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Kuwait Times



THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2016

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HEALTH MINISTER HANDILY DEFEATS GRILLING MOTION

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TWO SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR SPYING FOR IRAN

KUWAIT: A court yesterday sentenced two defendants to death, including an Iranian being tried in absentia, after they were convicted of "spying for Iran" and plotting attacks in the country. The Iranian, Abdulreda Hayder, was on trial along with 25 Kuwaitis on charges of spying for Iran and hiding large quantities of arms and ammunition in underground depots. The court said Hayder is an Iranian spy who recruited the Kuwaiti Shiites and arranged for their travel to Lebanon, where they received military training from Iran-backed militia group Hezbollah.

The other man sentenced to death, Kuwaiti Hasan Abdulhadi Ali, had been a member of Hezbollah since 1996 and was "the mastermind of the cell", the court said. It sentenced another defendant to life in prison. Nineteen were jailed for between five and 15 years, two of them in absentia. Three were acquitted and one was fined KD 5,000 (\$16,500).

The court said Ali had reached out to an Iranian diplomat at Tehran's embassy in Kuwait City and later travelled to Iran, where he was in contact with the Revolutionary Guard.

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KUWAIT: Health Minister Dr Ali Al-Obaidi is seen during a parliamentary session at the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Health Minister Dr Ali Al-Obaidi successfully rebutted a slew of allegations against the ministry and defeated an attempt by the interpellators to collect the necessary 10 votes to file a no-confidence motion. Obaidi, facing his first grilling, answered succinctly and with scientific data, speaking in a calm and collected voice throughout the ordeal. He noted that he had opened 26 projects since he came to the ministry about two years ago among them hospitals and medical centers.

MPs Hamdan Al-Azemi and Rakan Al-Nasef filed the grilling, argued that that the ministry had committed wide-ranging financial and administrative violations. The two lawmakers accused the minister of personally benefiting from his post by awarding contracts to a company he had owned and charged him of squandering public funds in highly-inflated contracts and not responding to warnings by the Audit Bureau. The two MPs also accused the minister of failing to take action against those responsible for causing the death of several patients in the past few months as a result of medical errors.

But Obaidi rejected these allegations as baseless. He also noted that not all who died lost their lives because of medical error and doctors who were responsible for such errors were penalized and some sacked.

Nasef said the minister refused to provide him with the names of companies that recruited 2,600 nurses from abroad, mostly Asian, and which forced the nurses to pay huge fees to be recruited.

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KUWAIT, QATAR KEEN ON BOOSTING COOPERATION: FM

GULF STATES SIGN EIGHT COOPERATION DEALS, PROGRAMS



KUWAIT: Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah (right) receives Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub. Tahboub handed over a letter from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

AMIR RECEIVES LETTER FROM PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday a written letter from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. The letter focused on issues connected to bilateral ties and means to enhance them. Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub handed the letter to Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received the outgoing Azeri Ambassador to Kuwait Tural Rzayev at Seif Palace yesterday. The meeting was also attended by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Earlier, His Highness the Amir received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, and Acting Minister of Oil Anas Al-Saleh. Separately, His Highness the Crown Prince received chiefs and members of the US, UK and Northern Ireland,

as well as the Cairo branches of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS). During the meeting, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf called on the Kuwaiti students to spare no effort in their quest to acquire knowledge, affirming that the future of Kuwait was in their hands. He called on them to follow the guidelines set by His Highness the Amir and the country's leadership, wishing the students all the best in the future. The students meanwhile thanked His Highness Sheikh Nawaf for his encouraging words, affirming that they will work hard for the development of the country. The meeting was attended by undersecretary at the Diwan of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince also received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, Waleed Abdulmohsen Al-Wuhaib, Director General of the Islamic Solidarity Fund, part of the Islamic Development Bank, and Aouni Al-Kaaki head of the Lebanese press syndicate. —KUNA

DOHA: Kuwait's First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said that the fourth session of Kuwait-Qatar joint committee dealt with ways of further boosting bilateral relations and cooperation.

During a joint news conference with Qatari Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Attiyah Monday, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said the participation of 24 government and private bodies in the committee meeting reflected keenness to meeting aspirations of the two countries. He said the two countries signed cooperation agreements to bring total deals to 24.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled noted that joint investments exceeded \$7 billion while trade exchange in 2015 amounted to around \$250 million. The two countries operate 73 flights weekly, and over 700,000 people travelled between the two countries last year. Kuwait is hosting more than 100 Qatar cadets, while 100 Kuwaitis are studying in Qatar, he said.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said he met with Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim Al-Thani and conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He congratulated Qatar and its people on the safe return of the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani.

Regional issues

Attiyah meanwhile said the two sides discussed regional and international issues of

mutual interest. He said the cooperation agreements would bolster cooperation in the fields of oil and gas, air transport, culture, information, and education. The joint committee is deeply concerned over the continued ordeal of Qataris held hostage in Iraq after they entered the country with legal documents from the Iraqi ministry of interior and embassy in Doha, according to a joint statement issued after the fourth session of the committee tonight. "The abduction of the Qatari nationals is a flagrant violation of the international law, the human rights and the values of Noble Islam; it's also an unacceptable infringement on the sisterly ties between the two Arab countries," the statement said.

The committee urged the Iraqi government to do its utmost towards freeing the Qatari hostages and ensuring their safe return home. The two sides signed the minutes of the fourth committee session which covered all aspects of cooperation in the fields of foreign policy, defense, security, economy, commerce, investment, energy, industry, education, higher education, labor, social affairs, environment, information, youth and sports, communication, information technology, electricity and water, civil service, and administrative development.

They also signed agreements in such areas as air transport, cultural and artistic exchanges, education and higher education, and scientific research as well as memoran-

dums of understanding (MoU) in the fields of oil and gas, petrochemicals, industrial cooperation, civil service, administrative development, the third executive program for media collaboration (2016-2018) the second executive program for educational collaboration (2016-2020).

They reviewed the sisterly ties in all fields as well as ways to further enhance them in the spirit of mutual trust and understanding, and shared interests. They also discussed a range of regional and international issues of common interest, according to the statement.

GCC joint action

Regarding the GCC joint action, the joint committee extolled Qatari Amir and His Highness the Amir of Kuwait for their constant efforts to push forward the blessed GCC march and their keenness on the success of the committee meeting. The two sides agreed to convene the fifth session of the committee in Kuwait in 2017; the exact date and venue will be arranged through routine diplomatic consultation, it added.

During his meeting with Qatari Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled conveyed to the Qatari leader the regards of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait and best wishes for Qatar. Sheikh Tamim asked Sheikh Sabah Khaled to convey his regards to His Highness the Amir and best wishes for the Kuwaiti people and government, the statement noted. — KUNA



DOHA: Qatari Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Attiyah (right) speaks during a joint news conference with Kuwait's First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. — KUNA



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GOVT SUES SHEIKHS AHMAD, TALAL OVER SPORT ACTIVITIES' SUSPENSION

DEMANDS KD 400 MILLION IN DAMAGES

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti government yesterday sued Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd and Sheikh Talal Al-Fahd jointly with members of the Olympic committee over the suspension of Kuwait's sports activities. The government primarily demands KD 5,001 as compensation from both sheikhs pending a further KD 400 million compensation. Notably, the International Olympic Committee had suspended all sport activities in Kuwait after a deadline it had given to amend sport laws to match the international Olympic charter passed.

Fake doctor freed

The public prosecutor yesterday released a student who was arrested for impersonating as a doctor at Amiri Hospital without any bail. The man was arrested recently after spending months working at the public hospital without authorization, according to investigations. The man denied criminal intent, claiming during questioning that he only wanted to fulfill his lifelong dream of working as a doctor.

Safety conditions

Chairman of the Municipal Council's technical committee Fahd Al-Sane said that the com-

mittee postponed discussing safety conditions in industrial area buildings until the industrial authority files an official request to do so. He added that the committee also referred a request made by a telecom company to extend its signal towers' licenses to a fact-finding committee. Sane said the committee also deferred discussing a proposal made by member Hassan Kamal on allocating a price of land to build an integrated medical city. He added that the committee also rejected a request made by a fuel marketing company to amend the council's decision on developing its fuel stations, in addition to discussing a number of other topics on the meeting's agenda.



KUWAIT: Senior Interior Ministry officials inspect a driver's papers during a crackdown in Mahboula Monday night.

1,527 ARRESTED IN MAHBOULA RAID

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Security forces launched a sudden inspection campaign in Mahboula Monday night, led by Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lieutenant General Suleiman Al-Fahd and Assistant Undersecretary For General Security Affairs Major General Abdulfattah Al-Ali. According to the Ministry of Interior's (Mol) public relations and security media department, the campaign resulted in arresting a total of 1,527 illegal residents including 401 arrested for not holding an ID, 150 visa law violators, 41 absconders, eight wanted for various crimes and three drunks, while two vehicles that had been reported wanted were found. Security sources explained that 636 of the arrested had been referred for deportation and other relevant authorities and that 261 were later released after they procured valid IDs.

Accordingly, Mol urged all residents to carry their IDs at all times and when going from one place to another. The department also urged all companies and sponsors to have their employees' visas renewed in time to avoid being arrested as violators. Finally, the department urged all residents to make use of the humanitarian gesture made allowing illegal residents to legalize their stay in Kuwait or pay fines and leave without being blacklisted.

Traffic campaign

Upon instructions from Mol's Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs Major General Abdullah Al-Muhanna, Ahmadi

traffic police launched a wide-scale inspection campaign in collaboration with Ahmadi municipality. The campaign resulted in filing 380 direct and indirect traffic citations in addition to referring 29 vehicles abandoned or displayed for sale to the department's impoundment garage.

Fake companies

Residency affairs detectives yesterday raided a number of commercial complexes to inspect fake companies, said security sources, noting that the raid resulted in finding 15 fake and closed companies that sponsor 82 laborers who had been all listed on travel ban lists. The sources added that concerned authorities have been contacted to take legal measures against the violating companies.

Fatal accident

A man was killed and another was critically injured in an accident reported yesterday at the paratroopers road. Police and paramedics had rushed to the scene where a sports-utility-vehicle was reported to have turned turtle. One Kuwaiti man was pronounced dead on the scene, while another was rushed to the hospital. An investigation was opened to determine the circumstances behind the accident.

Ammo found

Mol's relations and security media department yesterday announced finding some ammunition and weapons that had been left over since the 1990 invasion in Kuwait International Airport's vicinity.

PARLIAMENT, GOVERNMENT JOIN EFFORTS TO STUDY SUBSIDIES

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly yesterday agreed that its bureau will form a team to join several government ministers to study together state subsidies and submit a joint report to the national assembly.

The action came after Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah informed the assembly that the government plans to rationalize subsidies to ensure that they reach those who deserve it and insisted that any measure will not harm low-income people.

The new move comes after the finance minister said the government will take all the recommendations regarding the lifting or reduction of subsidies to the national assembly. Speaker Marzouk Al-Ghanem also said the government promised him that it will not take any unilateral decision subsidies and stressed that any measures to reduce subsidies to support the budget will not harm low income people.

The issue of reducing subsidies and raising the cost of fuel, electricity and other government services has gained momentum after almost all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states took key steps in this direction.

Four of the six states, including Saudi Arabia, have already increased the price of fuel products and only Qatar and Kuwait have not taken action. Kuwait however has lifted subsidies for diesel and kerosene.



KUWAIT: Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem (left) speaks with MP Abdullah Al-Traiji during a parliament session at Kuwait's National Assembly yesterday.

—Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

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Al Danah Millionaire Ramadan Ali Hassan Al-Sharah receives his cheque from Gulf Bank's CEO, Cesar Gonzalez -Bueno and the bank's team.

GULF BANK'S AL-DANAH MILLIONAIRE RECEIVES HIS PRIZE



Al Danah's KD 250,000 winner

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank recently had the opportunity to welcome and congratulate the KD 1,000,000 winner Ramadan Ali Hassan Al-Sharah and present him with his winning cheque. The Al-Danah KD 1,000,000 winner Ramadan Ali Hassan Al-Sharah, reacted upon receiving the cash prize by saying: "I would like to take this opportunity to thank Gulf Bank for this prize. I will without a doubt continue banking with Gulf Bank".

Gulf Bank would also like to congratulate Hassan Mohammed Al-Ansari and Fadel Hashem Ashkanani who won KD 250,000 and KD 50,000 respectively.

Customers wishing to take part in the Al-Danah draws are advised to open an account before 31 January to take part in the first quarterly Al-Danah draw for 2016 for KD25,000, KD125,000 and KD200,000 which will be held on 31 March 2016.

To be part of the Al-Danah draws, customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's 56 branches, transfer on line, or call the Customer Contact Center on 1805805 for assistance and guidance. Customers can also log on to www.gulfbank.com/aldanahwinners, to find out more about Al-Danah and who the winners are.

40-DAY COLD WAVE ENDS, LOW TEMPERATURES RETURN FRIDAY

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Astronomer Adel Al-Marzouq predicted that the weather would stabilize starting from tomorrow before marking the beginning of a 13-day cold wave on Friday that is locally known as Al-Naayem, which can be extremely cold and accompanied by night frost in desert areas. "This period is traditionally known to affect elderly sleeping people," he said, noting that there was an old saying about it that goes 'Al-Naayem chill makes seniors sleeping warmly feel cold'.

Marzouq added that these 13 days would be followed by four even colder days locally known as the 'Azairaq', urging everybody to be aware of extreme low temperatures, especially those camping in the desert. Marzouq elaborated that at the conclusion of the 40-day 'Merbeaniya'

cold wave on Thursday, the weather is forecast to be clear with northwesterly moderate cold wind and low temperatures at night. He added that temperatures are expected to drop to two or three degrees centigrade in desert areas during the night and early hours of the morning.

Marzouq said that Friday, Jan 15, would mark the beginning of the Naayem cold wave when winds are expected to shift to southeasterly with moderate speed and the possibility of light showers at night. As for Saturday, Jan 16, Marzouq said that temperatures would considerably rise due to a shift to light southeasterly winds and the possibility of scattered rain in the early morning. He added that temperatures would rise during the rest of next week to reach 18-21 C by day and 6-8 C at dawn with clear skies.



BEIRUT: KFAED Director General Abdulwahab Al-Bader and Chairman of the Lebanese Construction and Development Council Nabil Al-Jiser shake hands after signing the agreement. —KUNA

KFAED, LEBANON SIGN \$30 MILLION GRANT AGREEMENT

BEIRUT: The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) and Lebanon have signed a \$30 million grant agreement to improve public services in Lebanese communities hosting Syrian refugees. The grant agreement was signed by KFAED Director General Abdulwahab Al-Bader and Chairman of the Lebanese Construction and Development Council Nabil Al-Jiser.

The grant is part of a \$500 million commitment that Kuwait pledged during the third Syrians donors' conference that was held in Kuwait, Bader said yesterday.

The KFAED paid \$100 million of that pledge, Bader pointed out. He expressed hope that this grant would help the Lebanese Government in improving the living conditions of Syrian refugees.

Meanwhile, Jiser expressed his appreciation to Kuwait's support to Lebanon in easing off some of the responsibility it has shouldered as a host country for Syrian refugees. He added that Kuwait offered Lebanon \$450 million grants to overcome current crises - half the amount of easy loans that were given to development projects. —KUNA

DOOR OPEN FOR BY-ELECTION IN 3RD CONSTITUENCY

KUWAIT: The door is open for those wishing to run in a by-election in the third constituency, said a statement issued by the Ministry of Interior yesterday, noting that registration for candidates to become members of Parliament starts today. Among candidacy requirements is to be a Kuwaiti citizen, not less than 30 years of age, able to read and write, with an immaculate criminal record,

said the statement. At the time of registration, a candidate is also required to pay a registration fee of KD 50, said the statement.

Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem had announced yesterday that the seat of deceased MP Nabeel Al-Fadhel was vacant, calling for the necessary constitutional procedures to be carried out to fill in the seat. Speaking to the regular session of parliament,

Ghanem said that according to article 84 of the constitution and item 18 of the National Assembly's statute, the vacant seat of an MP, who did not finish his legislative term, should be filled in within a period of two months through elections. MP Fadhel passed away due to health complications during a regular session for parliament on December 22nd, 2015. —KUNA







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- All submitted photos will become property of Kuwait Times newspaper and can be used for different purposes.
- The winners will be chosen by a panel of judges.
- All photos must be original and should not be doctored with any design program, such as Photoshop.
- All photos should be submitted at the Kuwait Times newspaper before 17th of March 2016.

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NINGXIA: Female Kuwaiti students visit the Yinchuan Mingcui Lake Country Marsh Park in China. — KUNA

SENEGALESE OFFICIAL LAUDS KUWAIT'S DEVELOPMENT AID CONTRIBUTIONS

FEMALE STUDENTS VISIT MARSHLAND PARK IN CHINA

DAKAR/NINGXIA: Director General of Senegal's Road Maintenance Project Ibrahim Ndiaye praised Kuwait's development aid contributions to Senegal, especially the significant role played by Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) in the country.

During a meeting yesterday with Kuwaiti high-achieving students visiting the country, the official said that the fund has allocated 29 loans, worth KD 110.2 million, and these loans have financed several projects in the field of transport, agriculture, healthcare, and education. After the meeting, the Kuwaiti delegation went on a field visit to several KFAED funded projects in the capital Dakar.

Meanwhile, KFAED trip coordinator Dr Khalid Al-Nafisi stressed the impor-

tance of the "be a high-achiever" program which highlighted the active role of Kuwait in the development of other countries. Students partaking in the program expressed their pride of the fund's activities, saying that it reflected the bright image of Kuwait.

Separately, distinguished female high school students on Monday visited Yinchuan Mingcui Lake Country Marsh Park, the third largest in China and the largest in its eastern regions. The youngsters were dazzled by the wide-ranging wildlife, including 97 different animals and over 10,000 bird species during their trip to the Chinese autonomous region of Ningxia, organized by Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

Due to the extremely cold winter, Mingcui Lake transforms into ice. And

the people of Ningxia's capital, Yinchuan, are welcomed to take to the ice, much to the delight of the Kuwaiti visitors, who joined in. The young girls were also taken to a shopping mall and a market, where they got a close hand of the region's colorful traditional dress.

The visit is part of an initiative organized by KFAED aimed at highlighting the philanthropic work it has done for so many parts of the world. The fund organizes annual trips for both male and female high school students as part of its social development plan. Since 2010, KFAED had taken an initiative to develop the abilities and talents of well-achieving students, by taking them on trips to different cities around the world. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Lieutenant General Yousif Abdullah Al-Ansari, Director of the Kuwait Fire Services Directorate (KFSD), yesterday presided a meeting at KFSD headquarters to review the major incidents that fire and rescue teams handled recently. The meeting also attended by KFSD's Deputy Director for Prevention Major General Khaled Al-Mekrad, Deputy Director for Firefighting Brigadier Jamal Al-Blaihees and fire chiefs from various governorates, central operations, marine forces and the head of the fire investigations department. —By Hanan Al-Saadoun

ELECTRONIC CRIMES LAW THREATENS TO FURTHER STIFLE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION: AMNESTY INT'L

KUWAIT: A new cybercrimes law, which is due to take effect on 12 January 2016, will add a further layer to the web of laws that already restrict the right of people in Kuwait to freedom of expression and must be urgently reviewed, Amnesty International said.

The law includes criminalization of a range of online expression - in particular, criticism of the government, religious figureheads or foreign leaders. Dozens of people in Kuwait have already been arrested and prosecuted under other legislation for comments of this kind made on social media sites such as Twitter.

"This repressive law is the latest, flawed strand in a tangled web of legislation that is designed to stifle free speech," said Said Boumedouha, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa program. "Like anyone else in the world, Kuwaitis have a right to peacefully express their opinion, including by criticizing their own or other governments online without fear of imprisonment."

The law repeats vaguely worded provisions of flawed laws dating back to 1970 and 2006 which criminalize a range of peaceful expression that could be construed as criticism of government and judicial officials, religious figures or leaders of regional governments. These laws have already been used to restrict peaceful expression in Kuwait.

With the introduction of this new law, people in Kuwait will face up to 10 years' imprisonment for peacefully expressing their opinions over the internet. The law addresses actions which, depending on circumstances, could be recognizably criminal acts; such as unauthorized access to an electronic network, the alteration of data, such as by way of forgery, the dissemination of unlawfully accessed information and the use of the internet for trafficking. However, the law mistakenly conflates this type of activity with peaceful expression.

International law

The new legislation also conflicts with international law, which requires the definition of crimes to be clear and precise. It flies in the face of the UN Human Rights Council's



2014 resolution on the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet, which called upon states to ensure that they "address security concerns on the Internet in accordance with their international human rights obligations," including the protection of freedom of expression.

"The Kuwaiti authorities must not apply this law until they have reviewed its compatibility with Kuwait's international human rights obligations," said Said Boumedouha. "This law does not belong to the 21st century. In spirit and indeed, in letter, it is a retrograde piece of legislation that merely draws upon earlier, repressive laws. Kuwaitis deserve better."

In December 2015, Amnesty International urged the government to revise all laws relating to freedom of expression, whether in speech, print or by electronic means, and to bring them in line with international human rights law and standards.

Report

Amnesty International set out its concerns and recommendations relating to freedom of peaceful expression in Kuwait in its December 2015 report, The iron fist policy: Criminalization of peaceful dissent in Kuwait. Journalist and prisoner of con-

science Ayad Khaled Al-Harbi, 26, has been in prison since October 2014 in connection with, among other things, tweets deemed critical of Kuwait's Amir and government and echoing the words of prominent government critic, Musallam Al-Barrak, as well as verses of poetry criticizing Arab rulers.

Blogger Hamad Al-Naqi is currently serving a 10-year prison term for posting comments on Twitter that were considered critical of the leaders of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia and other messages deemed 'insulting' to Islam. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Prisoner of conscience, Abdullah Fairouz, a human rights defender and political activist, is serving a five-year jail term because he posted tweets saying that those who lived in royal palaces should not be immune from prosecution.

On 28 July 2014, lawyer Khaled Al-Shatti tweeted a thinly veiled condemnation of members of the armed group calling itself Islamic State. He was sentenced to one year in prison with immediate implementation by a Misdemeanours Court on 17 December for insult to religion. However the Appeals Court halted the implementation of this sentence until it issued its verdict. If Khaled Al-Shatti is jailed, he will be a prisoner of conscience.

ANALYST EXPECTS KUWAITI OIL PRICE TO HIT \$34 IN 2016

KUWAIT: The expected average price for Brent Crude oil in 2016 is \$39 per barrel, equivalent to \$34 per barrel of Kuwaiti crude oil, a Kuwaiti oil analyst predicted yesterday. This prediction is in line with plummeting crude oil prices during the first quarter of the year, with a gradual recovery expected during the second half of 2016, analyst Mohammad Al-Shatti said.

Moreover, the disparity in prices between Gulf oil and Brent crude could further widen as means of keeping the market afloat and maintaining a level of competition between oil producers, Shatti said. The decline in oil prices comes amid dismal conditions as the price of Brent Crude oil reached a record of \$115 per barrel in June 2014 only to plunge to a staggering \$30 per barrel in January 2016, Shatti noted.

The analyst also noted that the expected entry of Iranian oil into the market in February 2016 is sure to have an effect on supply and demand during the year. On average, the price of oil during 2015 stayed within the range of \$35 to \$66, a possible indication of average

oil prices during the expected recovery in the second half of this year, Shatti said.

Rising hostility

Meanwhile, Shatti opined that rising hostility amongst some of the world's largest oil producers, nations with "massive oil reserves", no longer has a bearing on oil prices, a testament to what he said was "oil versatility." As for price of Kuwaiti oil, he said that it now stands at \$24 per barrel, a decline not seen in 12 years.

The number of oil drills in the United States has dwindled from 1609 in October 2014 to 516 on January 8, perhaps an omen that the decrease in oil prices shows no signs of abating, Shatti said. A daily decline of 330 thousand barrels is expected for 2016, he added.

On whether the prices of oil can ever regain its glorious form, Shatti said that expected prices for a barrel of Brent Crude oil for the years 2018 and 2019 are between \$50 to \$70, a sign that a sharp decline of oil prices would persist in the next few years.— KUNA



Kuwait International Airport

10 MILLION PASSENGERS USED AIRPORT IN 2015

KUWAIT: A total of 10,213,277 passengers used Kuwait International Airport in both departures and arrivals in 2015. The Ministry of Interior's Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Borders Affairs Major General Faisal Al-Senain said yesterday.

A statement issued by the ministry's Relations and Security Media Department quoting Senain explained that the total number of departing passengers was 5,055,581, including 1,814,941 citizens, while the total number of arriving passengers was 5,157,696, including 1,807,242 citizens. Senain added that the airport pass-

ports department issued 299,785 visas, while it identified 662 blacklisted people by their fingerprints, prevented them from entering Kuwait and returned them to where they came from. It also arrested 533 forgers. "The total number of passengers denied access into Kuwait was 3,053," he said. Senain also announced arresting 993 people and referring them to the residency affairs detectives while 295 others were arrested and referred to the central department. In addition, Senain announced arresting 181 citizens who were referred to relevant authorities.



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Al-Anbaa
OPERATING THROUGH ENEMY PLANS

By Sami Al-Nisf

The spectacular victory achieved by the Soviet Union and the considerable sacrifices it made during World War II against Nazi troops, that had brought so much suffering and torture to West European peoples, was the main reason in the founding of strong Marxist parties in countries like Italy, France, Spain, Greece and Portugal after East European countries shifted to communism. Communists were very close to rulers of countries like Italy and France.

In the 1960s, international powers started cooperating with some Western countries' authorities in applying a theory known as 'operating through enemy plans', which means creating an extreme power known as Marxism and having it carry out some terrorist operations such as bombing densely crowded spots, assassinations and kidnappings, like the kidnapping of Italian PM Aldo Moro and killing him by the Red Brigades that claimed to be communist, just as he was about to share the cabinet with Communists. In another example, demonstrations organized by students who claimed to be leftist swept France in 1968 and forced President De Gaulle, who had called for quitting from the NATO, step down in 1969.

The very same plan was used during the same period in the Middle East, where many military coups were arranged in Iraq in 1968, Libya in 1969, and Syria and Sudan in 1970. Regimes in those countries were allowed to pretend to be leftist and nationalist as well as to get closer to the Soviet Union and then commit all kinds of atrocities, including killing, torture, corruption and waging already lost wars, in order to have peoples shift their hate to the ideas and slogans they represented. The Soviet Union was very dissatisfied with regimes that claimed to be its allies while they hunted and executed communists in their countries, just like Saddam, who revolted against the communists in 1978 and executed them all. The same happened when Assad sent his troops to Lebanon in 1976 to fight the Palestinian, leftist and Marxist powers (locally known as the national powers) in favor of the Lebanese rightist powers who were allies of Israel.

The same happened in Libya in 1971 when Gaddafi helped foil the Marxist Hashim Attallah's coup in Sudan against Numairi by forcing a British Airways flight carrying the coup leaders to Sudan, including Abu Bakr Nour and his companions, to land in Libya. Saddam's intelligence also planted a bomb on a flight carrying communist Sudanese leaders from Baghdad to Khartoum, killing all those onboard. Those were all acts by those who pretended to be friends with the Soviet Union in public and acted on destroying it in secret. This method of 'operating through enemy plans' seems to have lasted until the 1980s, 1990s and the present through Islamist movements who followed Palestinians' tendency for terrorist acts, making people hate them, their slogans and causes. Accordingly, organizations like Al-Qaeda, IS, Ansarullah and others continue to destroy Muslim countries in the name of Islam and what a brilliant plan it is, depending on the fact that our naive people believe so much of the lies they hear and refuse to believe facts they see it with their own eyes!

— Translated by Kuwait Times



Al-Anbaa
EGYPT AND IRAN

By Saleh Al-Shayehi

Egypt is an example of an ancient civilized country that acts according to the moralities of states with ancient human civilization legacies. It is always keen on maintaining such a status and highly appreciates human values and achievements. Therefore, it is no wonder that most oriental geniuses in the modern age came from Egypt, like the prince of Arab poetry, the reviver of Arab poetry, the dean of Arab literature and the Arab Nobel prize laureate.

Egypt has also given humanity many great scientists, who were killed within certain plots, the most famous Quran reciters who attracted Muslims from far and wide with their sweet voices and recitations. The kings of Arab literature, acting, singing, dancing and music also came from Egypt. Well, the list is too long to be contained in one article.

On my recent visit to Cairo, I spent some time relaxing in old Fatimid Cairo near Al-Azhar mosque and its vicinity. I went through the streets of Al-Mo'ez Ledein Ellah Al-Fatimi and Jawhar Al-Siqilli, the founder of Fatimid Egypt. Traditionally, Egyptians have a song, which goes: "He who built Egypt was originally a confectioner" to

indicate how beautifully and carefully it had been designed and built.

In fact, an Egyptian historian once wrote that Jawhar El-Siqilli had worked as a confectioner in Sicily before he came to Egypt as a slave and learnt military arts after he was freed and eventually became the highest-ranking military commander of the Fatimids. He was the one who invaded Egypt and occupied it to found the Fatimid dynasty at that time. Therefore, Egyptians always sing those lines to refer to the beauty of Fatimid Egypt's mosques, streets, alleys, marketplaces, walls and gates.

The secret of this may lie in the fact that Egypt has been invaded by many cultures and civilizations, who all ended up melting in the Egyptian civilization pot. That is why, probably, Egypt is internationally known as the world's largest open museum containing three-fourths of the world's monuments.

We do have another similarly ancient and civilized country in our orient - Iran. If only Iran had followed Egypt's footsteps in maintaining its status and history without wasting it in wars and conflicts. If only it exported its civilization instead of exporting its revolution!

— Translated by Kuwait Times

Crime

Report

Motorist stabbed in traffic dispute

KUWAIT: A university student was stabbed in his head when he was attacked along with his friend for four persons who claimed that the victim forced them off the road. A police source said a citizen in his twenties told Qadsiya police station that he had a dispute over the right of way, and was surprised by being chased from Qadsiya to Mansouriya gas station. Four persons then came out of the vehicle with knives and sticks and attacked him. The victim was able to write down the license plate number of the suspects' car and detectives are looking for them.

Delivery man mugged

A delivery man was stabbed twice by a thief who stole KD 240 and his phone. The victim went to Mubarak Hospital and a case of attempted murder and armed robbery was recorded at Salmiya police station. The Indian driver was on his way to deliver an order when he was stopped by the thief, and when he asked for help from passersby, the thief stabbed him in the hand and arm and escaped.

Illegal entry

A Syrian man who was arrested for attempting to enter the ministry of defense was sent to state security for questioning. A military patrol noticed the man parking his car near the boundary wall of Al-Jewan building, then walking to the main gate and attempting to slip in. Patrolmen found he was a Syrian who claimed to have an appointment, but on checking, he was found to be lying.

Father threatened

A citizen asked Jabriya police to help him after his son threatened and attempted to beat him. Police are looking for the son, who fled.

Two held with drugs

Ahmedi police foiled a deal to sell drugs and arrested two citizens with 50 illicit tablets, who were sent to the Drugs Control General Department. A police patrol noticed two persons who had parked their cars in Sabahiya, then one of them went and joined the other in his car. When policemen came close to them, they tried to hide something, and when searched, the drugs along with money were found.

'Infiltrator' caught

A bedoon (stateless) man attempted to go through the security barriers towards an aircraft that was heading to Britain, but airport security men stopped him. After some silence, he told them: "I want to go to Britain." A security source said airport police noticed a man attempting to go past them, then he escaped when they confronted him, jumped over the barriers and rushed to gate number 2, but was caught. When he was searched as a precautionary measure, a bullet was found with him. He did not have a passport or ticket, and was sent to the airport security office. The suspect is a bedoon in his twenties. He did not have any drugs with him and was sane. — Al-Rai



KUWAIT: A view from Monday's regular session at the Municipal Council. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

COUNCIL SLAMS 'UNETHICAL ACTIVITIES' AT CAFES

KUWAIT: Members of the Municipal Council slammed the presence of closed cabins in cafes and what goes on in some of them, such as the "sale" of women, liquor and drugs. Council member Mane Al-Ajmi said during a regular session Monday most unethical activities in cafes are committed by expats, who attempt to "present their culture to the Kuwait society one way or another", adding that "the term shisha is used in some cafes to allow the mixing of genders and create closed cabins and chairs that become beds".

"There is a chain of gangs of expats whose job is to spread vice, while some Kuwaitis seek to make financial profits without regard to their religious feelings or patriotism," Ajmi alleged. He added everyone has heard about the presence of drugs, liquor



Council member Mane Al-Ajmi speaks during the session.

and other illicit things in such cafes, "so we demand the implementation of the smoking ban law, which was

passed by parliament".

"Another catastrophe is of selling women, in addition to having rooms in which vice activities are carried out," he said, urging the interior ministry to be strict in implementing the law and supervise cafes. "The majority of cafes are guarded by men equipped with walkie-talkies to inform those inside about any stranger who enters," he claimed

Meanwhile, council member Fahd Al-Sane said: "This issue shakes the entire Kuwaiti society, so there must be coordination between the interior ministry and municipality to eradicate this phenomenon." — Al-Rai

NO SPRING BREAK EXTENSION

KUWAIT: The Education Ministry denied social media reports that it may extend the spring break until Feb 7. Public Education Undersecretary Fatima Al-Kandari said that rumors suggesting an extension for the break are "totally untrue," and confirmed compliance with decision number one which decided that Jan 24, Sunday, is the day when teachers and students return to school. — Al-Anbaa

ONCOST JOINS HORECA 2016 AS SILVER SPONSOR

KUWAIT: ONCOST Cash and Carry Company (ONCOST) announced its participation in the Horeca Kuwait 2016 exhibition, which is due to be held in the period of January 18-19, 2016. In this regard, ONCOST's Operations executive manager, Saleh Mohammed Al-Tunaib said that Horeca 2016 has proved its great ability to develop the hospitality, food industries and hotel sector, adding that it had attracted an unprecedented number of participating companies. He added that the exhibition is a golden opportunity for ONCOST to take part in major hospitality, foodstuff and hotel equipment exhibitions, and to get closer to its clients, meet other local and international companies manager to eventually activate commercial exchanges and the develop the sector in general.

Tunaib added that ONCOST Cash and Carry was the first wholesale membership retail store introduced in Kuwait based on the concept of com-

binning quality assortment with value and convenience all offered under one roof. He also noted that ONCOST offers competitive prices compared to those in other wholesale and retail stores. "That is why we have been successful with various clients, namely those of Horeca, merchants and the owners of grocery stores and mini markets," he underlined.

Notably, Horeca Kuwait 2016 has attracted over 60 participants of the world's leading hospitality, food industries and hotel equipment companies, as well as several travel agencies and offices. In addition, the cooking contest is expected to witness fierce competition between over 300 chefs from various world cuisines under the supervision of nine cooking experts.

Horeca Kuwait 2016 is organized by Leaders Group Company for Consulting and Development in collaboration with the Hospitality Services Company. It takes place at



Saleh Al-Tunaib

Badriya Ballroom in Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa under the auspices of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

SUBAIH TALKS DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE

KUWAIT: Social Affairs and Labor Minister and State Minister for Development and Planning Hind Al-Subaih said "treatment and adjustment of the demographic structure in the country revolves around two main paths - keenness on fixing the size and number of expats and guaranteeing the percentage of Kuwaitis compared to expats." She added that statistics in the past five years showed the number of Kuwaitis as a percentage compared to expats is decreasing.



Hind Al-Subaih

Subaih appealed to government workers to "do their jobs quickly." "If every Kuwaiti gives his job its due and considers work as worship as he gets a salary, I believe we will reach unbelievable achievements, and I am optimistic because Kuwaiti people are smart and able to achieve," she said.

Subaih, who was speaking during a radio show, said "the geographic area for housing represents one of the main paths in the development plan", adding that some lands that were handed over to execute projects have some obstacles. "One of the plots that was handed over to implement a housing project had 14 obstacles in the way of the implementation process," she said.

"The electricity problem is one of the obstacles and problems in the implementation of some housing projects and we seek to remove this problem through finding several solutions to guarantee that housing applicants receive their homes complete without anything lacking or problems," she noted. — Al-Rai

SHEEP FROM IRAN BANNED FOR DISEASE

KUWAIT: Sea ports and land border outlets have decided to ban sheep from Iran until further notice because of the discovery of an infectious disease in several shipments. A source said tests by the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) proved the existence of foot and mouth disease in some sheep, and asked Doha port to return the shipments after the disease was discovered in them. He said this measure aims at protecting the health of sheep and animals besides protecting the health of citizens and expats.

The source said Doha Port Supervisor Khalid Al-Failakawi gave orders to ban entry of any sheep or other animals arriving from Iran based on tests and reports by PAAAFR, adding that the tests showed that six shipments of Iranian sheep did not meet import conditions. He said the number of Iranian sheep to be returned is 3,000, imported by six Kuwaiti companies by sea, based on instructions not to unload any shipment until after approval from the veterinary quarantine in order to ensure the safety of shipments.

The source said that concerned authorities had banned sheep from Saudi Arabia three months ago for the same reason, while assuring citizens and expats that there is nothing to worry about, because the disease did not infect all sheep, especially that sheep already in the market are safe and fit for human consumption. — Al-Qabas



White supremacists back Donald Trump

WHITE HOUSE DENIES SNUBBING JORDANIAN KING

SUICIDE BOMBER KILLS 10 IN ISTANBUL

NINE GERMANS, ONE PERUVIAN AMONG THOSE KILLED IN 'IS' ATTACK

ISTANBUL: A suicide bomber thought to have crossed recently from Syria killed at least 10 people, most of them German tourists, in Istanbul's historic heart yesterday, in an attack Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu blamed on Islamic State. All of those killed in Sultanahmet square, near the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia - major tourist sites in the center of one of the world's most visited cities - were foreigners, Davutoglu said. A senior Turkish official said nine were German, while Peru's foreign ministry said a Peruvian man also died.

Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus said the bomber was believed to have recently entered Turkey from Syria but was not on Turkey's watch list of suspected militants. He said earlier that the bomber had been identified from body parts at the scene and was thought to be a Syrian born in 1988. Davutoglu said he had spoken by phone with German Chancellor Angela Merkel to offer condolences and vowed Turkey's fight against Islamic State, at home and as part of the US-led coalition, would continue.

"Until we wipe out Daesh, Turkey will continue its fight at home and with coalition forces," he said in comments broadcast live on television, using an Arabic name for Islamic State. He vowed to hunt down and punish those linked to the bomber. Several bodies lay on the ground in the square, also known as the Hippodrome of Constantinople, in the immediate aftermath of the blast. It was not densely packed at the time of the explosion, according to a police officer working there, but small groups of tourists had been wandering around.

"This incident has once again shown that as a nation we should act as one heart, one body in the fight against terror. Turkey's determined and principled stance in the fight against terrorism will continue to the end," President Tayyip Erdogan told a lunch for Turkish ambassadors in Ankara. Norway's foreign ministry said one Norwegian man was injured and was being treated in hospital. Turkey, a NATO member and candidate for accession to the European Union, is part

of the US-led coalition against Islamic State fighters who have seized territory in neighboring Syria and Iraq, some of it directly abutting Turkey.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility but Islamist, leftist and Kurdish militants, who are battling Ankara in southeast Turkey, have all carried out attacks in the past. "We heard a loud sound and I looked at the sky to see if it was raining because I thought it was thunder but the sky was clear," said Kuwaiti tourist Farah Zamani, 24, who was shopping at one of the covered bazaars with her father and sister.

'Unimaginable' Scene

The dull thud of the blast was heard in districts of Istanbul several kilometres away, residents said. Television footage showed a police car which appeared to have been overturned by the force of the blast. Tourist sites including the Hagia Sophia and nearby Basilica Cistern were closed on the governor's orders, officials said. "At first we thought it was percussion bomb, it was so loud. They attacked Sultanahmet to grab attention because this is what the world thinks of when it thinks of Turkey," said Kursat Yilmaz, who has operated tours for 25 years from an office by the square. "We're not surprised this happened here, this has always been a possible target," he said.

Ambulances ferried away the wounded as police cordoned off streets. The sound of the call to prayer rang out from the Blue Mosque as forensic police officers worked at the scene. "It was unimaginable," the police officer who had been working on the square said, describing an amateur video he had seen of the immediate aftermath, with six or seven bodies lying on the ground and other people seriously wounded.

Just over a year ago, a female suicide bomber blew herself up at a police station for tourists off the same square, killing one officer. That attack was initially claimed by a far-left group, the DHKP-C, but officials later said it had been carried out by a woman with suspected Islamist militant links.—Reuters



ISTANBUL: Emergency responders work beside victims at the site of a blast in Istanbul's Sultanahmet district, the city's main tourist hub, yesterday. — AFP

CLINTON CONFRONTS RIVAL SANDERS; IOWA POLLS TIGHTEN

WATERLOO: Hillary Clinton has spent much of her 2016 presidential campaign looking past Democratic rival Bernie Sanders, focusing instead on Republicans and the November general election. No longer. Three weeks before the leadoff Iowa caucuses and with polls suggesting a tightening race, she now is confronting the Vermont senator more directly, attempting to undermine his liberal credentials on gun control, taxes, health care and even the Wall Street regulations that have been the core of his insurgent campaign. "It's time for us to have the kind of spirited debate that you deserve us to have," Clinton told voters Monday. "We do have differences."

After months with a comfortable edge in most Iowa polls, the former secretary of state finds herself battling an underdog rival in a state that has a history of rewarding anti-establishment campaigns - a situation that brings back echoes of her 2008 loss to Barack Obama. At a forum aimed at young and minority voters on Monday night, the candidates found themselves defending their positions on immigration, criminal justice, gun control and abortion - along with tackling questions about selfies, white privilege and recently deceased rock star David Bowie. "The inevitable candidate for the Democratic nomination may not be so inevitable today," said Sanders, when asked about his standing in Iowa.

While she has locked up the vast majority of support from party leaders and large

donors, Sanders has captured the hearts of many in the Democratic base with his unapologetically liberal economic message. An NBC/The Wall Street Journal/Marist poll released Sunday found Clinton with 48 percent and Sanders with 45 percent of likely caucus goers, representing a closer margin than past polls have indicated. Sanders has maintained an edge in New Hampshire, which borders his home state of Vermont, making Iowa even more important for Clinton. The NBC/Wall Street Journal/Marist poll showed Sanders with 50 percent and Clinton with 46 percent in that primary.

Clinton still holds a strong advantage among black and Latino voters who play a bigger role in the primaries in late February and March. But even if Clinton pulls out a win in Iowa, a narrow victory could set off alarms among Democrats about her strength against Sanders, who started the campaign as an obscure senator polling in the single digits. Until now, Clinton has rarely mentioned Sanders by name at her campaign events, choosing instead to warn voters about the risks of electing a Republican. She has pointed to efforts by Republicans to repeal Obama's signature health care law - the president vetoed the most recent try - as a sign of what could come if Democrats lose the White House.

But on Monday, she widened her health care critique to include Sanders, saying he would "rip up" the law and put power in the hands of states.—AP

FAMILY OF FOUR KILLED IN OHIO HOUSE EXPLOSION

OHIO: A couple and their two children were killed in a house explosion that shook a northeast Ohio neighborhood, fire officials said. The blast and subsequent fire happened Monday night in Northfield Center Township in Summit County. Firefighters arrived on the scene and saw flames shooting from the house. Fire Chief Frank Risko said the bodies of a mother and her two daughters, 8 and 12, were found on the first floor near the front of the home. The father was found near the back of the house. Authorities did not immediately identify the victims. Neighbors reported hearing the blast around 8:30 pm. Randy Nickschinski lives

two doors down. He told Cleveland.com that he and his son, Nate, rushed to the house and kicked in the front door. The family's dog quickly escaped. Then he, his son and another neighbor went inside and yelled for the family, but no one answered. "There was a lot of fire, a lot of debris," Nickschinski said. "We were yelling and nothing. We were just looking everywhere." Nickschinski's daughter, Danielle, told the website that she had done babysitting for the family's two young girls. "They were very outgoing and nice," she said. "They always wanted to play." The cause of the explosion remained under investigation.— AP

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HONDA

COLOGNE TURKS TOO FEAR CRIME AND RACE TENSIONS

COLOGNE: As Cologne reels from the New Year's Eve violence against women, it's not just ethnic Germans who worry—many Turkish migrants also fear crime and tell their host country: don't blame us. Some worry that Germany's record migrant influx is reigniting troubles that Cologne—a pioneer city in multicultural life, with large-scale labor migration since the 1960s—thought it had long left behind. "What happened on New Year's Eve was horrible. One group of foreigners did horrible things, and now some Germans think all foreigners are horrible," said Mihriban Findik, a 40-year-old Kurdish woman from Turkey who has lived in Germany for 23 years.

She said the violence—in which men described as North African- and Arab-looking groped and robbed hundreds of women—was no surprise to her, as a single mother working in a tobacco shop in the low-income district of Kalk. "There are many foreign men here, without women, some drink too much, they smoke hash. Men come in and say, 'do you want to go with me?' I know I have to laugh or there'll be trouble." Findik said she often felt vulnerable: "Some come from countries where women are covered and they see women in skirts and go crazy. It has got worse. I didn't used to be scared, but now I am."

'Police abandoned us'

Many long-established migrants from Turkey say they are as much victims of crime as the majority population. A Turkish kiosk owner fumed that "the police see everything and do nothing. They have abandoned us." "It's been getting worse for two years, the street isn't safe anymore," said the 50-year-old who has been in Germany for 30 years and, like many people discussing the sensitive subject, declined to give his name. "They come in, they terrorize us and steal. Five people come in, one talks to you, the others steal—chocolate, cigarette lighters, whatever," he said, adding that his former 24-hour business now closes at midnight for safety reasons. He said he wasn't worried about the new refugees from Syria and other war zones, but thuggish groups from some North African countries who arrived years ago via EU countries. "I don't have a prob-

lem with the refugees, they should stay," he said.

Pepper spray sold out

North of Cologne lies Chorweiler, a district of 1970s era public housing tower blocks, home to over 100 nationalities, where many balconies have satellite dishes to receive foreign language TV. One resident, Ijaz Khan, 29, born in Germany to Pakistani parents, said he had felt a darkening mood since New Year's Eve, especially as he commutes to his hotel barkeeper job downtown. "To some people I might look North African, and I've noticed people on the train look at the empty seats next to me and keep walking, probably thinking I could be one of them."

Having spent a decade of his childhood in Pakistan, he said he wasn't surprised that faraway conflicts would eventually come to haunt Europe. "If you stir a hornets' nest, hornets come out," he said. As global refugee flows have risen sharply, he voiced fears that his German home city now could backslide on past gains in cultural diversity and tolerance. "In Cologne we've always lived quite well together, it's a bit like a big village," he said. "My best friend is German. Integration has worked relatively well here. There are many mixed marriages. "But New Year's Eve has shaken all that. I've seen people approach each other differently, with different eyes, especially when you look different." "The shops are all out of pepper spray. Women have bought up all the supplies."

Yet, he said he couldn't blame people for feeling insecure, especially at the central railway station, where there are drug dealers and 'dancers'-pickpockets who con passers-by with sing-song and jovial hugs and steal their wallets. "The police have ignored all this for years," he said, adding that he was shocked but not surprised by the New Year's Eve troubles. "I think it was a mix—thieves, dancers, asylum-seekers, I don't know," he said. "Some of them come from countries where everything is forbidden and think that here everything goes, that German police are soft. I think alcohol played a big role too. "I think everything just came together. Everyone just thought they could do what they want." — AFP



MADAYA: Aid vehicles wait on the outskirts of besieged rebel-held Syrian town of Madaya yesterday. Dozens of aid trucks headed to Madaya, where more than two dozen people are reported to have starved to death. — AFP

MADAYA SITUATION 'ALARMING'

MOBILE CLINICS, MEDICAL TEAMS HIGHLY NEEDED

GENEVA: The World Health Organization has asked the Syrian government for permission to send mobile clinics and medical teams to the besieged town of Madaya to assess the extent of malnutrition and evacuate the worst cases, its representative said yesterday. An aid convoy on Monday brought the first food and medical supplies for months to the town, where thousands are trapped and local doctors say some have starved to death.

Elizabeth Hoff, WHO representative in Damascus who went into Madaya on Monday in a UN convoy, said the agency needed to do a "door-to-door assessment" in the town of 42,000 people, where a Syrian doctor told her 300-400 needed "special medical care." "I am really alarmed," Hoff told Reuters, speaking by telephone from the Syrian capital where she has been based since July 2012. "People gathered in the market place. You could see many were malnourished, starving. They were skinny, tired, severely distressed. There was no smile on anybody's faces. It is not what you see when you arrive with a convoy. The children I talked to said they had no strength to play."

An international aid convoy entered the town of Madaya, besieged by government forces, where thousands had been trapped for months

without supplies and people had been reported to have died of starvation. The WHO brought in 7.8 tons of medicines including trauma kits for wounds and medicines for treating both chronic and communicable diseases, including antibiotics and nutritional therapeutic supplies for children, Hoff said. "The female doctor said mothers had absolutely no milk for breast-feeding, the milk had dried up and the babies are not satisfied," Hoff said.

Many malnourished people were too weak to leave their homes. "We need to go in with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent for a door-to-door assessment, if there are these cases we need to verify and make sure they get urgent treatment," Hoff said. "I sent an immediate request to authorities for more supplies to be brought in. We are asking for mobile clinics and medical teams to be dispatched." She added: "We need unhindered, sustained access, the only thing that will help in the long term is lifting the siege."

WHO simultaneously delivered 3.9 tons each to Foua and Kafraya, two villages in Idlib province encircled by rebels fighting the Syrian government. Hoff visited two medical sites in Madaya, one a private practice based in a home run by two doctors, and the other a makeshift

field hospital in a basement. Neither had supplies. "The doctors at the private practice said they had run out of medicines they received in October and patients preferred to spend what little money they had on food and not health care," Hoff said. "They reported widespread malnutrition and serious problems with severe acute malnutrition, I cannot confirm what they reported." The two doctors lacked equipment for measuring wasting in a child, or even a scale to weigh patients, she said.

The makeshift field hospital, down a dark flight of stairs, lacked hygienic conditions, Hoff said. "The room is often so crowded that they had to give a drip to a patient outdoors because there was no room in the clinic." The Syrian doctor there told her he had names of 300-400 people requiring immediate medical care. "The doctor in the clinic reported that he hadn't eaten for three days." "I spoke with a man who said he was 45 and severely malnourished, he could hardly talk. He said he had four children at home who are in a bad situation. He was totally dehydrated and had a yellow color and was distressed." "A pregnant woman was there who came in regularly unconscious ... she was lying in front of me, with very low blood sugar and lacking food. The nurse had nothing to give." — Reuters



MUNICH: Police officers escort rejected refugees who are boarding an aircraft at the airfield of the Franz-Josef-Strauss airport in Munich, southern Germany, as the plane brings rejected asylum seekers back to their country. — AFP

WHITE HOUSE DENIES SNUBBING JORDAN KING

WASHINGTON: The White House on Monday said President Barack Obama would not meet with close ally King Abdullah of Jordan who is currently in Washington—because of scheduling problems. "The president regrets that he is unable to meet with him personally on this visit due to scheduling conflicts, including the State of the Union address," a White House spokesperson said.

Yesterday, Obama delivered his final annual address to a joint session of Congress, a set piece of the US political calendar. The White House and Jordanian officials said Abdullah would instead meet with Vice President Joe Biden yesterday. He met with Defense Secretary Ash Carter and Secretary of State John Kerry on Monday. Kerry and Abdullah discussed the fight against the Islamic State and "efforts to

revive Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations," a diplomat said.

Abdullah also met with Defense Secretary Ash Carter, who expressed his "deep appreciation... for Jordan's continued contributions to regional counter-ISIL efforts," Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook said. He was referring to the self-proclaimed Islamic State group, which has seized large chunks of territory in Iraq and Syria and declared a caliphate ruled in accordance with Islamic law, or sharia. Obama "looks forward to the opportunity to meet with His Majesty in the near future," the White House official said. Obama and Abdullah last met in Washington almost a year ago. Since then, the fight against IS has intensified and efforts to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have ossified. — AFP

GUANTANAMO EX-INMATES IN GHANA WANT A 'NORMAL LIFE'

ACCRA: Two Yemeni men transferred from Guantanamo Bay to Ghana are looking to rebuild their lives but are not out to avenge their detention, they said in an interview broadcast late Monday. "We have been wrongly arrested for 14 years without any charge against us," one of the men, Mahmud Umar Muhammad Bin Atef, told public radio station Uniq FM. "We have suffered but we are not looking for revenge," he added. The Pentagon in Washington announced the transfer of Atef and Khalid Muhammad Salih Al-Dhuby on January 6 and maintained they did not pose a threat but would still be monitored.

Nevertheless, there has been some public opposition in Ghana to the men's arrival on security grounds. The United States had claimed Dhuby, who lived in Saudi Arabia, was a "probable" member of Al-Qaeda and received training in Afghanistan to target coalition forces. Atef was allegedly a Taliban member and fought under Osama bin Laden's 55th Arab Brigade, also against NATO forces, according to their leaked case files published in the New York Times. The two men, however, said Ghanaians had nothing to fear. "We are not part of any group, for example Al-Qaeda, or other things. We don't belong to any of them," Atef said. "We are healed. We want to live very normal lives. Allah bless you and the people of Ghana."

The two men said they were big fans of Ghana footballer Asamoah Gyan and many of the detainees at the US-run camp in Cuba supported the Black Stars at the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. "When Ghana beat America, we were very happy. We made some celebrations. We also told the guards that we've won," said Atef. US President Barack Obama pledged to shut the controversial Guantanamo facility when he took office in 2009 but as he nears the end of his second term of office, the camp remains open. Atef and Dhuby were among 17 detainees deemed low-risk that Defense Secretary Ashton Carter approved for transfer last month. — AFP

SAUDI EXECUTED FOR MURDER

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia yesterday put to death one of its citizens convicted of murder, bringing to 51 the number of locals and foreigners executed this year. Mishari Al-Anzi was convicted of shooting dead another Saudi during a dispute, the interior ministry said. Most executions in the country are carried out by beheading with a sword. On January 2, the kingdom executed 47 men convicted of "terrorism", including Al-Qaeda-linked Sunni militants and Shiite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr, whose death sparked a diplomatic crisis with Iran. Last year Saudi Arabia executed 153 people, most of them for drug trafficking or murder, according to AFP tallies.

Amnesty International said Saudi Arabia engaged in "a horrendous execution spree" in 2015, when the number of people put to death was the highest for two decades, since 192 in 1995. "The past year has seen the kingdom's human rights record go from bad to worse," London-based Amnesty said in a statement on Friday. The number of Saudi executions was far behind that of its regional rival Iran. Non-governmental organizations said in a letter to the United Nations General Assembly that Iran executed at least 830 people between January and November 1 last year. Saudi Arabia practices a strict Islamic legal code under which murder, drug trafficking, armed robbery, rape and apostasy are all punishable by death. — AFP



BEKAA VALLEY: A Syrian refugee carries a baby on her back at a refugee camp in the town of Hosh Hareem, in the Bekaa valley, east Lebanon. — AP

LEBANON 'PUTTING SYRIAN REFUGEES AT RISK OF EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE'

LONDON: Lebanon is effectively barring many Syrian refugees from renewing their residency permits, putting them at risk of exploitation and "setting the stage for a potentially explosive situation", rights campaigners warned yesterday. Human Rights Watch said a \$200 annual renewal fee introduced last year was prohibitive for most Syrian refugees in Lebanon where the great majority rely on aid.

HRW's deputy Middle East director, Nadim Houry, warned that the residency rules were "making life impossible for refugees ... and pushing them underground." "The last thing Lebanon needs is a large, undocumented community living at the margins of society, at heightened risk of abuse."

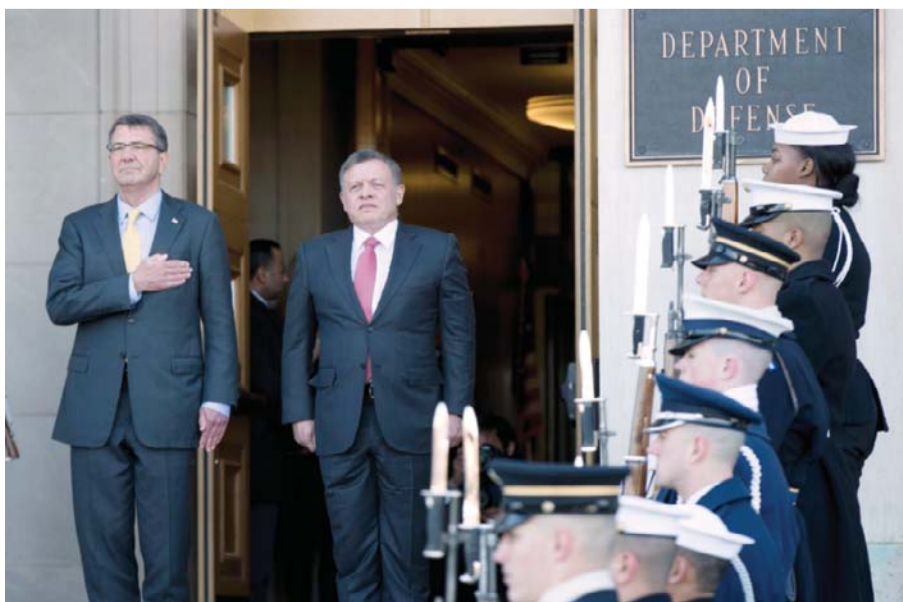
Lebanon is hosting more than 1 million refugees who have fled Syria since the start of civil war almost five years ago, the highest per capita concentration of refugees in the world. Only two of the 40 refugees interviewed for an HRW report said they had been able to renew their residencies. Obstacles included high fees, prohibitive paperwork requirements and arbitrary application of the regulations, according to the report entitled "I Just Wanted to be Treated like a Person". The lack of legal status leaves Syrians vulnerable to exploitation - including labor abuse and sexual abuse - and means they cannot turn to the authorities for protection, HRW said. It is not known how many refugees lack legal status in Lebanon, which is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Officials at Lebanon's Ministry of Social Affairs could not immediately be reached for comment.

HRW said refugees applying to renew

residency permits are split into two groups: those registered with the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) and those who must find a Lebanese sponsor to remain in the country. However many UNHCR-registered refugees reported that officials asked them to provide a sponsor, even though the rules do not require it. The need to find a sponsor raises the risk of corruption. One refugee is quoted as saying that sponsors were making a business out of the crisis, selling sponsorships to refugees for up to \$1,000.

Potential sponsors wait on the Syrian border or at the airport to sell sponsorships to new arrivals, he said. Another refugee, Amr, told HRW that the fact his sponsor was also his employer had locked him into a cycle of abuse. "My boss makes me work more than 12 hours a day at his shop. Sometimes I complain but then he threatens to cancel my sponsorship. What can I do? I have to do whatever he says. I feel like his slave," he was quoted as saying.

Refugees who are working said employers often underpaid them, taking advantage of their inability to complain. Five women told HRW that sponsors and employers had attempted to sexually exploit them. Syrians without residency cannot move freely for fear of arrest, HRW said, meaning more families are relying on their children to work because minors are less likely to be stopped at checkpoints. Parents also said that some schools refused to enroll children without a valid residency even though this is not required for school registration. The report added that babies born to parents without legal status risk becoming stateless. — Reuters



WASHINGTON: Defense Secretary Ash Carter welcomes Jordan's King Abdullah II during an honor cordon at the Pentagon. — AP



CALIFORNIA: A truck sits flooded on Camino de la Reina which is flooded by the San Diego River after heavy rains in San Diego, California. — AFP

AS RAIN PUMMELS SOUTH CALIFORNIA, SOME SEE A WAY TO FIGHT DROUGHT

SAN DIEGO: Much of the torrential rain that fell on Southern California this week flowed right into the ocean, just like it did before the state's epic drought. That seemed like a good idea for many years, as storm drains provided a crucial defense against flooding. But with California entering what may be a fifth year of drought, water agencies slowly are moving to capture and store more of this precious resource. "That was the 19th, 20th century thinking: 'Let's get that water out of here as fast as possible,'" said Deborah Bloome, senior director of policy at TreePeople, a nonprofit group that is working to increase rain capture in the Los Angeles area.

Now, people are more likely to see a rapidly disappearing flood - nearly 3 inches fell on much of Southern California this week - as a wasted opportunity. The State Water Resources Control Board approved a broad plan Wednesday for capturing more rain. The regulator is launching a road show this month to explain how it will dole out \$200 million for projects to collect rain, part of a \$7.5 billion water bond voters approved in November 2014. Los Angeles expects to collect 3.3 billion more gallons a year from projects now under construction. The city eventually plans to capture 20 billion more gallons than the 10 billion it collects during normal years and up to 26 billion gallons during wet years.

Still, many believe more can be done, through projects large and small. "This is a source of water that has been neglected for far too long," said Peter Gleick, president of the Pacific Institute, which authored a 2014 report with the Natural Resources Defense

Council that estimated urban California could capture an additional 630,000 acre-feet of rain a year, roughly enough for 1.2 million households. "It is untapped, and it has enormous potential." Southern California imports a lion's share of its water from Northern California and the Colorado River, on aqueducts that stretch hundreds of miles. The drought has slashed water consumption across the state and renewed interest in developing new water sources, like recycling and seawater desalination.

California's rainy season usually runs from January to early March with short but intense storms, creating a limited window. Parched Southern California needs the water most and has long had reservoirs to capture some of it. But much of the water dumped by El Nino's storms streamed down gutters and curbs through a concrete jungle, into drains that go into the Pacific. Los Angeles County captured 3.2 billion gallons during this week's storms as of Thursday afternoon, largely through 27 holding ponds, said Steven Frasher, a spokesman for the public works department. Water from the Los Angeles and San Gabriel rivers flowed into fields that percolate into aquifers for future pumping. The Orange County Water District, which relies on rain capture for about 10 percent of its supplies to 2.4 million people south of Los Angeles, collected about 3.3 billion gallons from this week's storms as of Thursday afternoon. The captured water flows into the Army Corps of Engineers' Prado Dam and is slowly released 11 miles downstream on the Santa Ana River, to ponds that seep into an aquifer. The rest goes into the ocean.—AP

WHITE SUPREMACISTS BACK DONALD TRUMP

'WE DON'T NEED MUSLIMS'

WASHINGTON: A white supremacist group said it has placed thousands of automated phone calls in Iowa urging voters to back billionaire Donald Trump's bid for the Republican presidential nomination because "we don't need Muslims." The telephone campaign is led by the American Freedom Party, which on its website says it "shares the customs and heritage of the European American people." The calls featured the spokesman of a white supremacist group that Dylann Roof, who is accused of gunning down nine people at a black church in South Carolina in June, had reportedly cited as inspiration.

"We don't need Muslims. We need smart, well-educated white people who will assimilate to our culture," Jared Taylor, editor of the supremacist magazine American Renaissance, says on the call. Taylor is also spokesman of the Council of Conservative Citizens, a supremacist group with historic links to the White Citizens Council, a segregationist organization set up in Mississippi in 1954. The group also attempted to buy radio time in Iowa but was rebuffed. The Trump campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The group has placed about 200,000 "robocalls" in Iowa and may also target New Hampshire, organizers said. The American Freedom Party published an audio recording of the call on its website. Iowa kicks off the voting in the nominating contests leading up to the November 2016 presidential election with its caucuses on Feb. 1. New Hampshire holds the country's first primary elections on Feb. 9. The campaign by the American National Super PAC injects another controversial wrinkle into a presidential campaign that has been more racially charged than any in recent memory.

Trump has emerged as a surprise front runner in the Republican nominating contest after calling Mexican immigrants "rapists" in his speech declaring his candidacy and saying the United States should ban Muslims from entering the country, following the massacre in San Bernardino, California, last month by a young Muslim couple. Republican rivals have condemned those remarks as inflammatory, but they have not dented Trump's popularity among Republican voters, who are overwhelmingly white.

"I can't say it surprises me," said Dave Zbaracki, a former Republican who was attending a campaign event for Democrat Hillary Clinton in Waterloo, Iowa. He said many



RENO: People listen to Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump at a rally in Reno, Nev. — AP

of his Republican friends were "mortified" by events in the race. The group bought airtime on a Des Moines Christian radio station to broadcast its message but the station says it will not broadcast the show. "They're not on our air," Praise 940 AM general manager Jeff Delvaux said.

Energized by trump

Trump has not sought the backing of white supremacist groups but several say his success has helped them win new supporters. "Clearly our movement has been energized by Trump," said Richard Spencer, director of the National Policy Institute, a far-right group dedicated to promoting the interests of white Americans. The chairman of the American Freedom Party, William Johnson, who also appears on the call, told Reuters he has spent about \$9,000 on the effort and plans to spend another \$10,000 of his own money. He said others have volunteered to pay for the effort as well.

The group, which originally registered in November as the American National Trump Super PAC before changing its name, also planned to run pro-Trump radio programming from Jan. 12 through Jan. 22, but was notified

on Monday morning that the station would not accept its \$2,100 payment. "We've been advised by our attorney NOT to run the For God & Country program on KPSZ," an employee wrote, according to email correspondence forwarded by Johnson.

Delvaux, the station manager, declined to say why the station opted to return the money. Other white supremacist leaders said that while many of their supporters supported Trump, they did not plan to formally campaign on his behalf. Michael Hill, president of the League of the South, said his members were most excited about Trump's potential to disrupt the American political system, which could make it easier for them to accomplish their goal of breaking the South away from the rest of the United States. "I'm looking for American politics to become pure chaos," he said.

Spencer, of the National Policy Institute, said he planned to vote for Trump but thought white nationalist groups would actually hurt the real-estate billionaire's prospects if they campaigned for him. "Most white people are afraid of our ideas," he said. "We're not going to really help candidates by giving them our seal of approval," he added. — Reuters

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DANISH LAWMAKERS MULL PROPOSAL TO TAKE REFUGEES' CASH

AUDEROD: In return for staying at a Danish refugee centre, Iranian software engineer Sarah Alimalayeri said she was happy to hand over the gold bracelet and necklace she was wearing, but not her pendant. "You can't take everything, but this is a good balance," she said. The 24-year-old migrant is an unlikely supporter of a controversial bill due to be discussed in the Danish parliament today, which would allow police to seize migrants' valuables to pay for their stay in asylum centers if it is passed later this month.

Rather than raising significant amounts of money for the state, it is widely seen as the latest in a string of moves by the Danish government to tell potential migrants to steer clear of Denmark. Copenhagen's right-wing government, which relies on support in parliament from an anti-immigration party, last week watered down the proposal by raising the amount of cash a refugee can keep from 3,000 kroner (402 euros, \$438) to 10,000 kroner.

But despite international outrage and a leading US newspaper making comparisons to Nazi Germany, Integration Minister Inger Stojberg has refused to back down from the bill's most controversial element: searching migrants' bags for gold and other valuables.

Only items for personal use such as mobile phones and watches as well as items of sentimental value like wedding

rings will be exempted. The centre-right minority government has defended the bill, arguing that Danish nationals seeking welfare handouts can expect similar treatment. "It is already the case that if you as a Dane have valuables for more than 10,000 kroner it may be required that this is sold before you can receive unemployment benefits," Stojberg said last month.

"In Denmark, if one can manage on one's own, one manages on one's own," he stressed on Friday.

Refugees divided

At the Auderod asylum centre 60 kilometres (37 miles) northwest of Copenhagen, Alimalayeri's view was clearly in the minority but she insisted that Denmark was within its rights to confiscate valuables to pay "for all of these services." One of her friends at the refugee centre was wealthy but did not want the Danish authorities to find out for fear they would reject her asylum application, she claimed.

However, several other residents said they had little more than the clothes they were wearing and questioned the effects of the bill. "I owe 7,000 euros (\$3,250) (I borrowed) to get here," said Farhad Moradi, a 22-year-old Kurdish student from Iran, as he shuddered in a t-shirt in near-freezing temperatures. Inside the centre's communal area nearby, young men played pool and Arabic

pop music blared from a TV set. Tarek Issa, a 25-year-old law student from Hama in Syria said he had read about the Danish proposal on Facebook before travelling to the country to join his family, but said it did not affect his choice of destination. "We almost paid everything to come here. Like a house, like a restaurant we owned before," he said. A police search of his bags would turn up "maybe 100 euros," he laughed.

Widespread criticism

The proposal is part of a bigger immigration bill which will also delay family reunifications for some refugees by up to three years, as well as making it harder to obtain permanent residency and shortening temporary residence permits. UN refugee agency UNHCR said on January 6 that the proposals sent a signal to other countries that "could fuel fear, xenophobia and similar restrictions that would reduce-rather than expand-the asylum space globally."

"You might of course think that this is really bad publicity for Denmark. I do," said Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen, political spokesperson for the leftist Red-Green Alliance party. "But I think the Danish government... is quite happy, because the main purpose with this proposal is to make refugees afraid of applying for asylum in Denmark," she added. Denmark received 21,000 refugees last year, compared to 163,000 in neighbor-



KRUSAA: Danish police officers walk at the Danish-German border in Krusaa, Denmark. A controversial bill is due to be discussed in the Danish parliament today, which would allow police to seize migrants' valuables to pay for their stay in asylum centers. — AFP

ing Sweden, which until recently had some of Europe's most generous asylum rules. The Danish Refugee Council said the move mostly seemed to be "a measure of symbolic character." "As far as we know there are not many people carrying valuables like that," spokesman Sebastian Juel Frandsen said.

Criticism has not just been limited to the centre-left opposition: Two government allies have also said they will not support the migrant searches unless changes are made. The Conservative

People's Party wants to see a detailed list of things that cannot be confiscated, while the Liberal Alliance only supports seizing large amounts of cash. The Social Democrats, the main opposition party, wants more guarantees that items of personal value will not be removed. After being discussed in parliament today, the immigration bill will be sent to a parliamentary committee, after which lawmakers will discuss it again on January 21. A vote will be held on January 26.—AFP



PAJU: People look at a map of the border area between North and South Korea at the Imjingak Pavilion near the border village of Panmunjom, which has separated the two Koreas since the Korean War, in Paju, north of Seoul, South Korea.— AP

NORTH KOREA THREATENS TO OBLITERATE UNITED STATES

S KOREA WINNING SHOUTING MATCH WITH LOW-TECH NORTH

SEOUL: North Korea said yesterday its nuclear test was not intended to be a provocation or threat, as it laid out plans for a weapons system capable of obliterating the entire United States. A lengthy commentary by the official KCNA news agency underlined the North's claim that last Wednesday's test was of a powerful miniaturized hydrogen bomb which marked a "new high stage" in the country's search for a credible nuclear deterrent. Experts have largely dismissed the claim, saying the test yield was far too low for a full-fledged thermonuclear device and was similar to the simple fission implosion devices it has tested three times in the past. The KCNA commentary said the test was an indispensable stage on the "normal course" which other countries have taken to the development of a two-stage fission-fusion H-bomb.

"The test was neither to 'threaten' anyone, nor to 'provoke' someone for a certain purpose," KCNA said, insisting that the main focus was on providing a "sure guarantee" of the North's immunity from attack by hostile forces. Prime among those forces was the United States it said, offering an apocalyptic vision of how it would respond to US aggression. North Korean scientists and technicians "are in high spirit to detonate H-bombs of hundreds of kilotons and megatons, capable of wiping out the whole territory of the US all at once," it said. Outside experts say the yield from Wednesday's test was around six kilotons, while an H-bomb would have been at least 100 times more powerful.

Low-tech North

North Korea may have nuclear weapons, but in a high-decibel, cross-border propaganda shouting match, South Korea insists its superior technology is winning hands down. South Korea started blasting a mix of K-pop and propaganda messages into North Korea on Friday, using giant banks of speakers located close to the heavily militarized border. The resumption of the broadcasts, which had driven the North to threaten military strikes when they were employed last year, was a direct response to Pyongyang's decision to conduct a fourth nuclear test two days earlier.

Since the speakers were plugged back in, the North has sought to respond in kind, with its own amplified messages extolling the virtues of leader Kim Jong-Un, and attacking South Korean President Park Geun-Hye. "Currently, North

Korea's loudspeaker broadcasts have been turned on in 10 locations, but with negligible impact," a defense ministry official said. "The reason is that North Korea's output capacity is very low compared to ours. Their broadcasts are audible within a one- to three-kilometer radius, while ours can be heard 10 kilometers away," the official said. The last time South Korea used the speakers was during a sharp escalation in military tensions after two of its soldiers were maimed by a landmine on the border. The South kept up the broadcasts for several weeks, finally

unplugging the speakers in line with an August agreement aimed at defusing a crisis that had driven both sides to the brink of an armed conflict. The agreement had stipulated that the speakers would remain off, barring any "abnormal case" in the future. Seoul deemed that last Wednesday's nuclear test-which Pyongyang claims was of a powerful H-bomb-fell into the "abnormal" category and so the speakers were switched back on. The South has given no indication of how long it intends to keep the broadcasts going this time.—Agencies

DRUG LORD'S LAST TUNNEL HIDDEN BEHIND A MIRROR

LOS MOCHIS: A mirror inside a closet concealed the last tunnel that Mexican drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman used to flee as marines battled his henchmen before his capture. The house in Los Mochis, a northwestern seaside city in Guzman's native Sinaloa state, bears the scars of Friday's fierce pre-dawn gunfight, with dried blood on the floors.

A video released by the government shows the marines firing their assault rifles and tossing smoke grenades before entering the rooms. One troop was wounded and was on the ground. "Stay calm, buddy," one marine told him. As they moved inside, they arrested one man. They screamed at a woman who was hiding in a bathroom, asking her where the kingpin was. "I don't know, sir," she answered. When the dust settled, five gunmen were dead, one marine wounded and six suspects detained. The 58-year-old kingpin, meanwhile, was nowhere to be seen. His security chief, Orso Ivan Gastelum, was also missing.

DVDs and lingerie

The marines frantically searched the house. In one bedroom, three DVDs of the TV series "La Reina del Sur" were on a bed. The star of the show about a drug queen is Kate del Castillo, the Mexican actress who brokered the notorious October meeting between Guzman and US actor Sean Penn. The authorities found out about the clandestine meeting and nearly caught Guzman in early October. They eventually tracked him down in Los Mochis, where he arrived on the eve

of the raid.

The shrapnel from stun grenades was still in the main room when reporters were allowed to tour the house on Monday. Food was rotting in the kitchen. Authorities said food had been ordered for 13 people on the eve of the raid. Dried blood stains were splattered in the entrance and another room of the white house. On the second floor, there were three bedrooms, including one with evidence that a woman slept there, including lace lingerie, makeup and a hairdryer on the ground. The top floor had a patio with more bullet holes. "Guzman's gunmen tried to flee through here," an official from the attorney general's office said.

Final tunnel

Suspecting that Guzman had fitted the home with a tunnel, the soldiers scoured the house. They moved the refrigerator, which had bullet holes, but no tunnel was there. "Since we know that his modus operandi is tunnels, the soldiers moved the fridge to see if there was one back there," the official said.

Their suspicions were justified since he used a 1.5 kilometer (one-mile) tunnel to secretly flee prison in July. Meanwhile, he had an escape hatch into drainage systems in his home in another Sinaloa city. In Los Mochis, the drug lord's last underground escape route was in a bedroom where the bed's mattress was nearly on the ground and men's clothing was strewn about the floor.—AFP

OPPOSITION IN A SHOWDOWN WITH VENEZUELA HIGH COURT

CARACAS: Venezuela headed into ever murkier political waters Monday as the Supreme Court declared the newly opposition-controlled legislature null and void and the opposition vowed to continue defying the judges. The showdown between the legislative and judicial branches escalated a notch as the court invalidated all actions taken by the current National Assembly, which includes three opposition lawmakers judges had barred from taking office over an election dispute.

The decision declared the three lawmakers and the National Assembly's leadership in contempt of court and voided the legislature's decisions for as long as the trio hold their seats. The opposition, which accuses the court of bias for President Nicolas Maduro, said it could not respect the ruling and would continue legislating with the two-thirds majority it insists it rightfully won in elections last month. "All 112 (opposition) lawmakers are going to continue legislating. This sentence from the Supreme Court of Justice is impossible to respect. We lawmakers are protected by the constitution," said deputy speaker Simon Calzadilla.

Speaker Henry Ramos Allup said the court was "at the administration's service to override the people's will." The number two figure in Maduro's camp, former speaker Diosdado Cabello, fired back that the legislature itself was in contempt of court. "There's a (legislative power) vacuum coming, because if the Assembly is in contempt, no one is going to recognize it. We the people are not required to. The other branches of government are not required to," he said. The court has emerged as a powerful player as reeling oil giant Venezuela embarks on a new era of divided government in the wake of the opposition's landslide win in legislative elections last month, which delivered a crushing blow to Maduro and the "revolution" launched by his late mentor Hugo Chavez in 1999.

The opposition coalition, the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), accuses Maduro of packing the court with his allies. A week before the 167-member legislature's new

session, the court barred three opposition lawmakers from taking their seats, effectively scrapping MUD's powerful two-thirds majority. Ramos Allup, the new speaker, defiantly swore them in anyway, setting up a messy political and legal battle.

Judges under fire

The opposition's disputed "super-majority" gives it the power to remove Supreme Court judges from the bench, as well as put legislation to a referendum and call an assembly to draft a new constitution. The opposition has vowed to use those powers to force Maduro from office within six months. The embattled president, whose term runs until 2019, has meanwhile vowed to fight the "bourgeois assembly" tooth and nail.

Just hours before the court ruling, MUD lawmakers had launched a legislative committee to probe alleged irregularities in the appointment of 13 judges to the 32-member Supreme Court. Maduro's United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) used an extraordinary session in the final hours of its legislative majority to push through the judges' appointment, a move the opposition condemned as undemocratic. The court ruling came as MUD lawmakers introduced a bill on one of their top legislative initiatives, an amnesty for 75 jailed opposition figures they say are political prisoners.

The bill was tabled by Lilian Tintori, the wife of jailed opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez, who was sentenced to 14 years in September on charges of inciting violence at anti-government protests—a ruling that drew international condemnation. Venezuelans exasperated with empty supermarket shelves, long lines, violent crime and a deep recession voted on December 6 to give the opposition control of the National Assembly for the first time since Chavez came to power 17 years ago. Political analysts warn the country faces a period of brutal political turmoil. With rumors of coup plots and counter-coup plots swirling, Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino has vowed the military's "absolute loyalty" to Maduro.—AFP



CARACAS: Lilian Tintori (center), wife of jailed opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez (center) walks accompanied by supporters inside the Congress in Caracas. — AFP

LIKE JAIL: NEW YORK HOMELESS SAY SHELTERS NOT THE ANSWER

NEW YORK: Life on the streets of New York may be miserable for the thousands of homeless who sleep rough, but many are disillusioned by stepped-up efforts to eradicate a modern-day crisis. America's biggest and wealthiest city is a beacon across the world for financial success and entertainment—one of the biggest tourist draws on the planet, welcoming 56 million visitors last year. It has more billionaires than any other city in the world, says Forbes.

And yet 75,000 people are homeless, according to US government figures—the mentally ill, those who lost jobs in the 2008 global financial crash, employees who cannot afford skyrocketing rents, families and children. Dozing on benches in Penn Station, begging on the street or curled up at the bottom of subway stairwells, the plight of the

city's homeless is clear for all to see. The Coalition for the Homeless non-profit says nearly 60,000 people are in shelters each night and that in recent years homelessness in the city has hit highs not seen since the 1930s Great Depression.

The statistics are an embarrassment for Mayor Bill de Blasio, a progressive Democrat two years on the job who campaigned to redress the city's colossal inequality after two decades under Republican mayor Rudolph Giuliani and billionaire Michael Bloomberg. His office marked the New Year by announcing a slew of initiatives, upping the number of personnel taking people off the streets when temperatures drop, increasing the number of beds for homeless youth and promising to double the number of city-funded drop-in centers.—AFP



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DECADE-OLD TATTOOS TELL OF DEVOTION, CASTE AND DEFIANCE IN INDIA

ARJUNI: Mahettar Ram Tandon is still proud of the indelible message he carries almost five decades after he had the name of the Hindu god Ram tattooed over his entire body. Dressed in a simple white lungi, a traditional Indian garment, and wearing a peacock feather hat called a "mukut", Tandon is part of the Ramnami Samaj religious movement in the eastern state of Chhattisgarh, one of India's poorest regions. "It was my new birth the day I started having the tattoos," he says.

"The old me had died." Denied entry to temples and forced to use separate wells, low-caste Hindus in the Chhattisgarh first tattooed their bodies

and faces more than 100 years ago as an act of defiance and devotion. Ramnamis wrote Ram's name on their bodies as a message to higher-caste Indians that god was everywhere, regardless of a person's caste or social standing. Now 76, Tandon's purple tattoos have faded over decades under the harsh sun of his village of Jamgahan.

In the nearby village of Gorba, Punai Bai, 75, spent more than two weeks aged 18 having her full body tattooed using dye made from mixing soot from a kerosene lamp with water. "God is for everybody, not just for one community," says Bai, who lives in a one-room house

with her son, daughter-in law and two grandchildren. Nowadays the tattoos of Ramnamis, who number 100,000 or more and live in dozens of villages spread across at least four districts of Chhattisgarh state, are usually on a smaller scale. Since the banning of caste-based discrimination in India in 1955, the lives of many lower-caste Indians have improved, villagers said. As young Ramnamis today also travel to other regions to study and look for work, younger generations usually avoid full-body tattoos.

"The young generation just don't feel good about having tattoos on their

whole body," says Tandon, who has always lived in his village of small mud houses surrounded by fields of grazing cattle, wheat and rice. "That doesn't mean they don't follow the faith." Children born in the community are still required to be tattooed somewhere on their body, preferably on their chest, at least once by the age of two. According to their religious practices, Ramnamis do not drink or smoke, must chant the name "Ram" daily and are exhorted to treat everybody with equality and respect.

Almost every Ramnami household owns a copy of the Ramayana epic, a

book on Lord Rama's life and teachings, along with small statues of Indian deities. Most followers' homes in these villages have "Ram Ram" written in black on the outer and inner walls. Despite the 1955 legislation, centuries-old feudal attitudes persist in many parts of India and low-caste people, or Dalits, still face prejudice in every sector from education to employment. Tandon is optimistic about the Ramnamis' relative change in fortunes since he had his body tattooed all those years ago. "The world is changing, the times are changing," he says. "We have all realised that we are all the same." — Reuters



YANGON: Cartoonist Maung Maung Aung draws a cartoon at his house in Yangon. — AFP

MYANMAR'S CARTOONISTS SHARPEN PENCILS; SATIRE MAKES A COMEBACK

CARTOONS TACKLING A RANGE OF SUBJECTS

YANGON: With a flourish of his pencil, cartoonist Maung Maung Aung skewers a pampered politician in a sketch, an image that just a few years ago would have been unthinkable. The illustrator is among an increasingly brazen band of satirists that has emerged in a nation where recent elections tipped the balance of power from authoritarian military rulers for the first time in generations. Maung Maung Aung's drawing shows a destitute family chiding a paunchy parliamentarian. "We are very happy for you that you have not been beaten and abused. We only hope that you won't cause trouble for others," reads a speech bubble above the raggedly dressed father, mother and small child.

The image takes aim at inequalities faced by many ordinary people in Myanmar, despite reforms that have rippled through the long-cloistered nation. Those changes led to a landmark victory for Aung San Suu Kyi and her pro-democracy party in November, boosting hopes of a prosperous future and a more open press. "Cartoons need freedom. The more freedom there is, the more a cartoon is able to say and be creative so they can carry more meaning," said 60-year-old Maung Maung Aung, perched behind his drawing board in a Yangon studio cluttered with illustrations.

In four decades as a cartoonist he has suffered poverty, fear and censorship, working with little margin for error under a junta that jailed dissenters and ripped anything deemed critical from newspaper pages. That drove him to seek refuge in the United States, where he worked as a painter at a fine arts studio in Florida. But he returned to his homeland in 2012 soon after a quasi-civilian government replaced outright army rule. Now cartoons are enjoying a re-

naissance, tackling a range of subjects—from the country's economic woes to foreign policy and the elections-peppering newspapers and websites daily.

And Myanmar's caricaturists are sharpening their pencils for the next test how to satirize the revered Suu Kyi as her party prepares to take over government in late March. Suu Kyi is lionized in Myanmar, where the peaceful resistance to army rule was for years depicted as a tussle between the frail and graceful Nobel laureate and brutish generals. Maung Maung Aung said illustrators should not shirk from depicting "The Lady," as Suu Kyi is known. "Cartoonists should not be biased, they should point out the faults of any government," he said.

'Sacrosanct subject'

Suu Kyi faces myriad challenges, including restoring peace in war-torn ethnic borderlands, rebooting the economy left in tatters by the junta and tackling rampant corruption—all easy fodder for the country's satirists. "She (Suu Kyi) has been a sacrosanct subject, but it'll come. We can't have a really free media if one figure is held 'out of bounds'," Yangon-based Myanmar analyst Khin Zaw Win said.

"She will not-and should not-be spared." But that might be easier said than done. Phoe Kyaw, a cartoonist from Suu Kyi's Kawhmu constituency, said he would feel free to criticize her. "She will understand," he said. "On the other hand, I believe in her as our national leader, that's why I won't draw a cartoon to insult her personally." And though the country's reforms have brought an end to draconian pre-publication censorship, restrictions on expression remain with several activists detained for Facebook posts satirizing the army in recent months.

The private daily newspaper Myanmar Times issued a prominent apology in March for a cartoon lampooning the army's battles with rebels in the far north. In the offending cartoon a man reading the newspaper tells a woman that the military are "seizing the mountains." "It's not enough to seize the rice fields," the woman replies in a speech bubble, a reference to persistent accusations of landgrabbing by the armed forces, particularly under junta rule. The paper conceded the image was "not in good taste" and no action was taken against it.

A hundred years of satire

At a recent cartoon exhibition in Yangon, crowds of hundreds chuckled at illustrations commenting on everything from the election to controversy over a Chinese-backed copper mine. "Cartoons can stimulate debate, give facts and figures and send a message for change," said 67-year-old bank worker Dominic Zin Aung. The cartoon festival was held in honor of Ba Gyan, considered to be the father of Myanmar cartoons, who started his illustrious career in 1915, mocking the British colonial authorities and later the early independence government. But that era of vibrant political debate was snuffed out by the military, which seized power in 1962. With their open ridicule of authority figures, Ba Gyan's decades old cartoons are still possess the power to shock in their boldness. Myanmar's first generation of cartoonists "had the chance to write openly about national freedom and revolution under the colonialists," said Maung Maung Aung, lamenting the restrictions faced by a second wave of cartoonists under military rule. "If we could have a real democratic age, then our freedom would be assured," he said. — AFP

PHILIPPINES WELCOMES MORE US FORCES TO COUNTER CHINA

MANILA: The Philippine Supreme Court ruled yesterday a security accord with the United States was legal, allowing more US forces into the former American colony as it seeks to counter Chinese expansion in the South China Sea. The 10-year agreement, signed in 2014 but not implemented due to legal challenges, will see more US troops and warships rotate through the Philippines, and the hosts will receive help in building military facilities.

Supreme Court spokesman Theodore Te said the accord was upheld with a 10-4 vote, ruling that President Benigno Aquino's government had the authority to sign the pact and did not need congressional approval. The pact "is a mere implementation of existing laws and treaties," Te said. Aquino negotiated the accord to help the Philippines improve its military capabilities and draw the United States closer, partly to counter a fast-expanding Chinese presence in disputed parts of the South China Sea.

US President Barack Obama also pushed hard for the Enhanced Defense Co-operation Agreement (EDCA) as part of his so-called strategic "pivot" to Asia that has involved strengthening the American military presence in the region. However it faced immediate legal challenges from groups opposed to US military involvement in the Philippines, a US colony from 1898 to 1946. The Philippines hosted two of the largest overseas US military bases until 1992, the year after the Philippine Senate voted to end the leases in the face of strong anti-US sentiment.

Philippine military chief General Hernando Iriberry immediately welcomed yesterday's ruling, saying the accord would help the country address short-term "capability gaps" and modernize its armed forces. Iriberry also emphasized the pact would help the Philippines "maintain maritime security", a term commonly used when referring to efforts to contain China's expansion in the sea. The US embassy in Manila also hailed the decision. "EDCA is a mutually beneficial agreement that will enhance our ability to provide rapid humanitarian assistance and help build capacity for the Armed Forces of the Philippines," a statement said.

Anti-US anger

However opponents quickly voiced their concern. "The government may have wantonly surrendered our national sovereignty to the US but the Filipino people will continue to fight for it," said League of Filipino Students chairperson Charisse Banez. "We will not allow the return of US bases in the country and its reoccupation of the Philippines." Filipino and US embassy officials declined to give details yesterday as to how quickly the pact would be implemented, or specifics such as which bases would be used by the Americans.

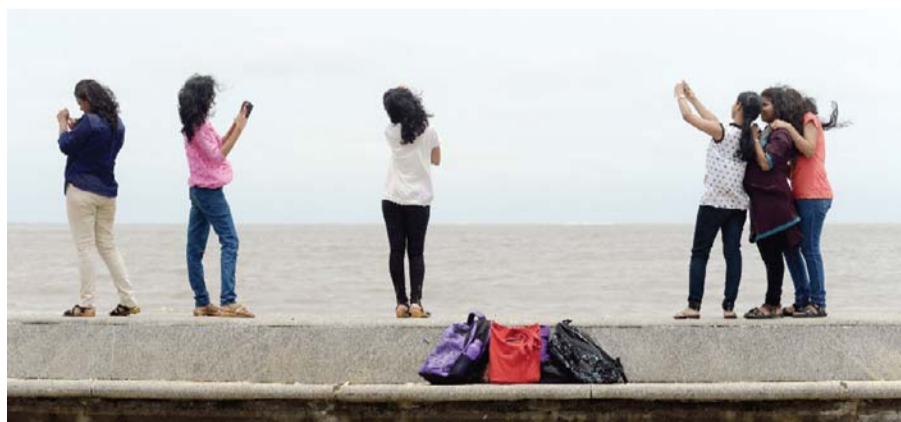
But Filipino officials previously said the United States would be offered access to key bases, including those facing the South China Sea that would allow rapid deployment into the waters.

The Philippines and the United States are already bound by a mutual defense treaty signed in 1951 and a visiting forces agreement signed in 1998. The Philippines, which has one of Asia's weakest armed forces, has for decades heavily relied on US military aid for weapons and training. And thousands of American troops pass through the country for regular war games that are authorized under the 1998 agreement. US navy ships also often make port calls. But in recent years the tensions with China have seen Aquino's government seek even greater US military and diplomatic support.

China claims almost all of the South China Sea, despite conflicting claims from the Philippines as well as Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei. In April 2012, after a tense stand-off with Philippine ships, Chinese vessels took control of a shoal just 220 kilometers off the main Philippine island of Luzon. The Philippines has since become the most vocal critic of China's efforts to claim the waters, including its strategy of turning islets into artificial islands that can host military facilities. With its own armed forces unable to counter China, the Philippines had no choice but to draw in the United States and its allies such as Japan, according to security analyst Rodolfo Mendoza. "Our only option is partnership with the US and other allies," Mendoza said. — AFP



MANILA: Activists display placards during a protest in front of the Supreme Court in Manila yesterday. The Philippine Supreme Court ruled yesterday that a military accord with the United States was constitutional, paving the way for a greater presence of US forces in the former American colony as tensions simmer in the South China Sea. — AFP



MUMBAI: Young Indian couples take 'selfies' on Marine Drive promenade in Mumbai. — AFP

MUMBAI POLICE IDENTIFY DANGEROUS SELFIE SPOTS

MUMBAI: Mumbai police said yesterday they have identified 16 dangerous selfie spots across the Indian city after a man drowned trying to save a girl who fell into the sea while taking a photo of herself. The spots include the major tourist attractions of Girgaum Chowpatty beach and Marine Drive promenade as well as the site where the 18-year-old girl slipped last week, deputy commissioner Dhananjay Kulkarni said.

"After the unfortunate incident we have decided to identify 16 spots where taking selfies can be dangerous but we may add more," he said. "We have written to the municipal corporation to put some warning signs up at such points. We also want them to deploy some life-guards also," Kulkarni added. The girl and two friends fell off rocks into the Arabian Sea near Bandra Bandstand in the north of India's finan-

cial capital while clicking selfies on Saturday. A passerby, 37-year-old Ramesh Walanju, jumped in and helped save the two friends but was washed away by the choppy waters and his body was found floating in a nearby creek on Monday. The girl is still missing.

Police officers patrolling the selected areas have been briefed to warn people against taking selfies, the deputy commissioner said. Last month a Pakistani man died in Rawalpindi after being hit by a fast-moving train as he tried to take a selfie with it while standing on the track. In May last year a Russian woman accidentally shot herself in the head with a pistol while posing for a selfie with the weapon. And US investigators in February said a pilot's repeated snapping of selfie photos caused a small plane to crash, killing both people on board. — AFP

MULTIPLE JIHADIST ATTACKS KILL MORE THAN 30 IN IRAQ

BAGHDAD: Jihadist gunmen and bombers killed at least 12 people in a busy market area of Baghdad while a double blast at a cafe north of the Iraqi capital claimed another 20 lives. An attack claimed by the Islamic State group and involving suicide explosions, gun-fights and hostage-taking wreaked chaos in the eastern neighborhood of Baghdad Al-Jadida. "A car came... gunmen came out of it and spread out. They started shooting, killing people, there were lots of dead people," said a witness, Salman Hussein. The shocked young man recounted how one of the attackers held a shop owner and spoke on a mobile phone before detonating his suicide belt. "The car they came in was laden with explosives and also blew up," he said.

The head of Baghdad Operations Command, Lieutenant General Abdelamir Al-Shammari, insisted to reporters on the scene that the situation was quickly brought under control. He denied reports by several officials in the Baghdad police and in the interior ministry that the attackers held several people hostage in the nearby Zahrat Baghdad mall. But a senior police officer gave a different account, saying the attackers sprayed gunfire and blew up a car bomb on the street before entering



BAGHDAD: A Iraqi man checks a damaged building near the Al-Jawaher Mall in eastern Baghdad the day after a bomb attack yesterday. — AFP

the mall and taking hostages. "When the security forces got too close, they killed three hostages," he said. Several other sources gave a similar account. The sequence of the attack, a departure from Islamic State's usual modus operandi in Baghdad, remained unclear and the statement posted by the jihadists online provided few details. It said the attack was carried out by "four soldiers of the caliphate" and targeted Shiites. It said one of the IS members blew himself up in an explosives-laden vehicle when "the apostates sent reinforcements". IS claimed that a total of 90 people were killed or wounded, but the group has previously exaggerated the number of casualties caused by its attacks.

Diyala bombings

"These people were shooting everywhere, there was even one guy with an RPG (rocket-propelled grenade launcher)," said Fadhel, another witness from Shiite neighborhood Baghdad Al-Jadida. "I saw the body of a small child strewn on the ground over there... What were the sins these people committed to deserve this?" he said. Police and hospital sources put the casualty toll from the attack, one of the worst to hit Baghdad in months, at 12 dead and more than 30 wounded. — AFP



The Sultan Ahmed Mosque, better known as the Blue Mosque, is seen in the historic Sultanahmet district of Istanbul, following an explosion nearby yesterday. — AP

SUDAN DITCHES IRAN FOR SAUDI PATRONAGE

KHARTOUM: When Saudi Arabia executed a leading Shiite cleric and protesters responded by torching the Saudi embassy in Tehran, Sudan was one of only three countries to sever ties with Iran in solidarity with Riyadh. The Jan 4 move cemented a dramatic political shift: in the past two years, Sudan has turned its back on a quarter-century alliance with Iran in favor of the Saudis, who have proved more willing to provide the financial support it sorely needs. Saudi Arabia has already invested more than any other country in Sudan - about \$11 billion, mostly in agriculture. In the past year, it has deposited \$1 billion in Sudan's central bank, signed deals to finance the construction of power-generating dams on the Nile, and pledged even more investment in farming.

Such largesse explains why Sudan, struggling with a collapsing currency and soaring unemployment, has chosen to favor economic ties with Saudi Arabia over a relationship with Iran that was largely based on arms. "The government decided to distance itself

from the alliance with Iran after it evaluated the relationship and found it economically and politically damaging," said Al Tayeb Zeinalaidine, politics professor at Khartoum University. "Iran didn't offer any economic aid to Sudan and this left the government thinking its relations... had become a burden".

The swing toward Riyadh marks a new tack for Sudanese President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir, who has maintained power for over 25 years in a volatile neighborhood by navigating shifting alliances. At different times he has drawn close to Osama bin Laden, the United States and Tehran. Last year he joined a Saudi-led coalition fighting Houthi rebels in Yemen who are allied with Shiite Iran, showing Sunni Gulf Arab powers that he could be an asset in their fight to limit the influence of the Islamic Republic. Sudan's defence ministry says it has deployed three military jets as well as ground troops to secure facilities in the southern port of Aden and elsewhere, though they have been

involved in little active combat so far. Sudan has also trained thousands of Yemeni troops.

Bumpy Road

For much of the period since Bashir seized power in 1989, ties with Saudi Arabia had been tense. Bashir backed Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, and protesters took to the streets of Sudan to support Iraq's Saddam Hussein and condemn the Saudi royals. As recently as 2013, relations reached a nadir when Saudi Arabia banned Bashir's plane from passing through its airspace to Iran. By contrast, Bashir fostered warm relations with Tehran, crowned with the 1991 visit of then-president Hashemi Rafsanjani. The two countries, both listed as state sponsors of terrorism and subjected to US sanctions, saw mutual benefit in teaming up against Western attempts to isolate them.

Sudan helped Iran project its influence by serving as the key entry point for Iranian weapons exports to Africa, according to sources who monitor

the arms trade. Khartoum denies taking part in these activities. In exchange, Sudan benefited from Iranian military technology that has helped it become a major African weapons producer. But the calculus has shifted as Sudan's economic problems have mounted - especially since it lost three-quarters of its oil revenues when South Sudan seceded in 2011.

Military spokesman Ahmed Al-

Khalifa Al-Shami said the army backed the policy shift, and military cooperation with Iran had been more limited than media reports would suggest. "The army has not been harmed by the severing of relations with Iran because all the military production is being done with Sudanese labor and expertise," Shami said.

Sudan has said its support for the Yemen campaign was a turning point in the Saudi relationship, but was not

linked to more investment. Nor did it cut ties with Iran in return for Saudi aid. Ali Al-Sadeq, Sudanese foreign ministry spokesman, said Sudan saw much more in the new relationship. "We are looking to a strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia," he said. "We are neighbors on the Red Sea coast and work together to secure these coastlines against challenges... We expect in the coming period more progress in cooperation". — Reuters

HEALTH MINISTER HANDILY DEFEATS GRILLING...

Continued from Page 1

The minister responded however that he did not order an investigation into the allegations because no one has officially complained, adding that only qualified companies are involved in the recruitment.

MPs Youssef Al-Zalzalah and Saadoun Hammad spoke in

support of the minister and charged that the grilling was politically-motivated and not based on correct charges. Hammad also defended the minister for owning a company, saying that most ministers own companies and cited the examples of the ministers of finance and housing. The lawmaker said the health minister is the victim of politicians and merchants who want to press him for contracts.

TWO SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR SPYING...

Continued from Page 1

The ruling said that Ali arranged with the Revolutionary Guard to smuggle large quantities of arms and explosives into Kuwait. The defendants were also convicted of spying for Hezbollah, smuggling in and assembling explosives, and possessing firearms and ammunition. The verdicts can be appealed.

Kuwaiti authorities said in August they had dismantled an Iran-linked cell and seized large quantities of arms, explosives and ammunition. During the trial, which began in September, all 23 defendants present in court denied the charges and alleged that confessions were extracted under torture. They told the court they were beaten and given electric shocks, with interrogators threatening to kill them if they did not sign prepared confessions. Iran has denied any links to the group.

The verdicts come amid deep tensions between

Tehran and Gulf Arab states after Iranian protesters on January 2 torched Saudi Arabian diplomatic missions in the Shiite-dominated Islamic republic. The attacks were in anger over Riyadh's execution of Nimr al-Nimr, a prominent cleric from the kingdom's Shiite minority. Riyadh cut diplomatic ties with Tehran the next day and a number of its Sunni Arab allies followed suit, including Bahrain and Sudan. Other Arab countries downgraded ties or recalled their envoys from Tehran.

Kuwait recalled its ambassador from Iran to protest the attacks and summoned Tehran's ambassador to express its disapproval. Around a third of Kuwait's native population of 1.3 million is Shiite. The hearing yesterday was held amid tight security, with armored vehicles with mounted machineguns stationed around the Palace of Justice in Kuwait City. Only close relatives of the defendants, lawyers and journalists were allowed to attend the hearing. — AFP

IRAN TO SELL HEAVY WATER TO US UNDER NUCLEAR DEAL

TEHRAN: Iran will sell part of its stock of heavy water to the United States under its nuclear deal with world powers, its deputy atomic chief said yesterday. Ali Asghar Zarean also denied reports Iran had dismantled the core of its Arak nuclear reactor, a key step in the deal that is to see sanctions lifted in exchange for limits on Tehran's nuclear program. "Iran will sell 40 tonnes of its excess heavy water to the United States through a third country," Zarean, deputy head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, was quoted as saying by the official IRNA news agency. "Six tonnes of the exported heavy water will be used in nuclear facilities and the rest in American research centres," he said.

Iran has a heavy water production plant in its Arak nuclear site, which has been operating for several years. Under its July deal with the P5+1 group - Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States plus Germany - Iran has agreed to replace the core of the Arak heavy water reactor and take other steps to ensure it cannot be used to make nuclear weapons. Reports emerged on Monday that Iran had removed the core at Arak, but Zarean said this was not the case and that Tehran was still working on an agreement for a replacement being redesigned with the help of China and the United States. — AFP

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P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net
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FIRST AID SHIPMENT IN MONTHS REACHES BESIEGED MADAYA



FIVE YEARS AFTER ARAB SPRING, HOPES DASHED



This file photo taken on Dec 7, 2011 shows soldiers of the Free Syrian Army, formed by army deserters, taking position in an undisclosed location in Syria.



This file photo taken on March 9, 2011 shows a Libyan rebel fighter using his legs to steady his machinegun as he fires at a fighter jet flying overhead during clashes with forces loyal to leader Muammar Gaddafi, just few kilometers outside the oil town of Ras Lanuf.

Focus

XINJIANG COTTON AT CROSSROADS OF CHINA SILK ROAD

By Dominique Patton

The Youngor cotton spinning factory is one of the biggest employers in Aksu, an agricultural town on the edge of the Taklamakan desert in China's restive Xinjiang region. Youngor, one of China's largest shirt-makers, opened the plant in 2011 to be closer to the main cotton-growing region in Xinjiang. Soon it will be joined by others: Beijing wants to create 1 million textile jobs in Xinjiang by 2023. Xinjiang fits into Beijing's larger vision of shifting labor intensive industries such as textiles out of the Pearl River Delta and into the interior. China is putting less value on being "the world's workshop" amid labor shortages and competitive pressures from Southeast Asia.

The textile hub is also a key initiative in President Xi Jinping's "one belt, one road" initiative, the new Silk Road and economic belt spreading from Western China to Central Asia and onwards to Europe. More immediately, Beijing is offering the carrot of jobs and development, even as it wields a harsh stick against Uighur separatism. "We must promote employment as a permanent cure to maintain social stability and achieve long-lasting peace, and particularly solve the unemployment problem for peoples in southern Xinjiang," a 2014 official document stated in outlining a massive expansion of Xinjiang's textile industry. China says it is fighting an Islamist insurgency in the deserts, mountains and forests of energy-rich Xinjiang. Critics say the unrest largely stems from repressive Chinese policies against the Uighurs, a minority Muslim people who speak a Turkic language and have different customs from Han Chinese.

Migrating to Cities

Most Uighurs live in towns and cities such as Aksu in the poorer southern part of Xinjiang, where much of the violence has unfolded. There, in one of its first serious attempts to address the economic factor in Xinjiang's unrest, Beijing is making a clear effort to create more jobs for Uighurs. Almost all of the 520 employees at the Youngor factory are Uighurs. The average factory floor salary is around 3,000 yuan (\$463.18) a month, and comes with food and lodging - compared with roughly 4,000 yuan for textile workers in the southern China factory belt.

"There are still a lot of people to come out of (Xinjiang's) countryside," said Xu Zhiwu, general manager at Youngor's Aksu factory, referring to government data that show 2.6 million rural residents sought work in Xinjiang's cities in 2014. Xinjiang Youngor Cotton Spinning Co Ltd, a unit of Youngor Group, is planning to expand its factory, built among apple orchards on Aksu's outskirts, Xu said. Yarn maker Huafu Top Dyed Melange Yarn is already at work on a 5 billion yuan plant outside Aksu, undeterred by September's attack on a coalmine near the city. Texhong Textile Group Ltd, one of China's top spinners, is targeting a 1-million spindle project in the region. "The scale of the project has to be big to ask for more favourable policy support from municipal governments," Texhong said in a stock exchange statement, referring to subsidies Beijing offers to lure firms to the region.

Cotton to Garments

More than 60 percent of China's cotton crop is grown in Xinjiang. It's a major advantage for companies who process the fluffy material into cotton thread to be close to supplies. Their automated spinning factories also benefit from electricity prices around half those in coastal provinces. Spinning needs relatively few workers. Creating 1 million textile jobs will require a build-out of the entire industry chain, from dyeing and weaving to garment production. And that poses a far greater challenge than attracting more spinners.

Dyeing, bleaching and washing of fabric would demand substantial supplies of water in the arid region. Much of Xinjiang, including Aksu, is classified as "high risk" for water stress by the non-profit World Resources Institute. The WRI has designated Shihezi and Korla, two cities also targeted for major textile expansion, as "extremely high risk".

Aksu is consulting with textile companies on plans to build a 50,000-tonne waste water treatment facility to handle discharge from future dyeing operations, said Youngor's Xu, who has attended recent government meetings on the issue. A similar facility is also under discussion for Shihezi, near Urumqi, but some firms are wary of proceeding with dyeing in the area. "We are not sure whether the capacity of the facility could meet all the demand and protect the environment from damage," said Zhao Yang, general manager of three Xinjiang spinning factories owned by Hong Kong-based shirt maker Esquel. "Compared with Guangdong, where our fabric mill sites are, Xinjiang's water is very scarce," he said. —Reuters

By Guillaume Klein

On Jan 14, 2011, Tunisians packed the streets of their capital and shocked the world by overthrowing longtime dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. The revolution shook the Middle East, setting off the hopeful uprisings that came to be known as the Arab Spring. But five years later, the countries that followed Tunisia's example could hardly be worse off, the hopes of their people dashed by new autocrats, strife, civil war and the rise of the virulent jihadism exemplified by the Islamic State group.

"Those were exciting days. The democracy fever spread," Hafez Ghanem, the vice president of the World Bank, wrote in a recent book to mark the start of the Arab Spring. "But can a country with no democratic tradition and with weak institutions become a well-functioning democracy and improve the lives of its citizens overnight? The answer is obviously no." Only weeks before Ben Ali stepped down after 23 years in power, few could have expected the wave of change to come.

A month earlier a street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi had set himself on fire in the town of Sidi Bouzid, triggering the mass protests that eventually brought Ben Ali down. Tunisia was not only the first Arab Spring country but also its only partial success story. There has been a rise in jihadist violence since Ben Ali's overthrow, most dramatically in the attacks on the Bardo museum and on a Mediterranean resort that killed 60 people, most of them foreign tourists. But the country has elected a new government and its National Dialogue Quartet - a group of four civil society organizations - was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year for helping to save its transition to democracy. Elsewhere in the region, popular uprisings were less the beginnings of a new spring than preludes of harsh winters.

Crackdowns and Chaos

In Egypt, the ouster of Hosni Mubarak was followed by turbulent unrest and eventually a military overthrow of his Islamist successor Mohamed Morsi, the country's first civilian - and freely elected - president. Then-army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi took over and launched a harsh crackdown on Morsi's supporters, leaving hundreds dead and thousands in prison. Jihadist violence has surged, especially in the restive Sinai Peninsula, and IS has claimed a range of deadly attacks, including the downing of a Russian plane in October that killed all 224 people on board.

In Libya, an uprising against longtime

leader Muammar Gaddafi quickly became an armed revolution backed by NATO, and his overthrow and killing in 2011 have been followed by continued strife and political chaos. Rival parliaments and governments are vying for power and UN efforts to bring about a unity government have so far failed. IS jihadists have gained an important foothold in Gaddafi's hometown Sirte and launched attacks, last week killing more than 50 people in a bombing at a police school in Zliten, the worst incident since the revolution.

In Yemen, the stepping down of longtime president Ali Abdullah Saleh after mass protests was followed by deep instability and eventually war after Shiite Houthi rebels forced his successor Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi to flee the capital. Saudi Arabia launched a military intervention last March to support Hadi's government but there are few signs, despite UN peace efforts, of a war that has killed more than 6,000 people coming to an end. Shiite protesters inspired by the Arab

Spring also launched demonstrations against their Sunni rulers in Bahrain but were put down a month later. Sporadic unrest has continued.

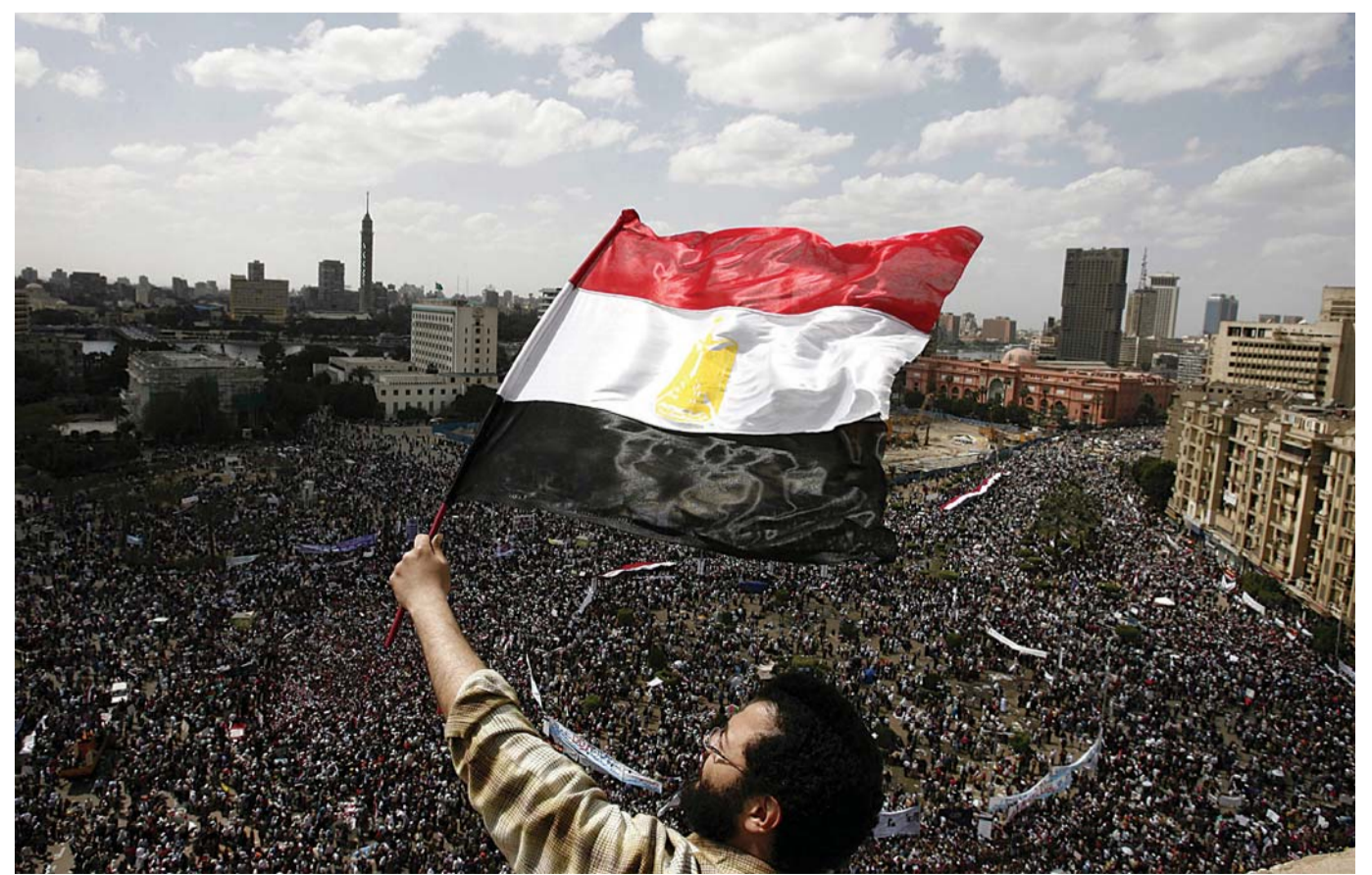
Like 'Fall of Berlin Wall'

But nowhere were the aspirations of the Arab Spring more disappointing than in Syria, where peaceful protests against President Bashar Al-Assad evolved into a brutal civil war that has left more than 260,000 dead and forced millions from their homes. After nearly five years of war, Syria is in ruins, its people scattered, many of them turned desperate refugees hoping to reach Europe. Much of the country has been taken over by IS, which has declared a "caliphate" in areas under its control in Syria and neighboring Iraq, committing widespread atrocities as it imposes its harsh interpretation of Islam.

From its base there, IS has organized or inspired a new wave of attacks on the West, including the Nov 13 massacres on the

streets of Paris and the Charlie Hebdo killings a year ago. "The Arab Spring was a moment in history comparable to the fall of the Berlin Wall, in the sense that there were major shifts in geopolitical maps, like in the 1990s," said Michael Ayari, an analyst with the International Crisis Group. "We still don't have a clear reading... At the moment it feels like we are in downward phase, but this is a process that will take decades," he said.

"It is clear that the Arab transition has taken on a violent, and even scary character," wrote Ghanem, whose book "The Arab Spring Five Years Later: Toward Greater Inclusiveness" was published by the Brookings Institution last month. But he said there was still hope for positive change, if Arab governments focus on more "inclusive" policies to pursue economic growth and good governance. "The Arab Spring is not a season," he wrote. "It is a first and important step on the long road to a new political, social and economic order." —AFP



This file photo taken on April 08, 2011 shows an Egyptian protester waving his national flag as tens of thousands gather for a demonstration in Cairo's Tahrir Square two months after president Hosni Mubarak was ousted, to demand that former regime officials including the veteran strongman be purged and tried. —AFP

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ALLI SIGNS NEW TOTTENHAM DEAL

LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur breakthrough star Dele Alli has signed a new five-year contract tying him to White Hart Lane until 2021, the Premier League club announced yesterday. Alli, 19, joined Spurs in a £5 million (\$7.2 million, 6.7 million euros) move from third-tier Milton Keynes Dons last year and has made a stunning impact, scoring five goals in 18 Premier League appearances this season. The versatile central midfielder has also been capped by England and scored his first international goal in November's 2-0 friendly win over France at Wembley. "I'm delighted. The club's been really great to me since I've come here," Alli said in a video interview published on the Tottenham website. "We've got a great, young team and I see us going forward, so I'm happy to be here." Alli signed for Tottenham from his home-town club MK Dons in January 2015 and was loaned back to the League One side for the remainder of last season before linking up with Spurs during the close season. He made his debut against Manchester United on the season's opening day and has made 26 appearances in all competitions. —AFP



FIFA MUSEUM TO OPEN ON FEB 28

ZURICH: The multi-million dollar FIFA museum, the project of fallen world football chief Sepp Blatter, will open its doors on February 28 in Zurich, two days after the election of his successor, FIFA announced yesterday. Over 140 million Swiss francs (\$140 million/128 million euro) has been invested over the past three years in the museum dedicated to the world's most popular sport. "We couldn't ignore the turbulences, it was not easy. But we had to focus on our mission, to build a museum and a team," said managing director Stefan Jost of the work which continued against the backdrop of the current scandal engulfing the sport's governing body. Blatter along with UEFA chief Michel Platini have both been suspended from all football activity for eight years by a FIFA tribunal, over a two million Swiss franc (\$2 million/1.8 million euro) payment that Blatter approved to the Frenchman. "It's not a museum about personalities, it's about what football gives to people around the world," added Jost of the project which was the brainchild of Blatter, who has headed FIFA since 1998. "We don't know if the new president will participate in the inauguration," said Jost, adding that the interim secretary general Markus Kattner would be present. In the centre of Zurich, and covering 3000 m2 on three levels, the museum will exhibit objects tracing the history of football, with a library including 5000 works. —AFP

CAULKER LOANED TO LIVERPOOL BY QPR

LONDON: Liverpool have moved to address their defensive injury problems by signing centre-back Steven Caulker on loan from Queens Park Rangers, the Premier League club announced yesterday. "Liverpool Football Club have completed the signing of Steven Caulker on loan from Queens Park Rangers until the end of the season," Liverpool announced on their website. Caulker could make his debut in today's home game against league leaders Arsenal.

The 24-year-old, capped once by England, was expected to train with Liverpool for the first time yesterday. Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp moved to bring Caulker in after hamstring injuries to Martin Skrtel and Dejan Lovren left him short in central defence. However, Kolo Toure and Mamadou Sakho have recovered from cramp and knee problems respectively, so Caulker may be on the bench against Arsenal. Formerly with Tottenham Hotspur, Caulker had been on loan at Southampton and appeared in the south coast club's crushing 6-1 defeat at Liverpool's hands in last month's League Cup quarter-finals. —AFP



KUALA LUMPUR: Team Asia captain Jeev Milkha Singh of India (R) looks on as Team Europe captain Darren Clarke of Northern Ireland (L) answers questions from the media during a press conference at the Glenmarie Golf and Country club in Shah Alam yesterday ahead of the 2016 Eurasia Cup Golf tournament.



HUA HIN: A handout photo released yesterday shows Jose Rolz of Guatemala (L) and Juan Ignacio Lizarra of Uruguay posing during the Asian Tour final stage qualifying school at the Springfield Royal Country Club in Hua Hin. — AFP photos

NEWLY CONFIDENT ASIA EAGER FOR SHOWDOWN WITH EUROPE

KUALA LUMPUR: Team Asia members yesterday exuded confidence ahead of this week's EurAsia Cup clash, saying the improving calibre of the region's golf had given them high hopes of beating Europe. The inaugural running of the match-play event two years ago ended in a 10-10 tie following a stirring comeback by Asia, but the squad's players said they may go one better this time.

"There has been so much improvement, especially on the Asian side (since 2014)," said Asian Tour Order of Merit winner Anirban Lahiri of India. "If you look at the Asian team now we have five or six people who are in the

top 60 in the world, and that was not the case when we played two years back."

"That tells you that Asian golf has kicked on and has gotten stronger over the last two years." The Ryder Cup-style contest at the Glenmarie Golf and Country Club in Malaysia tees off Friday with bragging rights between the European and Asian Tours at stake.

The European circuit is the larger of the two, with more of its players achieving success on the sport's biggest stages.

A proposed merger between the two tours has sparked concerns among Asian players of becoming eclipsed by European players and

tournaments. But Team Asia members vowed to serve notice of the region's quality this week.

"We believe that if we perform as well as we did (in 2014), Europe (will find it) tough to take the trophy away from us," said Kiradech Aphibarnrat of Thailand.

'WE ARE STRONG ENOUGH'

Asian players have gone from strength to strength in the past season. Lahiri won twice in co-sanctioned Asian-European events and logged top-10 finishes around the world, while South Korea's An Byeong-Hun took

European Tour Rookie of the Year honours.

Thai veteran Thongchai Jaidee recorded eight top-10s and a career-high world ranking of 28, and countryman Kiradech won three times globally. All are on the 12-man Asian squad captained by India's Jeev Milkha Singh.

Lahiri said Europe had sent a "much stronger team" than in 2014. "What does that tell you? It tells you that we are strong enough and they are not going to take any chances," he said.

European golfers who qualified include England's Danny Willett, Shane Lowry of Ireland, and Frenchman Victor Dubuisson.

Major winner Darren Clarke of Northern Ireland has bolstered the side further with his captain's picks-Ryder Cup match-play veterans Lee Westwood and Ian Poulter of England.

Clarke also skips Europe in the Ryder Cup against the United States in September, making the EurAsia Cup something of a trial run. He said yesterday he remained focused this week purely on victory in Malaysia, but admitted the outcome could guide pairings and strategy against the US.

If Europe fails again to clinch the EurAsia Cup, "it's going to send some shudders down the Ryder Cup team," Lahiri said. — AFP

INDIAN PLAYER BACKTRACKS ON KIDNEY SALE THREAT

MUMBAI: An Indian squash player has backtracked on a threat to sell his kidney to raise funds ahead of next month's South Asian Games, saying it was a "spur of the moment" decision that he was now regretting. Ravi Dixit, 22, is part of the home squad for the event in northeast India and was reported to be offering the organ for sale on social media for an asking price of 800,000 rupees (\$11,952.79) due to a lack of sponsors. "I need at least Rs 1 lakh to participate in the South Asian Games but have not been able to find any sponsor," Dixit was quoted as saying by the Hindustan Times newspaper yesterday. "So, I have decided to sell my kidney for Rs 8 lakh so that I can participate in other tournaments as well for the rest of the year."

Dixit, who turns 23 this week, later apologised for his comments in a letter issued through the Squash Rackets Federation of India, the local governing body, but insisted he still needed sponsorship to continue his playing career.

"I never intended to sell my kidney. This statement was made at the spur of the moment for which I am truly sorry," Dixit wrote. "I am keen to pursue squash as my career and continuously looking out for additional sponsors to meet my expenses." Dixit's threat to sell the organ, forbidden by Indian law, was also a cause of concern for his parents. "I have spoken to Ravi. He is in Chennai right now but I spoke to him on the phone. His mother and I are imploring him not to take the step," Ravi's father, Ramkailash, told the Times of India newspaper.

"Together, we will figure out a way to deal with this crisis. This way, he will ruin both his life and career. "I funded my daughter's wedding with Ravi's winnings. Since he has to support the family as well, he cannot use much of what he gets for himself."

His father's employer, the Dhampur Sugar Mill, had provided financial assistance in the past but according to Dixit, the funds were no longer enough to support him. — Reuters

AL-ATTIYAH STRIKES AS DAKAR DISASTER HITS LOEB

BELLEN: Defending champion Nasser al-Attiyah won the eighth stage of the Dakar Rally on Monday as disaster struck debutant Sebastien Loeb's impressive start to the gruelling event. Al-Attiyah, in a first stage win for Mini against the might of Peugeot who had won the previous six, finished 12 seconds ahead of Carlos Sainz and 31sec in front of new leader Stephane Peterhansel, both representing the French car manufacturer.

Nine-time world champion Loeb, after three stage wins, lost his lead of the overall standings as he ground to a standstill after taking a wrong turn and rolling less than 30 kilometres from the end of the 393km timed special of the 766km run between Salta and Belen. Despite massive damage to the car, Loeb and co-pilot Daniel Elena managed to limp home to now stand eighth in the overall standings, more than one hour off the pace.

"It's over for the victory," said Loeb. "In a stream there was a huge step that I didn't see and which threw us into a barrel-roll. "We lost a lot of time because we had to change the wheels." "Our victory hopes have gone—we knew that we didn't know it all!" Loeb may have impressed during the first week of the Dakar, putting his WRC experience to good use, but Peterhansel warned that the Dakar is a different beast. "He fell into the trap we could have

expected. Once you're off the track you have to open your eyes twice as much," he said. "That was where he risked making a mistake." KTM rider Toby Price won the motorcycle section, the Australian landing a sledgehammer blow in distancing Paulo Goncalves (Honda), the overnight leader, by 5:17. As a result, Price took command of the overall standings with a lead of 2:05 over the Honda rider from Portugal. Yesterday's ninth stage was around Belen. — AFP



BELLEN: Peugeot's French driver Sebastien Loeb is helped to put his overturned car back on its wheels during Stage 8 of the Dakar 2016 between Salta and Belen, Argentina, on Monday. — AFP

CAS BANS 34 AFL PLAYERS AFTER UPHOLDING WADA APPEAL

MELBOURNE: In what Australian rules football administrators described as a "stain on our game," 34 players involved in Essendon's supplement program in 2012 were suspended for the 2016 season.

The ruling came yesterday after the Court of Arbitration for Sport upheld an appeal from the World Anti-Doping Agency against an Australian Football League tribunal's decision to clear them.

Almost 10 months after the AFL's anti-doping tribunal stated it could not be "comfortably satisfied" that any of the players had violated anti-doping rules by using Thymosin Beta-4 under the club's supplements program during the 2012 season, CAS announced it had ruled in favor of WADA and set aside the initial decision.

The sanctions came as a shock to some, but not to anti-doping officials. In the end, players and administrators of Australia's homegrown game had to accept that athletes are ultimately responsible for whatever ends up in their systems. Of the 34 players, a dozen still are contracted to Melbourne-based Essendon, including the AFL's 2012 player of the year Jobe Watson, five are playing for other clubs and the others have retired or been de-listed. "As tough as the sanction feels, the AFL accepts

the decision of CAS," AFL chairman Mike Fitzpatrick said. Gillon McLachlan, the AFL's chief executive, described the sanction as "devastating" for the players.

"Our view is that they have been horribly let down by the administration of the time," he said. "But the club has sought to acknowledge what has happened and move forward from those events." Watson will have to meet with the AFL to determine the ramifications for his Brownlow Medal, awarded to the best and fairest player in the league. The AFL said Essendon would be permitted to top up its squad with 10 additional players in 2016. Former coaches and union officials were critical of the severity of the player sanctions. James Hird, who was head coach during the 2012 season and has already served a year-long ban from the game, said the penalties were "a miscarriage of justice."

AFL Players' Association chief executive Paul Marsh said the players involved were not drug cheats. "We are struggling to understand how the CAS decision can be so different to that of the AFL anti-doping tribunal," Marsh said. "If the players were administered with banned substances, they have been deceived. They are the victims, not the perpetrators."

BANNED SUBSTANCE

In its judgment, CAS said it was satisfied the players had taken the banned substance and were significantly at fault. It imposed mandatory two-year bans, meaning most of the 34 players will be suspended until Nov. 13.

The court rejected an argument of "no significant fault, no significant negligence" which could have drastically reduced the sentences. "If the AFL tribunal's decision had prevailed, it would have set a damaging precedent for future non-analytical anti-doping cases and, therefore, been detrimental for anti-doping efforts worldwide," WADA director general David Howman said.

It was the severity of the penalties that shocked those who believed any bans imposed by the court might be backdated so heavily the players would miss only a handful of games.

While the domestic media speculated that players would take legal action in civil courts, the CAS verdict, delivered by a three-man panel headed by British barrister Michael Beloff, is likely the last step in the anti-doping process that started in February 2012 when Essendon announced its supplements program was being investigated.

ASADA chief executive Ben McDevitt said the "unfortunate episode has chronicled the most devastating self-inflicted injury by a sporting club in Australian history." "Unfortunately, despite their education, (the players) agreed to be injected with a number of substances they had little knowledge of, made no enquiries about the substance and kept the injections from their team doctor and ASADA," he said.

"At best, the players did not ask the questions, or the people, they should have. At worst, they were complicit in a culture of secrecy and concealment." The nutritionist behind the supplements program has been banned for life by the AFL, but maintains he is innocent of doping allegations and threatened legal action.

Essendon chairman Lindsay Tanner said the 2012 supplements program "was a mistake of the highest magnitude."

"It's heartbreaking for the players, who will struggle to understand how two tribunals could come to two different conclusions from the same evidence," Tanner said. "But as a club, we should have had more robust systems in place to ensure the protection of our players." — AP

SEDIN SCORES IN OT, CANUCKS END PANTHERS' WINNING STREAK

VANCOUVER: Daniel Sedin scored his second goal of the night on a power play at 2:21 of overtime, and the Vancouver Canucks stopped the Florida Panthers' 12-game winning streak with a 3-2 victory Monday. Sedin snapped a shot past Roberto Luongo with Jaromir Jagr in the penalty box for hooking, tying Markus Naslund's franchise record for goals with 346. With the Canucks celebrating on the ice, the teams came together near the benches with a lot of pushing and shoving. A number of players from both teams began throwing punches as referees tried to break up the fights. Jake Virtanen also scored for Vancouver, which got 26 saves from Jacob Markstrom. Jussi Jokinen and Jonathan Huberdeau scored for the Panthers (26-12-5). Luongo made 27 stops, but his nine-game winning streak ended. Virtanen tied it with 2:38 left in regulation.

Howard stopped 27 shots after getting pulled from his previous two starts, but the former starter remained winless in six appearances since Dec. 3. He hasn't won a road game since Nov. 21.

RANGERS 2, BRUINS 1

Jesper Fast scored on a deflection in front with 1:42 to play and New York rallied to beat Boston. Derick Brassard also scored in the third period and Henrik Lundqvist made 32 saves, including a highlight-reel stop on Max Talbot, as the Rangers beat the Bruins for only the fourth time in 12 meetings (4-8). Jimmy Hayes scored for the Bruins, and Tuukka Rask had 28 saves. Boston is 2-6-1 in its last nine games. It marked the first time this season the Rangers overcame a deficit at the start of the third period and won in regulation. They were 0-11-2 entering the game.

SHARKS 5, FLAMES 4

Joel Ward scored midway through the third period to help San Jose hold off Calgary. Joe Thornton, Joonas Donskoi, Logan Couture and Brent Burns also scored for the Sharks.

Martin Jones finished with 31 saves - 15 in the third period. Sean Monahan, Dennis Wideman, Sam Bennett and Michael Ferland scored for the Flames, who have lost four of their last five at home after winning a franchise-record 11 straight at the Saddledome. Karri Ramo had 13 saves. Burns' power-play goal at 5:12 of the third broke a 3-all tie. Ward scored 5 minutes later to give San Jose a two-goal lead. — AP



GLENDALE: Derrick Henry #2 of the Alabama Crimson Tide runs with the ball against the Clemson Tigers during the 2016 College Football Playoff National Championship Game at University of Phoenix Stadium on January 11 in Glendale, Arizona. — AFP

ALABAMA BEAT CLEMSON TO WIN FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

GLENDALE: The University of Alabama won its fourth national title in the last seven seasons, outlasting the dynamic play of Deshaun Watson and No. 1-ranked Clemson in a 45-40 victory Monday in the College Football Playoff championship game.

The No. 2-ranked Crimson Tide (14-1) became just the second team in college football since 1936 to win four titles in seven seasons, joining Notre Dame, which won four times from 1943-49. For Alabama coach Nick Saban, it is his fifth national championship, leaving him only one short of former Tide coach Bear Bryant for the most all-time. "This was a great challenge for us," Saban said. Alabama hit Clemson with a barrage of big plays, including four touchdowns of at

least 50 yards, and used a surprise early in the fourth quarter to seize control.

With 10:34 left in the fourth quarter and Alabama having just tied the game with a short field goal, Saban took a gamble to try to keep the ball away from Watson and the Tigers. He called for a high-bouncing outside kick that Tide defensive Marlon Humphrey caught over the shoulder at midfield.

"I think that changed the momentum of the game, and our guys finished it," Saban said. Moments later, Alabama took back the lead. For the second time, Clemson (14-1) lost track of the tight end O.J. Howard in coverage and Jake Coker hit him in stride deep for a 51-yard touchdown to make it 31-24 with 9:45 left.

Watson then led Clemson to a field goal to make it 31-27 before Kenyan Drake came up and streaking down the sideline for a 95-yard kickoff return touchdown.

Watson threw his third touchdown pass to make it 38-33 with 4:40 left, and then Alabama went back to its workhorse Heisman Trophy winner. Derrick Henry plunged into the end zone for his third touchdown of the game to make it 45-33 with 1:07 left.

Watson threw another touchdown pass, but would not get another chance as Clemson's outside kick went out of bounds. Watson gave the Tide all it could handle, throwing for 405 yards and four touchdowns. — AP



GLENDALE: Head coach Nick Saban of the Alabama Crimson Tide celebrates by hoisting the College Football Playoff National Championship Trophy after defeating the Clemson Tigers in the 2016 College Football Playoff National Championship Game at University of Phoenix Stadium on January 11 in Glendale, Arizona. The Crimson Tide defeated the Tigers with a score of 45 to 40. — AFP

PAS PRAISE KUWAITI FENCER AL-QALLAF

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Sports (PAS) Director General has praised two-time North American Cup gold-medalist Kuwait's Tareq Al-Qallaf as an "example" amongst his peers.

Speaking of the Kuwaiti fencer on Monday, Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said that Al-Qallaf represents "an example of

a Kuwaiti athlete who is loyal to his nation and is committed to gaining more and more accomplishments in the name of Kuwait." Al-Qallaf took home two gold medals in the wheelchair sabre and epee events and a bronze in the foil at the event held in St. Louis, Missouri. The PAS chief called on Kuwaiti athletes to follow suit, in continuously working to

raise the name of Kuwait at continental and international competitions. "PAS constantly works to back sports and its athletes through alleviating every obstacle they may be faced with, in its aims for a true resurgence of Kuwaiti sports based on the wise directions and support of the political leadership," he added in his statement. — KUNA

NHL results/standings

Los Angeles 4, Detroit 2; Vancouver 3, Florida 2 (OT); Calgary 4, San Jose 5; NY Rangers 2, Boston 1.

| Eastern Conference | | | | | | Western Conference | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|----|----|----|-----|--------------------|---------|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----|-----|----|
| Atlantic Division | | | | | | Pacific Division | | | | | | | | | |
| PL | W | L | OT | GF | PTS | Dallas | Chicago | St. Louis | Minnesota | Nashville | Colorado | Winnipeg | | | |
| Florida | 43 | 26 | 12 | 5 | 118 | 92 | 57 | 44 | 29 | 11 | 4 | 149 | 116 | 62 | |
| Detroit | 43 | 22 | 14 | 7 | 107 | 112 | 51 | 44 | 27 | 13 | 4 | 126 | 104 | 58 | |
| Montreal | 43 | 23 | 17 | 3 | 122 | 107 | 49 | 45 | 24 | 14 | 7 | 111 | 112 | 55 | |
| Boston | 41 | 21 | 15 | 5 | 124 | 110 | 47 | 42 | 22 | 12 | 8 | 111 | 99 | 52 | |
| Tampa Bay | 42 | 21 | 17 | 4 | 107 | 102 | 46 | 42 | 19 | 16 | 7 | 107 | 115 | 45 | |
| Ottawa | 43 | 20 | 17 | 6 | 119 | 131 | 46 | 43 | 21 | 19 | 3 | 125 | 123 | 45 | |
| Toronto | 40 | 16 | 17 | 7 | 104 | 112 | 39 | 42 | 19 | 20 | 3 | 111 | 121 | 41 | |
| Buffalo | 42 | 16 | 22 | 4 | 97 | 115 | 36 | | | | | | | | |
| Metropolitan Division | | | | | | Central Division | | | | | | | | | |
| Washington | 42 | 32 | 7 | 3 | 139 | 90 | 67 | Los Angeles | 42 | 27 | 12 | 3 | 112 | 92 | 57 |
| NY Rangers | 42 | 23 | 14 | 5 | 123 | 110 | 51 | Arizona | 41 | 21 | 16 | 4 | 116 | 125 | 46 |
| NY Islanders | 42 | 22 | 15 | 5 | 114 | 107 | 49 | Vancouver | 43 | 17 | 16 | 10 | 105 | 120 | 44 |
| New Jersey | 43 | 21 | 17 | 5 | 97 | 102 | 47 | San Jose | 40 | 20 | 18 | 2 | 114 | 112 | 42 |
| Pittsburgh | 41 | 20 | 16 | 5 | 97 | 100 | 45 | Anaheim | 41 | 17 | 17 | 7 | 78 | 99 | 41 |
| Philadelphia | 40 | 18 | 15 | 7 | 91 | 108 | 43 | Calgary | 41 | 19 | 20 | 2 | 109 | 129 | 40 |
| Carolina | 43 | 18 | 18 | 7 | 102 | 118 | 43 | Edmonton | 43 | 17 | 23 | 3 | 105 | 127 | 37 |
| Columbus | 43 | 15 | 24 | 4 | 109 | 139 | 34 | | | | | | | | |



NEW YORK: Mats Zuccarello #36 of the New York Rangers watches a shot by Derick Brassard #16 enter the net past Tuukka Rask #40 of the Boston Bruins at 35 seconds of the third period at Madison Square Garden on Monday in New York City. The Rangers defeated the Bruins 2-1. — AFP

S LANKA TO PROBE ALLEGED DRINKING, SQUABBLING ON NZ TOUR

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's demoralised cricket team faces an investigation into alleged "scandalous behaviour" during its dismal tour of New Zealand, including drinking parties and squabbling, the sports minister said yesterday.

Dayasiri Jayasekera said he had been handed photos of national players attending all-night parties just before crucial matches against hosts New Zealand, who achieved a virtual clean sweep in the just-

ended tour. "There was scandalous behaviour," the minister told AFP. "They have not only attended drinking parties till three and four in the morning, but there was a lot of tension and friction among members." Sri Lanka went to New Zealand as defending champions of the shortest form of the game, but slipped to third position this month behind the West Indies and Australia after their resounding defeat in the Twenty20 matches. Sri Lanka also lost the

Tests 0-2 and the one-day series 1-3 to the hosts. "When they return, I want to call the team and along with Thilanga (Sumathipala, new Sri Lanka Cricket president) try to find out what happened," the minister said. "My main concern is the breakdown in discipline. When that is affected, the team naturally performs badly," he said of reported squabbling between players, including the captain, and the coach. The minister said Sri Lanka would

also focus on finding a long-term coach after Marvan Atapattu quit weeks before his contract was due to expire in September last year. Sri Lanka appointed Jerome Jayaratne as interim coach, initially for the home series against the West Indies and then for the New Zealand tour. Jayaratne, 49, had been head of coaching at Sri Lanka Cricket but his elevation to oversee the national team was seen as a stop-gap arrangement. Atapattu was the seventh Sri

Lanka head coach in the past five years. The 45-year-old took over the team in September 2014 after Englishman Paul Farbrace abruptly quit months earlier to become England's deputy coach. Since 2010, Trevor Bayliss, Stuart Law, Ramesh Ratnayake, Geoff Marsh and Graham Ford have also held stints as Sri Lanka coach.

Jayarathne, a former Under 19 international, had headed the coaching department for seven years. — AFP



PERTH: Australia's Steve Smith, right, attempts to play a shot against India during their one day international cricket match in Perth, Australia, yesterday. — AP

SMITH, BAILEY TONS POWER AUSTRALIA TO 5-WICKET WIN

PERTH: Steve Smith and George Bailey both scored centuries as Australia cruised to a five-wicket win over India in the first one day international at the WACA ground yesterday.

After Indian opener Rohit Sharma scored an unbeaten 171 to lead his country to an imposing 309-3, Australia got away to a rocky start when left arm seamer Barinder Sran removed both openers in his first three overs.

Playing on a lifeless pitch which offered nothing for the bowlers, Bailey and Smith played brilliantly to frustrate the Indian attack. They rotated the strike throughout the innings to keep the score moving, taking quick singles and hitting boundaries when they needed to increase the pace. Bailey was the more aggressive early and reached his century before his captain, taking just 106 balls with six boundaries and two sixes. Smith began to accelerate and followed Bailey to three figures soon after, off only 97 balls including six fours and a towering six.

Bailey eventually fell when he tried to smash another six off Ravi Ashwin and was caught on the boundary by Bhuvneshwar Kumar but Smith continued his incredible vein of form.

He smashed his way to 149 but with only two

runs needed for victory he chipped Sran to cover where Virat Kohli claimed an easy catch, leaving James Faulkner to hit the winning run.

"I thought we did well in the field to restrict them to 309," Smith said. "They looked like they were going to get 350 at one stage." India must have been confident of defending their total after Sran's impressive start.

He brilliantly caught and bowled Finch (8) in his second over, then had the dangerous Warner (5) caught at midwicket by Kohli in his third.

But the ease with which Australia chased the score down showed that India had not scored quickly enough in the middle of their innings and were at least 20 runs short of a competitive total. "I think it's important that after you score 300 runs you bowl well and I think in the middle overs when the spinners were bowling they gave up too many runs," Dhoni said. "I was quite happy with the fast bowling performance—I thought they bowled well and hit the right spots."

TOOTHLESS ATTACK

Earlier Sharma and Kohli (91) shared a 207-run partnership for the second wicket against a toothless Australian attack. India lost opener

Shikhar Dhawan (9) in the sixth over when he top-edged an attempted pull from Josh Hazlewood straight to Mitchell Marsh at deep backward square leg.

However, that brought Kohli to the crease and signalled a long period of complete dominance over the Australian attack as he raced to the highest individual ODI score against Australia on Australian soil, eclipsing Viv Richards' 153 not out for the West Indies in 1979.

Sharma smashed 13 fours and cleared the boundary seven times to the delight of the large contingent of Indian fans at the ground.

He built his innings steadily, bringing up his 50 from 63 balls, his century from 122 and his 150 from 155, mixing quick singles with some powerful boundary hitting. It was the fourth time Sharma had scored 150 in ODIs, a record only surpassed by countryman Sachin Tendulkar.

Sharma lost Kohli with the score on 243 and was joined at the crease by Dhoni, who joined in with 18 rapid runs before he was caught brilliantly at mid-on by Boland. However, despite the late flourish the Indians fell short and Australia were able to draw first blood in the five-match series. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

PERTH, Australia: Scoreboard from the first ODI between Australia and India at the WACA ground in Perth yesterday:

| India | | Australia | |
|--|-----|---|-----|
| R. Sharma not out | 171 | D. Warner c Kohli b Sran | 5 |
| S. Dhawan c Marsh b Hazlewood | 9 | S. Smith c Kohli b Sran | 149 |
| V. Kohli c Finch b Faulkner | 91 | G. Bailey c Kumar b Ashwin | 112 |
| M. Dhoni c Boland b Faulkner | 18 | G. Maxwell c Dhawan b Ashwin | 6 |
| R. Jadeja not out | 10 | M. Marsh not out | 12 |
| Extras (lb6, w4) | 10 | J. Faulkner not out | 1 |
| Total (3 wickets; 50 overs) | 309 | Extras (lb5, w12) | 17 |
| Fall of wickets: 1-36 (Dhawan); 2-243 (Kohli), 3-286 (Dhoni) | | Total (5 wickets; 49.2 overs) | 310 |
| Did not bat: A. Rahane, M. Pandey, R. Ashwin, U. Yadav, B. Kumar, B. Sran | | Fall of wickets: 1-9 (Finch), 2-21 (Warner), 3-263 (Bailey), 4-273 (Maxwell), 5-308 (Smith) | |
| Bowling: Hazlewood 10-0-41-1, Paris 8-0-53-0 (1w), Marsh 9-0-53-0 (1w), Boland 10-0-74-0, Faulkner 10-0-60-2 (1w), Maxwell 3-0-22-0 (1w) | | Did not bat: M. Wade, S. Boland, J. Hazlewood, J. Paris | |
| Australia | | Bowling: Sran 9.2-0-56-3 (3w), Kumar 9-0-42-0 (4w), Sharma 1-0-11-0, Yadav 10-0-54-0 (3w), Jadeja 9-0-61-0 (1w), Aswhin 9-0-68-2 (1w), Kohli 2-0-13-0 | |
| A. Finch c and b Sran | 8 | Result: Australia won by five wickets. | |

DE VILLIERS FACES BIGGER CHALLENGE

JOHANNESBURG: AB de Villiers faces the biggest challenge of a glittering career when he captains South Africa in the third Test against England, starting at the Wanderers Stadium tomorrow. Arguably the world's best batsman - he is ranked third in Tests and first in one-day internationals - De Villiers, 31, made no secret of his ambition to captain the South African Test team following the retirement of Graeme Smith in 2014.

But Cricket South Africa decided to appoint Hashim Amla instead, with De Villiers continuing to lead the one-day side. Now De Villiers has the job he wanted, following the surprise resignation of Amla after the second Test last week - but only for the remaining two matches of the series.

A long-term appointment will probably not be made for some time, with South Africa not due to play another Test series until they meet New Zealand in August.

De Villiers takes over at a difficult time. Despite fighting back strongly to draw the second Test in Cape Town, South Africa have gone eight Test matches and more than a year without a win.

England lead the series 1-0 and South Africa will lose their number one Test ranking unless they can earn at least a share of the series honours. The Wanderers has traditionally favoured fast bowlers, but the bowling firepower at De Villiers' disposal has been severely depleted by injuries to Dale Steyn and Vernon Philander.

As was the case in the second Test, it leaves Morne Morkel as the only experi-

enced bowler in the line-up. The bowlers took some severe punishment at the hands of Ben Stokes and Jonny Bairstow at Newlands, although they performed better in the second innings.

Picking the right bowling line-up will be a key factor for South Africa, with Kyle Abbott and the uncapped Hardus Viljoen, who plays for the Wanderers-based Lions franchise, coming under consideration. There is also a possibility that South Africa might decide to go without specialist spin bowler Dane Piedt, which could mean a recall for batsman and part-time spinner JP Duminy. England, meanwhile, have no selection dilemmas following strong performances in both Test matches so far. The only player in their side who has not made at least one significant contribution is captain Alastair Cook, who has made just 42 runs in four innings.

Teams:

South Africa (likely): AB de Villiers (captain), Dean Elgar, Stiaan van Zyl, Hashim Amla, Faf du Plessis, Temba Bavuma, Quinton de Kock (wkt), Morne Morkel, Kagiso Rabada, Dane Piedt or JP Duminy, Chris Morris or Kyle Abbott or Hardus Viljoen.

England (likely): Alastair Cook (captain), Alex Hales, Nick Compton, Joe Root, James Taylor, Ben Stokes, Jonny Bairstow (wkt), Moeen Ali, Stuart Broad, Steven Finn, James Anderson.

Umpires: Kumar Dharmasena (SRI), Chris Gaffaney (NZL). — AFP



LAHORE: Pakistani women cricketers take a selfie with the ICC 2016 World Twenty20 trophy during a ceremony in Lahore yesterday. The International Cricket Council (ICC) 2016 World Twenty20 trophy has reached Pakistan for a two-day tour. — AFP

HK PLAYER CHARGED OVER FIXING APPROACH

HONG KONG: Hong Kong international Irfan Ahmed has been charged and provisionally suspended for failing to report an alleged fixing approach, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said. The 26-year-old all-rounder, who was slated as part of Hong Kong's squad for the World Twenty20 championship in India in March, faces a ban of between two and five years if found guilty.

The charge under the ICC's anti-corruption code is the latest to arise from wide-reaching investigations into illegal bookmaking networks by the world body's anti-corruption unit.

According to Australia's Fairfax Media, Ahmed

was approached by former Pakistani cricketer Naseem Gulzar, one of the alleged match-fixers accused of paying former New Zealand batsman Lou Vincent to deliberately underperform in county matches in England.

Kevin Egan, a Hong Kong-based barrister hired by Ahmed to defend him, downplayed the charge against the cricketer.

"(Gulzar) was like a father figure to him and (Ahmed) was approached with a corrupt offer which he rejected. But the only criminality alleged against him by the ICC was simply having failed to report that approach," Egan was quoted as saying. — AFP

GAYLE UNDER FIRE AGAIN FOR BBL NO-RUN

SYDNEY: West Indies star Chris Gayle was under fire again yesterday for his actions in Australia's Big Bash League, days after a storm over his sexist comments to a female television presenter. Gayle, who made headlines after attempting to flirt with Network Ten reporter Mel McLaughlin during a live interview, was savaged by commentators for refusing to take what appeared to be an easy single for his Melbourne Renegades team against Sydney Thunder late Monday. He was criticised by the match commentators for turning back his fellow opening batsman Tom Cooper, who was keen to take a run in a format where one run can mean the difference between a win and loss. "This is the most unbelievable, ridiculous cricket I've ever seen," said former Australian Test skipper Ricky Ponting.

"Sometimes in cricket and in life you get what you deserve, and he got what he deserved there. "What sort of message does that send to the boys on the sideline?" Gayle was dismissed the next ball when Fawad Ahmed took a catch off Clint McKay. He had scored 28 off 20 balls.

The burly West Indian declined to be interviewed about the incident after the match. Normally batsmen would only refuse an easy single if they were attempting to keep the strike and protect a lesser batsman. Gayle's Renegades team went on to win the match by five wickets. Gayle was fined US\$7,000 for his approach to McLaughlin last week, which provoked a storm of outrage among other female journalists who aired complaints against the West Indies showman. Cricket Australia chief James Sutherland said no one should have to face such a situation. Gayle's future in Australia's BBL next season is up in the air following the furore. — AFP

AUSTRALIA HOPING BAD BOYS COME GOOD IN MELBOURNE

MELBOURNE: Nick Kyrgios and Bernard Tomic gave Australia an unwanted reputation as a breeding ground for tennis brats during a tempestuous 2015 and the pair will be firmly under the spotlight in front of home crowds at Melbourne Park.

With former world number one Lleyton Hewitt set to retire and the last of his two grand slam titles at the 2002 Wimbledon championships a distant memory, Australia has long yearned for a new force in men's tennis to challenge at the majors. Tomic, 23, and Kyrgios, 20, have both been tagged as the future of the sport in the country but the excitement generated by their undeniable talent gave way to dismay last season as the pair hogged the headlines for all the wrong reasons. Following a Wimbledon campaign where Kyrgios railed at match

officials and was jeered by fans for appearing to tank a game in defeat to Richard Gasquet, the hot-headed tyro sunk to a new low during the U.S. hardcourt season.

His lewd, off-the-cuff remark directed at Stan Wawrinka during their match at the Rogers Cup sparked worldwide condemnation and a suspended ban from the ATP Tour. Australia's number one Tomic was also a lightning rod for criticism at Wimbledon, where he launched a jaw-dropping tirade against his home tennis association, complete with character assassinations of some of its most senior managers. Banished from the Davis Cup team for a second time in his career, Tomic was later apprehended by Miami police for trespassing and resisting arrest after hotel guests complained of a noisy party in his room.

Though the charges were later dropped, local media were quick to link the Miami incident with a number of brushes with the law in Australia, where Tomic has had his drivers' license cancelled after a number of speeding offences and once clashed with police following an infamous brawl in a roof-top jacuzzi. All but lost in a turbulent year for their management teams was their unquestionable progress on-court, with the pair shrugging off each scandal to complete their most encouraging seasons.

IMPROVED WORK ETHIC

Kyrgios' run to last year's quarter-finals at Melbourne Park made him the first local men's entrant to reach the last eight in a decade and he made his first ATP final at Estoril. His season also featured impressive

wins over top 10 opponents and he enters the Australian Open ranked world number 30 after a confidence-boosting win over world number two Andy Murray at the Hopman Cup.

Long criticised for his work ethic, Tomic put in his most taxing season and famously captured his third ATP title at Bogota a week after spending time in a cell following his Miami arrest.

Tomic now holds a career-high ranking of 17, having upset top 10 player Kei Nishikori during a promising run to the semi-finals of the Brisbane International last week. Although the pair were both omitted from Davis Cup ties last year, Tennis Australia have welcomed them back with open arms and fans have rejoiced in their early season form. Local media reported

with a tone of surprise that Kyrgios celebrated his team's Hopman Cup triumph by returning immediately to the court for more practice. The pair's rehabilitation remains unfulfilled, however, with the ATP's suspended sentence from the Wawrinka incident still hanging over Kyrgios for another month.

Tomic risked a lot of good will gained in recent months after reports emerged this week that he had abused staff at a Gold Coast resort over a dispute arising from access to its tennis courts. The player quickly issued a public apology. "Habits die a bit hard," former coach Neil Guiney, who helped guide Tomic into the professional ranks, told News Ltd media. "He's got to watch that sort of thing because everyone else is watching." — Reuters

KERBER WITHDRAWS FROM SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL

SYDNEY: Eight of the top 10 women in tennis are injured or have become sick in the lead up to the Australian Open, the latest being Angelique Kerber after she withdrew from the Sydney International yesterday with a stomach illness.

Kerber lost in the final of last week's Brisbane International to Victoria Azarenka and beat Elina Svitolina in the first round in Sydney before falling ill and pulling out of her second-round match against Ekaterina Makarova on Tuesday.

"I'm very sorry I can't go on court today but I'm not feeling 100 percent," Kerber said. "I don't want to risk my health before Melbourne, of course, but I love to come back to the Apia International Sydney and always have good results here - semifinals last year and the final two years ago."

The Sydney tournament has already lost fourth-ranked Agnieszka Radwanska to a leg injury and defending champion Petra Kvitova, ranked No. 6, to a stomach virus, along with Daria Gavrilova of Australia, winner of last week's Hopman Cup, who has an abdominal strain.

Last week, four other top-ranked women either retired or withdrew from tournaments because of injuries: No. 1 Serena Williams (Hopman Cup/knee), second-ranked Simona Halep (Brisbane/ankle), No. 3 Garbine Muguruza (Brisbane/foot) and No. 5 Maria Sharapova (Brisbane/forearm). Ninth-ranked Lucie Safarova has already withdrawn from the Australian Open with a bacterial infection, leaving No. 10 Venus Williams as the only active member of the women's top 10 without an injury concern or illness ahead of the tournament, which starts Monday.

Halep showed signs of improvement, shrugging off the Achilles tendon problem that forced her out of the Brisbane International to beat Caroline Garcia 6-4, 2-6, 6-2 in the second round and move into the quarterfinals in Sydney, where she is seeded No. 1.

Earlier yesterday, Sara Errani rallied from 5-1 down in the second set, saving

seven set points, to beat former No. 1 Jelena Jankovic 7-6 (3), 7-6 (8) to advance to the quarterfinals.

"Yeah, it was 5-1, but I had many games with 40-Love, 40-15, and advantage, and so it didn't really feel like 5-1," Errani said. "I was just thinking that I was near my best level, and to just try to keep going, play all the points, and finally was 5-all, and 5-5, 6-all, and really tough tiebreaker." Fifth-seeded Karolina Pliskova beat Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-3, 6-0 and eighth-seeded Belinda Bencic defeated Tsvetana Pironkova 6-3, 6-3.

Samantha Stosur also reached the Sydney quarterfinals for the first time in 11 years when she beat Slovakian veteran Daniela Hantuchova 6-4, 6-2. Stosur was runner-up at the tournament in 2005. In the men's draw, Teymuraz Gabashvili beat seventh-seeded Leonardo Mayer 6-4, 6-3, eighth-seeded Alexandr Dolgoplov beat Thomaz Bellucci 6-1, 6-4 and Nicolas Mahut beat Adrian Panarino 6-4, 7-5.

At the Hobart International, Eugenie Bouchard continued her injury comeback with a 6-4, 7-5 win over Alison Van Uytvanck. She is playing in only her third tournament since she sustained a concussion when she fell in the dressing room at the US Open in September. Bouchard also reached the quarterfinals of last week's Shenzhen Open.

"I just felt my timing was a bit off and my serve was definitely not there so at least I pulled through, but I definitely want to be able to play better than that," the Canadian said. Second-seeded Camila Giorgi beat Nao Hibino 6-2, 6-3 to reach the quarterfinals. On a rain-shortened day at the ASB Classic in Auckland, New Zealand, eighth-seeded Robert Bautista Agut beat defending champion Jiri Vesely 6-3, 7-5 and 2008 champion Philipp Kohlschreiber beat Benjamin Becker 7-6 (8), 6-3. Sam Querrey and Aljaz Bedene had been locked in a marathon match before Bedene was forced to retire while trailing 6-7 (5), 7-6 (10), 2-1 after nearly two hours. — AP



Angelique Kerber of Germany.



NEW YORK: San Antonio Spurs forward David West (30) defends Brooklyn Nets guard Bojan Bogdanovic (44) in the first half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, in New York. The Spurs defeated the Nets 106-79. — AP

SPURS ROUT NETS 106-79 TO MATCH BEST SEASON START

NEW YORK: LaMarcus Aldridge had 25 points and 11 rebounds as the San Antonio Spurs extended their winning streak to eight games with a 106-79 victory Monday over Brooklyn in the Nets' first game since an organizational shake-up. A day after coach Lionel Hollins was fired and general manager Billy King resigned, the Nets dropped their 10th straight at home and fifth in a row overall. Kawhi Leonard added 17 points for the Spurs, who go to Detroit on Tuesday before putting their 31-game home winning streak on the line Thursday in a showdown with Cleveland. The Spurs (33-6) were up seven at halftime before dominating the second half, just as they did in their 102-75 victory over the Nets on Oct. 30. Those are two of their 14 wins by 20 or more points this season. Brook Lopez scored 18 points and Joe Johnson had 16 in the Nets' first game under interim coach Tony Brown. Brown moved guards Wayne Ellington and Donald Sloan into the starting lineup, but they combined for just 10 points on 4-of-12 shooting.

WARRIORS 111, HEAT 103

Stephen Curry scored 31 points and Draymond Green added 22 points and 12 rebounds to lead the Warriors to their 36th straight regular-season home win. Klay Thompson added 17 points to help the Warriors (36-2) get halfway to Chicago's record win total of 72 set in 1996-97 three games before the midpoint of the season. Dwyane Wade scored 20 points and Chris Bosh and Gerald Green added 15 apiece for the Heat, who had won eight of their past 11 games here. But these Warriors teams are far different and that showed against a resilient Heat team that battled all night but was unable to handle the depth of the Warriors

| NBA results/standings | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|-----|------|------|--------------------|----|----|------|------|
| Golden State 111, Miami 103; Brooklyn 79, San Antonio 106; Chicago 100, Washington 114. | | | | | | | | | |
| Eastern Conference | | | | | Western Conference | | | | |
| Atlantic Division | | | | | Northwest Division | | | | |
| W | L | PCT | GB | | | | | | |
| Toronto | 24 | 15 | .615 | — | Oklahoma City | 26 | 12 | .684 | — |
| Boston | 19 | 18 | .514 | 4 | Utah | 17 | 20 | .459 | 8.5 |
| New York | 19 | 20 | .487 | 5 | Portland | 16 | 24 | .400 | 11 |
| Brooklyn | 10 | 28 | .263 | 13.5 | Denver | 14 | 24 | .368 | 12 |
| Philadelphia | 4 | 36 | .100 | 20.5 | Minnesota | 12 | 26 | .316 | 14 |
| Central Division | | | | | Pacific Division | | | | |
| Cleveland | 26 | 9 | .743 | — | Golden State | 36 | 2 | .947 | — |
| Chicago | 22 | 14 | .611 | 4.5 | LA Clippers | 25 | 13 | .658 | 11 |
| Indiana | 21 | 16 | .568 | 6 | Sacramento | 15 | 22 | .405 | 20.5 |
| Detroit | 21 | 16 | .568 | 6 | Phoenix | 13 | 26 | .333 | 23.5 |
| Milwaukee | 15 | 24 | .385 | 13 | LA Lakers | 8 | 31 | .205 | 28.5 |
| Southeast Division | | | | | Southwest Division | | | | |
| Atlanta | 23 | 15 | .605 | — | San Antonio | 33 | 6 | .846 | — |
| Miami | 22 | 16 | .579 | 1 | Dallas | 22 | 16 | .579 | 10.5 |
| Orlando | 20 | 18 | .526 | 3 | Memphis | 21 | 18 | .538 | 12 |
| Washington | 17 | 19 | .472 | 5 | Houston | 19 | 19 | .500 | 13.5 |
| Charlotte | 17 | 20 | .459 | 5.5 | New Orleans | 11 | 25 | .306 | 20.5 |

despite the rare off-shooting night from Curry.

WIZARDS 114, BULLS 100

John Wall had 17 points and 10 assists to help the banged-up Wizards pull away from the Bulls. Washington had seven players score in double figures in its second straight win after a stretch of five losses in six games. Ramon Sessions had 16 points, and Garrett Temple, Otto Porter Jr. and Nene scored 14 apiece. The Wizards led by as many as 18

points while playing without key performers Marcin Gortat, Kris Humphries and Bradley Beal. Gortat was scratched with a sore left knee, Humphries missed his fourth straight game with a sore right knee and Beal remains out due to a stress reaction in his lower right leg. Derrick Rose scored 23 points in the first of four games in five nights for the Bulls. Jimmy Butler had 19 points and seven assists, and Pau Gasol added 15 points and 10 rebounds. — AP

HALEP WINS ON RETURN BUT FITNESS DOUBTS REMAIN

SYDNEY: World number two Simona Halep overcame a nagging Achilles problem to beat Caroline Garcia of France at the Sydney International yesterday ahead of next week's Australian Open.

The Romanian withdrew from the Brisbane International last week because of the injury, which also affected her 2015 campaign, and she called the trainer during her second-round match. Halep, who was given a first-round bye, said the pain was coming and going but she produced some of her best tennis in the deciding set on the way to a 6-4 2-6 6-1 victory that set up a quarter-final against Czech fifth seed Karolina Pliskova.

"When you have pain you always get scared

because you don't know what is going to happen," she said after her win. "I felt actually yesterday during the practice same thing.

Five minutes pain, five minutes without pain. "I don't know exactly what this is. MRI showed that I have just an inflammation and I can keep playing, so I will do my best and I will try to be there, to stay focused."

The 24-year-old is one of four leading women players heading to the Australian Open, which begins in Melbourne on Monday, under an injury cloud. World number one Serena Williams (knee), fifth-ranked Maria Sharapova (arm) and number three Garbine Muguruza (foot) all withdrew from matches in the last week. Halep said before the clash with

the 34th-ranked Garcia she was fit but she looked anything but during her medical time out after the Frenchwoman stepped up the aggression to take the second set.

Halep, though, shrugged off the complaint to storm through the third set, reeling off five straight games and recording her first win of the year when Garcia netted a straightforward mid-court forehand.

"I needed matches to see if I can stay during the match until the end with my achilles," she said. "I did well today. I'm happy that I could finish.

I am happier that in the third set I didn't feel the pain. It means that I can keep working and keep playing with tough opponents." — Reuters



SYDNEY: Simona Halep of Romania hits a return against Caroline Garcia of France during their women's singles second round match at the Sydney International tennis tournament in Sydney yesterday. — AFP

CUP ON THE BACKBURNER AS CITY AND EVERTON CLASH AGAIN

MANCHESTER: Manchester City and Everton play the second instalment of their league and cup trilogy today with all parties insisting thoughts of Wembley will go on hold. The two clubs met in the first leg of their League Cup semi-final at Everton last Wednesday when the Merseysiders got their noses in front thanks to a 2-1 win.

They will meet again in Manchester on January 27 to decide who gets to the final at Wembley, but before that face each other in the Premier League at Eastlands.

And Everton manager Roberto Martinez says it is important for his players to forget the cup for now and focus on the league showdown. "The game today is so impor-

tant in the league for different reasons; they're trying to get that top spot and we're trying to get as high up as we can, and the three points are important in themselves," he said. "So I don't think we need to look any further than that. "Playing a team three times in three weeks will have a role in terms of how you prepare the game but not in a conscious manner." Both sides are likely to show changes from the teams that met a week ago, with City's former Liverpool winger Raheem Sterling hoping to get a crack at his one-time local rivals. "I've never come up against the same team as often as this and it is a pretty quick turnaround," Sterling said. "But I didn't play in

the League Cup semi-final first leg last week so I obviously hope to be involved this time. "We know this is an opportunity for us but we just need to focus on what we need to do to win the Premier League and not worry about other teams and what they're doing. "That way, we don't let anything affect our thinking and purely focus on our own performance. "We've played a lot of away games over the past fortnight so we're looking forward to playing in front of our own fans again today."

FOCUSED

City, three points behind Premier League leaders Arsenal, completed a run

of four successive away fixtures with a 3-0 win at Norwich in the third round of the FA Cup last Saturday.

That win has kept Manuel Pellegrini's side on course for an unlikely quadruple of trophies domestically and in the Champions League. City manager Pellegrini, who is likely to have Yaya Toure, Fernandinho and David Silva back from injury to face Everton, said: "It's very important to be focused game by game.

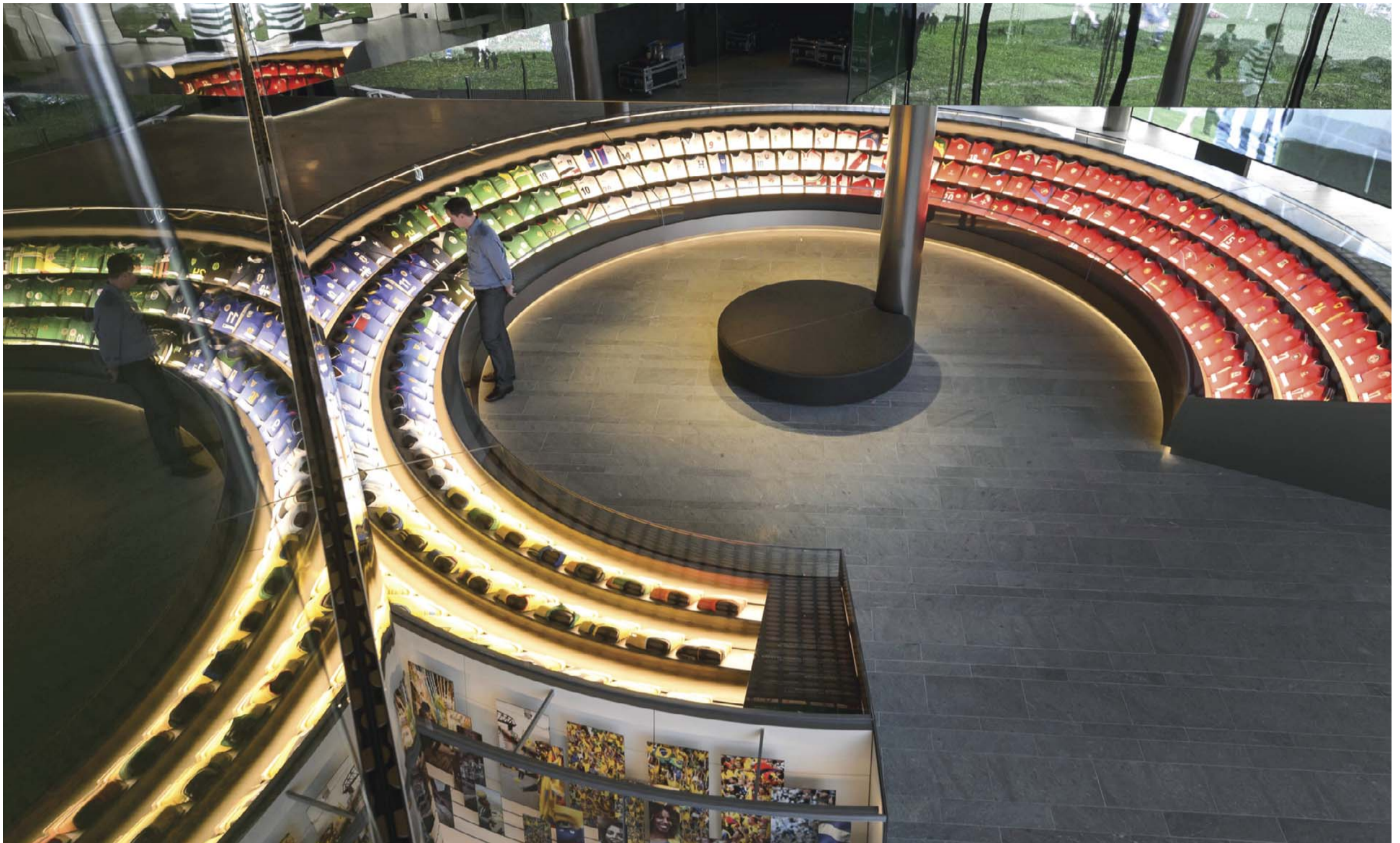
"We've played in the FA Cup and now we must return to the Premier League. We have to play two games at home and it's very important that we try to reduce the gap that we have with Arsenal. "We have

so many games to play in January that it is important to have the whole squad fit.

"The team played very well (at Norwich) and now we must choose which is the best team to start against Everton."

Martinez rotated his squad for their 2-0 FA Cup win over League two side Dagenham and Redbridge but is expected to have top scorer Romelu Lukaku, who headed the late winner against City in the League Cup clash, back today.

Tim Howard may return in goal for Everton, 11th in the table but beaten just once away from home this season, but defender Seamus Coleman and midfielder Tom Cleverley are out through injury. — AFP



ZURICH: A man looks at football jerseys during a press visit to the new museum dedicated to FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Association - International Federation of Association Football) yesterday in Zurich. The FIFA World Football Museum will open its doors on February 28, 2016 allowing the scandal-tainted world football body to show off artefacts from the sport's rich heritage. — AFP

ARSENAL STEELED FOR ANFIELD EXAMINATION

LIVERPOOL: Arsene Wenger says Arsenal will face a stern test of their Premier League title credentials when they take on Liverpool today.

Wenger's side head to Anfield two points clear at the head of the table and having won five of their last six league games.

The weekend FA Cup third round victory over Sunderland extended their winning run and Wenger acknowledges his side's recent success has strengthened the belief they can push on during the second half of the season.

The Gunners manager, though, knows any meeting with Liverpool carries an extra edge that was demonstrated when the sides met on Merseyside last season, with the home side clinching a point thanks to Martin Skrtel's stoppage-time equaliser.

"The momentum creates confidence and confidence is vital at that level," Wenger said. "In December and now in January we have been consistent and we go into a very important part of the season because we play many games.

"Every time we go to Anfield, we face a team who is up for it. It's always a ferocious battle, no matter who the manager is.

"They had a very strong manager before, they have a very strong one now and Jurgen Klopp

has the personality to do well there." Wenger hopes to add Basel midfielder Mohamed Elneny to his squad this week. "I expect Mohamed yes, we are positive that this week it can happen," he said. And his options will shortly be strengthened by the return to fitness of Alexis Sanchez, although the Chile striker will not make the trip to Liverpool. "We think he will be short for Wednesday," said Wenger.

"He has a chance to be available for Sunday against Stoke. He is always keen to play."

BIG CHALLENGE

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp is looking forward rather than back as he prepares to take on Wenger in English football for the first time.

The pair have previously met at Champions League level with honours almost even, Wenger enjoying three wins to Klopp's two and a draw from his time in charge at Bundesliga side Borussia Dortmund.

Klopp took over at Liverpool after the sides had drawn 0-0 at the Emirates Stadium in the Premier League in August.

And the German admits watching Wenger's work at closer quarters has impressed him even more as the Liverpool boss prepares for huge back-to-back home games against the Gunners and Manchester United.

"We shouldn't talk too much about my experiences of playing against Arsenal. We will find a current plan for this game," Klopp said.

"It's always a big challenge to play against clubs like Arsenal or Manchester United.

"It's a good challenge, not easy, but really interesting. We have to make good decisions in the right moment. We are looking forward to these games. "My respect for Arsene Wenger grows day by day. It's really intensive to work in the Premier League and he's done a brilliant job."

Klopp's remarks regarding Wenger, looking to lead Arsenal to a fourth league title but first since 2004, reflect his initial impressions of managing in England.

Klopp, who took over at Anfield in October, said that the number of fixtures has been the biggest difference to managing on the continent, with Liverpool facing the possibility of playing nine games in January.

That workload is stretching a squad that has been badly hit by injuries, although Klopp hopes to have a number of key players back for the game on Wednesday when the eighth-placed Reds will be looking for a third win in four league games. After having no senior central defenders available for last Friday's 0-0 FA Cup draw at Exeter, ex-Arsenal defender Kolo Toure and Mamadou Sakho are both expected to be fit.

Captain Jordan Henderson is also set to return in midfield and winger Jordan Ibe is fit after hamstring trouble. — AFP

BARCA EYE QUARTERS TO END FIERY ESPANYOL SERIES

MADRID: Holders Barcelona will be looking to seal their place in the Copa del Rey quarter-finals today in the final instalment of three heated Catalan derbies against Espanyol over 10 days. The European champions hold a commanding 4-1 lead from the first-leg which Espanyol ended with nine men after red cards for Hernan Perez and Papakouli Diop, whilst goalkeeper Pau Lopez escaped punishment for stamping on newly crowned Ballon d'Or winner Lionel Messi.

However, Barca will be without the suspended Luis Suarez as he was given a two-match ban for confronting Espanyol players in the tunnel after the game and calling them a "waste of space". Espanyol has also been reported to Spain's anti-violence commission by the Spanish league for alleged racist abuse aimed at Brazilian star Neymar during the sides' 0-0 draw in La Liga on January 2. Barca boss Luis Enrique compared Espanyol's roughhouse tactics to playing American football after the first-leg, but will meet with his counterpart Constantin Galca on Tuesday to try and ease tensions between the two clubs.

Despite their comfortable lead and a punishing schedule of up to 17 games in January and February, Enrique is expected to start with both Messi and Neymar in attack in Suarez's absence. Javier Mascherano, Dani Alves, Sergio Busquets and Andres Iniesta are also expected to return after being rested for Saturday's 4-0 rout of Granada. La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid have far more work to do to reach the last eight after only managing a 1-1 draw with a much-changed side away to Rayo Vallecano last week.

TEMPORARY CHARGE

Atletico boss Diego Simeone has made a telling contribution with one of his substitutes scoring in each of the last four games and insisted he won't hold back in rotating his squad once more for the return-leg at the Vicente Calderon tomorrow. "We are doing things well and that gives us energy to prepare for the



SANT JOAN DESPI: Barcelona's coach Luis Enrique laughs during a press conference one day after being awarded the 2015 FIFA World Coach of the Year, at the Sports Center FC Barcelona Joan Gamper in Sant Joan Despi, near Barcelona yesterday. — AFP

game in the Copa del Rey," said the Argentine.

"We don't believe we are better or worse than any opponents, but we have a group of 23 players that are prepared to compete at any moment and those that come off the bench are giving us the chance to decide the game." Gary Neville's Valencia can put their La Liga woes to one side by completing their passage into the quarters as they hold a 4-0 lead over Granada. Juan

Merino takes temporary charge of Real Betis, after Pepe Mel was sacked for the second time by Los Verdiblancos on Sunday, away at local rivals Sevilla hoping to overcome a 2-0 deficit.

The tie of the round, though, is likely to come at El Madrigal where high-flying Villarreal look to turn around a 3-2 first-leg defeat to last season's finalists Athletic Bilbao. — Reuters

SOME MAN UTD GAMES HAVE BORED ME TOO: VAN GAAL

LONDON: Even Louis van Gaal has been "very bored" watching Manchester United's dull games this season, the Dutch manager has admitted.

United have alienated a section of their fans with a series of soporific displays this season, and were booed off at halftime in their scrappy 1-0 win over Sheffield United in the third round of the FA Cup on Saturday. Scores of supporters left the ground in the second half and former United midfielder Paul Scholes said the players and manager looked "bored" during the match. Speaking to reporters ahead of yesterday's Premier League clash with Newcastle United, Van Gaal

admitted he had also found some of his team's performances tedious. "There are matches that I have enjoyed very much. Against Chelsea (last month) I have enjoyed it, but the result was 0-0 and we could have lost also," he said.

"There are also matches where I'm very bored or angry because we are not disorganising our opponent's defence, but that is football."

United are fifth in the Premier League standings and have won their last two matches following a run of eight games without victory.

The team have been criticised for a dull style of

play that is at odds with the club's attacking traditions. Failure to beat third-from-bottom Newcastle will rekindle the scrutiny on Van Gaal, especially after the manager acknowledged the fans' frustration with his side's laboured displays.

"They have been ironic (against Sheffield United) but that's an expression of the fans and that's good. The players were frustrated and the fans were frustrated. "But the fans also have to know we can't always play fantastic football and that was also the case in former days when it didn't happen. I'm sorry about that, but it is like that," he added. — Reuters

Live Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE
Swansea City v Sunderland 22:45
 beIN SPORTS
Stoke City v Norwich City 22:45
 beIN SPORTS
Manchester City v Everton 22:45
 beIN SPORTS
Southampton v Watford 22:45
 beIN SPORTS
Chelsea v West Bromwich 22:45
 beIN SPORTS
Liverpool v Arsenal 23:00
 beIN SPORTS
Tottenham v Leicester 23:00
 beIN SPORTS

SPAIN COPA DEL REY
Celta de Vigo v Cadiz 22:30
 beIN SPORTS
Villarreal v Bilbao 22:30
 beIN SPORTS
Las Palmas v Eibar 23:00
 beIN SPORTS
Espanyol v Barcelona 23:00
 beIN SPORTS

Sports

Smith, Bailey tons power Australia to 5-wicket win

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Spurs rout Nets 106-79 to match best season start

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BARCA EYE QUARTERS TO END FIERY ESPANYOL SERIES Page 19



KUWAIT: Salmiya Club players celebrate after winning the Crown Prince Cup at Jaber Stadium yesterday. (Inset) HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah presents the cup to Chairman of Salmiya Club Sheikh Turki Al-Yousef Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Layali Al Khayyam

Iranian Restaurant

The authenticity of Layali Al Khayyam Iranian restaurant indulges guests in a world of divine taste, where herbs and fruits such as pomegranates, quince, prunes, apricots and raisins cooked to perfection with your choice of rice with meat, lamb, chicken or fish. To achieve a balanced taste, characteristic Persian flavoring such as saffron, dried limes, cinnamon and parsley are mixed delicately and used in some special dishes.

For Reservations
224 75 987 @Alkhayyamkw

Gulf Road, Dhiafa Village near Kuwait Towers

SALMIYA CLUB LIFT CROWN PRINCE CUP

KUWAIT: Salmiya Club won the HH the Crown Prince Cup yesterday for the second time in its history by beating Kuwait Club 1-0 in the finals, which was held under the patronage and attendance of HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Jaber Al-Sabah at the new Jaber Stadium. Faisal Anzi scored the winning goal in the 74th minute. A fireworks display was held and gifts were also distributed to the spectators.

Salmiya Club won its first title in this competition in 2001, while Kuwait Club has won the title five times - in 1994, 2003 and 2008, 2010 and 2011. Qadisiya Club holds the record number of wins in this competition with eight titles, Arabi Club with seven, followed by Kuwait Club, Salmiya Club and Kazma Club, which only won the title once, in 1995.

Upon his arrival at the venue, HH the Crown Prince was received by Minister of Information and Minister of

State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, Director General of The Public Authority for Sport (PAS) Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, President of Kuwait Football Association (KFA) Sheikh Talal Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Chairman of Salmiya Sporting Club Sheikh Turki Al-Yousef Al-Sabah, Chairman of Kuwait Sporting Club Abdulaziz Fahad Al-Marzouq, and a number of senior officials in PAS, KFA, and the event's supreme organizing committee.

The event was attended by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and a number of senior officials. — KUNA

CARLI STANDS BESIDE MESSI AS WORLD'S BEST

ZURICH: Standing beside Lionel Messi on stage, Carli Lloyd found her place at the top of world soccer. Lloyd was shoulder to shoulder with Messi on Monday, both cradling golden trophies from FIFA as the world's best players in 2015.

Even at 33, the United States captain and inspiration of its Women's World Cup title has a career plan to let her one day match Messi's five FIFA awards.

"Last night was the moment where I said to myself that I can remain one of the best players in the world for the next five years," Lloyd told The Associated Press in an interview yesterday.

Lloyd and Messi, the captain of Argentina's national team, reached the same goals before, as Olympic gold medalists in 2008. Back then, Messi's self-belief was far ahead of Lloyd even after she scored the winning goal against Brazil in the Beijing final. When she scored both goals in the next Olympic final - beating Japan 2-1 at Wembley Stadium in London - things started to change for the New Jersey native.

"Since the 2012 Olympics is when I pretty much started to believe that I could go on to do it," Lloyd said at a hotel just a block away from the concert hall where she joined the elite. Lloyd arrived in Zurich as the strong favorite to join American greats Mia Hamm and Abby Wambach on the FIFA award list. She was favored to win after scoring three goals in her third major title win, a 5-2 rout of Japan last July.

"I didn't know what I was coming into," Lloyd said of the FIFA show. "The anticipation was more nerve-racking than any Olympic or World Cup final I've ever played in."

Rugged and raw was how Lloyd described herself on stage earlier in the FIFA ceremony. The effort to

hold back tears before starting her acceptance speech with a quiet "Sorry" to the applauding audience took her somewhere new.

"I'm not a super emotional person," she said. "I'm pretty tough and raw in my nature but something like that, it's uncontrollable."

"I never really believed I could reach this point, though I was striving for it. I'm extremely humbled."

A 13-minute hat trick in the World Cup final earned three VIP tickets: The red-carpet FIFA event followed the team's ticker-tape parade in downtown Manhattan last July and a trip to the White House in October. Lloyd and Wambach flanked President Barack Obama in the team photograph.

"I've gotten used to the glitz and glamor world that comes with it," Lloyd said, before adding: "It's never an enjoyable night to wear heels. I'd rather be in my soccer cleats, but it's fun." Lloyd is quickly back in uniform this week at a training camp in Los Angeles to prepare for Olympic qualifying matches. No women's team has taken Olympic gold one year after winning the World Cup.

"My 2015 is good but 2016 needs to be even better," said Lloyd, who will marry long-term partner Brian Hollins after the Olympics.

The same is true of women's soccer, which could emerge from the chaos of FIFA's corruption crisis as a big winner. One year ago, Wambach came to Zurich as a nominee and met with FIFA secretary general Jerome Valcke. She stressed the players' anger and legal fight against FIFA letting Canada host the World Cup on artificial turf.

The old regime seemed to sell women's soccer short, whatever then-President Sepp Blatter said about being their pioneer supporter. — AP

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2016

Kuwait trade surplus narrows in Q3 on lower oil revenues

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China Q4 GDP growth seen slowing sharply

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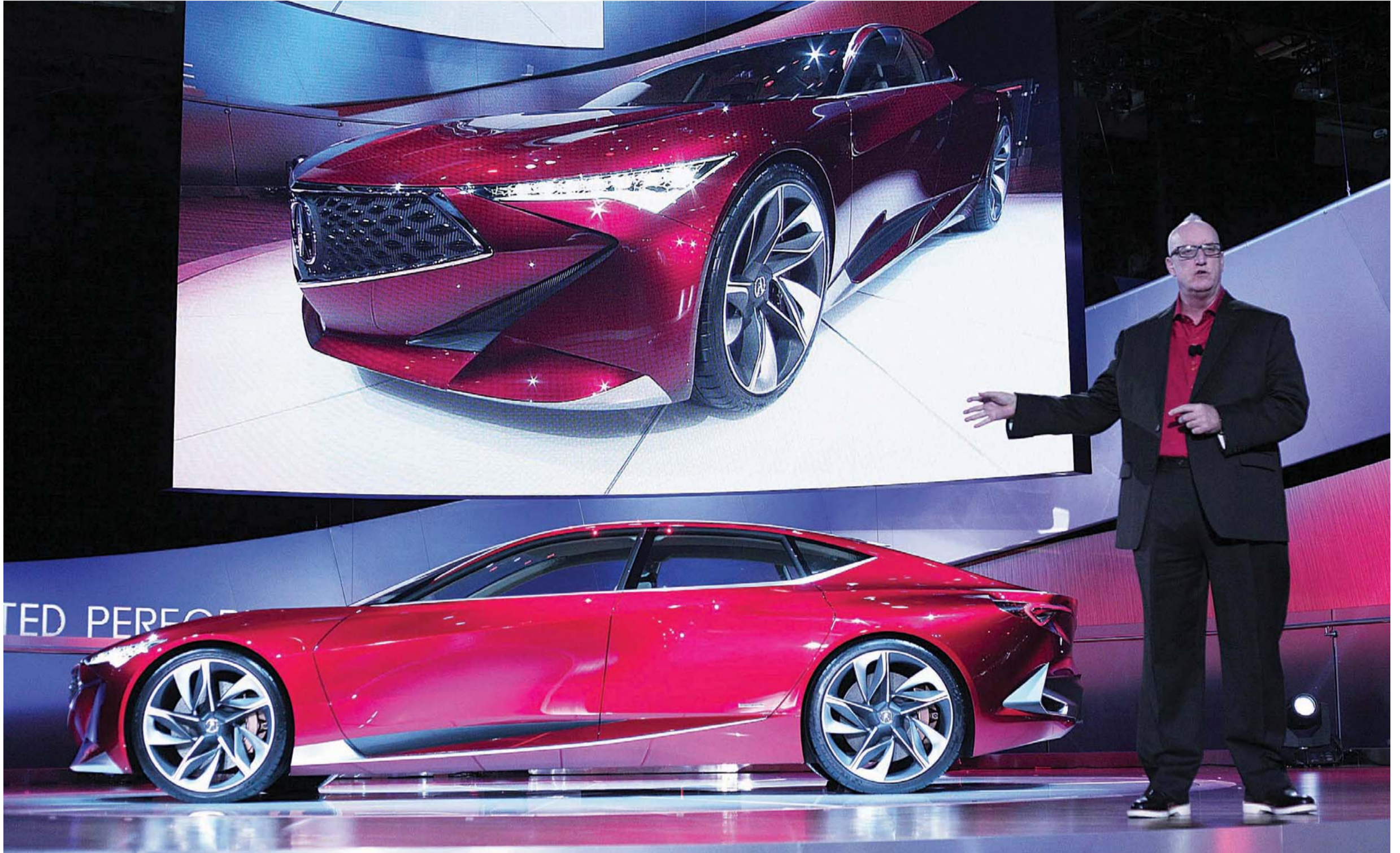
UK INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT DROPS SHARPLY IN NOVEMBER

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Ford introduces FordPass

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DETROIT: Dave Marak, Acura Global Creative Director, reveals the Acura Precision Concept to the news media at the 2016 North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) yesterday in Detroit. The NAIAS runs from January 11th to January 24th and will feature over 750 vehicles and interactive displays. —AFP (See Page 23)

UAE MOVES TO QUASH TALK OF OPEC EMERGENCY MEET NIGERIA SAYS CURRENT MARKET CONDITIONS DEMAND MEETING

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates moved to quash talk of a potential emergency meeting of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) after Nigeria's oil minister said yesterday a "couple" of members had requested a gathering.

Benchmark Brent crude futures slipped towards \$30 a barrel to a near 12-year low before rising slightly. They have shed almost three-quarters of their value since mid-2014 due to oversupply.

Such market conditions supported an emergency meeting to review whether OPEC should change strategy, Nigerian Minister of State for Petroleum Resources Emmanuel Ibe Kachikwu told reporters on the sidelines of an energy conference in Abu Dhabi. However, UAE Energy Minister Suhail bin Mohammed al-Mazroui later told the same conference the current OPEC strategy was working, adding that time was needed

to allow this to happen - perhaps between one and 1-1/2 years.

"I'm not convinced OPEC alone can change or can solely unilaterally change this strategy just because we have seen a low in the market," Mazroui said.

Mazroui added that while the first half of 2016 would be "tough" for the oil market, there would be a gradual recovery later in the year, aided by an expected drop in non-OPEC production.

The Nigerian minister did not specify which OPEC members wanting a meeting and said any such gathering would be in February or March. OPEC's next scheduled meeting is not until June 2.

But two OPEC delegates from outside the Gulf were sceptical an emergency conference would take place. "There won't be any meeting," said one of the OPEC delegates from an African OPEC country.

OPEC's strategy of maintaining production levels, instead of reducing supply to allow prices to recover, has been aimed at defending market share at the expense of higher-cost producers such as those in the US shale sector.

The supply glut is likely to be exacerbated in 2016 by the return of Iranian supply to the market, once Western sanctions have been lifted.

"I think all the members including Iran have the right to increase their production. I don't think we are going to restrict anyone," Mazroui said.

Such prospects have led oil analysts to downgrade their forecasts in recent days, with Standard Chartered saying prices could drop to \$10 a barrel.

The likelihood of a meeting taking place will hinge on the attitude of OPEC heavyweight Saudi Arabia, which has been at the vanguard of resistance to a production cut.

"Saudi Arabia has never held the position that it does not want to talk," Kachikwu said. "In fact, it was very supportive of a meeting before June, at the time when we held the December meeting, if (there was a) consensus call for it."

Nigeria call

Kachikwu said yesterday that he expects an extraordinary meeting of the OPEC oil cartel in "early March" to address nosediving crude prices. "We did say that if it (the price) hits the 35 (dollar per barrel), we will begin to look (at)... an extraordinary meeting," said Kachikwu. The prices have hit levels that necessitate a meeting, he told an energy forum in Abu Dhabi.

Saudi-led Gulf exporters within OPEC have so far refused to cut production to curb sliding prices, seeking to protect their market share despite a heavy blow to their revenues. Kachikwu, who was president of OPEC until the

end of December, said that member states differ on the issue of intervention. "One group feels there is a need to intervene. The other group feels even if we did, we are only 30 to 35 percent of the producers really," as 65 percent of supply comes from non-OPEC countries, he said at the Gulf Intelligence UAE Energy Forum.

"Unless you have this 65 percent (of) producers coming back to the table you really won't make any dramatic difference," he added. US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) for February delivery was down around 2.8 percent, at \$30.54 per barrel, in Asian trade yesterday.

European benchmark Brent North Sea crude fell 3.1 percent, to \$30.57. The last time prices were so low for WTI was in December 2003 and in April 2004 for Brent. Prices plummeted 10 percent last week on fears about the global supply glut and weakness in China, the world's biggest energy user. —Agencies

SAUDI RIYAL FORWARDS CRASH THROUGH KEY 1000 LEVEL TO HIT RECORD LOW

DUBAI/LONDON: The Saudi Arabian riyal hit a record low in the forwards market yesterday Tuesday, breaching the key 1000-point mark as a fresh slip in oil prices raised fears that the kingdom will eventually scrap or loosen its currency peg to the US dollar. One-year dollar/riyal forwards - contracts used by counterparties to lock in a future exchange rate - climbed as high as 1020 points in very volatile trade. This topped their previous record of 850 points hit during a bout of speculation against the riyal in 1999, according to Thomson Reuters data.

The move has come despite comments from Saudi Arabia's central bank governor on Monday that recent volatility in the forwards market is due to speculation based on unrealistic expectations. He restated policy makers' commitment to the peg. "Forwards are moving higher on speculation that Saudi Arabia may soon have to either abandon, or at the very least loosen its currency's peg to the dollar, as its reserves will dramatically fall if oil prices continue to slide further," said a currency trader at a major Gulf bank.

The riyal is pegged in the spot market at 3.75 to the dollar. Some banks and funds use the forwards market to hedge against the risk that the peg might eventually be broken. Persistently low oil prices have raised fears that the world's top oil exporter

may have to run down its foreign assets - still totaling \$628 billion at the end of December - at a much faster rate than the \$100 billion used in 2015 to cover a record state budget deficit, forecast for this year to be 326 billion riyals. The low crude prices have inflicted much pain on the kingdom's petroleum industry, which in 2015 generated some 80 percent of government revenues. Fuelling speculation further are geopolitical concerns over a sharp deterioration in relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran in recent days, which is seen likely to continue.

BLEAK FORECASTS

Despite the bleak forecast for oil prices and geopolitics, many bankers still believe Riyadh remains very unlikely to break its currency peg. "The core Gulf USD pegs, including that of Saudi Arabia, are likely to hold at current oil prices," said Jean-Michel Saliba, economist at Bank of America-Merrill Lynch in a note to clients.

This was due to a combination of some GCC countries still holding sizeable foreign assets and the start of a fiscal adjustment process across the region based on the understanding that the underlying cause of macro imbalances are unsustainable fiscal positions, he added. "Oman is the most vulnerable, in our view," said Saliba.

The Gulf countries' pegs to the dollar have helped keep inflation low, simplify trade and financial transactions, and reduce uncertainty about the domestic value of oil export receipts. Those believing the peg will be retained point to economic reforms announced as part of Saudi's state budget for 2016 at the end of December, which contained steps designed to bring a budget deficit under control including reduced subsidies and the privatization of state-owned assets.

The sale of a stake in national oil giant Saudi Aramco or some of its downstream companies has also been floated in the last few days. "The last budget and statements re-enforce the view that Saudi Arabia will focus on fiscal consolidation which will be used to undertake the adjustment to cheap oil rather than a devaluation," said Jason Tuvey, Middle East Economist at Capital Economics in London. Yet the recent slide in oil to a near 12-year low and \$30 per barrel is weighing heavily on sentiment against crude exporters, with the cost of insuring their sovereign debt against default jumping to fresh highs. Saudi Arabia's five-year credit default swaps (CDS) rose by 7 basis points from Monday's close to 196 bps, matching 6-1/2 year high hit last week, according to financial data provider Markit. —Reuters

PETROCHEMICALS DRAG SAUDI TO 4-YEAR LOW

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Middle East bourses slumped yesterday in a broad sell-off as investors cashed out, with petrochemicals the main drag on Saudi Arabia's index and blue-chips weighing elsewhere.

Brent crude had slipped towards \$30 a barrel to a near 12-year low. It then rebounded above \$32 after Middle East stock had closed. Oil prices have fallen by almost three-quarters since mid-2014 due to oversupply. Saudi Arabia's benchmark fell to 1.8 percent to 6,069 points, its lowest close since late 2011 as Monday's rebound proved fleeting.

Saudi Basic Industries (SABIC) - the Gulf's largest listed company - tumbled 4.9 percent, while most other petrochemical stocks also fell. Banks also slid. National Commercial Bank (NCB), the largest bank by assets, dropped 4.4 percent. In Qatar, the benchmark fell 2.0 percent to a 27-month low of 9,477 points. All traded stocks declined as both foreign and regional investors sold up.

Qatar National Bank (QNB), the bourses' largest stock by market value, plunged 3.1 percent.

Investor worries over the impact of

lower spending by the government and related entities on QNB's growth potential could be a reason for its stock price slide, NABD Securities said in a note.

Qatari banks are expected to deliver weak profits in their forthcoming annual financial statements, the note added. Banks also weighed on Abu Dhabi's index for a second day. The benchmark fell 1.5 percent as investors fretted about lenders' profitability ahead of fourth-quarter earnings.

Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank and First Gulf Bank dropped 5.9 and 2.6 percent respectively.

Dana Gas declined 2.0 percent. The Emirati energy company said it aims to slash its head office workforce by 40 percent and cut general and administrative costs by half between 2015 and early 2016. Dubai's bourse dipped 0.7 percent to 2,921 points, but above an intraday low of 2,874 points. The index is only 70 points shy of December's two-year low.

Volumes were modest. Arabtec and Emaar Properties between them accounted for 58 percent of all shares traded on the index. Emaar, which start-

ed 2016 with a sharp sell-off after fire struck one of its Dubai luxury hotels on New Year's Eve, declined 3.2 percent, taking its year-to-date decline to 14.2 percent.

Arabtec shrugged off early-session losses to end 4.1 percent higher, its third straight gain. The builder is up 2.4 percent in 2016. "Unless there are major negative or positive surprises to fourth quarter earnings, stock markets will continue to be weak with no bright spots," said Sebastien Henin, head of asset management at Dubai-based The National Investor.

EGYPT

Cairo's main index fell 2.6 percent as most of the 26 traded stocks fell more than 1 percent. The market is down 7.7 percent in 2016. Foreign and non-Egyptian Arab traders were net sellers for a second consecutive day, bourse data showed.

Orascom Telecom, one of regional investors' preferred stocks, and Global Telecom, a foreign fund manager favourite, fell 4.6 and 7.2 percent. —Reuters



DETROIT: Porsche introduces the new 911 Turbo S at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. The show is open to the public from January 16-24. — AFP



DETROIT: Takahiro Hachigo, President, CEO and Representative Director of Honda speaks at the Acura press conference at the 2016 North American International Auto Show in Detroit. — AFP

LINCOLN, CADILLAC BATTLE LUXURY RIVALS VIA CHINA

DETROIT AUTO SHOW

DETROIT: Faded US luxury brands Lincoln and Cadillac are finding a new cachet in China, a lucrative market that could help power their comeback against German and Japanese rivals back home.

Ford is banking on this momentum to steal the thunder from Volkswagen's Audi, BMW, Toyota's Lexus and Daimler's Mercedes-Benz, which dominate the US luxury market, when it unveils a new version of the iconic Lincoln Continental at the Detroit auto show yesterday.

The Lincoln Continental, first introduced in 1939 and pulled off the market in 2002, will return to replace the luxury MKZ sedan in an updated version equipped with a six-cylinder, 3.0-liter engine, according to a concept car presented at the New York auto show early last year.

The split, winged grill will be replaced by a single, centered chrome grill. The car will be offered in front-wheel drive with an option for all-wheel drive, US automotive media have reported.

Lincoln also wants to distance itself from the pack by promoting its consumer services packaged in the "Lincoln Way" program. "We want to tell the story of the brand," Kumar Galhotra, president of the

Lincoln division, said in a phone interview. Clearly, the company wants to capitalize on the Continental's prestigious past, when it was the vehicle of choice for US presidents from the 1960s to 1980s.

The Continental will be marketed in the United States and China this year, but not in Europe.

division of General Motors, are finding their reputations still have weight in the world's largest auto market, China. Cadillac sold 62,630 vehicles in China by the end of October, 13.3 percent up from 2014. Lincoln, in its first full year in China, sold 11,630 vehicles in 2015 and already has a network of 33 dealerships that it plans to double by 2020.

In the United States, the two legendary brands also seem to be regaining some allure.

Sales have grown, stemming some of the bleeding inflicted by the crushing domination

of the European and Japanese luxury brands over the last decade.

Cadillac sold 175,267 vehicles last year, a gain of 2.6 percent from a year ago. Lincoln reported 101,227 vehicles sold, up a solid 7.1 percent, in line with the luxury market's 7.7 percent rise.

By contrast, BMW, the top luxury brand in the US market, saw sales gain last year by 1.8 percent, to 346,023 vehicles. "Overall the luxury market is doing well," said Karl Brauer, an analyst at Kelley Blue Book.

While luxury cars represent only 10 percent of all vehicles sold in the United States, they generate 50 percent of profits because of their large profit margins, according to analysts. Both Cadillac and Lincoln know they need to lure young, hip, well-heeled customers, rather than their parents. It is a challenge: in 2014, the average Cadillac customer was 59.5 years old, according to IHS Automotive.

Last year, Cadillac moved its headquarters to New York's trendy SoHo district in Manhattan, and features this new staging

ground in its advertising. Polishing its modern image, the 113-year-old brand became the first automaker to partner with New York's inaugural men's fashion week last year. Cadillac is offering personalized models in each luxury segment, borrowing a successful tactic used by German competitors.

The brand has targeted the sale of 500,000 vehicles per year and will create eight new models by 2020. Ford meanwhile plans on four new models and annual sales of 300,000 vehicles by the end of the decade. — AFP



DETROIT: The Volkswagen display is shown at the North American International Auto Show. — AP



DETROIT: The new Lincoln Continental is unveiled during the Lincoln press conference at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, Michigan. — AFP

Still coveted in China
Both Lincoln and Cadillac, the premium

CHINA Q4 GDP GROWTH SEEN SLOWING SHARPLY

BEIJING: China is expected to post its weakest economic growth since the global financial crisis in the fourth quarter, adding pressure on policymakers to take more steps to ward off a sharper slowdown that could jolt global markets.

A renewed plunge in China's stock markets and the yuan have stoked concerns among global investors about the health of the world's second-biggest economy, although analysts see few signs of an abrupt drop-off in activity.

Growth in fourth-quarter gross domestic product likely slowed to 6.8 percent from the same period last year, down from 6.9 percent in the third quarter, according to a Reuters poll of 50 economists.

That would be the weakest pace of expansion since the first quarter of 2009, when growth tumbled to 6.2 percent. The highest forecast in the poll was 7.1 percent and the lowest was 5.3 percent, though some investors fear current growth levels could already be much weaker than the official data will suggest. "The weaknesses in both domestic and external demand have exacerbated the deflationary pressures in the economy," economists Qu Hongbin and Julia Wang at HSBC said in a note. "Going into 2016, weak domestic as well as external demand will continue to weigh on growth."

Economic growth for the full year is expected to have cooled to its slowest pace in 25 years of 6.9 percent in 2015 from 7.3 percent in 2014, a central bank work paper said recently.

Beijing's growth target for 2015 was "around" 7 percent, with the government rejecting suggestions that the figures were being inflated to meet official forecasts.

FISCAL STIMULUS EYED

While the government is expected to lean more on fiscal policy to support growth this year, the central bank may still need to keep monetary policy accommodative to help cushion the impact of structural reforms on the economy. Top leaders also pledged to push forward "supply-side reform" to help generate new growth engines, while tackling factory overcapacity and property inventories.

The government could widen this year's budget deficit to about 3 percent, the biggest in perhaps half a century, as

leaders turn to tax cuts and increased spending to support growth, policy advisers say, after disappointing returns from a year of monetary policy easing.

The government is expected to target economic growth of at least 6.5 percent in 2016 - in line with a new five-year plan to fulfill a previously announced goal of doubling GDP and per capita incomes by 2020 from 2010 levels, policy insiders say.

Analysts at Barclays expect the central bank to deliver two cuts in interest rates totalling 50 basis points and two cuts in bank reserve ratios totalling 100 basis points in the first half of 2016.

"We think the 'supply-side reforms' emphasised by the government are likely to slow investment and pose strong headwinds to growth, at least in the short term," analysts at Barclays said in a note.

The central bank has already cut interest rates six times since November 2014, and reduced the amount of cash that banks must hold as reserves to spur activity.

Other support measures have included more government spending on infrastructure and easing down payment requirements and other curbs on the cooling property sector.

MONTHLY DATA

A raft of monthly indicators will be released with the GDP data on Jan. 19, and analysts will be looking for signs as to whether momentum is still fading or if the economy may be slowly stabilising. Factory output likely grew 6.0 percent in December from a year earlier, slightly down from November, as firms struggle to cope with persistent deflationary pressures due to overcapacity and softening demand. Annual growth of fixed asset investment, a crucial driver of China's economy, likely eased to 10.2 percent in 2015 - the weakest expansion in nearly 15 years.

Annual retail sales growth was seen at 11.3 percent in December, rising slightly from the previous month's growth of 11.2. The customs office is due to publish December trade figures today. Exports were expected to have dropped 8 percent in December after sliding 6.8 percent in November and imports may have declined 11.5 percent in December from a year earlier, according to analysts polled by Reuters. — Reuters

HIT BY OIL PRICE, RUSSIA SLAPS 10% CUTS ON GOVERNMENT

CUTBACKS TO EXEMPT PENSIONS, GOVT SALARIES

MOSCOW: Under pressure from the falling global oil price, Russia is requiring government departments to cut spending by 10 percent, repeating a policy it also imposed in 2015, two government sources told Reuters. The cutbacks will exclude several areas of government spending, including public obligations such as pensions, and pay for government employees.

Energy giant Russia is under pressure to find spending cuts as the international oil price has plunged towards

\$30 per barrel, a major problem for the federal budget that relies on oil and gas taxes for almost half its revenues.

Under the plan, which was approved at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in December, government departments have until Jan. 15 to submit proposals about where the cuts will fall, one of the sources said. If they fail to do so the finance ministry will decide which items to cut.

The savings are expected to amount

to 700 billion rubles (\$9.16 billion).

Under the 2016 budget approved in October, federal budget expenditures were projected at 15.8 trillion this year, up from 15.5 trillion in 2015, with the federal budget deficit projected at 3 percent of GDP. However, that plan was based on the Urals oil price averaging \$50 per barrel in 2016, an assumption that President Vladimir Putin has since described as "unrealistic".

A similar plan for government departments to cut their spending by

10 percent was also approved for 2015, but as with the latest plan large areas were excluded. Government ministries eventually agreed to cut a trillion rubles from their expenditure plans in early 2015, but the introduction of new spending meant a revised budget approved in April cut overall spending only by 298 billion rubles.

Final expenditures for last year are now expected to be nearly 15.5 trillion rubles, similar to the original budget plan. — Reuters

SAINSBURY'S LEADS 'BIG FOUR' FIGHTBACK AGAINST DISCOUNTERS

LONDON: Britain's top supermarket chains are showing signs of getting to grips with an industry in turmoil, with Sainsbury's winning market share in the key Christmas period and Morrisons delivering a surprise rise in underlying sales.

The "big four" supermarket groups - Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda and Morrisons - have been hit by a shift away from big weekly food shopping trips towards more frequent spending, particularly at discounters Aldi and Lidl. The cost of fighting back against low-price rivals, coupled with a stretch of grocery price deflation, has hammered their sales and profits, while they have also had to write-down billions of pounds on the value of their out-of-town megastores.

There were signs yesterday, however, that the worst might be over. Monthly data from market researcher Kantar Worldpanel showed No 2 chain Sainsbury's grew sales and market share over Christmas, the only one of the big four to do so and sending its shares as much as 4.7 percent higher. Shares in No 4 Morrisons, meanwhile, jumped as much as 14 percent after its own Christmas trading update showed the first rise in underlying sales since 2012.

And while Kantar Worldpanel continued to show market leader Tesco losing share, there was an improvement from the previous month. That helped Tesco's shares, which hit an 18-year low in December, to bounce back as much as 7 percent.

Tesco will publish its Christmas performance tomorrow. Kantar Worldpanel showed overall industry sales fell by 0.2 percent year-on-year in the 12 weeks to Jan. 3, reflecting grocery price deflation of 1.8 percent and adding to evidence of a subdued Christmas across Britain's retail sector as unseasonably warm weather hit demand for clothing.

The British Retail Consortium said yesterday spending rose at its weakest quarterly rate in more than a year as stores competed to offer discounts.

But 2016 could be better for the big supermarkets. Analysts think they are closing the price gap with discounters,

improving product availability and customer service and doing better at highlighting the larger product ranges and online services they offer compared with discounters. They also think there could be a return to food price inflation this year and that the big four should benefit from rising disposable incomes and population growth.

"All of which makes us a little bit more sanguine on the investment prospect of the UK supermarkets," said Shore Capital analyst Clive Black.

MORE CUSTOMERS

Kantar Worldpanel said Sainsbury's total sales rose 0.8

percent year-on-year in the 12 week period and its market share edged up 0.1 percentage point. The firm attracted an additional 114,000 shoppers, with its premium "Taste the Difference" brand recording its best ever Christmas.

Sainsbury's, which revealed last week it made a bid approach for Argos owner Home Retail in November, will publish a Christmas trading update today.

Kantar Worldpanel said Tesco, Asda and Morrisons all saw total sales fall - by 2.7 percent, 3.5 percent and 2.6 percent respectively - and all lost market share to Aldi and Lidl, which grew sales by 13.3 percent and 18.5 percent respectively. — Reuters



BALI: Indonesian fishermen unload a fresh catch of fish at Kedonganan beach near Kuta on Indonesia's resort island of Bali yesterday. The World Bank maintained its growth forecast for Indonesia's economy at 4.7 per cent for 2015, with gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast of 5.3 per cent for 2016. — AFP

SHARES RECOVER AS EUROPE SHRUGS OFF CHINA MARKET SURGE

LONDON: Stocks rose in Europe yesterday, lifted by a recovery in oil prices, but after a slump in crude to a fresh 12-year low and a dramatic surge in offshore Chinese yuan deposit rates had earlier rattled investors.

Weak British industrial production figures were the latest in a line of economic data that suggests interest rates in the developed world may not rise as quickly as had been thought. The prospect of easier central bank policy for longer also supported the stock bounce.

A rally in the European retail sector led by strong seasonal updates from British

companies pulled the FTSEuroFirst 300 up from a three-month low. The index was last up 1.5 percent, on for its biggest rise in over two weeks.

US futures pointed to a rise of around 0.5 percent at the open on Wall Street, having earlier indicated a fall of around 0.3 percent. "There is a notion, perhaps misplaced, that oil may find a floor at present levels as it's already down 17 percent so far this year," said Brenda Kelly, head analyst at London Capital Group.

"The cheap and easy money is not here to stay but it seems it may be here for some

time yet. A combination of bargain hunting and technical buying is also contributing."

At 1230 GMT Britain's FTSE 100 was up 1.6 percent, and Germany's DAX and France's CAC 40 both rose 2.1 percent.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan fell 0.3 percent and was just shy of its lowest level in four years. It is down more than 9 percent since the start of 2016. Japan's Nikkei closed 2.7 percent lower at its lowest level in almost a year.

CHINA WHIRL

With investors still licking their wounds

from last year's plunge in global commodity prices and a sharp sell-off in Chinese markets, 2016 has brought more pain for investment portfolios in the form of a deepening slowdown in the global economy and volatile Chinese markets. Beijing set another firm fix for its currency, eliminating the gap between offshore and onshore yuan exchange rates. This was done by encouraging state banks to buy up yuan in Hong Kong, driving up the overnight deposit rate fixing to 66.8 percent.

"China is continuing to instill a degree of stability after the sharp volatility at the beginning of the month by announcing stable to firmer fixings," said Mitul Kotecha, currency strategist at Barclays in Singapore. "Tighter liquidity has contributed to a squeeze on long USD/CNH positions and will mean investors are wary of shorting CNH in the near term," he said.

The weakness in commodities since the start of the year showed glimmers of dissipating. Brent and US crude futures both slumped to new 12-year lows, flirting with a break below \$30 a barrel, before moving back above \$31. The bearish dynamics of slow demand

and oversupply that have rocked oil this year also weighed on copper, pushing the industrial base metal down for the fifth day in a row to a fresh 6-1/2-year low of \$4,354 a ton.

Sterling was the big mover in currencies, falling below \$1.45 for the first time since June 2010 after figures showed UK industrial production surprisingly fell in November at the fastest pace in almost three years.

The pound was last down 0.8 percent at \$1.4420. Economists at JP Morgan pushed back their forecast for the Bank of England's first post-crisis rate hike by six months to November 2016.

The US dollar recovered ground against the euro and yen, trading at 117.75 yen while the euro was changing hands at \$1.0855. Money market futures are starting to price out the chance of multiple rate hikes by the Federal Reserve this year, with only a roughly 50 percent chance of a second hike priced in. At the start of the year, futures were fully pricing in two rate increases. The market is far from convinced that the Fed is going to raise rates in March, after implementing its first rate hike in almost a decade only last month. — Reuters

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report, Tuesday 12 January 2016. Includes sections for Index, Trades, Oil & Gas, Basic Materials, Consumer Goods, Health Care, Consumer Services, and Banks. Each section lists securities with columns for Change, Closing, Last Closing, High, and Low.

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report. At 02:00 PM Previous Day. Includes Global Stock Indices, MENA Stock Indices, Global Currencies Exchange Rate, MENA Currencies Exchange Rate, Global Interest Rates, and Commodities.

UK INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT DROPS SHARPLY IN NOVEMBER

LONDON: British industrial output suffered its sharpest fall in almost two years in November and retail spending disappointed over Christmas, denting hopes that the economy bounced back from a mid-year slowdown at the end of 2015.

Sterling fell to a 5-1/2-year low against the dollar after industrial production dropped unexpectedly as unusually mild weather curbed demand for heating gas and factory output contracted for a second month in a row. The 0.7 percent month-on-month fall in production was the steepest since January 2013, official statisticians said.

Britain has been one of the fastest-growing big advanced economies in the world for the last couple of years. But it

has relied heavily on domestically focused services and consumer spending for growth, frustrating hopes for a better-balanced recovery.

Adding to a sense that the economy might struggle to exceed the tepid 0.4 percent expansion seen in the third quarter of 2015, retail spending over the crucial Christmas period was "disappointing", the British Retail Consortium said.

J P Morgan said it now expects the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to wait until the final months of the year before hiking interest rates from record-low levels.

"This ... report is the straw that breaks the camel's back," J P Morgan economist

Malcolm Barr said. "Recent disappointment in the pay data and the drop in oil prices had already put our call for the MPC to raise rates in May at risk." The BoE will publish its first monetary policy decision of the year on Thursday. Economists do not expect any change to the 8-1 majority of policymakers who want to keep rates on hold. Compared with a year ago, industrial output was up 0.9 percent, the weakest annual growth since July, while manufacturing output was 1.2 percent lower than November 2014.

The Office for National Statistics said industrial production would have to rise 0.5 percent on the month in December to prevent the sector exerting a drag on

economic growth in the fourth quarter.

December's weather was as unseasonably mild as in November, when electricity and gas consumption sank 2.1 percent on a seasonally adjusted basis, the biggest monthly drop since April.

Separately, British retail spending over the Christmas holidays recorded its weakest quarterly growth in more than a year as stores competed to offer discounts, the BRC said.

Retail spending rose by 0.9 percent in the three months to December compared with a year earlier, the slowest calendar quarter of growth since the third quarter of 2014.

Price-cutting by retailers and low oil

prices are likely to drag further on inflation, which has been stuck in a narrow range of between plus and minus 0.1 percent since February.

Data from market researcher Kantar Worldpanel also showed no Christmas uplift for the British grocery market, with Sainsbury's the only one of the four major firms to grow sales.

Instead, Britons seem to be spending more on eating and drinking outside the home. The hospitality sector led growth in consumer spending in December, according to from payment card provider Visa Europe, whose upbeat figures on Monday contrasted with a more downbeat message from other parts of the economy. — Reuters

BP TO AXE 4,000 JOBS GLOBALLY

LONDON: British energy major BP said yesterday that it will axe more than 4,000 jobs worldwide over the next two years in response to collapsing oil prices. The company said in a statement that it would "reduce BP upstream staff globally from 24,000 to somewhere below 20,000 by year-end 2017".

The cutbacks will include 600 job losses at BP's North Sea activities. London-listed energy giant BP had already slashed 4,000 jobs last year as it prepared for a prolonged period of low prices. Brent North Sea crude prices tumbled to fresh 12-year lows yesterday and have shed more than 15 percent so far this year. The oil market had plunged by 35 percent in 2015, its third consecutive annual decline, plagued by chronic oversupply.

Mark Thomas, regional president for BP North Sea, said that "given the well-documented challenges of operating in this maturing region and in toughening market conditions, we need to take specific steps to ensure our business remains competitive and robust".

"An inevitable outcome of this will be an impact on headcount and we expect a reduction of around 600 staff and agency contractor roles by the end of 2017, with the majority of these taking place this year," he added.

Oil slumped under \$31 per barrel yesterday on global oversupply, prompting OPEC member Nigeria to call for an emergency meet to address collapsing prices that has ravaged revenues and hurt the profits of energy majors. BP stressed yesterday that it is "committed to the North Sea".

The group said it would invest about \$2 billion of capital into North Sea projects this year. "This will sustain many hundreds of supply chain contractor jobs going forward," it added.

British production of oil and gas rose in 2015 for the first time in 15 years but may struggle to maintain the performance amid low energy prices. Output is expected to have risen by as much as eight percent last year after a strong first 10 months, industry body Oil and Gas UK said last week. — AFP



BEIJING: A woman plays cards with other investors at a brokerage house in Beijing yesterday. Chinese stocks seasawed yesterday as worries lingered over the country's financial markets and economic outlook, fueling volatility in other Asian benchmarks. — AP

THAI GOVT WILL BUY RUBBER AT UP TO \$1.65 PER KG FROM FARMERS

BANGKOK: Thailand's government will buy rubber directly from farmers at prices of up to 60 baht a kilogram, nearly double the market price, in a bid to placate increasingly disgruntled farmers as prices dip to a seven-year low, the cabinet said yesterday.

The cabinet did not guarantee a price for 60 baht (\$1.65) per kilogram (2.2 lb), as demanded by some rubber farmers groups, but said it would purchase up to 200,000 tons of rubber at up to 60 baht a kilo. The government has been anxious to head off protests from rubber farmers in parts of the south, who traditionally form part of the support base for the ruling royalist-military elite. Some rubber farmers supported anti-government protests in 2014, leading to a military coup ousting the previous government.

Yesterday's announcement follows protests and hunger strikes by some groups, who say not

enough is being done to help farmers hit by a slowing demand for natural rubber as the economy cools in China, the world's top rubber importer. Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha has directed state agencies and ministries to use more Thai rubber, saying around 100,000 tons of rubber will be used for projects this year. Thailand, the world's top rubber producer and exporter, currently uses around 1.4 million tons of the 4 million tons of rubber it produces each year. The government also said yesterday it would help farmers by distributing 4 million bags rice to some 800,000 rubber farming households. The commerce ministry said it would also negotiate with overseas buyers to purchase about 3.6 billion baht (\$99.12 million) worth of rubber from Thailand this year. But some want the government to intervene faster and guarantee all prices at 60 baht. — Reuters



KUALA LUMPUR: A worker (center) pours natural rubber blocks for sale into a basket at a shop in Pahang, outside Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Natural rubber is used extensively in many applications and products, either alone or in combination with other materials. In most of its useful forms, it has a large stretch ratio and high resilience, and is extremely waterproof. — AFP

EUROPE REFINERS RUSH TO MAKE MORE GASOLINE

REFINERS TWEAK CRUDE OIL FEEDSTOCKS AS DIESEL LANGUISHES

LONDON: After years of building up diesel production, European oil refiners are using every trick in the book to maximize gasoline output to meet unabated global demand as the two fuels stage a sharp reversal of fortune.

Many operators on the continent, including Total, BP, Royal Dutch Shell and ExxonMobil, have invested hundreds of millions of dollars over the past decade to increase production of diesel, the road fuel of choice in the region, while seeking to lower gasoline output, seen as a mere "by-product" of that process until recently.

But today the world faces a growing excess of diesel and spectacular demand in Asia and the United States for gasoline and naphtha, a feedstock for plastic manufacturing.

While oil refineries cannot maintain high output of gasoline without also ramping up diesel production, they are now taking every possible step to tweak production in order to favor gasoline and naphtha.

One such step is using as feedstock lighter crude oil grades with higher yields of gasoline and naphtha. For example, light Nigerian crude prices have outperformed heavier grades. Some refineries have also opted to lower operating levels, or runs, in diesel producing units known

as hydrocrackers. In recent weeks, as naphtha cracks surged to record levels, some refiners have tweaked the distillation boiling temperature, or "cut point", in order to favor naphtha over kerosene and jet fuel, according to refinery sources and traders.

The results are already showing-yields of middle distillates, which include gasoil and diesel, dropped to around 50 percent in December, data from industry monitor Euroilstock showed, the lowest in around 6 years.

"We expect European refiners to do all sorts of things... They are already doing this as the market is sending such strong signals. We will see fractions pulled out of the diesel pool and moved into jet and we will see naphtha fractions taken out of jet and moved into light ends," according to Robert Campbell, head of oil products research at consultancy Energy Aspects.

Benchmark European gasoline refining margins, or cracks, rose to around \$15 a barrel this week-nearly three times higher than a year ago and ten times above 2013 levels-as demand in China and Asia for the road fuel remains unabated. Diesel cracks, on the other hand, have languished due to rising global production, slower

demand and a mild winter that has filled storage tanks to the brim.

The small changes in refining slates are having an incremental effect. A 1 percent swing in yields could lower Europe's diesel production by more than 250,000 tons per month, according to Campbell.

"It is not enough by itself to right the market but would help a little bit. A similar development in the U.S. Gulf Coast would shave another 150,000-200,000 tons off the balance and that starts to have a pretty significant effect on the overall number of cargoes being shown."

The global shortage in gasoline is expected to continue this year too. "With new refinery additions less tailored towards light products and increasing demand for petrol in Asia, it appears increasingly likely that the market could find itself short of gasoline again as it did over the summer of 2015," Barclays said in a note.

In the near term, the sharp decline in crude oil prices due to a persistent supply glut is likely to support refining margins but Energy Aspects' Campbell expects "modest" cuts in refining rates in both Europe and the United States. Once crude supplies tighten towards the end of the year, "that support will go away and margins will really struggle," he said. — Reuters

CANADA MINING FIRM HALTS SOME WORKS, CUTS JOBS IN GREECE

ATHENS: Canadian mining company Eldorado Gold said yesterday it is suspending work at a site in Greece and laying off 600 workers following protests by local residents and a spat with the country's leftwing government.

The Vancouver, Canada-based company said it was halting operations at a gold mine at Skouries, on the Halkidiki peninsula, one of four major Greek sites where the company is involved.

CEO Paul Wright said a further 500 jobs were also likely to be cut later in the year. Wright accused the government of holding up permits and using the mining project as a "political toy" but insisted the company had no plans to pull out of Greece and hoped to restart work at Skouries at a later date.

"It's not dissimilar to building a kitchen and putting in the floor and furniture but not being allowed to put in a wall and roof over it. It's a bit silly," Wright told a news conference in Athens. Wright said his company had invested \$700 million (645 million euros) and created 2,000 jobs, but added that it was willing to negotiate royalty payments for gold being extracted that were not included in the original agreements made with the Greek state.

Elected a year ago, the leftwing government has expressed support for resident protest groups near Skouries who oppose the project on environmental grounds and fears it will hurt local tourism. The protests included road blockades, violent confrontations with police and a 2013 arson attack on

Eldorado facilities at Skouries. Environment Minister Panos Skoutelis said Wright had made the announcement after rescheduling meetings with the government for later in the week. "The Canadian company is trying to change facts on the

ground - that is provocative behavior," he said.

"The government will not be blackmailed. The decisions it takes will be based on public interest, environmental protection, and will be taken after studying all the facts." — AP



A bulldozer works at the site of a gold mine in Skouries village, northern Greece. Canadian mining company Eldorado Gold said yesterday it is suspending work at the site and laying off 600 workers following protests by local residents and a spat with the country's left wing government. — AP

CHINA 2015 AUTO SALES GROWTH HITS THREE-YEAR LOW

BEIJING: Vehicle sales in China, the world's largest car market, increased at their slowest pace in three years in 2015, industry group data showed yesterday, as slowing growth and volatile stock markets hit demand.

A total of 24.60 million cars were sold last year, up 4.7 percent from 2014, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM). That was down from a 6.9 percent rise in 2014 and marked the slowest growth since 2012 when sales increased by 4.3 percent, previous CAAM figures showed. CAAM secretary general Dong Yang estimated that purchase restrictions imposed in big cities pulled auto sales growth down by up to eight percentage points, while extraordinary swings in the country's stock markets were responsible for a two percentage point drop.

"The 2015 car market downturn was to some extent accidental," Dong wrote in an article on CAAM's website. Looking forward, "those factors should improve clearly and the auto market will not grow as slowly as in 2015," he added. Sales may gain around six percent this year to top 26 million units, CAAM said yesterday, according to Bloomberg News. The market is crucial to foreign auto makers, some of whom posted strong sales last year despite the overall slowdown in growth.

US auto giant General Motors delivered a

record 3.61 million vehicles in China in 2015, up 5.2 percent from the previous high in 2014, according to the company, China's top foreign auto maker by sales.

The numbers put it ahead of German rival Volkswagen, which is struggling with a global scandal over emissions cheating. Volkswagen China delivered 3.55 million vehicles to customers in the Chinese mainland as well as Hong Kong, it said on Monday.

Ford, another US car maker, set a record for sales in China in 2015, reaching 1.12 million vehicles, up three percent on the previous year, the company said. China's auto industry felt the pinch of the country's slowing economic growth last year, with producers scaling back output and media reports of unusually long holidays at factories and decreased bonuses and overtime pay for workers.

Economic growth hit a 24-year low of 7.3 percent in 2014 and slowed further last year, weakening to 6.9 percent in the July-September period. A spectacular rally in Chinese shares in the first half of 2015 attracted huge flows of funds into the stock markets, much of which became locked up in an ensuing rout, hitting consumers' budgets and dampening demand for cars. To prop up the auto industry, the government cut purchase taxes by half on cars with small engines from October 1. — AFP

FORD TRANSFORMS INTO AUTO, MOBILITY COMPANY, INTRODUCES FORDPASS

DUBAI: As part of its transformation into an auto and mobility company, Ford is introducing FordPass - a platform that reimagines the relationship between automaker and consumer. FordPass aims to do for car owners what iTunes did for music fans.

FordPass members can talk to personal mobility assistants - FordGuides - night or day to help resolve their mobility challenges, whether finding a more efficient way to get around or booking parking before reaching their destination. Members can also reserve and pay for advance parking, virtually build their ideal vehicle at one of several FordHubs, and receive rewards for FordPass membership loyalty.

"Ford always has been motivated to make people's lives better," said Mark Fields, Ford president and CEO. "We did it when we put the world on wheels a century ago and we do it now through our strong lineup of cars, SUVs, trucks and electrified vehicles. Today, we take our commitment one step further with the introduction of FordPass - an all-new platform that may be our most revolutionary yet."

A FordPass membership is free for Ford vehicle owners and non-

move better."

FordPass features four elements to benefit members: The marketplace includes mobility services; FordGuides help consumers move more efficiently; appreciation, where members are recognised for

modal transportation and more. Members can pay for these services through FordPay - a virtual wallet that is part of FordPass.

"FordPass is about convenience," said Stephen Odell, Ford executive vice president, Global Marketing,

to locate their vehicle.

FordGuides

No one wants to be just a number. That's why FordPass members can speak directly to trusted and knowledgeable FordGuides - all at the touch of a button. For example, if a member decides he would like to book advance parking for an upcoming show but is unsure how to reserve it, one push of a button on his smartphone lands him in a live chat with a FordGuide who will lead him through the options and help to reserve parking.

The guides will be available free of charge. Their only job is to guide, serve and help solve mobility challenges - not to sell.

Appreciation and FordPass Perks is about making mobility more rewarding - no matter the journey. FordPass members will be rewarded for doing simple things, such as registering to become a member, booking parking, or interacting with FordGuides. And by collaborating with affinity partners McDonald's, 7-Eleven and others, FordPass can recognize members with access to merchandise and unique experiences.

"We're engaging with our customers - and our potential customers - aiming to make every interaction with the Ford brand a positive experience," said Elena Ford, Ford vice president, Global Dealer and Consumer Experience. "We want consumers to know how much we appreciate them, and with FordPass, we're taking loyalty a step further."

FordHubs

FordPass also includes the opening of FordHubs, where consumers will be able to explore Ford's latest innovations, learn about the company's mobility services and experience exclusive events. These urban storefronts will be located in New York, San Francisco, London and Shanghai. The first opens later this year in Westfield World Trade Centre in New York.

On-site FordGuides will help guests understand mobility options available in their cities, explore solutions for their mobility needs, view a real-time mobility map of their city, and experience special events, including new vehicle reveals.

"These aren't places where we're trying to sell something," said Odell. "We want to hear people's thoughts, and we want to show them what we're doing to solve the transportation issues of today and tomorrow - and not just in their city, but around the world."

FordPass launches this spring in the United States and Canada, followed by other markets including Europe, China and Brazil later this year. FordPass capability is activated through smartphones. Consumers can sign up for more information and updates at MyFordPass.com.



owners alike. The platform officially launches in April.

FordPass is part of Ford Smart Mobility, the plan to take the company to the next level in connectivity, mobility, autonomous vehicles, the customer experience, and data and analytics.

"As we've studied the mobility challenges people face, we designed FordPass to help provide services that make consumers' lives easier," said Fields. "FordPass is really about listening to people's needs and developing ways to help them

their loyalty; and FordHubs, where consumers can experience Ford's latest innovations.

Marketplace

All FordPass members will have access to a marketplace of mobility services.

Ford is working with ParkWhiz and Parkopedia in the US to help people find and pay for parking more easily, and FlightCar to borrow and share vehicles when they travel. In the future, services will include ride sharing, car sharing, multi-

Sales and Service. "We're connecting consumers with the world, making it all incredibly easy."

Ford owners can easily connect with their preferred dealer to schedule maintenance and service appointments or to review their Ford Credit vehicle finance account details.

Members who own Ford vehicles equipped with SYNC(r) Connect can use FordPass to access vehicle features such as remote start; lock and unlock; fuel, oil levels and battery charge; tyre pressure readings; and

ETIHAD AIRWAYS DELIVERS ANOTHER YEAR OF STRONG GROWTH IN 2015

ABU DHABI: Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, delivered solid operational performance in 2015 by achieving continued growth in passenger and cargo volumes.

The airline carried 17.4 million passengers last year, a significant increase of 17 per cent over 2014 levels, and operated 97,400 flights which covered 467 million kilometres. The growth in passenger demand continued to surpass the airline's capacity increase, underscoring the strength of its long-term growth strategy.

In total, Etihad Airways carried more than 75 per cent of the total passengers who travelled to and from Abu Dhabi International Airport in 2015. With the addition of the airline's equity partners that operate flights into the UAE capital, the combined total rises to 84 per cent of passenger traffic at Abu Dhabi International Airport.

James Hogan, Etihad Airways' President and Chief Executive Officer, said: "In 2015, we were able to bring new competitive choice to millions of travellers, through our award-winning services and through the growing networks of our equity partners. No airline group is doing more to stimulate new competition in the aviation industry."

Etihad Airways introduced six additional destinations to its global route network in 2015, with new flights to Kolkata, Madrid, Edinburgh, Entebbe, Hong Kong, and Dar es Salaam, and a new direct service to Brisbane.

Last year also saw Etihad Airways' fleet boosted with the deployment of the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, which entered commercial service on routes to Washington DC, Zurich, Singapore and Brisbane. The Airbus A380 network was expanded with a second service to London Heathrow and new flights to

Sydney and New York.

This year, the airline will commence its third daily A380 service to London Heathrow, and will add two new A380 destinations of Mumbai and Melbourne, while the Boeing 787 will start flying to five new cities, namely D,sseldorf, Perth, Shanghai, Istanbul and Johannesburg.

Etihad Airways increased frequencies on 16 existing routes across the world in 2015. These were Bangkok, Chennai, Dammam, Delhi, Hong Kong, Hyderabad, Istanbul, Jeddah, Kochi, Kozhikode, Melbourne, Mumbai, Muscat, Seychelles, Tehran and Trivandrum.

Complementing its organic growth, the airline also expanded its codeshare and equity partnerships last year. These partnerships delivered more than five million passengers onto Etihad Airways' flights, an increase of 43 per cent over the 3.5 million passengers in 2014.

A new codeshare agreement was launched with Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), while Etihad Airways' existing codeshares with Air Serbia, American Airlines, flynas, Jet Airways, Korean Air, NIKI and S7 Airlines were significantly expanded. As a result, Etihad Airways now offers a combined passenger and cargo network of nearly 600 destinations through its 197 interline and 49 codeshare partnerships.

In April 2015, the airline obtained regulatory approval from Switzerland's Federal Office of Civil Aviation, FOCA, to finalise a 33.3 per cent investment in the Swiss regional carrier, Darwin Airline.

In June, Darwin Airline, trading as Etihad Regional, became the latest addition to Etihad Airways' equity partners network, which also includes airberlin, Air Serbia, Air Seychelles, Alitalia, Jet Airways and Virgin Australia. Etihad Airways' equity partnerships represent the seventh largest

global grouping of airlines, together flying more than 100 million guests.

Etihad Airways also reported strong cargo volumes for 2015, with 592,090 tonnes of freight and mail flown in total, a four per cent increase year-on-year. The airline accounted for 88 per cent of cargo imports, exports and transfers at Abu Dhabi International Airport last year.

During 2015, Etihad Cargo enhanced its global reach by offering bellyhold capacity on Etihad Airways' six new passenger destinations, bringing to 96 the total number of passenger destinations on which cargo services are currently provided. Etihad Cargo also expanded its freighter services to several new markets including Dakar, Nouakchott and Douala, bringing the number of freighter-only destinations operated to 20.

Etihad Airways' fleet consisted of 121 aircraft at the end of 2015 (+9 per cent year-on-year), with an average age of 5.8 years - one of the youngest and most environmentally-friendly in the industry. The airline took delivery of 11 Airbus (four A380s, six A321s and one A320) and four Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft in 2015, while further leased capacity was also added.

To support the next phase of its global network expansion, Etihad Airways will receive 10 aircraft deliveries this year, including five Boeing 787-9s, three A380s and two Boeing 777-200 Freighters.

Hogan said: "We enter 2016 with confidence as a stronger, more dynamic airline that will continue to support the evolution of Abu Dhabi as a global aviation hub."

"We continue to face challenges, not least the protectionism of the major American and European legacy carriers. We will continue to fight to bring new competitive choice to travellers around the world."



PARIS: Airbus CEO Fabrice Bregier (L) listens to Airbus Chief Operating Officer Customers John Leahy during the company's annual press conference in Paris yesterday. Airbus said yesterday aircraft orders dropped in 2015 from a year earlier, but were still way ahead its US rival Boeing. —AFP

AIRBUS BEATS BOEING IN 2015 ORDER RACE, LAGS ON DELIVERIES

PARIS: European planemaker Airbus beat Boeing in the race for new business last year, swelling its total order book to a record \$1 trillion, but remained behind on deliveries as Boeing extended its lead as the world's largest jetmaker. The planemaker's division of Airbus Group grabbed 1,036 net plane orders after cancellations, it said yesterday, down 29 per cent from 2014, compared with Boeing's tally of 768, a fall of 46 per cent.

Both planemakers experienced a slowdown after two years of heavy orders, and amid concerns over the impact of economic jitters and low oil prices on demand for fuel-saving jets.

Despite that, deliveries of popular models grew, reflecting industry forecasts of persistent growth in traffic. Airbus hit a company record of 635 deliveries and predicted over 650 in 2016, with new orders again exceeding deliveries.

Boeing said last week its deliveries rose 5 per cent to 762 jets, an industry record. Combined deliveries came in a whisker below 1,400, having doubled in the past decade, and Airbus planemaker chief Fabrice Bregier said the latest data showed the market was "resilient".

Airlines "do not expect oil prices to stay low forever," he said. However, Airbus dropped to its lowest overall share of deliveries against Boeing - 45 per cent - since 2002, and its lowest share of wide-body deliveries - 35 per cent - since 2001, after its rival pumped up deliveries of its 787 Dreamliner.

Airbus expects to close the gap with its competing A350, but deliveries have started gently due to industry-wide cabin supply problems and the European firm's determination to avoid a repeat of industrial problems that beset Boeing's 787 and its own A380.

Airbus argued deliveries were about the same as Boeing's, disregarding differences of timing between increases in production of the latest generation of lightweight jets.

In a boost to the slow-selling A380, the world's largest passenger jet, Airbus said it had won an order for three of the double-deckers from a "global leading airline". That fell to a net total of two orders for the year, after a cancellation linked to the restructuring of bankrupt Russian airline Transaero, industry sources said.

Japan's Nikkei reported this month Japan's biggest carrier ANA Holdings Inc (9202.T) was set to buy three of the jets.

As planemakers target further production increases, tensions meanwhile surfaced between Airbus and some top suppliers. Sales chief John Leahy blamed US engine maker Pratt & Whitney for a delay in the first delivery of the new A320neo, while Bregier publicly told France's Zodiac Aerospace to pull up its socks following seat production delays.

"Yes it is a message," he told a news conference. Airbus missed its target for 15 A350 deliveries in 2015 by one plane after shortages in cabin equipment. It expects to deliver "at least 50" of the new jets in 2016. —Reuters



PARIS: French President Francois Hollande (right) delivers a speech during an event to mark the bicentenary of the Caisse des Depots et Consignations (CDC), a French financial organization created in 1816, at the Grand Palais in Paris, yesterday. —AFP

MUBASHER LAUNCHES MUBASHER DOW JONES NEWSWIRE

DUBAI/LONDON: Mubasher, the leading Middle East and North Africa (MENA) news, market data and technology provider, yesterday launched a joint product with Dow Jones, the world's leading provider of real-time financial news and publisher of The Wall Street Journal.

Mubasher Dow Jones Newswire, provides a constant watch on corporate developments and financial markets in MENA and offers a unique insight into the region's economies, offering fresh ideas for investment decision-making, research and trading.

The English language newswire combines detailed regional coverage with global reporting and analysis of topics including economics, business and companies. The service includes commentary and analysis of public, private and state-owned enterprises, as well as coverage of regional stock market activity, government privatisations and budgetary moves; economic trends and infrastructure tenders.

The Mubasher Dow Jones newswire is available to financial professionals through subscription via Mubasher's new MENA market intelligence platform, Decypha www.decypa.com

"Our partnership with Dow Jones is the direct result of feedback from financial professionals, requesting a single, focused newswire on the MENA region which also includes the key global macroeconomic news" said Yousef Rafayah, General Manager, Mubasher Media. "The Mubasher Dow Jones Newswire aims to become a must-have for MENA investors by providing high quality breaking news first, coupled with a deep insight on markets and companies."

"Our global business and economic news will help to bring context to the valuable content from Mubasher, allowing Decypha customers to make timely and informed

investment decisions. We are excited to begin this partnership," said Jason Malatesta, Head of Partners and Alliances at Dow Jones.

"A high percentage of financial market news across the MENA region will break in Arabic first, but it is highly important for investors to have an English news source that covers this in a timely and accurate way" said Dr. Fadi Khalaf Secretary General at The Arab Federation of Exchanges.

DirectFN, a wholly owned subsidiary of National Technology Group (NTG), specializes in providing solutions ranging from desktop information workstations, transaction systems and order management systems through to total end-to-end solutions. DirectFN(tm) products are deployed in some of the largest financial institutions across the Middle East and South Asia. DirectFN is also a provider of exchange information to institutions via direct feeds or its workstation, which includes reference data, charting tools and other content required by both the professional and retail investment community in the Middle East and global investment community.

DirectFN has recently launched a new version of Decypha, a cost effective financial intelligence platform offering world class exclusive news wire (Mubasher Dow Jones), real time market data and a deep insight on companies, sectors and markets of the MENA region and beyond. It has been designed to help professional investors to find and assess new investment opportunities and make informed decisions easier and faster.

DirectFN also cater to the needs of the Investment and Brokerage communities with a single platform, PRO10, to view real-time prices and related information for multiple asset classes. PRO10 covers a broad range of markets from US to Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia with the ability to focus on the different dynamics of local markets.

DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK: PITFALLS OF THE SMART OFFICE BOLD

By Ovanes Mikhailov

Have you noticed that the modern office space is no longer just a building with windows, desks and a ceiling? With various automation systems becoming commonplace, the office has essentially become a huge cybernetic organism. All sorts of engineering and logistical solutions, sensors and controllers encompass technologies providing access control, video surveillance, climate control, water supply, lighting, fire extinguishing, elevator control, etc.

This same system can also, to some extent, control information and communications technologies, monitor the state of communication channels, restrict employee access to undesirable Internet resources, and block file downloads by size and type. All of these solutions, sensors and controllers are tied together into a sophisticated telecommunications network that has a single control center - a server or any modern computer with specialized software providing support for all the relevant protocols.

These systems are designed to create and maintain comfortable working conditions for the company's employees, as well as provide a more centralized and

less complicated process for managing these technologies. These systems also help to improve efficiency. For example, the early detection of a gas or water leak by the system's sensors could reduce company's costs significantly.

A study carried out by Allied Market Research found the market for smart building systems is evolving and growing rapidly. The research company forecasts that the market will grow by 29.5% by 2020 and reach a volume of \$35.3 billion. This means that more and more office buildings will be built based upon these principles.

But have you ever considered your smart office from an IT security viewpoint? Did it occur to you that by equipping your office with devices designed to provide life's comforts, cybercriminals are handed even more opportunity to gain access to your corporate information and even to cause physical damage?

It makes no difference in this context whether you are renting an office or have a smart building of your own. Incidentally, the size of your business and its area of work does not matter either, because your company may be of interest to cybercriminals both on its own and as a stepping-stone for attacks against your partners.

Weak Spot

This is because the telecommunications network used in the system, while being a key element that is essential to its operation, is also the system's weak spot. It is used for all communications between the command center and the end devices. The network can use both wired and wireless technologies (such as Wi-Fi and Bluetooth). Moreover, the central computer itself may have an Internet connection to make management and control easier. For cybercriminals, this is the primary target, since access to the command center, or the corporate network, enables them to take over the entire system.

For example, after gaining access to the network, cybercriminals can monitor the office's operation using the video surveillance system - they may even be able to see the information on employees' monitors. Taking advantage of the access control system's vulnerabilities, criminals can get into the building disguised as employees without attracting anyone's attention. After all, the security service does not necessarily know all employees by sight. Taking control of other life-support systems can seriously undermine the office's ecosystem, to the point of making work

impossible. This can result in downtime, missed deadlines, damage to property and other financial losses.

This is why a multi-tier, comprehensive approach to IT security is a must. It is essential that security is not limited to protecting corporate resources internally using IT security solutions on employees' endpoints. It is crucial to provide reliable protection for all elements of the smart building management system that are connected to your corporate system in any way.

Embedded Solutions

With the market for embedded solutions evolving at such a pace, some vendors are now looking to develop specialized technologies to cater for this growing market. Kaspersky Lab for example is developing an embedded secure operating system. Specifically, one of its components, Kaspersky Security System, is already available in the market as an embedded OEM solution. The component can be built into any real-time operating system, providing security for operations performed under that operating system.

The operating system itself can be built directly into controllers and sensors used in smart building systems. All of these end devices are microcomput-



Ovanes Mikhailov

ers that need protection as much as other computers that are better known to the world. Since conventional security tools cannot be installed on such devices, a specialized solution implemented as a secure operating system can provide security of smart building systems at the end device level, safeguarding the company against cyberattacks that use the system as an entry point into the company's corporate network.

NOTE: Ovanes Mikhailov is the Managing Director in the Middle East of Kaspersky Lab

REPLACEMENT IN WORKS FOR CLIMATE COMPUTER

CHEYENNE, Wyoming: One of the most powerful computers in the world dedicated to climate change, weather and other earth science research will be replaced in 2017 by an even faster machine, officials announced Monday. The Yellowstone supercomputer in Wyoming currently ranks among the 60 fastest in the world. The new supercomputer, to be named Cheyenne, will be at least 2 1/2 times more powerful, the National Center for Atmospheric Research said.

Capable of 5.3 quadrillion calculations, or petaflops, per second, Cheyenne will be some 100,000 times faster than a typical home computer. The speed provides unprecedented detail in climate-change predictions, including regional modeling of effects, the center said. A more powerful computer will allow researchers to see results in higher resolution, like a higher density of pixels sharpens images on a television or a stronger telescope brings a greater number of far-off galaxies into focus, explained Rich Loft, the center's director of technology.

Scientists since 2012 have been using the Yellowstone supercomputer near Cheyenne for a range of research that also includes modeling air pollution and ocean currents. The atmospheric research center plans to install Cheyenne later this year and put it to work early next year. Questions it might help answer include:

- Is the California drought a fluke or due to global climate change?
- Can scientists predict the intensity of solar flares - streams of radiation released by the sun that can endanger satellites and astronauts - during an upcoming solar cycle?
- How might climate change increase the likelihood of drought and change the

extent of arctic sea ice from decade to decade?

The Yellowstone computer, located in a business park a few miles west of Cheyenne, put Wyoming's capital on the map as a potential technology hub. Facilities including a huge Microsoft data center have set up nearby since the center opened. The old machine won't shut down when the new one boots up. The computers will be side-by-side for much of next year but won't operate in direct coordination. Time and bandwidth on supercomputers typically gets divided up among researchers and rarely goes to a single project at a time. "The machine is usually working on dozens of problems at the same time in a kind of mix of jobs that are running on it. Some of those jobs might take a quarter of the machine. Others might take only 1 percent," Loft said.

More than 2,200 scientists from more than 300 universities and federal labs have used Yellowstone since 2012. Officials moved to replace the first Yellowstone computer so quickly because of the rapid pace of technology. "Things get better, faster cheaper. That's the whole story of computers," Loft said. "Certainly you know, if you have a phone, it starts to feel clunky after a few years." The Cheyenne supercomputer will be about three times as efficient as Yellowstone, using 90 percent as much electricity but taking up to a third as much space. The machine will be built by Milpitas, California-based Silicon Graphics International Corp.

The University Corp for Atmospheric Research, a consortium of more than 100 North American universities and colleges, oversees the National Center for Atmospheric Research. Both organizations are based in Boulder, Colorado. — AP



LAS VEGAS: The EHang 184 autonomous aerial vehicle is unveiled at the EHang booth at CES International on Jan 6, 2016. The drone is large enough to fit a human passenger. — AP

IF YOU THINK DRONES ARE A PASSING FAD, THINK AGAIN

LAS VEGAS: If you're used to thinking of drones as a passing fad, last week's CES gadget show should give you second thoughts. Tiny, self-piloted copters promise to buzzily follow you around like something out of a Neal Stephenson cyberpunk novel. New drones that could find lost wilderness adventurers or help them see out above treetsops; others purport to carry a human passenger at the touch of a button.

None of this, of course, will be happening overnight. Limited battery life means that many commercial models can't fly for more than about 20 minutes at best. Manufacturers haven't yet figured out the best way to keep many tiny drones where they ought to be, given that GPS positioning sucks too much power for their minuscule batteries. Obstacle avoidance systems that would let small drones pilot themselves are still under development. And looming over the entire field are new government rules intended to keep people safe, but which may also slow innovation.

So far, none of those obstacles are slowing down an industry that appears to be in full lift-off. The Consumer Technology Association estimates that US consumer drone spending will more than double to \$953 million next year. ABI Research believes the global market for drones will hit \$8.4 billion in 2018, with users ranging from the military and oil companies to farmers, journalists, and backyard tinkerers.

As drone capabilities continue to grow, drones may become a mass-market product for average consumers in about three years, says Patrick Moorhead, principal analyst of research firm Moor Insights & Strategy. "You should be able to get a drone that can effectively follow you, not run into things, and find things on its own," he says. "That's pretty cool."

That's assuming, of course, that you're not commuting to work in one. At CES, Chinese manufacturer EHang Inc unveiled a large drone that it said can carry a human passenger at speeds of up to 60 miles an hour. The four-armed quadcopter has been on more than 100 flights, mostly in wooded areas of Guangzhou, according to Chief Marketing Officer Derrick Xiong. Some - he didn't say how many - have carried a human passenger.

Federal aviation regulators declined to comment on EHang's human-carrying drone, saying the company hasn't submitted any proposal to authorities. The Federal Aviation Administration advised an EHang representative at the show to contact its unmanned aircraft system office.

Smaller Models

In contrast with the bigger drones, smaller ones were also on display. On the small drone

front, Kickstarter-funded Fleye envisions its camera-bearing flying sphere as a kind of personal videographer that follows you around street corners; you'll be able to switch between settings such as "selfie", "panorama" and "virtual tripod". And because it's encased in what looks like a lightweight football helmet, its propellers pose less risk to bystanders. "Instead of doing collision detection and avoidance, we just make sure if it collides, it won't hurt," says CEO Laurent Eschenauer.

Toy drone maker Spin Master Inc showed off an augmented-reality game in which kids use a real-life drone to rescue tiny virtual people, put out fires and fight aliens. In essence, they're interacting with a virtual world overlaid on the real world; they can see the virtual elements on a tablet they're using to control the drone. Robolink Inc. wants you to learn how to program using its "CoDrone", a flying electronics kit you can instruct to jump off a table into someone's hand with a simple line of code. CEO Hansol Hong describes the educational product as "where Khan Academy meets drone".

But the reach of some small drones still exceeds their grasp. Companies like San Jose-based UNorth Inc, maker of the Mota; Newark, Delaware-based Onagofly; and South Korean ByRobot Co all said they're still tweaking the

system needed to make tiny drones weighing less than half a pound follow their owners. For instance, ByRobot co-founder James Hong said its engineers still need several months to modify the way its drone uses wireless Bluetooth and Wi-Fi signals. The changes should help maintain a reliable connection to the user's smartphone, making possible the "follow me" function in the absence of GPS, which the company considers too power-hungry for smaller drones.

With the potential for millions of new flying objects buzzing around the country in coming years, the FAA is working on new drone-safety rules. By this spring, the agency plans to unveil regulations to allow streamlined approval of commercial drone uses, instead of the case-by-case system it uses now. Last month, the FAA began requiring registration for drones weighing between about half a pound and 55 pounds. Even as they come up with new rules, regulators don't know exactly where the technology is headed, FAA Administrator Michael Huerta acknowledged in a speech to CES attendees. "This is not going to be a finite process, where one day we sit back and say OK, we're done," Huerta said in a speech Wednesday. "Maintaining the highest levels of safety requires us to constantly evolve in our approach." — AP



CHEYENNE, Wyoming: This undated file photo shows the NCAR-Wyoming Supercomputing Center (NWSC) "Yellowstone" supercomputer, among the 60 fastest in the world, used to study weather, climate, oceanography, and other areas of earth science. — AP

GOVTS URGED TO SUPPORT SCRAMBLING DIGITAL DATA

SAN FRANCISCO: An open letter posted on Monday by Internet freedom advocates called on governments to back tough encryption of digital data to keep people's information private. The letter quickly gathered nearly 200 online signatures, including renowned computer security specialist Bruce Schneier and groups such as the Internet Association and the Electronic Privacy Information Center, after it was posted at the website securetheinternet.org. "The ability to freely develop and use encryption provides the cornerstone for today's global economy," the letter said. "Economic growth in the digital age is powered by the ability to trust and authenticate our interactions and communicate and conduct business securely, both within and across borders."

The letter called on governments around the world to reject any policies or secret deals that limit people's access to powerful data encryption tools that could even shield information from intelligence

gathering agencies. Governments were urged to spurn any idea of making companies build "backdoors" that they could use to get private data and to not ask for software "keys" for unscrambling encrypted information. "There's no middle ground on encryption," TechFreedom's policy counsel Tom Struble said in a statement announcing that the group signed the letter. "Any vulnerability imposed for government use can be exploited by those who seek to do harm."

Countries considering proposals to undermine data encryption included Britain, China, India, France and the United States, according to TechFreedom. "Encryption and other anonymizing tools and technologies enable lawyers, journalists, whistleblowers and organizers to communicate freely across borders and to work to better their communities," the letter said. "We encourage you to support the safety and security of users by strengthening the integrity of communications and systems." — AFP



The Hexo+ Your Self-Flying Camera drone is on display at the Hexo+ booth during CES International on Jan 7, 2016. The fully autonomous drone has no controller. Using a smart phone app, the user selects how and from what angle you want the drone to take video of you and it will automatically follow you around with its camera.

DOCTORS' STRIKE CAUSES DISRUPTION AT UK HOSPITALS

LONDON: Tens of thousands of junior doctors in England went on strike yesterday, causing major disruption to hospitals across the country in the first walkout of its kind for 40 years. They are providing only emergency cover during a 24-hour walkout which started at 0800 GMT, meaning that several thousand routine operations have had to be cancelled, along with appointments and tests. There are more than 55,000 junior doctors in Britain, making up a third of the medical workforce.

They are qualified medical practitioners who are working while studying for qualifications to take more senior roles. The strike is over a new type of contract which the government says will improve healthcare at night and at weekends but medics say would drastically reduce their pay. "The new con-

tract is not fair, it's not safe and from the beginning, we as a profession have been bullied, intimidated and threatened by the Department of Health," said Florence Dalton, 29, a psychiatrist picketing at St Pancras hospital in central London.

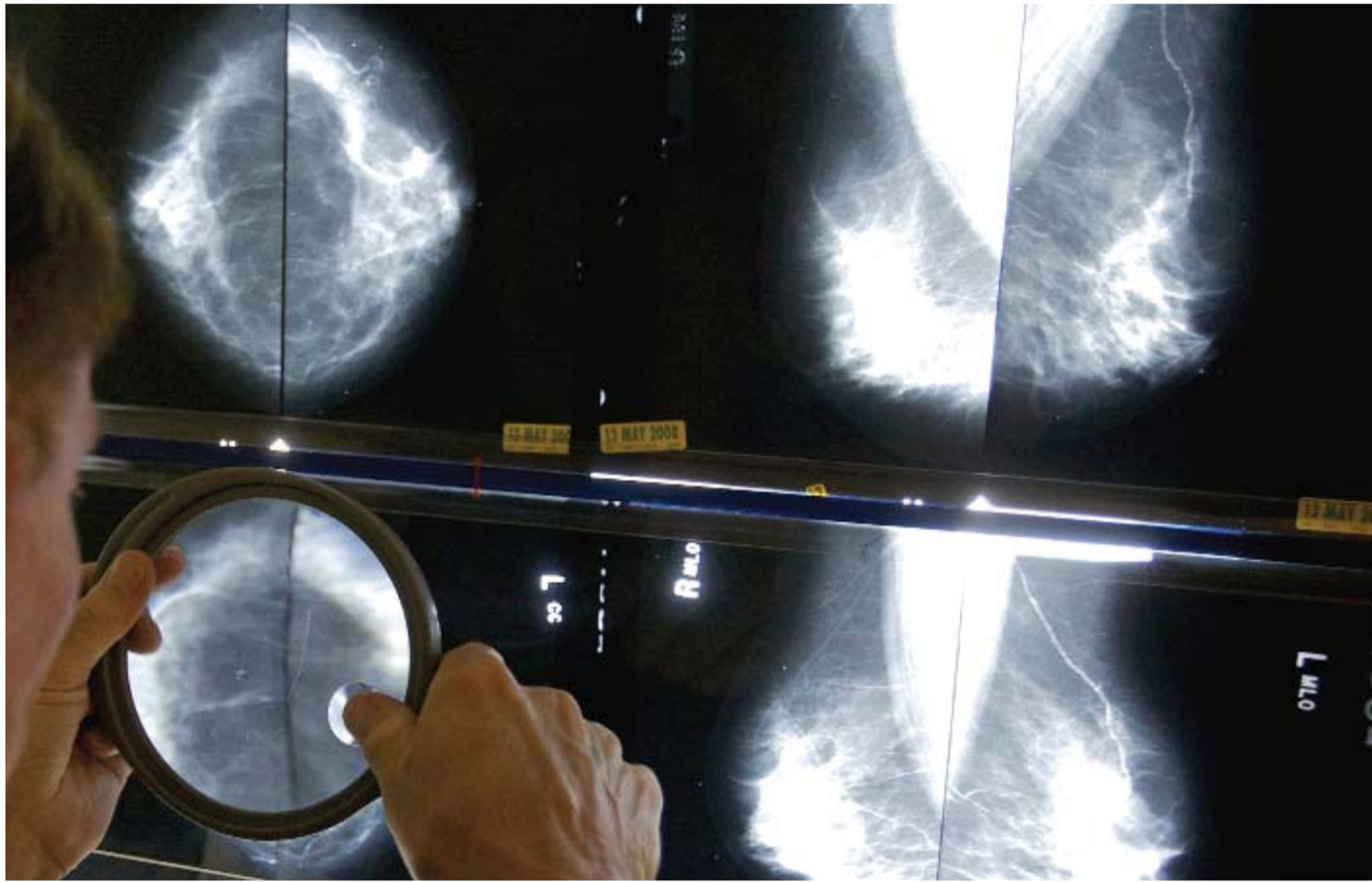
She added that many workers in the state-run National Health Service (NHS) felt "exhausted, overstretched and undervalued". "Staff are already leaving in their droves," she said. "Fewer and fewer people are coming into the profession. It makes me so angry." Doctors on several picket lines in London were joined by a choir of NHS doctors and nurses who took this year's Christmas number one spot in Britain's pop charts ahead of Justin Bieber with a charity singer.

On Monday, British Prime Minister

David Cameron appealed to junior doctors to call off what he said was an unnecessary strike which would cause "real difficulties" to the NHS. His government says the reforms are needed to help create a "seven days a week" NHS where the quality of care is as high at the weekends as on weekdays. The NHS has so far postponed 4,000 routine treatments due to the strike. A further 48-hour stoppage is due to take place on January 26, while on February 10, there will be a full withdrawal of labor from 0800 GMT to 1700 GMT. The NHS is the fifth largest employer in the world, providing health care which is largely free at the point of delivery. It is widely respected in Britain, with pollsters YouGov rating it the institution which the most people view positively. — AFP



LONDON: The British National Health Service Singers, who are either doctors or nurses, perform a protest song in support of junior doctors outside Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children, as a 24-hour junior doctor strike starts in London. — AP



LOS ANGELES: A radiologist uses a magnifying glass to check mammograms for breast cancer in Los Angeles. — AP

US GUIDELINES URGE CANCER SCREENING FROM AGE OF 50

NEWEST RECOMMENDATIONS STOKE NEW CONTROVERSY

MIAMI: Women 50 and older should get a mammogram to screen for breast cancer every two years, while women in their 40s should decide with their doctors, said US guidelines Monday. The newest recommendations by the US Preventive Services Task Force stoked new controversy over what is best for women, who not long ago were urged to get a mammogram every year starting at age 40.

The guidelines are based on findings from six independent research teams, which crafted "simulation models to analyze 10 different digital breast cancer screening strategies for the average-risk US female population," said a description of the work in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. The new guidance accounts for the latest scientific data on the potential harms—such as over-diagnosis, false-positives and benign biopsies—of screening using digital mammography. It also takes into account knowledge about molecular subtypes of cancer as well as how breast density plays into risk.

"Mammography screening every two years for average-risk women ages 50 to 74 offers a favorable balance of benefits to harm," said the guidelines. However, lead investigator Jeanne Mandelblatt of Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center cautioned that "it's important to remember that none of us is the 'average' woman" and that family history and other risk factors must be considered. "The bottom line is that mammography saves lives," she added. "When to start screening and how often to undergo mammography is a personal decision.

No model can provide those answers."

Experts' concerns

Some outside experts raised concern about how younger women would interpret the guidelines, and the potential for fewer to seek screening. "While the new guidelines still state women in their 40s can go forward with mammograms, they suggest that mammograms are not required," said Stephanie Bernik, chief of surgical oncology at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York. "Unfortunately many women will take this as a signal that mammograms are not beneficial." According to Nina Vincoff, chief of breast imaging at Northwell Health, mammography "is not perfect," but she said women in their 40s should not discount the importance of screening. "They also concluded that mammography starting at age 40 saves more lives than mammography starting at age 50," said Vincoff, who like Bernik was not involved in the research.

"Women need to understand that if they start having mammograms later, they risk having a cancer that is detected at a more advanced stage, which may require more extensive treatment or which may no longer be curable." The latest guidelines come on the heels of the American Cancer Society's recommendations issued in October 2015, which urged women to wait until the age of 45 before getting an annual mammogram to screen for breast cancer. The American Cancer Society previously recommended women be screened each year from age 40, but said

it changed its advice because evidence failed to show enough lives were being saved.

Screening statistics

For the task force guidelines, research was led by the Cancer Intervention and Surveillance Modeling Network (CISNET), and funded by the National Cancer Institute. Researchers considered screening strategies starting at age 40, 45 or 50, with one- or two-year intervals between screening exams. The recommendations, based on a review of new research, are the same as those issued by the group in 2009. They say screening earlier or more often "prevented a small number of additional deaths, but also caused a larger number of false positive mammograms and benign biopsies, and led to more over-diagnosis and over-treatment."

Overall, the likelihood of a woman getting breast cancer in her life from age 40 to 100 is 12.9 percent, the report said. Among women 50-74, screening every two years "achieves a median 25.8 percent breast cancer mortality reduction—averting seven breast cancer deaths per 1,000 women screened," the report said. The strategy also "leads to 953 false positives and 19 over-diagnosed cases." Over-diagnosed cancer implies the discovery of a small tumor that might not be life-threatening. When women in their 40s are added to the equation, screening every two years "averts one more death per 1,000 from breast cancer and generates 576 more false positive tests." — AFP

EL NINO AND DROUGHT TAKING A TOLL ON ZIMBABWE'S CATTLE

TSHOLOTSHO, Zimbabwe: Justin Dlomo watches his small herd of emaciated cattle scrounge for bits of dry grass with a growing sense of dread. "I don't even know what to do anymore," he says. Worsening drought in Zimbabwe has dried up water holes, crops and pasture, leaving farmers like 56-year-old Dlomo, who lives about 120 kilometres north of Bulawayo, unable to feed their animals - and unable to sell them for much either.

"We are all selling off our livestock. Better that than watch the cattle die," Dlomo told Thomson Reuters Foundation. But because so many desperate farmers now have animals on the market, a cow that used to sell for \$500 now fetches just \$150 - or in some places as little as \$50 - from buyers in the cities. As climate change strengthens, drought is becoming more frequent and severe in southern Africa, and that - combined with this year's El Nino phenomenon - is taking a heavy toll on rural lives and economies, experts say.

"Water sources have dried up and we are drinking from the same reservoirs with our cattle," Dlomo said. Zimbabwe is one of many countries feeling the strain of El Nino, which has dried up rainfall across southern Africa over the last year, killing crops, disrupting hydropower production and forcing local water authorities to enforce stringent water rationing in some areas. When facing drought in the past, Dlomo would have moved his cattle to another neighboring region with more rainfall. But this time the drought is widespread, he said. "We cannot move our cattle anymore. There is no grass everywhere," Dlomo said.

Thousands dying

Livestock experts say parched pastures are causing the deaths of thousands of cattle across the country. Last year, the agriculture ministry's livestock department estimated that the national cattle herd stood at 5.3 million animals, down from over 6 million in 2014. In one district in Masvingo province last year, more than a thousand cattle died because of drought, according to the Ministry of Agriculture.

Last week, the meteorological services department announced that the country should not expect any rain in the coming month, putting a further strain on livestock farmers. According to the agriculture min-

istry, Zimbabwe is experiencing its worst drought since one in 1991-1992 that killed more than one million cattle. However, while the World Food Program said last month that millions of Zimbabweans will require food assistance this year, Dlomo said there is no assistance in sight for his dying livestock. "We have not seen anyone here coming to offer solutions to our plight. It's like a punishment from God," Dlomo said.

Simangaliphi Ngwabi, the agriculture ministry's chief livestock specialist in Matebeleland South province, said there was little water or pasture for cattle in the region, as dry conditions continue across the country. The livestock department estimates that more than 350,000 cattle may face death due to drought in Matebeleland South. Last month, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization said it would provide subsidized livestock feed to small-scale farmers in four districts of hard-hit Matebeleland South province as hundreds of cattle succumbed to El Nino-worsened drought.

Planning ahead?

Last year, amid another season of poor rainfall in the country's southwest, Paddy Zhanda, the deputy agriculture minister in charge of livestock told farmers to sell their livestock to avoid losses. By cutting herds, farmers would earn something from their cattle instead of losing them to drought, he said. However, Naboth Chuma, a livestock researcher at Chinhoyi University of Technology, said farmers facing more frequent drought need to make plans to prepare for it - including storing cattle feed - before animals start dying.

"When a drought occurs it is never a sudden thing," Chuma said. "What is required is for government and aid agencies to work with these usually resource-challenged farmers to help their stock enough feed for their animals. The unfortunate part is that there are competing needs for both humans and livestock and it is cattle that suffer," he said. Deputy minister Zhanda has told farmers that they must find solutions to the livestock crisis and not wait for the cash-strapped government to intervene. "We are still praying for rain. It is the only thing that will save us," Dlomo said. — Reuters

DOZENS OF WHALES DIE AFTER STRANDING IN INDIA'S SOUTH

CHENNAI: Dozens of whales have died after stranding themselves on a southern Indian beach, a forestry

official said yesterday, with local fishermen struggling to save others. The pod of more than 50 small

whales started beaching themselves on Monday afternoon along a 15-kilometre (9-mile) stretch of coast

near Tiruchendur on India's southernmost tip. "It's very strange and we are examining the whales. We found some of the whales are still alive and struggling for their lives," said local forest officer SA Raju. Raju said he and his team were seeking help from the district administration to try to rescue those still breathing.

Fishermen and others were attempting to push those whales back into the water, according to the Press Trust of India and other local media, which put the number of stranded animals at more than 100. The whales were up to 15 feet (4.5 metres) long and Raju said they were trying to determine the type. Local media quoted other officials as saying they were fin whales and calves. Fishermen raised the alarm after the whales starting coming ashore. "On Monday evening there were more than a dozen whales beached at many places on the shore," said S Thiraviyam, a resident of the town of Manapad. The southern tip of India is close to major shipping trade routes. — AFP



TAMIL NADU: People look at one among the dozens of whales that have washed ashore on the Bay of Bengal coast's Manapad beach in Tuticorin district, Tamil Nadu state yesterday. — AP



OKINAWA: A great white shark swims in a large fish tank of the Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium at Motobu in Japan's southern island of Okinawa. — AFP

GREAT WHITE SHARK DIES AFTER 3 DAYS IN JAPANESE AQUARIUM

TOKYO: A great white shark has died after barely three days in a rare case of captivity in a Japanese aquarium. The 3.5 meter shark, which was accidentally caught in a net in southwestern Japan yesterday, died early Friday, according to Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium. The cause of death was under investigation. Keeping a great white shark in captivity is extremely difficult as it needs to keep swimming constantly to get oxygen and maintain its body temperature. An official for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, or PETA, Asia, criticized keeping the shark in captivity as "cruel and wrong." "The cause of death is clear: captivity. The shark never had to die like this," said Jason Baker, PETA's vice

president of international campaigns. Aquarium researcher Keiichi Sato said the aquarium abides by Japanese and international laws and believes its efforts contribute to education and science. "Many visitors had asked us to exhibit the great white shark," he said in a telephone interview from Okinawa. The aquarium had announced the rare successful exhibition of the species earlier this week. The captured shark, a male, was relatively small, and had appeared to be doing well, swimming with several other sharks, but suddenly weakened and sank to the bottom of the tank. Efforts to give it oxygen in a separate special tank failed. It had refused to eat any food since being caught. — AP

NURSES REUNITE, WITH ROLES SWITCHED, DECADES LATER

MILWAUKEE: Lynn Bartos always had a good feeling about the soft-spoken nurse who would greet her warmly at the Milwaukee-area infusion clinic where she got treatments for rheumatoid arthritis pain. It turned out the two had a far deeper connection. "I think somewhere inside of me there was something saying, 'There's something familiar about that young woman,'" said Bartos, a semi-retired nurse herself. That nurse, Nicole Krahn, was assigned to administer the IV this summer as Bartos settled in for one of the three-hour appointments at Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin that come every five weeks.

Krahn thought Bartos' name sounded familiar but couldn't place it. In conversation, she discovered Bartos was working part-time at the hospital's neurology clinic. "I asked, 'Oh, is that where you spent your career?'" She said, "No... I spent my early career at the GI clinic at Children's," Krahn said. Krahn, whose small intestines became twisted shortly after birth and were mostly removed, had to be fed intravenously for the first few years of her life. She visited the clinic regularly as a child to be



WISCONSIN: Nurse Nicole Krahn (left) gets rheumatoid arthritis medication ready for semi-retired nurse Lynn Bartos at Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin in Wauwatosa, Wis. The two have switched roles from more than 25 years ago, when Bartos cared for Krahn as a toddler. — AP

weighed and checked over. The girl who called herself "NeeNee" liked going to Children's Hospital of Wisconsin four or five

times a week because she got to see a nurse she called "Sweet Lynney." Rose Frye, Krahn's mother, remembers how her daughter would tell the nurse about her boo boos. "She got attached to certain people," she said. The pair was even featured in the hospital's nursing magazine in a 1988 story about long-term care. This summer, Bartos took a second look at Krahn's name tag - and the realization hit. "I said, 'You're NeeNee!' And she said, 'Yes, I am,' and we suddenly realized we had this connection that went way back to her being a toddler," said Bartos, now 66. "And I'm like, 'That toddler is now taking care of me.' And I think I spent the rest of the day crying during the infusion appointment." They hadn't seen each other in 25 years, since Bartos had changed jobs. Krahn, now 30, said she remembered Bartos and always wanted to be a nurse. She says Bartos' kindness influenced how she relates to patients. "I don't know if it's a small world, or it was meant for me to take care of her after all these years," Krahn said. Bartos said she often wondered about "NeeNee." "It was absolute gift to me to reconnect with Nicole," she said. "That's how I look at it, that I was given a gift to know that 44 years of nursing, I did make a difference." — AP



In this June 1988 photo, Lynn Bartos, pediatric nurse for Children's Hospital of Wisconsin Gastroenterology Clinic, holds Nicole Frye (left) at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin in Wauwatosa, Wis. The nurse and family were featured on the cover of the hospital's nursing magazine in 1988 for a story about long term care. — AP



LIMA: A falconer trains a black-headed vulture (Coragyps atratus) in Lima. — AFP

GPS VULTURES SWOOP DOWN ON ILLEGAL DUMPS IN PERU

AUTHORITIES RECAST DIRTY SCAVENGERS AS SUPERHEROES

LIMA: The lowly vulture is a dirty scavenger to many, but Peruvian environmental authorities have recast the birds as superheroes and outfitted them with high-tech gear in a bid to crack down on illegal garbage dumps. Wearing GPS trackers and mini video cameras, 10 vultures with mythological names have been dispatched to lead authorities to the illegal dumps whose runoff pollutes the rivers and Pacific coastline of the Peruvian capital Lima. In a public service announcement that looks like a Hollywood

action movie preview, a "vulture" describes the campaign as a life-and-death battle between the teeming city's human population and the ominous menace of disease-carrying trash.

"Fourteen thousand years have passed since this struggle began," he says in a gravelly voice. "On one hand, pestilence and disease are hidden among the filth. On the other hand, humanity is placidly ignoring the danger that threatens." Lima is known for the flocks of vultures that feed at its

four landfills and the countless illegal dumps where an estimated 20 percent of its trash ends up. They are often seen as pests by the city's nearly 10 million inhabitants, who according to officials throw away 2.1 million tons of garbage a year.

But Captain Phoenix, Captain Aella and the other vultures drafted into the environment ministry's program are now the protagonists in a creative social media campaign, which aims to raise awareness about the problem and get Lima residents to report illegal

dumps and throw away less trash. "Vultures are our allies in the reduction of organic waste," program coordinator Javier Hernandez said. "In their search for food, what they're really doing is identifying places where there is organic matter and garbage. We're using that... to get the GPS coordinates and monitor these sites." The 10 vultures, which have all been certified disease-free, are specially trained to fly back to their keepers after each outing. Video footage they take along the way will be posted online. — AFP

ILLNESS-BEARING MOSQUITOS TRIGGER ALERT IN EL SALVADOR

SAN SALVADOR: El Salvador on Monday issued a national alert against a mosquito that transmits tropical diseases, in an effort to contain human infection. The country's civil protection agency called for preventive measures against bites from the yellow fever mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*, across most of the country and for 47 towns and villages to be specifically checked. The measure aims to curb the transmission of three viruses carried by the mosquito: dengue, chikungunya and Zika. While usually not fatal, the dis-

eases are characterized by fever, joint pain, headaches and rashes. In babies, Zika infections can cause underdeveloped brains. El Salvador urged pregnant women to take special precautions against Zika infection, especially during their first three months, and to quickly seek prenatal tests in case of concern. The Pan American Health Organization last week issued a statement on the "new threat" posed by the spread of the Zika virus through several Latin American countries, notably in Brazil. — AFP

WILD ELEPHANT KILLS THAI WOMAN, INJURES BABY

BANGKOK: A wild elephant trampled a rubber tapper to death and left her two-year-old son badly injured, Thai police said yesterday, the second deadly attack in the area in recent months. The 34-year-old woman was found early Monday morning on a road near a rubber plantation in the province last October.

Conservationists estimate Thailand is home to around 2,500 wild elephants. But the population has been decimated over the past century in the face of rapid development, habitat destruction and the lust for ivory used to make medicine and ornaments. Both wild and domesticated elephants, of which there roughly 4,000, have been known attack passersby and overturn cars, especially during mating season. Last August an elephant in northern Thailand killed his Thai keeper, or "mahout", before taking off into the jungle with three Chinese tourists still on his back. The tourists survived in the incident. — AFP

province bordering Cambodia, said it was unclear whether the elephant was the same animal that killed two Thai men on a rubber plantation in the province last October.

The officer said the elephant is believed to have retreated back into a nearby national park after the incident. Rubber tappers work early in the morning often on land that edges onto forest, home to elephants and other wild animals. A park official at Khao Soi Dao, one of several protected areas in the

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
روفد علي المخيزيم

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

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



AAW WELCOMES FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO KUWAIT

Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Commercial Company (AAW) announced that Chairman and Managing Director of AAW, Faisal Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa met with French Ambassador to Kuwait Christian Nakhle, at AAW where the two discussed trade and investment opportunities and the development of Kuwait's private healthcare sector.

During his visit, Christian Nakhle highlighted the importance of growth in the health sector outside of France, expressing his delight with AAW's joint venture with the French world-class cancer treatment center, Gustave Roussy, in Kuwait.

Based in France, Gustave Roussy is one of the world's leading cancer-research institutes and the largest health center dedicated to oncology in Europe. Affiliated with

the Unicancer Federation, the newly established Gustave Roussy will create a solid base for international experience and experts, offering world-class career opportunities for doctors and support staff in Kuwait.

AAW Chairman and CEO, Faisal Ali Al-Mutawa said: "For decades, France and Kuwait's private sector have been working together on the establishment and success of various business initiatives in both countries. I thank Nakhle for his visit, his continued interest in the development of our two economies."

AAW runs one of Kuwait's most successful wholesale and retail pharmaceutical retail and wholesale operations, and is one of the primary suppliers to the Ministry of Health and private hospitals in the country.



INDIA EDUCATION EXHIBITION 2016 TO SHOWCASE PREMIER INDIAN UNIVERSITIES

The ninth iteration of the annual India Education Exhibition, which will be held on Friday 15 and Saturday 16 January at the Ramada Hotel Kuwait in Al-Riggaa area, will prove to be an informative event for students seeking professional and vocational courses in reputed universities and institutes of higher learning in India.

The two-day event, which will be open from 11:00 am to 8:00 pm on both days, will feature nearly 20 leading universities with over 75 colleges and institutes under them offering more than 250 educational courses and programs. These include among others graduate and post-graduate degrees in various disciplines such as medicine, engineering, business management, marketing and communications, arts and science, hospitality and hotel management and Allied Health Sciences.

During the exhibition, students and their parents can avail of personalized interactions with college administrators, professors and specialized career counselors. This one-on-one discussions and group seminars will allow visitors to know about the wide variety and scope of courses on offer and to determine the programs best suited to their interests and abilities.

Added benefit

Many institutes of higher learning in India are not only on par with their Western counterparts but also have the added benefit of competitive fee structure that has been attracting foreign students to the country. Moreover, education is a sector that is very strong in India and university standards have to be steadily maintained in order to retain their certification from government.

Each year, top ranked universities usually have a huge surplus of candidates applying for the few limited seats, leading to disappointment for many. For students who are eager to continue their higher education in India, the upcoming India Education Exhibition is an ideal opportunity to explore admission possibilities with top universities under one roof. Many of the institutions at the exhibition will be offering spot registrations to eligible candidates, in addition to providing admission guidance and career counseling.

Among the universities at the exhibition will be Manipal University, which is one of the top universities in India and is co-sponsor of the event. Established in 1993, Manipal University was founded on the principle of provid-

ing the best education to students. In this regard, the University has taken necessary steps to structure reservoirs of intellectual wealth and academic excellence through building state-of-the-art facilities and acquiring distinguished professional faculty in various departments.

277 courses

Today, Manipal University boasts of some of the country's best institutes and schools that offer more than 277 courses in 20 diverse streams. The university inculcates demanding standards in its curriculum to challenge students and through its wholesome and inspirational education helps craft talented professional in various fields. With an excellent academic reputation, qualified and respected faculty, excellent academic and clinical facilities, the university fosters a world-class learning environment. In addition, the university is a pioneer of the 'Inspired Learning' approach to higher education, where the academic delivery model goes beyond classroom education to provide a holistic learning experience.

Another key participant at the India Education Exhibition 2016 is VIT University, a highly sought after

center for providing quality higher education on par with international standards. An international student counselor and academic head from the university will be on hand at the exhibition to offer counseling sessions to students. The institution offers various programs, including 19 in undergraduate, 34 in post-graduate, 2 in integrated studies and 4 in research.

Receiving students from 50 countries and from every state in India, the student body comprises of over 24,000 students, with nearly a third of them women.

Some of the other leading educational institutions participating in the exhibition include Anna University, Thapar University, SDM Group, Hindustan University, Datta Meghe Medical Science University, D.Y. Patil University, K.J. Somaiya Group of Institutions, Vishwakarma Institute of Technology, M.V.J. Institutions, NITTE University and Jain International School. All the participating institutes are recognized by the AICTE, UGC and respective government bodies in India. These universities are just representative of the many academic powerhouses that will be showcasing their courses during the India Education Exhibition 2016.



Guyana's Minister of Business meets with UAE's Minister of State.

UAE MINISTER LAUDS 'EXCEPTIONAL' MEETING WITH GUYANA PRESIDENT

Minister of State of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Reem Al-Hashimy, this morning paid a courtesy call on President of Guyana David Granger, at the Ministry of the Presidency, where discussions ensued on the vast opportunities within the renewable energy sector and strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries.

described the meeting as "exceptional", saying that though it is the first meeting between the two countries, her country was looking forward to forging a strong relationship with Guyana.

"We discussed elements of how we can strengthen our bilateral relationship between the United Arab Emirates and Guyana. There are some opportunities that exist that we could work together on. This is our first visit here and... we are very excited to be able to work together. I think it can be incredibly positive and we are both new to each other. We are now getting to know the opportunities that exist," Minister Hashimy said.

Of particular note, the Minister said that a discussion on renewable energies development has highlighted its potential to become a key area of collaboration between the two countries; even as she praised the Guyanese hospitality.

"There are several opportunities that exist primarily in the renewable energy sector which we found very interesting, development in general but on also on economic and trade fronts. I think your people are incredibly friendly, very warm and very welcoming. We have been well received, everybody has been very hospitable to us and we are very thankful and we look forward to working together," she said.



Guyana's President and UAE's Minister of State.

Hashimy was accompanied by Rouda Al-Otaiba, Ahmed Almulla, Majid Al-Suwaidi, Meera Al-Azizi and Muna Al-Maeni; representatives from the UAE's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Carl Greenidge also attended the meeting. In an invited comment, Hashimy



UAE Minister meeting with Guyana's Public Infrastructure Ministers.



Guyana's President and UAE's Minister of State.

INTERIOR MINISTRY'S ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING GRANT OF PARTIAL AMNESTY TO RESIDENCY VIOLATORS IN KUWAIT INDIAN EMBASSY STATEMENT

On 10 January 2016, the Ministry of Interior, Kuwait has announced special dispensation (partial amnesty) for all illegal residents in Kuwait. As per the announcement, residency violators will be allowed to pay their fines and either legalize their status or leave the country without being black-listed. But this would apply to those who voluntarily participate in the above scheme and that the Residency Affairs Departments across the country are ready to receive violators in order to rectify their legal status, for payment of fines for leaving the country.

2. There are approximately 28,000 Indians illegally staying in Kuwait due to residency/visa

violations. All Indian illegal residents are urged to avail the above dispensation to either legalize their status or leave the country after payment of fines without being black-listed. They should contact the concerned Residency Affairs Department of Kuwait with available documents to rectify their status or for payment of fines for leaving the country to avail the above opportunity.

3. The Indian Embassy is ready to provide all necessary assistance to all those seeking the above special dispensation by issuing Emergency Certificates (travel document) expeditiously if required by the local authori-

ties who are processing their documents under above scheme. The requirement for issue of Emergency certificate is as under: (a) Prescribed format for issue of EC (copy enclosed)

(b) Three recent passport size photograph; (c) A copy of the passport (relevant pages) (c) Payment of KD 5,000 consular fee for EC
4. For any query/clarification in the matter, please contact A K Srivastava, Second Secretary (PIC/CW) Tel. No. 22531716 and Mobile No. 97229914 or B K Sinha, Assistant (CW) at Mobile No. 97164067 and Mr. Mohammad Ashfaq Durrani, Local Staff member, Mobile: 66680031.



Chef Osama El Sayed



Chef Osama during a Q&A session.



Chef Osama with a winner.



(From right) Andrew UTC CEO, Anis Abdul Gani Braun sales and brand manager, Chef Osama El Sayed, Taher Al Samana, UTC Pand G Group manager, Jiby Mathew Area, sales manager, Braun/DeLonghi.



The crowd at Carrefour Avenues.

BRAUN/DELONGHI HOSTS 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 world wide 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 hyper market 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.

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.



Andrew Denby CEO, UTC



AL-MULLA EXCHANGE KINDLES NOSTALGIA WITH 'FARIHA PERVEZ - LIVE IN CONCERT'

Al-Mulla Exchange, Kuwait's leading Exchange Company, continued to enthrall its customers with its latest musical show by Pakistani singing sensation, Fariha Pervez, on January 9, 2016, at the American International School.

The event titled 'Fariha Pervez - Live in Concert' saw a huge turnout of audience as expected, who were treated to a melodious fare, weaving in and out of various musical genres that Pervez is so adept at.

Fariha Pervez easily ranks among the topmost female singers in Pakistan, who shot to limelight by co-hosting a popular children's music program. Since then, her career graph has been skyrocketing with

accolades and awards being showered on her. She has created a niche for herself with her unique voice and is considered one of the most versatile singers in the country who can effortlessly belt out a range of musical genres including folk, classical, semi-classical and modern pop.

About the musical show, Al-Mulla Exchange's General Manager, Rakesh Joshi, said the exchange company is looking forward to continuously delight its customers and people at large with events that transcend time and space and rekindle fond memories of home. "We are trying to connect with our customers at deeper levels by fulfilling not just their money-exchange

needs, but also their aspirations and interests."

This is the second musical show hosted by Al-Mulla Exchange since the beginning of New Year. The last one was 'Rafi Ki Ruhaniyat' when the golden hits of India's erstwhile king of Bollywood music, Mohammed Rafi, were performed to a nostalgic audience on the 1st and 2nd of January, 2016.

On Jan 1, 2016, Al-Mulla Exchange, also launched the Transfer and Win Gold Festival, which gives customers a chance to win 1 gm gold daily for 3 months and 1 kg gold grand prize at the end of the promotion.



CLASSIFIEDS



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

| Time | Programme | Time | Programme | Time | Programme |
|----------|---|----------|--|----------|---------------------------------|
| 12:00 PM | SHARQIA-1 DADDY'S HOME | 12:30 AM | THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | 10:30 PM | PAPARAZZI -Arabic |
| 2:00 PM | APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film | | | 12:45 AM | PAPARAZZI -Arabic |
| 4:00 PM | DADDY'S HOME | 11:45 AM | FANAR-3 APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film | | PAPARAZZI -Arabic |
| 6:00 PM | DILWALE - Hindi | 1:45 PM | APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film | 11:30 AM | FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS |
| 9:00 PM | DILWALE - Hindi | 3:30 PM | PAPARAZZI -Arabic | 2:30 PM | |
| 12:05 AM | DADDY'S HOME | 4:45 PM | APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film | 5:45 PM | |
| | | 7:30 PM | PAPARAZZI -Arabic | 9:00 PM | |
| | | 9:45 PM | PAPARAZZI -Arabic | 12:15 AM | |
| | | 12:05 AM | PAPARAZZI -Arabic | | |
| 12:15 PM | SHARQIA-2 THE REVENANT | 12:15 PM | FANAR-4 THE REVENANT | 11:45 AM | AVENUES-4 DADDY'S HOME |
| 1:30 PM | APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film | 12:15 PM | APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film | 2:00 PM | DILWALE - Hindi |
| 3:15 PM | THE REVENANT | 3:15 PM | THE REVENANT | 5:15 PM | DILWALE - Hindi |
| 6:15 PM | THE REVENANT | 6:15 PM | THE REVENANT | | NO THU-SUN |
| 9:15 PM | THE REVENANT | 9:15 PM | THE REVENANT | 5:30 PM | *STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS* |
| 12:15 AM | THE REVENANT | 12:15 AM | THE REVENANT | 8:30 PM | Special Show "THE BIG SHORT" |
| | | | | 11:45 PM | DILWALE - Hindi |
| 11:30 AM | SHARQIA-3 THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | 12:00 PM | FANAR-5 DILWALE - Hindi | | DADDY'S HOME |
| 1:15 PM | THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | 3:00 PM | DILWALE - Hindi | 12:15 PM | THE REVENANT |
| 3:00 PM | THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | 6:00 PM | WAZIR - Hindi | 3:30 PM | THE REVENANT |
| 4:45 PM | THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | 8:30 PM | DILWALE - Hindi | 6:45 PM | DADDY'S HOME |
| 6:30 PM | PAPARAZZI -Arabic | 11:30 PM | DILWALE - Hindi | 9:00 PM | THE REVENANT |
| 8:45 PM | PAPARAZZI -Arabic | | | 12:15 AM | THE REVENANT |
| 11:00 PM | THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | 11:45 AM | MARINA-1 THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | | |
| 12:45 AM | THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | 1:30 PM | THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | 11:30 AM | 360°-1 THE REVENANT |
| | | 3:15 PM | THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | 2:30 PM | THE REVENANT |
| | | 5:00 PM | THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | 5:45 PM | THE REVENANT |
| | | 6:45 PM | PAPARAZZI -Arabic | 9:00 PM | THE REVENANT |
| | | 9:00 PM | PAPARAZZI -Arabic | 12:15 AM | THE REVENANT |
| | | 11:15 PM | THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | | |
| | | 1:00 AM | THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | 1:15 PM | 360°-2 THE REVENANT |
| | | | | 4:30 PM | THE REVENANT |
| | | 11:45 AM | MARINA-2 DADDY'S HOME | 7:45 PM | THE REVENANT |
| | | 1:45 PM | DADDY'S HOME | 11:00 PM | THE REVENANT |
| | | 3:45 PM | POINT BREAK | | |
| | | 6:15 PM | DADDY'S HOME | 12:30 PM | 360°-3 EXTRACTION |
| | | 8:15 PM | EXTRACTION | 2:45 PM | SNOWTIME! |
| | | 10:15 PM | THE REVENANT | 5:00 PM | EXTRACTION |
| | | 1:15 AM | EXTRACTION | 7:15 PM | EXTRACTION |
| | | | | 9:30 PM | EXTRACTION |
| | | | | 11:45 PM | EXTRACTION |
| 11:30 AM | MUHALAB-1 DADDY'S HOME | 12:30 PM | MARINA-3 THE REVENANT | | |
| 1:30 PM | DADDY'S HOME | 1:30 PM | THE REVENANT | 11:30 AM | AL-KOUT.1 THE REVENANT |
| 3:30 PM | EXTRACTION | 3:30 PM | THE GOOD DINOSAUR | 2:30 PM | THE REVENANT |
| 5:30 PM | DADDY'S HOME | 5:45 PM | THE GOOD DINOSAUR | 5:30 PM | THE REVENANT |
| 7:30 PM | DILWALE - Hindi | 8:45 PM | THE REVENANT | 8:30 PM | THE REVENANT |
| 10:30 PM | DADDY'S HOME | 11:45 PM | THE REVENANT | 11:30 PM | THE REVENANT |
| 12:30 AM | EXTRACTION | | | | |
| | | 12:30 PM | AVENUES-1 GET SQUIRRELY | 12:30 PM | AL-KOUT.2 DADDY'S HOME |
| | | 2:45 PM | GET SQUIRRELY | 2:45 PM | EXTRACTION |
| | | 5:00 PM | GET SQUIRRELY | 5:00 PM | DADDY'S HOME |
| | | 7:15 PM | APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film | 7:00 PM | HO MANN JAHAN - Pakistani |
| | | 9:15 PM | APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film | 9:00 PM | CHARLIE- Malayalam |
| | | 11:15 PM | APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film | 11:00 PM | HO MANN JAHAN - Pakistani |
| | | 1:15 AM | APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film | 1:00 AM | EXTRACTION |
| | | | | 1:00 AM | EXTRACTION |
| 12:30 PM | FANAR-2 THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | 1:00 PM | AVENUES-2 EXTRACTION | 12:45 PM | AL-KOUT.3 FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS |
| 2:30 PM | THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | 3:15 PM | EXTRACTION | 3:00 PM | FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS |
| 4:30 PM | THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | 5:30 PM | EXTRACTION | | |
| 6:30 PM | EXTRACTION | 7:45 PM | CHARLIE- Malayalam | | |
| 8:30 PM | THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD | | | | |
| 10:30 PM | EXTRACTION | | | | |

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Fajr: 05:20
 Shorook: 06:44
 Duhr: 11:57
 Asr: 14:51
 Maghrib: 17:10
 Isha: 18:31



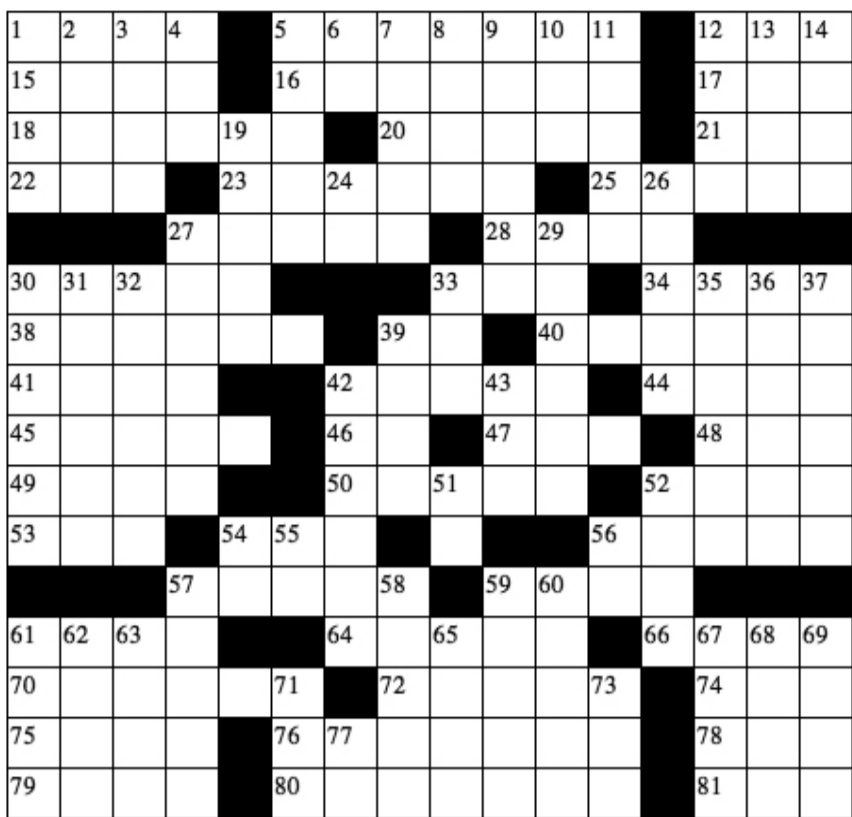
Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

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

| Arrival Flights on Wednesday 13/1/2016 | | | | Departure Flights on Wednesday 13/1/2016 | | | |
|--|------|-------------------|-------|--|------|-----------------|-------|
| Airlines | Fit | Route | Time | Airlines | Fit | Route | Time |
| MSC | 415 | Sohag | 00:05 | IRM | 1189 | Mashhad | 13:40 |
| SYR | 343 | Damascus/KAC | 00:10 | JZR | 176 | Dubai | 13:45 |
| JZR | 267 | Beirut | 00:30 | IRC | 6522 | Lamerd | 13:55 |
| JZR | 539 | Cairo | 00:40 | MSR | 611 | Cairo | 14:00 |
| FDB | 069 | Dubai | 00:55 | UAE | 872 | Dubai | 14:15 |
| THY | 772 | Istanbul | 01:05 | CLX | 792 | Hanoi | 14:30 |
| DLH | 635 | Doha | 01:35 | IZG | 4168 | Mashhad | 14:30 |
| ETH | 620 | Addis Ababa | 01:45 | KNE | 481 | Taif | 14:50 |
| CLX | 784 | Luxembourg | 01:45 | MSR | 576 | Sharm el-Sheikh | 14:55 |
| PGT | 858 | Istanbul | 02:00 | IRC | 527 | Mashhad | 14:55 |
| UAE | 853 | Dubai | 02:30 | KAC | 673 | Dubai | 15:00 |
| GFA | 211 | Bahrain | 02:30 | FDB | 058 | Dubai | 15:10 |
| KKK | 6507 | Istanbul | 02:50 | QTR | 1079 | Doha | 15:10 |
| OMA | 643 | Muscat | 02:55 | KAC | 791 | Madinah | 15:10 |
| FDB | 067 | Dubai | 03:05 | IRM | 1187 | Tehran | 15:30 |
| RJA | 644 | Amman | 03:05 | SV | 503 | Madinah/Jeddah | 15:45 |
| MSR | 612 | Cairo | 03:10 | GFA | 222 | Bahrain | 15:45 |
| QTR | 1076 | Doha | 03:15 | MRJ | 4812 | Tehran | 15:45 |
| CEB | 7694 | Manila | 03:15 | KAC | 617 | Doha | 15:45 |
| ETD | 305 | Abu Dhabi | 03:25 | KAC | 773 | Riyadh | 15:50 |
| AGY | 680 | Alexandria | 04:30 | KNE | 463 | Madinah | 16:00 |
| DHX | 170 | Bahrain | 05:40 | KNE | 473 | Jeddah | 16:05 |
| THY | 770 | Istanbul | 05:55 | JZR | 554 | Alexandria | 16:10 |
| FDB | 5061 | Dubai | 06:30 | ABY | 128 | Sharjah | 16:25 |
| BAW | 157 | London | 06:40 | OMA | 646 | Muscat | 16:30 |
| KAC | 412 | Manila/Bangkok | 07:20 | KAC | 563 | Amman | 16:45 |
| QTR | 1086 | Doha | 07:40 | JZR | 266 | Beirut | 17:05 |
| FDB | 053 | Dubai | 07:45 | ETD | 304 | Abu Dhabi | 17:30 |
| KAC | 302 | Mumbai | 07:50 | JZR | 238 | Amman | 17:30 |
| OMA | 641 | Muscat | 07:55 | FDB | 052 | Dubai | 17:35 |
| KAC | 206 | Islamabad | 08:25 | QTR | 1073 | Doha | 17:40 |
| KAC | 352 | Kochi | 08:30 | UAE | 858 | Dubai | 17:45 |
| KAC | 346 | Ahmedabad | 08:30 | JZR | 538 | Cairo | 17:45 |
| KAC | 344 | Chennai | 08:30 | RJA | 641 | Amman | 17:55 |
| UAE | 855 | Dubai | 08:40 | SYR | 342 | Damascus | 18:00 |
| KAC | 362 | Colombo | 08:50 | SV | 511 | Riyadh | 18:15 |
| KAC | 332 | Trivandrum | 08:50 | IRC | 6512 | ABD | 18:20 |
| ABY | 125 | Sharjah | 09:00 | GFA | 216 | Bahrain | 18:20 |
| ETD | 301 | Abu Dhabi | 09:20 | JZR | 184 | Dubai | 18:40 |
| QTR | 1070 | Doha | 09:25 | MSR | 615 | Cairo | 18:50 |
| FDB | 055 | Dubai | 09:40 | JZR | 124 | Bahrain | 19:10 |
| GFA | 213 | Bahrain | 09:40 | FDB | 064 | Dubai | 19:20 |
| IRA | 665 | Shiraz | 10:40 | ABY | 124 | Sharjah | 19:25 |
| IAW | 157 | Al Najaf | 10:50 | UAE | 876 | Dubai | 19:30 |
| UAE | 873 | Dubai | 11:05 | GFA | 218 | Bahrain | 20:15 |
| AXB | 889 | Mangalore/Bahrain | 11:15 | KAC | 361 | Colombo | 20:45 |
| JZR | 165 | Dubai | 11:30 | QTR | 1081 | Doha | 20:50 |
| AGY | 684 | Sohag | 11:35 | KAC | 351 | Kochi | 20:50 |
| MEA | 404 | Beirut | 11:55 | KAC | 343 | Chennai | 21:00 |
| KAC | 204 | Lahore | 12:20 | KNE | 461 | Riyadh | 21:10 |
| SAW | 701 | Damascus | 12:20 | KAC | 331 | Trivandrum | 21:10 |
| FDB | 075 | Dubai | 12:25 | OMA | 648 | Muscat | 21:20 |
| IRM | 1188 | Mashhad | 12:25 | FDB | 062 | Dubai | 21:20 |
| MSC | 401 | Alexandria | 12:30 | MSR | 619 | Alexandria | 21:45 |
| JZR | 561 | Sohag | 12:45 | DLH | 634 | Doha | 21:45 |
| UAE | 871 | Dubai | 12:50 | DHX | 171 | Bahrain | 21:50 |
| IRC | 6511 | ABD | 13:00 | FDB | 5054 | Dubai | 21:50 |
| MSR | 610 | Cairo | 13:00 | JAI | 571 | Mumbai | 21:55 |
| CLX | 792 | Luxembourg | 13:15 | JZR | 502 | Luxor | 22:00 |
| IZG | 4167 | Mashhad | 13:30 | ETD | 308 | Abu Dhabi | 22:10 |
| KAC | 382 | Delhi | 13:50 | KAC | 301 | Mumbai | 22:10 |
| KNE | 460 | Riyadh | 13:50 | MEA | 403 | Beirut | 22:20 |
| IRC | 526 | Mashhad | 13:55 | GFA | 220 | Bahrain | 22:25 |
| MSR | 575 | Sharm el-Sheikh | 13:55 | ETD | 920 | Dubai | 22:35 |
| QTR | 1078 | Doha | 14:10 | UAE | 860 | Dubai | 22:55 |
| FDB | 057 | Dubai | 14:10 | KAC | 345 | Ahmedabad | 23:00 |
| IRM | 1186 | Tehran | 14:15 | QTR | 1083 | Doha | 23:05 |
| SV | 500 | Jeddah | 14:30 | KAC | 205 | Islamabad | 23:10 |
| KAC | 284 | Dhaka | 14:45 | ETD | 310 | Abu Dhabi | 23:15 |
| | | | | FDB | 060 | Dubai | 23:35 |

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

CROSSWORD 1136



ACROSS

1. Lacking sufficient water or rainfall.
5. A hard green Swiss cheese made with skim-milk curd and flavored with clover.
12. The part of the nervous system of vertebrates that controls involuntary actions of the smooth muscles and heart and glands.
15. A Russian river.
16. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Sichuan.
17. Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
18. A scented lozenge used to sweeten the breath (e.g. to conceal the odor of tobacco).
20. An impression in a surface (as made by a blow).
21. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
22. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
23. A landlocked republic in southern central Africa.
25. State in northeastern India.
28. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
30. (Greek mythology) The husband of Medea and leader of the Argonauts who sailed in quest of the Golden Fleece.
34. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
38. Relating to or containing acetic acid.
40. A Bantu language spoken by the Chaga people in northern Tanzania.
41. An informal conversation.
44. The (prehensile) extremity of the superior limb.
45. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
46. Being one more than one hundred.
47. A piece of furniture that provides a place to sleep.
48. (informal) Roused to anger.
49. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
50. A drug (trade names Calan and Isoptin) used as an oral or parenteral calcium blocker in cases of hypertension or congestive heart failure or angina or migraine.
53. The act of slowing down or falling behind.
61. Any toad of the genus Bufo.
64. Minute floating marine tunicate having a transparent body with an opening at each end.
66. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
70. (Welsh myth) The other world.
72. English aristocrat who was the first wife of Prince Charles.
74. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
75. A caustic substance (Ca(OH)2) produced by heating limestone.
76. Orange liqueur with lemon juice and brandy.
78. (of securities) Not quoted on a stock exchange.
79. Weight to be borne or conveyed.
80. Amphibians that resemble lizards.
81. A unit of length of thread or yarn.

DOWN

1. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
2. Being or occurring in fact or actuality.
3. A ruler of the Inca Empire (or a member of his family).
4. The longer of the two telegraphic signals

used in Morse code.

5. Short and fat.
6. The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
7. Not acknowledging the God of Christianity and Judaism and Islam.
8. Precipitation falling from clouds in the form of ice crystals.
9. Affected by ague.
10. Long and light rowing boat.
11. A large body of water constituting a principal part of the hydrosphere.
12. By bad luck.
13. Kamarupan languages spoken in north-eastern India and western Burma.
14. A fraudulent business scheme.
19. Of or relating to Oman or its people.
24. Being one more than fifty.
26. A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
27. A peasant farmer in the Scottish highlands.
29. A city in western Germany near the Dutch and Belgian borders.
31. Common house and field crickets.
32. A cylindrical drawstring bag used by sailors to hold their clothing and other gear.
33. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary and stimulates growth of Graafian follicles in female mammals, and activates sperm-forming cells in male mammals.
35. (of reproduction) Not involving the fusion of male and female gametes reproduction".
36. Related on the father's side.
37. Steps consisting of two parallel members connected by rungs.
39. The capital of Western Samoa.
42. Australian physiologist noted for his research on the conduction of impulses by nerve cells (1903-1997).
43. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
51. A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
52. A small cake leavened with yeast.
54. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
55. An honorary degree in science.
56. The syllable naming the fourth (subdominant) note of the diatonic scale in solmization.
57. Frightened into submission or compliance.
58. A group of Plains Indians formerly living in what is now North and South Dakota and Nebraska and Kansas and Arkansas and Louisiana and Oklahoma and Texas.
59. The unlimited 3-dimensional expanse in which everything is located.
60. (astronomy) An indistinct surface feature of Mars once thought to be a system of channels.
62. Type genus of the family Unionidae.
63. A federally chartered corporation that purchases mortgages.
65. A German art song of the 19th century for voice and piano.
67. A correctional institution used to detain persons who are in the lawful custody of the government (either accused persons awaiting trial or convicted persons serving a sentence).
68. The emotion of hate.
69. Type genus of the family Arcidae.
71. Inflammation of the urethra of unknown cause.
73. A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
77. A heavy brittle metallic element of the platinum group.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You are poised in anticipation, eager to ride the fluctuating waves of contradictory energy. You believe that maintaining a positive attitude will overcome all challenges, but you may have underestimated the power of the cosmic tides now. A smarter strategy could be to retreat and reevaluate your plans today, instead of futilely pushing against the currents. A steadier pace improves your chances of reaching your destination. By practicing a little patience, you can transform your unbridled optimism into tangible results.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Everything seems to be flowing your way today, but all the positive feedback could have a surprising negative effect. You may become so sure of your actions now that you overlook a potential problem. Luckily, you can rely on your common sense to remind you that it takes less work if you do something right the first time around. Thankfully, your world will continue to spin in your favor as long you don't let the current energy of abundance encourage greed. More isn't necessarily better; if you already set an attainable goal, be prepared to stop when you reach it.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Although it might seem as if every word you say now encounters resistance, sit tight and wait your turn as communication continues to improve over the next couple of days. Your bright idea is close to paying off, but you must remain persistent in your efforts. Unfortunately, too much stress on the job can make you less effective today, so just coast for a while if you run into trouble. Fight the temptation to dig in your heels because a stubborn stance won't work in your favor. Adaptability is your not-so-secret weapon, so don't be afraid to use it to your advantage.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your moods are brewing up a storm today, yet you won't gain any respect by giving up at the first sign of conflict. Neither do you need to battle against an immovable stone wall. Your most sensible approach is based upon a high level of consistent behavior without any signs of aggression. It may even be helpful to consciously let go of control so you can float with the flow now. Calm your nerves by surrounding yourself with the sounds of nature, soothing music or just good old-fashioned silence.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

A flood of brilliant ideas opens many possibilities at work today, yet you may grow agitated because you can't find the hook that could turn this magical moment into something more. If you experience an unexpected setback now, pushing harder won't bring success any faster. Instead, connect with the intellectual buzz but wait for the energy to quiet down before finalizing your career plans. Exploring your options enables you to make the most of the amazing opportunities knocking at your door.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This is a significant day for your relationships and you might end up pleasantly surprised with the outcome. However, you need to demonstrate a modicum of self-restraint or someone could rain on your parade now. There are long-lasting ramifications if unequal power dynamics are left unaddressed today. Even if it feels like you're being bent out of shape, express the love that is already in your heart. The simplest act of kindness may be enough to shift the energy in a brighter direction.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

There's plenty of detailed busywork on your agenda today but you really don't want to mess with your schedule to make it all fit in. Unfortunately, your lack of rigidity only stirs up more conflict. You gain the most by meeting others halfway and acting as spontaneously as you can. Paradoxically, a gracious compromise may be the most sensible way to get what you want now. Just make sure you don't go running in the opposite direction and become so enthusiastic about every idea that nothing gets done at all.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Some of the current complexity in your life stems from how you chose to react to recent events. If you pursued an opportunity without overplaying your hand, you won't likely run into any problems at all. But if you overcompensated by listening to your ego and making a hasty decision, today's consequences might be a bit tougher to accept. Nevertheless, relaxing your grip and letting go of your old expectations frees you to achieve your new goals. Embracing your future is easier when you carry less baggage.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Although you are concerned that your secret isn't safe today, you still could enjoy yourself while navigating all the twists and turns of the day. This high level of action is what you asked for so don't waste everyone's time wishing that your life was less hectic now. The Sun's sweet trine to auspicious Jupiter suggests that there really is a pot of gold at rainbow's end for those who believe. However, you must meet your current responsibilities before you can magically transform a tricky moment into an awesome day.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Living up to your end of the bargain and managing all the minute details of a project means that delicious rewards may be just around the next corner. But the dark clouds might not clear until later in the day so it's best to keep your shoulder to the wheel since it's uncool to fall behind in your work. Part of your current lesson is learning to live with more uncertainty now. Dig deep to find spiritual meaning in the present moment while also honoring your dreams for the future.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You don't have much time to attend to your agenda today because people keep showing up unexpectedly. Thankfully, your friends and associates recognize your brilliance and seem to be supportive of your plans, even if they require your immediate attention. Take advantage of their interest and involve them in your activities. Fortunately, you can work closely with others without sacrificing your individuality as long as you are clear about your goals. Ironically, setting boundaries not only brings the respect you deserve, it also enables you to feel proud of your accomplishments.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Someone may shock you with unexpected criticism today, refocusing your attention back on reality. If your fantasies have hijacked your goals, embrace the unsolicited advice you receive from others now, instead of rejecting it out of hand. Be sure to establish healthy boundaries so you can maintain your emotional sanity. Nurturing your confidence, not your skepticism, will guide you toward fulfillment.

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Fantasy World 1

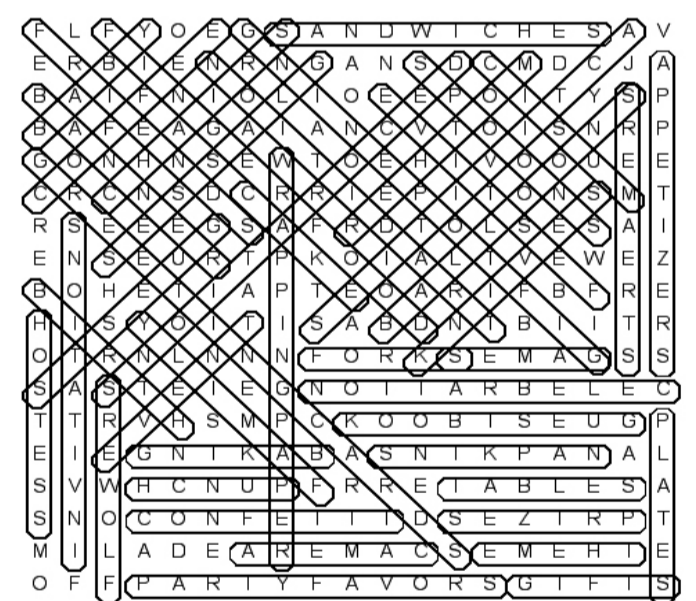
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 17 letters spell the name of a popular fantasy book series.



- | | | | |
|------------|--------|----------|---------|
| ALE | ELVES | LANCE | QUEST |
| BATTLE | FARM | MACE | SERVANT |
| CASTLE | FOREST | MAGIC | SPEARS |
| CENTAUR | GIANTS | MINSTREL | SPRITE |
| CHALICE | GNOMES | MOAT | STEW |
| CROSSBOW | GOLD | OGRE | TOWER |
| CROWN | GUARDS | PEASANT | WARLOCK |
| DAGGER | HERO | PEDDLER | WEAPONS |
| DRAWBRIDGE | HORSE | POISON | WINE |
| DUNGEON | INN | PRINCE | WITCH |

Yesterday's Solution

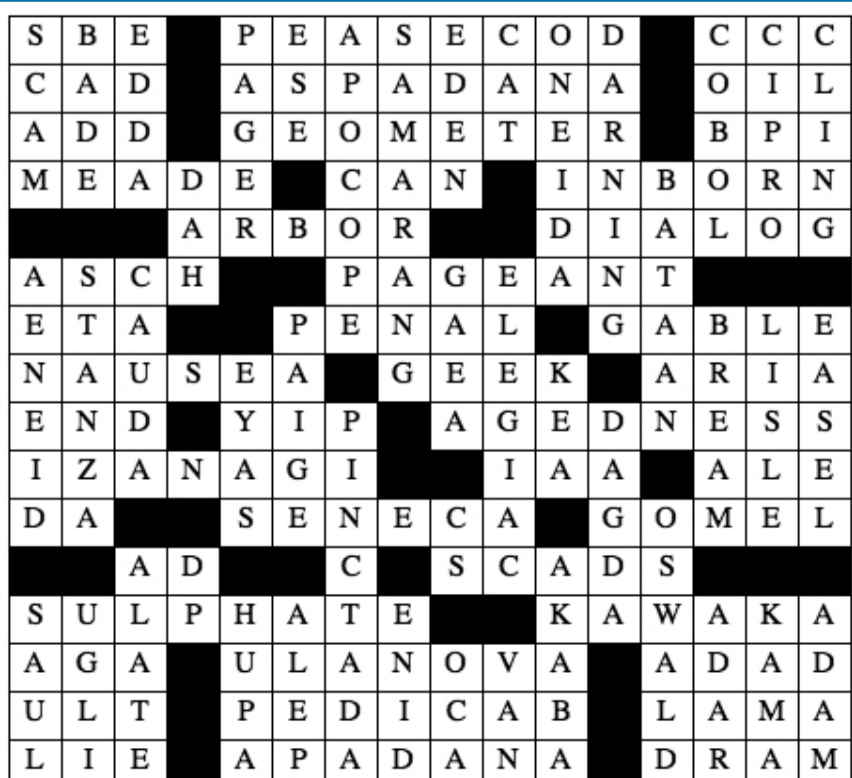
Baby Shower



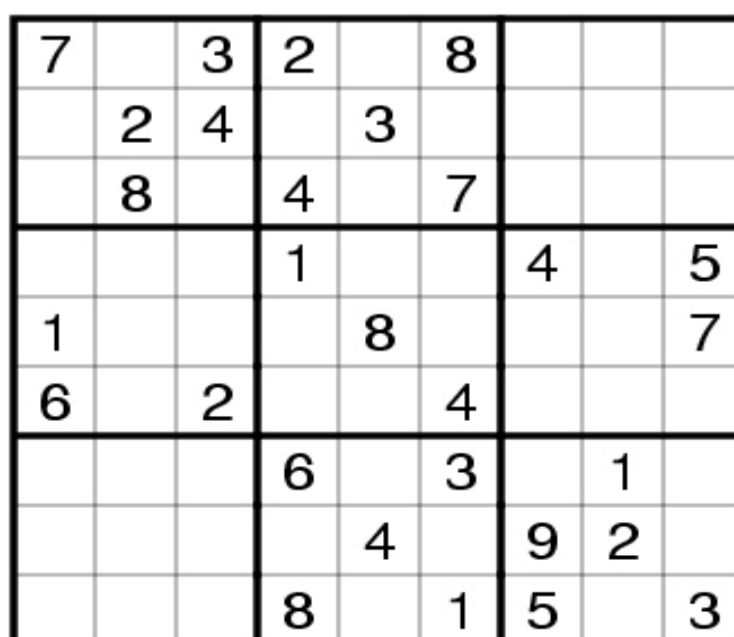
- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| ACTIVITIES | CONFETTI | GIFTS | PARTY FAVORS |
| APPETIZERS | DECORATIONS | GLASSES | PLATES |
| BAKING | EVENT | GREETING CARDS | PRIZES |
| BALLOONS | FAMILY | GUESTBOOK | PUNCH |
| BANNER | FESTIVE | GUESTS | SANDWICHES |
| BIRTH | FINGER FOOD | HOSTESS | SPOONS |
| CAKE | FLOWERS | INVITATIONS | STREAMERS |
| CAMERA | FORKS | KNIVES | TABLES |
| CELEBRATION | FRIENDS | MOTHER | THEME |
| CHAIRS | GAMES | MUSIC | TRADITION |
| COFFEE | GIFT OPENING | NAPKINS | WRAPPING PAPER |

The hidden message is: LOVE AND JOY ARE WHAT BABIES ARE MADE OF

Yesterday's Solution

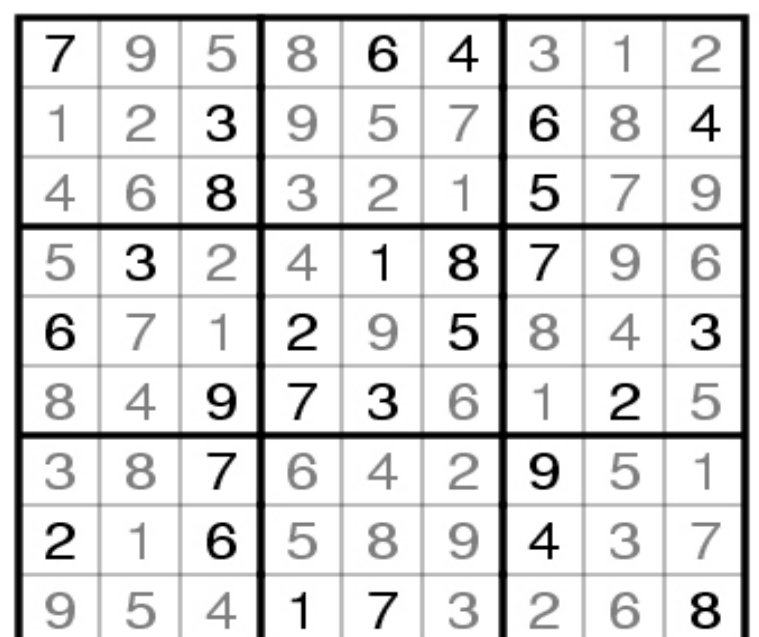


Daily SuDoku



hard

Yesterday's Solution



very hard

For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL hotline 128



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Hospitals

Table listing hospitals such as Sabah Hospital, Amiri Hospital, Maternity Hospital, etc., with their respective phone numbers.

Clinics

Table listing various clinics like Kaizen center, Rawda, Adaliya, etc., with their phone numbers.

Table with columns: GOVERNORATE, PHARMACY, ADDRESS, PHONE. Lists pharmacies across different governorates like Ahmadi, Jahra, Capital, etc.

Table of international phone numbers for various countries, organized by region.

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630 Fax: (+965) 24348714 www.met.gov.kw

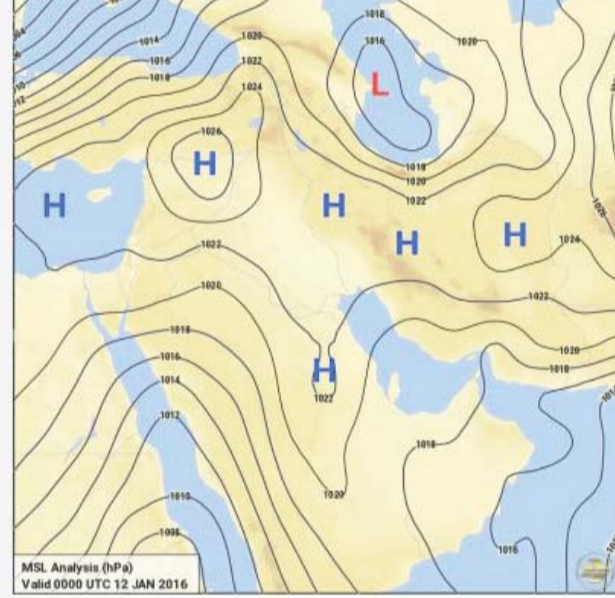
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 12/01/2016-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 18 °C

By Day : Partly cloudy with light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 18 km/h By Night : Partly cloudy with light to moderate north westerly to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

Table showing weather forecasts for Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, including temperature, wind, and sun icons.

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Table with columns: Station, MIN °C, REC, Max °C, EXP. Lists forecast data for various stations like Kuwait City, Airport, etc.

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Table showing recorded weather data for the previous day, including temperature, humidity, and wind.

Prayer Times

Table showing prayer times for Fajr, Sunrise, Zuhr, Asr, Sunset, and Isha.



PRIVATE CLINICS

Table listing various medical specialties and their practitioners, including Ophthalmologists, General Practitioners, and Urologists.

Table listing Plastic Surgeons, Family Doctors, Psychiatrists, and other medical professionals.

Table listing Paediatricians, Dermatologists, Dentists, and Neurologists.

Table listing Endocrinologist, Physiotherapists & VD, Rheumatologists, and Internist, Chest & Heart.

Summary table at the bottom listing contact information for Psychologists, Soor Center, Kaizen center, Noor Clinic, and William Schuilenberg.

Natalie Cole remembered with mix of music and laughter

Natalie Cole was remembered as a loyal friend, "the best and bossiest big sister," and a worthy successor to her famous father's legacy in a joyous and music-filled funeral highlighting her Baptist faith on Monday. The two-hour, 50-minute service at West Angeles Church of God in Christ was filled with affection for the daughter of crooner Nat King Cole who carved out her own Grammy Award-winning legacy during a 40-year career.

Known for effortlessly crossing R&B, pop and jazz genres with such hits as "This Will Be (An Everlasting Love)," "Inseparable," and



In a Feb 8, 2009 file photo, Natalie Cole holds the best instrumental arrangement accompanying vocalist award backstage at the 51st Annual Grammy Awards, in Los Angeles.

"Our Love," she died New Year's Eve at age 65 of pulmonary arterial hypertension, which led to heart failure. "My sister was a warrior in the best sense of the word," Casey Cole Hooker said. "In the end her body simply began to give out and it shut down. She was long accepting of what was coming and trying to make us OK."

Cole Hooker's twin, Timolin Cole Augustus, read a condolence letter from President Barack Obama to the singer's 38-year-old son Robert Yancy. Among the several hundred mourners were singers Chaka Khan, Gladys Knight, Lionel Richie, Smokey Robinson and Stevie Wonder, along with Cole's frequent producer David Foster, actress Angela Bassett and the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who did not speak. Khan had been expected to sing, but didn't because of illness.

Spirit and kindness

Freddy Cole, the singer's 84-year-old uncle and the last surviving brother of Nat King Cole, also attended. Wonder played harmonica and sang "The Lord's Prayer," getting the crowd on its feet and cheering at the end. "We must continue the spirit and kindness that this woman gave the world," Wonder said, glancing down at Cole's closed casket bedecked with a large spray of her favorite white roses. "She left this country where people are so divided. We speak of love but we don't do love.

We've got a lot of work to do Natalie, and we will do it in the spirit of you."

Richie recalled the extra pressure Cole faced trying to make it in the entertainment industry as the daughter of a legendary singer. "She conquered and stepped up and rose above it all," he said. "I will always remember her laughter, her humor, her silliness, that voice and more importantly her friendship. There were many moments she was down and she picked me up." Foster collaborated with Cole when she intertwined her voice with that of her father to make his "Unforgettable" a multi-Grammy-winning hit through technological wizardry in 1991. "She was the most un-star like superstar you could ever know," he said. "She always had a sympathetic ear and words of wisdom, which she learned from her own eventful life."

'What a woman'

Cole was frank about the fierce drug addiction that gripped her for several years until she went to rehab and overcame it in the 1980s. She was later diagnosed with hepatitis C, which she attributed to her addiction, and had a kidney transplant in 2009. Those issues contributed to her health woes in recent years even as she maintained a busy performing schedule. "Fame is a beast," Foster said. "For Natalie, in the early years it did not serve her well, but in the last 25 years fame became very matter of fact. She didn't use it, abuse it and she didn't give a crap about it. Even when she was struggling with her own health, she maintained her own dignity, class and optimism."

Cole Augustus said her sister answered to the nickname "Sweetie" among family. Cole Hooker smiled while recalling Cole as "always the best and bossiest big sister." The twin sisters contributed background vocals to a song on Cole's last album done in Spanish in 2013. She urged her siblings to "watch their pitch" before the session began. "That was the end of our recording career," Cole Augustus said. Yancy, whose late father Marvin was the first of Cole's three husbands, is a drummer who played in his mother's touring band. He carried her thick Bible to the podium. They shared a strong faith and were regular churchgoers. "What a woman," he said. "She taught me how to love. She had my back every time when I needed it. The greatest gift she ever gave me was Jesus. I cannot wait until that day that I see you again." Cole Hooker said her older sister wanted her epitaph to be: "The daughter of a king, the mother of a prince and a friend to all." Cole was later interred privately at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale, near her father, her mother Maria, and adopted siblings Carole and Nat Kelly Cole. —AP



Jacir Eid Al-Hwietat, 15, poses for a photo in Wadi Rum, a scenic desert area of southern Jordan. —AP photos



Jacir Eid Al-Hwietat, right, and his cousin, Hussein Salameh Al-Sweilhiyeen, pose for a photo in Wadi Rum.

Bedouin coming-of-age drama vying for Oscar nod



George David, general manager of the Royal Film Commission, speaks during an interview with The Associated Press, in Amman, Jordan.



Bassel Ghandour, who produced the film and co-wrote the script of "Theeb" (Wolf) speaks during an interview.

A coming-of-age drama set among Bedouin tribesmen roaming the desert emerged as the first potential Oscar contender produced by Jordan's nascent film industry. "Theeb" (Wolf), set in 1916, tells the story of a playful 11-year-old Bedouin boy of the same name who gets caught up in his tribe's alliance with the British against Ottoman rulers during the era's Arab Revolt. Billed as a "Bedouin Western" and an authentic portrayal of Bedouin culture, Theeb is one of nine movies short-listed for best foreign language film nominations. The final five will be announced Thursday.

For the amateur cast from a Bedouin clan and for two young Jordanians writing and directing their first feature film, making Theeb has already been a wild ride, climaxing in the 2014 world premiere at the Venice Film Festival. That marked the first time the actors left Jordan or saw the entire film. "They got a 10-minute standing ovation," said director Naji Abu Nowar, who won for best director in the "Orizzonti" (Horizons) category in Venice.

Directorial debut

"The Bedouins, it's a very macho culture, and you never see anyone cry, even the children ... and to see tears coming out of some of their eyes (during the premiere) was a really powerful moment," he said, speaking from the Palm Springs International Film Festival, a last pre-Oscar opportunity to promote foreign films. Theeb also won two nominations from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, or BAFTA, for its 2016 awards - for best foreign language film and for outstanding directorial debut for Abu Nowar, who is also British.

The actors have since resumed their lives in Al-Shakriyah, a small Bedouin village nestled among striking rock formations rising from the desert floor of Wadi Rum, a protected landscape just north of the Red Sea and one of Jordan's main tourist attractions. Jacir Eid Al-Hwietat, who played Theeb, is now 15, attends 10th grade and has revised his career plans, from police officer to actor. "I'm a celebrity among my friends now," said Jacir, who has morphed from a boy with a sweet smile into a guarded teen.

His cousin, Hussein Salameh Al-Sweilhiyeen,

who played Theeb's brother Hussein, is back to racing camels and working as a tourist guide. Since Theeb, he has appeared in a German TV documentary about Wadi Rum and a Jordanian tourism commercial, and said he would like to do more acting. Al-Sweilhiyeen said being involved in Theeb made him aware of the need to protect traditions. Bedouin lifestyles in the area have changed dramatically in the last few decades, with nomads settling down, trading their camels for pickup trucks and living off tourists instead of goat herds.

"Sometimes I say the old life was better," said Al-Sweilhiyeen, sitting on the floor of the carpeted family diwan, or traditional reception area for guests. "The desert teaches you how to depend on yourself. Now we have good services, but we need to protect some old customs." Jacir's father, 42-year-old Eid, still remembers the old ways; he was born in a tent and as a boy rode camels over long distances as his family wandered the desert before settling down about 30 years ago. He dropped out of school as a 15-year-old, taught himself English, began guiding tourists and recently sold his last camels, saying he doesn't have the time and space to care for them properly. Al-Hwietat became the local point man for the filmmakers, Abu Nowar and Bassel Ghandour, who produced the film and co-wrote the script. The pair lived in Al-Shakriyah for most of 2012, soaking up Bedouin culture, rewriting the script and holding acting workshops for the local cast.

Wadi Rum

Theeb was filmed over five weeks by veteran Austrian cinematographer Wolfgang Thaler, the most experienced crew member and praised by all involved as the bedrock of the production. Ghandour said Thaler used super-16mm film in part because it captures the desert's harsh sun and deep shadows more naturally. Theeb, also released commercially, was "definitely low-budget," Ghandour said, but wouldn't reveal how much it cost to make.

Half a century before Theeb, scenes of the Oscar-winning epic "Lawrence of Arabia" about maverick British army officer T. E. Lawrence were filmed in Wadi Rum, just minutes from where Jacir

and his family live. Jacir's grandfather was part of the local support staff for "Lawrence," also set during the Arab Revolt, and the tradition continues. Jacir's father, Eid, has worked on international productions, most recently as a location manager for "The Martian," a 2015 science fiction film starring Matt Damon, which just won a Golden Globe Award for Best Musical or Comedy Motion Picture.

Damon was unpretentious during the shoot, greeting everyone at the start of each day, said Al-Hwietat. Providing locations and crew for foreign films remains an important part of Jordan's film work, said George David, general manager of the Royal Film Commission. Major films shot in Jordan also include "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (1989) and "The Hurt Locker" (2008). At a time of growing conflict in the region, urban centers in Jordan, seen as relatively safe, are standing in for Baghdad or Beirut, he said, adding that "we have also become the go-to location for Mars and the moon."

Sundance Institute

Meanwhile, the success of Theeb signals the development of domestic film production. Over the past decade, the commission has offered workshops on all aspects of film-making, including an annual screenwriters' lab in consultation with the Sundance Institute. It also helped promote 25 feature films and documentaries made in Jordan between 2010 and 2015. However, budget cuts have forced the closure of a film school and the commission had to reduce training. "If we, as an industry, tackle the funding issue, I think we will be seeing more Theebs," said David. "Whether it wins or not, we are already very proud of what it has already achieved."

Back in Al-Shakriyah, the Theeb cast members play it cool, despite what appears to be a mild case of Oscar fever. If Theeb is nominated, four of them plan to travel to the awards ceremony in Hollywood - Jacir, his father Eid, cousin Hussein and the film's villain, played by local resident Hassan Mutlaq Al-Maraieyh. Like others in the film industry, they have already thought about what to wear for the big night - black robes, the Bedouin version of formal attire, instead of the beige ones for every day, said Jacir's father. —AP



Pallbearers carry the casket of Natalie Cole after the funeral services at West Angeles Church of God in Christ in the Crenshaw district of Los Angeles. —AP photos

DiCaprio's Globes win gives boost to Oscar campaign

Leonardo DiCaprio has taken a leap forward in his quest for his first Oscar, with a Golden Globes win for his intense performance as a 19th century fur trapper in "The Revenant." All eyes in Hollywood are now on the Oscar nominations, to be announced on Thursday, to see if the "Titanic" star scores his fifth nomination for an acting role as widely expected. The 41-year-old DiCaprio won for best actor in a drama at the star-studded Globes ceremony on Sunday that also saw "The Revenant" win for best director and best motion picture drama.

Pundits seem to agree that while the race to the Academy Awards on February 28 remains open in most categories, including for best picture, DiCaprio's quest for the golden statuette that has eluded him so far seems on track. "I think DiCaprio looks like a slam dunk," said Scott Feinberg, awards columnist for trade magazine The Hollywood Reporter. "I don't see him losing."

Feinberg explained that DiCaprio "has had the misfortune in the past of being great in years when other people were having their greatest year." Indeed, the actor has lost out to some powerhouse actors in their prime: Matthew McConaughey for "Dallas Buyers Club," Forest Whitaker for "The Last King of Scotland," Jamie Foxx in "Ray" and Tommy Lee Jones in "The Fugitive." "But this year, it doesn't look like there is that one other person challenging him," Feinberg told AFP. The Globes win "puts a little wind behind his sails for the next round just because of the attention that he gets," he said.

Matt Damon could be his top rival at the moment—he took home the Golden Globe for best actor in a comedy for space blockbuster "The Martian"—the other big winner on Sunday, with a victory for best comedy film.



Leonardo DiCaprio poses with the award for best performance by an actor in a motion picture - drama for "The Revenant" at the FOX Golden Globes after party. —AP

Globes offer clue

Feinberg pointed out that while there was unanimous agreement on DiCaprio's Oscar chances, the Globes could not be considered a bellwether for the Academy Awards overall, leaving the race wide open. "There are only 82 people from the Hollywood Foreign Press Association voting for the Golden Globes while 6,200 vote for the Oscars, and all of them are associated with the actual making of film," Feinberg said. Experts point out that neither of last year's Globes best picture winners "Boyhood" and "The Grand Budapest Hotel" ended up with an Oscar.

Instead, the Academy Award went to "Birdman," directed by Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, who is also behind "The Revenant." "Really, it's impossible to call any film the pacesetter now," wrote Glenn Whipp, a reporter with the Los Angeles Times. Still, industry observers agree that the Globes can generate buzz for certain films and thus influence voting among the members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

"Room" star Brie Larson took home the coveted prize for best actress in a drama for her searing turn as a mother in captivity with her young son—clearly giving her an edge for Thursday. In the supporting actor category, Globe winner Sylvester Stallone is expected to ride a wave of popular support for "Creed," in which he reprised his iconic role of boxer Rocky Balboa, straight to an Oscars nod. In the best picture category, a pair of films seen as Globes favorites fell flat on Sunday, but are still expected to earn some Oscar nominations. "Spotlight," about journalists from The Boston Globe who uncovered sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, went home empty-handed on Sunday despite three nominations. And "The Big Short," based on a book about the financial crisis of 2007-2008, was also snubbed, going zero for four. —AFP



Ryan Coogler

'CREED'S' RYAN COOGLER TO DIRECT MARVEL'S 'BLACK PANTHER'

"Creed" helmer Ryan Coogler is set to direct Marvel and Disney's "Black Panther" movie, the studio announced on Monday. Chadwick Boseman has already been cast as the lead character, who will make his first appearance in May's "Captain America: Civil War." The "Black Panther" film, set for a release in February 2018, marks the first time a major Marvel Studios film will focus primarily on a black superhero.

There was much speculation surrounding who would take on the directing job. Ava DuVernay earlier this year passed on the film. Coogler was another favorite choice among fans. The 29-year-old director gained widespread recognition for his Sundance breakout "Fruitvale Station" and this year has been making waves with "Creed," a continuation of the Rocky Balboa franchise focused on Apollo Creed's son. —AP



Crowds gather to read and place floral tributes beneath a mural of British singer David Bowie, painted by Australian street artist James Cochran, aka Jimmy C, following the announcement of Bowie's death, in Brixton, south London.



Newspapers that show a picture of David Bowie on the front are on display in London yesterday.

Tributes for iconic singer David Bowie

Tributes have poured in for singer David Bowie, who died Sunday aged 69. Politicians, entertainers, actors and astronauts have expressed their sadness at his death. Here is a look at some of the reactions:

Bruce Springsteen: "Over here on E Street, we're feeling the great loss of David Bowie. David was a visionary artist and an early supporter of our music. Always changing and ahead of the curve, he was an artist whose excellence you aspired to. He will be sorely missed."

Debbie Harry: "Without this visionary and his friend Iggy Pop where would Blondie be today? Silly question and one that can't be answered really but there is no doubt in my mind that Bowie played a big part in our future successes. As for now, love you David Bowie."

Mick Jagger: "David was always an inspiration to me and a true original. He was wonderfully shameless in his work. We had so many good times together... He was my friend. I will never forget him."

Elton John: "I am still in shock. Never saw it coming. ... My deepest condolences to Iman and the family. An amazing career."

Bette Midler: "Bowie WAS The Man Who

Fell to Earth. Curious, brilliant, enigmatic and sweet. We needed him and he appeared, changing our perceptions forever."

Yoko Ono: "As John & I had very few friends, we felt David was as close as family. Sweet memories will stay with us forever."

Bowie's son, director Duncan Jones, posted a picture of his smiling father on Twitter: "Very sorry and sad to say it's true. I'll be offline for a while. Love to all."

Yusuf Islam, also known as Cat Stevens: "He has left us for another world, beyond the darkness of this present one vividly so depicted in the shadows of his last video. I truly pray he's welcomed to the light by his Maker in that great today, which has no tomorrow."

Irish singer Hozier: "Unthinkable. The world has lost one of the most important artists and icons of our time. I was moved immeasurably by David Bowie. RIP"

Mariah Carey: "David Bowie we will remember your brilliance. Heartfelt condolences to family, friends & fans around the world."

Astronaut Tim Peake, who is aboard the International Space Station:

"Saddened to hear David Bowie has lost his battle with cancer - his music was an inspiration to many."

Josh Groban: "He never seemed of this earth. Now he's left it. He bent rules, gender, genres, and our minds. RIP David Bowie. One. Of. A. Kind."

Former astronaut Chris Hadfield, who performed "Space Oddity," on the International Space

Station in 2013: "Ashes to ashes, dust to stardust. Your brilliance inspired us all. Goodbye Starman."

German Foreign Office: "Good-bye, David Bowie. You are now among #Heroes. Thank you for helping to bring down the #wall."

The Rolling Stones: "The Rolling Stones are shocked and deeply saddened to hear of the death of our dear friend David Bowie. As well as being a wonderful and kind man, he was an extraordinary artist, and a true original."

Madonna: "Im Devastated! This great Artist changed my life! First concert I ever saw in Detroit!"

Paul McCartney: "His music played a very strong part in British musical history and I'm proud to think of the huge influence he has had on people all around the world. "I send my deepest sympathies to his family and will always remember the great laughs we had through the years. His star will shine in the sky forever."

Iggy Pop: "David's friendship was the light of my life. I never met such a brilliant person. He was the best there is."

Harry Potter author JK Rowling: "I wish he could have stayed on earth longer. RIP"

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby: "I remember sitting listening to his songs endlessly in the '70s particularly and always really relishing what he was, what he did, the impact he had."

British Prime Minister David Cameron: "Genius is an over-used word but I think musically, creatively, artistically David Bowie was a genius." "For someone of my age he provided a lot of the soundtrack of our lives."

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair: "From the time I saw his Ziggy Stardust concert as a student, I thought he was a brilliant artist and an exciting and interesting human being."

Jazz guitarist Pat Metheny who worked with David Bowie on the song "This Is Not America":

"He carried the kind of broad view of music and art that was inspiring to me as a collaborator and a fan. I feel very lucky to have had the chance to be around him."

London Mayor Boris Johnson: "No-one in our age has better deserved to be

called a genius."

Tony Visconti, Bowie's longtime producer:

"David always did it his way and his way was the least obvious way. He was a true genius who proved it over and over again through groundbreaking albums. I co-produced his new album 'Blackstar'. He sang with powerful energy and determination, his performances were brilliant. He will live forever in our hearts, mine especially."

Comedian Ricky Gervais: "I just lost a hero. RIP David Bowie."

Rapper Kanye West: "David Bowie was one of my most important inspirations, so fearless, so creative, he gave us magic for a lifetime."

Singer Pharrell Williams: "David Bowie was a true innovator, a true creative. May he rest in peace."

Actor Mark Ruffalo: "Rip Father of all us freaks. Sad sad day. Love always."

Columbia Records: "We are deeply saddened by the loss of David Bowie. It was an honor and a privilege to release his music to the world."

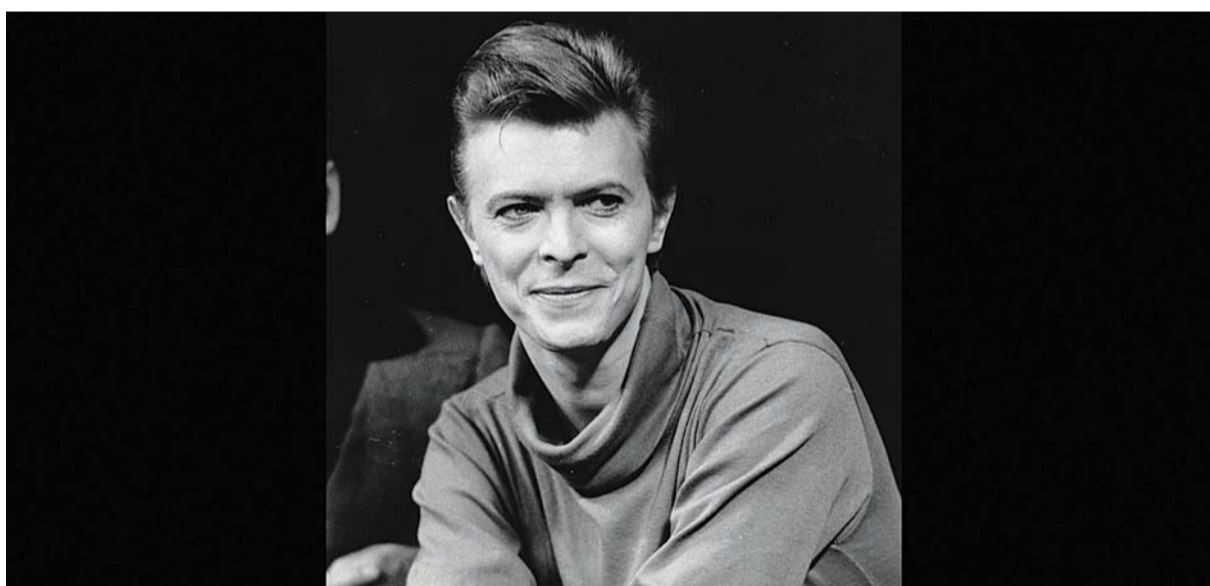
Jim Nicola, artistic director of New York Theatre Workshop, where the musical "Lazarus" is playing with Bowie songs:

"We are very fortunate to have had the opportunity to collaborate with Mr. Bowie on his theatrical piece, 'Lazarus,' and we look forward to honoring his work onstage as 'Lazarus' plays its final performances." —AP

Bells at Oslo's City Hall to honor Bowie

The bells at Oslo's City Hall will ring to the tune of David Bowie's "Changes" every evening starting today in honor of the late music icon, officials said. "We received so many requests and there was such unanimity that we just decided to do it. To be honest, there wasn't really even any discussion about it," bell ringer Laura Marie Rueslatten Olseng told AFP.

The clock tower at Oslo's City Hall marks the passage of time with different musical pieces every hour. Featuring such classic composers as Edward Grieg, Eric Satie and Vivaldi, as well as more modern hits such as "Imagine" by John Lennon, the program is sometimes changed to reflect current events. Bowie will thus join a playlist already featuring heavy metal group Motorhead, which was added after the death of the band's frontman Ian "Lemmy" Kilminster last week. A few days after the Paris attacks on November 13, the bells played "Til Ungdommen", a Norwegian hymn about peace. So why "Changes", a track from Bowie's 1971 Hunky Dory album? "Musically, the chords and the melody suit the programming machine" for the bells, said Olseng. "And it's a song that came out many years ago and which means something to a lot of people." The first bars of the song will ring out every day at 7:00 pm (1800 GMT) until May 31. —AFP



In this Sept 17, 1980, file photo, David Bowie listens during a news conference after a rehearsal at the Booth Theater in New York. —AP/AFP photos

Questions linger over death of music icon Bowie

Music legend David Bowie was famously private during his lifetime—and in death, as a string of questions about the circumstances of his passing remained unanswered yesterday. His official social media accounts had announced the shock news of his death at 69 on Monday: "David Bowie died peacefully today surrounded by his family after a courageous 18-month battle with cancer," adding a request for privacy for the grieving family.

Little information was available on how or where he died, and requests for comment to Bowie's record company Columbia Records were not answered. Born and raised in south London, Bowie was a long-time resident of New York and some British media reported that he had died there. But the New York Post claimed that the "Heroes" and "Life On Mars?" singer had "passed away at his London home". With no official comment available, Bowie's place of death remained a mystery, as did funeral arrangements.

Yet a small circle of close collaborators were aware that the iconic performer, who repeatedly reinvented himself across six decades in the music industry, was in poor health. Belgian theatre director Ivo Van Hove, who worked closely with Bowie on his musical "Lazarus" which opened in New York in December, told Dutch public radio NPO that Bowie had been suffering from liver cancer. "I've known for more than a year. We began working together on our show 'Lazarus', and at one moment he took me to one side to say that because of his illness, he would not always be able to be around," Van Hove told NRC Dutch daily.

Circle of secrecy

Bowie's supermodel wife Iman, who has not commented publicly on his death, posted a series of poignant messages on social media in the days before he passed away. "The struggle is real, but so is God," she wrote on her public

Twitter and Facebook accounts Sunday. The previous day, she had written: "Sometimes you will never know the true value of a moment until it becomes a memory". Bowie's son, film director Duncan Jones, confirmed news of his father's death Monday with a short message on Twitter and has not commented further. "Very sorry and sad to say it's true. I'll be offline for a while. Love to all," he wrote.

All but an inner circle were kept in the dark about the singer's illness as he worked to complete his final album, "Blackstar", released on his 69th birthday, just two days before his death. Van Hove said Bowie was desperate to finish "Blackstar" and "Lazarus" before it was too late. At the musical's New York premiere on December 7, few knew that anything was amiss. "The press wrote that he looked so well and so healthy. But as we went off the stage, he collapsed. And I realized that it might be the last time I saw him," said Van Hove.

Tony Visconti, who worked with Bowie on many of his albums, was another who knew the singer was ill. "His death was no different from his life—a work of art. He made 'Blackstar' for us, his parting gift," Visconti wrote on Facebook. "I knew for a year this was the way it would be. I wasn't, however, prepared for it." Highlighting how secret Bowie kept his illness, long-time collaborator and friend Brian Eno said his death came as "a complete surprise".

He told the BBC he received an email from Bowie a week before his death which he now believes was a farewell message. "It was funny as always, and as surreal, looping through word games and allusions and all the usual stuff we did. It ended with this sentence: 'Thank you for our good times, Brian, they will never rot,'" Eno said. "I realize now he was saying goodbye." —AFP

Outback pub toasts David Bowie, its most famous visitor

Visitors at a dusty Outback pub raised their toasts yesterday to the pub's most famous visitor, David Bowie. More than three decades ago, the mercurial musician made the 650-kilometer (400-mile) drive from Sydney to the tiny outpost of Carinda in parched western New South Wales state to shoot the video for his 1983 hit "Let's Dance" at Carinda's only pub. The pub's current owner, Malcolm George, said the town of fewer than 200 people hadn't known that Bowie was coming. And they have never been allowed to forget the visit, which took their rustic watering hole to a global audience.

"People still come in asking, 'Is this the pub where Bowie sang?'" George said. George said that only one of the local extras who appeared in those smoky bar scenes still lives in the town. But news late Monday (Australian East Time) that Bowie had died immediately boosted business.

"It's been nonstop," George said. He said that when he bought the pub a year ago, it was in disrepair. Many of the brown and green tiles had fallen from the wall that had formed a blond Bowie's backdrop as he sang and strummed his guitar. But George stripped tiles from elsewhere in the pub to restore that iconic surface.

Marie Draper, who works behind the bar, said a week rarely goes by without a tourist gravitating to that wall. "We do get quite a few tourists who come through," Draper said. "They ask where the spot is and stand in front of the tiles and get their photos taken." Draper has lived in Carinda all her life, but wasn't around when Bowie visited. She couldn't comment on local legend that Bowie paid the local extras by offering to pay for everyone in the bar's drinks. "It created a lot of excitement around here at the time," Draper said. —AP



Memorabilia and bouquets of flowers are left in honor of David Bowie outside his New York apartment, Monday. —AP



This photo provided January 12, 2016 by the Cincinnati Zoo in Ohio shows a baby penguin born January 8. —AP

Cincinnati Zoo names baby penguin 'Bowie' after singer

Having already earned a measure of "Fame" with the Cincinnati Zoo's first animal birth of 2016, a newborn penguin chick has been named "Bowie." The zoo says the baby known as a blue or fairy penguin hatched at 6 am Friday, weighing 46 grams. Friday was both David Bowie's and Elvis Presley's birthday, and the zoo says there was a lot of support for the Elvis name.

But the zoo already has a king penguin named for "the King," so "Bowie" was the choice for the new arrival. Director Thane Maynard says the year's first baby is fitting since the zoo celebrates "Penguin Days" in January and February. The singer Bowie turned 69 Jan 8, and released a new album, "Blackstar." —AP

'Style king' Bowie hailed at London men's fashion week



A model displays the word "Bowie" on her hands, in reference to British musician David Bowie, as she presents a creation by British design house Burberry Prorsum on the final day of the Autumn/Winter 2016 London Collections: Men fashion event in London on January 11, 2016. — AFP

In the middle of Burberry's London fashion show, a model showed her palms to photographers, displaying a name written in big black capital letters: "Bowie". To the sound of the late singer's hits, the British label's CEO and creative director Christopher Bailey welcomed the few hundred people invited to the unveiling of Burberry's new menswear collection as London Men's Fashion Week drew to a close. "He's a complete legend. We will all miss his creativity, his style and the elegant way that he approached everything," said Bailey, who was born in 1971, the year Bowie released seminal song "Life on Mars".

"I grew up with him. He's kind of been an undercoat to my creative life forever," he told reporters in the city where Bowie grew up. A brilliant and visionary musician, David Bowie experimented with a kaleidoscope of images and styles as a counterpoint to his musical adventures. One of his best-known hits is named "Fashion". Dubbed the "King of Style" by some fashionistas, he had recently worked with British designer Paul Smith on the artwork for his latest album, "Blackstar".

"A lot of people are considered celebrities today when they have only experienced popularity for one or two years, but he was exposed to the public for about 46 years, and so his talent was very very clear, very impressive," Smith said. For Men's Fashion Week the designer recreated his first shop replete with items that influenced him—including many nods to the singer, such as a book of Bowie photos. Tributes from sartorial tastemakers flowed from beyond London. For French designer Jean Paul Gaultier, whose avant-garde work includes designs influenced by Bowie, the musician was an "absolute rock star" and a "cult" in his own right.

"Personally, he inspired me with his creativity, his extravagance, his sense of reinvention, his allure, his elegance and playful-

ness with genre," he added. The flashy makeup and striking red mullet of "Ziggy Stardust"—era Bowie inspired Gaultier's 2011 ready-to-wear spring-summer collection. Fellow French designer Jean-Charles de Castelbajac saluted Bowie on France's RTL radio station, declaring Bowie "a cosmic pioneer in all fields." —AFP



Models present creations by British design house Burberry Prorsum on the final day of the Autumn/Winter 2016 London Collections: Men fashion event in London.

Models present creations from Richard James collection.



Models present creations by British designer James Long.



Landmark Group to launch 'Art Olympiad' for the ninth consecutive year

As part of its commitment to the community, Landmark Group Kuwait is all set to host, for the ninth year in a row, the Art Olympiad 2016. The event will take place on January 27th from 10 am till 2.00 pm at Centrepoint, The Avenues Mall. This initiative is considered as part of Landmark Group's ongoing corporate social responsibility where young artists have the opportunity to showcase their talents.

Saibal Basu, Chief Operating Officer of Landmark Group, Kuwait said, 'Art Olympiad aims at supporting young talents and providing them with the opportunity to express themselves and their thoughts through Art. We take pride in the growing popularity of this initiative and the great anticipation we see from participating schools and students. We are certain that this year's version of Art Olympiad will mark another success and become an incentive for potential talents to surface their creativity.'

About 150 students aged 14 years and below representing well reputable schools across Kuwait will be participating at this year's competition. Landmark Group will provide all participants with a craft pack that includes a drawing sheet and a variety of art materials such as paints, pencils and crayons.

Over 15 schools will be participating this year including: The English School, Salmiya, Fahaheel Al-Watanieh Indian Private School Ahmadi, Indian Educational School Jleeb, Indian Learners Own Academy, Ajial Bilingual School, Canadian Bilingual School, Indian English Academy School- Don Bosco, Indian Central School, British School of Kuwait, American international school and many more.

Art Olympiad objective is to bring fun and entertainment to young artists by encouraging their creativity and also by rewarding them for their participation in the art competition. It provides a grooming platform for these students by helping them improvise their flair and encourage their innovative ability through art.

Students this year will be judged on the basis of creativity, workmanship and overall impression. Judging will be held in two age categories:

- 1) 9-11 years,
- 2) 12-14 years.

First, second and third place prizes will be awarded for each category, in addition to two awards for creativity and colorfulness in which a total of eight winners will be selected at the end of the competition. Each winner will be awarded with exciting grand prizes and many other valuable gifts. They will also receive certificates and trophies in recognition of their participation, and their schools will be given a plaque of appreciation.



Jourdan Dunn displays a creation by Moschino, during their Men AW2016 collection show.



A model displays a creation by designer Oliver Spencer.





A lama dances the Cham dance during the Gedong festival at the Ganden Sumtseling Monastery in Shangri-La, Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of southwest China's Yunnan Province on January 5, 2016. — AFP photos

Dances with monks at Tibetan festival



Children in traditional Tibetan clothes follow the Cham dance during the Gedong festival at the Ganden Sumtseling Monastery.



Young lamas play in front of a wall at the Ganden Sumtseling Monastery.



Lamas playing traditional instruments during the Gedong festival.

Thousands of meters above sea level, high on the Tibetan plateau, hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist devotees in brilliant hues of pink and blue gathered for the Gedong festival. Lamas young and old mixed with festival-goers wearing traditional garb to watch the religious Cham dances at the Ganden Sumtseling monastery in Shangri-La. Masked, costumed monks portrayed a host of ghosts and deities from the pantheon of Tibetan Buddhist mythology, to the sounds of lamas playing traditional instruments—crashing cymbals, drums and deep, vibrating ceremonial horns.

Tsering Choetso, a 52-year-old farmer, said the true meaning of the festival was hard to explain in a language other than Tibetan, but described it as a chance to "pay our respects to our deities as well as our departed ancestors." "A ghost is a lesser deity in a world that resembles hell," he said. "We believe that if we come here and watch and dance, we won't be afraid

of them if we encounter them in our afterlife." Though Buddhism is one of China's five officially sanctioned religions, the country's ruling Communist Party accuses the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama of trying to split the country, calling him a "wolf in sheep's clothing".

China, which has ruled Tibet since the 1950s, has been accused of trying to eradicate the region's Buddhist-based culture through political and religious repression and large-scale immigration by Han Chinese. But Beijing insists that Tibetans enjoy extensive freedoms and that it has brought economic growth to the region. During the Cultural Revolution expressions of ethnic identity, such as religious activity or local festivals, were brutally suppressed. The 17th century Ganden Sumtseling monastery—often called "Little Potala" for its resemblance to Lhasa's iconic palace—was itself heavily damaged.

Now it has been extensively renovated,



A young lama turns a prayer wheel at the Ganden Sumtseling Monastery.

rebuilt and developed into a commercial tourist attraction, complete with hefty entrance fees, with the festival promoted as a key opportunity to visit. The town in which it sits, in an ethnically Tibetan area of China's Yunnan province, was previously known as Zhongdian. But it was renamed in 2001 as a tourism strategy seeking to capitalize on the fictional mountain paradise described in James Hilton's 1933 novel "Lost Horizon". Chinese security forces, which have sometimes put on huge shows of strength at temple events, appeared to be entirely absent from the festival.

For one of the monastery's lamas, who gave his Chinese name as Lurongzhuxi, the event was a way of bringing the cosmology of his religion to life. "In our daily lives, few have the experience of witnessing deities," he said. "Nevertheless, we strongly believe they exist and are everywhere. Today's Cham dance could be interpreted as a reminder of their existence." — AFP

This picture taken at the Ganden Sumtseling Monastery in Shangri-La, Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of southwest China's Yunnan Province, shows a lama performing the Cham dance during the Gedong festival.



A lama performing the Cham dance during the Gedong festival.

