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150 Fils

LAST KUWAITI DETAINEE AT GITMO REPATRIATED

FAYEZ AL-KANDARI 'DELIGHTED' TO RETURN HOME

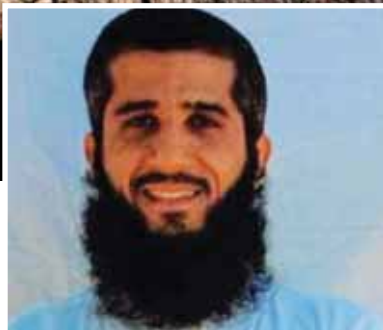


Min 12°

Max 22°



GUANTANAMO BAY, Cuba: This April 9, 2014 file photo shows razor wire-topped fence and a watchtower at the abandoned "Camp X-Ray" detention facility at this US naval station and prison. Fayeze Al-Kandari, (inset) the last Kuwaiti Guantanamo Bay inmate, was transferred from the controversial US military prison back to Kuwait yesterday. — AFP



WASHINGTON: The last Kuwaiti Guantanamo Bay inmate has been transferred from the US military prison back to Kuwait, the Pentagon announced yesterday, bringing the prison's remaining population down to 104. "The Department of Defense announced today the repatriation of Fayeze Mohammed Ahmed Al-Kandari from the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay to the government of the state of Kuwait," the Pentagon said in a statement.

The US military and intelligence agencies had "determined continued law of war detention of Al-Kandari does not remain necessary," and that Kandari was no longer considered a significant threat to US security. Kandari's lawyer, Eric Lewis of the Washington firm Lewis Baach PLLC, said Kandari was transferred yesterday to Kuwait, where he will undergo a medical examination and be put into a rehabilitation program to help him reintegrate into society. "Mr Al-Kandari is delighted to be going home and reuniting with his beloved parents and family after all these years away," Lewis said.

Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said a Kuwaiti security team received Kandari, who is on the way home. In a statement to KUNA, Sheikh Salem congratulated HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti people and Kandari's family on his release. He added that the decision to set Kandari free embodied the elevated directives by the Amir, and his keenness during contacts with former US president George W Bush and current President Barack Obama, on closing that file.

The release was also the outcome of instructions and unremitting follow-up by First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, he added. In addition, Ambassador Sheikh Salem "proudly" recalled the role and non-stop efforts by the committee of the families of Kuwaiti detainees in Guantanamo over the past years. Kandari's release is a positive progress in bilateral relations, marking the end of a sensitive issue that has always topped priorities of the Kuwaiti government in contacts with the US, he stressed. "It is the end of a 13-year period which witnessed hard and constant contacts to bring the file to an end."

Moreover, the move reflects real assessment of Kuwait's role in countering terrorism, and the serious steps the country has taken in cooperation with the international community in this regard, Sheikh Salem said. Kandari was the last of 12 Kuwaitis who had been imprisoned at Guantanamo. The Kuwaiti government supported the release of its citizens, who unlike a majority of those held at Guantanamo, had high-profile Washington lawyers and public relations firms working to secure their freedom. That effort suffered a setback in 2008 when one of the released prisoners carried out a suicide car bombing in Iraq targeting Iraqi security forces in the northern city of Mosul.

A profile of Kandari released by the Pentagon last year identified Kandari as an Al-Qaeda recruiter and propagandist. It said he also "probably" served as Osama bin Laden's spiritual adviser. He denied committing any terrorist acts or having any extremist affiliations and was never charged. According to his leaked prison file, published by the New York Times, 40-year-old Kandari was a "committed member" of Al-Qaeda and was an influential religious figure for the group's fighters in Afghanistan. He was initially captured in Dec 2001, and sent to Guantanamo in May the following year, where inmates are kept without recourse to regular US legal processes and some likely will die in prison without ever being convicted of a crime. — Agencies

ARAMCO STUDYING SHARE OFFER

RIYADH: State-owned Saudi Aramco, the world's largest crude oil producer, said yesterday it is considering a share offer as part of economic reforms by the kingdom hit by a record budget deficit. The announcement comes after oil prices plummeted to 12-year lows on world markets because of a global supply glut, increasing strains on Saudi Arabia's public finances. The company "has been studying various options to allow broad public participation in its equity", a statement said.

This would be through the listing on capital markets "of an appropriate percentage of the company's shares and/or the listing of a bundle (of) its downstream subsidiaries," it said. "This proposal is consistent with the broad and progressive direction pursued by the kingdom for reforms, including privatisation in various sectors of the Saudi economy and deregulation of markets, which the company strongly supports," it added.

The statement comes a day after The Economist published an interview with Saudi Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman who said a share offer was under review. A public listing by Saudi Aramco would make it the first major state-owned oil firm in the Gulf to be floated on markets. Saudi Aramco said that, after studying the options, the findings will be presented to the board of directors, which will make recommendations to the company's Supreme Council. The council is chaired by Prince Mohammed and has overseen Saudi Aramco since it was separated from the oil ministry last year.

The kingdom, which is fighting a costly war against rebels in Yemen, is confronted by unusual economic challenges caused by plunging global oil prices. Last week, it reported a record deficit of \$98 billion for 2015. And it projected a shortfall of \$87 billion this year, with crude prices currently around \$34 a barrel, down from more than \$100 early in 2014. In an unprecedented departure from its decades-old generous welfare system, Riyadh's budget last week announced rises in fuel, electricity, water and other prices.

In his interview, Mohammed said a share offer "is something that is being reviewed, and we believe a decision will be made over the next few months". The thirty-something prince said he was personally enthusiastic about the step, which would be in the interests of the market, the company and greater transparency. Mohammed, the son of King Salman, is also defense minister and heads the kingdom's main economic coordinating council.

The dive in oil prices is largely due to Saudi Arabia's own policies and those of other members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). They refuse to cut crude production as they seek to drive less-competitive players, including US shale producers, out of the market. Analysts expected the kingdom would make only a small stake available to the public. Abhishek Deshpande, an analyst at Natixis, said talk of an IPO shows the kingdom's determination to address the economic consequences of low oil prices. "It could be a very big step forward and also means oil prices will stay low for a while," Deshpande said. — AFP



KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim Al-Ja'fari. — KUNA

SHEIKH SABAH KHALED MEETS IRAQI FM ON REGIONAL ISSUES

KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim Al-Ja'fari, now on a visit to Kuwait. The two sides discussed a range of issues of mutual concern including the latest political and security developments in the Gulf region and beyond. They also discussed the ramifications of the aggression on the Saudi embassy in Tehran and consulate in Mashhad.

Sheikh Sabah Khaled reaffirmed Kuwait's firm opposition to any violation of the sanctity of diplomatic missions. He reiterated that the attacks on the Saudi mission in Iran constitute a flagrant

violation of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. While reaffirming Kuwait's support to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and all other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Sheikh Sabah Khaled urged easing the tension in the region.

The meeting gathered Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Ceremonial Affairs Dhari Al-Ajran, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Minister's Office Affairs Ayham Al-Omar and Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Homeland Affairs Aziz Al-Dihani as well as several senior officials of the ministry. — KUNA

FORMER COMMISSIONER LAUDS AMIR'S SUPPORT TO REFUGEES



GENEVA: Kuwait's permanent representative to UN in Geneva Jamal Al-Ghunaim meets Former (UNHCR) Commissioner Antonio Guterres. — KUNA

GENEVA: Former UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Antonio Guterres has highly appreciated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's support to refugees, Syrians in particular. Thanks to His Highness the Amir's efforts, Kuwait has come to be the biggest, and top supporter ever to the UN Refugees Agency, Guterres added in a message on Friday to Kuwait's permanent representative to UN and International Organizations in Geneva Jamal Al-Ghunaim.

Guterres held the post of UNHCR from 2005 to 2015. He noted that the Kuwaiti government played a significant role to muster the international community in three international conferences for Syria donors. Kuwait had a major role regarding donations for the Syrians, Guterres said, a matter that had a positive effect on the Agency's handling of the refugees crisis. The for-

mer UNHCR said he was confident the country would continue support to the agency with his successor Filippo Grandi.

Meanwhile, Ghunaim paid tribute to Guterres's efforts, sincerely handling "severe crises," in particular the Syrian one, to relieve refugees' sufferings. His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti people responded to the UNHCR's efforts for refugees, and especially Syrians, as part of a human duty, either through donations to the Refugee Agency or relief agencies, such as the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) in cooperation with the relevant organizations, he said.

Ghunaim noted that Kuwait would carry on with support to the agency, and would attend the fourth donors conference for Syria to be held in London next month. He pointed to the good relations with the new UNHCR. — KUNA

GHANEM: AIPU AFFIRMS SUPPORT TO SAUDI ARABIA

CAIRO: President of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU) and Kuwait parliament speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem affirmed AIPU's support to Saudi Arabia in the face of its current challenges. Ghanem made this remark to the press after meeting up with Secretary-General of the Arab League Nabil Al-Araby recently.

"As an Arab parliament, we confirm our support to Saudi Arabia, one of the AIPU members, against any violations that have been done to it, most recently the attacks on its embassy and its diplomatic missions in Iran," Ghanem said.

On his meeting with Araby, Ghanem described it as "constructive" and had many "eye-to-eye" views on several regional challenges and developments, especially regarding the Palestine file. He stressed that there is an existing cooperation among AIPU, Arab Parliament and Arab League in order to "unify stances" and "face trials."

AIPU is currently working on regaining Egypt's membership in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which mainly depends on the results of Geneva's recent meeting and House of Representatives' election on January 10.

Once Egypt gets its membership back, then it will be able to resume its important role in Arab parliaments. The next IPU meeting will be in Zambia which will discuss many serious global challenges, hence, Arab parliaments should exert many efforts to come together in the event, Ghanem pointed out. — KUNA



CAIRO: President of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU) and Kuwait parliament speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Secretary-General of the Arab League Nabil Al-Araby. — KUNA

KUWAITI MINISTER'S VISIT TO BAHRAIN TO BOOST TIES: ENVOY

MANAMA: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah has affirmed that latest visit to the Kingdom by the Minister of Information contributed to cementing bilateral relations between Kuwait and Bahrain at the tourist and cultural levels. Various quarters in the Kingdom valued the tour by Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, also the Kuwait Minister of State for Youth Affairs, to cultural centers including the Arab Center for International

Heritage, where he examined historic treasures, said Sheikh Azzam, also the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in the Kingdom.

He called for examining the Bahraini experience of putting the heritage resources at disposal of boosting tourism. Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud concluded on Thursday a two-day official visit to the country during which he attended a ceremony marking Manama as the Gulf Tourist Capital. — KUNA



MANAMA: Minister of Information Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah is pictured with Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah. — KUNA

MINISTRY REGULATES PRIVATE SCHOOLS' FEES INCREASE

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education set up a committee to put regulations for increasing in Arabic and foreign private school fees, a senior ministry official announced yesterday.

The committee, which was formed by Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa, is scheduled to finish its mission by the end of the month, said Dr Haitham Al-Athari. Its final recommendations will be applied on all private schools in Kuwait, said Athari, who charges the committee.

Any school that fails to adhere to those recommendations, particularly fails to obtain permission from the ministry before increasing fees will be subjected to punitive measures, Athari said, adding that termination of the school's license is the maximum form of punishment that could be used in this case.

The senior official urged parents to inform the ministry with any cases in which schools increase their fees, and provide evidence, adding that each complaint will be dealt with confidentially. The ministry has recently informed a private school to reverse a 19 per-

cent increase in fees after receiving complaints from students' parents, Athari added.

High-achieving students

In other news, a group of Kuwaiti students left for Senegal on Friday on the seventh trip organized by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, for high-achieving high school students. The KFAED's program is themed 'Be a High-Achiever.'

Organizing trips to the KFAED beneficiary states is prompted by a belief in the importance of motivating Kuwaiti students for further achievements and promoting their national sense through acquainting them with the status their country enjoys among the Arab, and other developing countries, as well as its efforts to support development worldwide, Ahmad Al-Sarraf from the Fund's Media Department told KUNA.

They also aim to enhance students' skills for search, and help them explore their abilities of self-reliance and bearing responsibilities, as well as getting acquainted with the



KUWAIT: A group of high-achieving students prepare to leave Kuwait on a trip organized by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED). — KUNA

world, Sarraf added. The trip, running as far as January 16, is part of the KFAED's role for promoting the Kuwaiti human resources, which included a program for training and qualifying engineers launched in 2004.

It is the first of its kind to an African country, he said, noting that Senegal is an ideal as a destination for the 'Be a High-Achiever' program for its cultural heritage and geographical diversity. The trip program, according to Sarraf, is variant, with cultural, refreshment and tourist goals, he said.

Meanwhile, another group of high-achieving Kuwaiti students left for China yesterday on a trip organized as part of KFAED's 'Be a High-Achiever' program. The trip's organizer Fatma Al-Terkit told KUNA that 12 female high schoolers will tour China until January 17. Not only will the trip aim at familiarizing students with KFAED's developmental projects in China but also will them to explore different culture, improve their sense of responsibility and their awareness of the importance of teamwork, she added. — KUNA



250,000 SHRIMPS RELEASED INTO SEA

KUWAIT: Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) recently released 250,000 baby shrimps into a bay north of the country, in a bid to enhance dwindling fish stocks. Managing Director of KISR's Environmental and Biological Research Department Faisal Al-Halil said that KISR aims to find a solution to rapidly depleting fish stocks in the country, saying that the institute had recently begun implementing water farm projects to remedy the issue.

Lauding the initiative, Halil said that a number of students and representatives of numerous public institutions had joined efforts of releasing new breeds of shrimp and fish. The species of shrimps released Thursday represents a major step forward for KISR, Halil noted.

The two underlying goals of the initiative are to boost fish stocks in the country as well as generate awareness on the issue, Halil said. In order to ensure the success of such initiatives, all segments of society should contribute, in conjunction with major public bodies, he added.

Scientific researcher Shereen Al-Subaie, in comments to KUNA, said that the shrimps were released into an environment enriched with biological diversity, ensuring a smooth process of assimilation for the shrimps. Noura Jindal, another researcher, said that the measure is aimed at ensuring food security in the country as KISR expects to undertake similar initiatives in the near future. With a rich maritime tradition, sea food such as fish and shrimp are staples in the Kuwaiti diet. — KUNA

KUWAIT MADE GREAT CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUDAN'S DEVELOPMENT: AMBASSADOR

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Ambassador of Sudan to Kuwait Mohi Al-Deen Salim Ahmed said relations between Khartoum and Kuwait are historical and the two countries share friendly ties. Pointing out that Kuwait has made great contributions to the development of Sudan, he expressed gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the government and people of Kuwait for their support for his country.

At a dinner hosted in honor of journalists on Wednesday at Crowne Plaza Hotel, the ambassador added that the Sudanese people cannot forget great Kuwaiti personalities such as the late Abdulrahman Al-Sumait, Ambassador Abdullah Al-Sareea and others who had a great impact on the development of Sudan. On Sudan's decision to sever relations with Iran following the storming of Saudi missions in Tehran, Ahmed said the decision has its own vision in its relationships with the countries.

Economic cooperation

Economic advisor at the Sudanese embassy Faisal Abdul Rahman spoke about economic cooperation between Kuwait and Sudan. "Kuwait is the largest investor amongst the four countries investing in Sudan and its financing is



KUWAIT: Ambassador of Sudan to Kuwait Mohi Al-Deen Salim Ahmed speaks at a dinner held in honor of the press. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

the most effective, affecting the Sudanese economy on several levels," he said. Noting that Kuwait's investments in Sudan are not less than 25 percent of the foreign investment there, Abdul Rahman hailed Kuwaiti investments as one of the best and most successful investments that he has seen.

"In my opinion, Kuwait is the Arab world's center, culturally, intellectually and morally," indicating that the importance of Kuwait does not just come

from its agreements, of which there are more than ten in Sudan, but also because it includes important Arab investment organizations. Abdul Rahman pointed out that Kuwaiti-African cooperation is special, especially after Kuwait announced to give more than \$2 billion for development in Africa, noting that Sudan with its strategic location can play a big role in helping Africa take advantage of this generous grant from Kuwait.

GCC FMS DISCUSS ATTACKS AGAINST SAUDI EMBASSY

RIYADH: The foreign ministers of the GCC member states are set to hold an extraordinary meeting in Riyadh today to discuss recent attacks on the Saudi embassy and consulate in Tehran and Mashad respectively. GCC Secretary-General Abdullatif Al-Zayani said in a press statement the meeting will be presided by Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir, the current chairman of the GCC ministerial council.

Iranian protesters had stormed and torched the Saudi diplomatic mission in

Iran following the execution of 47 Saudi terror convicts in Saudi Arabia. On January 3, Saudi Arabia severed all diplomatic and trade ties with Iran in response to the attacks on its embassy and consulate in Iran.

Several countries and regional and international organizations have consequently condemned the storming of the Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran, and affirmed support to and solidarity with Saudi Arabia. — KUNA



Abdullatif Al-Zayani



AMMAN: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Chairman delivers bread to Syrian refugees. —KUNA



Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Chairman with Syrian child

KUWAIT BUILDS HUMANITARIAN BRIDGE TO RELIEVE SYRIANS

AID DELIVERED TO REFUGEES IN LEBANON

AMMAN/BEIRUT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) has sought to be on top in humanitarian action, particularly, at the local level and in Arab states since its launch in 1966, placing all possible and available resources at the disposal of relieving crises or catastrophes-stricken peoples worldwide.

In line with this approach, the KRCS has mapped out, since flare-up of the Syrian crisis in 2011, a plan aimed at securing the largest amount possible of aid to as many as possible of Syrians who have been locally relocated or forced to flee to countries neighboring their war-torn homeland, including the Kingdom of Jordan.

The Society has practically built a bridge of humanitarian aid for the war-tormented Syrians, dispatching rows of convoys laden with food, medical supplies, clothing and other basic materials for the refugees.

The Kuwaiti humanitarian mission is continuing, delivering relief supplies and necessities to more than 1.4 million Syrians who have taken up refuge in the Jordanian capital, the Kingdom governorates, cities and border areas.

Clinic

According to a statistical study, the KRCS built a clinic in 2015 within premises of the Jordanian Red Crescent Hospital to treat the refugees for a one-year duration. The clinic, construction of which cost some \$500,000, receives 25-30 cases per day, providing treatment for various illnesses and cases, including fractures and burns.

Moreover, the society has paid \$84,000 to use one of the hospital buildings for securing dental treatment for the

refugees for a year-long time. At least 10 cases are admitted daily at this special ward. Also, it has provided medical facilities for babies' circumcision. The procedure, practiced by Muslims, has been conducted for 3,000 babies.

In addition to the badly needed medical aid, the Kuwaiti association rented more than 70 bakeries to distribute bread to the refugees for a month-long duration. The phased "glove project" had provided more than 15.5 million pieces of bread since February 2013, benefiting more than 43,000 cash-strapped Syrian families. During the fasting month of Ramadan, in 2013 and 2014, the Kuwaiti society provided 500-700 feast-breaking meals for 36,000 refugees.

Furthermore, the society has worked out a contract with local merchants to give purchase coupons, each valued at KD 50 (\$70), for the refugees to get clothes and utensils. Some 3,500 families have benefited from these coupons.

The society has also provided necessities for Syrian students, renovated some schools to help in accommodating the Syrian pupils. Also, livestock has been given to thousands of families, in addition to food parcels, bedclothes, heating devices and toys.

The KRCS celebrates its golden jubilee on January 10th, boasting a long record of humanitarian and relief missions worldwide. Its staff and volunteers have been seen in hot and dangerous spots in various countries, aiding people stranded amid bloody conflicts, or suffering from effects of natural disasters such as earthquakes or floods.

The generous Kuwaiti aid, worth billions of US dollars, has practically developed into "humanitarian diplomacy," earning

Kuwait the UN designation, the "Humanitarian Center."

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the number-one mastermind of this humanitarian policy has also been granted the title, the "Humanitarian Leader," by the UN chief, Ban Ki-moon.

South Lebanon

KRCS engaged in an ongoing campaign to secure assistance to as many Syrian refugees as possible in Lebanon and other countries neighboring Syria, has handed over relief supplies to Syrians in southern Lebanon.

The association distributed detergents and bedclothes to 300 Syrian families at Al-Wazzani town, located close to the southern borders, KRCS member Athbi Al-Nuwaieem said yesterday. He re-affirmed keenness on delivering aid to refugees settled in remote regions, despite hard geographic and security conditions.

Wazzani, located nearly 70 kilometers from the capital Beirut and close to the southern border line, was recently targeted with volleys of shells fired by the Israeli artillery units. The Kuwaiti philanthropic association is distributing aid, this month, to 30,000 Syrian refugees. Some of the humanitarian work is being done in coordination with the Qatari relief society.

KRCS officials have affirmed that hard winter conditions, namely heavy snow, will not prevent its teams from reaching the refugees in mountainous and far areas. Lebanon has recently witnessed a snow storm that caused damage and blocked many roads. The country hosts more than one million Syrian refugees. —KUNA



Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) deliver relief aid to Syrian refugees in Jordan



Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) relief aid to Syrian refugees.



US EMBASSY, INFO MINISTRY CELEBRATE NATIONAL HOLIDAYS MUSICAL PERFORMANCE AT AL-SHAHEED PARK

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The United States Embassy in collaboration with the Ministry of Information celebrated Kuwait's national holidays with a musical performance yesterday at Al-Shaheed Park. The 90-minute musical performance organized by the US 1st Armored Division rock band Shockwave (drums, guitars, vocalists) is part of the ongoing US Embassy's program to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Kuwait's liberation.

Information Ministry Undersecretary Tareq

Eid Al-Mizrem said that the celebration marks the 55th National Day and the 25th Liberation Day. "As usual, we are celebrating our friendship with the US embassy and the 25th anniversary of the liberation of Kuwait at Al-Shaheed Park, the park that honors Kuwaiti martyrs who died during the Iraqi aggression of 1990," he said. Mizrem added the audience will enjoy the celebration with the Kuwaiti musical show 'Sameri' and the American band.

Joey Hood, the Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Kuwait, pointed out that the

US Embassy is sharing Kuwait's celebration and their joy on the 25th anniversary of the liberation. "We are taking advantage of the beautiful weather and our band to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the liberation. Music is a universal language and that is why we decided to share with Kuwait our fantastic music," he added.

The US Embassy will hold a reception on Jan 24 onboard a US carrier at Shuwaikh Port, and on Jan 28, a folkloric festival will be held. On Feb 26, another celebration will take place at Al-Shaheed Park.



KUWAIT: Scenes from the event that was organized at Al-Shaheed Park yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Crime

Report

BOOTLEGGER ARRESTED
IN MANGAF

KUWAIT: An Indian man used an open yard as a liquor vending area in Mangaf, and policemen arrested him with 21 bottles of alcoholic drinks. He was sent to the Drugs Control General Department. Ahmadi police patrols suspected man sitting in the area with a cardboard box of drinking water. When he was approached, he escaped on foot, but was arrested.

Drug addict caught

Ahmadi police arrested a citizen in Jaber Al-Ali under the influence of drugs and was sent to the Drug Control General Directorate (DCGD). The arrest was made late at night and when they searched him as a precautionary measure, they found two envelopes of shabu and drug paraphernalia.

Policeman sentenced

The misdemeanors court sentenced a former high-ranking police officer to one week in jail after being convicted with drunkenness in public in Salhiya. A police patrol noticed a man late at night walking unsteadily, and discovered he was drunk. He told police he was a senior officer, and admitted he drank a quarter bottle of vodka. In a separate case, the criminal court sentenced a ruling family member to five years in jail and KD 200 to suspend the sentence while awaiting the final verdict. The sentence was made in absentia. The suspect was accused of stealing phones and the wallet of an Egyptian man, and made him sign promissory notes for certain amounts of money.

Fraud

A citizen in his forties accused a girl in her twenties of fraud and exhausting him financially. When he asked her to return his money, she threatened him with getting him in legal trouble. He told Fintas police that she was "showing off" at his expense. He said he knows the girl since two years and that she exhausted him financially, apart from the gifts he bought for her. Police are investigating.

Home robbery

An Indian man's apartment was broken into and KD 780 as well as personal belongings were stolen. A theft complaint was filed at Salmiya police station and investigations are underway.

Couple fight

A man accidentally discovered that his wife frequents a suspicious cafe and smokes shisha, so he got angry with her, entered the cafe, beat her in front of others, tore her clothes and threw her hijab away. A security source said the woman complained to police and handed them a medical report stating her injuries. When the husband was asked about what happened, he denied her claims, adding that after he saw his wife's car outside the cafe and found her inside, she tried to escape. When he caught her, she attempted to get away and hit him. When the woman was questioned a second time, she said her husband removed her hijab and tore her shirt, exposing her back. In another case, a security source said an Egyptian woman was referred by Hawally prosecutor, after claiming her husband forced her to sign a document, to Jabriya police station. He said the husband beat his wife badly and insulted her verbally for a long time, but one day he beat her badly in the presence of his friend and forced her to sign 10 promissory notes in Kuwaiti dinars and Egyptian pounds. Detectives are investigating. — Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa



Three suspects arrested for visa forgery are pictured in this handout photo.



Environmental police inspect a concrete mixer truck during a recent campaign in Kabd.

TRIO ARRESTED
FOR VISA FORGERY

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Jahra detectives arrested a citizen in his twenties who issued forged visas in cooperation with two Bangladeshis, and charged KD 1,000 for each visa. A security source said information was received about the citizen's activity, so Brigadier Mohammad Al-Sharhan asked a team to investigate. Detectives then found that there were two Bangladeshis working with him in issuing forged visas. A source agreed with one of the citizen's partners to process six visas for KD 6,000, and it was agreed to deliver them in a cafe in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. The citizen came with one of the Bangladeshis, but when detec-

tives tried to arrest them, the citizen resisted. He was brought under control. The citizen then told detectives about the third partner who was waiting in the car, who was also arrested. The three were sent to concerned authorities.

Inspection

The Environment Police in cooperation with the Environment Public Authority carried out a campaign in Kabd camps in order to make sure that environmental conditions are met. Camels areas, trucks, concrete mixers, industrial and hazardous material transportation, as well as means of transporting garbage were inspected. Environment Police Director Lieutenant Colonel Hussein Al-

Ajmi led the campaign.

Fire

Jahra firemen put out a fire in Saad Al-Abdallah house Wednesday evening. The fire was caused by an electric short circuit in an exhaust fan. The flames were put out after the house was evacuated, and no injuries were reported.

Accident

A sports utility vehicle (SUV) crashed into a heavy duty truck, trapping the driver inside. Mangaf firemen rushed to the accident, which happened in Hadiya, and got the injured driver out of the car. He was taken by paramedics to hospital.

REPORT SLAMS SPENDING
ON TREATMENT OVERSEAS

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A report by the Finance Ministry and discussed by the cabinet criticized budget spending, particularly with regards to the treatment overseas program. According to the report, spending on the program rose from KD 245 million in 2014 to KD 441 million last year. The report suggesting utilizing such funds in building hospitals on high international standards, thus ending the treatment overseas program.

MEDICAL STAFF TO
WEAR IDS AT WORK

KUWAIT: In order to avoid a repetition of the recent fake doctor scandal, the Ministry of Health sent a circular to all hospitals and health centers around Kuwait, requesting that ID cards be worn by medical teams and employees during working hours. The circular said that any employee who fails to wear the ID will be held legally liable by concerned authorities at the ministry. The circular asked that any staff member reporting to work without an ID should be reported. — Al-Qabas

FORMER MP CONVICTED
OF VOTE BUYING

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The appeals court sentenced former MP Mushari Al-Husseini to two years in jail, and KD 5,000 to suspend the sentence after he was found guilty of vote buying. The court said while being as a candidate in the fourth district in the 2013 assembly, the former lawmaker asked a number of his accomplices to 'buy' votes after handing them the money mentioned in the investigations. In turn, they gave the cash to other suspects to make them vote for the former MP during the elections. A total of seventeen suspects were charged in the case.

Request denied

The renewal judge rejected a release request made by a citizen charged of insulting His Highness the Amir and burning his citizenship. The citizen had earlier uploaded a video on social media showing him burning his citizenship and uttered insulting words, prompting police authorities to arrest him.

Lawyers Society

The Kuwait Lawyers Society's Board of Director selected Nasser Al-Karyoun as President, while Sharyan Al-Sharyan was selected as Deputy Chairman, Muhannad Al-Sayer as Secretary and Humoud Al-Rdaan as Treasurer. The results of the society's elections were as follows:

- 1) Nasser Al-Kryoun
- 2) Muhannad Al-Sayer
- 3) Abdelrahman Al-Barrak
- 4) Sharyan Al-Sharyan
- 5) Duaij Al-Kandari
- 6) Wasmi Al-Wasmi
- 7) Mubarak Al-Khashab
- 8) Mishal Al-Khannah
- 9) Humoud Al-Radaan

RAIN DAMAGES RUNWAY AT KUWAIT INT'L AIRPORT

KUWAIT: Teams at Kuwait International Airport are continually cleaning the eastern runway as gravel became loose following the latest rains in the country. This is to avoid any danger to aircraft. It is done while work is still

ongoing on the western runway, which is currently closed.

The teams are supervising the eastern runway round the clock to deal with the problem, as the two runways are parallel in length and

width, and if one is closed for maintenance, the other compensates, so closing them together means a halt of aviation at Kuwait airport. So the only way to avoid the problem at this time is to intensify efforts to clear the runway. — Al-Rai

International

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 2016

Princess Ashraf, shah's twin sister, dies aged 96

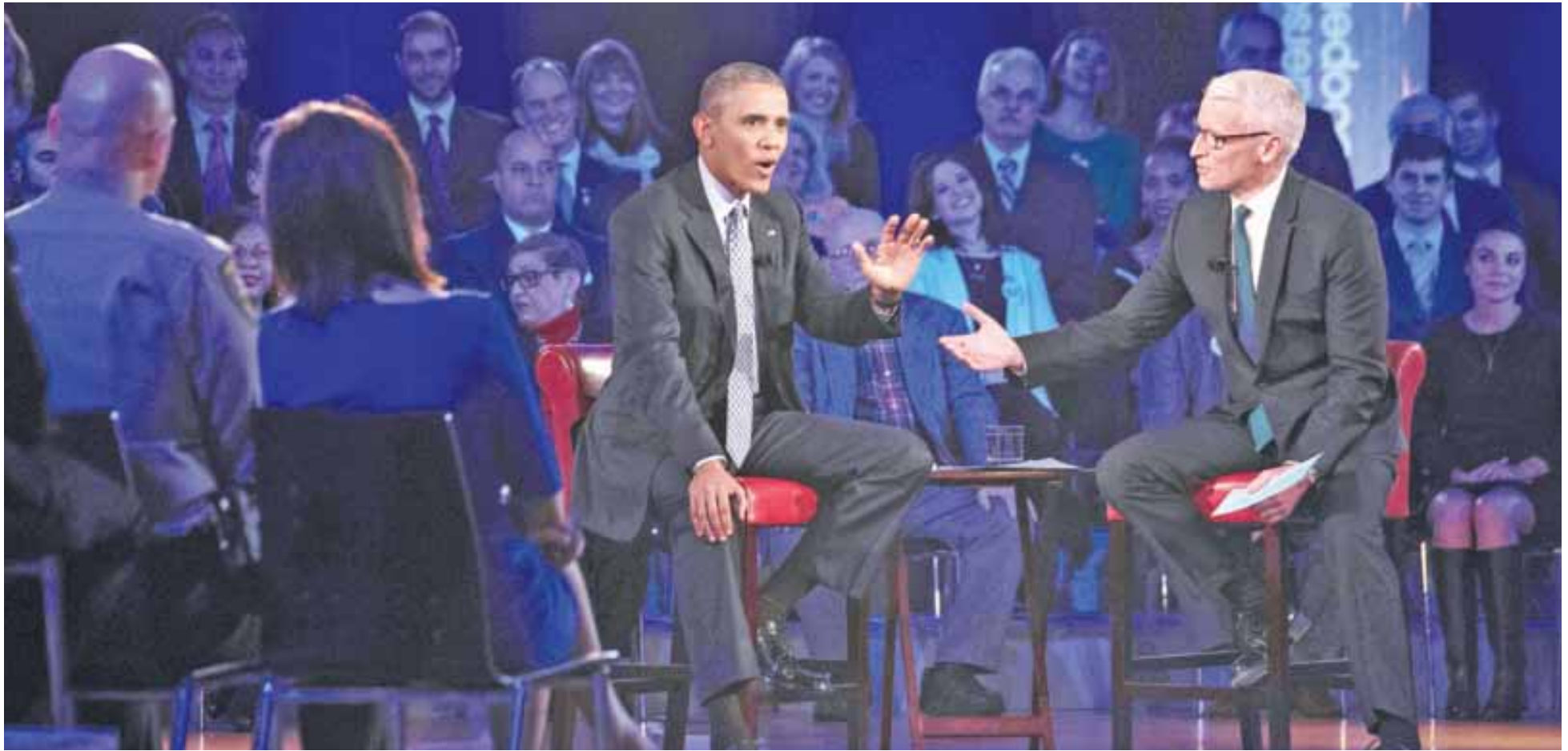
9

Migrants in Germany fear backlash after sex assaults

10

Seoul resumes propaganda broadcasts hated by North

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FAIRFAX, Virginia: US President Barack Obama speaks at a town hall meeting with CNN's Anderson Cooper on reducing gun violence at George Mason University on Thursday. — AFP

OBAMA MOCKS GUN 'CONSPIRACY'

PRESIDENT WILL NOT CAMPAIGN FOR OPPONENTS OF NEW LAWS

FAIRFAX, Virginia: US President Barack Obama mocked conspiracy theorists and tore into the National Rifle Association for pushing "imaginary fiction", as he described his plans to tighten gun control rules as modest first steps toward tackling gun violence in America. In a primetime, televised town hall meeting Thursday, Obama fielded tough questions from high-profile gun control opponents and supporters alike, often answering with sympathy and without confrontation as he tried to reassure Americans there is a middle ground on a fiercely divisive issue.

But Obama didn't hold back when asked by CNN moderator Anderson Cooper about the notion that the federal government - and Obama in particular - wants to seize all firearms as a precursor to imposing martial law. He blamed that notion on the NRA and like-minded groups that convince its members that "somebody's going to come grab your guns". "Yes, that is a conspiracy," Obama said. "I'm only going to be here for another year. When would I have started on this enterprise?" Obama defended his support for the constitutional right to gun ownership while arguing it was consistent with his efforts to curb mass shootings. He said the NRA refused to acknowledge the government's responsibility to make legal products safer, citing seatbelts and child-proof medicine bottles as examples.

Taking the stage at George Mason University, Obama accused the NRA of refusing to participate in the town hall despite having its headquarters nearby. "Since this is a main reason they exist, you'd think that they'd be prepared to have

a debate with the president," Obama said. NRA spokesman Andrew Arulanandam said beforehand that the group saw "no reason to participate in a public relations spectacle orchestrated by the White House." Several NRA members were in the audience for the event, which was organized and hosted by CNN. And the NRA pushed back on Twitter in real time, noting at one point "none of the president's orders would have stopped any of the recent mass shootings".

The White House has sought to portray the NRA, the nation's largest gun group, as possessing a disproportionate influence over lawmakers that has prevented new gun laws despite polls that show broad US support for measures like universal background checks. Last year, following a series of mass shootings, Obama pledged to "politicize" the issue in an attempt to level the playing field for gun control supporters.

The American Firearms Retailers Association, another lobby group that represents gun dealers, did participate Thursday. Asked how business had been since Obama took office, Kris Jacob, vice president of the group, replied: "It's been busy." "There's a very serious concern in this country about personal security," he added.

Opposition

Obama's actions on guns have drawn major attention in the presidential campaign, with the Democratic candidates backing Obama and the Republicans unanimously voicing opposition. Donald Trump, addressing a rally in Vermont just as Obama was holding the town hall, said he would eliminate

gun-free zones in schools on his first day if elected to the White House. "You know what a gun-free zone is for a sicko? That's bait," Trump told the crowd.

Obama's broadside against the NRA came two days after his unveiling of a package of executive actions aimed at keeping guns from people who shouldn't have them. The centerpiece is new federal guidance that seeks to clarify who is "in the business" of selling firearms, triggering a requirement to get a license and conduct background checks on all prospective buyers.

The plan has drawn intense criticism from gun rights groups that have accused the president of trampling on the Second Amendment and railroading Congress by taking action on his own without new laws. Just after his 2012 re-election, Obama pushed hard for a bipartisan gun control bill that collapsed in the Senate, ending any realistic prospects for a legislative solution in the near term.

The town hall featured several well-known figures in the gun debate. Former Rep Gabrielle Giffords, who was shot in 2011, stood as her husband, Mark Kelly, asked Obama about confiscation theories. Taya Kyle, whose late husband was depicted in the film "American Sniper", asked the president about why he doesn't highlight falling murder rates. Cleo Pendleton, whose daughter was shot and killed near Obama's Chicago home, asked about his proposals to stop gun trafficking across state lines. Kimberly Corban, an NRA supporter, told Obama she'd been raped by an intruder and now feels that owning a gun "seems like my basic responsibility as a parent ... I refuse to let that happen again." — AP

COALITION, YEMEN DENY IRAN EMBASSY HIT

DUBAI: The Saudi-led coalition and Yemen's foreign ministry denied Iran's accusation that Saudi warplanes had hit its embassy in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa. Iran on Thursday said the warplanes had attacked its embassy in Yemen's capital on Wednesday night, an accusation that exacerbated tension between the major Shiite and Sunni powers in the region. "The coalition command confirmed that these (Iranian) allegations are false and void, stressing that it does not carry out any operations in the vicinity of the embassy or near it," a statement on the state Saudi news agency SPA said late on Thursday. It also urged diplomatic missions in Sanaa not to offer militias an opportunity "to use diplomatic missions' buildings in any military action".

Residents and witnesses in Sanaa had told Reuters there was no damage to the Iranian embassy building. Yemen's foreign ministry also denied the embassy building had been targeted, according to the Saudi-allied, government-run state

news agency, sabanew.net. The official foreign ministry source cited on sabanew.net said responsibility for the protection of diplomatic missions in Sanaa lay with the Houthi militia, who are in control of Sanaa, and their allies, forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh.

A growing diplomatic dispute between Riyadh and Tehran, triggered by Saudi Arabia's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric, has damaged the outlook for any resolution to the conflict in Yemen, where a coalition led by Saudi Arabia has been fighting the Shi'ite, Iran-allied Houthi movement. While Riyadh sees the Houthis as a proxy for bitter regional rival Iran to expand its influence, the Houthis deny this and say they are fighting a revolution against a corrupt government and Gulf Arab powers beholden to the West. Separately, SPA said late on Thursday that three people were killed and nine wounded when "military projectiles" fired from Yemen landed in the Saudi southwestern region of Jazan.



SANAA: A general view shows the outside of the Iranian embassy in the Yemeni capital yesterday. — AFP



RAMADI: Iraqi forces secure an area near the Grand Mosque in central Ramadi, the capital of Iraq's Anbar province, yesterday, after retaking the city from Islamic State (IS) group militants. — AFP

SPECIAL FORCES TARGET IS IN HAWIJA: IRAQ SPEAKER

US DENIES PARTICIPATING IN AIR LANDINGS

BAGHDAD: Foreign special forces have been carrying out raids on an Islamic State stronghold in northern Iraq ahead of an offensive planned later this year to retake Mosul, the largest city under the group's control, Iraq's parliamentary speaker said. Several attacks behind Islamic State lines around Hawija, 210 km north of Baghdad, were carried out in recent weeks, Salim Al-Jabouri told Reuters on Thursday. Both the US and Iraqi military have denied that US forces have carried out military operations on the ground in Hawija since October, when US special forces rescued 69 Iraqis in a raid that killed one US commando.

But Dubai-based Al-Hadath TV and Iraqi media have reported at least half a dozen raids in and around Hawija since late December, led by US special forces. Washington said last month it was deploying

a new force of around 100 special operations troops to Iraq to conduct raids against Islamic State there and in neighbouring Syria, without providing details. US Army Col Steve Warren, spokesman for the international coalition bombing Islamic State, rejected the media reports this week, calling them "Iranian disinformation" aimed at distracting from Iraqi military gains against Islamic State elsewhere.

He told Reuters that coalition forces in Iraq have not operated on the ground since the October operation. Iraq's defence minister last week also denied that the US had a role in such raids. Special operations in Hawija "have been repeated a second and third time ... These operations are bearing fruit," said Jabouri, Iraq's most senior Sunni Arab official. "They eliminate the terrorists and free innocents, and for us it represents a

positive development." Jabouri said the raids were carried out "from time to time" and "supported by Iraqi forces" but did not specify whether the United States played a role or how many had occurred. The raids are "not direct ground attacks; they are operations targeting the dens of Daesh in important and sensitive areas," Jabouri said, using an Arabic acronym for the group, which is also known as ISIS and ISIL. He said they were not enough to get rid of Islamic State but "are dealing them strong blows".

Local sources near Hawija, including a police officer and a municipal official, said last week that several raids had targeted Islamic State buildings including a courthouse and a police station, killing and capturing several militant leaders. Reuters could not independently verify the reports. — Reuters

TURKISH TROOPS KILL 18 MILITANTS IN CAMP ATTACK

ANKARA: Turkish troops have killed 18 members of the Islamic State (IS) group after the jihadists launched an attack on a camp used to train Iraqi fighters outside the Iraqi city of Mosul, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday. Turkish forces have been using the Bashiqa camp, just outside Mosul, to train local Iraqi fighters to retake the city from IS. "Eighteen members of the Daesh terror organization who wanted to infiltrate Bashiqa were neutralized," Erdogan said in televised comments after Friday prayers in Istanbul, using another name for the IS group. "None of our soldiers were wounded," he added.

It was not immediately clear what nature of attack the jihadists had launched but Erdogan said that the Turkish forces were ready to repel any kind of assault. "Our armed forces there, our officers providing the training, are prepared for any kind of attacks or raids, or anything that happens," said Erdogan. The presence of the Turkish troops, while welcomed by the local authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan, has become a bone of contention with the central Iraqi government which angrily called for the Turkish troops to leave. Turkey in December withdrew some of the troops after also coming under US pressure. But it is unclear how many remain at the camp. Erdogan said yesterday the latest attack showed how right Turkey was to station armed forces at the camp to protect the Turkish officers who are providing the training for the Iraqis. "They are doing what needs to be done at the right time and will continue to do so," he said. Four Turkish soldiers were wounded on December 16 when IS jihadists fired mortars on the training camp, in an attack that also left two Iraqis dead. — AFP

IS CLAIMS ATTACK ON EGYPT HOTEL

CAIRO: An Islamic State affiliate in Egypt has claimed responsibility for an attack on a hotel near the Giza Pyramids the previous day that authorities said had left no casualties, according to a statement circulated yesterday by sympathizers of the militant group. Egypt's Interior Ministry said no one was hurt in Thursday's incident at the Three Pyramids Hotel, but the attack damaged the hotel's facade and also a bus parked in front of the building. A group of about 15 attackers fired birdshot and flares at the hotel's security post. A suspect was arrested and police were still searching for the rest of the group, the ministry said.

Arab Israeli tourists staying at the hotel said the attackers used flares and live bullets. Israel's Foreign Ministry said no Israelis were hurt. But a statement carried yesterday by IS sympathizers on Twitter claimed there were dead and wounded among the tourists and security officers protecting the hotel. It said the attackers "were able to target a tourist bus carrying Jews with light weapons" - an operation the IS affiliate claimed was in response to a call by the Islamic State group's leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi "to target Jews everywhere." — AP

TWO REFUGEES ARRESTED IN US OVER IS LINKS

LOS ANGELES: US authorities said two people with ties to the Islamic State group were due in court yesterday in California and Texas, including a refugee from Syria accused of returning there to fight alongside IS. The arrests come amid heightened security in the United States following last month's assault by a radicalized Muslim couple in California that left 14 people dead and the November terror attacks in Paris. The attacks added to pressure for more scrutiny of refugees from war-ravaged Syria.

Aws Mohammed Younis Al-Jayab, an Iraqi-born Palestinian arrested Thursday who came to the United States from Syria as a refugee in 2012, traveled to Syria the following year where he fought for various terror groups, according to a criminal complaint. One of those groups was Al-Qaeda

affiliate Ansar al-Islam (Partisans of Islam), which previously operated under its own banner in Iraq and Syria. Listed as a terrorist organization by the United Nations and the US, its Iraqi faction has since merged with the Islamic State group, though some of its Syrian fighters rejected IS. US Attorney Benjamin Wagner was careful to stress that "while (Jayab) represented a potential safety threat, there is no indication that he planned any acts of terrorism in this country".

Another Iraqi-born Palestinian, Omar Faraj Saeed Al Hardan, was indicted Wednesday in Texas for providing material support to the IS group. He is due to make an initial court appearance yesterday. Hardan, 24, was charged with one count each of attempting to provide material support to ISIL (Islamic State), procurement of

citizenship or naturalization unlawfully and making false statements.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott and other local officials said Hardan's arrest backed their calls for a refugee ban. "This is precisely why I called for a halt to refugees entering the US from countries substantially controlled by terrorists," he said. The state's Attorney General Ken Paxton called the arrest a "troubling revelation," using the occasion to take a swipe at President Barack Obama. "The arrest in Houston of an Iraqi refugee for suspicion of terrorist activities is a troubling revelation - especially in light of the president's insistence on placing further refugees in Texas," he said. "My office will continue to press for the right of Texans to ensure that terrorists are not being placed in our communities."

From Refugee to Radical

Hardan, who lives in Houston, was granted legal permanent resident status in 2011, two years after entering the United States. According to the indictment, he provided training, expert advice and assistance to IS. He also lied on his formal application to become a naturalized US citizen, saying he was not associated with a terror group despite having been associated with IS members and sympathizers throughout 2014. During an Oct 2015 interview, Hardan is also said to have falsely claimed he had never received weapons training of any kind when he had in fact learned to use machine guns. He faces up to 53 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine if convicted on all charges. — AFP



ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Sunni Muslims shout slogans during a protest yesterday against Iran and in support of Saudi Arabia. — AFP

PROTESTS HELD IN IRAN AGAINST SAUDI ARABIA

ROW SMOLDERS BETWEEN RIVALS

TEHRAN: Anti-Saudi demonstrators took to the streets of Tehran yesterday to protest Riyadh's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric and after Iran accused its rival of bombing its embassy in Yemen. The festering diplomatic crisis between the Middle East's leading Sunni and Shiite Muslim powers has raised sectarian tensions across the region and complicated efforts to resolve conflicts in Syria and Yemen. In a development that could further strain relations, Saudi media reported yesterday that four Iranians would go on trial in the kingdom, one for spying and the other three for "terrorism".

Around 1,000 protestors marched through Tehran chanting "death to America" and "death to Israel", frequent rallying cries at demonstrations in Iran. Some carried placards with the picture of Nimr Al-Nimr, the Shiite cleric and activist whose execution by Saudi Arabia on Saturday unleashed a wave

of anger across the Shiite world. Relations between the longtime adversaries hit a fresh low Thursday when Iran accused Saudi warplanes of deliberately targeting its embassy in Sanaa, damaging the property and seriously wounding a security guard. The Yemeni conflict, which pits the rebels known as Houthis against pro-government forces backed by Riyadh and other Gulf Arab states, is one of the main sources of dispute between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

'Crimes against Muslims'

During weekly prayers in Tehran, influential cleric Ayatollah Mohammad Emami Kashani told worshippers that Riyadh, along with Israel and the United States, was responsible for "all crimes committed against Muslims". "The Zionist regime plans, the US supports and Saudi Arabia sources the necessary funds," Kashani said, according to state

news agency IRNA. Nimr was executed along with 46 other prisoners that Riyadh said were "terrorists".

In response, protesters in Iran stormed and set fire to the Saudi embassy in Tehran and consulate in the second city of Mashhad. Iran denounced those attacks, but the repercussions quickly rippled across the region with Saudi allies Bahrain, Djibouti, Somalia and Sudan also cutting diplomatic ties with Tehran. At the same time, the United Arab Emirates has downgraded relations with Iran, while Kuwait and Qatar have recalled their ambassadors. Iran hit back Thursday by announcing a ban on imports from the kingdom, which will reportedly affect goods worth about \$40 million. The latest crisis threatens a fragile UN-backed initiative to end the war in Yemen, where the world body says at least 2,795 civilians have been killed since March. — AFP

PRINCESS ASHRAF, SHAH'S TWIN SISTER, DIES AGED 96

DUBAI: Iranian Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, the twin sister of the country's deposed shah whose glamorous life epitomized the excesses of her brother's rule, has died after decades in exile. She was 96. Many in Iran before the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution believed Princess Ashraf served as the true power behind her brother, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and pushed him into taking power in a 1953 coup engineered by the US.

Immortalized in her royal prime by an Andy Warhol portrait with bright red lips and raven-black hair, Princess Ashraf's years out of power more resembled a Shakespearean tragedy. Assassins killed her son on a Paris street just after the Islamic Revolution, her twin brother died of cancer shortly after, while a niece died of a 2001 drug overdose in London and a nephew killed himself in Boston 10 years later.

Still, she always defended her brother's rule and held onto her royal past. "At night, when I go into my room, that's when all the thoughts come flooding in," the princess told AP in a 1983 interview in Paris. "I stay up until 5 or 6 in the morning. I read, I watch a cassette, I try not to think. But the memories won't leave you." Reza Pahlavi, a son of the shah, announced his aunt's death in a Facebook post on Thursday night. Her personal website said she died Thursday, without elaborating. A longtime adviser to Princess Ashraf in New York could not be immediately reached for comment yesterday.

In Iran, local media reported her death relying on international reports. State television reported she died in Monte Carlo and described her as being famous for being corrupt. Born Oct 26, 1919, Princess Ashraf was the daughter of the monarch Reza Shah, who came to power in a 1921 coup engineered by Britain and later was forced to abdicate the throne after a 1941 invasion by Britain and Russia. By 1953, America helped orchestrate the coup that overthrew Iran's popularly elected prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, over fears he was tilting toward the Soviet Union. That brought her brother to power and set the stage for decades of mistrust between the countries. — AP



NEW YORK: In this April 17, 1980 file photo, Ashraf Pahlavi, twin sister of the deposed Shah of Iran, is interviewed for ABC-TV's "Good Morning America". — AP

EU PUSHES LIBYA PEACE AFTER DEADLY BLASTS

TUNIS: EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini pressed Libyan politicians to support a unity government yesterday, a day after suicide bombings killed dozens sparking fears of a jihadist expansion on Europe's doorstep. Mogherini issued a plea for unity as she met in a suburb of Tunis with Fayeze Al-Sarraj, a businessman who was named in a UN-brokered national unity government as prime minister designate. "Libyans deserve peace and security," she said. "With the Libyan Political Agreement, with a presidency council, the government of national accord that we hope can be put in place soon, there is finally after so many months a real possibility to unite among Libyans and try to fight terrorism," she said.

The Libyan branch of the Islamic State jihadist group said it was behind one of Thursday's attacks, on a checkpoint in Ras Lanouf, home to a key oil terminal on the country's northern coast. IS, which launched an offensive against Libya's oil heartland on Monday, said a foreign fighter detonated an explosives-packed car, killing and wounding several people. The Red Crescent said six people, including a baby, died in the attack. Another suicide bomber on Thursday attacked a police training school in Zliten, west of Tripoli, killing more than 50 people, a security source said.

So far, nobody has claimed responsibility for that attack, which left buildings charred and turned cars into twisted wrecks. It was the deadliest single attack in Libya since the 2011 revolution that toppled longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

'IS Taking Advantage'

Fears the jihadists are establishing a new stronghold on Europe's doorstep have added urgency to efforts to bring together warring factions in a country beset by chaos since 2011. Libya has had rival administrations since August 2014, when an Islamist-



TUNIS: Libyan Prime Minister Fayeze Al-Sarraj and EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini attend a joint press conference yesterday. —AFP

backed militia alliance overran Tripoli, forcing the government to take refuge in the east. In December, after months of negotiations, a minority of lawmakers from both sides signed on to the UN-brokered national unity deal which has yet to win the full support of

the two legislatures. Analysts say these divisions are bolstering the position of IS. "The situation has become very worrisome... with IS taking advantage of the chaos, the collapse of the central authorities and wars by proxy," said Karim Bitar, head of research at the French Institute of International Relations. The international community has been pleading for months with Libya's rival parliaments to embrace the UN-brokered deal.

Mogherini was to hold talks later yesterday in Tunis with the members from both legislatures who signed the agreement. She will be making a fresh bid to shore up support for the deal. "As the Libyans express the courage and the willingness to unite, to put the country back on track... Europe, the international community is there to show its own unity in supporting this process," she told reporters after meeting Sarraj and before heading into the talks. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon condemned Thursday's attacks and also urged unity among Libyans. "These criminal acts serve as a strong reminder of the urgency to implement the Libyan political agreement and form a government of national accord," Ban said. "Unity is the best way for Libyans to confront terrorism in all its forms." Bitar said the establishment of a national unity government was a matter of "urgency" but he warned that international efforts could fail due to "numerous suspicions" on the ground. Mohamed Eljarh, a non-resident fellow with the Atlantic Council's Hariri Centre, agreed. He said the latest attacks claimed by IS "would not end the feud in Libya, but could at best result in reducing the trust deficit between the various armed and political groups as they attempt to cooperate and help each other in the face of IS's expansion". —AFP

MIGRANTS IN GERMANY FEAR BACKLASH AFTER SEX ASSAULTS

18 ASYLUM-SEEKERS BLAMED • POLICE CHIEF SACKED

COLOGNE: When asylum seeker Asim Vllaznim heard about the New Year's Eve spate of sexual attacks in Germany, blamed on a crowd of migrants, he says his heart fell. "Our first reaction was: Now the Germans will hate us," said the 32-year-old Kosovar, sitting with his family in their room at a migrant shelter in the western city of Cologne. The city's ugly mob violence - including groping, other assaults, thefts and two reported rapes - has inflamed public opinion already strained by the influx of a record 1.1 million refugees and irregular migrants last year.

Germany has been shocked by reports of women running a fearful gauntlet in a drunken and aggressive crowd of men, described by witnesses as being of Arab and North African appearance. Late yesterday, Cologne's police chief was suspended, national news agency DPA reported. Wolfgang Albers, 60, was put into "temporary retirement," said DPA as well as the city newspaper Koelner Stadt-Anzeiger, quoting unnamed local government sources.

Vllaznim said he fears the anti-foreigner backlash has only just begun, as furious critics have blamed Angela Merkel's liberal refugee policy for the mob attacks. "It's a shame what they did at the central station," said the father of five about the violence in the square between Cologne's railway station and the city's famous Gothic cathedral. The perpetrators should be sent to prison, he said, adding that he hoped alcohol hadn't driven some young refugees to do "terrible things". Police - under fire for failing to prevent the attacks, and then for initially downplaying them - have since struggled to review video footage to identify the culprits in the chaotic crowd.

'We Are Not Bad People'

A week on, police have received more than 120 criminal complaints. Yesterday, the interior ministry said police had identified 31 suspects, including 18 asylum seekers, for mostly theft and assault offences, but reported no arrests so far. The suspects include two Germans and



COLOGNE: Policemen stand on January 8, 2016 in front of Cologne's landmark, the Cologne Cathedral, where offenses against women were committed on New Year's Eve. —AFP

American and a Serbian but most are from Arab and North African countries; nine Algerians, eight Moroccans, five Iranians, four Syrians and one from Iraq. "It is not good news for Merkel," Vllaznim sighed, offering tea as his children bounced carelessly on the bed behind him.

He expressed faith in the chancellor dubbed "Mama Merkel" by grateful refugees, and her motto of "we can do it", but said he knew she is under mounting pressure. "I thank the Germans for having us ... I would tell them not to be afraid," he said. His own family fled because of discrimination against their Albanian-speaking Ashkali ethnic minority, hoping for a brighter future for their children,

he told AFP. "We are not bad people, we only want a better life."

'Germans are Afraid'

Fear and anger have gripped many citizens of Cologne, a city of about 600,000 which took in more than 10,000 asylum seekers in December alone. Since the New Year's Eve attacks, police vans have been parked outside the main railway station as the city nervously readies for next month's Rhineland Carnival street parties, expected to draw hundreds of thousands at the start of the Christian Lent. "It would be great if you knew who did it so the culprits could be arrested and sent back home, no matter what country they come from," said one resident, 42-year-old Rute Graca, on her way to work.

The growing climate of distrust worries Ghaith Anthipan, a 20-year-old Syrian standing outside the cathedral this week in the freezing rain. With a friend he held up signs in broken German that read: "What happened to women in Cologne on New Year's hurts." A Bosnian woman in a local shelter, who asked not to be named, said that "in every culture, there are people who behave badly". "Do not put all the refugees in the same bag," said the 36-year-old mother of two daughters, standing in the corridor of the shelter that was meant to house 550 people but now shelters 623 asylum seekers.

The Muslim woman said that, as xenophobic attacks have spiked in Germany, she stopped wearing her headscarf several months ago and no longer goes out after dark. After the Cologne attacks, she said, "we understand that some Germans are afraid", but voiced hope the culprits will turn out to be people other than refugees. Abdul Baldeh, a 28-year-old Guinean waiting at a nearby railway station, also said that in his new host nation, "people are more distrustful than they have been in recent months". "We did not come to cause problems," he said. "What I want is to learn German, get a job and be free." —AFP



OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso: In this file photo taken April 24, 2012, released Swiss hostage Beatrice Stockly arrives by helicopter from Timbuktu, Mali after being handed over by a militant Islamist group Ansar Dine. —AFP

SWISS MISSIONARY KIDNAPPED SECOND TIME IN TIMBUKTU

BAMAKO: A Swiss missionary was kidnapped from her home in Timbuktu, nearly four years after she was abducted by Islamist militants from the same house, the Malian army and a local resident said. There was no information on the attackers and no immediate claim of responsibility, but Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is active in desert areas north of the city and has a history of seizing foreigners and demanding ransoms.

In April 2012, militants kidnapped Beatrice Stockly and released her days later. She returned to her work as a missionary. A resident of Timbuktu who knows Stockly told Reuters she had again been abducted. "I confirm that a European woman was kidnapped in Timbuktu at 3.30 am (0330 GMT). A neighbor alerted the security forces around 6 am," said army spokesman Souleymane Maiga.

French forces drove Islamist fighters from major urban centres in 2013 but they have intensified their insurgency with a series of attacks and roadside bombings last year. Two militants attacked a luxury hotel in the capital Bamako on Nov 20, killing 20 people, many of whom were foreigners. Three Islamist militant groups including AQIM claimed responsibility for the hotel attack, which showed the militants extending their reach beyond the north. —Reuters

POLAND EDGES CLOSER TO HARDLINE HUNGARY

WARSAW: Poland's conservatives have been cosying up to populist Hungary since returning to power in October, following Budapest's lead in tightening government control over the judiciary and media in moves that have riled the

European Union. The ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party has been singing Hungary's praises since ousting the centrist Civic Platform (PO) at the polls after eight years in opposition. PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski's endorsement of the

policies of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban - whom critics accuse of trampling human rights and democratic processes - has alarmed critics at home and abroad.

"It's not Budapest here, it's Warsaw," youth protestors shouted outside the presidential palace in Warsaw last month, during a rally against the government's controversial reforms of the constitutional court. Tomorrow, the European Commission announced it would debate the state of rule of law in Poland - a move that could lead to a potentially punitive process aimed at buttressing democracy and human rights. Orban, who sustained fierce criticism from his EU peers last year over his hardline stance on migrants, said yesterday that Budapest would "never support" any EU sanctions on Poland. "I call for more respect for the Poles because this is what they deserve," said Orban, who has also incurred the opprobrium of Brussels over his curbs on the press and judiciary.

Despite the controversy, Kaczynski, who is neither premier nor president but

widely believed to call the shots in his party, has been steering Warsaw closer to Budapest. On Wednesday, he met Orban in the Polish resort town of Niedzica for talks on "a host of international issues, notably European ones," according to Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski. Prime Minister Beata Szydlo is also to visit Budapest "in the coming weeks", Polish and Hungarian officials said.

Hungarian news site Hungary Today linked Kaczynski's meeting with Orban to British Prime Minister David Cameron's visit to Budapest on Thursday, suggesting that the Hungarian-Polish talks were meant to harmonise Warsaw and Budapest's positions on EU reforms proposed by London. But Polish media also speculated that Warsaw was looking for pointers from Orban on how to resist pressure from Brussels. Waszczykowski said Thursday he did not know whether the topic had come up in Niedzica but that his ministry would "like to learn from Hungary's experience in its dealings with the EU". —AFP



Viktor Orban

Jaroslaw Kaczynski

BELGIAN POLICE FIND FUGITIVE'S HIDEOUT

APARTMENT LIKELY USED TO MAKE BOMBS

BRUSSELS: Belgian police have found a Brussels flat where bombs used in the Paris attacks could have been made and where key suspect Salah Abdeslam may have hidden after the massacre, prosecutors said yesterday. Three hand-made belts for possible use in suicide attacks, traces of explosives and one of Abdeslam's fingerprints were discovered during a search in December of the apartment in the Schaerbeek area, they said.

The flat was rented by someone using a false name, possibly used by another suspect in the Nov 13 Paris attacks who is now in custody in Belgium, the federal prosecutor said. Prosecutors said Abdeslam might have hidden in the flat after the Nov 13 attacks, but that they were also working on the theory that the explosive devices used in the massacre could have been made there. "We found the fingerprint but we have no idea when it was left - a fingerprint has no date or time on it," prosecutors' spokesman Eric Van Der Sypt told AFP. "Maybe he went there to get his belt (before the attacks), and maybe he went back afterwards. I suppose it's a possibility of both," he added.

Explosive Traces, Vests Found

An international manhunt has been underway for Belgian-born Abdeslam, 26, since suicide bombers and assailants firing automatic weapons killed 130 people and wounded many more in a wave of attacks across Paris. Investigators said friends drove Abdeslam from Paris back to the Belgian capital, slipping through three police checks, while one suspect has since said that he drove Abdeslam across Brussels to Schaerbeek on Nov 14.

There was no sign of police activity on Thursday at the apartment block in the quiet Schaerbeek area, AFP journalists said. Residents said they were not aware of any raid in December. Prosecutors said the raid was carried out "in the framework of the investigation opened after the Paris attacks". They did not explain why details were only being



BRUSSELS: A picture taken yesterday in the Brussels district of Schaerbeek shows journalists taking pictures in the Rue Henri Berge. Belgian police have found three belts for possible use in suicide attacks, traces of explosives and a fingerprint of wanted Paris attacks suspect Salah Abdeslam, prosecutors said. —AFP

released a month after the search. "During a house search conducted December 10th in an apartment on the third floor, Rue Berge in Schaerbeek, material that can be used to fabricate explosives as well as traces of TATP were found," the prosecutor said in a statement, referring to a type of explosive.

Hunt Continues

"This apartment was rented under a false identity that might have been used by a person already in custody in this case," the statement added. "Three handmade belts that might be used to transport explosives as well as a fingerprint of Salah Abdeslam were also discovered."

Prosecutors would not comment on Belgian media reports that the flat had been cleaned and checked for fingerprints after the attacks, which would explain why only one of Abdeslam's prints was found. After the attacks, French authorities said that telephone data had placed Abdeslam in the area where an explosives belt was found in a dustbin in the Paris suburb of Montrouge. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the coordinated series of attacks on bars, restaurants, and a concert hall, in which the attackers were armed with guns and suicide belts. Seven died during the assault but the total number of those directly involved is still unclear. —AFP

FRENCH POLICE SEEK IDENTITY OF ATTACKER

PARIS: French anti-terror investigators were yesterday seeking to identify a man shot dead while trying to storm a Paris police station brandishing a meat cleaver and wearing a fake suicide vest. The man was shot dead by officers as he ran towards the entrance of the police station waving the meat cleaver and shouting "Allahu Akbar" ("God is greatest") on Thursday, exactly a year to the day since the massacre of journalists at the Charlie Hebdo newspaper. Based on his fingerprints, police initially identified him as Sallah Ali, born in 1995 in Casablanca, a homeless man who was arrested for theft in 2013.

But Paris prosecutor Francois Molins said yesterday that the identity was "not at all certain" since he was carrying no documents at the time of his arrest. "This identity (he gave in 2013) is contradicted by a hand-written note that we found in his clothes," Molins told France Inter radio. "He is not known to the intelligence services under this name." The note, which included a hand-drawn flag of the Islamic State group (IS), gave a different name which Molins did not reveal. It also said his nationality was Tunisian instead of Moroccan.

Molins said the man was carrying a mobile phone with a German SIM card, with French media saying it contained several messages in Arabic, some of which were sent from Germany. The police station is in Paris' 18th district, an area with a mainly North African population which lies close to the tourist hotspot of Montmartre. Describing the attack, an investigation source said the man pulled the cleaver from his inside coat pocket as he ran towards the officers. He "did not heed the warnings, and police opened fire". The attacker was also wearing a pouch under his coat with a wire hanging from it, but the device "contained no explosives," the source told AFP. A remote-controlled robot was also used to inspect the body for explosives.

Unknown to Terror Police

The attack "illustrates very well the multi-form character of the terrorist threat today in France," said Molins. "We can find ourselves confronted by very organised attacks with extensive logistics and coordination, and on the other hand by people who work in an isolated manner, either because of psychological instability or simply because they are following the standing order to carry out murders," he said.

IS has called for supporters to carry out random attacks in France and other European countries. A source close to the investigation said Thursday's attacker had pledged allegiance to IS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi in the documents found on his body. And he justified the attack as revenge for French bombings in Syria. Justice Minister Christiane Taubira confirmed the suspect was not on the radar of counter-terrorism police. "From what is known of this person, there was no link to violent radicalisation whatsoever," said Taubira on Thursday. —AFP

BIRTH CONTROL BATTLES RAGE ON 100 YEARS LATER

NEW YORK: Outside the crumbling Brooklyn building where the first US birth control clinic opened 100 years ago, Alexander Sanger reflected on the move that landed his grandmother in jail and fueled a controversy over women's reproductive rights that has raged ever since. "This is where it all started," said the grandson of Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger in his first visit to the Brownsville, Brooklyn, site where she started her clinic in 1916.

"She threw down the gauntlet and said, 'Preventing women from contraception is inhumane,'" said Sanger, 68, chairman of the International Planned Parenthood Council and a former president of Planned Parenthood New York City. City records show the desolate building with bricked up windows is not abandoned, although it appears unoccupied, a far cry from the busy clinic shown in historic photographs with baby carriages parked out front.

Some of the reproductive rights battles that Margaret Sanger fought a century ago were remarkably similar to the challenges facing Planned Parenthood today, particularly organized religion's objection to sex education, her grandson said. "There is a direct correlation," he said. "If the hormones are raging among young people and you don't get them preventive information and preventive methods, they are going to get pregnant."

Father Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life, said the Roman Catholic Church's opposition was rooted in a far deeper philosophical divide. "It's not just a question of 'Let's teach them sex education so they'll know how to prevent the pregnancy,'" Pavone said. "The fundamental disagreement comes on that basic question of 'What's human sexuality all about?'"

The religious-liberty fight over contraception is back in the US Supreme Court, which will rule by July

on whether religious groups deserve a blanket exemption so that they do not have to pay for their employees' contraceptive coverage as mandated under President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act. Abortion is the flashpoint in other conflicts that are vastly and violently different from those Sanger faced before her death in 1966.

Opponents have waged a decades-long string of attacks on abortion providers, the most recent in November when a gunman killed three people at a Colorado Springs Planned Parenthood clinic. Since 1993, there have been 11 murders and 26 attempted murders due to anti-abortion violence, according to the National Abortion Federation, a group of health-care providers. Lawmakers continue to tighten restrictions on abortion, with 288 such limits passed by states since 2011, according to Elizabeth Nash of the Guttmacher Institute, a non-profit that focuses on reproductive health.—Reuters

OREGON MILITIA LEADER REJECTS BID TO END STANDOFF

MALHEUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, OREGON: The leader of a group of armed protesters occupying the headquarters of a federal wildlife refuge in southeastern Oregon met briefly with a local sheriff on Thursday but rejected the lawman's offer of safe passage out of the state to end the standoff. Ammon Bundy and other occupiers left the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in two vehicles and traveled to a neutral location along a remote Oregon roadside to meet for about five minutes with Harney County Sheriff David Ward.

During that meeting, which was attended by two Reuters reporters, Ward told Bundy that he was seeking a peaceful resolution to the nearly week-long standoff and offered to escort the occupiers out of Oregon. But Bundy, saying that the sheriff had not addressed the occupiers' grievances, declined. "We always consider what people say," Bundy told reporters following the meeting, but "I'm not afraid to go out of state. I don't need an escort." The sheriff's office later said in a tweet that Ward had plans to meet with Bundy again on Friday.

The takeover that began on Saturday at the headquarters of the refuge, about 30 miles (48 km) south of the small town of Burns, is the latest incident in the so-called Sagebrush Rebellion, a decades-old conflict over federal control of land and resources in the US West. The move followed a demonstration in support of two local ranchers, Dwight Hammond Jr. and his son Steven, who were returned to prison earlier this week for setting fires that spread to federal land. A lawyer for Hammond family has said that the occupiers do not speak for the family.

Local residents have expressed a mixture of sympathy for the Hammond family, suspicion of the federal government's motives and frustration with the occupation. The leaders of the armed occupation are Ammon Bundy and his brother, Ryan Bundy. Their father, Cliven Bundy, along with a band of armed men, stared down federal agents trying to seize his livestock in Nevada in 2014. Many of the other occupiers also are from outside Oregon.—Reuters



BURNS, Oregon: Duane Ehmer rides his horse Hellboy at the occupied Malheur National Wildlife Refuge on the sixth day of the occupation of the federal building on Thursday. — AFP



CARACAS: Supporters of Venezuela's late President Hugo Chavez and current President Nicolas Maduro accompany United Socialist Party (PSUV) deputies outside the Supreme Court of Justice on Thursday. — AFP

MILITARY VOWS TO SUPPORT MADURO AS CRISIS DEEPENS

BATTLE LINES DRAWN

CARACAS: Venezuela's military pledged loyalty to President Nicolas Maduro on Thursday, ramping up a high-stakes standoff between his socialist government and a center-right opposition that has vowed to use its new legislative powers to oust him. The opposition laid claim to a big majority in the National Assembly, which could empower it to force out Maduro. He has rejected the assembly as illegal and formed a new hardline leftist cabinet to fight it, in a deepening political crisis.

Venezuela's defense minister and armed forces chief, General Vladimir Padrino, weighed in, saying the military was unwavering in its backing for Maduro - who has vowed to resist "with an iron hand." "The president is the highest authority of the state and we reiterate our absolute loyalty and unconditional support for him," said Padrino, after the under-pressure government sued to stop the emboldened opposition using its newfound powers to kick out Maduro.

The pledge from the armed forces will only ratchet up fears of unrest in the South American oil-producing country, which is stricken by recession, shortages and rampant crime. The new speaker of the congress, Henry Ramos Allup, said on Twitter that two premises of his Democratic Action party were attacked with explosive devices, but no one was hurt and no damage reported. He said police were investigating. Padrino lashed out at the opposition after Ramos Allup had portraits of late president and socialist icon Hugo Chavez removed from the assembly building on Wednesday. "This is an outrage to military honor," he warned. The government side also responded by

pledging to fill the streets of Caracas with pictures of Chavez and of Simon Bolivar, Venezuela's 19th-century independence hero.

'Illegal Parliament'

On a day of fast-moving developments in Venezuela, Maduro's side applied to the Supreme Court to declare null any legislation passed by the opposition-controlled congress. Maduro supporters say the opposition's two-thirds majority in the assembly is not legitimate since it swore in three lawmakers whom the court had ordered to be suspended pending allegations of electoral fraud. "The decisions made in that circus they have set up should be ignored," said pro-government deputy Pedro Carreno at the court, where he presented the suit. "This is an illegal parliament and therefore its decisions are illegal and null." He accused the opposition of planning a "coup d'etat" and being in contempt of court. Ramos Allup rejected the charge. "The ones who are in contempt are the ones who have disregarded the public will after the elections," he said. The opposition MUD coalition won a majority in the assembly for the first time in nearly 17 years at elections on Dec 6. The MUD has vowed to find a way within six months to get rid of Maduro by constitutional means. But Maduro's side vowed to block it by suing, withholding funding and refusing to publish its legislation. "They give us six months to survive. You need balls to carry out a coup d'etat. We'll see if they have any," said Diosdado Cabello, the number two in Maduro's leadership. "Get ready for a long struggle."—AFP



TONGI: Bangladeshi Muslim devotees offer prayers during the first day of a multiple day event, World Congregation of Muslims, on the banks of the River Turag yesterday, north of Dhaka. Thousands of Muslims attend the annual event, one of the world's largest congregation of Muslims. — AP

PAK TO COOPERATE WITH INDIA PROBE

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's prime minister and army chief pledged yesterday to cooperate fully with India on investigations into an attack on an Indian air base last week, as the fate of scheduled talks between the nuclear-armed neighbors remains uncertain. The comments come a day after India called on Pakistani authorities for "prompt and decisive" action against militants it blames for the weekend attack that killed seven Indian military personnel and wounded 22.

Participants at a high-level meeting in Islamabad "reiterated Pakistan's commitment to cooperate with India to completely eradicate the menace of terrorism," Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's office said in a statement. The meeting was also attended by Army Chief Raheel Sharif, the head of the military's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Rizwan Akhtar, and several top civilian and military officials.

India says it gave Pakistan "specific and actionable information" regarding the Pathankot air base attack on Tuesday. In its statement, Sharif's office said the meeting had reviewed the progress on the information received from India and would stay in touch with the Indian government. A meeting between the two countries' foreign secretaries was scheduled for January 15, but it is unclear if it will go ahead. The fate of the talks rested on Pakistan's response to the information, Indian government spokesman Vikas Swarup said on Thursday. — Reuters

THOUSANDS OF INDIAN KIDS BRUSH TEETH FOR RECORD

INDIA LIFTS BAN ON BULL RUN FESTIVAL

BANGALORE, India: Thousands of Indian children gathered in the southern city of Bangalore to brush their teeth, altogether, in an effort to raise awareness about good oral hygiene. Dr Girish Rao from My Dental Plan, a program that organized Thursday's event, says the 17,505 kids from 20 schools who participated set a new record for mass teeth-brushing activity. The two-minute effort was witnessed by an international auditor who will submit documents to the Guinness Book of World Records. Rao said in a statement that "the earlier record was by 13,800 children at El Salvador in South American in 1995."

Separately, India has lifted a ban on a popular but controversial bull running festival, angering animal rights activists who say it is cruel and abusive. A government order said the event, held every January to mark the winter harvest in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, would be allowed to go ahead this year after it was cancelled in 2015. "Bulls may... continue to be exhibited or trained as a performing animal at events such as Jallikattu in Tamil Nadu," said the order published by the environment ministry on Thursday, using the local name for the event.

In the centuries-old festival of Jallikattu, which means "bull-taming", bulls are let loose and young men compete to subdue them. The event was cancelled last year for the first time after the previous government imposed a ban citing cruelty. Unlike in the popular Spanish traditional of bull-fighting, the aim is not to kill the animals. But critics say they are fed liquor and have chili powder thrown into their eyes before they are released from a holding pen and chased by revellers.

There have also been reports of bulls having their horns sharpened with broken glass, while the "taming" can lead to serious injury and a painful death for the animals. Over the years, dozens of people have also been killed and hundreds more wounded in the event. The government ordered a ban in 2011 but it was not implemented until 2015 after the Supreme Court had dismissed a slew of legal challenges.

Poorva Joshipura, chief executive of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) in India, said the group would challenge the move. "We are horrified and aghast over the lifting of ban on Jallikattu when the same government is fighting to protect

cows," she told AFP, referring to measures to protect the animals revered by Hindus. "Terrified bulls are deliberately disoriented through substances like alcohol, stabbed and jabbed by sickles, spears, knives or sticks, punched, jumped on and dragged to the ground in the so-called sport."

The government's decision to lift the ban reportedly followed pressure from local politicians including Tamil Nadu's controversial Chief Minister Jayalalitha Jayaram ahead of planned protests. Local media reports said it may have been motivated by upcoming state elections. Tamil historians claim the sport dates back to the second century AD and pre-dates the Spanish matadors.



BANGALORE: Indian school children brush their teeth in an attempt to make a record on Thursday. — AP

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CHINA LAWYERS STRIKE BACK AFTER CRACKDOWN

BEIJING: Chinese security agents hooded one as they bundled him into a vehicle. Police seized others at home as their horrified families watched. More, alone when they disappeared, sent frantic text messages to friends. Six months ago, China's biggest-ever crackdown on human rights lawyers saw state agents question more than 130 attorneys and their colleagues. Among those who were taken away at least 16 people are still being held in secret, leaving their families isolated and fearful.

The sweep demonstrates the hollowness of the Communist Party's loudly proclaimed commitment to the rule of law, campaigners say, and is an attempt to end efforts to use China's tightly-controlled legal system to independently challenge official injustice. Now dozens of the rights lawyers are trying to employ that same system to defend their absent colleagues. "The Communist Party uses weapons to maintain its rule. We cannot use guns, but at least we can use the law," said Yu Wensheng, who was among those held.

He represents lawyer Wang Quanzhang, but says police have denied him access to his client and refused to say where he is being held. A document police sent him last month shows Wang - who has defended members of the banned religious group Falun Gong - is accused of "inciting state subversion" and "picking quarrels and provoking troubles". It adds he is being held under a form of "residential surveillance" where suspects can be held for up to six months incommunicado in unofficial jails. "In a detention centre there are rules, and prosecutors are



BEIJING: In this photo taken on Jan 4, 2016, Chinese human rights lawyer Yu Wensheng poses for a photograph. — AFP

responsible. But with residential surveillance, it's just the police themselves," Yu said. "We suspect they are subject to torture."

'Rule of Law'

China's courts are tightly controlled by the Communist Party, with forced confessions often used as evidence and guilty verdicts delivered in more than 99.9 percent of criminal cases. Over the past decade a small group of a few hundred lawyers, sometimes with official encourage-

ment, used the courts to seek redress - sometimes successfully - for what they considered egregious rights violations. They include victims of forced demolitions, illegal "black jails", dissidents jailed for their writing, and others detained for practicing their religious faith.

Beijing law firm Fengrui, which has defended victims of sexual abuse, members of banned religious groups and dissident scholars, was at the centre of the crackdown with seven of its staff still held. The firm courted publicity in a censored media environment, taking legal activism "to a new level", Eva Pils, a transnational law specialist at King's College London, told AFP. "Basically what the party-state has been trying to do is make an example of them. It raises the question of whether the government thinks it really needs defense lawyers."

'Criminal Gang'

Fengrui founder Zhou Shifeng, who advised the families of children poisoned by milk powder in a 2008 scandal, was led away from a Beijing hotel with a hood over his head on July 10, a witness told AFP. A week later state TV showed him "confessing guilt" under detention in a report which said he had "inappropriate relationships" with at least five women. Broadcaster CCTV said the lawyers had tricked clients and "created a nuisance" in court by rowing with officials, making recordings and taking photographs. No official charges were mentioned. The official news agency Xinhua has described the lawyers as a "criminal gang". — AFP

SEOUL RESUMES PROPAGANDA BROADCASTS HATED BY NORTH PRESSURE GROWS ON CHINA TO REIN IN PYONGYANG

SEOUL: South Korea yesterday resumed high-decibel propaganda broadcasts into North Korea as the United States ramped up pressure on China to bring Pyongyang to heel after its latest nuclear test. While North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un celebrated his 32nd birthday, the international community scrambled to find common ground on how best to penalise his regime following its shock announcement two days ago that it had successfully tested its first hydrogen bomb. The cross-border broadcasts blare out an eclectic mix of everything from K-pop and weather forecasts to snippets of news and critiques of the North Korean regime.

Among the songs on yesterday's playlist was "Bang, Bang, Bang" a recent hit by A-list K-pop boy band, Big Bang. Their resumption revives psychological warfare tactics that date back to the 1950-53 Korean War. But they can be remarkably effective. Their use during a dangerous flare-up in cross-border tensions last year infuriated Pyongyang, which at one point threatened artillery strikes against the loudspeaker units unless they were switched off.

The South finally pulled the plug after an agreement was reached in August to de-escalate a situation that had brought the two rivals to the brink of an armed conflict. Now they are back - punishment for Wednesday's surprise nuclear test, which triggered global condemnation and concern, despite expert opinion that the yield was far too low to support the North's claim that the device was an H-bomb.

Diplomatic Frenzy

The test set off a diplomatic frenzy as the UN Security Council met to discuss possible sanctions and world leaders sought to build a consensus on an appropriate response to such a grave violation of UN resolutions. Most eyes were on North Korea's main ally, China, which condemned the test but gave no signal that it was ready to approve a significant tightening of sanctions on its recalcitrant neighbor. In a phone



YEONCHEON, South Korea: South Korean army soldiers remove camouflage from loudspeakers near the border area between South Korea and North Korea yesterday. — AP

call with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on Thursday, US Secretary of State John Kerry insisted that Beijing's softly-softly line had failed and it was time to take a tougher stance with Pyongyang.

"China had a particular approach that it wanted to make and we agreed and gave them time to implement that," Kerry told reporters. "But today in my conversation with the Chinese I made it very clear that that has not worked and we cannot continue business as usual." British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond delivered a similar message during a visit to the USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier, docked at the Yokosuka Naval Base southwest of Tokyo. "Continuing with words is not enough, we have to show we are prepared to take actions to ensure sanctions

against North Korea are effective," Hammond said.

While Beijing has restrained US-led allies from stronger action against Pyongyang in the past, it has shown increasing frustration with its refusal to suspend testing. But China's leverage over Pyongyang is mitigated, analysts say, by its overriding fear of a North Korean collapse and the prospect of a reunified, US-allied Korea directly on its border. And Beijing has resisted being tagged as the only country that can influence events in Pyongyang, insisting that North Korea is a common problem for a host of countries. "We all know how the Korean nuclear issue came into being and where the crux lies. It's not on the Chinese side," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Friday. — AFP

DUMMY HELLFIRE MISSILE MISTAKENLY SHIPPED TO CUBA

WASHINGTON: A dummy US Hellfire missile was mistakenly shipped from Europe to Cuba in 2014, The Wall Street Journal reported Thursday. The inert missile did not contain any explosives, the Journal reported, but there are concerns that Cuba could share the technology with potential US adversaries like North Korea or Russia. The Journal report was attributed to anonymous "people familiar with the matter." A US official with knowledge of the situation, who wasn't authorized to speak publicly on the matter and demanded anonymity, confirmed its veracity to The Associated Press.

According to the Defense Department, the Hellfire is a laser-guided, air-to-surface missile that weighs about 100 pounds. It can be deployed from an attack helicopter like the Apache or an unmanned drone like the Predator. It is manufactured by Lockheed Martin. The Hellfire training missile contains an incomplete guidance section and has no operational seeker head, warhead, fusing system or rocket motor.

The US official told the AP that Lockheed was authorized to export the dummy missile for a NATO training exercise. The official attributed the shipping error to Lockheed's freight forwarders, and said the US was working with Lockheed to get the device back. The official said the US doesn't want any defense technology to remain in a proscribed country, whether that country can use it or not. The official said there is greater concern that Cuba could give more technically advanced countries access to the dummy.

According to the Journal report, the missile was properly shipped to Spain, where it was used in the training exercise. It was then taken on a somewhat roundabout journey through Spain, Germany and France before winding up at Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris. From there, it was supposed to have been shipped back to Florida; instead, it was loaded onto an Air France flight to Havana. US officials have been urging the Cuban government to return the missile, the Journal's sources said. The US and Cuba restored diplomatic relations in July 2015 after more than 50 years of hostility. The Journal reported that the US is also investigating whether the missile's disappearance was a deliberate act of espionage. — AP

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

Oil options lurch closer to \$20 Goldman forecast

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Pakistan to merge stock exchanges to form single bourse

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Germany, France post drop in industry output

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SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 2016



US added strong 292K jobs in December

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WUHAN: Investors sit in front of screens showing stock market movements in a stock firm in Wuhan, central China's Hubei province yesterday. China's short-lived stock circuit breaker, scrapped after only four days, demonstrates the communist state's enduring distrust of the markets and its instinct to intervene, analysts said yesterday. — AFP

SHANGHAI SHARES RISE AFTER OFFICIAL U-TURN WORLD STOCKS RECOVER, RELIEVED OVER CHINA CURBS

SHANGHAI: Shanghai shares closed higher yesterday after authorities reversed course and suspended a new "circuit breaker" mechanism that had fuelled a global rout by twice automatically closing Chinese markets early. After a volatile morning the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index closed up 1.97 percent at 3,186.41, while the Shenzhen Composite Index, which tracks stocks on China's second exchange, added 1.05 percent to 1,978.72.

However, Shanghai still ended the week almost 10 percent lower and Shenzhen lost more than 14 percent. "The scrapping of the circuit breaker system will help to stabilise the market, but a sense of panic will remain, particularly among retail investors," Li Jingyuan, general manager at Shanghai Bingsheng Asset Management, told Bloomberg News. Government-linked entities stepped in to buy stocks for at least the second time this week to shore up the market, Bloomberg reported, quoting people familiar with the matter. Global investors have been alarmed by slowing growth in the world's second-largest economy, which is expected to have expanded last year at its slowest pace in a quarter of a century. Official data on fourth-quarter and annual growth is due to be released later in January.

Yesterday's rise came after the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) late Thursday said it was shelving the "circuit breaker", which it had introduced at the beginning of the year.

The mechanism was meant to calm China's notoriously volatile markets—which went into a tailspin in mid-2015 — by automatically suspending trading for 15 minutes if they fell by five percent in one day, and closing them early if they dropped seven percent.

Yuan rate up

But dealers said the system instead heightened selling pres-

sure from traders who wanted to avoid being stuck with shares they did not want to hold. "After weighing advantages and disadvantages, currently the negative effect is bigger than the positive one," the CSRC said in a statement.

"Therefore, in order to maintain market stability, CSRC has decided to suspend the circuit breaker mechanism." Rumors circulated on China's Twitter-like Weibo that CSRC chief Xiao Gang had submitted his resignation over the debacle, which would be announced at the weekend.

Similar speculation has been heard before, and investors have repeatedly called for Xiao's head in recent months over the government's interventions following the market falls. Authorities also set the central rate for the yuan currency marginally higher against the US dollar yesterday, ending eight days of falls.

The People's Bank of China (PBoC) set the daily reference rate at 6.5636 to the greenback, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. It was up 0.02 percent from Thursday, when it was set at its lowest level in nearly five years. China limits the yuan to rising or falling two percent on either side of the reference rate.

The eight days of falls revived concerns over the currency of the world's biggest trader in goods. A lower unit should make Chinese exports more competitive on world markets, but at the cost of its imports becoming more expensive in yuan terms. The country will announce inflation statistics for December at the weekend. China has pledged to make the value of the yuan more flexible and market-oriented, and the International Monetary Fund has announced the unit will join its elite reserve currency basket.

Global equities firm

Meanwhile, world stock markets widely recovered yesterday, with European shares staging a modest rebound after China removed ill-fated trading curbs, a move that underpinned Asian markets earlier. Oil markets pulled back also after striking 12-year low points on Thursday.

In yesterday trading at about 1030 GMT, London's benchmark FTSE 100 index was up 0.5 percent compared with Thursday's close. In the eurozone, Frankfurt's DAX 30 climbed 0.6 percent and the Paris CAC 40 won 0.1 percent. Europe's main indices closed with losses of about 2.0 percent Thursday as signs of a dramatic slowdown in powerhouse China put fright into investors about the outlook for the world economy.

Asian stock markets meanwhile endured another volatile ride yesterday. US stocks also tumbled Thursday ahead of yesterday's closely watched monthly employment data from the Labor Department that is expected to show jobs growth slowed in December.

The wild swings across Asia were reminiscent of the summer's China-linked worldwide turmoil owing to increasing concerns about Beijing's ability to control a slowdown in the world's number-two economy.

"There's not a lot of stability in terms of policy management in China," said Matthew Sherwood, head of investment strategy at asset managers Perpetual in Sydney. "They are very much making it up as they go... It causes large market volatility as people in markets don't like uncertainty."

Global investors have been alarmed by slowing growth in China's economy, which is expected to have expanded in 2015 at its slowest pace in a quarter of a century. — Agencies

OIL PRICES STEADY AROUND MULTI-YEAR LOWS

SEOUL/LONDON: Oil prices steadied around 11-1/2-year lows, after rising earlier during the day following Chinese shares higher, as persistent global oversupply and a bleak demand outlook weighed on prices. Beijing deactivated a circuit breaker mechanism that was blamed for aggravating equity market crashes earlier this week.

Oil prices plunged to 12-year lows on Thursday after leading energy consumer China allowed its yuan currency to slip, sending stock markets tumbling globally. Beijing then suspended equities trading as the sharp falls triggered the circuit-breaking mechanism for a second time since its introduction this week. "We haven't really

seen a change in the trend, and much more evidence is needed for calling a trend change or even a halt in prices," Michael Poulsen of Global Risk Management said.

"It looks like it's some technical trading, but you could put the China sticker on it," Poulsen added.

Brent rose 9 cents to \$33.84 a barrel by 1114 GMT, near a low of \$34.18 reached in July 2004. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) was flat at \$33.27 a barrel. Chinese stocks rose on Friday as the yuan currency firmed in early trade after the People's Bank of China strengthened its official rate for the first time in nine trading days.

Over the past year, the world has been producing 1.5 million barrels per day more oil than it consumes. OPEC and the International Energy Agency expect global demand growth to slow in 2016 to around 1.20-1.25 million barrels per day from a very high 1.8 million bpd in 2015. Average US oil rigs fell by 46 in December to 714 compared with November, Baker Hughes INC said on Friday. The worldwide rig count for December fell by 78 to 1,969.

The US Energy Information Administration said last month that production in 2016 would fall by 570,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 8.76 million bpd, an upward revision from its 520,000 bpd fore-

cast in November. The options market is showing there are concerns oil prices can fall further. Some investors are protecting themselves by acquiring put options giving them the right to sell at \$25 a barrel, anticipating that Brent will fall below that.

Oil bull Andy Hall's Astenbeck Capital Management lost about 35 percent in 2015, CNBC reported on Thursday, citing a source who reviewed the fund's performance. OPEC's smallest member Ecuador, which has increased debt and reduced investments due to the oil price plunge, said it would continue to press for production cuts when the cartel meets next on June 2 in Vienna. — Reuters

OIL OPTIONS LURCH CLOSER TO \$20 GOLDMAN FORECAST

OIL TRADERS BUY BEARISH OPTIONS AT \$30, \$25/BARREL

LONDON: When US investment bank Goldman Sachs said last year that oil could fall as low as \$20 per barrel, it assigned a fairly low probability to that scenario.

Fast-forward five months and in some parts of the world the forecast has already proved correct. Canadian physical crude has been selling this week at below \$20 per barrel, less than it costs to extract and transport. Traders in the options market, meanwhile, are taking protection against prices falling below \$25. The developments reflect growing concerns that a market already awash in too much oil is now suffering the double-whammy of a sharp slowdown in US and Chinese demand.

For the past 18 months, oversupply has been the main factor responsible for dragging down prices by two-thirds, after Saudi Arabia pushed OPEC to ramp up exports to fight for market share with higher-cost producers such as US shale firms.

Low prices spurred global demand to multi-year highs, saving oil from a further collapse and encouraging producers to hope that the market might recover later in 2016.

But just as Saudi Arabia was about to start celebrating its first tactical victories,

with US output declining under pressure from low prices, signs are emerging that demand in the United States, China and Europe is much weaker than anticipated. Estimated demand from China, the world's second largest consumer and the engine of global economic growth since the commodities boom started in the early 2000s, fell in both September and November, compared to the same months of 2014.

US demand, the world's largest, began falling from October, according to the latest available data, despite low gasoline prices, while US distillate demand slid to its lowest for more than a decade towards the end of 2015. Demand in the European Union turned flat in October, having surprised on the upside throughout most of the year. "2015 started off with a spectacular growth in demand. But in the last quarter of 2015, things seem to have changed," said Abhishek Deshpande, an analyst at banking and investment group Natixis.

"SUPPORTS CRUMBLING"

Goldman's drastic scenario was based on the logic that the market might have to undergo a \$20 per barrel price shock in order to force an acceleration in the shut-

down of unprofitable production.

That no longer seems fanciful. "Oil has been under pressure as of late, and downside risks of a dip into the \$20s have grown," Bank of America Merrill Lynch said on Thursday.

The same day, Brent and WTI futures fell briefly to their lowest levels since 2004, near \$32 per barrel, as a sliding yuan and an emergency halt in Chinese stockmarket trading left Asian markets in turmoil.

For oil prices to fall as much as 5 percent in early and usually calm Asian trading hours is very rare, and even veteran chart-watchers are now struggling to draw a line under the biggest rout in decades.

"The supports are crumbling... There is not a winning long in the market - maximum pain is lower. It is not advised to be long," said Robin Bieber of brokers PVM.

He said there would not be much to stop oil falling into the mid-\$20s if WTI crude fell below the \$32.40 a barrel support level. Minutes later, WTI fell as low as \$32.10, although prices slightly recovered towards \$34 per barrel later in the day.

NEGATIVE OIL

Over the past year, the world has been producing 1.5 million bpd more oil than it consumes. OPEC and the International Energy Agency expect global demand growth to slow in 2016 to around 1.20-1.25 million barrels per day from a very high 1.8 million bpd in 2015.

That means that for most of 2016 the world will still be producing more than it can consume, adding to record stockpiles already exceeding 3 billion barrels.

The options market is showing that fears are indeed on the rise that futures could fall further. The Chicago Board Options Exchange's oil volatility index has risen 20 percent so far this year.

Implied volatility in ICE Brent options - including the \$30/barrel and \$25/barrel Feb 16 option - has spiked in recent weeks. Some investors are protecting themselves by acquiring put options giving them the right to sell at \$25, anticipating that Brent will fall below that.

"There has been more interest in buying options like \$25 puts and open interest has increased. Volatility has been rallying. The action that we have seen shows that people have a bearish slant," said a senior options trader at a major bank. — Reuters

KUWAIT OIL PRICE IN RECORD FALL TO \$24.12PB

KUWAIT: Kuwait oil price, in record decline, dropped \$2.32 reaching \$24.12 per barrel on Thursday in contrast to \$26.44 pb on Wednesday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. In international markets, Brent Blend contracts rose, today (Friday), 2.3 percent, reaching \$34.72 pb, two dollars higher than its lowest fall recorded in 2004 when they reached \$32.16 pb.

Meanwhile, the American West Texas crude rose 2.16 percent reaching \$33.99 pb, after falling in the previous session to \$33.10 pb, an ebb unprecedented since 2003. — KUNA

AIRBUS A400M DELIVERIES TO TURKEY SEEN DELAYED IN 2016

ANKARA: Deliveries of two Airbus A400M military transport planes to Turkey in 2016 are expected to be delayed and talks are ongoing on delivery of a replacement for one that crashed on its maiden flight last year, a defense official told Reuters. Ankara signed a deal for 10 of the Airbus heavy cargo and troop carriers in 2003 as part of a group of seven European NATO nations, expecting its order to be fulfilled by 2018. Turkey received two of the aircraft in 2014 and was due to receive two more last year, but only one was delivered. The second plane crashed in Spain on May 9, killing four test crew.

"Talks are continuing on the delivery date for the replacement," an official from the Undersecretariat for Defense Industries (SSM), part of Turkey's defense ministry, said on condition his name was not used. "According to the A400M agreement, two aircraft should be delivered to the Turkish Air Force in 2016, in April and June. But it is anticipated that there will be delays in these deliveries," he added.

The delivery calendar had to be updated after last year's crash and a subsequent halt in testing, the official said. The crash struck a fresh blow to Europe's largest defence project which was already struggling to overcome delays and cost overruns that led to a bailout by European governments in 2010.

Reuters reported in July that the accident had led to new development delays of up to three months. Airbus took a fresh charge of 290 million euros (\$315 million) in July because of the delays, bringing cumulative provisions on the project to more than 5 billion euros.

The company said then that the crash had caused setbacks for the delivery schedule that were still being assessed. NATO ally Turkey occupies a crucial strategic position, bordering Iran, Iraq and Syria and is a member of the US-led coalition against Islamic State.

The A400M troop and cargo plane was developed for seven European NATO nations - Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Spain and Turkey - at a cost of 20 billion euros (\$22 billion). It entered service in 2013 after a delay of more than three years. The planes, costing just over 100 million euros each, are assembled in Spain, which has long sought to emerge from France and Germany's shadow within Europe's largest aerospace company. After the May crash, flights of the two aircraft previously delivered to the Turkish Air Force were suspended for safety reasons. However, defense industry officials said flights of the two planes resumed on June 18 last year. — Reuters



YAOUNDE: International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde (left) shakes hands with Cameroon's Minister of Finance Alamine Ousmane Mey after she spoke during a roundtable with economic and monetary community of Central Africa (CEMAC) Ministers of Finance at the Hilton Hotel yesterday. — AFP



CHICAGO: Ralph Logan, general manager of Microtrain (left) speaks with James Smith who is seeking employment during a National Career Fairs job fair in Chicago. For months, US employers have steadily added jobs even as global growth has flagged and financial markets have sunk. — AP

US ADDED STRONG 292K JOBS IN DECEMBER: DATA

JOBLESS RATE REMAINS AT 5%

WASHINGTON: American employers added a strong 292,000 jobs in December, suggesting that the US economy is so far defying global trends and growing at a solid pace. The Labor Department says the unemployment rate remained 5 percent for a third straight month. More Americans started looking for work, and most found jobs. The government also said employers added a combined 50,000 more jobs in October and November than it had previously estimated. Hiring averaged 284,000 a month in the fourth quarter, the best three-month pace in a year.

The strong figures underscore the resilience of the US economy at a time of global turmoil stemming from China's slowing economy and plummeting stock market.

Most economists expect solid US consumer spending will offset any overseas drag, though many forecast only modest growth.

For months, US employers have steadily added jobs even as global growth has flagged and financial markets have sunk. Stronger customer demand has given most businesses confidence to hire even though some sectors - notably manufacturing and oil and gas drilling - are struggling.

If employers continue to hire steadily and to raise wages consistently, consumers are expected to keep spending and to support US economic growth even if foreign economies struggle.

Still, stumbling growth in countries like China, the world's second-largest economy, and financial market turmoil could pose

long-term challenges for the US economy. A strong dollar and faltering global growth have cut into exports of factory goods. The dollar has climbed about 10 percent in value in the past year compared with overseas currencies. That has made US goods more expensive globally while lowering the price of imported products. In November, exports fell to their lowest level in nearly four years and helped shaved about 0.6 percentage point from the economy's growth in 2015, according to Goldman Sachs. Most analysts estimate that the economy expanded at a modest pace 2.5 percent last year.

Another blow to manufacturing has been oil prices, which fell to their lowest level in 12 years Thursday. Oil and gas drillers have responded by slashing payrolls and sharply cutting spending on steel pipes and other drilling equipment. Manufacturers added just 17,000 jobs last year through November. Yet manufacturing makes up just 10 percent of the US economy and oil and gas drilling even less. Consumer spending accounts for roughly 70 percent.

For now, Americans are confident enough to buy more homes. Sales of newly built homes jumped nearly 15 percent in 2015 and helped spur building and construction hiring: Construction companies added 215,000 jobs last year, a 3.4 percent gain. In another sign of consumer health, auto sales rose to a record high last year as cheap gas and low interest rates led to booming sales of SUVs and pickup trucks. Lower gas prices may have hurt the oil patch, but they should benefit consumers by cutting their gas bills. Chris Christopher, an economist at IHS, a forecasting firm, estimates that American households saved, on average, \$722 last year from cheaper gas. He expects them to save an additional \$217 in 2016 given the continuing drop in oil prices. — AP

BRAZIL INFLATION HITS RECORD HIGH IN 2015

RIO DE JANEIRO: Annual inflation in Brazil hit a 12-year high last year at 10.67 percent, the government said yesterday, the latest sign of economic troubles in the world's seventh largest economy.

The figure-the highest since 2002 — was more than double the government's 4.5 percent inflation target. State statistics agency IBGE said consumer prices rose 0.96 percent month-on-month in December, after a 1.01 increase in November.

In 2014, annual inflation stood at 6.41 percent. Last year's inflation figure, while high, was still slightly below market expectations of 10.72 percent and the central bank's last forecast of 10.8 percent. For this year, the central bank is expecting 9.2 per-

cent inflation in the first quarter, with a gradual decrease during the year to reach 6.2 percent in December. It estimates 4.8 percent inflation for year's end in 2017. Latin America's biggest economy is going through a turbulent economic period with deep recession, rising unemployment and a dramatic drop in investor confidence fueled by an impeachment drive against President Dilma Rousseff.

The dramatic slowdown began last year, causing the government to revise its 2016 budget targets five times. It is now expected to post a \$31 billion deficit. The IMF expects that Brazil will stay in recession in 2016. If confirmed, this would be the first time since 1930-31 that Brazil is in recession two years in a row. — AFP

CHINA'S CURRENCY STANCE TESTS WORLD POLICYMAKERS' SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE

SINGAPORE: Assessments of China's intentions after it let the yuan depreciate more quickly this week possessed some qualities of a fair-ground mirror, with policymakers in nearby Asia far less alarmed about risks of a "currency war" than those further away.

As global currency and stock markets shivered on Thursday, Mexico's Finance Minister Luis Videgaray vented fears that China's machinations could lead to a spiral of competitive devaluations, echoing a complaint commonly heard from Brazil in recent years. "There is a real worry that in the face of the slowing Chinese economy the public policy response is to start a round of competitive devaluation," Videgaray said during an event in Mexico City.

The unpleasant start to 2016 caused by tanking Shanghai shares and the yuan's latest slip had analysts also flagging the possibility that Beijing, in its haste to stem the rot in the world's second-largest economy, was weakening its currency to revive sagging exports.

A view among Asian neighbours, however, was that China had more to lose from capital outflows than it could gain from increased exports if the yuan was allowed to sink too far.

Latin American currencies weakened far more sharply than most Asian currencies last year, a factor that probably helped shape the differing perspectives between policymakers from these regions.

"I doubt China would seek a weaker yuan in the way that could shake the confidence of its economy," a senior official at Japan's Ministry of Finance told Reuters. "Blatant yuan devaluation would prompt heavy criticism from the US and other countries, but it's not the time to worry about a currency war," said the official, whose own government faced similar suspicions over policies adopted three years ago that led to a steep drop in the yen. US Republican presidential candidates have seized on the yuan's slide to lambast China over policies they say are designed to gain an advantage in trade.

"They're now rapidly trying to goose up exports," US Senator Marco Rubio of Florida told reporters on the campaign trail in New Hampshire. Minutes of the Federal Reserve policy meeting in December, when interest rates were increased for the first time in nearly a decade, also showed US central bankers had "lingering concerns" over the potential for China's slowdown to impact US growth.

A European Central Bank official, who didn't want to be identified, said the weaker yuan would have a "relatively minor impact" on the eurozone's imported inflation, but the underlying message on the health of China's economy was "a much bigger concern" and any increase in market volatility could upset the U.S. Fed's schedule on interest rates.

MISUNDERSTOOD

Beijing's critics, according to some Asian central bankers, were in danger of misreading its actions in the currency market. While the People's Bank of China (PBOC) fixed its daily yuan guidance rate lower for eight days in a row, culminating in a 0.5 percent drop on Thursday - it nudged the rate higher on Friday - dealers suspect the central bank of intervening in the past two days through state banks to ease pressure on the currency.

During recent months, the PBOC has spent billions of dollars from reserves bolstering the yuan. "It's not like they're buying heaps of dollars to weaken their currency," said a senior Bank of Korea official, speaking on condition of anonymity. "I feel they'd rather want to slow down the pace (of depreciation), but for now it seems China is letting the yuan move in line with markets."

How far and how fast could be the most pertinent questions. Sources told Reuters on Thursday that the PBOC is under increasing pressure from policy advisers to let the currency fall quickly and sharply, by as much as 10-15 percent, as its recent gradual softening is thought to be doing more harm than good.

Indeed, the two Asian BRIC economies, China and India, registered currency depreciations of 4-5 percent last year, while Brazil's currency dropped nearly 33 percent and Russia's fell by more than a fifth. Other emerging markets suffered similar steep falls in their currencies' value - South Africa's rand lost almost 26 percent and the Turkish lira weakened more than 20 percent.

India, which like most other places uses interest rates rather than the exchange rate as a main policy tool, would take a long, hard look before weakening the rupee in response to the cheaper yuan.

"Depreciating the rupee has more cost than benefit for India as we are net importers. There's tremendous pressure on corporate balance sheets who are net importers," noted a senior policymaker directly aware of Reserve Bank of India's thinking.

Elsewhere in Asia, the only countries whose currencies depreciated in double-digits were Indonesia and Malaysia by just over 10 percent and 18 percent respectively. — Reuters

CHINA MEDDLING SHOWS OFFICIAL DOUBTS OVER MARKETS: ANALYSTS

SHANGHAI: China's short-lived stock circuit breaker, scrapped after only four days, demonstrates the Communist Party's enduring distrust of the markets and its instinct to intervene, analysts said yesterday.

The mechanism-which halted trading on the Shanghai and Shenzhen exchanges if shares moved sharply-was originally aimed at limiting volatility, but it had the opposite effect, causing investors to panic and send the markets down. The China Securities Regulatory Commission, the market watchdog, abruptly announced late on Thursday that the circuit breaker would be suspended because of a "negative" effect.

With global worries rife over China's slowing economy, the market and policy chaos, coupled with a creeping depreciation in the currency, have given investors worldwide an unsettling reminder of last year. Then, stocks collapsed as a debt-fuelled bubble burst prompting an unprecedented government bail-out, and authorities launched a shock devaluation of the yuan. "The government's good intentions went awry," Haitong Securities analyst Zhang Qi told AFP of the circuit breaker. "There was controversy about the policy from the beginning," he said, adding: "It's not clear whether regulators tested the system and compared it with foreign practices before implementation."

Other global bourses, such as New York, have circuit breaker mechanisms, but their triggers are generally set far higher than China's-which is a 15-minute trading halt for a five percent rise or fall, and an end to the day's trading for a seven percent move.

That happened twice in the four days it was in place. The Asian giant's exchanges were already notoriously volatile, and analysts say circuit breakers work better in mature markets.

With most Chinese traders being individual investors, the market halts caused them to rush for the exits to avoid being caught in a larger fall. "The mechanism should have never been put in place to begin with. From the get-go it appeared ill-conceived," Gordon Chang, an author and independent commentator, said.

Stronger state control

Individual stocks have been limited to rising or falling 10 percent a day for almost 20 years in China. Analysts said the very idea of a circuit breaker was another sign policymakers were reluctant to let market forces set the true level of share prices-worried that a collapse could spark social unrest and hurt the real economy.

"What they are actually doing is strengthening the state across the board," said Fraser Howie, co-author of "Red Capitalism: The Fragile Financial Foundation of China's Extraordinary Rise".

"Reform isn't coming. There is no plan for markets as a decisive role," he told AFP, alluding to a 2013 pledge by the Communist Party. Last year's rescue package was textbook heavy-handed state interventionism: regulators barred major shareholders from selling, allowed hundreds of companies to freeze trading in their stock and funded a "national team" to buy for the government, at a cost estimated in the hundreds of billions of dollars.

"Beijing has its work cut out to salvage

its reputation for competent economic management," said Tom Rafferty, lead analyst for China of the Economist Intelligence Unit. "The authorities staked a huge amount on propping (up) the markets in mid-2015 — an unwise decision given stocks appeared grossly overvalued-and we are now seeing the situation unravel again," he said in a statement.

Shanghai shares closed up nearly two percent on Friday after swinging in and out of negative territory.

'Botched communication'

This week's stock gyrations have come as the central bank guided the yuan currency down, setting its daily fix lower for eight sessions, representing a 1.4 percent fall, before a slight reversal yesterday.

One analyst called the move a "drip-feed devaluation" which was raising worries over China's slowing economy, bigger capital outflows and the threat of a currency war. In August last year, the central bank moved the yuan down nearly five percent over a week, saying the drop was a result of reforms aimed at making the unit more flexible.

"There is certainly a sense that the situation is spiralling out of control," chief Asia economist for Capital Economics, Mark Williams, said in reference to the currency.

He believes China is seeking stability for the yuan, but will likely have to intervene to convince the market that the currency is not just a one-way bet to fall. "The PBoC (People's Bank of China) hopes to keep the renminbi broadly stable... but has botched communication of its policy," Williams said in a research note. — AFP

BRAZIL CB WEIGHED BAN ON EX-BTG PACTUAL CEO

BRASILIA: Five years before his arrest in a political corruption scandal, billionaire financier André Esteves was nearly banned from banking in Brazil due to irregular trading, according to a central bank document reviewed by Reuters.

Central bank investigators recommended in October 2010 that Esteves, who founded and ran investment bank Grupo BTG Pactual SA until last November, should have been barred from managing financial institutions for six years due to "serious infractions" of banking rules between 2002 and 2004, the document showed. The severe punishment under consideration was eventually reduced to fines for Esteves and the bank, but it showed Brazil's most influential dealmaker attracted regulators' scrutiny for more than a decade before his downfall last year.

Esteves declined to discuss the case while BTG Pactual referred inquiries to securities filings at the time. Central bank director Sidnei Corrêa Marques, who ruled against the proposed ban, told Reuters in an interview he considered the crucial role of the bank and its CEO in the financial system when making his decision. Esteves was arrested in November and charged with obstructing a corruption probe at state-run oil company Petrobras by conspiring to help a Petrobras executive who was a potential prosecution witness flee the country. He denied any wrongdoing but stepped down as chief executive and chairman of BTG Pactual and passed control over Latin America's biggest independent investment bank to seven partners. After spending three weeks in prison, Esteves was released on house arrest last month pending trial. The investigation from a decade ago that could have derailed his banking career years earlier focused on nearly \$3.8 billion of trades between the bank, known then as Banco Pactual SA, Delaware-based Romanche Investment Corporation LLC.

Romanche was created 15 years ago as a limited liability corporation, without public disclosure of its ownership, and the law firm at its registered address declined to comment. The company did not file annual tax reports in Delaware as required and still owes \$1,004 there, according to public documents. The securities regulator CVM found in a separate probe that the trades served to transfer Banco Pactual's profits out of the country and potentially reduce the bank's tax bill. The central bank and CVM investigated alleged banking and securities infractions, leaving assessment of the tax impact to Brazil's federal revenue service, which declined to comment on the case. Reuters could not determine how the bank's tax payments were affected by the transactions. — Reuters

MERCEDES, AUDI SALES TOP NEW RECORDS IN 2015

FRANKFURT: German top-of-the-range carmakers Audi and Mercedes-Benz yesterday reported record sales in 2015, even holding their own in China despite difficult market conditions.

Mercedes-Benz, flagship brand of Daimler, said it sold 1.872 million vehicles worldwide last year, an increase of 13.4 percent over the previous year. Rival Audi, the high-end brand of embattled auto giant Volkswagen, said it sold 1.803 million cars, up 3.6 percent year-on-year.

"Last year, we sold more cars than ever before," said Daimler chief executive Dieter Zetsche.

"We were able to increase our unit sales in all three core regions-Europe, NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and Asia-Pacific. And with 373,459 units sold, China developed into our biggest individual market worldwide in 2015. With growth there of 32.6 percent, Mercedes-Benz grew significantly faster than the overall automobile market," Zetsche said.

Daimler said Mercedes-Benz launched more than 15 new or updated models in China last year, where it also expanded the dealer network to approximately 500 dealerships.

Local production capacities were also expanded. At Audi, which has been affected by the massive pollution-cheating scandal that has engulfed its parent company VW, sales growth was more modest. "2015 has proved that Audi is solidly on track and that we are able to master a year that presented various challenges very successfully," said chief executive Rupert Stadler. In China, Audi's sales slipped by 1.4 percent to 570,889, but the level was still "very high," Stadler insisted. "Over the course of the next months, (we) will introduce various new models throughout our Chinese product portfolio: by the summer of 2016, successors will be launched for models that represent around 60 percent of total Audi sales in China," Audi said. — AFP

PAKISTAN TO MERGE STOCK EXCHANGES TO FORM SINGLE BOURSE

KARACHI: Pakistan's benchmark Karachi Stock Exchange (KSE) will become the Pakistan Stock Exchange next week after merging with two other bourses to become the single share trading entity in the country, officials said yesterday.

The merger of the Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad Stock Exchanges into the PSX could pave the way for more foreign investor interest, observers said. "All the three stock exchanges are being merged into a single national stock exchange from Monday," LSE chief Aftab Chaudhry told AFP.

"The merger will help in selling the exchange to a strategic buyer as part of the demutualisation plan," said Mohammad Sohail, chief of Topline Securities, a Karachi-based investment house. Under the plan the PSX would become a listed company on the exchange with 40 percent of its shares offered to foreign buyers — 20 percent in an initial public offering (IPO) and the remaining 40 percent allocated to listed brokers.

Foreign investors can already trade on the existing exchanges, but the new bourse would be better organised with greater international links, observers said.

"The new buyer would be likely to introduce new derivatives and would facilitate new listings, providing much



KARACHI: Pakistani brokers sit under monitors showing the latest share prices during trading at The Karachi Stock Exchange (KSE) in Karachi yesterday. Pakistan's benchmark Karachi Stock Exchange (KSE) will become the Pakistan Stock Exchange next week after merging with two other major bourses to become the single share trading entity in the country. — AFP

needed depth and breadth in the market," Sohail said.

The KSE was set up in 1947 with only five listed companies and a market capi-

talisation of just 37 million rupees. It now has 572 companies listed with the total value of 6,958 billion rupees (\$66 billion). — AFP

GOLD SLIDES FROM 9-WEEK HIGH AS STOCKS REBOUND

LONDON: Gold prices fell 1 percent yesterday, retreating from the previous day's nine-week high as stock markets rebounded after this week's rout and the dollar strengthened.

European stocks climbed after Asian shares gained, with battered Chinese equities rising strongly after China suspended its market circuit breaker and guided the yuan higher for the first time in nine days. Jitters over the Chinese economy had spooked global stock markets and sent investors sprinting to safe-haven assets this week, sending gold sharply higher.

Spot gold peaked earlier on Friday at \$1,112 but quickly pared gains. It was

down 1 percent at \$1,097.30 an ounce at 1053 GMT, while US gold futures for February delivery were down \$9.90 an ounce at \$1,097.90. "Concerns over China, and possibly the Middle East, have prompted some safe-haven demand. That has stirred the gold price," Capital Economics analyst Simona Gambarini said. "But as we know, safe-haven demand can be quite volatile."

"We are generally positive on the gold price for the year, but not necessarily on safe-haven demand. That's a wild card."

Investment appetite for gold showed signs of picking up this week. Holdings of the world's largest gold-backed exchange-

traded fund, New York-listed SPDR Gold Shares, rose 4.2 tons on Thursday, data from the fund showed. Attention was turning to US non-farm payrolls data due at 1330 GMT, which traders will watch for clues on the outlook for US interest rate policy.

The prospect of rising rates in the United States was a key factor pushing gold down more than 10 percent last year. A strong report could be seen as prompting the Federal Reserve to raise rates at a faster pace. That could dent demand for non-interest-paying gold, while boosting the dollar.

Silver was down 1.9 percent at \$14.02

an ounce, while platinum was up 0.3 percent at \$876.30 an ounce. Palladium was up 0.8 percent at \$496.20 an ounce.

Palladium fell below \$500 for the first time since September 2010 on Thursday, reaching a low of \$481.67. It is set to end the week down 11 percent. "Technically the chart looks horrible-the metal has collapsed through the \$500 figure and the only support visible on a 10-year weekly chart is at \$447 — the 61.8 percent Fibonacci retracement of the entire 2009 to 2014 rally," ICBC Standard Bank said in a note. "By that point the metal will be oversold and due a bounce, but not because there is any 'deficit' of metal." — Reuters

GERMANY, FRANCE POST DROP IN INDUSTRY OUTPUT

DATA CASTS CLOUD OVER EUROZONE RECOVERY

FRANKFURT: Industrial production in Europe's two biggest economies fell in November, casting a cloud over the outlook for recovery in the eurozone as a whole, data showed yesterday Friday.

The German economy ministry calculated that factory output contracted by 0.3 percent in November compared with a month earlier, corrected for seasonal factors. The previous month, output had increased by 0.5 percent. Falling activity in the key manufacturing sector provided the main drag on the headline figure, with manufacturing output down by 0.8 percent month-on-month, the ministry said. By contrast, construction output increased by 1.6 percent and energy output was up 2.5 percent.

Meanwhile, French industrial production slipped 0.9 percent in November compared to a month earlier, the Insee statistics agency said.

Here, activity in the energy, water and extractive industries fell, while manufacturing production grew slightly in the European Union's second leading economy.

Economists said both sets of data fell short of projections. "November's disappointingly weak German and French industrial production figures provided further evidence that the hard data on the eurozone economy is failing to live up to the more optimistic picture painted by the surveys," said Capital Economics economist Jessica Hinds. German trade data also failed to live up to expectations, with exports edging up by a meagre 0.4 percent and the trade surplus contracting, the federal statistics office Destatis calculated.

'Germany is struggling'

"The big picture is that German industry is struggling," said Hinds. "Granted, the surveys suggest that annual production growth might pick up soon. But industrial production would have to rise by 1.5 percent month-on-month in December if the fourth quarter is merely to match the third quarter. This dents hopes that

German growth picked up" in the fourth quarter after the disappointing expansion of 0.3 percent in the third quarter, she said.

But UniCredit economist Tobias Ruehl was more optimistic. "Fundamentally, the industrial sector in Germany is in good shape and at some point, positive developments in new orders will lead to increased industrial activity," he said.

On Thursday, factory orders, a key measure of demand for goods in Europe's top economy, rose in November, driven by robust domestic demand, the economy ministry said.

Ruehl noted that a preliminary estimate for full-year gross domestic product (GDP) growth was scheduled to be released next week. "Taking the latest data releases into account, we stick to our estimate of 1.7 percent year-on-year," Ruehl said.

"Nevertheless, we see some downside risks to our fourth-quarter growth forecasts. However, this does not endanger our overall optimistic scenario for 2016," he said.

Commerzbank economist Marco Wagner was more pessimistic, saying he was pencilling in growth of only around a quarter of a percentage point for the fourth quarter "at best."

"And the turmoil in China and problems in other emerging markets give little reason to hope that growth will soon pick up again," he warned. ING DiBa economist Carsten Brzeski said the drop in industrial output in Germany "adds to evidence that the Chinese and emerging market slowdowns are leaving their marks on the euro-zone's largest economy."

Brzeski said he felt that "the latest batch of November data suggests a continuation of the recovery in the fourth quarter, albeit at a rather subdued pace."

"However, in the light of the latest market turmoil, continued concerns about the Chinese economy, extremely low oil prices and the absence of dynamic growth regions in the world economy, any shouts of joy about strong German growth should better remain humble," he concluded. — AFP



ATHENS: Demonstrators chant slogans in Athens yesterday during a protest march against the reforms the government has proposed for the new pension plan, as part of measures demanded by country's creditors. — AFP

EU CLEARS FEDEX TAKEOVER OF TNT

BRUSSELS: The EU's anti-trust regulator yesterday cleared FedEx's 4.4-billion-euro (\$4.8 billion) deal to buy Dutch rival TNT Express, a key tie-up for the fast-growing e-commerce delivery business. "Following an in-depth investigation opened in July 2015, the (European) Commission has concluded that the acquisition will not give rise to competition concerns," the EU's powerful executive arm said in a statement. The companies are "not particularly close competitors ... (and) the merged entity will continue to face sufficient competition from its rivals in all markets concerned," it said.

Brussels opened the investigation citing concerns the deal could lead to higher prices for consumers who are increasingly buying online and getting packages delivered directly to them.

"The conclusion is that European consumers will not be adversely affected by the transaction. We have therefore unconditionally approved the merger," EU Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager said in the statement. The deal announced in April came two years after the Commission torpedoed a bid by FedEx's US rival UPS to buy TNT Express. TNT Express went through extensive restructuring after the UPS bid failed, cutting 4,000 jobs. FedEx employs more than 320,000 people worldwide with annual turnover of \$47 billion. — AFP

VW TO UNVEIL NEW SUV IN ELECTRIC-CAR PUSH

BERLIN: Volkswagen will unveil a battery-powered SUV at the Detroit auto show on Monday, according to company sources, part of a push into electric vehicles as it seeks to win back US buyers following its emissions test cheating scandal. The car will be a plug-in hybrid version of the Tiguan, the German automaker's top-selling sport-utility vehicle (SUV), the two sources told Reuters yesterday.

Analysts say Volkswagen's core VW brand badly needs new models in the world's second largest auto market to reverse a three-year decline in sales which fell 4.8 percent in 2015 to 349,440 cars.

Europe's biggest automaker is putting increasing emphasis on electric cars following its cheating of diesel emissions tests, which analysts think could hit demand for diesel vehicles, and a focus on SUVs makes sense given their growing popularity. "VW can't release an SUV soon enough," Edmunds.com analyst Jeremy Acevedo said. "SUV market share is at its highest ever level (in the US)," with compact SUVs such as the new Tiguan accounting for 13 percent of all US auto sales in 2015.

The sources said the concept model, following VW's unveiling of an electric microbus at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas this week, would hit US dealerships sometime after the planned release next year of a new midsize crossover vehicle and a long-wheelbase Tiguan.

However, the German group is struggling to balance model development with the growing costs of its emissions scandal, a task made more difficult this week by a US lawsuit seeking billions of dollars in fines. The new Tiguan prototype integrates electric engines at the front and rear axles and boasts more offroad quality than the GTE concept version of VW's fifth best-selling model launched at the Frankfurt auto show last September, the sources said. — Reuters

CHINESE FIRMS STEP UP DOLLAR DEBT REDEMPTIONS

HONG KONG: Chinese companies that have borrowed heavily in global dollar debt markets are increasingly planning early repayments of their dollar-denominated loans and bonds as the Chinese yuan's weakness extends into the new year.

Bankers say the expected yuan depreciation over the next few years as US interest rates head higher and China's take the opposite track will push more companies to follow suit to reduce exposure to dollar debt. China SCE Property Holdings Limited said on Wednesday that it would redeem its \$350 million senior note due 2017, while another real estate company, SUNAC China Holdings Limited, said it had completed the redemption of its dollar note due next year.

Under normal circumstances, non-investment-grade companies rarely redeem bonds early as they don't always

have easy access to refinancing, but that is changing as the yuan's fall deepens and financing channels in China become available. "Most of the companies we talked to are waiting for the call option dates to arrive to redeem their bonds. The yuan has weakened sharply and funding costs in China's domestic market have become much cheaper now," said a debt capital market (DCM) banker at an American bank in Hong Kong.

Dollar bond issuances by Chinese companies started to pick up in 2013, and many of them carried call options that usually allowed issuers to redeem bonds three years later, so there could soon be a flurry. "Issuers started to contact us in September to ask about early redemptions of their dollar bonds, and such redemptions gradually came out since the end of last year," said a DCM banker at a Chinese bank in Hong Kong. "Even for companies that have sold

dollar bonds without call options, many of them are consulting with us on how to redeem them ahead of due time," the banker said.

Chinese companies sold a total of \$60.3 billion worth of dollar-denominated bonds in 2015, more than six times the 2010 figure, Thomson Reuters data show.

The yuan posted a record yearly loss against the dollar last year and bearish bets on the currency hit a near six-year high as China's central bank allowed the currency to depreciate at a faster pace, a Reuters poll showed on Thursday. "Hedging cost for dollar debt is high as forward and option contracts are expensive now due to high volatility, so it makes sense to just adjust debt structure by cutting dollar debt exposure," said a corporate treasurer at a Chinese state-owned enterprise in Hong Kong.

China Eastern Airlines said on Monday

it had recently repaid \$1 billion worth of dollar debt to reduce its exposure to currency volatility. It would adopt various measures in the short run to further optimize debt structure. The company's dollar debt ratio is now just over 70 percent, down from 80 percent at the end of September last year, and the ratio would continue to fall, according to the board secretary Wang Jian.

Smaller competitor Spring Airlines will also pay back some dollar debt this year before it's due.

"We started to do this from 2013 and got more aggressive after the currency reform in August," said Chen Ke, its chief financial officer. The market consensus is for the yuan to fall further this year, though analysts are divided on how much. Kevin Lai, Daiwa's Asia ex-Japan chief economist, expects it to hit 7.5 to the dollar by the end of the year. — Reuters

CHINESE TURMOIL WON'T AFFECT ASIAN ECONOMY: ADB CHIEF ADB TO COOPERATE WITH CHINA'S NEW AIIB

MANILA: China's economy, as well as Asia's, are unlikely to slow down sharply this year despite Chinese stock turmoil that has rocked global financial markets, the Asian Development Bank president said yesterday.

Sharp selloffs in the Chinese stock markets this week have renewed fears about the fate of the world's second-largest economy and the knock-on effects across the globe. "I don't have a very pessimistic view about China," ADB president Takehiko Nakao told reporters in Manila, adding the bank was maintaining its 6.7-percent economic growth forecast this year for China.

This would only be slightly lower than its 6.9-percent growth projection for the country in 2015.

Developing Asia as a whole, which has been highly dependent on China, should grow 6.0 percent, or up from 5.8 percent forecast for 2015, Nakao said. Nakao said China was successfully undertaking important reforms, such as making its economy less reliant on investment and more on domestic consumer demand.

He also cited ongoing reform of state-owned enterprises, expansion of the social security system and reduction of disparities between Chinese cities and rural areas.

"Also there is room for stimulus... because its fiscal position is strong and inflation is subdued," he said.

Nakao said that, despite the latest turmoil on the Shanghai bourse, the index was still about 1,000 points above its end-2013 level. Nakao also said he did not believe the yuan currency's depreciation was a deliberate attempt by the Chinese authorities to weaken it to boost exports.

"This depreciation is not because of artificial intervention to lower the renminbi," he said, using another term for the yuan. "It is in a sense the other way. They don't intervene, that's why there is a marked depreciation." Nakao said a rapid depreciation could trigger a reciprocal move by other countries. "Already some countries have depreciations in currencies. But I don't think this is a currency war," he said.

The US-backed Asian Development Bank



MANILA: Takehiko Nakao, Asian Development Bank (ADB) president, speaks during a press briefing at ADB headquarters in Manila yesterday. The ADB is cooperating closely with the China-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and plans to co-finance projects beginning this year, the ADB president said. — AFP

will cooperate with a major new Chinese-led multilateral lending institution and they plan to co-finance projects this year, the ADB's president said yesterday.

The Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has been viewed by some as a rival to the World Bank and the Philippines-based ADB, which was founded in 1966. But ADB President Takehiko Nakao said he did not believe the AIIB, which will launch next week with starting capital of \$20 billion, will diminish his institution and they were happy to work together.

"We agreed we can cooperate," Nakao, told reporters in Manila, adding he already had two meetings with AIIB president-designate Jin Liqun since last year to set parameters for the two institutions' working relationship. "(Jin's) ideas about operations are different, but because of these different ideas, we can complement each other even more."

Nakao said the two men agreed to co-finance certain projects in the region to address transport and renewable energy needs, and expected to announce specific projects by about the middle of the year. China's official Xinhua News Agency earlier reported the AIIB, which will launch next week in Beijing, expected to offer its first batch of project loans by mid-2016.

Nakao, former Japanese vice finance minister, would not say how much money the ADB would put into AIIB co-financing. The United States and Japan—the world's largest and third-largest economies, respectively—have notably declined to join the AIIB.

However many other major economies, including Germany, Britain, South Korea and Russia, have signed up. "There are many reasons to do it (join) because Asian developing nation countries need money for financing infrastructure needs," Nakao said. — AFP

Q&A: CHINA'S MARKET TURMOIL A SYMPTOM OF OTHER PROBLEMS

HONG KONG: Calm returned yesterday to China's stock markets after a torrid week but underlying reasons for the turmoil remain: a weakening yuan and perceptions China's leaders are bungling their handling of the economy.

WHAT WAS BEHIND THE STOCK MARKET SLIDE?

Government intervention after a boom and bust last year has kept stock prices at artificially high levels. Ultimately, they must come down, particularly as the government attempts to withdraw its support measures. The slowdown in the Chinese economy is also a negative; China is expected to post its weakest annual expansion in a quarter century when fourth quarter growth data is released later this month. An ill-thought-out "circuit breaker" trading halt system, which kicked in twice this week, also added to volatility. One big reason is the weakening yuan. Investors were spooked Thursday when the government guided the tightly controlled currency sharply lower, in what was interpreted as a panicked effort to stimulate the economy by helping beleaguered exporters. That weakness is a bigger incentive for Chinese investors to sell shares and move money overseas.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD?

Foreign investors have limited ownership of Chinese stocks because the country's financial system is still largely fenced off from the world. However, the country's rising economic clout mean fluctuations on the Shanghai stock exchange have the power to rattle investor sentiment and hit the portfolio values of everyone from mom and pop investors to big pension funds. Still, a bigger impact, both positive and negative, could come from the weakening the Chinese currency, since it would affect commerce and consumers around the world.

WHAT'S HAPPENED LATELY WITH THE YUAN?

Beijing has gradually loosened the reins on the tightly controlled currency, pledging to let market forces have greater influence on the exchange rate. Economists were expecting the yuan to decline as China's economy weakens but what's come as a shock are a few sudden movements over the past half year. In a surprise move in mid-August, China's central bank set the daily target rate 1.9 percent lower, the biggest one day change in a decade. The next day it fell another 1.6 percent. Another sharp drop came on Thursday, when the yuan rate fell to its lowest in about five years.

WHY IS THE YUAN WEAKENING IN THE FIRST PLACE?

China's currency controls link the yuan to the US dollar, which has risen strongly over the past year and resulted in the yuan becoming 10-15 percent overvalued. That has compounded problems for China's exporters, who were already facing higher wages at home and a sluggish global economy. "A level of the currency that would make sense for the US doesn't make sense for China," said Louis Kuijs, head of Asian economics of Oxford Economics. Analysts believe Beijing is letting the renminbi, as the yuan is also known, fall but is finding it difficult to control the speed of its descent because of speculative pressure in the offshore yuan market. "Some forces attempt to make profit from speculating on the renminbi," the People's Bank of China said in an editorial posted on its website Thursday. "This kind of trading ... only leads to abnormal fluctuations in the yuan's exchange rates." — AP

A photograph of Swedish actress Alicia Vikander and British actor Eddie Redmayne on a red carpet. Vikander is on the left, wearing a strapless black dress with a colorful geometric pattern on the bodice and a long black skirt. Redmayne is on the right, wearing a red and black plaid suit with a white shirt and black tie. They are both looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred red carpet event with photographers and bright lights.

Weekender

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A file photo taken on December 8, 2015, shows Swedish actress Alicia Vikander (L) and British actor Eddie Redmayne pose on the red carpet of the UK premiere of film 'The Danish Girl' in London. — AFP

'Bridge of Spies' and 'Carol' lead Bafta nominations

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Khloe's relationship with James Harden is priority

The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star and the NBA basketball star have been plagued by rumors their romance is on the rocks but the 31-year-old television personality insists she knows how to "balance" her career and personal life. She told Entertainment Tonight: "I do like to put my relationships a priority. But I'm a really good multi-tasker and I just know how to balance out. Even if it's just a 48-hour trip. As long as you get that time in then it works. "I think keeping it a little private too has really helped us. Mystery is good." Meanwhile, the 'Kocktails with Khloë' host is reportedly struggling with the distance between the pair as

she looks after her estranged husband Lamar Odom in Los Angeles. A source said previously: "It hasn't been easy. James obviously has wanted to see her more and be with her in [Texas] more, but she's felt like she needed to stay in Los Angeles to be with her family and to deal with Lamar stuff. That has put some strain on things. "She is with him now in Houston. She went to his game last night and bowling. They are still together and having fun."



Hayek's life is 'so much better' now

The 'Everly' star insists she isn't envious of her pre-baby body as she has welcomed such a great person into her life, eight-year-old daughter Valentina, who she has with husband François-Henri Pinault. Sharing a throwback photo of herself in a bikini before she gave birth to her little girl, she wrote: "This was my waist before pregnancy. Now it's not the same but my life is so much better." Meanwhile, the 49-year-old actress previously revealed she never exercises. She said: "I have the bad habit of not exercising and not eating healthy food. I have the bad habit of liking wine and cocktails. I'm sometimes lazy with the maintenance. Altogether it's a lot of work." And whilst she can slack on her healthy lifestyle, it is her skincare routine that Salma ensures she completes religiously. She added: "No matter how bad my habits are I always take my make up off before bed. Even if I'm exhausted or sick I take it off. I don't pluck my eyebrows for 90 per cent of the year. But one thing I always do is take my makeup off."

Beyonce to perform with Coldplay at Super Bowl

The 'XO' hitmaker, 34, who previously headlined the event in 2013, will join the band during their 12-minute slot at the annual championship game of the National Football League at the Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California on February 7. The news was announced by Pepsi - the show's sponsor - just four weeks after the 'A Sky Full of Stars' hitmakers confirmed they were taking the headline slot. However, the group - which is the first British act to take the slot since The Who in 2010 - is starting to feel the pressure as an audience of 115 million will tune in to watch the band. Frontman Chris Martin said recently: "We get a couple of weeks off but then we're preparing for the Super Bowl. "It's a huge show so there's a lot of pressure and we've already started planning what we want to do." Meanwhile, it's hardly surprising the four-piece - consisting of Chris, Guy Berryman, Jonny Buckland and Will Champion - are feeling the heat as they follow in the footsteps of Katy Perry who made history last year when 118 million viewers tuned in to watch her perform.



Johnny Depp gave Justin Bieber his hat

The 'Sorry' singer was shocked when the 'Pirates of the Caribbean' actor unexpectedly visited him in his hotel and presented him with the "cool" headwear before turning up to one of his gigs accompanied by his 16-year-old daughter Lily-Rose. Justin said: "You want to hear a cool Johnny Depp story? I opened up my door at the hotel, I heard knock knock knock and he's like, 'Hey I just wanted to give you this.' He opened a box and I opened it up and it's one of his cool hats." I think he was doing a press conference in the lobby and someone told him I was up in my room." And then he

came to my show in Miami with his daughter, super nice guy." And the 21-year-old star will keep the surprise gift forever. Speaking on radio program 'The Bert Show', he added: "I got it framed." Meanwhile, Justin has vowed to quit smoking because he doesn't want to be a bad role model. He said: "I want to quit smoking. I am going to do it. I don't want to be someone who is smoking and people say I'm a bad influence. But again it's my journey, let me be and I'll figure it out."





Malik learned to be 'disciplined' in OneD

The 22-year-old singer - who quit the chart-topping group last March - is able to grin and bear it when it comes to having to do things he doesn't really want to. He said: "I'm incredibly disciplined. I realized I can push myself through situations I might not necessarily want to do, but can overcome by being in the moment. "No matter what, I can smile and do whatever I got to do." Zayn is currently working on his own solo material and often records several tracks every day because he is so enthusiastic about what he is writing. He told Billboard magazine: "I'll come down here and record maybe

seven songs a night." That's because I'm enjoying what I'm doing. I'm not censoring myself anymore, so I'm not tired. I love it." Though Zayn's old teachers have previously described him as "a model student", the British singer - who almost missed his 2010 audition for 'The X Factor' because he wanted a lie-in - doesn't remember his school days quite that way. He said: "I was a different person then. I was 17 and like, 'Screw the world!' I thought I was 2Pac and I'm really not."

Meghan Trainor is 'still' single

The 'All About That Bass' hitmaker was previously rumored to be dating Nick Jonas' assistant Cory Anderson but she insists there is no one special in her life at the moment. Asked if she has a boyfriend, she said: "No, I'm single, still." But the 22-year-old star has her mind on other things as she's been working hard on her new album, 'Thank You'. Though the record doesn't yet have a release date, Meghan can't wait for her fans to hear her music as she's found it so hard holding them back "from the world". She told E! News: "We're doing the final mixes this week. It's amazing to finally wrap it up. "It kills you to hold these songs from the world, it really does. Especially, one of my songs, it's called 'Thank You', which the album is called, 'Thank You', and it's a song to my fans. I want them to hear it now but I have to wait." Meghan was forced to cancel a string of tour dates last summer to undergo surgery after suffering a vocal cord hemorrhage and now she's recovered from the procedure and said people have told her voice has "gotten better".



Moretz stopped trusting people after parents divorced

The '5th Wave' actress was devastated when her father "just left" her mother when she was a child and she admits their separation had a huge impact on her. She said: "It made me harder on myself. [It] was as heavy as you can get to dismantle a family, for sure. "When you're betrayed by someone that is a bloodline, you start to beware trusting people and to protect yourself at all costs. "For a long time, I did that too much. I wasn't letting people in." The 18-year-old star also admitted that, when she was 16 and filming 'Carrie', she felt incredibly insecure. She told America's Marie Claire magazine: "I felt fat; I felt not pretty. "I felt like I didn't really know who I was. I was so confused; I was scared. I had bad acne. I felt incredibly insecure." However, these days Chloe is much

more confident in herself. She added: "I'm so free now. I don't know what happened, but when I turned 17, this huge weight was lifted off my shoulders. "I don't worry about what people say about me. I know who I am, who I want to be, what I want to portray myself as, what I want people to think of me." The teenage starlet insists she's not interested in a relationship "for a while" and has no desire to date anyone older than she is. She said: "I don't want to date older people, because I'm 18 and older people are more serious. "Then I kind of realized, I'll go on dates, why not? And that's kind of how I am right now."

Boyega refuses to let fame 'go to his head'

The 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' actor admits he has had a fair share of admirers since starring as Finn in the science fiction franchise but tries to "focus on the work" rather than the celebrity status it has given him. He said: "It's nice, of course, when people appreciate any work you've done, but one minute you're great and the next the next they can be saying you're the worst thing that's ever happened to 'Star Wars', so I'm not planning on letting it go to my head." Although this franchise is such a massive thing, I've tried my best to approach it as I approach any other job: do the best I can and just focus on the work." The 23-year-old star also spoke of his "relief" when he found out he had the role in

the JJ Abrams-directed movie. He added to Vogue.co.uk: "When I found out I had the part, the overwhelming feeling was of relief. I'd been auditioning for seven months so it was just unbelievable to think, yes, finally I know for sure I'm going to be in this film. "In terms of what's changed, my life back home in London is still pretty normal. I mostly drove everywhere around where I live even before I got that part, so that has meant my life just goes on as normal. I was in Wandsworth this morning." — Bangshowbiz





In this Jan 11, 2015 file photo, workers prepare for rain at the 72nd annual Golden Globe Awards at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills. — AP photos



Ricky Gervais

Hollywood awards season kicks off with Golden Globes

Hollywood's biggest stars turn out tomorrow for the Golden Globes, which kick off the industry's awards season this year with a show that promises suspense and cheeky humor. While their record in predicting Oscars glory has been hit-and-miss, many see the Globes as a pretty strong indicator of films and actors destined for an Academy Award on February 28.

"It's an uncanny crystal ball," said Tom O'Neil, founder of awards tracker GoldDerby.com. "The Globes historically has predicted 75 percent of the Oscars. "So it's considered your audition for the Oscar." Returning to host what is described as Hollywood's biggest party of the year will be British comedian Ricky Gervais, who has used previous appearances on the show to dish out politically-incorrect and stinging jokes.

The field is wide open this year as to who will walk away with a Golden Globe, awarded by members of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association at a gala dinner in Beverly Hills. "Some years there are movies like 'Titanic' that just seem to have a momentum and everybody seems to like them," said Timothy Gray, awards editor for trade magazine Variety. "But this year there is genuine suspense."

Leading the pack of films vying for top honors is "Spotlight," which tells the story of Boston Globe journalists who uncovered sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. Pundits see the movie as frontrunner for best drama-but no shoo-in, as it faces competition from

"Carol," a lesbian romance starring Cate Blanchett as a housewife who falls for a store clerk played by Rooney Mara. Other top contending dramas are the epic survival thriller "The Revenant" starring Leonardo DiCaprio, the harrowing kidnap tale "Room" and "Mad Max: Fury Road."

'It's DiCaprio's year

The frontrunner for best comedy is "The Big Short," based on a book about the financial crisis of 2007-2008. Also running in that category are the dramedy "Joy," space blockbuster "The Martian," zany caper "Spy" and Amy Schumer's breakout film "Trainwreck."

In the race for best actor in a drama, DiCaprio appears well ahead for his strong performance as legendary fur trapper Hugh Glass in "The Revenant." Critics are widely predicting the 41-year-old actor will take home his first Oscar for the role. "There is a feeling that it's his year," said O'Neil. "All 17 GoldDerby experts have him unanimously out front to win."

Also nominated for best actor in a drama are Bryan Cranston who plays a blacklisted 1940s screenwriter in "Trumbo," Eddie Redmayne for the transgender tale "The Danish Girl" and Will Smith for the hard-hitting sports drama "Concussion." For best actress in a drama the nominees are Blanchett and Mara for "Carol," Brie Larson for "Room," and Alicia Vikander who plays alongside Redmayne in "The Danish Girl."

On the television front, two series nominated for a Golden Globe are creating a buzz—"Mr Robot," about a computer programmer and vigilante hacker, and "Narcos," Netflix's take on the infamous Medellin drug cartel. Movies aside, all eyes will be on Gervais, who raised eyebrows for his off-color jokes when he hosted the show for three years starting in 2010.

The caustic comedian, who takes over from co-hosts Tina Fey and Amy Poehler, comes with a reputation of poking fun at everyone from Mel Gibson to Angelina Jolie, as well as the Hollywood Foreign Press, and this year he is not expected to hold back. Gervais has made his apologies in advance for what he will say. "Because I can see the future, I'd like to apologize now for the things I said at next week's Golden Globes," he tweeted on January 1.

But O'Neil said Gervais' edgy humor was more likely than not to go down well with an audience mellowed by flowing champagne. "He's a brilliant host because he's an anarchist who loves to rock the house," O'Neil said. "This is Hollywood's biggest party of the year and Ricky is perfectly cast as a wild card upon the stage. — AFP

List of Golden Globe nominees

FILM

Best film, drama:

"Carol"
"Mad Max: Fury Road"
"The Revenant"
"Room"
"Spotlight"

Best film, musical or comedy:

"The Big Short"
"Joy"
"The Martian"
"Spy"
"Trainwreck"

Best actor, drama:

Bryan Cranston, "Trumbo"
Leonardo DiCaprio, "The Revenant"
Michael Fassbender, "Steve Jobs"
Eddie Redmayne, "The Danish Girl"
Will Smith, "Concussion"

Best actor, musical or comedy:

Christian Bale, "The Big Short"
Steve Carell, "The Big Short"
Matt Damon, "The Martian"
Al Pacino, "Danny Collins"
Mark Ruffalo, "Infinitely Polar Bear"

Best actress, drama:

Cate Blanchett, "Carol"

Brie Larson, "Room"

Rooney Mara, "Carol"
Saoirse Ronan, "Brooklyn"
Alicia Vikander, "The Danish Girl"

Best actress, musical or comedy:

Jennifer Lawrence, "Joy"
Melissa McCarthy, "Spy"
Amy Schumer, "Trainwreck"
Maggie Smith, "The Lady in the Van"
Lily Tomlin, "Grandma"

Best supporting actor:

Paul Dano, "Love & Mercy"
Idris Elba, "Beasts of No Nation"
Mark Rylance, "Bridge of Spies"
Michael Shannon, "99 Homes"
Sylvester Stallone, "Creed"

Best supporting actress:

Jane Fonda, "Youth"
Jennifer Jason Leigh, "The Hateful Eight"
Helen Mirren, "Trumbo"
Alicia Vikander, "Ex Machina"
Kate Winslet, "Steve Jobs"

Best director:

Todd Haynes, "Carol"

Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, "The Revenant"

Tom McCarthy, "Spotlight"
George Miller, "Mad Max: Fury Road"
Ridley Scott, "The Martian"

Best foreign language film:

"The Brand New Testament" (Belgium/France/Luxembourg)
"The Club" (Chile)
"The Fencer" (Finland/Germany/Estonia)
"Mustang" (France)
"Son of Saul" (Hungary)

Best animated feature:

"Anomalisa"
"The Good Dinosaur"
"Inside Out"
"The Peanuts Movie"
"Shaun the Sheep Movie"

TELEVISION

Best drama series:

"Empire" (Fox)
"Game of Thrones" (HBO)
"Mr. Robot" (USA)
"Narcos" (Netflix)
"Outlander" (Starz)

Best drama actor:

Jon Hamm, "Mad Men"
Rami Malek, "Mr. Robot"
Wagner Moura, "Narcos"
Bob Odenkirk, "Better Call Saul"
Liev Schreiber, "Ray Donovan"

Best drama actress:

Caitriona Balfe, "Outlander"
Viola Davis, "How To Get Away With Murder"
Eva Green, "Penny Dreadful"
Taraji P. Henson, "Empire"
Robin Wright, "House of Cards"

Best musical or comedy series:

"Casual" (Hulu)
"Mozart in the Jungle" (Amazon)
"Orange Is the New Black" (Netflix)
"Silicon Valley" (HBO)
"Transparent" (Amazon)
"Veep" (HBO)

Best musical or comedy actor:

Aziz Ansari, "Master of None"
Gael Garcia Bernal, "Mozart in the Jungle"
Rob Lowe, "The Grinder"
Patrick Stewart, "Blunt Talk"
Jeffrey Tambor, "Transparent"

Best musical or comedy actress:

Rachel Bloom, "Crazy Ex-Girlfriend"
Jamie Lee Curtis, "Scream Queens"
Julia Louis-Dreyfus, "Veep"
Gina Rodriguez, "Jane the Virgin"
Lily Tomlin, "Grace and Frankie"

Best limited series or TV movie:

"American Crime" (ABC)
"American Horror Story: Hotel" (FX)
" Fargo" (FX)
"Flesh & Bone" (Starz)
"Wolf Hall" (PBS)

Best limited series or TV movie actor:

Idris Elba, "Luther"
Oscar Isaac, "Show Me A Hero"
David Oyelowo, "Nightingale"
Mark Rylance, "Wolf Hall"
Patrick Wilson, "Fargo"

Best limited series or TV movie actress:

Kirsten Dunst, "Fargo"
Lady Gaga, "American Horror Story: Hotel"
Sarah Hay, "Flesh & Bone"
Felicity Huffman, "American Crime"
Queen Latifah, "Bessie"



(From left) Director/writer Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, actors Tom Hardy and Leonardo DiCaprio arrive at the world premiere of "The Revenant" at the TCL Chinese Theatre, in Los Angeles.



This photo provided by Open Road Films shows, (from left) Michael Keaton, as Walter "Robby" Robinson, Liev Schreiber as Marty Baron, Mark Ruffalo as Michael Rezendes, Rachel McAdams, as Sacha Pfeiffer, John Slattery as Ben Bradlee Jr., and Brian d'Arcy James as Matt Carroll, in a scene from the film, "Spotlight."

The main **Bafta** nominations

Best film

"The Big Short"
"Bridge of Spies"
"Carol"
"The Revenant"
"Spotlight"

Outstanding British film

"45 Years"
"Amy"
"Brooklyn"
"The Danish Girl"
"Ex Machina"

Best director

Adam McKay for "The Big Short"
Steven Spielberg for "Bridge of Spies"
Todd Haynes for "Carol"
Ridley Scott for "The Martian"
Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu for "The Revenant"

Leading actor

Bryan Cranston for "Trumbo"
Matt Damon for "The Martian"
Leonardo DiCaprio for "The Revenant"
Michael Fassbender for "Steve Jobs"
Eddie Redmayne for "The Danish Girl"

Leading actress

Cate Blanchett for "Carol"
Brie Larson for "Room"
Saoirse Ronan for "Brooklyn"
Maggie Smith for "The Lady in the Van"
Alicia Vikander for "The Danish Girl"

Supporting actor

Christian Bale for "The Big Short"
Benicio del Toro for "Sicario"
Idris Elba for "Beasts of No Nation"
Mark Ruffalo for "Spotlight"
Mark Rylance for "Bridge of Spies"

Supporting actress

Jennifer Jason Leigh for "The Hateful Eight"
Rooney Mara for "Carol"
Alicia Vikander for "Ex Machina"
Julie Walters for "Brooklyn"
Kate Winslet for "Steve Jobs"

Cold War fever as 1950s spies, romance lead **Bafta** picks

Steven Spielberg spy thriller "Bridge of Spies" and "Carol", a story of romance between two women, led the nominations on Friday for Britain's Bafta film awards, seen as a tip for later Oscar success. The two Cold War-era stories set in the United States in the 1950s have nine nominations each and are both nominated in the best film category.

They are up against financial drama "The Big Short" and survival tale "The Revenant", which has eight nominations. Also in the running for best film is "Spotlight"—the story of the journalists who uncovered sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, which led nominations at the Golden Globes along with "Carol". "We couldn't have more different films. There is a good mix in there of British talent as well," said Amanda Berry, chief executive of Bafta (The British Academy of Film and Television Arts). Irish actress Saoirse Ronan, 21, is nominated for best actress for her performance in "Brooklyn", the story of an Irish immigrant to New York, which has six nominations.

The other nominees for best actress are Cate Blanchett for "Carol", Brie Larson for "Room", Maggie Smith for "The Lady in the Van" and Alicia Vikander for "The Danish Girl"—who is also up for best supporting actress for her role in thriller "Ex Machina". Vikander's fellow star in "The Danish Girl", British actor Eddie Redmayne, who plays a transgender artist, is nominated for best actor for the same film.



British actor Stephen Fry (R) and British actress Gugu Mbatha-Raw pose for pictures during a photocall at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) nominations announcement in central London.

It is Redmayne's second best actor nomination in a row after winning the award last year for portraying scientist Stephen Hawking in "The Theory of Everything". Redmayne will be up against Leonardo DiCaprio for "The Revenant", Michael Fassbender for "Steve Jobs", Matt Damon for "The Martian" and "Trumbo" star Bryan Cranston—

known for his leading role in television hit "Breaking Bad".

Outdoor epic

In the best director category, Spielberg is up against Mexico's Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, Britain's Ridley Scott, and US directors Adam McKay and Todd Haynes. "I'm so pleased to see a great wide sweep of films represented, both intimate portraits—if you might call them that—like 'Room' and 'Carol' and sort of epics like 'The Revenant'," said British actor and comedian Stephen Fry.

He likened Inarritu's "The Revenant" to the "incredible outdoor films" of cinema history and had praise for its star, who endures extreme cold and a bear attack in the frontier film set in the 1800s. "A lot of people will feel that this is one of Leonardo DiCaprio's most accomplished and extraordinary performances, both as a physical achievement to have done what he has done, but also as an acting achievement and there is a huge amount of affection for him," Fry said.

"He's a very liked and respected man, he has an extraordinary sort of dignity and self-assurance without any cockiness, conceit or any of the other qualities that some people are perceived to have. So I think there will be a strong move to voting for him but you can't guarantee it." The awards will be announced on February 14, two weeks before the Oscars. — AFP



Australian actress
Cate Blanchett



Swedish actress
Alicia Vikander



US actor Bryan Cranston



British actor Eddie Redmayne



This photo provided by Gramercy Pictures shows, Natalie Dormer, left, as Sara Price, and Taylor Kinney as Aiden in Jason Zada's "The Forest," a Gramercy Pictures release. — AP photos



Natalie Dormer as Sara Price in Jason Zada's "The Forest'.

Film Review

Forgettable horror 'The Forest' wastes star Dormer

The January movie has long had a reputation for being among the worst that Hollywood has to offer, as though everyone collectively acknowledges that they need a month to catch up on the glut of prestige offerings and awards hopefuls that hit at the end of December. There are always exceptions of course, but unfortunately "The Forest," a rotten horror film about twin sisters and the spooky Japanese woods where people go to kill themselves, is not one of them.

It's rife with unbearable dialogue, cheap jump scares, and far too familiar imagery which makes the whole experience instantly forgettable. The story starts when Sara (Natalie Dormer), a young, wealthy professional living with a blandly handsome husband (Eoin Macken), discovers that her expat twin sister has disappeared in a forest in Japan. This isn't any forest, though. It's Aokigahara, also known as the suicide forest. Everyone she talks to assures her that her sister is definitely dead by now.

But Sara knows better. In "The Forest" being a twin means that you have a spidey sense that your other half is around and living. There's a buzz, or something, and one time when Jess (also played by Dormer) took too many pills, the hum stopped. That's Sara knew something was wrong and knew to call the police to check on her. Fine, whatever.

So Sara hops on a plane to Japan to search for Jess in the spooky suicide forest. Her dreams and eventually visions get creepier the closer she gets. There some elderly Japanese women around to warn her not to go into the forest, too - it's haunted by the spirits of the dead, she's too sad, and it's too dangerous.

Thankfully that night at the bar, she meets a handsome American travel writer from Australia, Aiden (Taylor Kinney) who offers to let her accompany him and a park ranger, Michi (Yukiyoshi Ozawa) into the forest. Michi does "off the books" treks through the woods to try to save people from killing themselves. And, of course, there things go crazy, especially after Sara decides to stay overnight.

This forest apparently really is popular among suicidal people - so much so that there's a sign at the entrance urging visitors to think of their families. That fact on its own is truly horrifying and possibly worthy of a cinematic interpretation of why that is. Here, it's exploited for an unimaginative mishmash of silly horror objectives. For example, not only will the forest bring out any latent sadness, but the spirits there are also angry, vindictive and restless. And beware the bruised and battered Japanese girls wandering around in school uniforms.

Even Sara, a happy, well-adjusted adult with a horrific trauma

in her past, is not immune to the powers of the suicide forest. A character's descent into madness can be the stuff of cinematic gold, but this is both ridiculous and, at times, needlessly confusing.

Director Jason Zada in his feature debut shows some stylistic flair, but resorts to far too many scary movie clichés to make this a fun watch, including the requisite score laced with creepy little girls singing off in the distance. Dormer, who is such a standout as the feisty Margaery Tyrell on "Game of Thrones," manages to infuse a few moments with humor and zest, but Sara never really comes to life as a full character. It's hard to tell whether that's a problem with the writing or the performance. Kinney's Aiden is similarly unremarkable.

Save yourself, and your money from "The Forest," it's pretty bad, even for a January release. "The Forest," a Gramercy Pictures release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "disturbing thematic content and images." Running time: 95 minutes. A half star out of four. — AP



'Game of Thrones' season 6 to premiere April 24

Season six of "Game of Thrones" will premiere on April 24, HBO announced Thursday at the Television Critics Association press tour in Pasadena. While details are scarce about the plot for the upcoming episodes of the hugely popular fantasy series, a teaser released late last year suggests that it will address the season five cliffhanger that left fans speculating whether Kit Harington's Jon Snow was alive after he became the victim of a Julius Caesar-like uprising.

The season also marks the return of Isaac Hempstead-Wright as Bran Stark, a character who has not been seen since season four. New cast members this season include Max von Sydow as the Three-Eyed Raven (a character first played by Struan Rodger) and "UnREAL" actor Freddie Stroma as Dickon Tarly, the brother of John Bradley's Samwell.

Ian McShane will also join "Thrones" in an undisclosed role for one episode in season six, and has cryptically teased that "I am

responsible for bringing somebody back that you think you're never going to see again. I'll leave it at that."

All other seasons of "Game of Thrones" premiered somewhere between the end of March and the middle of April, and this time frame is a strategic move for HBO. Television episodes must air before the close of Emmy nomination voting on June 24 of this year in order to be eligible for this year's Emmy Award consideration. Last year's "Game of Thrones" finale aired on June 14 — the day before nomination voting began in 2015. The series went on to win the Emmy Award for best drama.

The "Game of Thrones" season five finale brought the show's largest audience ever, averaging 8.11 million viewers. The series was also the most-pirated TV show of 2015. HBO also announced that, per its custom, Emmy-lauded comedies "Silicon Valley" and "Veep" will also return on April 24 following the premiere of "Thrones." - Reuters



Attendee Wei Rongjie wears a working prototype of his HoloSeer AR/VR all-in-one augmented reality and virtual reality headset, January 6, 2016 at the CES 2016 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. — AFP photos



David Adderley uses a Samsung Gear VR at the YouVisit booth.

Consumer Electronics Show awash with altered realities

Altered realities abounded at the Consumer Electronics Show gadget-fest on Thursday, touching everything from sex and sports to sales and space exploration. Virtual reality (VR) headsets immersed people in fictional worlds, while augmented reality (AR) eyewear overlaid digital data on the scenes around them.

"Virtual reality takes you to another place, while augmented reality brings another place to you," said Ari Grobman of Lumus, an Israeli company that specializes in optics technology for augmented reality. "I don't see them as competing forces at all; they are very complementary." Facebook-owned Oculus began taking pre-orders for its eagerly-anticipated

Rift VR headsets at a price of \$599 when the CES show floor opened on Wednesday. Rift was slated to begin shipping in March. The Oculus booth at the CES trade-only event had a seemingly endless queue of people waiting to dive into Rift. HTC used CES to announce enhancements to a Vive VR headset it is bringing to market.

"For too long, the promise of virtual reality has been little more than a promise," HTC chief executive Cher Wang said in a release. "Today we stand on the precipice of a new era." While video game players have been natural early targets for virtual reality, the technology is being put to use for education, medicine, sports, porn and more. "Virtual reality is a big deal here," Gartner analyst Brian Blau said at CES. "I was trying to count the number of booths that at least had a VR headset, and there were too many."

VR for QBs

Young startup STRIVR Labs mentally trains US pro football

quarterbacks by virtually putting them into plays using Rift headsets. "It takes you as close to the real life experience of a player that you can get," former quarterback Trent Dilfer said while taking part in a virtual reality panel at CES.

"I think coaches that don't implement this are really missing the boat." Virtual reality is also being used for fan experiences, such as providing the illusion of being at a stadium or trying to block hockey pucks fired at a net by pro players. California-based porn company Naughty America is using virtual reality to put viewers in the heart of the action in sex scenes, a demonstration showed.

"I think everyone has been looking for that in adult entertainment and it is here," Naughty America vice president Lauren S told AFP. "Seeing is believing." Naughty America has added VR videos to the online porn catalog that can be accessed by people with monthly subscriptions to the service. US space agency NASA used Rift at CES to let people virtually fly around a towering rock- et that it plans to launch in 2018.

The International Space Station is equipped with Microsoft's HoloLens augmented-reality headgear. "I think it is going to increase the speed at which we can do our science," said Hugh "Trey" Cate of NASA.

Information in the air

San Francisco-firm Skully was at CES with its first augmented reality motorcycle helmet. A tiny projector displayed driving directions, or showed what was going on behind a rider by tapping into a camera built into the rear of the \$1,499 helmet. "Motorcycle riders are fanatics, and they are really excited about

this," Skully manager of special projects Clint Masterson told AFP.

Lumus AR technology has been used by US military jet pilots. "It is battle-proven," Grobman told AFP. "It has been in combat almost daily in Iraq." Silicon Valley-based Atheer Labs uses Lumus optics engines in a "smart glasses platform" aimed at businesses. People wearing the glasses see information float in front of them, and can interact with it using gestures, head motion or voice commands, according to Ketan Joshi of Atheer.

"This is the evolution of computing," Joshi said. "Information surrounds you and you can interact with it by literally reaching out and touching it or talking to it." Industries in which AR is being put to work include manufacturing, health care, insurance, and oil-and-gas, according to Joshi. Workers in the field are able to remotely tap into computer or brain power in the office for help with unfamiliar or puzzling scenarios.

Grobman envisioned a day when a car driver could slip on AR glasses to get help with a roadside repair or someone could use them to have a spouse guide them through cooking dinner. Travelers might one day slip on AR glasses to get translations displayed as they explore places where they don't speak the language. "We don't believe, in the end, people will be wearing these glasses day in and day out," Joshi said.

"It is more the genie who comes to my aid and we solve a problem together." — AFP



A man tries out virtual reality goggles with an EHang Ghost Drone 2.0, which has 4K video, Avatar tilt control and VR goggles.



Attendees react to a demonstration of the Samsung Gear VR virtual reality headset.



Controversial novel on mixed-faith love flourishes

A love story between an Israeli Jew and a Palestinian Muslim has become an unlikely bestseller, after Israel's education ministry refused to allow the book in the high school curriculum. Dorit Rabinyan's "Gader Haya," which means "Borderlife" in English, was left off courses last week in a bid to avoid encouraging relationships between Jews and Arabs, sparking a ferocious backlash by Israeli cultural figures and a buying frenzy.

The country's main fiction chart announced yesterday that the book had shot to the top as a bestseller in book stores and online. The chart does not provide numbers but Rabinyan's agent said over 5,000 copies had been sold in a week, a huge figure in Israel's small market with many book stores selling out.

New deals to sell the rights in Hungary, Spain and Brazil have been discussed, while publication in the US, France and other countries where translation deals had already been agreed will be sped up, the agent said. Reflecting on the controversy, Rabinyan said that while she was "worried" about the future of Israeli democracy, she had been encouraged by the support she received.

"I think this whole march to bookstores is a demonstration," she said. "It is not only my fans that buy Borderlife, it is the fans of Israeli democracy. 'By buying my novel they reconfirm their trust and belief in Israel's liberalism, in Israel's freedom of choice and speech.'"

Frowned upon

Borderlife, published in 2014, is 43-year-old Rabinyan's semi-autobiographical story of an Israeli woman who meets and falls in love with a male Palestinian artist in New York. The two later part ways as she returns to the Israeli city of Tel Aviv and he to Ramallah, in the

Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Relationships between Israeli Jews and Palestinians are extremely rare and are frowned upon by large parts of both societies. The book was among the winners of the Bernstein Prize for young writers, an annual Israeli award for Hebrew literature.

After requests to include it in the high school curriculum by a number of teachers, a committee initially backed the book, but was later overruled by senior ministry officials.

Among the reasons given was that "intimate relations between Jews and non-Jews threatens the separate identity," according to the protocol of a parliamentary debate on the issue.

This provoked fury from left-wing Israelis and cultural figureheads, many of whom have long been critical of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who formed a new right-wing government following his re-election in May.

In one video shared on social media in

reaction to the controversy, Arabs and Jews kiss on camera to break what they call a taboo in Israeli society.

Rabinyan describes herself as a "proud Zionist"-the Jewish political movement for creation and consolidation of Israel as a Jewish state-but at the same time said pretending such relationships don't exist would be foolish.

'Literature is a mirror'

"Literature is a mirror," she said. "(My critics think) if they eliminate the mirror maybe the reality will vanish as well." "They see Palestinians as a mass, and (the Palestinians) see us as a mass as well. To look into each other's eyes, as happened between my characters, is very rare for an Israeli to experience." The education ministry, in a statement on Thursday, appeared to row back from its previous position, stressing that the book was not totally banned from the curriculum.

"The book wasn't 'disqualified', but merely not included among the books studied" in the extended high school literature program, it said. The ministry added that while teachers were still permitted to study the book with their students, it wouldn't be included in the final exam. The novel is the latest cause celebre in longstanding clashes between Netanyahu's right-wing government and cultural figures.

In June, Education Minister Naftali Bennett, leader of the rightwing Jewish Home party, pulled state funding from an Arab play which he alleged showed a Palestinian attacker in a sympathetic light. The country's most famous living author, Amos Oz, declared in November he will not attend events at Israeli embassies across the globe due to the government's "radical" policies. —AFP



A file picture taken on December 31, 2015, shows Israeli author Dorit Rabinyan posing with her Hebrew-language novel titled "Gader Haya" (known in English as "Borderlife") at her house in the coastal city of Tel Aviv. —AFP

Angst as 'Mein Kampf' hits German bookstores

MUNICH: New copies of Hitler's "Mein Kampf" hit bookstores in Germany yesterday for the first time since World War II, unsettling some Jewish community leaders, as the copyright of the anti-Semitic manifesto expires. Bavaria was handed the copyright of the book in 1945, when the Allies gave it control of the main Nazi publishing house following Hitler's defeat.

For 70 years, it refused to allow the inflammatory tract to be republished out of respect for victims of the Nazis and to prevent incitement of hatred. But "Mein Kampf"-which means "My Struggle"-fell into the public domain on January 1.

Copies of an annotated version running to 2,000 pages prepared by German researchers went on sale on Friday, with the authors arguing that their version would serve to demystify the notorious rant, which in any case can be found easily on the Internet. The version by the Institute of Contemporary History of Munich (IFZ) has been in the works since 2009 and aims to "deconstruct and put into context Hitler's writing".

Retailing at 59 Euros (\$65), the book looks at key historical questions, the institute said, including: "How were his theses conceived? What objectives did he have? And most important: which counterarguments do we have, given our knowledge today of the countless claims, lies and assertions of Hitler?" Christian Hartmann, who led the editorial team for the annotated version said the version could show a wider public how "aggressive the hate sermon" was. Education Minister Johanna Wanka has argued that the annotated text should be introduced to all classrooms across Germany, saying it would serve to ensure that "Hitler's comments do not remain unchallenged".

"Pupils will have questions and it is only right that these can be addressed in classes," she said. But some among the Jewish community questioned whether it was necessary to propagate the incendiary text again.

'Poison cabinet of history'

Partly autobiographical, "Mein Kampf" outlines Hitler's ideology that formed the basis for Nazism. He wrote it in 1924 while he was imprisoned in Bavaria for treason after his failed Beer Hall Putsch. The book set out two ideas that he put into practice as Germany's leader going into



A copy of an annotated version of Adolf Hitler's book "Mein Kampf" is pictured prior to a press conference for its presentation in Munich. — AFP

World War II: Annexing neighboring countries to gain "Lebensraum", or "living space", for Germans, and his hatred of Jews, which led to the Holocaust.

Some 12.4 million copies were published in Germany until 1945, some of which can be found in academic

libraries. Newspaper Tagesspiegel said the reprint serves as a historical documentation of the Nazi atrocities when "witnesses, victims or perpetrators are no longer around". "That cannot be stopped," it added. The Berliner Zeitung noted that the tract should have been banned for sedition during the Nazi era, and not now.

"Today, the book must be made available precisely for this reason," it said, adding that it serves as an "arsenal" against anti-Semitism. But opinion is divided among the Jewish community, with some leaders welcoming the new version and others slamming the reprints. The President of the Germany's Jewish Council, Josef Schuster, told broadcaster NDR that he welcomed the publication of the annotated version as it would serve to "undo the myth of this book" and show how "completely wrong and ridiculous Hitler's theories and theses were".

Charlotte Knobloch, leader of the Jewish community in Munich, however said she could not imagine seeing "Mein Kampf" in shop windows. Ronald Lauder, president of the World Jewish Congress, told AFP that not only would "Holocaust survivors be offended by the sale of the anti-Semitic work in bookstores again", but that he also failed to see a need for a critical edition.

"Unlike other works that truly deserve to be republished as annotated editions, 'Mein Kampf' does not," he said, arguing that academics and historians already have easy access to the text. And even though it should be studied and German students taught about the devastating impact it had, Lauder said "the idea that to do so requires an annotated edition with thousands of pages of text is nonsense." "Now, it would be best to leave 'Mein Kampf' where it belongs: the poison cabinet of history," he said. —AFP

Warm winter melts hopes of legendary canal race

Winter is nearing the halfway mark in the Netherlands with record high temperatures, melting fervent Dutch skaters' hopes of gliding over frozen canals or taking part in a near-mythical race last held 19 years ago. December was the warmest-ever recorded in three centuries, leaving depressed Dutch skaters idly sharpening their blades and praying for temperatures to drop.

A short frozen spell in the country's north at the start of the New Year briefly raised spirits and saw some desperate skaters try out a thin layer of ice that glossed over pavements and streets. Many others, however, have been left to seek solace at 24 major indoor ice skating centers and hundreds of smaller outdoor rinks to practice their gliding tech-

go round-and-round a 400 metre artificial ice rink," added Zweedijk, whose society counts some 500 members who skate at a rink in the nearby German town of Grefrath.

For many—including the country's top Olympic medallists who won a total of 24 skating medals including eight golds at the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi—nothing compares to the feeling of skating outdoors. "It's cold, there's ice, there's snow sometimes and that's the magic of skating outside," said Wiebe Wieling, president of the Society of Frisian Elf Steden (Eleven Cities) tour, one of the world's most mythical skating endurance races. "When you skate from one place to the other you get a feeling you will never get from skating indoors," Wieling told AFP. It is what skaters seem to crave. "Skating on natu-



This file shows teenagers ice skating in Noordlaren.

niques on artificial ice, kept frozen by electrically-powered machines. But what they dream of is skating on "real ice".

'Magic of skating outside'

Every winter, the Dutch carefully scrutinize weather reports. When a cold spell strikes the thickness of the ice is meticulously tested daily until it reaches more than six centimeters, considered thick enough for recreational skating. Marathon skating requires ice to be at least twice as thick.

For some, the absence of a long, freezing cold winter is becoming a real cause for concern. "Of course we're worried that the global climate is getting warmer," said Hans Zweedijk of the North Limburg Recreational Skating Society, based in the eastern Dutch city of Venlo.

"We've seen our membership drop over the last few years due to the lack of natural ice to skate on," he told AFP. "Our members would much rather skate on natural ice than

ral ice for many is the ultimate form of the sport," said Pieter Clausung of the Royal Dutch Skating Federation (KNSB).

Waiting for Elfstedentocht

The Dutch love affair with ice stretches as far back as the 13th century. Down the centuries skating became a main way of travelling between towns, according to the authoritative Dutch book "Alles over Ijs" (Everything about Ice).

Painters like 15th-century Dutch master Hieronymus Bosch featured strange creatures on skates in his works, while in the 1600s painters Hendrick Avercamp and Jan van Goyen immortalised the Dutch affinity for skating. Nowhere is Dutch ice skating folklore more enshrined than in the legendary Elfstedentocht.

Each year around 30,000 registered skaters wait in nervous anticipation for the temperature to drop below zero long enough to freeze over 200 kilometres (120



This file photo taken on January 6, 2016 shows women skate on ice in Geesburg. —AFP photos

miles) of Frisian canals, spanning the 11 cities on the arduous circular route of the race. Having only been held just 15 times since it first began in 1909, the Elfstedentocht is considered the pinnacle of every Dutch skater's life and victory on such a tough course ensures near immortality.

"The whole country goes crazy!" said Wieling, who would be the one to pronounce the magic Frisian words "It giet oan" (It is happening) to inform the world the race is on, if and when the time comes. But with the last race dating back to 1997, many are wondering when it will occur again. It came close in 2012, but the Society of the Frisian Elf

Steden finally decided the ice was not thick enough to support thousands of skaters and hundreds-of-thousands of spectators.

"It's been an exceptionally long time since we last had an Elfstedentocht," said Matthijs van der Linden, meteorologist at Meteovista.nl. "The average global temperature is climbing. That however doesn't mean we'll never again have an Elfstedentocht," he said. "But it does mean that the wait between each race becomes longer and longer." In an ironic twist of fate, this week's brief freeze led to the cancellation of an indoor skating competition as slippery road conditions made access to the track impossible. —AFP



A picture taken on December 30, 2015 shows children skating on an artificial ice rink in the central Dutch city of Gouda.



LAS VEGAS: (Left) Attendees look at an EHang 184 autonomous-flight drone that can fly a person at CES 2016 at the Las Vegas Convention Center on Thursday in Las Vegas. The 18-foot-long, 440-pound drone has four arms and eight propellers and can fly up to 63 mph for 23 minutes and go about 20 miles. It can carry one passenger who does not need to pilot the drone. Once a destination is entered, only a takeoff or land button needs to be pushed to travel. The drone takes off and lands vertically eliminating the need for a runway. CES, the world's largest annual consumer technology trade show, runs through January 9 and features 3,600 exhibitors showing off their latest products and services to more than 150,000 attendees. (Right) The Ghost Aeromaster quadcopter drone for aerial photography is displayed at the Thunder Tiger Group booth at CES 2016 at the Las Vegas Convention Center in Las Vegas. —AFP

CAR TALK IS ELECTRIC AT VEGAS TECH SHOW

LAS VEGAS: Talk by automakers attending the CES tech show this week in Vegas was nothing short of electric. Ford, General Motors and Volkswagen have made it clear they are betting on electric vehicles for the future, even though the segment is only a small sliver of the global industry.

Some of the vehicles unveiled at the Consumers Electronics Show have been concepts or prototypes, but GM displayed the final version of its Chevrolet Bolt, which aims to capture buyers who are interested in electric propulsion without the price tag of a Tesla. The boldest statement however came from California startup Faraday Future, which on Monday in Las Vegas unveiled its FFZERO1 concept car, resembling a Batmobile and touted as a game-changer in the industry.

The company, which has revealed little about its financial backing or management, has already said it would invest \$1 billion in a Nevada manufacturing plant and that it expects cars to be produced within two years.

Volkswagen used CES to unveil its BUDD-e—a version of its hippie favorite Kombi minivan transformed into an electric, connected vehicle of the future.

The German automaker, hit by a global scandal over its diesel cars, said it expects the electric ones to be on the road by the end of the decade. Ron Montoya of the auto research firm Edmunds.com, said VW has a possible winner with the minibus. "You can easily see that being a production car," he said.

"Not only would it be a very stylish car that a lot of people have emotional connections with, but it could be potentially one of the first (electric) minivans." In a move that could make electric cars affordable to a mass market, GM showed its definitive version of the Chevrolet Bolt and confirmed it would be in production later this year.

The Bolt is designed to travel 320 kilometers (200 miles) between charges. And it will cost under \$30,000 after tax breaks, GM said. It also features some of the connected technol-

ogy found on rival vehicles including a Wi-Fi hotspot offering access to apps and services.

"The Bolt EV is truly the first EV that cracks the code of long range and affordable price," GM chief executive Mary Barra told a CES forum. Ford meanwhile reaffirmed its plan to invest \$3.5 billion over the next five years in electric car development, with a goal of producing 13 new EV or hybrid vehicles by 2020.

Several other automakers are also committed to electric, and some see the segment gaining traction, even though electrics only represented 0.08 percent of the global auto fleet at the end of 2014.

The Norwegian example

There are signs consumers are warming to EVs. In Norway, for example, one out of every five cars registered last year was electric. "EVs will play a bigger role in the automotive future—there's little question about that," said Kelley Blue Book analyst Akshay Anand.

"The Bolt is a big step simply because of its

price and range." Anand said there is still some reluctance, however. Lower fuel prices have reduced the sense of urgency and "most consumers want an EV as a primary vehicle, so range and charging time are critical factors.

A new model?

One company that has had success in some respects is Tesla, whose highly regarded electric vehicles have become a hit.

But its price tag has been too high for the general public. Faraday Future and others have hinted about a new ownership model, raising the prospect of plans that allow consumers to get a car as needed without a hefty commitment.

This takes on a new perspective if cars become autonomous. "VW hinted that cars might become 'devices' at some point in the future," Anand said. "The social aspect of a car is bizarre to think about, but it could very well happen down the road." —AFP



LAS VEGAS: Goldman Sachs Client Platforms and Investment Banking Technology Global Head Lance Braunstein speaks during a keynote address by Samsung SDS President Dr WP Hong at CES 2016 at The Venetian Las Vegas. —AFP

SAMSUNG'S 4Q PROFIT MISSES EXPECTATIONS

SEOUL: Samsung Electronics said yesterday that its fourth-quarter profit rose 15 percent over a year earlier, a smaller-than-expected gain as the world's largest maker of smartphones and memory chips struggles to revive growth. The South Korean company reported in its earnings preview that it recorded 6.1 trillion won (\$5.1 billion) in operating profit for the October-December quarter, compared with 5.3 trillion won a year earlier.

Samsung was expected to report 6.6 trillion won in operating profit, according to financial data provider FactSet. Sales stayed nearly flat at 53 trillion won (\$44.3 billion), also slightly lower than expectations. It did not give net profit or other details, which will be announced at the end of this month. The preliminary results showed that the company's annual profit dropped for a second time in three years after hitting a peak in 2013, as explosive growth in its mobile business, which once accounted for two-

thirds of its profit, came to a stunning halt. Samsung's semiconductor business posted profit growth thanks to solid consumer demand for consumer electronics and smartphones, but the profit from component sales fell short of offsetting a steep fall in mobile phone sales.

Analysts have recently lowered their earnings forecasts on Samsung, citing weak global demand for personal computers and smartphones that hurt its semiconductor business. They said Samsung's consumer electronics division, which manufactures and sells television sets and home appliances, was likely its only division that showed a recovery, thanks to seasonally high demand and a fall in LCD panel prices that helped save costs.

Samsung's stock price fell in recent weeks to its lowest level in three months, after rising briefly in November on its announcement of a shareholder return policy. —AP

RENAULT-NISSAN TO INTRODUCE 10 SELF-DRIVING VEHICLES BY 2020

SUNNYVALE, California: The Renault-Nissan Alliance is entering the race to build autonomous cars with a plan to introduce 10 different models capable of temporarily relieving humans of their driving duties on highways and city streets.

The road map laid out Thursday calls for Renault-Nissan to gradually phase in the self-driving vehicles in the US, Europe, Japan and China as its engineers fine-tune the automated technology and its management wrangles with regulators over safety concerns. If things pan out the way Renault-Nissan envisions, its first batch of self-driving cars debuting later this year will be able to steer while traveling down a single lane on the highway. By 2018, the cars will be able automatically navigate across several highway lanes and then handle traversing city streets on their own by 2020.

Renault-Nissan's agenda doesn't represent a huge breakthrough. Some cars, such as Tesla Motors' latest luxury models, already are capable of shifting into self-driving mode on highways, while other vehicles have been able to automatically park themselves for several years.

Renault-Nissan, a partnership between car makers in France and Japan, still isn't ready to identify which models will be infused with the self-driving technology or specify how much the autonomous vehicles will cost. The alliance still has lot of work to do to perfect its robotic technology, a point illustrated during a Thursday test drive in a self-driving Nissan Leaf with an Associated Press reporter. The human driver had to grab the steering wheel or step on the brakes on at least three occasions during a 25-minute excursion. During the journey, the vehicle strayed from a lane as the road curved, became confused by a flashing sign in a construction zone and didn't decelerate quickly enough as a traffic signal turned red. Thursday's announcement at Renault-Nissan's Silicon Valley research center thrusts the alliance into a motorcade of major automakers and technology companies working on self-driving cars. Their goal is to change the way people get around and reduce the number of traffic accidents caused by distracted, drunk or hapless humans behind the wheel.

Competition

The competition includes Toyota, Ford Motor, General Motors, Google Inc, ride-hailing services Uber and Lyft and possibly even Apple Inc. The intensifying focus on self-driving technology reflects a belief that people would rather be texting, checking Facebook, reading, or watching videos instead of having to spend so much of their time tediously steering and braking on increasingly congested roads.

Just how long it will take before cars can be trusted to drive completely on their own is a matter of debate. Google, which has logged more than 1 million miles in self-driving cars since 2009, is hoping to have vehicles that don't require any human intervention on the road by 2020 in licensing deals with established automakers. Renault-Nissan and most other major automakers believe vehicles will only be able to take over the driving for short periods under certain traffic conditions, requiring a human to still be paying enough attention to take over the wheel when the robotic technology is faltering and unable to respond properly. —AP



LAS VEGAS: The self-balancing Ninebot Segway personal transportation robot is demonstrated at CES 2016 at the Sands Expo and Convention Center in Las Vegas. —AFP



MOUNTAIN VIEW: Segolene Royal, French Minister for Ecology, and attache Philippe Perez visit Google headquarters in Mountain View, California on Thursday. Royal, who heard a presentation about Google's self-driving cars, plans to visit Apple and Tesla yesterday. —AFP

GOOGLE TO PRODUCE PROJECT TANGO 3D PHONE WITH LENOVO

DEVICES CAN BE USED FOR INDOOR MAPPING, AUGMENTED REALITY AND MORE

LAS VEGAS: Google and Lenovo said Thursday they would team up to produce the first smartphone using three-dimensional mapping developed for the US tech giant's "Project Tango."

The partnership announced on the sidelines of the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas will produce the first consumer device using the technology—which aims for a new generation of smart devices that can be used for indoor mapping, augmented reality and more.

The companies said the device—which was not displayed—would be a large-screen smartphone with a display of around six inches (15 centimeters) and cost under \$500.

The Tango phone, set for worldwide release in mid-year, will also mark the first major entry into the US smartphone market for the Chinese electronics giant.

"This was not designed as a niche device," said Lenovo vice president Jeff Meredith.

"We want this to be accessible to a large audience."

Google announced its research project in 2014 aimed at broadening the potential for smartphone technology in a three-dimensional world. But until now, the only device using Tango was a bulky tablet made by Google for developers. Project Tango leader Johnny Lee, who joined in the Las Vegas announcement, said the technology "transforms the smartphone into a magical window on the world."

Lee, who demonstrated various uses of the technology, said it could help consumers find their way in a large hotel or mall, or take precise measurements of a room before shopping for furnishings.

He showed how to get instant meas-

urements of ceiling height, square footage and more, and then tested how certain furniture pieces would look in a room.

Project Tango uses depth sensing and motion tracking to create on-screen 3D experiences, allowing users to get a better picture of a physical environment. "There is much more in the space around us that we can see with our eyes," Lee said.

Unlike GPS, Project Tango motion tracking works indoors, allowing users to navigate in a shopping mall, or even find a specific item at the store. Meredith said Lenovo was still testing several designs for the device but would "definitely" launch in mid-2016.

The companies also announced an "app incubator program" to encourage developers to produce new applications for the ecosystem. —AFP

APPLE CEO TIM COOK GETS \$1 MILLION PAY RAISE

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple CEO Tim Cook got a raise of more than \$1 million last year, though he didn't make as much as his top lieutenants.

The tech company says in a filing that Cook's total pay was nearly \$10.3 million, including \$2 million salary, an \$8 million bonus and \$209,000 for private security. Apple paid five senior vice presidents more than \$25 million apiece, including stock

grants worth \$20 million. Cook hasn't received stock in recent years. He was given restricted grants worth \$384 million in 2011, when he became CEO. Apple earned a record \$53 billion profit on sales of \$233.7 billion in the fiscal year ending in September. Its stock rose 15 percent during that period, although shares have sagged recently amid worries about Apple's ability to keep growing. —AP

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 2016

32
TV LISTINGS

00:20 Manhunt: Search For A Killer
01:10 Misfit Garage
02:00 Street Outlaws
02:50 Engine Addict With Jimmy De Ville
03:40 How It's Made
06:00 Fast N' Loud

10:10 Deadliest Catch: Legend Of The Cornelia Marie
11:00 Gold Rush: Catch Up
11:50 Catching Monsters
12:40 Property Wars
13:05 The Liquidator
14:45 Storage Wars Canada
16:50 Alaskan Bush People
17:40 Alaska: The Last Frontier
18:30 Mythbusters
19:20 The Carbonaro Effect
20:10 You Have Been Warned
21:00 Alaskan Bush People
21:50 Alaska: The Last Frontier
22:40 Railroad Alaska
23:30 Superhuman Science



00:35 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design
01:20 Stephen Hawking's Universe
04:29 Stephen Hawking Biography
06:03 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design
06:50 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design
07:37 How Do They Do It?
08:23 How It's Made
12:08 Mega Builders
15:57 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
19:50 How Do They Do It?
20:40 Mighty Ships
21:25 Food Factory
22:15 Strip The Cosmos
23:00 How The Universe Works
23:45 NASA's Unexplained Files



00:40 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
01:30 The Haunted
02:20 Ghost Lab
03:10 Missing In Maui: A Disappeared Special
04:00 Deadly Devotion
04:45 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
05:30 The Haunted
06:20 Deadly Affairs
07:10 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
08:00 Fatal Encounters
08:50 Disappeared
10:30 On The Case With Paula Zahn
12:10 The Will
13:00 The Will
13:50 California Investigator
14:40 Dr G: Medical Examiner
15:30 On The Case With Paula Zahn
17:10 Disappeared
18:50 California Investigator
19:40 Deadly Affairs
23:00 Swamp Murders
23:50 Deadly Women



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
02:30 Violetta
03:15 The Hive
03:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:10 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 Wizards Of Waverly Place
09:45 I Love Violetta

10:00 Best Friends Whenever
10:25 Cloud 9
12:20 Liv And Maddie
17:50 Disney's Descendants
19:55 Dog With A Blog
20:20 Mako Mermaids
20:45 Good Luck Charlie
21:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place
22:00 Binny And The Ghost
22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:10 Wolfblood



00:00 House Of DVF
00:55 The Grace Helbig Show
01:25 Hollywood Cycle
02:20 E! News
03:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
04:10 E! Entertainment Special
05:05 E! Entertainment Special
06:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
06:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
07:50 Style Star
08:20 E! News
09:15 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
10:15 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
11:10 New Money
11:35 New Money
12:05 E! News
13:05 Stewarts And Hamiltons
14:05 Hollywood Cycle
15:00 Hollywood Cycle
16:00 WAGs
17:00 WAGs
18:00 E! News
19:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
20:00 Dash Dolls
21:00 Christina Milian Turned Up
22:00 E! News
23:00 The Soup
23:30 Sex With Brody



00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:00 Australian Food Adventures With Matt Moran
02:00 Bite This With Nadia G
03:00 Man Fire Food

03:30 Man Fire Food
04:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
06:00 Chopped
07:00 Man Fire Food
07:30 Man Fire Food
08:00 Chopped
09:00 Amazing Wedding Cakes
10:00 The Kitchen
11:00 The Kitchen
12:00 Chopped
13:00 Guy's Big Bite
13:30 Guy's Big Bite
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
17:00 Chopped
18:00 Siba's Table
18:30 Siba's Table
19:00 Amazing Wedding Cakes
20:00 Chopped
21:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
21:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
22:00 Man v Food
22:30 Man v Food
23:00 Food Court Wars



00:10 Vera
02:00 Emmerdale
04:45 Coronation Street
06:10 Pick Me!
07:05 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
07:55 Churchill's Secret
09:25 Midsomer Murders
11:20 Grantchester
12:15 Safe House
13:10 Vera
15:00 Churchill's Secret
16:45 The Jonathan Ross Show
17:40 Grantchester
18:35 Coach Trip
19:00 Churchill's Secret
20:45 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
21:40 The Jonathan Ross Show
22:30 Coach Trip
23:00 Coronation Street



00:30 Cristela
01:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
01:30 It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia
02:00 It's Always Sunny In

Philadelphia
02:30 The Big C
03:00 Fresh Off The Boat
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
09:30 Parks And Recreation
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
14:30 Parks And Recreation
15:00 Baby Daddy
15:30 Cristela
16:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
16:30 Til Death
17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
18:00 The Muppets
18:30 Dr. Ken
19:00 Mr. Robinson
19:30 Life In Pieces
20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
21:00 Cristela
21:30 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
22:00 Saturday Night Live
23:00 The Big C
23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers



00:00 Justified
01:00 Grey's Anatomy
02:00 Dominion
03:00 Top Gear (US)
04:00 American Idol
06:00 Covert Affairs
07:00 Switched At Birth
08:00 Odyssey
09:00 American Idol
11:00 Switched At Birth
12:00 Dominion
13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
14:00 Odyssey
15:00 Covert Affairs
16:00 Live Good Morning America
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
18:00 Odyssey
19:00 Grey's Anatomy

20:00 Stitches
21:00 Heroes Reborn
22:00 The Blacklist
23:00 Minority Report



00:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
01:00 Good Morning America
03:00 Mistresses
04:00 Grimm
05:00 Good Morning America
07:00 Top Gear (UK)
08:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
09:00 Parenthood
10:00 Top Gear (UK)
11:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
12:00 C.S.I.
13:00 Shark Tank
14:00 Parenthood
15:00 Chicago Fire
16:00 The Voice
18:00 Shark Tank
19:00 Parenthood
20:00 C.S.I.
21:00 Shark Tank
22:00 Mistresses
23:00 Grimm



00:00 Enemies Closer
02:00 Home
03:45 The Outsider
05:30 The Amazing Spider-Man 2
08:00 Marvel's Next Avengers: Heroes Of Tomorrow
10:00 The Italian Job (2003)
12:00 The Outsider
14:00 The Prince
16:00 Getaway
17:45 The Perfect Storm
20:00 The Italian Job (2003)
22:00 G.I. Joe: The Rise Of Cobra



00:00 Home-18
01:45 The Outsider-PG15
03:30 The Amazing Spider-Man 2

06:00 Marvel's Next Avengers: Heroes Of Tomorrow-PG
08:00 The Italian Job (2003)-PG15
10:00 The Outsider-PG15
12:00 The Prince-PG15
14:00 Getaway-PG15
15:45 The Perfect Storm-PG15
18:00 The Italian Job (2003)-PG15
20:00 G.I. Joe: The Rise Of Cobra
22:00 Biker Boyz-PG15



00:00 Borat
02:00 Life Of Crime
04:00 Life With Mikey
06:00 The Ladykillers
08:00 Happy Gilmore
10:00 Life With Mikey
12:00 The Ladykillers
14:00 You Again
16:00 Happy Gilmore
18:00 Date Night
20:00 I Give It A Year
22:00 The Inbetweeners Movie 2



01:00 Hours-PG15
02:45 Foxcatcher-PG15
05:00 Paranoia-PG15
07:00 Belle-PG15
09:00 Testament Of Youth-PG15
11:15 Paranoia-PG15
13:00 I'll Follow You Down-PG15
15:00 The Fold-PG15
16:45 Testament Of Youth-PG15
19:00 A Walk Among The Tombstones-PG15
21:00 Fury-PG15
23:30 Starred Up-18



01:45 Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom
04:15 Men Of Honor
06:30 Rushmore
08:15 Little Man Tate
10:00 The Nightmare Before Christmas
11:30 Rushmore
13:15 The Butler
15:30 Late Bloomers



THE ITALIAN JOB ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 2016

17:30 The Nightmare Before Christmas
 19:00 Siberian Education
 21:00 Frank
 23:00 The People vs Larry Flynt

OSN MOVIES HD

01:00 Oculus-PG15
 03:00 A Turtle's Tale 2: Sammy's Escape From Paradise-FAM
 05:00 The Giver-PG15
 07:00 Song For Marion-PG15
 09:00 Barefoot-PG15
 10:45 The Expendables 3-PG15
 13:00 Seventh Son-PG15
 15:00 Miss Julie-PG15
 17:15 Barefoot-PG15
 19:00 Tammy-PG15
 21:00 Rudderless-PG15
 23:00 Wicked Blood-18

OSN MOVIES HD
KIDS

01:15 Mamma Moo And Crow
 02:45 Goat Story 2
 04:15 Blue Elephant 2
 06:00 True Story Of Puss'n Boots
 08:00 Blackie And Kanuto
 10:00 Moomins And The Comet Chase
 11:30 Jungle Shuffle
 13:00 Goat Story 2
 14:30 Egon And Donci
 16:00 Justin And The Knights Of The Valour
 18:00 Moomins And The Comet Chase
 20:00 Charlie And The Chocolate Factory
 22:00 Egon And Donci
 23:30 True Story Of Puss'n Boots

OSN MOVIES HD
PREMIERE

00:00 Hit And Run-18
 02:00 Alexander And The Terrible... Very Bad Day-PG
 04:00 Free Birds-PG
 06:00 The Package-PG15
 08:00 The Single Moms Club-PG15
 10:00 Justice League: War-PG15
 12:00 Alexander And The Terrible... Very Bad Day-PG
 14:00 Dragonheart 3: The Sorcerer's Curse-PG15
 16:00 The Single Moms Club-PG15
 18:00 Guardians Of The Galaxy-PG15
 20:00 No Good Deed-PG15
 22:00 Sin City: A Dame To Kill For-18

amc

03:40 Shadows On The Wall
 05:15 Mannequin
 06:45 Island Of The Lost
 08:15 Agent Cody Banks
 09:55 Agent Cody Banks 2: Destination London
 11:35 Brannigan
 13:25 The Man In The Iron Mask
 15:35 Lords Of Dogtown
 17:15 Duplex
 18:45 Seven Years In Tibet
 21:00 Fear The Walking Dead
 22:00 Breaking Bad
 23:00 Walking Tall
 00:25 Shadows On The Wall
 02:00 Kuffs

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



THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN 2 ON OSN MOVIES ACTON HD



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
 09:55 The Hive
 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 Aladdin
 12:50 Aladdin
 13:15 Aladdin
 13:35 Aladdin
 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
 21:35 Sofia The First
 22:00 Miles From Tomorrow
 22:25 Miles From Tomorrow
 22:55 Miles From Tomorrow
 23:20 Lilo And Stitch
 23:45 Cars Toons
 23:50 Zou
 00:05 Henry Hugglemonster
 00:20 Calimero
 00:35 Zou
 00:50 Loopdidoo
 01:05 Art Attack
 01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
 01:45 Calimero
 02:00 Zou
 02:15 Loopdidoo
 02:30 Art Attack
 02:55 Henry Hugglemonster

07:00 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
 07:25 Boyster
 08:40 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 Teen Beach 2
 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

nickelodeon HD

03:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
 03:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
 03:48 Henry Danger
 04:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
 04:36 The Haunted Hathaways
 05:00 Winx Club
 05:24 Henry Danger
 05:48 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
 06:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
 06:36 SpongeBob SquarePants
 07:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
 07:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
 07:48 Sanjay And Craig

08:12 Harvey Beaks
 08:36 Breadwinners
 09:00 Get Blake
 09:24 Rabbids Invasion
 09:48 Henry Danger
 10:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
 10:36 The Haunted Hathaways
 11:00 Winx Club
 11:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
 11:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
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 17:24 Harvey Beaks
 17:48 Breadwinners
 18:12 Henry Danger
 18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
 19:00 The Haunted Hathaways
 19:24 Max & Shred
 19:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
 20:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
 20:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
 21:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
 21:24 Breadwinners
 21:48 Breadwinners
 22:12 Sanjay And Craig
 22:36 Sanjay And Craig
 23:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
 23:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
 23:48 Henry Danger
 00:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
 00:36 Max & Shred
 01:00 The Haunted Hathaways
 01:24 Sanjay And Craig
 01:48 Sanjay And Craig
 02:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
 02:36 SpongeBob SquarePants

sundance CHANNEL

04:10 Welcome To Pine Hill
 05:35 Where The Buffalo Roam
 07:15 Small Town Murder Songs
 08:30 The Great Train Robbery Pt.1
 10:00 Dear Lemon Lima
 11:25 Marvin's Room
 13:05 Adopt A Sailor
 14:35 3 Backyards
 16:05 Discovering: Queen
 16:50 Produced By George Martin
 18:20 Battle For Britain
 18:35 Marvin's Room

20:15 Adopt A Sailor
 21:45 3 Backyards
 23:15 Cole
 01:00 Dear Lemon Lima
 02:25 Paper Covers Rock



03:15 My Strange Addiction
 03:40 My Strange Addiction
 04:05 Your Style In His Hands
 05:00 Your Style In His Hands
 06:00 Say Yes To The Dress
 06:25 Say Yes To The Dress: The Big Day
 07:15 My Giant Life
 08:05 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
 08:55 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
 09:45 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
 10:35 Kate Plus 8
 11:25 Jon & Kate Plus 8
 11:50 Jon & Kate Plus 8
 12:15 Jon & Kate Plus 8
 12:40 Jon & Kate Plus 8
 13:05 Jon & Kate Plus 8
 13:30 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
 13:55 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
 14:20 Belief
 15:10 Cake Boss
 15:35 Cake Boss
 16:00 Cake Boss
 16:25 Cake Boss
 16:50 Cake Boss
 17:15 Catwalk 30+
 18:05 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
 18:55 Cake Boss
 19:20 Curvy Brides
 19:45 Curvy Brides
 20:10 My Giant Life
 21:00 Belief
 21:50 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
 22:40 Long Island Medium
 23:05 Last Chance Salon
 23:55 Last Chance Salon
 00:45 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
 01:10 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
 01:35 Kate Plus 8
 02:25 Long Island Medium
 02:50 Long Island Medium



00:50 River Monsters
 01:45 Call Of The Wildman
 02:10 Call Of The Wildman

02:40 River Monsters
 03:35 Tanked
 04:25 The Lion Man
 05:15 Gator Boys
 06:02 Treehouse Masters
 06:49 River Monsters
 07:36 Call Of The Wildman
 08:25 Treehouse Masters
 09:15 Treehouse Masters
 12:55 Snake Sheila
 13:50 Lion Man: One World African Safari
 14:20 Lion Man: One World African Safari
 14:45 Safari Sisters
 15:40 Secret Creatures Of Jao
 16:35 Into The Dragon's Lair
 17:30 The Lion Man
 17:55 The Lion Man
 18:25 Wild Things With Dominic Monaghan
 19:20 Africa's Trees Of Life
 20:15 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
 21:10 River Monsters
 22:05 Dog Rescuers
 23:00 Africa's Trees Of Life
 23:55 Snake Sheila

BBC
entertainment

00:30 The Musketeers
 01:25 Stewart Lee's Comedy Vehicle
 01:55 Casualty
 02:45 The Musketeers
 03:40 Watson & Oliver
 04:10 The Weakest Link
 05:00 Teletubbies
 05:25 The Green Balloon Club
 05:50 Nina And The Neurons: In The Lab
 06:05 Nuzzle & Scratch: Frock n Roll
 06:25 Teletubbies
 06:50 The Green Balloon Club
 07:15 Doctors
 09:45 Doctor Who
 11:05 King George & Queen Mary
 12:55 Casualty
 13:45 Eastenders
 15:45 Last Of The Summer Wine
 16:45 The Weakest Link
 17:30 Daddy Daycare
 18:20 Tough Guy Or Chicken?
 19:10 Doctor Who
 20:00 Alan Carr: Chatty Man
 20:45 Sean Lock Live
 21:40 Dara O Briain: This Is The Show
 22:35 Alan Carr: Chatty Man
 23:20 Sean Lock Live



LITTLE GREEN FINGERS AT IISM

'Go Green week' was celebrated last month at India International School. Green and greener was the color scheme that decked the classrooms and the campus. Supporting the initiative, students indulged themselves in a variety of its concepts such as management of waste by grade I, nourish-

ing the nature by grade II, the importance of the four R's - reduce, recycle, reuse and replace by grade III, evaluating and educating the community of environmental impacts by grade IV and conservation of natural resources as a child by grade V. Charts, slogans, write ups, banners, working model and craft work out of waste

were the highlights of the exhibits. Students were encouraged to nurture seeds into plants. The response was so overwhelming that a 'mini garden' adorns the entrance of the school. Special assembly with students dressed in various blends of green perfectly culminated as the grand finale, but our pledge to green living continues.



PBD 2016 IN KUWAIT TODAY

The Embassy of India in Kuwait will be organizing a conference to observe the Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) 2016 in its Auditorium today (Saturday) from 4 pm to 6.30 pm. Issues concerning the Indian Diaspora in Kuwait will be taken up for discussion. There will also be an interactive session in which the audience can also exchange their views and raise their queries, if they wish to do so.



Birthday Greetings

Happy birthday to Abdul Jabbar Abdullah. May Allah shower all His blessing on him and give him happiness, long life and prosperity. Blessing from

his wife Mumtaz Begum, daughters Shamsath Begum, Safah Begum, Nishath Begum, son-in-law Barkath Ali, Elahi and Mubeen Basha.



Chef Osama El Sayed demonstrates a Braun product at the event. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



BRAUN/DELONGHI HOSTS REGION'S MOST POPULAR CELEBRITY CHEF OSAMA EL SAYED IN KUWAIT

Union Trading Company (UTC) the exclusive distributor for Braun/DeLonghi in Kuwait, recently organized the most unique event with the famous Chef Osama El Sayed, Celebrity Brand Ambassador of Braun in the Middle East.

Chef Osama, an expert in international and Arabic cuisines and a worldwide author promoted the Braun's household kitchen appliances. He regularly uses the Braun products at home and on his popular show to transform complex cooking recipes into simple and fast meal making.

Chef Osama hosted live in-store events at

two exclusive and popular hypermarkets locations: Carrefour at The Avenues on 6th January 2016, LuLu Hypermarket and Department Store on 7th January 2016. As expected, both events attracted large crowds by patrons and press alike.

Meanwhile, Chef Osama said: "I am coming here to meet with my fans in Kuwait to introduce the latest and the most unique products of Braun and to explain how they work. For me, this is, also, a great opportunity to exchange cooking experiences with the audience freely in public."

There was a tremendous interest and

enthusiasm generated by the crowd at both events with not only questions and answers, but live cooking shows and demonstrations.

Braun, a premium German brand for electrical appliances are renowned for their reliability, longevity, and sustainability. Braun designs products with great attention to detail that makes a difference in people's lives. All in all, Braun's idea can be summarized by their brand line "designed to make a difference."

The quality of products manufactured by Braun is what attracted Union Trading Company, as they share the same vision which

is customer satisfaction and loyalty to the brand and company. This is the reason why UTC has an aggressive markets strategy coupled with public activities towards the Braun brand in Kuwait as well as the entire region.

Union Trading Company (UTC) is the Premier distributor and retailer in Kuwait, having established a number of leading brands/products across many different markets and categories. With world-renowned Brands including Gillette, Oral B, Braun, Duracell, Hanes, General Air Conditioning, Glem Gas, Vileda, Chantelle and Parker - to name a few.



PLANNED PARENTHOOD ENDORSES CLINTON

WASHINGTON: Planned Parenthood, the influential US women's health care provider savaged by anti-abortion Republicans who want to shut it down, said Thursday it was backing Hillary Clinton for president.

The move will be a political and funding boon for the former secretary of state, who is a strong supporter of Planned Parenthood, which said its advocacy organizations would spend at least \$20 million in the 2016 election cycle to help elect the Democratic frontrunner. It is the first time the 100-year-old organization is endorsing a candidate in the primary process, which kicks off in three weeks in the heartland state of Iowa.

An official endorsement announcement will be made Sunday in New Hampshire, the group said. "We're proud to endorse Hillary Clinton for president of the United States," Planned Parenthood Action Fund president Cecile Richards said in a statement. "No other candidate in our nation's history has demonstrated such a strong commitment to women or such a clear record on behalf of women's health and rights."

Clinton is being challenged for her party's nomination by independent Senator Bernie Sanders and former Maryland governor Martin O'Malley. The election is in November. Clinton and the organization, which operates 700 clinics nationwide, have been allies for years and her campaign has gone out of its way to highlight the many times she has stood with the group.

Richards' daughter works on the Clinton campaign's staff in Iowa, according to The New York Times, which first reported the group's endorsement. Last year Clinton vigorously defended Planned Parenthood when it found itself accused by anti-abortion activists of selling fetal tissue to researchers. The allegations were never proven, but in October the organization stopped accepting reimbursements for costs of the donations.

This week the Republican-controlled Congress passed legislation that would place a moratorium on all federal funding for the organization, a move that Planned Parenthood's supporters said would serve to restrict women's access to health care, including cancer screenings and family planning. President Barack Obama is certain to veto the measure. Clinton expressed thanks for the endorsement and said the coming campaign and election is crucial for women's health and reproductive rights.

Planned Parenthood and its patients and advocates "are a crucial line of defense against the dangerous agenda being advanced by every Republican candidate for president," Clinton said. "This week was a jarring reminder of what's at stake in 2016." Clinton and Democratic lawmakers are defenders of a woman's right to obtain an abortion, a medical procedure still fiercely opposed by many Republicans 43 years after the US Supreme Court affirmed its legality nationwide. —AFP



NEW JERSEY: In this June 10, 2015 photo, medical marijuana patient Genny Barbour, who is autistic and suffers from seizures, interacts with her mother Lora at their home in Maple Shade. —AP

SCHOOLS PONDER MARIJUANA POLICIES OVER STUDENT USE

AUBURN, Maine: After years of trying to keep marijuana out of schools, educators across the country are grappling with how to administer cannabis to students with prescriptions for it. Medical marijuana has been legal in some states for two decades but school districts and lawmakers are only now starting to grapple with thorny issues about student use of a drug still illegal under federal law.

"School districts are trying to find their way and navigate this landscape as laws develop and social norms change," said Francisco Negron, general counsel of the National School Boards Association. "This is a situation in which the changing social norms are ahead of the existing operational structure."

The possibility of medical marijuana in schools raises a number of questions for school officials, such as who will administer it, how to prevent it from being redistributed by students, and even the legality of having it on campus. Only three of the 23 states where medical marijuana is legal have seen schools or state officials set up rules, according to the pro-reform Marijuana Policy Project.

Certain conditions

This week, a school committee in Auburn, a Maine city of about 23,000, approved a policy to allow students to have medical marijuana under certain conditions. It would have to be approved by a physician

and administered in school by a parent or guardian, Auburn Assistant Superintendent Michelle McClellan said. Nurses wouldn't be able to administer the drug and students would not be permitted to smoke it.

The decision in Auburn came about two months after a New Jersey school became the first in the country to allow medical marijuana. The Larc School instituted the policy after 16-year-old Genny Barbour, who suffers from potentially life-threatening epileptic seizures, fought for the right to take edible marijuana. A nurse at the special education school in Bellmawr provides Genny with her midday dosage of cannabis oil.

In Colorado, the law permits parents or professional caregivers to come on school grounds to administer medical marijuana if the district has adopted a policy allowing it, according to Megan McDermott, spokeswoman for the state Department of Education. School nurses or staff cannot administer it.

While medical marijuana has been legal in some states for years, fresh claims about pediatric use have helped prompt schools to look at the issue, said Morgan Fox, a spokesman for the Marijuana Policy Project. For example, the American Academy of Pediatrics generally opposes medical marijuana but issued a statement a year ago saying "exceptions should be made for compassionate use in children with debilitating or life-limiting diseases."

Victories for student health

Proponents of marijuana's use as a treatment for everything from seizures to chronic pain trumpet the recent policy changes as victories for student health. Others who doubt the wisdom of allowing marijuana in schools raise concerns whether the changes will result in schools violating federal laws that still outlaw marijuana.

In Maine, Auburn Superintendent Katy Grondin said it's important for school districts to make sure medical marijuana doesn't interfere with education. "It's what the doctor and the family decides is in the best interest of the child," she said, adding that students won't be able to carry marijuana in school. "We're not getting involved in it medically."

Scott Gagnon, director of Smart Approaches to Marijuana Maine, which opposes legalization of marijuana and fought the state's law to allow marijuana in schools, said districts are right to be cautious and work to prevent recreational use of the substance. "We already know kids report that drugs are sold and exchanged on school property. We don't want to see this add to that," he said.

But Fox, the Marijuana Policy Project spokesman, said laws that allow access to marijuana in school are about providing children with medicine they need to be able to attend at all. "These kids, just because they're sick, shouldn't have their education interrupted," he said. —AP

HEALTH WORKERS NEAR DEFEAT OF FLESH- BURROWING WORM

JUBA: Health workers yesterday celebrated a key step towards eradicating the flesh-burrowing guinea worm after South Sudan, once by far the worst-affected country, recorded a massive drop in infections. "South Sudan is on the verge of eliminating guinea worm disease," South Sudan Minister of Health Riek Gai Kok said in a statement, after workers recorded just five cases last year, a more than 90 percent drop from 2014, when 70 cases were recorded—the highest number globally.

Guinea worm is a debilitating parasite that digs out the body—including even eyes and sexual organs—but is close to being stamped out for good following a two-decade campaign by The Carter Center, a not-for-profit organisation founded by former US president Jimmy Carter. Last year there were 22 cases in just four nations across Africa, compared to 3.5 million in 20 countries in 1986 when The Carter Centre began its massive push began to stop the water-borne parasite. —AFP

WILD DECEMBER PUSHES US WEATHER TO RECORDS

WASHINGTON: December's wild El Nino pushed 2015 in the United States to near-record levels for heat, moisture and downright extreme conditions, US government weather officials said Thursday. The year that just ended was the second warmest and third wettest in 121 years of record-keeping for the lower 48 states, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced.

The 54.4 degree (12.4 Celsius) average last year was second only to 2012. "The combination of El Nino plus climate change clearly has brought the US some weirdly memorable, highly unusual, and quite troubling weather," said climate scientist Michael Oppenheimer of Princeton University. "As for the influence of climate change, it's just the beginning."

These are just US statistics. Globally, it's almost certain to be hottest on record with exact figures coming out later this month, and the US near-record is emblematic of that, said Deke Arndt, NOAA's climate monitoring chief. "We live in a warming world and a warming world is bringing more big heat and more big rain events to the United States," Arndt said during a NOAA press conference.

For much of the spring and summer, climate change was the big factor pushing US temperatures above normal. But in November and December, El Nino took over and supercharged the

global warming effect while turning on the heavy rains, said Victor Gensini, a meteorology professor at DuPage College outside Chicago.

El Nino is the natural warming of the central Pacific that changes weather worldwide. It occurs every two to seven years or so with one

of its most noticeable effects being heavy downpours in California. Going into December, it was just the fifth warmest and ninth wettest

year in the United States. Then a record-setting December pushed everything up a few notches.

Warmest, wettest

At 38.6 degrees (3.6 Celsius) - 6 degrees warmer than the 20th century average - December was nearly a full degree warmer than the record set in 1939. And the 3.93 inches of precipitation in December surpassed the old record by more than a sixth of an inch. This was the first time that a month was both the warmest and wettest on record, said NOAA climate scientist Jake Crouch.

Last year, the US lurched from one extreme to another. Going into December, the US was flirting with a record low number of tornado deaths. Then a series of nasty tornadoes killed 24 people in four days, making it the second deadliest December for tornadoes on record.

NOAA compiles a climate extremes index that puts all sorts of extreme weather - hot and cold, wet and dry - into one lump statistic. It showed 2015 was 70 percent more extreme than the average over 106 years. It was the fourth most extreme year in the United States. Ten weather disasters last year caused \$1 billion or more in damage - ranking fourth highest for number of billion-dollar disasters in 35 years of record-keeping. Dollar figures are adjusted for inflation.



MISSOURI: In this Dec 31, 2015 file photo, houses are surrounded by floodwater in Arnold. —AP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF





Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
د. فهد علي المخيزيم

Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM



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



SHARQIA-1
DADDY'S HOME 12:00 PM
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 2:00 PM
DADDY'S HOME 4:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 6:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 9:00 PM
DADDY'S HOME 12:05 AM

SHARQIA-2
THE REVENANT 12:15 PM
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 1:30 PM
THE REVENANT 3:15 PM
THE REVENANT 6:15 PM
THE REVENANT 9:15 PM
THE REVENANT 12:15 AM

SHARQIA-3
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 11:30 AM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 1:15 PM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 3:00 PM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 4:45 PM
PAPARAZZI -Arabic 6:30 PM
PAPARAZZI -Arabic 8:45 PM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 11:00 PM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 12:45 AM

MUHALAB-1
DADDY'S HOME 11:30 AM
DADDY'S HOME 1:30 PM
EXTRACTION 3:30 PM
DADDY'S HOME 5:30 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 7:30 PM
DADDY'S HOME 10:30 PM
EXTRACTION 12:30 AM

MUHALAB-2
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 11:45 AM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 1:30 PM
WAZIR - Hindi 3:15 PM
PAPARAZZI -Arabic 5:30 PM
PAPARAZZI -Arabic 7:45 PM
PAPARAZZI -Arabic 10:00 PM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 12:15 AM

MUHALAB-3
THE REVENANT 11:30 AM
THE REVENANT 2:30 PM
THE REVENANT 5:30 PM
THE REVENANT 8:30 PM
THE REVENANT 11:30 PM

FANAR-1
DADDY'S HOME 11:30 AM
DADDY'S HOME 1:30 PM
THE PEANUTS MOVIE 3:30 PM
DADDY'S HOME 5:30 PM
FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS 7:30 PM
DADDY'S HOME 9:45 PM
THE REVENANT 11:45 PM

FANAR-2
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 12:30 PM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 2:30 PM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 4:30 PM
EXTRACTION 6:30 PM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 8:30 PM
EXTRACTION 10:30 PM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 12:30 AM

FANAR-3
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 11:45 AM
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 1:45 PM
PAPARAZZI -Arabic 3:30 PM
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 5:45 PM
PAPARAZZI -Arabic 7:30 PM
PAPARAZZI -Arabic 9:45 PM
PAPARAZZI -Arabic 12:05 AM

FANAR-4
THE REVENANT 12:15 PM
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 1:30 PM
THE REVENANT 3:15 PM
THE REVENANT 6:15 PM
THE REVENANT 9:15 PM
THE REVENANT 12:15 AM

FANAR-5
DILWALE - Hindi 12:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 3:00 PM
WAZIR - Hindi 6:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 8:30 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 11:30 PM

MARINA-1
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 11:45 AM

KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (07/01/2016 TO 13/01/2016)

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 1:30 PM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 3:15 PM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 5:00 PM
PAPARAZZI -Arabic 6:45 PM
PAPARAZZI -Arabic 9:00 PM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 11:15 PM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 1:00 AM

MARINA-2
DADDY'S HOME 11:45 AM
DADDY'S HOME 1:45 PM
POINT BREAK 3:45 PM
DADDY'S HOME 6:15 PM
EXTRACTION 8:15 PM
THE REVENANT 10:15 PM
EXTRACTION 1:15 AM

MARINA-3
THE REVENANT 12:30 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 1:30 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 3:30 PM
THE REVENANT 5:45 PM
THE REVENANT 8:45 PM
THE REVENANT 11:45 PM

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

AVENUES-2
EXTRACTION 1:00 PM
EXTRACTION 3:15 PM
EXTRACTION 5:30 PM
CHARLIE- Malayalam 7:45 PM
EXTRACTION 10:30 PM
EXTRACTION 12:45 AM

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

360° 1
THE REVENANT 11:30 AM
THE REVENANT 2:30 PM
THE REVENANT 5:45 PM
THE REVENANT 9:00 PM
THE REVENANT 12:15 AM

360°- 2
THE REVENANT 1:15 PM
THE REVENANT 4:30 PM
THE REVENANT 7:45 PM
THE REVENANT 11:00 PM

360°- 3
EXTRACTION 12:30 PM
SNOWTIME! 2:45 PM
EXTRACTION 5:00 PM
EXTRACTION 7:15 PM
EXTRACTION 9:30 PM
EXTRACTION 11:45 PM

AL-KOUT.1
THE REVENANT 11:30 AM
THE REVENANT 2:30 PM
THE REVENANT 5:30 PM
THE REVENANT 8:30 PM
THE REVENANT 11:30 PM

AL-KOUT.2
DADDY'S HOME 12:30 PM
EXTRACTION 2:45 PM
DADDY'S HOME 5:00 PM
DADDY'S HOME 7:00 PM
DADDY'S HOME 9:00 PM
EXTRACTION 11:00 PM
EXTRACTION 1:00 AM

AL-KOUT.3
FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS 12:45 PM
FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS 3:00 PM
PAPARAZZI -Arabic 5:15 PM
PAPARAZZI -Arabic 7:30 PM
PAPARAZZI -Arabic 9:45 PM
FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS 12:05 AM

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Gunasekaran R (Hindu), S/o Ramalingam, DOB 02.06.1974. Passport No: F5807434, residing at No. 28, Pillaiyar Koil Street, SiruPuliyur Eswarakandanallur, Villupuram, 607204 has converted to Islam with the name of R. Nazir on 30th November 2015. (C 5108) **6-1-2015**

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation available for bachelor (partition) in a



Prayer timings

Fajr: 05:20
Shorook 06:44
Duhr: 11:55
Asr: 14:48
Maghrib: 17:07
Isha: 18:29



Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381

room in Salmiya. Call: 66711141. **(C 5110)**

Sharing accommodation in a 2 bedroom C/AC flat 1 room separate bathroom, new finger office Farwaniya, (family only) from Jan 30. Phone: 99482666. (C 5109) **6-1-2016**

Sharing accommodation available for a bachelor with a Mangalorean Catholic bachelor near Khaitan cinema Garnatha bus stop. Contact: 66036893. **(C 5107) 5-1-2016**



Flight Schedule

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

In case you are not travelling, your proper cancellation of bookings will help other passengers use seats

Arrival Flights on Saturday 9/1/2016

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MSC	415	Sohag	00:05
KLM	413	Amsterdam/Dammam	00:20
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55
RJA	642	Amman	01:05
THY	772	Istanbul	01:05
MSR	614	Cairo	01:20
SAI	441	Lahore	01:30
DLH	635	Doha	01:35
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:45
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30
PGT	5737	Istanbul	02:50
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55
FDB	067	Dubai	03:05
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10
QTR	1076	Doha	03:15
KKK	6507	Istanbul	03:20
THY	5422	Istanbul	03:25
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:25
JZR	503	Luxor	04:25
AGY	680	Alexandria	04:30
PGT	5620	Istanbul	04:35
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:40
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55
FDB	5061	Dubai	06:30
BAW	157	London	06:40
JZR	529	Asyut	06:50
KAC	412	Manila/Bangkok	07:20
QTR	1086	Doha	07:40
FDB	053	Dubai	07:45
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50
KAC	206	Islamabad	08:25
KAC	344	Chennai	08:30
KAC	352	Kochi	08:30
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:20
KAC	416	Jakarta/Kuala Lumpur	09:20
JZR	327	Al Najaf	09:20
QTR	1070	Doha	09:25
FBA	833	Al Najaf	09:30
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40
JZR	1329	Al Najaf	09:40
MRJ	4813	Tehran	10:00
OMA	641	Muscat	10:05
THY	6676	Istanbul	10:25
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40
UAE	873	Dubai	11:05
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:15
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30
AGY	684	Sohag	11:35
IAW	157	Al Najaf	11:50
NIA	151	Cairo	11:55
KAC	204	Lahore	12:20
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25
MSC	401	Alexandria	12:30
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50
JZR	241	Amman	12:50
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00
FBA	831	Al Najaf	13:30
JZR	779	Jeddah	13:35
KNE	460	Riyadh	13:50
KAC	382	Delhi	13:50
MSR	575	Sharm el-Sheikh	13:55
KAC	672	Dubai	14:00
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10
FDB	057	Dubai	14:10
KAC	284	Dhaka	14:45
JZR	175	Dubai	14:45
KAC	512	Mashhad	14:50
KAC	788	Jeddah	14:50
KNE	462	Madinah	14:55
IZG	4167	Mashhad	14:55
GFA	221	Bahrain	15:00
IRM	1186	Tehran	15:00
KNE	472	Jeddah	15:05
NIA	251	Alexandria	15:30
OMA	645	Muscat	15:30
KAC	562	Amman	15:40
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45
ABY	127	Sharjah	15:45
JAD	301	Amman	15:55
JZR	535	Cairo	16:10
QTR	1072	Doha	16:10
FDB	051	Dubai	16:30
JZR	357	Mashhad	16:30
JZR	257	Beirut	16:30
KNE	474	Jeddah	16:35
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	16:40
RJA	640	Amman	16:55
KAC	542	Cairo	16:55
SYR	341	Damascus	17:00
SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15
GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30
KAC	540	Sharm el-Sheikh	17:45
KNE	470	Jeddah	17:45
JZR	325	Al Najaf	17:50
JZR	777	Jeddah	17:55
KAC	118	New York	17:55

SVA	500	Jeddah	18:00
UAE	875	Dubai	18:00
KAC	502	Beirut	18:00
FDB	063	Dubai	18:05
UAL	982	IAD	18:15
JZR	177	Dubai	18:20
IRM	1180	Mashhad	18:45
ABY	123	Sharjah	18:45
QTR	1080	Doha	18:55
IRA	669	Mashhad	18:55
KAC	742	Dammam	19:05
KAC	614	Bahrain	19:10
IRM	1188	Mashhad	19:15
KAC	774	Riyadh	19:25
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30
CLX	856	Luxembourg	19:35
KAC	176	Geneva/Frankfurt	19:35
KAC	618	Doha	19:35
KAC	104	London	19:40
KAC	674	Dubai	19:45
MSR	618	Alexandria	20:05
KNE	480	Taif	20:10
JZR	189	Dubai	20:15
FDB	061	Dubai	20:20
OMA	647	Muscat	20:20
KAC	786	Jeddah	20:30
ABY	121	Sharjah	20:35
FDB	5053	Dubai	20:50
DLH	634	Frankfurt	20:55
JAI	572	Mumbai	20:55
MEA	402	Beirut	21:20
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20
ALK	229	Colombo	21:25
UAE	859	Dubai	21:40
GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45
KAC	676	Dubai	21:45
QTR	1082	Doha	22:00
KLM	415	Amsterdam	22:05
AIC	987	Chennai/Hyderabad	22:25
ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:25
KAC	564	Amman	22:25
FDB	059	Dubai	22:30
JZR	185	Dubai	23:15
UAL	981	Bahrain	23:25
FDB	071	Dubai	23:45
THY	764	Istanbul	23:50
JAI	574	Mumbai	23:55
MSC	403	Asyut	23:55
JZR	125	Bahrain	23:55

Departure Flights on Saturday 9/1/2016

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
JZR	528	Asyut	00:05
BBC	044	Dhaka	00:10
PIA	240	Sialkot	00:40
FDB	072	Dubai	00:40
MSC	502	Alexandria	00:55
JAI	573	Mumbai	00:55
MSC	416	Sohag	01:00
KLM	413	Amsterdam	01:35
KAC	283	Dhaka	02:10
MSR	615	Cairo	02:20
THY	773	Istanbul	02:30
SAI	442	Lahore	02:30
DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:35
ETH	621	Addis Ababa	02:45
KAC	203	Lahore	03:05
KAC	381	Delhi	03:30
UAE	854	Dubai	03:45
PGT	859	Istanbul	03:55
OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
FDB	068	Dubai	04:00
PGT	5738	Istanbul	04:00
MSR	613	Cairo	04:10
ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:15
KKK	6508	Istanbul	04:20
THY	5423	Istanbul	04:55
QTR	1077	Doha	05:00
THY	765	Istanbul	05:15
AGY	685	Sohag	05:30
JZR	326	Al Najaf	05:55
JZR	1328	Al Najaf	06:15
PGT	5621	Istanbul	06:25
FDB	070	Dubai	06:30
JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
RJA	643	Amman	07:05
THY	771	Istanbul	07:05
FDB	5062	Dubai	07:10
GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
JZR	240	Amman	07:15
JZR	778	Jeddah	07:55
KAC	511	Mashhad	08:30
FDB	054	Dubai	08:30
QTR	1087	Doha	08:40
BAW	156	London	08:45
JZR	256	Beirut	09:05
KAC	671	Dubai	09:15
JZR	534	Cairo	09:15
KAC	787	Jeddah	09:25
ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
KAC	101	London/New York	09:55
KAC	541	Cairo	09:55
UAE	856	Dubai	09:55

KAC	561	Amman	10:00
JZR	174	Dubai	10:10
ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:25
KAC	501	Beirut	10:30
JZR	356	Mashhad	10:30
FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
FBA	834	Al Najaf	10:45
KAC	165	Rome/Paris	11:00
QTR	1071	Doha	11:00
OMA	642	Muscat	11:05
GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
KAC	539	Sharm el-Sheikh	11:25
MRJ	4814	Mashhad	11:30
THY	6677	Istanbul	11:55
RBG	554	Alexandria	12:00
JZR	776	Jeddah	12:20
UAE	874	Dubai	12:30
AGY	681	Asyut	12:35
NIA	152	Cairo	12:55
IAW	158	Al Najaf	13:05
FDB	076	Dubai	13:10
MSC	402	Alexandria	13:30
JZR	176	Dubai	13:45
MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
JZR	324	Al Najaf	14:25
FBA	832	Al Najaf	14:40
KNE	481	Taif	14:50
MSR	576	Sharm el-Sheikh	14:55
KAC	785	Jeddah	15:00
KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
FDB	058	Dubai	15:10
QTR	1079	Doha	15:10
JZR	188	Dubai	15:40
KAC	617	Doha	15:45
GFA	222	Bahrain	15:45
KAC	613	Bahrain	15:50
KAC	773	Riyadh	15:50
KAC	741	Dammam	15:55
IZG	4168	Mashhad	15:55
KNE	463	Madinah	16:00
KNE	473	Jeddah	16:05
IRM	1187	Tehran	16:15
ABY	128	Sharjah	16:25
OMA	646	Muscat	16:30
NIA	252	Alexandria	16:30
JAD	302	Amman	16:40
KAC	563	Amman	16:45
KAC	675	Dubai	17:00
JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
KNE	475	Jeddah	17:25
ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	17:30
FDB	052	Dubai	17:35
QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
RJA	641	Amman	17:55
SYR	342	Damascus	18:00
SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
KNE	471	Jeddah	18:45
JZR	238	Amman	18:50
JZR	554	Alexandria	19:10
FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
ABY	124	Sharjah	19:25
UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
SVA	505	Jeddah	19:30
UAL	982	Bahrain	19:30
IRA	666	Esfahan	19:55
IRM	1181	Mashhad	20:00
GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
IRM	1189	Mashhad	20:30
KAC	353	BLR	20:40
KAC	361	Colombo	20:45
KAC	351	Kochi	20:50
QTR	1081	Doha	20:50
KAC	543	Cairo	20:55
JZR	124	Bahrain	21:05
CLX	857	Hong Kong	21:05
MSR	607	Luxor	21:05
KAC	331	Trivandrum	21:10
KNE	461	Riyadh	21:10
ABY	122	Sharjah	21:15
OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
FDB	062	Dubai	21:20
DLH	634	Doha	21:45
DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
FDB	5054	Dubai	21:50
JAI	571	Mumbai	21:55
KAC	301	Mumbai	22:10
ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
KAC	345	Ahmedabad	23:00
QTR	1083	Doha	23:05
KLM	415	Dammam/Amsterdam	23:05
KAC	205	Islamabad	23:10
ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:15
KAC	411	Bangkok/Manila	23:35
FDB	060	Dubai	23:35

Word Search Puzzles

Old West 2

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid.
The remaining 30 letters spell a Will Rogers quotation.

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

ASSAY OFFICE DOCTOR DRESSMAKER MINE SHAFT SCOUTS
BANK ROBBER FENCE OUTLAWS SHOOTOUT
BARN GOLD NUGGET PELTS SHOTGUN
BLACKSMITH GENERAL STORE PIGS SPURS
BOOTS GUNSlinger PIONEERS STIRRUP
BUCKBOARD HATS POST OFFICE TOWN HALL
BUNKHOUSE HIRED HAND RANCH HAND TRADING POST
CALAMITY JANE HORSES REVOLVER TUMBLEWEED
CHAPS ICE HOUSE SADDLER WAGON
COAL OIL HORSES SADDLER WAGON
COWPOKE LASSO SALOON GIRL WANTED POSTER
DAVY CROCKETT MARSHALL SCHOOLHOUSE WHISKEY WILD BILL HICKOK

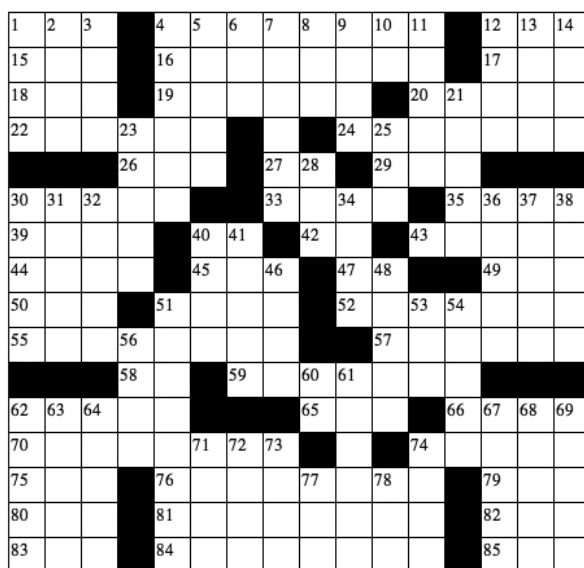
Yesterday's Solution

Ice Hockey

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

ARENA ASSIST CROWD DEFENSEMEN FACE-OFF FORWARDS GOALIE
HELMET ICING OFFSIDE PASS PENALTY PUCK
REFEREE RINK SCORE SKATES STICK TEAMS

CROSSWORD 1132



ACROSS

1. The sign language used in the United States.
4. Of or relating to or in the manner of the playwright Henrik Ibsen.
12. A dark-skinned member of a race of people living in Australia when Europeans arrived.
15. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
16. The state of being salient.
17. (informal) 'johnny' was applied as a nickname for Confederate soldiers by the Federal soldiers in the American Civil War.
18. Thigh of a hog (usually smoked).
19. (anatomy) Occurring singly.
20. Become ground down or deteriorate.
22. A port city in southwestern Turkey on the Gulf of Antalya.
24. A channel in which a tidal current runs.
26. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
27. A hard gray lustrous metallic element that is highly corrosion-resistant.
29. A committee in the executive branch of government that advises the president on foreign and military and national security.
30. Of or relating to or characteristic of Ireland or its people.
33. Greater than normal in degree or intensity or amount.
35. Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
39. A cord that is drawn through eyelets or around hooks in order to draw together two edges (as of a shoe or garment).
42. A Mid-Atlantic state.
43. Type genus of the Upupidae.
44. Slightly open.
45. A federal agency that supervises carriers that transport goods and people between states.
47. A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.
49. Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
50. (British) A waterproof raincoat made of rubberized fabric.
52. Undo the ties of.
55. Relating to the abomasum (the fourth compartment of the stomach of ruminants).
57. (South African) A camp defended by a circular formation of wagons.
58. A silvery malleable metallic element that resists corrosion.
59. A large hemispherical brass or copper percussion instrument with a drumhead that can be tuned by adjusting the tension on it.
62. Red pear-shaped tropical fruit with poisonous seeds.
65. A loud utterance.

66. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
70. A whimsically eccentric person.
75. (prefix) Reverse of or absence of.
76. Howler monkeys.
79. A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
80. (Greek mythology) The winged goddess of the dawn in ancient mythology.
81. Any of several trees or shrubs of the genus Carpinus.
82. A member of a Mayan people of southwestern Guatemala.
83. A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
84. A language spoken by the Atakapa people of the Gulf coast of Louisiana and Texas.
85. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
2. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
3. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
4. (Old Testament) The first of the major Hebrew prophets (8th century BC).
5. A street of small shops (especially in Orient).
6. Marked by skill in deception.
7. Coming next after the seventh and just before the ninth in position.
8. (used as a combining form) Recent or new.
9. In or of the present month.
10. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
11. In such a manner as could not be otherwise.
12. Beside one another in a row or rank.
13. English monk and scholar (672-735).
14. Be obedient to.
21. A summary that repeats the substance of a longer discussion.
23. (Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation) Optical device that produces an intense monochromatic beam of coherent light.
25. Antibacterial drug (trade name Nydrazid) used to treat tuberculosis.
28. A resource.
31. The seventh month of the Moslem calendar.
32. Small tropical American tree bearing edible plumlike fruit.
34. Hinge joint in the human leg connecting the tibia and fibula with the femur and protected in front by the patella.
36. A Russian prison camp for political prisoners.
37. With rapid movements.
38. Someone who drives racing cars at high speeds.
40. Slanting diagonally across the grain of a fabric.
41. Enthusiastic approval.
46. City in southwestern Colombia in a rich agricultural area.
48. (dentistry) A filling consisting of a solid substance (as gold or porcelain) fitted to a cavity in a tooth and cemented into place.
51. Medium tall celery pine of New Zealand.
53. A decree that prohibits something.
54. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
56. One thousandth of a second.
60. One million periods per second.
61. Any tropical African shrub of the genus Protea having alternate rigid leaves and dense colorful flower heads resembling cones.
63. Sing softly.
64. A member of the Siouan people of the Kansas river valley in Kansas.
67. Any property detected by the olfactory system.
68. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
69. (Jungian psychology) The inner self (not the external persona) that is in touch with the unconscious.
71. A secret scheme to do something (especially something underhand or illegal).
72. Dutch astronomer who proved that the galaxy is rotating and proposed the existence of the Oort cloud (1900-1992).
73. Tropical American flat-jointed prickly pear.
74. God of love and erotic desire.
77. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
78. The sound made by a gentle blow.

Daily SuDoku

	7	1						2
	5		1	4		8		
	4			6		7		
	6		9		4	1		
		2	8		1			3
		9		8				1
		4		1	3			6
7						2	8	

very hard

Yesterday's Solution

9	1	8	4	7	6	2	5	3
6	4	5	3	8	2	7	9	1
2	3	7	5	9	1	4	8	6
8	6	4	7	5	9	1	3	2
5	7	9	1	2	3	6	4	8
1	2	3	6	4	8	9	7	5
7	9	2	8	6	5	3	1	4
3	8	6	9	1	4	5	2	7
4	5	1	2	3	7	8	6	9

easy

Yesterday's Solution

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

CHELSEA TOP PREMIER LEAGUE WAGE BILL CHART

LONDON: Chelsea have usurped Manchester United and Manchester City at the top of the Premier League's wage bill chart, according to annual figures released yesterday. The data, published by Companies House, the United Kingdom's registrar of companies, showed that Chelsea spent more money on player salaries last season than any other team in the English top flight. They had topped the table prior to the 2011-12 season, when City, who won that year's title, overtook them.

Chelsea, owned by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich, reported a total wage bill of £215.6 million (\$314.3 million, 289.7 million euros), a rise of £25 million. United's salary bill was £203 million, City's £193.5 million and Arsenal's £192.2 million. Both Manchester clubs reported a fall in overall wages. Chelsea finished the season as champions, with City second,

Arsenal third and United fourth, but they have fallen badly off the pace this term, resulting in the dismissal in December of manager Jose Mourinho.

In November Chelsea announced a net loss of £23.1 million on turnover of £314.4 million, but said that they were still complying with European governing body UEFA's Financial Fair Play (FFP) regulations. Their full annual figures reveal that the west London club made a £42 million profit in player trading after selling Romelu Lukaku, Andre Schurrle and Ryan Bertrand. The equivalent figure in 2013-14 was £65 million. The accounts also reveal that Abramovich injected £46.7 million of funding last season and £57.1 million the previous year. The accounts state: "However ... part of the debt has been converted into equity during the year via the allotment of ordinary shares." — AFP



Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich



Louis Van Gaal

OVER-STRETCHED UTD PLAYERS IN 'RED ZONE'

LONDON: Several Manchester United players are in the 'red zone' according to manager Louis van Gaal as he weighs up his options for today's FA Cup third round tie at home to Sheffield United. A hectic holiday program, including four games in 15 days, has taken its toll on United's squad and Van Gaal fears that many of his over-stretched players risk injury or burnout.

Defender Phil Jones is ruled out through injury while winger Ashley Young might not be risked with United set to face a Premier League clash at Newcastle United three days after playing third tier Sheffield United. "Phil Jones is injured and a lot of players are in the red zone," Van Gaal, for once not grilled on his future as United manag-

er, told a news conference. "(Young) was back in training this week," Van Gaal added. "He is not injured, he is overloaded and in the red zone. More players are in the red zone and we have to decide if they can play against Sheffield United or not."

Young hobbled off against Swansea City last weekend, when United ended an eight-game sequence without a win to ease the immediate pressure on Van Gaal. Midfielder Jesse Lingard is available, however, after recovering from a hamstring injury. "He has trained fully this week so he is ready," Van Gaal said. Van Gaal has only one more year left on his contract after the current season and Bayern Munich coach Pep Guardiola's name has been linked with the Old Trafford hot seat ever since the

Spaniard said he would leave Germany at the end of the campaign.

Guardiola has also been touted as Chelsea's next manager, although bookmakers have him favorite to replace Manuel Pellegrini at Manchester City next season. Van Gaal said he respected Guardiola's wish to coach in the Premier League, but said nothing should be taken for granted. "It's not for sure he (Pep) will be the manager of a Premier club next season," he said. "I think that it is very good he wants to do that. 'I have already said that I am at the end of my career so for me it is not so interesting. For me, what is interesting is how I take care of Manchester United and I still have one year to go after this season.'" — Reuters

CRUZ AZUL SEEK EUROPEAN EFFECT IN MEXICO TITLE BID

MEXICO CITY: Cruz Azul have recruited former Barcelona prospect Victor Vazquez in a bid to end an 18-year wait for another Mexican league title. Vazquez, who emerged from the famed Barca youth scheme before joining Club Bruges in 2011, has arrived in Mexico for a medical before signing for the "Blue Machine" yesterday. The 28-year-old Catalan midfielder, Belgian player of the year in 2015, is not ready for his debut and will watch from the stands when Cruz Azul, who won their eighth title in 1997, kick off the Liga MX Clausura championship at Morelia on Saturday.

"I'm (nearly) ready... The only thing I need to adapt to is the altitude," Vazquez said on arrival at Mexico City, which is 2,200 meters above sea level. "I know the team have spent 18 years without being champions and that's what I'm coming here for, to be a champion," Vazquez was quoted as saying by the daily Record (www.record.com.mx). Cruz Azul are hoping the rare signing of a European player will have a similar impact in the Apertura to that of French striker Andre-Pierre Gignac at UANL Tigres. Gignac top-scored with 15 goals in 21 matches as Tigres won their fourth title in December. They begin the defense of their crown at Toluca tomorrow. The pair are among a huge number of foreign players in the Mexican top flight, the vast majority from South America. A big concern for some clubs is the growing number of players taking out Mexican citizenship within two years of arriving in the country and so vacating a foreign-player berth. — Reuters

IFAB RECOMMENDS VIDEO TECH TRIALS

LONDON: Soccer's rule makers have decided to recommend trialing video replays next season to help referees with questionable goals, penalties, red cards and cases of mistaken identity. The International Football Association Board (IFAB) decided at their preliminary meeting on Thursday to recommend to their AGM in March that trials are begun with a view to the system becoming law in two or three years. "The board were unanimous in proposing this to the AGM with a strong recommendation that trials start next season," Stewart Regan, the chief executive of the Scottish FA and their representative on IFAB, told reporters.

"There are many details to be finalized, and we think the experiments will last between two and three seasons." IFAB, the game's ultimate law-making body, was formed in 1886 and predates world soccer's governing body FIFA by 18 years. It consists of four members of FIFA and four members from the British associations. David Elleray, the former Premier League referee who sits on IFAB's technical sub committee, said: "The main objective is to try to eliminate clear errors by the referee. 'You will never eliminate all errors from the game, but this is a major step forward in reducing those errors.'" IFAB approved the use of goalline technology in 2012 and since then there have been an increasing number of calls from players and managers to use video technology in other aspects of the game. — Reuters

POUND REBUKES COE OVER IAAF CORRUPTION

LONDON: Former World Anti-doping Agency (WADA) chairman Dick Pound yesterday criticised IAAF president Sebastian Coe for not doing more to uncover corruption at the highest level of his sport. Pound, who chaired the WADA independent commission that found evidence of "state-sponsored doping" in Russian athletics, said that Coe and Sergey Bubka should have taken action during their tenures as IAAF vice-presidents under Lamine Diack, who Coe succeeded last August.

Diack's son, Papa Massata Diack, was one of three senior IAAF figures banned for life by the organization's ethics commission on Thursday for blackmailing athletes who had failed doping tests. "Coe and Bubka were there. It's easy enough if you want to get a governance review," Pound said in an interview with British newspaper The Times. "They had a (19th-century) constitution in a 21st-century organization."

"They had an opportunity a long time ago to address issues of governance, and you saw from the International Olympic Committee what happens if you don't do



Dick Pound

that-you get your tits in the wringer." Former Russian athletics chief Valentin Balakhnichen and former Russian walking coach Alexei Melnikov have also been given life bans, while ex-IAAF anti-doping director Gabriel Dolle received a five-year suspension. Papa Massata Diack,

Balakhnichen and Melnikov were found to have blackmailed Russian runner Liliya Shobukhova, London marathon winner in 2010, into paying a bribe for a positive drugs test to be covered up.

Coe reacted to their suspensions by saying: "The life bans announced today

(Thursday) could not send a stronger message that those who attempt to corrupt or subvert the sport of athletics will be brought to justice." Papa Massata Diack, Lamine Diack and Balakhnichen are also under investigation by French police over allegations they took bribes to hush up doping offences. Lamine Diack alone is alleged to have received one million euros (\$1.1 million). His son acted as a marketing consultant to the IAAF until forced to stand down over the scandals.

Pound's independent commission is due to publish a second report next week and he said that it would reveal evidence of corruption even more shocking than the scandal plaguing world football's governing body FIFA. "With very few exceptions, I have not seen international sports federation presidents so involved in corruption, as opposed to moving money around like the FIFA boys," he said. "In a sense, this is worse. This gets down to affecting the outcome on the field of play. It's about the integrity of competition." He added: "You get to see how some scumbags operated." — AFP

MANNING BACK IN THE SADDLE FOR BRONCOS

ENGLEWOOD: Gary Kubiak stuck to his word in naming Peyton Manning his starter even after declaring that Brock Osweiler had done nothing to deserve a demotion. "Peyton's our quarterback," Kubiak said on the day Manning hobbled to the sideline and gave way to his longtime understudy following his fourth interception against Kansas City on Nov 15. "If he's healthy and ready to go, Peyton's our quarterback."

Manning is healthy and ready to go. So, he'll be under center for the Denver Broncos (12-4) in the playoffs. Kubiak called his quarterbacks into his office Thursday when players returned from a three-day furlough and informed them of his decision. "I feel really good about this," Kubiak said. "I feel good about how far Peyton has come, where he's at physically, mentally. I could see it happening throughout the course of the last two weeks. I'm excited for him to get going." Manning said his left foot is fine now and he's even refreshed after taking nearly two months off.

He also suffered no lingering effects from Damion Square's textbook helmet-to-chest hit on Sunday in what the 39-year-old quarterback called his welcome-back-to-football moment. "I felt good going into the game Sunday, had no issues coming out," Manning said. "And these past couple of days off certainly helped as well." Manning praised his backup, saying the Broncos wouldn't be the AFC's top seed without him, "but I'm looking forward to being back" calling the shots beginning Jan. 17 in the divisional round. Osweiler reacted the way Kubiak and GM John Elway hoped he would: with disappointment and determination.

"I stand behind Peyton. I stand behind Coach. I stand behind this team," Osweiler said. "You're going to see the same exact guy out of me as you've seen the whole season. Bottom line: I just care about this football team winning games. If coach thinks Peyton gives the team the best chance,



Peyton Manning

then I fully support that." Manning missed seven starts with a torn plantar fascia. He returned to action Sunday when he relieved Osweiler in the second half and led the Broncos to a 27-20 win over San Diego. That marked Manning's first game as a backup since his freshman year at Tennessee.

'I'm excited'

Manning went 7-2 as Denver's starter, although he struggled all season with his foot injury, which affected his throwing motion and led to right shoulder and rib injuries as well. It also forced the Broncos to put Manning in the pistol or shotgun on most snaps. On Sunday, he was under center 40 percent of the time, which did wonders for their ground game. "I'm glad to have him back," receiver Demaryius Thomas said. "I'm excited to see how he'll play now that he's healthy." Osweiler went 5-2 and

both losses came down to dropped passes. That's why Thomas said not to call this a quarterback quandary but dependable depth.

"We've got two guys we can go with," Thomas said, "and both of them can win games for us." Osweiler, who becomes a free agent this offseason, displayed the athleticism, acumen, accuracy and arm strength to run Kubiak's offense, but his inexperience also showed. He failed to check out of a cornerback blitz Sunday in which he was sacked and stripped of the football, one of five turnovers following his 72-yard touchdown toss to Thomas 31 seconds into the game. Manning got the same look a couple of times and checked into run plays away from the pressure. His superior recognition and line calls helped the Broncos gain a season-best 210 yards rushing. — AP

GREED THE MOTIVATOR AS NFL TEAMS RUSH TO LA

LOS ANGELES: The people of St Louis are in a tizzy, and not just because the team they lifted from Los Angeles could soon be heading back home. Apparently it wasn't enough for the Rams to pack up their gear and leave behind a useless dome taxpayers built for them. They had to insult the local citizenry on the way out by calling them lousy fans who can't support multiple sports franchises.

If it came as a surprise to loyal Rams fans, well, they should have seen it coming. It wasn't that long ago, 1995 to be exact, when then-owner Georgia Frontiere strong-armed the NFL into moving the Rams from the Los Angeles area to St Louis. Frontiere said so few fans were coming to games that the franchise risked bankruptcy by staying in Anaheim. Now the Rams want to go back, to a new stadium development they want to build near the city's airport. In asking the league to leave, the team said that accepting conditions for a new stadium in St Louis would leave the team "well on the road to financial ruin."

It was, of course, nonsense then. It's even more nonsense now. However the Los Angeles franchise shell game plays out - the Chargers and Raiders also filed this week to move to LA - the idea that an NFL team might be in financial difficulty is laughable. Massive guaranteed TV contracts shared equally among the 32 teams - last year each got \$226.4 million just from TV alone - almost guarantee expenses will be paid before any tickets are sold. It's also not about fans, or the lack of them, as the Rams suggested in their 29-page application to leave St. Louis. There are more than enough loyal fans to fill the new \$1.1 billion stadium that civic leaders are proposing in St. Louis in what looks like a futile effort to keep the team.

No, the move for all three teams is about potential and potential valuation. The LA market is big and vast, and occupying a new stadium in it - whether the proposed development by the Rams in Inglewood or a shared facility for the Chargers and Raiders in nearby Carson - is about as close as it gets to a license to print money. While Southern California residents haven't exactly been holding demonstrations in the streets demanding a team, there will surely be enough to fill whatever stadium or stadiums eventually get built. But the real value lies in a wide open market in the second largest city in the country that all three teams can't wait to exploit.

According to Forbes, the Rams ranked 29th among the 32 NFL teams last year with a valuation of \$1.45 billion. That's not bad considering the team was essentially valued at about half that just six years ago when owner Stan Kroenke scooped up the 60 percent he didn't own from heirs of Frontiere. It's entirely conceivable - actually almost guaranteed - that the team's value could double again the minute it moves to Los Angeles. And with that much money at stake, there should be some interesting conversations among the very rich when NFL owners meet next week with a decision on the Los Angeles moves on the table. — AP

PANTHERS EXTEND WINNING STREAK TO 11

OTTAWA: Reilly Smith and Vincent Trocheck scored 8 seconds apart in the first period and the Florida Panthers extended their franchise-best win streak to 11 games with a 3-2 victory over the Ottawa Senators on Thursday night. Aleksander Barkov also scored for the Atlantic Division-leading Panthers and Roberto Luongo won his career-high ninth straight start behind 30 saves. Florida's streak is the NHL's longest since Boston won 12 straight in March of 2014, according to the NHL. Max McCormick and Milan Michalek scored for the Senators and Craig Anderson stopped 13 shots. In the first period, Luongo made a great save, and on the ensuing play, Smith deflected Jonathan Huberdeau's shot to open the scoring at 12:01 on the Panthers' first shot of the game. Trocheck made it 2-0 after Ottawa's Fredrik Claesson turned the puck over trying a no-look pass from the end boards out front of his own net.

CAPITALS 4, ISLANDERS 1

Alex Ovechkin scored his 497th goal, Braden Holtby stopped 34 shots to keep up his stellar play and NHL-leading Washington beat New York. Jason Chimera, Nate Schmidt and Nicklas Backstrom also scored to help Washington reach 63 points and become the first team with 30 wins. Holtby improved to 26-4-2, including 18-0-2 in his last 21 games. It was the teams' first meeting since the Capitals won a seven-game series with the Islanders in the first round of the playoffs last season. Brock Nelson scored for New York and Jaroslav Halak made 34 saves in his first action in nearly three weeks. The Islanders had won four of six and fell to 7-2-2 against Metropolitan Division foes.

KINGS 2, MAPLE LEAFS 1

Jake Muzzin and Jeff Carter scored third-period goals and Vincent Lecavalier had an assist while making his Los Angeles debut. Lecavalier set up Muzzin for the game's first goal with 17:07 to play, capping a solid effort in the 17-year NHL veteran's first game since Nov. 12. Los Angeles acquired Lecavalier and defenseman Luke Schenn from Philadelphia on Wednesday, and both veterans played solidly against the Maple Leafs a few hours after their cross-country flight. Peter Holland scored a power-play goal midway through the third period, and James Reimer stopped 39 shots in his first start since Dec. 3 for the Maple Leafs. Toronto's three-game winning streak ended in the middle stop of its three-game California trip. Jonathan Quick made 25 saves to remain unbeaten since Dec. 22 for Los Angeles.

RED WINGS 2, SHARKS 1

Petr Mrazek made 35 saves, Justin Abdelkader scored with 6:52 remaining and Detroit got its third straight win. Danny DeKeyser also scored and Detroit remained perfect midway through a six-game trip. Mrazek has started each of those three games and allowed four goals in that time. Joel Ward scored for San Jose, but the Sharks lost their third in four games and fell to a league-worst 5-12 at home. Martin Jones had 23 saves. Abdelkader's go-ahead goal was set up by a coast-to-coast skate from Pavel Datsyuk and a juicy bounce. After Datsyuk got the puck in deep, he whipped it toward the net, and the rebound skipped out into the slot. Abdelkader got it there and fired past Jones for his 13th goal this season.

COYOTES 2, FLAMES 1

Stefan Elliott scored on a point shot through traffic 1:47 into the third period and Arizona beat Calgary. Elliott worked a cycle up high with Anthony Duclair before firing through Martin Hanzal's screen. Hanzal was originally credited with the goal, but replays showed the puck deflected off Flames defenseman Kris Russell and not Hanzal. Oliver Ekman-Larsson also scored to help Arizona improve to 6-1-2 in its last nine. The Coyotes are second in the Pacific Division at 20-16-4. Louis Domingue made his fifth straight start and made 25 saves for Arizona. The Coyotes picked up five of a possible six points on their three-game Western Canada trip. Johnny Gaudreau scored his team-leading 18th goal in the first period for Calgary. The Flames lost at home for just the third time in 15 games.

STARS 2, JETS 1, SO

Tyler Seguin and Patrick Sharp scored back-to-back goals to start the shootout and Dallas ended a season-high three-game losing streak. Seguin stopped a three-game pointless streak, his longest of the season, with a first-period



CHICAGO: Pittsburgh Penguins defenseman Trevor Daley (6) upends Chicago Blackhawks left wing Dennis Rasmussen during the first period of an NHL hockey game on Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2016. — AP

goal. Mathieu Perreault pulled Winnipeg even in the second period. Kari Lehtonen stopped 27 of 28 shots in regulation and all five in overtime. Leading 2-1 in the shootout, he turned away Bryan Little to clinch his seventh win in nine games against the franchise that drafted him second overall in Atlanta in 2002. The Western Conference-leading Stars hadn't lost consecutive games all season before going 0-2-1 on an East Coast trip. Connor Hellebuyck had 23 saves in Winnipeg's first game since he tied a rookie franchise record with 43 stops against Nashville.

FLYERS 4, WILD 3, OT

ST. PAUL: Michael Del Zotto scored his second goal of the game with 37 seconds left in overtime to send Philadelphia over Minnesota. Sean Couturier scored his fifth goal in nine games and Ryan White also scored to help Philadelphia win its second straight after losing three in a row. Steve Mason made 31 saves for the Flyers and Brayden Schenn added two assists. A game after posting a hat trick against Columbus, Zach Parise scored with 6:24 left to tie it for Minnesota. Marco Scandella and Jason Zucker also scored for the Wild. Devan Dubnyk made 32 saves. — AP

GREAT BRITAIN STAY ALIVE IN HOPMAN CUP

PERTH: Great Britain kept their Hopman Cup hopes alive with a 3-0 win over Germany in their final round robin outing at the mixed teams tournament in Perth yesterday. The British pairing of Andy Murray and Heather Watson won their respective singles matches against Alexander Zverev and Sabine Lisicki to secure the tie. Although the mixed doubles was a dead rubber, the couple also needed a win to enhance their chances of reaching today's final.

They did so in style, winning in straight sets 6-3, 6-4 to complete a clean sweep of the tie. With two wins from their three round robin outings, Great Britain still needed unbeaten Australia Green to lose their final tie against France. Regardless of that outcome,

Murray said the Hopman Cup had provided an ideal launching pad for his upcoming Australian Open campaign in Melbourne later this month.

Murray was too good for the emerging Zverev, despite being broken when he initially served for the second set, winning 6-3, 6-4 for two victories from his three singles matches in Perth. His one defeat was to mercurial local Nick Kyrgios. "I obviously have things to practice on and try to improve, I am fairly pleased with how I played," Murray said. "The serve was good, that is a good start to build from. "I gave up maybe five or six break points total in the three matches, and some of them could have been avoided as well, so that was very good. "The rest of my game there is a

few things I can still work on, the movement can get a bit sharper and hit the ball a bit cleaner from the back of the court, but I think that will come."

Watson showed she would be a dangerous opponent in Melbourne with her second win in succession, against Lisicki. Former Wimbledon finalist Lisicki is on the comeback trail after being sidelined by injury for the second half of 2015 and had her chances against Watson, but couldn't match her opponent's consistency. Ranked 32 in the world, the German had three break points at 0-40 when Watson served for the match in the second set, but the world number 55 claimed the final five points in succession to complete a 6-3, 6-4 win. — AFP



QUEENSLAND: Roger Federer of Switzerland hits a return against Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov during their men's singles quarter-final match on the sixth day of the Brisbane International tennis tournament yesterday. — AFP

DEFENDING CHAMP CRUISES INTO BRISBANE SEMIFINALS

FEDERER OVERCOMES ILLNESS AND OPPONENT

BRISBANE: Roger Federer overcame a lingering sickness to hold off Grigor Dimitrov 6-4, 6-7 (4), 6-4 yesterday and take his title defense into the semifinals at the Brisbane International. Federer delayed his opening match at the Australian Open warmup until the fifth day because of a flu-like illness and was playing Dimitrov in the quarterfinals on less than 24 hours rest. His serve in the first set was almost flawless, dropping just two points, and he appeared to be on course with break-point chances for another straight-set victory over the young Bulgarian - sometimes likened to him because of their similar styles - before Dimitrov rallied.

After wasting a chance to serve out the second set in a nervous 10th game, Dimitrov dominated the tiebreaker and forced a decider. Federer, after showing signs of fatigue in the second, took a quick break before the third, and then went on a roll to set up three match points in the ninth game. Again Dimitrov rallied, winning five consecutive points and forcing Federer to serve it out - which the 17-time major winner duly did.

"I'm not going to tell you too much, but it was tough in a way," Federer said of his illness, knowing the Australian Open starts Jan. 18. "Body is not quite ready, so it's good to get through it without any issues." By holding off Dimitrov, who is 10 years his junior, Federer set up a meeting with 22-year-old Dominic Thiem, the youngest player in the top 20. Thiem beat third-seeded Marin Cilic 2-6, 7-6 (4), 6-4 and later said he was hoping to play Federer. "It's for every young player an amazing experience to play with the probably greatest of all time," Thiem said. "You can learn so many things from him."

The other semifinal match will feature 2015 finalist Milos Raonic against Bernard Tomic. Tomic ended 2014 US Open finalist Kei Nishikori's streak of three straight semifinal appearances at the Brisbane International with a 6-3, 1-6, 6-3 win, his first over a top 10 player on home soil. Raonic relied on his big serve to dictate a 6-4, 6-4 win over No 78-ranked Lucas Pouille. On the women's side, fourth-seeded Angelique Kerber moved into the final by beating Carla

Suarez Navarro 6-2, 6-3. Two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka and US qualifier Samantha Crawford played the other semifinal match.

In Auckland, New Zealand, Julia Goerges reached her sixth WTA final and her first in four years when she beat qualifier Tamira Paszek 6-4, 6-2 in the ASB Classic semifinals. Sloane Stephens was leading 5-2 in the first set of the other semifinal match against third-seeded Caroline Wozniacki when rain halted play, forcing it to be postponed to Saturday. At the Hopman Cup in Perth, Andy Murray and Heather Watson each had 6-3, 6-4 singles wins over German opponents Alexander Zverev and Sabine Lisicki, and combined to win the mixed doubles by the same margin to secure a 3-0 win that kept Britain in contention for Saturday's final. The Australia Green team can seal a spot in the final against Ukraine with a win over France late Friday. Nick Kyrgios gave the home team a 1-0 lead when he beat Kenny De Schepper 6-4, 6-4 ahead of Daria Gavrilova's match with France's Caroline Garcia. — AP

AUBAMEYANG WINS AFRICAN PLAYER OF THE YEAR, REJECTS EPL OVERTURES

ABUJA: Star Borussia Dortmund striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang rejected English Premier League overtures as he celebrated winning the African player of the year award. The Gabonese, who is the leading Bundesliga scorer this season, was reduced to tears after stopping Yaya Toure getting a fifth straight title on Thursday night. "I am staying at Dortmund," the 26-year-old Aubameyang, who has been linked with an \$85 million move to Arsenal, Manchester United and Liverpool, said after accepting the prize at a gala in Abuja. "I am so happy. I am not someone who usually cries but it is quite an emotional moment. "When you are standing alongside players like Yaya Toure or Andre Ayew there is pride in winning such a trophy ahead of them because they are great players and I obviously admire them a lot."

The first player from Gabon to win the title said he hopes to get a second award next year with his rich run of form. "I will really have to work a lot. Obviously I think I have the skills and the talent to make it again next year but it will require lots of work and many sacrifices as well." Aubameyang, who has scored 18 goals in 17 Bundesliga games this season, earned 143 points in a poll of African coaches, seven more than Manchester City's Toure. Ghana and Swansea City striker Andre Ayew was third on 112 points. "I am disappointed but that won't take anything from anybody," said Toure, the Ivory Coast captain. "I am sure Andre is also disappointed after what he did last year."

"This is not the time to complain. We will all go back and continue to work hard." Aubameyang dedicated his title to his country and Gabon's President Ali Bongo Ondimba was among the first to congratulate him. "His genius is a major asset for the Panthers in preparation for the next African Cup of Nations," said Bongo. Gabon will host the next next African championship in 2017. "We have good players and a good national team in Gabon," declared Aubameyang. Frenchman Herve Renard, who led the Ivory Coast to the 2015 African Cup of Nations, was named Coach of the Year.

This was his second such award after the 47-year-old also led Zambia to upset favorites Ivory Coast to lift a first-ever Nations Cup trophy in 2012. "You never win alone so I would like to congratulate my staff," said Renard. "I would like to congratulate the Ivory Coast Federation because they believed in me and I dedicate this trophy to all the people around the world from Ivory Coast because it was an amazing victory for us, after 23 years they were waiting this trophy." Compatriot Bruno Metsu has also clinched two Coach of the Year Awards when he was in charge of Senegal in 2001 and 2002.

Ivory Coast were named Team of the Year. Other award winners included Cameroon's Gaell Enganamouit (Women's Player of the Year), TP Mazembe (Club of the Year), Nigeria Under-23 midfielder Oghenekaro Etebo (Most Promising Talent) and Nigeria's Under-17 star Victor Osimhen (Youth Player of the Year). Charles Kumi Gyamfi (Ghana) and Samuel Mbappe Leppe (Cameroon) were recognised as African Legends. — AFP

ENTHUSED BERNABEU AWAITS ZIDANE’S BOW AS BOSS

MADRID: French legend Zinedine Zidane takes charge of Real Madrid for the first time when Deportivo la Coruna visit what is expected to be a sold out Santiago Bernabeu today. The Madrid fans turned out in their thousands to welcome Zidane at his first training session on Tuesday, hours after he replaced the sacked Rafael Benitez, who paid the price for his unpopularity with the club’s stars and fans alike after just seven months in the job. By contrast, Zidane is beloved at the Bernabeu for his five years as a player in the Spanish capital, most notably scoring a sensational winning goal in the 2002 Champions League final. Yet, Deportivo’s visit will be his first match in senior management having only previously coached Madrid’s feeder team Castilla for the past 18 months.

Zidane has a tough task if he is to deliver only Madrid’s second league title in eight years with Real trailing league leaders Atletico Madrid by four points and Barcelona by two - having also played a game more than the European champions. “This is a difficult but stimulating challenge, I want to take up the challenge and do my utmost to win titles,” said Zidane. “I will be satisfied with winning everything. Our objective is to win, we have two titles that we can win and we are going to try until the end of the season.” Zidane has signaled his intention to retain the star attacking trident of Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale and Karim Benzema up front and will have a fully-fit squad to choose from after captain Sergio Ramos returned to training on Thursday.

Despite their struggles under Benitez, Madrid have been lethal at home since suffering a 4-0 thrashing at the hands of Barcelona in November, scoring 25 goals in their last four games at the

Bernabeu. However, Deportivo’s resurgence under former Madrid midfielder Victor Sanchez has been one of the revelations of the season. The Galicians have only lost three times in the league this season and have already taken points off Barcelona and Atletico. “Real Madrid are one of the best teams in the world with the best players. The sacking of the coach will make them go for it from the start with Zidane as the new coach,” said Deportivo striker Lucas Perez, who has scored 12 goals already this campaign.

“For Deportivo the fact it is the Bernabeu, that Zidane is the coach, means there will be more cameras, but I think we have shown in the Camp Nou, at Valencia and other difficult places that we will play with the same mentality to win games wherever they are.” Barca can return to the top of the table and open up a five-point gap over Madrid when they host Granada earlier today. The Catalans have drawn three of their last four La Liga games, but returned to goalscoring form thanks to an inspired Lionel Messi as the Argentine scored twice and created two more for Gerard Pique and Neymar in a bad-tempered 4-1 win over local rivals Espanyol in the Copa del Rey in midweek.

Luis Suarez could face up to a three-match ban for confronting the Espanyol players in the tunnel after the game, but any sanction would take effect in the Cup leaving him free to face Granada. Atletico have the toughest challenge of the title contenders when they travel to fifth-placed Celta Vigo on Sunday. Augusto Fernandez could make his Liga debut for Diego Simeone’s men just days after leaving Celta, whilst the hosts are likely to again be without injured Spanish international Nolito. Top-scorer Antoine Griezmann and Diego Godin will be among those to

Spanish League table										
MADRID: Spanish La Liga table before this weekend’s matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):										
Atletico Madrid	18	13	2	3	25	8	41			
Barcelona	17	12	3	2	40	15	39			
Real Madrid	18	11	4	3	47	18	37			
Villarreal	18	11	3	4	24	16	36			
Celta Vigo	18	9	4	5	28	25	31			
Athletic Bilbao	18	8	4	6	27	20	28			
Deportivo La Coruna	18	6	9	3	26	18	27			
Eibar	18	7	6	5	25	19	27			
Sevilla	18	7	5	6	24	21	26			
Valencia	18	5	8	5	23	17	23			
Malaga	18	6	5	7	13	14	23			
Espanyol	18	6	3	9	16	28	21			
Getafe	18	5	5	8	20	27	20			
Real Betis	18	5	5	8	13	27	20			
Real Sociedad	18	4	5	9	20	27	17			
Las Palmas	18	4	5	9	18	26	17			
Granada	18	4	5	9	20	32	17			
Sporting Gijon	17	4	3	10	16	27	15			
Rayo Vallecano	18	4	3	11	20	41	15			
Levante	18	2	5	11	12	31	11			

return to the Atletico side after Simeone made 10 changes for the 1-1 draw at Rayo Vallecano in the Cup on Wednesday. —AFP



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

SPANISH LEAGUE		
Barcelona v Granada	18:00	beIN SPORTS
Sevilla v Bilbao	20:15	beIN SPORTS
Getafe v Real Betis	20:15	beIN SPORTS
Real Madrid v Deportivo	22:30	beIN SPORTS
Levante v Rayo Vallecano	0:05	beIN SPORTS
ITALIAN LEAGUE		
Carpi v Udinese	17:00	beIN SPORTS
Fiorentina v Lazio	20:00	beIN SPORTS
AS Roma v AC Milan	22:45	beIN SPORTS
FRENCH LEAGUE		
Lyonnais v Troyes	19:00	beIN SPORTS
Angers v Caen	22:00	beIN SPORTS
Stade de Reims v Toulouse	22:00	beIN SPORTS
Stade Rennes v Lorient	22:00	beIN SPORTS
Montpellier v Girondins	22:00	beIN SPORTS
AS Monaco v Ajaccio	22:00	beIN SPORTS

Italian League Preview

SADIQ CAN WAIT AS ROMA SEEK MILAN REDEMPTION

MILAN: Nigerian starlet Umar Sadiq is in no hurry to step into goal-shy Edin Dzeko’s boots despite Roma hosting AC Milan today in a clash that could decide the future of both teams’ coaches. Sadiq, 18, has found the net in each of his last two appearances for Roma, coming off the bench to head home in a 2-0 win over Genoa last month and giving the Giallorossi the lead in a 3-3 draw away to Chievo on Wednesday. That result left Roma in fifth place but Rudi Garcia’s men trail leaders Inter Milan by six points and the pressure is growing on the French coach-although he is not alone. Milan handler Sinisa Mihajlovic could become the latest scapegoat for the long-standing malaise at the seven-time European champions following a 1-0 home defeat by Bologna in midweek, when Milan had 16 attempts on goal.

Sadiq, meanwhile, believes Roma can turn the corner with a win at the Stadio Olimpico but despite Dzeko struggling to find the net-he has scored only three league goals so far-the Nigerian has given the Bosnian his backing. Asked if Dzeko should be worried for his starting place, Sadiq told asroma.it: “It’s important for a striker to score but I shouldn’t be looking at my goals or my games right now, I just need to keep working hard. I hope Edin will come back 100%.” Promoted to Roma’s senior squad after scoring 14 times in 10 games for their youth team, Sadiq could earn his second start after Dzeko’s appeal to halve a two-match ban was rejected on Thursday.

Roma confirmed, however, winger Mohamed Salah could be available despite the speedy Egyptian hobbling off with a thigh knock against Chievo. As Inter look to protect their one-point lead over Fiorentina and Napoli when they host Sassuolo on Sunday, Mihajlovic can only hope his misfiring strikers improve in a stadium he is all too familiar with having spent six seasons

with Roma’s bitter rivals Lazio. After Milan’s sixth reverse of the season on Wednesday, Mihajlovic hit out: “We weren’t unlucky, when you miss five one-on-one chances to beat the goalkeeper you risk conceding a goal at the end, and that’s what happened.

“We have to get back on track. We have to work hard and we will try and do well away at Roma.” Fiorentina, who have scored a league-leading 36 goals thanks primarily to Nikola Kalinic (10) and Josip Illicic (9), host a struggling Lazio today with the chance to go provisional top for the second time in a week. Illicic hit a brace midweek in a 3-1 win away to Palermo that sent La Viola top of the pile before Inter regained command thanks to a 1-0 win away to Empoli. With hopes of a first title since 1969 growing in Florence, Fiorentina will be expected to prevail against a Lazio side still struggling amid a series of underwhelming performances by Manchester United target Felipe Anderson.

Lazio coach Stefano Pioli is still without key midfielder Lucas Biglia through injury, but it was the Brazilian’s compatriot, Anderson, who was the subject of Pioli’s ire after a lacklustre scoreless draw with Carpi in midweek. “I believe he can do a lot more. I know it and he knows it,” Pioli told media after the game having substituted Anderson at half-time. Thanks to the league-leading tally of Gonzalo Higuain (16 goals) and a solid contribution so far from Lorenzo Insigne (8), Napoli are also just one point off the pace. Maurizio Sarri’s men travel to Frosinone looking to avoid a repeat of their scoreless draw with another promoted side, Carpi, earlier this season. Juventus reinforced their bid for a record-equaling fifth title with a 3-0 rout of winless Verona in midweek and the champions, only three points adrift in fourth, are away to Sampdoria in Sunday’s late game. —AFP

UNITED ON RED ALERT AS UNDERDOGS CHASE FA CUP SHOCKER

MANCHESTER: Sheffield United manager Nigel Adkins believes his third tier underdogs should dare to dream as they bid to claim another famous scalp against Manchester United in the FA Cup third round today. The Blades have built up an impressive reputation as cup fighters in recent seasons, reaching the FA Cup semi-final two seasons ago and last season reaching the last four of the League Cup.

Those successes were achieved under Nigel Clough and Adkins, who replaced Clough as manager of the League One club in June, wants to follow in his footsteps by sending United crashing to a humiliating defeat at Old Trafford. "Manchester United should beat a League One side but that's the beauty of the FA Cup and especially the third round," Adkins said. "There will be upsets and surprises and why can't that be us? It's the Theatre of Dreams, so why can't we dream. "It's a game of football with three results on offer. We would be more than delighted with two of those."

Adkins, 50, who led Southampton to the Premier League as manager in 2012, has taken Sheffield United into promotion contention

on the back of a run of just two defeats in eight games, which has lifted them to eighth in the League One table. Adkins, who has also managed Reading and Scunthorpe, knows the Blades face a massive test against a United team seeking to win the competition for a record-equaling 12th time. But the Premier League side's win over Swansea last weekend was their first win in nine games under Louis van Gaal and Adkins will look to exploit any vulnerability as the Yorkshire club, who last won the competition in 1925, seek one of their biggest results in their history.

No fear

"We are well aware of the massive threats Manchester United possess," he added. "They have tremendous players and an outstanding manager but we have got to belief and go there with no fear factor. "The club has done really well in the cup competitions in the last few seasons and this is another opportunity. "It's a big step up but we can't be fearful. It's what we are striving for and where we want to be long-term, so let's go and enjoy the occasion."

For all United's pedigree in the Cup, they haven't lifted the trophy since beating Millwall in the 2004 final. And beleaguered boss van Gaal is targeting a decent run to ease the pressure on his position and set up the chance of a first piece of silverware of his Old Trafford reign. The Dutchman is expected to pick a strong side against the Blades and Spanish midfielder Ander Herrera should feature as he sets his sights on winning his first honor in English football. "It's different to the Spanish Cup because it's more about the knockout situation," Herrera said.

"In Spain we play two legs in the cup, so it's good that it can be down to just one game here-it makes it very emotional. "It's a very interesting competition and I always watched it when I was in Spain. Every team has a chance to win it, which is good. "We didn't go too far in the last FA Cup but I enjoyed the games a lot. "It's a very enjoyable competition and a nice one that we can hopefully win this season." Van Gaal will be without injured defenders Luke Shaw, Marcos Rojo, Antonio Valencia and Phil Jones through injury, but midfielder Jesse Lingard could return.— AFP



Arsene Wenger

HOLDERS ARSENAL ON THE ROAD TO FA CUP HISTORY

LONDON: Arsenal's sights are set on the Premier League title but Gunners defender Calum Chambers says the possibility of becoming the first club in the modern era to lift the FA Cup for a third successive season will fire their defense of the trophy. Arsene Wenger's side face Sunderland in the third round at the Emirates Stadium today eight months after their 4-0 victory over Aston Villa in last season's final.

And having ended the club's nine-year wait for a trophy by beating Hull City 12 months earlier, the Gunners last suffered defeat in the FA Cup way back in February 2013. The north Londoners sit top of the Premier League and beat struggling Sunderland 3-1 in December, meaning they will face Sam Allardyce's team confident of extending their impressive run. With the Champions League due to resume next month, Arsenal's chances of becoming the first club since Blackburn Rovers in the 1880s to make it three FA Cup wins in a row will hinge on their ability to manage the demands of competing on different fronts.

But Chambers insists there will be no lack of incentive to deliver success in the main domestic cup competition. The centre-back, who could be handed a rare starting opportunity if Wenger rotates his squad, said: "I think for every Englishman it is a very memorable cup. It gives that edge to it so you want to win it even more. "It would be an amazing achievement (to win it for the third time in a row) and I'm sure everyone will be everything to get there. "I wouldn't say we are discussing it but we are thinking about it. Anything in the cup can happen, it is not always straightforward. "You have to have both short range and long-range goals. A long-range goal would be to break records, win trophies and do well, so I think everyone strives for that."

Scheduling

Wenger has ruled out a return for Alexis Sanchez who has a hamstring problem, while Santi Cazorla and Tomas Rosicky are still out. "Will a young player or two start? I haven't decided yet," Wenger said. "The thinking is to give absolutely everything to qualify. We are the holders of the cup and I know as well by experience that it is very important that you get in the competition and that you have a successful third round."

Meanwhile, Black Cats boss Allardyce has criticized the scheduling of the next round of Premier League matches in the mid-week following this weekend's third round ties. Allardyce claims it devalues the FA Cup and will force him into making several changes this weekend. He says his priority is securing a 10th successive season of top flight football at the Stadium of Light, with his side facing a crucial visit to fellow strugglers Swansea four days after their trip to London.

Teenage defender Thomas Beadling and back-up goalkeeper Jordan Pickford, 21, are expected to be involved for the 1973 FA Cup winners. Allardyce is unlikely to risk veteran defenders John O'Shea and Wes Brown, while nine-goal top scorer Jermain Defoe and key midfielder Lee Cattermole are also set to be rested for Wednesday's trip to South Wales. Injuries to Younes Kaboul, Seb Larsson and Jack Rodwell further lessen the options available to Allardyce, who said: "We've got a ridiculously short period of time to recover after the Arsenal cup match, so I will be making changes. "That's not me disrespecting the FA Cup, it's me having to deal with the situation caused by the diabolical way the games have been scheduled. The staff are working very hard to help the lads recover." — AFP

FA CUP PREVIEW

PELLEGRINI FACES FA CUP DILEMMA

NORWICH: Manuel Pellegrini faces an FA Cup selection dilemma at Norwich today as he attempts to keep Manchester City on track in four competitions. Pellegrini has indicated the FA Cup is bottom of his priority list in the midst of a testing January schedule that consists of a minimum of seven matches, and potentially as many as nine. City's manager has even gone as far as to suggest that his side will struggle to find time to play all of their fixtures if they reach the finals of all three cup competitions.

A run in the Champions League is a genuine prospect thanks to a kind draw, while Pellegrini's team can reach Wembley in the League Cup by overturning a 2-1 semi-final first-leg deficit against Everton at the end of this month. With the focus on those two competitions in addition to a Premier League challenge, Pellegrini will give some consideration to squad rotation as his team travel to Norwich for Saturday's FA Cup third-round tie. In the Chilean's mind, winning a quadruple of the Champions League, the Premier League and England's two major cup competitions is impossible. "It's a lot of games. If you ask me, I always prefer to play in all the competitions," Pellegrini said.

"But I am worried about the FA Cup, because after the early rounds, you start having to postpone your Premier League games to continue in the tournament. "I am not sure if you can continue in all the competitions. I think if you play in the semi-final of the FA Cup and you are in the semi-final of the Champions League, then you don't have time to play all of your Premier League games." While the fixture schedulers would surely find time to squeeze in all of City's games somewhere, Pellegrini's point is that pushing for success on four fronts is bound to result in a failure somewhere along the line.

Vulnerable

Their recent form suggests the strain may be showing; just two wins from their last five fixtures in all competitions, culminating in Wednesday's League Cup defeat at Goodison Park. City's defense continues to look vulnerable in the absence of their captain Vincent Kompany with a calf injury, with Martin Demichelis at fault for allowing Romelu Lukaku the space to head Everton's first-leg winner. Pellegrini, though, feels he has the attacking talent to hurt Norwich, even if he decides to rest Argentina forward Sergio Aguero, who is still



Manuel Pellegrini

regaining full fitness after a heel injury.

"We've got good players in the squad. But the way we play, our mentality, we give chances but we also create a lot of chances. If our players get chances, normally they will score," he said. A run of three wins from their last four games means Norwich go into the tie with renewed belief after easing their Premier League relegation concerns. A successful holiday period means they sit six points clear of the bottom three, easing the pressure that was beginning to build at Carrow Road and allowing them to view the meeting with Pellegrini's side as a more welcome distraction.

The game also marks the first anniversary of Alex Neil taking charge of the club after moving south from Scottish club Hamilton. May's Championship final win was a high point and the manager believes the club is moving in the right direction. "To get back-to-back wins is very important. It takes pressure off the games coming up and we need to approach them in the same manner," he said. "Belief comes with wins, that is the bottom line. People might watch you, you don't play well and lose and everybody will write you off but if you can get a bit of momentum it is massive. "We have found a nice balance at the moment, we are looking threatening going forward and that is now two clean sheets." — AFP

GUIDETTI DOUBLE EASES CELTA PAST CADIZ MOMO HANDS LAS PALMAS A WIN OVER 9-MAN EIBAR

MADRID: Swedish international John Guidetti struck twice as Celta Vigo all but ended Cadiz's Copa del Rey lifeline with a 3-0 win in the first leg of their last-16 tie on Thursday. Cadiz only made it to the last 16 after Real Madrid were expelled from the competition for fielding an ineligible player in the previous round. But their chances of reaching the quarter-finals look bleak as former Manchester City and Celtic striker Guidetti

opened and rounded off the scoring with sharp finishes from close range either side of Jonny's deflected second just after half-time. Las Palmas also look well set for the last eight thanks to Momo's stoppage time winner to edge a five-goal thriller 3-2 at nine-man Eibar.

Aythami Artiles and Wakaso Mubarak cancelled out goals from Izet Hajrovic and Saul Berjon before late red cards for Hajrovic and Gonzalo Escalante

turned the match decisively in Las Palmas' favor. Holders and competition favorites Barcelona eased past local rivals Espanyol 4-1 in a bad-tempered encounter that saw the visitors have two men sent off on Wednesday. There were also first-leg wins for Gary Neville's Valencia, Sevilla and Athletic Bilbao. However, La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid have work to do in next week's second legs after being held 1-1 away at Rayo Vallecano. — AFP

CHINA FIRES PERRIN AFTER WCUP FLOP

BEIJING: China's football body announced the sacking of national coach Alain Perrin on Friday after a disappointing run of results left their World Cup qualifying campaign hanging by a thread. The Chinese Football Association (CFA) said the decision had been made "out of consideration for the performance of the Chinese national team" and "the needs of future team-building".

After "sincere consultations" the two sides had decided Perrin "will no longer work as the head coach of China's national team", a statement on the CFA website said, adding that the search for a replacement would start immediately. The news comes just a year after the ex-Lyon and Marseille boss led China to the quarter-finals of the Asian Cup in Australia, in their best performance in more than a decade. But optimism has since faded, and the CFA made a public apology and announced a review into the Frenchman's performance after a 0-0 World Cup qualifying draw with Hong Kong in November.

With two games to go in the second round of qualifying for Russia 2018, China are third in their group and teetering on the brink of elimination. The way forward for China remains unclear, but they will be desperate to solve the riddle of creating a national team to match the country's soaring football ambitions. Spearheaded by football-loving President Xi Jinping, China hopes to host and even win a World Cup, and has ordered the game to be played more widely in schools. The country is also preparing to bid for the 2023 Asian Cup, the continent's biggest football championship.

The challenge of leading the world's most populous and second-largest economy to football glory would intrigue many coaches-but China's record invites caution. China are currently languishing at 82nd in the rankings, below the likes of Equatorial Guinea and Libya, and have only ever reached one World Cup, in 2002. The domestic game long suffered from endemic corruption, with a history of match-rigging and bribery, but authorities have sought to clean up the game in recent years. Now their big-spending clubs are finding success, with

Guangzhou Evergrande winning the AFC Champions League twice in the last three years.

'Hire an extraterrestrial'

Perrin arrived in Beijing in February 2014, months after ex-Real Madrid and Spain boss Jose Antonio Camacho was sent packing midway through a lucrative contract. His highpoint was last year's Asian Cup, where China won all three group games for the first time before losing in the quarter-finals to eventual champions Australia. But China then drew friendlies with Haiti and Tunisia, and lost 2-0 to South Korea before a run of World Cup qualifiers which ultimately spelled doom for Perrin.

China drew 0-0 at home with Hong Kong and lost 1-0 away to Qatar to put their hopes in jeopardy, before easing their frustrations with a 12-0 pummeling of Bhutan. China then faced a politically charged trip to semi-autonomous Hong Kong, where fans jeered their shared anthem, to rescue their campaign. However, a second goalless draw prompted the apology from the CFA, which also distanced itself from Perrin. China captain Zheng Zhi also shied away from publicly backing Perrin when questioned by AFP at the Asian Football Confederation awards in November.

Perrin, 59, who led Lyon to a French league and Cup double in 2008, has also managed Saint-Etienne and had an eight-month stint at English side Portsmouth in 2005 - where he achieved just four victories in 20 Premiership matches. Before taking up the China post he managed a team in Qatar, which is to host the 2022 World Cup. Some Chinese fans said the CFA had questions to answer. "No matter who you hire or dismiss, the national team performance doesn't change. The key issue is not the coach, but the system of Chinese football," posted one social media user. "Without changing the system, it would be useless even if you hire an extraterrestrial to coach the team." — AFP



Michel Platini

PLATINI WITHDRAWS OF FIFA RACE, VOWS TO CLEAR NAME

PARIS: Suspended UEFA chief Michel Platini vowed to clear his name of sleaze allegations and slammed outgoing FIFA president Sepp Blatter as he pulled out of the race to lead football's world body. Platini told French sports newspaper L'Equipe that he would concentrate on fighting his eight-year ban from football, as he abandoned his bid to contest the FIFA election on February 26. "I will not present myself for the presidency of FIFA. I am withdrawing my candidature," he said, in an interview to be published in full yesterday. "I no longer have the time nor the means to go to the voters, to meet people, to fight against the other candidates. In withdrawing, I am dedicating myself to my defense."

Platini and Blatter were suspended for eight years by FIFA's ethics committee over a \$2 million payment made to Platini in 2011 for work carried out between 1999 and 2002. The 60-year-old Platini said his ban has made it impossible for him to put together a campaign to take on the sport's most powerful job. "It is a question of the calendar, but not only that. How can you win an election when you are prevented from campaigning?" he said. Platini laid the blame for his plight squarely at the door of Blatter, 79, claiming that the veteran Swiss wanted his "scalp". "Everything started because of Blatter, who wanted my head, who did not want me to go to (lead) FIFA," Platini was quoted as saying. "He said often that I would be his final scalp, but he fell at the same time as me."

'How did we get to this?'

Platini said he will concentrate his resources on an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) and the FIFA electoral commission which "claimed that I had falsified accounts". The Frenchman said: "I have fought like I have always fought in my life but I have not been given the opportunity to compete this time round." Platini's decision to give up on his dream of becoming FIFA president leaves five declared candidates.

They are: Asian football head Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa of Bahrain, South African politician and tycoon Tokyo Sexwale, former FIFA vice-president Prince Ali bin Al Hussein of Jordan, UEFA general secretary Gianni Infantino, and Jerome Champagne, a former FIFA assistant general secretary from France. Platini, a FIFA vice-president, and Blatter were banned from all football-related activities by FIFA's ethics committee on December 21. Platini insisted there was nothing illegal in his oral contract he said was agreed with Blatter.

The salary agreement was however never disclosed in FIFA documentation until the payment was made in 2011. "I'm struggling to understand. Why? How did we get to this? I did some work, I asked to be paid, I sent an invoice, I was paid, I paid my taxes on that. That was in 2011," he told AFP when the ban was announced. "There was a debt that was settled, full stop! Then, in 2015, the Swiss court wanted more information." — AFP



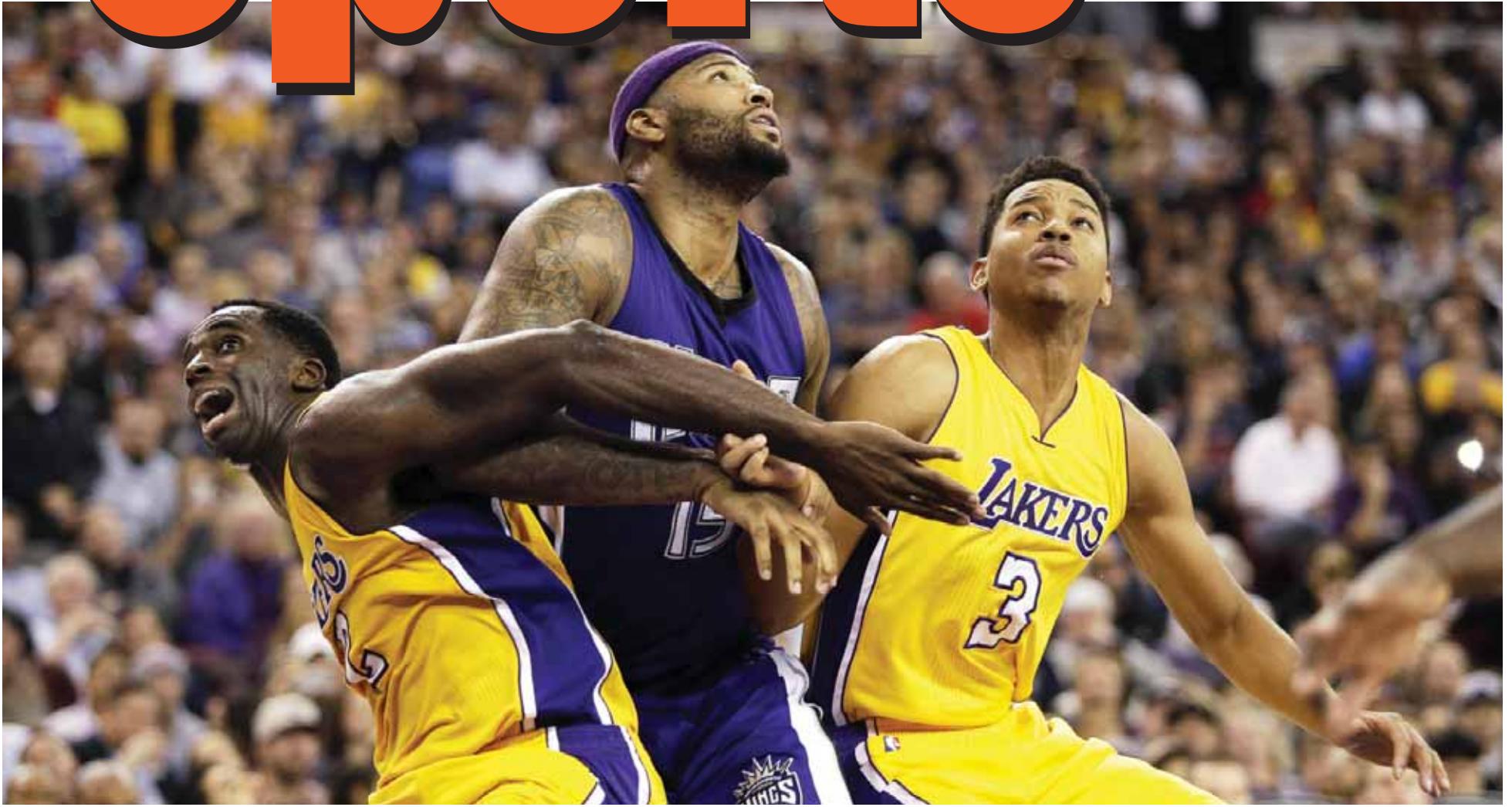
China's coach Alain Perrin

Sports



**Platini withdraws
of FIFA race, vows
to clear his name**

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SACRAMENTO: Los Angeles Lakers forward Brandon Bass (left) and guard Anthony Brown (right) battle for a rebound with Sacramento Kings center DeMarcus Cousins during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Sacramento, Calif on Thursday, Jan 7, 2016. — AP

KINGS HOLD OFF BRYANT'S LAKERS

LOS ANGELES: The Sacramento Kings squandered a 27-point lead but dug deep late for a 118-115 NBA victory over the Los Angeles Lakers in Kobe Bryant's last game in the California capital. Kings guard Rajon Rondo made a running basket to put Sacramento up by one with 21 seconds left and then forced a Lakers turnover as a contest that looked like a certain blowout came down to the wire. Sacramento center DeMarcus Cousins then made two free throws and Lakers guard Louis Williams missed a three-pointer at the buzzer.

Bryant, the Lakers superstar who will retire at the end of this season, scored 28 points in his 34th and final regular season appearance in Sacramento. Bryant returned from a three-game absence nursing a sore shoulder and scored 28 points—including a highlight-reel two-handed dunk that Lakers coach Byron Scott called a "young man moment." Bryant, who led the Lakers to three playoff series victories over the Kings, made 10 of 18 shots from the field and six of eight free throws, and became the third player in NBA history—and at 37 the youngest ever—to score 33,000 points in his career.

He took his tally to 33,010, but was on the bench for the night by the time the Lakers charged back into contention. Rookie D'Angelo Russell scored 11 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter for Los Angeles. Although the Lakers fell to 8-29 — the second-worst record in the league Bryant said the heart his young teammates showed late was encouraging. "They played so well, they worked really, really hard," Bryant said. "It's important for them to figure out how to close those games out without me on the floor."

Bulls in tune

The Chicago Bulls consolidated their second spot in the Eastern Conference with a sixth straight victory, downing the Boston Celtics 101-92. Down 43-33 late in the second quarter, the Bulls out-scored Boston 15-4 in the final four minutes of the frame to lead 48-47 at halftime. They rolled from there, continuing an impressive streak that has seen them score at least 100 points in their last nine games. That's a feat the Bulls hadn't accomplished since the 1995-96 season when Michael Jordan led the team.

Shooting guard Jimmy Butler said the Bulls' offensive output was rooted in improved defense. "That's what really won us the game," Butler said. "We were out there guarding, we rebounded, and we got a lot of easy baskets. When we're playing like that, we look really good out there." Six Chicago players scored in double figures. Butler had a double-double of 19 points and 10 assists, Derrick Rose scored 18 and center Pau Gasol had his 19th double-double of the season with 17 points and 18 rebounds. The in-tune Bulls had an appreciative audience in Spanish tenor Plácido Domingo, a friend of Gasol's who attended the game. "He's a basketball fan," Gasol said.

Harden leads Rockets

Down by five to Utah on their home floor at halftime, the Houston Rockets picked up the pace in the second half to beat the Jazz for the second time in four days. Rockets guard James Harden scored 33 points in the 103-94 victory as Houston overcame the absence of center Dwight Howard, who sat out with tightness in his back. Houston, who defeated the Jazz 93-91 in Salt Lake City on Monday, scored 64 points in the second half, connecting on 65.7

percent of their shots from the floor. After the break, they produced 12 fast-break points, including 10 in the third quarter. "I think we were playing for the most part pretty well defensively. Offensively we were too slow," Harden said of the first half. "We wanted to put an emphasis on pushing the basketball, getting stops and just running out."

HAWKS 126, 76ERS 98

Kent Bazemore scored 22 points, Paul Millsap and Al Horford had 18 apiece and Atlanta blew out Philadelphia to end a two-game losing streak. Dennis Schroder added 14 points off the bench for the Hawks, who shot 54 percent from the field and 42 percent from 3-point range against the NBA's worst team en route to their most lopsided win of the season. Rookie Jahlil Okafor led the Sixers with 21 points, while Nerlens Noel had nine points and 13 rebounds. Recently acquired point guard Ish Smith finished with 12 points and seven assists.

ROCKETS 103, JAZZ 94

James Harden scored 33 points to lead Houston to its second victory over Utah in four days. The Rockets won 93-91 Monday in Salt Lake City. Harden had 30 points in that one and has scored at least 30 in three of his last four games. Playing without Dwight Howard, who sat out with lower back tightness, the Rockets beat the Jazz for the 10th time in the last 12 meetings. Gordon Hayward scored 15 points for Utah. Center Rudy Gobert played for the first time since spraining a left knee ligament on Nov 30. He was limited to just 15 minutes but chipped in six points and three rebounds.— Agencies