

Sawaber tenants disappointed by lack of services at new home



Jeb Bush sees similarities in his foreign policy and his dad's



'Hateful Eight' a mysterious, bloody thriller by Tarantino



Leicester go top despite missed Mahrez penalty at Villa



IRAN, US SWAP PRISONERS AS SANCTIONS SET TO END

TEHRAN TO BUY 114 JETS FROM AIRBUS, EYES OIL DEALS



Min 07°
Max 20°
High Tide 04:27 & 15:14
Low Tide 11:05 & 23:57

COMOROS CUTS TIES WITH IRAN

MORONI: Indian Ocean archipelago and Saudi Arabia ally the Comoros said Friday it had cut diplomatic relations with Iran over what it termed Tehran's "aggression" towards Riyadh. A foreign ministry statement said the Comoros viewed Tehran as "interfering" in "the internal affairs of certain countries" and "not respecting diplomatic conventions". Comoros' foreign ministry said it had called on the Iranian ambassador to clear his desk.

The move came a week after the Comoros, a member of the Arab League, recalled its own ambassador from Tehran judging that Iran has created a climate of "gratuitous aggression" towards Riyadh. Relations between majority Shiite Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia dived after the January 2 ransacking of the Saudi embassy in Tehran and the Saudi consulate in Mashhad, Iran's second city.

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VIENNA: US Secretary of State John Kerry (left) meets Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif (right) yesterday. — AP

VIENNA: Iran and the US announced yesterday a prisoner swap in an apparent gesture of goodwill ahead of the expected entry into force of last year's mammoth nuclear deal between Tehran and six major powers. The four Iranian-American detainees set to be freed by Iran included Washington Post correspondent Jason Rezaian and Saeed Abedini, a pastor from Idaho, a senior US official said. The others are Amir Hekmati and Nosratollah Khosravi-Roodsari, Washington said. A fifth American, identified as Matthew Trevitick, was also to be released as part of a different process.

In exchange Washington said it had granted clemency to seven Iranians, six of whom are dual US-Iranian citizens, and dropped charges against 14 more. In Vienna meanwhile US Secretary of State John Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif hammered out the final details for the implementation of last July's nuclear deal. This was ahead of an expected UN nuclear watchdog announcement that Iran has complied with its side of the accord, allowing the lifting of sanctions, including on Iran's lifeblood oil exports.

Zarif said earlier as he arrived in the Austrian capital that this was a "good day for the world", removing "the

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COMMITTEE FORMED TO SPEED UP DEPORTATIONS

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TAIWAN'S TSAI WARNS CHINA AFTER BIG WIN

PAGE 12

COLUMNIST, FADHL'S SON JOIN RACE

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

MUNICIPALITY SET TO ALLOW BARBEQUING IN PARKS, BEACHES

KUWAIT: Acting Municipality Director Ahmed Al-Manfouhi told Al-Rai newspaper yesterday that the municipality will soon make an announcement allowing barbecuing at certain locations that have been environmentally regulated and readied. The locations include parks and other spots along the seafront that will be available for free. Manfouhi said that the municipality formed a special committee including representatives from TEC, PAAAFR and EPA to decide on suggested locations in a way that meets environmental conditions and regulations stated in the new environment law.

"Very strict measures will be taken against those who barbeque in non-designated locations," he warned, pointing out that all locations would be monitored by the municipality. He also noted that a meeting would be held soon to decide on these locations and declare them open for barbecuing. Municipal council member Ali Al-Moussa said a lack of services and periodic maintenance had been behind the previous environmental destruction caused by barbecuing and stressed the need to have new regulations including conditioning the use of environment-friendly charcoal and selling it to picnickers at reasonable prices.

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KUWAIT: The total number of candidates running for by-elections in the third electoral constituency rose to 21 yesterday after five more candidates filed their nominations with the elections committee including outspoken columnist Fuad Al-Hashim and Ahmed Nabil Al-Fadhl, son of the late MP.

Hashim stressed that Nabil Al-Fadhl had to be replaced by a man of the same caliber and potentials during this time of tension. "We need an MP who is not sectarian, tribal, belongs to a party or uses religious slogans," he underlined, noting that he had worked as a journalist for 35 years during which he witnessed 15 parliaments and that he had never thought of becoming a lawmaker because he believes that journalists are more powerful and effective in terms of getting ministers and officials to respond to their articles faster than ministers respond to grilling motions.

He also undermined the short period left of this parliament's tenure, noting that he at least wishes to lay some foundations and set examples to be followed and nurtured by his successors. "Some people have been parliamentarians for 40 years and did nothing so far, while others became MPs while totally penni-



Ahmed Nabil Al-Fadhl



Fuad Al-Hashim

less and were ousted by voters after amassing huge fortunes," he underlined, pointing out that his life was like an open book for voters.

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GAZA: Palestinians attend the opening of the Sheikh Hamad residential project in the southern Gaza Strip town of Khan Younis yesterday. — AFP

QATAR PROVIDES 1,000 NEW HOMES FOR GAZANS

GAZA: Qatari-funded construction projects have provided 1,000 new dwellings for Palestinians left homeless by the 2014 Gaza war with Israel, and a similar number for low-income families in the territory, officials said yesterday. The Gulf state's contribution is the sole significant sign of rebuilding in the Gaza Strip, where some 100,000 people remain displaced 18 months after the fighting, with economic growth stifled by Israeli and Egyptian blockades. Ismail Haniya, the Hamas chief in Gaza, called the completion of the first stage "a historic moment".

The Qatari donations have buoyed Gaza's de facto Islamist Hamas rulers, irking Israel and the US-backed Palestinian administration based in the occupied West Bank. Past efforts by Qatar to mediate between Hamas and Israel yielded little. After the 2014 war, Qatar pledged \$1 billion for building projects in Gaza, of which \$50 million was paid to owners of destroyed houses to fund the rebuilding of shelters. Qatar envoy Mohammed Al-Amadi said 1,000 new homes had been completed since.

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News

in brief

Fire at Saudi oil site

DUBAI: A fire that broke out yesterday at an industrial oil waste storage tank in the Saudi industrial city of Jubail was brought under control without any disruption to operations or casualties, Saudi petrochemical company Kayan said. Kayan, the fifth-largest petrochemical manufacturer by market value in Saudi Arabia, gave no details on what caused the fire but said it would announce the financial impact and any new developments at a later date. Saudi civil defense earlier reported the fire having been brought under control and published photos on its Twitter account of fire trucks trying to control the flames.

Queen Rania slams cartoon

AMMAN: Jordan's Queen Rania has hit back at a cartoon in French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo depicting drowned Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi as a grown-up refugee committing sexual offences in Germany, referring to the multiple acts of sexual assault blamed on migrants on New Year's Eve. In response Queen Rania posted a cartoon on Facebook and Twitter by Jordan's Osama Hajjaj depicting the little boy lying face down on the beach alongside an older child with a backpack and finally a doctor. The queen added the caption: "Aylan could've been a doctor, a teacher, a loving parent."

29 KILLED IN ATTACK ON BURKINA HOTEL

AUSSIE COUPLE ABDUCTED

OUAGADOUGOU: At least 29 people, many of them foreigners, were killed in an attack overnight on a top hotel in the capital of Burkina Faso, the latest country to be drawn into a regional jihadist battle against the West and its allies. A total of 126 people were freed, 33 of them wounded, from the four-star Splendid hotel after security forces retook the facility and nearby Cappuccino restaurant on Saturday more than 12 hours after the attack began, Interior Minister Simon Compaore told AFP. The assault on the two venues, popular with Westerners and UN personnel, was crushed by midday but the police and military were still combing the area for other suspects, a security source said.

Communications Minister Remi Dandjinou earlier gave a provisional figure of 26 killed and announced three days of mourning. The French foreign ministry said two of its nationals were among those killed and gave a toll of 27

dead "and around 150 injured". Compaore said "three jihadists - an Arab and two black Africans - have been killed". The security source said four jihadists were killed, two of them women, and that the victims were of 18 nationalities.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed the attack on behalf of an affiliate, saying the strike on the former French colony was in "revenge against France and the disbelieving West", according to a statement carried by US-based monitoring group SITE. AQIM said the gunmen were from the Al-Murabitoun group of notorious Algerian extremist Mokhtar Belmokhtar. The attack will heighten concerns that jihadist groups are casting their net wider in search of targets in west Africa, two months after a siege at a luxury hotel in neighboring Mali, where 20 people were killed, against mostly foreigners.

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OUAGADOUGOU: This image taken from television shows a woman being led to safety yesterday. — AP



KUWAIT: Buildings in a new residential area located northwest of Sulaibikhat, where apartments were allocated to Sawaber residential complex's Kuwaiti tenants.



The new buildings are flanked by columns of smoke from nearby power plants. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

SAWABER TENANTS DISAPPOINTED BY LACK OF SERVICES AT NEW HOMES

'REPLACEMENT FLATS' ALLOCATED IN NORTHWEST SULAIBIKHAT

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: After a decision was made to demolish the Sawaber residential complex, one of the solutions offered to Kuwaiti tenants was to move to replacement flats in northwest Sulaibikhat. Those who agreed to this option were given the keys to their apartments more than a month ago and were told the flats were

ready for them to move in.

Last week, all remaining tenants of Sawaber received official eviction orders, so some of them started moving to their new flats in northwest Sulaibikhat. Although they were told the flats were ready for occupancy, residents found that many amenities and services are missing or not as they were told or as they expected.

Disappointed

Bu Salem is one of such tenants who started to move there last week. He was disappointed by the problems he faced when he arrived. "My first shock was when I used the elevator and got stuck in it with my mom and the maid. They start panicking as nobody came to rescue us after we rang the emergency bell and even my mobile did not work as the signal was lost. After more than 15 minutes, I forced open the doors and managed to get my family out," he told Kuwait Times.

This new residential area that is not inhabited yet apart from a few families includes 62 buildings built by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare for Kuwaiti citizens. Each building consists of five floors, with only one flat on each floor. But Bu Salem sees some positive features in his new house. "The flat is spacious - around 400 square meters - although I would rather receive a house, as we are three families living together. Also the location is not bad, as it is near the seaside, though far from the city," he pointed out.

"But there are many other problems. The

parking lot is very small and can accommodate less than 30 vehicles, and it is for three buildings. This means each flat will only get space for two vehicles, although they know that we are mostly multigenerational families and each flat will have at least four vehicles, not mentioning when guests come to visit us, who won't find a place to park. This problem is very annoying and we have no clue how they can correct it," stressed Bu Salem.

No water

One of the worst problems he faced was of water. "Although they told us to move in, they have not connected the water supply yet. So I had to order a water tanker that cost me KD 7 every day. I had to fill the tank daily as a siphon in the toilet was broken and water flowed continuously till the tank got empty. For two weeks they didn't fix it, so I brought a plumber myself and paid him. Now I call the water tanker once every three days. They told me they will connect the water after at least 50 percent of the tenants of the whole area move in," he said.



Damage can be seen at the door of one of the apartments.

Bu Salem had more complaints. "The doors need to be adjusted, as they don't close properly. I complained and they said I have to wait till my turn comes. There is no haris (janitor) to help us if we need something. Also, garbage is piled on every corner of the street near the building as there are no trash bins yet. There are also no co-ops, banks, polyclinic, police station and other basic services," he fumed.



The parking lot.

OOREDOO SPONSORS KUWAIT'S BIGGEST ANNUAL FESTIVAL

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of international Ooredoo Group, announced its partnership with Hala February 2016 Festival, Kuwait's biggest annual event which kicks off on January 28 and lasts until the first week of March.

Commenting on this partnership, Ooredoo's Director of Corporate Communications, Mijbil Alayoub said: "We're happy to be taking part in Kuwait's biggest annual event. Hala February attracts people from Kuwait's different communities, and even visitors from outside Kuwait. Additionally, it marks Kuwait's national holidays, and this year's program includes a variety of activities and events that range from cultural to entertaining."

This year's round of festivities will kick off in with the launch of Hala February camp, which will take place in Bnaider on Route 258. The camp will include a designated area to support small-sized youth projects. The camp will include educational, cultural and religious symposiums, as well as shows and competitions for children.

For all the visitors of Kuwait, Ooredoo is offering free prepaid SIM cards at its branches in Kuwait International Airport,

Saad Al-Abdullah Airport, Nuaiseeb Boarder Control Checkpoint and Salmi Boarder Control Checkpoint.

One of the most attractive features of Hala February is the annual musical concerts which will be held at the Ice Skating Rink. All artists of the concerts will appear on "Studio Ooredoo," a show that will broadcast on Kuwait National Television. Ooredoo will also sponsor "Alo February," a daily radio game show with valuable prizes.

In addition to these events, a marathon will be held on Gulf Road between Kuwait Towers and Souq Sharq for all age groups, in addition to a graffiti competition and a show jumping competition which will be organized at the Kuwait Equestrian Club.

In spirit of the occasion, Ooredoo will organize its own employee competition which encourages employees to come up with innovative and creative ideas dedicated to Kuwait. Ideas will be judged by a panel of and winners will receive valuable prizes from the company. Ooredoo's partnership with Hala February reflects the company's belief in its social responsibility toward the community in which it operates and in the importance of effectively taking part in national events and activities.



KUWAIT: The speakers are seen during a roundtable titled 'Effective strategies of metro and railway projects.' — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSES RAILWAY PROJECTS IN GCC

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Experts shared their experiences of railway projects and explained Kuwait and GCC countries' need for considering these projects for economic development at a seminar organized by the Kuwait Economic Society. The roundtable was titled 'Effective strategies of metro and railway projects' and held on Wednesday at the Regency Hotel. GCC member states are working on implementing railway projects to connect their cities and capitals with each other. Establishing the infrastructure is estimated to cost \$15.4 billion.

Steve Lankester of Parsons Brinckerhoff said Kuwait needs metro and railways projects to face continued expansion of new urban areas in the southern and northern parts of the country. "To realize such projects, we have to think about the land and spaces that we need to build on, and also consider structures for stations, tunnels and public areas. Metro projects need concerted efforts of both the private and public sectors as they have many technical details during the phases of construction," he explained. Lankester pointed out that metro projects need a number of technical steps which should be implemented accurately after conducting detailed studies on the goals of these projects.

Benefits

About the key benefits of the railway and metro projects, Nada Abu Al-Samh, a financial analyst at the GCC General Secretariat, explained that the projects will expand regional networks. "These projects will create a sustainable railway industry, develop a GCC railway network of 12,000 km, see investments of around \$250 billion, create significant numbers of jobs (10,000), significant investment opportunities for economic diversification, and will strengthen economic and social integration in the GCC," she said. Samh added that the project will link all the GCC countries. The railway will start from Kuwait and wind through Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and United Arab Emirates before ending in Oman.

John Thomas, Regulatory Affairs Advisor at UAE's Etihad Rail, said that an establishment was formed in Abu Dhabi in 2009 and a plan was formulated to transport passengers by rail and connect them with the six emirates. Added that the Etihad itself manages the infrastructure of the metro and this is a successful example in Abu Dhabi, advising all GCC countries to take the same steps.

Evaluation

Meanwhile, Connie Crawford, an expert in management of public transport projects at the Louis Berger Group, said there should be planning, construction and evaluation before setting up metro projects, adding that Kuwait is still designing the project and this will take time.

"A metro project in any country across the world includes expansion plans for several years - up to 100 - during which the system can be developed every few years to deal with growing population and urban expansion. Metro transport should be carried out in parallel with the

development of cities to secure the maintenance of economic development, particularly in Kuwait," she explained.

Steven Webb, an expert at a French company specialized in metro projects' operation, said metro transport will lessen traffic jams GCC member states are suffering from, adding that the network in Kuwait will be connected with all GCC countries. "This needs full harmonization of all means of transport connected with the metro project. The system of public transport through buses will be integrated with metro networks in order to provide a complete service to citizens and residents as well," he pointed out.

KRCS TO LAUNCH AID CAMPAIGN FOR SYRIAN TOWN OF MADAYA

KUWAIT: A five-day relief aid campaign will be launched today by Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) to help the malnourished citizens of the Syrian town of Madaya. KRCS Chairman of the Board Dr Hilal Al-Sayer told KUNA that the campaign will help gather necessities and foodstuff for people in Madaya, adding that the rough situation in the Syrian town required such action.

He called on the international community to intensify its efforts to help those in the town, affirming that now is the time to show a sincere gesture of hope for the people of Madaya. KRCS will be able to receive money donations online and also physical ones at its headquarters in Shuwaik residential area. UNICEF recently confirmed that severe cases of malnutrition amongst the children of the besieged Syrian town. — KUNA



Dr Hilal Al-Sayer

LATE SHEIKH ABDULLAH AL-NOURI: PERSONALITY OF DIVERSE INTEREST

KUWAIT: Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri, whose demise anniversary falls today, was a unique Kuwaiti personality of diverse knowledge and experience; a scholar, businessman and explorer. Sheikh Nouri, who was born in 1905, had qualifications for leadership and multiple skills and interest by nature. When he was very young, he was not a child as commonly identified; investing his time not for playing but for learning and other useful and constructive activities. It was his father who had taught him basics of the language; and later he attended classes of scholars, namely Sheikh Abdullah Al-Dehian and Sheikh Abdulwahab Al-Fares.

Years later, Sheikh Nouri taught at Mohammad Al-Ojairi School in Al-Gibla district, located in the heart of the Kuwait City, then he worked as a teacher at Al-Mubarakia and Al-Ahmadia schools, before traveling to countries such as India for trade.

He was appointed court clerk in 1926, later served as the chief clerk, before Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber employed him as his special secretary. In 1942, Nouri worked as a vol-

unteer for three years at the religious institute. Having rich religious knowledge and being eloquent, Nouri had served as prayer imam and sermon lecturer. He had also served as inspector and guide of imams.

In 1953, Al-Nouri became in charge of Kuwait Radio and personally prepared and presented various religious and health programs. He was a reference in jurisprudence, a renowned writer and traveller, leaving behind a heritage of books on various issues.

In 1970, he travelled to Muslim nations and countries with Muslim communities, raising donations for the Muslims there. In 1977, he distributed money to schools and hospitals. He also travelled to Australia where he helped in establishing an Islamic school.

However, this project was not completed due to his demise. Kuwaitis who followed his steps after his death formed a society after his name. It was proclaimed in 1981. His society is proceeding with the good deeds, raising donations for the Muslims, building mosques, schools, orphanage houses and hospitals in various countries. — KUNA

KUWAIT DELIVERS 19 TONS OF AID TO SYRIAN REFUGEES IN JORDAN

AMMAN: Some 19 tons of relief aid donated by the Kuwaiti people were delivered to Syrian refugees in Jordan yesterday, an official of the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) said. The supplies, including food, clothes, bedclothes and detergents are being handed over to the refugees in Amman and refugee camps straddling the Jordanian-Syrian borders, said Ziad Abu Taleb, the deputy supervisor of the IICO bureau in the country, during a ceremony marking launch of the campaign.

The relief operation is part of ongoing Kuwaiti support for the refugees that began with flare-up of the Syrian crisis six years ago,

said Abu Taleb who lauded facilities provided by the Kuwaiti diplomats in the country for the humanitarian efforts.

The campaign was launched in coordination with the local Islamic Charity Foundation, chairman of which, Dr Ibrahim Abulezz, expressed gratitude to Kuwait for relieving the refugees and supporting Jordanian charities. The supplies arrived in the country, last week, aboard a plane of the Kuwaiti Air Force. The 19-ton cargo is part of 40 tons pledged by the people of Kuwait. Jordan hosts 1.4 million Syrian refugees, including 16,000 encamped along the border with Syria. —KUNA





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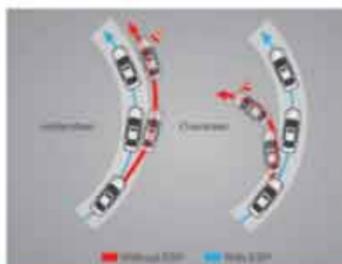
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In Brief

FOREIGN MINISTRY REFUTES ALLEGATIONS AGAINST DIPLOMAT

KUWAIT: The Foreign Ministry refuted yesterday social media allegations made against Kuwait's Ambassador to Senegal Mohammad Khalaf, stressing that the diplomat was not accused of any suspicious behavior or misconduct. A statement by a ministerial said that the ministry will look into issues connected with the performance of its diplomats; however, unlawful allegations should not be made against Kuwait's Ambassadors without evidence. —KUNA



ENVOY ATTENDS INAUGURATION

KUWAIT: Representing His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Guatemala and non-resident ambassador to United Mexican States Sameeh Jawhar Hayat attended Guatemala's new president's inauguration Jimmy Morales. The ambassador conveyed the greetings and congratulations of His Highness the Amir to the president of Guatemala, wishing better bilateral relations for the common interests of both sides.



AL-BABTAIN LAUDS EGYPT'S JUDICIARY

ALEXANDRIA: Abdul Aziz Al-Babtain, Chairman of Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation, has lauded Egypt's judiciary and 'bold stands' by the Egyptian Judges Club. Babtain was speaking during a recent ceremony organized by the club, honoring him as an eminent Arab personality that has influenced and preserved Arab culture. The ceremony marked Egyptian Judges' Day. He praised the Egyptian judges, namely those who have served in Kuwait, as well their "bold stances" to preserve the judiciary's independence. The ceremony was attended by senior Egyptian officials, dignitaries and law personalities. — KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Workers prepare the 'largest bowl of Omani delight' during activities held currently at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village. — KUNA photo

FACING HISTORY

By Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

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Is it a coincidence? In this month, January 1624, Abbas Al-Safawi and his forces carried out the Baghdad massacre following a three-month siege, during which Muslims ate cadavers, and thousands of Sunnis became victims of that massacre and mosques were destroyed and replaced with trash dumps, including the tomb of Imam Abu Hanifa Al-Numan.

Today, the same tragedy is being repeated in another place - Syrian cities are surrounded by new Safawis, and history repeats itself. Muslims are besieged in Syrian cities to a point where they eat leaves of trees until nothing is left. The dictator of Syria with Iran and Russia behind him is responsible for this massacre, and history will not forget this shame.

To those besieging children and women until death, the siege was witnessed and there can be no justifications, and will not be saved by any stands. They are criminals against human beings, and history will not forget them as it did not forget Abbas Al-Safawi, who was cursed. In the Baghdad siege and Safawi's army massacre, Arab Shiites stood next to their Sunni brothers in humanitarian contributions documented by history. Islam, with its sects, has justice and mercy, and when a group loses the values of mercy and justice, they lose the values of Islam with it.

When terrorist groups that behead people appeared, all Muslim scholars were against them, Sunni and Shiite, so what is going on with Shiite scholars today who see the siege and the terroristic spirit personified by the Assad regime and forces backed by Iran and Russia and none of them speaks except on very rare occasions - where is justice? Where is mercy?

Today, we are at a crossroads - either we all stand against starving children and women regardless of their beliefs, or have the nation shredded forever, and this is what the enemies are looking for. The aim behind the siege is not to starve women and children - no this is not the biggest reason despite its enormity, because Assad's barrel bombs kill manifold women and children - the goal is to make the nation fragmented to a point of no return, and this is the secret behind the siege which presses hard on the consciences of our nation.

A message to Arab Shiites and their true scholars - today is the day of reckoning. Either you speak loudly against the siege, or history will record that you contributed to the shredding of the nation and gave extremists from all sides a new historic justification, with which the reform of the reformists will be of no use. We are not in a political argument, and not over who is right and who is wrong. No, we are not in this sterile dispute - we are facing a humanitarian and Islamic stand that we do not accept even for our enemies.

Today, we are face-to-face with history.

FEMALE KUWAITI STUDENTS CONCLUDE TRIP TO CHINA

NINGXIA/DAKAR: Excelling female students, partaking in a Kuwait Fund for Arabic Economic Development (KFAED) sponsored trip, ended yesterday their visit to the Ningxia province, China. Speaking to KUNA, several students expressed their gratitude towards the KFAED and the Ministry of Education for including them in the trip in which they were informed about the various contributions of the fund. The students also said that they were educated about the traditions and culture of the Ningxia province which has a Muslim majority.

KFAED has funded 35 varied projects in China, worth a total \$887 million, which focus on roads, airports, ports, railway tracks, hospitals, the environment and education. Since 2010, KFAED had sponsored trips for excellent high-school Kuwaiti students in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. The trips focused on the fund contributions to major development projects around the globe.

Philanthropic aid
Meanwhile, another group of Kuwaiti students concluded a week-long exploratory tour to Senegal where they examined Kuwaiti philanthropic aid for the nation and main tourist attractions. Ahmad Al-Sarraf, in charge of the media department of

KFAED which organized the educating trip, said the high-school students were impressed with Senegal's unique culture. They also learned about KFAED's humanitarian projects with visits to their sites, he added.

They sensed significance of these ventures and their contribution to Senegal's development, Sarraf told KUNA, lauding the local road authority for organizing the tours and aiding KFAED in preparing the trip schedules. He also praised officials from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education who accompanied the students, following up on their daily affairs and offering help for them. The students' punctuality and adherence to the schedules reflected a good image about Kuwait and ensured success of the trip, he said.

Dr Khaled Al-Nafisi, a member of the ministry delegation taking part in the expedition, affirmed that the students learned about Kuwait's aid for developing nations in general, and Senegal in particular, in addition to practicing collective work and protocols of the country's official representation abroad.

Contrary to the prevailing understanding that Kuwaiti aid is restricted to constructing roads, the students as a result of their field inspections determined that such ventures help in transforming communities' life style and creating new ones, Dr Nasif

explained. Affirming the Ministry's keenness on involvement in such activities to help in students' upbringing, he expressed gratitude to KFAED for organizing the journey.

Boosting development

Student Ali Bou-Shiba acknowledged that he has had no faintest idea about KFAED's contributions abroad, "but as a result of this expedition, I have become acquainted with the fund development ventures and realized how important they are for boosting development in Senegal."

His fellow student, Abdullah Al-Rashidi, said KFAED's aid for the needy reflects Kuwait's advocacy of helping developing nations. Another, Nasser Al-Huwail, affirmed that such assistance helped the Senegalese in their development plans, adding that he had also learned about history colonialism and slavery.

The students were honored with a lunch by the domestic road authority. And the Kuwaiti diplomatic mission hosted the young citizens, briefing them about the diplomats' tasks as to serving the State interests and looking after the Kuwaiti community affairs. They had visited markets, tourist landmarks and key facilities. The expedition, themed "Be a High-Achiever," was first launched in 2010. — KUNA



NINGXIA: Excelling female Kuwaiti students are pictured during a KFAED-sponsored trip to China. — KUNA photos

INDIA'S ASTROSAT

By Labeed Abdal

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India's launch of its first dedicated space observatory from the spaceport of Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh indicates its quantitative and qualitative competitiveness in world races where everyone always fights to take the lead. Confirmations made by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) Chairman AS Kiran Kumar that "the locally-made Astrosat was launched into space onboard a locally-made rocket carrying six satellites, including four American ones" again indicates both major and minor countries' persistence to achieve aspirations and better life for future generations.

Moreover, placing the telescope that was manufactured by ISRO with the aim of studying celestial objects including black holes, stars and galaxies, 650 km above Earth's surface on a five-year mission,

International leadership and advancement belongs to all mankind on a planet inhabited by all kinds and races

once more emphasizes that nothing is impossible with patience and persistence. With this step, India will be the fourth country worldwide, after the US, EU and Japan, to have an observatory orbiting in space, which is a turning point in the history and the future of the entire international community that is already full of challenges and change of balances of powers.

We critically need to reconsider our UN membership in view of drastic changes in the circumstances that called for establishing the United Nations in the first place. It is also noteworthy to mention that the UN came for all nations not only for those with shared and common interests against the entire world with all its ethnicities and regional communities.

International leadership and advancement belongs to all mankind on a planet inhabited by all kinds and races of people rather than those practicing martial (war) arts, testing weapons and explosives in their 'lab zones'. International silence occasionally needs to throw some stones in stagnant waters in order to avoid hearing promises, then end up with nothing but mirage and the sound of some hollow drums here and there!

In my view

EGYPT: A CASE STUDY



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Security is a blessing, and no terrorist group can offer anything better. Egypt is preparing to mark the fifth anniversary of the revolution of Jan 25, 2011, which overthrew President Hosni Mubarak's regime. This anniversary comes amid harsh circumstances for all Arab states because terrorism is knocking on every door. According to official reports, it seems that the Egyptian government expects some violent acts and incitement of the public by some terrorist groups, most notably from the Muslim Brotherhood. There are incitements to target security forces, police, army and the judiciary and calls for demonstrations. Some of these calls are being highlighted on Facebook.

I believe it is the right of the state to confront vandals who threaten the security of the country, but the question remains about what the Muslim Brotherhood wants? Why is it still mixing religion with politics and using the youth as fuel for its agenda? The Egyptian ministry of awqaf is trying to confront the Muslim Brotherhood's calls to demonstrate against the government during the anniversary with a common sermon in all mosques in Egypt hailing the blessings of security and safety. In contrast, the terrorist Brotherhood group believes that participation in demonstrations is jihad in the name of Allah against the Egyptian state. This is insolence and ignorance and it is a great shame for anyone to trust such suspicious calls.

What will happen during the anniversary of the Egyptian revolution is an internal affair and I'm confident that it will be dealt with. I'm cornered on the spread of such extremist ideas among young people and young women in particular, not necessarily in Egypt but elsewhere, especially through Facebook, which seems to be a powerful social site with a huge impact in Egypt. Let's not disregard the fact that Kuwait has a large Egyptian community and perhaps a few may sympathize with the fishy calls of the Muslim Brotherhood. This must be taken into consideration.

I do not see any difference between a group like the Muslim Brotherhood and IS and other terrorist groups, but I also wonder what they are seeking from causing chaos in their own country. It is everyone's duty to stand up in the face of those who try to create a mess, whether they have a long beard or not. This is why I believe Egypt is part of us here in the Gulf and we are obliged to support it now and always.

Parliaments in the world have a significant role in shaping and influencing public opinion, and are a measure of the pulse of the street. In Egypt, the large parliament inevitably has a positive role to keep the state, its facilities and its citizens safe and has a duty to be strong and supportive of the state's incentive to guard them from any aggressor or calls for demonstrations and dissemination of violence, especially since Egypt does not suffer from the hateful sectarian that we face here in the Gulf. This is truly a significant blessing.

Why should we care about Egypt? This is an interesting question. Egypt's stability is our stability and returning it back to its position regionally and internationally is our strength in the Gulf as well, and we should not be fooled by any other calls. We face the same threat of terror.

The Egyptian government will face this anniversary with more awareness and firmness which is important for the protection of the lives of many innocent people and the protection of the name and reputation of Egypt internationally. It is also an important lesson for us.



MP Kamel Al-Awadhi



MP Fares Al-Otaibi



MP Ahmad Al-Qudhaibi



MP Faisal Al-Kandari



MP Askar Al-Enezi

MAIDS' RECRUITMENT COMPANY ALMOST READY: MP AWADHI

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: MP Kamel Al-Awadhi said the establishment of a Kuwaiti company for recruiting domestic helpers is about to be completed and only final touches are still needed before it is officially launched. Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh has already approved the company's founding committee's formation, capital, share value and distribution to shareholders, the lawmaker said. The parliament last year approved the creation of a shareholding company to handle the recruitment of domestic helpers in Kuwait.

Grilling postponed

In other news, MP Fares Al-Otaibi said

after declaring his intention to grill the finance minister over lifting subsidies, he received various calls from the government to talk him out of his plans.

"Within a few days following filing my grilling motion, the government made some tangible decisions to put things back on the right track including going back on its decision to increase fuel prices in a Cabinet meeting held on January 3," he claimed, adding that since the issue became one of public concern, the government announced intentions to refer to the parliament a study on lifting subsidies for review by relevant committees. "Accordingly, I have decided postponing my grilling motion of the finance minister," he said, noting that he had been promised

by the finance minister himself to discuss the matter with the parliament and not to take any unilateral decision in this regard.

Abuse of power

MP Ahmad Al-Qudhaibi warned Minister of Commerce and Industry Yousef Al-Ali of returning gravel mining lands previously withdrawn from companies for violating the industry authority's conditions to the same firms. "The minister must respect the allocation committee's decisions and not interfere in its work," he underlined, accusing Al-Ali of abusing his powers and describing such a step as 'violation of public funds'.

Anticorruption bill

MP Faisal Al-Kandari stressed that

approving the anticorruption bill reflects a state of government-parliament persistence on boosting monitoring tools. He said the previous bill annulled by a court order was replaced by another more accurate one that mandates politicians and senior government officials to file financial disclosure statements that would impose strict monitoring and help fight corruption.

Bedoon martyrs

MP Askar Al-Enezi filed a proposal calling for including bedoon (stateless) martyrs, their children and military bedoons who had taken part in Kuwait's liberation war to lists of bedoons deserving Kuwaiti citizenship.

COUPLE ARRESTED FOR LIQUOR TRADE

By Hanan Al-Saadoun



Coastguard officers are seen with falcons after thwarting an attempt to smuggle the birds.

KUWAIT: Ahmadi detectives arrested a citizen and an Asian woman for trading in liquor, said security sources. Case papers indicate that detectives had been tipped off concerning the suspects' activities and after close surveillance, an undercover agent was sent to make a deal with the suspects, who were arrested red-handed. On searching their house, detectives found 49 bottles of liquor and KD 1,687 in cash. A case was filed.

Falcon smuggling foiled

Coastguards foiled an attempt to smuggle 23 falcons on a boat arriving from Iran, said security sources, noting that the coastguards spotted and inspected the boat in Kuwait's national waters and found the birds. A case was filed.



Two people arrested yesterday on charges of trading in liquor.

CANDIDATES FOR BY-ELECTIONS REACH 21

KUWAIT: Some 21 Kuwaitis have so far registered to run for by-election in the 3rd constituency, the Interior Ministry's directorate of elections affairs has said. Five new candidates registered yesterday, head of the directorate Salah Al-Shatti added. Registration door closes by the end of January 22 working ours. Some 10 people applied in the first day, five in the second and one on Friday, candidates. — KUNA

KDIPA KEEN ON EXTENSIVE INVESTMENT FORUM

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) is hard at work to complete the organizational requirements and measures for its first investment promotion forum, KDIPA said in a statement yesterday.

KDIPA is keen that the pivots of the Kuwait Investment Forum, slated for March 8-9, be comprehensive so as to reflect the positive transformations the country has been going through, as the current mid-term development plan is entering its second year, it

added. The forum agenda has been prepared, together with topics of each session, according to the statement. The forum will be concluded with an open session on the "future of investment for sustainable development."

In addition, participants will review successful experiences of foreign companies that have been investing in Kuwait recently, making utmost benefit of the advantages and exemptions offered by Law 116/2013 on promoting direct investment.

Topics to be covered by the forum discussions include bases and prospects of economic and development policy; Kuwait's advantages as an attractive investment destination; legislative developments to support investment environment; safeguards of direct investment; and the role of small and medium size enterprises (SMEs). According to the statement, the fourth session will be the longest, devoted to reviewing a multitude of available and promising investment opportunities in Kuwait. — KUNA

KUWAIT ACHIEVES REMARKABLE PROGRESS IN CURING EPILEPSY

BEIRUT: Kuwait has achieved significant progress in curing epilepsy, on the Middle East level, a senior neurologist said yesterday. More than 30 batteries have been implanted in epilepsy patients in Kuwait over the past few years, head of the Kuwait Neurology Society Dr Jassim Al-Hashel, told KUNA on the sidelines of the sixth Lebanese-Kuwaiti association on epilepsy.

Hashel, also head of the Neurology Section at Ibn Sina Hospital, stressed the momentousness of enhancing communication among specialists through scientific gatherings and such conferences to exchange expertise on the latest developments and methods of treatment.

Meanwhile, head of Epilepsy Program at Ibn Sina Hospital Dr Maher Orabi said that the major aim of the Lebanon conference is to develop a link between the two countries for combating epilepsy. According to Orabi, 12 surgeries have been conducted for epilepsy patients in Kuwait, which is among the top Mideast countries in the field.

For Neurology and Stroke Consultant at Amiri Hospital Dr Khaled Al-Hassan, the conference offers a good opportunity for Lebanese and Kuwaiti specialists to exchange expertise and promote medical skills in neurology, epilepsy in particular. — KUNA

MINISTRY: CO-OPS MUST OBTAIN PERMISSION BEFORE ACTING

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor has warned various co-operative societies against directly contracting various companies, organizing competitions or offering public tenders and bids without prior permission from the ministry in writing. The ministry also urged all co-op boards to

have their accounting departments review all cheques issued from banks they deal with in addition to monthly accounts with their respective auditors for approval prior to signing the cheques by chairmen and treasurers. The ministry urged all co-ops to provide copies of security, handling and umrah contracts for auditing purposes.

KUWAIT EXAMINES FOREIGN TEACHING EXPERTISE

GENEVA: Kuwait through the International Bureau of Education (IBE) is seeking to examine expertise of Scandinavian and Southeast Asian States in their advanced teaching of sociology, humanities and natural sciences, said the State envoy to UNESCO.

Teaching internationally-oriented curricula, namely natural sciences and applications, lenses Kuwait's status among advanced states in scientific research; that is what Kuwait aspires to with respect of future policies,' said Dr Mehsaal Johar Hayat, the State of Kuwait Permanent Delegate at the UNESCO, on Saturday, following conclusion of the IBE meetings late on Friday. He also indicated that Oman, as current chairman of the IBE, could help Kuwait and other

countries in the Arab-Islamic Group to benefit from the bureau expertise. Ambassador Hayat confirmed anew that Kuwait's overhauling of the teaching sector does not include the religious and patriotic textbooks, noting that the focus would be on natural sciences and mathematics, teaching methods of which have been greatly improved worldwide.

Moreover, he called for wide-scale overhauling of the education in the Arab world to catch up with the tremendous scientific development, made in other nations. 'We won't be able to stay abreast without boosting students' abilities and stimulating them to be creative and innovative.' Kuwait is currently on the right track in this respect, he added. — KUNA



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Al-Anbaa
WHAT IF SADDAM HAD REMAINED IN POWER?

By Sami Al-Nisf

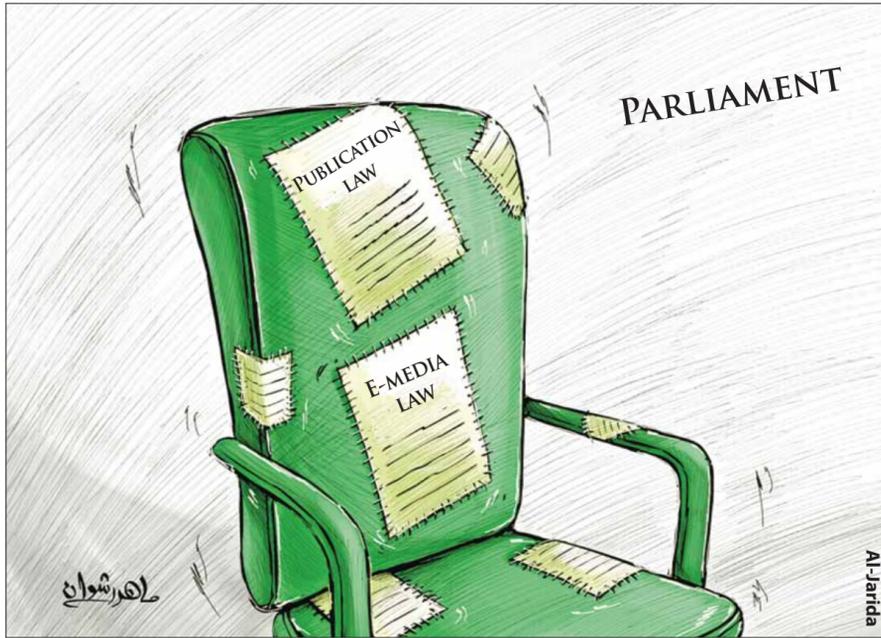
During a recent diwaniya discussion, a GCC diplomat said that Kuwait and some GCC states were wrong in supporting international military efforts to topple the tyrant Saddam Hussein (and Gaddafi later on). I argued that such support was something we should be proud of because nobody heard any criticism to toppling tyrants who had been oppressing their peoples when international troops invaded Germany and toppled Hitler or invaded Panama and toppled Noriega.

Saddam remaining in power or his succession by one of his sons, Oday or worse by Qusai, would have meant the continuation of criminal acts against the Iraqi people and neighbors. He might have used chemical or biological weapons that are easily and quickly produced, to strike Kuwait because he had enough scientists and easy access to the cheap raw material needed for the process. He might as well have embarked on another military adventure by attempting to invade Saudi Arabia because Saddam was very unpredictable. Toppling him was surely heartening to at least 85 percent of the Iraqi people and neighboring countries. It stopped his wars and paved the way for democracy, liberty and resuming Iraq's development plans. The post 2003 sectarianism, assassinations and explosions were but normal reactions of Saddam's own intelligence, that ever since coming to power in 1968 until his fall in 2003, had never stopped harming the Iraqi people's interests and destroying the country. So, please stop viewing Saddam's reign as 'paradise' for the Iraqi people and its neighbors!

As soon as 'coup regimes' came to power in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Libya, they started involving their own countries in both domestic and foreign wars, sending their subjects to prisons and burying many of them in mass graves. Simultaneously, all great beautiful ideas about loving one's own country, sacrifice, Arab unity and scientific and economic development have been destroyed and replaced by disgusting dividing ones, killing, injustice and reviving the worst human traits like treachery, espionage, ungratefulness and reporting on family and relatives, things which Saddam used to brag about. Such revolutionary regimes and those who implanted them had to be toppled with the same devastation they had first come to power with!

All stories undoubtedly show that Saddam, Assad, Saleh and Gaddafi's regimes deliberately stored huge amounts of weapons and ammunition in various locations in their countries before they fell. They had also spread hatred and division amongst various sects of their peoples with the intention of triggering civil wars. It is no secret that those tyrants' intelligences have a lot to do with the current destruction in the Arab world. So, please let's not ask for mercy for tyrants, criminals and suspicious leaders because they brought nothing but destruction before and after their falls and do not deserve to be praised by the peoples who had been afflicted by their injustice and tyranny. Finally, in their memoirs, both Syrian vice presidents Abdul Haleem Khaddam and Farouq Al-Shara said that Saddam had started preparing to invade Kuwait the moment he stopped the war with Iran. They documented this by letters, documents and meetings that showed how he was trying to secure his front with Iran before invading Kuwait. The memoirs also refuted Saddam's false accusations and claims against Kuwait and showed that his meeting with US ambassador Glaspie would have changed nothing because the invasion decision had been already made, which was also confirmed by some Iraqi military leaders who had taken part in the invasion and released their memoirs in 2003.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



Al-Anbaa
'IF THE LORD OF THE HOUSE PLAYS DRUMS'

By Nermin Al-Houti

I was watching TV on Saturday evening as I usually do, and I was changing channels to find what could attract me to watch, when I found the program "Ten in the Evening," and away of my rejection of the presenter's method, what made me watch it was the topic which is considered the current issue in Egypt, which is: The eruption of many fires in several villages without knowing the reasons for this, which has scared those in the concerned villages.

My issue is not with the Almanasfour village, and it is not in the show's guests - my focus is on the fake media that works on making the public angry, especially that some of them do not have the media and science culture, and this is what I saw and noticed in the Almanasfour issue.

The show began with a summarized explanation from both Mayor Amer Ibrahim and MP Talaat Al-Suwaidi, bearing in mind that the person who presented the show should do that from the media point of view, but regardless of that, following the explanation of the mayor and MP, then from what other guests said, who all agreed on one thing, which is the presence jinn (genies), and here the subject changed by the show's presenter, who was the ridiculing of people who believe in the existence of jinn.

We moved away from Almanasfour and issue became of settling accounts - we do not know its merits, and we started seeing a wrestling match between the presenter and his guests over it, and the villages where fires are widespread.

The funny part is that those preparing the program brought outsider psychiatrists to give their opinion on this issue, as if the entire society consists of psychiatric patients, and the presenter

moved away from the core issue, and his focus turned to that there is no existence of jinn and that science is what moves the world. Regrettably, in each episode of that show, the conclusion ended with a joke that made it lower and did not enhance it, but as it is said: "The smart's one fault can be considered one thousand", and this is what took place is that program that is blighted by having religious and language mistakes, and does not learn from previous mistakes. In the episode about Alamasfour village, one psychiatrist over the phone could not complete a proverb, so we tell the "Ten in the Evening" program: "If the lord of the house plays drums, the rest of those in it will be dancers."

A last word:

102. "They followed what the Shayatin (devils) gave out (false) of the magic) in the lifetime of Sulaiman (Solomon). Sulaiman did not disbelieve, but the Shayatin (devils) disbelieved, teaching men magic and such things that came down at Babylon to the two angels, Harut and Marut, but neither of these two (angels) taught anyone (such things) till they had said, "We are only for trial, so disbelieve not (by learning this magic from us)." And from these (angels) people learn that by which they cause separation between man and his wife, but they could not thus harm anyone except by Allah's Leave. And they learn that which harms them and profits them not. And indeed they knew that the buyers of it (magic) would have no share in the Hereafter. And how bad indeed was that for which they sold their own selves, if they but knew." Al-Baqarah / Holy Quran.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

Crime

Report

647 arrested in Mirqab crackdown

KUWAIT: The Capital security directorate launched a wide scale inspection campaign in Mirqab in search of illegal residents, said security sources, noting that the campaign headed by Capital security director Maj Gen Ibrahim Al-Tarrah resulted in the arrest of 647 illegal residents including five who had infiltrated into Kuwait. The sources explained that the arrested expats included 35 with expired residencies, 25 wanted people, 40 in violation of residency laws, 106 without IDs, 15 peddlers and gamblers and four wanted for financial claims.

Car crashes into hospital

An Asian man was arrested for allegedly ramming his vehicle deliberately into Jahra Hospital's radiology department, said security sources, noting that the man claimed a malfunction in his accelerator pedal made him lose control.

Landmine found

A citizen reported finding an antitank mine in Zour desert, said security sources, noting that a bomb squad was dispatched to the scene to remove the mine.

Forgery

A citizen was arrested for registering 15-year-old twin brothers in his citizenship file, said security sources, noting that the twins originally held their father's Dominican citizenship and with the help of the Kuwaiti mother, arrangements were made with the suspect in return for KD 25,000. A case was filed.

Vehicle destroyed

A parked vehicle caught fire for unknown reasons, said security sources, noting that the fire completely destroyed it. The sources believed that the vehicle might have been stolen and used in illegal activities before the robbers set it ablaze. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

Kitchen fire

A fire broke out in the kitchen of an apartment in a Jleeb Al-Shuyukh building when a cooking gas cylinder exploded, said security sources, noting that the fire caused considerable damage.

Theft

A Syrian man filed a complaint with Ardiya police accusing his brother-in-law of stealing KD 5,000 from his house, said security sources. A case was filed and the suspect was summoned for further investigations. — Al-Rai

CONDOLENCES

Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief,
management and staff convey their
deepest condolences to

ANTONIO COELHO

ON THE SAD DEMISE OF HIS BROTHER IN LAW

PASCOAL F D'LIMA

May God Almighty Rest His Soul in Peace



KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) recently helped realize the wish of 6-year-old Hamad Thamer to fly over Kuwait in a Ministry of Interior helicopter, through its social initiative known as 'I Fancy', which is being held for

the third year. NBK's Public Relations official Jawan Al-Abdel Jaleel stressed that the initiative comes as part of the bank's responsibility towards the community, adding that Hamad was one of the kids treated at NBK Hospital.

SPEAKER'S MEETING WITH SHIITE MPs RESULTS IN SUPPORTING NATIONAL UNITY

KUWAIT: Following Shiite MPs' decision on Wednesday to boycott the parliamentary session in protest of what was described as 'current political situations', Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem held a long meeting with them that lasted from 9:00 pm until an hour after midnight that proved to be very fruitful. Informed sources said that all parties taking part in the meeting reaffirmed their keenness on national unity and handling local and regional issues wisely.

Shiite MPs stressed that they boycotted the session to avoid futile and provocative discussions of regional political situations, a topic which was on that session's agenda. The sources expressed trust in the wisdom of all politicians and keenness on not steering public opinion into unnecessary sectarian tension. Notably, seven of the boycotting MPs attended the meeting, while only MPs Faisal Al-Duwaisan and Abdullah Al-Tamimi were absent. — Al-Rai



Marzouq Al-Ghanem

SECURITY COMMITTEE FORMED TO ACCELERATE EXPAT DEPORTATIONS

KUWAIT: Well-informed security sources said that the interior ministry had formed a special security committee to accelerate deporting illegal expats arrested so far. The sources added that the total number of expats arrested in violation of residency laws was over 1,100 and that their immediate deportation had been delayed due to some formalities and obstacles such as holding expired passports or losing them, which is a must in order to scan their fingerprints and make sure they are not wanted for any other legal claims.

The sources highlighted that more coordination was needed with arrested expats' embassies pending deporting them, which would take a long time. "Another obstacle is being wanted for other cases, which slows down deportation and calls for referring them to relevant authorities instead," explained the sources, adding that some of the arrested expats have no relatives in Kuwait to whom they could entrust powers of attorney to wrap up their affairs in Kuwait.

In a related development, MoI undersecretary Lt Gen Suleiman Al-Fahd recently issued a directive to all security forces instructing them to show their IDs on stopping expats



KUWAIT: A policeman fingerprints an expatriate man during a crackdown on residency violators carried out last Thursday at Jahra's industrial area, in which 1,583 people were arrested.

during the ongoing inspection campaigns in order to avoid some criminals' attempts to impersonate as police officers and rob expats. — Al-Rai



China ties could suffer as Taiwan opposition wins

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600 BRITISH JIHADISTS STOPPED FROM ENTERING SYRIA

WHAT DOES OBAMA CARRY IN HIS POCKET?

WASHINGTON: When President Barack Obama feels tired or discouraged, reaching into his pocket can help him get over it. For inspiration he carries some of the keepsakes people have given him since he started running for office. He says that helps him cope on a bad day "because somebody gave me this privilege to work on these issues that are going to affect them." The upshot: Obama realizes "I better get back to work." The president made the revelation Friday during separate interviews with three YouTube personalities. One of his interviewers had asked ahead of time for Obama to bring a meaningful item and talk about it.

He was prepared. When asked, Obama pulled quite an assortment from his right pants pocket: rosary beads from Pope Francis, a tiny Buddha, a metal poker chip he said came from a bald biker with a handlebar mustache he met in Iowa in 2007, a Coptic cross from Ethiopia and a Hindu statuette of the monkey god Hanuman. Obama has too many of the mementoes to carry all of them around "but I'll pick out a few things...to remind me of all the people I've met along the way and the stories they told me," he told Ingrid Nilsen of Los Angeles. She's known as "Missglamorazzi" on the video sharing website.

The interviews were part of a continuing White House strategy to reach different audiences and keep alive discussion of themes from Tuesday's State of the Union address. Obama was also questioned by Adande Thorne, a video game enthusiast from Orlando, Florida, known online as "sWooZie," and Destin Sandlin, an Alabaman who is into science and makes educational videos. Sandlin, who said he holds a civilian job at the Department of Defense, asked Obama to describe the characteristics of "Obamium," a hypothetical element named after him.

"I would want it to be stable," Obama said. "I would want it to be a catalyst, but one that didn't get too hot or too cold, and hopefully, it would be one that was useful to humanity, that we could actually use and wasn't just some shiny object." Obama said his favorite movie last year was "The Martian," starring Matt Damon. He has not seen "Star Wars: The Force Awakens."

Asked by "sWooZie" who would emerge victorious if musicians Drake and Kendrick Lamar faced off in a rap



BATON ROUGE: US President Barack Obama greets patrons at Po' boy Lloyd's restaurant during an unannounced stop in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. — AFP

battle, Obama chose Lamar. He said Drake is an "outstanding entertainer," but that Lamar had the best album last year, titled "To Pimp a Butterfly." Last year Obama praised Lamar's song, "How Much a Dollar Cost"

The president's YouTube interviewers also asked about issues, including gun control, terrorism and cancer, along with what some refer to as the "tampon tax" - levied by some states levy on sanitary products for

women who menstruate. Obama said he was unaware of that particular situation but told Nilsen it illustrates a basic tenet of his health care law: Women shouldn't be disadvantaged by the health care system.— AP

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US DRONE STRIKE KILLS 3 AL-QAEDA MILITANTS IN YEMEN

SANAA: A US drone strike killed three suspected Al-Qaeda militants in southern Yemen yesterday, according to local tribesmen. Believed to be the first drone strike this year in Yemen, it targeted the militants' vehicle while they were traveling in Shabwa province, the tribesmen said. They spoke on condition of anonymity because of security concerns. It was not immediately possible to verify their account. US officials rarely comment on the covert drone program.

The latest strike comes amid reports of divisions and defections among Al-Qaeda's rival group, the Islamic State affiliate in Yemen, as a defected group leader gave an online testimony, claiming that IS fabricated videos to exaggerate their strength and presence. In testimony posted online by Al-Qaeda supporters, a man calling himself Antar al-Kanadi said he defected from IS because its leadership had become too extreme. Al-Kanadi's allegations seem to match reports elsewhere of dissension within the Yemeni IS ranks.

According to The Long War Journal, which monitors militant group activity,

more than a dozen IS leaders and scores of their fighters have rebelled against the top leader, Abu Bilal al-Harbi, for alleged violations of Islamic Shariah law. "Seventy members of the Islamic State's Yemeni branch announced their 'defection' from the Islamic State's wali in a letter published online on Dec 15," it said. Al-Kanadi also alleged that IS in Yemen released two videos of training camps in Hadramawt province and fraudulently claimed they were elsewhere in the country.

Yemen has been mired in conflict between Shiite Houthis rebels and an internationally recognized government backed by a Saudi-led military coalition. Both IS and Al-Qaeda in Yemen have exploited Yemen's chaos and expanded their reach over the past year. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has long been described by Washington as the global network's most active and dangerous branch. The IS affiliate in Yemen has claimed responsibility for a series of bloody attacks including four suicide bomb attacks on mosques in Sanaa in March and the assassination of the governor of Aden province. — AP



ADEN: Yemeni men extinguish the flames from a burning police vehicle in the southern city of Yemen. Two Yemeni policemen were killed in a bombing in main southern city Aden, in the third such attack targeting security personnel in as many days. — AFP



RAMADI: Iraqi security forces deploy in the Soufiya neighborhood in central Ramadi, 70 miles west of Baghdad, Iraq. — AP

ECONOMIC 'TSUNAMI' UNDERMINES WAR AGAINST ISLAMIC STATE IN IRAQ

KRG FACES BANKRUPTCY WITHOUT ECONOMIC REFORM

ERBIL: Iraq's Kurdistan region is in danger of being drowned by an economic "tsunami" as global oil prices plunge, its deputy prime minister said, warning it could undermine the war effort against Islamic State. Four months in arrears and deeply in debt, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which depends on oil revenue to survive, has been hit hard by oil's slump below \$30 per barrel this week from over \$100 a barrel two years ago. Even before oil's most recent losses, the autonomous region was unable to meet a bloated public payroll including the salaries of its own armed forces, the peshmerga, which are on the front line against

Islamic State.

"The world is focused on the war against ISIS but nobody wins a war bankrupt," Qubad Talabani said in the interview on Thursday, using an acronym for Islamic State. "I think this is something the coalition against ISIS really do need to factor into the equation." The peshmerga have emerged as a key component of the U.S.-led coalition's strategy to "degrade and destroy" the radical Sunni militants, driving them back in northern Iraq with the help of air strikes. But Talabani said the economic crisis threatened progress on the battlefield: "The most dangerous impact it can have is on morale. We are

getting desertions. People are leaving their posts—it will increase."

The oil price crash has compounded Kurdistan's economic woes, which began in early 2014 when Baghdad slashed funding to the region to punish it for exporting crude on its own terms in pursuit of economic independence from Iraq. Then Islamic State overran a third of Iraq, driving more than one million refugees into the region of five million and scaring off foreign investors. In an effort to tackle the crisis, Kurdistan ramped up independent oil exports last year to more than 600,000 barrels per day (bpd), but at current prices the region is still left with a monthly deficit of 380-400 billion Iraqi dinars (\$717 million).

Asked whether the KRG was calculating it might be better off resuming oil exports under Baghdad's auspices in return for a slice of the revenue from their combined exports of more than 3.8 million bpd, Talabani said it would make little difference. "I don't think this is a calculation we're thinking of or they're thinking of because it doesn't actually change the equation for anyone." "At this oil price, a couple of hundred thousand barrels here or there is not going to fix Baghdad's problems and it's not going to fix ours. We have to think of another formula to fix our economic problems."

A deal last year whereby the KRG agreed to export 550,000 bpd of crude through Iraq's state oil marketing firm SOMO in exchange for the reinstatement of its budget share was never

properly implemented. The same arrangement is embedded in Iraq's 2016 budget, but Talabani indicated the KRG did not intend to implement it. "The fact that the control continues to lie 100 percent with the central government and the lack of clarity with our share of the budget and how it's calculated would restrict us from going along with what's written in the 2016 budget," Talabani said. "We don't want to rule out a deal, but we want a deal that's fair," he said, adding that it need not entail the KRG exporting oil via SOMO.

'Sinking ship'

After the oil-fueled economic boom it enjoyed in the wake of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Kurdistan region faces spending cuts and economic reform, and is also looking for ways to raise non-oil revenue. In December, the KRG cut the allowances of ministers and other officials by as much as 50 percent and eliminated perks enjoyed by senior civil servants, and Talabani said bigger changes were on the way. "We're not bankrupt yet but if we don't enact structural and actual reforms the current situation is not sustainable," Talabani said. The reforms will target three main areas: fuel subsidies, the power sector and the public payroll, which costs the region 875 billion Iraqi dinars (\$804 million) per month. The KRG has already opened up the fuel market to private companies and will consider selling parts of the electricity sector, Talabani said. — Reuters



BAGHDAD: An Iraqi vendor sells food at a market in an east Baghdad district yesterday. — AFP

ISRAELI NGOS UNDER PRESSURE

JERUSALEM: A new Israeli bill targeting left-wing NGOs has prompted comparisons with the climate of hatred two decades ago and drawn criticism from rights groups, Washington and the European Union. At the heart of the storm over a bill that the United States has warned could have "chilling" repercussions are long-established leftist Israeli organizations with strong international reputations. Peace Now promotes the creation of a Palestinian state, B'Tselem documents violations of human rights in the Palestinian territories, while Breaking the Silence is run by former soldiers opposed to Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

Such organizations which challenge government policies are increasingly accused by those on the right in Israel of forming a "fifth column" operating against the state and acting as agents of foreign powers. Comparisons have been made with the polarization of Israeli society at the time of the 1995 assassination of prime minister Yitzhak Rabin by a rightwing Jewish extremist opposed to peace with the Palestinians. "In some ways it is worse" than during Rabin's time, Hagai El-Ad, executive director at B'Tselem said. "The situation has dramatically changed since 20 years ago. The number of politicians that reflect the values we strive to see is dramatically smaller."

Leftwing organizations are now under threat from a bill proposed by Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked of the far-right Jewish Home party. The text has renewed tension between one of the most rightwing governments in Israeli history and the United States and the European Union. The draft law demands that NGOs receiving more than half of their funding from foreign governments declare it in all their official reports, while their representatives should wear a special badge during visits to parliament. The text does not specifically refer to leftist organizations, but they are the ones it would impact.

Rightwing NGOs supporting the Israeli occupation of the West Bank tend instead to rely on private donations, such as from

American Irving Moskowitz who grants funds for Jews to buy homes in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem. The anti-settlement Peace Now organization has produced a report on the lack of transparency in the funding of nine leading rightwing organizations. The bill is "a heinous crime against democracy," Anat Ben Nun from Peace Now said. "Under the pretext of transparency, the government is trying to delegitimize anyone who does not share its views or opposes its policies".

'Chilling effect'

For her part, Shaked argues that the bill aims to ensure "transparency and clarity". Writing in an American publication, she said that tanks and bombs are no longer the only challenge facing Israel. "Sometimes the real threat lies in the interference of another country in your internal affairs." She denied the bill would restrict NGO activities, but said "hundreds of millions of dollars are sent to NGOs in Israel from countries that seek to decide the existing dispute between Israel and the Palestinian Authority". The government contends that constant criticism risks turning Israel into an international pariah and that attacks on the bill are meant to "besmirch Israel's name". The United States and the European Union, however, have not remained silent.

Unusually, the US embassy in Tel Aviv on Monday published two press releases after a meeting between ambassador Dan Shapiro and Shaked. The statements expressed US concern over the "chilling effect" of the bill. The European Union's ambassador to Israel, Lars Faaborg-Andersen, told Shaked in a meeting that Israel could find itself grouped with authoritarian regimes which have passed similar legislation, a diplomatic source said. The bill will be debated in parliament in coming weeks, during which time Washington and Brussels hope to influence its wording. Apparently seeking to calm debate over the bill, Shaked on Thursday met representatives from each of the EU member states in Tel Aviv. — AFP

600 BRITISH JIHADISTS STOPPED FROM ENTERING SYRIA FOR JIHAD

LONDON: Some 600 Britons have been stopped from going to Syria to try to join Islamic State and other jihadist groups, Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond said in comments reported yesterday. Meanwhile some 800 have made it through since 2012, with half of them still thought to be inside the war-torn country, he said, in comments reported in The Guardian and The Daily Telegraph newspapers. "Approximately 800 Brits have been to Syria, of whom half are still there. But on top of that 800, we have stopped another 600," he said, on a visit to southern Turkey. The foreign secretary said the number of Britons stopped in Turkey had gone up in the past eight months due to Ankara reassessing the scale of the threat posed to Turkey by Islamic State (IS).

He said greater coordination between

London and Ankara had also played a part. Hammond said besides foreign airstrikes, the interception of jihadists aiming to link up with IS was placing extra strain on the group in its Raqqa headquarters. "There is evidence (IS) is finding it difficult to recruit to the brigades in Raqqa because of the high attrition rate of foreign fighters," he said. "Not just those targeted in UK drone strikes, but US strikes against prominent targets including foreign fighters." "Generally they are very stretched now—their manpower on the ground in relation to the territory they're holding is very thin." British fighter jets joined the US-led coalition bombing IS targets in Syria after parliament backed the move in December. Britain was already involved in attacking IS targets in Iraq. — AFP

FLEEING SYRIANS TAKE CHANCES AT A REMOTE JORDAN CROSSING

HADALAT: Abdelhadi Zarara, six children in tow, juggles with his emotions as he crosses into Jordan, as thousands of other Syrian refugees wait in no-man's land hoping their turn will come. Zarara, 39, says "there was nothing left for me in Syria," where his wife was killed a few months ago in a regime bombardment that also destroyed the family home in southern Daraa province.

According to Jordanian authorities the number of Syrians stuck along its desert border with Syria jumped from a few hundred three months ago to 16,000 by the start of January. They are fleeing the nearly five-year war, leaving behind death and devastation in the hope of making a new life in Jordan or beyond, with many eyeing Europe as their final destination. But only 50 to 100 will be lucky enough to cross into Jordan each day, according to the army and aid agencies.

The kingdom says it is hosting 1.4 million Syrian refugees—equal to 20 percent of

Jordan's population and more than twice as many as the 600,000 figure given by the UN refugee agency UNHCR. During the first two years of the Syrian conflict, there were 45 crossing points along the 378-kilometre (235-mile) frontier. Now just two remain open, in rocky, hard to access areas devoid of water, shade or vegetation, according to UNHCR. One of them is at Hadalat, 500 kilometres northeast of the capital Amman, while the other is at Rokbane, 70 kilometers further east. Around 1,300 Syrians are stuck in Hadalat, while in Rokbane 15,000 are trapped in dire conditions, said General Saber Al-Mahayra, the head of Jordan's border guards unit.

'Weeding' out jihadists

Intensified fighting in Syria, including the launch of Russian air raids in September in support of Damascus, has sparked a fresh wave of refugees seeking safety in Jordan, Mahayra said. Zarara and his children arrived in Hadalat in October. "There

weren't many people around and we had nothing to protect us from the cold and the rain," he said. The Jordanian army gave them food and blankets but it was only several weeks later that UNHCR provided shelter in the form of tents, he said. In early December, UNHCR and New York-based Human Rights Watch issued separate pleas urging Jordanian authorities to allow all the refugees to enter the desert kingdom, warning of deteriorating conditions.

But Jordan has stood its ground, allowing only a trickle at a time and insisting that it must screen newcomers to ensure they are genuine refugees and not armed jihadists seeking to infiltrate the country. "Our security is above everything else," said Mahayra. After the conflict erupted in March 2011, Syrians who sought refuge in Jordan were mostly from the southern Daraa province across the border, he said. But recent newcomers have travelled from as far as Raqqa, the self-declared capital of the Islamic State group in northern Syria.

"In a bid to weed out jihadist infiltrators, the army is carrying out meticulous controls at the border," Mahayra said, adding that two suspected jihadists who tried to pass for refugees were recently arrested.

Eyeing Europe

Riyadh, 23, was one of the lucky few who entered Jordan on Thursday after "83 painful days" trapped in no-man's land, he said as he dusted off his clothes caked in sand. He too came from Daraa, after losing hope that he would be able to finish his last year at university there. "Security conditions won't allow it," he said. Hassad, who crossed into Jordan with his wife and five children, said he had to pay people smugglers 100,000 Syrian pounds (\$440, 400 euros) for each member of his family. "I am hoping for a better future for my children," he said, adding that Jordan would only be a stepping stone towards their new life.

"Our goal is to travel to Europe, soon I hope," he said. Army trucks lined up on the



REWASHED: Jordanian soldiers carry Syrian refugee children stranded in the makeshift camp into Jordanian territory through the Hadalat border crossing, located near the northeastern Jordanian border with Syria and Iraq, near the town of Rewashed. — AP

Jordanian side of the Hadalat crossing to transport the newcomers to a reception centre where refugees would undergo medical checks and further security controls. After that they will be taken to one of two refugee camps in northern Jordan—Zaatari or Azraq—which are run jointly by the Jordanian authorities and the UN. The camps are home to about 20 percent of all Syrian refugees in the kingdom. — AFP

JEB BUSH SEES SIMILARITIES IN HIS FOREIGN POLICY AND DAD'S 'AMERICA SHOULDN'T BE THE WORLD'S POLICEMAN'

IOWA: Jeb Bush believes he's got the best prescription for American foreign policy, from his strategies for deterring North Korea's nuclear ambitions, to destroying the Islamic State. However, unlike his rivals in the crowded 2016 Republican race for the White House, Bush's foreign policy pitch comes with a caveat: He's as much his own man, as he is a member of the Bush family. In an extended interview with The Associated Press, the former Florida governor praised the approach of his father, former President George H W Bush,

Joint Chiefs of Staff under his father and as his brother's first secretary of state.

'Overwhelming force'

Powell laid out a doctrine of "overwhelming force" which he applied in the 1990 Gulf War. But Jeb Bush stresses the need for a military and political strategy to play out hand-in-hand. "The one ingredient that I think is so essential is to not just have a military exit strategy, but have a political strategy not create another void that has to be filled

the Iraqi government to leave some behind. Some viewed the withdrawal as an end to a dark legacy in US foreign policy, while others say it created the security vacuum which ultimately gave rise of the Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria.

Still, while Jeb Bush urges a forceful stance against Islamic extremism, his rhetoric has been far more subdued to that of some of his rivals - among them, Texas Sen Ted Cruz, who vowed to carpet bomb areas in which the Islamic State operates, suggesting civilians would be caught in that campaign; and billionaire Donald Trump, who vowed to temporarily ban Muslims from entering the United States to prevent attacks - comments that sparked widespread international condemnation.

World's policeman

At Thursday's debate, for example, he cautioned that America shouldn't be "the world's policeman" but that it should take measures to protect its own national interest and its allies. He was the only Republican candidate to denounce Trump's proposal at Thursday's Republican debate, noting that the United States needs support from Muslim nations such as Egypt and Jordan to move on the Islamic State. "All Muslims? Seriously? What kind of signal does that send to the rest of the world?" Jeb Bush said to Trump on stage in South Carolina.

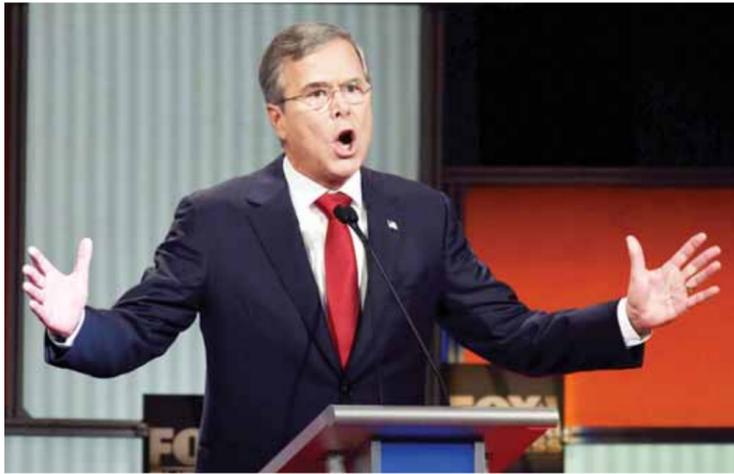
While he continues to lag behind some of his more outspoken rivals in the polls, his comments may have earned him the coveted endorsement of South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, who said Friday that Jeb Bush "has stayed true to who he is (and) hasn't tried to get ahead in a contested primary by embracing demagoguery." Jeb Bush has said in interviews that he holds different policy opinions from George W. Bush, but he has never criticized his older brother, who left office in 2009 with a foreign policy legacy that many warned could haunt his younger brother's presidential ambitions.

"Having gone through what he did, most of his tenure as president was defined in a lot of ways by what was going on in the Middle East," Jeb Bush told the AP. "His knowledge and insights would be invaluable." He said he would seek the advice of his father, his brother and all the former presidents, if elected, but admitted that with Obama: "I don't know if I would agree with his advice." Jeb Bush commended his brother's approach to other

major foreign policy issues, particularly engagement with China, his efforts to fight AIDS in Africa and his ability to maintain close ties to Israel, a relationship he said the Obama administration has left to sour.

The former governor says Obama leaves behind a legacy of "leading from behind," one he claims the current Democratic front-runner and President Obama's former secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, will inevitably continue. His criticism of Obama echoes that of his

Republican rivals. All of them have expressed their disdain for the Obama administration's nuclear deal with Iran, vowing to reverse it if they win the White House. And they say countries like North Korea would never step out of line if America asserted itself more forcefully. Jeb Bush pointed to reports last week of an alleged hydrogen bomb test in North Korea. Bush said he would keep all options open for dealing with North Korea, but stopped short of calling for a pre-emptive strike against it. — AP



Republican Presidential candidate, former Florida Gov Jeb Bush

who built a broad coalition to wage the Persian Gulf War, and mobilized US military might to drive Iraq out of Kuwait. Jeb Bush says the aggressive military policy he would pursue as President Barack Obama's successor would signal to the world "we're back in the game."

While he said he would seek the advice of his brother, former President George W Bush, in foreign affairs, especially on the Middle East, a Jeb Bush doctrine would more closely resemble that of Bush the father. "It was a very successful foreign policy and one that I think one could envision a bipartisan consensus emerging around," Jeb Bush said of his father's approach, "and one the American people could support." He speaks of using military intervention "sparingly" but with "awesome force," taking a page out of the playbook of Colin Powell, who served as chairman of the

again...where we have to respond again to that void being filled," he said. "Syria is a good example of that." When Obama leaves office in a year, he'll hand his successor military conflicts in the two countries in which he vowed to end prolonged wars: Afghanistan and Iraq. There will be far fewer troops in each, and the American forces there do not have a direct combat role.

But for Obama, a quest to end the two wars he inherited from George W Bush's administration will go unfulfilled. While the war in Afghanistan was widely viewed as retaliation for the September 11th attacks, the 2003 US-led war in Iraq received widespread condemnation as it aimed to destroy weapons of mass destruction that were never found. US troops were withdrawn from Iraq in late 2011, despite failed last-minute negotiations between the Obama administration and

HILLARY CLINTON'S CAMPAIGN DEPLOYS BILL 'VERY CAREFULLY'

KEENE: Bill Clinton promised voters in 1992 that they'd be getting "two for the price of one" if they elected him to the White House - a presidential duo of the young Arkansas governor and his Yale Law-educated wife. Nearly a quarter century later, the duo is back - but not quite the same. As Hillary Clinton fends off a rising challenge from Bernie Sanders, his wife's campaign aides are grappling with how best to deploy what she has described as her "not-so-secret weapon."

Their answer: Very, very carefully. During campaign swings through Iowa and New Hampshire, Bill Clinton treaded fastidiously through tightly controlled campaign events. A natural-born chit-chatter, he was not giving interviews. When he stopped to talk with reporters after one recent event, campaign aides turned up the music, making a conversation all but impossible.

A popular figure

His remarks to voters have been relatively subdued: long on history, statistics and nostalgia. He's dodged questions about Sanders and Republican front-runner Donald Trump, who's been baiting the Clinton family with comments about the former president's past sexual improprieties "I'm not going there," Bill Clinton said on Wednesday, when asked about Sanders at a campaign event in New Hampshire. "I came here to tell people why I thought Hillary should be president and her ideas are better." While Bill Clinton remains a popular figure among Democrats, some of the key achievements of his administration form the basis of Sanders' critique against his wife - that she's too willing to compromise liberal ideals for political gain.

The Vermont senator has denounced his rival's policies on trade, same-sex marriage, crime and welfare cuts. He's made reinstating Glass-Steagall, a Depression-era

banking law repealed under Bill Clinton's administration, a central attack line of his campaign. "People don't have a long memory, but Bernie's doing his best to remind them," said Roger Hickey, a co-director of the liberal Campaign for America's Future. "People don't want a recycling of Bill Clinton's presidency. They want somebody who's willing to stand up to the billionaires and corporate power."

Clinton aides say those critiques miss the larger picture of wage growth, job creation and a balanced budget. In a debate last month, Clinton said she would turn to her husband for economic advice. "He carries a message of peace and prosperity under his presidency and I think a lot of Americans would like to get back to those days," Clinton said in an interview on NBC's "Today Show" on Wednesday. At an afternoon event in Keene, voters recalled the Clinton presidency fondly, as a time of prosperity.

Skeptical re-examination

"The best economic times for my family were when Bill Clinton was president," said Madeline Smeaton, a graduate student in Keene whose father lost her job in the Great Recession. "We were making a lot of money." Still, some of those economic achievements face a skeptical re-examination within a party that's grown more liberal under the Obama administration. Bill Clinton has said that he regrets approving the Defense of Marriage Act and the "don't ask, don't tell" policy that banned gays and lesbians from military service. He also has looked back with regret on signing the 1994 crime bill, which led to tougher sentencing for drug offenses.

"I signed a bill that made the problem worse," the former president told an audience at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's annual meeting in Philadelphia in July. "And I want to admit it." On Wednesday in New Hampshire, Bill Clinton detailed the economic growth under his administration, listing statistics on wage growth, the decline in poverty and insurance rates. He walked voters through Hillary Clinton's policy priorities, stressing the need to invest in infrastructure, renewable energy, small business, college affordability and paid leave. — AP

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MONTENEGRO TO TURN EX-CONCENTRATION CAMP INTO LUXURY HOTEL

PODGORICA: Montenegro has defended its decision to allow an island fortress and wartime concentration camp to be transformed into a luxury resort, a move that has sparked anger among relatives of its former prisoners. Situated in the Adriatic sea in the popular Bay of Kotor, the 19th century fort on Mamula island was run by fascist Italian forces during World War II as a concentration camp, where dozens of inmates are believed to have died. Now the Balkan country has granted a 49-year lease to Swiss-Egyptian company

Orascom to invest 15 million euros (16 million dollars) to build a high-end hotel with a dance floor, spa and marina jetty.

"We were facing two options: to leave the site to fall into ruin or find investors who would be willing to restore it and make it accessible to visitors," Olivera Brajovic, head of the national directorate for tourism development said late Friday. Relatives of some of those detained at Mamula during the war have however come together to oppose the project, which they say

is inappropriate given the island's dark past. "To build a luxury hotel dedicated to entertainment at this place where so many people perished and suffered is a blatant example of lack of seriousness towards history," campaigner Olivera Dokle said.

The 54-year-old woman, whose grandfather, father and uncle were imprisoned at Mamula, said that the fortress should be renovated and opened to visitors as a historic site. "No concentration camp in the world has been transformed into a hotel," she said.

According to the local war veterans' association, Mamula had more than 2000 prisoners, of whom 50 died from hunger amid the grim conditions and 80 were executed. Brajovic insisted that "countries much richer than Montenegro have chosen to preserve similar buildings in such a way, even sites under UNESCO protection".

Brajovic said plans for the conversion included a memorial room to former inmates. Despite the concern of prisoners' relatives, Montenegrin PR agency Magna, which represents Orascom, said

the local war veterans' group had given approval for the project, which includes plans to conserve the fortress. Salt and Water, the Belgrade-based company designing the resort, has pictures of the planned transformation on its website. It says the idea for the "reconstruction project" was converting the fortress "to the luxurious touristic resort with minimal interventions". According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, Montenegro is ranked third in the world for its tourism industry's long-term growth forecast.—AFP



SKOPJE: The leader of Macedonia's biggest opposition party SDSM, Zoran Zaev (center) talks to the media in Skopje yesterday. EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn said in press statement that the negotiations between the four biggest political parties on implementing last year's political agreement have failed. — AFP



SKOPJE: European Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn talks to the media in Skopje yesterday. — AFP

MACEDONIAN OPPOSITION THREATENS TO BOYCOTT ELECTION CALLED TO END CRISIS EU-BROKERED DEAL THROWN INTO DOUBT

SKOPJE: A European Union-brokered deal to end a political crisis in Macedonia hung in the balance yesterday after opponents of conservative Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski threatened to boycott an early parliamentary election in April. All sides had agreed last year to an April 24 election, two years ahead of schedule, under EU mediation to end months of bitter standoff over allegations against Gruevski's government of illegal phone-tapping and widespread abuse of office.

But opposition Social Democrat leader Zoran Zaev said overnight that not all conditions had been met for a free and fair election in the tiny ex-Yugoslav republic, citing a lack of media reform to reduce government influence and failure to conduct a thorough review of the electoral roll. "We won't accept elections without timely regulation of the media or timely clearing of the voter list," Zaev told reporters after emerg-

ing from late-night talks with Gruevski and the EU's enlargement commissioner, Johannes Hahn, who brokered the original deal. "If there are elections on April 24 we will not take part," Zaev said. "We will continue to fight for free, fair and democratic conditions in which to hold elections."

Almost a decade in power, Gruevski's government was bombarded last year by allegations of illegal surveillance, meddling in the media and judiciary, rigging elections and appointing party faithful to public sector jobs. The accusations stemmed from a slew of phone-taps released by Zaev, who said the government had conducted the surveillance. Gruevski denied this and dismissed the accusations as a plot to bring him down. He submitted his resignation to parliament on Friday, in line with the deal, but said it would become effective 100 days before the election, which has yet to be officially called.

Deeper into crisis

Gruevski accused Zaev of trying "to take the country even deeper into crisis." "He just wanted to postpone elections, without any serious arguments," he told reporters. Gruevski's commands enough votes in parliament to endorse his resignation and force an election regardless of Zaev's threats to boycott. Hahn said he still expected all sides to stick to the election agreement, promising the poll would be closely monitored by European observers. He warned of the need for an effective government capable of confronting the challenges the Balkan country faces in terms of the economy and a large wave of migrants crossing its territory from Greece en route to western Europe. "I will come back," he said, "but now it is up to the political parties to take their decision. I can only urge everybody to participate in elections." — Reuters



WROCLAW: Photo shows the tumski bridge leading to the cathedral island in Wroclaw, Poland.— AFP

'CULTURE CAPITAL' WROCLAW AT CROSSROADS OF EUROPE HISTORY

WROCLAW: Long a symbol of Polish-German reconciliation, Poland's western city of Wroclaw will become a European culture capital this year highlighting its history at the crossroads of political upheaval in central Europe. Formerly known as Breslau and part of Germany before the end of World War II, Wroclaw will share the limelight with fellow capital of culture San Sebastian on Spain's northern Basque coast. Poland's fourth largest city with a population of 630,000, Wroclaw is an industrial centre and university town whose complex identity spans a millennium and includes a myriad of influences.

The central European melting pot was over the centuries part of the Kingdom of Poland, Bohemia, Hungary, the Austrian Empire, Prussia and Germany. The city's honor comes at a time when relations between Poland and Germany both EU and NATO members are strained over controversial legislation enacted by the new conservative government in Warsaw giving it control over the country's top court and public broadcasters. The right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) party, which returned to power after eight years in October, has brought back anti-German

rhetoric and euroscepticism.

Poland's justice minister referenced the 1939-45 war in response to a letter from German politician and EU Commissioner Guenther Oettinger, while a Polish pro-government magazine depicted EU leaders including German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Nazi uniforms. The harsh Polish comments came after the new laws were notably criticized by the German head of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, as constituting a "coup" and "Putinisation of European politics". But in Wroclaw there is no ill will, according to sculptor and longtime resident Amanda Rozanska: "We don't have a problem with Germans." "We rather like them, ever since they've accepted that what happened is their fault," she said, referring to Nazi Germany's occupation of Poland.

Historical kick-off

The culture capital festivities kick off this weekend, with dancers and musicians taking to the streets to offer a polyphonic account of the city's history, directed by Chris Baldwin, who had collaborated on the London Olympics celebra-

tions. "I believe this may be the most important year in the post-war history of Wroclaw," says Mayor Rafal Dutkiewicz on the city's website about the host of cultural events planned over the next 12 months. "We want Wroclaw to be a very open metropolis on the map of Europe and the world."

One way to look at the city's history is the daily life in pre-war Breslau its streets, restaurants, brothels-depicted in detail by local writer Marek Krajewski in his detective novel series featuring policeman Eberhard Mock, which has been translated into 18 languages including German. Soviet bombing flattened 70 percent of the city in 1945 and most of the German residents left after the war ended. Wroclaw was mainly repopulated by Poles from the city of Lwow which became Ukraine's Lviv after the war and also drew Jews and Greek immigrants. The city's Jewish community is now one of the country's most dynamic, though incidents of anti-Semitism occur. In November last year prosecutors opened a probe into an anti-migrant demonstration where protesters burnt a mannequin depicting a Jew. — AFP

POPE VISITS SYNAGOGUE IN SIGN OF FRIENDSHIP AMID QUESTIONS

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis today becomes the third pope to visit Rome's main synagogue in a sign of continued Catholic-Jewish friendship that was highlighted by a recent Vatican declaration that it doesn't support official efforts to convert the Jews. But the visit also follows a series of developments that have upset some in the Jewish community, including a new Vatican treaty signed with the "state of Palestine" and Francis' own words and deeds that have been interpreted by some as favoring the Palestinian political cause.

The chief rabbi of Rome, Riccardo Di Segni, said in an interview Friday that the papal visit is aimed at showing five decades of improving Christian-Jewish relations and interfaith harmony, at a time of Islamic extremist violence around the globe. But he said some recent Vatican developments "cannot be so appreciated by the Jewish community." Earlier this month, a treaty went into effect regulating the life of the Catholic Church in the Palestinian territories. It was the first treaty the Holy See had signed with the "state of Palestine" after the UN General Assembly recognized Palestine in 2012.

Before that, in May last year, Francis privately told the visiting Palestinian leader, Mahmoud Abbas, that he was "a bit of an angel of peace." And a year before that Francis began his visit to the region in Bethlehem, not Israel, and stopped his popemobile to pray at the separation barrier Israel had built around the West Bank city. Given all that, Jews welcomed a document issued by the Vatican last month tracing 50 years of improved relations following the Second Vatican Council's "Nostra Aetate" declaration which, among other things, repudiated the centuries-old charge that Jews as a whole were responsible for the death of Christ.

In the new document, the Vatican went further than "Nostra Aetate" or any subsequent Vatican statement making clear that Jews are in a salvific relationship with God and that the Catholic Church "neither conducts nor supports any specific institutional mission work directed towards Jews." "This document is very significant," said Rabbi David Rosen of the American Jewish Committee, the Vatican's longtime dialogue partner with the Jewish community who

will attend today's visit as a representative of the chief rabbinat of Israel.

But Rosen, during the official Vatican launch of the document, pointed out the absence of any reference to Jews' relationship with the land of Israel, or to the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and the Holy See in 1993. That development alone has paved the way for successive papal trips to Israel. The absence is likely explained by the realpolitik of the Vatican's diplomacy in the Middle East and the reality of the Catholic Church in the region, where Christians are a minority and a persecuted minority at that. Rosen, however, is certain that Francis recognizes the special relationship of world Jewry with Israel. Francis, whose longstanding friendship with the Jewish community in Argentina is well known, reportedly told a recent visiting Jewish delegation that attacks on the state of Israel amount to anti-Semitism.

"I think Pope Francis is even one step ahead of his predecessors in his understanding of the importance of the land of Israel for the Jewish people," Rosen said in a telephone interview. "That doesn't mean that within the Curia, even if sympathetic, there aren't those who still feel that there has to be an official caution that is required by manifold interests." Di Segni, the chief rabbi of Rome, told reporters this week that he would underline the crucial link between Jews and Israel in his speech today. And while welcoming the theoretical declaration that the Catholic Church cannot support institutional efforts at converting Jews, he said he hoped Francis would provide "concrete signs" translating that during his synagogue visit.

Most of all, Di Segni said today's visit would be an opportunity to show the continuity of Catholic-Jewish friendship at a time when the world is confronting a spate of religiously inspired violence. "We are living in very difficult times, facing a wave of violence and hatred and destruction of society based and inspired by distorted visions of religion," he said. "So the aim of this visit should be to demonstrate that different religions - that must be different - can live together in good harmony and work together for the good of the society." — AP

MARINE HELICOPTERS CRASH

HALEIWA: Rescuers continued to search choppy waters where debris was sighted after two Marine Corps helicopters carrying six crew members each crashed off the Hawaiian island of Oahu during a nighttime training mission, military officials said. There was no immediate word Friday on the fate of those aboard or what caused the accident. The transport helicopters known as CH-53Es crashed late Thursday, officials said. Hours later, a Coast Guard helicopter and C-130 airplane spotted debris 2 1/2 miles offshore.

The wreckage was strewn over a two-mile area, Marine Capt Timothy Irish said. The choppers were part of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing at Marine Corps Base Hawaii. Known as Super Stallions, they are the US military's largest helicopter, capable of carrying a light armored vehicle, 16 tons of cargo or a team of combat-equipped Marines, according to a Marine Corps website. Elaray Navarro, a retiree who lives across the street from the beach, said she heard two booms late Thursday that were loud enough to shake her house. "I threw my blanket off, put my slippers on and ran outside thinking it was a car accident," she said.

She expressed concern for the crew as she watched the pounding surf from Haleiwa. "I pray to the man upstairs to help them. To bring them home safely," she said. The Coast Guard was notified of the crash by a civilian on a beach who saw the aircraft flying then disappear and a fireball. Another person reported a flare in the sky, Coast Guard spokesman Lt Scott Carr said. It was

not clear if the fireball and the flare were the same, he said. The Marines were alerted when the helicopters failed to return to their base at Kaneohe Bay as scheduled, Irish said. The Coast Guard initially reported that the choppers had collided, but Irish said Friday that he did not know if the accident was a collision.

The helicopters normally carry four crew members, but this particular flight also carried one or two instructor trainers, Irish said. He did not know if they were teaching the crew or just observing. The search included Air Force units as well as a Honolulu Fire Department rescue boat and Coast Guard cutters. Two Navy ships, the USS John Paul Jones and the USS Gridley, were also participating with a Navy squadron of SH-60 helicopters. Rough weather was making the search difficult, with winds blowing up to 23 mph and breaking surf up to 30 feet. "That is moving that debris all over the place," Carr said. "It makes finding things incredibly difficult."

Even Honolulu lifeguards accustomed to big waves weren't able to search for long with poor morning visibility. "We are now back in the water, and we are searching," Honolulu Emergency Services Department spokeswoman Shayne Enright said. "We're very hopeful that we will still find possible survivors out there." About two dozen Marines were seen walking up and down the beach at Waimea Bay, a popular surfing spot a few miles from the rescue operation. They appeared to be searching the area. One used binoculars to look out to sea.— AP



HAWAII: US Marines walk on the beach at Waimea Bay near Haleiwa, Hawaii, where two military helicopters crashed into the ocean about 2 miles offshore. — AP

IN SOUTH INDIAN TEMPLE TOWN, PLASTICS BECOME TABOO

PATHANAMTHITTA: Millions of Hindu men trudge the steep, three-hour climb to a hill-top temple to worship a celibate god every year. They bathe away their sins in the Pamba River. And these days, they leave less of a trace thanks to new rules aimed at getting rid of plastic trash. Local officials have banned all plastic containers from the Sabarimala temple, set deep in the dense jungle of tiger conservation park in Kerala state. Pilgrimages throughout the year attract some 100 million worshippers, though women of childbearing age are forbidden from entering.

For years the traffic took a heavy toll. Pastures were strewn with potato chip packages and water bottles. Plastic bags blown into the air caught on branches and hung from the forest canopy. Rivers became choked with clothing discarded as people as they wash away their sins. Last year, traces of plastic were found in the digestive tracts of dead sambar deer and at least one elephant, prompting Kerala's forest department to petition a court last year for the ban on disposable plastic items.

Such bans have been imposed in various parts of India, including the capital of New Delhi, with little effect as people flout new rules and authorities do little to crack down. The famed Himalayan pilgrimage to the Amarnath stalagmite housed in a cave atop a mountain has become well known for the trash left on the mountain trail. But visitors and officials in Sabarimala say there is already a noticeable difference here. Pilgrims readily hand over their plastic bags and bottles, about 90 percent of which is recycled and the rest incinerated. District workers collected 1.2 tons of plastic trash this year from busloads of visitors during the latest pilgrimage, which ended Friday and drew some 5 million people.

"There is a palpable change," says pilgrim Dinox D, who has made the annual visit every year for the past 10 from his home in the neighboring state of Karnataka. "It was becoming the need of the hour for an anti-plastic drive here." Still, there is room for improvement, and officials may start frisking pilgrims for plastic next year rather than relying on them to voluntarily give it up. "We aim to extend the mission further, to possibly also include fines, among other things," Pathanamthitta district magistrate S Harikishore said. While acknowledging that people traveling for days need to carry and store things, he suggested they use cloth bags or reusable containers that are not thrown away. The government has spent nearly \$18 million since November handing out cloth totes, setting up plastic trash receptacles and printing leaflets for an awareness campaign, Harikishore said. Aiming to cut down on the 2 million or so plastic bottles usually left behind, officials have also set up a free water filtration depot for people to refill flasks. Clean up crews have also collected one-third the amount of discarded clothing from rivers than what they pick up after last year's pilgrimage. The Sabarimala shrine is dedicated to Lord Ayyappan, and is believed to mark the spot where the Hindu god meditated after killing a powerful demon. More temples sit atop other hills surrounding Sabarimala. — AP

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KERELA: Hindu worshippers queue during a pilgrimage at the Sabarimala temple in the southern Indian state of Kerala. Local officials have banned all plastic containers from the Sabarimala temple, set deep in the dense jungle of tiger conservation park in Kerala state. — AP



JAKARTA: A street-vendor pushes his cart past the damaged police outpost opposite Starbucks coffee shop in central Jakarta yesterday. Days after deadly gun and bomb attacks rocked the Indonesian capital, Jakarta's food peddlers, taxi drivers and shopkeepers returned to life as normal, more concerned with making a dollar than the Islamist assault. — AFP

INDONESIA IDENTIFIES MILITANTS, SHUTS DOWN RADICAL WEBSITES

MALAYSIA DETAINS A MAN WHO CONFESSED TO PLANNING ATTACK

JAKARTA: Indonesian police yesterday named the five men they suspect launched this week's gun and bomb attack in Jakarta, which was claimed by Islamic State, and said they had arrested 12 people linked to the plot who planned to strike other cities. As investigators pieced together clues from the radical group's first attack on Indonesia, neighboring Malaysia said it had arrested a man in Kuala Lumpur who had confessed to planning a suicide attack in the country.

"We ... have carried out acts of force. We have done searches, we have made arrests and we have obtained evidence connected with the terrorist bombing at Sarinah," Jakarta police spokesman Mohammad Iqbal told a news conference. "We will not say how many people or what sort of evidence we have as it will upset our strategy. Be patient, when the case is closed and things are clear we will disclose them."

Seven people, including the militants, were killed in Thursday's attack near the Sarinah department store in the Indonesian capital's commercial district. About 30 people were hurt. Police held up pictures of the dead and wounded at the news conference, including a man who kicked off the siege by blowing himself up in a Starbucks cafe. Another attacker, who opened fire with a gun outside the cafe, was named as Afif. A National Counter-Terrorism Agency spokesman said Afif had served seven years in prison, where he refused to cooperate with a de-radicalization program.

The brazenness of the Jakarta assault, which had echoes of marauding gun and bomb attacks such as the Paris siege in November, suggested a new brand of militancy in a country where extremists typically launch low-level strikes on police. Police spokesman

Anton Charliyan said the Jakarta five and the 12 others who were arrested had plans to attack cities elsewhere in Indonesia, including Bandung, which lies some 120 km southeast of the capital. "There were general plans targeting certain places like police and government offices, foreigners or those cooperating with foreign entities," Charliyan told reporters.

Malaysian planned attack

In Malaysia, the country's police chief said a suspected militant who was arrested in a metro station in Kuala Lumpur on Friday had confessed to planning a suicide attack. Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar said the 28-year-old Malaysian planned to carry out the attack in the country after receiving orders from a foreign member of Islamic State (IS) in Syria. "The suspect is also responsible for hanging IS flags at several locations ... to warn the government to stop arresting IS members in Malaysia," Khalid said in a statement. No details were given about where and how he planned to attack.

Khalid said three other people suspected of being supporters of Islamic State were arrested this week at Kuala Lumpur airport after they returned from Turkey. Malaysia has been on high alert since Thursday's siege in Jakarta. Security has been beefed up in public areas and borders have been tightened to prevent jihadis getting into the country. Earlier yesterday, Indonesia said it had shut down at least 11 radical websites and several social media accounts, including several on Facebook that expressed support for the Jakarta attack. "We are monitoring many websites and public complaints about this," said Ismail Cawidu, a public relations official at the communications ministry.

The government also sent letters to social media companies such as Facebook, Twitter and Telegram requesting radical material be immediately blocked or taken down, Cawidu said. The alleged mastermind behind the Jakarta attack, an Indonesian citizen fighting with Islamic State in Syria, is believed to have used social media extensively to share his beliefs about the group and communicate with contacts in Indonesia using blog posts and mobile messaging apps. Authorities believe there are at least 1,000 Islamic State sympathizers in Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim population. — Reuters



JAKARTA: Jakarta Police medical division chief officer Musyafak shows a photograph of killed militant Afif, also known as Sunakin, during a press conference at the police headquarters in Jakarta yesterday. — AFP

PAKISTAN EXECUTED 332 AFTER REINSTATING DEATH PENALTY

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan announced this week that authorities have executed 332 criminals and militants since lifting a moratorium on the death penalty in 2014, marking the first time an official tally has been released. The South Asian nation unveiled a grand National Action Plan (NAP) to curb militancy after Taliban assailants gunned down more than 150 people, most of them children, at an army-run school in Peshawar on December 16, 2014.

In accordance with the NAP, the six-year moratorium on the country's death penalty was lifted and the constitution amended to allow military courts to try those accused of carrying out attacks. Hangings were initially reinstated only for those convicted of terrorism, but in March they were extended to all capital offences. In a written reply submitted to the parliament on Friday, the Ministry of

Interior and Narcotics Control said 332 people had been executed in the country. Supporters argue that executions are the only effective way to deal with the scourge of militancy in Pakistan.

But critics say the legal system is unjust, with rampant police torture and poor representation for victims during unfair trials, while the majority of those who are hanged are not convicted of terror charges. Amnesty figures suggest Pakistan is on track to become one of the world's top executioners in 2015. According to the report submitted to parliament, 172 religious seminars across the country have been closed on suspicions of having links to militant organizations. "993 URLs and 10 websites of organizations have been blocked," it said. The dossier added that 98.3 million unregistered SIM cards have

been blocked.

More than 2,000 cases of hate speech have also been registered, while 2,195 people have been arrested. More than 70 shops have been shuttered throughout Pakistan for selling material deemed to promote hate speech. Since 2013, paramilitary troops and police have been engaged in an anti-militant and crime operation in Karachi. Thousands of criminals have been arrested in the operation's wake along with 890 militants in the city. Officials say militant attacks have fallen by 80 percent as a result, according to the report. In June 2014, the army launched the "Zarb-e-Azb" operation in a bid to wipe out militant bases in North Waziristan tribal area and so bring an end to the bloody decade-long Islamist insurgency that has cost Pakistan thousands of lives. — AFP

TURKEY DETAINS ACADEMICS OVER 'PRO-KURDISH' PETITION

ISTANBUL: Turkish police on Friday detained at least 18 academics who signed a petition criticizing a military crackdown in the Kurdish-dominated southeast, triggering new alarm about freedom of expression in the country. In a rare rebuke to Washington's NATO ally, the US ambassador to Turkey expressed alarm over the investigations, with Western concern over freedom of expression already riding high due to the detention since November 26 of two prominent opposition journalists. They were arrested in raids targeting 21 academics accused of disseminating "terrorist propaganda" by signing a petition denouncing military operations against Kurdish rebels.

Fifteen academics and lecturers from the University of Kocaeli, near Istanbul, were initially detained, with another three academics from Uludag University in western Bursa province later held in their offices, Dogan news agency said. The academics were questioned for a day before being released, Dogan reported late Friday. Prosecutors on Thursday launched a vast investigation into over 1,200 academics from 90 Turkish universities for engaging in "terrorist propaganda" and "inciting hatred and enmity" by signing the petition. Entitled "We won't be a party to this crime", the petition urged Ankara to halt "its deliberate massacres and deportation of Kurdish and other peoples in the region", angering President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

'Cruel and despicable'

Turkey is waging an all-out offensive against the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), with military operations backed by curfews aimed at flushing out rebels from several southeastern urban centers. But Kurdish activists say dozens of civilians have died as a result of excessive force and the operations have become the subject of huge controversy in Turkish society. Erdogan on Friday launched his strongest attack yet on the signatories, accusing them of supporting the Kurdish rebels and thus being a "party" to the crimes of the PKK.

"Those standing by the perpetrators of the massacres are a party to the crime," he told reporters after Friday prayers in Istanbul. "Our people must understand who is who-having a

PhD title doesn't necessarily make you an intellectual. These are people in the dark. They are cruel and despicable." Critics have denounced the move as the latest attempt by Erdogan to stifle dissent, with the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) condemning "the steps taken by the Turkish government that are plunging Turkey into a deep darkness." "These operations... which are only seen in undemocratic regimes are very dangerous and unacceptable," the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) added in a statement.

'Be quiet'

US ambassador to Ankara John Bass expressed concern over the "pressure having a chilling effect on legitimate political discourse across Turkish society regarding the sources



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

and solutions to the ongoing violence." "In democratic societies it is imperative that citizens have the opportunity to express their views, even controversial or unpopular ones," he said in a statement. "Expressions of concern about violence do not equal support for terrorism. Criticism of the government does not equal treason," he added.

Ankara's controversial mayor Melih Gokcek, a member of Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), hit back at Bass by telling him to go home and saying he was "a wrong choice for the US in Turkey." "You are trying to make an enemy (of Turkey). At least you should learn to be quiet," he wrote on Twitter. — AFP

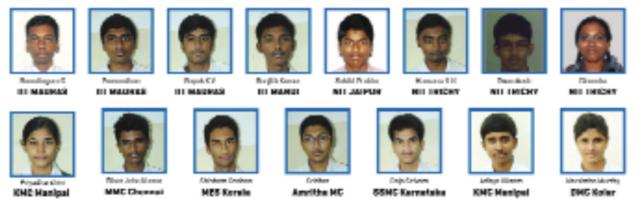
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TAIWAN K-POP STAR FLAG ROW ESCALATES AFTER APOLOGY

TAIPEI: A row over a teenage Taiwanese K-pop star forced to apologize for waving the island's flag was rapidly turning into an international incident yesterday, stealing the spotlight from Taiwan's presidential elections. Leadership candidates running for office in yesterday's pivotal vote demanded answers from China and South Korea after the video apology from a tired and somber Chou Tzu-yu, 16, went viral, with more than 2.6 million hits. The controversy dominated news coverage in Taiwan on election day, with China ties a key issue for voters.

"There is only one China and the two sides are one," Chou said in the apology, posted on YouTube by South Korean agency JYP Entertainment. "As a Chinese person my improper words and behavior during my activities abroad hurt my company and the feelings of netizens across the strait," Chou added. "I have decided to stop my activities in China for now to seriously reflect on myself." Based in South Korea, Chou is a singer with all-girl band TWICE. She waved Taiwan's official flag on a recent online broadcast, angering Chinese netizens, with suggestions she was pushing a pro-Taiwan independence agenda.

Taiwan has ruled itself since a split with the

Chinese mainland in 1949 after a civil war, but has never formally declared independence. Beijing sees it as part of its territory awaiting reunification, by force if necessary. China's Taiwan Affairs Office blamed "political forces in Taiwan" for using Chou's case to "provoke conflict", according to a report from state news agency Xinhua, posted on the affairs office website. "Compatriots on both sides of the strait should be on high alert," the report said, citing an unnamed TAO spokesman.

'Bullied by China'

Both Taiwan's main leadership candidates defended Chou yesterday. "A citizen of the Republic of China (Taiwan's official name) who shows her recognition for the country should not be suppressed and should not be forced to say the opposite of what she originally meant," said presidential frontrunner Tsai Ing-wen of the Beijing-wary Democratic Progressive Party. "Our hearts are with all friends who hold the flag and support the flag," said Eric Chu of the ruling Kuomintang (KMT), set to be punished in the polls for its Beijing-friendly stance.

A statement from the office of current President Ma Ying-jeou said he had asked officials

to "clarify the roles of the Korean and Chinese sides in this incident and demand they seriously face it". Ma later said waving the flag was not a sign of being pro-independence and it was unacceptable that Chou was forced to apologize. There was also anger online in Taiwan. "A 16-year-old girl is bullied by China. I sure will go voting today," said one post on Taiwan's Apple Daily newspaper website.

South Korean fans described the teen as a political victim and criticized her agency for kowtowing to China for money. "This just shows how blinkered China is, using a child to score political points," said one post on South Korea's Naver news portal. Analysts said the drama could boost election turnout and may help the DPP. Media reports said a Chinese TV channel had cancelled an upcoming show featuring TWICE and that Chou had also been pulled from endorsing Chinese smartphone vendor Huawei in the South Korean market. Last year, US singer-songwriter Katy Perry caused a stir in both Taiwan and China when she appeared on stage in Taipei draped in a Taiwanese flag, while donning a gold dress adorned with sunflowers—a symbol of anti-China student protests in Taiwan in 2014. — AFP



TAIPEI: A supporter of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) holds up a placard of K-pop artist Chou Tzu-yu, a member of the South Korean all-girl band TWICE who was forced to apologize after waving the Taiwanese flag. — AFP



TAIPEI: Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen (center) gestures as she celebrates alongside counterpart Chen Chien-jen (right) after winning the elections in Taipei yesterday. — AFP

TAIWAN ELECTS 1ST FEMALE PRESIDENT

VOTERS TURN THEIR BACKS ON CLOSER CHINA TIES

TAIPEI: Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan's main opposition party will become the island's first female president in a landslide victory over the ruling Kuomintang yesterday, as voters turned their backs on closer China ties. KMT candidate Eric Chu conceded defeat in a disastrous rout for the party, addressing tearful crowds at the party's headquarters in Taipei. The vote count is continuing but live television figures from polling stations show Tsai of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has secured a historic landslide victory, with around 60 percent against 30 percent for Chu.

That would be the biggest ever win for any president in Taiwan—the previous record was 58.45 percent for current KMT president Ma Ying-jeou in 2008. "I'm sorry... We've lost. The KMT has suffered an election defeat. We haven't worked hard enough and we failed voters' expectations," said KMT candidate Eric Chu addressing tearful crowds at the party's headquarters in Taipei. Chu also said the KMT had lost its parliamentary majority, the first time it has ever lost control of the island's legislature. "This is an unprecedented drastic change for the KMT," he said.

Support for Tsai has surged as voters have become increasingly uneasy about a recent rapprochement with China under Ma, who must step down after a maximum two terms. As the economy stagnates, many are

frustrated that trade pacts signed with the mainland have failed to benefit ordinary Taiwanese. The DPP has a much wavier approach to China, although Tsai has repeatedly said she wants to maintain the "status quo". "We want to congratulate the DPP's victory, this is the Taiwan people's mandate," Chu said. He bowed deeply in a sign of apology and declared his resignation as chairman of the party.

Risk to China ties

Jubilant crowds gathered at the DPP headquarters in Taipei, where Tsai was due to speak later. Vendors were selling everything from cups to key chains bearing Tsai's image. One small group held up a banner saying: "Taiwan is not part of China. Support Taiwan independence." "China has no right to claim Taiwan and we want to say that to the world," said one member of the group, Angela Shi, who returned from San Francisco to vote. Tsai has walked a careful path on her China strategy, but the DPP is traditionally a pro-independence party and opponents say Tsai will destabilize relations. Ma has overseen a dramatic rapprochement with China since coming to power in 2008. Although Taiwan is self-ruling after it split with China following a civil war in 1949, it has never declared independence and Beijing still sees it as part of its territory awaiting reunification.

The thaw culminated in a summit between Ma and Chinese President Xi Jinping in November. Yet despite more than 20 deals and a tourist boom, closer ties have exacerbated fears that China is eroding Taiwan's sovereignty by making it economically dependent.

Low salaries and high housing prices are also riling voters. Beijing has warned it will not deal with any leader who does not recognize the "one China" principle, part of a tacit agreement between Beijing and the KMT known as the "1992 consensus". The DPP has never recognized the consensus. Observers say it is unlikely Tsai will do anything to provoke Beijing if she wins. Analysts also agree there will not be any immediate backlash from China, as alienating Taiwan would play against Beijing's ultimate aim of reunification. In the latest cross-strait drama, the plight of a teenage Taiwanese K-pop star dominated local news coverage, with presidential candidates drawn into the row. Chou Tzu-yu, 16, of girl-band TWICE who is based in South Korea, was forced to apologize after sparking online criticism in China for waving Taiwan's official flag in a recent Internet broadcast. Her remorseful video went viral within hours, with Tsai, Chu, and president Ma all leaping to her defense yesterday and demanding answers from China and South Korea over her treatment. — AFP

FROM DAVOS TO LAOS, ANOTHER WORLD TOUR FOR US' JOHN KERRY

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State John Kerry sets off on another tour around the world next week that will take him to Europe, the Middle East and Asia. The State Department, which released Kerry's schedule late Friday, said the top US diplomat will travel to Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, Laos, Cambodia and China. Kerry's first meeting will be in Zurich on January 20, where he will meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to discuss the crises in Syria and Ukraine—the two hot points of disagreement between Moscow and Washington.

State Department spokesman John Kirby on Thursday said that the United States has raised concerns about Russia's tactics in the conflict in Syria, and wants Moscow to pressure its Syrian allies into allowing humanitarian aid to civilians. Kerry then heads to the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, on January 21-22. Some 2,500 business and political leaders, including more than 40 heads of state, are expected to attend the gathering in Davos for a series of seminars on key issues facing the global economy.

Headline guests at the Swiss resort town include British Prime Minister David Cameron, US Vice President Joe Biden, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls and the newly-elected leaders of Canada and Argentina, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President Mauricio Macri. Kerry's next stop will be Riyadh, where on January 23 he is scheduled to meet senior Saudi Arabian leaders, as well as the top diplomats of the Gulf Cooperation Council states "to discuss bilateral and regional issues," the State Department said. The Sunni Arab monarchies, led by Saudi Arabia, have been historic allies of the United States. However they differ strongly with Washington over the nuclear agreement with Iran and the civil war in Syria.

Three stops in Asia

Kerry next travels to Vientiane, where on January 25 he will meet with Lao Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong and Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith. Topics will include a "special" summit of the ten Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on February 15-16 in Sunnylands, California. Kerry will also "affirm support for Laos as this year's ASEAN chair, and express continued US interest in a close bilateral relationship," the State Department said.

US President Barack Obama is scheduled to visit Laos later in the year when Vientiane hosts the annual ASEAN summit. It will be the first visit by a US president to Laos. During the Vietnam war, US warplanes dropped more than two million tons of ordnance on Laos from 1964 to 1973 in bombing missions aimed at cutting North Vietnam supply lines through the neighboring country. An estimated 30 percent of the ordnance failed to detonate. Relations between Laos and the United States have improved during Obama's presidency. Kerry's next stop: Phnom Penh, where on January 26 he will meet Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and Foreign Minister/Deputy Prime Minister Hor Namhong.

Topics include the ASEAN summit as well as "ways to further strengthen bilateral cooperation and the growing bilateral economic relationship." On his final stop Kerry will head to Beijing, where on January 27 he is scheduled to meet senior Chinese government leaders "to discuss a range of global, regional, and bilateral issues, including North Korea." The world's two leading powers have plenty of disagreements, but cooperate on several issues including the Iran nuclear arms deal, attempts to contain pollution and greenhouse gases, and most recently North Korea. — AFP



WIEN: US Secretary of State John Kerry (right) is greeted by the US Ambassador to Austria Alexa Wesner upon arrival in Vienna, Austria yesterday. — AFP

ALLY-TURNED-RIVAL SEEKS TO UNSEAT UGANDA'S MUSEVENI

KAMPALA: A long-time lieutenant of veteran Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni who is seeking to oust him in next month's election says he has been made an "enemy of the state" and his supporters have been harassed. Amama Mbabazi, 67, who served as prime minister until he was sacked by Museveni last year, said Uganda's security forces routinely interfere with his events by restricting his movements and intimidating his supporters. The authorities deny such charges and say they guarantee free speech. When Mbabazi was briefly detained last year, police said he was illegally campaigning before it was allowed. Rights groups, however, say opponents are often intimidated.

"It's total harassment. It's as if I'm an enemy of the state. They deface my posters. They intimidate people," Mbabazi told Reuters at his home in Uganda's capital. "I was shocked." Museveni, 71, a former rebel fighter and now an ally of Western states, has led Uganda since 1986. He is widely expected to win another four-year term on Feb 18. Museveni has been credited with stabilising Uganda after decades of chaos. But opponents say he has become increasingly authoritarian, and the United States and other allies have said it is probably time for him to move on.

Mbabazi, the former secretary-general of the ruling National Resistance Movement now running as an independent, has complicated Museveni's re-election bid even if he is

unlikely to derail it. The former premier has attracted thousands at his rallies with the tagline "change, but with continuity." Yet analysts say he has not sparked mass defections from the ruling party. The opposition vote is split. One of the other rival candidates is Museveni's veteran competitor, Kizza Besigye, who is running for a fourth time. Mbabazi says many people are afraid to declare their support. "Even now I have very many people who support me, but they dare not say it," he said. "They want to protect their businesses, their government positions, and fear they will lose their jobs if they are associated with me."

Mbabazi also faces criticism that he does not mark a real break with the past. In a TV debate with other candidates but snubbed by Museveni, Mbabazi was asked why he had not delivered more of his manifesto promises when in power. He blamed the president's overwhelming executive power. In a 90-minute interview, Mbabazi portrayed himself as a reluctant candidate who ran after Museveni reneged on a private promise after the 2011 race not to seek office again. Mbabazi has said he planned to serve just one term if he won, but did not rule out seeking re-election because "five years is not much time." "My message is, I want the peaceful transition of power from one generation to the next," he said. "One of the attributes of good leaders is that they relinquish power," he said. — Reuters

AFTER H-BOMB TEST, NORTH KOREA FOCUSES ON TROUBLING ECONOMY

PYONGYANG: After ringing in the new year with claims of its first successful hydrogen bomb test, North Korea is now calling on the United States and the world community to accept it as a nuclear power, jettison the pursuit of punitive sanctions and allow it to focus on what it really wants: Build up the nation's troubled economy. While waiting to see what kind of new sanctions might be imposed by the United States, the United Nations and others, North Korean officials say that with the test now out of the way they want the US and its allies to back off and allow them to turn their attention toward peaceful economic growth, as promised by leader Kim Jong Un in his New Year address.

"The US should be accustomed to the status of the DPRK as a nuclear weapons state whether it likes it or not," a Foreign Ministry spokesman said in a statement issued Friday, adding that the North will continue to bolster "in every way" its ability to field nuclear weapons to cope with the "ceaseless provocations" emanating from Washington. North Korea's official name is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Reflecting Pyongyang's concerns over the loom-

ing threat of sanctions, the statement struck a deliberately conciliatory tone by adding that the North stands by its previous offers to put a moratorium on nuclear tests and seek a peace treaty to formally end the Korean War if the United States halts its annual military exercises with the South - an offer Washington has repeatedly ignored in the past.

It also said the North would not use the weapons recklessly. But the statement then switched back to defiant mode, accusing the United Nations of rushing to "fabricate a resolution on sanctions aimed at such hostile acts as hamstringing our efforts for peaceful economic construction and the improvement of the people's standard of living." While it may be wishful thing

on Pyongyang's part to expect a quick welcome into the nuclear club, the statement and others made recently by North Korean officials through the state-run media accurately reflect Kim Jong Un's twin goals of bolstering the country's nuclear deterrent, whatever sanctions that may bring, while at the same time improving domestic living standards. "The DPRK is not interested in aggravating the situation as it is channeling all its efforts into the building of an economic power," the spokesman said, adding that Pyongyang's "primary task for this year is to develop economy and improve the people's standard of living and to that end it requires stable situation and peaceful climate more than any time." Just exactly how it intends to invigorate its centrally controlled, isolated and inefficient domestic economy remains to be seen, especially if it continues to refuse to bow to international pressure on its nuclear program and development of the long-range missiles needed to deliver them to targets on the US mainland. But North Korea's ruling regime - pushed by realities on the ground - does appear to be genuinely considering at least some kind of economic reform. — AP



SEOUL: South Korean army soldiers gather to search for suspected North Korean leaflets in Seoul, South Korea. South Korean military said it has found hundreds of anti-South Korea leaflets near the western portion of the Korea's border. — AP

29 KILLED IN ATTACK ON BURKINA HOTEL

Continued from Page 1

AQIM and Al-Murabitoun jointly claimed that attack. President Roch Marc Christian Kabore, who took office just last month, a year after a popular uprising ousted longtime leader Blaise Compaore, called on his fellow citizens to show "courage". Burkina Faso has "never caved in under any circumstances and it's not going to start now," he said. The attack began around 7.45 pm on Saturday when an unknown number of attackers stormed the 147-room Splendid Hotel in the heart of Ouagadougou.

An AFP reporter saw three gunmen wearing turbans firing on Avenue Kwame Nkrumah, one of the city's main thoroughfares. Another witness reported seeing four assailants. The hotel and its environs were transformed into a battleground as Burkina Faso troops, backed by French forces based in the city under a regional counterterrorism initiative, launched an attempt to retake the hotel around 2 am. The US, which has a small contingent in the country, said it supported French forces in the operation.

Several guests managed to escape from the hotel through side entrances, including Labor Minister Clement Sawadogo, who emerged unscathed. "It was horrible... there was blood everywhere. They were firing at people at close range," Yannick Sawadogo, one of those who escaped, told AFP. "They were walking around people and firing at people who were not dead." Compaore, the interior minister, told AFP that 10 bodies had been discovered on the terrace of the Cappuccino restaurant.

French President Francois Hollande denounced the "odious and cowardly attack", with the European Union and Britain issuing similar condemnations. Also yesterday, the Burkina government said that two Australians were kidnapped Friday in the northern Baraboule region, near the border with Niger and Mali. Malian militant group Ansar Dine told AFP the couple was being held by jihadists from the Al-Qaeda-linked "Emirate of the Sahara". A Burkinabe intelligence source told AFP the Australians were a couple in their 80s from the western city of Perth who had lived since 1972 in Djibo, near Baraboule. The army meanwhile said a heavily-armed group of about 20 people also carried out an attack Friday near the border with Mali, killing two people - a police officer and a civilian - and leaving two others wounded.

The attack in Ouagadougou was unprecedented in Burkina Faso and comes as people were enjoying a return to stability after the election which ended a shaky transitional period following Compaore's ouster, including a failed coup. "The elections went off well... That makes the country a symbol of progress, which is what those people want to destroy," Cynthia Ohayon, a security analyst with the International Crisis Group said.

Al-Murabitoun had already begun to move into the impoverished country of around 17 million. In April last year, the group claimed the abduction of the Romanian security chief of a mine in the country's north. Burkina Faso is one of the five countries in the restive Sahel region that is hosting France's Barkhane counter-terror mission. — AFP

IRAN, US SWAP PRISONERS AS SANCTIONS...

Continued from Page 1

shadow of a baseless confrontation" in the Middle East. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report was expected to confirm - later than widely anticipated - that Iran has dramatically scaled down its nuclear program as agreed in the hard-won July 14 deal reached in Vienna.

This, combined with ultra-close IAEA inspections, extend to at least a year - from a few months previously - how long Iran would need to make one nuclear bomb's worth of fissile material. Iran has always denied wanting nuclear weapons, saying its activities are exclusively for peaceful purposes such as power generation. The IAEA's green light means that a raft of US, EU and UN sanctions on the Islamic republic can be lifted, allowing oil exports to resume and opening up the 80-million-strong country to business.

The Vienna agreement between Iran and six major powers was sealed after two years of rollercoaster negotiations following the June 2013 election of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. The highly complex deal drew a line under a standoff dating back to 2002 marked by failed diplomatic initiatives, ever-tighter sanctions, defiant nuclear expansion by Iran and threats of military action. In addition it put Iran and the United States on the road to better relations some 35 years after the Islamic revolution that toppled the US-backed shah, and at a particularly explosive time in the Middle East.

The agreement, heralded as US President Barack Obama's biggest major foreign policy triumph, has by no means been universally cheered, however. Obama's Republican opponents charge that it fails to do enough to ensure Iran will never get an atomic bomb, a complaint shared by Israel, Iran's arch foe widely assumed to have nuclear weapons itself. "The 'Implementation Day' of the nuclear agreement ushers us into a new and dangerous era, in which Iran is freed from most of its economic sanctions, without having to quit its nuclear program or provide explanations for its military activities," Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Gilad Erdan said yesterday. Sunni Saudi Arabia, Iran's other great regional rival, is also alarmed at the prospect of warmer US-Iran ties and of predominantly Shiite Iran, newly flush with oil revenues, increasing its influence. Already Saudi Arabia and Iran, fighting a proxy war in Yemen and key players in the Syrian conflict, are at daggers drawn following Riyadh's execution of a Shiite cleric in early January and the subsequent ransacking of the Saudi embassy in Tehran.

Iran's imminent return to the oil market has also contributed to the sharp slide in the price of crude to 12-year lows of under \$30 per barrel this week, putting Saudi Arabia's public finances under strain. The lifting of sanctions on Iran is "going to put 500,000 barrels per day more on the market", said James Williams of WTRG

Economics. Some analysts believe \$20 a barrel of oil is on the horizon.

The deal has more than a decade to run, which is likely to be a bumpy road, experts say, not least if more hardline governments emerge in Tehran or Washington. The two countries are still far from being best friends, as witnessed by Iran's recent capture of 10 US sailors in Iranian waters, although their improved relations did help ensure their swift release. Iran violated a UN resolution in October when it test-launched a medium-range missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead, a UN panel of experts concluded in a report in December. A "snapback" mechanism ensures that many of the sanctions can be swiftly reimposed, and a special joint commission is meant to handle any misunderstandings.

"Iran may test the boundaries of the agreement," said Kelsey Davenport of the Arms Control Association. "At the same time, punitive actions for violations on both sides should be proportionate, and differentiated from technical missteps, which may occur under such a complex agreement," she told AFP.

Even before the expected announcement that sanctions would be lifted, Iran's Mehr news agency reported yesterday that executives from two of the world's largest oil companies, Shell and Total, had arrived in Tehran for talks with state firms. Shell denied it. Iran also plans to buy 114 civil aircraft from European aircraft maker Airbus, the transport minister was quoted as saying yesterday. "We have taken the first step in agreeing with Airbus to buy 114 planes," Abbas Akhooondi was quoted as saying by the Tasnim news agency. Airbus said it was not engaging in commercial talks with Iran until sanctions had been lifted.

"Although Iran clearly has a need for new aircraft, we must conform strictly to the law and, until all measures concerning the embargo are lifted, no commercial discussions can take place," an Airbus spokesman said. A deal for 114 airplanes would be worth more than \$10 billion at catalogue prices, depending on the type of aircraft. Such a purchase would be in line with the predictions of Iranair, whose chairman told Reuters in an interview 18 months ago that, as soon as sanctions were eased, Iran would seek to obtain at least 100 wide-body and short-haul jets.

Iranian and Western industry officials estimate that Iran, a country of 80 million people, will need a total of 400 or more aircraft in the next decade to renew an ageing fleet that has suffered several fatal crashes in recent years. For France-based Airbus, its main US rival Boeing and other manufacturers, that could mean an early windfall of \$20 billion in deals, while leasing companies may also benefit due to long waiting times. Some Iranian officials have said the country is ready to place orders for at least 100 jets with both Airbus and Boeing. — Agencies



The Silberhorn Mountain casts its shadow during a foggy day yesterday above the resort of Wengen in the Swiss Alps. — AFP

QATAR PROVIDES 1,000 NEW HOMES FOR GAZANS

Continued from Page 1

"Qatar exerts every effort to help the people of Gaza in the fields of electricity, agriculture, infrastructure and housing, including the rebuilding of completely destroyed houses," Amadi told Reuters. Gaza economist Maher Al-Tabbaa said reconstruction efforts were being hampered by difficulties in bringing raw materials to Gaza. Israel bars the import of products it suspects Hamas might use to rearm or build fortifications, although it began easing restrictions in October under a mechanism overseen by the United Nations.

"Only 400,000 tonnes of cement have entered Gaza since October 2014, or the equivalent of Gaza's need of cement in two months only," said Tabbaa, who is also in charge of public relations at Gaza's Chamber of Commerce. Officials said yesterday that Qatari funding had provided another 1,060 new homes in the Gaza

town of Khan Younis for low-income families. An Indonesian-funded hospital opened in Gaza last month, the first new medical centre in the territory in a decade.

Yesterday, Qatari and Palestinian flags adorned the complex as buses dropped hundreds of people who will receive the apartments. Posters of the former Qatari Amir, his succeeding son and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas hung from the buildings. The families received certificates at the event, but won't move in for another two months due to minor infrastructure work, such as paving the roads to the city and connecting it with water network. Among those who received certificates was Samia Al-Nakhala, 39, who lives with her husband and son in a home that costs \$250 a month in rent. Now she will pay the cost of the house in monthly installments of \$170. "Instead of throwing my money in the air every month, now I will be paying for my own home," she said. — Agencies

COLUMNIST, FADHL'S SON JOIN RACE

Continued from Page 1

Fadhli's son justified his candidacy by claiming to continue his father's legacy and projects based on national unity. He added that he had been always close to his late father and that he shares his same ideas and methods. Candidate Abdullah Al-Duwaihi said he was running to serve Kuwait by setting laws and legisla-

tions and monitoring their implementation. Candidate Najeeb Al-Awadhi said that except for the interior minister, the entire Cabinet needs to be clinically revived. He added that some lawmakers had failed their voters. Candidate Abdullah Al-Khamees said that he decided to run because he fully believes in the legislature's significance.

COMOROS CUTS TIES WITH IRAN

Continued from Page 1

The ransacking came amid anger over Riyadh's execution of Nimr Al-Nimr, a prominent cleric from the kingdom's Shiite minority.

Following the execution Riyadh severed diplomatic relations with Tehran. Several Arab countries followed suit and severed or reduced relations with Iran. "One cannot violate with impunity the sovereignty of diplomatic mis-

sions," the Comoros foreign ministry director general Ahamada Hamadi told AFP, referring to the ransacking. The three islands of Anjouan, Grand Comore and Moheli that make up the Comoros have a total population of just under 800,000 people, nearly all of whom are Sunni Muslims. Since gaining independence from France in 1975, the impoverished archipelago has witnessed more than 20 attempted coups, four of which were successful, but it has enjoyed relative stability in recent years. — AFP

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RESPONSIBLE
FOR JAKARTA
ATTACKS

Focus

OLD MILITANTS WITH
NEW BRAND BEHIND
JAKARTA ATTACK

By Stephen Wright

In the course of six years without a major terrorist attack, Indonesia had grown more and more confident that it had stayed on top of any threat from Islamist militants. Last week, that conviction was punctured by a bold, daylight attack in the heart of Jakarta's busy commercial district. Suicide bombers and gunmen struck a Starbucks and a traffic police post Thursday, killing two people and wounding 20 before the five assailants themselves were slain. The style of the attack, and the people who appear to be behind it, suggest that remnants of the networks responsible for the notorious 2002 Bali bombings and other assaults are trying to regroup under the banner of the Islamic State group.

There had been warning signs of a possible emerging threat for months, including the government's acknowledgment that hundreds of Indonesians had traveled to Syria to fight for the IS group. At the same time, pro-IS rallies in Indonesia were attracting small crowds. Some experts say an IS network was developing in the suburbs of Jakarta, the capital, while counterterrorism efforts were focused on hunting down the country's most-wanted militant in far-off Sulawesi. The blog of Bahrin Naim, an Indonesian militant in Syria, urged his followers to study the methods of the Paris attackers who had killed 130 people in November.

Police quickly tied the IS group to Thursday's attack, labeling Bahrin Naim as its instigator and funder, but they've given scant details beyond saying that an IS flag was found in one attacker's home. Supporters of the Islamic State group claimed responsibility online. Experts say that while it's difficult to know how much of a foothold IS has established in Indonesia, the attack achieved two things: It showed that domestic militant groups are still capable of violence despite being fragmented by the government's counterterrorism campaign; and gave at least the impression that IS now has the ability to launch attacks in Southeast Asia.

Both IS and any affiliate "have an interest in being seen as part of a larger network because it fits with their scare tactics," even if they are tied only by sympathies, said Carol Kersten, an expert in Islam at King's College London. In Western capitals, Indonesia has long been a kind of poster child for progress: A developing nation with the world's largest Muslim population that has embraced both democracy and moderate Islam.

Its reputation for tolerance took a battering from the Bali bombing that killed 202 people, mostly foreigners, and from other high-profile attacks on Western targets by Jemaah Islamiyah militants who wanted to replace civilian government with a caliphate. But the violence also unleashed a sustained government effort - aided by the US and Australia - to break up militant cells. There were hundreds of arrests and the killing of key figures able to mastermind devastating attacks.

Atomization

The atomization of militant networks was evident in Thursday's attack, with its low death toll, basic weapons and unsophisticated execution that betrayed limited resources and capacity. "It was a simple attack. Their arms were pretty limited," said Scott Stewart, a tactical analysis expert at Stratfor, a global intelligence and advisory firm. The main impact, he said, is from the "hype and fear that it conjures." Stewart considers the association with IS a "rebranding" effort by militants who previously identified with Al-Qaeda, rather than a sign of a new and rising radical movement. He said Indonesia will continue to see a persistent and low-level threat of violence, a situation not different from the past six years when there were no major attacks but several thwarted plots. "It's basically the same people," he said.

National police chief Gen Badrodin said one of the men killed, known as Sunakim, was previously sentenced to seven years in prison for his involvement in Jemaah Islamiyah-orchestrated military-style training in Indonesia's Aceh province. He was released early. Still, the IS link in Indonesia is likely to raise concern in other Southeast Asian nations, particularly Singapore and Malaysia, which have both thwarted plots. Along with Indonesia, they recently agreed to boost their joint efforts to combat radicalism and share intelligence. Some Malaysians are also believed to have traveled to Syria to join IS.

Southeast Asia's fairly open societies, easy travel and Muslim-majority populations in Indonesia and Malaysia make it vulnerable, said Vikram Singh, a former Obama administration defense official on South and Southeast Asia. The Jakarta attack, following the extremist assaults in San Bernardino, Paris and Istanbul, suggests that the ability of IS to direct or inspire attacks around the world is building, he said. "They are sending the message that 'we are not going to be just a Syria-Iraq issue. We're going to reach far,'" Singh said. — AP

Washington Watch

THE STATE OF DIS-UNION

By Dr James J Zogby

On Tuesday of this past week, President Obama delivered the annual State of the Union (SOTU) address to a Joint Session of Congress. And then on Thursday, the Republican candidates for their party's nomination held their sixth televised debate. The contrasts in tone couldn't have been sharper, defining the deep partisan divide that has tragically paralyzed our ability to address critical issues facing our country.

For his part, the President sought to frame his SOTU remarks as confident, optimistic, and forward looking. He challenged those who promoted despair and cynicism, noting the progress that has been made in cutting unemployment in half, rescuing America's auto industry, and passing health care reform that has enabled 17 million more Americans to receive coverage. While acknowledging that real problems of income inequality remain, he noted that with investments in education, job training, and continued Wall Street reform, progress could be made.

The President also used the address to challenge the notion being propagated by some that America is in decline all over the world. It is undeniable that we face new challenges from a deeply unsettled Middle East, from an emboldened Russia, an aggressive China, and the persistent threat of terrorism. But he noted that in the face of these challenges, working with allies, we have made progress in addressing climate change and stopping the spread of Ebola, in securing agreements to stop Iran's nuclear program, promote trade with Asian partners, and in opening relations with Cuba. He concluded that despite diplomatic setbacks, persistent and de-stabilizing conflicts, and the continuing threat of terrorism, America's standing has, in fact, improved in almost every country in the world.

As is the case in every SOTU address, the President proposed that Congress take action in a number of areas that he maintained would build on the progress we have made and create a more prosperous and secure America in the future. But his most compelling remarks came near the end of his speech when he returned to a theme that has shaped his entire public life - the need to bring an end to "the rancor and suspicion" that has divided us and inhibited bipartisan cooperation.

He began by urging office holders to "reject any politics that

targets people because of race or religion". He went on to note that "This isn't a matter of political correctness. This is a matter of understanding what makes us strong. The world respects us not just for our arsenal, it respects us for our diversity and our openness and the way we respect every faith...When politicians insult Muslims...that doesn't make us safer...It diminishes us in the eyes of the world. It makes it harder to achieve our goals. It betrays who we are as a country."

He closed with this appeal: "The future we want - opportunity and security for our families, a rising standard of living, a sustainable, peaceful planet for our kid - all that is within our reach. But it will only happen if we work together...if we can have rational, constructive debates...if we fix our politics. [This] doesn't mean we have to agree on everything...[But] it doesn't work if we think our political opponents are unpatriotic or trying to weaken America...Democracy grinds to a halt without a willingness to compromise...Our public life withers when only the most extreme voices get all the attention...We have to change the system to reflect our better selves."

GOP Rhetoric

These concluding thoughts struck me as prescient as I listened to the tone and content of the GOP debate that followed the SOTU just two days later. If the President sought to elevate our political discourse and seek compromise, many of those competing for the Republican nomination were clearly moving in the opposite direction. Ohio Governor John Kasich and former Florida Governor Jeb Bush stood out as exceptions, but their voices were often drowned out by the harsh and unyielding rhetoric of their competitors.

Five of the seven candidates (all but Kasich and Bush) either rejected new Muslim immigrants or questioned the wisdom of admitting them. Trump calling Muslim immigrants a "great Trojan Horse" that would allow terrorists entry into America. The two hour slug-fest featured an abundance of intramural squabbling. Donald Trump and Texas Senator Ted Cruz were at war with one another, as were New Jersey Governor Chris Christie and Florida Senator Marco Rubio. While blood was drawn, the combatants saved their harshest and most demeaning jabs for President Obama.

Rubio, for example, had this to say: "Barack Obama does not believe that America is a great global power. Barack Obama believes that America is an arrogant global power that needs to be cut down to size. And that's how you get a foreign policy where we cut deals with our enemies like Iran and we betray our allies like Israel and we get our military and we go around the world like he has done on 10 separate occasions and apologized for America."

Trump added, "Our country is being run by incompetent people...We are a stupid country laughed at by people all over the world." And the most boorish insult of the night was delivered by Christie when, speaking of the President, whom he once embraced, thanking him for the support he offered to his hurricane ravaged state, said "We are going to kick your rear end out of the White House come this fall."

The entire affair was a sad display of our politics at its worst, made all the more troubling by the fact that the two candidates (Kasich and Bush) who continually attempted to elevate the discourse, are, at this point, polling near the bottom of the GOP pack. There are, to be sure, legitimate challenges that Republicans and Democrats can offer to the President's performance, to date. The Affordable Care Act needs fixing. Not enough has been done to correct income inequality, the racial divide, and widespread corrosive government surveillance. There have been failures in foreign policy, too. We mishandled the Syrian civil war and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and while the P5+1 agreement with Iran was an achievement, we should have been more attentive to the concerns of anxious Arab allies who felt sidelined and betrayed by their exclusion from the process.

But all these efforts could have been advanced had there been constructive bipartisan cooperation. And, even now, they can and should be discussed without the rancorous and divisive rhetoric that makes forward progress impossible. As the president noted in his State of the Union, the fact that the tone of politics hasn't changed is one of his lasting regrets. But "it takes two to tango" and from the performance of Trump and company, the other side doesn't appear ready to end the state of our dis-union.

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute

US BLINKED ON NEW IRAN SANCTIONS

By Lesley Wroughton, Patricia Zengerle
and Matt Spetalnick

The day before the Obama administration was due to slap new sanctions on Iran late last month, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif warned US Secretary of State John Kerry the move could derail a prisoner deal the two sides had been negotiating in secret for months. Kerry and other top aides to President Barack Obama, who was vacationing in Hawaii, convened a series of conference calls and concluded they could not risk losing the chance to free Americans held by Tehran. At the last minute, the Obama administration officials decided to delay a package of limited and targeted sanctions intended to penalize Iran for recent test-firings of a ballistic missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead.

This account of previously unreported internal deliberations was provided by two people with knowledge of the matter. Those unilateral US sanctions were expected to be imposed quickly now that four Americans, including Washington Post journalist Jason Rezaian, were being released by Iran on Saturday. Eight Iranians accused in the United States of sanctions violations were having charges dropped or sentences commuted on Saturday under the complex prisoner deal, according to court filings and sources familiar with the cases.

The moves came as broader US and international sanctions were set to be lifted after verification that it had met commitments to curb its nuclear program. But Kerry's decision not to call Iran's bluff in December shows how months of clandestine negotiations to free Rezaian and other Americans became deeply intertwined with the final push to implement the nuclear deal, despite the official US line that those efforts were separate. A US official said yesterday there was no connection between the nuclear deal and the release of the Americans.

The prisoner swap could also come under scrutiny from critics who have questioned the Obama administration's resolve in dealing with Iran and ability to follow through on its pledge to keep a hard line on sanctions outside those imposed on its nuclear program. The episode was one of several diplomatic and military near misses between Iran and the United States in recent weeks, including a quickly defused crisis when 10 US sailors were detained after entering Iranian waters.

Tense Calls and Bureaucratic Errors

Details of the prisoner talks were a closely held secret, so even within the Obama administration few people realized how perilously close the swap came to falling through. On Dec 29, Kerry told Zarif the United States intended to impose new

sanctions on Iran over the missile test firings, which were deemed to have violated a United Nations ban, according to a US official and congressional sources. Zarif countered that if Washington went ahead, the prisoner swap was off, the sources said.

Kerry spoke by phone that night with Treasury Secretary Jack Lew and a White House official and the decision was made to hold off on any sanctions announcement, they said. Obama's role in the unfolding drama was not clear. Zarif's ability to fend off new US sanctions, even temporarily, may have bought him some breathing space with Iranian hardliners who oppose the terms of nuclear deal. They have insisted that any new sanctions would be a show of bad faith by Washington.

But a bureaucratic misstep almost undid Kerry and Lew's decision. Word of their last-minute intervention to delay the sanctions never filtered down to working-level officials at the State Department during the holiday lull. Unaware of the change of plan, the State officials went ahead and quietly informed key congressional offices the next morning about the new Iran sanctions targeting about a dozen companies and individuals. They included copies of a news release that the Treasury Department intended to issue.

Officials then abruptly pulled back, telling congressional staffers the announcement had been "delayed for a few hours," according to an email seen by Reuters. The next day the State Department emailed that sanctions were delayed because of "evolving diplomatic work that is consistent with our national security interests."

Administration officials then told some congressional staffers confidentially that something big involving Iran was in the works, in an apparent attempt to tamp down criticism from Capitol Hill, a congressional source said. Leading lawmakers, including some of Obama's fellow Democrats, chided the White House for delaying the sanctions package and suggested it could embolden Iran to further threaten its neighbors and destabilize the Middle East.

Small Circle of Trust

The nuclear deal signed on July 14 between Iran and world powers had been widely hailed as a major boost for Obama's legacy. But he also faced criticism for refusing to make the accord contingent on Iran's release of Americans known to be held by Iran. The prisoners, accused of spying and other charges, included Rezaian and several other Iranian-Americans.

At a White House news conference the day after the nuclear accord was signed, Obama bristled at a reporter's suggestion

that while basking in the glow of the foreign policy achievement he was all but ignoring the plight of Americans still detained in Iran. "You should know better," he said, adding that US diplomats were "working diligently to try to get them out." But Obama insisted that linking their fate directly to the nuclear negotiations would have encouraged the Iranians to seek additional concessions.

Once the deal was done, Kerry told his staff to redouble efforts to secure the Americans' release, a US official said. By that time, Brett McGurk, a State Department official, had already been conducting secret negotiations for months with an unnamed Iranian representative, the official said. In a sign that Iran was looking for a way forward, officials of the Iranian interests section in Washington - Tehran's de facto embassy - began meetings in August with some of the 12 Iranians held in the United States for violating sanctions. The aim was to see whether they would be willing to return to Iran if a swap could be arranged, according to a person familiar with the cases.

In recent months, senior Iranian officials repeatedly floated the idea of a prisoner exchange, despite apparent opposition from Iranian hardliners. Kerry informed only a handful of senior lawmakers on a confidential basis on Thursday night that a release of Americans held in Iran was imminent, a congressional source said. Obama has had some success in keeping such proceedings under wraps in the past. His aides negotiated a deal in late 2014 that led to Cuba's release of former US aid contractor Alan Gross and a US intelligence operative while Washington freed three Cuban spies.

But it was a prisoner swap earlier that year - the Taliban's release of alleged US army deserter Bowe Bergdahl in exchange for five Taliban commanders held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba - that caused a backlash from Republican lawmakers. They argued that Obama failed to give Congress the legally required notice for transfer of Guantanamo prisoners and questioned whether Bergdahl endangered fellow soldiers by slipping away from his post in Afghanistan, provoking a massive manhunt.

Yesterday, Kerry and Zarif joined with European Union foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini in Vienna for planned "Implementation Day", which would end a decade of nuclear sanctions on Iran and unlock billions of dollars of its frozen assets. With the US prisoners free, Obama may now feel freer to go ahead with the missile sanctions, which are far more limited than the nuclear sanctions program that crippled Iran's economy. US officials have said that the new financial penalties remain on the table and are likely to be revisited soon. — Reuters

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ALL-GOLD SERENA MULLS OLYMPIC TREBLE BID

MELBOURNE: World number one Serena Williams confirmed yesterday she plans to play doubles at the Olympics in Rio this year and is even mulling the mixed event if she can find a partner. Williams and sister Venus have an enviable record for the United States at the Olympics, claiming the women's doubles gold in 2000, 2008 and 2012. Serena is also the current Olympic singles champion and is keen for more glory. "We definitely want to play doubles there," she said ahead of the Australian Open in Melbourne. "So we're going to play some tournaments later in the year, get our doubles game back, see how it goes." Asked if she would consider playing mixed doubles as well in Rio, she replied: "I would love to. I don't know, though. That's a lot of matches. We'll see," she added. "I play well with John (Isner). I didn't get to play with Jack (Sock). Yeah, anyone with a big serve, where I can just stand at the net and look good, that's all I need to do." — AFP



SVINDAL WINS WENGEN WORLD CUP DOWNHILL

WENGEN: Aksel Lund Svindal won the Wengen men's World Cup downhill for the first time in his career yesterday. The veteran Norwegian, second on Friday in the super-combined, produced a superb run in difficult conditions to clock 1min 48.79secs. That was 00.19secs ahead of last year's winner on the famous Lauberhorn piste, Hannes Reichelt of Austria, with another Austrian, Klaus Kroll, in third place a second and a half slower. The 100 points for the win means that Svindal leapfrogged slalom king Marcel Hirscher atop the overall World Cup rankings. The overall champion in 2007 and 2009, he now has 816 points to 801 for Hirscher, but the Austrian will likely rebound with the Wengen slalom today. Svindal has now won four out of the five World Cup downhills contested this season, with the exception of Santa Caterina on December 29 which went to Frenchman Adrien Theaux. It wasn't easy to win in these conditions, but the piste was still in good shape. It was just the visibility that was poor," he said. "Everyone was saying yesterday that I was the hot favourite, but it doesn't work like that. You also need your share of luck and today that is what I had. Now we move on to Kitzbuhel and it is a similar layout. If everything goes well during the week I have a chance of winning again." — AFP

ZIDANE CONTENT WITH REAL SQUAD AFTER FIFA BAN

MADRID: Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane is happy with his squad and the club has not discussed possible reinforcements despite FIFA's decision to ban them from the next two transfer windows, he said yesterday. FIFA announced on Thursday it had banned Real and neighbours Atletico Madrid from registering players for the next two windows for breaching rules on signing non-Spanish Under-18 players. Both clubs denied wrongdoing and said they would appeal. The list of players included at least one of Zidane's four sons, who play for various Real youth teams, although the club have not confirmed which of them were singled out by FIFA. The sanction means the clubs will not be able to register new signings until July 2017 once the present transfer window closes at the end of the month. They may be able to get the ban suspended pending the outcome of their appeal as Barcelona did when they were handed a similar punishment in 2014.



KUWAIT: The participants prepare ahead of the start of the SPARK Marathon 2016. (Inset) Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah speaks at the event. — KUNA Photos

SPARK 2016 TO RAISE SPORTS AWARENESS IN KUWAITI SOCIETY

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said that SPARK Marathon 2016 aimed to raise sports awareness and encourage sport activities among people of the Kuwaiti society. Holding such sport events boosts the partnership between state and private sectors in supporting the

Kuwaiti youth as seen through the effective cooperation between SPARK Athletic Center and the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, Sheikh Salman stated to reporters Saturday on the sidelines of conclusion of the Spark Marathon at the Marina Crescent in Salmiya. He praised SPARK's efforts, headed by the center's CEO Abdulmohsen Al-Babtain in supporting and serving

youngsters in the most appropriate way and form of youth action in the State of Kuwait, expressing his gratitude to the sponsoring companies and institutions for their effective role in making the event successful. The government's top priorities stem from His Highness the Amir's directions in supporting sports for all, particularly youngsters, the Kuwaiti minister said, noting that SPARK

Marathon 2016 is an ideal reflection of the positive cooperation between the private sector and the ministry. He also confirmed his ministry's strive to continue cooperating with the private sector to attain the desired goals, indicating that the event's financial returns are to be invested in holding a charity in cooperation with the UN and philanthropic societies in Kuwait. — KUNA

NEW RUSSIAN CHIEF TO REFORM ATHLETICS

MOSCOW: Russia's embattled athletics body yesterday elected a new "anti-crisis" president, regional sports bureaucrat Dmitry Shlyakhtin, who has promised to rescue its reputation from doping claims ahead of the Rio Olympics. Shlyakhtin, who has served as a regional sports official, was backed by Russia's Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko and elected unanimously to head the All-Russian Athletics Federation (ARAF) after two candidates withdrew themselves from the vote. He will serve as an "anti-crisis" head of the body for the next several months, through the Olympic Games in Rio, before another vote in September or October, Mutko told journalists

Shlyakhtin has been sports minister of the Samara region on the Volga river for the last three years. Before that he headed the CSKA athletics club. Mutko further called Shlyakhtin an "ideal candidate" and man of great experience reorganising CSKA. "It's a critical situation, but we will be helping him," the minister told R-Sport agency. "We have to build back trust, I hope together we will manage this." The IAAF provisionally suspended the ARAF in November and outlined strict reinstatement criteria last month, including severing ties with Russian athletics officials, officers or staff with any past involvement in doping. Possibly due to this, ARAF secretary general Mikhail Butov withdrew his candidacy ahead of the vote Saturday. Butov had been invited for the secretary general post by ex-ARAF chief Valentin Balakhnichchev, who is now banned by IAAF for life. Another candidate Alexander Shustov, a 31-year-old veteran high-jumper, also retracted his candidacy, later explaining that he is planning to continue his career as an athlete for the time being.

ERADICATE OUR PROBLEMS

"We decided not to task anyone from among former employees or athletes with work in the new athletics federation leadership," said Gennady Aleshin, who has been de-facto Russia's athletics representative in his capacity as head of an interim coordination commission of Russia's Olympic Committee. "We must demonstrate consistent and tough work to eradicate our problems, to ensure that our athletes make it to the Rio Olympic Games," he told journalists. Russia is facing an uphill battle after a World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) independent commission alleged widespread state-sanctioned corruption and doping in the country's athletics. The leadership of Russian anti-doping agency RUSADA-which WADA claimed provided advance notice to athletes about out-of-competition testing-last month resigned en masse following a pledge by President Vladimir Putin to "do everything" to fight doping. Officials have also promised to promptly reactivate RUSADA and the Moscow anti-doping laboratory, both suspended over the WADA report published in November.

Over four thousand Russian athletes have been banned from international competition and sports authorities are launching reforms and making promises to get the ban lifted in time for Rio. — AFP



MOSCOW: Newly elected President of Russia's Athletics Federation (ARAF), regional sports bureaucrat Dmitry Shlyakhtin, attends a press conference at Russia's Olympic committee in Moscow yesterday. — AFP

ahead of the decision. "In this difficult period for Russian athletics, my task is simple, to return the federation to the international level, to reinstate the trust of IAAF and WADA, to give our athletes the opportunity to compete in international events," he told journalists after the vote. "We must solve all of these problems quickly," he said, after Mutko said he hoped to "reinstate all the powers of our athletics federation in March." The federation on Saturday also approved changes to its charter, which now includes a "large anti-doping bloc" of measures, ARAF spokeswoman Alla Glushchenko told AFP. She declined to give precise details about the amendments.

'BUILD BACK TRUST'

Virtually unknown outside of Russia,

DAKAR DOZEN FOR PETERHANSEL, PRICE CLAIMS BIKE CROWN

RIO CUARTO: France's Dakar Rally legend Stephane Peterhansel celebrated his 12th title on Saturday as motorbike rider Toby Price became the first Australian to etch his name on the gruelling event's roll of honour.

The 50-year-old Peterhansel avoided any late drama to safely cross the finish line of the closing 13th stage at Rio Cuarto to give French manufacturer Peugeot their first win since 1990.

"It's extraordinary. The pressure was very high, but we came through," said the Dakar's all-time record winner. "Some of my wins count more than others, but this one's definitely in the top 3." Price, 28, who came third last year on his debut, dominated the two-week bike race after lifting the second stage last week.

"Being the first Australian to win the Dakar is just insane," Price said. "I don't know what to say, I don't know what to think... I'm in shock, I never would've thought I could win this race in my second participation. "This is incredible for my family, my friends and my fans back in Australia!"

The rider from New South Wales finished fourth on the final day to wrap up the title and supply his KTM team with a 15th consecutive crown. He had a tidy 39-minute cushion over his Slovakian teammate Stefan Svitko with Chilean Pablo Quintanilla at 48min in third.

NEW CHAPTER

While he was savouring opening his Dakar account, Peterhansel was adding a new chapter to his love affair with the iconic event he first competed in back in 1989. He made what ultimately proved to be a decisive step towards the 2016 title on Thursday's drive from Belen to La Rioja. With his Peugeot teammate and arch rival Carlos Sainz com-



RIO CUARTO: Peugeot driver France's Stephane Peterhansel, right, and co-driver Jean Paul Cottet, greets fans after winning the car category at the Argentina Dakar Rally upon arrival to the last stage between Villa Carlos Paz and Rosario, Argentina yesterday. — AP

ing to a grinding halt 30 kilometres from the line, he ended the day a full one hour clear of last year's winner Nasser Al-Attiyah behind the wheel of a Mini. After safely coming in ninth behind final stage winner Sebastian Loeb, Peterhansel took the title with over half an hour to spare from Qatar's Al-Attiyah. For Peugeot this was a superb achievement coming just two years after their return to the iconic event following a 26-year absence. South African Giniel De Villiers driving a Toyota took third over an hour adrift.

Peterhansel won the first of his six titles on two wheels in 1991 and his 11th victory behind the wheel of a Mini in 2013. "It's too early to think about the future," he said. "One thing's for sure, getting the same number of victories on a bike and in a car was the last big goal in my career. Now that it's done, I don't think there are many things left to motivate me." The quads category was won for the third time by Marcos Patronelli with Dutchman Gerard de Rooy annexing his second truck title. — AFP

USAIN BOLT SHOCKED BY IAAF REPORTS, AGAINST WIPING RECORDS

KINGSTON: Six-times Olympic champion Usain Bolt said he felt shocked and let down by the scandal-hit IAAF, but the Jamaican sprinter was against resetting athletics world records as the sport attempts to move on from the doping crisis.

Thursday's second instalment of a World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) report slammed the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), accusing its former head, Lamine Diack, of running a clique that covered up organised doping and blackmailed athletes as senior officials looked the other way. The first part of the report by independent investigator Dick Pound, a former head of WADA, in November led to athletics superpower

Russia being banned from competition for state-sponsored doping. Jamaican sprint king Bolt, the biggest name in athletics with a plethora of titles, records and commercial deals, said the IAAF had failed their athletes. "When I heard it was quite shocking for me to hear that because as far as I was concerned I think they were doing a good job to clean up the sport," Bolt told Reuters in Kingston after collecting his sixth National Sportsman of the year award. "So for me to hear something like this was quite shocking and you feel let down as an athlete to be wanting to actually help clean up the sport, and then something like this to come up about the body. "It's kind of a letdown, so hopefully

there's no such thing, but we'll see what happen (with the investigations)." Diack stepped down last year after 16 years leading the IAAF and was replaced by Briton Sebastian Coe. The Senegalese is already under formal investigation in France on suspicion of corruption and money laundering linked to the concealment of positive drug tests in concert with Russian officials and the blackmailing of the athletes to allow them to continue to compete.

The reports noted that Diack "sanctioned and appeared to have had personal knowledge of the fraud and the extortion of athletes carried out by the actions of the illegitimate governance structure he put in place." — Reuters

MUNSTER STUN STADE WITH IMPRESSIVE WIN

PARIS: Irish province Munster severely dented the hopes of Stade Francais of reaching the European Champions Cup quarter-finals with a 26-13 home win over the French champions yesterday. The bonus point win was just their second success of the pool stages and leaves them in third place with 10 points.

Stade were left stranded on 14 points, four behind Leicester who were expected to pick up maximum points late yesterday at home to Treviso and clinch qualification.

The French side would then have to defeat Leicester in Paris in the final pool game to have any chance of advancing as one of the best runner-up teams. Munster had the best of a physical first half at Thomond Park, scoring two tries to nil as Stade Francais struggled to compete. The first came after 32 minutes when hooker Mike Sherry powered over after an impressive driving line-out, while the second was a solo effort from centre Keith Earls on the stroke of half-time, bursting through a gap in the Stade ranks from the halfway line and sliding in under a late tackle. The French had only two Mome Steyn penalties to show for their efforts as Munster turned with a 12-6 lead and things went from bad to worse for the visitors one minute into the second half.

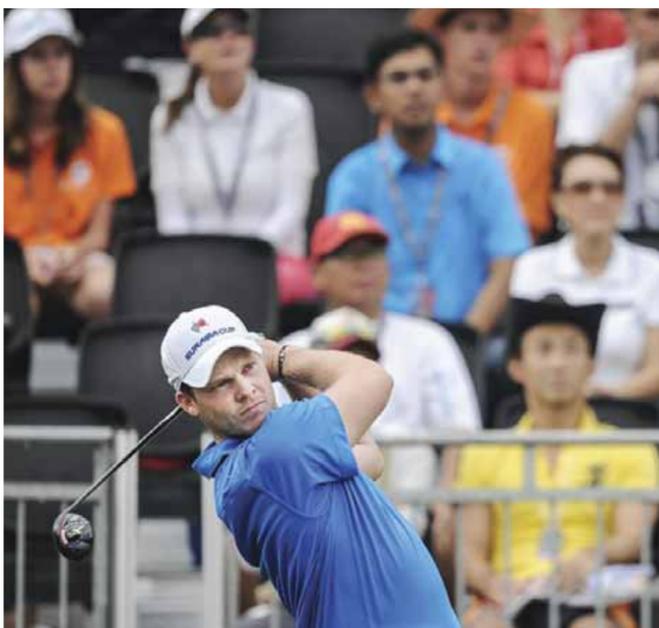


SWANSEA: Clermont's Georgian flanker Viktor Kolelishvili (R) is tackled by Ospreys' Welsh fly-half Dan Biggar and Ospreys' Welsh lock Lloyd Ashley during the European Rugby Champions Cup group stage match between Ospreys and Clermont Auvergne at the Liberty stadium in Swansea, south Wales on Friday. — AFP

Fly-half Ian Keatley was the architect sending through an inch-perfect chip for winger Simon Zebo to collect and score between the posts. Stade were guilty of squandering several good scoring opportunities due to turnovers, but they got themselves back into the game with 17 minutes to go. There looked to be little danger to the home side before an overthrown line-out in their own half was gobbled up by flanker Jonjo Jones who thundered in under the posts from 25 yards out.

The door was briefly open for Stade but three minutes later it shut again as the Munster pack bossed their way forward and South African flanker and club skipper CJ Stander muscled his way over after Connor Murray took a quick tap. The French side went out in search of a second try that would have given them a defensive bonus point but they came up short. In yesterday's other early game Bordeaux edged Exeter 34-27 in a Pool 2 thriller.

In action later Saturday Saracens host Ulster in a clash of the top two teams in Pool 1, while Oyonnax take on Toulouse and Leinster go up against Bath. In Friday's match, Welsh side Ospreys scored a superb 21-13 win over last year's runner-up Clermont to move two points clear atop Pool 2. — AFP



KUALA LUMPUR: Team Europe Danny Willett of England tees off on the first hole during the 2016 EurAsia Cup Golf tournament at the Glenmarie Golf and Country club in Shah Alam, outside Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — AFP

DOMINANT EUROPE PROMISE NO LET UP IN EURASIA CUP

KUALA LUMPUR: European captain Darren Clarke insisted there will be no complacency on the final day of the EurAsia Cup after his team took a commanding six-point lead in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Clarke's 12-man team doubled their three-point lead from the first round by winning four of six fourball matches, with one lost and the other halved, for a 9-3 advantage in the saunlike conditions at Glenmarie Golf and Country Club. Clarke, who is also the current European Ryder Cup captain, could not have been more delighted with team lynchpins Lee Westwood and Ian Poulter who again won both their matches against Asian Tour rivals. Europe now needs to secure just 3.5 of the 12 points up for grabs in Sunday's deciding singles matches to claim the trophy after the inaugural 2014 tournament ended in a 10-10 draw.

"I am a very excited captain but this morning Asia came at us strongly, and we expected that, but the quality of the European guys showed as they just knuckled down, fought hard so I feel very pleased with the overall result," said Clarke. "My advice now to the team is that there be no complacency. I've been in a few Ryder Cup scenarios where we have had big leads and it hasn't worked out. "But first and foremost... I want the guys to go out and enjoy themselves and go and play well."

Yesterday's second round commenced with Europe leading 4.5-1.5 over

Asia. And for the second day running Poulter, a veteran of five Ryder Cup campaigns, set the tone, teaming up with fellow Englishman Danny Willett, to win 3&2 over Thailand's Thongchai Jaidee and An Byeong-Hun from South Korea. In a 10-minute period Europe then secured three quick points to race ahead 8.5-1.5 as Bernd Wiesberger of Austria and England's Ross Fisher won 2-up over the Korean pairing of Kim Kyung-Tae and Wang Jeung-Hun.

Lee Westwood and 21-year-old Matthew Fitzpatrick snatched the biggest win of day two with a 5&4 triumph over Asian Tour number one Anirban Lahiri from India and China's Wu Ashun.

Thailand's Kiradech Aphibarnrat and India's SSP Chawrasia recorded the Asian team's only victory, finishing 2-up after a birdie on the last hole against Swede Kristoffer Broberg and England's Chris Wood. "It was a great way to finish with a birdie but then we both were playing solid golf... and really played well as a team," Aphibarnrat said. Ireland's Shane Lowry and Andrew Sullivan from England stayed unbeaten in the team format, winning 3&2 over Thailand's Prayad Marksaeng and Japan's Shingo Katayama.

The final match of the day-with Soren Kjeldsen from Sweden and Frenchman Victor Dubuisson playing Malaysians Danny Chia and Nicholas Fung-was halved. — AFP

BLACKHAWKS BEAT LEAFS FOR 10TH STRAIGHT WIN

TORONTO: Patrick Kane had three goals for his first hat trick of the season and the Chicago Blackhawks beat the Toronto Maple Leafs 4-1 Friday night for their 10th straight win. Artemi Panarin also scored and assisted on two of Kane's goals for the Blackhawks. Scott Darling made 28 saves to earn the win in net for Chicago while Corey Crawford took the night off after a 2-1 win in Montreal the night before. Kane, who added an assist for a four-point night, now has an NHL-leading 28 goals on the season. The win puts Chicago in first in the Central Division, a point ahead of the Dallas Stars, who played at Anaheim later Friday night. Morgan Rielly scored for Toronto, which has lost four in a row. James Reimer stopped 25 shots.

LIGHTNING 5, PENGUINS 4, OT

Vladislav Namestnikov completed a hat trick in overtime and Tampa Bay beat Pittsburgh to extend a season-high four-game winning streak. Valtteri Filppula and Anton Stralman also scored for Tampa Bay and Steven Stamkos had two assists. Andrei Vasilevskiy made 36 saves. Pittsburgh got goals from Kris Letang, Patric Hornqvist, Trevor Daley and Chris Kunitz. Evgeni Malkin had two assists, giving him 23 assists and 42 points in 31 games against Tampa Bay. Namestnikov scored the winner from in close 2:11 into the extra session. Marc-Andre Fleury made 20 saves for the Penguins.

DUCKS 4, STARS 2

Jakob Silfverberg had a goal and an assist and the NHL's lowest-scoring team blasted the highest-scoring team for four goals in the first period. After Silfverberg and Sami Vatanen scored 31 seconds apart in the opening minutes, Hampus Lindholm and Corey Perry scored 33 seconds apart later in the first period while the Ducks shredded the Stars' defense and goalie Kari Lehtonen in a 12:32 stretch. Frederik Andersen made 22 saves for the Ducks, who have won seven of 10. Mattias Janmark scored a short-handed goal and captain Jamie Benn had a power-play goal for the Stars. Dallas has lost six straight road games for the first time in five years.

CANUCKS 3, HURRICANES 2, OT

Bo Horvat scored his second goal with 1:35 left in overtime and Vancouver beat Carolina. Horvat also had two goals against Carolina in a 3-2 win nine days earlier and has scored four of his eight goals this season against the Eastern Conference foe. Linden Vey also scored and Jacob Markstrom made 38 saves for Vancouver. Carolina's John-Michael Liles made it 2-2 with 2:10 left in the third period. Kris Versteeg also scored for the Hurricanes, and Cam Ward made 19 saves.

JETS 1, WILD 0

Winnipeg rookie Connor Hellebuyck became the first goalie to shut out Minnesota this season, and the Jets used an early goal by Blake Wheeler to beat the Wild. Hellebuyck won his NHL debut at Minnesota on Nov. 27 with a 3-1 decision and made 24 saves in this one. Detroit is now the only remaining NHL team that hasn't gone scoreless in a game this season.

With Alexander Burmistrov called for tripping with 2:42 left, the Wild had a power play that went to a 6-on-4 when coach Mike Yeo pulled Devan Dubnyk. But the two-man advantage wasn't enough to keep the Wild from falling to 2-



TORONTO: Phillip Danault #24 of the Chicago Black Hawks is checked by Morgan Rielly #44 of the Toronto Maple Leafs during an NHL game at the Air Canada Centre on Friday in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. — AFP

NHL results/standings

Boston 4, Buffalo 1; Chicago 4, Toronto 1; Vancouver 3, Carolina 2 (OT); Tampa Bay 5, Pittsburgh 4 (OT); Winnipeg 1, Minnesota 0; Anaheim 4, Dallas 2.

Western Conference							Eastern Conference						
Central Division							Atlantic Division						
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS		
Chicago	30	13	4	135	108	64	Florida	26	13	5	118	98	
Dallas	29	12	4	151	120	62							
St. Louis	25	15	7	117	118	57							
Minnesota	22	14	8	113	103	52							
Colorado	22	20	3	128	127	47							
Nashville	19	17	8	113	123	46							
Winnipeg	21	21	3	118	129	45							
Pacific Division							Metropolitan Division						
Los Angeles	27	12	3	112	92	57	Washington	33	7	3	143	91	
Arizona	22	16	5	122	131	49	NY Islanders	24	15	5	122	110	
San Jose	22	18	2	120	114	46	NY Rangers	23	15	5	124	113	
Vancouver	18	17	10	109	126	46	Carolina	20	18	8	111	124	
Anaheim	19	17	7	86	102	45	Pittsburgh	20	16	7	103	108	
Calgary	20	20	2	115	129	42	New Jersey	21	19	5	99	110	
Edmonton	17	23	5	109	133	39	Philadelphia	19	15	7	94	110	
							Columbus	16	25	4	114	145	

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

5-1 in their last eight home games. Just 3:07 into the game, the Jets were on the rush as Wheeler patiently worked on Wild defenseman Jonas Brodin before toe-dragging into the slot and sending a wrist shot past Dubnyk.

BRUINS 4, SABRES 1

Zdeno Chara floated in the go-ahead goal from the left point 29 seconds into the third period and Boston beat Buffalo. Ryan Spooner scored an insurance goal with 9:07 left and added two assists, and Brett Connolly scored

into an empty net with 1:09 remaining. Matt Beleskey had a goal and an assist, and Boston snapped a 0-2-1 skid and improved to 2-4-1 in its past seven. The Bruins beat Buffalo by overcoming a 1-0 first-period deficit and after squandering third-period leads in losing each of their past two: A 3-2 loss at Philadelphia on Wednesday night and a 2-1 loss at the New York Rangers on Monday night. Backup Jonas Gustavsson stopped 33 shots, including the final 24 he faced. Fourth-line center David Legwand scored for Buffalo. — AP

SNEDAKER AHEAD IN SONY OPEN

LOS ANGELES: Brandt Snedeker continued his strong start to 2016 on Friday, firing a five-under par 65 to take a one-stroke lead after two rounds of the Sony Open in Honolulu, Hawaii. Snedeker, part of a five-way tie for the first-round lead, was impressive on the greens. He rolled in a 15-footer at his opening hole, the 10th and picked up another birdie at the par-five 18th.

He chipped in from 35 feet at the third, and poured in a 20-foot birdie putt at four before capping his round with a six-foot birdie at Waialae Country Club's ninth.

His 12-under total of 128 gave him a one-shot lead over fellow American Kevin Kisner, whose 66 was highlighted by an eagle at his finishing hole, the ninth. British Open champion Zach Johnson had five birdies in his four-under 66 for 130.

He was joined at 10-under by England's former world number one Luke Donald and American Zac Blair, who both carded their second straight 65s, and Chez Reavie, who climbed up the leaderboard with a seven-under 63 that included seven birdies.

Snedeker, a seven-time winner on the US PGA Tour, is coming off a tie for third at last week's Tournament of Champions at Kapalua—a solid finish that followed missed cuts in his two previous starts.

"This is why we spend so much time away from our families as well as so much time on the golf course, (working) to be in contention and have a chance to win at the weekend," he told the Golf Channel.

After floundering late last season, Snedeker went to work with swing coach Butch Harmon. The move is paying divi-

dends, although Snedeker said change wasn't easy.

"It felt really awkward and uncomfortable, and I thought there would be some growing pains with it, some kind of foul balls here and there that just kind of come when you make a swing change," he said. "I played a bunch of practice rounds at Maui and that kind of helped me get more comfortable with it."

"(I) feel way more comfortable with it this week and excited about it because the bad shots haven't been near as bad as they had been." Fiji's Vijay Singh, 52, signed for a one-under par 69 that left him four off the lead and still in the hunt to become the oldest ever winner on the US PGA Tour.

Jimmy Walker, seeking an unprecedented third Waialae title, was nine off the lead after a second-round 68. — AFP



HONOLULU: Brandt Snedeker plays a shot from a bunker on the 18th hole during the second round of the Sony Open in Hawaii at Waialae Country Club on Friday in Honolulu, Hawaii. — AFP

MURRAY HAPPY TO SCRAP MELBOURNE FINAL FOR BABY DASH

MELBOURNE: Andy Murray made it crystal clear yesterday that he wouldn't hesitate to pull out of the Australian Open if his wife goes into labour—even if it meant robbing the event of its men's final.

Murray said he had no problem missing the chance of a third Grand Slam title, or ending the men's tournament early, if he has to dash home for the birth of his first child.

"For me, my child is more important to me, and my wife is more important to me, than a tennis match," he told reporters in Melbourne.

Two-time Grand Slam-winner Murray has reached four of the last six finals at Melbourne Park, although he is yet to lift the trophy.

If the Scot were to pull out of the final, the title would go to his opponent and the Australian Open would miss its showpiece moment usually watched by millions of viewers around the world. Murray, 28, said he was growing increasingly excited about the prospect of fatherhood, with his wife Kim Sears due to give birth in the coming weeks.

"Most days I think about that. Just now it's a big change coming. It's very, very exciting," he said. "I'm sure everyone that's had their first child would have thought the same thing with just a few weeks to go.

"Again, I've never been in this position, so it's something new for me to deal with and handle, which is good. New experiences are always good, something to learn from.

"When I'm on the practice court and stuff, I'm very focused there. When I've been training, not distracted on that side of things. Just obviously after your practices and when you're away from the court, it's a bit different."

TALL ORDER

Baby issues have been foremost for some time for Murray, who has only just been reunited with his coach, Amelie Mauresmo, after she took maternity leave last year.

The 28-year-old has also had an abbreviated off-season after leading Britain to Davis Cup glory in late November, and has skipped



MELBOURNE: Britain's Andy Murray plays a backhand return during a practice session ahead of the 2016 Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

his usual training camp in Miami in favour of Dubai. "We have a good relationship," he said of Mauresmo. "Obviously when you do spend like four, five months away from anyone that you're working with, it takes a little bit of time to get back into things.

"It's good that we got to spend quite a lot of time together, close to a month of practising, preparation. So, yeah, I'm happy she's back with me." His first opponent is Germany's Alexander Zverev, who stands 6ft 6in (1.98 meters) at just 18 but who, at a world ranking of 83, may be hoping that Murray's baby comes early. "He's a big guy obviously for his age. Of the young guys coming through, by far the tallest of them, which has obviously benefits," Murray said of Zverev.

"At the age he's at just now can cause a few issues, as well, until you kind of fill out into your physique." But he's got a very good game. He serves well. For a big guy, moves pretty well, too. He's improving all the time... it will be a tough match." — AFP

NADAL WARY OF VERDASCO AFTER EPIC S-FINAL DUEL

MELBOURNE: Rafael Nadal admitted yesterday he faces a "very, very dangerous" Australian Open first-round clash against Fernando Verdasco with memories still fresh of their epic 2009 semi-final duel.

At five hours and 14 minutes, that battle seven years ago was then the longest match in the tournament's history with a shattered Nadal showing incredible resilience to win 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 7-6 (7/2), 6-7 (1/7), 6-4. Despite the brutal but high-quality marathon, he went on to spend another four hours and 23 minutes on court to beat Roger Federer in the final and win his only Australian Open title. The two Spaniards have been pitted together again at Melbourne Park and despite Verdasco slipping down the rankings to 47, Nadal knows he has his work cut out.

"Very tough first round. Not a lucky first round, I think, for me. For him either," said Nadal, seeded five. "Will be a tough match. I need to be ready to play very good tennis if I want to be through." Nadal, who lost to Novak Djokovic in the Qatar Open this month, still has vivid memories of the 2009 encounter with his fellow left-hander.

"Obviously that match gave me the chance to win the only Australian Open that I won. That was an unforgettable memory for me. I think it was a huge level of tennis there. Some spectacular points," he said. "A lot of people always talk to me about that match. I enjoyed that match. Was a tough one. Was a great experience." Asked if it was more difficult playing a fellow left-hander, Nadal, 29, said it was not important. "I played a lot of times with lefties. We'll see. But it's not about playing against a lefty, is about playing against a player that has a huge potential, is able to reach a great level of tennis," he said.

"If you are not playing your best, it is a very, very dangerous match." Nadal endured his worst season in a decade last year and is looking for a solid start to 2016.

The former world number one's reign as French Open king ended at the quarter-final stage in 2015, and he also failed to reach the semi-final of the US Open, Australian Open and Wimbledon. If he gets past Verdasco, his next major challenge should come against Swiss fourth seed Stan Wawrinka in the quarter-finals. — AFP



SYDNEY: Viktor Troicki of Serbia holds the winners trophy with the ballkids after beating Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria 2-6, 6-1, 7-6 (9-7) in the men's singles final match at the Sydney International tennis tournament in Sydney yesterday. — AFP

TROICKI EDGES DIMITROV IN SYDNEY THRILLER

SYDNEY: Serbia's Viktor Troicki successfully defended his Sydney International title with a gripping third-set tiebreaker win over Grigor Dimitrov in the final yesterday. The third seeded Troicki fought back from losing the opening set to win on his second match point 2-6, 6-1, 7-6 (9/7) in two hours 17 minutes at Ken Rosewall Arena.

It was Troicki's third career final and comes 12 months after he beat Mikhail Kukushkin as a qualifier in the same final. Troicki joins former world No.1s Lleyton Hewitt and Pete Sampras as back-to-back Sydney International winners.

"This was my eighth final and I never had it this close, this tight," Troicki said. "I got to say it was tough to play it, but I managed to keep calm in most important points. It's great to win again, second year in a row. I love this tournament.

This was my third final, second title, and it's (a) great feeling. "It's great to win in the start of the year, to start the year with such confidence."

It was the first time the Serbian had beaten

the Bulgarian in three meetings, with Dimitrov having prevailed when the pair met in Basel four years ago and again just last week in Brisbane.

In a magnificent tussle, the deciding set lasted 83 minutes as the two manoeuvred for openings in long, exciting rallies with both players having their chances to win the match and the title. Troicki, who looked leaden-footed in the opening set, finished strongly and won the decisive tiebreaker with a brilliant backhand across court. "I've got to admit that I felt at the start a bit tired from yesterday. I had a long day yesterday. Six sets," Troicki said. "I started a bit slower and he played amazing at the start and he didn't give me a chance.

"I was like, okay, this is not going to last too long if I don't change it. Luckily I raised my energy and started playing better tennis."

IT'S NEVER EASY LOSING

The 24-year-old Dimitrov was denied his fourth ATP World Tour title and first in 18

months, since triumphing at the Queen's Club in London in June 2014. "It's never easy losing from a match point. It's in the game. Obviously was Viktor's day today," Dimitrov said.

"I think everything was pretty much going on his side. Especially even after that first set I knew he was going to do something else. I think early on he got a few good calls, few good shots, so that kind of lifted him up. I'm giving all the credit to him today." Both players broke each other's service four times in the final, while Troicki saved 11 break points during the engrossing contest. The 22nd-seeded Troicki was defending rankings points from his 2015 title win, while Dimitrov is expected to climb from his current spot of 28 after beating Alexandr Dolgoplov and Gilles Muller to reach the final.

Troicki heads to Melbourne where he faces Spaniard Daniel Munoz de la Nava in the opening round of the Australian Open, while Dimitrov, who reached as high as No.8 in the world in 2014, plays Italian Paolo Lorenzi. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Victoria Azarenka of Belarus gestures during a press conference ahead of the Australian Open tennis championships in Melbourne, Australia, yesterday. — AP

AZARENKA BUZZING WITH EXCITEMENT

MELBOURNE: Victoria Azarenka said yesterday she was buzzing with excitement ahead of the Australian Open as the music-loving former world number one gets back in the groove after a torrid two years battling injuries.

The Belarusian, a two-time champion at Melbourne Park, struggled with foot and knee problems in 2014 and only played nine tournaments, also battling depression and a split from long-term boyfriend Stefan Gordy, better known as Redfoo, the US musician and reality TV star. Then a painful thigh strain in 2015 sent her spiralling down the world rankings.

But she won the build-up Brisbane International last weekend in convincing fashion, and can't wait to get going at the opening Grand Slam of the season. "I feel good, I'm feeling excited. I had a pretty good week of practice here," she said ahead of her first-round encounter with Belgian Alison Van Uytvanck.

"So, yeah, I'm looking forward to it." Azarenka, nicknamed "Vika" and renowned in the past for fiery on-court outbursts, won the tournament in 2012 and defended her title the following year. It is her most successful Grand Slam and one of her favourite events of the year.

"I've always loved Australia. It gives me a special energy. I feel really good here. I love the fans here, they're really passionate. Always in a good mood and excited. It's always fun," she said. Her success in Brisbane, where she dropped just 17 games in four matches, has put her on the radar as potential title challenger once again although she is reluctant to talk up her chances, with Serena Williams the favourite to win another Grand Slam. "I just feel excited, I'm not thinking about the chances. As I said, I try to live in the moment," said Azarenka, seeded 14. If she gets past Van Uytvanck first up, her first major hurdle could be Spanish third seed Garbine Muguruza, who she is scheduled to meet in the fourth round. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Russia's Maria Sharapova smiles during a press conference, ahead of the Australian Open tennis championships in Melbourne, Australia, yesterday. — AP

MELBOURNE: Roger Federer balked at suggestions that Novak Djokovic had climbed above his fellow 'Big Four' players yesterday — but he admitted the Serb "deserves a little star" by his name. Despite Djokovic's dominance last year, Federer, who has arrived at the Australian Open with new coach Ivan Ljubicic in tow, insisted the Serb's competitors were not far behind.

The 'Big Four' of Federer, Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Andy Murray has long dominated men's tennis, and has been joined by Stan Wawrinka, who won his second Grand Slam title last year.

But the concept of an elite group has been called into question by the exploits of Djokovic, who fell only one win short of a calendar-year Grand Slam last year. "Who's had the most success? The top five guys really, with Stan, you know, Murray, myself, Novak and Rafa," Federer told journalists in Melbourne. "I still think the same guys are playing very well," added the Swiss. "But, of course, Novak deserves like a little star next to his name right now because he's been doing extremely well."

Federer insisted he hadn't tailored his game just to beat Djokovic, after he teamed up with Croatia's Ljubicic—who is close to the Serb and has an intimate knowledge of his game.

"Not really. That was more something that went into the press," he said when asked if Ljubicic had helped him switch up his game for Djokovic. "I'm always on the look-out for how to play certain players or certain tournaments or about my own game. So Novak might be a small piece of the puzzle, but it wasn't the (only) piece. "I'm more focused about my own game than any other player."

COLD COMFORT

Djokovic is a puzzle Federer, 34, will have to solve if he is to add to his record 17 Grand Slam



MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic of Serbia follows through on a shot during a practice session, ahead of the Australian Open tennis championships in Melbourne, Australia, yesterday. — AP

titles as retirement looms ever closer. But the Swiss won three of their eight matches last year and he said Ljubicic's input was more about giving him the final shove he sometimes needs to get over the winning line. "Last year I did quite well against Novak. Of course, I've got to keep it up. I always believe there's new things you can learn, but there's always sometimes a way of staying motivated, staying hungry. Someone like Ivan can also help do that," Federer said. "But I can do a lot by myself, but I need my support team to push me the last one percent, five percent, 10 percent, whatever

it is, because I'm not in the same mood every single day." Federer added that he was all but recovered from the illness that hampered him at the Brisbane International, where he lost in the final to Milos Raonic. The third seed's first-round match at Melbourne Park, where he is a four-time winner, is against Georgia's Nicoloz Basilashvili—with Djokovic potentially lurking in the semis.

"Cough's gone. The cold's 90 percent gone. I'm happy. The last couple days I've been able to practice normally. Yeah, I'm relieved that since Thursday now I'm better," Federer said. — AFP

DHONI MAY MAKE INDIA CHASE IN THIRD ONE-DAYER

BRISBANE: Back-to-back one-day defeats in Perth and Brisbane have forced India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni to rethink his strategy of opting to bat first against Australia, who have taken a 2-0 lead in the five-match series by chasing down 300-plus targets. Dhoni won the toss in both matches and

after India posted scores of 309 and 308 and watched as the hosts reeled them in with powerful displays at the crease. There was also a suggestion of a lack of discipline about India's bowlers, who leaked 23 wickets in the two matches. Ahead of today's third one-dayer, Dhoni wondered if

chasing a target was a better option for India. "I feel even if we cut down the extras we will have to score more runs," said Dhoni. "There are two options: either put pressure on the batsmen and score 330, or chase down the batsmen, give them the batting first. We will have a look and decide what suits us the

best." While Rohit Sharma burnished his reputation in limited-overs cricket with a second successive century in Brisbane, skipper Dhoni said he was seeking even more from his batsmen. "As a team we have to win, irrespective of which department is not doing well, and for that we have to score 20-30

more runs," he added. "That will put a lot of pressure on the batsmen, because the moment you take your guard right from the first ball, on the back of your mind would be 'we have to get 330-340 odd runs to be on the safer side' and that would put a lot of pressure." — Reuters

IRVING SCORES 23 TO HELP CAVALIERS TO 91-77 WIN

HOUSTON: Kyrie Irving scored 23 points, LeBron James added 19 and the Cleveland Cavaliers wrapped up their longest trip of the season with a 91-77 victory over the Houston Rockets on Friday night. The Cavaliers capped six games away from home and were playing for the second straight night, but it was the Rockets who looked tired and listless as Cleveland built a double-digit lead by halftime and pushed it to 20 in the third. Cleveland got back on track after a loss to San Antonio on Thursday night that snapped an eight-game winning streak before the team's showdown with Golden State tomorrow. Dwight Howard had 14 points and 11 rebounds for the Rockets. James Harden had 11 points on 2-for-10 shooting and missed all five of his 3-point attempts.

THUNDER 113, TIMBERWOLVES 93

Russell Westbrook had his 23rd career triple-double, leading Oklahoma City to a victory over Minnesota. Westbrook finished with 12 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for his fourth triple-double of the season. He bounced back after being ejected Wednesday night against Dallas following skirmishes with J.J. Barea. He sat out the fourth quarter Friday because the Thunder were in control. Kevin Durant had 21 points, Dion Waiters scored 20 and Cameron Payne added 14 for the Thunder. Andrew Wiggins had 25 points for the Timberwolves. They have lost nine straight.

HEAT 98, NUGGETS 95

Hassan Whiteside had a triple-double with 19 points, 17 rebounds and 11 blocks and injury-depleted Miami rallied to beat Denver. Chris Bosh made the tiebreaking jumper with 55 seconds left and scored 24 points. Tyler Johnson had 15 off the bench for Miami, which was without Dwyane Wade because of injuries to both shoulders. It was the first game Wade missed this season due to injury. It left the Heat without their starting backcourt, with Goran Dragic sidelined by a strained left calf. Darrell Arthur led Denver with 18 points.

MAVERICKS 83, BULLS 77

Dirk Nowitzki scored 21 points to lead Dallas past Chicago. Nowitzki hit a 3-pointer with 2:15 to play to put the Mavericks up 79-72. Jimmy Butler missed two 3-pointers in the final 12 seconds as the Bulls tried to rally. Deron Williams added 18 points for the Mavericks. Derrick Rose, back in the lineup after missing a game with knee pain, led Chicago with 18 points, and Pau Gasol had 17. Joakim Noah left after separating his left shoulder in the second quarter.

BUCKS 108, HAWKS 101, OT

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 28 points and 16 rebounds, Khris Middleton scored 26 points and Milwaukee beat Atlanta in overtime. Greg Monroe and Michael Carter-

Williams added 15 points apiece for the Bucks. Carter-Williams also blocked Jeff Teague's shot at the horn, sending the game into overtime. Paul Millsap had 23 points for Atlanta. Carter-Williams made a 3-pointer with 3:04 remaining in overtime to put the Bucks ahead 100-99. Antetokounmpo hit a free throw and then scored on a dunk to extend Milwaukee's lead to 103-99 with 1:35 left. After an Atlanta turnover, Antetokounmpo hit a 3 to put Milwaukee up by seven.

TRAIL BLAZERS 116, NETS 104

Damian Lillard had 33 points and 10 assists, reserve Allen Crabbe added 19 points and Portland beat Brooklyn for its third straight victory. Down 92-86 with 8:41 left, Lillard and backup center Ed Davis and Lillard combined for 16 points during a 19-2 run that gave the Trail Blazers a 105-94 lead with 4:26 remaining. Brook Lopez scored 25 points for Brooklyn, and Donald Sloan came up just short of his first career triple-double, finishing with 15 points, nine rebounds and nine assists. The Nets have lost 11 of their last 12 games at Barclays Center.

PELICANS 109, HORNETS 107

Ryan Anderson hit six 3-pointers and had a season-high 32 points, and Anthony Davis dunked Jrue Holiday's alley-oop lob with 2 seconds left to lift New Orleans past Charlotte. Davis finished with 22 points to help New Orleans win its second straight. Holiday added 13 points and 10 assists, including a short turnaround that gave the Pelicans a 105-102 lead with 57 seconds left. Kemba Walker scored 25 points for Charlotte, including a tying 3 with 19.2 seconds left. Nicolas Batum also had 25, but his last-second 3-pointer from the left corner bounced out.

WIZARDS 118, PACERS 104

John Wall had 28 points, seven rebounds and eight assists to lead Washington past Indiana for its fourth straight victory. Bradley Beal added 22 points for Washington. The Wizards outscored the Pacers 20-4 in the first 7 minutes of the second quarter and 35-19 overall in the period. Paul George had 21 points, seven rebounds and five assists for Indiana.

CELTICS 117, SUNS 103

Isiah Thomas scored 19 points against his former team, Marcus Smart had his first career triple-double and Boston beat Phoenix. Thomas was acquired from the Suns in a trade last Feb. 19. Four days later in his only other game against Phoenix since the deal, he had 21 points and seven assists. Smart had 10 points, 11 assists and 11 rebounds, and Kelly Olynyk added 21 points and nine rebounds. Mirza Teletovic led Phoenix with 22 points. The Suns have lost 12 of 13 to drop to 13-28. — AP



JOHANNESBURG: England's bowler Stuart Broad celebrates the dismissal of South African batsman Stiaan van Zyl (not in picture) during day 3 of the third Test match between England and South Africa at Wanderers stadium yesterday in Johannesburg. — AFP

BROAD BOWLS ENGLAND TO SERIES VICTORY

JOHANNESBURG: Stuart Broad produced a sensational display of fast bowling as England swept to a series-clinching victory over South Africa on the third day of the third Test at the Wanderers Stadium yesterday.

Broad took six for 17 as South Africa were bowled out for 83 in their second innings. England won by seven wickets to take a winning 2-0 lead into the final Test in Centurion next week. Broad ripped the heart out of the South African batting, taking the first five wickets for one run in the space of 31 balls after lunch. The defeat toppled South Africa from top spot on the International Cricket Council's Test rankings.

England led on the first innings by 10 runs after being bowled out for 323 and the match was evenly poised as South African opening batsmen Dean Elgar and Stiaan van Zyl put on 23 runs at the start of the second innings, with Broad having conceded 13 of the runs.

Then Broad struck, having Elgar caught behind off a ball that lifted and moved away from the left-hander. Van Zyl was dropped, a difficult chance to James Anderson at third slip, and the single that was taken as the ball looped away was to prove the only run that Broad conceded while tearing the heart out of the batting. Van Zyl was caught at gully. South African captain AB de Villiers came out to a roar of appreciation from a near-capacity crowd but was caught behind for nought off a delivery which cut back sharply to take an inside edge.

LIFTING DELIVERIES

Hashim Amla was superbly caught at short leg by James Taylor off a full-blooded leg glance and Temba Bavuma was bowled when he ducked to avoid a short ball which hit his glove and went on to the stumps. Broad was rested with figures of five for 14 from 10 overs, eight of which were bowled after lunch.

But the carnage continued. Steven Finn had Dane Vilas caught by a diving Taylor at short leg and Chris Morris was bowled by a full ball from Ben Stokes. Kagiso Rabada made a quick 16 before he was caught behind off Stokes. Eight wickets fell for 55 runs between lunch and tea.

The last two wickets fell quickly after tea.

James Anderson took only his second wicket of the match when he had Hardus Viljoen leg before wicket and Broad dived full length down the pitch to take a return catch from Faf du Plessis. Morkel tested Alastair Cook with some fast, lifting deliveries at the start of England's second innings, but he and Hales took England to within ten runs of victory before part-time spinner Elgar dismissed Hales and Nick Compton

in successive overs.

Cook made 43, his highest score of the series, but was caught behind off Morris with three runs needed. Earlier Rabada claimed a maiden five-wicket haul to restrict England's first innings lead to 10 runs. Rabada, 20, playing in his fifth Test match, took five for 78 and led the South African attack, bowling at pace with consistent control. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close of play on the third day in the third Test between South Africa and England yesterday in Johannesburg, South Africa.

South Africa 1st innings 313		England 1st innings (Overnight: 238-5)	
A. Cook c Vilas b Viljoen	18	D. Vilas c Taylor b Finn	8
A. Hales c de Villiers b Rabada	1	C. Morris b Stokes	1
N. Compton c Elgar b Rabada	26	K. Rabada c Bairstow b Stokes	16
J. Root c Vilas b Rabada	110	H. Viljoen lbw b Anderson	6
J. Taylor c Bavuma b M. Morkel	7	M. Morkel not out	4
B. Stokes c&b M. Morkel	58	Extras (lb-2 nb-1)	3
J. Bairstow c van Zyl b Rabada	45	Total (all out, 33.1 overs)	83
M. Ali c Vilas b Morris	19	Fall of wickets: 1-23 D. Elgar, 2-28 S. van Zyl, 3-30 A. de Villiers, 4-31 H. Amla, 5-35 T. Bavuma, 6-45 D. Vilas, 7-46 C. Morris, 8-67 K. Rabada, 9-77 H. Viljoen, 10-83 F. du Plessis	
S. Broad b Rabada	12	Bowling:	
S. Finn c Vilas b M. Morkel	0	J. Anderson 10-1-26-1, S. Broad 12.1-6-17-6, B. Stokes 8-1-24-2, S. Finn 3-0-14-1 (nb-1).	
J. Anderson not out	0		
Extras (b-1 lb-14 nb-3 w-9)	27		
Total (all out, 76.1 overs)	323		
Fall of wickets: 1-10 A. Hales, 2-22 A. Cook, 3-74 N. Compton, 4-91 J. Taylor, 5-202 B. Stokes, 6-242 J. Root, 7-279 M. Ali, 8-309 S. Broad, 9-311 S. Finn, 10-323 J. Bairstow			
Bowling:			
C. Morris 15-1-71-1, K. Rabada 23.1-5-78-5 (nb-1 w-3), M. Morkel 20-1-76-3, H. Viljoen 15-0-79-1 (nb-2), S. van Zyl 3-0-4-0.			
South Africa 2nd innings			
D. Elgar c Bairstow b Broad	15	England 2nd innings (Target: 74 runs)	
S. van Zyl c Stokes b Broad	11	A. Cook c Vilas b Morris	43
H. Amla c Taylor b Broad	5	A. Hales lbw b Elgar	18
A. de Villiers c Bairstow b Broad	0	N. Compton c M. Morkel b Elgar	0
F. du Plessis c&b Broad	14	J. Root not out	4
T. Bavuma b Broad	0	J. Taylor not out	2
		Extras (b-4 lb-2 w-1)	7
		Total (for 3 wickets, 22.4 overs)	74
		Fall of wickets: 1-64 A. Hales, 2-68 N. Compton, 3-71 A. Cook	
		Did not bat: B. Stokes, J. Bairstow, M. Ali, S. Broad, J. Anderson, S. Finn	
		Bowling: M. Morkel 15-2-7-0, K. Rabada 4-0-28-0, H. Viljoen 4-2-15-0(w-1), C. Morris 6-2-8-1, D. Elgar 3-4-1-10-2.	
		Result: England won by 7 wickets	



HOUSTON: LeBron James #23 of the Cleveland Cavaliers takes a shot during their game against the Houston Rockets at the Toyota Center on Friday in Houston, Texas. — AFP

NBA results/standings

Houston 77, Cleveland 91; Boston 117, Phoenix 103; Brooklyn 104, Portland 116; Denver 95, Miami 98; Chicago 77, Dallas 83; New Orleans 109, Charlotte 107; Milwaukee 108, Atlanta 101 (OT); Indiana 104, Washington 118; Oklahoma City 113, Minnesota 93.

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	PCT	GB
Toronto	25	15	.625	—
Boston	21	19	.525	4
New York	20	21	.488	5.5
Brooklyn	11	29	.275	14
Philadelphia	4	37	.098	21.5

Central Division

Cleveland	28	10	.737	—
Chicago	23	16	.590	5.5
Indiana	22	18	.550	7
Detroit	21	18	.538	7.5
Milwaukee	17	25	.405	13

Southeast Division

Miami	23	17	.575	—
Atlanta	23	17	.575	0
Orlando	20	19	.513	2.5
Washington	19	19	.500	3
Charlotte	18	21	.462	4 1/2

Western Conference

Northwest Division

Oklahoma City	29	12	.707	—
Utah	17	22	.436	11
Portland	18	24	.429	11.5
Denver	15	25	.375	13.5
Minnesota	12	29	.293	17

Pacific Division

Golden State	37	3	.925	—
LA Clippers	26	13	.667	10.5
Sacramento	16	23	.410	20.5
Phoenix	13	28	.317	24.5
LA Lakers	9	32	.220	28.5

Southwest Division

San Antonio	35	6	.854	—
Dallas	23	18	.561	12
Memphis	22	19	.537	13
Houston	21	20	.512	14
New Orleans	13	26	.333	21

MODI DROPS LATEST SUIT AGAINST CAIRNS

WELLINGTON: Billionaire Indian Lalit Modi has dropped his multimillion-dollar law suit against Chris Cairns in the latest twist in the long-running match-fixing related saga, it was reported yesterday.

Modi was seeking to recoup £1.5 million pounds (US\$2.13 million) in costs from a libel suit he lost when former New Zealand star Cairns successfully argued he had been defamed by the Indian cricket entrepreneur.

However, the Weekend Herald, said Modi had now "given up trying to claw back costs". Cairns, who no longer lives in New Zealand, declined to comment "but his UK solicitor Rhory Robertson confirmed a Notice of Discontinuance had been filed by Modi to halt proceedings", the newspaper said. The five-year legal battle began in January 2010 when Modi alleged in a tweet that Cairns had been involved in match-fixing.

Cairns won the libel case in 2012 and in an eight-week trial last year he was also found not guilty of perjuring himself in the defamation hearing. Modi launched his lawsuit based on evidence in the perjury case when New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum and former Test batsman Lou Vincent claimed they had been approached by Cairns to fix matches. — AFP



Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool v Man United	17:05
Stoke City v Arsenal	19:15

SPANISH LEAGUE

Real Sociedad v DLa Coruna	0:05
Valencia v Rayo Vallecano	14:00
Real Madrid v Sporting Gijon	18:00
Getafe v RCD Espanyol	20:15
Las Palmas v Atletico	20:15
Barcelona v Athletic de Bilbao	22:30

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE

Genoa v Citta di Palermo	14:30
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Bologna v SS Lazio	17:00
Carpi v UC Sampdoria	17:00
AS Roma v Hellas Verona	17:00
Udinese Calcio v Juventus	17:00
Chievo Verona v Empoli	17:00
AC Milan v Fiorentina	22:45
Lorient v AS Monaco	16:00
Caen v Marseille	19:00
Saint Etienne v Lyonnais	23:00

HANDANOVIC MIRACLE HELPS INTER MILAN DRAW AT ATALANTA

MILAN: Inter Milan was held to 1-1 at struggling Atalanta as its Serie A title challenge suffered another blow yesterday.

Atalanta, loser of its last four matches, was the stronger side and Inter goalkeeper Samir Handanovic had to pull off some fine saves, including a stunning stop on the hour mark. Both sides netted own goals in the first half with Inter defender Jeison Murillo giving Atalanta the lead before Rafael Toloi also turned into his own net.

Inter, which fell off the top spot last week following a surprise defeat to Sassuolo, moved to a point behind Napoli ahead of the Serie A leader's match against Sassuolo. Also later was Torino against Frosinone.

"I'm not happy with the performance of some of the players," Inter coach Roberto Mancini said. "Someone, if he is talented, can and has to do more. We have good players and we have to do more, especially up front. ... We won so many 1-0, and I

would sign to win as many more, but sometimes one goal is not enough.

"At the beginning, we would have signed to find ourselves in this position at this point of the season, but that doesn't mean we have to waste everything we have done: We have to remain calm and get back to not giving away goals."

Inter also went a point above Juventus, which will be seeking its 10th consecutive win at Udinese on Sunday. Fiorentina could

move above Inter with a win at AC Milan.

Atalanta started the stronger and took the lead when Murillo slid in to intercept Boukary Drame's cross from the left, but succeeded only in poking the ball past his own goalkeeper. Atalanta returned the favor eight minutes later as, following a delightful one-two between Mauro Icardi and Stevan Jovetic, Toloi fired into his own net off the underside of the crossbar.

Handanovic kept Inter in the match, and

pulled off what could be the save of the season. Wearing a baseball cap to keep the sun out of his eyes, he somehow managed to stop Luca Cigarini's effort from point-blank range with his trailing foot.

"Handanovic's save? Impossible, I don't understand how he could have done it," Atalanta coach Edy Reja said. "Maybe we deserved more, even if Inter could have also punished us at the end. We have to continue like this." — AP

RESURGENT SOUTHAMPTON RUN RINGS ROUND WEST BROM



SOUTHAMPTON: Free-scoring Southampton beat West Brom 3-0 at Saint Mary's for a third straight Premier League win yesterday with two goals from England under-21 captain James Ward-Prowse. Southampton are now tenth on 30 points and looking good for a Europa League bid if they can maintain the kind of form that saw them finish seventh last season to make the qualifying round.

Ronald Koeman's charges came into the game having banged four goals past Arsenal and on the back of a 2-0 midweek win over a handy Crystal Palace side in their last two home games. But in this mid-table battle West Brom arrived on the South coast having taken seven points from Chelsea, Stoke and Newcastle in their last three and pundits were predicting a tight game.

The 21-year-old Ward-Prowse, a product of

the Southampton youth team with over 100 first team games under his belt, would be largely responsible for the three points staying at Saint Mary's. Ward-Prowse's first goal was a free-kick, hammered into the top-left hand corner from over 20-yards out on the left and which exposed 'keeper Boaz Myhill's positioning as he belatedly raced across his goal desperately.

West Brom's 33-year-old former Welsh international 'keeper then dived the wrong way as Ward-Prowse coolly converted his spot-kick after Matt Targett was fouled in the area by Craig Dawson. Serbian international winger Dusan Tadic's angled shot after a lightning break down the left made it 3-0 for the hosts, and added to the goal the substitute had scored in midweek. Tadic's goal owed a great deal to Steven Davis's surging run and the Northern Irishman was full of pace and passing throughout.

Tony Pulis's side can comfort themselves that they're eight points above the drop zone in 13th place in the Premier League after 22 games, a place above champions Chelsea with whom they drew 2-2 at Stamford Bridge in midweek.

Southampton's win came after they had signed striker Charlie Austin from Queen's Park Rangers yesterday morning to beef up their attack for the run in. — AFP



STAMFORD BRIDGE: Everton's English defender John Stones (L) tries to hold off Chelsea's Brazilian striker Kenedy (R) during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Everton at Stamford Bridge in London yesterday. — AFP

English Premier League results/standings

AFC Bournemouth 3, Norwich City 0; Chelsea 3, Everton 3; Manchester City 4, Crystal Palace 0; Newcastle United 2, West Ham United 1; Southampton 3, West Bromwich Albion 0; Tottenham Hotspur 4, Sunderland 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Manr City	22	13	4	5	43	21	43
Arsenal	21	13	4	4	37	21	43
Leicester City	21	12	7	2	38	25	43
Tottenham	22	10	9	3	38	18	39
West Ham Utd	22	9	8	5	34	26	35
Man United	21	9	7	5	27	20	34
Stoke City	21	9	5	7	24	22	32
Crystal Palace	22	9	4	9	23	24	31
Liverpool	21	8	7	6	25	27	31
Southampton	22	8	6	8	31	24	30
Everton	22	6	11	5	39	32	29
Watford	21	8	5	8	25	24	29
WBromwich	22	7	6	9	22	30	27
Chelsea	22	6	7	9	31	34	25
AFC B'mouth	22	6	6	10	26	37	24
Norwich City	22	6	5	11	24	38	23
Newcastle Utd	22	5	6	11	24	39	21
Swansea City	21	4	7	10	19	30	19
Sunderland	22	5	3	14	27	45	18
Aston Villa	21	2	5	14	17	37	11

English Football League tables

Championship							
Middlesbrough	26	17	4	5	37	13	55
Hull	27	16	5	6	44	18	53
Derby	27	13	10	4	38	21	49
Burnley	27	13	9	5	42	24	48
Brighton	27	12	11	4	32	27	47
Sheffield	27	12	9	6	41	30	45
Ipswich	27	12	9	6	37	32	45
Birmingham	27	12	7	8	34	28	43
Cardiff	27	10	10	7	33	29	40
Wolves	27	10	7	10	36	37	37
Brentford	27	10	6	11	38	39	36
Nottingham	27	8	11	8	29	25	35
Preston	27	8	11	8	24	24	35
Reading	27	9	7	11	31	30	34
QPR	27	8	10	9	34	34	34
Huddersfield	27	8	8	11	36	37	32
Leeds	27	7	11	9	27	32	32
Blackburn	26	6	11	9	23	23	29
Fulham	27	6	10	11	43	47	28
Milton Keynes	27	5	15	12	38	26	26
Rotherham	27	3	17	12	47	24	24
Bristol City	27	5	9	13	24	46	24
Charlton	27	4	8	15	21	53	20
Bolton	27	2	11	14	21	45	17

League One							
Burton	25	17	3	5	34	19	54
Walsall	26	15	7	4	44	25	52
Gillingham	27	15	6	6	53	34	51
Coventry	27	13	9	5	47	27	48
Wigan	27	13	9	5	44	28	48
Peterborough	26	12	5	9	52	38	41
Sheffield Utd	26	11	7	8	44	38	40
Southend	26	10	8	8	33	34	38
Millwall	25	11	4	10	38	35	37
Bradford	24	10	7	7	25	26	37
Port Vale	25	10	6	9	29	27	36
Doncaster	26	9	8	9	33	35	35
Rochdale	25	9	7	9	34	30	34
Swindon	26	10	4	12	41	44	34
Bury	25	9	6	10	35	40	33
Scunthorpe	26	9	5	12	28	36	32
Barnsley	25	9	3	13	37	41	30
Chesterfield	27	9	3	15	37	46	30
Blackpool	26	8	4	14	26	34	28
Fleetwood	24	7	5	12	32	34	26
Shrewsbury	26	7	5	14	31	45	26
Oldham	25	3	12	10	26	39	21

French Ligue 1 table							
Paris SG	20	17	3	0	50	9	54
Angers	21	9	7	5	20	13	34
Nice	21	9	6	6	35	25	33
Monaco	20	8	9	3	27	25	33
Caen	20	9	3	8	21	24	30
Lyon	20	8	5	7	27	24	29
Saint-Etienne	20	9	2	9	23	24	29
Rennes	20	6	10	4	27	23	28
Lorient	20	6	9	5	29	28	27
Nantes	20	7	6	7	16	18	27
Marseille	20	6	8	6	28	21	26
Bordeaux	20	6	8	6	24	28	26
Lille	20	5	10	5	16	14	25
Gazélec Ajaccio	20	6	7	7	22	24	25
Montpellier	20	6	4	10	22	26	22
Bastia	20	6	4	10	20	26	22
Reims	20	5	6	9	20	27	21
Toulouse	20	4	8	8	24	34	20
Guingamp	20	5	5	10	17	27	20
Troyes	20	0	8	12	11	39	8

Italy Serie A standings							
Napoli	19	12	5	2	38	15	41
Inter Milan	20	12	4	4	25	13	40
Juventus	19	12	3	4	33	15	39
Fiorantina	19	12	2	5	37	19	38
AS Roma	19	9	7	3	36	22	34
Sassuolo	18	8	7	3	23	17	31
Empoli	19	9	3	7	24	23	30
AC Milan	19	8	5	6	25	23	29
Lazio	19	8	3	8	23	27	27
Chievo Verona	19	7	5	7	25	21	26
A Bergamo	20	7	4	9	21	24	25
Udinese	19	7	3	9	18	27	24
Sampdoria	19	6	5	8	28	30	23
Torino	18	6	4	8	22	23	22
Bologna	19	7	1	11	20	25	22
Palermo	19	6	3	10	19	29	21
Genoa	19	5	4	10	19	26	19
Frosinone	19	4	3	12	20	41	15
Carpi	19	3	5	11	17	34	14
Verona	19	0	8	11	12	31	8

SHELVEY'S FINE DEBUT IN NEWCASTLE WIN



NEWCASTLE: Newcastle United's new 12 million pound (\$17.11 million) signing Jonjo Shelvey enjoyed a fine debut, contributing to both his side's goals, as the Premier League strugglers halted West Ham United's momentum with a nail-biting 2-1 win yesterday.

Newcastle were relieved to clamber out of the relegation places after two early

goals from Ayoze Perez and Georginio Wijnaldum-his ninth of the season-saw them make an electrifying start to proceedings at St James' Park.

They had to hold on grimly in the dying minutes as Newcastle keeper Rob Elliot made a vital save from Cheikh Kouyate.

Nikica Jelavic had put West Ham back in the game four minutes after halftime, when he latched on to a poor back pass from defender Chancel Mbemba.

Shelvey, the new capture from Swansea City, was instrumental with his passes in setting up the victory as Newcastle boss Steve McClaren found some measure of revenge over West Ham's Slaven Bilic, eight years since Bilic's Croatia denied his England team a place at Euro 2008. — Reuters

TERRY GOES FROM ZERO TO HERO AS CHELSEA SNATCH LATE POINT



LONDON: John Terry snatched a last-gasp Chelsea equaliser eight minutes into stoppage-time to rescue a dramatic 3-3 draw against Everton at Stamford Bridge yesterday.

Chelsea's month-long unbeaten run under interim manager Guus Hiddink appeared to be at an end when Ramiro Funes Mori put Everton 3-2 ahead in the 90th minute.

But Blues captain Terry, who earlier scored an own goal to give Everton their opener, had the last word with a back-flicked finish worthy of a top striker, although there was controversy over the effort as the centre-back appeared to be in an offside position.

That late intervention capped a spirited, if error-strewn display, from Chelsea, who had fallen two goals behind after Kevin Mirallas added to Terry's own goal. A terrible defensive mix-up allowed Diego Costa to pull one back and Chelsea were level seconds later when a deflected Cesc Fabregas effort found the net, setting the stage for the memorable finale.

Hiddink had warned beforehand that Chelsea cannot regard themselves as immune from the

prospect of relegation so long as they fail to record victories.

And last season's Premier League champions, six points above the relegation zone, still look in some disarray after their second home draw this week. Chelsea carved out the first chance and it took a smart save from Tim Howard to prevent Willian, played in on the right of the box by Fabregas, from opening the scoring.

Mirallas, having turned his man superbly to scamper into space, forced Chelsea goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois into a diving parry as Everton ended the half strongly.

The Toffees took the lead five minutes into the second period thanks to Terry's own goal. Romelu Lukaku, Everton's top scorer, was the key man as he fed the ball to Ross Barkley despite three blue shirts being in close proximity.

Barkley sent Leighton Baines into a crossing position on the left and Terry, mindful of Lukaku stealing in behind him, mis-kicked an attempted clearance into his own net from close-range.

OUTRAGEOUS

Chelsea immediately squandered possession in their own half and were relieved that Barkley, played in by Mirallas, hit Courtois' near post rather than the net. Hiddink reacted by sending on attacking midfielder Oscar for the more defensive-minded Nemanja Matic but Everton's second followed straight away.

Barkley's burst put Chelsea on the back foot and Mirallas swivelled to control Baines' cross

from the left and fire past fellow Belgian Courtois. Chelsea needed inspiration and Fabregas almost provided it with an outrageous flick that Howard did well to palm away. In the end it took a hoof upfield to get Chelsea back in the game. Fabregas launched a long ball for Costa to chase and the Brazilian tapped into an empty net after Howard raced off his line, only to miss the ball and take out team-mate Phil Jagielka instead.

Chelsea were roused at last and Oscar saw a shot saved before Fabregas's effort took a deflection off Muhamed Besic to deceive Howard.

Hiddink's side had scored twice in the space of two minutes and Everton were relieved not to concede a penalty when Costa went down under Jagielka's challenge as the hosts poured forward again.

Everton were forced into a change when Bryan Oviedo was stretchered off to be replaced by Funes Mori. The visitors still posed an occasional threat and Courtois made a game-saving stop to deny Mirallas after Besic had put him through with 15 minutes remaining. Costa was hurt and had to go off as both sides made a flurry of changes for the final 10 minutes. And when an Everton corner was headed straight to substitute Gerard Deulofeu he sent it back to the far post, where Funes Mori hooked into the net. Yet Oviedo's injury meant there was still time left for Terry to apply the finish to a sustained bout of pressure and preserve Hiddink's unbeaten record as interim boss. — AFP

ERIKSEN BRACE GETS SPURS BACK IN GROOVE



LONDON: Christian Eriksen scored twice as Tottenham Hotspur revitalised their Champions League push by coming from behind to convincingly beat Sunderland 4-1 in the Premier League yesterday. With Tottenham winless in three games in 2016 and Sunderland chasing a third straight league win, it threatened to be a fiddly afternoon for Mauricio Pochettino's side at White Hart Lane.

They fell behind to Patrick van Aanholt's 40th-minute goal, but Eriksen equalised within two minutes before second-half goals from Moussa Dembele, Eriksen and Harry Kane, from the spot, secured victory. Spurs provisionally opened up a four-point lead over fifth-place West Ham United in the fourth and final Champions League qualifying berth and closed to within four points of the summit. Sam Allardyce's Sunderland drop one place to 19th and remain a point from safety.

Allardyce awarded a league debut to goalkeeper Jordan Pickford and the 21-year-old was immediately in the thick of the action, plunging to his left to palm a 25-yard shot from Kane around the post.

Determined to atone for recent disappointments, Spurs set up camp inside the Sunderland half and Dele Alli should have put them ahead when he blazed over after Danny Rose's shot bounced into his path off Kane. Erik Lamela drilled a shot across goal and narrowly wide, while Kieran Trippier just failed to pick out Alli with a volleyed cross from the right. Sunderland had not had a sniff at the other end, but five minutes before half-



WHITE HART LANE: Tottenham Hotspur's Belgian defender Toby Alderweireld (L) tries to block a ball from Sunderland's English striker Jermain Defoe (C) with Tottenham Hotspur's English defender Eric Dier (R) following up during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Sunderland at White Hart Lane in north London yesterday.

a chance to restore Sunderland's lead when he rolled a tame free-kick straight at Lloris, while Pickford parried from Eriksen at the other end.

Defoe lashed a shot into the side-netting early in the second half, but after Alli had headed well from Lamela's cross and Kane had seen a shot turned behind by Pickford, Spurs went in front in the 59th minute. From a deep corner, Rose was denied by Pickford, but Dembele picked up the loose ball, stepped inside two defenders and drove a low shot inside the right-hand upright with his left foot.

CALAMITY FOR KIRCHHOFF

Their lead was to last just 91 seconds. A neat one-touch move involving Kane, Alli and Eriksen culminated in Kane seeing a shot blocked by Pickford, but Eriksen slammed the rebound goalwards and Lee Catmerole, covering on the line, could only knee the ball into the roof of the net. Former Spurs striker Jermain Defoe squandered

Sports

Troicki edges
Dimitrov in
Sydney
thriller

17



Terry goes from
zero to hero as
Chelsea snatch
late point

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BLACKHAWKS BEAT LEAFS FOR 10TH STRAIGHT WIN

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BIRMINGHAM: Leicester City's Argentinian striker Leonardo Ulloa (R) vies with Aston Villa's English defender Joleon Lescott during the English Premier League football match between Aston Villa and Leicester City at Villa Park in Birmingham, central England yesterday. — AFP

LEICESTER GO TOP DESPITE MISSED MAHREZ PENALTY



BIRMINGHAM: Aston Villa striker Rudy Gestege came off the bench to dent Leicester's Premier League title challenge as his second half equaliser rescued a 1-1 draw for the bottom club yesterday.

Although Leicester moved one point clear of second placed Manchester City, Claudio Ranieri's side left Villa Park frustrated their

lead wasn't more significant after Gestege's first goal since September cancelled out a first half opener from Japan striker Shinji Okazaki.

The Foxes should have been out of sight by the time Gestege equalised and they paid the price for a series of misses, with Riyad Mahrez especially culpable after his first half penalty was saved by Mark Bunn. Third placed Arsenal can regain pole position if they draw or win at Stoke today. This was another encouraging performance for Villa after a 1-0 win over Crystal Palace in midweek gave Remi Garde his first three points as Villa boss and secured their first league victory since the opening day of the season. But Garde's team need points rather than plaudits and they remain rooted to the bottom of the

table, with a nine-point gap to make up if they are avoid dropping into the second tier for the first time since 1988. Robert Huth had been Leicester's match-winner at Tottenham in midweek, but the German defender almost gifted Villa the opening goal when his mis-cued clearance allowed Libor Kozak to surge clear for a low shot that Kasper Schmeichel saved at his near post.

That was far from Schmeichel's only significant contribution as his booming kick downfield helped the visitors take the lead in the 28th minute. Jamie Vardy alertly peeled away from Villa's dozing defence to meet the long ball with a superb lob that caught Bunn off his line. Bunn managed to make an acrobatic back pedalling save, but Okazaki followed up to slot home from close-range despite the

goalkeeper's attempt to keep it out, with goaline technology confirming the ball had crossed for his fourth league goal of the season.

FORTUITOUS

Ranieri's side had a golden opportunity to double their lead four minutes later when a flowing move cut through the Villa defence and ended with a penalty after Mahrez's shot was blocked by the sliding Aly Cissokho's raised arm.

Despite missing from the spot earlier this month Mahrez took the penalty himself, but the Algeria winger's slightly too casual strike down the middle was close to Bunn and the Villa goalkeeper made the save. Cissokho tested Schmeichel with a stinging shot early

in the second half before Leicester midfielder Danny Drinkwater's dipping long-range effort drew a fine tip over from Bunn. Villa appealed in vain for a penalty when Huth swung an arm into Kozak's face, while Drinkwater threatened again when he flicked wide from Vardy's cross. There was more menace about Villa's attacks now and Garde sent on Gestege in the 67th minute to add further thrust to the forward line. The switch paid rich dividends eight minutes later when Gestege equalised in fortuitous circumstances.

First he got away with the ball bouncing off his arm and then benefitted from a Huth clearance that hit him in the groin. Those two lucky breaks presented the Benin striker with the opportunity for a shot that deflected off West Morgan and past Schmeichel. — AFP

AGUERO DOUBLE FIRES MAN CITY TO EASY WIN



MANCHESTER: Sergio Aguero scored twice as Manchester City got their Premier League title challenge back on course with an emphatic 4-0 win over Crystal Palace at a snowy Etihad Stadium yesterday.

Aguero's goals, which took his total for the season to 13, came in each half as City made up for their midweek blank against Everton when they failed to score in a home Premier League match for the first time in 12 months.

Fabian Delph and David Silva scored either side of Aguero's double as Manuel Pellegrini's side recorded a seventh successive home win against the Londoners to go to the top of the table before Leicester's late kick-off at Aston Villa on Saturday and Arsenal's match at Liverpool today.

Palace had failed to score in their previous four league games—their leanest run in the Premier League since 1998 — but should have ended their drought inside the first two minutes as they

looked to make amends for a 5-1 drubbing at the Etihad in the League Cup in October.

Defender Damien Delaney stayed up in attack following a corner but, from Connor Wickham's excellent cross, the Palace captain failed to beat Joe Hart with a header no more than eight yards out.

That miss proved costly as City went in front 20 minutes later through the unlikely figure of Delph. The England international, given just his third league start of the season with Fernandinho still injured and Yaya Toure rested on the bench, and justified his inclusion with only the 11th league goal of his career.

City's frustration at failing to find a way through a well-drilled Palace defence was just starting to show when Delph cut in and fired a low, long-range shot into the bottom corner from almost 35 yards, which goalkeeper Wayne Hennessey allowed to skid under his dive.

That should have given City a measure of control but just two minutes later Hart almost let that slip when his careless clearance went straight into the back of James McArthur.

The ball dropped for Delaney but at full stretch the centre-back, a constant threat from set-pieces, hooked his effort just wide from the edge of the penalty area.



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Ivorian midfielder and captain Yaya Toure (2R) vies with Crystal Palace's English defender Joel Ward (R) and Crystal Palace's English defender Scott Dann (2L) during the English Premier League football match yesterday. — AFP

Hart did better when turning a Yohan Cabaye free-kick round the post as Palace continued to push for an equaliser but four minutes before half-time City went 2-0 up.

Aguero, who had not scored at the Etihad since November, saw his 25-yard shot deflected in via the head of Palace's Scott Dann, the defender's attempted clearance wrong-footing Hennessey. City were forced into a change seven minutes into the second half when Aleksandar Kolarov went off with a leg injury, Gael Clichy replacing him at left-back.

Pellegrini didn't wait much longer to make a tactical switch as Kelechi Iheanacho, who had scored in both of City's previous wins over Palace this season, was replaced by Toure following a frustrating afternoon for the young forward.

City still weren't entirely comfortable as Palace kept forcing them back but Toure quickly made his mark as the hosts put the result beyond doubt.

From City's best move of the match, Silva, Aguerro and Toure all combined before Kevin De Bruyne pulled the ball back for Aguerro to tap in and make it 3-0.

Palace replied with a long-range effort from Yohan Cabaye which flew just wide but they knew they were a beaten side. And they conceded a fourth goal with six minutes left as City finished in style. Aguerro was again involved as he led a break-away before calmly squaring the ball for Silva, who scored his first league goal since the opening day of the season. — AFP

CHERRIES ON TOP AGAINST NORWICH



BOURNEMOUTH: Bournemouth returned to winning ways as a 3-0 victory at home to fellow strugglers Norwich City yesterday saw them move five points clear of the Premier League relegation zone.

Dan Gosling's first-half header and a Charlie Daniels penalty after half time put the Cherries, who lost 3-1 at home to West Ham in midweek, 2-0 up before recent signing Benik Afobe sealed victory 15 minutes from time with his first top-flight goal.

What was just Bournemouth's sixth win in 22 league matches so far this season saw Eddie Howe's side move above Norwich and into 15th place in the table.

Meanwhile the Canaries' seventh defeat in eight away league matches left them four points above the bottom three. Bournemouth were rewarded for their early dominance when Gosling gave the south coast club a 10th-minute lead in front of their own fans at Dean Court. Marc Pugh, in for the injured Matt Ritchie, swung in a cross and Gosling headed into the bottom corner from close range. Bournemouth then had

appeals for a penalty rejected when Daniels went down inside the area.

Referee Bobby Madley angered the home support again with another contentious decision. Afobe, chasing a through ball, was brought down on the edge of the area by Norwich goalkeeper Declan Rudd.

But with two Canaries defenders in close attendance, Madley showed Rudd a yellow rather than a red card. Early in the second half, Pugh demonstrated good skill to weave his way through a retreating defence only to shoot straight at Rudd.

Pugh then played a key role as Bournemouth doubled their lead when, after he was pulled back inside the box, Madley awarded the Cherries a 54th-minute penalty. Daniels's spot-kick then beat Rudd with the aid of a deflection off the right post to make it 2-0.

Afobe, 22, who joined Bournemouth last week for a reported club record fee of £10 million (\$14.5 million, 13.3 million euros) from second-tier Wolves having proved himself a prolific scorer in lower league English football, put the result beyond doubt in the 75th minute.

Daniels's precise cross arrived at the feet of the striker and Afobe, a former Arsenal youngster, powered in a shot from close range in what was just his second Premier League appearance after he made his Bournemouth debut against West Ham. — AFP

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Saudi's 2016 budget aims to address fiscal challenge

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Nissan TITAN Warrior Concept, Nissan IDS Concept on display

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YUSUF A ALGHANIM & SONS AUTOMOTIVE OPENS CHEVROLET SHOWROOM IN AHMADI

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BEIJING: Representatives of the founding nations of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) walk around a sculpture after it was unveiled during the opening ceremony of the AIIB in Beijing yesterday. (inset) Chinese Premier Li Keqiang waves as he leaves the Inaugural Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). — AFP

CHINA LAUNCHES NEW AIIB DEVELOPMENT BANK

BEIJING SEEKS TO ALTER THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping launched a new international development bank seen as a rival to the US-led World Bank at a lavish ceremony yesterday, as Beijing seeks to change the unwritten rules of global development finance.

Despite opposition from Washington, US allies including Australia, Britain, Germany, Italy, the Philippines and South Korea have agreed to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in recognition of China's growing economic clout. "Asia's financing needs for basic infrastructure are absolutely enormous," Xi said in a speech at the launch, adding the bank would aim to invest in projects that were "high-quality, low-cost".

In order for Asia to continue to be the most

dynamic region for global growth, it needs to invest in infrastructure and connectivity, Premier Li Keqiang said, during the afternoon session of the opening ceremony.

The AIIB is expected to lend \$10 billion-\$15 billion a year for the first five or six years and will start operations in the second quarter of 2016.

Even so, no specific infrastructure projects would be announced "for the time being", AIIB President Jin Liqun told Reuters on the sidelines of the launch.

Diplomatic coup

Luxembourg Finance Minister Pierre Gramegna said the establishment of the AIIB was "further proof of the rebalancing of the

world economy". A successful AIIB that sets itself apart from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would be a diplomatic triumph for China, which opposes a global financial order it says is dominated by the United States and does not adequately represent developing nations.

The AIIB will require projects to be legally transparent and protect social and environmental interests, but it will not force borrowers to adopt the kind of free-market practices favoured by the IMF, sources told Reuters in September. By not insisting on some free market economic policies recommended by the World Bank, the AIIB is likely to avoid the criticism levelled against its rivals, which some say impose unreasonable demands on borrowers.

It could also help Beijing stamp its mark on a bank regarded by some in the government as a political as much as an economic project. Baikuntha Aryal, joint secretary at Nepal's Ministry of Finance, said the Himalayan country was hoping the AIIB would fund roads, hydropower and urban development projects.

"The AIIB is specifically for infrastructure so we see it as a supplement to projects in Nepal funded by the ADB (Asian Development Bank) and World Bank," he said.

China has an initial subscription of \$29.78 billion in authorized capital stock in the AIIB, out of a total of \$100 billion. It invested another \$50 million yesterday.

China's gross domestic product (GDP) totalled more than \$10 trillion in 2015 and the

economy grew by around 7 percent, with the services sector accounting for half of GDP, Premier Li Keqiang said yesterday.

The premier also said that employment had expanded more than expected with 900 million people making up the country's total workforce, including 150 million skilled professionals. Consumption contributed nearly 60 percent of growth, Lisaid, at the opening ceremony for the China-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in Beijing. China's fourth-quarter and full-year 2015 GDP figures are expected to be released on Jan 19. Analysts polled by Reuters have forecast 2015 growth cooled to 6.9 percent, down from 7.3 percent in 2014 and the slowest pace in a quarter of a century. — Reuters

IRAQ'S SOUTHERN OIL EXPORTS RUNNING AT 3.3M BPD

BASRA: Iraq's exports from its southern region have been running at an average daily rate of 3.297 million barrels per day (bpd) so far this month, higher than December's average and unaffected by tribal clashes, an oil company executive said yesterday.

All the fields are running normally, state-run South Oil Co's deputy director general Salah Mahdi told Reuters in an interview in Basra. "The security situation is very good, I don't see any impact on our oil operations," he said.

Iraq sent an armored army division and a police strike force into the southern oil city of Basra to disarm residents as fighting between rival Shi'ite Muslim tribes intensified, local officials and security sources said on Friday. Iraq

exported 3.215 million bpd on average in December, according to the oil ministry. The country produces most of its oil from the southern region.

The crude shipments from the south account for all of Iraq's central government's oil sales as the Kurdish regional government in the north in mid-2015 pursued independent sales in an escalating row over oil export rights and budget payments. The southern regions are far from areas of conflict with Islamic State militants in the north and west, but recent tribal fighting raised fears of disruptions to energy operations. "Recent security operations in Basra are sending reassuring messages to international foreign oil companies," Mahdi said. — Reuters

RUSSIA SEEKS ROSNEFT STAKE SALE TO EASE BUDGET WOES

MOSCOW: The Russian government is looking to privatize a 19.5 percent stake in state oil giant Rosneft to ease a budget crunch as oil prices slide, Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said yesterday. "We must make a decision now where to get the money," Siluanov said in an interview to Rossiya-1 channel.

"Firstly, we are talking about a stake that should have been sold several years ago, it is a stake in Rosneft, 19.5 percent," Siluanov added. Cutting ownership in

Rosneft, a sprawling energy holding in which state ownership is now 69.5 percent, has been discussed by the government for years.

The 19.5 percent stake was set for sale in 2013 before the government decided to push the decision back. Privatisation has now been increasingly brought up by officials due to the economic slump, despite worries of unfavorable market conditions and a collapse of the Russian ruble which may complicate the deal. — AFP

GERMAN MINISTER SEEKS PETROL TAX TO PAY FOR MIGRANT CRISIS

BERLIN: Germany's Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble yesterday raised the prospect of introducing a tax on petrol in Europe to pay for solving the migrant crisis, in remarks to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper. "If national budgets or the EU budget are insufficient, let's agree to set up, for instance, a tax of a certain amount on each litre of petrol," the minister said.

"This way we would have the means for a European response to the refugee issue," he said, in an apparent reference to beefing up security at the European Union's outer borders in order to stop the migrant inflow. "Finding a solution to the problem must not fail because of a lack of means."

Schäuble said the New Year's Eve mass sexual assaults in Cologne on women that have been blamed on Arab and North African men only "step up the pressure" to find "a solution to the problem of controlling the European Union's external borders."

"The problem must be solved at a European level," he said. "Otherwise, it won't just be Germany that suffers the consequences, as some seem to think, but our neighbors will be massively affected too, as will the Balkans, and all the way down to Greece." "Things are moving too slowly in Europe," he said, adding that he fully backed Chancellor Angela Merkel's efforts to solve the challenges posed by the migrant crisis. "I support, with the full force of my convictions, what the chancellor says: we need to solve the problem starting from Europe's external borders," he said. Otherwise, "Europe will find itself in an even bigger crisis."



ATHENS: Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras (L) meets German Finance minister of North Rhine-Westphalia state Norbert Walter-Borjans, in his office in Athens on January 16, 2016, as Germany and Greece signed a joint declaration on tax evasion. — AFP

Low pay, wage gap

British opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn said yesterday he would stop big companies from distributing dividends unless they paid their workers the living wage as part of his proposals to promote fairer working conditions. Corbyn, a socialist who won control of the Labour Party in September, said too much of the proceeds of growing company profits benefit the wealthiest and called for "pay ratios" to be introduced to help tackle income inequality.

"Only profitable employers will be paying dividends. If they depend on cheap labor for those profits then I think there's a question

over whether that's a business model to which we should be turning a blind eye," Corbyn told a socialist conference in London, his first major speech of the year.

Britain has already announced a compulsory 'national living wage' of at least 7.20 pounds (\$10.26) an hour for people aged over 25 in April, rising to around 9.35 pounds an hour by 2020. Corbyn's proposals were criticized by a leading employers' group, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), which said it did not support his idea of intervening in company wages.

"The idea of politicians stepping into the relationship between a private company and its shareholders would be a significant intervention, and not one that we would support," Matthew Fell, CBI chief of staff, added in a statement.

Corbyn, whose election was seen as a major shift back to the political left for the Labour Party, also proposed maximum "pay ratios" between the highest and lowest salaries within companies.

He said Britain's pay inequality was only second to the United States among the Group of Seven (G7) economic powers. "Not only is this unfair, it actually holds back growth. A more equal society is not only fairer, it does better in terms of economic stability and wealth creation," he added.

Corbyn's leadership has split Labor lawmakers between his left-wing allies and moderates, some of whom have questioned his ability to lead the party to victory in a 2020 election. — Agencies

HOW TO ASK FOR A PAY RAISE IN 2016

BAYT.COM WEEKLY REPORT

Whether you are trying to negotiate a salary for a new job or seeking a pay rise in your current role, it pays to learn how to get the salary you truly deserve. Here are some tips to help you from the career experts at Bayt.com, the Middle East's leading job site:

1. Check the market rate

It's important to know what your peers in the same industry are getting paid. If you are getting paid less than average it's a good time to ask for a raise. Remember that it's okay to quote an amount during the negotiation process. Aim high at first, and it will eventually lead to a mutually agreeable figure. Salary tools such as Bayt.com Salaries are a great way to assess your current market worth and compare your compensation with others in your field. Bayt.com Salaries gives you vital crowd-sourced, up-to-date information about salaries being paid by country, industry, company and position; all key insights as you

plan for salary discussions for the year ahead.

2. Prepare

There are many reasons why you may ask for a pay raise. Base your request on a set of clear and objective criteria. From a company's perspective, the only reason to be paid more is because you will deliver more in the future. If you're asking for a pay raise, don't make it about how hard you've worked in the past, your personal situation (new loan, kids' education, etc.) or what others are getting paid in your position. Talk instead about what you can do, and what your future plans are for the company. Did you do something extraordinary for the company? Are you consistently reaching your targets but feel under-appreciated? Always start a conversation about a pay rise with proof in hand. Also, prepare a list of counter questions and arguments that your manager might bring up

so that you don't fumble in the negotiation process.

3. Have a face-to-face discussion

There is no substitute for face-to-face discussions when seeking a pay rise. Set a time and place to meet with your manager in a private setting, such as his office or a meeting room. A salary negotiation is often a lengthy process and chances are that it will be abruptly cut short, and against your interests, if conducted in an impersonal manner and in the absence of all the non-verbal cues that facilitate effective face-to-face negotiation.

4. Think beyond the salary

There's more than just your salary that you can negotiate. Bonuses, unpaid leave, relocation expenses, flextime, severance and predetermined timeframes for salary reviews are all negotiable.

5. Don't make threats

In order for your negotiations to be effective, realize that both you and your boss need to walk away from the table feeling that they have won. Make sure your boss is aware of what the company is getting in return for the package you are asking for. Ask your boss for suggestions on what added responsibilities you can assume to further justify the raise. Most importantly, always be calm and confident while putting forth your case, and avoid the fatal mistake of getting too emotional or asking for a raise coupled with the threat of quitting.

6. Get it in writing

Last but not least, whatever the terms reached at the negotiation table get it in writing. Make sure the agreement has the right names, terms and signatures, so there is no question of commitment, and no room for ambiguity or retreat.

SAUDI'S 2016 BUDGET AIMS TO ADDRESS FISCAL CHALLENGE

KUWAIT: Saudi budget aims to put the kingdom on a more solid footing while still supporting the economy in a much anticipated announcement, the Saudi authorities unveiled on 28 December their budget for 2016. The new budget, which projects a deficit of SR 326.2 billion (\$87 billion) on expenditures of SR 840 billion (\$224 billion) and revenues of SR 513 billion (\$137 billion), took on added importance in light of increased market concerns about fiscal sustainability in the context of the low oil price environment.

With oil revenues impacted by a further decline in oil prices in 2015 and expenditures elevated due to King Salman's accession bonus and the war in Yemen, 2015 saw increased drawdowns of the kingdom's foreign reserves and, in July, the first issuance of Saudi sovereign debt since 2007. Market anxieties were further compounded in late October by the one notch downgrade of Saudi Arabia's credit rating to A+ by Standard & Poor's.

The 2016 budget looks to address the fiscal challenge facing the kingdom by exercising some spending restraint, all the while maintaining sufficient investment to diversify and stimulate the non-oil economy. In an effort to reduce the fiscal deficit, which is estimated to have ballooned to SR 367.5 billion (\$98 billion), or 15 percent of GDP, in 2015, the authorities penciled in spending cuts of 2.3 percent compared to the 2015 budget and cuts of 13.8 percent compared to actual spending outcomes in 2015. Revenue is projected to decline by 15.0 percent from the 2015 budget and 15.4 percent compared to estimates of realized revenue this year. This, the authorities hope, will bring the deficit down to SR 326.2 billion (\$87 billion).

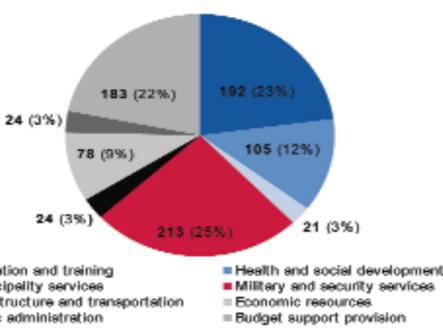
While the oil price assumed in the 2016 budget was unstated, we assume it to be in the region of \$40 per barrel (bbl). This is also based on the kingdom maintaining its 2015 oil production average of 10.2 million barrels per day (mb/d).

According to the Ministry of Finance, the deficit will continue to be financed by debt issuance, with the government weighing the option of international bonds in addition to domestic bonds in order to avoid a tightening in domestic liquidity and minimize any impact on private sector growth. To that end, the government is also likely to continue drawing down its foreign reserves, albeit at a slower pace. Reserves had declined by \$96 billion, or 13.2 percent, in 2015, to a still sizeable \$635 billion by the end of November.

Despite fiscal consolidation, the government has continued to prioritize education, social and economic development as well as defense and security in their

NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

Chart 2: Budget allocations 2016 (SR billion, share in brackets)



Source: MOF

spending plans. Together, education and health/social development will receive 35 percent of budgetary allocations, which is consistent with their long term share of more than 30 percent. Military and security spending, meanwhile, will continue to account for the single largest share of government spending with a budget allocation of 25 percent. The latter is no doubt a reflection of the kingdom's ongoing military involvement in Yemen and sensitivity to heightened geopolitical tensions in the region.

While a breakdown of the budget in terms of capital and current expenditures has not been provided, the fact that allocations to infrastructure and transportation, for example, have been cut by 63 percent to SR 23.9 billion (\$6.4 billion)-the largest reduction among spending items-would tend to support the view that the king-

Wide-ranging subsidy

In what is being described as something of a milestone, the Council of Ministers has announced a series of revisions and reforms to otherwise politically sensitive issues such as subsidies and taxes. The first reforms were rolled out the day after the budget was announced and include hikes to gasoline prices (20-25 percent), progressive increases in water and electricity prices (up to 26 percent and 100

percent for the highest users, respectively) and rises to feedstock and energy prices for industrial users. Price increases on tobacco and soft drinks products may also follow. The government also plans to gradually phase in a value-added sales tax (VAT) in tandem with other GCC countries.

Moreover, the government has proposed a set of structural reforms to be implemented during the next five years. These reforms include: privatizing a range of government entities and sectors; removing regulatory and bureaucratic obstacles in the private sector; improving transparency and accountability; providing partnership opportunities between the private and government sectors; and reforming and developing government performance. In addition, the authorities intend to establish both a unit within the Ministry of Finance to manage public debt, and a National Project Management Agency to review government projects and optimize capital spending.

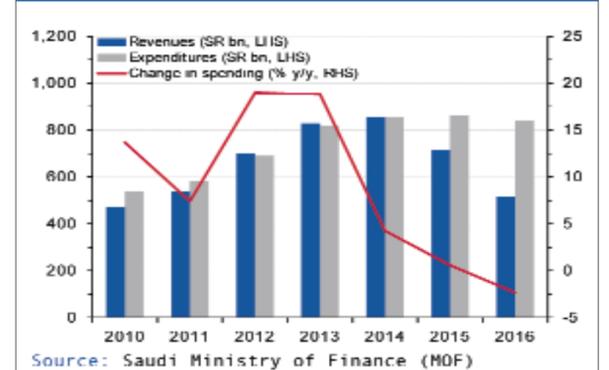
Further details on these reforms and the government's longer-term plans are likely to follow later this month when the authorities launch the National Transformation Plan (NTP) 2020. The NTP is expected to cover in detail measures the government intends to introduce to diversify government revenue, enhance public sector productivity, cap runaway current spending and accelerate privatization. Energy subsidy reform procedures are likely to feature as well.

Actual fiscal outcomes

According to the authorities, Saudi Arabia posted a deficit of 15.2 percent of GDP (SR 367 billion) in 2015. This is the kingdom's largest ever deficit and its second in a row, following 2014's deficit of -2.5 percent of GDP.

Nevertheless, this outcome was better than expected given that the IMF and others (including NBK) were forecasting a deficit closer to 20 percent of GDP. Actual spending in 2015 is estimated to have fallen by 14.5 percent from the level in 2014 to reach SR 975 billion (\$260 billion). Without the one-offs relating to King Salman's Royal Accession Decrees, which are estimated to have cost the treasury SR 88 billion (\$23.5 billion, accounting for 77 percent of the increase in expenditures) and costs associated with the war in Yemen, spending would have likely gone down further. This is the first time since 2002 that fiscal outlays have actually gone down year-on-year. Moreover, the amount of overspending in relation to the budget actually fell below the 5-year average of 25 percent and the 33.3 percent witnessed in 2014 to 13.4 percent in 2015. Increased restraint on the capital spending side is largely responsible; looking at the value of

Chart 1: Budget 2016



Source: Saudi Ministry of Finance (MOF)

government contracts awarded during the year, the authorities have significantly reduced their outlays from SR 184 billion (\$49 billion) in 2014 to SR 118 billion (\$31.5 billion), a sizeable drop of 36 percent.

Revenues, on the other hand, were heavily impacted by the 45 percent decline in oil prices (Brent) witnessed in 2015, falling by a similar rate of 41.6 percent y/y to SR 607.5 billion (\$162 billion). (See Chart 3.) This is 6-year low, and comes despite crude oil production increasing by 5 percent y/y to a record high of 10.2 mb/d in 2015. Conversely, non-oil revenues, surprised to the upside. These increased by 36.8 percent to SR163 billion (\$43.5 billion) on the back of higher investment and "other" income. Consequently, the share of non-oil revenue to total revenue reached a peak of 26.8 percent, providing encouragement to the authorities as they push ahead with diversifying the kingdom's income streams.

Real growth moderates

Preliminary estimates of real GDP growth in 2015 show the economy continuing to expand at a respectable rate of 3.4 percent y/y. This was driven by gains in the oil and the non-oil private sector, which grew by 3.1 percent and 3.7 percent, respectively. This is in line with our own estimates for the year, which see real output growing by 3.5 percent y/y. In 2016, growth is expected to moderate further on account of lower average oil prices and more restrained government

spending. With the government continuing to emphasize investment spending, however, the non-oil economy is expected to perform relatively well.

Public debt, meanwhile, increased to SR 142 billion (\$38 billion), or 5.8 percent of GDP, in 2015. (Chart 7.) The increase in debt from 2014's low of 1.6 percent of GDP is the first recorded gain since 2002, and is primarily a result of the government's bond program. Bond issuance totaled SR 98 billion (\$26 billion) during 2015. Market reaction to the budget has been mixed, but budget's nod toward fiscal reform is viewed positively. The main Saudi stock market index, the Tadawul All Share Index (TASI), has been volatile in the wake of the budget announcement, with the government's plan to hike feedstock prices for industrial users prompting a sell-off in the main chemical stocks. Along with the chemicals sector, the cement and transport sectors benefit from heavily subsidized input prices.

Nevertheless, as the dust settles, sentiment is expected to improve as the government's commitment to fiscal reform gains credibility. Indeed, among analysts and the economic community, reaction has been generally positive. The deficit was lower than many had predicted, budgeted spending cuts are not expected to greatly impact non-oil growth in the short term and, significantly, the government has finally unveiled a seemingly credible reform plan to put the economy on a more fiscally sustainable footing.

KUWAIT OIL PRICE DOWN 10 CENTS TO \$21.61 PB

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 10 cents Friday to reach \$21.60 per barrel after being \$21.70 pb the day before, said a statement by Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday.

At the global level, the price of oil plummeted by more than six percent due to the losses at the markets of the world's second largest economy China. The impending resumption of Iranian oil production was also another factor in the drop due to the high levels of supplies in the market. The Brent mix went down by \$1.97 to settle at \$28.94 per barrel. The price American crude also went down by \$1.78 to settle at \$29.42 pb. — KUNA

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.589
Indian Rupees	4.560
Pakistani Rupees	2.902
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.121
Nepali Rupees	2.860
Singapore Dollar	212.240
Hongkong Dollar	39.230
Bangladesh Taka	3.877
Philippine Peso	6.434
Thai Baht	8.401

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.203
Qatari Riyal	83.647
Omani Riyal	83.647
Bahraini Dinar	808.690
UAE Dirham	82.907

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	38.936
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	38.936
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	790.930
Tunisian Dinar	149.930
Jordanian Dinar	1.421
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.000
Syrian Lira	429.050
Morocco Dirham	31.151

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.350
Euro	443.590
Sterling Pound	443.440
Canadian dollar	214.710
Turkish lira	100.070
Swiss Franc	306.030
Australian Dollar	213.500
US Dollar Buying	303.150

GOLD

20 Gram	226.690
10 Gram	116.040
5 Gram	58.700

UAE EXCHANGE CENTRE WLL

CURRENCIES

Australian Dollar	203.08
Canadian Dollar	218.17
Swiss Franc	310.48
Euro	335.10
US Dollar	304.45
Sterling Pound	444.75
Japanese Yen	2.63
Bangladesh Taka	3.881
Indian Rupee	4.560
Sri Lankan Rupee	2.118
Nepali Rupee	2.850
Pakistani Rupee	2.901
UAE Dirhams	0.08285
Bahraini Dinar	0.8091
Egyptian Pound	0.03879
Jordanian Dinar	0.4330
Omani Riyal	0.7906
Qatari Riyal	0.08394
Saudi Riyal	0.08115

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer

US Dollar	304.800
Canadian Dollar	216.885
Sterling Pound	443.575
Euro	334.510
Swiss Franc	304.295
Bahraini Dinar	806.370
UAE Dirhams	83.225
Qatari Riyals	84.445

Selling Rate

US Dollar	304.800
Canadian Dollar	216.885
Sterling Pound	443.575
Euro	334.510
Swiss Franc	304.295
Bahraini Dinar	806.370
UAE Dirhams	83.225
Qatari Riyals	84.445

Saudi Riyals

Saudi Riyals	81.960
Jordanian Dinar	429.370
Egyptian Pound	38.814
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.123
Indian Rupees	4.563
Pakistani Rupees	2.902
Bangladesh Taka	3.877
Philippines Peso	6.470
Cyprus pound	580.550
Japanese Yen	3.595
Syrian Pound	2.380
Nepalese Rupees	3.850
Malaysian Ringgit	69.735
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	46.740
Thai Bhat	9.355
Turkish Lira	101.100

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.435173	0.444173
Czech Korune	0.004219	0.016219
Danish Krone	0.040273	0.045273
Euro	0.325371	0.333371
Norwegian Krone	0.029995	0.035195
Romanian Leu	0.072951	0.072951
Slovakia	0.009097	0.019097
Swedish Krona	0.031625	0.036625
Swiss Franc	0.297680	0.307880
Turkish Lira	0.096096	0.106396

Australasia

Australian Dollar	0.203948	0.215448
New Zealand Dollar	0.193103	0.202603

America

Canadian Dollar	0.208372	0.216872
US Dollars	0.300250	0.304750

US Dollars Mint

0.300750	0.304750
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Asia

Bangladesh Taka	0.003523	0.004123
Chinese Yuan	0.044508	0.048008
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037141	0.039891
Indian Rupee	0.004217	0.004607
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002504	0.002684
Kenyan Shilling	0.002965	0.002965
Korean Won	0.000240	0.000255
Malaysian Ringgit	0.066046	0.072046
Nepalese Rupee	0.002885	0.003055
Pakistan Rupee	0.002639	0.002919
Philippine Peso	0.006374	0.006654
Sierra Leone	0.000070	0.000076
Singapore Dollar	0.208000	0.214000
South African Rand	0.011967	0.020467
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001766	0.002346
Taiwan	0.008975	0.009155
Thai Baht	0.008079	0.008629

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.800404	0.808404
Egyptian Pound	0.035158	0.038284
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000201	0.000261
Jordanian Dinar	0.425272	0.432772
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000151	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021552	0.045552
Nigerian Naira	0.001258	0.001893
Omani Riyal	0.784099	0.789779
Qatar Riyal	0.082886	0.084099
Saudi Riyal	0.080273	0.081223
Syrian Pound	0.001290	0.001510
Tunisian Dinar	0.146446	0.154446
Turkish Lira	0.096096	0.106396
UAE Dirhams	0.081882	0.083031
Yemeni Riyal	0.001376	0.001456

LOSS OF US PASSPORT OVER TAX DEBT NOW A REALITY

KUWAIT: The US congress has passed a new law titled "Revocation or Denial of Passport in Case of Certain Tax Delinquencies" that would revoke an individual's US passport if they fail to comply with Internal Revenue Service (IRS) filing requirements.

The law declares that if the IRS attests anyone having a seriously negligent tax debt of at least \$50,000, the State Department has the right to revoke, deny, or limit their US passports. Tying travel to taxes is more of a reality than ever before, especially among the several million Americans

living abroad that frequently travel using a US passport.

Administrative details are limited at this time, but this law can now officially result in no new passport, no renewal, and even having existing passports cancelled. The IRS will use the \$50,000 threshold of unpaid federal taxes to compile a list of delinquent taxpayers. This threshold includes penalties and interest, not only previous tax owed.

Those living outside the US, with years of non-compliance, are especially at risk because their debt will quick-



ly reach that threshold due to the inclusion of penalties and interest. Danielle C Huss, GM of American Tax Bureau (ATB), explains, "Any US passport holder that has not been tax compliant should immediately seek help or may face passport loss, severe penalties and possibly criminal charges. This is no longer a what-if

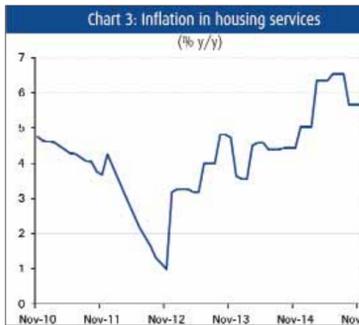
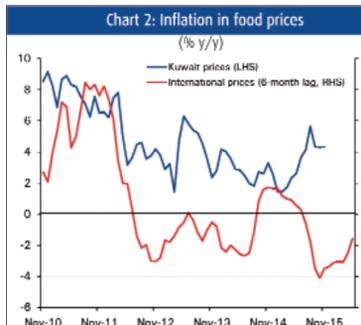
scenario, but a reality".

This law is related to the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA), which requires foreign financial institutions to report any US account holders, and is currently being enforced worldwide.

"I urge US citizens to immediately take steps to comply with US tax laws before the IRS takes action against them; a good start would be contacting ATB for help as we have 25 years accumulated experience in US taxation advising and preparation," Huss recommended.



Danielle C Huss



KUWAIT INFLATION EASES TO 3.1% IN NOVEMBER

KUWAIT: Inflation in consumer prices came in marginally lower in November, easing from 3.2 percent year-on-year (y/y) in October to 3.1 percent y/y, as inflation in most components was either unchanged or remained steady. Core inflation (which excludes food inflation) also eased slightly, from 2.9 percent y/y to 2.8 percent during the same period. Subsequently, annual headline inflation is on track to average close to 3.3 percent in 2015, slightly higher than the 3.3 percent annual average in 2014.

Inflation in local food prices was unchanged at 4.3 percent y/y in November; global food prices remained in decline. According to the Commodity Research Bureau's global commodity index, international food prices continued to fall, but at a slower rate of -8 percent y/y. Upward pressures on local food inflation are poised to be limited in the near-to-medium

NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

term, against a backdrop of weak global food prices.

Inflation in housing services was unchanged from September's 5.7 percent y/y reading. Inflation in this segment (primarily housing rent) witnessed strong gains over the past year, particularly in 4Q14 and 1Q15. It appears to have peaked in 2Q15 and we may see it continue to subside over the following months.

Inflation in furnishings and household was slightly higher in November and clothing & footwear prices continued to fall. Inflation in furnishings and household maintenance rose slightly from 2.5 percent y/y in October to 2.7 percent y/y in November. Prices in clothing &

footwear fell for the eighth consecutive month. The stronger dinar continues to apply downward pressure in this segment, as most clothing and footwear items are imported (from non-dollar countries).

Inflation in the 'other goods & services' segment also trended lower in November. Inflation in this segment, which includes prices of items that are mostly imported - personal care products and jewelry and certain business charges - is also being weighed down by the stronger dinar.

Inflation in the wholesale price index (updated once every quarter) is projected to be moderate in the near-to-medium term. This will help keep inflation in the consumer price index in check and lead to an annual average close to our 3.3 percent forecast in 2015, when the final numbers are out.

OBAMA PROPOSES CHANGES TO UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE PLAN

WASHINGTON: President Barack Obama yesterday proposed changes to the US unemployment insurance system that he says would offer more security to the jobless and encourage experienced workers to rejoin the workforce, even if it means taking a pay cut.

"We shouldn't just be talking about unemployment; we should be talking about re-employment," Obama said in his weekly radio and internet address. The president's proposal would require states to provide wage insurance to workers who lose their jobs and find new employment at lower pay. The insurance would replace half of the lost income, up to \$10,000 over two years. It would be available to workers who were with their prior employer for three years and make less than \$50,000 in their new job. The proposal also would require states to make unemployment insurance

available to many part-time and low-income workers, and it would mandate that states provide at least 26 weeks of unemployment insurance. Nine states fall short of the benchmark, the White House said. The proposal comes as US businesses, outside the manufacturing sector, are experiencing strong demand and adding employees. A recent government employment report showed that employers added a net 292,000 jobs in December as the unemployment rate held at 5 percent. Obama has begun claiming some credit for this progress, hoping to push back against Republican presidential candidates he says are talking down the economy. But the White House also has acknowledged the many jobs added since the recovery are lower paying, and many Americans continue to see no wage growth. — AP



WASHINGTON: US President Barack Obama speaks in the Cabinet Room of the White House in Washington. The president yesterday proposed a set of changes to the US unemployment insurance system. — AP



ATHENS: A demonstrator shouts slogans in a megaphone during a rally in central Athens yesterday called by Greek main workers' unions to condemn a planned overhaul of Greece's pension system demanded by its international creditors. — AFP

GREEK WORKERS MARCH TO PROTEST PENSION REFORM

ATHENS: Greek workers marched through the streets of Athens yesterday to protest against the leftist-led government's planned pension reform which the country's international creditors have demanded as part of its third bailout.

About 3,000 public and private sector workers, pensioners and students rallied peacefully outside parliament. They held banners reading "You cannot bargain with social security" and chanted "Your hands off our pensions!" "We will fight to protect our rights and force the government to withdraw this monstrous plan that it calls a reform," the secretary-general of private sector union GSEE, Nikos Kioutsoukios, told Reuters.

Turnout in recent protests has been weak, mainly due to austerity fatigue and resignation after five years of belt-tightening and two bailouts that have shut businesses and pushed up unemployment but have not pulled Greece out of the crisis.

On Feb. 4, labour unions will stage a 24-hour general strike against the planned reform, the third such walkout in three months. Turnout will indicate the level of resistance the government faces as it pushes through tough measures. This week lawyers staged one of their biggest rallies in recent years and they have threatened to step up labour action. Farmers are also gearing up for road and border crossing blockades against the planned pen-

sion cuts and social security contribution increases. Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras was first elected a year ago promising to end austerity. After tough negotiations he signed up to a third bailout in July and was re-elected in September on a mandate to implement it while protecting the vulnerable.

Greece's first bailout review is expected to officially begin next week. The lenders currently see a fiscal gap of well over 1.5 percent of GDP for 2016, according to sources close to the talks, and expect tough talks on pension reform. "We will defend what is non-negotiable for us," Labour Minister George Katrougalos told Skai TV. — Reuters

S&P CUTS POLAND'S SOVEREIGN RATING OVER GOVT ACTIONS

WARSAW: Global ratings agency Standard and Poor's cut its long-term foreign currency sovereign credit rating for Poland by one notch Friday to 'BBB+', citing government moves "weakening institutions". "The downgrade reflects our view that Poland's system of institutional checks and balances has been eroded significantly," the ratings agency said in a statement, pointing to recent legislative changes pushed through by the EU and NATO member's new right-wing government.

Since winning an absolute majority in last October's general election, the populist-oriented Law and Justice (PiS)

party led by eurosceptic Jaroslaw Kaczynski has pushed through institutional changes that critics insist have tightened its grip on power.

Standard and Poor's warned in its Friday statement that "the constitutional court's ability to work efficiently and independently will likely be undermined, in our view, by changes to the court's composition and decision-making process." It also pointed to a new media law that gives the government extensive control over management of public broadcasters and measures allowing it to change the structure of the civil service.

"In our view, these measures erode the strength of Poland's institutions and go beyond what we had anticipated regarding policy changes from the general election."

The Fitch agency meanwhile held Poland's rating at 'A-', with a stable outlook. Having clocked growth each year since it shed communism a quarter century ago, Poland has long been regarded as Central Europe's powerhouse. The reputation was bolstered by sound fiscal management which saw debt remain low. Standard and Poor's said the outlook for the rating is negative, warning —AFP



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PRE-QUALIFICATION FOR TENDER

INTRODUCTION

Duqm Terminal is seeking to engage Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Contractor to carry out the Detailed Design (Owner completed FEED) Procurement and Construction works for the new LIQUID STORAGE TERMINAL AND DRY BULK FACILITIES in the Port of Duqm, Sultanate of Oman.

Description	Prequalification Document fee	Letter of Interest submission date
Invitation to pre-qualify for Major Engineering, Procurement and Construction Works of Liquid Storage Terminal and Dry Bulk Facilities in Port of Duqm, Sultanate of Oman Tender No: 024-2015	Omani Rials 3,000.00 Or USD 7,800.00 (Non-refundable)	On or before 22 nd January, 2016 (13:00 GMT)

PRE-QUALIFICATION ASSESSMENT

The prequalification of applicants will be based upon previous proven track record of Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) experience preferably in the Region, and specific to Liquid Storage Tanks, Dry Bulk Handling Facilities, Buildings and Infrastructure. Applicants will be assessed against their Experience, Organizational Structure, HSSE Systems, Quality Management, Technical Capabilities, Project Management and Financial Status.

PREQUALIFICATION REGISTRATION PROCESS

1. Applicants to send the following by email to dpqc.tender@duqterminal.om

a) Expression of interest titled "LIQUID STORAGE TERMINAL AND DRY BULK FACILITIES EPC" with details of a contact person name, title, telephone, fax and email address.

2. Interested applicants requested to deposit the Prequalification document fee to the following bank account and send us the proof of fee deposit:

Duqm Petroleum Terminal Company LLC
Bank Name: Oman Arab Bank
Bank Account: 3151 - 252989 - 500
Address: AL-Duqm Branch, P.O. Box: 55 PC 418
Swift Code: OMABOMRXXX

3. Company will issue a detailed Prequalification enquiry to the interested applicants against receipt of PQ fee in Duqm Terminal Bank Account.

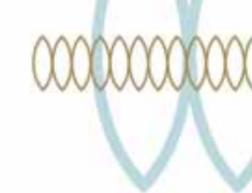
SCOPE OF WORK

The Project Prequalification Questionnaire provides a description of the scope of the work, which includes the following major work packages:

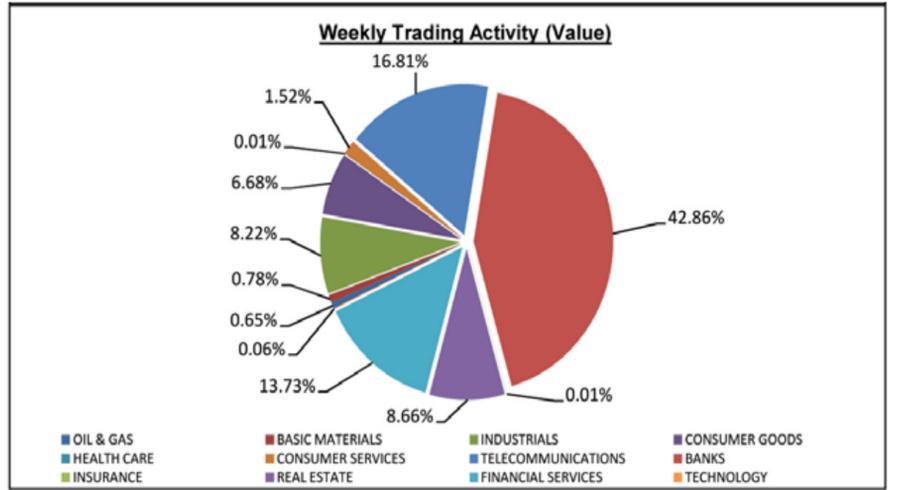
1. Liquid Storage Tanks, Pipelines and loading Facilities;
2. Dry Bulk Handling Facilities for Petcoke & Sulphur Storage, including Ship Loaders and conveyors; and
3. Buildings, Roads, Infrastructure and associated Utilities.

Note:

Duqm Terminal shall not be held liable for costs incurred by the Applicant in the preparation and submission of the PQQ. This stage entitles applicants to receive a detailed Prequalification enquiry and not the EPC Tender.



www.duqterminal.om



KUWAIT EQUITIES CONTINUE TO BE BEARISH

BAYAN WEEKLY MARKET REPORT

KUWAIT: Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) ended last week in the red zone. The Price Index closed at 5,265.94 points, down by 3.82 percent from the week before closing, the Weighted Index decreased by 4.48 percent after closing at 355.39 points, whereas the KSX-15 Index closed at 828.38 points down by 5.48 percent. Furthermore, last week's average daily turnover increased by 25.15 percent, compared to the preceding week, reaching KD 13.90 million, whereas trading volume average was 87.29 million shares, recording a loss of 17.55 percent.

The stock market ended the week's trading with noticeable losses for the three indicators, especially the KSX-15 Index which declined steeply continuing its downward direction to reach very low levels, as it reached by the end of last week its lowest level ever since its inception in May 2012. The market witnessed such performance in light of the strong selling trend that it was subject to as a result to the continued investors' interaction with the negative surrounding factors, related to the national economy future in a continued decline to oil prices, and its effect on the listed companies in KSE. Also, the market losses come in parallel with the continued watch and cautious state that is controlling many traders currently, waiting for the listed companies' 2015 financial results.

On the other hand, the drop in prices of many stocks during last week's trading caused the market cap to lose around KD 1.12 billion, to reach KD 23.54 billion, compared to KD 24.66 billion at the end of a week earlier.

Moreover, the market initiated its first sessions of the week with grouped losses for the three indices, due to the strong selling pressures witnessed by many listed stocks, especially the leading and large-cap ones, in addition to the liquidation operations executed on the small-cap stocks during this period. On the next two sessions, the market continued recording grouped losses for the three indicators, among a declined liquidity levels, especially on Tuesday's session, where the value decreased more than 35 percent, to reach KD 13.75 million.

On mid Wednesday's session, the market was able to relatively hold compared to the previous sessions, whereas the Weighted Index was able to realize slight growth supported by the random purchas-

KSE INDICES				
		Price Index	Weighted Index	KSX 15
Weekly	Last week	5,265.94	355.39	828.38
	Previous week	5,475.15	372.05	876.45
	Change (Point)	-209.21	-16.66	-48.07
	Change (%)	-3.82%	-4.48%	-5.48%
Annual	Last year	5,615.12	381.70	900.43
	Change (Point)	-349.18	-26.31	-72.05
	Change (%)	-6.22%	-6.89%	-8.00%

ing operations that included some leading stocks, whilst the Price and KSX-15 indices couldn't, and continued recording losses, however limited; such performance came among a growth in the trading value by about 40 percent. The stock market returned in its last session of the week to record grouped losses for the three indicators as a result to the random selling operations executed by many traders in the market, and concentrated on the leading and heavy stocks, among a noticeable growth in the trading value.

Sectors' Indices

All of KSE's sectors ended last week in the red zone except for one sector. The Real Estate sector headed the losers list as its index declined by 5.84 percent to end the week's activity at 855.87 points. The Banks sector was second on the losers' list, which index declined by 5.50 percent, closing at 838.36 points, followed by the Industrial sector, as its index closed at 974.40 points at a loss of 4.34 percent. The Health Care sector was the least declining

as its index closed at 915.28 points with a 0.47 percent decrease. On the other hand, the Technology sector was last week's only gainer, which index grew by 0.06 percent, closing at 832.18 points.

Sectors' Activity

The Financial Services sector dominated a total trade volume of around 157.25 million shares changing hands during last week, representing 36.03 percent of the total market trading volume. The Real Estate sector was second in terms of trading volume as the sector's traded shares were 25.57 percent of last week's total trading volume, with a total of around 111.60 million shares. On the other hand, the Banks sector's stocks were the highest traded in terms of value; with a turnover of around KD 29.77 million or 42.86 percent of last week's total market trading value. The Telecommunications sector took the second place as the sector's last week turnover was approx. KD 11.68 million representing 16.81 percent of the total market trading value. — Prepared by the Studies & Research Department, Bayan Investment Co.

MARKET ACTIVITY			
	Last Week	Previous Week	Ch. %
Volume	436,449,959	423,489,024	3.06%
Value (K.D)	69,475,623	44,412,717	56.43%
Deals	12,903	9,645	33.78%

MARKET CAPITALISATION (K.D.)			
	Last Week	Previous Week	Weekly Ch. %
	23,539,269,924	24,655,110,440	-4.53%
			Annual Ch. %
			-6.83%

TOP GAINERS OF THE WEEK				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (fils)	Ch. %
MARIN	114.00	104.00	10.0	9.62%
KFIC	38.00	35.50	2.5	7.04%
KCEM	395.00	370.00	25.0	6.76%
REAM	140.00	132.00	8.0	6.06%
WINS	106.00	100.00	6.0	6.00%

TOP LOSERS OF THE WEEK				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (fils)	Ch. %
MRC	54.00	79.00	-25.0	-31.65%
MARAKEZ	23.00	32.00	-9.0	-28.13%
NAFAIS	114.00	154.00	-40.0	-25.97%
MUNSHAAT	61.00	82.00	-21.0	-25.61%
SOKOUK	34.50	45.50	-11.0	-24.18%

SECTORS' WEEKLY TRADING ACTIVITY				
Sector	Volume	To Market %	Value	To Market %
OIL & GAS	16,290,761	3.73%	451,069	0.65%
BASIC MATERIALS	2,181,403	0.50%	542,278	0.78%
INDUSTRIALS	33,810,111	7.75%	5,710,650	8.22%
CONSUMER GOODS	4,981,062	1.14%	4,642,661	6.68%
HEALTH CARE	75,850	0.02%	9,604	0.01%
CONSUMER SERVICES	6,807,033	1.56%	1,058,279	1.52%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	27,029,383	6.19%	11,679,077	16.81%
BANKS	75,390,228	17.27%	29,774,143	42.86%
INSURANCE	68,440	0.02%	9,650	0.01%
REAL ESTATE	111,596,038	25.57%	6,018,464	8.66%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	157,252,122	36.03%	9,535,577	13.73%
TECHNOLOGY	967,528	0.22%	44,170	0.06%

SECTORS INDICES PERFORMANCE				
Sector	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Weekly Ch. %	Annual Ch. %
OIL & GAS	796.71	812.19	-1.91%	-2.69%
BASIC MATERIALS	915.43	953.01	-3.94%	-7.19%
INDUSTRIALS	974.40	1,018.65	-4.34%	-6.58%
CONSUMER GOODS	1,049.61	1,076.44	-2.49%	-4.14%
HEALTH CARE	915.28	919.59	-0.47%	-1.09%
CONSUMER SERVICES	969.44	988.17	-1.90%	-3.89%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	587.05	591.15	-0.69%	-1.93%
BANKS	838.36	887.12	-5.50%	-7.58%
INSURANCE	1,096.02	1,123.66	-2.46%	-2.75%
REAL ESTATE	855.87	908.95	-5.84%	-9.02%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	553.78	573.65	-3.46%	-6.99%
TECHNOLOGY	832.18	831.71	0.06%	1.47%

GET USED TO IT: BIG DROPS FOR STOCKS ARE BACK AGAIN

WALL STREET WEEKLY ROUNDUP

NEW YORK: Yes, this is scary. Stock prices plunged again Friday and are down 8 percent in just two weeks, an unprecedented slide for a start of a year. The vicious drops feel even more unsettling because they're such a departure from the placid and strong returns that investors had been enjoying for years. Like vacationers returning from a warm beach to a slushy commute to work, the shock of change is making something already painful even more so.

Now investors just need to get used to it, analysts say. "It was easy for many years," says Bill Barker, portfolio manager at Motley Fool Asset Management, whose three mutual funds control about \$600 million. "That was not an accurate display of what happens in the market all the time."

The painful return of big price swings serves as a reminder that investing in stocks can be harrowing, especially if investors focus on the day-to-day moves.

That's not to say investors can't still win over the long term. Over the past 12 months, an investor in an S&P 500 index fund has lost nearly 5 percent, including dividends. But over five years, they are up a total of 60 percent, and over 10 years, they are up 79 percent.

It's just that analysts expect the volatility to continue. The remarkably calm stretch from late 2011 through last summer was an anomaly. From 2012 until last summer, investors basked in a market where the Standard & Poor's 500 rarely had a bad day. The widely followed index fell more than 1 percent less often than Los Angeles has rainy days, about 8 percent of the time. During that span, the S&P 500 also completely avoided a "correction," which is what traders call a sustained drop of 10 percent.

It wasn't until this past August when the S&P 500 snapped into its first correction in nearly four years, felled by concerns about

China's slowdown and the fragility of the global economy. The worries have resumed this year. The S&P 500 fell back into a correction, and it has already had six days where it's lost more than 1 percent.

That means the S&P 500 has had that big a drop in 22 percent of the trading days since Aug. 20, more than the historical average. But when looking at the last five years as a whole, the recent spurt of volatility has merely pulled the market back to "normal." The S&P 500 has had a 1 percent drop in 11 percent of trading days in the last five years, the same as its average over the last 50 years.

The latest big drop came Friday, when the S&P 500 sank 2.2 percent and at one point was down as much as 3.5 percent. Besides China's sharp economic slowdown, analysts see other reasons for volatility to continue. Tensions in the Middle East are high, and the plunge in prices of oil and other commodities are raising concerns about global economic growth and decimating the profits - and share prices - of materials producers.

What makes the volatility even more painful to endure is that many analysts are forecasting stock returns to be lower this year and in the coming years than in the recent past. So investors are facing the prospect of higher risk without much higher reward.

The forecast for big swings could encourage some investors to try to time the market, attempting to jump in to catch stocks when they're rising and jump out during downturns. That's usually not a good idea, even for pros. Strategists at Goldman Sachs' investment management division wrote in a recent report that it's better to remain a long-term investor, and not become a short-term trader.

"The vast majority of traders - including most macro hedge fund traders - have failed to capitalize on such moves," the strategists wrote. —AP



NEW YORK: Stock traders follow stock prices at the New York Stock Exchange on Friday. — AP

CHINA SEEKS INVESTMENT FOR DISPUTED ISLES, TO LAUNCH FLIGHTS

BEIJING/WASHINGTON: China will invite private investment to build infrastructure on islands it controls in the disputed South China Sea and will start regular flights to one of them this year, state media said on Friday, moves likely to anger other claimants.

A US research institute, meanwhile, said China appeared to have stepped up construction work on artificial islands it has built in the South China Sea and was close to finishing two more military-length airstrips on them. China claims almost all of the South China Sea, through which more than \$5 trillion of maritime trade passes each year. The Philippines, Brunei, Vietnam, Malaysia and Taiwan have overlapping claims. In 2012 China set up what it calls Sansha City, based on Woody Island in the

Paracels, to administer its islands there. Sansha's deputy mayor, Feng Wenhui, said they will welcome private investment and "will initiate public-private-partnership programmes", state news agency Xinhua said.

"The city will also push forward the planning and construction of a maritime medical rescue centre. Submarine optical cables will be laid and put into use this year, and Wi-Fi will cover all inhabited islands and reefs," Feng said.

The airport on Woody Island will also this year launch regular flights, Feng added, without elaborating. China took full control of the Paracels in 1974 after a naval showdown with Vietnam.

Asked about China's investment plans, Gabrielle Price, a US State Department spokeswoman, said Washington continued

to call on all claimants to halt land reclamation, construction of new facilities, and militarization of outposts in the South China Sea. Though China calls it a city, Sansha's permanent population is no more than a few thousand, and many of the disputed islets and reefs in the sea are uninhabited.

Hundreds of Vietnamese demonstrated in Hanoi when China established Sansha and invited oil firms to bid for blocks in offshore areas that Vietnam claims as its territory. Tensions between China and Vietnam have flared again in recent weeks, after Chinese civilian aircraft conducted test landings on the disputed Fiery Cross Reef, one of three runways China has been building by dredging sand up onto reefs in the Spratly Islands to the south of the Paracels. Vietnam says China's landings were on an

"illegally" built reef, and has vowed to defend its sovereignty through peaceful measures.

CIVILIAN VISITORS

Chinese state media on Friday showed pictures of what it said was the first batch of civilian passengers to arrive by plane on Fiery Cross, family members of troops based there, though it only appeared to be two women and two young children.

"Everyone rapturously looked around at the island's beautiful scenery," read a caption underneath one of the pictures on the website of Chinese news portal Sina. It showed the four standing in front of two civilian aircraft. The Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative of Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank published satellite images on Friday showing

airstrips on two other artificial islands - Mischief and Subi Reefs - close to completion. It said the work was progressing faster than expected. While the strip at Fiery Cross had taken at least seven months to complete, that one on Mischief Reef was nearly finished after only three to four months, AMTI said in a report. The construction included housing, cement plants, docking facilities, and an area of artificial turf that could be used for sports or as a parade ground, AMTI director Greg Poling said. The work would be of particular concern to the Philippines, given the proximity of the strips to Philippine occupied features, the AMTI report said. The United States, a treaty ally of the Philippines, has criticised Beijing's building of artificial islands in the Spratlys and has conducted sea and air patrols near them. — Reuters

VENEZUELA'S MADURO ADMITS ECONOMIC 'CATASTROPHE'

CARACAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro admitted before a hostile legislature Friday that the oil-rich nation is mired in a "catastrophic" economic crisis, hours after decreeing a two-month state of emergency. Maduro's first state of the nation address before the newly opposition-held National Assembly, which is locked in a bitter power struggle with his administration, came as Venezuela's central bank released its first economic growth and inflation statistics in more than a year.

The figures show the magnitude of the country's recession: the economy shrank 4.5 percent in the first nine months of 2015, the central bank said, while inflation for the same period came in at a painful 108.7 percent, fueled by crippling shortages. "These catastrophic figures (are) the result of an economic situation that in another era of regressive neoliberal and capitalist policies would surely have pushed (the Venezuelan) people into unemployment," said Maduro.

Earlier, the leftist leader sought to seize the initiative in his standoff with the legislature, decreeing a 60-day state of "economic emergency." It gave the administration special temporary powers to boost production and ensure access to key goods, including taking over private companies' resources, imposing currency controls and "other social, economic or political measures deemed fitting." Addressing the legislature, Maduro said the plunge in oil prices over the past year and a half had the country trapped in an "economic storm" that pitted two models against each other.

"The socialist model is the only one, not the neoliberal model that wants to come and privatize everything," he said to jeers from opposition lawmakers. "You will have to come and overthrow me if you want to pass a privatization law. No, no and not!"

Dressed in his red, yellow and blue presidential sash, Maduro periodically sipped from a white coffee cup, as his mentor, late leftist firebrand Hugo Chavez, used to do. At other points, Maduro sounded a more conciliatory note, saying he was ready for dialogue.

Addressing the issue of what the opposition calls political prisoners from within its ranks—one of its most acrimonious disputes with Maduro—the president said: "We are ready and willing to talk about this and any other issue necessary to discuss for the peace that Venezuela demands of us."

'Wrong-headed model'

National Assembly speaker Henry Ramos Allup, a fierce Maduro opponent, delivered a scathing rebuttal to his address. "For 17 years, we've followed a wrong-headed economic model. Here are the numbers to prove it," he said, referring to the new statistics. Venezuela has the world's biggest known oil reserves, but the current price slide has slashed its revenues, straining Maduro's policies of oil-fueled social spending. The current National Assembly, inaugurated 10 days ago, is the first controlled by the opposition since Chavez came to power in 1999.

Institutional arm-wrestling threatened to paralyze the legislature until last-minute compromises set the stage for Maduro to deliver his annual presidential report. After the opposition won a landslide election victory last month, Maduro secured a Supreme Court injunction reducing its majority from two-thirds to three-fifths, limiting his rivals' powers to force him from office as they have vowed. The opposition Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) initially defied what it calls the pro-Maduro court.

But it bowed to pressure from the judiciary Wednesday, when three of its lawmakers agreed to quit while authorities investigate them over the Maduro camp's allegations of electoral fraud.

Leaders have been wary of fanning tensions, mindful of deadly street clashes in 2014. The so-called "supermajority" would have allowed the opposition to launch constitutional measures to cut short Maduro's mandate, which expires in 2019. Maduro accuses capitalist forces of waging "economic war" on Venezuela by starving it of goods. Analysts say the political deadlock threatens to worsen the hardship that drove voters to the opposition.

"If Maduro's discourse continues to be the same, the only way the results can change is by getting worse," said economist Luis Vicente Leon. On the streets, some Venezuelans were fed up with both sides. "This just keeps getting worse. Now they're going to deal with the problem even less because they're fighting over the Assembly," said Juan Molina, a 44-year-old security guard. "I don't know how this place is going to end up." — AFP



YUSUF A ALGHANIM & SONS AUTOMOTIVE OPENS CHEVROLET SHOWROOM IN AHMADI PART OF ITS STRATEGY TO ENSURE CUSTOMER CONVENIENCE

KUWAIT: In a move that reinforces the company's commitment of ensuring complete convenience for all its customers across the country, Yusuf A Alghanim & Sons Automotive, the exclusive distributor of Chevrolet vehicles in Kuwait, is excited to announce the opening of a new showroom in the Ahmadi area. The opening also plays a vital part in strengthening the company's presence in the 10th district along with its already-established Fahaeel showroom.

As a company that continuously elevates its customer relations and car sales and services to new levels, the new Ahmadi showroom highlights Yusuf A Alghanim & Sons Automotive's rapid success in the country as well its mission to customer convenience by providing its award-winning services across different sectors in Kuwait. The showroom, in addition, aims to offer a completely satisfying experience from the

moment customers step in until the day they drive off to a thrilling destination with their new Chevrolet vehicle.

On a par with other Chevrolet's showrooms in the country, the strategic location of the Ahmadi showroom is designed to ensure customers' peace of mind by availing finance companies and financial services within the facility itself, thus saving them valuable time and money. The addition of a new showroom also means less travel distance for customers and more brand exposure for Chevrolet Alghanim, the company that always delivers exciting, not-to-be-missed offers all yearlong.

These offers include the highest trade-in value, plus up to 1,000 KD upon purchasing the powerful Chevrolet Silverado or the award-winning Ahmadi Tahoe, in addition to Chevrolet Impala and Traverse. Customers are encouraged to visit the

Ahmadi showroom, or any Chevrolet showroom in the country, in order to take full advantage of these limited time promotions and own the Chevrolet car of their dream.

All customers who purchase a Chevrolet from Alghanim will receive the benefits of the Chevrolet Care, which entails new levels of post-sale support and trust. The Chevrolet Care is an exceptional customer service that is based on four main pillars: competitive and transparent service costs (especially for four-wheel drive vehicles), scheduled service appointment booking with same day delivery, quality service by certified technicians and 3yr/100,000km warranty with 24x7 roadside assistance. Customers are welcome to visit any of Chevrolet Alghanim's showrooms today, including the newly opened Ahmadi showroom, and test-drive and own a Chevrolet at an unbelievable price.



CARACAS: Aristobulo Isturiz, Tarek William Saab, Susana Barreiros Venezuelan ombudsman Tarek William Saab, left, National Public Defender Susana Barreiros, center, and Vice President Aristobulo Isturiz, right, listen to Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro during his annual state of the nation report, in Caracas. — AP

CITIGROUP Q4 EARNINGS RISE AS LEGAL EXPENSES DROP

NEW YORK: Citigroup's said Friday that its profits jumped sharply in the fourth quarter, helped lower legal and regulatory costs that hammered the bank in the fourth quarter of 2014.

The New York-based financial conglomerate had a profit of \$3.34 billion in the three-month period ending in December, or \$1.02 per share. That's compared to a profit of \$344 million, or 6 cents per share. The 2014 quarter was where Citigroup incurred roughly \$3.5 billion in legal costs tied to settling several high-profile investigations, including allegations of currency trading and interest rate manipulation.

Citi has continued its theme of trying to clean up its balance sheet and slim itself down in the eight years since the financial crisis. Citi Holdings, the so-called "bad bank" where Citi warehoused most of its toxic assets from that period, was profitable in the quarter once again. Citi was able to sell \$32 billion in assets from Citi Holdings last quarter.

"We have undoubtedly become a simpler, smaller, safer and stronger institution," Citi CEO Michael Corbat said in a prepared statement. Citigroup shares fell 2.91, or 6.4 percent, to \$42.47. — AP

includes Citibank in the US as well as its operations in Latin America and Asia, saw a 20 percent drop in profits from a year ago to \$1.34 billion. Most of the drop was tied to Latin America, where Citi has been dealing with issues tied to its Mexico subsidiary Banamex and has been closing operations in some Latin American countries.

Citi's investment banking division performed well in the fourth quarter, even with the choppy US and overseas markets. Bond trading had revenues of \$2.2 billion in the quarter, up 7 percent, and stock trading had revenues of \$606 million, up 29 percent. Investment banking fees, earned as Citi helps companies issue debt, go public or merge with another company, rose 6 percent to \$1.1 billion. Removing an adjustment tied to the value of Citigroup's debt, Citi earned \$3.45 billion, or \$1.06 per share. Analysts were looking for Citi to earn \$1.05 per share, according to FactSet.

Citi's total revenue was \$18.46 billion compared with \$17.90 billion the year before. Citi's expenses dropped 23 percent, most of that tied to lower legal expenses. Citigroup shares fell 2.91, or 6.4 percent, to \$42.47. — AP

COAL SUSPENSION AFFECTS 30-PLUS MINING PROJECTS

BILLINGS, Montana: At least 30 applications from companies seeking to mine hundreds of millions of tons of coal face suspension as the government reviews its sales of the fuel from public lands, US officials disclosed Friday.

The coal leasing program is on hold for up to three years while the Interior Department reviews fees paid by mining companies and the environmental effect of burning coal, agency Secretary Sally Jewell said. The Associated Press obtained a Bureau of Land Management list of affected sites ahead of its public release, and it includes mining proposals in nine states.

Some of the largest projects are in the Powder River Basin of Wyoming and Montana, the nation's top coal-producing region. Other projects are in Utah, Kentucky, Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Oklahoma and North Dakota. The announcement marks another major blow to the struggling coal industry, which has been hit with increased competition from cheap natural gas, new anti-pollution regulations and faltering international coal markets that have dimmed hopes to boost exports.

Even before leasing was suspended, work at many of the sites was unlikely to begin for years because of the time it takes companies to navigate the government coal program.

Mining already underway on public lands will be allowed to continue. As could 17 other lease applications, many of which had been approved or whose environmental studies were completed but still were being processed.

Working families

Mining representatives and elected officials from coal states decried the announcement. "President Obama is wrong, and once again Montana's working families are bearing the brunt of his unilateral action," said Montana Gov. Steve Bullock, also a Democrat. But the coal industry effectively has been under its own leasing moratorium in the Powder River Basin for the past few years. Several companies, including Alpha Natural Resources, which filed for bankruptcy protection last year, have asked the government to delay action on coal tracts previously nominated for leasing.

No federal coal reserves in Wyoming or Montana have been leased since 2012. "This is



A mining dumper truck hauls coal at Cloud Peak Energy's Spring Creek strip mine near Decker, Mont. At least 30 applications from companies seeking to mine hundreds of millions of tons of coal face suspension as the government reviews its sales of the fuel from public lands. — AP

just such a great time to take a pause in the federal coal program. There is so much uncertainty about the future of coal," said Shannon Anderson with Powder River Basin Resource Council, a conservation group made up of landowners. The moratorium could stall a 441 million-ton expansion of Cloud Peak Energy's Antelope mine in central Wyoming, a 198-million-ton expansion of Cloud Peak's Spring Creek mine in Montana, and a 203-million-ton expansion of Lighthouse Resources' Decker mine in Montana.

Cloud Peak Energy President Colin Marshall accused federal officials of pandering to environmentalists trying to shut down the industry.

"We believe this review process is not warranted and is aimed at delaying leases to ensure the coal is never mined, denying its economic benefits to the nation," Marshall said.

But Marshall added that the Gillette, Wyoming-based company does not expect an

immediate effect to its operations and has a significant amount of coal reserves on non-federal lands, including on Montana's Crow Indian Reservation. The US sold billions of tons of coal over the past several decades, and Jewell said those reserves would be enough to sustain current production levels for about 20 years even with no new leases.

Roughly 40 percent of the coal produced in the country comes from federal lands, primarily in Wyoming, Montana, Colorado, Utah and New Mexico. Wyoming has directed billions of dollars from the sale of federal coal leases to support state school construction in recent decades. But with the recent downturn in the industry, the state has been scrambling to identify new sources of revenue. "If we aren't able to change those policies around, places like Gillette are going to look very much like the economies of Appalachia are looking right now," Republican state Rep. Tim Stubson said. — AP



NISSAN TITAN WARRIOR CONCEPT, NISSAN IDS CONCEPT ON DISPLAY

2016 NORTH AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL AUTO SHOW

DUBAI: Just one year after the production version of the all-new Nissan TITAN XD made its world debut at the North American International Auto Show, the TITAN Warrior Concept was unveiled today on the very same stage. A design study created to demonstrate how the Cummins 5.0L V8 Turbo Diesel engine-equipped TITAN XD can be adapted for off-road adventure use - as well as for its heavy-duty work capabilities - the TITAN Warrior Concept features unique exterior and interior design treatments and a modified off-road suspension.

"Truck buyers have a seemingly insatiable appetite for more content and more unique offerings," said José Muñoz, executive vice president, Nissan Motor Co., Ltd and chairman, Nissan North America, Inc., as he revealed the TITAN Warrior Concept. "Even though our all-new 2016 TITAN XD just started arriving at Nissan dealers nationwide last month, we are already exploring new territory where TITAN might go in the future."

Also making its first North American appearance in the Nissan display is one of the stars of the recent Tokyo Motor Show, the Nissan IDS Concept autonomous driving vehicle. Last week, Renault-Nissan Alliance chairman and CEO Carlos Ghosn announced the two companies would launch more than 10 vehicles with autonomous drive technology by 2020. The technology will be installed on mainstream, mass-market cars at affordable prices.

The IDS Concept embodies Nissan's vision of the future of autonomous driving and zero emission electric vehicles. By integrating advanced vehicle control and safety technologies with cutting edge artificial intelligence (AI), Nissan is among the leaders developing practical, real-



world applications of autonomous drive technology. Muñoz also reviewed Nissan's ongoing sales growth in the United States in 2015 and its strong momentum heading into the new calendar year, building on the late 2015 launches of the new TITAN XD, Altima sedan, Sentra compact and the tremendous growth in sales of the recently redesigned Murano and Rogue crossover SUVs. Total 2015 sales were an all-time high of 1,484,918 units, an increase of 7.1 percent over 2014 sales.

"We set sales records month after month, profitably. We introduced fresh products in every critical segment, including full-size pickups. And we beat the industry average in terms of percentage of sales increase," explained Muñoz. "Our calendar year share of 8.3 percent represents the one of the highest gains in the industry and our brand value continues to rise. Our market presence also

continues to expand through our involvement in sports, entertainment and charity support." Public days for the 2016 North American International Auto Show, which is held at Cobo Hall, are January 16-24. For photography and additional information about the Nissan TITAN Warrior Concept and Nissan IDS Concept, along with the complete lineup of 2016 Nissan vehicles, please visit NissanNews.com. The TITAN Warrior Concept creators had more than a strong foundation on which to build their vision of a bold and expanding future in the full-size pickup market, they had a familiar one. As part of the group that brought the "American TITAN" to life - a group that ranged from Tennessee, Michigan, Mississippi, Indiana, Arizona and California - the design team imagined how their original TITAN design, inspired by warriors in ancient Greek mythology, might evolve to extreme lev-

els of adventure duty.

While maintaining the TITAN XD Crew Cab's standard wheelbase and length, they gave the concept truck an even more powerful presence than the original. Building on the new second generation TITAN's warrior-inspired styling, the designers amplified the protective look of the production exterior.

Designating the new look as "modern armor" - with a stealthy, robotic quality - they continued the anatomical feel of the production TITAN, but added a more machine-like, sharper-edge appearance. Exterior features include muscular, carbon fiber fenders, functional hood vents, carbon fiber cabin and tailgate spoilers, and a large front skidplate, which interlocks into the powerful front bumper. Custom LED lights, front and rear, and integrated, roof-mounted LED offroad lights add to the TITAN Warrior Concept's stealthy presence. The TITAN

Warrior Concept is covered in a custom matte-gunmetal paint called "Thunder" and accented in special "Magma" and black color highlights.

Inside the TITAN Warrior Concept's rugged performance-focused exterior is an interior conceived to handle the abuse experienced on an extended off-road excursion in comfort and style. The seats are covered in a carbon-colored high-strength seat fabric trimmed with "Magma" orange accents. Interior surfaces utilize material, such as carbon fiber, polished chrome finishes, leather with accented Magma orange stitching. Other interior details include unique hot-and-cold drink containers integrated into the center console. Robust auxiliary toggle switches are integrated into the center stack for additional off-road accessories. Instrument panel-mounted auxiliary gauges are provided to easily monitor truck performance.

NBK CONCLUDES ITS ONLINE AND MOBILE BANKING CAMPAIGN

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announces the last group of winners for its Online and Mobile Banking campaign that offered the chance to win weekly valuable prizes when using NBK electronic channels.

Mohamad Ibrahim Al-Majthoub, Sayed Shabuddin Nooruddin, Saad Ghazi Al-Mutairi, Mohammed Khaled Al-Jassim, Reza Nazerian, Niveen Abdulrahman Abu Zaid, Abdullah Salem Al-Menahi, Ibrahim Ahmad Al-Ghuseen, Majed Mohammed Radhi and Nourah Abdulaziz Al-Mansour each won a smart watch in the weekly draws. NBK customers who enrolled or used NBK's Online Banking and Mobile Banking Application were eligible to enter weekly draws to win apple watches and android smart watches.

All NBK customers can benefit from the

most developed banking services and products on NBK Mobile Banking application and NBK Online Banking, including checking balances, transferring funds locally or to any NBK bank account outside Kuwait with no fees, and reduced fees to any bank in the world, making payments, ordering checkbooks, requesting a printed account statement, a branch and ATMs locator and much more.

NBK customers can register on NBK Online Banking by visiting NBK's website www.nbk.com. NBK customers can also download NBK Mobile Banking application by visiting the associate store on their mobile devices. For assistance, customers can visit any of NBK's branches or call NBK Call Center at 1801801 or +96522248361 from outside Kuwait.



FLYDUBAI OFFERS YOU PERFECT DESTINATION TO SPEND SCHOOLS' HOLIDAY WITH FAMILY

KUWAIT: For the occasion of schools' holiday in Kuwait, flydubai gives Kuwait holidaymakers a world of opportunities with several destinations that are just within their reach, like the exotic island of Zanzibar. Whether it's exploring the 19th-century architecture of Stone Town or cutting through the crystal-clear waters of the warm Indian Ocean, Zanzibar is an African paradise ripe for discovery.

Be transported to a land of swaying palms and freshly-caught grilled fish by the shore, while enjoying a variety of activities such as swimming with sea turtles, snorkeling, scuba diving, hiking, and fishing. For a whiff and taste of adventure, you can get the chance to go on a spice tour on this "Island of Spices" to explore a variety of spices. Zanzibar is a perfect romantic retreat for honeymooners and families looking to have fun at the beaches. Don't forget to experience the chance to sail on a dhow in the azure waters of the Indian Ocean.

Top things to see and do

- Discover MjiMkongwe, also known as Stone Town, on the west bank of Unguja. Here you can sample local cuisine at Forodhani Park, discover how the sultans relaxed at the Hamamni Persia Baths or simply explore the gorgeous 19th-century architecture of the area - a Unesco World Heritage Site.

- Wind down after a busy day of sightseeing on one of Zanzibar's idyllic shoreline paradises. Nakupenda, Paje and Uroa Bay are just three locations that offer sapphire waters, white sand and total relaxation.

- Enjoy 'One Thousand and One Nights' of music, dancing and food at Mtoni Palace. One of the oldest buildings on the western shores of

Zanzibar, here visitors can get a glimpse into the world of Arabian royalty that once lived in the area.

- Want to get up close and personal with nature? There's no shortage of options in Zanzibar. Head to the Zanzibar Butterfly Centre, Mnarani Marine Turtles Conservation Pond or, if you're feeling particularly brave, Cheetah's Rock.

- Go snorkelling or diving in the crystal-clear waters of the Zanzibar Archipelago, or, if you prefer staying above surface, try your hand at kitesurfing against some truly beautiful African sunsets.

- Indulge your inner party animal at the Cannibal Party. Expect traditional dance, fire dancers, acrobatics and a whole lot of fun.

- Head north of the Kiwengwa Pongwe Forest on the eastern shores of Unguja and you will find the Kiwengwa Caves. These atmospheric and

naturally-created caverns are a sight to behold - just don't head in if you have a fear of bats.

flydubai...More choices, more adventures!!!

With a focus on offering Kuwait travellers greater destination choices and flying options, flydubai provides an ideal opportunity to discover the world. Passengers have the chance to experience new adventures through convenience, reliability and comfort along with excellent onboard experiences.

flydubai has gone the extra mile with its rapidly expanding international network covering the Middle East, GCC, Africa, Central Asia, Europe, and the Indian Subcontinent. With flydubai's new business class service with full-range and all-inclusive facilities, lounges, and inflight-entertainment, passengers can choose an even more comfortable and personal flying experience.



GULF BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF AL-DANAH DAILY DRAWS

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its Al Danah daily draws on 10 January 2016 announcing the names of its winners for the week of 4 January - 7 January 2016. The Al-Danah daily draws include draws each and every working day for two prizes of KD1,000 per winner.

The winners are:
(Monday 4/1): Naser Abdullah Fereh Al-Mahwos, Layla Mohammed Jawad Aryan
(Tuesday 5/1): Ashwaq Abbas Mohammed Al-Ataar, Khadega Mehalhal Sarhan Hemod
(Wednesday 6/1): Ebtisam Mohammed Homoud Al-Enzy, Badriah Othman Saleh Malallah
(Thursday 7/1): Emad Hamdy Hamed Aaser, Hamdan Terki Ghanim Al-Mutairi

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah 2016 draw lineup includes daily draws (2 winners per working day each receive KD1000). Al-Danah's 1st Quarterly draw will be held on 31 March, 2nd Quarter - 30 June, 3rd Quarter - 29 September. The final Al-Danah draw for the Million Dinars will be held on 5 January, 2017 whereby the Al-Danah millionaire will be announced alongside winners of KD250,000 and KD50,000.

Five reasons why the Al-Danah account is the Best:

- 1) Kuwait's single biggest yearly cash prize of KD 1 million
- 2) Kuwait's biggest quarterly cash prizes, up to KD500,000
- 3) Two winners of KD1,000 every working day
- 4) The most opportunities to win
- 5) Only bank that transfers your chances to win from year to year Win big, live big, with Al-Danah 2016.

Al-Danah also offers a number of unique services including: the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card which helps account holders deposit their money at their convenience; as well as the Al-Danah calculator to help customers calculate their chances of becoming an Al-Danah winner.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaitis and all residents of Kuwait. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the draw within two days. To take part in the Al Danah 2016 upcoming yearly draw, customers must have an Al-Danah account containing at least KD 200. 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.

'DIVISION' TAKES ON INTERACTIVE TERROR

LOS ANGELES: At the beginning of "Tom Clancy's The Division," players portraying top-secret operatives are dropped from a helicopter into a rendition of New York City that's been crippled by a terrorist attack. Central Park is a mass graveyard. Madison Square Garden is a makeshift hospital under siege. The James A. Farley Post Office Building is being transformed into a base of military operations. The Lincoln Tunnel has devolved into a shooting gallery for looters and thugs.

This ain't the Mushroom Kingdom. While maintaining its third-person shooter sensibilities, the ambitious new video game from Ubisoft is seeking to tackle such serious topics as viral outbreaks, police brutality and the breakdown of emergency services. Is this supposed to be - gulp - fun? "It's a dark and depressing scenario, but it's important that you can be the hero," said creative director Magnus Jansen after a demonstration of the "The Division," out March 8. "You can come in and make a difference. The important thing is that society has stumbled and it's hanging by a thread, but you can prevent it from complete collapse."

The developers are well aware that many players won't be interested in a shared-world shooter that meticulously envisions such a chilling scenario, but they're not apologizing for their gritty look at what they call a "mid-crisis." "We

have the greatest respect for (real-life) victims of anything that we touch on in the game, whether it's an outbreak, terrorist attack or anything like that," said Jansen. "We would never want to upset anyone with our work of art. That's the risk we run by working on something that's about a plausible clear and present danger. That's also part of what makes it compelling."

For decades, most military shooters sought to recreate real-life wars and weapons of the past and present. However, in recent years, franchises like "Call of Duty" and "Battlefield" have focused on depicting futures where fictional conflicts are fought with laser weapons and mechanical appendages. The creators of "The Division" were more interested in crafting a realer-than-real interactive experience based on what might actually happen if a biological threat was unleashed across Manhattan on Black Friday. They were inspired by actual military simulations and responses to such disasters as Hurricane Katrina.

"My favorite part of working on the game was to look at New York and see how these landmark buildings would be transformed if a crisis happened," said associate creative director Julian Gerighty. "What was their original function and how would that change if the support systems in place fell? For example, we imagine a subway extension as a



Image shows a scene from the video game 'Tom Clancy's The Division'. — AP

place to dump body bags because that could possibly keep disease from spreading."

The chaos extends to the game's approach to a multiplayer mode. While players can work together to rescue civilians and recapture landmarks, they

can also enter a lawless Midtown territory dubbed "the dark zone," where online players can team up or double-cross each other while hunting for prized gear. "When we were watching players in the alpha (test), I expected people to be much more aggressive, at

least when they first started exploring the dark zone," said Gerighty. "However, people were really hesitant to turn on each other, which is very much the emotional experience we wanted. I think that will evolve even further once the game is released." —AP



CANON TO LAUNCH INFRARED CAMERAS

KUWAIT: Canon Middle East, a leader in security and surveillance solutions, will launch nine new network cameras at Intersec 2016, the leading trade fair for Security, Safety and Fire Protection industries, to be held from Jan 17-19 in Dubai.

The cameras are the first infrared (IR) based fixed box cameras, featuring a 2.4x zoom lens and an ultra-wide 113.4° angle of view for high quality monitoring day or night. The cameras contain a built-in IR LED that enables filming in zero light conditions and the Smart Shade feature which brightens dark areas in the images captured. The cameras offer users longer zoom range to deliver improved identification and feature an IK10 vandal resistance certification, ensuring that users can rely on the cameras operating in all conditions. This makes the cameras highly ideal for both indoor and outdoor environments, including construction, hospitality, retail, transport, city surveillance and critical infrastructure monitoring.

"Canon is no longer just a camera manufacturer. We're a full service provider having high quality and powerful video surveillance solutions in our portfolio. Our new cameras offer high-quality monitoring with detailed images and intelligent analytic functions," said Hendrik Verbrugghe, Marketing Director, Canon Middle East.

According to a recent research by G4S, Middle East has evolved to be the most vibrant safety and security market in the world. Another report states that in the Mid-East and Africa, the total network video surveillance market was worth about US 420 million in 2014, and industry players are expecting a very healthy increase until 2019, when the entire region will be 94 per

cent network video surveillance. In the UAE, increasing demand for higher security cameras and government mandates has boosted the market for IP surveillance systems in the country. The surveillance market is therefore expected to touch USD 197.8 million by 2021, says a research by 6WResearch.

"Given the importance of ensuring security and safeguarding people, property and assets, entities such as government departments, hotels and resorts and retail outlets increasingly rely on robust surveillance systems as part of their overall security strategy. Canon has identified these industry demands and the new cameras are reflective of our efforts to meet them," said Verbrugghe.

At Intersec, Canon Middle East will also demonstrate the flexibility of the cameras and show how they are well integrated with 40 of the top video management softwares. This compatibility has been made possible with Canon's acquisition of Milestone, one of the world's leading VMS providers and its partnerships with other such providers such as Netavis and Digiever. As well as partnering with VMS providers, Canon has been investing time and effort into developing partnerships with systems integrators in the region, recently developing relationships in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. The new nine network cameras that are being launched are: High Speed 360° PTZ Network Cameras such as VB-R11VE & VB-R10VE (outdoor), VB-R11 (indoor), Fixed Dome Network Cameras such as VB-M641VE & VB-M640VE (outdoor), VB-M641V & VB-M640V (indoor) and Fixed Box Network Cameras such as VB-M741LE and VB-M740E.

HONEYWELL TO HIGHLIGHT SOLUTIONS AT INTERSEC

DUBAI: Honeywell, a leading global provider of fire safety and security systems, will showcase integrated solutions designed to secure and protect commercial buildings such as hotels, hospitals and shopping malls, as well as homes, critical infrastructure and industrial sites at Intersec 2016. The event, one of the world's leading trade fairs for security, safety and fire protection, runs Jan 17-19 at the Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre.

"Safety and security are primary concerns for both public and private sector decision-makers across every sector. At Intersec 2016, we will show how integrated fire, safety and security technologies can create efficiencies that play a critical role in safeguarding people's lives and minimizing material damage in the event of an incident," said Honeywell's Norm Gilsdorf, president, Middle East, Russia and Central Asia. "Honeywell is committed to helping create a world that is safer and more secure, and we pride ourselves on our ability to understand complex environments and deliver customized solutions that are highly effective and which meet the needs of our customers," he added.

Honeywell experts will also demonstrate the benefits of managing disparate systems holistically and from a single point of access. They will further showcase their ability to combine systems such as access control, CCTV and intrusion detection with fire alarm, fire detection, evacuation and cyber security systems to create more effective solutions to help drive positive outcomes in crisis situations. Honeywell will also illustrate how it is able to integrate previously installed third-party hardware and upgrade existing infrastructure using modular components and software options to cost-effectively expand systems and help its customers meet evolving business needs.

According to consulting firm Frost & Sullivan, the Middle East's physical security market is projected to grow 25 percent annually to reach \$11 billion in 2020, having been valued at \$3 billion in 2014. Frost & Sullivan also estimates that the Middle East's cyber security market will almost double to reach \$10 billion by 2020, having been worth \$5.17 billion in 2014, while the Gulf region's fire safety market alone will hit \$3.15 billion by 2020, registering an estimated 15 percent annual growth rate.

SPACE X TO LAUNCH OCEAN SATELLITE, TRY WATER RETURN

LOS ANGELES: A \$180 million satellite to study the world's oceans in a changing climate will blast off today atop a Falcon 9 rocket, which SpaceX will try to land on a floating platform after launch. The satellite, known as Jason-3, aims to offer a more precise look at how global warming and sea level rise affect wind speeds and currents as close as one kilometer from shore, whereas past satellites were limited to about 10 km from the coast. "That is a significant advantage over our predecessors," said Jim Silva, Jason-3 program manager at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The technology will also monitor global sea surface heights, tropical cyclones and help support seasonal and coastal forecasts. During a five-year mission, its data will also be used to aid fisheries management and research into human impacts on the world's oceans. The satellite is the fruit of a four-way partnership between NOAA, NASA, the French space agency CNES (Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales) and the European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT).

The launch is scheduled for Sunday, January 17 at 10:42 am (1842 GMT) from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. The weather outlook was clear for launch time, but in case of a delay, another launch window opens Monday at 1831 GMT.

SpaceX's 'Recycle' Mission

After the rocket sends the satellite on its way, the first stage of the Falcon 9 will power back toward Earth in a bid to set itself down on a barge, or dronship, as SpaceX calls the floating platform. The attempt is the latest in a series of trial runs as SpaceX attempts to make rocket parts reusable, lowering the cost of spaceflight and making it more sustainable and accessible. Currently, expensive rocket components are jettisoned into the ocean after launch, wasting hundreds of millions of dollars.

The California-based company headed by Internet entrepreneur Elon Musk managed to land the Falcon 9's first stage - the long, towering portion of rocket - on land at Cape Canaveral last month. But an ocean landing has proven elusive, with prior attempts ending in failure. According to Hans Koenigsmann, president of



LOMPOC: The Jason-3 satellite is prepared for encapsulation in its payload fairing at the SpaceX Payload Processing Facility at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. — AFP

mission assurance at SpaceX, the company decided to try an ocean landing because it did not have the "environmental approval" to attempt a landing on solid ground in the area, though it hopes to in the future. "We had a

really good landing last time so things are looking good," he told reporters. There will not likely be any live images of the touchdown, due to the dronship's distance from shore, he added.—AFP

'RACIST' VIDEO GAME PULLED AFTER UPROAR

SYDNEY: A video game allowing players to kill Australian Aboriginals has been removed from mobile stores after more than 50,000 people signed an online petition against the "racist" app. The app, "Survival Island 3 - Australia Story", tells users that they have to find ways to stay alive in "one of the most dangerous places in the world", including having to "fight with aboriginals - you invaded their home!"

The change.org petition, which has been signed by more than 50,000 people since it was set up on Friday, called for the app to be pulled from mobile stores, adding that "killing indigenous Australians is not a game". "Selling games that promote racism and negative stereotypes of indigenous Australians is not acceptable," the petition added. By midday yesterday, the app had been pulled from the two dominant smartphone app stores - Apple's iTunes store as well as Google Play.

A spokeswoman for tech giant Google, which offers apps through Google Play on its Android mobile platforms, would not comment on the game but said the tech giant would remove "applications that violate our policies". Apple did not immediately respond to AFP requests for comment, and the game's developer could not be immediately reached for comment.

Australia's Race Discrimination Commissioner Tim Southommasane wrote on Twitter that it was "unacceptable to see such promotion of violence and hatred against Aboriginal people". Aboriginals, the most disadvantaged Australians, are believed to have numbered around one million at the time of British settlement. There are now just 470,000 out of a total Australian population of 23 million, and they suffer disproportionate levels of disease, imprisonment and social problems as well as significantly lower education, employment and life expectancy. —AFP

AMAZON DIPS ITS TOES INTO MARITIME SHIPPING

SAN FRANCISCO: Amazon said Friday it has taken the first steps to begin maritime shipping operations, adding to its already vast arsenal of logistical operations. The company confirmed to AFP that it had registered with the US Federal Maritime Commission to operate via a Chinese subsidiary Beijing Century Joyo Courier Service. The news was first reported by the shipping blog Flexport, which called it "Amazon's first step toward entering the \$350 billion ocean freight market."

By operating its own maritime shipping, Amazon could improve its ability to move goods into the company's logistics network, the blog noted. "We don't have anything to share beyond confirming that the filing occurred," Amazon spokeswoman Kelly Cheeseman said.

Road and Air

Amazon has already announced it hopes to be able to use drones to deliver goods to customers upon winning regulatory approval. It has also confirmed plans to acquire all shares of French delivery group Colis Prive, which could help reduce its reliance on outside shippers such as FedEx and UPS. The online retail giant last year announced the purchase of "thousands" of trailers capable

of carrying its goods between warehouses in the United States.

In the air, Amazon has been developing automated drones with a vision of having packages quickly dropped at customers' doors. US media reports last year told of efforts by Amazon to negotiate air cargo leases to for transporting products. "It sounds like they are gradually building more of their own supply chain so they can have more control of every part of the delivery experience," Forrester analyst Sucharita Mulpuru said.

A large part of Amazon's costs are related to shipping and deliveries, and by relying on third parties the company is at the mercy of others, reasoned independent technology analyst Rob Enderle. Amazon's operation is so massive, it may have the resources to run its own shipping and delivery operations, perhaps even contracting services out to other companies to bring in revenue, according to analysts. "It is an expensive bet," Enderle said. "But, they have demonstrated with Amazon Web Services that they can take these very large risks and make them pay off." Amazon became a market leader in cloud computing after investing heavily in data centers, and then renting out computing power and data storage space. — AFP

RESEARCHERS CONFIRM SITE OF HANGINGS FOR SALEM WITCH

SALEM: A team of researchers using historical documents and 21st-century archaeological techniques has confirmed the site where 19 innocent people were hanged during the Salem witch trials more than three centuries ago. The site, known as Proctor's Ledge, is a small city-owned plot of woods nestled between two residential streets and behind a Walgreens pharmacy, said Salem State University history professor Emerson "Tad" Baker, a member of the seven-person team, which announced its findings this week.

Historian Sidney Perley had pin-

pointed Proctor's Ledge nearly a century ago as the site of the hangings by using historical documents, but his findings were lost to time, and myth, misconceptions and conspiracy theories had taken their place, Baker said. The current research, known as the Gallows Hill Project, was about correcting the misinformation many people have about one of the most tragic episodes in American history. "We are not discovering anything, and we don't want to take credit for that," he said. "This is all about the healing, not about the discovery."

Twenty people suspected of witchcraft were killed in Salem in 1692 during a frenzy stoked by superstition, fear of disease and strangers, and petty jealousies. Nineteen were hanged, and one man was crushed to death by rocks. "The witch trials cast a long dark shadow on Salem history," Baker said. The top of nearby Gallows Hill had long been thought of as the site of the hangings, but there was no evidence to support that, Baker said. Proctor's Ledge is at the base of Gallows Hill.

To determine the spot, the team looked at eyewitness accounts of the

hangings, then used modern-day aerial photography and ground penetrating radar not available a century ago. The team made other interesting discoveries. They determined there probably never was a gallows at the site. More than likely, the executioners tossed a rope over a large tree. Baker also stressed that there is no evidence that any of the victims were buried at Proctor's Ledge - it's too rocky and the soil is too shallow.

"I think knowing the exact location where the executions took place is important because we want to get his-

tory right," Mayor Kim Driscoll said. "It's also an opportunity to come together and recognize the injustice and tragedy." The city plans to place a marker at the site but also wants to respect the rights of the people who live in the area, the mayor said. The city doesn't want visitors tramping through private backyards looking for the spot, she said. Instead, she encourages visitors to go to the memorial and museum downtown. Baker said a memorial at the site is important. "We need to have that exact spot marked so it can never be lost again," he said. — AP



LIMA: A specialist fumigates the Nueva Esperanza graveyard in the outskirts of Lima. Health officials fumigated the largest cemetery in Peru and second largest in the world to prevent Chikungunya and Zika virus, which affect several South American countries. — AFP

ZIKA VIRUS SPREADING RAPIDLY IN CARIBBEAN, LATIN AMERICA

US ISSUES TRAVEL WARNING FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

MIAMI: The United States has warned pregnant women to avoid travel to 14 countries and territories in the Caribbean and Latin America due to the mosquito-borne Zika virus, linked to birth defects. "The virus is spreading fairly rapidly through the Americas," said Lyle Petersen, director of the division of vector-borne infectious diseases at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in a conference call with reporters. "We thought it was very important to warn people as soon as possible."

The level two travel alert applies to Brazil,

Colombia, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Martinique, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Suriname, Venezuela and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. "Pregnant women in any trimester should consider postponing travel to the areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing," said the CDC. Zika virus can cause fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis, with symptoms usually lasting under a week. But in pregnant women, the virus can spread to the fetus and cause brain shrinkage or death.



LIMA: View of the Nueva Esperanza graveyard as it is fumigated in the outskirts of Lima. — AFP

Along with a rise in Zika cases in Brazil, more than 3,500 cases of microcephaly have been documented in the country between October 2015 and January 2016. Four of those cases have recently been analyzed, showing that babies were infected with Zika virus while they were in the womb and that it reached their brains. Two of the cases involved miscarriages, and two of the babies died soon after birth. "All four mothers reported having experienced a fever and rash illness consistent with Zika virus disease during their pregnancies," said the CDC. "Genetic sequence analysis showed that the virus in the four cases was the same as the Zika virus strain currently circulating in Brazil."

'Special precautions'

Experts say they don't know just how much of an increase Brazil is experiencing in microcephaly, but that there is a rising number of cases. The virus appears to destroy brain tissue that had already formed, resulting in smaller brain sizes and birth defects. "Until more is known, and out of an abundance of caution, CDC recommends special precautions for pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant."

Those who are trying to become pregnant "should consult with their health care provider before traveling to these areas and strictly follow" steps to prevent mosquito bites, including wearing long sleeves and pants and applying insect repellent. There is no vaccine to prevent Zika and no medicine available to treat it. There have been 26 travel-related cases of Zika virus in the United States since 2007, but no locally acquired cases so far, Petersen said. He added that the situation is changing rapidly and urged women to "take these recommendations quite seriously." — AFP

JOY OVER 'EBOLA VICTORY' CRUSHED BY NEW DEATH

FREETOWN: The World Health Organization confirmed yesterday a new death from Ebola in Sierra Leone just a day after west Africa celebrated the end of an outbreak which killed 11,000 people. A 22-year-old woman was taken ill near the Guinean border on Thursday last week and died on Tuesday, local health officials said as the WHO issued a statement from Geneva confirming she was killed by Ebola. Augustine Junisa, the chief local medical officer, told reporters the student became ill while on holiday in the village of Bamoi Luma and was taken by relatives to hospital. The official said the woman "died at home" but did not say why she had been released from the hospital in Magburaka, the capital of the northern Tonkolili district.

"The swab test on the victim after her death was done three times and all proved positive," Langoba Kelly of Sierra Leone's office of national security told reporters in Freetown, appealing for calm. Kelly said investigators were fanning out across Tonkolili to track down anyone who may have had contact with the victim and family members had been placed in isolation. The WHO had said Thursday a two-year Ebola outbreak that killed 11,315 people and triggered a global health alert was over, with Liberia the last country to get the all-clear. However, the organization also warned there could be "possible flare-ups" of the disease.

'Really worried'

UN chief Ban Ki-moon cautioned that the region could expect sporadic cases in the

wrecked the economies and health systems of the three worst-hit west African nations after it emerged in southern Guinea in December 2013.

Sierra Leone was declared free of Ebola transmission on November 7 last year and Guinea on December 29. The agency said the 42-day countdown to Sierra Leone being declared free of transmission once more would begin from the date of the latest victim's burial if no more cases were uncovered. Meanwhile investigators are likely to focus on whether she had sexual contact with an Ebola survivor, only recently recognized as a possible source of infection, and if she crossed the border to Guinea in the days before becoming sick. Rumors have circulated in Sierra Leone media over the resumption of the practice of eating bush meat, banned because bats and other jungle-dwelling mammals are thought to be natural reservoirs for the Ebola virus.

Lax hygiene

But Ian Mackay, associate professor of virology at the University of Queensland, said the practice had been in existence long before the outbreak and a relaxation of hygiene precautions like handwashing was more of a worry. "That seems to have dropped down a little bit. The WHO was mentioning that yesterday, that handwashing has just become just a little bit more lax and that really needs to pick up to help combat the return of this and other infections," he told Britain's BBC Five Live radio station.

At its peak, it devastated Guinea, Liberia



MONROVIA: A health worker sprays a man with disinfectant chemicals as he is suspected of dying due to the Ebola virus as people look on in Monrovia, Liberia in this file photo. — AP

coming year but added "we also expect the potential and frequency of those flare-ups to decrease over time." Residents in Magburaka, a town of around 40,000 people, voiced shock and distress over the announcement. "It was not expected and came at a time when we had thought that the virus is nowhere within our land," groundnut farmer Allieu Kamara said. "We are really worried that death has resulted from the case but we are hopeful that the huge presence of the various key players will bring back confidence to all of us." The deadliest outbreak in the history of the feared tropical virus

and Sierra Leone, with bodies piling up in the streets and overwhelmed hospitals recording hundreds of new cases a week. Liberia, the country worst hit by the outbreak with 4,800 deaths, discharged its last two patients from hospital—the father and younger brother of a 15-year-old victim on December 3, 2015. Africa's oldest republic was the last country still afflicted by the outbreak that infected almost 29,000 people and claimed 11,315 lives, according to official data. The real toll is suspected to be much higher, with many Ebola deaths believed to have gone unreported. — AFP

HONDURAN TEAM UNEARTH CERAMICS AT 'WHITE CITY' SITE

TEGUCIGALPA: Honduran officials said Friday that archaeologists have begun excavations at a mysterious site on Honduras' Caribbean coast that may be the long-rumored "White City" ruins. Officials said excavation that began Wednesday has so far unearthed about five dozen stone and ceramic fragments and other artifacts. Also known as the "City of the Monkey God," the site is located in Honduras' jungle-covered Mosquito coastal region.

The dig is being carried out by archaeologists from Honduras' Institute of Anthropology and Colorado State University. Institute Director Virgilio Paredes said the site did not appear to be Mayan, the culture that dominated other sites in the region. "It is a new culture, or a different culture," Paredes said. He said that jars and bowls had been discovered that bore decorations that appeared to represent humans, jaguars, buzzards, lizards and birds. The pieces appear to date to between 1,000 and 1,500 AD, Paredes said.

The most striking piece discovered appears to be a ceremonial seat or throne made of stone, carved

with the figure of a jaguar. The city's name is believed to be derived from the white limestone rock in the area, or a cult purported dedicated to a monkey god. Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez visited the site and said in a statement "We are blessed to be alive at such a special time in Honduran history." "This discovery has created a lot of excitement because of its significance for Honduras and the world," Hernandez said.

Honduras' Minister of Science, Ramon Espinoza, said "there will be further research to gather more data, because there is no other site in central America with a lost civilization." The area is inhabited by the Pech and Payas indigenous groups, who long spoke of such a site. The first written reference came in 1544, in a document written by Spanish Bishop Cristobal de Pedraza. US adventurer Theodore Morde claimed to have discovered "The Lost City of the Monkey God" in 1940, but didn't reveal the location. The rumored site had supposedly been located and lost between the 1500s and the 1800s. Researchers detected the current excavation site in 2012. — AP

FEARS MOUNT IN NIGERIA OVER LASSA OUTBREAK AND RESPONSE

LAGOS: At least 44 people have died from Lassa fever in Nigeria with the death toll expected to rise, underscoring the difficulty in combating deadly viruses in a region still reeling from Ebola. While health authorities assure Africa's most populous country of more than 170 million they have the haemorrhagic virus under control, there are fears the scale of the outbreak is being downplayed. The outbreak was only announced in January-months after the first case of the disease happened in August-with subsequent deaths reported in 10 states, including in the nation's central capital Abuja and the bustling oil hub of Port Harcourt.

Experts warn the disease, transmitted through the faeces, urine and blood of rats as well as human bodily fluids, may have spread as people criss-crossed the country in packed buses during the festive season. "It is possible we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg," Chikwe Ihekweazu, an infectious disease epidemiologist said. "My biggest worry at the moment is that given that the cases that have been reported are from a very wide geographical area, transmission chains will be difficult to identify, making control very difficult." During the massive Ebola outbreak in 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) described Nigeria as a "spectacular success" story, praising Africa's biggest economy for preventing an "apocalyptic urban outbreak" with strong leadership and a rapid response. Only seven people died from 19 confirmed cases of the disease out of more than 11,000 deaths in west Africa.

Alarming spread

Yet the recent Lassa flare-up indicates Nigeria's health care system is not so resilient, with issues ranging from

basic health education to doctor diligence. Michael Asuzu, professor of public health at the University of Ibadan, in southwest Nigeria, said the Lassa response took so long to gear up because residents in the initial infected village of Foka, in the northwest state of Niger, attributed deaths to supernatural forces. "They thought it was related to some traditional things they were doing at the time, so there was cultural secrecy surrounding it," said Asuzu, who is chairing an expert committee appointed by the government to investigate the out-

break. "They attributed it to God's will." Scientists familiar with the disease say that though Lassa fever outbreaks are not uncommon in Nigeria, the death toll of the recent outbreak is alarming. "From the numbers that are reported, it think it's really bad for the country," Lassa researcher Deborah Ehichioya said. "It's not normal." Doctors could be misdiagnosing Lassa fever, facilitating the spread of the disease, she added. "It's not just business as usual, which is treating for malaria and typhoid, we have a lot more to diagnose," she said. — AFP



ABUJA: A man walk past signpost of National Hospital in Abuja. — AFP

FRACKING IN ALBERTA: THE DAILY QUAKES AND THIRSTY RESIDENTS

LOCAL AUTHORITIES WARN OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL COSTS

MONTREAL: One earthquake is recorded on average each day in a western Canadian region where companies extract oil by fracking, according to statistics published by the Canadian province's energy regulatory agency. The Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) said Friday that in the last year alone, there were 363 tremors in and around Fox Creek, a small town of 2,000 inhabitants located 260 kilometers (160 miles) northwest of Edmonton.

Some days, seismic activity is higher, such as on September 11, 2015, when a record 18 earthquakes were felt. On Tuesday, a 4.8-magnitude quake on the Richter scale was recorded 30 kilometers west of Fox Creek, where Spanish firm Repsol SA is injecting liquids at high pressure into subterranean rocks to create fissures and extract oil and gas—the

process known as fracking. Repsol confirmed it had been conducting fracking operations "at the time of the event." The technology is widely used in Canada and the United States, helping to keep down energy costs. But some European countries ban it. The AER has not confirmed a link between Tuesday's small quake and fracking in the region. Spokeswoman Carrie Rosa said the agency is investigating. Meanwhile, Repsol has halted operations and is awaiting an AER go-ahead before resuming fracking—which is required for all seismic events of 4.0 or higher under new rules. The company said it didn't know when operations will restart.

Water shortages

Local municipal authorities have warned of the environmental costs

of large-scale oil extraction in this region rich in hydrocarbons. "Industry and the provincial government (of Alberta) have been turning a blind eye to what has been going on in our area," Fox Creek Mayor Jim Ahn said in a letter to the AER. "We have industry pulling water from our rivers, streams and lakes at rates we feel far exceed their capabilities to replenish themselves."

Water shortages have become a persistent problem, he said, adding that the municipality had to spend more than Can\$300,000 (US\$206,000) to bring in potable water for its residents. Rosa said the AER is working with the town to address its concerns. The agency, for example, immediately shuts down upstream extraction in the area when a quake of magnitude 4.0 or more has been felt. But it said it has

not confirmed yet whether or not the latest tremor had anything to do with oil and gas operations.

Officials in neighboring British Columbia province last August confirmed that in 2014 a Canadian subsidiary of Malaysian oil and gas giant Petronas had triggered one of the largest quakes ever linked to fracking at that point. The British Columbia Oil and Gas Commission said it linked the operations of Progress Energy in the province's northeast to a 4.4-magnitude quake felt in Fort St John in August 2014. The commission said the quake was "triggered by fluid injection during hydraulic fracturing" by the company. Amid growing concern about fracking, however, the US Geological Survey last year said the extraction process is only occasionally the direct cause of major quakes. — AFP

CANADA TOP COURT DELAYS NEW ASSISTED DYING RULES

OTTAWA: Canada's high court gave parliament another four months Friday to rewrite the law in order to allow doctors to help gravely ill patients die upon request. The government had asked for time to amend the nation's Criminal Code after the court in February 2014 quashed a section prohibiting assisted suicide, effectively authorizing it for consenting adults with serious health problems. The court had already suspended its ruling for one year to allow legislators an opportunity to enact new rules surrounding the divisive issue.

But a new Liberal government won an October general election and asked for a further six-month delay. Granting the further extension is an "extraordinary step," the court said in its decision, "since its effect is to maintain an unconstitutional law." However, the court also agreed to a few exemptions that would allow some patients to proceed now with assisted suicide, notably in Quebec province, which rolled out

Canada's first assisted dying framework last month. On Thursday, local media reported that two people in Quebec had already asked for help dying. One of them was approved and died in hospital. Health officials are still considering the second request.

Elsewhere in Canada, until June when the injunction is set to expire, a patient may seek permission from a judge to proceed. The Supreme Court's February 2015 decision had reversed its own 1993 ruling in the case of Sue Rodriguez, a pioneer in the fight for the right to die in Canada. At that time, the court had expressed concern about protecting vulnerable persons, but in its newer ruling last year pointed to changed Canadian social values. Polling shows a strong majority of Canadians — 85 percent—support the right to die. Some form of physician-assisted dying is legal in Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Switzerland and in a handful of US states. — AFP



TAIK KYI: A boy holds the rope to go up a tree house with a ladder in Taik Kyi village on the outskirts of Yangon. — AFP



TAIK KYI: A man walks past a tree house in Taik Kyi village on the outskirts of Yangon. — AFP

RAMPAGING ELEPHANTS FORCE VILLAGERS TO TREE-TOP REFUGE

TAIK KYI: Pushed from their forest home by encroaching farm land, wild elephants are driving fearful villagers in a Myanmar township to seek refuge in tree houses while the animals storm their rice paddies looking for food. The elephants have trampled crops, destroyed homes and even, villagers say, killed people in their path-forcing families in Kyat Chuang to build new shelters made of wood and bamboo on higher ground.

"We have had to move our huts into the trees, so we are safe," explained San Lwin, who dashes several meters up a tree to his thatched-roof shelter when the elephants are near. Villagers in Kyat Chuang, a farming community 100 kilometers north of Yangon said they yearned for the days before the elephant rampages started three years ago. Now they scamper up home-made bamboo

ladders to their elevated huts whenever they hear the thundering sound of elephant feet, which is usually several times a week. "We want them to be taken away ... so we can live peacefully," said Than Shin, a 57-year-old farmer.

Spurred by the loss of their forest habitats, the elephants, and villagers they have been terrorizing, are some of the casualties of Myanmar's alarming rate of deforestation, one of the fastest in the region. The country lost almost 20 percent of its forest cover between 1990 and 2010, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. Experts say the chief drivers of forest loss are logging and large-scale land concessions for commercial agriculture handed out under decades of opaque junta rule. Myanmar's population of wild Asian elephants is thought to

be one of the largest in the region, according to the World Wildlife Fund.

But the endangered species is increasingly threatened by habitat loss, a thirst for ivory, and traffickers who smuggle the animals into Thailand for the tourist industry. The newly-elected National League for Democracy (NLD) - the pro-democracy party of Aung San Suu Kyi that swept to a thumping majority in landmark elections in November-said Thursday it would address Myanmar's medley of environmental issues after assuming office later this year. "We will try to restore the environment in Myanmar that has been ruined for many decades," Soe Nyunt, vice chairman of the NLD's Environmental Conservation Committee said. "It will not be easy," he added. — AFP



TAIK KYI: A woman prepares to go to a field in Taik Kyi village on the outskirts of Yangon. —AFP

CLINIC PAGE



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HEALTHY living

JANUARY 2016

THE 4 BASICS of food safety



TSC LAUNCHES HEALTHY LIVING EVENT ACROSS ALL STORES

The Sultan Center (TSC) has partnered with Flex Gourmet to launch a wellness program that promotes healthy living through balanced nutrition combined with mental well-being and physical exercise. The 'Healthy Living' campaign is a part of TSC's "Because We Care" initiative that will take place across all of TSC's stores as part of its ongoing support to the community. This campaign will highlight choices that contribute to a healthy lifestyle, with a weekly range of activities set to underline the importance of healthy dieting, physical exercise and food storage & handling.

TSC believes in the importance of wellness and is committed to giving the public an opportunity to gain valuable knowledge on improving their well-being by learning about healthy food choices, products available to them and how to lead an improved overall lifestyle.

Lisa Al-Gharib, Marketing Manager at TSC, said "TSC has taken up this initiative in collaboration with Flex Gourmet to promote healthier lifestyles in a fun and informative way. We aim to spread awareness of the importance of a balanced diet and how it contributes to overall health and well-being."

The community program will cover a series of specific themes over the course of three weeks.

Week 1 will focus on healthy eating with focus on the benefits of nutritious foods. Cooking tips and delicious recipes will be shared. Together, TSC and Flex Gourmet will give customers an opportunity to consult with a nutritionist, have their body mass index (BMI) checked, and discover tips on eating a balanced diet. Participants will have a chance to sign up for a weight loss challenge where the winner will receive a health club membership and a meal package membership from Flex Gourmet.

Week 2 will focus on the four basic food safety tips to help reduce the risk of food poisoning within the home - an initiative by Alyasra Foods. The food safety tips being covered are "Clean It, Separate It, Chill It & Cook It". Along with recommendations for placement of foods within the grocery cart while shopping.

Week 3 will focus on the benefits of physical fitness and the importance of exercise for a healthy lifestyle. TSC has arranged for fitness experts to provide tips on the importance of regular physical exercise to unwind and help you look good, feel better and sleep well... all the essential components for basic well-being.

Everyone is invited to TSC stores to discover the new range of healthy food products and to move a step closer to living healthier lifestyles.

EMINENT JOURNALIST NAIR TO ADDRESS MMF CONFERENCE

Malayali Media Forum (MMF), Kuwait will hold a three-day conference as part of its anniversary celebration on January 28-30, 2016 at the Indian Community School auditorium, Khaitan. Eminent Indian journalist and Associate Editor of The Hindu, C Gouridasan Nair will be the chief guest of the conference who will deliver a keynote speech on the challenges and opportunities of the media in today's world on the first day of the conference on January 28 at 6pm at ICSK auditorium, Khaitan. On the second day on January 29 (Friday), Nair will hold an exclusive media workshop for the MMF members updating the media fraternity on the emerging trends in the media.



On the third day on January 30 (Saturday), Nair will hold an interactive session on journalism titled "Understanding Media" for students studying in various Indian schools in Kuwait. The session will be held from 2 pm to 5 pm at the Indian Community School, Khaitan.

Media is a constant presence in our lives, regardless of where we live. They are our windows on the world. We understand the world in which we live, form our opinions and take crucial decisions based on the inputs-both positive and negative-that we receive from the media.

Often, parents are worried about the negative influence of the media-particularly, the new media-on their children. Teachers, with whom young adults spend most of their time on any weekday, are also a worried lot. Often, both are at a loss how to handle situations where children are found to get difficult and inconvenient social messages through the media. How can we address this situation? Who are our allies here? How can each one of us address the challenge that each one of us-as parent, teacher and a socially committed human being-face each day? This is the objective of the interactive session.

In view of the relevance of the subject, the MMF, Kuwait is taking the initiative to hold the session which will be highly beneficial for the student. It will be an interactive session on the 'World of Newspapers, TV, New Media and Advertisements', consisting of two segments with a two-hour lecture and one hour interaction with the children.

Students studying in 9th standard up to 12th standard in Indian schools may register their names to participate in the session which is free. Admission will be on first-come first-served basis.



The Sudanese Women Association in Kuwait celebrated Sudan's 60th National Day anniversary in a recent ceremony. Ambassador of Sudan to Kuwait Mohi Al-Deen Salim Ahmed, embassy staff and members of the Sudanese community in Kuwait attended the event. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

SUDANESE COMMUNITY CELEBRATE NATIONAL DAY



KAYAMKULAM NRIS CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

Kayamkulam NRIs Kuwait celebrated Christmas and New Year on Thursday, January 14, 2016, at the Indian Community School Auditorium, Amman Branch.

Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sunil Jain inaugurated the celebration, by the traditional lamp lighting. The Ambassador, in his inaugural address, appreciated the efforts of Kayamkulam NRIs in helping the society and wished all success for its continued socio-welfare initiatives. Rev Biju Sam of St Paul's Marthoma Church, Ahmadi delivered the Christmas and New Year messages after cutting the cake along with the Ambassador and other dignitaries on the dais. Highlighting several examples, Rev. Biju Sam delivered the messages advising the audience to

make the New Year more fruitful by doing activities favorable to the society. Sirajudeen, Adviser, felicitated the occasion. President B S Pillai chaired the meeting. In his address, President pointed out the measures taken by the Indian Ambassador for the welfare of Indian Expatriates.

Prominent personalities, sponsors, well-wishers, representatives of fellow associations, Media Wing, were participated in the celebration. Premsan, General Secretary welcomed the audience, while Tom Jose, Program Convener, proposed vote of thanks. Sradha Binu excellently compered the meeting.

Thereafter, the floor was left for the cultural programs. The high lights were a Choir by "Salmiya Friends" and a Musical Show by "Yes Band". About 34 meticulously

dressed groups of children, youngsters both male and female, along with the Christmas Father on stage, mesmerized the audience, with their flawless choir songs.

And the musical show was another treat for the attendees, as its talented singers beautifully sang several songs covering all areas of music. Another attraction of the day was a beautiful song by Dajah Mohammad, a young girl from Egypt.

Before the end of the program, play like American Auction was also conducted to entertain the audience. A delicious dinner was also served to all participated. Registered with the Indian Embassy, Kayamkulam NRIs has been in the gulf for the last 11 years, by voluntarily rendering socio-welfare services.

THE "WIN GOLD" CAMPAIGN FROM ALGHANIM AUTOMOTIVE PARTS COMES TO SUCCESSFUL END

The promotional campaign on GM Genuine spare parts concludes with lucky winners getting up to 100 gram of pure gold. In a move that highlights its commitment toward its customers, Yusuf Ahmed Alghanim and Sons Automotive, the exclusive distributor of Chevrolet and Cadillac vehicles in Kuwait as well as the largest distributor of genuine spare parts from General Motors, announced on January 13th, 2016, the names of the 50 lucky winners who struck gold with last year's biggest spare parts promotion. The campaign, which started on October 26th and ended on December 31st, 2015, gave customers the chance to enter a draw to win one of 50 gold prizes, with up to 100g of pure gold, with every KD 25 purchase from any Alghanim Auto Parts outlet.

The promotion saw a massive reception and participation of Alghanim Auto Parts customers, which was available at Yusuf A Alghanim and Sons Automotive's auto parts outlets at Shuwaikh, Sharq, Canada Dry Street, Jahra, and Fahaaheel.

This amazing promotion confirms Yusuf A

Alghanim and Sons Automotive's steadfast commitment on developing the best offers that avail customers to a variety of budget-friendly options while securing their safety on the road, not to mention the highly-trained crew of technicians and professionals who provides high quality service through state-of-the-art equipment and auto maintenance knowledge.

Indeed, as the agent of GM in Kuwait, Alghanim Automotive provides its customers with world-renowned, genuine spare parts that enhance customers' safety and prolong vehicles' longevity and performance. Yusuf A Alghanim and Sons Automotive facility is equipped with a modern and air-conditioned warehouse that stocks all the required parts using the latest global systems and processes, which include making deliveries twice a day of spare parts to all locations in Kuwait. For more inquiries about spare parts, campaigns and locations, customers may contact Alghanim auto parts at 24969772 / 700.



PSME KUWAIT HOLDS YEAR-END MEETING



The Philippine Society of Mechanical Engineers Kuwait Chapter (PSME Kuwait) recently held its 4th year-end General Membership Meeting at the Radisson Blu Hotel with the theme "Filipino Mechanical Engineers for Global Excellence and Competitiveness."

The well-attended event was graced by the presence of Philippine Embassy Officials, Senior Officers of PSME, Officers of PSME Kuwait and many distinguished guests. The messages imparted gave more inspiration to all

Mechanical Engineers present in the occasion, that they may continue to strive for excellence in their chosen field.

PSME Kuwait officers and members are not only dedicated with their work to produce at par level products that can be internationally acclaimed, but they also have time as well for community service and humanitarian efforts. This is how Filipino organizations in Kuwait work and live - with determination, self-reliance,

cooperation and a compassionate heart.

Every event, together with its organization has its backbone - generous sponsors who willingly become part of an important occasion by sharing their blessings. In this regard, SEBA MED believes in the intelligence, people-oriented and commitment to excellence of PSME Kuwait.



'IDUKKI FEST 2016' ON FEBRUARY 27

Idukki Association Kuwait (IAK) will celebrate its 10th anniversary on February 27 as 'Idukki Fest 2016' from 3:30 pm till 9:00 pm at the American International School Auditorium, Hawally.

Farwanayah Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah will be the chief guest of the event. Member of the Indian Parliament from Idukki constituency and the patron of the Association Advocate Joice George and Ambassador of India to Kuwait, Sunil Jain also will attend the event.

Various cultural programs will be staged by the association members. The main attraction of the event will be a mega musical show, led by well-known Malayalam playback singer Rimi Tomy and her eight-

member team.

The objective of this function is to raise necessary funds to support the financially backward sick students from Idukki district through "Student Aid Program 2016", which is constituted as a part of Association's popular 'Karunya Nidhi' program.

Official inauguration of "Idukki Fest 2016" and raffle coupon, followed by a press meet was held at Continental Hotel Kuwait City on Thursday. President Georgie Mathew, General Secretary Sunil Kumar, Treasurer Bijoy Kurian, Idukki Fest program joint conveners Areeparambil Mathew and Shaju Paul and advisory board chairman-cum-media committee member Jeral Jose attended the press meet.



Discovery Channel HD
00:20 Superhuman Science
00:45 Predators Up Close With Joel Lambert
01:35 Predators Up Close With Joel Lambert
02:25 Predators Up Close With Joel Lambert
05:00 Railroad Alaska
06:00 Yukon Men
06:50 Wheeler Dealers
07:40 Misfit Garage
08:30 Storage Hunters UK
08:55 The Liquidator
09:20 Storage Wars Canada
09:45 What Happened Next?
10:10 How Machines Work
10:35 Alaskan Bush People
11:25 Alaska: The Last Frontier
12:15 Railroad Alaska
13:05 Storage Hunters UK
13:30 The Liquidator
13:55 Storage Wars Canada
14:20 Yukon Men
15:10 Wheeler Dealers
16:00 Misfit Garage
16:50 What Happened Next?
17:15 How Machines Work
17:40 Street Outlaws
18:30 Engine Addict With Jimmy De Ville
19:20 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown
20:10 The Liquidator
20:35 Storage Wars Canada
21:00 Impossible Engineering
21:50 Impossible Engineering
22:40 Wheeler Dealers: Trading Up
23:30 Wheeler Dealers

Discovery Science
00:35 How The Universe Works
02:55 Strip The Cosmos
03:42 Mythbusters
07:37 How Do They Do It?
08:00 How Do They Do It?
08:23 Food Factory
12:08 How It's Made
15:57 Strangest Weather On Earth
19:50 How The Universe Works
22:15 Strip The Cosmos
23:00 How The Universe Works
23:45 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

ID. Investigation Discovery
00:40 Serial Killers
01:30 Deadly Sins
02:20 Deadly Devotion
03:10 Swamp Murders
04:00 Deadly Women
04:45 Serial Killers
05:30 Deadly Sins
06:20 The Will
07:10 The Will
08:00 Fatal Encounters
08:50 Disappeared
09:40 Disappeared
10:30 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
11:20 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
12:10 The Will
13:00 The Will
13:50 California Investigator
14:15 California Investigator
14:40 Dr. G: Medical Examiner
15:30 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
16:20 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
17:10 Disappeared
18:00 Disappeared
18:50 California Investigator
19:15 California Investigator
19:40 I Almost Got Away With It
23:00 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
23:50 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall

Disney
00:00 Violetta
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Wolfblood
02:05 Wolfblood
02:30 Violetta
03:15 The Hive
03:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:10 Wolfblood
04:35 Wolfblood
05:00 Violetta
05:45 The Hive
05:50 Mouk
06:00 Lolirock
06:25 Hank Zipzer
06:50 Girl Meets World
07:15 H2O: Just Add Water
07:40 Austin & Ally
08:05 Austin & Ally
08:30 Austin & Ally
08:55 Austin & Ally
09:20 Austin & Ally
09:45 Violetta Recipes
10:00 Best Friends Whenever
10:25 How To Build A Better Boy
12:00 I Love Violetta
12:20 Jessie
12:45 Jessie
13:10 Liv And Maddie
13:35 Liv And Maddie
14:00 Austin & Ally
14:30 Austin & Ally
14:55 Lolirock
15:20 I Didn't Do It
15:45 I Didn't Do It
16:10 Best Friends Whenever
16:35 Best Friends Whenever
17:00 Girl Meets World
17:25 Girl Meets World
17:50 I Love Violetta
18:00 Wizards Of Waverly Place The Movie
19:30 Gravity Falls
19:55 Dog With A Blog
20:20 Mako Mermaids
20:45 Good Luck Charlie
21:10 Good Luck Charlie
21:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place
22:00 Binny And The Ghost
22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
22:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:10 Wolfblood
23:35 Wolfblood

EHD
00:30 Fashion Bloggers
00:55 Fashion Bloggers
01:25 Stewarts And Hamiltons
02:20 El News
03:15 Eric And Jessie: Game On
03:40 Eric And Jessie: Game On
04:10 El Entertainment Special
05:05 The El True Hollywood Story

06:00 Kourtney & Kim Take New York
06:55 Kourtney & Kim Take New York
07:50 Style Star
08:20 E! News
09:15 House Of DVF
10:15 House Of DVF
11:10 Fashion Bloggers
11:35 Fashion Bloggers
12:05 E! News
13:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
14:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:00 Dash Dolls
16:00 Christina Milian Turned Up
17:00 New Money
17:30 New Money
18:00 E! News
19:00 Fashion Bloggers
19:30 Fashion Bloggers
20:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
21:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
22:00 Christina Milian Turned Up
23:00 Dash Dolls



00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
00:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:00 Chopped
02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
02:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
03:00 Man V Food
03:30 Man V Food
04:00 BBQ Crawl
04:30 BBQ Crawl
05:00 Chopped
06:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
06:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
07:00 Man Fire Food
07:30 Man Fire Food
08:00 Chopped
09:00 Amazing Wedding Cakes
10:00 The Kitchen
11:00 The Kitchen
12:00 Chopped
13:00 Guy's Big Bite
13:30 Guy's Big Bite
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
16:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
16:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
17:00 Chopped
18:00 Siba's Table
18:30 Siba's Table
19:00 Dinner At Tiffani's
19:30 Dinner At Tiffani's
20:00 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
20:30 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
21:00 All Star Academy
22:00 Australian Food Adventures With Matt Moran
23:00 The Freshman Class
23:30 The Freshman Class



00:20 Coronation Street
00:45 Coronation Street
01:10 Pick Me!
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Coronation Street
02:55 Coronation Street
03:25 Coronation Street
03:50 Coronation Street
04:15 Murdoch Mysteries
05:05 Murdoch Mysteries
05:55 The Jonathan Ross Show
06:50 Vera
08:40 Safe House
09:35 Endeavour
11:20 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
12:15 Grantchester
13:10 Murdoch Mysteries
14:05 Murdoch Mysteries
15:00 The Syndicate
15:55 Midsomer Murders
17:40 The Jonathan Ross Show
18:35 Coach Trip
19:00 The Syndicate
19:55 Midsomer Murders
21:45 Safe House
22:45 Coronation Street
23:15 The Jonathan Ross Show



01:30 Saturday Night Live
02:30 The Big C
04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
05:30 Young & Hungry
06:00 Til Death
06:30 New Girl
07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
08:30 Young & Hungry
10:30 New Girl
11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
12:00 Til Death

13:00 Young & Hungry
16:30 Til Death
17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
18:30 The Goldbergs
19:00 Grandfathered
19:30 Melissa & Joey
20:00 Bad Judge
22:00 Married
23:00 The Big C
23:30 Bad Judge



00:00 Defiance
01:00 Heroes Reborn
02:00 The Blacklist
03:00 Minority Report
04:00 Stitches
05:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
06:00 White Collar
07:00 Switched At Birth
08:00 Witches Of East End
09:00 Stitches
10:00 White Collar
11:00 Switched At Birth
12:00 Coronation Street
12:30 Coronation Street
13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
14:00 Witches Of East End
15:00 White Collar
16:00 Live Good Morning America
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
18:00 Witches Of East End
19:00 Heroes Reborn
20:00 The Blacklist
21:00 Scandal
22:00 How To Get Away With Murder
23:00 Show Me A Hero



00:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
01:00 Franklin & Bash
02:00 Good Morning America
03:00 Downton Abbey
04:00 Grimm
05:00 Franklin & Bash
06:00 Good Morning America
07:00 Coronation Street
07:30 Coronation Street
08:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
09:00 Supernatural
10:00 Coronation Street
11:00 Coronation Street
12:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
12:00 C.S.I.
13:00 Shark Tank
14:00 Supernatural
15:00 Franklin & Bash
16:00 The Voice
17:00 C.S.I.
18:00 Shark Tank
19:00 Supernatural
20:00 C.S.I.
21:00 Shark Tank
22:00 Downton Abbey
23:00 Grimm



00:00 Automata
02:00 The Departed
05:00 The Hunger Games: Catching Fire
08:00 Forget And Forgive
10:00 Justice League vs. Bizarro League
11:30 Automata
13:45 Toxin
15:45 The Hunger Games: Catching Fire
18:30 Justice League vs. Bizarro League
20:00 Northmen: A Viking Saga
22:00 I, Frankenstein



00:00 The Departed-18
03:00 The Hunger Games: Catching Fire-PG15
06:00 Forget And Forgive-PG15
08:00 Justice League vs. Bizarro League-PG15
09:30 Automata-PG15
11:45 Toxin-PG15
13:45 The Hunger Games: Catching Fire-PG15
16:30 Justice League vs. Bizarro League-PG15
18:00 Northmen: A Viking Saga-PG15
20:00 I, Frankenstein-PG15
22:00 Kiss The Girls-PG15



00:00 Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues
02:00 The Lego Movie
04:00 The Love Guide
06:00 The Waterboy
08:00 UHF

10:00 The Love Guide
12:00 Titeuf, Le Film
14:00 Mousehunt
16:00 UHF
18:00 When In Rome
20:00 She Wants Me
22:00 Behaving Badly



01:00 A Valentine's Date-PG15
03:00 A Long Way Down-PG15
05:00 Shadow Witness-PG15
07:00 Chalet Girl-PG15
09:00 InSight-PG15
11:00 Shadow Witness-PG15
13:00 1911-PG15
15:00 Stone Markers-PG15
17:00 InSight-PG15
19:00 Jamie Marks Is Dead-PG15
21:00 Short Term 12-PG15
23:00 Kill The Messenger-PG15



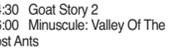
01:30 So Puder... Dirjal
03:00 Blue Sky
05:00 Black Nativity
07:00 See Girl Run
09:00 Manny
11:00 We Are Family
13:00 Belle
22:00 Atlas Shrugged Part 2: The Strike
17:00 Manny
19:00 Jayne Mansfield's Car
21:15 Calvary
23:00 The Motel Life



01:00 Lords Of London-PG15
03:00 Romeo & Juliet-PG15
05:00 Big Eyes-PG15
07:00 Penguins Of Madagascar
09:00 Robot & Frank-PG15
10:45 Still Alice-PG15
12:45 The Fault In Our Stars-PG15
15:00 Admission-PG15
17:00 Robot & Frank-PG15
19:00 The Grand Budapest Hotel
21:00 God's Pocket-18
23:00 The Boy Next Door-18



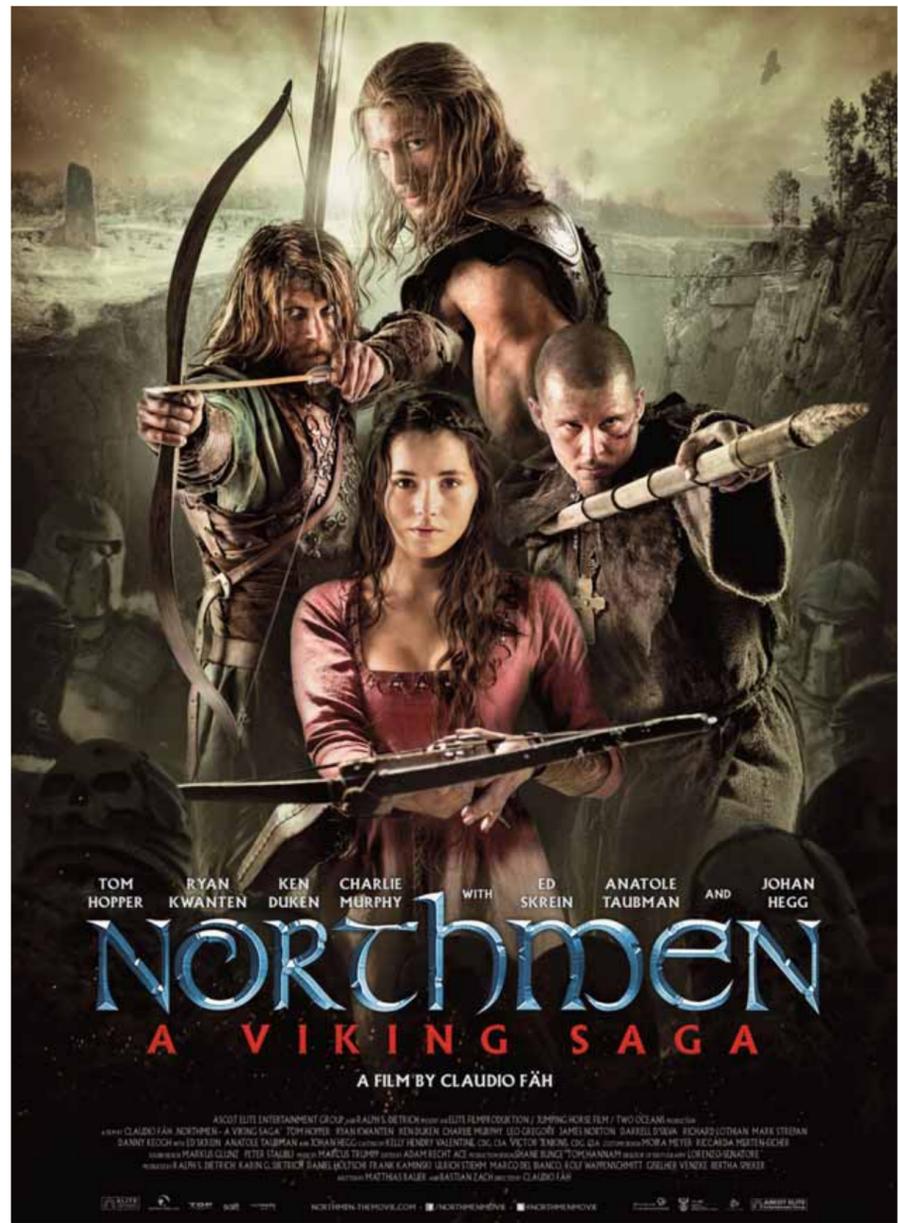
01:15 Barse And The City Of Thieves
03:00 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
04:30 Pim And Pom: The Big Adventure
06:00 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
07:45 Cher Ami
09:45 Memory Loss
11:15 Delhi Safari
13:00 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
14:30 Goat Story 2
16:00 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants
18:00 Memory Loss
20:00 The Adventures Of Don Quixote
22:00 Goat Story 2
23:30 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants



00:00 The French Minister-PG15
02:00 Salingger-PG15
04:15 Asterix: The Mansions Of The Gods-PG
06:00 The Book Of Life-PG
08:00 Vamps-PG15
10:00 Searching For Sugar Man-PG15
12:00 To The Wonder-PG15
14:00 Shaolin-PG15
16:15 Vamps-PG15
18:00 Wish I Was Here-PG15
20:00 The Other Woman-PG15
22:00 The Anomaly-18



04:35 True Heart
06:05 Of Mice And Men
07:55 Nobody's Fool
09:40 Mannequin
11:10 Grayeagle
12:55 Punks
14:30 Teen Witch
16:00 True Heart
17:30 Nobody's Fool
19:15 Guns Of The Magnificent Seven
21:00 Stand By Me



NORTHMEN- A VIKING SAGA ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

22:30 Suspect Zero
00:10 Stand By Me
01:40 The Adventures Of Buckaroo Banzai



03:00 Born To Kill
04:00 Born To Kill
05:00 The Haunting Of...
06:00 Celebrity Ghost Stories
07:00 The FBI Files
08:00 After The First 48
09:00 After The First 48
10:00 The FBI Files
11:00 The FBI Files
12:00 Martina Cole's Lady Killers
15:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
20:00 Private Crimes
23:00 Killer Kids
00:00 Killer Kids
01:00 The Haunting Of...
02:00 I Escaped My Killer



03:05 Calimero
03:20 Zou
03:30 Loopedidoo
03:45 Art Attack
04:10 Henry Hugglemonster
04:20 Calimero
04:35 Zou
04:45 Loopedidoo
05:00 Art Attack
05:25 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 Calimero
05:50 Zou
06:00 Loopedidoo

06:15 Art Attack
06:35 Henry Hugglemonster
06:50 Calimero
07:00 Zou
07:20 Loopedidoo
07:35 Art Attack
08:00 Calimero
08:10 Zou
08:25 Loopedidoo
08:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
09:05 Sofia The First
09:30 Miles From Tomorrow
09:55 The Hive
10:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
10:35 Doc McStuffins
11:00 Sofia The First
11:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
12:00 Miles From Tomorrow
12:25 Lilo And Stitch
12:50 Lilo And Stitch
13:15 Lilo And Stitch
13:35 Lilo And Stitch
14:00 Sofia The First
14:25 Sofia The First
14:50 Miles From Tomorrow
15:15 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
15:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
16:05 The Adventures Of The Disney...
16:35 Miles From Tomorrow
17:00 Sofia The First
17:25 Aladdin
17:50 Gummi Bears
18:15 Chip 'n' Dale's Rescue Rangers
18:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
19:05 Miles From Tomorrow
19:30 Sofia The First
19:55 Doc McStuffins
20:15 Jake And The Never Land

Pirates
20:45 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
21:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
21:35 Sofia The First
22:00 Miles From Tomorrow
22:25 Miles From Tomorrow
22:50 Miles From Tomorrow
23:20 Lilo And Stitch
23:45 Cars Toons
23:50 Zou
00:05 Henry Hugglemonster
00:20 Calimero
00:35 Zou
00:50 Loopedidoo
01:05 Art Attack
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
01:45 Calimero
02:00 Zou
02:15 Loopedidoo
02:30 Art Attack
02:50 Henry Hugglemonster



07:00 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
07:25 Boyster
07:50 Supa Strikas
08:15 The Incredibles
10:05 Guardians Of The Galaxy
10:10 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
10:25 Kickin' It
10:50 Mighty Med
11:20 Supa Strikas
11:45 K. C. Undercover
12:10 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
12:35 Annedroids
13:00 Lab Rats
13:30 Lab Rats
13:55 Lab Rats
14:20 Lab Rats
14:45 Lab Rats
15:15 Lab Rats



03:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
03:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
03:48 Henry Danger
04:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
04:36 The Haunted Hathaways
05:00 Winx Club
05:24 Sanjay And Craig
05:48 Sanjay And Craig
06:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:36 SpongeBob SquarePants
07:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:48 Sanjay And Craig
08:12 Harvey Beaks
08:36 Breadwinners
09:00 Get Blake
09:24 Rabbids Invasion
09:48 Henry Danger
10:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
10:36 The Haunted Hathaways
11:00 Winx Club
11:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
11:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
12:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
13:00 Breadwinners
13:24 Breadwinners
13:48 Get Blake
14:12 Rabbids Invasion
14:36 Henry Danger
15:00 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
15:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
16:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
17:00 Sanjay And Craig
17:24 Harvey Beaks
17:48 Breadwinners
18:12 Henry Danger
18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
19:00 100 Things To Do Before High School
19:24 100 Things To Do Before High School
19:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
20:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
20:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
21:00 Breadwinners
21:24 Breadwinners
21:48 Sanjay And Craig
22:36 SpongeBob SquarePants
23:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
23:24 Henry Danger
23:48 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
00:12 Max & Shred
00:36 The Haunted Hathaways
01:00 Sanjay And Craig
02:12 SpongeBob SquarePants



04:15 Broke Sky
05:55 Heartland
07:35 Charge!
09:10 Discovering: Lennon
10:00 Rolling Stones: Crossfire Hurricane
12:00 All On The Line
13:00 The Red Road
14:00 Marvin's Room
15:40 The Journey
17:20 Nick Nolte: No Exit
18:35 Rolling Stones: Crossfire Hurricane
20:30 The Red Road
21:30 All On The Line
22:30 Theatreland
23:00 Hollywood's Best Film Directors



THE ANOMALY ON OSN MOVIES PREMIERE HD

CLASSIFIEDS



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (14/01/2016 TO 20/01/2016)

SHARQIA-1	Time	FANAR-1	Time
KUNG FU STYLE	1:00 PM	DADDY'S HOME	11:30 AM
FORECLOSURE	3:00 PM	DADDY'S HOME	1:30 PM
THE HATEFUL EIGHT	5:00 PM	THE REVENANT	3:30 PM
FORECLOSURE	7:00 PM	NANNAKU PREMATHO-Telugu	3:30 PM
THE HATEFUL EIGHT	10:15 PM	NANNAKU PREMATHO-Telugu	6:30 PM
	12:15 AM	NANNAKU PREMATHO-Telugu	9:45 PM
		DADDY'S HOME	1:00 AM
SHARQIA-2	Time	FANAR-2	Time
THE 5TH WAVE	11:30 AM	THE HATEFUL EIGHT	11:30 AM
RIDE ALONG 2	1:45 PM	FORECLOSURE	2:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2	3:45 PM	THE HATEFUL EIGHT	4:30 PM
RIDE ALONG 2	5:30 PM	FORECLOSURE	7:45 PM
THE 5TH WAVE	7:30 PM	FORECLOSURE	9:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2	10:00 PM	THE HATEFUL EIGHT	11:45 PM
THE 5TH WAVE	12:05 AM		
SHARQIA-3	Time	FANAR-3	Time
THE REVENANT	12:30 PM	KUNG FU STYLE	12:15 PM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD	1:30 PM	KUNG FU STYLE	2:15 PM
THE REVENANT	3:30 PM	KUNG FU STYLE	4:15 PM
NANNAKU PREMATHO-Telugu	3:30 PM	THE REVENANT	6:15 PM
THE REVENANT	6:30 PM	THE REVENANT	9:15 PM
NANNAKU PREMATHO-Telugu	6:45 PM	THE REVENANT	12:15 AM
THE REVENANT	9:30 PM		
NANNAKU PREMATHO-Telugu	10:00 PM		
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD	12:30 AM		
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD	1:15 AM		
MUHALAB-1	Time	FANAR-4	Time
KUNG FU STYLE	1:00 PM	RIDE ALONG 2	12:15 PM
KUNG FU STYLE	3:00 PM	RIDE ALONG 2	2:15 PM
KUNG FU STYLE	5:00 PM	RIDE ALONG 2	4:15 PM
NANNAKU PREMATHO-Telugu	7:00 PM	RIDE ALONG 2	6:15 PM
DILWALE - Hindi	7:00 PM	RIDE ALONG 2	8:15 PM
NANNAKU PREMATHO-Telugu	10:15 PM	RIDE ALONG 2	10:15 PM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD	1:30 AM	RIDE ALONG 2	12:15 AM
MUHALAB-2	Time	FANAR-5	Time
THE 5TH WAVE	12:45 PM	THE 5TH WAVE	11:30 AM
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD	1:30 PM	THE 5TH WAVE	1:45 PM
THE REVENANT	3:30 PM	THE 5TH WAVE	4:15 PM
SOOGADE CHINNI NAYANA -Telugu	3:30 PM	DILWALE - Hindi	6:45 PM
THE REVENANT	6:30 PM	THE 5TH WAVE	9:45 PM
SOOGADE CHINNI NAYANA -Telugu	6:30 PM	THE 5TH WAVE	12:45 AM
SOOGADE CHINNI NAYANA -Telugu	9:30 PM		
MUHALAB-3	Time	MARINA-1	Time
RIDE ALONG 2	11:30 AM	FORECLOSURE	1:00 PM
THE REVENANT	1:30 PM	THE 5TH WAVE	3:00 PM
NANNAKU PREMATHO-Telugu	1:30 PM	FORECLOSURE	5:30 PM
THE REVENANT	4:30 PM	THE 5TH WAVE	7:30 PM
NANNAKU PREMATHO-Telugu	4:45 PM	FORECLOSURE	10:00 PM
RIDE ALONG 2	8:00 PM	THE 5TH WAVE	12:05 AM
RIDE ALONG 2	9:45 PM		
RIDE ALONG 2	11:30 PM		
RIDE ALONG 2	1:15 AM		
MUHALAB-3	Time	MARINA-2	Time
RIDE ALONG 2	11:30 AM	RIDE ALONG 2	12:45 PM
THE REVENANT	1:30 PM	RIDE ALONG 2	2:45 PM
NANNAKU PREMATHO-Telugu	1:30 PM	RIDE ALONG 2	4:45 PM
THE REVENANT	4:30 PM	RIDE ALONG 2	6:45 PM
NANNAKU PREMATHO-Telugu	4:45 PM	RIDE ALONG 2	8:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2	8:00 PM	RIDE ALONG 2	10:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2	9:45 PM	RIDE ALONG 2	12:45 AM
RIDE ALONG 2	11:30 PM		
RIDE ALONG 2	1:15 AM		

REQUIRED

Business Development Manager Responsible
 to keep updated market information available to support strategic decisions. In charge of developing Business Plan for the company. The BD Manager will report to the Country Manager and will be located in Kuwait.

■ **Office Skills & Experience**
 Relevant experience in offshore onshore Oil & Gas organization in Kuwait.

■ **Interpersonal skills**
 Aptitude for developing customer relationships; ability to communicate effectively.

Competency to represent the company in written and verbal format.
 Ability to manage business relationships at all levels. Extensive experience fluent English (writing and speaking). Transferable residence, Driving licence.

Please send your CV to Email:
akram@mtgsofd.ae or abbas@mtgsofd.ae
Mobile: 97202014 - Eng. Ali Hammoud

3B General Trading & Contracting Company W.I.I

is seeking for the following positions as per the below conditions :

- ⇒ **Projects Control Manager**
10Yrs Experience & above
- ⇒ **Projects Control Engineer:**
6 Years & above Experience in project Planning & Cost Control
- ⇒ **Construction Engineer :**
10 Yrs Experience & above in oil & gas Experience in international EPC.
- ⇒ **Procurement Engineer:**
6 Yrs Experience and above in oil & gas

All candidates shall have Mechanical engineering degree ,Computer Skills, Driving license is an advantage & Transferable Residency

CVS can be send to: jobs2016.kw@gmail.com or to fax: 23263911

No: 16758

Kuwait Times

Ads will not be accepted over the fax

TEXT OF ADVERTISEMENT TO BE PUBLISHED

CONDITION

1. Ads must be on the original coupon.
2. Ads of personal nature. will be accepted for **KD 3 for 3 days.**
3. Semi-commercial ads i.e. Baby-Sitting, Matrimonial, Tuition & Transport available will be accepted for **KD 5 for 3 days.**
4. Ads must not exceed 25 words.

Sender's Name _____
 Address, Tel. No: _____

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, Kuwait 13014, Tel: _____

REQUIRED

For Construction Material Factory

Maintenance Technician

- Experience in Wood Material equipment
- Transferable residency - Article 18 is a must.

Experienced Skilled Labor

- Transferable residency - Article 18 is a must

Interested candidates are requested to e-mail their CV at:
regionalwazzan@gmail.com

Working offer

Required funny & nice staff
 To work in a entertainment sector

Good salary + bonus

Tel: 90079931

Available for Rent

Residential Apartments, floors and villas

22466566
96645531
90976777

Flight Schedule

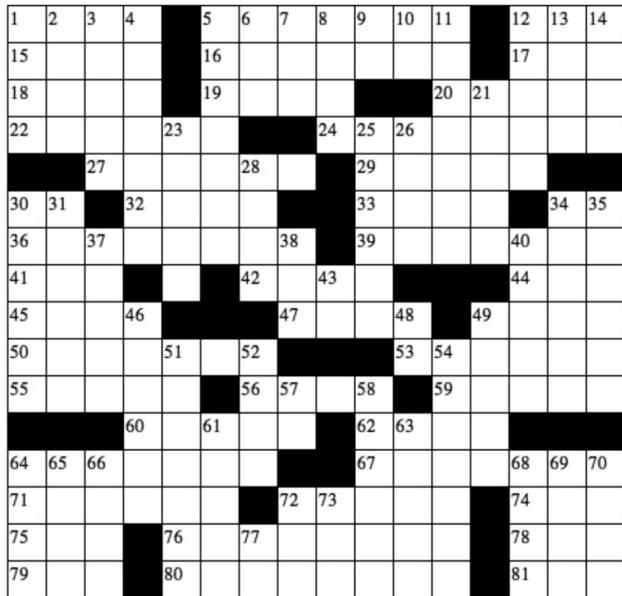
Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

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

Arrival Flights on Sunday 17/1/2016				Departure Flights on Sunday 17/1/2016			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MSC	415	Sohag	00:05	AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05
JZR	239	Amman	00:25	FDB	072	Dubai	00:40
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:55
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40	MSC	416	Sohag	01:00
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55	KAC	283	Dhaka	02:10
RJA	642	Amman	01:05	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30
THY	772	Istanbul	01:05	DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:35
ETH	3402	Addis Ababa/Riyadh	01:30	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	02:45
DLH	635	Doha	01:35	ETH	3403	Addis Ababa	03:05
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:45	KAC	381	Delhi	03:30
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00	UAE	854	Dubai	03:45
JZR	555	Alexandria	02:25	PGT	859	Istanbul	03:55
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	FDB	068	Dubai	04:00
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	MSR	613	Cairo	04:10
FDB	067	Dubai	03:05	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:15
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10	KKK	6508	Istanbul	04:20
CEB	7694	Manila	03:15	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:55
QTR	1076	Doha	03:15	QTR	1077	Doha	05:00
KKK	6507	Istanbul	03:20	LMU	511	Cairo	05:05
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:25	THY	765	Istanbul	05:15
KAC	544	Cairo	03:35	CEB	7695	Manila	05:20
LMU	510	Cairo	04:05	JZR	560	Sohag	06:10
PGT	860	Istanbul	04:15	FDB	070	Dubai	06:30
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:40	JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55	RJA	643	Amman	07:05
QTR	8511	Doha	06:10	THY	771	Istanbul	07:05
FDB	5061	Dubai	06:30	FDB	5062	Dubai	07:10
BAW	157	London	06:40	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
KAC	412	Manila/Bangkok	07:20	QTR	8512	Doha	07:40
FDB	053	Dubai	07:25	FDB	054	Dubai	08:10
QTR	1086	Doha	07:40	JZR	174	Dubai	08:25
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50	QTR	1087	Doha	08:40
SVA	512	Riyadh	07:50	BAW	156	London	08:45
OMA	641	Muscat	08:00	SVA	513	Riyadh	08:50
KAC	354	BLR	08:15	OMA	642	Muscat	08:55
KAC	206	Islamabad	08:25	KAC	171	Frankfurt	09:05
KAC	352	Kochi	08:30	JZR	534	Cairo	09:15
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	08:30	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:25
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:50	UAE	856	Dubai	09:55
KAC	362	Colombo	08:50	KAC	117	New York	09:55
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC	541	Cairo	09:55
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:20	KAC	561	Amman	10:00
QTR	1070	Doha	09:25	KAC	671	Dubai	10:05
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:25
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:40	KAC	501	Beirut	10:30
IRC	528	Ahwaz	10:00	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	482	Istanbul	10:35
UAE	873	Dubai	11:05	IRA	664	Shiraz	10:40
SYR	341	Damascus	11:25	KAC	677	Abu Dhabi/Muscat	10:50
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	QTR	1071	Doha	11:00
AGY	682	Asyut	11:40	IRC	529	Ahwaz	11:00
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
SAW	701	Damascus	12:20	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:20
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25	SYR	342	Damascus	12:25
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	KAC	103	London	12:25
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	UAE	874	Dubai	12:30
JZR	175	Dubai	13:00	AGY	683	Alexandria	12:40
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
KAC	382	Delhi	13:50				
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10				
FDB	057	Dubai	14:10				

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

CROSSWORD 1140



ACROSS

- (prefix) Indicating difference or variation.
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory (trade name Toradol) that is given orally.
- A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.
- Colored or impregnated with dye.
- A dehydrogenated analogue of cortisol (trade names Orasone or Deltasone or Liquid Pred or Meticorten).
- (used as a combining form) Recent or new.
- A river in central Italy rising in the Apennines and flowing through Florence and Pisa to the Ligurian Sea.
- The 20th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- Dwell (archaic).
- Biennial weed in Europe and America having large pinnate leaves and yellow flowers and a bitter and somewhat poisonous root.
- Any plant of the genus *Alocasia* having large showy basal leaves and boat-shaped spathe and reddish berries.
- The 12th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- Isolated from others.
- A soft yellowish-white trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
- A member of a pastoral people living in the Nilgiri hills of southern India.
- A subdivision of a larger religious group.
- A great sacrifice.
- Japanese painter whose work influenced the impressionists (1760-1849).
- The residue that remains when something is burned.
- A fencing sword similar to a foil but with a heavier blade.
- Perennial herb of East India to Polynesia and Australia cultivated for its large edible root yielding Otaheite arrowroot starch.
- An accidental hole that allows something (fluid or light etc.) to enter or escape.
- God of death.
- Rhizomatous perennial grasslike herbs.
- Someone who lends money at excessive rates of interest.
- Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
- Providing sophisticated amusement by virtue of having artificially (and vulgarly) mannered or banal or sentimental qualities.
- Brightly colored tropical freshwater fishes.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- (Old Testament) The eldest son of Isaac who would have inherited the Covenant that God made with Abraham and that Abraham passed on to Isaac.
- Of or pertaining to Sabah or its people.
- Rambling talkativeness (especially in the aged).
- French writer who was the embodiment of 18th century Enlightenment (1694-1778).
- An associate degree in applied science.
- Nocturnal mouselike mammal with forelimbs modified to form membranous wings and anatomical adaptations for echolocation by which they navigate.
- A mishap.
- (Irish) The sea personified.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- (Greek mythology) The Greek personification of death.
- Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.

DOWN

- (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
- A small constellation in the northern hemisphere near Cygnus and Draco.
- United States tennis player (born in Czechoslovakia) who won several singles championships.
- Dragonflies and damselflies.
- A professional killer who uses a gun.
- A metal-bearing mineral valuable enough to be mined.
- The network in the reticular formation that serves an alerting or arousal function.
- A law passed by US Congress to prevent employees from being injured or contracting diseases in the course of their employment.
- An uproarious party.
- An associate degree in nursing.
- Canadian economist best remembered for his humorous writings (1869-1944).
- Native to Egypt but cultivated widely for its aromatic seeds and the oil from them used medicinally and as a flavoring in cookery.
- The basic unit of money in Ghana.
- 100 toea equal 1 kina.
- Of or relating to the African people who speak one of the Bantoid languages or to their culture.
- Give expression or emotion to, in a stage or movie role.
- A driver who urges the animals on with lashes of a whip.
- A spread made chiefly from vegetable oils and used as a substitute for butter.
- Informal terms for a (young) woman.
- Surgically remove a part of a structure or an organ.
- A resident of Maine.
- Virility drug (trade name Viagra) used to treat erectile dysfunction in men.
- The first Hindu calendar month (corresponding to March or April in the Gregorian calendar).
- (music) The pace of music measured by the number of beats occurring in 60 seconds.
- The occurrence of a sudden discharge (as of liquid).
- (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- An industrial city in southern Poland on the Vistula.
- A soft yellow malleable ductile (trivalent and univalent) metallic element.
- A line of people or vehicles waiting for something.
- Heat beforehand.
- The act of scanning.
- A religious adviser (not necessarily a priest) in the Eastern Orthodox Church.
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- A small sphere.
- All the loaves of bread baked at the same time.
- (music) A notation written at the beginning or end of a passage that is to be repeated.
- An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- A wine bottle made of leather.
- Containing or filled with salt.
- The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
- An antidepressant drug that acts by blocking the reuptake of serotonin so that more serotonin is available to act on receptors in the brain.
- A container.
- An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You find yourself feeling more private and in a stay-at-home mood. Catching up with unfinished personal business is necessary. The new, the advanced and the high-tech world are fascinating to you. Both you and your loved one are interested in the new ways to reach out and communicate—perhaps computers. Be careful that you do not overspend or indulge too much just now. Your community concerns may increase and you are willing to volunteer. There is time to spend with loved ones and family later today—you look forward to building better relationships. A cycle of nostalgia and domesticity begins, emphasizing a need for security and a sense of roots. Pregnancy is possible.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Perhaps a quiet day has created a lull in your imagination just now. Your path of self-development and expression may become more and more unusual-setting you apart from the crowd. Communication technologies interest you as well as medical technologies. Grants, job searches and creating your own business are options you may consider. The new, the futuristic, the high-tech are the things that spur your imagination and move you into being inventive. Soon, a major new focus in your life will be ideas and technologies that change the lives of people, not just one person. If you need more education, you will dedicate yourself to returning to school. If you are considering a move, consider a city near a large river, lake or ocean.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

More friends and more neighborhood involvement than usual this weekend find you caught up with games of trivia as well as the latest news on family members. It is fun to be kept abreast of the news and others appreciate your interest as well. You will want to work on your living conditions. This may mean changing the filters or finding the source of a draft. You may decide to plan a garden for the spring—take this in little steps. If you have never had a garden—start small. You may even get each family member to be responsible for his or her own square of land. Of course, plans could be made toward this endeavor but weather may not permit preparation for a time. A book signing at a bookstore near you may be fun this evening.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You have support from others in whatever you want to achieve. If you are working now, you will find work exciting as new technologies are all around you. You are brimming full of curiosity with an industrious attitude! We certainly live in exciting times and avenues are opening now for you to learn about new technologies, as well as some new healing remedies. This could mean a home show or technical type of show at a convention center in your city. Be wise and pace your activities; if you have made promises, keep them.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

If you are a healer or work for a medical service, take time to strengthen your own energies. Good nutritional meals and plenty of breaks from whatever you are doing are very important. Try to say no to new projects when your dance card is already full. If you are really tempted to cram more into your already busy schedule, you could regret the end results. Your path of personal improvement becomes more intense. A subject that you are interested in could gain most of your attention this afternoon. Will you improve communication and respect between the police and the community in your area your sense of purpose is enhanced.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Frustrations hide around every little corner today. Do not take things too seriously—consider the saying: do not sweat the small stuff. Make it a point to meditate at the same time and the same place each day—even if it is only for five minutes. This time will bring about opportunities for you to receive insights and to gain some sort of focus—positive changes magically happen. However, you will have to empty your mind and continue this meditative practice in order to gain continued success. The insights will come little by little. A more positive life is within your reach! The evening is full of the sounds of laughter. You could be a great party planner. Being creative, inventive, good-natured and fun loving is in high demand for this sort of job.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Ideas are all around you for the expression of art. Take advantage of this day and plot out an art plan for the year. You may even receive some big surprises for your efforts. This is a time when your path of self-development and expression becomes more and more unusual-setting you apart from the crowd and from all that is traditional. The new, the advanced and the high-tech are the marks of your lifestyle as this part of your life is started. Your creative interest could possibly become a big money maker—if you wanted to turn it into a business. Ideas and technologies that change the way people live all over the country are a major new focus in your life.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may perceive how to proceed with some difficult plans. A creative endeavor now can be very successful. You may find it is easy to procrastinate when there are so many activities and events scheduled on your calendar. Thin these out in order to create a better balance—you will be glad you did. Distance yourself from a situation that could be holding you back. Adjustments and fine-tuning relationships are the keys to emotional satisfaction. Harmony and beauty are most satisfying and this is the area in which you and most of us would like to remain; don't rock the boat, so to speak. Consider inviting your friends to join with you this evening. Good, healthy fun multiplies. The feelings of those around you may be very clear.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

With the chores out of the way, family members may enjoy some of your time to visit and enjoy your company. There is talk of dreams and fantasies. Your intuition is active today. The idea of keeping notes of your psychic or intuitive insights will provide you with a doorway to your private self. Ideas are clear and strong. This is a time when your inner path of self-development becomes more focused. Diplomacy may be necessary with young family members as you come together in some sort of participation. There is an expression of love through the way you share your time. Provide areas of retreat for each member of the family—everyone can have his or her very own private space.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Family members want to talk today and plans are in process for a busy weekend. Ideas are clear and you are talkative and quick-witted. An elderly member of the family may slow you down a bit this morning but there are some great stories to be told—and you listen. A neighbor may visit you today with some fun ideas for activities, projects or entertainment... You may even be invited to dinner or receive a free restaurant coupon. You may think about planning something later this season for this neighbor. Perhaps you can babysit their kids so they can enjoy an anniversary celebration.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

A plea for understanding from a loved one today could bring about some long discussions. Financial problems may seem to loom ahead—rethinking a budget, however, will have positive results. Ideas flow easily, and through good communications, you may come up with some successful moneymaking ideas. Plan a garage sale and consider a part-time job. Parts of this month have been rest, fun and renewal of friendships. Now it is time to mastermind. Your attitude is positive and will help you to avoid future frustrations. This could be a time to make some changes in your environment. You may also discover expenses that are unnecessary. A free health symposium is something you and a friend may plan to attend.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You hate to let things drop until you have understood all avenues of a situation—you will find clear understanding resulting from your probing questions. You could be lunching with a couple of friends today, enjoying the camaraderie between friends. Take little bites... There could be lots of conversation and laughter. Carry that light spirit home with you and you will find this attitude continuing. You will be writing letters and making phone calls this afternoon. You could be most persuasive with others and compelling in having things go your way—particularly this evening. A good conversation with those you love is possible. You may want to escape into your dreams or do some creative work later this evening. Enjoy this time with your loved ones.

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Movie Actors 3

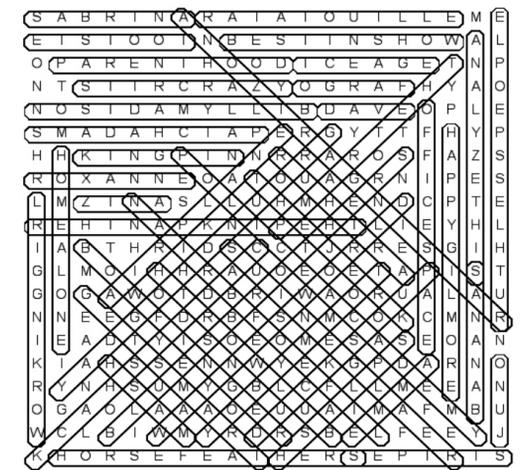
Find and circle all of the Movie Actors that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of a movie for which Forest Whitaker won an Oscar.



- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| ARKIN, Alan | GLOVER, Danny | PACINO, Al |
| BALE, Christian | GOODING JR, Cuba | PAXTON, Bill |
| BANDERAS, Antonio | HARRIS, Ed | PITT, Brad |
| BROADBENT, Jim | HAWKE, Ethan | QUAID, Dennis |
| BRODERICK, Matthew | KINGSLEY, Ben | RADCLIFFE, Daniel |
| BRODY, Adrian | MACY, William H. | SINISE, Gary |
| BYRNE, Gabriel | MALKOVICH, John | SLATER, Christian |
| CRAIG, Daniel | MCGREGOR, Ewan | STRATHAIRN, David |
| DAY-LEWIS, Daniel | MURPHY, Eddie | THORNTON, Billy Bob |
| EASTWOOD, Clint | MURRAY, Bill | WALKEN, Christopher |
| FIRTH, Colin | NICHOLSON, Jack | WASHINGTON, Denzel |
| FISHBURNE, Laurence | NORTON, Edward | WHITAKER, Forest |
| FRASER, Brendan | OLDMAN, Gary | WILLIS, Bruce |

Yesterday's Solution

Comedy Movies 2



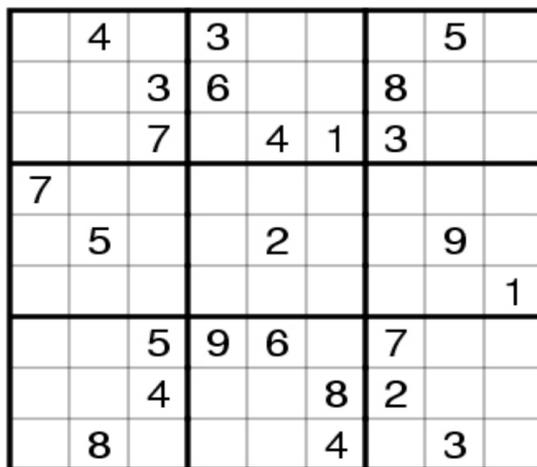
- | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| AIRPLANE | DUCK SOUP | LIFE OF BRIAN | SABRINA |
| ANALYZE THIS | EMMA | MASH | SPLASH |
| ANTZ | FARGO | OFFICE SPACE | STRIP STRIP CRAZY |
| ARTHUR | GET SMART | PARENTHOOD | STRIPE |
| BANANAS | GROUNDHOG DAY | PATCH ADAMS | THE JERK |
| BEST IN SHOW | HAPPY GILMORE | POLICE ACADEMY | THE PINK PANTHER |
| BILLY MADISON | HOME ALONE | RAISING ARIZONA | THE TRAMP |
| BLUES BROTHERS | HORSE FEATHERS | RATATOUILLE | TOMMY BOY |
| BOWLING | ICE AGE | REAL GENIUS | TOOTSIE |
| BULWORTH | JUNO | ROXANNE | WAYNES WORLD |
| CADDYSHACK | KINGPIN | RUTHLESS PEOPLE | WORKING GIRL |
| DAVE | | | |

The hidden movie title is: MONTY PYTHON'S THE MEANING OF LIFE

Yesterday's Solution

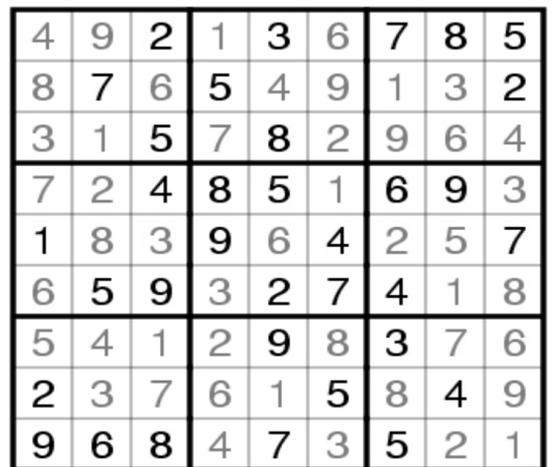


Daily SuDoku



hard

Yesterday's Solution



easy

For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaeel Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Luxembourg	00352
Albania	00355	Macau	00853
Algeria	00213	Macedonia	00389
Andorra	00376	Madagascar	00261
Angola	00244	Majorca	0034
Anguilla	001264	Malawi	00265
Antigua	001268	Malaysia	00660
Argentina	0054	Maldives	00960
Armenia	00374	Mali	00223
Australia	0061	Malta	00356
Austria	0043	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahamas	001242	Martinique	00596
Bahrain	00973	Mauritania	00222
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritius	00230
Barbados	001246	Mayotte	00269
Belarus	00375	Mexico	0052
Belgium	0032	Micronesia	00691
Belize	00501	Moldova	00373
Benin	00229	Monaco	00377
Bermuda	001441	Mongolia	00976
Bhutan	00975	Montserrat	001664
Bolivia	00591	Morocco	00212
Bosnia	00387	Mozambique	00258
Botswana	00267	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brazil	0055	Namibia	00264
Brunei	00673	Nepal	00977
Bulgaria	00359	Netherlands	0031
Burkina	00226	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Burundi	00257	New Caledonia	00687
Cambodia	00855	New Zealand	0064
Cameroon	00237	Nicaragua	00505
Canada	001	Niger	00227
Cape Verde	00238	Nigeria	00234
Cayman Islands	001345	Niue	00683
Central African	00236	Norfolk Island	00672
Chad	00235	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
Chile	0056	North Korea	00850
China	0086	Norway	0047
Colombia	0057	Oman	00968
Comoros	00269	Pakistan	0092
Congo	00242	Palau	00680
Cook Islands	00682	Panama	00507
Costa Rica	00506	Papua New Guinea	00675
Croatia	00385	Paraguay	00595
Cuba	0053	Peru	0051
Cyprus	00357	Philippines	0063
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Poland	0048
Czech Republic	00420	Portugal	00351
Denmark	0045	Puerto Rico	001787
Diego Garcia	00246	Qatar	00974
Djibouti	00253	Romania	0040
Dominica	001767	Russian Federation	007
Dominican Republic	001809	Rwanda	00250
Ecuador	00593	Saint Helena	00290
Egypt	0020	Saint Kitts	001869
El Salvador	00503	Saint Lucia	001758
England (UK)	0044	Saint Pierre	00508
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Vincent	001784
Eritrea	00291	Samoa US	00684
Estonia	00372	Samoa West	00685
Ethiopia	00251	Sao Marino	00378
Falkland Islands	00500	Sao Tome	00239
Faroe Islands	00298	Saudi Arabia	00966
Fiji	00679	Scotland (UK)	0044
Finland	00358	Senegal	00221
France	0033	Seychelles	00284
French Guiana	00594	Sierra Leone	00232
French Polynesia	00689	Singapore	0065
Gabon	00241	Slovakia	00421
Gambia	00220	Slovenia	00386
Georgia	00995	Solomon Islands	00677
Germany	0049	Somalia	00252
Ghana	00233	South Africa	0027
Gibraltar	00350	South Korea	0082
Greece	0030	Spain	0034
Greenland	00299	Sri Lanka	0094
Grenada	001473	Sudan	00249
Guadeloupe	00590	Suriname	00597
Guam	001671	Swaziland	00268
Guatemala	00502	Sweden	0046
Guinea	00224	Switzerland	0041
Guyana	00592	Syria	00963
Haiti	00509	Serbia	00381
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Taiwan	00886
Honduras	00504	Tanzania	00255
Hong Kong	00852	Thailand	0066
Hungary	0036	Toga	00228
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Tonga	00676
Iceland	00354	Tokelau	00690
India	0091	Trinidad	001868
Indian Ocean	00873	Tunisia	00216
Indonesia	0062	Turkey	0090
Iran	0098	Tuvalu	00688
Iraq	00964	Uganda	00256
Ireland	00353	Ukraine	00380
Italy	0039	United Arab Emirates	00976
Ivory Coast	00225	United Kingdom	0044
Jamaica	001876	Uruguay	00598
Japan	0081	USA	001
Jordan	00962	Uzbekistan	00998
Kazakhstan	007	Vanuatu	00678
Kenya	00254	Venezuela	00582
Kiribati	00686	Vietnam	0084
Kuwait	00965	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands US	001340
Laos	00856	Wales (UK)	0044
Latvia	00371	Yemen	00967
Lebanon	00961	Yugoslavia	00381
Liberia	00231	Zambia	00260
Libya	00218	Zimbabwe	00263
Lithuania	00370		

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

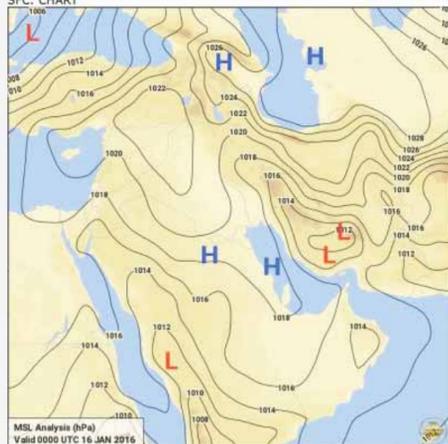
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 16/01/2016-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 22 °C

By Day : Sunny with variable wind changing to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear
By Night : Cold with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 30 km/h

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Expected Weather				
Min Temp °C	08	07	10	10
Max Temp °C	21	22	25	21
Wind Direction	north westerly	variable wind changing to light to moderate south easterly later on	south easterly to southerly	north westerly becoming north easterly
Wind Speed km/h	08 - 28	08 - 28	20 - 38	10 - 32

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C	REC	Max °C	EXP
KUWAIT CITY	13		19	
KUWAIT AIRPORT	08		22	
ABDALLY	09		23	
BUBYAN	10		18	
JAHRA	12		22	
FAILAKA ISLAND	11		19	
SALMIYAH	14		19	
AHMADI	14		19	
JAL ALIYAH	11		20	
QAROH ISLAND	17		19	
UMM AL-MARADEM	16		19	
NUWAISIB	10		20	
WAFRA	10		20	
MANAGISH	12		21	
SALMY	10		23	
MUTRIBA	10		21	

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	21
Min Temp (°C)	05
Max Rel Hum (%)	100
Min Rel Hum (%)	33
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	25 SE
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

	Sunrise	06:43
	Sunset	17:12

Prayer Times

Fajr	05:20
Sunrise	06:43
Zuhr	11:58
Asr	14:53
Sunset	17:12
Isha	18:33



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	Plastic Surgeons
Dr. Abdallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabeea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223
Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)	Family Doctor
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	2455050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammed Al-Daory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	Psychiatrists
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	2455050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhaizeem	22639920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Rafea	25333501
Urologists	Internists, Chest & Heart
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abdallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Paediatricians	Endocrinologist
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarroof	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gupje	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	Physiotherapists & VD
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dr. Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdallateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	Rheumatologists:
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	Internist, Chest & Heart
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135
Dr. Mohammed Akkad	2455050 Ext 210
Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC	
Assistant Professor Of Medicine Head, Division of Cardiology Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital	25339667
Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Farida Al-Habib MD, PH.D, FACC	2611555-2622555
Inaya German Medical Center	
Te: 2575077	
Fax: 25723123	

Dr. Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr. Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	Dentists
Dr. Adrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s. Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliyami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
General Surgeons	Neurologists
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
Internists, Chest & Heart	Dentists
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr. Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Psychologists /Psychotherapists	Soor Center Tel: 2290-1677 Fax: 2290 1688	info@soorcenter.com www.soorcenter.com	Kaizen center 25716707	Noor Clinic 23845955	William Schuilenberg, RPC 2290-1677 Zaina Al Zabin, M.Sc. 2290-1677
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Alicia Vikander couldn't live in America

The 27-year-old Swedish actress - who is dating Michael Fassbender - currently lives in London and can't imagine ever making a move Stateside because she doesn't feel comfortable there. Asked if she could live in Los Angeles, she said: "I don't think so. I don't feel very close to American culture. I'm much more European in my sensibility. I feel comfortable living in London now." However, the 'Danish Girl' star admits her stint in the UK didn't get off to a great start. She said: "I don't have very good memories of when I moved here. I was sharing this terrible - and very expensive - little flat, and when I first opened the door there were at least half a dozen rats running around in there. It was so bad that we moved the kitchen table into the hallway and that's

where we would always eat lunch and dinner." Though she is happily settled in London, Alicia does feel homesick sometimes. She told LOOK magazine: "I will always feel Swedish and Scandinavian that will never change. I have this love of nature and the outdoors that is very much part of my culture. I often feel homesick for it and things like the little red houses you find on small Swedish islands. Our beaches are very different from those in other countries too and I would love to go back there more often."



Guy Ritchie thinks Madonna's parenting is 'counterproductive'

The 'Man From U.N.C.L.E.' filmmaker - who struggled with learning disorder dyslexia as a child - is preparing to do battle with his ex-wife over the custody of their 15-year-old son Rocco, and he reportedly thinks the pop superstar is too strict with the teenager. A source told People magazine: "He wants Rocco to have the confidence he lacked growing up and thinks Madonna's stern parental style is counterproductive. The welfare of Rocco is Guy's priority." Rocco left Madonna's 'Rebel Heart' tour in December to be with his father and stepmother Jacqui Ainsley in London, and defied a court order to spend Christmas in New York with his mother. The teenager has remained in the UK and is reportedly missing school, but the source claims Rocco dislikes the Manhattan private school where he is educated because he thinks it is "elitist" and misses his friends in London. Madonna and Guy are due in court for a hearing on the matter on February 3. The former couple - who divorced in 2008 - also have adopted son David, 10, together, while Madonna also has daughter Lourdes, 19, from a past relationship, and adopted daughter Mercy, nine. Meanwhile, Guy and Jacqui are parents to Rafael, four, Rivka, three, and Levi, 18 months.



Kimberley Walsh is a 'controlling mother'

The former Girls Aloud singer admitted she won't let her 16-month-old son Bobby - who she has with fiance Justin Scott - stay at her best friend Cheryl Fernandez-Versini's house until he is much older because she feels "weird" when he isn't around. She said: "Cheryl was well up for it and still is, and I would completely trust her. She knows what she is doing and she says he's so easy it would be fine, but I think maybe when he's a bit older and I feel it's easier to let him go. I'm quite a controlling mother. I would feel weird if he wasn't sleeping at my house, it's a bit pathetic. But Cheryl knows I'm one of those mothers, so she understands." And despite her busy schedule, the 34-year-old star won't enlist the help of a nanny because she and Justin think it's important to be hands-on parents. She told Closer magazine: "There's just no way I could do it. He's our son, it's us who should be putting him to bed. Justin feels the same - he doesn't want a stranger in our house. I'm not judging people, but we want him to see one of us before he goes to sleep and wake up to us in the morning, even if that is at 4am. We make it work. Justin was coming home early and doing bath time every night when I was on stage recently."



Mirren never wanted to be a Hollywood star

The 70-year-old actress never imagined she would be able to follow her career dreams but initially set her sights on the theatre work. She said: "It was never my ambition to be a Hollywood star. I never even imagined that being an actress would be possible. I came from a family background where that world just seemed like a fortress, something you couldn't get into. I wasn't thinking about Hollywood because I wanted to be a theatre actress. I didn't even go to the cinema very often." As acting was not on Helen's agenda, she initially followed the advice of her parents to train as a teacher instead. She revealed: "They wanted me to become a teacher not an actress! So I did train as a teacher." And though she finally achieved her dreams, the 'Eye in the Sky' star's path never ran smoothly. She told the Daily Mail newspaper: "Somehow I've been led stumbling to the point where I am right now, which is the place I most want to be. It's been an endless litany of mistakes and mis-steps." Though she didn't carve out a teaching career, Helen admitted that she did achieve one thing her parents wanted. She said: "One very important thing that my parents always taught me was: 'You must be financially independent.' I take great pride and great pleasure in knowing that these days I am, indeed, financially secure, and that I have everything I have, I have earned."

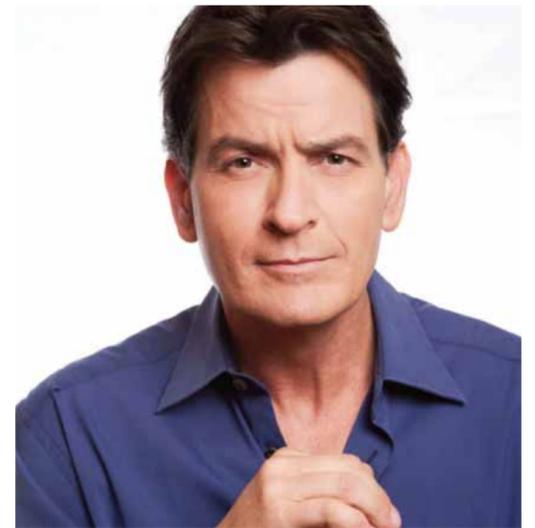


Kylie Jenner never wants to 'depend on a man'

The 18-year-old reality star - who has an on/off relationship with rapper Tyga - is determined to retain her own independence so she doesn't end up in a position where she has "nothing". She said: "I feel like I never want to depend on a man or a significant other because I've seen people where they break up with their boyfriend and then they're left with nothing. I want to be that girl who has her own stuff, who drives her own car and is just completely independent so I don't have to depend on anybody else." Despite leading her life in the public eye, Kylie insists she and Tyga are actually very private. She said: "If T and I broke up and didn't post a picture [on Instagram] for 10 days, no one would think anything is wrong because we don't really post that many pictures and we aren't that open." And the 'Keeping Up With the Kardashians' star admits her ultimate ambition is to leave the spotlight. Asked where she sees herself at 95, she told Britain's Elle magazine: "I would love to have a family and build a home with a farm in Malibu Canyon and just have my kids and throw away my phone and just really live my life and not do this anymore. That's my goal. To do everything that I want to do and that I aspire to and then not do it. Doesn't everybody want to do that? Just do what they want then relax."

Sheen says 'deep substance abuse' caused his manic episodes

The 50-year-old actor - who was axed from 'Two And A Half' men in 2011 over his erratic antics and public rantings about show creator Chuck Lorre - says his past behavior was a result of his lifestyle choices. Speaking on 'The Dr Oz Show', he said: "Manic behavior is usually in the throes of deep partying. Deep substance abuse and drinking. It doesn't really happen when I'm not doing. It has never really reared its head. It's interesting how I answered that question. I've been 'described' or 'diagnosed' by enough people that I guess at some point you have to take a look at it if it keeps walking like a duck." Meanwhile, Charlie also



revealed that he is back on his HIV medication. Earlier this week he admitted he had stopped the treatment his own doctor had advised him on in order to seek alternative therapy in Mexico, under the care of Dr Sam Chachoua, but when it was clear it wasn't working, he returned to conventional medicine. His manager, Mark Burg, said: "Just to be clear, Charlie put his life at risk for a doctor who claimed to have a cure for HIV. When it didn't work he immediately went back on his medication."



Gervais has hit out at Caitlyn Jenner again

During his recent stint as Golden Globe Awards host, the 54-year-old comedian blasted the transgender reality TV star - previously known as Bruce - who was involved in a fatal car accident in Malibu in which one person died. In response to Ricky's comments, Caitlyn quipped: "I think what I'm going to do is call the Golden Globes and see if they need a new host for next year. We'll solve that problem." However, Ricky was unimpressed and tweeted: "Please, please, please let her host the @golden-globes. Just don't let her drive." In response to reports saying that Caitlyn had "broken her silence", Ricky added: "At last. She always brakes too late," he quipped. During his opening monologue, Ricky joked: "I've changed. Not as much as Bruce Jenner, obviously. Now Caitlyn Jenner, of course. What a year she's had. She became a role model for trans people everywhere, showing great bravery in breaking down barriers and destroying stereotypes. She didn't do a lot for women drivers, but you can't have everything, can ya?" Previously, when people claimed the joke was transphobic, Ricky insisted he would not say sorry. He tweeted: "Suggesting a joke about Caitlin Jenner is automatically transphobic is like suggesting a joke about Bill Cosby is automatically racist. You have every right to be offended. Just don't cry when no one cares (sic)." And he went on to defend himself on Twitter, when one person wrote: "Re: Ricky Gervais's defence [sic] of his Caitlyn Jenner joke. If your joke is about a person's transition, it's probably transphobic (sic)." Ricky hit back, saying: "What if it was about her killing someone with her car? Would that be okay? I made a joke about Caitlyn Jenner killing someone in her car. I'm #TransportPhobic (sic)." Previously, Caitlyn was cleared of any criminal wrongdoing in relation to the car crash last February.



Blunt passed out when she was charged by a shark

The British actress and her husband John Krasinski had a terrifying underwater encounter during their honeymoon in 2010 when they went scuba diving, even though the 'Devil Wears Prada' star was concerned about getting close to the creatures. John recalled: "It's very scary... I know every shark looks like Jaws, but these really look like Jaws and they're huge...and they swim very close. "Emily never wanted to learn scuba diving and I was like 'We'll never get into trouble with sharks. "All of a sudden one broke off from the circle and started swimming behind us. I saw it and Emily didn't. "He started to charge Emily, so my decision was 'If I spook her and she moves a lot, he might bite

her. I just let it ride." The shark drifted past Emily - who has 23-month-old daughter Hazel with the '13 Hours' star - and when she realized it was so close, her spouse was left terrified by what happened next. He told talk show host Ellen DeGeneres: "Air bubbles came out, she kind of passed out under water. All of her air just went to the top, it was pretty scary." Thankfully for the couple, a sea turtle then came and cheered up the 32-year-old beauty. John, 36, added: "A sea turtle that came up, I'm not kidding, put his arm around her and then started petting her head. He hugged her. "It was like he knew she had had a bad day and was like 'Sorry about my buddy Terry, he gets real close on the flybys."



Parker thinks she is 'radically different' from Carrie Bradshaw

The 50-year-old actress can understand why people see similarities between herself and her famous 'Sex and the City' alter ego, but she insists it took "real work" to portray the character. She said: "I love the process of becoming somebody else, but the work to become so, and to be convincing, is still very challenging. "Every project is brand new and scary. People probably don't realize that Carrie Bradshaw was radically different from who I was, who I continue to be. "I think that sometimes because we look alike and live in the same city and haunt the same neighborhoods, that it was sort of like I was playing in the sandbox, when in truth it took real work every day to be her, to understand her, to not judge her." Sarah Jessica - who has son James, 12, and twin daughters Marion and Tabitha, six, with husband Matthew Broderick - will next be seen in HBO show 'Divorce' and she is enjoying playing a character so "incredibly different" to her real self. She told WSJ. magazine: "I'm working on a new series for HBO now. "The character I'm playing is incredibly different from me in many ways - she handles complexity differently than I do, her marriage is different from my own, and she's struggling financially in a way that I don't at this point in my life. "But that's what I love. I still love the idea of being somebody else."

Caitlyn wants to take her reality show around the world

The 66-year-old former Olympian - who was known as Bruce Jenner before her gender transition - has been on a road trip with her pals for the second season of 'I Am Cait', taking in the Grand Canyon, Santa Fe, New Mexico, Tulsa, Oklahoma, New York, Chicago, Iowa, Kansas City, St. Louis and New Orleans, and now she's set her sights on going even further afield. Speaking to TV critics, she said: "We opened up this conversation, but in opening it up there are so many issues in this community that we need to talk about and deal with. "I want to change people's thinking on this issue. It's not an issue that has bor-

ders. It is all over the world. I would love to take this show global." The reality star admits she has gained more enjoyment from going out and about since her transition. She said: "For almost my entire life, I never really liked going out. I never really felt like I fit in. I was more of a lone. "Now after transitioning, I actually enjoy going out." And when she's out in public, Caitlyn takes around 50 selfies a day with fans, mostly young men and women. She noted: "The next group of people coming up really has a different look at all of this."



DiCaprio won't make a movie like 'The Revenant' again.

The 41-year-old star - who played American frontiersman Hugh Glass, who sustains injuries from a brutal bear attack and is left for dead by his fellow adventurer Jackson (Tom Hardy) - filmed for seven months in sub-zero temperatures and took shelter inside a dead horse in one scene. And despite winning a Golden Globe and being nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actor for his performance, Leonardo confessed he won't ever work in those conditions again. Speaking from the European premiere of 'The Revenant' at London's The Empire Leicester Square on Thursday night - where temperatures were almost freezing on the red carpet - he moaned to BANG Showbiz: "I haven't been back in cold weather for six or seven months [until now]. "Something in [director Alejandro G Inarritu's] eyes, spoke to me about this story. "But I don't know if I'll ever be able to do a movie like this for the rest of my career." Despite the memories of the cold still being fresh, the actor was very "proud" to tell the story. Leonardo said: "We're all very proud of it. It's incredible to do a movie like this, it's such an experimental thing... It's about adaptation to your circumstances, survival and perseverance of the human spirit." Leonardo was joined on the red carpet at the premiere by his co-stars, including Hardy, Domhnall Gleeson, Will Poulter and Paul Alexander.



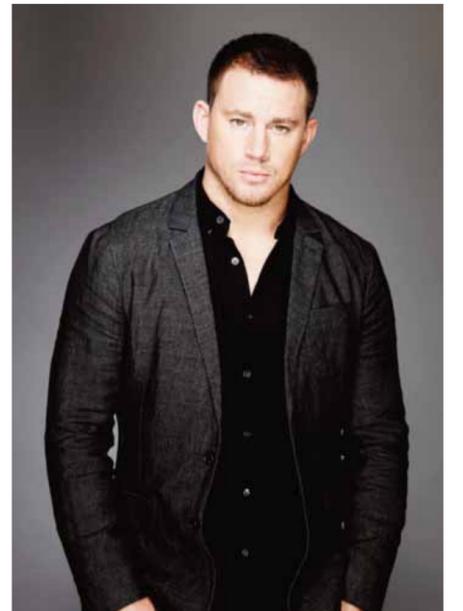
Amal Clooney thinks it's 'good' she is in the public eye

The human rights lawyer admits she feels a "certain responsibility" since being thrust into the spotlight thanks to her relationship with actor George Clooney - who she married in September 2014 - and tries to use the attention on her to help with her work. Asked about celebrities using their fame to promote other causes, she told NBC News' Cynthia McFadden: "I think it's wonderful that celebrities would choose to spend their time or energy or, you know, the spotlight that they have to raise awareness about these causes." "I don't really see myself in the same way because I'm still doing the same job that I used to do before. "If there's more attention paid - for whatever reason - to that, then I think that's good. "I think there is a certain responsibility that comes with that. And you know, I think I'm exercising it in an appropriate manner by continuing to do this kind of work." George recently admitted he thinks Amal is so smart, he often feels like an "idiot" when they sit down for a chat. He said: "Often times I feel like an idiot talking to my own wife. It's never good."



Tatum had never met Beyonce before 'Lip Sync Battle'

The 'Magic Mike XXL' actor's routine to 'Run the World (Girls)' saw him dance alongside the singer and despite the impressive choreography, they never had chance to rehearse because producers kept them apart backstage so Channing's wife Jenna Dewan-Tatum - who he was competing against - never found out. Executive producer Casey Patterson said: "That moment on air, that's the first time they ever met. "He's dressed as her, dancing and singing to her song. We were just hoping he would keep dancing." While the pair hadn't met before, the 35-year-old actor had contacted Beyonce, 34, personally to ask her to take part. Casey added to The Hollywood Reporter: "Channing, during one of his rehearsals, sent an iPhone video message to her about two days before the show. "Only Channing and Beyonce know the back and forth, but I think that's what put it over the top." The celebrity contestants choose their own songs for the show and Beyonce's tracks have been requested more than any other artist. Casey said: "We don't choose the songs for the performers - it's always their choice - and, since day one, the most requested artist has been Beyonce." She's been the holy grail, and we've always been in contact with her camp. They know when we're gearing up for production."

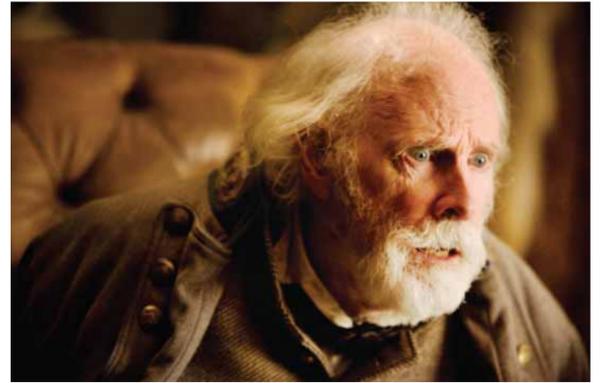


Tomlinson praised for his kindness towards a young cancer victim

The caring One Direction singer was touched by the story of Harvey, nine - who suffered from the aggressive childhood cancer neuroblastoma - after their mothers met at a charity event. Louis, 24, helped Harvey and his family creates a number of "precious" memories, including inviting him to a charity ball for children, bringing him to a One Direction concert and sending the entire family to Disneyland, before Harvey sadly passed away last year. Harvey's mother Sarah Hext told The Inquisitr: "Disney was Harvey's favorite place. There were about 10 Believe in Magic charity family's who went and the kids were given a suitcase each full of beautiful clothes, we stayed in The Pink Palace hotel which is just stunning,

everything was taken care of. "The day after the One Direction show, Louis even sent a car to take us all to a Believe in Magic party in Hamleys toy store. The whole weekend was 'just magical' we as a family would never have had access to this sort of treatment if it were not for Louis and Jay [Johannah Deakin - Louis' mother]. "Louis Tomlinson is very grounded, he is family orientated and both Louis and Jay hold a very special place in my family's hearts." — Bangshowbiz





Film review

The Hateful Eight

By Aakash Bakaya

What makes a movie worth watching? What makes a movie worth spending your hard-earned cash on or use up almost three hours of your time? There are no definite answers to these questions because ten different people would give you ten different answers. But that doesn't mean there won't be similar thoughts running through the heads of a majority of them. I may be wrong but my guess is that the most common words would be the three 'Es' - entertaining, engaging and enlightening. For over two decades now, writer and director Quentin Tarantino has been providing these three Es in all his films and his latest feature 'The Hateful Eight' is no different.

Set in a wintry hell of outback Wyoming years after the American Civil War, the story begins with a pair of bounty hunters making their way to the town of Red Rock. Major Marquis Warren (Samuel L Jackson) is transporting three corpses and hires a ride to town with our other bounty hunter John Ruth (Kurt Russell). Ruth is far from hospitable and is suspicious of everyone he comes across. This is because he is transporting his own bounty to Red Rock - alive.

Fugitive Daisy Domergue (Jennifer Jason Leigh) has a massive \$10,000 bounty on her head and Ruth is going to make sure that nothing is going to get in his way to that paycheck. There are complications however as a deadly blizzard is right on their tails and they need to find shelter as soon as possible. Fortunately for them, 'Minnie's Haberdashery' is on route and they decide to hole up inside. When they reach Minnie's however, there are already a few guests inside and having eight holed-up strangers (one of them being a wanted criminal) is not going to make this stay any easier.

The film's setting never leaves Minnie's after our weary protagonists settle down and what ensues will leave you glued to the screen until the credits begin to roll. Not since 'Reservoir Dogs' has Tarantino scaled back a film to this degree while his sumptuous flair for dialogue makes even the most mundane of



locations such a riveting experience. It's witty, sharp and tense at all times and in true Tarantino fashion, its ability to shock the audience is ever present. One aspect he's proven again with his scripts is his subtle jabs at present political and class scenarios. Race tensions are ever present in Minnie's Haberdashery and like 'Django Unchained', the colorful language is meant to be a giant finger to today's politically correct audiences.

Another hallmark of a Tarantino movie is the amazing performances he gets out of his actors. I can safely claim that even if the story doesn't grab you - the actors most certainly will. Russell and Jackson give typical solid performances once again as both always seem in their elements in a Tarantino flick (it helps when the writer writes a specific role especially for you). The rest of cast which includes Tim Roth, Michael Madsen and Walton Goggins all seem to be thoroughly enjoying themselves with their eccentric parts and any Tarantino fan will crack a smile seeing 'Reservoir Dogs'

duo Roth and Madsen side by side again.

As great as their performances are, the highlight of the film most certainly goes to Leigh's unnerving portrayal of Daisy Domergue. She steals every scene she's in with soul searching glares while the handful of lines she's given makes her feel like the biggest person in the room. To churn out such a performance being handcuffed to another actor for almost the entire film only serves to highlight it even more.

Another standout of the film goes to Ennio Morricone's amazing soundtrack. An original soundtrack with only a single pre-recorded track is a first for the director and getting the legendary composer onboard is an absolute treat. Morricone, one of film's greatest music composers, returns for his first Western film in almost 50 years and listening to it in the cinema was an honor. It was also like nothing I was expecting. Except for his classical sweeping scores that are now synonymous with the Western genre, we get a musical styling remi-

A mysterious, bloody thrill ride courtesy of Quentin Tarantino

niscent from his compositions on horror classic 'The Thing'. From the opening scene itself - the slow, high-pitched violins get under your skin and intensify the feeling of isolation and dread all the more. It's funny how many more

throwbacks are present to John Carpenter's horror classic and it suits the film to a surprising degree.

Tarantino films have always been a cinematic event and the fact that it's being overshadowed by 'The Revenant' and a little film called 'Star Wars' only serves the intrigue behind the movie even more. It's a fantastic film that may sound biased from a self-proclaimed Tarantino fan but ultimately it absolutely succeeds in providing the audience with the three common "Es" of a great movie. The film's violent and bloody third act may be too shocking for some but I would still recommend the film based on its tremendous power to suck you into its world. 'The Hateful Eight' is pure, old-school escapism and stands as one of my all-time favorite cinema experiences. Drag your friends to the nearest cinema hall and strap yourselves in for a three-hour-long ride you won't forget soon.



Home Centre Launches widely-awaited 'Room Makeover' contest



Home Centre, the largest home retailer in the Middle East has announced the fourth edition of its much-anticipated 'Room Makeover' contest. Teaming up with brand ambassador Nancy Ajram, Home Centre will give away room makeovers worth KD 1200 each to 15 winners selected from six countries in the region - the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Lebanon.

Regarding the "most awaited room makeover with Nancy Ajram", this season features a unique twist. Commencing on 17 January 2016, this season will ask participants to share their thoughts with Nancy on why they deserve to win.

Commenting on the initiative Nancy Ajram said: "People love the idea of winning a room makeover - especially at the beginning of a new year - as it represents a fresh start. Despite this being my first year of association with Home Centre, I've seen some beautiful creations as part of the brand's room makeovers in the previous cycles. Personally, for me it is the human aspect of the winners' stories that stand out - each of them is a truly deserving candidate. I am excited to see the entries that come in this year."

Mederic Payne, CEO, Home Centre, said: "Home Centre's Room Makeover is truly amongst the most eagerly awaited consumer-engagement platforms by a brand across the region. The campaign has enjoyed huge success over the past three cycles and we have had numerous requests to re-launch it year after year.

For Home Centre, this is purely an opportunity to showcase our core strengths as a market leader in this niche segment and connect with our customers. We have the breadth across our collection to match any preference, and comprehensively deliver a room that meets every need.

We don't link the Room Makeover with a minimum purchase or a sales promotion as we want it to be truly all-inclusive. We hope that the fourth cycle inspires people and gives them unique ideas for their own home, because that is the spirit that Home Centre embodies."

Participants can apply for the contest at any Home Centre store, or by logging on to the brand's website (www.homecentrestores.com/roommakeover), Facebook page (www.facebook.com/Homecentrestores),



Twitter handle (www.twitter.com/askhomecentre) or Instagram account (www.instagram.com/homecentrestores).

Entries will remain open until 13 February 2016 and all applicants will be rewarded with an e-voucher offering a 20 percent discount

for purchases at Home Centre stores in their respective country.

Home Centre will reach out to the top 500 shortlisted participants and request them to share pictures of their room. These will be further narrowed down to the top 30 entries.

After having reviewed these rooms, Home Centre's team of experts will select the top 15 winners, one of which will be selected through a vote on Home Centre's Facebook page. Voters will also be entitled to receiving a 20 per cent discount voucher which can be redeemed against purchases at Home Centre stores in their respective countries.

Room Makeovers for the 15 winners will be executed in March 2016 by a special team of visual merchandisers and designers from Home Centre, concluding the fourth cycle of the brand's most successful consumer activation. The team will pay special consideration to the individual preferences and personalities of the winners, to create a room which is best suited to their lifestyles.

Each makeover will be pre-planned and implemented in a single day, to minimize the inconvenience to the winners.

The third cycle of Home Centre's Room Makeover attracted over 37,000 entries and the winners' journeys received over 200,000 views across the brand's social media platforms. To watch Home Centre's previous room makeovers, log on www.homecentrestores.com/roommakeover.



Models present the creations for fashion house Costume National during the Men Fall - Winter 2016 / 2017 collection shows at the Milan's Fashion Week. —AFP photos

Fashion titans clash over shake-up of catwalk calendar

Milan Fashion Week



It is nothing short of a fashion earthquake. The organisers of New York Fashion Week are considering doing away with a century of tradition and showing designers' catwalk collections only when they go on sale in the shops.

Until now, the public has had to wait between four and six months before they could buy the clothes featured in each season's shows. But the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA), which runs New York's twice-yearly catwalk shows, claims the "system is broken" and no longer works in a world obsessed with "fast fashion". Its director, the designer and former princess Diane von Furstenberg, claims the system frustrates the public and gives counterfeiters time to rip off the latest trends. "The only people who benefit are the people who copy," she told the trade bible Women's Wear Daily.

Von Furstenberg and the CFDA—who have commissioned a consultants' report into how the fashion calendar might be shaken up—said the press and retailers should still be given sneak previews of each new season's creations behind closed doors so orders could be placed. But the razmataz of the big runway shows should be opened up to the public, she argued, and turned into major entertainment events. Now only fashion buyers, journalists and celebrities are allowed to attend the catwalk shows, with seats highly sought after.

Paris, Milan hit back

But the Americans may not have it their way, with Paris and Milan—the world's traditional fashion capitals—roundly rejecting the idea. With their fashion industries more geared towards craft and artistry than the mass-market US trade, the fashion world appears to be heading for a stand-off.

"Our industry is experiencing exceptional growth," said Ralph Toledano, head of France's Couture Federation, saying it was wrong to think the status quo no longer works and warning that such radical change might create more problems than it solves. "This all comes from an idea that we frustrate the public by showing them things that they cannot yet buy. Which is true. And that maybe is a problem we should think about," Toledano said.

"But it is not the best solution for Paris, which is the capital of fashion know-how and creativity. We want to show clothes in a manner fitting to the way they were created. "You cannot say to a designer, 'We are going to

freeze your creations for months.' Some of them sometimes tell us the day after a catwalk show that they don't like some of the things they came up with themselves—imagine what it would be like after several months," he added.

And Toledano dismissed as unrealistic von Furstenberg's idea that new collections could be shown secretly to the press and buyers without details leaking in the age of Twitter and WhatsApp. His opposite number in Milan, Carlo Capasa, was equally skeptical. "There will be a black market in photos of designs," he claimed, warning that turning fashion shows into a "phenomenon of pure marketing risked killing the way catwalk shows promote innovation."

Penalize new designers

Capasa feared the system the Americans were proposing pandered to multinational brands, and "would penalize new labels who might lose the powerful push that a good catwalk show can give," he said in a statement.

For several years, London has been experimenting with a halfway house between the two systems, organizing a "Fashion Weekend" at the end of each fashion week for the general public. Caroline Rush, director of the British Fashion Council, said with many followers of fashion watching shows almost live through social media, the lines were already blurring.

"There is no doubt in future seasons these lines will blur even more as designers opt to do in-season shows. However, we need to ensure those businesses that rely on platforms such as fashion weeks to reach new wholesale partners and media continue to have the opportunity to do so," she added.

Some labels are already trying to find alternatives to the catwalk circus, with Versus Versace—the youth-orientated brand of the Italian fashion house—putting its new designs directly on sale on its website. And the French brand Givenchy set up a lottery for 800 places at its last New York show in September. It is not the first time such a democratic approach has been tried. Thousands of fashion fans bought tickets to watch a Thierry Mugler show in Paris in 1984. —AFP



Models present the creations for fashion house Ermenegildo Zegna.



Sikh devotees take selfies on the eve of the birth anniversary of the tenth and final Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh, in Golden Temple, Sikh's holiest shrine in Amritsar, India. Gobind Singh is considered a forefather in the religion. — AP

Heart-pounding action? Hollywood can now measure that



This photo provided by Twentieth Century Fox shows, Leonardo DiCaprio in a scene from the film, "The Revenant." — AP

Ever been told a movie is a heart-pounding thriller that'll have you on the edge of your seat? Thanks to wearable technology, Hollywood has the tools to prove it. 20th Century Fox says that it used a wearable wristband on over 100 people in test screenings for Oscar-contender "The Revenant" before it hit theaters in December. It's unclear if it's the first studio to obtain this sort of data from audiences, but experts say it's unlikely to be the last.

By measuring heart rate, skin moisture, movement, and audible gasps, Fox found the Leonardo DiCaprio vehicle had 14 heart-pounding moments where it measured significant jumps in people's heart rates. Fifteen scenes evoked fight-or-flight responses, as determined by a range of indicators taken together. The audience was also almost completely motionless for just over half of the 2.6-hour movie - in other words, says the studio, on the edge of their seats.

George Dewey, Fox's senior vice president of digital, said the data complements traditional written surveys and focus groups. One of its advantages, he said, is that it cuts through some of the statistical "noise" that results when audience members influence each other after the movie. "This is a pure way to measure individual audience response," he said.

Companies like the Innerscope Research unit of measurement and ratings giant Nielsen have been doing such biometric-based audience testing for nearly a decade, said Carl Marci, Nielsen's chief neuroscientist. But Hollywood, he said, has been shy about applying these techniques to movies due to the time and expense involved.

Taking such measurements has previously involved

bringing viewers into the lab one at a time, where they can be monitored by medical-grade equipment that tracks everything from brainwaves to eye movement. The spread of inexpensive wearable sensors, however, is bringing costs down to the point where even movie producers with tight budgets can consider them.

Technology for marketing

Sensors that are "wearable and smaller and lighter and less expensive" are starting to hit the marketplace, Marci said. "This is one example of the wave." Lightwave Inc, the technology company Fox hired to run the test, said it opted for the sensor-laden wristband to avoid "white coat syndrome" - the sort of elevated blood pressure and heart rate people experience when they know they're being tested. (Or just going to the doctor.) "The participant feels like they're just going to a movie," said Lightwave CEO Rana June.

For now, Fox plans to use the technology for marketing - for instance, to highlight scenes that provoke more of a reaction among women in advertising that targets them. But "Revenant" director Alejandro Inarritu also saw the results, Dewey acknowledged. And it's not hard to imagine such pulse and respiratory data influencing the way directors and editors put together their films, much the way test-audience reactions can lead filmmakers to drop certain scenes, or even to change a movie's ending entirely. Dewey, however, played down the likely impact on the moviemaking process. "Nothing's ever going to replace the artistry of filmmaking," he said. —AP

Potter fans raise wands for late actor Rickman

Some left flowers, others a few heartfelt words. Fans of the Harry Potter saga paid tribute Friday to the late actor Alan Rickman at the mythical platform 9 3/4 at London's King's Cross station. One letter left among the flowers at King's Cross reflected how Rickman had made the character his own.

"Dear Alan, I was so shocked to hear of your death," it read. "I feel like a great light has gone out of the world. You have always been part of me for my childhood. You have understood and loved Severus more than any of us and a part of him dies with you." Rickman, who died of cancer on Thursday, aged 69, gained legions of young fans with his portrayal of the morally ambiguous teacher Severus Snape in all eight "Harry Potter" films from 2001 to 2011.

Platform 9 3/4 is where Potter departed for Hogwarts via the Hogwarts Express, and is marked by a permanent installation at King's Cross, comprising a trolley-complete with luggage and birdcage-disappearing into a wall. "It's really upsetting," said fan Sarah Winfield, 25, speaking next to a shrine by the trolley installation. "He was done with Harry Potter, but he wasn't done making good films, so it's sad."

Potter's creator JK Rowling has said she was "shocked and devastated" by Rickman's death, adding that he was "a magnificent actor and a wonderful man." Daniel Radcliffe, who played Potter, said Rickman was "one of the greatest actors I will ever work with... and one of the loyalist and most supportive people I've ever met." Winfield added: "Severus Snape is Alan Rickman and Alan Rickman is Severus Snape. I don't think anyone else could fill his shoes."

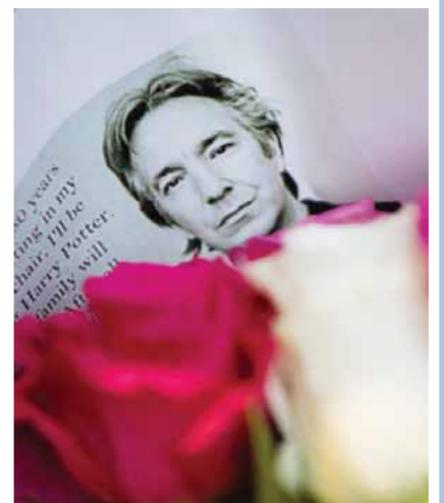
January blues

At the beginning of the saga, Snape-a teacher at Potter's school Hogwarts-is cold and unkind but develops into a more sympathetic character as his true motives are revealed. Hordes of international fans took to Twitter to express their sadness, encouraging each other to re-enact the poignant moment during the series when Hogwarts pupils pay tribute to their deceased headmaster Dumbledore.

"Raise your wands for Mr Alan Rickman aka Professor Severus Snape. You will be missed sir. May you rest in peace," wrote user Miriam Santiago.

Others took to online fan forums. "I heard of his passing just as my day was winding down," wrote user "Steelsheen" on Potter forum "Snitchseeker". "Shock gave way to sadness which gave way to exhaustion. You know news hits you bad when not even sleep could make it better. Onto the next great adventure Alan!"

Rickman is the second major British cultural figure aged 69 to die this week following a private battle with cancer after rock icon David Bowie's death on Monday. "I'm a little emotional, it's been a difficult week, with David Bowie and Alan Rickman-they were great idols of mine," said Brazilian Raquel Velho at King's Cross. "Harry Potter has always been part of my life and when I saw that Severus Snape had died I had to do something for him," she added. "Clearly we got up on the wrong side of this year," wrote fan "Ameh" on Snitchseeker. "Can we all just agree to go to sleep and start 2016 over again?" —AFP



Floral tributes to British actor Alan Rickman are seen at the Platform 9 3/4 Harry Potter display at King's Cross station in London. —AFP