tell us if help is coming or not because we have nothing here," Mohamed said the

cost of what food was available was astronomical. "The situation has become very tragic. Very little can be smuggled in, so the prices of food are extremely high," he said. "A bag of milk can go for \$100, a kilo of rice for \$150," he said.

'Surviving on weeds'

According to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, at least 10 people have died from lack of food and medicine in the town. Another 13 have been killed by regime mines or snipers while trying to leave in search of food, the monitoring group said. It said regime forces had placed additional mines and barbed wire around Madaya since the September deal, adding that some 1,200 people inside had chronic illnesses, and more than 300 children there were suffering from malnutrition and other ailments.

"Many of the town's residents have been forced to survive on weeds and others pay huge sums of money at government checkpoints to obtain food," Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman said. "One resident who was really suffering put his car on sale for the price of 10 kilos of rice. He is one of many who did that. He didn't manage to sell it, and a relative of his died as a result of the food shortages," he added. "Young people, women and children have turned into skeletons from



HOUTA: A Syrian child sits in front of a mural covered in bullet holes on the wall of a former school in the rebel-held region of Eastern Ghouta, on the outskirts of the Syrian capital Damascus yesterday. — AFP

hunger. The town needs everything," said Moaz Al-Qalamuni, a journalist in Madaya. Pawel Krzysiek, a spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross who entered Madaya during the last aid delivery,

also painted a bleak picture.

'Mothers cannot lactate'

"People for far too long have been left without all the basics, basic food supplies,

basic medicines, no electricity and no water... I really saw the hunger in the people's eyes," he said. "People were begging us for baby milk," during the aid delivery, he added. "They said the mothers cannot lactate, they are malnourished, they are scared. There is no way to feed newborns and the young babies." The crisis comes despite a rare deal that was intended to bring relief to Madaya and Zabadani, along with the government-held towns of Fuaa and Kafraya in Idlib province, which are under rebel siege. The September deal produced a six-month truce to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid and the evacuation of wounded civilians and fighters.

A first aid delivery went ahead, and in December some 450 fighters and civilians from Zabadani, Fuaa and Kafraya were evacuated. But there have been no subsequent aid deliveries, and while government forces can air drop some supplies into Fuaa and Kafraya, the opposition has no similar way to get food into Madaya. Krzysiek said the ICRC and Syria's Red Crescent were hoping to be able to bring aid into Madaya "as soon as possible." "It's not a solution to do one-off, one-shot food deliveries," he said. "In places like that, that have been left without aid for months, even years, you really need to deliver regularly to make sure that people have enough to food to feed themselves and their families." — AFP



LAHORE: Members of a gypsy family cook food in their make-shift home in suburbs of Lahore, Pakistan yesterday. — AP

TALEBAN PUBLISHES 1ST ANNUAL REPORT AS SECURITY IMPROVES

PAKISTANI TALEBAN CLAIMS IT KILLED 686 IN 2015

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani Taliban has released its first annual report, claiming it killed hundreds of people in 2015, with analysts suggesting its "inflated" figures illustrate the jihadists' struggle to demonstrate their capability as security improves. The report, written in Urdu, is a detailed list of attacks carried out on security forces, police and politicians in several Pakistani cities and the northwestern tribal areas between January 3 and December 26.

Released on December 29, it says that in 2015 the Pakistani Tehreek-e-Taleban (TTP) carried out 73 target killings, 12 ambush attacks, 10 raids, 19 IED (Improvised Explosive Device) blasts, five suicide attacks, 17 missile attacks and shot down two helicopters, and claims it killed some 686 people in 2015. Claims by the TTP are often exaggerated. In the report, for example, it claims that it killed 247 people in an attack on Peshawar's Badaber airbase in September. The official death toll was 29. "This report mostly carries big claims, but there is no evidence to support these claims which are often inflated," said Pakistani analyst Rahimullah

Yousafzai. "They have realized that this kind of report is necessary to show people that they are still active and potent," Yousafzai said. Pakistan has been battling a homegrown Islamist insurgency for over a decade, with more than 27,000 civilians and security personnel dying in extremist attacks, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, a monitoring site.

But overall levels of extremist-linked violence dropped dramatically last year, with 2015 seeing the fewest deaths since 2007 - the year the Pakistani Taliban umbrella group was formed. Analysts have credited the fall to military offensives against the Taliban in the tribal areas of North Waziristan and Khyber where they are headquartered, as well as operations in the country's largest city of Karachi. Authorities have also taken steps to shut down insurgents' sources of funding and arrested thousands for inciting hatred under a National Action Plan to curb militancy.

'Campaign weakened'

Yousafzai suggested the TTP had issued the annu-

al report because "people are saying that their campaign has weakened." Amir Rana, the director of the independent Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS), said despite the setbacks the TTP remained operational in Pakistan. "Its real operational strengths are its affiliates and support networks, which still exist inside Pakistan and ... will take time to break," Rana said.

He predicted that the drop in extremist-linked violence would continue, however. In its own annual report for 2015, PIPS said that "terrorism declined by 48 percent, but TTP remained a major factor of instability in 2015". Pakistan's northwest tribal areas bordering Afghanistan suffered the most in 2015 with 268 deaths, followed by 257 in Balochistan, 251 in Sindh, 206 in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, 83 in Punjab and four in Islamabad, the PIPS report said, for a total of 1,069 deaths. PIPS said the TTP and its affiliates were responsible for some 57 percent of the 625 reported attacks in 2015, attributing the remainder to other jihadist, nationalist and sectarian groups. — AFP

MISSING HONG KONG PUBLISHER WENT TO CHINA 'VOLUNTARILY'

HONG KONG: A publisher of books critical of China's leaders who went missing in Hong Kong last week has travelled to China voluntarily, his wife said yesterday, as Britain expressed concern and reminded its former colony of its commitment to press freedom. Four other associates of the publisher that specializes in selling and publishing gossipy political books on China's Communist Party leaders have been unaccounted for since late last year. The disappearances and China's continued silence have stoked fears of mainland Chinese authorities using shadowy tactics that erode the "one country, two systems" formula under which Hong Kong has been governed since its return to China in 1997.

Lee Bo, 65, a shareholder of Causeway Bay Books, went missing last week, amid mounting speculation he may have been taken by Chinese agents. His wife, Sophie Choi, however, withdrew a missing persons report for her husband on Monday. "He went voluntarily so that's why ... I cancelled the report," Chao said in brief comments to reporters staking out her apartment. Hong Kong police confirmed in a statement that the missing persons report had been cancelled, but said they would continue investigating.

Neither Lee nor his wife could be reached by Reuters on their mobile phone numbers. Britain confirmed on Tuesday that one of those missing was a British citizen. An embassy spokesman in Beijing added in a statement that Britain was "deeply concerned" by reports of disappearances and detentions. "We encourage the Hong Kong SAR (special administrative region) government to honor its commitment to protecting the freedom of the press, and we hope the Chinese authorities will continue to make every effort to ensure that the environment in which the media and publishers operate in the Hong Kong SAR supports full and frank reporting," the statement said.

Britain handed the global financial hub back to China under an agreement that its core liberties and way of life - including freedom of speech and an independent judiciary - continue for 50

years. In a handwritten note dated January 3 and purportedly written and signed by Lee, photos of which were widely circulated on social and local media but couldn't be verified by Reuters, Lee wrote that he had travelled back to China in order to assist with an unspecified "investigation".

An officer at the Public Security Bureau in Shenzhen, just over the border from Hong Kong in China's Guangdong province, told Reuters he'd been instructed by his supervisors to say he wasn't aware of the case. The Guangdong provincial Public Security Bureau said it wasn't aware of the situation and referred inquiries to the Guangdong propaganda department. "I don't know anything about this," said Deng Hong, a deputy director of Guangdong's Information Office when contacted by Reuters. The office gave no immediate response to faxed questions seeking further details on Lee's whereabouts or his involvement in any investigations.

Several trenchant editorials by China's state media fuelled public concern in Hong Kong that China might be tightening its grip on the city. Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying said it would be "unacceptable" and unconstitutional if Chinese agents were found to have been involved. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Tuesday denounced "groundless accusations" by others about the case. China's state-run Global Times wrote that many of the books published by Lee's firm had "maliciously fabricated content" that stoked political rumours in mainland China and caused an "evil influence".

Lee had told Reuters in November that the men had likely been arrested because of a "new book they are going to publish". He did not elaborate. Angela Gui, the daughter of missing Gui Minhai, who had penned tabloid-style exposes on China's leaders and was the owner of Mighty Current, the publishing house that owns Causeway Bay Books, said she hoped the missing men would be found soon. "And that they will be returned from wherever they are as soon as possible," she told Reuters by phone from Britain. — Reuters

GIANT STATUE FOR CHAIRMAN MAO

BEIJING: A gargantuan gold-painted statue of Communist China's founding father Mao Zedong has been erected in open countryside by a group of capitalists at a cost of 3 million yuan (\$460,000), reports said. The statue towers some 37 meters over empty fields in the central province of Henan and shows the man who ruled China with an iron grip for nearly three decades seated in thoughtful repose, his hands crossed.

Its construction was reportedly funded by several local entrepreneurs and finished in December after nine months of labor, the HMR.cn portal said on Monday. Despite being blamed for millions of deaths, Mao is still widely revered in China, where the Communist leadership tightly controls public discussion of history and seeks to use his legacy to shore up its support. China's current President Xi Jinping has praised Mao as a "great figure" and revived some of his rhetoric and centralization of power, while following the party's 1980s conclusion that he also made "mistakes".

Some Internet users criticized the statue, pointing out its location in Henan, the centre of a famine in the late 1950s resulting from Mao's economic policies estimated to have killed as many as 40 million people. "Have you forgotten about the Great Famine, building that?" asked one poster on Sina Weibo, a Chinese equivalent of Twitter. Others



KAIFENG: Photo shows a huge statue of Chairman Mao Zedong under construction in Tongxu county in Kaifeng, central China's Henan province. — AFP

questioned the statue's resemblance to the Great Helmsman, who also launched the decade-long Cultural Revolution that saw violence and destruction nationwide. But many heaped praise on the statue, with one Weibo user simply saying: "Badass". — AFP

SOUTH CHINA SEA TENSIONS SURGE

CHINA LANDS PLANE ON ARTIFICIAL ISLAND

HONG KONG: China's first landing of a plane on one of its new island runways in the South China Sea shows Beijing's facilities in the disputed region are being completed on schedule and military flights will inevitably follow, foreign officials and analysts said. China's increasing military presence in the disputed sea could effectively lead to a Beijing-controlled air defense zone, they said, ratcheting up tensions with other claimants and with the United States in one of the world's most volatile areas.

Chinese foreign ministry officials confirmed on Saturday that a test flight by a civilian plane landed on an artificial island built in the Spratlys, the first time Beijing has used a runway in the area. Vietnam launched a formal diplomatic protest while Philippines Foreign Ministry spokesman Charles Jose said Manila was planning to do the same. Both have claims to the area that overlap with China. "That's the fear, that China will be able to take control of the South China Sea and it will affect the freedom of navigation and freedom of overflight," Jose told reporters.

In Washington, State Department spokesman John Kirby said China's landing of the plane "raises tensions and threatens regional stability." Senator John McCain, the chairman of the influential US Senate Armed Services Committee, criticized the Obama administration for delaying further "freedom of navigation" patrols

within 12 nautical miles of the islands built by China. China has been building runways on the artificial islands for over a year, and the plane's landing was not a surprise. The runway at the Fiery Cross Reef is 3,000 meters long and is one of three China was constructing on artificial islands built up from seven reefs and atolls in the Spratlys archipelago.

The runways would be long enough to handle long-range bombers and transport craft as well as China's best jet fighters, giving them a presence deep into the maritime heart of Southeast Asia that they have lacked until now. Chinese officials have repeatedly stressed that the new islands would be mostly for civilian use, such as coast

guard activity and fishing research. Foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at the weekend that the test flight was intended to check whether the runway met civilian aviation standards and fell "completely within China's sovereignty".

However, military landings on the islands were now "inevitable," said Leszek Buszynski, a visiting fellow at the Australian National University's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre.

An air defense zone, while unlikely soon, was feasible and possible in future once China's built up its air strength, he said. "The next step will be, once they've tested it with several flights, they will bring down some of their fighter air

power - SU-27s and SU-33s - and they will station them there permanently. That's what they're likely to do."

De facto defense zone

Ian Storey, a South China Sea expert at Singapore's ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, said he expected tensions to worsen as China used its new facilities to project power deeper into the South China Sea. Even if China stopped short of formally declaring an Air Defense Identification Zone, known as an ADIZ, Beijing's need to protect its new airstrips and other facilities could see it effectively operating one. Work is well underway to complete a range of port, storage and personnel facilities on the new islands, US and regional officials have said. Fiery Cross is also expected to house advanced early warning radars and military communications facilities, they said. "As these facilities become operational, Chinese warnings to both military and civilian aircraft will become routine," Storey said. "These events are a precursor to an ADIZ, or an undeclared but de facto ADIZ, and one has to expect tensions to rise." China sparked condemnation from the United States and Japan in late 2013 when it declared an ADIZ over the East China Sea, covering uninhabited islands disputed with Tokyo. Hua, the Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman, said on Monday that there were no immediate plans for an ADIZ in the South China Sea. — Reuters



PAG-ASA ISLAND: Filipino children take part in a clean-up at Pag-asa island, a remote Philippine-held island in the South China Sea. — AFP

EMOTIONAL OBAMA UNVEILS PLAN TO CUT GUN VIOLENCE

WASHINGTON: A visibly emotional President Barack Obama, at one point wiping tears from his cheek, unveiled his plan yesterday to tighten control and enforcement of firearms in the US, using his presidential powers in the absence of legal changes he implored Congress to pass. Obama accused the gun lobby of taking Congress hostage, but said "they cannot hold America hostage". He insisted it was possible to uphold the Second Amendment while doing something to tackle the frequency of mass shootings in the US that he said had become "the new normal". The much-debated Second Amendment of the Constitution guarantees the right of citizens to own firearms.

"This is not a plot to take away everybody's guns," Obama said. "You pass a background check, you purchase a firearm. The problem is some gun sellers have been operating under a different set of rules." Obama's actions ensure that gun rights - one of the most bitterly divisive issues in America - will be at the forefront of the 2016 presidential campaign, which begins in earnest next month with the first primary contests.

Accusing Obama of gross overreach, many of the Republican presidential candidates have vowed to rip up the new gun restrictions upon taking office. Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton said she was proud of Obama's efforts and promised she would safeguard them. Obama wiped tears away as he recalled the 20 young children killed in 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. He paid tribute to the parents, some of whom gathered for the ceremony, who he said had never imagined their child's life would be cut short by a bullet. "Every time I think about those kids, it gets me mad," Obama said.

At the centerpiece of Obama's plan is a more sweeping definition of gun dealers that the administration hopes will expand the number of sales subject to background checks. Under current law, only federally licensed gun dealers must conduct background checks on buyers. But at gun shows, websites and flea markets, sellers often skirt that requirement by declining to register as licensed dealers.

Aiming to narrow that loophole, the Justice Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives is issuing updated guidance that says the government should deem anyone "in the business" of selling guns to be a dealer, regardless of where he or she sells the guns. To that end, the government will consider other factors, including how many guns a person sells, how frequently, and whether those guns are sold for a profit. The White House also put sellers on notice that the administration planned to strengthen enforcement - including deploying 230 new examiners the FBI will hire to process background checks.

Public opinion polls show Americans overwhelmingly support expanding background checks for gun purchases, but are more divided on the broader question of stricter gun laws. About a third of Americans live in a household where at least one person owns a gun. Particularly in rural areas where firearms are a way of life, many citizens do not believe gun laws should be made stricter. The reverse is true in urban areas, where majorities want tighter firearm regulations.

The impact of Obama's plan on gun violence remains a major question, and one not easily answered. Had the rules been in place in the past, the steps wouldn't likely have prevented any of the recent mass shootings that have garnered national attention. The Obama administration acknowledged it couldn't quantify how many gun sales would be newly subjected to background checks, nor how many currently unregistered gun sellers would have to obtain a license.

Pushing back on that critique, Obama said every time the issue is debated, gun rights groups argue the steps wouldn't necessarily have stopped the last massacre, "so why bother trying?" "I reject that thinking," Obama said, arguing it would be worth it if the measures would prevent even a single gun death. "We maybe can't save everybody, but we could save some."

To lend a personal face to the issue, the White House assembled a cross-section of Americans whose lives were altered by the nation's most searing recent gun tragedies, including former Rep Gabrielle Giffords and



WASHINGTON: US President Barack Obama, joined by Vice President Joe Biden and gun violence victims, gets emotional as he speaks in the East Room of the White House yesterday about steps his administration is taking to reduce gun violence. — AP

relatives of victims from Charleston, South Carolina, at Virginia Tech. Mark Barden, whose son was shot to death at Sandy Hook Elementary School, introduced the president with a declaration that "we are better than this".

After Newtown, Obama sought far-reaching, bipartisan legislation that went beyond background checks. When the effort collapsed in the Senate, the White

House said it was thoroughly researching the president's powers to identify every legal step he could take on his own. But a more recent spate of gun-related atrocities, including in San Bernardino, California, shootings have spurred the administration to give the issue another look, as Obama seeks to make good on a policy issue that he's elevated time and again but has failed until now to advance. - AP

KUWAIT RECALLS ENVOY AS SAUDI-IRAN CRISIS...

Continued from Page 1

to the consolidation of efforts aimed at building confidence among nations. This goes in harmony with the resolution issued by the UN Security Council in this regard. Jarallah asserted Kuwait's supportive stance with Saudi Arabia in all measures taken in this regard to safeguard its security and stability.

Meanwhile, a number of lawmakers yesterday welcomed the government's decision to recall Kuwait's ambassador from Tehran in protest against attacks on Saudi diplomatic missions, but some called for cutting all ties with the Islamic republic and the expulsion of its envoy. MPs also welcomed the speaker's decision to convene an emergency session of the National Assembly to discuss the issue and demanded that the meeting should be public and not secret.

Islamist MP Ahmad Al-Azemi praised the call to hold an emergency session of the Assembly to discuss the "flagrant Iranian aggression on the Saudi embassy and consulate in Iran". He demanded that the session be held in public to let the world hear the opinion of the Kuwaiti

parliament on the matter. He also welcomed the government's measure to recall the Kuwaiti ambassador but added that MPs would still urge the government to sever ties with Tehran and expel its ambassador from Kuwait.

MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji also welcomed the holding of the Assembly session, but said he was against holding it behind closed doors. The lawmaker said what happened against Saudi Arabia also affects Kuwait and "we have to be clear that Iran poses a clear danger against the country and the best example is the terror cell which was awaiting orders from Iran and Hezbollah to overthrow the regime in Kuwait".

MP Abdullah Maayouf said recalling the Kuwaiti ambassador is not enough and the Kuwaiti government should take a tougher stance like that of Bahrain which cut off relations with Iran. The lawmaker said he is against holding the emergency session behind closed doors, as the Kuwaiti people need to know those MPs who justify Iranian actions. Maayouf said those who defend Iran should go to the country of their choice and added that he was surprised by those who deny that Iran is a terrorist state.

MP Faisal Al-Duwaisan however strongly responded to Maayouf's criticism, saying the lawmakers he criticized are only defending national interests. Duwaisan described Maayouf's criticism against pro-Iran MPs as "very cheap and undermines national unity". MP Abdulrahman Al-Jeeran welcomed the recalling of the Kuwaiti ambassador, adding that he had long demanded boycotting Iran politically and on the economic front.

Meanwhile, Islamist MP Humoud Al-Hamdan asked the interior and Islamic affairs ministers a series of questions about a statement issued by a number of Shiite clerics and signed by "clerics of Kuwait" condemning the execution of Shiite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr in Saudi Arabia. He said the statement, signed by 17 Shiite clerics, defended the Shiite cleric as a martyr and accused Saudi Arabia of pouring oil on the sectarian fire in the region. He asked which of the signatories work as preachers in the ministry of awqaf and inquired about the ministry's measures against them. No date has been set yet for the emergency session as it depends on when the speaker returns from abroad.

The six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) said it would meet in Riyadh Saturday for talks on the embassy attacks, a day before the Arab League is due to hold an emergency meeting. Tensions between Saudi Arabia, the main Sunni power, and Shiite-dominated Iran erupted this week into a full-blown diplomatic crisis, sparking widespread worries of regional instability. Iran lashed out again at Saudi Arabia for the execution yesterday, with President Hassan Rouhani accusing Riyadh of seeking to "cover its crime" by severing ties. "One does not respond to criticism by cutting off heads," Rouhani said, referring to the usual Saudi practice of carrying out executions with beheading by the sword.

Washington and other Western powers have called for calm amid fears the dispute could raise sectarian tensions across the Middle East and derail efforts to resolve conflicts from Syria to Yemen. The Security Council joined those calls late on Monday, issuing a statement urging all sides to "take steps to reduce tensions in the region". The statement by the 15-member council con-

demned "in the strongest terms" the attacks which saw protesters firebomb the Saudi embassy in Tehran and its consulate in Iran's second-biggest city Mashhad.

But the council made no mention of the event that set off the crisis - Saudi Arabia's execution on Saturday of Nimr, a cleric and activist whose death sparked widespread protests among Shiites. Saudi Arabia cut off diplomatic ties with Tehran in protest at the attacks on Sunday and has severed air links with Iran. Some of its allies among Sunni Arab states followed suit, with Bahrain and Sudan breaking off ties and the United Arab Emirates downgrading relations on Monday. Bahrain - base of the US Fifth Fleet - cut all air links with the Islamic republic yesterday, the official BNA news agency reported.

Rouhani has condemned the attacks and Tehran's mission to the UN vowed in a letter to the Security Council to "take necessary measures to prevent the occurrence of similar incidents in the future". Iranian officials have brushed aside the dispute, with government spokesman Mohammad Bagher Nobakht saying yesterday it "will have no impact on Iran's national development". "It is Saudi Arabia that will suffer," he said.

Regional powerhouse Turkey expressed alarm at the crisis yesterday, with Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu saying: "We expect all countries in the region to show common sense and take steps aimed at easing the tensions in the region." He said Ankara was "ready to make any effort" to help resolve the crisis.

Iran and Saudi Arabia are on opposing ends of a range of crucial Middle East issues, including the war in Syria - where Tehran backs President Bashar Al-Assad's regime and Riyadh supports rebel forces - and Yemen where a Saudi-led coalition is battling Shiite insurgents. Despite the fears, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United Nations, Abdullah Al-Mouallimi, insisted the row would not have an impact on efforts to resolve regional conflicts. "From our side, it should have no effect because we will continue to work very hard to support the peace efforts in Syria and Yemen," Mouallimi told reporters.

TALK OF THE TOWN

Continued from Page 1

So what's the big idea of saying that the government will save around KD 1 billion. What about the hundreds of billions of dollars in budget surpluses Kuwait has seen in these last two decades? And what about the revenue and profits from Kuwait's 'investment income', which is not included in the budget (which is only based on oil revenues)?

So lifting subsidies isn't really necessary in my opinion because Kuwait has plenty of money - thank God - and is not really truly facing a budget deficit as we hear every day from the government and what is published every day in the media. This talk, which has reached every gathering and every diwaniya and every chai daha (mid-morning tea), is about budget concerns. It's on our mind,

day and night, and it has become the talk of the town and has a bad effect on the market. And we can see it. No one nowadays is selling or buying. The market is stagnant and everyone is scared and lacking confidence. This despite massive untouched financial reserves and a planned new government spending spree on mega projects.

So can for God's sake one government spokesman come out and tell us directly what's going on? What is the decision and why? Show us all the budgets and we don't mind any decision if Kuwait is really suffering - we are all there for Kuwait. I'm sure all of us would contribute.

But enough with the rumors and the threats and the fear mongering.



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• Kuwait 1 (The New str.) • Kuwait 2 (Panasonic Tower) • Hawalli 1 (Tunis str.) • Hawalli 2 (Bin Khalidn str.) • Shuwaikh (4th Ring road) • Al-Rai (4th Ring road) • Salmiya (Salem Al-Mubarak str.) • Farwaniya (Behind police Station) • Fahaheel (Opp. General Parking) • Jahra (Opp. Main Co-op.) • Alport (Departure Hall)

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Focus

SAUDI-IRAN ROW
COULD SHATTER
SYRIA EFFORTS

By Cecile Feuillatre and Rouba El Hussein

The deepening crisis between Saudi Arabia and Iran could threaten fragile efforts to negotiate an end to the Syrian war, which has claimed more than a quarter of a million lives, analysts say. "The conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia will definitely have a negative impact" on the peace process, said Samir Nashar, a member of the Syrian opposition-in-exile. "The negotiations were already difficult, if not impossible, and this conflict is only going to lead to positions becoming more entrenched," he told AFP.

On opposite sides of the Sunni-Shiite faultline in Islam, Iran and Saudi Arabia are also key players in the Syrian conflict, respectively backing or opposing the regime in Damascus. Tensions surged on Saturday when Saudi Arabia executed a leading Shiite cleric and activist, Nimr Al-Nimr, prompting furious crowds in Iran to set fire to the Saudi embassy in Tehran and its consulate in Mashhad.

In response, Saudi Arabia severed ties with Iran on Sunday, giving Iranian diplomats 48 hours to leave the country. This was followed on Monday by Bahrain and Sudan cutting ties with Tehran, while the United Arab Emirates downgraded its links with Iran, recalling its envoy. The bust-up is the result of years of seething hostility between the Persian and Arab rivals, who have fought for leadership of the region through proxy wars in Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen, where Riyadh is directly involved militarily in the fight against Shiite Houthis rebels.

Both countries are also deeply involved in the war in Syria, where Iran supports President Bashar al-Assad and has supplied "military advisers" to his regime. The Saudis have called for Assad to go and are giving financial and military support to rebel organizations that include fundamentalist groups. In Syria, the Saudi-Iranian rivalry "has been one of the driving factors from the start," said Yezid Sayigh of the Carnegie Middle East Center. As 2015 came to a close, tentative efforts to broker peace in Syria appeared to have had a glimmer of success. But this latest crisis threatens to derail the process, commentators said.

'Low Expectations'

Noah Bonsey, senior analyst at the International Crisis Group, said the deterioration in relations "will further diminish already low expectations" for talks expected to take place in late January. "Ultimately, reaching a political resolution in Syria would require key states backing each side to make reciprocal concessions, and pressure their Syrian allies to do the same. For now, things are moving in the opposite direction," said Bonsey. At talks in Vienna in October and November, all the players in the conflict gathered around the same table for the first time.

Western diplomats noted the barely-concealed animosity between the Saudis and the Iranians at those discussions. But, one diplomat said brightly, "at least they are talking to each other". That, however, was before diplomatic ties were severed. The Vienna parlay broke ground by drawing up an international roadmap, which was unanimously adopted by the UN Security Council on Dec 19.

It foresees talks between the different sides in January, the establishment of a transitional government within six months and elections within 18 months in a plan supported by Iran and Russia, which also backs Assad. "We made progress by getting all the protagonists back to the negotiating table, and the UN resolution showed the commitment of the international community. It is essential we keep up the negotiations, but the process has just been weakened," said a source deeply involved in the negotiations, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Karim Bitar, a researcher at the IRIS think-tank in Paris, pointed out that the conflict between Riyadh and Tehran only adds to tensions that had already mounted with the death of influential Syrian rebel chief Zahran Alloush, killed in a regime air strike in late December. "This escalation is going to make any chance of progress on Syria more complicated," Bitar said. Realizing that the peace process now hangs in the balance, the United States, France, Germany and Italy have all called for calm. — AFP

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WITH EXECUTION, REGIONAL TENSIONS IGNITED

By Jon Gambrell

By executing a senior Shiite cleric, Saudi Arabia effectively lit a match to set off regional sectarian tensions and its rivalry with Iran, threatening to derail already-shaky peace efforts over the wars in Syria and Yemen. It also is part of a more aggressive stance by the kingdom in the past year, which included launching an air campaign against Shiite rebels in Yemen and increased aid to rebels in Syria. The policy in part reflects a greater willingness for risk-taking to counter Iranian influence in the Arab world, especially with Riyadh worried about a potential easing of relations between Tehran and Washington in the wake of last year's nuclear deal.

But it also has a powerful domestic factor: A show of toughness by King Salman and his son, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, aiming to bolster their rule at a time when Saudi Arabia is facing an economic crisis brought on by low oil prices. To the greater world, however, the execution of Nimr Al-Nimr took on a different appearance. "It looks like an extremely irrational and ill-considered decision to do this," said Christopher Davidson, a professor of Middle East politics at Durham University in Britain. "In my view, it speaks more about the local dynamics in Saudi Arabia itself."

The execution sparked outrage among Shiites around the world, with protests in Iraq, Bahrain and Pakistan, and even in Saudi Arabia's tightly controlled Shiite heartland in the east. Iran's government - which presents itself as a defender of Shiites in the region - loudly condemned the killing. Attackers stormed, ransacked and burned the Saudi Embassy in Tehran, prompting Riyadh to cut off ties in response.

Nimr's death was a dramatic step because Saudi Arabia has rarely resorted to the death penalty in dealing with unrest among its Shiite minority, which has long com-

plained of discrimination in the Sunni-led kingdom. A vocal opponent of the Saudi royal family, Nimr was seen by Shiites in the region as a political dissident, although he always contended he did not foment violence.

Shiites had warned against his execution ever since a Saudi court convicted him of sedition and other charges and sentenced him to death in 2014. He was executed among a group of 47 people convicted on terrorism charges - almost all connected to Sunni radicals and Al-Qaeda - painting him with the same brush as a threat to security.

For the royal family, the execution signals a tough hand against any trouble from Saudi Arabia's Shiites and bolsters the kingdom's posturing as the champion for Sunni Muslims in the region against Iranian influence. Saudi Arabia's allies rallied it to its side Monday, with a number of nations following its lead in either cutting or reducing diplomatic ties with Iran. The Arab League called an emergency meeting of foreign ministers for Jan 10 to discuss the attack on the Saudi Embassy and other Iranian "interference in Arab affairs."

Ultraconservatives

The execution also placates the kingdom's Sunni ultraconservatives, a key source of support for the ruling family. Shiites remain a favorite target of slurs by Saudi clerics, who follow the ultraconservative Sunni doctrine known as Wahhabism.

While the kingdom's Shiite community - an estimated 10-15 percent of the population of nearly 29 million - has seen only relatively low-level restiveness over the years, clerics often depict Shiites as a threat, a potential lever for Iranian influence.

Ultraconservative support is particularly important at a time when Saudi Arabia is facing the rise of an insurgency by Sunni extremists linked to the Islamic State group.

Young Saudi Sunnis have been involved in a string of suicide bombings in the kingdom. Since Syria's civil war escalated in the past four years, Saudi clerics urged young men to fight alongside Sunni rebels there against the Iranian-backed Syrian government.

Analysts believe Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed, the king's 30-year-old son, has been the driving force behind the kingdom's more assertive stance and its willingness to take extreme political risks in the region, particularly the push into the war in Yemen.

Tellingly, it was Prince Mohammed, the Saudi defense minister, whom US Secretary of State John Kerry, the German defense minister and a Sudanese official contacted for consultations Monday as the crisis spread.

The intensified Saudi-Iranian tensions could doom the multilateral talks launched by the US and Russia in Vienna last month aimed at pushing a plan to end Syria's civil war. Riyadh and Tehran were both participating in those talks, and it was already going to be extremely difficult to get them both fully behind a peace plan: Iran is the main backer of Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad, and Saudi Arabia has backed the rebels, determined to oust Assad and deprive Iran of a key ally.

Efforts for peace in Yemen already appeared to be crumbling. A truce there - largely ignored by combatants - ended this weekend. That civil war has killed more than 5,880 people since March and keeps Saudi Arabia and its allies mired in a conflict that has no clear sign of ending soon. All the while, Saudi Arabia faces budgetary pressure as global oil prices have sunk under \$40 a barrel and likely will remain low well into this year.

The kingdom already has made some cuts, but more could be around the corner, forcing it to make unpopular decisions for a society used to government subsidies. But there's one place it's not cutting back: It allocated \$57 billion in defense spending for 2016. — AP

NEW CRISIS THREATENS WIDER ESCALATION

By Angus McDowall

The last time Saudi Arabia broke off ties with Iran, after its embassy in Tehran was stormed by protesters in 1988, it took a swing in the regional power balance in the form of Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait to heal the rift. It is hard to see how any lesser development could resolve the region's most bitter rivalry, which has underpinned wars and political tussles across the Middle East as Riyadh and Tehran backed opposing sides. Riyadh's expulsion of Iran's envoy after another storming of its Tehran embassy, this time in response to the Saudi execution of Shiite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr, raised the heat again, making the region's underlying conflict even harder to resolve.

At the heart of the new crisis is Saudi Arabia's growing willingness to confront Iran and its allies militarily since King Salman took power a year ago, say diplomats, choosing with his son, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, to abandon years of back-room politics. Last year, Riyadh began a war in Yemen to stop an Iran-allied militia seizing power in its southern neighbour and boosted support to Syrian rebels against Tehran's ally President Bashar Al-Assad. Its execution of Nimr, while mainly driven by domestic politics, was also part of that open confrontation with Iran, according to political analysts.

The interventions followed years of Riyadh complaining about what it regarded as unchecked Iranian aggression in the region. It has pointed to Iran's support for Shiite militias and accused the country of smuggling arms to groups in Gulf countries - which Iran denies. "We will not allow Iran to destabilize our region. We will not allow Iran to do harm to our citizens or those of our allies and so we will react," Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir told Reuters on Monday, signalling Riyadh would not back down.

The Saudi decisions in Syria and Yemen were also partly a response to Iran's nuclear deal with world powers, which lifted sanctions on Tehran, theoretically giving it more money and political room to pursue its regional activities. The new crisis has had the effect of hardening a wider confrontation between the loose-knit coalitions of allies each can call upon in the region; some of Riyadh's allies also cut diplomatic ties with Tehran after the embassy attack, while Iran's warned of repercussions. That chain reaction may now complicate complex political talks over the formation of a government in Lebanon, efforts to bring Syria's warring parties to talks, stalled negotiations to end Yemen's civil war and Riyadh's rapprochement with Baghdad.

Simmering Mist

Until the 1960s and 70s, Saudi Arabia and Iran were uneasy allies regarded as the "twin pillars" of Washington's strategy to curb Soviet influence in the Gulf. Sectarianism was muted. But rich on its new oil wealth, Saudi Arabia began to propagate its rigid Salafi interpretation of Sunni Islam which regards Shiism as heretical, in mosques around the region. And, after its 1979 revolution, Iran adopted - and exported - the doctrine of Velayat-e Faqih, which says ultimate temporal power among Shiites should reside with its

own supreme leader. That growing ideological divide set up a simmering mistrust that was soon matched by a geopolitical rivalry that has driven their fractious relations for the subsequent 37 years. After Iran's 1980-88 war with Iraq, when Saddam invaded, it developed a strategy of "forward defence", seeking to use ties with Arab Shiites to build militias and political parties that could stop new enemies emerging and give it deterrent capability through proxy forces.

Riyadh regarded Tehran's cultivation of Shiite groups with intense suspicion, fearing it would foment revolution in Saudi-allied states and destabilize the region. It broke ties in 1988 when a diplomat died in the storming of its Tehran embassy following tensions over the death of hundreds of Iranian pilgrims in clashes with Saudi police during the haj. But when Saddam invaded Kuwait, Tehran and Riyadh set aside their hostility to make common cause against a shared enemy.

The toppling of Saddam in 2003 upturned the regional power balance, however, as Iran used its ties to the country's large Shiite community to gain sway in Baghdad, pitting Riyadh and Tehran more openly against each other - a pattern repeated in Yemen and Syria after the "Arab Spring" uprisings. Meanwhile, Iraq's civil war had poured fuel on growing sectarian tensions as Al-Qaeda, which follows an extreme form of Salafism, sent suicide bombers

against Shiite civilians, prompting murderous retaliation from Iran-linked militias.

Further Escalation

Now there is some scope for further escalation, both in the various Middle East theatres where Iran and Saudi Arabia back opposing forces, and diplomatically as Riyadh taps Arab and Muslim channels to try to isolate Tehran, according to analysts. "Since 1979 the two countries have fought numerous proxy conflicts throughout the Middle East and often exchange threats and insults. But they've stopped short of direct conflict and eventually agreed to a cold reconciliation," said Karim Sadjadpour, senior associate of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Middle East program.

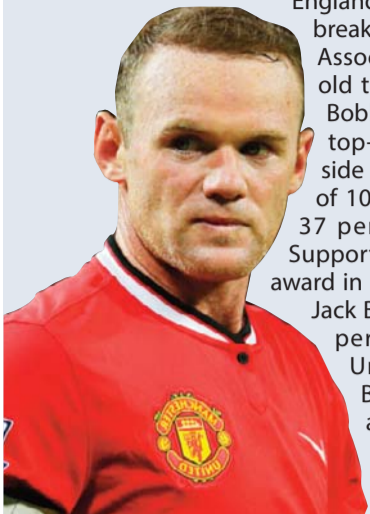
But he said that Iran might seek to stoke unrest among Saudi Arabia and Bahrain's Shiite communities. Renewed protests among Saudi and Bahraini Shiites since the execution of Nimr, along with the bombing of two Sunni mosques in Iraq, may be regarded by Riyadh as evidence of Iranian incitement. Riyadh has itself pushed allies to cut ties with Iran and pressed Muslim bodies like the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to condemn the storming of the embassy. Theoretically, it could also ramp up support for Syrian rebel groups. — Reuters



An image grab taken from Saudi Arabia's official Al-Ikhbariya TV channel on Monday shows what the news channel said were members of the Saudi diplomatic mission in Tehran being greeted by Saudi officials upon their arrival at Dubai airport, a few hours after Saudi Arabia decided to sever its diplomatic relations with Iran. — AFP

ROONEY NAMED ENGLAND PLAYER OF THE YEAR

LONDON: Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney has been voted England's Player of the Year for the fourth time after breaking his country's scoring record, the Football Association announced yesterday. The 30-year-old took his England tally to 51 goals, breaking Bobby Charlton's longstanding record of 49, and top-scored with seven goals as Roy Hodgson's side qualified for Euro 2016 with a perfect record of 10 wins. Rooney, England's captain, received 37 percent of the votes in a poll of England Supporters Club members. He previously won the award in 2008, 2009 and 2014. Stoke City goalkeeper Jack Butland, who has produced some impressive performances this season, was elected the Under-21s Player of the Year. Rooney and Butland, 22, will be presented with their awards prior to England's friendly against Germany in Berlin on March 26. — AFP



AUBAMEYANG FUELS TRANSFER TALK

BERLIN: Bundesliga leading scorer Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has fuelled speculation he is set to leave Borussia Dortmund after missing the club's return to training following the winter break yesterday. A club spokesman said the Gabon international was absent "for personal reasons" although reports have linked the 26-year-old with Premier League clubs Arsenal, Liverpool and Manchester United. "We all hope he'll (Aubameyang) stay," said teammate Matthias Ginter after the first training session in January for a Dortmund side who are second in the Bundesliga, eight points behind leaders Bayern Munich. "He's very important, on the pitch and off, for what he contributes to the group atmosphere." Aubameyang has had his best start to a season since arriving from Saint-Etienne in 2013, scoring 18 goals in 17 Bundesliga games and 27 in all competitions. Ginter expressed the same hope regarding midfielder Ilkay G. ndogan, reportedly a target for Serie A giants Juventus. "We would be delighted if they stayed as long as possible with us. I hope they will extend their contracts." — AFP

ASPRILLA JOINS UAE CHAMPIONS AL AIN

SOFIA: Colombian forward Danilo Asprilla has signed a deal to join United Arab Emirates champions Al Ain, ending his successful stint at Bulgarian club Litex Lovech. "I know that my new club's goals are very high and I'm aware of what is required of me," Asprilla, who will turn 27 next week, told a news conference. "I've achieved a lot with Litex and it's time to try something new," he said, adding that he turned down offers from several European clubs to join Al Ain, the first Emirati club to win the Asian Champions League in 2003. The skilful Colombian, who signed a two-and-a-half-year contract with Al Ain, scored 25 goals in 74 appearances for Litex. He is the Bulgarian league's top scorer with 11 goals after the first half of this season. Al Ain, coached by Croatian Zlatko Dalic who led them to their 12th Arabian Gulf League title last season, top the domestic championship with 34 points from 13 matches. — Reuters



Manny Pacquiao

PACQUIAO 'TO RETIRE' AFTER BRADLEY FIGHT

GENERAL SANTOS: Filipino boxing champion Manny Pacquiao said he would end his legendary career after fighting Timothy Bradley in April to concentrate on his political career, dousing hopes for a rematch with Floyd Mayweather.

The winner of an unprecedented eight world titles, who has flirted with the idea of running for president, said he was confident of winning a senate seat in the May elections.

Pacquiao is facing American welterweight Bradley for the third time on April 9, after losing to his biggest rival Mayweather in the sport's richest fight in May last year.

"I am retiring from boxing to concentrate on my political career. My fight with Timothy Bradley will be my last," Pacquiao said in an interview in his mansion late Monday.

The 37-year-old member of parliament dismissed reports that he would not step away from the sport without a rematch with American Mayweather, who himself retired after beating Pacquiao.

"I did not say anything like that. Nobody interviewed me about that. I will retire after my April 9 fight," he said. Pacquiao lost by unanimous decision to his brash arch-rival Mayweather, whom he fought with a torn rotator cuff that later required surgery. He has won 57 fights, including 38 knockouts, lost six and had two draws in a professional career spanning more than 20 years after being raised in poverty.

Pacquiao is ranked seventh in the race for 12 seats in the nationally-elected senate. He currently represents the southern province of Sarangani in parliament.

The senate is a traditional springboard for future presidential campaigns. Three of the last Philippines presidents, including the incumbent Benigno Aquino, were senators before they were elected to the country's highest office. "My survey rankings have been consistent and I expect it to improve once the campaign starts," he said.

The former fish vendor is adored by the Filipino masses who are inspired by his rags-to-riches life story.

Aside from politics, Pacquiao has parlayed his ring legend status to a career in movies, television and product endorsements. He is also a pastor in a born-again Christian group and credits his renewed faith for transforming him to a devoted family man from a hard-partying womaniser. In a recent television interview, Pacquiao said he "prayed to God for guidance" before deciding to concentrate on politics. Pacquiao, however, has been criticised for putting his boxing training before his duties in parliament. Last year, he attended just four of the 70 legislative sessions. In one of the rare times he took the floor in parliament in 2011, he argued against a bill that would provide free condoms for the poor, citing his Christian beliefs. The bill was eventually signed into law. — AFP

HUGHES EXTENDS WASPS CONTRACT

LONDON: Future England back-row forward Nathan Hughes confirmed yesterday he has extended his contract with Premiership side Wasps. Fiji-born Hughes will qualify for England at the end of June, and recently confirmed he will make himself available for Test selection for head coach Eddie Jones's set-up.

"I'm really excited to have signed a new contract with Wasps as I can see the direction the club is going in," said Hughes. The 24-year-old sat out the 2015 Rugby World Cup in a bid to complete the three-year residency qualification period to be eligible to represent England.

Wasps have moved quickly to tie down the in-demand Hughes to a new deal, fresh from securing an extended contract for club captain and England flanker James Haskell.

"I really appreciate Dai (Young) giving me the opportunity to come here and over the past two years it has been a great club to be part of," he said.

"We have secured our own home and have seen some really exciting players joining Wasps and I really want to be part of the club moving forwards."

"We know success won't happen overnight and there is a lot of work to do, but long-term we really want to be a squad winning silverware - that has to be the ambition."

"In my first year we finished 7th and reached the European play-off against Stade Francais, last season we finished 6th

and reached the quarter final, so we really want to continue that progress."

"We know we need to improve our league form and get consistency in our game, so that will be our focus during the second part of the season."

Rugby director Young admitted Wasps had to move quickly to complete new terms for Hughes, with Premiership rivals hovering. Young tipped the hard-running backrower to fight hard for an England berth once he qualifies for Test action.

"We are thrilled Nathan has committed his future to Wasps: it was a no-brainer offering him a new contract and I'm sure a number of other clubs would have been tracking his progress closely," said Young. "Nathan has made a huge impact since joining Wasps and the great thing is there is so much more to come from him."

"He is only 24 and is still raw in some aspects of the game, having only made the switch from hockey to rugby at 17. "Given his growing performances this season, it's no surprise many are talking about him as an international prospect for England when he qualifies over the summer."

Hughes' new deal was tempered slightly by Samoa prop James Johnston's immediate departure, to "pursue alternative options".

Injury on Samoa duty in the build-up to Rugby World Cup 2015 limited Johnston's Wasps openings, leaving boss Young to accept the 29-year-old's departure as the best course of action. — AFP

NASSER AL ATTIYAH TO ATTEND EVENTS OF LIWA INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL 2016

KUWAIT: Nasser Al Attiyah FIA vice president & QMMF president will arrive at Abu Dhabi tomorrow, upon an official invitation from Sheikh Marwan Bin Rashid Al Mualla Motorplex chairman to attend the conclusion events of Liwa International Festival 2016.

About the nature of this visit, Al Attiyah confirmed that Sheikh Marwan Bin Rashid Al Mualla is considered one of the main supporting characters for motorsport within Gulf, this is quite clear when we see the number of events hosted and organized in Motorplex Club, confirming in the same time that UAE is considered as one of the pioneers in motorsport and auto bikes.

Al Attiyah also mentioned the positive interaction led by Sheikh Marwan Bin Rashid Al Mualla which contributed positively in finding a special prestigious position for the Emirati motorsport among regional and international occasions, throughout taking care of many Emirati champions in all different kinds of motorsport.

Nasser Al Attiyah as FIA vice president & FIM deputy president assured his full support for the efforts of Sheikh Marwan Bin Rashid Al Mualla in order to achieve more achievements for UAE and Arab in general, by hosting more international motorsport events. At the end of his statement, Al Attiyah thanked the organizers of Liwa International Festival which has become one of the most important touristic stations in UAE and Gulf in general.

NEW ADDITION

Marwan Al Mualla: The presence of Nasser Al Attiyah is a new addition to the festival.

From his side, Sheikh Marwan Bin Rashid Al Mualla - Motorplex chairman welcomed the expected visit of Nasser Al Attiyah, he said that,



Sheikh Marwan Bin Rashid Al Mualla - Motorplex chairman.



Nasser Khalifa Al Attiyah.

the presence of Nasser Al Attiyah in this event will give a new addition to it as an international festival organized annually in UAE and considered a focus point of all official parties within UAE. Al Mualla stated that this visit is considered a new step to reinforce the communication and cooperation among the Middle East and North Africa clubs and federations, which would absolutely create new positive concepts for the future of motorsport.

Al Mualla said that "Due to God, Al Attiyah's efforts and MENA officials, Arab states has now become more prominent on the motorsport world map larger than before. Moreover, we - as Arabs became more affective in the process of decision making in FIA and FIM, we could not

touch such realization before Al Attiyah took over his current positions. It's a self clear reality, which should be realized and appreciated by all." We have enough experience (either technical or administrative) to be pioneers, we have to sustain these concepts throughout the well communication based on positive cooperation among us for better motorsport's future, we have also to exploit well these chances represented in the presence of Nasser Al Attiyah in these important positions - which he is currently occupying. At the end, I would like to emphasize once more that we as Motorplex will continue working side by side upon our agreed strategy, hoping to achieve more progress in motorsport in UAE, Gulf, Middle East and North Africa.



SANTA CATERINA VALFURVA: Norway's Nina Loeseth, the winner, center celebrates on podium with runnerup Sarka Strachova, left, and third placed Veronika Velez Zuzulova, after an alpine ski, women's World Cup slalom, in Santa Caterina, Italy, yesterday. — AP

NORWAY'S LOESETH CLAIMS MAIDEN WORLD CUP WIN

SANTA CATERINA VALFURVA: Nina Loeseth ended a 16-year World Cup victory drought for the Norwegian women's slalom team yesterday, posting the fastest time in both runs on the Deborah Compagnoni course.

Loeseth finished in 1 minute, 57.65 seconds to secure her first victory in dominating fashion, beating second-place Sarka Strachova of the Czech Republic by a big margin of 1.12. Veronika Velez Zuzulova of Slovakia, who was 13th after the opening run, was third, 1.37 behind.

"That was about time," Loeseth said. "We have to drive for 6.5 hours today so maybe I open a bottle of champagne in the car." Norwegian women had been unsuccessfully chasing a slalom win since Trine Bakke triumphed in Maribor, Slovenia, on Jan. 6, 2000.

"It's just amazing," said Loeseth, whose sisters Mona and Lene also competed on the World Cup for several seasons. "I did not think that I would win. But it's a good feeling." Loeseth had three career podium finishes before, most recently in last month's giant slalom in

Courchevel, France. She positioned herself for her maiden victory by gaining a 0.25-second lead over Charlotte Chable of Switzerland in the opening run.

"It was a stable run, no mistakes," Loeseth said about the first leg. "I am a very safe skier. I have to challenge myself to ski more on the limits."

Chable, who started the race 28th, lost balance and fell just a few gates before the finish of her second run. "I felt I had some mistakes," Loeseth said. "I had a bit of problems but it was OK, actually. I just pulled out everything I had and it was worth it."

Loeseth draw praise from Strachova, the 2007 world slalom champion who has been without a World Cup win for more than six years. "(Loeseth) has done very well lately, in giant slalom as well," Strachova said. "The second run looked so easy but she was brutally fast. She fully deserved to win here."

Frida Hansdotter, who was on the podium in all four previous slaloms this season, finished fifth and retained the lead in the discipline

standings. The Swede has 365 points, followed by Strachova with 271 and Slovakian pair Velez Zuzulova and Petra Vlhova with 220 each. Vlhova didn't score points after sliding off course in her opening run.

Hansdotter also overtook Lindsey Vonn in the overall standings and climbed to second place behind Lara Gut of Switzerland. Vonn and Gut don't compete in slalom. Gut has 658 points, Hansdotter 521 and Vonn 500. Loeseth climbed to fourth with 406.

The result left Mikaela Shiffrin as the only skier with more than one slalom victory this season. The Olympic and world champion from the United States won the first two events but is out recovering from knee injury for an indefinite time. A men's slalom on the same course is scheduled for Wednesday. Both races were moved from Zagreb because of a lack of snow and mild temperatures in the Croatian resort. The women's World Cup travels to Altenmarkt-Zauchensee, Austria, for speed races this weekend. — AP



DOHA: Spain's David Ferrer returns the ball to Illya Marchenko of Ukraine during their tennis match in the Qatar Open tournament yesterday, in Doha. — AFP

WILLIAMS INSISTS SHE WILL MAKE AUSTRALIAN OPEN



PERTH: Serena Williams of the US hits a return against Jamila Wolfe of the Australia Gold team during their women's singles match on day three of the Hopman Cup tennis tournament in Perth yesterday. — AFP

PERTH: The Australian Open preparations of Serena Williams suffered a potentially significant blow when she was forced to retire with a knee injury during the United States' 3-0 Hopman Cup loss to Australia Gold yesterday evening.

The world number one retired due to soreness in her left knee during her singles match against Jarmila Wolfe (nee Gajdosova) when trailing 7-5, 2-1.

Veteran Lleyton Hewitt then secured the tie for Australia Gold with a 7-5, 6-4 win over Jack Sock, and it became a clean sweep for the home side when the mixed doubles was a walkover due to Williams' absence.

The result meant the US bowed out of contention in the tournament. But of more concern to their camp was the fitness of the defending Australian Open champion. Williams had already missed the United States' opening Hopman Cup tie on Monday due to inflammation of her left knee and was keen to gain some valuable match practice against Wolfe.

However, she appeared extremely restricted in her movements, particularly on her left side. The ailment appeared to cast significant doubt over her title defence in Melbourne, where she will aim for a seventh singles title later this month.

Williams admitted she retired because she was being hampered by the knee and could not move around the court as she wanted. However, the 21-times Grand Slam singles champion was confident it was only a minor problem and even refused to rule herself out of Thursday's Hopman Cup tie against the Czech Republic.

"I just have some inflammation that's been going away very slowly," she explained. "It's still there, it's going away, but just needs a little more time. A little rest, a little treatment. I've been training really hard during the off-season and really pushing myself beyond the limits, I just think a day off or two will make a world of difference."

Williams said her 2015 campaign, which saw the 34-year-old on target for a calendar Grand Slam until she was beaten by Italian Roberta Vinci in the US Open final in early September, had taken a heavy physical toll.

She barely played after the US Open, although she returned in the International Premier Tennis League in Manila last month. Williams' coach Patrick Mouratoglou conceded Williams' knees were troubling her in November.

However, Williams said she remained confident of another successful Australian Open campaign. "Speed is my strength so I definitely think

I will be able to get it right for Australia," she said. "I only think positive and I know I'll be okay." Earlier in the day, Alexandr Dolgoplov put Ukraine within reach of their second Hopman Cup final. In Ukraine's first appearance at the event since being runners-up in 1995, world number 36 Dolgoplov gave his country two wins from as many ties with his victory over the Czech Republic's Jiri Vesely.

After the 19th-ranked Elina Svitolina upset world number 11 Karolina Pliskova in straight sets in the women's singles, Dolgoplov clinched the tie when he beat Vesely in similar

fashion 7-5, 7-6 (7/3). In the dead mixed doubles rubber, the Czechs kept their final hopes alive with a 6-3, 6-1 win. Having already beaten the USA on Monday, the result puts Ukraine in pole position to reach Saturday's final.

As the only unbeaten team in their group, Dolgoplov and Svitolina simply need to beat Australia Gold in their last round-robin match Thursday to reach the final. In Ukraine's last appearance at the Hopman Cup, siblings Andrei Medvedev and Natalia Medvedeva were beaten in the final by Germany's Boris Becker and Anke Huber. —AFP

NO SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED COACHING CANDIDATES FOR NFL TEAMS

NEW YORK: Teams looking for a new head coach will find plenty of qualified candidates. Picking the right one is the tough part for the Giants, Eagles, Dolphins, 49ers, Browns and Titans. Chip Kelly, Adam Gase and Mike Shanahan are just a few of the hot names. From proven winners to successful coordinators to Super Bowl champions, here's a list of some of the top candidates.

THE COORDINATORS

Adam Gase: Bears offensive coordinator and former Broncos OC. Has helped Jay Cutler and Peyton Manning have success. Dolphins, Browns and Eagles have interest.

Sean McDermott: Panthers defensive coordinator since 2011. Former Eagles DC. His defense has ranked in top-10 four straight years. Eagles, Giants could be right fit.

Josh McDaniels: Patriots OC since 2012. Former Broncos head coach, going 11-17. Has worked with Tom Brady for all but three seasons. Dolphins, Eagles possibilities.

Teryl Austin: Lions DC past two seasons. Led second-ranked unit in 2014. Browns, Eagles, Dolphins have interest.

Hue Jackson: Bengals OC this season. Went 8-8 as Raiders head coach in 2011. Has coached offense/defense. Andy Dalton had best season under him. Browns, 49ers, Titans possibilities.

Matt Patricia: Patriots DC since 2012. Has been on Bill Belichick's staff since 2004 and previously coached offensive side. Dolphins, Browns possibilities.

Darrell Bevell: Seahawks OC since 2011.

Was hot name past couple of years. Helped Russell Wilson have his best season this year. Teams have to wait to interview him. Titans would be nice fit.

ASSISTANT COACHES

Anthony Lynn: Bills running backs coach and assistant HC. Has been RB coach since 2003 with four teams. Dolphins have interest.

Doug Marrone: Jaguars assistant HC. Was 15-17 as Bills head coach in 2013-14. Browns, Eagles, Dolphins have interest.

FORMER COACHES

Mike Shanahan: Won two Super Bowls with Broncos. Dolphins, 49ers possibilities.

Chip Kelly: Was 20-12 first two seasons before 6-9 cost him job in Philadelphia. Titans, 49ers, Browns possibilities.

Mike Smith: Led Falcons to playoffs four times in seven seasons. Dolphins interviewed him Monday.

Jim Schwartz: Was 29-51 as Lions coach from 2009-13. Was DC in Buffalo in 2014 when Bills had fourth-ranked defense. Browns have interest.

CURRENT COACHES

Sean Payton: Saints HC past 10 seasons. Won one Super Bowl. Has two years remaining on contract. Giants, 49ers, Eagles would have interest if he's available. John Harbaugh: Ravens HC past eight seasons. Won one Super Bowl, six winning years. No reason to think he's leaving unless Eagles make a trade offer Baltimore can't refuse. —AP

CHARGERS, RAIDERS SEEK MOVE TO LA

LOS ANGELES: The San Diego Chargers, St. Louis Rams and Oakland Raiders have submitted applications to relocate their franchises to Los Angeles, the National Football League said late Monday.

The NFL released a statement confirming that they have received formal petitions from each of the three teams indicating they are ready to pay the \$550 million relocation fee for the team that wins approval through a vote of the owners.

"Three teams—the Oakland Raiders, St. Louis Rams, and San Diego Chargers each submitted applications to our office today to relocate their franchises to the Los Angeles area beginning with the 2016 season," the league said in a statement. "Each team submitted the appropriate documentation in support of its application as required by the NFL Policy and Procedures for Proposed Franchise Relocations."

It said the applications would be reviewed by league staff and three league committees meeting in New York on Wednesday and Thursday.

Next week's league meeting in Houston will also take up the applications, the statement added, noting that three quarters of NFL clubs — 24 out of 32 — must approve of a franchise relocation

before it can go forward.

The Chargers said the biggest reason for wanting to move was a lack of a suitable state-of-the-art stadium.

"Today, the San Diego Chargers submitted to the National Football League the team's application to relocate to Los Angeles," the Chargers said in a statement.

"We have tried for more than 14 years, through nine separate proposals and seven different mayors, to create a world-class stadium experience for fans in San Diego. "Despite these efforts, there is still no certain, actionable solution to the stadium problem. We are sad to have reached this point."

The Chargers have pledged to respect the League owners' final decision. The Rams issued a brief statement indicating they had informed the NFL of their relocation proposal, effective for the 2016 NFL League Year.

All three teams have plans to develop a stadium in south Los Angeles. Rams owner Stan Kroenke plans to build a stadium site in Inglewood near the Los Angeles International Airport, and there is a joint stadium plan in the south central suburb of Carson for the Chargers and Raiders. —AFP

SHARAPOVA SUFFERS ARM INJURY, HALEP OUT WITH LEG PROBLEM

BRISBANE: Australian Open contenders Maria Sharapova and Simona Halep withdrew from the Brisbane International yesterday after suffering injuries less than two weeks before the first grand slam of the year.

Romanian top seed Halep was felled by inflammation in her left Achilles, an injury that hampered her 2015 campaign, but was hopeful of being fit in time for next week's event in Sydney.

Russian Sharapova, the defending champion, was nursing an arm injury which meant a premature exit and no matches at her only tournament before the Melbourne slam which begins on Jan 18.

"I hurt my forearm in practice a couple days ago and need to precautionary withdraw with the #AusOpen starting," Sharapova was quoted as saying by Brisbane tournament organisers. Sharapova has long been dogged by injuries and missed last year's US Open with a leg muscle injury and then suffered an arm injury on her return in China in October. The world number four had been due to face compatriot Ekaterina Makarova in first round action later on Tuesday but was replaced by another Russian, lucky loser Margarita Gasparyan.

That match, on Pat Rafter Arena, was one of several to be delayed on Tuesday by rain

on the east coast of Australia, causing further headaches for tournament organisers shorn of two of their biggest draw cards.

The injuries to Halep and 28-year-old Sharapova, five-times a grand slam singles champion, follow fitness concerns over Australian Open defending champion Serena Williams, who pulled out of her first match of the year at the Hopman Cup in Perth on Monday because of a knee complaint.

Halep, the world number two, was scheduled to face twice Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka of Belarus in second round action after receiving a bye and she downplayed concerns about the injury being anything serious. "I did an MRI and it's nothing dangerous, but it's still an inflammation," said Halep who was replaced in the draw by lucky loser Ysaline Bonaventure of Belgium.

"I have just to take a few days' rest." U.S. Open finalist Roberta Vinci escaped any drama and became the first woman through to the last eight on the Brisbane hard courts after the Italian demolished Dominika Cibulkova 6-1 6-1. In the men's draw, seeds David Goffin and Domini Thiem won on Tuesday to make the second round, where 17-times grand slam champion Roger Federer will begin from against German Tobias Kamke today. — Reuters



PERTH: Jamila Wolfe of the Australia Gold team hits a return against Serena Williams of the US during their women's singles match on day three of the Hopman Cup tennis tournament in Perth yesterday. — AFP

MUMBAI BOY'S 1,000 RUNS IN INNINGS SMASH 117-YEAR RECORD

MUMBAI: A Mumbai schoolboy made history yesterday when he became the first batsman in any class of cricket to score 1,000 runs in a single innings, with Indian legend Sachin Tendulkar leading the plaudits.

Fifteen-year-old Pranav Dhanawade smashed his way to 1,009 not out off 323 balls as he obliterated a 117-year-old record for the highest number of runs scored in one innings.

Dhanawade, the son of an auto-rickshaw driver, soared past Arthur Collins' previous record total of 628 in England in 1899, during an inter-school tournament in the western Indian city.

"Congrats #PranavDhanawade on being the first ever to score 1,000 runs in an innings. Well done and work hard. You need to scale new peaks!" Indian batting great Tendulkar posted on Twitter.

Dhanawade's epic knock included 129 fours and 59 sixes and came at a phenomenal strike rate of 312.38. It ended when his KC Gandhi High School team declared on 1,465 at the ground at Thane in northern Mumbai.

Their opponents, Arya Gurukul, had

been bowled out earlier for just 31, according to the Press Trust of India. Dhanawade's innings lasted 395 minutes and occurred during the Bhandari Cup school tournament, which is officially recognised by the Mumbai Cricket Association.

The teenager, who also plays as wicket-keeper, surpassed Collins' score on Monday, finishing the day on 652, before crossing the 1,000 mark after lunch yesterday.

"I have always been a big-hitter. When I started I never thought about breaking the record," Dhanawade told the Hindustan Times after his opening-day knock.

"The focus was never that. I just played my natural game, which is to attack from the word go.

"After reaching 300, my coach Harish Sharma told me to play on. I did not know of the world record, but we had the Indian record in mind," he added, referring to the previous highest national individual total of 546.

'ANOTHER TENDULKAR?'

Dhanawade's monumental achieve-

ment sent Twitter into a frenzy. His name trended in India, with excited but also nervous cricket fans posting regular score updates as he neared the 1,000 mark.

Ayaz Memon, a cricket expert, said it would be a phenomenal feat for a cricketer to score four digits at any level of the game.

"It's just incredible. Scoring 1,000 runs in less than two days at this speed is a great achievement," Memon told AFP.

But translating this accomplishment from club to international level will be a big challenge for the teenager, he said.

The omens are good, however—Tendulkar, Dhanawade's batting hero, first burst onto the scene in 1988 aged 14 when he scored 326 not out in a Mumbai school match.

He went on to become the highest scorer in the history of Test cricket as well as the first player to score 100 international centuries.

"...(The) numbers are just unbelievable. Another @sachin_rt in the making?" tweeted Indian international spin bowler Harbhajan Singh yesterday.

Collins, who himself was born in



MUMBAI: Pranav Dhanawade, a 15-year-old opening batsman, who scored 1009 not out in a tournament recognized by the Mumbai Cricket Association shows a thumbs up gesture as he poses near the score board in Mumbai, India, yesterday. The Mumbai teenager has become the first batsman to score 1000 runs in an officially recognized innings. — AP

India, was aged just 13 when he entered the record books for his score at Clifton

College in Bristol, where a plaque honours his exploits. —AFP

NZ SEAL SERIES WIN OVER S LANKA

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: New Zealand sealed the one-day series against Sri Lanka yesterday with Martin Guptill's century spearheading a 36-run victory in the fifth and final one-dayer at Mount Maunganui.

Matt Henry's five-wicket bag helped ensure the hosts took a 3-1 series win to go with their 2-0 Test domination last month. New Zealand posted 294 for 5 batting first at the popular beachside resort venue with Guptill making 102, before Sri Lanka were all out for 258 with 17 balls remaining.

Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews, with a brave knock of 95, had set the scene for a cliff-hanger finish when he led his side to 223 for 5 before the tail folded in six overs for the addition of only 35 runs. The last three wickets fell for six runs in the space of 10 deliveries. Along with Mathews, Dinesh Chandimal and Milinda Siriwardana played their part in keeping Sri Lanka in with a chance for most of the their innings. Mathews and Chandimal produced a 93-run stand for the fourth wicket before Trent Boult, making his first appearance in the series, dismissed Chandimal for 50.

After Thisara Perera (15) made a brief appearance at the crease Siriwardana and Mathews cracked 62 off 40 to have Sri Lanka at 223 for 5 with nine overs and five wickets to get the remaining 72 runs.

But when Siriwardana fell to Mitchell Santner for 39, New Zealand rammed home their advantage. At the start of

the day Guptill capped a remarkable home season with his 10th ODI century, reaching 102 in 109 deliveries to go with his 79, 93 not out, 30 and 27 earlier in the series.

When Mathews won the toss and put New Zealand into bat he had an immediate result with Tom Latham out in the first over without scoring. But Guptill and Kane Williamson then established New Zealand's dominance with 122 for the second wicket.

Any loose ball was despatched towards the boundary with a Guptill four bringing up their century partnership in 115 balls. But a lapse in timing by Williamson on 61 led to his undoing when he gloved an attempt to sweep a leg-side delivery from Tillakaratne Dilshan and wicketkeeper Dinesh Chandimal snared the catch. Ross Taylor put on 81 for the third wicket with Guptill who was caught by Thisara Perera off Nuwan Kulasekara.

Taylor brought up his half-century with a six to mid-wicket before also falling to Kulasekara. Sri Lanka in reply were on the back foot in the third over when Dilshan, marking his 300th ODI, was removed by Boult for five. Henry bowled Lahiru Thirimanne for two and had Danushka Gunathilaka caught for 15 as Sri Lanka slumped to 33 for 3 after nine overs before Mathews put some respectability into their innings. Henry, who was only required by New Zealand for three of the five matches, finished with five for 50 to give him 13 wickets in the series, while Boult took three for 43. —AFP

SCOREBOARD

MOUNT MAUNGANUI, New Zealand: Completed scoreboard in the fifth and final ODI between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at Mount Maunganui yesterday:

New Zealand		Sri Lanka	
M. Guptill c Perera b Kulasekara	102	L. Thirimanne b Henry	2
T. Latham c Chandimal b Pradeep	0	D. Chandimal c Williamson b Boult	50
K. Williamson c Chandimal b Dilshan	61	A. Mathews c Nicholls b Henry	95
R. Taylor c Siriwardana b Kulasekara	61	T. Perera c Taylor b Milne	15
H. Nicholls c Dilshan b Kulasekara	2	M. Siriwardana c Nicholls b Santner	39
L. Ronchi not out	37	C. Kapugedera c Milne b Henry	10
M. Santner not out	21	N. Kulasekara c Santner b Boult	15
Extras (lb5, w5)	10	D. Chameera c Nicholls b Henry	0
Total (5 wickets; 50 overs)	294	N. Pradeep not out	0
Did not bat: I. Sodhi, A. Milne, M. Henry, T. Boult		Extras (lb1, w11)	12
Fall of wickets: 1-3 (Latham), 2-125 (Williamson), 3-206 (Guptill), 4-215 (Nicholls), 5-262 (Taylor).		Total (10 wickets; 47.1 overs)	258
Bowling: Pradeep 10-1-69-1 (w2), Chameera 9-0-41-0 (w1), Perera 6-0-45-0 (w2), Kulasekara 10-0-53-3 (w2), Dilshan 10-0-49-1, Siriwardana 5-0-32-0.		Fall of wickets: 1-12 (Dilshan), 2-15 (Thirimanne), 3-33 (Gunathilaka), 4-126 (Chandimal), 5-161 (Perera), 6-223 (Siriwardana), 7-237 (Kapugedera), 8-252 (Mathews), 9-253 (Chameera), 10-258 (Kulasekara).	
		Bowling: Boult 8.1-0-43-3 (w2), Henry 10-1-40-5 (w4), Milne 9-0-54-1 (w5), Santner 9-1-54-1, Sodhi 9-0-55-0, Williamson 2-0-11-0.	
		Result: New Zealand win by 36 runs.	



BAY OVAL: New Zealand celebrate winning the series 3-1 after the fifth one day international cricket match between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at the Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui yesterday. — AFP



CAPE TOWN: South African batsman Temba Bavuma plays a shot during day 4 of the second Test match between England and South Africa at the Newlands stadium yesterday in Cape Town, South Africa.—AFP

AMLA, BAVUMA BAT S AFRICA TO SAFETY

CAPE TOWN: Hashim Amla hit a double century and Temba Bavuma made a maiden hundred as South Africa batted their way to safety on the fourth day of the second Test against England at Newlands yesterday.

South Africa made 627 for seven before declaring two runs short of England's first-innings total of 629 for six declared. England opens Alastair Cook and Alex Hales negotiated a tricky six overs, reaching 16 for no wicket at the close. They will go into the last day with an overall lead of 18 runs.

Amla made 201 and Bavuma 102 not out in a South African innings which lasted for 211 overs and more than two days. The innings featured three partnerships of more than 150.

Amla was involved in the first two big stands, 183 for the third wicket with AB de Villiers (88) and 171 for the fourth with Faf du Plessis (86). But there was still some alarm for South Africa when three wickets, including those of Amla and Du Plessis, fell to the third new ball soon after lunch. Bavuma and new cap Chris Morris came together with their side still 180 runs behind with five wickets remaining and England still hoping to secure a good first innings lead.

But the pair played fearless cricket and added 167 runs, a South African seventh wicket partnership record against England.

Bavuma, the first black African batsman to play Test cricket for South Africa, struck the ball cleanly as he raced to 50 off 52 balls with 11 fours.

He was made to work harder for his second fifty, which he reached off 140 deliveries with a thick edge off Steven Finn which went to the boundary for his 16th four.

England's bowlers toiled with minimal reward on a pitch which offered no assistance. Their cause was not helped by a rash of missed chances, with nine catches going down in the innings. Amla benefited from four dropped or missed catches, while De Villiers, Du Plessis, Bavuma and Morris (two) all gave chances.

Stuart Broad and James Anderson struck three times with the third new ball in a rare period of ascendancy for the bowlers. Amla was bowled off bat and pad and Du Plessis followed four balls later, caught in the gully off Anderson. Quinton de Kock made only five before pulling a short ball from Broad to backward square leg.

Amla, who made his fourth Test double century, batted for 707 minutes, faced 477 balls and hit 27 fours. With a draw almost assured, England look set to take a 1-0 lead into the third Test of the four-match series in Johannesburg next week. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

CAPE TOWN: Scores at close of play on the fourth day of the second Test between South Africa and England at Newlands yesterday:

England, first innings, 629-6 dec		South Africa, first innings (overnight 353-3)	
D. Elgar c Compton b Stokes	44	F. du Plessis c Stokes b Anderson	86
S. van Zyl run out (Compton)	4	T. Bavuma not out	102
H. Amla b Broad	201	Q. de Kock c Anderson b Broad	5
A. de Villiers c Anderson b Finn	88	C. Morris c Root b Finn	69
F. du Plessis c Stokes b Anderson	86	K. Rabada not out	2
T. Bavuma not out	102	Extras (b4, lb9, w13)	26
Q. de Kock c Anderson b Broad	5	Total (7 wks dec, 211 overs)	627
C. Morris c Root b Finn	69	Fall of wickets: 1-7 (Van Zyl), 2-85 (Elgar), 3-268 (De Villiers), 4-439 (Amla), 5-439 (Du Plessis), 6-449 (De	
K. Rabada not out	2		
Extras (b4, lb9, w13)	26		
Total (7 wks dec, 211 overs)	627		
Fall of wickets: 1-7 (Van Zyl), 2-85 (Elgar), 3-268 (De Villiers), 4-439 (Amla), 5-439 (Du Plessis), 6-449 (De			

Kock), 7-616 (Morris)
Bowling: Anderson 35-12-77-1, Broad 34-8-94-2 (2w), Ali 52-14-155-0, Finn 39-5-132-2 (2w), Root 20-4-54-0 (3w), Stokes 28-4-100-1 (4w), Hales 3-1-2-0.
Did not bat: D. Piedt, M. Morkel

England, second innings
A. Cook not out 8
A. Hales not out 5
Extras (nb3) 3
Total (0 wks, 6 overs) 16
Bowling: Morkel 3-2-4-0 (1nb), Rabada 3-0-12-0 (2nb)
Match situation: England lead by 18 runs with 10 wickets remaining in the second innings.

GAYLE FINED FOR 'OUT OF LINE' TV CHAT-UP

SYDNEY: Chris Gayle was fined but avoided suspension for making inappropriate comments to a female reporter in a live TV interview during a Big Bash League Twenty20 match in Australia.

After scoring 41 from 15 deliveries for the Melbourne Renegades in a win over the Hobart Hurricanes on Monday night, the former West Indies captain suggested to television reporter Mel McLaughlin that the pair go out for a drink and made remarks about her appearance. He added, "Don't blush, baby" during an awkward pause in the interview.

Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland on Tuesday joined the criticism of Gayle's suggestive comments, saying it bordered on harassment and was inappropriate in the workplace. Renegades chief executive Stuart Coventry reacted by fining Gayle \$10,000 Australian dollars (\$7,300).

"It was done in jest but it's inappropriate," Coventry said. "We had a look at some history and ... we think that this is a one-off scenario." Coventry said Gayle was "quite surprised" when informed of the fine, which will be donated to charity.

Sutherland said Gayle "got it badly wrong last

night." "It's not a nightclub - it's actually a workplace, it's Chris Gayle's workplace and it's Mel McLaughlin's workplace and those comments border on harassment and are inappropriate for cricket and inappropriate for the workplace," he said. "We are working incredibly hard to ensure cricket is a sport for all Australians - men and women, boys and girls - and we just won't tolerate behavior that undermines that."

'SIMPLE JOKE'

Sutherland said that because the Renegades had sanctioned Gayle, the veteran batsman would not face further action from Cricket Australia for this incident.

Coventry and Gayle both apologized to McLaughlin, with the player defending his comments as a "simple joke." "There wasn't anything meant to be disrespectful or offensive to Mel. If she felt that way, I'm really sorry for that," Gayle was quoted as saying by Australian Associated Press. "There wasn't any harm meant in that particular way."

"It was a simple joke - the game was going on. Things get out of proportion but these things happen." —AP



KUWAIT AIRWAYS CLINCH NATIONAL ICE HOCKEY TITLE

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways won the National Ice Hockey title after defeating Sable 10-5 during the final match which was held at the Ice Skating Rink Monday evening.

The match was fast and competitive, as KAC controlled most of the match due to the organized attacks by its players and sound defence. The championship lasted for four weeks.

Deputy Chairman of Winter Games Club Khalid Al-Mutairi lauded the technical level of participating teams: Touristic Enterprises, Gulf Cables, KAC and Sable.

He said the distinguished level made the coach of Kuwait national team add nine new players to the team after their strong showing, and they will participate in the Gulf championship to be held in Qatar at the end of January.

He said the team will leave at the end of this week to hold a training camp in Sweden to get ready for the tournament.



FERRER CRASHES OUT IN FIRST ROUND IN DOHA

DOHA: Defending champion David Ferrer crashed out in the first round of the Qatar Open yesterday, beaten in three sets by Ukraine's Ilya Marchenko, ranked number 94 in the world. Ferrer, the number four seed, struggled throughout, losing his serve in the very first game and eventually going down 7-6, 3-6, 2-6 in an eventful clash lasting over two and a quarter hours.

"Of course I am disappointed because I lost in the first round," said Ferrer, the world number seven. He was playing with a new racquet but said this was not the reason for his loss. "I am happy with the racquet. The problem is not the racquet, it's my serve."

For Marchenko, the result represented the best victory of his career. Before Tuesday's game he had never beaten anyone in the top 10. More remarkably it was the first time that Marchenko had even won a set against a top 10 player.

"It was a fantastic day for me, I am really happy with the performance," said the 28-year-old. "It's a fantastic way to start the season." Despite losing the first set, Marchenko, hitting booming forehands

and backhands from the baseline throughout, had served for the set at 5-4. However, he squandered his chance and Ferrer clawed his way back in typical fashion, eventually taking the tie-break 10-8 in a set lasting one hour and eight minutes.

But he was immediately broken in the second set by Marchenko, who this time held on and then powered through the final set to claim a famous victory. Despite double-faulting three times in the final game, Marchenko eventually closed the game out to claim a second round clash on Wednesday against Russia's Teymuraz Gabashvili.

Ferrer won the Qatar Open last year-one of five World Tour singles titles he took during 2015 — beating Tomas Berdych in straight sets in the final. Earlier on Tuesday, Berdych, who is this year's number three seed, beat another Ukrainian, Sergiy Stakhovsky in straight sets, 7-5, 6-4. The Czech said he was "feeling good" after his victory. Rafael Nadal, the number two seed, plays later against compatriot Pablo Carreno Busta. — AFP (Also See Page 16)

MARTINEZ KEEN TO HOLD ON TO MIRALLAS

LONDON: Everton manager Roberto Martinez says Kevin Mirallas is still a part of his plans and the club are not open to selling the midfielder in January, despite him playing only a bit-part role in the first half of the season. The Belgian has made only two starts in 10 Premier League appearances so far this campaign.

The 28-year-old has been linked with a move away in the transfer window as he seeks more first-team action ahead of the European Championship finals in France, with French side Monaco interested in signing the winger, according to media reports. Speaking at his pre-match news conference ahead of Wednesday's League Cup semi-final first leg against Manchester City, Martinez said he could trim his squad this month, but denied that he would welcome bids for Mirallas. "I expect Kevin to have a major influence in the second half of the season," the Spaniard said.

"Kevin signed a new contract in the summer. He had a really strong pre-season. We allow football to make decisions. We've got really good attacking options and Kevin

was unfortunate. "He started the first game against Watford and from there he had a little injury, he got a three-game suspension, but the way he's been working in the last few weeks earned him a start against Newcastle and he did really well." Martinez said he intended to keep faith with understudy goalkeeper Joel Robles, who has played in the cup games for Everton this season, and that defender Phil Jagielka was likely to return from injury in the FA Cup tie against Dagenham & Redbridge on Saturday. The Spaniard backed his team to pose City problems in the home leg at Goodison Park, but said he would have preferred to play away first. "When you've got a two-legged affair, you want the second leg at home," Martinez said.

"I know Goodison will be rocking and what we're going to see tomorrow will be special. I think the League Cup has been a phenomenal competition for us. We've seen the home and away support helping the team to get through. "I feel that playing at home, Goodison at its very intimidating best, we can face anyone." — Reuters

CRISTANTE JOINS PALERMO ON LOAN

MILAN: Palermo have secured the loan signing of former AC Milan midfielder Bryan Cristante from Benfica, the Serie A club announced yesterday.

The 20-year-old Cristante, who has been used rarely by the Portuguese giants after joining them in September 2014, has signed a six-month deal that could become permanent at the end of the season. Benfica are demanding six million euros (\$6.4m, £4.4m) for the player's definitive transfer. Palermo have slipped to 16th place in Serie A and coach Davide Ballardini said he hopes it won't be the club's last acquisition of the winter transfer market.

"I know Cristante and although I haven't

seen him playing for a while, I know he's an interesting player," said Ballardini, who replaced sacked Giuseppe Iachini two months ago. "I'm hoping we can recruit some other players because we're still a few short of having a full squad."

Palermo host Fiorentina on Wednesday and Ballardini believes the Florence-based side, who along with Napoli sit just one point behind leaders Inter Milan, will be hard to overcome.

"They're a very competitive side and in the next few weeks, when we'll have no Cup fixtures, they could be a lot stronger," he added. "For me, they're serious candidates for the league title." — AFP



DENVER: Colorado Avalanche goalie Semyon Varlamov, left, of Russia, makes a stick save of shot by Los Angeles Kings left wing Milan Lucic in the first period of an NHL hockey game Monday, in Denver. — AP

IGINLA'S 600TH GOAL HELPS AVALANCHE BEAT KINGS 4-1

DENVER: Jarome Iginla became the 19th member of the 600-goal club, scoring a power-play goal in the third period, and the Colorado Avalanche beat Los Angeles 4-1 on Monday night, snapping the Kings' five-game winning streak. Iginla sent a wrist shot toward the net that hit off the skate of defenseman Jake Muzzin and bounced past goalie Jonas Enroth. Iginla was mobbed by teammates near the glass and then he saluted the crowd during an extended standing ovation. Defenseman Tyson Barrie added two goals and two assists, while Matt Duchene also scored for the Avalanche, who improved to 1-1-1 on a five-game homestand. Semyon Varlamov stopped 30 shots. Tyler Toffoli scored the lone goal for the Kings on a pass from Anze Kopitar, who has at least one assist in six straight games.

RED WINGS 1, DEVILS 0

Dylan Larkin scored on a breakaway and Petr Mrazek made 22 saves to lead Detroit past New Jersey. Mrazek, appearing in an eighth straight game, earned his second shutout of the season and seventh of his career. Cory Schneider stopped 20 for the Devils, who saw their three-game winning streak snapped. Larkin scored on a nifty backhand to polish off the breakaway at 9:20 of the first period. Brad Richards hit Larkin with a long lead pass as Larkin slipped behind the Devils' defense and deked Schneider down to the ice. It was the 14th goal for Larkin, tops among rookies.

SENATORS 3, BLUES 2, OT

Bobby Ryan scored twice, including the game-winner at 2:33 of overtime, to lift Ottawa past St. Louis. Mike Hoffman also scored and Andrew Hammond made 36 saves for the Senators, who had lost three straight and been shut out in back-to-back games against the Chicago Blackhawks and New Jersey Devils. Troy

Brouwer and Kevin Shattenkirk scored for St. Louis, and Brian Elliott made 29 saves. The have lost three straight and four of five. Brower put St. Louis on the scoreboard late in the first period, and Shattenkirk made it 2-0 at 7:42 of the second. Hoffman cut Ottawa's deficit in half late in the second period, and Ryan tied it at 5:01 of the third.

OILERS 1, HURRICANES 0

Andrej Sekera scored 2:47 into overtime, Cam Talbot made 29 saves for his first shutout of the season, and Edmonton beat Carolina. On the winning goal, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins got the puck to Sekera, who was able to send a one-handed slash of his own rebound through Ward's legs. The Oilers won their second straight overall and ninth of their last 11 at home. Cam

Ward finished with 26 saves for Carolina, which lost its second straight.

COYOTES 3, CANUCKS 2

Shane Doan scored twice to lead the Coyotes past division-rival Vancouver. Laurent Dauphin also scored for the Coyotes. The 39-year-old Doan increased his team lead to 15 goals - including nine in his last seven games. Louis Domingue, taking over for the injured Mike Smith, made 35 saves in his third straight start for Arizona, which remains second in the Pacific Division with 42 points. The Canucks now trail the Coyotes by three points in the tight Pacific standings. Daniel Sedin and Bo Horvat scored Vancouver. Jacob Markstrom made 26 saves in his fifth straight start in place of Ryan Miller (groin). —AP

NHL Results/Standings

Detroit 1, New Jersey 0; Ottawa 3, St. Louis 2 (OT); Colorado 4, Los Angeles 1; Edmonton 1, Carolina 0 (OT); Arizona 3, Vancouver 2.

Western Conference						Eastern Conference						
Central Division						Atlantic Division						
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	
Dallas	28	9	4	144	107	60	Florida	23	12	4	106	85
St. Louis	23	14	5	103	103	51						
Chicago	23	13	4	111	97	50						
Minnesota	20	11	7	101	90	47						
Nashville	19	13	7	103	102	45						
Colorado	19	18	3	113	111	41						
Winnipeg	18	19	2	104	114	38						
Pacific Division						Metropolitan Division						
Los Angeles	25	12	2	105	87	52	Washington	28	7	3	121	83
Arizona	19	16	4	110	124	42	NY Islanders	22	13	5	113	99
Anaheim	16	15	7	73	90	39	NY Rangers	21	14	4	112	103
Vancouver	15	16	9	97	113	39	New Jersey	20	15	5	93	95
San Jose	18	17	2	101	106	38	Pittsburgh	19	15	4	91	93
Calgary	18	18	2	101	121	38	Carolina	16	17	7	92	111
Edmonton	17	21	3	102	122	37	Philadelphia	15	15	7	79	102
							Columbus	15	22	3	103	127

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

SPORTING REJECT BOATENG RETURNS TO AC MILAN

MILAN: Kevin-Prince Boateng has returned to AC Milan on a six-month deal following an unhappy spell at Schalke 04 and an aborted move to Sporting Lisbon, the Serie A club announced yesterday.

German-born Ghanaian international Boateng played his last match for Milan in August 2013 but has been training

with the club for several months after failing to secure a deal at Sporting, having quit Schalke under a cloud last May.

A statement by the seven-times European champions said: "AC Milan announce that Kevin Prince Boateng has signed a contract with Milan until 30 June, 2016."

Milan coach Sinisa Mihajlovic, mean-

while, said: "Boateng came here to train and has done really well. He has character and can be useful because he's a versatile player. "It's only right he was given a contract until June." Milan did not say whether Boateng's contract would be extended after the summer, but the short-term deal has only added to the intrigue surrounding Boateng's return to

the club for whom he has played a total of 100 matches across all competitions.

After the midfielder quit Schalke at the end of last season, the 28-year-old was set for a move to Sporting Lisbon only to be rejected by the Portuguese giants.

Officially, Boateng failed to secure a deal because of a disagreement over the

players' image rights. However a spokesman for Sporting later claimed Boateng had "failed the club's medical tests because of a problem with his knee".

AC Milan, who host Bologna at the San Siro on Wednesday, sit in sixth place in Serie A, eight points behind leaders Inter Milan. — AFP

ZIDANE TAKES COMMAND AT REAL MADRID IN 'DIFFICULT' CHALLENGE

MADRID: Thousands of Real Madrid fans turned out to cheer Zinedine Zidane as one of the all-time great players started his first day as coach of the Spanish giants, confessing a "difficult" challenge lay ahead.

While commentators expressed doubts about the Frenchman's experience, 5,000 fans packed the Alfredo di Stefano stadium at Real's training ground to see Zidane take his first session with Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale and other superstars.

The 43-year-old Zidane got right down to work within hours of Rafael Benitez being sacked on Monday night as he takes the step up from his only previous coaching job with Castilla, the Real B team. Real president Florentino Perez sacked Benitez after the Spaniard struggled for seven months to win over Madrid's fans and leading players. The club has suffered a year-long slump that has seen them burn through two Champions League-winning coaches-Benitez and Carlo Ancelotti. They are in third place in La Liga, four points behind leaders Atletico Madrid and two points behind eternal rivals Barcelona, who have a game in hand.

'DIFFICULT BUT STIMULATING'

Madrid were recently booted out of the Copa del Rey for fielding an ineligible player, but they are still in the Champions League, facing Roma in the last 16 next month.

And Zidane insisted Tuesday that his aim was to win a trophy. "This is a difficult but stimulating challenge, I want to take up the challenge and do my utmost to win titles," he told reporters in a highly-mediatised press conference at the Santiago Bernabeu. "I'm at the best team in the world," said the Frenchman, who played for the club between 2001 and 2006.

"Our objective is to win, we have two titles that we can win and we will try," he added in reference to the Champions League and La Liga. All eyes will now be on whether Zidane has the temperament and tactical ability to gel Madrid's 'Galacticos' into a trophy-winning unit. Key players such as Karim Benzema and James Rodriguez often showed their disgust when substituted by Benitez.

Off-field distractions also took their toll with Benzema facing blackmail charges over a sextape of France teammate Mathieu Valbuena, and Rodriguez accused of speeding at up to 200kph (124mph) last week. Zidane is not known for his communication skills and had a fiery temperament on the field as a player. His career ended with an infamous headbutt on Marco Materazzi in the 2006 World Cup final between France and Italy. But he is respected by Madrid's players and adored by their fans for his feats on the field, highlighted by his brilliant winner in the 2002 Champions League final against Bayer Leverkusen.

'SHORTEST LINK'

And the man who will become his chief rival, Barcelona boss Luis Enrique, said the change in coaches at Real was to be expected. "I'm not surprised, it's a regular subject in modern football," said the former Roma coach.

"The chain always breaks at the shortest link and this link is the coach." He added: "All coaches at some point in their careers are sacked, it's a risky profession."

Spanish media said that Zidane has his work



VALDEBEBAS: Real Madrid's new French coach Zinedine Zidane (R) listens to his French assistant coach David Bettoni during his first training session as coach of Real Madrid at the Alfredo di Stefano Stadium in Valdebebas, on the outskirts of Madrid, yesterday. — AFP

cut out because of his lack of experience.

"The Frenchman is a football legend and a great figure of Madrid," wrote Marca, Spain's most read sports daily.

"But his coaching experience is inversely proportional to his excellent footballer's experience-limited... and controversial." He has spent a sea-

son and a half in charge of Madrid's feeder team Castilla, which failed to secure promotion from Spanish football's third tier last season.

But he has the advantage of knowing the players well—he was Ancelotti's deputy in 2013 and 2014. And the team appeared relaxed yesterday, with players all smiles. —AFP

FIVE FACTS ABOUT ZINEDINE ZIDANE

MADRID: Five facts about Zinedine Zidane, who was appointed as head coach of Real Madrid to replace the sacked Rafael Benitez:

- Raised in a tough Marseille suburb, Zidane rose to prominence with Bordeaux, winning the Ligue 1 player of the year title in 1996 before big-money moves to Italian giants Juventus (1996) and a world-record 150 billion lire (about \$80 million) transfer to Real Madrid in 2001.

- 'Zizou' assumed global superstar status after the 1998 World Cup, where he bounced back from a red card in a group match against Saudi Arabia to score two headed goals as France beat favourites Brazil 3-0 in the final at the Stade de France.

- In his first season at Madrid, Zidane wrote himself into club folklore with a stunning match-winning volley in the 2002 Champions League final against Bayer Leverkusen in Glasgow. A year later, after helping Real win La Liga, he was named FIFA world player of

the year for an unprecedented third time, a feat only subsequently matched by Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi.

- His career ended in infamy at the 2006 World Cup when, after having scored an audacious chipped penalty off the crossbar after just seven minutes of the final in Berlin, he headbutted Italy's Marco Materazzi in extra time and received a red card. France went on to lose 5-3 on penalties. Zidane claimed that no-nonsense defender Materazzi had insulted his sister and that the Frenchman would "rather die than apologise".

- Real Madrid president Florentino Perez appointed Zidane as an adviser in 2009 and the club's sporting director in 2011. In 2013-14 he was assistant coach to Carlo Ancelotti as the club won the Champions League. Soon after, Perez appointed him coach to the club's B team, Real Madrid Castilla, despite lacking the necessary coaching badges. Zidane has since obtained them. — AFP

FIFA INVESTIGATOR SEEKS NINE-YEAR VALCKE BAN

ZURICH: Sepp Blatter's former right-hand man is facing a nine-year ban from soccer. The chairman of the FIFA ethics committee, Cornel Borbely, recommended the ban for Jerome Valcke yesterday after concluding his investigation. In his final report, Borbely also asked that Valcke be fined 100,000 Swiss francs (\$100,000) and that his 90-day suspension be extended for another 45 days.

Valcke, a Frenchman who served alongside Blatter for nearly a decade, was accused of violating six articles of the FIFA code of ethics, including confidentiality and conflict of interest. The former television journalist and sports marketing executive was originally banned for 90 days in October, a month after being put on leave by FIFA. The ban will expire at the end of day yesterday.

Last year, Valcke was implicated by a FIFA ticketing partner for using work and private email accounts to discuss a World Cup black market ticket deal. Valcke has denied that he sought cash from sales of top-category tickets for matches at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil he knew were being offered at several times face value.

The FIFA code of ethics allows for charges of breach of confidentiality and loyalty, which could be leveled simply for doing official business through private email accounts.

A final decision on banning Valcke will come from ethics committee chairman Hans-Joachim Eckert, the judge who last month banned both Blatter and Michel Platini for eight years each. Valcke, whose main duty at FIFA was overseeing organization of the World Cup, rose to the top administrative job at FIFA soon after being fired in 2006 during a scandal.

As marketing director, he was impli-

cated in misleading World Cup sponsor MasterCard during contract renewal talks. FIFA and Blatter eventually signed with Visa, provoking a legal suit from MasterCard which was settled for \$90 million.

Valcke's conduct and business ethics were severely criticized by a New York judge who heard the case. FIFA fired Valcke and other marketing officials involved in the deal, then re-hired him several months later as secretary general after Blatter was re-elected president.

FIFA has been in crisis since the federal investigations of bribery and corruption implicating senior soccer officials were revealed in May.

Valcke was identified as having processed transfers of \$10 million from FIFA accounts which were alleged by the U.S. Department of Justice to be bribes for CONCACAF officials to support South Africa's successful bid to host the 2010 World Cup.

FIFA and Valcke said the payments were authorized by then-finance committee chairman Julio Grondona, after being requested by South African officials to be paid from their tournament organization funds.

Still, Blatter announced his planned resignation on June 2, the day after FIFA and Valcke's role in the affair was revealed.

Blatter has said FIFA's troubles stem from the December 2010 decision to award Russia and Qatar hosting rights to the 2018 and 2022 World Cups, respectively. Valcke has been blamed for urging FIFA in 2008 to run a dual bidding contest, in order to secure long-term commercial security amid the economic downturn. —AP

PEP GUARDIOLA WANTS TO COACH IN PREMIER LEAGUE AFTER BAYERN

MUNICH: Pep Guardiola wants to coach in the English Premier League when he leaves Bayern Munich at the end of this season, but hasn't yet signed a contract with a club.

"The reason I'm not staying at Bayern is very simple: I want to coach in England in the Premier League. That's the only reason I'm not extending my contract," Guardiola said Tuesday. "I'm young enough. I'm 44-years-old. I want a new challenge."

Having opted not to extend his three-year contract at Bayern, Guardiola expressed his thanks to Bayern and its chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge "because I know the club wanted to keep me, but at this stage in my career I need a new challenge. That's it, nothing more."

Guardiola, who took over Jupp Heynckes' treble-winning side in 2013, led Bayern to the Club World Cup and UEFA Super Cup that same year, a German league and cup double in 2014, and another Bundesliga title in 2015. The side set a host of records in that time.

The former Barcelona player and coach has been heavily linked with a move to Manchester City but he said nothing had been decided yet.

"I have different offers but I haven't decided yet," Guardiola said. "If I had signed a contract with a club then the club would communicate that. I have nothing signed yet so I can't say anything about that."

Guardiola acknowledged that the move was "a risk for me. The club gave me an exceptional squad. It would be possible to stay here and win more" but "I think it's the right time for this new challenge. It's only my second experience as coach. I need new challenges, new experiences. Three years is enough (at Bayern). New players, new stadium, new restaurants, that's what I want. That's the reason, the only reason that I made that choice."

Guardiola paid tribute to his players at Bayern and added, "Thomas Mueller said it perfectly: 'Regardless of the coach, we want to win.' I have no doubt that they will do the best for themselves, for the club, for this period of time (the rest of the season)."

The Champions League, which has so far eluded Guardiola at Bayern, remains his main priority for this season, and he praised the club's decision to appoint former Real Madrid, Paris Saint-Germain and Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti as his replacement.

Guardiola said the Italian was "perfect for the club" and "I wish will lots of luck and want to leave him a brilliant team. He'll be coaching the best team possible. Karl-Heinz Rummenigge did perfectly. Coach leaves, coach arrives. The most important thing is stability." Guardiola said of his time in Munich: "I'll be just a small part of the great history of this club." — AP



MUNICH: Headcoach of German First division football club Bayern Munich Pep Guardiola (C), Bayern Munich's Spanish defender Juan Bernat (L) and Bayern Munich's French forward Kingsley Coman attend a training session in Munich, southern Germany, yesterday. Bayern Munich coach Pep Guardiola has admitted he wants to manage in the English Premier League in his first press conference since announcing he will leave the Bundesliga giants at the end of the season. — AFP

Sports

NZ seal series
win over
S Lanka



Zidane takes
command
at Real



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2016

SHARAPOVA SUFFERS ARM INJURY, HALEP OUT WITH LEG PROBLEM Page 16



OAKLAND: Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry, left, scores past Charlotte Hornets' Kemba Walker (15) during the first half of an NBA basketball game Monday, in Oakland, Calif. — AP

CURRY HELPS GET WARRIORS BACK ON TRACK

OAKLAND: Draymond Green became the second Warriors player to post three straight triple-doubles, and Golden State rolled to its 35th straight regular-season home win by beating Charlotte. Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson scored 30 points apiece, and Marreese Speights had a season-high 15 off the bench to help the Warriors sweep the season series from the Hornets. But the night belonged to Green, who had 13 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists to join Tom Gola in 1959-60 as the only Warriors players to have triple-doubles in three consecutive games. The previous player in the NBA to do it was Oklahoma City's Russell Westbrook, who had a four-game streak last season. Kemba Walker and Jeremy Lamb each scored 22 points for the Hornets. Charlotte has lost a season-high four straight.

SPURS 123, BUCKS 98

Kawhi Leonard scored 10 of his 24 points in the decisive third quarter and San Antonio beat Milwaukee for its fifth straight victory. The Spurs improved to 30-6 and joined defending champion Golden State as the only teams to reach 30 wins already this season. Rookie swingman Jonathon Simmons scored a career-high 18 for the Spurs, who set a season high for points two days after posting 121 against Houston. LaMarcus Aldridge had 16 points and 11 rebounds. Tim Duncan finished with 14 points and 10 boards for the Spurs, one game after going scoreless for the first time in his 19-year career. San Antonio played without starting point guard Tony Parker due to right hip soreness, but still won its 27th game in the last 31.

76ERS 109, TIMBERWOLVES 99

Ish Smith had 21 points and 11 assists, and Richaun Holmes scored 17 to lead Philadelphia over Minnesota. Still the worst team in the NBA at 4-33, the 76ers have won three of six games and have a new confidence since they hired Jerry Colangelo as chairman of basketball operations last month. Colangelo's first big move was acquiring Smith from New Orleans in a Dec. 24 trade that cost them nothing but second-round draft picks. Smith averaged 13.4 points and 7.6 assists since the deal and has made his teammates better. Shabazz Muhammad led the Timberwolves with 20 points.

CAVALIERS 122, RAPTORS 100

Kyrie Irving scored a season-high 25 points, J.R. Smith had 24 on eight 3 pointers and Cleveland defeated Toronto. Irving, playing his sixth game since returning from a bro-

ken left kneecap, was 10 of 16 from the field. The three-time All-Star, injured in Game 1 of last season's NBA Finals, added eight assists and six rebounds. LeBron James, who didn't play in the fourth quarter, had 20 points and seven assists in 31 minutes. All five Cavaliers starters finished in double figures. Tristan Thompson added 14 points with 11 rebounds, and Kevin Love scored 14 as Cleveland improved to 15-1 at home. The Raptors were led by Kyle Lowry's 23 points.

CELTICS 103, NETS 94

Jae Crowder scored a career-high 25 points with a strong start and a clutch finish, and Boston beat Brooklyn to split a home-and-home series. Crowder had 14 points in the first quarter, then was largely quiet until hitting a 3-pointer and adding a three-point play after Brooklyn got close in the final minutes. He surpassed his previous best of 24 points by making a pair of free throws with 16 seconds remaining. Isaiah Thomas added 19 points for the Celtics, who rebounded from consecutive losses at home. Evan Turner, starting for injured Avery Bradley, had 12 points and 11 rebounds. Thaddeus Young had 23 points and a season-high 15 rebounds for the Nets, who have lost seven straight at home. Joe Johnson scored 21 and Brook Lopez, the Eastern Conference player of the week, finished with 19.

PISTONS 115, MAGIC 89

Andre Drummond had 17 points and 12 rebounds, and Detroit rolled to its most lopsided victory of the season. Detroit led 57-47 at halftime, and although Orlando scored the first seven points of the third quarter, a 16-4 run later in the period gave the Pistons a comfortable advantage again. Detroit then poured it on at the start of the fourth. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 21 points for the Pistons, and Brandon Jennings added 17. Reggie Jackson scored 14 points with seven assists. Victor Oladipo, starting in place of injured guard Elfrid Payton, led Orlando with 18 points.

HEAT 103, PACERS 100, OT

Chris Bosh scored 31 points, Dwyane Wade had 27 including a layup that beat the buzzer and forced overtime, and Miami erased an 18-point third-quarter deficit to beat Indiana. Goran Dragic added 13 points for the Heat, who matched a season best with their third straight win. Paul George scored 32 points on 12-for-29 shooting for Indiana, but his 3-pointer from the right corner bounced off the rim on the game's final play. Monta Ellis had 17

points. Before the opening tip, a malfunction kept the lights that illuminate the floor from coming back on after Miami's starting lineup was announced, leading to a delay of nearly half an hour and briefly sending both teams back to their locker rooms.

THUNDER 116, KINGS 104

DeMarcus Cousins had 33 points and a season-high 19 rebounds, and Sacramento took advantage of Kevin Durant's absence to beat Oklahoma City. Durant missed the game with a sprained right big toe. His status is day to day, but coach Billy Donovan said before the game that he didn't consider it serious. Rajon Rondo had 13 points, 19 assists and nine rebounds. Marco Belinelli scored 21 points and Rudy Gay added 16 for the Kings. Russell Westbrook had 17 points, 15 assists and eight rebounds for the Thunder, but he shot 2 of 15 in the second half. Serge Ibaka scored a season-high 25.

ROCKETS 93, JAZZ 91

James Harden scored 30 points and Houston rallied in the second half to beat Utah, ending its longest losing streak of the season at four games. The Jazz led by 15 midway through the third quarter before Harden began to heat up. He scored seven straight points to get the margin down to single digits. Harden's layup with 1:55 remaining gave the Rockets an 89-87 lead they never relinquished. Rodney Hood had a chance to tie it for the Jazz with 6 seconds remaining but missed the third of three free throws to leave Utah down by one. Harden finished with seven assists and five rebounds. Dwight Howard had 16 points and 13 rebounds for Houston. Hood led the Jazz with 23 points and matched a career high with five 3-pointers. Gordon Hayward added 20 points and seven rebounds.

GRIZZLIES 91, TRAIL BLAZERS 78

Zach Randolph had 26 points and 18 rebounds off the bench against his former team, and Memphis spoiled Damian Lillard's return to the Portland lineup. Lillard missed seven games because of plantar fasciitis in his left foot. The Trail Blazers went 4-3 while he was out, with CJ McCollum sliding over to point guard. Lillard looked rusty at the start of his return and the Grizzlies took advantage, leading by as many as 20 early in the fourth quarter. Lillard led the Blazers with 17 points. He shot 4 of 14 from the field but made all seven free throws. Courtney Lee had 16 points for the Grizzlies. — AP

NBA results/standings

Cleveland 122, Toronto 100; Philadelphia 109, Minnesota 99; Boston 103, Brooklyn 94; Detroit 115, Orlando 89; Miami 103, Indiana 100 (OT); San Antonio 123, Milwaukee 98; Sacramento 116, Oklahoma City 104; Houston 93, Utah 91; Memphis 91, Portland 78; Golden State 111, Charlotte 101.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference			
Atlantic Division				Northwest Division			
Toronto	21	15	.583	Oklahoma City	24	11	.686
Boston	19	15	.559	Utah	15	18	.455
NY Knicks	16	19	.457	Portland	15	22	.405
Brooklyn	10	24	.294	Denver	12	23	.343
Philadelphia	4	33	.108	Minnesota	12	23	.343
Central Division				Pacific Division			
Cleveland	23	9	.719	Golden State	32	2	.941
Chicago	20	12	.625	LA Clippers	22	13	.629
Indiana	19	15	.559	Sacramento	14	20	.412
Detroit	19	16	.543	Phoenix	12	25	.324
Milwaukee	14	22	.389	LA Lakers	8	27	.229
Southeast Division				Southwest Division			
Miami	21	13	.618	San Antonio	30	6	.833
Atlanta	21	14	.600	Dallas	19	15	.559
Orlando	19	16	.543	Memphis	19	17	.528
Charlotte	17	17	.500	Houston	17	19	.472
Washington	15	17	.469	New Orleans	11	22	.333



MIAMI: Monta Ellis #11 of the Indiana Pacers passes away from Chris Bosh #1 of the Miami Heat during a game at American Airlines Arena on Monday in Miami, Florida. — AP

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2016

Analyst coverage in Kuwait
is lowest in GCC at 8.1%

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Gulf IPO market remained
muted in 2015

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Sharjah plans
sukuk issue in Q1

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OIL PRICES, GLOBAL MARKET VOLATILITY HIT GCC EQUITIES



KUALA LUMPUR: Visitors watch trading boards at a private stock market gallery in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Most Asian stock markets inched higher yesterday as China's benchmark stabilized a day after plunging nearly 7 percent. — AP

SAUDI-IRAN TUSSE UNLIKELY TO DENT GULF BOND PLANS SOVEREIGNS TO PLACE \$15BN OF BONDS, SAUDI TO ISSUE LION'S SHARE

LONDON: Middle East sovereigns are expected to shrug off the fierce feud that has erupted between Saudi Arabia and Iran and go on to place a record amount of debt in 2016, with a debut dollar deal from Saudi still anticipated to be the star of the show. Gulf Cooperation Council sovereigns are tipped to raise \$15bn from the bond market this year - more than all GCC sovereign dollar debt issuance from 2013 to the end of 2015.

"That's the area where there is going to be a lot of activity," said a syndicate banker, one of several officials at international banks who began sounding out Saudi Arabia last year for a potential dollar transaction.

Not only Saudi Arabia but Oman, Qatar,

Dubai, Bahrain and Kuwait are all touted as issuers for 2016 by bankers. But the year has got off to a shaky start in the Gulf, with Riyadh cutting diplomatic ties with Tehran on Sunday, after its embassy was stormed in Iran in response to Saudi's execution of Shi'ite Muslim cleric, Sheikh Nimr Al-Nimr.

Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates both curtailed Iranian diplomatic presence in their countries on Monday, with Manama ordering Tehran's diplomats out of Bahrain within 48 hours. Meanwhile, aggression between Israel and Lebanon is rising along the border, with attacks made by both sides, Reuters reported. While the ramped up political risk temporarily pushed oil prices higher to \$38.5 a barrel on

Monday morning, bankers say the escalating conflict will have little impact on sovereign bond issuance from the region.

"The Saudi/Iran situation has been bubbling for a long time," said an emerging markets DCM banker. "I don't think it will have much of an effect, if any." The syndicate banker said: "The back and forth between the countries is going to continue happening, but investors have been in the region for a while and know that it will settle."

COST CUTTING KINGDOM

Saudi, which could be the Gulf's biggest bond issuer this year if the rumored debut deal materializes, announced at the end of

last year a series of tightening measures in its 2016 budget to mitigate the effects of cheap oil. Saudi Arabia ran a record budget deficit of \$r367bn (\$97.9bn) in 2015 because of low oil prices, the country's Council of Economic and Development Affairs said last week. The belt-tightening in Saudi's budget signals the sovereign's intention to play a long-term game to keep oil prices low, forcing Iran to cut its own budget and help Riyadh maintain its regional dominance, according to Tim Ash, CEEMEA strategist at Nomura.

He said: "It's like the arms race between Reagan's US and the Soviet Union in the 1980s, but playing out via oil and budgets between Saudi Arabia and Iran today." Saudi

could raise global oil market prices tomorrow if they signalled the intent to moderate production - the reality is they want to keep oil prices low to hold back investment into the Iranian oil sector."

The budget changes include reduced energy subsidies and an increase in defense and security spending, in part because Saudi Arabia is also engaged in a conflict with Yemeni army units allied to the Iran-allied Houthi militia.

"One of the main reasons they will need financing is because they have been funding the war in Yemen," said the DCM banker, who added that he is hoping to pitch for the Saudi deal. — Reuters

GULF MARKETS WEAK, SAUDI'S SAVOLA FALLS

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Most Gulf stock markets remained weak yesterday because of concern about volatile oil prices and the outlook for the global economy, while Egypt rallied on the back of buying by foreign investors. The Saudi index climbed in the opening minutes but soon turned lower and closed down 0.7 percent. Major food producer Savola plunged 9.7 percent after Saudi Arabia said it would cut off all commercial relations with Iran in its dispute with Tehran over Riyadh's execution of a Shi'ite cleric.

Savola is one of the few Saudi companies with a presence in Iran; through an affiliate it has edible oil and confectionery factories in Tehran, which provided 11 percent of its total revenue in the third quarter of 2015. It has not yet released a statement on the impact of geopolitical tensions on its business, and some analysts said there would not necessarily be a big effect. "Savola's Iran business is a separate company with strong local partners, so the impact on the company may be minimal," said a Riyadh-based equity analyst.

Rising debt insurance costs showed foreign investors continuing to hedge against geopolitical risk in the Gulf; five-year Saudi credit default swaps, used to hedge against a sovereign debt default, climbed a further 7 points yesterday to 173 points, the highest level since at least 2010. But instability in the global economy is still a

bigger worry than geopolitics for the Saudi stock market, and it continued to dampen the petrochemical sector yesterday. Heavyweight Saudi Basic Industries slid 2.3 percent and Advanced Petrochemical lost 3.6 percent. Both companies announced last week that their operating costs would increase after the government reduced price support for natural gas feedstock and hiked electricity tariffs.

Some banks recovered part of the previous session's losses. Islamic lender Alinma rose 1.4 percent, after sliding 3.7 percent on Monday. Al Rajhi, the largest retail Islamic bank, advanced 2.4 percent for its fourth straight session of gains. Elsewhere in the Gulf, Abu Dhabi's index rose 1.6 percent on the back of gains in some blue-chip banks; First Gulf Bank jumped 3.3 percent and Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank added 3.4 percent. But Dubai edged down 0.2 percent and Qatar fell 0.8 percent in a broad-based decline. However, Qatar's Islamic Holding, a financial and investment firm, surged 8.3 percent in unusually heavy trade; the company is boosting its capital by as much as 50 percent through a rights issue. Eligibility for the rights closed on Dec. 1 and subscriptions to the issue will run from Dec. 27 to Jan. 13. Egypt rose 0.6 percent with exchange data showing non-Arab foreign investors were net buyers by a large margin. Telecom Egypt surged 5.0 percent. — Reuters

CHINA WORRIES WEIGH ON GLOBAL STOCKS

LONDON: Global stock markets were weighed down by worries over the Chinese economy even though the country's benchmark index stabilized yesterday, a day after plunging nearly 7 percent. European equities staged a timid rebound yesterday, winning moderate support after Beijing pumped cash into the money market to soothe worries over the slowing Chinese economy.

Frankfurt, London and Paris won about 1.0 percent in early deals, but the gains evaporated by midday amid ongoing jitters over China and the Middle East, only to turn positive again in afternoon trading.

The euro meanwhile hit a one-month low at \$1.0739 on news that eurozone inflation was unchanged at a weaker-than-expected 0.2 percent in December. Miners and oil firms were among the worst casualties from the fierce selloff because China is a top consumer of commodities.

US stocks opened modestly higher as trading stabilized a day after a plunge in China unsettled investors around the globe. The Dow Jones industrial average was up 15 points, or 0.1 percent, to 17,172 as of 9:35 am Eastern time yesterday. The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose three points, or 0.2 percent, to 2,016. The Nasdaq composite edged up seven points, or 0.2 percent, to 4,910. The stocks of gun makers were up strongly in early trading after new data pointed to strong sales at the close of 2015.

Smith & Wesson jumped 10 percent and Sturm Ruger gained 8 percent.

Living with 'new' China

"Markets are in a very much risk-off scenario with investors not wanting to start the year off with big losses so the riskier assets are suffering, such as equity markets," said analyst James Hughes at trading firm GKFX.

"There are still worries about the stability of the Chinese economy and the ability of the rest of the global economy to come to terms with the new China, one that no longer looks to double-digit GDP growth as the norm.

"Markets have not coped well with this up to now," he told AFP. Asian markets mostly fell Tuesday, with Shanghai down 0.3 percent after a topsy-turvy session that witnessed opening losses of three percent. State-controlled funds bought stocks yesterday, Bloomberg News reported, quoting people familiar with the matter, mirroring moves last year when the government waded into the market to halt a rout.

The People's Bank of China, the central bank, also pumped 130 billion yuan (\$20 billion) into the money market, according to a statement. "Whilst European investors may have initially taken China's market injection as a rebound-worthy bit of news, the fact is that ... this still didn't help the Shanghai Composite avoid a wild, and negative, session of trading," said Spreadex ana-

lyst Connor Campbell.

In echoes of the summer's turbulence that saw trillions wiped off valuations, most bourses in Asia tumbled in the first few minutes of trade yesterday before bouncing in and out of positive territory throughout the day. The selling on Monday was fuelled by more downbeat data on Chinese factory activity, the latest evidence showing the Asian powerhouse economy struggling with its lowest annual growth rates in 25 years.

The data-combined with the expiration this Friday of China's measures brought in to curb last year's share slump-sent Shanghai stocks crashing almost seven percent on Monday.

Regulators halted trading in China before the scheduled close on Monday, the first day a new circuit breaker mechanism was in place. Shane Oliver, head of investment strategy in Sydney at AMP Capital Investors, said he expected China to further ease monetary policy, adding to the six interest rate cuts between November 2014 and November 2015.

"We've been reminded that volatility in financial markets remains high and that the global economy still needs monetary policy support," he added.

Elsewhere on Tuesday, Hong Kong finished 0.7 percent lower, having also enjoyed healthy buying spells, while Tokyo closed down 0.4 percent. — Agencies

ANALYST COVERAGE IN KUWAIT IS LOWEST IN GCC AT 8.1%

KUWAIT: Kuwait Financial Centre 'Markaz' published a blog post titled "Reasons for poor Analyst Coverage in Kuwait". In this post, Markaz examines and analyzes the stocks listed in Kuwait and the research coverage they receive and compare it with other GCC countries such as KSA, UAE and Qatar and cites reasons for low coverage in Kuwait.

Compared to all other stock exchanges in the GCC, the number of large- and mid-cap stocks is much lower in Kuwait, than in peer countries, whereas the number of small-cap stocks is almost 92 percent of the market. In terms of analyst coverage (as a percentage of all stocks in the exchange), Kuwait is the lowest at 8.1 percent, while Saudi is the highest at close to 50 percent. Looking at the cap-wise analyst coverage, other than Qatar (64 percent), all other GCC nations have over 90 percent analyst coverage for large-cap stocks, due to the popularity of these stocks among the investors and the relatively higher amount of research and information available in the public domain. This coverage value decreases for mid-cap companies, with a high of 91 percent seen for Saudi Arabia, and a low of 57 percent for UAE. It falls further for small-cap companies, with a high coverage of 28 percent seen for Saudi Arabia small-caps and a low of 3 percent for Kuwait small-caps. This is more pronounced in Kuwait, as it is the exchange with the most number of small-cap companies, as compared to its peers.

Under GCC stocks that are followed by 5 or more analysts, Kuwait has the lowest coverage at 33 percent (only 5 companies) of stocks with 5 or more analyst coverage, while the rest of the countries under consideration have more than 40 percent of stocks with analyst coverage that are covered by 5 or more analysts. Again, since the markets in the region are top heavy, most of the stocks with 5 or more analysts fall under the large cap, with lesser such coverage for the mid-cap and close to nil coverage for the small-cap stocks.

BUY and HOLD recommendations dominate the GCC markets, with over 90 percent recommendations for Kuwait, Saudi and the UAE, while for Qatar it is 81 percent. SELL recommendations are the least popular in the region.

The reasons for poor analyst coverage Markets driven by retail investors

Over 45 percent of the value traded in Kuwait, across the years, is attributed to retail investors. Companies and funds, which are the major consumers of research, together accounted for around 30 percent, on average, since 2009. This figure is over 85 percent for Saudi Arabia, 73 percent for Dubai and 47 percent for Qatar. Primary reason why analyst coverage is low in the region is the relative lower consumption of research in the region

MARKAZ ECONOMIC REPORT



Language barrier
The presence of larger expat population compared to local population in the region and investments from companies and foreign institutions have pushed demand for research in

Trading volumes are driven mostly by word-of-mouth information.

Lack of Liquidity in the mid cap and small-cap space

Lack of liquidity, especially in the mid cap and small-cap space, and general lack of investor interest has led to lower research offerings in this segment. The draining liquidity and the top heavy nature of the Kuwait bourse has led to dwindling analyst interest in the mid cap

can be seen in regular filings of financial results, where Kuwait lags behind the rest of the GCC. Delays in acquiring time-sensitive information and minimal public disclosures discourage analysts from following companies.

What should be done to increase analyst coverage?

Kuwait is behind the curve compared to other GCC countries in improving capital market efficiencies. Despite being the oldest stock exchange with the maximum number of listed stocks, the market lacks the required breadth and depth due to the concentration of stocks to a limited number of sectors. Increasing the

	Kuwait	Saudi Arabia	UAE	Qatar
Total number of stocks	185	169	111	43
% of large cap stocks	1.6%	14.8%	12.6%	25.6%
% of mid cap stocks	7.0%	19.5%	13.5%	37.2%
% of small cap stocks	91.4%	65.7%	73.9%	37.2%
Large Cap Analyst Coverage	100.0%	92.0%	92.9%	63.6%
Mid Cap Analyst Coverage	61.5%	84.8%	73.3%	62.5%
Small Cap Analyst Coverage	2.4%	29.7%	11.0%	6.3%
Total Analyst Coverage as a % of all stocks in the exchange	8.1%	49.7%	29.7%	41.9%
Percentage of stocks covered by 5 or more analysts, as a % of Total Analyst Coverage	33.3%	47.6%	48.5%	44.4%
Recommendations				
% of BUY / STRONG BUY, as a % of Total Recommendations	50.7%	48.1%	61.0%	37.1%
% of HOLD, as a % of Total Recommendations	38.8%	43.8%	29.1%	38.1%
% of SELL / STRONG SELL, as a % of Total Recommendations	10.4%	8.0%	9.9%	24.7%

Source: Reuters as on Dec 9, 2015, Marmore Research

English, while research in Arabic still lags behind. The demand for research in Arabic is less, which has led to lesser consumption of research among local investors, which has in

and small-cap segment. Lack of new listings in the domestic market and landmark events in other regional indices has also contributed to lower liquidity in Kuwaiti bourse. Stock turnover

depth would encourage research activities. Steps should be taken for Kuwait to represent the MSCI EM Index similar to UAE and Qatar. The first step to achieve that would be encouraging foreign investors to invest in the market. The fact that the market is dominated by retail participants disincentivates the needs for research. Steps should be taken to encourage domestic institutional investors who have a longer term investment horizon to invest in the stock market which would also bring in the much need liquidity.

ratio has been on a declining trend and stood at 22 percent in Kuwait Stock Exchange as against GCC average of 76 percent.

Analyst Coverage Band	Percentage of Stocks	Average Market Cap (KD mn)
Not covered by any of the analysts	92%	63
Covered by less than 5 analysts	5%	466
Covered by more than 5 analysts	3%	1,934

Source: Reuters Eikon, Data as of Dec 9, 2015

turn led analysts to shift their focus to research primarily in English.

Investments based on sentiments and speculation

GCC markets are top-heavy, and investments are restricted mostly in the large- and mid-cap space. These investments are driven primarily by sentiments and speculation.

Information disclosure and Time taken

Kuwait companies lag in timely disclosures compared to their regional peers, and the time taken for compliance is a lot more lenient. This

Regulatory bodies should look at enforcing corporate governance codes to improve quality of disclosures. It should also encourage companies to engage with the analysts on a regular basis to ensure maximum information sharing. Information and data on listed companies should be timely available either through a separate website or through the existing system. Cross-listing stocks on other regional exchanges where there is more analysts coverage could aid in spurring research in Kuwait.

News

in brief

ADNOC sets Dec Murban crude OSP at \$37.25/bbl

DUBAI: Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) cut its December retroactive selling price for its benchmark Murban crude to \$37.25 per barrel, down \$6.30 from the month before, it said yesterday. That puts the December Murban official selling price (OSP) at a \$2.66 per barrel premium to the average of Dubai quotes for the month, up 80 cents from the differential in November, Reuters data showed. Light, sour crude supply is expected to tighten early this year as ADNOC has cut Murban and Das crude exports due to field maintenance and higher domestic demand. Asian refiners are also demanding more Murban and Das to take advantage of higher margins from producing gasoline and naphtha since the grades yield more light fuels after refining.

Oman's Bank Dhofar closes \$250 million 3-year loan

DUBAI: Oman's Bank Dhofar has raised a \$250 million three-year loan to be used for general funding, sources aware of the matter told Reuters yesterday. The lender joins a number of Gulf banks that have tapped the loan market in recent weeks to bolster their balance sheets while regional liquidity drops amid persistently low oil prices. The loan was signed in the last week of December, three sources said on condition of anonymity as the information is private. They declined to reveal pricing details. Bank ABC, BNP Paribas, Commerzbank, Credit Agricole, HSBC and National Bank of Abu Dhabi funded the transaction, the three sources added. Bank Dhofar did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

US dollar stable against KD at 0.303

KUWAIT: The US dollar exchange rate against the Kuwaiti dinar yesterday was stable at KD 0.303 while its rate came down against the euro to KD 0.328, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). The CBK said that the exchange rate of the Sterling pound was stable at the 0.447 while it went down against the Swiss franc to KD 0.303. The exchange rate against the Japanese Yen remained the same at KD 0.002.

Egyptian pound steady at official auction, black market

CAIRO: Egypt's central bank kept the pound at 7.7301 pounds to the dollar at its official foreign currency auction yesterday. The pound was steady on the black market as well. Egypt, which depends on imported food and energy, is facing a dollar shortage and mounting pressure to devalue the pound. The central bank surprised markets when it strengthened the pound on Nov. 11 by 20 piasters against the dollar. Yesterday, it sold 39.4 million dollars at a cut-off price of 7.7301 pounds to the dollar, unchanged from Sunday. The black market rate was around 8.58 pounds to the dollar yesterday, almost unchanged from Sunday's rate of 8.57. The country has been starved of foreign currency since a popular uprising in 2011 ousted autocrat Hosni Mubarak and drove tourists and foreign investors away. Egypt's reserves have tumbled from \$36 billion in 2011 to \$16.4 billion, and the country has been rationing dollars through weekly dollar auctions to banks, keeping the pound artificially strong.

Iraq's Dhi Qar Oil to oversee Garraf, Nasiriya fields

BAGHDAD: Iraq's newly established Dhi Qar Oil Co. will oversee four oil fields including Garraf and Nasiriya which are already in production, a company executive said yesterday. Dhi Qar aims to boost production to about 200,000 barrels per day this year from 170,000 barrels a day currently, Kareem Yaseen, director for fields operations, told Reuters by phone. These fields were overseen until now by state-run South Oil Co, the main producer in the southern regions where Iraq pumps most of its crude. The oil ministry announced the establishment of Dhi Qar Oil Co. on its website on Tuesday as well as the renaming of South Oil Co as Basra Oil Co. Garraf is currently producing about 100,000 barrels per day and Nasiriya 70,000, Yaseen said.

SAUDI ARABIA RAISES FEB CRUDE PRICES TO ASIA

DUBAI: Saudi Aramco yesterday raised its February price for Arab Light grade for Asian customers by \$0.60 versus January to a discount of \$0.80 a barrel to the Oman/Dubai average.

Saudi's monthly oil prices set the direction for other OPEC producers Kuwait, Iran and Iraq which have undercut the top exporter in the last two years in a battle for market share amid low prices.

Saudi Aramco kept its Arab Light official selling price (OSP) to the United States unchanged at a premium of \$0.15 per barrel to the Argus Sour Crude Index (ASCI).

It cut its Arab Light OSP to Northwest Europe by \$0.60 to a discount of \$4.85 a barrel to the Brent Weighted Average (BWAVE). Aramco was expected to hike its Arab Extra Light OSP to Asia at about 70 cents a barrel, and raise its flagship Arab Light crude prices by 15-60 cents a barrel, according to a Reuters survey of Asian refiners. They expected only a smaller price increase for Arab Medium and Heavy crude. Traders said OSPs for Asia were raised more than expected for Arab Medium and Heavy, which one trader with a north Asian refiner said was probably to make up for low outright prices.

The December average Dubai crude price, as quoted by price-reporting agency Platts, fell to the lowest since Dec 2004.

The tables below show the full FOB prices for January in US dollars. Saudi term crude supplies to the United States are priced as a differential to the Argus Sour Crude Index (ASCI). — Reuters

KENYA TELECOMS REGULATOR SLAMS GOVT

NAIROBI: Kenya's telecoms regulator accused the government yesterday of curbing the watchdog's ability to manage competition in the sector by recently changing the law and said the move could discourage investments. Smaller operators in Kenya's telecom sector claim unfair competition, saying Safaricom, the biggest operator, is too dominant.

Francis Wangusi, director general of the regulator Communications Authority of Kenya (CA), said parliament took away CA's independence in determining if an operator was dominant last month when it changed sections of the law.

The amendments, which have already been signed into law by President Uhuru Kenyatta, require CA to involve the country's competition authority and the ministry of information and communication before making a decision on market dominance. "This is likely to expose

CA to various forms of litigation and hinder efforts to further attract investments to the sector thus slowing down anticipated growth," Wangusi said in an emailed statement in response to questions from Reuters.

The chair of the energy and information, communications and technology committee in the National Assembly said lawmakers wanted to enhance the decision-making on issues of dominance in the sector by bringing in another body with expertise on competition.

"We don't want a situation where one party wakes up today and says 'you are dominant'", Jamleck Kamau told Reuters. Wangusi said the changes flew in the face of the global practice, where dominance in telecom industries is usually assessed by the sector regulator independently based on market forecasts and other factors. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.549
Indian Rupees	4.587
Pakistani Rupees	2.906
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.119
Nepali Rupees	2.874
Singapore Dollar	214.733
Hongkong Dollar	39.298
Bangladesh Taka	3.880
Philippine Peso	6.481
Thai Baht	8.447

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.270
Qatari Riyal	83.715
Omani Riyal	791.580
Bahraini Dinar	809.352
UAE Dirham	82.974

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	39.020
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	38.968
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.422
Tunisian Dinar	150.419
Jordanian Dinar	429.619
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.031
Syrian Lira	2.172
Morocco Dirham	31.081

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.600
Euro	331.100
Sterling Pound	449.740
Canadian dollar	219.769
Turkish Lira	102.929
Swiss Franc	305.669
Australian Dollar 220.987	303.400

GOLD

20 Gram	216.710
10 Gram	111.050
5 Gram	56.210

UAE EXCHANGE CENTRE WLL

CURRENCIES

Australian Dollar	213.03
Canadian Dollar	223.33
Swiss Franc	308.51
Euro	333.77
US Dollar	304.65
Sterling Pound	451.93
Japanese Yen	2.57
Bangladesh Taka	3.884
Indian Rupee	4.577
Sri Lankan Rupee	2.120
Nepali Rupee	2.862
Pakistani Rupee	2.904
UAE Dirhams	0.08290
Bahraini Dinar	0.8096
Egyptian Pound	0.03881
Jordanian Dinar	0.4333
Omani Riyal	0.7911
Qatari Riyal	0.08400
Saudi Riyal	0.08120

TELEX TRANSFER PER 1000

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer

US Dollar	304.850
Canadian Dollar	220.900
Sterling Pound	449.420
Euro	331.525
Swiss Franc	306.125
Bahrain Dinar	806.500
UAE Dirhams	83.240
Qatari Riyals	84.460

Selling Rate

US Dollar	304.850
Canadian Dollar	220.900
Sterling Pound	449.420
Euro	331.525
Swiss Franc	306.125
Bahrain Dinar	806.500
UAE Dirhams	83.240
Qatari Riyals	84.460

Saudi Riyals

Saudi Riyals	81.970
Jordanian Dinar	429.440
Egyptian Pound	38.821
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.119
Indian Rupees	4.582
Pakistani Rupees	2.904
Bangladesh Taka	3.878
Philippines Peso	6.458
Cyprus pound	580.645
Japanese Yen	3.550
Syrian Pound	2.380
Nepalese Rupees	3.860
Malaysian Ringgit	71.015
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	47.105
Thai Bhat	9.410
Turkish Lira	103.155

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.441402	0.450402
Czech Korune	0.004204	0.016204
Danish Krone	0.040146	0.045146
Euro	0.324002	0.332002
Norwegian Krone	0.030281	0.035481
Romanian Leu	0.087378	0.087378
Slovakia	0.009109	0.019109
Swedish Krona	0.031795	0.036795
Swiss Franc	0.297354	0.307554
Turkish Lira	0.098813	0.109113

Australasia

Australian Dollar	0.210960	0.222460
New Zealand Dollar	0.198737	0.208237

America

Canadian Dollar	0.213476	0.221976
US Dollars	0.300500	0.305000

US Dollars Mint

	0.301000	0.305000
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Asia

Bangladesh Taka	0.003481	0.004081
Chinese Yuan	0.045182	0.048682
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037200	0.039950
Indian Rupee	0.004213	0.004603
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002472	0.002652
Kenyan Shilling	0.003166	0.003166
Korean Won	0.000247	0.000262
Malaysian Ringgit	0.066674	0.072674
Nepalese Rupee	0.002888	0.003058
Pakistan Rupee	0.002642	0.002922
Philippine Peso	0.006395	0.006675
Sierra Leone	0.000068	0.000074
Singapore Dollar	0.210698	0.216698
South African Rand	0.13601	0.022101
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001751	0.002331
Taiwan	0.009165	0.009345
Thai Baht	0.008124	0.008674

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.801067	0.809067
Egyptian Pound	0.034582	0.037708
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000201	0.000261
Jordanian Dinar	0.425626	0.433126
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000153	0.000253
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021580	0.045580
Nigerian Naira	0.001260	0.001895
Omani Riyal	0.784748	0.790428
Qatar Riyal	0.082955	0.084168
Saudi Riyal	0.080340	0.081290
Syrian Pound	0.001291	0.001511
Tunisian Dinar	0.146950	0.154950
Turkish Lira	0.098813	0.109113
UAE Dirhams	0.081950	0.083099
Yemeni Riyal	0.001377	0.001457

ADDRESSING ENERGY SECTOR CHALLENGES IN MIDEAST

By Andreas Kyrilis

KUWAIT: Going forward, the question of how to make optimal use of energy resources is set to become a burning topic - especially as standards of living become higher, energy demand increases and new supply sources come on stream.

In the MENA region, in particular, the collective annual primary energy consumption - across countries such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait and Qatar - has surged from 310 MTOE to 395 MTOE in the past five years. This figure - which represents a 4.5 percent increase year-on-year - is the result of the rising energy demand of fast-growing populations and the push towards diversification through the development of a strong local industrial base driven by the petrochemicals sector.

Available resources are not going to be

adequately meeting demand domestically in a few years.

In addition, there has been a parallel rise in rates of domestic energy consumption and population growth in the GCC, the latter which increased by 4.1 percent annually from 2000 to 2014. This, of course, makes effectively managing energy - across the region - a pressing concern.

Countries should adopt a strategic, holistic approach towards optimizing all aspects of the energy sector.

In line with the above, an Integrated Energy Strategy is an imperative necessity for countries looking to extract more value from their resources. As part of the strategy, overarching key principles should be followed. These include establishing deep integration between resource utilization and economic objectives at a national level; shifting some of the focus away from the mone-

tary benefits of hydrocarbon exports; and, building a more diversified economy through investments across the energy value chain.

More importantly all important aspects of energy should be observed in a coherent and coordinated manner rather than through individual initiatives - decisions that affect the everyday habits of the public regarding electricity and transportation fuel prices for private and industrial use, installation of energy efficient technologies, building code regulation should be taken in tandem with the plan for deployment renewable and nuclear technologies and central oil and gas production. This will ensure that all decisions are purposeful and not apply strain on living conditions if other more effective ways of saving energy exist.

To make this happen it is important that all energy related regulation and policymak-

ing is taking place with strong coordination among the existing policymakers, who in the case of energy can comprise a very broad network representing producers and consumers of energy: industry, commerce, transportation, economic development, and urban development are a few of the sectors that can have a strong influence in national energy policymaking.

Due to the complex nature of the relationships though it is crucial that all stakeholders are aligned around certain key goals at national level (typically economic development/diversification, security of supply, resource sustainability and cost competitiveness). Transparency and clarity around common goals will ensure that there is clear understanding of the purpose behind sometimes difficult changes in the existing regulation (e.g. retail fuel prices) and support driving change at national level.



Andreas Kyrilis, Principal at BCG Middle East



People meet recruiters for the French multinational automobile manufacturer PSA Peugeot Citroën, during a "job dating" yesterday in Montbéliard. Nearly 700 candidates took part in Montbéliard, in a "job dating", organised by PSA Peugeot Citroën to fill more than a hundred temporary jobs in the neighboring factory of Sochaux. —AFP

AIRPORT PRIVATIZATION OPEN TO FOREIGNERS: SAUDI ARABIA

RIYADH: Foreign companies will be allowed to invest in Saudi Arabian airports being privatized without the need for local partners, the kingdom's aviation regulator said yesterday.

Local investments in some airports will be capped at 25 percent to ensure foreign operators have a majority holding in operating contracts, Faisal Al-Sugair, vice-chairman of the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) told reporters in Riyadh. The kingdom plans to privatise its international and domestic airports by 2020, GACA officials said at a news conference. As part of the process, some would first be "corporatized" - restructured to operate like a company while remaining state owned, the officials said.

"All international companies, operators, who are qualified, can participate ... there is no requirement for a local partner, that's up to the companies," Sugair said.

Riyadh's King Khaled International Airport will shift to a corporate structure in the first quarter of 2016, Sugair said. However, the airport's new Terminal 5 will be run as a concession by Dublin Airport Authority before the rest of the airport is itself privatized, he said. An international operator will run a concession for the King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah, Saudi's busiest airport, Sugair said, adding that GACA is preparing a shortlist of bidders.

Dammam's King Fahd International Airport will be corporatized in the third quarter of 2017, before being privatized, GACA officials said. IFC is advising GACA on the privatization of King Abdulaziz International Airport, as well as the new Taif Airport, aimed for pilgrims.

The regulator first announced privatization plans, which include air traffic control and information technology units, in November. — Reuters

QATAR CB APPEARS TO CANCEL T-BILL AUCTION

DOHA/DUBAI: Qatar's central bank appears to have cancelled a monthly auction of Treasury bills as it resists upward pressure on market interest rates, commercial bankers said yesterday.

Last week, the central bank announced on its website that it would sell three-, six- and nine-month T-bills yesterday. But that announcement was removed from the website yesterday afternoon without explanation, and the central bank did not post results of an auction.

The central bank did not respond to telephone calls seeking comment, but bankers at two major Qatari commercial banks said their bids had not been accepted at the auction so they believed the sale had been cancelled.

"I've spoken to other bankers ... and they said the same. Their accounts have not been debited. The results should have been posted on the central bank website but I haven't seen them," said one

banker, declining to be named because of commercial sensitivities.

He said he expected the central bank to release a statement clarifying the situation later in the day.

In the past three months, the central bank sold fewer T-bills than planned at its monthly sales and yields at the sales rose sharply. Bankers in the Gulf said a reduction in fresh oil and gas revenues flowing into bank deposits, because of low global energy prices, was pushing up money rates in the region. In October, Qatar central bank chief Sheikh Abdullah bin Saud Al-Thani sought to dampen expectations for higher rates by saying he saw no reason for Qatar to imitate any US rate hike.

However, after the US Federal Reserve raised interest rates in December four other Gulf central banks quickly followed suit. The Qatari central bank may have rejected all bids and cancelled yesterday's bill auction because it felt the bids were too high, bankers said. — Reuters

UAE EMIRATE SHARJAH PLANS SUKUK ISSUE IN Q1

HSBC AMONG 6 ARRANGING BANKS MANDATED

DUBAI: The emirate of Sharjah is planning to raise funds through a dollar-denominated Islamic bond, sources aware of the matter said yesterday, in what could be the first sovereign sukuk issuance from the Gulf region this year. The sources said the issue would be of "benchmark size", traditionally understood to mean in excess of \$500 million.

Six local and international banks have been mandated to arrange the sukuk including HSBC, which is leading the transaction, two of the sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity as the information isn't public.

The sovereign is aiming to issue the sukuk in the first quarter of the year and could announce investor meetings for the deal as early as this month, the sources added.

However, the diplomatic spat between Saudi

Arabia and Iran could disrupt the timing of the issuance if it hits confidence among international investors. An official at the department of finance in Sharjah, the third largest emirate of seven in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), declined to comment. A successful offering could help Sharjah narrow its budget deficit and pave the way for other Gulf issuers to access the bond market.

As well as banks - seeking cash as local liquidity is squeezed - and companies, Gulf sovereigns are expected to make rare forays into international debt markets this year to cover budget shortfalls, including Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Sharjah has coped comparatively well with low oil prices thanks to its diversified economy, according to credit ratings agency Standard & Poor's (S&P), which rates it as A.

In November, S&P said it expected Sharjah's government deficit to narrow towards 1 percent of GDP in 2018 from a peak of 2.7 percent in 2014. It added the calculations were made without access to Sharjah's GDP data, which is not made public. Total expenditures in Sharjah's 2015 budget were forecast to be around 17.7 billion dirhams (\$4.8 billion). Sharjah's government budget is small relative to GDP, largely because the UAE federal budget covers a large share of public services in the emirate.

A sukuk issue would be only its second ever offering after it sold a \$750 million 10-year Islamic bond in 2014. The deal attracted significant interest from investors, who pledged orders worth 10 times its final size. The yield on the bond was at 3.68 percent at 1050 GMT from 3.77 percent on Monday. — Reuters

FRANCE'S ORANGE, BOUYGUES IN TELECOMS TIE-UP TALKS

PARIS: France's telecommunications giant Orange is in talks to buy its smaller rival Bouygues Telecom, both companies said yesterday, a move that would consolidate one of Europe's most competitive telecoms marketplaces. Orange, which is 20-percent owned by the French state, said it had "renewed preliminary discussions" with the Bouygues group but stressed they were not bound to any timeframe nor committed to "any particular predefined outcome".

Amid recent press reports of talks between the two groups, analysts had indicated that Orange may be facing a crunch decision over whether to shore up its position at home by gobbling up a competitor, or expand its presence abroad. "The group is exploring the opportunities available within the French telecoms market, while keeping in mind that its investments and its solid position afford it a total independence in its approach," Orange said in a statement.

It will be "particularly vigilant with regards to the value created through any resulting project", it added.

Orange chief Stephane Richard told AFP on Monday that his company had been "thinking for a little while that there's a certain logic to a consolidation in France".

The economy ministry declined to comment. However it highlighted that Economy Minister Emmanuel Macron said last month that he had no "principled position" on the number of operators in the market as long as investments in fixed line and mobile services are safeguarded.

That stance had evolved from June when he said consolidation was undesirable for the sector.

'Everyone stands to gain'

News of the talks appeared to find favor

on the Paris stock exchange, with telecom shares up on prospects of a condensing of the French market from four to three operators which could help reduce pressure on prices. Shares in Bouygues were up 1.4 percent around 1430 GMT on the Paris stock exchange and Orange rose 1.5 percent.

"Everyone stands to gain from the fact there is one less player and therefore one less competitor," HPC trader Xavier de Villepion said.

But a leading French consumer association demanded safeguards that fewer operators did not translate into less competition and higher prices for mobile phone users. The French government needs to "take a clear stance concerning its will to ensure real competition in the French electronic communications market with the aim of increasing consumers' purchasing power", the UFC-Que Choisir association said in a statement.

The industrial and construction company headed by Martin Bouygues said in a separate statement that the two telecoms had signed "a confidentiality agreement". "For the moment, no decisions have been taken and there is no guarantee that there will be an outcome to these preliminary discussions," Bouygues added.

It said it would "attach decisive importance" in all its discussions to "the interests of Bouygues Telecom employees and to investment momentum within the sector, which must remain strong in the interests of the consumer".

Any merger between the two French telecoms operators would require the green light from competition authorities in both France and Brussels. It would represent more than 60 percent of the mobile market, facing competition from smaller operators SFR and Free. — AFP

NO IMF PROGRAM NEEDED FOR NIGERIA: LAGARDE

ABUJA: Africa's biggest economy Nigeria, battling a revenue shortfall caused by the global oil shock, does not need assistance from the International Monetary Fund, the group's head said yesterday.

"Let me be very clear: I'm not here nor is my team here to negotiate a loan with conditionalities, we're not programming negotiations," said IMF managing director Christine Lagarde. "Frankly, given the determination and resilience displayed by the presidency and his team, I don't see why an IMF program is going to be needed," she told reporters in Abuja.

Lagarde was speaking after meeting President Muhammadu Buhari on a four-day visit that will also see her hold talks with the central bank governor and visit neighboring Cameroon.

Nigeria, Africa's number one oil producer, has seen revenues dive over the last year because of the fall in global crude prices, causing a cash crunch that has forced it to tighten spending. The naira currency has also slumped and GDP growth stalled to under 3.0 percent, while inflation is nudging 10 percent.

Lagarde described the talks as "excellent" and said they touched on "the challenges ahead stemming from the oil price reduction" and the need to find different revenue sources.

They also discussed "the necessity to apply fiscal discipline and the need to respond to the population's needs, improving the competitiveness of Nigeria and focusing on the short-term fiscal situation".

Buhari has made reviving the flagging economy one of his key priorities alongside cutting endemic corruption and government waste, and improving transparency and accountability.

Lagarde said they were "very ambitious goals that need to be delivered upon".

Trade concern

Nigeria last month unveiled a 6.08-trillion-naira (about \$30-billion, 27-billion-euro) budget, increas-

ing investment on capital expenditure to stimulate growth and lower dependence on crude exports. Lagarde said it was not her place to "approve or comment on the budget" but she disclosed the IMF would undertake a review and audit from next week "to really assess whether the financing is in place". It would also look at "whether the debt is sustainable, borrowing costs are sensible and what must be put in place in order to address the challenges going forward".

Analysts say the commercial health of the region is a priority for Lagarde's trip, with Nigeria struggling to adapt to rock-bottom oil prices and diversify its economy.

She is due to end her trip by meeting finance ministers from the six member countries of the

Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), delivering a speech on January 8.

"There was mention of the reform agenda, what Nigeria might do to cope with this period of oil price weakness, but also the policy response from Nigeria and the impact on surrounding countries," said Razia Khan, Africa economist at Standard Chartered Bank in London.

"One of the ways that Nigeria has chosen to deal with the pressures of weaker oil prices is control the demand of imports, by restricting the foreign exchange market," she told AFP. "That has caused an impact on trade with neighbouring countries that will be a concern not just to Nigeria but also some of those countries that are very reliant on Nigeria." — AFP



ABUJA: International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Christine Lagarde (2nd L) flanked by Nigerian Finance Minister Kemi Adeosun (L) and Nigerian Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, meets with Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari (R) during her visit in Abuja yesterday. —AFP

OIL PRICES FALL ON CHINA JITTERS, STRONGER DOLLAR

LONDON: Oil prices fell yesterday on concerns about the pace of economic growth in China and a stronger US dollar, handing back some of the gains triggered by an escalation of tensions in the Middle East. Global benchmark Brent crude prices were down 17 cents at \$37.05 a barrel at 1314 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude slipped 7 cents to \$36.69 a barrel.

"It is the Chinese stock market sell-off and the strong dollar that are pressuring oil," said Tamas Varga, oil analyst at London brokerage PVM Oil Associates. Chinese stock markets fell again yesterday after a 7 percent dive on Monday, rattling markets worldwide and prompting action from the central bank and stock market regulator. Concerns about the economy in China, the world's second-largest oil

consumer, were worsened by news that national rail freight volumes logged their biggest ever annual decline in 2015.

"Last year we talked about supply and demand even surprised on the upside. But with this news flow from China, demand fears have come back," said Frank Klumpp, oil analyst at Stuttgart-based Landesbank Baden-Wuerttemberg. The US dollar hit a one-month high against a basket of other currencies, weighing on oil prices as it made holding dollar-denominated commodities more expensive.

The oil market largely shrugged off rising political tensions in the Middle East. Yesterday, Kuwait recalled its ambassador to Iran following attacks on Saudi missions by Iranian protesters, state news agency KUNA reported.

Analysts said as long as the conflict did not impact oil production in the region it would not have a consequence for oil prices. ANZ bank said the tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran will "reduce the likelihood of any collaboration between the two oil majors regarding oil output as Iran re-enters the international market once sanctions are lifted".

In Libya, Islamic State militants resumed attacks on oil infrastructure, hitting an oil storage tank in the port of Es Sider. This followed clashes on Monday during which an oil storage tank holding around 400,000 barrels of crude exploded.

The ports are not currently operating, but analysts said Islamic State's growing presence in oil-rich Libya means the country will unlikely regain pre-crisis production levels any time soon.

In Algeria, an explosion and fire at its Skikda oil refinery injured 18 people, but production was unaffected as the incident occurred in a unit used to fill butane bottles.

Data from US industry group American Petroleum Institute expected at 4:30 p.m. ET (2130 GMT) will give an indication of US crude inventory levels. Genscape data published on Monday said crude inventories at Cushing, Oklahoma, had reached an all-time high in the week ending Jan 1.

Gold jumps

Meanwhile, gold rose yesterday as a wave of risk aversion due to growth worries in China and rising tensions in the Middle East triggered demand for the metal.

Spot gold was up 0.6 percent at \$1,080.43 an ounce by 1234 GMT. On Monday, the metal jumped as much as 2.2 percent to a four-week high of \$1,083.30 after data showed Chinese factory activity contracted for a 10th straight month in December.

"More weakness in China ... would be more positive for gold but investors would need to see more evidence of systemic issues there, which is still unlikely," Julius Baer analyst Carsten Menke said.

"That could be the only longer lasting upside for gold in an otherwise bearish outlook due to sound growth in the US and lack of inflation risks." A 7 percent slide in Chinese shares on Monday sparked by weak economic data rekindled worries over global growth on the first day of trading in 2016, and sent European and US stocks diving.

China stocks closed mixed yesterday in volatile trade, with indexes swinging into and out of negative territory, while European indexes were mixed.

"The first important resistance zone (for gold) lies between \$1,083 and \$1,087, with the next major level at \$1,100," said MKS Group in a note. Bullion, often seen as an alternative investment in times of political and financial uncertainty, is also benefiting from a shift away from risk along with the Japanese yen and US bonds.

Saudi Arabia's execution of a Shi'ite Muslim cleric over the weekend provoked protests among Shi'ites across the region. Saudi Arabia also said it would end air traffic and trade links with Tehran.

Safe-haven rallies tend to be short-lived and gold could see the focus shift back to US monetary policy soon. Gold slid 10 percent last year on fears that higher US rates would lower demand for the non-interest-paying asset, while boosting the dollar. A stronger greenback makes dollar-denominated gold costlier for holders of other currencies. San Francisco Federal Reserve President John Williams said on Monday he is unfazed by the weak economic data out of China that has spooked Wall Street, and sees three to five US interest rate hikes this year as reasonable given the strength of the US economy.

Investor sentiment remains bearish. Hedge funds and money managers boosted their net short position in COMEX gold to a fresh record in the week to Dec. 29, US government data showed on Monday. — Reuters

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Tuesday 05 January 2016

Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price Index	▼ -4.15	5,564.15	5,568.30	5,569.62	5,545.48
Weighted Index	▼ -1.31	377.13	378.44	378.73	376.50
KXS 15	▼ -3.72	888.89	892.61	894.83	887.11

Volume	93,949,971
Value (KWD)	11,450,567
Number of Trades	2,228

Security	Trades						Change
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	

MARIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	114	▲	0.0	
IKARUS	89	83	5,989	527	3	89	▲	2.0
IPG	0.0	0.0	0	0	320	▲	0.0	
NAPESCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	650	▲	0.0	
ENERGYH	41.5	38.5	128,500	5,061	14	41.0	▲	0.5
GPI	51	49.5	662,452	33,123	27	51	▲	0.0
ABAR	122	122	5,000	610	1	122	▼	-2.0
Oil & Gas			801,941	39,321	45	825.92	▲	2.06

KFOUC	222	216	15,010	3,242	3	216	▲	2.0
BPCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	520	▲	0.0	
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	610	▲	0.0	
ALQURAIN	186	184	174,713	32,492	9	184	▼	-2.0
Basic Materials			189,723	35,734	12	964.68	▼	-1.34

KCEM	370	370	837	310	1	370	▼	-25.0
REFRI	315	310	17,923	5,571	2	310	▼	-10.0
CABLE	375	355	40,500	14,388	7	365	▼	-10.0
SHIP	138	138	6,919	955	2	138	▼	-10.0
PCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	1,080	▲	0.0	
PAPER	0.0	0.0	0	0	390	▲	0.0	
MRC	0.0	0.0	0	0	79	▲	0.0	
ACICO	280	280	1,000	280	1	280	▲	5.0
GMCM	0.0	0.0	0	0	490	▲	0.0	
HCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	132	▲	0.0	
KPAK	0.0	0.0	0	0	360	▲	0.0	
KBMMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	250	▲	0.0	
NICBM	248	248	100	25	1	248	▲	10.0
EQUIPMENT	57	56	90,010	5,041	8	57	▼	-1.0
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	99	▲	0.0	
GYPSUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	102	▲	0.0	
SALBOOKH	82	81	18,000	1,463	2	81	▲	0.0
AGLTY	465	460	815,703	375,323	28	460	▼	-5.0
EDU	220	220	100	22	1	220	▲	10.0
CLEANING	39.5	38.0	152,300	5,962	8	39.5	▼	-0.5
CITYGROUP	405	380	2,785	1,073	2	405	▼	-0.0
KGL	41.0	40.5	22,089	904	2	41.0	▼	-1.0
KPCP	0.0	0.0	0	0	218	▲	0.0	
HUMANISOFT	990	990	50	50	1	990	▲	40.0
NAFAIS	0.0	0.0	0	0	184	▲	0.0	
SFAWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	320	▲	0.0	
GFC	33.5	33.5	1,500	50	1	33.5	▲	0.0
MAYADEEN	21.0	20.5	200,100	4,172	8	21.0	▲	0.5
CGC	790	790	500	395	1	790	▲	0.0
MTCC	67	66	217,000	14,431	8	67	▲	1.0
UPAC	0.0	0.0	0	0	650	▲	0.0	
ALAFCO	208	208	9,000	1,863	3	208	▲	4.0
MUBARRAD	77	77	366,800	28,244	11	77	▲	0.0
LOGISTICS	56	55	442,300	24,383	13	55	▲	0.0
SCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	87	▲	0.0	
QCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	75	▲	0.0	
QCEM	75	75	12,100	908	1	75	▲	0.0
FCEM	74	71	107,531	7,802	11	74	▼	-1.0
RKWC	99	99	10,900	1,079	2	99	▲	0.0
SPEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	89	▲	0.0	
Industrials			2,536,047	494,692	125	1037.17	▲	3.60

KSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	220	▲	0.0	
NSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	62	▲	0.0	
PAPCO	112	112	50	6	1	112	▲	0.0
CATTL	126	124	237,058	29,415	34	126	▲	2.0
DANAH	81	77	708,618	55,927	36	81	▲	0.0
POLUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	196	▲	0.0	
FOOD	2,060	2,020	417,694	852,693	24	2,060	▲	40.0
Consumer Goods			1,363,420	938,041	95	1098.45	▲	3.03
MHC	0.0	0.0	0	0	180	▲	0.0	
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	920	▲	0.0	
YIACO	138	136	5,500	749	2	138	▼	-4
Health Care			5,500	749	2	922.46	▼	-2.88

KCN	0.0	0.0	0	0	920	▲	0.0	
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	220	▲	0.0	
SULTAN	67	67	10,000	670	1	67	▲	2
CABLETV	27.5	27.5	221	6	1	27.5	▲	3
EYAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	330	▲	0.0	
IFAHR	0.0	0.0	0	0	204	▲	0.0	
OULAFUEL	110	110	9,582	1,054	5	110	▲	0.0
MUNTAZAHAT	0.0	0.0	0	0	99	▲	0.0	
JAZEERA	890	890	333	296	1	890	▲	0.0
SOOR	112	108	42,939	4,722	7	108	▼	-2
FUTUREKID	0.0	0.0	0	0	110	▲	0.0	
ALNAWADI	0.0	0.0	0	0	83	▲	0.0	
ALRAI	138	138	50,000	6,900	1	138	▲	0.0
ZIMAH	116	108	859,866	96,180	81	114	▼	-2
UFIG	0.0	0.0	0	0	140	▲	0.0	
KOUTFOOD	640	640	5,731	3,668	2	640	▲	0.0
Mezzan	1,160	1,140	722,033	824,178	26	1,140	▼	-2.0
Consumer Services			1,700,705	937,674	105	1004.78	▲	2.07

ZAIN	360	350	858,140	302,962	48	355	▲	0.0
OOREDOO	1,120	1,060	1,326	1,430	3	1,060	▼	-4.0
HITSTELEC	29.0	28.0	5,475,248	154,268	57	28.5	▲	0.0
VIVA	990	990	307,942	304,863	112	990	▲	0.0
Telecommunications			6,642,656	783,522	220	596.43	▲	-3.66

NBK	790	790	3,097,362	2,446,916	73	790	▲	0.0
GBK	260	260	32,980	8,575	4	260	▲	0.0
CBK	500	500	20,000	10,000	1	500	▲	0.0
ABK	370	370	74,201	27,454	4	370	▼	-5
ALMUTAHED	530	520	27,429	14,278	4	530	▲	10
KIB	0.0	0.0	0	0	224	▲	0.0	
BURG	375	370	21,424	7,962	5	375	▲	0.0
KFIN	540	520	4,405,477	2,335,887	96	520	▼	-10
BOUBYAN	440	435	45,724	19,899	10	435	▲	0.0
AUB	206	204	190,100	38,781	4	206	▲	2
ITHMR	46.0	45.0	6,761,792	309,095	133	45.0	▼	-1
WARBATABAK	194	192	309,884	60,035	93	194	▲	0.0
Banks			14,986,373	5,278,881	427	898.99	▼	-1.10

KINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	315	▲	0.0	
GINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	750	▲	0.0	
AINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	530	▲	0.0	
WINS	102	102	2,129	217	3	102	▼	-6.0
KUWAITRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	200	▲	0.0	
FTI	0.0	0.0	0	0	56	▲	0.0	
WETHAQ	0.0	0.0	0	0	41.0	▲	0.0	
BKIKWT	0.0	0.0	0	0	365	▲	0.0	
Insurance			2,129	217	3	1125.83	▼	-6.52

KINV	98	96	15,036	1,463	2	98	▼	-4.0
FACIL	168	168	73,361	12,325	4	168	▲	-0.0
IFA	30.0	29.0	540,262	15,932	16	29.5	▲	0.0
NINV	88	88	40,000	3,520	3	88	▲	0.0
KPROJ	580	570	921,758	525,452	38	570	▼	-10.0
COAST	32.0	31.5	74,242	2,339	11	31.5	▲	0.0
SECH	36.0	34.0	1,806,082	62,275	64	36.0	▲	2.0
SGC	104	104	40	4	1	104	▼	-2.0
ARZAN	35.0	35.0	100,000	3,500	1	35.0	▼	-2.5
MARKAZ	100	99	1,518	151	2	100	▲	0.0
KMEFIC	27.5	26.5	14,000	372	7	26.5	▼	-0.5
ALAMAN	56	55	242,751	13,351	6	56	▲	0.0
ALOLA	56	55	301,300	10,672	10	56	▲	0.0
ALMAL	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	32.5	▲	0.0
GIH	26.0	25.5	471,372	12,032	24	26.0	▲	0.0
AYAN	46.0	45.0	127,870	5,818	14	46.0	▼	-0.5
BAYANINV	34.0	33.5	102,000	3,447	3	34.0	▼	-0.5

GULF IPO MARKET REMAINED MUTED IN 2015

KUWAIT: The IPO market in the GCC saw muted activity in 2015, after the breakaway year witnessed in 2014, as trends exhibited during the year were similar to post crisis activity observed between 2009-13. Total number of IPOs/listings in the region fell by approximately 65 percent y-o-y to 6 issuances from 17 deals witnessed in 2014. After almost equaling the pre-crisis highs of capital issuances via IPOs in 2014 (\$10.89 billion), total capital raised during 2015 plunged by 86 percent y-o-y to \$ 1.48 billion.

Corporates looking to enter the market remained cautious during the year, as the significant drop in oil prices that transpired during 2015, coupled with geopolitical concerns and global economic uncertainty weighed heavily on IPO issuances and equity markets. KSA remained the most active IPO market in the GCC in 2015, as it saw 4 out of the region's 6 IPO deals listed on its exchange.

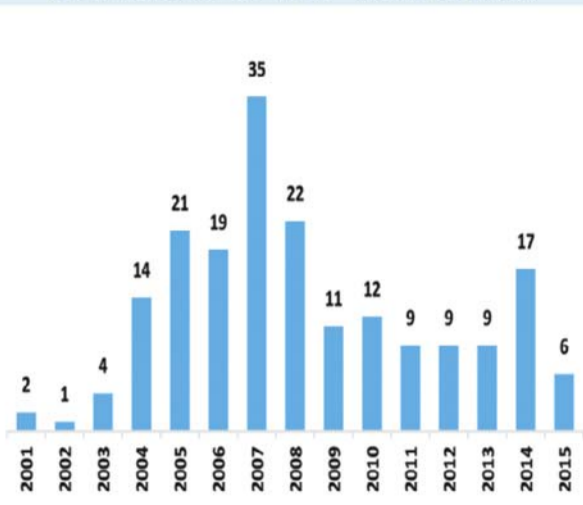
Globally as well, IPO trends receded in 2015, albeit at a slower pace compared to the GCC, as the number of IPO issuances fell by 2 percent to 1218 deals, while capital raised declined by 25 percent to \$ 195.5 billion, as per EY. The Asia Pacific region reportedly dominated IPO activity globally in 2015 with 55 percent of the deals, despite the freeze of Chinese exchanges on IPOs for a period of time during the year.

Barring already announced IPOs in the GCC for 2016, the year forward is likely to push issuers with ambitions of listing to put their plans on hold, until market conditions improve and aforementioned concerns considerably alleviate.

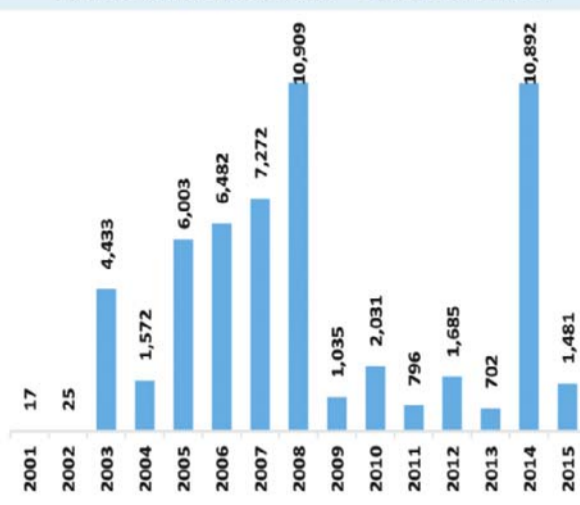
Regional IPO activity in the GCC came to a standstill in the back-half of 2015, as no listings were observed during H2-2015, barring the listing of Al-Andalus Real Estate Company in Saudi Arabia during December-15, which closed by the end of the year. The stock is up for listing during the first week of 2016. Post 2014, activity slowed down in Q1-15, but picked up pace in Q2-15, as bulk of the capital issuances (five out of six listings) were recorded during the quarter.

Though H2-15 was affected by the lull

GCC number of IPOs - 2001 to 2015



GCC IPOs in USD Mn—2001 to 2015



of business activity during Eid & summer holidays, the slowdown in listings was mostly ascribed to the negative sentiment prevalent in the market from falling oil prices, growing geopolitical concerns and broader economic uncertainty. As a result, the number of deals in 2015 even dipped lower than activity observed during 2011-13 (9 listings average). The high level of capital acquired through the primary market in 2014 was boosted by the listing of National Commercial Bank (NCB) of KSA which amounted to approximately \$ 6 billion. Nevertheless, capital issuances dropped by over 69 percent y-o-y in 2015, even after excluding NCB's IPO. In terms of industries which achieved the highest number of IPOs, the Industrial Manufacturing sector achieved two issuances during 2015; and remained the prominent sector behind Financial services in terms of issuances during the past 15 years. On the other hand, after a year dominated by Financial Services (in 2014), the Transportation sector raised the largest amount of capital at approximately \$752 million, from the IPO of Saudi Ground Services Company.

GCC IPOs
After witnessing broad based partici-

pation from all GCC states in the IPO market in 2014, 2015 saw only KSA, Kuwait and Oman take the primary market route. The IPO market in Kuwait which had dried up significantly since 2008, in the aftermath of the global financial slowdown, saw its first significant listing since then, as Mezzan Holding - the food and beverage major, raised \$ 228 Mn through its primary listing on the KSE. In Oman, Power & Utilities player -Phoenix Power Company raised approximately \$ 146 million through its IPO.

KSA continued to remain the dominant player in the region's primary capital markets, notching up over \$ 1 billion through capital issuances and securing over half of the deals witnessed in the GCC. Furthermore, apart from Saudi Ground Services Company, TASI further listed Saudi Company for Hardware (\$ 134 million) and Middle East Paper Co (\$ 120 million) on the exchange during the year. The IPO space in the GCC for 2016 is likely to witness a slow start, as corporates would remain cautious about capital raising through primary markets and would look to gauge market appetite for their issuances. More corporates are likely to push their issuances to the back-half of 2016 or the outer years, until risk appetite returns to primary markets and

uncertainties revolving around oil price, headwinds in the form of geopolitical risks and global economic growth concerns, mainly China dissipate. Upcoming IPOs in the region for the coming year would include Middle East Health Care Co. from KSA, as the company will offer 30 percent of its shares (27.6 million shares) through its initial share sale.

All IPOs listed in the GCC during 2015 remained oversubscribed, with Phoenix Power Company from Oman receiving the maximum response from investors, as the issue was oversubscribed by 15 times. Saudi Company for Hardware from KSA received significant positive response as well, as the issue was oversubscribed by over 6 times, followed by Saudi Ground Services Company from KSA which saw its IPO being oversubscribed by 3.4 times.

Global IPOs

Globally, despite falling short of the standout year achieved in 2014, IPOs in 2015 were in line with the 10-year annual global median of 1,241 deals raising \$ 176.1 billion, according to the EY based on data collected until early Dec-15. The global IPO market for the year reportedly reflected mixed trends across regions as compared to 2014, largely ascribed to

the greater range of financing options available to corporates and the volatile environment prevalent in equity markets. The Asia-Pacific region was the only region to improve on its IPO activity in 2015 as compared to 2014, with 673 deals raising \$ 90.2 billion, up 20 percent and 8 percent y-o-y.

The EMEIA region which includes Middle East and India came in second both in terms of IPO deal numbers and proceeds. Nevertheless capital raised was down 10 percent y-o-y, at \$ 67.1 billion, while the number of deals fell 5 percent y-o-y to 346 IPOs. US IPOs witnessed a challenging year in 2015, as the number of technology IPOs diminished, reportedly due to the marked rise in the availability of private capital. IPO deal numbers were down 41 percent from 2014 at 173 deals, and capital raised through primary issues were down 65 percent to \$ 33.3 billion.

Over 2011-15, Financial Services continued to remain the most active industry in the GCC at the IPO market with 66 deals. Industrial Manufacturing followed with 26 capital issuances followed by Oil & Gas (26) and Real Estate (16). Cautious optimism is expected to prevail in 2016, as volatility, electoral uncertainty and the impact of geopolitical shocks are expected to have significant impact on the IPO market in 2016.

Of the five names that were listed on GCC exchanges during 2015, three names closed the year in the green. This resulted in an average performance of c.20 percent for stocks listed during 2015. Mezzan Holding, which was witnessed its listing in Jun-15 led the way as its share price ended the year by gaining over 56 percent, as against -10 percent for the KSE weighted index during the same period. Saudi Company for Hardware (KSA) and Phoenix Power Company (Oman) followed with gains of over 42 percent and 31 percent for the year respectively. Middle East Paper Co. (KSA) and Saudi Ground Services Co. (KSA) lost ground post listing, driven by the overall negative performance from the TASI index, as the listings ended the year lower by over 20 percent and 9 percent respectively.



PHILADELPHIA: A worker works on the new Comcast Innovation and Technology Center under construction, in Philadelphia. The Commerce Department reports on US construction spending in November on Monday. —AP

US BUSINESS GROUP HOPES TO BOOST TRADE PACT MOMENTUM

WASHINGTON: Leading business groups, often at odds with President Barack Obama, are looking to give momentum to one of his priorities before he leaves office: approval of a trade pact linking 12 nations along the Pacific Rim that make up 40 percent of the world economy.

The Business Roundtable, made up of chief executive officers from large US companies, will endorse the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement yesterday. A trade group representing manufacturers did the same Monday.

Their influence could make supporters in Congress more eager to take the agreement up in an election year. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell recently urged Obama to hold off on sending the agreement to Congress before the elections, warning that it didn't have the votes. John Engler, president of the Business Roundtable, and a former Republican governor of Michigan, said his organization is hoping Congress will approve the pact before it heads home for its August recess.

"The hope is to send the signal now that we're getting pretty comfortable with the agreement and let's get ready to give it serious consideration," Engler told The Associated Press.

The trade agreement took more than five years to stitch together. Participating nations would reduce or eliminate thousands of tariffs that apply to foreign-made goods. The agreement also rolls back regulatory requirements, such as the need to establish an office in a particular country or partner with a local entity, in order to access their markets.

Several presidential candidates in both parties as well as members of Congress have panned the Trans-Pacific Partnership since agreement on the deal's terms was announced in October. Donald Trump said it's a "terrible deal." Democrat Hillary Clinton said "it didn't meet my standards."

That's led to questions about whether Congress would pass the trade pact, even though lawmakers just last year passed legislation designed to speed

TPP's passage without the threat of amendments or filibuster. Support from business groups could ease some lawmakers' concerns about the political environment.

Regulations

The trade group representing manufacturers came out with its endorsement Monday. The group's president and CEO, Jay Timmons, said that without the agreement, the United States would be ceding economic leadership to other global powers, letting them set the rules of economic engagement in the region.

The group has frequently clashed with the Obama administration over new environmental regulations and recently sued to stop stricter limits on smog-causing pollution.

Labor unions have come out overwhelmingly against the trade agreement, saying it will drive wages down, and it's clear that for Obama to get a legacy-setting victory, he'll have to rely on the Republican party to push the legislation to victory. Engler said he's confident that the pact would end up getting more votes than the fast-track legislation that passed last year. He said not all members of the Business Roundtable supported TPP, but there was broad consensus.

"We cannot have a robust economy if the goal is to make things here and sell it to ourselves," Engler said.

The White House said it welcomed the endorsements and that it showed that companies big and small feel the agreement is vital to their ability to compete globally.

"We look forward to working with Congress to ratify this agreement as soon as possible, so that these job creators can begin to take advantage of the 18,000 tax cuts within the agreement and support more higher-paying American jobs," said White House spokeswoman Brandi Hoffine.

The 12 nations in the Trans-Pacific Partnership: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore, Vietnam, United States. —AP

EUROZONE INFLATION HOLDS STEADY AT LOW RATE OF 0.2%

FRUSTRATED ECB EAGER TO SEE MORE PRICE RISES

LONDON: Lower energy costs kept a lid on inflation across the 19-country eurozone economy in December, official figures showed yesterday, in a development that could buoy consumers but frustrate policymakers at the European Central Bank eager to see more substantial price rises.

In an initial estimate, the European Union's statistics agency found that annual consumer price inflation held steady at 0.2 percent. The rate was positive for a third month but was below market expectations for an increase to 0.3 percent and far short of the European Central Bank's target of just under 2 percent.

Energy prices are the main cause for the subdued inflation, though their 5.9 percent drop in December was the smallest decline since July. That's because price levels are compared with a year earlier and much of the fall in oil prices occurred before then. Analysts say oil prices may

weigh on inflation even less in the next few months, helping the overall inflation rate to rise. Timo del Carpio, European economist at RBC Capital Markets, thinks inflation could rise to 0.8 percent in January but conceded that "global political and economic uncertainties" could cause further volatility in oil prices.

Beyond the impact of energy prices, inflation remains subdued in an economy that is struggling to gain momentum - at least compared with the United States.

The core inflation rate, which strips out the volatile items of food, energy, alcohol and tobacco, remained at a low 0.9 percent in the year to December, with high unemployment across much of the eurozone keeping wage increases in check. Low inflation is the main reason why the ECB has embarked on a series of stimulus measures over the past year. The worry is that low inflation becomes

entrenched and turns negative as it has done at times over the past couple of years. Deflation can weigh on economic activity if consumers and businesses anticipate future price declines. The ECB is clearly worried about that prospect. Last month, it extended its government bond-buying program and cut a key interest rate further into negative territory, measures it hopes will generate more economic growth and help get inflation back to target. Analysts think the ECB may have to do more this year, especially if global economic headwinds hinder the eurozone. Recent jitters over the state of the Chinese economy, the world's number 2, are one major reason for concern.

"We still think that the ECB was too timid in December and see it being forced to up the pace of its asset purchases before too long, perhaps in the second quarter," said Jennifer McKeown, senior European economist at Capital Economics. — AP

FOR SOME BRITISH BUSINESS OWNERS, EU MEMBERSHIP IS LOSING ITS APPEAL

CLECKHEATON: Eric Simpson, the owner of a furniture recycling firm in northern England, once believed in the European Union. Now he's unsure how to vote in a referendum on Britain's future in the bloc, reflecting growing doubts among the business community.

Leaving the world's biggest economic area, the market for almost half Britain's exports, may sound like business folly. And yet small company bosses like 55-year-old Simpson - and even executives of some larger firms - are divided over the vote on EU membership that Prime Minister David Cameron has promised. Four decades ago Britons voted decisively to stay in the European "common market," the precursor of the modern EU which has become a major economic and political force as well as a trading bloc. But sitting in the showroom of his Over2Hills business in the Yorkshire town of Cleckheaton, Simpson says Europe has changed for the worse since the last referendum in 1975.

"As a younger man, I thought the EU was good," said Simpson, whose company collects office furniture and sells on refurbished pieces and raw materials. "Some of the old views to help people trade and to help people work within Europe are good, but the EU's got a long way from its original values," he said. "I am completely undecided."

Simpson was too young to vote in 1975 when business bosses mobilised a powerful campaign, casting membership as a way to save the country then known as "the sick man of Europe" by joining Germany and France, whose economies had overtaken Britain's since World War II.

Today economic growth in Britain is a percentage point faster than in France or Germany, and business is less united on the benefits of staying in the EU - important differences that could influence voters as they try to work out whether leaving would hurt their wallets.

Cameron, who is trying to negotiate more favourable EU membership terms for Britain, has promised to call the referendum before the end of 2017 but it could be held as soon as June this year.

Public opinion polls show the gap between the pro- and anti-membership camps is narrow, with a significant number of voters undecided.

BUSINESS DIVIDED

Chief executives of major British corporations believe "Brexit" - a British exit from the EU - is the biggest political threat to the economy. But other business owners are more sceptical, saying EU-imposed

rules are burdensome and costly.

Support has dwindled even among bigger companies over the past six months, according to a quarterly survey conducted by business consultancy Deloitte. The poll of chief financial officers at firms in the FTSE 350 stock index and other large privately-owned companies showed 62 percent backed Britain's continued membership of the EU in the final quarter of last year.

This was sharply down from 74 percent in the second quarter of 2015, with a growing number of executives saying they wanted to see the results of Cameron's renegotiation before deciding.

Outright opposition is much stronger among more modestly-sized firms. A survey conducted last year by the Federation of Small Businesses showed 41 percent of respondents backed leaving the EU, not far behind the 47 percent who wanted to stay, with regulations from Brussels one of the main gripes. Surrounded by colourful refurbished tables and chairs ready for sale, Simpson said he had become ambivalent to the EU partly due to the ever-growing amount of "red tape", believing the burden on his business would be lightened were Britain to leave the EU.

"We're asked to fill in questionnaire after questionnaire about how much we pay people, how much waste we produce and the questionnaires just get

longer and longer and longer," said Simpson, whose firm employs just 23 people. He put the cost of adhering to rules and regulations at up to 30,000 pounds (\$44,200) a year, equivalent to around 10 percent of the firm's annual profit.

"INTO THE UNKNOWN"

Two of Simpson's senior staff are surer of their views, but still reflect the divided business community. Sales manager Jo Green is likely to back leaving the EU. "Britain was a leader and now we're just a follower," said 46-year-old Green, whose parents live in Norway - a country outside the EU but which has the sort of trade agreements with the bloc that supporters of Brexit say Britain could also negotiate.

"(Europe) holds us back in moving forward in our industries, having to comply with their rules and regulations," she added.

But Logistics Manager Kirsty Wilson told Reuters that her "gut instinct" was to remain in the EU. "If it isn't that broken, why do you go into the unknown?" she asked.

Avoiding uncertainty is, broadly, the chief argument of the main business lobby, the Confederation of British Industry, as well as of the boss of the pro-membership campaign. — Reuters



TORONTO: People walk the TSX sign in Toronto on Monday. — AP

OIL PRICES, GLOBAL MARKET VOLATILITY HIT GCC EQUITIES

NBK ECONOMIC UPDATE

KUWAIT: It was a tough year for regional stocks (and world stocks) with most markets ending 2015 well into negative territory. GCC equities underperformed most international peers with the MSCI GCC total return index retreating 15 percent during the year, its weakest performance since 2008. The correction followed three years of solid performance. While regional markets fared worse than their international counterparts, equities in general were thrashed in 2015. Total GCC market capitalization stood at \$904 billion at year end, after shedding \$200 billion during 2015.

Internationally, most equity markets lost ground in 2015 and the MSCI world index closed the year "flat". While losses in these markets were relatively limited, volatility increased in 2015. Indeed, daily losses often exceeded 5 percent in some major markets. Uncertainty surrounding the timing of a Fed rate hike was a primary reason behind the increased volatility. When the Fed finally made its first move since 2008 and raised rates in mid-December, stock markets seemed to have already priced in the hike, and its effect on equity prices was more or less muted.

Worries of weakening Chinese economic fundamentals and some unexpected measures by Chinese authorities also fueled uncertainty during 2015. Chinese equities experienced a strong correction towards the middle of the year and ripples of the correction touched markets globally. Stock markets in China, which had seen a strong rally towards the end of 2014, peaked in May 2015; the Shanghai Shenzhen CSI 300 index was up 107 percent from October 2014. The correction was triggered by economic data signaling some softening in the Chinese economy. Chinese equities managed to retrieve some of their gains, closing the year up 6 percent,

but have since had a very rough opening for 2016.

For a change, the euro area was in better shape, with European stocks among the best performers in 2015. That was despite some renewed concerns surrounding the Greek debt crisis and the risk of a Greek exit from the euro. Overall, European equities outperformed other markets, supported by the ECB's quantitative easing and a depreciating euro. The Euro Stoxx 50 index was up 4 percent on the year (in local currency).

Oil the main driver

For the region, lower oil prices remained the main driver of markets. Oil prices and GCC equities have moved largely in tandem since oil prices started retreating in the second half of 2014. The relationship has been far from symmetrical, with correlations increasing notably whenever oil prices took a dive. With the exception of the large petrochemical sector in the Saudi stock market, GCC equities have little direct exposure to oil prices, though or course oil dependence pervades the GCC economies.

Furthermore, low oil prices do raise concerns about fiscal sustainability and growth in regional economies. While GCC governments have expressed their commitment to support growth in the non-oil sector by sticking to their current development spending plans and maintaining large deficits in the medium term, a prolonged period of low oil prices could force governments to reduce capital spending and benefits, and could put pressure on liquidity. The issuance by the Saudi government of \$28 billion in bonds in 2015 to finance the fiscal deficit served as a reminder of these concerns.

The region's geopolitics continued to affect sen-

timent. Terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and instability in neighboring countries elevated security concerns. While the impact on markets was not always obvious following any particular event, general investor sentiment seemed to be hampered by the heightened security risks (and the new year started with a Saudi-Iranian diplomatic row).

Markets in the region continued to be pressured by a number of domestic and market specific factors. In the UAE, worries about an imminent correction in property markets continued to make headlines. In Qatar, the possible threats to the 2022 World Cup remained a concern, albeit a remote risk. In Kuwait, with stock market liquidity remaining below historic averages and equities trading well below book value, several companies listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange requested to delist, though the companies in question were all relatively small and had little impact on market capitalization.

Positive events

The GCC saw some positive events take place, but these were largely overshadowed by market volatility. In June 2015, Saudi Arabia opened up the market to direct foreign equity ownership, though only to qualified investors. This and other developments, such as the inclusion of KSA stocks in popular international indices and changes to trading and ownership restrictions, should continue to impact the Saudi market. Qatar also benefited from increased foreign investor interest with the upgrading in late 3Q15 of the equity market to "Emerging Market" status by FTSE. In Kuwait, the CMA issued the final amendments to its bylaws late in the year, a step generally seen as positive for the market.

All GCC markets ended the year in the red. Saudi

Arabia and Dubai were the worst performers, down 17 percent each. Despite a stellar performance earlier in the year, on the back of the decision to open up the market to foreign investors, Saudi equities were weighed down by further decline in oil prices. Dubai, with a larger foreign investor base, is typically more exposed to international factors (including oil prices). Qatar, Oman and Bahrain were each down 15 percent in 2015. Kuwait's value-weighted index was down 13 percent on the year and Abu Dhabi outperformed the region with a smaller decline of 5 percent. Market liquidity shrank in 2015 and should stay under some further pressure in the coming months. With banks now turning to fixed income markets to issue Basel III compliant perpetual and other bonds, and sovereigns also turning to capital markets to help finance their deficits, some liquidity is bound to be directed away from equities. Also, with regional rates now starting to rise following the first Fed hike late December, fixed-income assets are getting more attractive.

Regional markets are likely to continue to be moved by a number of regional and global factors in the coming months. Economic data from the major economies will have important implications for oil prices and the global outlook. Geopolitics will also remain a key driver particularly in light of the recent developments between Saudi and Iran. Chinese equities were already down 7 percent ytd in the first two trading sessions of 2016 and seem to be setting the mood for world equities, down too on the back of some weak economic data releases. More fundamentally for the GCC markets will be looking at governments' fiscal and reform plans for the coming years in order to gauge the implications for non-oil growth in GCC economies.

TOMORROW IS GULF BANK'S AL DANAH MILLIONAIRE DRAW

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced that The Al Danah KD 1 Million draw will take place tomorrow Thursday, 7 January at 7 pm at the Grand Avenues at the Avenues Mall. Gulf Bank invites you to attend this exciting event.

In addition to the lucky KD 1 million Al-Danah winner, the winners of the KD 250,000 and KD 50,000 cash prizes will be announced. As always, a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry will be at Gulf Bank's Al-Danah draw. Over the course of the event, the Bank will also unveil the Al-Danah draw line-up for 2016.

Every Al-Danah account holder with a minimum of KD 200 maintained in their account before the closing date is eligible to win and is automatically entered into the Al Danah draws. Opening an Al-Danah account

and being part of the draw is simple, as no salary transfer is required. Minors require their parents or their legal guardian to open the account on their behalf.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account offers a number of unique services including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which helps account holders deposit their money at their convenience; as well as the Al-Danah online calculator to help customers calculate their chances of becoming an Al-Danah winner. The Al-Danah account additionally provides loyalty chances, in which all chances customers accrued in the previous year are added to that of the following year; therefore, the total chances an existing customer had at the end of 2015 will be added to his/her 2016 chances.



FORD TRIPLING SIZE OF AUTONOMOUS VEHICLE DEVELOPMENT FLEET

DUBAI: Ford is tripling its fleet of fully autonomous Fusion Hybrid test vehicles - making it the largest in the automotive industry - and will use a new generation of cutting-edge sensor technology as the company further accelerates its autonomous vehicle development plans.

This year, Ford will add an additional 20 Fusion Hybrid autonomous vehicles, bringing the company's autonomous fleet to about 30 vehicles being tested on roads in California, Arizona and Michigan.

"Using the most advanced technology and expanding our test fleet are clear signs of our commitment to make autonomous vehicles available for millions of people - not just the elite," said Raj Nair, Ford executive vice president, Global Product Development, and chief technical officer. "With more autonomous vehicles on the road, we are accelerating the development of software algorithms that serve to make our vehicles even smarter." Building on more than a decade of Ford's autonomous vehicle research, this expansion is a key element of Ford Smart Mobility - the plan to take Ford to the next level in connectivity, mobility, autonomous vehicles, the customer experience and data and analytics. The newest vehicles are on Ford's third-generation autonomous vehicle development platform, built using Fusion Hybrid sedans, similar to the second-generation platform.

Ford recently announced its fully autonomous cars will take to the streets of California this year. The company already tests autonomous vehicles at its proving grounds, as well as on public roads in Michigan. Ford also was the first automaker to test a fully autonomous vehicle at Mcity - a 32-acre, full-scale simulated real-world urban environment at the University of Michigan.

Advances in sensing, software and hardware

Ford now is using Velodyne's newest LiDAR sensors - named Solid-State Hybrid (SH) Ultra PUCK(tm) Auto for its hockey puck-like size and shape - on its third-generation autonomous vehicle platform.

SH Ultra PUCK Auto sensors boast a longer range of 200 meters, making it the first auto-specific Solid-State Hybrid LiDAR sensor capable of handling different driving scenarios. The Ultra Puck will accelerate the development and validation of Ford's "virtual driver" software which serves as the decision-making brain that directs vehicle systems.

SH Ultra PUCK Auto's more targeted field of view and lightweight, sleek design make it optimal for packaging on an autonomous vehicle. The sensor's design means Ford can reduce the amount of LiDAR sensors from four to two on the third-generation Fusion Hybrid autonomous vehicles yet collect the same amount data as before.

"Adding the latest generation of computers and sensors, including the smaller and more affordable SH Ultra PUCK Auto sensors, brings Ford ever closer to having a fully autonomous vehicle ready for production," said Jim McBride, Ford's technical leader for autonomous vehicles. The vehicle's hardware systems, which interact continuously with the virtual driver, are equally important.

The third-generation autonomous Fusion Hybrid sedans will have redundant features and duplicate wiring for many systems, including throttle, steering and brakes. These redundancies will act as backups, if needed. Even the sedans' hybrid-electric powertrain can be considered a redundant system because the vehicle still has a source of power if either the battery-electric motor or gasoline-powered engine shuts down.

Ford's autonomous journey

Ford has been using Velodyne LiDAR sensors for roughly a decade, dating back to the DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) autonomous vehicle challenges.

During that time, Velodyne CEO and founder David Hall consulted with Ford's Jim McBride about LiDAR

challenges, supported by four engineers who still are on the company's autonomous vehicle development team today.

"We've come a long way since DARPA," said McBride. "A decade ago, no one in the field knew what the art of the possible was. Today, we're all hustling to make the most ambitious dreams become a reality."

The first-generation autonomous vehicle platform helped Ford understand that fully autonomous driving would be technically feasible in the near future and what it would take to achieve these through ambitious research.

Fusion Hybrid sedans were chosen for the second-generation vehicles because they have the newest and most advanced electrical architecture. With the latest generation of computers and sensors - including the



technology and how it could be used for 3D visualization. Within the year, Hall invented the SH LiDAR, consolidating the detector system with 64 lasers into one elegant part and rotating it for a 360 degree range of view. Ford began using the first Velodyne LiDAR sensor, an innovation that significantly changed the autonomous vehicle landscape. LiDAR emits short pulses of laser light to precisely scan the surrounding environment millions of times per second and determine the distance to objects. This allows the vehicle to create a real-time, high-definition 3-D image of whatever's around it.

Ford's first generation autonomous vehicle platform was built using a Ford F-250 Super Duty for participation in the DARPA challenges in 2005 and 2007. In 2013, Ford introduced its second-generation autonomous vehicle platform, using a Fusion Hybrid sedan. Ford was one of only six teams to participate in both the DARPA Desert Classic and Urban Finals chal-

smaller but more advanced Velodyne LiDAR HDL-32E sensor - Ford's autonomous vehicle platform took a step closer to production intent.

The objective of the second-generation vehicle fleet is to test many of the computing and sensor components required to achieve fully autonomous driving capability, defined by SAE International as Level 4, which does not require driver to intervene and take control of the vehicle. Last summer, Ford transitioned from the research phase of development to the advanced engineering phase.

Meanwhile, Ford continues using and honing other sensor types, including cameras, radar and ultrasonic devices, to deliver semi-autonomous features to customers today. These include Adaptive Cruise Control, Active Park Assist, Lane Departure Warning, Lane Keeping Aid, Pedestrian Detection, Pro Trailer Backup Assist and vehicle-to-vehicle connection technology already available on millions of Ford vehicles today.

OOREDOO EXPRESSES GRATITUDE TO CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of the international Ooredoo Group, announced yesterday that its Chief Operating Officer Hani Elkukhun, has resigned from his post citing personal reasons.



Ooredoo Kuwait's General Manager and CEO Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Thani expressed his gratitude to Elkukhun, noting that he contributed greatly to the company's strategy, which reinforced its position in the market as a leader in innovative telecommunication services.

Elkukhun overlooked several major achievements related to technology coverage, marketing campaigns, promotions, in addition to boosting sales and improving customer experience.

Ooredoo's operations in Kuwait date back to December 1999 when it launched wireless services as the second operator. The company today provides mobile, broadband internet and corporate managed services tailored to the needs of customers and businesses.

Ooredoo is guided by its vision of enriching people's lives and its belief that it can stimulate human growth by leveraging communications to help people achieve their full potential.



UNB WINS INTERNATIONAL AWARD 'LUCA PACIOLI'

KUWAIT: Union National Bank was awarded the prestigious International Award - 'Luca Pacioli' award which included a Trophy, a certificate and a medallion from the Europe Business Assembly in the United Kingdom for UNB's strong performance in the international financial and investment market, implementation of modern banking technologies, as well as the high standards of services and customer satisfaction.

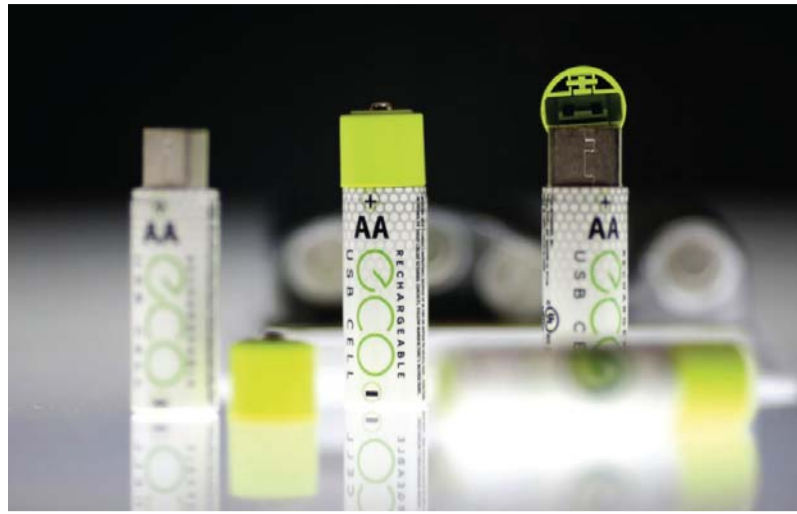
The awards were received on behalf of UNB CEO by Mohammad Ali, Executive Vice President (EVP), Union National Bank, during the Socrates Award Ceremony held at Oxford, in UK, on 15th December 2015.

The Socrates Committee, established in Oxford, is an international independent society that over the past decade has recognized the best of the best. Amongst its members are leaders in business, science and culture.

Mohammad Ali, Executive Vice President at UNB commented: "It is a great honor to receive the prestigious 'Luca Pacioli' Award. UNB has delivered outstanding financial

results based on a robust customer-focused business model and has created a strong culture of service excellence. In the process it has received various regional and international prestigious awards and accolades as testament to its strong customer centricity and service excellence standards. This award is yet another testimonial to UNB's continued progress and distinguished achievement," added Mr. Mohammad Ali.

The Europe Business Assembly (EBA) is an independent corporation for development and management of economic, social and humanitarian collaboration. As a non-governmental organization, EBA promotes transformation of state-of-the-art experience and economic practices, establishment of economic, educational, cultural, and scientific ties, creation of national business elites. The main mission of the EBA institutions and representative offices is the creation of a positive image of dynamically developing regions, companies and individuals in the European and global business community.



A Zero hand-controlled robotics kit is used on the floor of The CES Unveiled press event on Monday in Las Vegas, ahead of the CES 2016 Consumer Electronics Show. (Centre) The ECO SUBCell rechargeable which uses lithium polymer technology and can be charged by most USB ports is displayed in a showcase. (Right) A 3D drawing pen from xyzPrinting is displayed. — AP/ AFP photos

SMART-TECH FUTURE BECKONS FROM CES GADGET SHOW

LAS VEGAS: Look around. How many computing devices do you see? Your phone, probably; maybe a tablet or a laptop. Your car, the TV set, the microwave, bedside alarm clock, possibly the thermostat, and others you've never noticed. Much of that computing isn't doing much while segregated into individual devices. But many of these gadgets have the potential to get smarter by connecting to their fellows, which in turn could open the door to a brave new "Internet of Things."

To see where that might be taking us, there's no better place than the annual gadget extravaganza formerly known as the Consumer Electronics Show - and now simply as CES. The show, which starts today in Las Vegas, is the place for companies large and small to show off new connected devices. These range from the seemingly trivial - for instance, smart umbrellas that message you if you leave them behind - to the undeniably helpful, such as navigation devices that display driving directions onto your windshield so you don't have to take your eyes off the road.

And while traditional consumer electronics such as phones and TVs account for about half of revenue in US consumer tech, they aren't growing as quickly as newer connected devices, according to the Consumer Technology Association, the organizer of CES. For instance, smart home devices, such as cameras, thermostats and locks, are expected to grow 21 percent to 8.9 million units in 2016, or \$1.2 billion in revenue.

According to the McKinsey Global Institute, a division of the consulting giant McKinsey & Co, the value created by connecting the world's devices could hit \$11 trillion annually by 2025, a mind-boggling sum that represents over half of US economic output in a year. Most of the value comes from industrial uses - like cleaner air from smarter energy use and fewer factory shut-downs due to smarter maintenance. But trillions in benefits are expected to come from consumer-bought products: safer streets because of better-driving cars, robots that take care of household chores and health and fitness trackers that let us know when our bodies need medical attention. "There's a big value in avoiding pain and suffering," says



Slow Control's Yum & Done, the first smart spoon and a cuddly toy to help make kids eat their vegetables, is displayed. A button on the Bluetooth-enabled spoon activates an app on a smartphone or tablet that is covered by a cuddly toy to keep a child's attention while being fed from the spoon.

report co-author Michael Chui.

Of course, people have been making big projections for the Internet of Things for years, yet progress remains halting and fragmentary. Major technology companies can purposefully make it tougher to interact with other companies' gadgets for business reasons. More data can mean less privacy. In recent years, CES has begun catering more heavily to startups hoping to break through the noise. The sprawling show has sections for wearable fitness gadgets, drones, autonomous vehicles, education, virtual reality, video games, robots, 3-D printers and smart homes.

That's largely a reaction to the fact that many of technology's biggest names have been no-shows for some time. Apple Inc has skipped the show since the 1990s, and Microsoft Corp's then-CEO Steve Ballmer gave the company's last CES keynote in 2012. Google parent Alphabet Inc and Amazon.com Inc hold their own events to release products. And the Consumer Technology

Association that runs CES is aiming for attendance this year at or below last year's record 176,000.

Maturity

Shawn DuBravac, the CTA's chief economist, argues the show's maturity is a good thing, its focus transforming over the last two decades from what was "technologically possible" to what's "technologically meaningful." It's no longer about a robot that can walk up steps. It's about robots that actually mow your lawn. It's worth bearing in mind that CES is first and foremost a venue for promoting the tech industry - at least the non-Google/Apple/Amazon/Microsoft part of it. Sometimes the promotion falls flat; 3-D screen technology unveiled at CES in 2010 went from the next big thing to a mostly unused feature. Netbooks introduced in 2009 took a backseat to the iPad released a year later. And concepts such as the smart home have taken a really long time to materialize.



Francesca Dubsky displays the bottom side of the Hairmax LaserBand 82. The \$795 unit, designed by Pinin Farina, uses 90-second treatments of red laser light at 655 nanometers to grow hair by increasing blood flow to the scalp and stimulating hair follicles.

For all we know, the Internet of Things could be next on that list. Last summer, two researchers described how they hacked into and took control of a Jeep Cherokee via its cellular connection to the Internet. Cybersecurity firm Rapid7 gave a failing grade to eight of nine popular baby monitors for simple and obvious weaknesses like failing to encrypt Internet-streamed video to prevent eavesdropping or using unchangeable passwords that malicious types could easily find online. Such issues point to a deeper problem: Many would-be connected devices max out their capabilities doing one thing well, leaving little headroom for security protection that wasn't ever necessary in an unconnected world. Such gadgets could offer hackers an easy route into home or work computers. The fact that many such devices are produced by startups, often crowded and on shoestring budgets, means security is often an afterthought. And the more devices there are, the bigger the potential problem. "With the Internet of Things, we really have to

think in terms of scale," says Rapid7 senior security consultant Mark Stanislav. Another cautionary note: Regulators are tapping the brakes on entire industries that are getting lavish attention at CES. In December, California's Department of Motor Vehicles released restrictive draft rules for self-driving cars. They would require licensed human drivers to be ready to take the wheel. Google, which has already a prototype autonomous car that lacks a steering wheel, decried the decision, saying such handoffs could create more problems than they solve. Such regulations could also crimp the utility of self-parking cars that can act like robotic valets.

Similarly, new drone rules from the Federal Aviation Administration require approval for commercial use and a \$5 registration fee for hobbyists. A report released in December by Bard College's Center for the Study of the Drone said there were 241 reports to the FAA of near-collisions between drones and manned aircraft from Dec 2013 to Sept 2015. — AP



SEOUL: A researcher from the Intelligent Vehicle IT Research Center at Seoul National University shows the smartphone application for the driverless car called Snuber with a fixture on its roof with devices that scan road conditions at Seoul National University's campus yesterday. — AP

DRIVERLESS TAXI IN SEOUL OFFERS GLIMPSE OF FUTURE

SEOUL: A South Korean university is testing a sedan that can pick up and transport passengers without a human driver, giving a glimpse into the future of autonomous public transport. Seo Seung-Woo, director of the Intelligent Vehicle IT Research Center at Seoul National University, said the university has been testing the driverless taxi to transport handicapped students around campus. The vehicle, called Snuber, has been navigating the 4,109 sq m campus for the past six months without any accidents. It works in conjunction with a hailing app created by the university.

Companies around the world are betting that automated driving technology will transform public transportation. In Japan, a company called Robot Taxi Inc plans to offer a full commercial service in 2020. In Greece, driverless buses called CityMobil2 have been tested in real traffic. General Motors Co said Monday it is investing \$500 million in ride-hailing company Lyft Inc and forming a partnership that could eventually lead to on-demand, self-driving cars.

South Korean companies, however, have been slow to embrace the self-driving technology. The country's largest carmaker, Hyundai Motor Co, said it expects to roll out a fully auto-

mated car in 2030. Only this month, Samsung Electronics created a team to focus on autonomous driving. On the campus of Seoul National University, many heads turn as the grey sedan passes. It has turret on its roof with devices that scan road conditions. Seo's team outfitted the Genesis sedan with a camera, laser scanners and other sensors.

For now, due to regulations banning autonomous vehicles on the roads, a driver is behind the steering wheel and can override the automation in emergency situations. The car cannot travel faster than 30 km per hour because of the speed limit on campus. There are no full traffic lights but researchers have programmed Snuber to navigate around other challenges. The vehicle applies a brake pedal at a red stop sign and at a pedestrian crosswalk. When another vehicle stops in the middle of the road, the automated sedan will scan the other lanes to detect vehicles traveling from the opposite direction. If there are no other vehicles, the Snuber moves into the oncoming lane to pass the vehicle. However, it is not yet ready for use outside the relatively controlled campus environment. "It will take a huge amount of time and effort," said Seo. — AP

FARADAY REVEALS SLEEK, SPORTY CAR IN LAS VEGAS

MYSTERY ELECTRIC CAR STARTUP UNVEILS PROTOTYPE

LAS VEGAS: The automotive future according to a new electric car maker looks an awful lot like a Corvette crossed with the Batmobile. California-based Faraday Future debuted its sleek electric concept racecar Monday night during the annual CES show that focuses on consumer gadgets and has increasingly become a way for carmakers to show off their latest technological feats. The 18-month-old company that has remained much of a mystery until recently revealing its primary backer, Chinese billionaire Jia Yueting, won \$335 million worth of incentives from the state of Nevada last month to build a \$1 billion manufacturing facility in a hard-hit Las Vegas suburb.

Not even Nevada Gov Brian Sandoval, who pushed for the incentive package and attended Monday's debut, had seen the concept car. Neither had North Las Vegas Mayor John Lee although he visited the California headquarters four months ago and saw "the intelligence building around the car." "There was no doubt about it that that was the exclamation point," he said, referring to the negotiations to land the manufacturing plant in his city. He was convinced, he said.

Emphasizing the speed at which it will develop and build cars, the company's Senior Vice President of Research and Development Nick Sampson said the company would deliver its first production car in a couple of years. Sampson said Faraday had so far hired 750 people globally with most at its California headquarters and planned to break ground on its North Las Vegas plant in a few weeks with plans to hire 4,500 people there. He said his company would utilize digital design and testing of parts and modular construction, making it quicker than competitors.

"You don't need to have a hundred year legacy in the automotive industry to define what the next generation of transportation needs to look and feel like," Sampson said, taking a stab at traditional car makers and likening the future of cars to the debut of the Apple iPhone nine years ago making several models of cell phones obsolete. But Sampson wasn't saying what the company would build first for production, how much



LAS VEGAS: The Faraday Future FFZERO1 concept vehicle is unveiled at FF's pre-CES reveal event on Monday. — AP

it spent so far and also wasn't revealing much more information about the company's investors. The company is still shopping for a battery supplier, he said.

The presentation included Ding Lei, co-founder of LETV described as the Netflix of China, who said afterward that his company intends to partner with Faraday on research and development. The road to make a profitable electric car company hasn't been easy for one of the most well-known in the marketplace. Tesla has only made a quarterly profit once since its 2003 founding. And traditional automakers have been utilizing modular design and augmented reality in development for years.

Sampson said the difference is that Faraday will be designing only electric cars unlike other car-makers that might have to spend more time redesigning a model to fit a hybrid engine, V6 or V8. "We're developing one core motor technol-

ogy," Sampson said. The company dubbed Monday's debut that included a clear fin running half the length of the car, a single-line of a smile for a headlight and a white interior with a seat inspired by NASA design the FFZero1.

The low-profile waist-high car remained under a white sheet, the centerpiece on a white stage in front of white curtains for most of Monday's night's presentation inside a large tent packed with people and press waiting for the reveal. "It's an extreme tablet on wheels," said Richard Kim, Faraday's head of global design, saying the concept included the ability to project images on the road much like a "digital copilot," a smart phone dock in the steering wheel, tunnels below the car to funnel air through and a designed horizontal crease along the sides of the car he called the "UFO" line to signal the car was otherworldly. It's a "car of concepts," he said rather than a concept car. — AP

HOVERBOARD SPARKS AUSTRALIA HOUSE FIRE

SYDNEY: An Australian family home was gutted when a hoverboard caught fire as it was charging, officials said yesterday. Authorities said the hoverboard - a Christmas gift - was plugged into the wall in a young girl's bedroom in Melbourne when it ignited. The family were able to escape after a smoke alarm alerted them to

the danger but the house was severely damaged. Hoverboards - in reality self-balancing electric scooters - have surged in popularity and are now selling in Australia for as little as Aus\$200 (US\$150).

But concerns have arisen about the hazard they pose for street or sidewalk traffic, safety issues for riders, and reports that

some poorly designed chargers can lead to fires. In December the Australian consumer watchdog said it had two safety concerns with the products - fires that have occurred overseas from the faulty design of some hoverboard chargers and user injuries by falls. Hollywood star Russell Crowe was recently blocked from taking a hoverboard

on a Virgin Australia flight, while several other airlines do not allow them. The girl's father, Ash Ibraheim, said he had made sure the hoverboards he bought three of his four daughters for Christmas met Australian standards. "We heard there were a lot of imported versions that weren't complying, so we wanted to make sure we

got the right thing," he told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. He said he was grateful that the fire, which was sparked about 10 minutes after the board had been plugged in to charge, did not start when the girls were sleeping. "By the time the fire brigade came the whole house was on fire," he said. — AFP

EL NINO STORMS SLAM DROUGHT-PARCHED CALIFORNIA



PHILADELPHIA: Photo shows ice on the Delaware River in view of Philadelphia. The National Weather Service says the newest band of Arctic air could plunge parts of the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic into deep freezes that haven't been felt since the mid-1990s. — AP

SAN FRANCISCO: A strong storm was forecast for Northern California, prompting officials to issue flash flood watches for several rural areas hit by last year's wildfires. El Nino storms lined up over the Pacific started soaking California with light rain Monday but a series of stronger systems are expected to arrive starting today, forecasters said. The National Weather Service issued a flash-flood watch for Northern California communities affected by several destructive wildfires last summer and fall. At least two more storms are expected to follow today and tomorrow, possibly bringing as much as 3 inches of rain. As much as 15 inches of rain could fall in the next 16 days in Northern California, with about 2 feet of snow expected in the highest points of the Sierra Nevada, said Johnny Powell, a forecaster with the National Weather Service.

To the south, persistent wet conditions could put some Los Angeles County communities at risk of flash-flooding along with mud and debris flows, especially in wildfire burn areas. The brewing El Nino system - a warming pattern in the Pacific Ocean that alters weather worldwide - is expected to impact California and the rest of the nation in the coming weeks and months. El Nino storms in the early 1980s and late 1990s brought about twice as much rain as normal, Jet Propulsion Laboratory climatologist Bill Patzert said. The weather also caused mudslides, flooding and high surf.

In recent weeks, a weather pattern partly linked with El Nino has turned winter upside-down across the nation, bringing spring-like warmth to the Northeast, a risk of tornadoes in the South, and so much snow across the West that even ski slopes have been overwhelmed. Big parts of the country are basking in above-average temperatures, especially east of the Mississippi River and across the Northern Plains. In Arizona, El Nino conditions will help push a parade of Pacific Ocean storms inland with light to moderate snow falling in the high country and rain in lower elevations, forecasters said Monday. The National Weather Service says a series of weather systems will drop snow in the high country and rain in lower elevations as the week progresses.

El Nino's effects on California's drought are difficult to predict, but Patzert said it should bring at least some relief. Doug Carlson, spokesman for the California Department of Water Resources, pointed out that four years of drought have left California with a water deficit that is too large for one El Nino year to totally overcome. The record drought in California has forced Gov. Jerry Brown to order cities to conserve water by 25 percent compared to the same period in 2013. State officials said residents in November missed their 25 percent water conservation mandate for a second month running.

Felicia Marcus, chair of the State Water Resources Control Board, says California remains on course to beat its long-term goal through February. Marcus wouldn't say ahead of Tuesday's formal announcement exactly how much residents fell short of the target. In Southern California, Residents of the Silverado Canyon burn area in Orange County and the Solimar burn area in Ventura County were told they may want to evacuate in advance of the storm, but have not been ordered to do so. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti warned people to clear gutters and anything in their yard that might clog storm drains; assemble an emergency kit; and stockpile sandbags if their home is susceptible to flooding.

An effort also was underway to provide shelter for homeless people. "We want as little damage and destruction and as little death as possible," Garcetti said. Between 2 and 3.5 inches of rain is predicted to fall across the coastal and valley areas of Southern California through Friday, with up to 5 inches falling in the mountains. "This series of storms are definitely associated with the El Niño phenomenon in that the jet stream has taken a fairly significant southward trajectory in the Pacific on its return flow back into the California coastline," said Bob Benjamin, a forecaster with the weather service. — AP

VOTE TO REPEAL OBAMA'S HEALTH LAW MARKS TESTY START TO 2016

'TAXPAYER FUNDING OF ABORTION PROVIDERS IS WRONG'

WASHINGTON: The House is poised to send a bill to President Barack Obama's desk repealing his signature health care law, a sharply partisan start to a presidential election year in which legislating may take a back seat to politics on Capitol Hill. The legislation will be the first order of business when the House reconvenes later this week. After dozens of repeal votes in the House and Senate, it will mark the first time a bill repealing the health law makes it all the way to the White House.

Obama will veto the measure, which also would cut money for Planned Parenthood and already has passed the Senate under special rules protecting it from Democratic obstruction. But that's the point for Republicans, who intend to schedule a veto override vote around Jan 22, when anti-abortion activists hold an annual march in Washington. Republicans said Monday the vote will fulfill promises to their constituents while highlighting the clear choice facing voters in the November presidential election. "Obamacare is a failure and taxpayer funding of abortion providers is wrong."

With this bill, we will force President Obama to show the American people where he stands," said House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif. "Congress is making its choice clear." Democrats rejected the approach, in a clash that could set the tone for a partisan year. "They have no plan. Republicans just want to undo what Democrats have fought for decades," Democratic presidential front-runner Hillary Clinton said at a town hall meeting in Davenport, Iowa. She said if a Republican succeeds Obama in the White House, the health law "will be repealed and then you will have to start all over again."



President Barack Obama

Conservative demands

In the Senate, which reconvenes Jan 11, a week later than the House, early action will include a vote on a proposal by Sen Rand Paul, the Kentucky Republican who is running for president, for an "audit" of the Federal Reserve. Democrats are likely to block it. But, like the health repeal bill in the House, the vote will answer conservative demands in an election year. Also expected early in the Senate's year is legislation dealing with Syrian refugees, following House passage of a bill clamping down on the refugee program. Conservatives were angry when 2015 ended without the bill advancing. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky promised a vote, though without specifying whether it would be the House bill or something else. The House Benghazi committee will

continue its investigation of the attacks that killed four Americans in Libya in 2012, with a closed-door interview of former CIA Director David Petraeus today and former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta on Friday. That comes amid new Democratic accusations of political motives aimed at Clinton after the committee chairman, Rep Trey Gowdy, R-SC, endorsed Sen Marco Rubio, R-Fla for president.

Clinton was secretary of state at the time of the Benghazi attacks. New Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin promised a bold agenda after succeeding former Rep John Boehner as speaker last fall, and that will begin to take shape at a House-Senate GOP retreat next week in Baltimore. Thus far Ryan has pledged efforts to overhaul the tax system and offer a Republican alternative to the health overhaul.

Criminal justice

In the Senate, McConnell's primary focus is on protecting the handful of vulnerable Republican senators whose seats are at risk as Democrats fight to regain the Senate majority they lost a year ago.

That means weighing the political risks and benefits of every potential vote to endangered incumbents in Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and New Hampshire. Such considerations could determine whether McConnell allows criminal justice overhaul legislation - the one issue cited by Obama and lawmakers of both parties as ripe for compromise - to come to the floor.

McConnell already has suggested that prospects for approval of Obama's long-sought Asia trade pact are dim, and the senator has ruled out major tax overhaul legislation as long as Obama is president. McConnell could also try to put his thumb on the scales of the presidential race with two GOP senators having emerged as leading contenders. Sen Ted Cruz of Texas has been a thorn in McConnell's side, once calling the GOP leader a liar, and has frosty relations with his fellow senators. Rubio is on good terms with fellow lawmakers and has been endorsed by several of them.

McConnell could schedule debate on an issue with the potential to favor Rubio politically over Cruz, such as National Security Agency wiretapping authority. But McConnell insists he is staying out of it. "We all have a big stake in having a nominee for president who can win, and that means carrying purple states, and I'm sure pulling for a nominee who can do that," McConnell told The Associated Press in a recent interview, refusing to elaborate on who might fit that description. — AP

11-YEAR-OLD BITTEN BY SHARK IN AUSTRALIA'S GREAT BARRIER REEF

SYDNEY: An 11-year-old boy was mauled by a shark in the waters of Australia's Great Barrier Reef yesterday, officials said, the second attack in the area in four days. The boy was "wading in knee-high water" on the edge of a beach on Heron Island, some 460 kilometers north of Queensland state's capital Brisbane, when he was bitten by a black-tip reef shark on his lower right leg, according to Queensland Ambulance. "The child was removed from the water by his father and presented to the medical Centre (on the island), where he was treated by a registered nurse," paramedic Brad Lawson said.

A Queensland Ambulance spokesman told AFP the injuries were significant but not life-threatening and the boy was in a stable condition. A black-tip reef shark is usually found around coral reefs and shoals and can grow up to 1.8 meters long. The attack comes after a 31-year-old man was bitten by a shark-reportedly a three-meter animal-on Saturday while spearfishing off Miall Island, also near the southern end of the reef. Ambulance officials told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation that the man sustained the wounds while repeatedly punching the shark until it left.

A spate of attacks in neighboring New South Wales state last year led authorities to implement a range of shark-prevention measures to reduce encounters during the busy 2015-16 summer season. Measures include the testing of aerial drones to track sharks' movements, although the state government has ruled out culling the animals. There were 14 attacks in New South Wales last year-including the death of a Japanese surfer-compared to three in 2014, according to data compiled by Sydney's Taronga Zoo. In Queensland, there were four non-fatal attacks in 2015, compared to one in 2014. Experts say attacks are increasing as water sports become more popular and bait fish move closer to shore, but fatalities remain rare. — AFP

'FIRST-OF-A-KIND' DRUG APPROVALS ON THE RISE

WASHINGTON: Approvals for first-of-a-kind drugs climbed last year, pushing the annual tally of new US drugs to its highest level in 19 years. The rising figures reflect an industry-wide focus on drugs for rare and hard-to-treat diseases, which often come with streamlined reviews, extra patent protections and higher price tags. The Food and Drug Administration approved 45 drugs with never-before-sold ingredients in 2015, edging past the previous year's tally of 41, which had been the highest number since 1996. FDA drug approvals are considered a barometer of industry innovation and the government's efficiency in reviewing new therapies.

While the trend toward specialty medicines is good news for industry and patients, it is likely to fuel the ongoing debate over rising prescription drug prices. That issue has become a top concern for consumers, a subject of congressional scrutiny and even an issue on the presidential campaign trail. Democratic candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders have both outlined proposals designed to curb prices.

The FDA is not allowed to consider prices when approving medicines, though some experts argue it should. One of the most expensive drugs of the year was Vertex Pharmaceuticals' Orkambi for cystic fibrosis, priced at \$259,000 for a year's supply. The drug improves lung function in patients with the deadly inheritable disease, which causes the buildup of sticky mucus in the lungs, pancreas and other internal organs. Pfizer's breast cancer drug, Ibrance, was priced at \$118,200 per year, which was typical of new cancer drugs. Even some drugs for more prevalent diseases came with high price-tags: Bristol-Myers Squibb's hepatitis C pill, Daklinza, costs \$63,000 for a 12-week regimen.

Analysts say drugmakers are getting better at picking the most promising drugs in their research and development pipelines. Between 2007 and 2011, only one in 19 drugs entering early-stage testing actually reached the market, according to industry data analyzed by Bernstein's Tim Anderson. Today, one in 13 early-stage drugs make it to market. — AP

AFRICAN BOY MAULED BY CHIMPS TO UNDERGO FACIAL SURGERY

STONY BROOK: Dunia Sibomana was considered the lucky one two years ago when a group of chimpanzees jumped from the trees and attacked him and two other boys as they played near a preserve in their native Democratic Republic of the Congo. Dunia, unlike the others, survived. But he was severely disfigured: His lips ripped off and one cheek torn apart, leaving him with muscle damage that make it hard for him to eat, swallow and communicate.

Now, 8-year-old Dunia is set to undergo a rare and complicated surgery at a Long Island hospital that will use tissue and muscle from his forearm to recreate both lips. The hope is that he will once again be able to open and close his mouth, and eat and talk normally.

"As you can imagine, not having any lips, the food can just come right out," said Dr Leon Klempler, an associate professor of dentistry at Stony Brook Children's Hospital, where Dunia will undergo the operation. "He drools all the time and can't pronounce different words."

Monday's planned eight-hour procedure will be the first of three major operations for Dunia, who was brought from the Congo in November with the help of the non-profit foundation Smile Rescue for Kids. Dr Alexander Dagum, the hospital's chief of plastic and reconstructive surgery, said he believes there are only three other documented cases where the same surgery has been performed. The hospital is covering the cost of the surgery and the doctors have all donated their time. — AP

BAD AIR PLAGUED BEIJING FOR NEARLY HALF OF 2015



BEIJING: A woman wearing a mask for protection against pollution walks on a pedestrian overhead bridge as office buildings in Central Business District of Beijing are shrouded with smog. — AP

BEIJING: Beijingers spent nearly half of 2015 breathing air that did not meet national standards, Chinese media reported yesterday, as the city struggles to address a smog problem that has provoked widespread public anger. The Chinese capital faced 179 polluted days last year, with 46 of them considered heavily polluted, according to the Global Times, citing figures from the city's environmental protection bureau. Levels of PM2.5 - harmful microscopic particles that penetrate deep into the lungs-averaged 80.6 micrograms per cubic metre over the year, the newspaper said, more than eight times the World Health Organization's recommended maximum annual average exposure of 10.

The figures represented a 6.2 percent decrease year-on-year, but still left citizens breathing air that was 1.3 times the country's own standard, which is not as strict as the WHO's. After a comparatively mild year for pollution, Beijing in December declared its first ever red alert for smog, the highest level of a four-tier system, prompting authorities to order thousands of factories to close or curb their activities and pull half of all private cars off the streets, among other measures.

The decision came in response to public anger after the city failed to put the system, established in 2013, into action after heavy smog hit the city earlier the same month. The move set off a domino effect, with cities across China's polluted east and north declaring their own alerts, with PM2.5 levels climbing to over 700 in some areas. The entire eastern province of Shandong, home to almost 96 million people, issued its first ever alert. Beijing followed up with a second alert later in December, but then ignored successive waves of smog that struck the city around Christmas. — AFP



TOKYO: President of sushi restaurant chain Sushi-Zanmai, Kiyoshi Kimura, displays a 200kg bluefin tuna at his main restaurant near Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market yesterday. — AFP photos



TOKYO: Fishmongers inspect frozen bluefin tuna before the first auction of the new year at Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market yesterday.

JAPAN SUSHI BOSS PAYS \$117,000 FOR THREATENED TUNA

TOKYO: A Japanese sushi boss paid more than \$117,000 yesterday for a giant bluefin tuna as Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market held its last New Year auction ahead of a much-needed modernization move. Bidding stopped at a whopping 14 million yen for the enormous 200-kilogram (440-pound) fish—a threatened species that was caught off Japan's northern coast. The price was three times higher than last year but still far below a record 155.4 million yen

paid by the sushi chain operator in 2013 — when a Hong Kong restaurant chain weighed in and drove up bidding for a slightly larger fish of similar quality.

The New Year auction is a traditional feature at Tsukiji, where bidders pay way over the odds for the prestige of buying the first fish of the year. But it came as Japan, the world's largest consumer of bluefin tuna, faces growing calls for a trade ban on the species, which

environmentalists warn is on its way to extinction. The population of Pacific bluefin tuna is set to keep declining "even if governments ensure existing management measures are fully implemented", Amanda Nickson, director of Global Tuna Conservation at the Pew Charitable Trusts, said in a release.

Bluefin is usually the most expensive fish available at Tsukiji, the biggest fish and wholesale seafood market in the world. A single piece

of "otoro", or the fish's fatty underbelly, can cost up to several thousand yen at high-end Tokyo restaurants. The growing popularity of Japanese sushi worldwide has stoked demand elsewhere. "Given the already dire state of the population-depleted to just four percent of unfished levels—it is of particular concern that the auction price is rising again," Nickson added. "The international community must let the Japanese government know that additional action is needed

to save this species." Yesterday's auction winner, Kiyoshi Kimura, president of the firm behind the popular Sushi-Zanmai restaurant chain, said he was "glad to make a winning bid in the last New Year auction at Tsukiji." Kimura has won the bidding every year since 2012. Tsukiji—a sprawling complex of tiny stalls and wholesalers popular with tourists—will end its eight-decade history this year when it is relocated to a modern facility in Toyosu, a few kilometers away. — AFP

CHINESE WOMAN DIES OF H5N6 FLU

BEIJING: Health authorities in southern China said yesterday that a 26-year-old woman has died of a strain of bird flu, and another woman is reportedly in serious condition. The two contracted H5N6, a strain of bird flu that has so far only been seen in people in China.

A press officer at Shenzhen's Center for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed the death of the local woman on Dec 30. He wouldn't identify himself. A 40-year-old woman also from Guangdong province is in serious condi-

tion in hospital, the official Xinhua News Agency reported. Six human cases of H5N6 have been reported in total, all in China, since May 2014. The virus has been detected in poultry in China, Lao and Vietnam. The World Health Organization says that human cases of bird flu remain uncommon, with sporadic cases occurring following exposure to infected poultry or a contaminated environment. It says there is no evidence of sustained human-to-human transmission of bird flu. — AP

STUDY FINDS WEST AFRICA AT HIGHEST RISK OF BAT-TO-HUMAN VIRUS SPREAD

BATS CARRY MANY ZOOONOTIC VIRUSES

LONDON: Sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia are most at risk from bat viruses jumping to humans and causing new diseases that could lead to deadly outbreaks, scientists warned yesterday. Approximately 60 to 75 percent of emerging infectious diseases are so-called "zoonotic events"—where animal diseases jump into people—and bats in particular are known to carry many zoonotic viruses. The tiny animals are the suspected origin of rabies, Ebola, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and possibly Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and could cause other as yet unknown epidemics in future.

Scientists at University College London (UCL), the Zoological Society of London and Edinburgh University aimed to map out the highest-risk areas, using a variety of factors including large numbers of bat viruses found locally, increasing population pressure, and hunting bats for bushmeat. Kate Jones, UCL's chair of ecology and biodiversity, said her team first created risk maps for each variable and found, for example, that in mapping for potential human-bat contact, sub-Saharan Africa was a hotspot, while for diversity of bat viruses, South America was at most risk.

"By combining the separate maps, we've created the first global picture of the overall risks of bat viruses infecting humans in different regions," she said. The work was published in journal *The American Naturalist*. The research, using data published between 1900 and 2013, found that overall West Africa—the epicentre of the recent Ebola outbreak—is at highest risk for zoonotic bat viruses. The wider sub-Saharan Africa region, as

well as South East Asia, were also found to be hotspots.

Liam Brierley, a PhD student at Edinburgh University who worked with Jones, said the risk of bat to human virus transmission is being driven higher by large and increasing

populations of people and livestock expanding into wild areas such as forests. "People in these areas may also hunt bats for bushmeat, unaware of the risks of transmissible diseases which can occur through touching body fluids and raw meat of bats," he said. — Reuters

BRITAIN'S GOVT SET FOR FIRST DOCTORS STRIKE IN 40 YEARS

LONDON: The British government said it was seeking to hold talks with doctors in its state-funded health service in a last-ditch bid to avert a series of mass walkouts, potentially the first such strikes for four decades. Junior doctors, or doctors in training who represent just over half of all doctors in the National Health Service, said on Monday they would stage a 24-hour stoppage next week, followed by two further 48-hour strikes. It will affect non-emergency care and lead to the cancellations of many operations. Doctors' strikes are rare in Britain. The last time junior doctors took industrial action was in 1975 over non-payment for work done outside the standard 40-hour working week. A new contract was agreed the next year.

Planned walkouts before Christmas were suspended to allow for further talks in the dispute which centers on pay and conditions, but on Monday the doctors' union, the British Medical Association (BMA), said these discussions had failed to make progress. "In order for them (the strikes) to be called off, the government would have to recognize the deeply held concerns of junior doctors and be able to go rather further than it has been able to push itself over Christmas," Mark Porter, the BMA chairman told BBC Radio.

Ninety-eight percent of more than 37,000

junior doctors had voted to take part in industrial action, including strikes, in protest against the new employment contract proposed by Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt.

The BMA and doctors have criticized the contract, which changes the way they are paid for anti-social hours, saying it does not provide proper safeguards against doctors working dangerously long hours.

The government says the new contract is part of measures to ensure patients get the "same quality of care across the week". "Our absolute priority is patient safety and making sure that the NHS delivers high-quality care 7 days a week — and we know that's what doctors want too, so it is extremely disappointing that the BMA have chosen to take industrial action which helps no-one," Hunt said in a statement. He said the mediation service Acas had been asked to reconvene negotiations to try to settle the dispute.

The NHS delivers care for free to the whole population and accounts for a third of government spending on public services. The service often features as one of the most important issues during elections and recent struggles during winter have led to concerns as to whether the NHS is adequately funded to maintain high standards. — Reuters

TWO STUDIES CAST DOUBT ON THE CREDIBILITY OF MEDICAL RESEARCH

MIAMI: Two studies released Monday found major flaws with a large number of research papers in the biomedical sciences, a problem that authors say wastes billions and slows the pace of life-saving research. One of the studies in the journal *PLOS Biology* analyzed a random sample of 441 biomedical journal articles published in the last 15 years, and found that only one included a full protocol of the information necessary for evaluating and replicating the research.

Scientific studies are considered valid only if they can be reproduced by outside teams of researchers who come to the same conclusions using independent methods. Furthermore, most of the studies did not say where their funding came from, and did not establish whether there were any conflicts of interest. "We hope our survey will further sensitize scientists, funders, journals and other science-related stakeholders about the need to improve these indicators," wrote the study authors, who included prominent scientist John Ioannidis from the Meta-Research Innovation Center at Stanford University and Shareen Iqbal from Emory University. A separate study by researchers in Germany examined hundreds of published

experiments on stroke and cancer research and found that most did not contain sufficient information about how many animals were used. In many papers, the number of animals used over the course of the "vanished," making any conclusions far less reliable. "The study began with an attempt to look at the robustness of findings in a handful of preclinical papers" said first author Constance Holman, a researcher at Charite Universitätsmedizin.

"But the sheer number of missing animals stopped us in our tracks." When human subjects are part of a clinical trial, information about how many took part is considered crucial to the findings, and would not be left out of the published study, the authors said. An accompanying editorial in *PLOS Biology* noted that a "credibility crisis" is ravaging scientific research.

For instance, a recent attempt to replicate 100 psychology studies found that only 39 percent could in fact be reproduced. Other previous research has found that "85 percent of research investment in the biomedical sciences—or US \$200 billion of the worldwide investment in 2010—is wasted," it said. The journal is launching a new Meta-Research Section aimed at improving standards. — AFP

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MOVENPICK ORGANIZE FTZ CLEAN-UP CAMPAIGN

Movenpick Hotel Kuwait organized a half-day Free Trade Zone (FTZ) clean-up event, in which more than 40 hotel employees volunteered to participate.

Volunteers greatly enjoyed making a difference in their local environment. They filled 30 large garbage bags with different kinds of rubbish collected from within the Free Trade Zone.

"We participate in this campaign as part of Movenpick Hotels and Resorts' commitment towards sustainability and in the line with the social goals that the company

aspires to achieve," said Hassan Hassanien, General Manager of Movenpick Hotel Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Elsayed Elasy, Communications Manager said, "I am really glad with the recently organised Free Trade Zone clean-up campaign by our team. It shows their continuous efforts to build awareness on the growing environment challenges in Kuwait, and was one of the hotel's many social responsibility projects that reflect the company's strong and continued commitment to the local community."



SILVER MEDAL FOR ICSK AT NATIONAL ATHLETIC MEET

In a stellar performance, Christa Vincent of the Indian Community School Kuwait secured a silver medal in the high jump competition in the 20th CBSE National Athletic Meet held at Raipur from the 26th to 30th December 2015. She competed and won in the under-19 girls' category and is the only winner this year from Kuwait region.

A total of nine students represented the school at the national level. Jijo Jacob reached the semi-

finals of the 200m event in the Under-16 Category and 4x100 m Relay team entered the finals in the same category. This is the first time that a relay team from the Kuwait region has reached the finals at the nationals.

The management, staff and students of ICSK extend their heartfelt congratulations to the athletes and the physical education teachers of ICSK who have brought laurels to the school.



ASSE - KUWAIT CHAPTER'S PRESTIGIOUS SAFETY PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR AWARD

Mohamad Riaz Shareef, immediate past President, American Society of Safety Engineers Kuwait Chapter was honored with "ASSE Kuwait Chapter's Safety Professional Year Award 2015" for his outstanding contributions to the chapter and the HSE Profession. This prestigious award was given during the Kuwait Chapter's 8th International Professional Development Conference 2015 grand opening ceremony at Radisson Blu Hotel on 9th December 2015. Outstanding HSE professionals are the driving force behind the 104-year-old American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE). In addition to working to prevent injuries and illnesses at work, members volunteer their time and resources throughout the year to protect people, property and the environment. ASSE Kuwait Chapter is the first and the largest International Chapter outside USA. As per the Society Operating guidelines, each Region recognizes the one active member every year with Safety Professional of the Year (SPY) Award.

The Award is instituted by ASSE Kuwait Chapter in 2011, which is in line with the ASSE Head Quarters, USA procedures

and guidelines. The ASSE Chapter SPY award is an honor acknowledging the dedication and outstanding contributions of a member to the Chapter. During the ceremony, Jignesh Shah, Secretary ASSE-Kuwait Chapter briefed about the award and its evaluation criteria that was followed in selecting the 'Safety Professional of the Year Award'. Fadhel Al Ali, Chairman ASSE Kuwait Chapter handed over this prestigious award to Mohamad Riaz Shareef and appreciated his diligent efforts and contribution to the chapter and HSE Profession. Riaz is extending his voluntary services presently as Advisory Committee of Kuwait chapter. Riaz in his thanks-giving message thanked the ASSE Kuwait Chapter members, its Advisory & Executive Committee for the honor, besides thanking the Management of Kuwait National Petroleum Company, Kuwait where he is employed since year 2000, for providing support in delivering various initiatives by showing strong commitment towards HSE. He dedicated this award to all those professionals who worked with him over the years for the cause of protecting people, property and the environment.



The Scientific Center began screening 'Journey to Space 3D,' the newest movie shown at its IMAX theater. The movie premier took place in a recent ceremony that was attended by Mijbel Al-Mutawa, Chairman and CEO of the Scientific Center. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



AL-SAYER SPONSORS MOH FORUM FOR HANDICAPPED

'ACCESS AND EMPOWERMENT FOR PEOPLE OF ALL ABILITIES'



KUWAIT: Al-Sayer Group Holding and Al-Sayer Medical Company has sponsored the first forum for the handicapped hosted by Ministry of Health (MOH) under the theme 'Access and Empowerment for People of All Abilities', to raise awareness about disability issues and draw attention to the benefits of an inclusive and accessible society for all. The initiative underlines Group's firm belief in the role of the private sector as a key partner for the government towards the implementation of the various aspects of comprehensive development plan.

Extraordinary potential

Undersecretary Assistant for Medical Services Affairs Dr Mohammad Al-Khashty, Honorary Chairman of Kuwait Sports Club for Handicapped Sheikhha Anisa Salim Al-Humood Al-Sabah, Sheikhha Intisar Salem Al Ali Al-Sabah, Director General of Fire Service Directorate Major General Khaleel Al-Ameer, Director Educational Affairs Public Authority for Disabled Dr Bader Al-Barak. The key note speech was delivered by Dr Abeer Al-Bahwa on behalf of His Excellency Dr Ali Saad Al-Obaidi Minister of Health.

Guests of honor and high rank delegates who were present at the event were Director of Kuwait's Public Authority for the Disabled Dr Tareq Al-Shatti, Sheikhha Anisa Salim Al-Humood Al-Sabah, Sheikhha Intisar Salem Al Ali Al-Sabah, Director General of Fire Service Directorate Major General Khaleel Al-Ameer, Director Educational Affairs Public Authority for Disabled Dr Bader Al-Barak. The key note speech was delivered by Dr Abeer Al-Bahwa on behalf of His Excellency Dr Ali Saad Al-Obaidi Minister of Health.

Some of the active charitable organizations that participated in the exhibit were Kuwait Dyslexia Association, Center 21 and Gulf Disability Society. Kuwaitis with mild to moderate disabilities and their families, as well as governmental and non-governmental institutions and non-profit organizations were also present for the educative activities.

Honorary President of Kuwait Disabled Sports Club for Handicapped, Sheikhha Shaikha Abdullah Al-Sabah said, "This meeting intends to discuss and focus on issues related to disabled persons and finding solutions on how to integrate them in society." The objective of this forum is to create and exploit opportunities to help realize their potential and involve all elements of civil society for their support.

Emphasizing the importance of the event Dr Abeer Al-Baho said "This gathering is to commemorate International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which was held on December 3. In Kuwait, there are 4,439 disabled persons or 2.7 percent of the population. The aim of this forum is to give priority to disabled people at hospitals and to provide conventional and natural treatments to them, develop early detection for newborn babies, examine the health of couples before marriage and vaccinate children."

A large exhibition that displayed various colorful and eye-catching handicrafts created by the handicapped participants such as perfumes, sweets, stationary and painting was one of the highlights at the event. The exhibition featured more than 25 organizations that specialize in providing assistance and training to youngsters and adults with a range of disabilities.



Strong commitment

According to Faisal Bader Al-Sayer "At Al-Sayer Group we believe that the private sector should have an instrumental partnership with the government of Kuwait for the implementation of programs enabling the overall development of the social and cultural aspects especially in the midst of the rapid changes in today's world from political and economic perspective and also due to the evolution of the demographic landscape. We are proud to partner with MOH backed by strong commitment towards safeguarding interest of Kuwaiti community with special needs materially and morally. We will continue to work with concerned authorities for their overall development".

Al-Sayer Medical's 'Life Care' stand at the exhibition attracted a large number of visitors and officials, where some of the wide ranging medical line up were displayed that are available at the Life Care showroom, the biggest the most advanced healthcare outlet in Kuwait.

Dr Hossam Afify, General Manager Al-Sayer Medical Company explained about the company services and demonstrated how such products work, along with "Life Care" professional team providing information and assistance to the visitors along with the technical specifications of products.

Sheikha Shiekha Al Abdullah Al Sabah presented a certificate to Dr Hossam Afify appreciating their participation in the exhibition with Al-Sayer Medical Life Care stand and the assistance provided by the professional team. She also presented Al-Sayer Medical with a memento in recognition of Al-Sayer's partnership for the event.

Distinguished services

Acknowledging the partnership with MOH for this forum Dr Hossam Afify said "As one of Al-Sayer Group Holding companies, Al-Sayer Medical spares no time and effort expanding and diversifying its distinguished services being committed to provide the latest and most distinct and innovative high tech medical and health care products and unique services for the Kuwaiti market, meeting all needs of patients of all ages, and support of their future way of life."

Al-Sayer Group Holding is always committed to continue its relentless pursuit of progress grounded on the values of social responsibility, demonstrated by its support for community through key social events and activities promoting public awareness and engaging people from different categories and classes for the welfare of the Kuwaiti society.



Discovery Channel HD

00:20 Fast N' Loud
01:10 Spawn Of Jaws: The Birth
02:00 Dual Survival
02:50 River Monsters
03:40 Auction Hunters
04:05 The Liquidator
04:30 Storage Wars Canada
05:00 What Happened Next?
05:30 How It's Made
06:00 Ice Cold Gold
06:50 Wheeler Dealers
07:40 Fast N' Loud
08:30 Auction Hunters
08:55 The Liquidator
09:20 Storage Wars Canada
09:45 What Happened Next?
10:10 How It's Made
10:35 Spawn Of Jaws: The Birth
11:25 Dual Survival
12:15 River Monsters
13:05 Auction Hunters
13:30 The Liquidator
13:55 Storage Wars Canada
14:20 Ice Cold Gold
15:10 Wheeler Dealers
16:00 Fast N' Loud
16:50 What Happened Next?
17:15 How It's Made
17:40 Mythbusters
18:30 The Carbonaro Effect
18:55 The Carbonaro Effect
19:20 Manhunt With Joel Lambert
20:10 The Liquidator
20:35 Storage Wars Canada
21:00 Mythbusters
21:50 The Carbonaro Effect
22:15 The Carbonaro Effect
22:40 You Have Been Warned
23:30 Wheeler Dealers

Discovery Science

00:35 Mythbusters
01:20 How It's Made
01:44 How It's Made
02:08 Food Factory
02:31 Food Factory
02:55 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
03:42 NASA's Unexplained Files
04:29 Mythbusters
05:16 Food Factory
05:39 Food Factory
06:03 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
06:50 Mega Builders
07:37 How Do They Do It?
08:00 How Do They Do It?
08:23 Mythbusters
09:08 NASA's Unexplained Files
09:53 Mega Builders
10:38 How It's Made
11:00 How It's Made
11:23 How Do They Do It?
11:45 How Do They Do It?
12:08 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
12:53 Mega Builders
13:38 Mythbusters
14:23 How It's Made
14:46 How It's Made
15:10 NASA's Unexplained Files
15:57 How Do They Do It?
16:20 How Do They Do It?
16:44 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
17:31 Mega Builders
18:18 NASA's Unexplained Files
19:05 Mythbusters
19:50 Strip The Cosmos
20:40 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
21:25 How It's Made
21:50 How It's Made
22:15 How The Universe Works
23:00 Strip The Cosmos
23:45 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

ID. Investigation Discovery

00:40 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
01:05 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
01:30 The Haunted
02:20 Ghost Lab
03:10 Deadly Sins
04:00 Deadly Women
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

Zahn
09:40 Fatal Encounters
10:30 Murder Shift
11:20 Deadly Affairs
12:10 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
13:00 The Will
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:40 California Investigator
15:05 Dr. G: Medical Examiner
15:55 Fatal Encounters
16:45 On The Case With Paula Zahn
17:35 Murder Shift
18:25 I Almost Got Away With It
19:15 The Will
20:05 Deadly Affairs
20:55 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
21:45 California Investigator
22:10 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
22:35 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
23:00 Scorned: Crimes Of Passion
23:50 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall

Disney

00:00 Violetta
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Wolfblood
02:05 Wolfblood
02:30 Violetta
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: Just Add Water
07:40 H2O: Just Add Water
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
10:10 Jessie
10:35 Cow Belles
12:20 Hank Zipzer
12:45 I Didn't Do It
13:10 I Didn't Do It
13:35 Liv And Maddie
14:00 Liv And Maddie
14:30 H2O
14:55 H2O
15:20 Jessie
15:45 Jessie
16:10 Violetta
17:00 The Next Step
17:25 Liv And Maddie
17:50 Jessie
18:15 Austin & Ally
18:40 I Didn't Do It
19:05 H2O
19:30 Violetta
20:20 The Next Step
20:45 Good Luck Charlie
21:10 Good Luck Charlie
21:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place
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

Discovery

00:00 Stewarts And Hamiltons
00:55 The Grace Helbig Show
01:25 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
02:20 Giuliana & Bill
03:15 Christina Milian Turned Up
04:10 The E! True Hollywood Story
05:05 Beyond Candid With Giuliana
06:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
06:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
07:50 Style Star
08:20 New Money
08:45 New Money
09:15 Giuliana & Bill
09:15 Giuliana & Bill

11:10 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
12:05 The Grace Helbig Show
13:05 Fashion Bloggers
14:05 Dash Dolls
15:00 Kourtney And Khloe Take The Hamptons
17:00 Hollywood Cycle
18:00 E! News
19:00 Dash Dolls
20:00 Fashion Bloggers
21:00 House Of DVF
22:00 E! News
23:00 WAGS

Food Network

00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
02:00 Man v Food
03:00 Man Fire Food
04:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
06:00 Chopped
07:00 Man Fire Food
08:00 Chopped
09:00 Guy's Grocery Games
10:00 The Kitchen
11:00 Barefoot Contessa
12:00 Chopped
13:00 Guy's Big Bite
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 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 Chopped
22:00 Chopped South Africa
23:00 Iron Chef America

ITV Choice

00:10 Pick Me!
01:05 Emmerdale
01:30 Coach Trip
02:00 Come Date With Me Australia
02:30 Murdoch Mysteries
03:25 Vera
05:15 The Chase
06:10 Paddock To Plate
07:05 Coach Trip
07:30 Vera
09:20 Murdoch Mysteries
10:15 The Chase
11:10 Coach Trip
11:35 Pick Me!
12:30 Paddock To Plate
13:25 Emmerdale
13:50 Coach Trip
14:20 Coronation Street
14:45 Murdoch Mysteries
15:35 Pick Me!
16:30 The Syndicate
17:25 Safe House
18:20 Paddock To Plate
19:10 Coronation Street
19:35 Pick Me!
20:30 The Syndicate
21:25 Safe House
22:20 Coronation Street
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Paddock To Plate

OSN FIRST HD COMEDY

00:30 Cristela
01:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
01:30 Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll
02:00 You're The Worst
02:30 The Big C
03:00 Your Family Or Mine
03:30 The Goldbergs
04:00 Men At Work
04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
05:30 Young & Hungry
06:00 Til Death
06:30 New Girl
07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
08:00 Men At Work
08:30 Young & Hungry
09:00 Your Family Or Mine
09:30 Modern Family
10:00 Melissa & Joey
10:30 New Girl
11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
12:00 Til Death
12:30 Men At Work
13:00 Young & Hungry
13:30 New Girl
14:00 The Goldbergs
14:30 Modern Family

OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

00:00 Bro-18
01:45 Star Trek-PG15
04:00 Batman: Assault On Arkham-PG15
06:00 Gone In Sixty Seconds-PG15
08:00 Toxin
11:45 Star Trek
14:00 Northmen: A Viking Saga
15:45 Gone In Sixty Seconds
17:45 King Arthur
20:00 I, Frankenstein
22:00 Falcon Rising

15:00 Melissa & Joey
15:30 Cristela
16:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
16:30 Til Death
17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
18:00 Your Family Or Mine
18:30 Benched
19:00 Community
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 The League
22:30 The League
23:00 The Big C
23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers

OSN FIRST HD MORE

00:00 Justified
01:00 Deadline Gallipoli
02:00 Supergirl
03:00 Scream Queens
04:00 Complications
05:00 The Night Shift
06:00 Covert Affairs
07:00 Switched At Birth
08:00 Odyssey
09:00 Complications
10:00 The Night Shift
11:00 Switched At Birth
12:00 Coronation Street
12:30 Coronation Street
13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
14:00 Odyssey
15:00 Live Good Morning America
21:00 Chopped
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
18:00 Odyssey
19:00 The Fosters
20:00 Supergirl
21:00 Marvel's Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.
22:00 The Flash
23:00 American Horror Story: Hotel

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

00:00 Ride Along
02:00 Malavita
04:00 Titeuf, Le Film
06:00 Mr. Wonderful
08:00 Mousehunt
10:00 Titeuf, Le Film
12:00 The Lego Movie
14:00 UHF
16:00 Mousehunt
18:00 The Devil Wears Prada
20:00 High Road
22:00 Stand Up Guys

OSN MOVIES HD DRAMA

01:00 Chalet Girl-PG15
03:00 The Trials Of Cate McCall-PG15
05:00 My Piece Of The Pie-PG15
07:00 Reclaim-PG15
09:00 Shadow Witness-PG15
11:00 My Piece Of The Pie-PG15
13:00 A Valentine's Date-PG15
15:00 Middle Of Nowhere-PG15
17:00 Shadow Witness-PG15
19:00 Lords Of London-PG15

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

01:15 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
02:45 Back To The Sea
04:30 Bamse And The City Of Thieves
06:00 The Olsen Gang In Deep Trouble
08:00 Marco Macaco
09:45 Pim And Pom: The Big Adventure
11:15 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
12:45 Back To The Sea
14:30 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants
16:00 Kikoriki: Team Invincible
18:00 Pim And Pom: The Big Adventure
20:00 Bolts And Blip
22:00 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants
23:45 Kikoriki: Team Invincible

OSN MOVIES HD PREMIERE

00:00 Capital-PG15
02:00 Into The Woods-PG
04:15 Stolen Child-PG15
05:45 The Past-PG15
08:00 Admission-PG15
10:00 The Good Witch's Wedding-PG15
11:45 Into The Woods-PG
14:00 Penguins Of Madagascar-16:00 Admission-PG15
18:00 The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out Of Water-PG
20:00 The Grand Budapest



X-MEN: DAYS OF FUTURE PAST ON OSN MOVIES HD

13:45 Gone In Sixty Seconds
15:45 King Arthur-PG15
18:00 I, Frankenstein-PG15
20:00 Falcon Rising-PG15
22:00 RoboCop-PG15

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

01:30 When A Man Loves A Woman
03:45 Frankie & Alice
05:30 Manny
07:00 Black Nativity
09:00 Sleepless In Seattle
11:00 Manny
13:00 Lost Christmas
15:00 Se Puder... Dirijal!
17:00 Sleepless In Seattle
19:00 We Gotta Get Out Of This Place
21:00 A Mighty Heart
23:00 Heaven's Gate

OSN MOVIES HD DRAMA

01:00 Anna Nicole-PG15
03:00 Kristy-PG15
05:00 Trigger Point-PG15
07:00 Earth To Echo-PG
09:00 X-Men: Days Of Future Past-PG15
11:15 Not Safe For Work-PG15
13:00 How To Train Your Dragon 2-PG
14:45 Step Up All In-PG15
16:45 X-Men: Days Of Future Past-PG15
19:00 3 Days To Kill-PG15
21:00 The Woman In Black 2: Angel Of Death-PG15
23:00 Wild-18

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

01:15 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
02:45 Back To The Sea
04:30 Bamse And The City Of Thieves
06:00 The Olsen Gang In Deep Trouble
08:00 Marco Macaco
09:45 Pim And Pom: The Big Adventure
11:15 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
12:45 Back To The Sea
14:30 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants
16:00 Kikoriki: Team Invincible
18:00 Pim And Pom: The Big Adventure
20:00 Bolts And Blip
22:00 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants
23:45 Kikoriki: Team Invincible

OSN MOVIES HD PREMIERE

00:00 Capital-PG15
02:00 Into The Woods-PG
04:15 Stolen Child-PG15
05:45 The Past-PG15
08:00 Admission-PG15
10:00 The Good Witch's Wedding-PG15
11:45 Into The Woods-PG
14:00 Penguins Of Madagascar-16:00 Admission-PG15
18:00 The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out Of Water-PG
20:00 The Grand Budapest

21:00 Blood-PG15
23:00 Mall-18

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL

01:30 When A Man Loves A Woman
03:45 Frankie & Alice
05:30 Manny
07:00 Black Nativity
09:00 Sleepless In Seattle
11:00 Manny
13:00 Lost Christmas
15:00 Se Puder... Dirijal!
17:00 Sleepless In Seattle
19:00 We Gotta Get Out Of This Place
21:00 A Mighty Heart
23:00 Heaven's Gate

OSN MOVIES HD DRAMA

01:00 Anna Nicole-PG15
03:00 Kristy-PG15
05:00 Trigger Point-PG15
07:00 Earth To Echo-PG
09:00 X-Men: Days Of Future Past-PG15
11:15 Not Safe For Work-PG15
13:00 How To Train Your Dragon 2-PG
14:45 Step Up All In-PG15
16:45 X-Men: Days Of Future Past-PG15
19:00 3 Days To Kill-PG15
21:00 The Woman In Black 2: Angel Of Death-PG15
23:00 Wild-18

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

01:15 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
02:45 Back To The Sea
04:30 Bamse And The City Of Thieves
06:00 The Olsen Gang In Deep Trouble
08:00 Marco Macaco
09:45 Pim And Pom: The Big Adventure
11:15 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
12:45 Back To The Sea
14:30 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants
16:00 Kikoriki: Team Invincible
18:00 Pim And Pom: The Big Adventure
20:00 Bolts And Blip
22:00 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants
23:45 Kikoriki: Team Invincible

OSN MOVIES HD PREMIERE

00:00 Capital-PG15
02:00 Into The Woods-PG
04:15 Stolen Child-PG15
05:45 The Past-PG15
08:00 Admission-PG15
10:00 The Good Witch's Wedding-PG15
11:45 Into The Woods-PG
14:00 Penguins Of Madagascar-16:00 Admission-PG15
18:00 The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out Of Water-PG
20:00 The Grand Budapest

Hotel-PG15
22:00 Home Sweet Hell-18

AMC

04:15 Little Sister
05:50 Punks
07:25 Eight Men Out
09:25 Nobody's Fool
11:10 A Star For Two
12:45 Beat Street
14:30 Natural Causes
16:00 Punks
17:35 Teen Witch
19:05 Death Rides A Horse
21:00 A Fish Called Wanda
22:45 Electra Glide In Blue
00:40 LA Bamba
02:30 A Fish Called Wanda

ci

03:00 The Jersey Slayings
04:00 When Life Means Life
05:00 Campus Nightmares
06:00 My Ghost Story
07:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
08:00 Surveillance Oz
09:00 Surveillance Oz
10:00 Frenemies
11:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
12:00 Crime Stories
13:00 Homicide Hunter
14:00 I Survived
15:00 Frenemies
15:30 Frenemies
16:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
17:00 Crime Stories
18:00 The First 48
19:00 I Survived
20:00 Homicide Hunter
21:00 Crime Stories
22:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
23:00 My Haunted House
00:00 The Haunting Of...
01:00 The Ghost Inside My Child
02:00 My Haunted House

Disney Junior

03:05 Calimero
03:20 Zou
03:30 Loopdidoo
03:45 Art Attack
04:10 Henry Hugglemonster
04:20 Calimero
04:35 Zou
04:45 Loopdidoo
05:00 Art Attack
05:25 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 Calimero
05:50 Zou
06:00 Loopdidoo
06:15 Art Attack
06:35 Henry Hugglemonster
06:50 Calimero
07:00 Zou
07:20 Loopdidoo
07:35 Art Attack
08:00 Calimero
08:10 Zou
08:25 Loopdidoo
08:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
09:05 Sofia The First
09:30 Miles From Tomorrow
10:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
10:35 Doc McStuffins
11:00 Sofia The First
11:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
12:00 Miles From Tomorrow

12:25 Special Agent Oso
12:50 Handy Manny
13:15 Jungle Junction
13:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
14:00 Sofia The First
14:25 Sofia The First
14:50 Miles From Tomorrow
15:15 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
15:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
16:05 The Adventures Of The Disney...
16:35 Miles From Tomorrow
17:00 Sofia The First
17:25 Aladdin
17:50 Gummi Bears
18:15 Chip 'n' Dale's Rescue Rangers
18:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
19:05 Miles From Tomorrow
19:30 Sofia The First
19:55 Doc McStuffins
20:15 Captain Jake And The Never Land Pirates
20:45 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
21:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
21:30 Sofia The First
23:20 Lilo And Stitch
23:45 Cars Toons
23:50 Zou
00:20 Calimero
00:35 Zou
00:50 Loopdidoo
01:05 Art Attack
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
01:45 Calimero

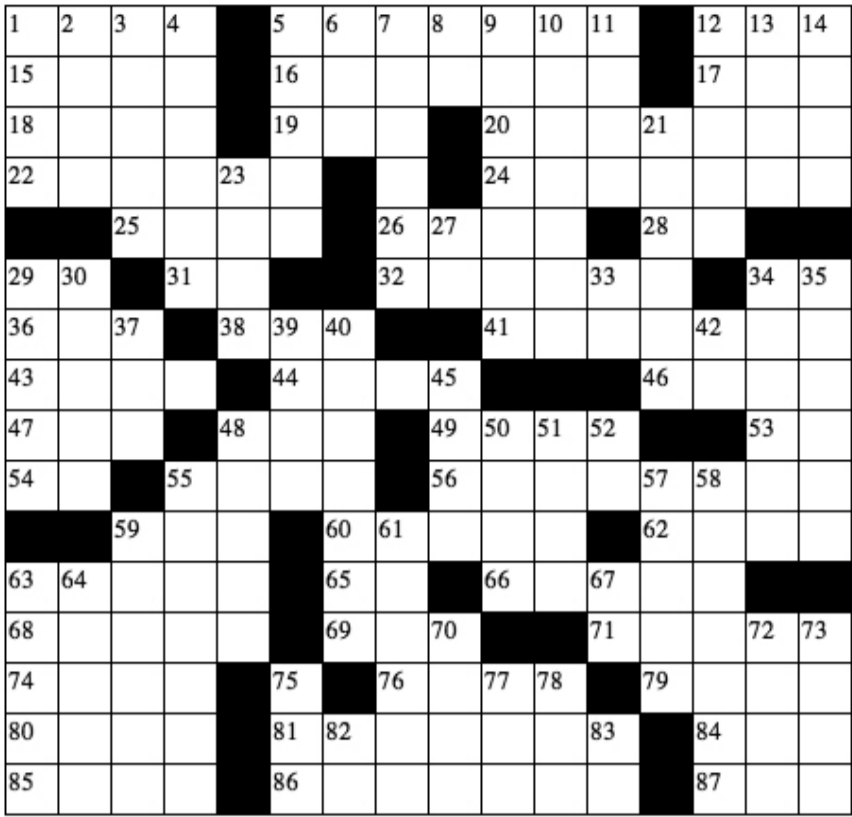
Disney XD

07:00 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
07:25 Boyster
07:50 Supa Strikas
08:15 Lab Rats
08:40 K. C. Undercover
09:10 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
09:35 Kirby Buckets
10:00 Lab Rats
10:25 Kickin' It
10:50 Mighty Med
11:20 Supa Strikas
11:45 K. C. Undercover
12:10 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
12:35 Annedroids
13:00 Dadnapped
14:25 Guardians Of The Galaxy
14:30 Phineas And Ferb
14:45 Phineas And Ferb
15:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
15:15 Rocket Monkeys
15:40 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
16:05 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
16:30 Kirby Buckets
16:55 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything
17:25 K. C. Undercover
17:50 Supa Strikas
18:15 Lab Rats
18:40 Mighty Med
19:10 Annedroids
19:35 Kickin' It
20:00 K. C. Undercover
20:25 Supa Strikas
20:55 Lab Rats
21:20 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything
21:45 Kickin' It
22:10 Phineas And Ferb
22:40 Super Matrak
23:05 Super Matrak
23:30 Boyster
00:00 Programmes Start At 7:00am KSA



I, FRANKENSTEIN ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

CROSSWORD 1129



ACROSS

DOWN

- 1. A town and port in northwestern Israel in the eastern Mediterranean.
5. Of or relating an apse.
12. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
15. The right to take another's property if an obligation is not discharged.
16. Argentine guerrilla leader who played an important role in the Cuban revolution under Fidel Castro (1928-1967).
17. Gear (including necessary machinery) for a particular enterprise.
18. An important seaport on the Island of Cebu in the Philippines.
19. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
20. Slightly dark.
22. Evergreen Indian shrub with vivid yellow flowers whose bark is used in tanning.
24. Tropical evergreen shrubs (some climbers) to trees of Asia and Australasia to Americas.
25. A small cake leavened with yeast.
26. A fee charged for exchanging currencies.
28. A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.
29. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
31. A colorless odorless gaseous element that give a red glow in a vacuum tube.
32. Talks a great deal about uninteresting topics.
36. A drug combination found in some over-the-counter headache remedies (Aspirin and Phenacetin and Caffeine).
38. Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
41. Coextensive with the order Pholidota.
43. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
44. The dialect of Albanian spoken in northern Albania and Yugoslavia.
46. (Middle East) An ornamental metal cup-shaped holder for a hot coffee cup.
47. An enzyme that catalyzes the oxidation of many body compounds (e.g., epinephrine and norepinephrine and serotonin).
49. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
53. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
54. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
56. Linear distance between the extremities of an airfoil.
60. Large dark brown North American arboreal carnivorous mammal.
62. Large swift fly the female of which sucks blood of various animals.
63. A way of access consisting of a set of steps.
65. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
66. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
68. A civil or military authority in Turkey or Egypt.
69. Government agency created in 1974 to license and regulate nuclear power plants.
71. An honorary arts degree.
74. Very dark black.
76. Any of the short curved hairs that grow from the edges of the eyelids.
79. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
80. (Norse mythology) Trickster.
81. Characteristic of the classical artistic and literary traditions.
84. Take in solid food.
85. 100 toea equal 1 kina.
86. The capital of French Polynesia on the northwestern coast of Tahiti.
87. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Business is productive today. You may finally see some closure on unfinished business. Your current situation may demand some reevaluation or otherwise challenge your ideas. Be careful in the way you act toward employers during this time. It would be wise to get a consultant on a new project that you want to begin.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Good eye-hand coordination and a sustained effort make almost any task run well. An authority figure may be having a change of mind in the middle of a project today. Do not question the request, just go with it-there is more to this than meets the eye.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Once work gets underway you have a feeling of confidence and optimism. There is motivation to improve and promote you. This week will bring opportunities for you to balance the budget, work on your goals and detect ways to improve the income.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Be watchful and calculating with finances the rest of this month. This is a rewarding day and a plus for any type of investments. You will be able to allow yourself the purchase of a desired item later this afternoon.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Someone in authority may change some plans and cause you to reorganize and be more conservative at this time. All of this should go rather smoothly, if you are selling a product, this could be one of your biggest days-you can be very persuasive with others.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Taking care of business is a major theme where your intentions are today. Any old preholiday problems regarding work and health may be best taken care of or settled now.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You like your life organized and you look forward to getting things accomplished. You aim to have a place for everything and everything in its place-and anything that gets in the way, gets on your nerves.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Learning experiences can sometime come through the disappointments we experience. Do not get too flustered about a recent disappointment-it could be a blessing in disguise.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

There is a lot of passion to accomplish whatever is needed. It is necessary to get rid of some of the things that slow your progress. Look very hard at every cubbyhole, drawer, box or closet in your living and work surroundings to accomplish this cleanup job.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

It may seem as though you are magic as you complete difficult tasks and work responsibilities. You are successful in meeting deadlines today. You could find yourself working overtime this afternoon in order to get a head start on tomorrow.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Courage and stability are important to you. You look for these things in others and you express them in the work you do. This could be a period of material gain. Combined energies turn to value and bring out your unique and unusual qualities.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Keep in touch with the business financial news. You have a great deal of insight into all of your dealings and must exercise balance and moderation in all of your financial dealings.

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Directions

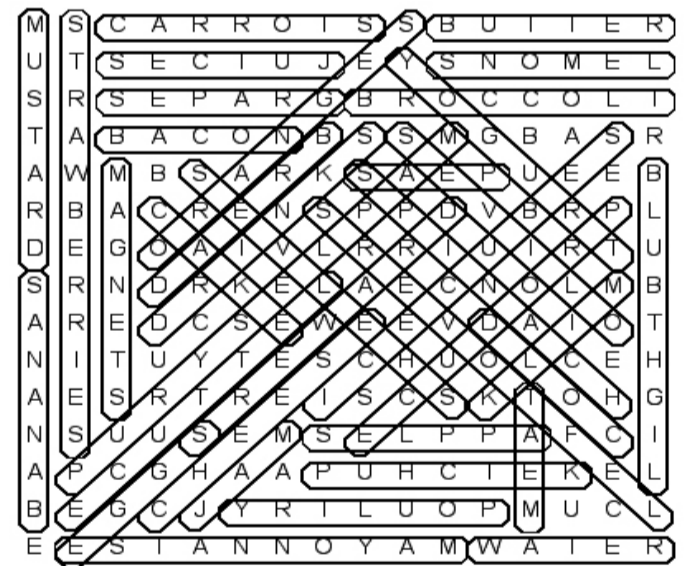
Find and circle all of the direction words that are hidden in the grid. The words may be hidden in any direction.

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

- ABOVE EAST SIDEWAYS
AHEAD FORWARD SKYWARD
AWAY LEFT SOUTH
BACKWARD NORTH TOWARD
BEHIND REVERSE UP
BELOW RIGHT WEST
DOWN

Yesterday's Solution

Refrigerator



- APPLES DRAWERS LETTUCE ORANGES
BACON DRINKS LIGHTBULB PEAS
BANANAS EGGS MAGNETS POULTRY
BREAD GRAPES MAPLE SYRUP PRODUCE
BROCCOLI ICE CUBES MAYONNAISE SHELVES
BUTTER JAM MEAT SPINACH
CAKE JUICES MILK STRAWBERRIES
CARROTS KETCHUP MUSTARD WATER
CHEESE LEFTOVERS OLIVES YOGURT
COLD LEMONS

The hidden message is: BARBECUE SAUCE

Yesterday's Solution

Grid of letters for 'Yesterday's Solution' crossword puzzle, showing the completed solution.

Daily SuDoku

4x4 grid for Daily SuDoku puzzle with some numbers pre-filled.

hard

Yesterday's Solution

6x6 grid for 'Yesterday's Solution' SuDoku puzzle, showing the completed solution.

medium

For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaeel Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khalidiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khalidiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Luxembourg	00352
Albania	00355	Lesotho	00266
Algeria	00213	Macau	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antigua	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Bahamas	001242	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahrain	00973	Martinique	00596
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritania	00222
Barbados	001246	Mauritius	00230
Belarus	00375	Mayotte	00269
Belgium	0032	Mexico	0052
Belize	00501	Micronesia	00691
Benin	00229	Moldova	00373
Bermuda	001441	Monaco	00377
Bhutan	00975	Mongolia	00976
Bolivia	00591	Montserrat	001664
Bosnia	00387	Morocco	00212
Botswana	00267	Mozambique	00258
Brazil	0055	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brunei	00673	Namibia	00264
Bulgaria	00359	Nepal	00977
Burkina	00226	Netherlands	0031
Burundi	00257	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Cambodia	00855	New Caledonia	00687
Cameroon	00237	New Zealand	0064
Canada	001	Nicaragua	00505
Cape Verde	00238	Niger	00227
Cayman Islands	001345	Nigeria	00234
Central African	00236	Niue	00683
Chad	00235	Norfolk Island	00672
Chile	0056	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
China	0086	North Korea	00850
Colombia	0057	Norway	0047
Comoros	00269	Oman	00968
Congo	00242	Pakistan	0092
Cook Islands	00682	Palau	00680
Costa Rica	00506	Panama	00507
Croatia	00385	Papua New Guinea	00675
Cuba	0053	Paraguay	00595
Cyprus	00357	Peru	0051
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Philippines	0063
Czech Republic	00420	Poland	0048
Denmark	0045	Portugal	00351
Diego Garcia	00246	Puerto Rico	001787
Djibouti	00253	Qatar	00974
Dominica	001767	Romania	0040
Dominican Republic	001809	Russian Federation	007
Ecuador	00593	Rwanda	00250
Egypt	0020	Saint Helena	00290
El Salvador	00503	Saint Kitts	001869
England (UK)	0044	Saint Lucia	001758
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Pierre	00508
Eritrea	00291	Saint Vincent	001784
Estonia	00372	Samoa US	00684
Ethiopia	00251	Samoa West	00685
Falkland Islands	00500	San Marino	00378
Faroe Islands	00298	Sao Tome	00239
Fiji	00679	Saudi Arabia	00966
Finland	00358	Scotland (UK)	0044
France	0033	Senegal	00221
French Guiana	00594	Seychelles	00284
French Polynesia	00689	Sierra Leone	00232
Gabon	00241	Singapore	0065
Gambia	00220	Slovakia	00421
Georgia	00995	Slovenia	00386
Germany	0049	Solomon Islands	00677
Ghana	00233	Somalia	00252
Gibraltar	00350	South Africa	0027
Greece	0030	South Korea	0082
Greenland	00299	Spain	0034
Grenada	001473	Sri Lanka	0094
Guadeloupe	00590	Sudan	00249
Guam	001671	Suriname	00597
Guatemala	00502	Swaziland	00268
Guinea	00224	Sweden	0046
Guyana	00592	Switzerland	0041
Haiti	00509	Syria	00963
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Serbia	00381
Honduras	00504	Taiwan	00886
Hong Kong	00852	Tanzania	00255
Hungary	0036	Thailand	0066
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Toga	00228
Iceland	00354	Tonga	00676
India	0091	Tokelau	00690
Indian Ocean	00873	Trinidad	001868
Indonesia	0062	Tunisia	00216
Iran	0098	Turkey	0090
Iraq	00964	Tuvalu	00688
Ireland	00353	Uganda	00256
Italy	0039	Ukraine	00380
Ivory Coast	00225	United Arab Emirates	00976
Jamaica	001876	United Kingdom	0044
Japan	0081	Uruguay	00598
Jordan	00962	USA	001
Kazakhstan	007	Uzbekistan	00998
Kenya	00254	Vanuatu	00678
Kiribati	00686	Venezuela	00582
Kuwait	00965	Vietnam	0084
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Laos	00856	Virgin Islands US	001340
Latvia	00371	Wales (UK)	0044
Lebanon	00961	Yemen	00967
Liberia	00231	Yugoslavia	00381
Libya	00218	Zambia	00260
Lithuania	00370	Zimbabwe	00263

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

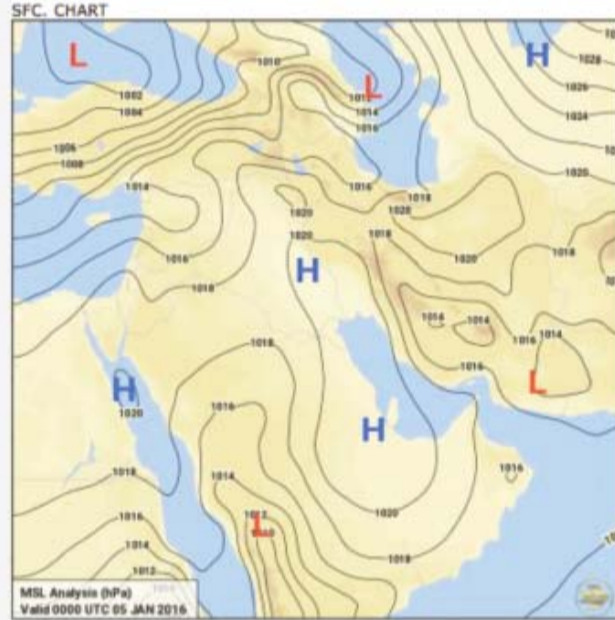
Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 05/01/2016-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 16 °C

By Day : Partly cloudy with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 20 km/h
By Night : Cold with light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 18 km/h and some high clouds will appear



Four-Day Forecast

	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Expected Weather				
Min Temp °C	06	07	08	08
Max Temp °C	19	20	22	21
Wind Direction	variable	north westerly to light variable	south easterly	north westerly
Wind Speed km/h	06 - 20	08 - 28	15 - 35	08 - 30

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C	REC	Max °C
KUWAIT CITY	09		16
KUWAIT AIRPORT	05		16
ABDULY	05		16
BUBYAN	06		15
JAHRA	08		17
FAILAKA ISLAND	07		15
SALMIYAH	11		15
AHMADI	11		15
JAL ALIYAH	07		15
QAROH ISLAND	15		16
UMM AL-MARADEM	14		16
NUWAISIB	07		17
WAFRA	06		17
MANAGISH	07		15
SALMY	06		15
MUTRIBA	06		16

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	16
Min Temp (°C)	04
Max Rel Hum (%)	100
Min Rel Hum (%)	40
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	25 NW
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

	Sunrise	06:43
	Sunset	17:04

Prayer Times

Fajr	05:19
Sunrise	06:43
Zuhr	11:53
Asr	14:45
Sunset	17:04
Isha	18:26



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	
Dr. Abidallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223
Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)	
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	24555050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daary	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	24555050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhaezem	22639920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadab	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Rafea	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abdallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Plastic Surgeons	
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Family Doctor	
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Psychiatrists	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr. Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	
Dr. Adrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s. Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliyami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
General Surgeons	
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
Internists, Chest & Heart	
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr. Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Paediatricians	
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarooof	25713514
Dr. Pradiip Gujare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dentists	
Dr. Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdalateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist	
Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924
Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288
Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Internist, Chest & Heart	
DR. Mohammed Akkad	24555050 Ext 210
Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC Assistant Professor Of Medicine Head, Division of Cardiology Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital	25339667
Consultant Cardiologist	
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Feature

Women with bikes...



Bahraini Anne Al-Zayani, biker and head of Public Relations at the American Mission Hospital, poses next to her motorbike in the capital Manama, on December 28, 2015. In the background is seen the Bahrain World Trade Center (BWTC) and its three wind turbines. — AFP photos



Bahraini Anne Al-Zayani, biker and head of Public Relations at the American Mission Hospital, poses at the 'Bahrain Bikers' association headquarters.



Bahraini Anne Al-Zayani, biker and head of Public Relations at the American Mission Hospital, rides her motorbike in Isa Town.



Bahraini Anne Al-Zayani, biker and head of Public Relations at the American Mission Hospital, poses next to her motorbike after polishing it.



Bahraini Anne Al-Zayani, biker and head of Public Relations at the American Mission Hospital, poses with her son Ebrahim Al-Zayani during a gathering of Bahraini bikers.



Bahraini Anne Al-Zayani, biker and head of Public Relations at the American Mission Hospital, takes part in a gathering of Bahraini bikers.



Egyptian female biker Dina Wassef poses for a photo on her Harley Davidson motorbike in the Egyptian capital Cairo, Wassef, a painter who has been riding a motorbike for six years, hasn't faced any problems in the street riding her bike expect from the regards of onlookers.



Egyptian female biker Yara Shalaby gets ready outside her house for a ride in the desert on the outskirts of the capital Cairo. Shalaby, an engineer who has been driving motorbikes for two years, says desert riding requires good physical condition to overcome obstacles and sand dunes.



Egyptian female biker Dina Wassef poses for a photo on her Harley Davidson motorbike in the Egyptian capital Cairo, Wassef, a painter who has been riding a motorbike for six years, hasn't faced any problems in the street riding her bike expect from the regards of onlookers.



Egyptian female biker Yara Shalaby rides in the desert.



A Moroccan man dressed in traditional attire walks past Mai Zniber, a Moroccan therapist posing on her Harley Davidson motorbike in the Moroccan capital Rabat. Mai has been riding a motorbike for four years and for her biking gives her a sense of freedom, self-confidence and pushes her limits with the bikes power and potential.



Mai Zniber, a Moroccan therapist rides her motorbike.

Feature



Camelia Mentak, a Moroccan cross-biker and stylist rides her cross-motorbike at an off-road course in the city of Marrakesh.



Camelia Mentak, a Moroccan cross-biker and stylist poses for a photo on her cross-motorbike at an off-road course in the city of Marrakesh. Mentak believes that women riding motorbikes, is a synonym of female emancipation in Morocco. The city of Marrakesh has a larger number of female motorbike riders than other more conservative Moroccan cities.



Camelia Mentak, a Moroccan cross-biker and stylist rides her cross-motorbike at an off-road course in the city of Marrakesh.



Camelia Mentak, a Moroccan cross-biker and stylist rides her cross-motorbike at an off-road course in the city of Marrakesh.



Malika Oumouid (center), a Moroccan member of the female police motorbike brigade controls the traffic in the Western city of Marrakesh.



Malika Oumouid (center), a Moroccan member of the female police motorbike brigade puts on her gloves before riding her bike in the Western city of Marrakesh.



Malika Oumouid (center), a Moroccan member of the female police motorbike brigade, waits in the traffic in the Western city of Marrakesh. For Malika, women riding motorcycles illustrates the country's development. The city of Marrakesh has a larger number of female motorbike riders than other more conservative Moroccan cities.



Twenty-eight-year-old amateur motorcycle rider and physiotherapist Wided El-Ali poses for a photo as she takes a motorbike lesson from forty-year-old Hamida Saklaoui, the first Arab woman rally driver to compete in the OPTIC 2000 Tunisia Rally, in Tunis. Hamida began motorcycling at the age of 14 and she later founded a club for bike lovers in Tunisia and now teaches women to ride motorbikes. Saklaoui, who is due to get married soon said she will only give up motorbiking when she is six months pregnant and it will be a huge sacrifice. Wided has been passionate about motorbikes since her childhood and is going to buy a motorbike to drive on the weekends.



Forty-year-old Tunisian woman Hamida Saklaoui (right), the first Arab woman rally driver to compete in the OPTIC 2000 Tunisia Rally, gives a motorbike lesson to Farah, a thirty-year-old novice rider.



Forty-year-old Tunisian woman Hamida Saklaoui, the first Arab woman rally driver to compete in the OPTIC 2000 Tunisia Rally, poses for a photo with her Yamaha TTR 600 motorbike in Tunis. Hamida began motorcycling at the age of 14 and she later founded a club for bike lovers in Tunisia and now teaches women to ride motorbikes. Saklaoui, who is due to get married soon said she will "only give up motor biking when she is six months pregnant and it will be a huge sacrifice".

Brutalist decor hefts some weight this fall

Muscular. Brawny. Disruptive. They don't sound like descriptors for home décor, do they? Yet they perfectly describe one of the most interesting new directions in furniture and accessories: Brutalist décor. Brutalist architecture was popularized by Le Corbusier in the 1950s. A departure from the intricate Beaux Arts building style, it was all about spare geometric forms, and materials like unfinished concrete, steel and glass. New York's Whitney Museum of American Art is a Brutalist design by Marcel Breuer. Paul Rudolph designed the Art and Architecture Building at Yale.

The style moved into interior décor that also played with abstract forms and rough textures, adding an earthy color palette and incorporating other materials like wood, plaster and marble. Furniture by designers like Paul Evans and Curtis Jere found fans, and the style caught fire during the '60s and '70s. There are nice examples on the sets of the movie "American Hustle" and TV's "Mad Men." So why is Brutalism once again having a moment?

"Brutalism is derived from the French word 'brut,' or raw, and I think it's that sense of rawness that design lovers are

attracted to today," ventures Anna Brockaway, co-founder and curator of the online vintage-design marketplace Chairish. "Because of their brawny heaviness, imperfect finishes and rough, uneven dimensions, Brutalist pieces deliver gutsy gravitas to a space."

Jeni Sandberg, a modern-design dealer and consultant in Raleigh, North Carolina, adds, "Brutalist works make perfect high-impact statement pieces, and collectors are snapping up pieces like wall sculptures and chandeliers."

And New York designer Daun Curry says, "Design should challenge us, and creating contrast in an environment gives urgency, interest and dimension. Brutalist design is fascinating because it balances delicacy with harsh materiality."

Curry's favorite sources include 1st Dibs and Flair Home Collection. The former offers vintage pieces like a 1967 Paul Evans patchwork steel cabinet, and a Lane dresser with a Brutalist sculptured wood mosaic. Flair has a collection of Brutalist objets d'art in various metals and gilded plaster.

Kelly Wearstler's Apollo stool is an artful stack of black or white marble circles; her Elliott chair is a sexy mix of curvy bronze and exotic fish leather; and her Array, District and

Astral rugs bring Brutalist imagery to the floor. James Bearden's blackened steel Skyscraper floor lamp for Studio Van den Akker combines architecture and function.

At Arteriors, long a source for Brutalist style, round slabs of forged iron form the industrial-chic Potter lamp. The Payne chandelier is a kinetic arrangement of hand-cut, gold-leafed iron shards, while a cove of welded iron sticks forms the Ecklo lamp. Armor-like metallic circles and squares form the Ulysses and Monty pendants.

"I recommend picking one statement-making piece to anchor a space, like a chandelier, credenza, cocktail table or wall sculpture, and then mixing in pieces from other eras and styles," advises Brockaway, of Chairish. "Also, many Brutalist pieces are dark in coloration, so I prefer to balance them with a lighter surrounding palate." — AP

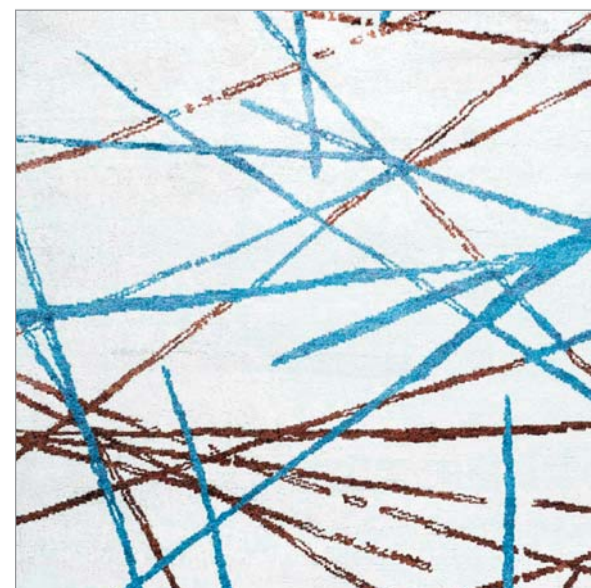
In this photo provided by Kelly Wearstler, the Elliott chair is a sexy mix of curvy bronze and leather. — AP photos



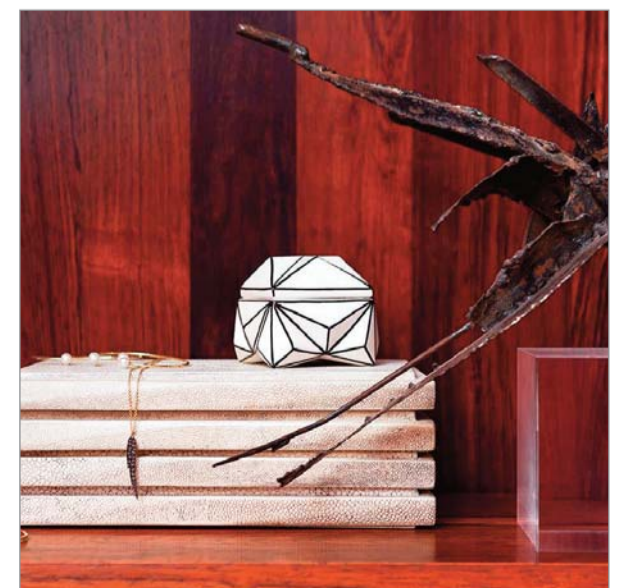
In this photo provided by Kelly Wearstler, the Elliott chair is a sexy mix of curvy bronze and an exotic Amazonian fish leather.



In this photo provided by Kelly Wearstler, the Apollo stool is an artful stack of black or white marble circles that epitomizes the Brutalist aesthetic.



This photo provided by Kelly Wearstler shows the Astral rug that brings Brutalist imagery to the floor.



This photo provided by Daun Curry shows the New York interior designer's strongly geometric and textural objets d'art that make a statement on a shelf for one of her projects.

Sub-zero swimming and frozen palaces as **Chinese ice festival** opens



People visit the China Ice and Snow World on the eve of the opening ceremony.



A man takes a photo in front of ice sculptures at the China Ice and Snow World on eve of the opening ceremony of the Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang province yesterday. — AFP photos

Brave swimmers plunged into freezing waters while other visitors gazed at frozen palaces ahead of the opening ceremony for China's spectacular Harbin Ice and Snow Festival yesterday. The annual festival in the capital of the northeastern province of Heilongjiang is expected to draw more than one million visitors to admire castles and cathedrals sculpted out of ice and lit up at night in ethereal colors.

This year's display is the largest in the festival's decades-long history, filling a park the size of more than 100 sports fields and using a record amount of ice and snow, according to the official Xinhua news agency. Though temperatures yesterday remained a biting -14 degrees Celsius (seven degrees Fahrenheit) even at noon, a number of festivalgoers took part in an ice-swimming competition, diving bare-chested and head-first into freezing pools of water cut into the ice.

Those not inclined to take the plunge admired a vast expanse of ice block Chinese palaces, Russian churches and European colonnades, with vendors selling gleaming rows of candied fruit. Visitors sledged and snapped selfies on the eve of the park's opening ceremony, the translucent pagodas around them glowing in surreally neon pinks, blues and greens. Chinese and Dutch designers worked with more than 10,000 workers over three months to build the winter wonderland, according to Xinhua. The centerpiece is a 15-story tower of ice, thought to be the world's tallest. The festival's schedule includes ice and snow sculpture contests, as well as performances and musical events. Local authorities hope that the festival can bring much needed tourist dollars to the region, historically one of China's industrial bases, now hit by an economic slowdown.—AFP



A child rides on a sleigh past snow sculptures.



A couple laugh as they walk past an ice sculpture.



A woman sits on a sleigh during the Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival.



People visit the Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival.



A family pull a sleigh before the opening ceremony.



Visitors look at snow sculptures.



People wait in line at the China Ice and Snow World on the eve of the opening ceremony.



A swimmer takes a breath in a pool carved from thick ice during an ice swimming competition.



Visitors take sleighs past snow sculptures.



A vendor selling candied haws waits for customers at the China Ice and Snow World.



In this photograph celebrated Indonesian tattoo artist Durga, looks out from studio platform during the traditional tattoo festival in the village of Maguwoharjo in Yogyakarta, Java's cultural heartland.



Celebrated Indonesian tattoo artist Durga speaks to a woman of Dayak tribe origin during the traditional tattoo festival. — AFP photos

Indonesian tattooists revive tribal traditions



Australian film maker and tattoo artist Rob Henry, sporting body tattoo designs from the Mentawai tribe origin, walks in the jungle where a traditional tattoo festival set up camp in the village of Maguwoharjo.



Australian film maker and tattoo artist Rob Henry, sporting body tattoo designs from the Mentawai tribe origin, walks in the jungle.



A tattoo artist uses the traditional 'hand tapping' method during a traditional tattoo festival.



Celebrated Indonesian tattoo artist Durga, lights an oil lamp during the traditional tattoo festival.

Men in tribal dress stand amid dense jungle on the Indonesian island of Java, their bodies covered in elaborate, traditional tattoos inspired by cultures in distant corners of the vast, tropical archipelago. Many images on display at the recent tattoo festival that brought the men together were not applied with fast, modern machines, but using a centuries-old, tribal method that involves artists gently tapping a stick mounted with a needle on a subject's skin. The practice known as "hand-tapping" had almost faded out completely, as modernity overwhelmed Indonesia's tribes and younger generations eschewed their ancestors' ways, but tattoo artists have in recent years been driving a revival as more and more people seek to reconnect with the past.

"There is a growing trend now, there are more people who want to learn about traditional tattooing—I am very happy about it," said Herpianto Hendra, a tattoo artist who uses the ancient method and is a member of Borneo's Dayak tribespeople. "I am proud that my culture is being recognized." The body art ranges from flowers inspired by Dayak tattoos that mark the coming of age, to narrow, black lines running across the body, like those of indigenous peoples from a remote scattering of islands in western Indonesia.

The festival earlier this month in Maguwoharjo village in Java's cultural heartland gathered people from across Indonesia and the world at the studio of celebrated Indonesian tattoo artist Durga, a leading figure in the revival. Durga has championed tattoos from the western Mentawai islands, home to a semi-nomadic tribespeople famed for their body art and the practice of sharpening their teeth, which they believe makes them more beautiful.

Close links to nature

Mentawai tattoos, generally long lines looping over the shoulders and chest and more elaborate patterns on feet and hands, were long part of local culture and signified the tribespeople's close links to nature. The other well-known body art from Indonesia is found among the Dayaks, an array of semi-nomadic tribes who traditionally lived in the jungles and mountains of vast, biodiverse Borneo island shared between Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei.

Their tattoos featured thick, black lines forming images inspired by nature, such as flowers, leaves and animals, that mark a person's journey through life. Before head-hunting was banned, Dayaks also received tattoos on their hands if they decapitated an enemy. While not as well known, other indigenous groups also have tattooing traditions, such as those in the eastern Maluku Islands and the central island of Sumba. But the tradition has been waning for decades, after Christian missionaries and the Indonesian government sought to discourage what they saw as outdated, tribal practices, and as younger tribespeople moved away from villages to rapidly growing cities in search of better jobs and education.

The revival has been driven by a small group of contemporary tattoo artists, some who have learnt "hand-tapping" methods from local tribes and have put a modern twist on ancient designs—increasingly popular among the young and hip living in Indonesian cities and abroad. Lars Krutak, an American tattoo anthropologist, said people are drawn to ancient Indonesian designs as they are "unique, beautiful and deeply spiritual." "People living in big cities want to be rooted to something meaningful, especially if they plan to wear these tattoos on their bodies for the rest of their lives," said Krutak, who has



Australian traditional tattoo artist, Brent McCown uses the "hand tapping" method during a traditional tattoo festival.

written an entry on Durga for the "World Atlas of Tattoo", which features 100 tattoo artists.

'Defend traditional culture'

In the capital Jakarta, a small museum dedicated to indigenous body art has opened, housed in a ramshackle building filled with tribal paraphernalia and photos of tattooed indigenous people. "Hand-tapping" regularly takes place at the museum, whose name "Bau Tanah" refers to the musty smell that emanates from the earth after heavy rains. At a recent "hand-tapping" session, tattoo artist Ranu Khodir knelt down and applied the image of a dragon in Dayak style on the stomach of Saman, a motorbike taxi driver, who like many Indonesians goes by one name. An assistant stretched out Saman's skin, as he stayed stoically silent as the tattoo was applied.

Khodir, who is not from an indigenous group but looks every bit like the tribesmen whose work he reveres, with a wild mane of jet-black hair and motifs of stars and flowers covering his back, used to do machine tattooing but switched to "hand-tapping" a few years ago. "I want to defend traditional Indonesian culture," he said. There are downsides to the traditional methods—it takes many more hours for a tattoo to be applied by "hand-tapping" than with a machine. Still, the old methods have been adapted for the modern world, with tattoo artists nowadays using sterilized needles and a light anesthetic to dull the pain. In the past in tribal areas, tattoos were applied with fish bones or long thorns. Despite signs of a revival in some areas, experts warn that tattooing styles of tribes in more remote places could be forgotten. "I fear this ancient traditional and artistic knowledge will soon be lost forever unless a concerted effort is made to record it immediately," said Krutak. — AFP



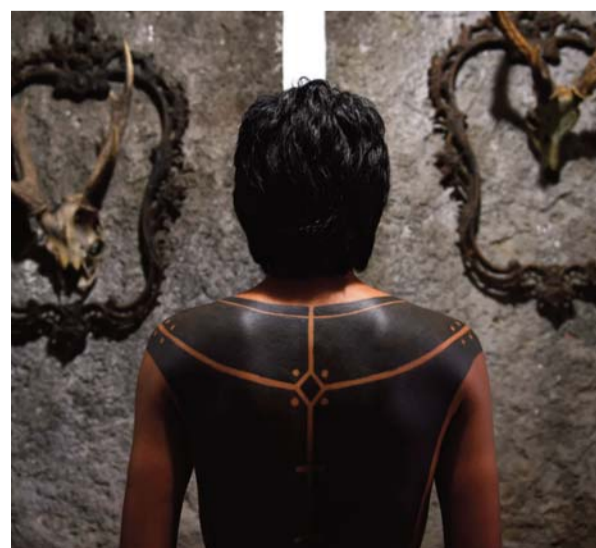
Esmat Sakulok, poses to display his body tattoo design from the Mentawai tribe origin during the traditional tattoo festival.



Agung Prasetyo, an Indonesian care taker of Bau Tanah tattoo museum, displays his Dayak tribe motif tattoo in Jakarta.



Ranu Khodir, a celebrated Jakarta tattoo artist, who uses the traditional hand-tapping method displays his Dayak tribe motif tattoo at the Bau Tanah tattoo museum.



Agung Prasetyo, an Indonesian care taker of Bau Tanah tattoo museum, displays his Dayak tribe motif tattoo.



Ranu Khodir, a celebrated Jakarta tattoo artist, who uses the traditional hand-tapping method prepares the traditional needle for a tattoo session.



Young contestants write their calligraphy during the annual New Year calligraphy contest in Tokyo yesterday. About 3,000 people took part in the calligraphy contest to celebrate the start of the new year. — AFP

After New Year, Times Square goes to dogs

Days after up to a million people crammed into New York's Times Square to ring in 2016, a more local audience had its chance for some midnight entertainment — dogs. In a concert that was in equal parts humor and metaphysical reflection, the experimental artist Laurie Anderson put on a show whose target audience was canine. Dozens of dogs in Times Square howled or barked at sounds only perceptible to their ears, although the hundreds of humans in attendance could also tune in on headphones.

Anderson conceived of Monday night's canine concert to accompany her latest film, "Heart of a Dog," which takes the story of the rat terrier she adopted with her late husband, rock legend Lou Reed, as the basis for a reflection on death and memory. A three-minute sequence of the film, which was originally commissioned by French-German network Arte and is shortlisted for an Oscar for Best Documentary Feature, is airing through January just before midnight on some of Times Square's iconic billboards. The abstract scene delved into Tibetan Buddhist conceptions of the afterlife. But Anderson saw her concert, a one-off in Times Square, in a lighter vein as a tribute to the unifying power of dogs. "I think

more people are sharing dogs these days, because everyone travels so much," she said. "It's really fun-barking in Times Square!" she said after the performance in which she set down her electric violin for a dog-friendly segment led by electronic sounds.

Dog lovers unite

Anderson put on a first concert for dogs in 2010 at the Sydney Opera House. One major difference in New York—the weather. Anderson, sporting a stocking cap but obliged to play bare-handed, and the crowd withstood dangerous cold of around 15 Fahrenheit (-10 Celsius). Sherry Dobbin, director of the Times Square Arts group behind the project, said the timing was intentional. "Considering the film is so much about that time when you're passing from one life into another, it seemed very natural following a huge celebration of the end of one year and bringing in the new year," she said.

When the clock neared midnight and the day January 5, a freezing but still chipper Anderson advised her audience, "You can keep barking!" Dogs, as well as cats, have significantly wider hearing ranges than humans. For the composition, Anderson chose

low-decibel sounds rather than high-frequency noises that could irritate dogs. While many dogs reacted, including New York Police Department German Shepherds invited along with their officers, others stayed silent or looked puzzled.

"I don't think she was terribly culturally enriched," Meghan Daum said of Phoebe, who is part St Bernard.

But Daum said that Phoebe seemed relaxed and "didn't get too freaked out." "I think it's fun. I think everyone had a good sense of humor about it," she said, while adding: "I don't think it's the right time of year for it." Ami Schragar warmed up her two dogs—Buttercup, a six-year-old Westie, and Lucas, a nine-year-old toy poodle—under blankets in a stroller. Schragar saw the concert as another victory for dog-lovers, after New York recently ended a ban on taking dogs to outdoor restaurants. "Anything that's dog-friendly I'll go to, even if it's midnight and freezing out," she said. — AFP

Guns N' Roses reunion set for April

Guns N' Roses and LCD Sound system, two of the most influential bands in recent decades, will both get back together for the Coachella music festival in April. Coachella, which takes place over two consecutive weekends in the California desert, confirmed the long-rumored reunions as it announced its lineup late Monday. The concerts are expected to mark the first time that the original lineup of Guns N' Roses—including singer Axl Rose and guitarist Slash—have performed together since July 1993 in Buenos Aires.

The Los Angeles-based hard rockers confirmed the dates on their website with a video of a giant concert reminiscent of the band's heyday. Rose is heard-with a profanity added-singing one of the most famous lines from the band's repertoire: "You know where you are? You're in the jungle, baby!" Guns N' Roses have kept playing in name in recent years but without Slash, who has long said it was too difficult to work with Rose. The singer, who rarely gives interviews, had been scheduled to speak Tuesday on the late-night talk show of Jimmy Kimmel. But Rose's name inexplicably disappeared Monday from Kimmel's list of guests on the show's website.

Still historic debut

With Rose's sweeping vocal range and raw anger coupled with Slash's intricate metal guitar, Guns N' Roses became an instant sensation. "Appetite for Destruction" from 1987 remains the top-selling debut album by a group in the United States, where it has been certified as selling 18 million copies. But Guns N' Roses have released just one album in the past two decades—"Chinese Democracy," which came out in 2008 after persistent delays and without Slash.

LCD Soundsystem, a younger band from New York, was influential in developing the hard-edged electronic scene of the 2000s that brought a new alternative aura to dance music. The band—best known perhaps for the track "Daft Punk Is Playing at My House," a tongue-in-cheek homage to the prominent French electronic duo—had broken up in 2011 with a concert at Madison Square Garden that was heralded with a live album and documentary. LCD Soundsystem reunited in its own idiosyncratic way on December 24 when it suddenly released a track entitled "Christmas Will Break Your Heart," with the band writing on Facebook that it was a "depressing Christmas song" that had been on the back burner for the past eight years. LCD Soundsystem will headline Coachella on the festival's two Fridays—April 15 and April 22 — with Guns N' Roses performing on the Saturday nights.—AFP



Police officers bring their dogs to a special canine-oriented concert in Times Square led by artist Laurie Anderson in New York City. — AFP photos



Laurie Anderson performs at the January Midnight Moment concert for dogs: Heart Of a Dog by Laurie Anderson at Duffy Square.



Michael Bay

Michael Bay to return for 'Transformers 5'

Michael Bay has confirmed that he will return to direct the fifth installment in the "Transformers" franchise for Paramount. Bay broke the news to Rolling Stone, after months of speculation, while promoting his new war movie "13 Hours." This past spring, the studio announced it would be assembling a writers room to build its new "Transformers" universe that would include spin-off pics along new installments in the franchise. The room was overseen by Akiva Goldsman with the studio recently tapping Art Marcum and Matt

Holloway ("Iron Man") along with Ken Nolan ("Black Hawk Down") to write the script. Mark Wahlberg, who appeared in the last installment, is expected to return and

Lorenzo di Bonaventura is producing. Insiders had expected that Bay would return to the franchise but the director has only now committed with his new movie almost out the door. Bay directed "Transformers: Age of Extinction," the fourth in the series and the first one without Shia Labeouf. It starred Mark Wahlberg, Jack Reynor and Nicola Peltz and, despite losing Labeouf, grossed more than \$1 billion worldwide. Details behind the next pic are under wraps but sources have said Wahlberg is the only cast member from "Age of Extinction" expected to reprise his role. Bay is repped by WME and "13 Hours" bows on Jan 15. — Reuters



These two file photos show US musician and singer James Murphy of LCD Soundsystem (left) performing during the 29th edition of the 'Printemps de Bourges' music festival on April 23, 2005 in Bourges, France; and Axl Rose of Guns 'n Roses (right) performing at the MTV Video Music Awards in New York on August 29, 2002. — AFP