

We would do it again in a heartbeat: US Gulf war vets



Islamic State 'brand' spreading worldwide



Experts on course to unravel secrets of Egypt pyramids



Liverpool felled by Rooney sucker-punch



ROUHANI, OBAMA HAIL NUKE DEAL AS SANCTIONS LIFTED

US SLAPS NEW MISSILE SANCTIONS AFTER PRISONERS LEAVE IRAN



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GULF SHARES PLUNGE AFTER OIL ROUT, IRAN DEAL

KUWAIT: Share prices in the energy-rich Gulf states nosedived yesterday following the sharp decline in oil prices as Iran prepares to resume crude exports after the lifting of sanctions. The plunge in the first day of trading also follows heavy losses in global bourses on Friday, when Gulf exchanges were closed for the weekend. The price of oil, which contributes more than 80 percent to Gulf states' revenues, shed more than 20 percent this year to drop below \$30 a barrel. This follows a plunge of 65 percent in the past two years.



KUWAIT: Traders follow stock market activity at the Kuwait Stock Exchange yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

The expected return of Iran to the oil market, following the implementation Saturday of its historic nuclear deal with world powers, will only worsen the production glut that has been the main reason for the oil price dive. All seven Gulf bourses saw a wave of panic selling, sending indices to multi-year lows. Big investors joined small dealers in dumping shares in fear of a further slump.

"The majority of Gulf firms depend on their governments, which depend on oil revenues. No one knows the bottom of oil prices," Kuwaiti analyst Ali Al-Nemish said. "The Iranian impact on the markets appears to be somewhat inflated because Iranian crude exports will not be huge initially," Nemish told AFP.

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TEHRAN: The US and Iranian presidents yesterday hailed the implementation of Tehran's nuclear deal as historic, but new American sanctions threatened fresh tensions. The UN's atomic watchdog confirmed in Vienna late on Saturday that Iran had complied with its obligations under last summer's accord, leading the United States and the European Union to lift sanctions.



Barack Obama



Hassan Rouhani

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, a moderate whose 2013 election victory helped launch a huge diplomatic effort toward the deal struck on July 14 in Vienna, said the implementation was a crucial moment for his country. "We Iranians have reached out to the world... have opened a new chapter in the relations of Iran with the world," the official IRNA news agency quoted him as saying.

In Washington, President Barack Obama said engagement with Iran had provided a "unique opportunity". But Obama also noted that "profound differences" with

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AMIR ORDERS SLASHING AMIRI DIWAN BUDGET

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday ordered HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to take measures needed to restudy the Amiri Diwan budget and that of affiliated bodies as well as rationalize it, said Deputy Amiri Diwan Minister Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah yesterday.

MPs welcomed and praised the Amir's order. MP Madhi Al-Hajeri said such an important decision can only come from an important leader like Sheikh Sabah. He said the Amir has realized the difficult economic situation resulting from the drop in oil prices and accordingly ordered the revision. He called on all state agencies to follow suit. MP Talal Al-Jallal called on all ministers to follow the decision in order to cut spending in the next year's budget. He asked the government to provide the National Assembly with the details of amounts saved by various ministers.

Meanwhile, Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday

assigned MP Yousef Al-Zalzalah to coordinate with finance minister and acting oil minister Anas Al-Saleh to hold a joint Assembly-government meeting to discuss measures to face the budget deficit. The meeting will take place at the Assembly bureau and will debate specific measures to boost non-oil revenues.

Saleh has said that the government will discuss all the measures with the Assembly before adopting them and Ghanem has said that the government promised not to take any unilateral decision. The meeting is expected to discuss reducing subsidies on petrol and on other heavily-subsidized services like electricity. Kuwait is the only Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) state not to raise the price of petrol following the sharp fall in oil prices. Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain have all increased the price of fuel and other commodities after recording budget deficits. Kuwait has only increased the price of diesel and kerosene.

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MUSLIM SCOUTS BALANCE FAITH, AMERICAN VALUES

News

in brief

Contractor dies at Ahmadi refinery

KUWAIT: The Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) said yesterday that an Indian contractor at Mina Al-Ahmadi refinery fell to his death during maintenance work. The accident occurred on Saturday afternoon and the contractor was provided with first aid, then transferred to Adan Hospital. He underwent surgery but died later in the evening of the same day, KNPC told KUNA in statement. The company expressed sorrow over the death of the worker and said that it will look into the causes of the incident.

Kuwaiti abducted in eastern Lebanon

BEIRUT: Unidentified gunmen abducted a Kuwaiti citizen in the Lebanon's eastern Bekaa valley, the Kuwaiti ambassador to the country said yesterday. Abulal Al-Ginaee, in a statement to KUNA, said the Kuwaiti diplomatic mission was in constant contact with Lebanese security apparatuses to look into the circumstances of the kidnapping of the Kuwaiti national and seek to free him as soon as possible. Local official media reported that unidentified gunmen snatched the Kuwaiti from his farm in the town of Qebb Elias in the Bekaa valley. He was taken away at gunpoint.

GETTYSBURG: In a bus taking them to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania - site of the US Civil War's most famous battle - the members of Boy Scout Troop 114 are all ears. "Listen up during the trip! This is a rewarding trip - if you pay attention, it will help you get the merit badge," booms one of the scout leaders. "We are going to Gettysburg!" says one of the 20 teenagers excitedly. "Alhamdulillah!" he cries, Arabic for praise God.

Troop 114 is like any other in the scouts, except in one important respect: They are Muslim. For these boys, combining their Islamic faith with an organization that was long a rite of passage for many young Americans is the best response to growing Islamophobia in the United States and the rhetoric of Donald Trump. The Republican presidential frontrunner wants a ban on Muslims entering the United States in the wake of attacks in Paris in November and the one that followed in California one month later.

Like all scouts, the members of troop 114 - created in Fairfax, Virginia in 2012 - pledge: "On my honor, I will do my best." But these scouts also hope they can "serve the Muslim community and help the kids become better citizens," says Abdul Rashid Abdullah, who is in charge of the troop of 35 scouts, most of whom are Americans of Arab origin. "Muslim boy scouts are not common, it's true," concedes the 43-year-old American, who converted to Islam in 1990. "But there are more and more of us. We get lots of support from the Boy Scouts. The only difference is how we pray."

The Saturday outing to Gettysburg aims to drive home to the scouts the turning point in the American Civil War. And the goal is not just to underscore the importance of American history - but to hammer home that American history is also their history.

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KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, accompanied by Kuwait Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Khaled Al-Kheder.

AMIR, CROWN PRINCE RECEIVE STATE OFFICIALS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Seif Palace yesterday. His Highness the Amir also received Parliament Speaker

Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as Defense Minister Sheikh

Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, who was accompanied by Kuwait Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Khaled Al-Kheder.

His Highness the Crown Prince also received Minister of Information and

Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, along with Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, and Acting Minister of Electricity and Water Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. —KUNA

HORECA KUWAIT 2016 KICKS OFF TODAY

PARTICIPANTS, SPONSORS PARTNERS IN SUCCESS: ANJERI

KUWAIT: Under auspices of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, the Horeca Kuwait 2016 exhibition opens today at Badriya Ballroom in the Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa, with participation of over 60 companies specialized in hospitality, catering and hotel equipment. The three-day event is organized by the Leaders Group Company for Consulting and Development in collaboration with the Hospitality Services Company.

Speaking on the occasion, Nabila Al-Anjeri, Leaders Group's General Manager, stressed that preparations for the exhibition are

complete. "The exhibition is a good chance for ambitious young people who intend to start new restaurant and hotel-related projects," she said in a press statement, noting that Horeca Kuwait is a scientifically specialized exhibition where experts in the hospitality, food industries, hotel equipment, tourism, shipping and storage fields would take part.

Anjeri thanked all participants and sponsors of the event, noting that their cooperation has been the base of Horeca Kuwait's success, and enabling it to achieve a leading position in Kuwait, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region and the Middle East.



Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah



Nabila Al-Anjeri



KUWAIT: Lord Mayor of London Jeffrey Evans arrived in Kuwait yesterday on an official visit. He was received by Hawalli Governor Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. —KUNA

WE WOULD DO IT AGAIN IN A HEARTBEAT: US GULF WAR VETS

WASHINGTON: Several US Gulf War Veterans expressed their honor to take part in the liberation of Kuwait, reiterating that they would do it again 'in a heartbeat'. Exactly twenty-five years ago today, the United States Army, backed by an international coalition of 34 countries, began the Desert Storm mission, an operation that lasted 41 days, resulting in the liberation of Kuwait from Saddam Hussein's occupying troops.

In several interviews with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the Army veterans said that they are proud to have partaken in 'something very significant,' liberating and returning a forcefully occupied land to its rightful owner.

Scott Stump, a Gulf War Veteran and the President and CEO of the National Desert Storm War Memorial (NDSWM) committee, said that "I am

honored to be a part of this momentous war, we did the right thing, I am proud to make a difference in Kuwaiti people's lives, giving them a future." Stump added that knowing what the Kuwaiti people have endured during the seven-month invasion urged the half a million US troop to combat the "terrorism" that was inflicted upon them.

Gulf War memorial

The NDSWM is designing and lobbying to place a Gulf War memorial on the National Mall in the heart of the US capital Washington DC to highlight the 292 US servicemen who gave their lives for the two operations in the war, Desert Storm and Desert Shield.

They are in the process of choosing the ground and designing in a way that highlights the efforts

of all the coalition and educates in one of the most important and most swiftly won wars that the US have partook in the 20th century.

It was an ultimate success, "what it was supposed to be and what it ended up being were so different," Stump noted about the offensive operation, Desert Storm, that began its aerial and naval bombardment of occupying Iraqi forces for five weeks and a ground assault on the February 24th, only two days before the official liberation of the State of Kuwait.

Stump visualized the dark black smoke that came out of Kuwait oil fields as it was set on fire "desperately" by Iraqi forces as they were fleeing out of Kuwait's north boarder. "We have a responsibility to our fellow man," Kent Shively, a US Marine infantry during the Gulf War, told KUNA and that "nobody has a desire to leave their family and home, but when you see snippets of what has occurred to your people (Kuwaitis), you go on ahead." "To be a 19-year-old kid and write your own will," Shively said who was married for 3 and half weeks at that time, but the swift victory gave them "an enormous sense of relief, as we believed this mission was a one-way trip."

Finish the job

On the other hand, Stephen Venneman who was a Firefinder Radar Operator during the war said that "I only wish we would have been able to finish the job and remove Saddam Hussein from power," however, he added "we met our objective to liberate the people of Kuwait from an illegal occupation." "I knew I wanted to go as soon as we heard about the Iraqi invasion," Venneman reiterated "I felt that the invasion was wrong, unjustified, and deserved a swift and decisive response from the international community," which it did.

On the reaction when he returned to the US after the victory he explained "I was treated like a conquering hero," noting that "I treasure the Liberation of Kuwait medal I received from the Kuwaiti government." A fourth US Army Veteran Cee Freeman also told KUNA that "I had to say goodbye to my parents," but when asked if he would do it again; he and the other veterans jumped and said "in a heartbeat." "We were riding along with a full army brigade when the news of the ceasefire broke and Kuwait's liberation. Miles of vehicles halted, soldiers came out of their vehicles and started jumping like kids," Freeman recalled. "We have accomplished the mission."

Starting January 17th, 1991, the international coalition back-then lead by the United States launched an aerial campaign dropping over 88 tons of bombs destroying Iraqi military infrastructure, targets and Scud missile launchers. More than 900,000 troops participated in Operation Desert Storm that continued two days after announcing Kuwait's free on the February 26th ending the around seven-month occupation. — KUNA



Gulf War veteran Cee Freeman's brigade in 1991.



WASHINGTON: Gulf War veterans Scott Stump, Kent Shively and Cee Freeman. —KUNA

SPEAKER MEETS YAZIDI SURVIVOR OF IS ATTACKS

KUWAIT: Parliament Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem met yesterday with a Yazidi girl who has survived aggressions by the so-called Islamic State (IS) in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, where she had spent months in captivity. Nadia Murad, who is on a visit to Kuwait at the invitation of Ghanem, gave the Parliament Speaker the minutia of the adversity she and her ethnic community

had to endure at the hands of IS in the city of Sinjar, which had fallen under IS' control. Ghanem extolled Murad's valiancy, vowing that the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union (AIPU) would vigorously pursue the issue. Murad had recently visited the United Nations (UN) and Egypt as part of efforts to shed light on female detainees held captive by IS. — KUNA



Fouzi Al-Sager



Eid Al-Otaibi.—Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

CANDIDATES FOR BY-ELECTIONS IN 3RD CONSTITUENCY REACH 30

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The total number of candidates running for by-elections in the third constituency rose to 30, while no female candidate has yet registered. Speaking after filing his nomination, candidate Abdullah Al-Kandari said that there was fierce competition in the constituency. He also slammed talking about the short period remaining in the current parliament's tenure, noting that a year has 365 days and that much could be done once lawmakers pinpointed citizens' concerns and needs.

Candidate Fouzi Al-Sager stressed that his main concern if he makes it to the parliament would be domestic stability because development basically depends on security. Candidate Faisal Al-Saleel said that his electoral program mainly focuses on supporting security forces in view of the threats surrounding Kuwait and endangering national identity and loyalty to the nation. He added that he would also focus on issues like disabled rights, educational development, improving health services and activating youth roles.

Candidate Eid Al-Otaibi said that his electoral program would focus on three main issues - decent dialogue, moderation and development. Candidate Mezyad

Al-Maasherji stressed that Kuwait was going through a new era that calls for more work, accomplishments and letting bygones be bygones. "We need to have youth play more significant roles in decision-making," he underlined.

Candidate Essa Abdullah said that he would focus on housing and health services. Candidate Fuhaid Al-Ajmi said that he would focus on serving citizens, education, health, housing and women's causes.

The Interior Ministry's Directorate of Elections Affairs had announced yesterday that nine more Kuwaitis have registered to run for by-elections in the third constituency. The decision to accept more candidacy requests is in line with Law 112 of the year 2016, issued by Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Director General of Election Affairs Salah Al-Shatti told KUNA.

Candidacy requests will be accepted until January 22, Shatti announced. Moreover, on January 12, Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem has declared vacant, the seat of deceased MP Nabil Al-Fadhli. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah has been notified to ensure proper action in line with constitutional law.

DEPARTMENT AUTHORIZED TO TRANSFER WORK PERMITS UNDER SEVEN CONDITIONS

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: In a bid to do both employers and workers justice, acting director of the Public Authority for Manpower Ahmad Al-Moussa authorized the authority's labor relations department and its units to accept or reject work permit transfer applications. According to the decision, the department and all labor units will allow transfers in seven cases including proving that employers had violated law 6/2010, banning employees from travelling, if the employee's relation with the employer is that of a partner, terminating employees by employers without violating article 41 of law 6/2010, the employee's resignation

and employer accepting it, cases included in articles 48 and 50 of the private labor law number 6/2020 and employees having worked for over three years for the same employer, provided employers are given proper legal notice in unlimited contracts and waiting for contract expiry in limited ones. Moussa added that transfers would be rejected in five cases including the validity of limited contracts without any violations on the employer's side, private school teachers desiring to transfer in the middle of the school year, working for less than three years on employer-issued work permits who insist they continue working for them, employees registered on government contracts and violating article 44 (a)

of the private labor law.

KD 250 insurance

Chairman of Kuwait Businessmen Society Anwar Al-Meshaal bin Ajween praised Social Affairs and Labor Minister Hind Al-Subaih's response to the society's appeal to cancel ministerial decree number 19/2015 pertaining with paying KD 250 insurance per worker on issuing work permits and restricting it to employers having contracts with the government.

MP sued

Chancellor Mohammed Al-Duaij yesterday filed another complaint against MP Abdulhameed Dashti, who described him

as 'one of Saddam's judges'. Duaij had earlier filed a complaint against Dashti for insulting judges after a court passed sentences against suspects accused in the 'Abdaly cell' case last week. Notably, the court sentenced two suspects to death and 20 others to various prison terms.

No compensation

A civil court yesterday decided against compensating those who had been renting Amghara land plots for damage resulting from the huge occasional tire fires at the Amghara scrap market. The fire happened a few years ago before the market was relocated in Naayem along the Salmi highway.

Legalese

PROTECTING YOUR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

With technology within hands reach, a majority of us now have Instagram accounts, Wordpress blogs, Snapchat and other platforms that have made us "publishers" in a sense. Online platforms have also made it easier for us to market our business ideas. Before technology, publishing your work was something only a few fortunate people had the opportunity or the means to do but now you could easily publish a short story, showcase your photography and even establish your own small company online.

We are very fortunate in Kuwait and the GCC that there is a lot of encouragement from governmental entities as well as communities to encourage the youth to become writers, painters, photographers, and to pursue any other talent or business idea they have. I hope this article helps you in pursuing your talent. With technology though, new laws had to be implemented for to protect our rights. Today I will be answering questions about Intellectual Property rights.

Question: What is included under Intellectual Property Rights? What can I protect?

Fajer: According to the World Intellectual Property Organization, "Intellectual Property refers to creations of the mind, such as inventions; literary and artistic works; designs; and symbols, names and images used in commerce". This definition is very wide and includes so many different things, to understand better lets break it down.

There are three main categories under intellectual property as follows:

1) Copy Right - this is of important to anyone that "Produces" work. This includes literary work, art work, photography, any theater plays, and any musical productions.

2) Patents - This refers to inventions. They have to be "new" and capable of industrial applications. As can be used, unlike copyright this refers to materialistic work.

3) Trade Marks - these are usually logos of commercial entities, used as a quality of origin and to inspire customer loyalty

Question: How do I register my Intellectual Property?

Fajer: The answer to this question depends on what you are trying to protect. For copy rights unfortunately unlike neighboring GCC countries you cannot do so easily online, but you can through the Kuwaiti courts, from experience though most people do so only after someone has infringed their right, ie they claim property rights to their work after someone has used their work without permission.

For patents it is much easier than copy rights as there is a central body for the Gulf Cooperation Council for the Arab States located in Saudi Arabia. It is called "The Patent Office of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf" and they accept online submissions at <http://www.gccpo.org/>

For Trademarks there is a relatively new regulation for the Gulf Cooperation Council for the Arab States, the law was passed in 2014 and the countries are working closely to apply the law, making it easier for business owners across the gulf to protect their commercial rights. In Kuwait you can apply through the Ministry of Commerce, after fulfilling certain requirements and filling out hard copy forms (not available online yet), you will receive a "temporary" Trade Mark, this usually takes around 30 days. The Trade Mark will then be printed in the local newspaper the Kuwait Gazette and if no one appeals or claims that the Trade Mark is similar to their own within 90 days, then the trademark will become a permanent right.

Question: How long can one person own a certain Intellectual Property Right?

Fajer: In Kuwait and most countries copyrights are given to the "producer" for their lifetime and for 50 years after their death. This explains why anyone can now produce something written by Shakespeare. In the GCC trademarks are now being passed for 10 years since the day of registration, and can be renewed accordingly.

Question: Sometimes going through the proper channels for copyrights can take a while, how can I protect myself until then?

Fajer: There is no right or wrong way to do this. The best way is to go through the proper channels but as you mentioned they take a while and sometimes it's more efficient not to do so. The important thing though is for you to protect your rights in the long run and you are able to do so by always being able to prove that your work is yours.

If you have produced work, let's say a short story for example, my suggestion is before publishing it, send it to yourself via email, this way if something does come up in the future you can prove that you wrote it first.

I would also advice that you always read or research about the terms and conditions on online platforms before "publishing" your work on them. Some platforms can be very sneaky by making you agree that anything you publish through them is owned by them.



People arrested yesterday for gambling.

SEVENTEEN EXPATS ARRESTED FOR GAMBLING

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Residency affairs detectives arrested 17 expatriates while gambling and betting. Detectives received information about several expats engaged in this criminal act, so the place was put under surveillance and after making sure about their activities, a team was formed to arrest them. The 17 were arrested with cash, money transfers, account records and gambling cards. All 17 confessed to the charges, and it was found out that an Asian man was running the place. All were sent to concerned authorities.

ment carried out a campaign on Seventh Ring Road and Kabd Road, resulting in impounding 95 cement mixers because of concrete leaking on the streets. Another campaign took place in the Capital governorate, resulting in impounding 20 vehicles, while 20 persons were arrested for using their vehicles to ferry people for money and were sent to concerned authorities.

Municipality campaign

Ahmadi municipality public cleanliness and road occupancy department carried out a field campaign in Industrial Fahaheel, resulting in the removal of 10 abandoned cars and warning 13 others.

Vehicles impounded

The supervision and inspection depart-

ROADS LEADING TO SABAH AL-AHMAD CITY TO BE DEVELOPED: MINISTER

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Public Works Minister Ali Al-Omar said that his ministry will soon develop Wafra highway and all roads leading to Sabah Al-Ahmad City. The ministry also offered a tender to study, design and supervise improving the roads between Sabah Al-Ahmad and Al-Khairan cities for public bidding, he added.

'Flying pebbles'

Meanwhile, MP Faisal Al-Kandari called for publishing a report made by a special committee on the 'flying pebbles' issue Omair had promised to investigate. "Those responsible must be held accountable," he underlined. Kandari also criticized officials' talk about reconsidering the materials used on various streets, noting that the problem prevailing over the past two years had never happened since Kuwait started paving streets in the 1960s and 1970s. "MPW takes full responsibility for the problem because we had warned last year of resuming contracts with contractors who do not respect contract conditions and ministry engineers do not do their jobs properly," he underlined.

Deportation center

The Ministry of Education (MoE) yesterday renewed allocating the Saad bin Elyas intermediate school building to be used as a temporary center to accommodate expats arrested pending deportation until March 31, 2018.

Housing units

The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) stressed that it would start distributing housing units in Khairan City in 2019 once the construction of Mutlaa, South Saad Al-Abdullah and South Sabah Al-Ahmad cities was concluded.

Oilfields development



Ali Al-Omar

Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) stressed continuing to develop the traditional northern oilfields through three main programs including building three crude oil collection centers, a facility to inject water and boost northern fields daily production capacity to one million barrels compared to the current rate of 600,000 barrels only. KOC also said

that a tender was signed to develop the first phase of heavy oil to get to a 60,000 barrel per day production rate by 2018-2019.

Sports' suspension

The parliament's committee for youth and sports is due to meet today to discuss the letters that had not reached the committee from the Public Authority of Youth and Sports (PAYS) concerning sports unions and other sports organizations such as the Olympic committee. Committee chairman Abdullah Maayouf said that the committee needs the original documents to investigate those responsible for suspending sports activities.



KUWAIT: Kuwait National Guard (KNG) hosted a first aid course recently for employees of the Public Authority for People with Special Needs, in order to improve their skills in helping patients and dealing with cases of emergency.

SECURITY CAMPAIGNS NON-DISCRIMINATORY, TARGET LAWBREAKERS: INTERIOR MINISTRY

KUWAIT: Security campaigns conducted by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) are non-discriminatory and are aimed to target those wanted for violations of state laws, irrespective of nationality, the MoI said in a press statement released yesterday. All expatriates are subject to the same law, one that is designed to uphold peace and security, the statement added.

The country's security apparatus will not in any way, shape or form undermine the liberty of nationals and expatriates alike, the statement stressed, adding that this is "a commitment affirmed by the MoI leadership."

Moreover, the statement added that a designated security force has been dispatched to the country's borders to deal with potential mass displacements. The MoI will do "everything in its power" to investigate and pursue anything that could have a detrimental effect on peace and security in the country, the statement said. — KUNA

In Brief

GHANEM PRESIDES OVER PARLIAMENT MEETING

KUWAIT: Officials from the National Assembly convened for a meeting yesterday, presided over by Parliament Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. During the meeting, some letters pertaining to impending visits by parliament speakers of friendly nations were discussed. Parliament Secretary Adel Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi said. A number of security related issues and decisions were also reviewed, Kharafi added. —KUNA



AIPU'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETS

BEIRUT: The Executive Committee of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU) started its 18th session in Beirut yesterday, chaired by Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Parliamentary Caucus MP Faisal Al-Shaya. The agenda of the 18th session includes a host of items, topped with hand-over of the AIPU Secretariat from outgoing Secretary General Nour Eddine Bouchkouj to elected Fayez Al-Shawabka, Shaya told KUNA on the sidelines of the gathering. —KUNA



ARMY CHIEF LAUDS TIES WITH JORDAN

KUWAIT: Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Khaled Al-Kheder yesterday hailed deep cooperative relations between Kuwait and Jordan. Speaking at a meeting with a visiting Jordanian military delegation, Kheder said Kuwait and Jordan enjoy deep cooperation, especially in the military field, the Defense Ministry's Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations said in a statement. Several high-ranking army officers were present in the meeting, it added. —KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Kuwait's 4th Arabian Horse Beauty Contest came to an end on Saturday, after 295 horses from Kuwait and Arab countries competed for most beautiful horses. —KUNA

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

By Labeed Abdal



local@kuwaittimes.net

Recent criticism by the US government of Israel's plans to expand a Jewish settlement in the West Bank on grounds that this would jeopardize the two-state solution to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as considering continuous settlement expansion, raise much skepticism about Israel's long terms plans and is something that really threatens UN resolutions in this regard. It also raises a great deal of skepticism about solving one of the longest and most complicated disputes of land that belongs to the followers of three heavenly religions.

The US expression of 'deep concern' towards Israel's attitude over expanding the Gush Etzion settlement would eventually lead to building one over an area of 10 acres in the West Bank, which indicates Israel's indifference, especially towards the end of Obama's presidency when the US and its parties are very busy with electing a new president, who is most likely going to be a Republican in favor of more wars in case he wins.

Maintaining the current situation stems from a fixed vision set during World War I by major countries at that time, which explains Israel's keenness on expanding its settlements by all means over the past century. This raises fear of more violent Israeli-Palestinian conflicts in view of a state of despair, stagnancy and broken peace promises despite the fact that settlements are deemed by the UN as illegal, undermining peace efforts and in violation of its resolutions.

Recurring of the very same incidents and reaching dead ends for over 70 years is very saddening in view of the multitude of victims, injured and killed, despite many moderate groups on both sides that truly seek peaceful, joint, legitimate and fair solutions.

Accelerating violence between Israelis and Palestinians through stabbings, shootings and running people over with vehicles has resulted in killing 23 Israelis so far and considerable numbers of Palestinians on the other hand, which emphasizes how hateful both peoples are towards each other and calls for changing the international methodology on handling the conflict with the aim of reaching solutions to unsolved issues.



KUWAIT: A man places a donation during a fund-raising campaign to rescue residents of Madaya, which was opened by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society yesterday. —KUNA photos



People register to make donations during the fund-raising campaign.

KRCS BEGINS FUND-RAISING CAMPAIGN FOR MADAYA

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) launched a fund-raising campaign yesterday, receiving donations to rescue residents of Madaya town in Syria who have been stricken by hunger and poverty due to the ongoing conflict in that country. KRCS Chairman of the Board Dr Hilal Al-Sayer told KUNA that the campaign will reflect the bright image of Kuwaiti generosity, pointing

out that the society is interested in sponsoring humanitarian aid, locally, and internationally.

Meanwhile, Director of Public Relations and media in KRCS Khalid Al-Zaid told KUNA that the campaign will help gather necessities and foodstuff for people in Madaya, in cooperation with other humanitarian organizations in Syria. —KUNA



Dr Hilal Al-Sayer



Khalid Al-Zaid

KPC STAFF OFFERED GOODS AT COMPETITIVE PRICES

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) introduced yesterday plans to launch an initiative to provide oil sector employees with goods and services for competitive prices, the latest in extensive privileges enjoyed by members of the sector.

Dubbed 'Excellence', the unprecedented initiative comprises an electronic program that merges KPC with a number of commercial companies, Head of the Public Relations Department of KPC Jamal Al-Sanousi said in a press conference. The initiative is expected to be in full effect by February, he announced.

The measure seeks to cement KPC values while giving employees an incentive in a highly distinguished sector to which more than 20,000 employees belong, Sanousi said. When news of the initiative first emerged, more than 920 employees registered, possibly a harbinger of the initiative's expected success, the Head of KPC's Public Relations Department noted. The facilitation of the purchasing process for registered users of the "Excellence" program is the primary aim, he said. —KUNA



Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah

AL-QURAIN FESTIVAL, KUWAIT CAPITAL OF ISLAMIC CULTURE KICKS OFF TODAY

KUWAIT: Celebrations of Al-Qurain Cultural Festival and 'Kuwait Capital of Islamic Culture 2016' will start today, sponsored by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Al-Qurain ceremony includes distribution of the State Encouragement and Appreciation Awards, honoring veteran actor Abdulhussain Abdelredha, Assistant Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Mohammad Al-Asousi said in a statement. He added that the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Sheikh Ahmad Al-Tayyeb is the dignitary of this year's ceremony.

The event will be used to emphasize how Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance, amid the current events in the region, as well as highlighting Kuwait as a 'Humanitarian Center,' Asousi said. The NCCAL official pointed to the UN honoring of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a 'Humanitarian Leader' and Kuwait as a 'Humanitarian Center.' The celebrations will also focus on the role of culture to get people closer to each other, shedding light on Kuwait's efforts in cultural work. Asousi offered a video on the activities to celebrate "Kuwait Capital of Islamic Culture 2016" that will run through the whole year, with participation of government bodies and public benefit societies, such as the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, the Kuwait University and the Kuwait Writers Association. —KUNA

'SADA EL-SAMT' PLAY WINS TOP PRIZE AT ARAB THEATER FESTIVAL

KUWAIT: Minister of Information Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah on Saturday congratulated His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister on the honoring of the Kuwaiti theater at the eighth Arab Theater Festival.

The honoring came in recognition of the role of Kuwait's political leadership in promoting culture and arts, the minister told reporters following a prize-giving ceremony where the arbitration panel of the festival announced 'Sada El-Samt' (echo of silence) play as winner of the fifth version of Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Hamad Al-Qassemi theatrical prize for 2015. The play, offered by Kuwait Theater Troupe, is written by late Iraqi playwright Qassem Matroud directed by Faisal Al-Ameeri, and starring Al-Ameeri, Samah and Abdullah Al-Turkmani.

Initiatives

Sheikh Salman, also Minister of State for Youth Affairs and President of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), spoke highly of Qassemi, a member of the UAE Federal Supreme Council and Ruler of Al-Sharjah Emirate, for his role in founding the Arab Theatre Institute (ATI) in 2009 and the promotion of the Arab theatrical arts.

Qassemi, the co-founder and president of the ATI, made several initiatives to advance the march of Arab theater, including the offering of the ATI award - the most prestigious Arab theatrical prize which is named after him.

"Dr Qassemi's presence at this festival shows his keenness on the advancement of the theatrical arts," Sheikh Salman said, noting that the ATI Secretary General Al-Sayed



KUWAIT: Minister of Information Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah is pictured with honored celebrities at the closing ceremony of the eighth Arab Theater Festival. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Ismail Abdullah has also made praiseworthy efforts to ensure the success of the festival. Sheikh Salman renewed Kuwait's commitment to promotion of cultural exchanges and artistic activities as a means of bringing the Arab peoples close to each other.

Abdullah meanwhile paid homage to the pioneers of the Kuwaiti theater for their contributions to the Arab theatrical movement. The ATI Secretary General also appreciated the efforts made jointly by NCCAL and the ATI in setting the state for the festival and thanked all participants for contributing to the success of this annual event.

Fruitful

Meanwhile, head of the arbitration panel Mokhlad Nusair Zayoud commended as fruitful the cultural exchanges and cooperation between NCCAL and the ATI. "The themes of war, violence and terrorism featured prominently in the plays offered at this edition of the festival," he noted.

The closing ceremony saw the honoring of number of celebrities who influenced the Kuwaiti theater and were nominated by NCCAL.

These include Ibrahim Al-Sallal, Jassem

Al-Nabhan, Hayat Al-Fahad, Khaled Al-Obaid, Suad Abdullah, Saad Al-Faraj, Suleiman Hezami, Suleiman Al-Yassin, Abdulhussain Abdelredha, Abdulrahman Al-Aqel, Abdulaziz Al-Haddad, Abdulaziz Al-Sarayee, Abdullah Al-Hubail, Awatef Al-Bader, Fuad Al-Shatti, Mohammad Al-Mansour, Mohammad Abdulaziz, Mohammad Jaber, Maryam Al-Saleh and Hayfa Adel. The festival, which opened on Sunday, January 10, was co-organized by NCCAL and the Arab Theatre Institute (ATI). It gathered 415 Arab theatrical figures and featured 15 plays. —KUNA



ATI Secretary General Al-Sayed Ismail Abdullah speaks at the event.



Veteran actor Abdulhussain Abdelredha is honored.



Veteran actress Maryam Al-Saleh is honored.



Actors perform on stage during the ceremony.

KUWAIT - MANILA

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Al-Anbaa

A SECOND WIFE?!

By Sami Al-Khorafi

The moment you ask a group of young people, assuming I am still one of them, about their opinion of taking a second wife and the replies will race to you as they are in a 100-meter race where everyone is keen on winning. They all roll up their sleeves to take part in this 'interesting' discussion. I wonder what makes this particular question very appealing to every man and provocative to women!

One of the guys said that his wife does not understand him and quickly gets angry over the most trivial things. "I try to keep calm and let her vent steam as she pleases while I am boiling inside, because I heard a specialist advise men to do so on a radio program," he said, noting that the expert advised husbands to avoid wives' anger rages by leaving the house to avoid problems. "I would marry another one if only I could," he added, explaining that such a step needs much guts and money.

Another said that the question he hates most from his wife is when she calls asking him: Where are you? "I then have an urge to get into the phone to tell her that I am bathing in the water tank on the roof!" he said, pointing out that his wife suspects all his moves. On his part, Bu Saad said that what really gets on his nerves is that his wife usually purchases the most elegant and expensive clothes only to wear them in front of her family and friends, while she only wears cheap garments bought from public stores for him as if he was nothing but a worthless insignificant shepherd, though it is he who pays for all her purchases. "What a fool I am!" he said.

I elicited many reactions and intend to publish them in further articles. However, another responder said that he would immediately get married to another woman if only he had enough money, because he was fed up with his wife. "Whenever I inquire about her whereabouts, she says that she is going shopping, on a family visit or going to a restaurant. She is always out of the house. The same applies to the children. She is very sick with the 'let me be' syndrome and I am fed up with that!" he explained.

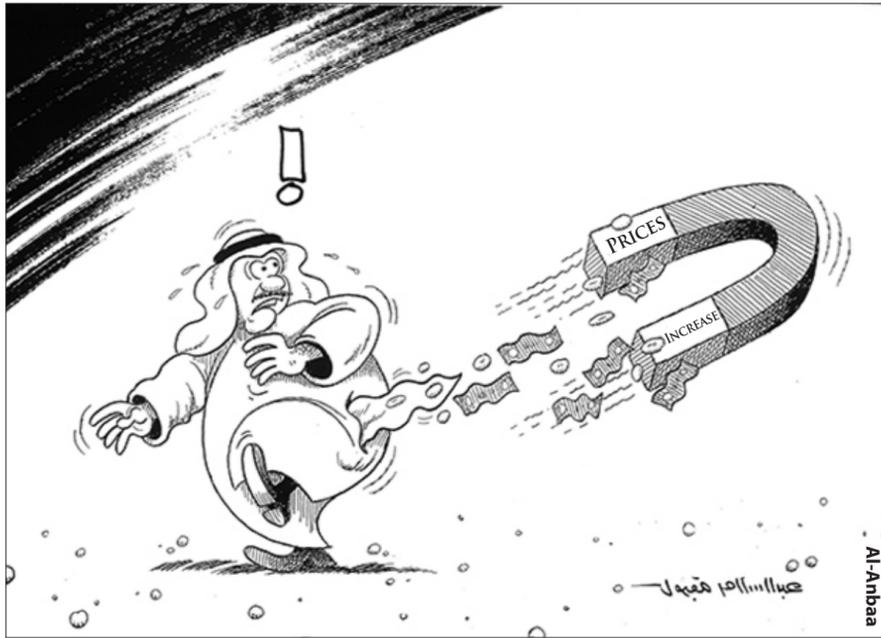
I believe that my female readers would kill me for this article, but kindly hold your horses and read on. On the other hand, many men stay at home waiting long for their wives to return from beauty salons to put on the best makeup for them, but shockingly meet them with silly questions such as: What kept you so long? Don't you have a husband or kids to tend to? You are too old to do that, aren't you ashamed of yourself? What's the difference? Nothing has changed after makeup - we only lost the money you spent on it.

Such questions are very disappointing for women and may drive some of them to shout back. Some other men know nothing about their houses and show no care for its needs. They only care for their diwanis or ranches. So what do such husbands expect from their wives, who in most cases, keep silent and patient only for the sake of the kids.

Finally, I would like to highlight that the holy Prophet (PBUH) advised us to take very good care of women as they are very fragile creatures. He taught us that mutual understanding is the base of marital relations and that it would be normal to have family disputes between couples and that this should not make husbands consider having second wives because of some silly complaints like the ones the guys mentioned above.

Dear fellowman - your first wife is the mother of your children. You should treat her nicely, put up with her faults and change a little for her. The same applies for you, dear wives. Take good care of your husbands and be like they wish. May Almighty Allah bestow happiness on you all. When a woman was asked about what she needs from a man, she said: I need security rather than love, deeds rather than words, kindness rather than cruelty and a man rather than a male!"

— Translated by Kuwait Times



Al-Anbaa

BIOMETRICS IN MOH FACILITIES SOON

KUWAIT: Well-informed health sources said that the Ministry of Health (MoH) is planning to use two more accurate punch-in and out systems for employees working in all its facilities and administrations in a bid to have more control over employees' performances and to avoid faking fingerprints in signing in and out. The sources explained that the two new systems use facial and eye recognition and that concerned ministry officials are currently meeting to discuss using them in all MoH facilities instead of the fingerprint system, especially after the recent discovery of employees using fake fingerprints. — Al-Anbaa

UNION'S SCHOOL FEE REQUEST REJECTED

KUWAIT: Education Minister Bader Al-Essa said the ministry rejected a request by the private schools union to grant it the freedom in deciding fees for private schools, adding "the ministry alone decides the fees for those schools, be they Arab or foreign, through a technical committee formed for this purpose". He expected the committee to complete its work soon and will announce the fees for each school.

Meanwhile, Essa said graduates from non-education colleges will be accepted for educational jobs in American and British schools, through interviews and selection of those qualified, as part of efforts to solve the problem of bringing foreign teachers from abroad that private schools are facing, and a lack of Kuwaiti graduates who are able to work in these schools because the higher education ministry is limiting education and philosophy specialties to Kuwait University only, and not allowing private universities in Kuwait to open education streams to graduate qualified teachers who are able to meet school's needs. — Al-Rai

PROCEDURES THREATEN TO HALT INSTALLMENT LOANS FOR EXPATS

KUWAIT: Supervisory instructions to the banking sector led to banks ceasing to grant expats installment loans up to KD 70,000, limiting their financial transactions to car loans and some consumer needs, although there are no specific supervisory instructions in this regard. Instructions by the Central Bank set the maximum limit of consumer loans at 15 times the salary, but should not exceed KD 15,000, and the total installments should not exceed 40 percent of the salary. Meanwhile, an installment loan may reach KD 70,000 and has to be paid back in 15 years.

Banking sources said supervisory instructions and banking policies do not differentiate between citizens and expats, but "installment loans" are exclusively for private residences in Kuwait including constructing, renovation and purchase, and cannot be used for trading in residential real estate or development for investment purposes. Banks used to grant installment loans to expats and they used the amount as they liked with a commitment to pay it back, and this was possible because the client was not required to present any invoices or proof for the money was used for. But starting from October, the customer had to submit invoices within six months, so some banks stopped granting installment loans to expats. — Al-Rai



VIVA VISITES KUWAIT SPORTS CLUB FOR DEAF

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, announced that its corporate team paid a visit to the Kuwait Sports Club for the Deaf in Sulaibikhat area. Special offers and gifts were distributed and showcased among the club's members.

VIVA's presence at the Kuwait Sports Club For The Deaf reaffirms its continued commitment to the society through communication with various Kuwaiti institutions and committees, promoting its products and services while meeting the clients' needs and aspirations.

VIVA is keen to continue its ongoing socially responsible

role in the community by spreading the spirit of goodness amongst Kuwaiti society. We believe at VIVA in taking a holistic approach to our CSR activities, one that engages our employees, and creates goodwill in our communities with a focus on helping to grow and develop the State of Kuwait.

VIVA's Corporate Social Responsibility 'CSR' activities can be reviewed on the company's website at <https://www.viva.com.kw/csr>. This offers a description of each CSR initiative that VIVA has supported, or taken on since its inception.

340 NURSERIES SUE GOVERNMENT

KUWAIT: Following the Cabinet's decision to transfer supervision of private nurseries from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) to the Ministry of Education (MoE), a number of private nursery owners vowed to file lawsuits against the Cabinet as they deemed the decision as being against nurseries and their employees' interests. The owners of 340 private nurseries added that they would go to court to suspend the Cabinet's decision until a final one was issued by the court. "This decision will allow all private schools to establish their own nurseries that will surely work as schools as well, which violates several rules," stressed the owners. — Al-Anbaa

CABINET UNIFIES RAILWAY PROJECT RESPONSIBILITY

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Road and Transportation Public Authority Abdullatif Al-Dakheel stressed that the delay in the railway project was due to endless paperwork and having to refer matters to various bodies. He added that, accordingly, the Cabinet decided solving the problem by unifying the project's responsibility with the road authority. Dakheel added that the real problem facing the project was not the farms on its route, but signing contracts with qualified companies. He also noted that Kuwait's railway would be connected to the GCC one by 2018. Further, Dakheel added that the project would cost KD 1 billion and that the partnership authority had already signed a contract with an international office to prepare the project's documents pending inviting companies and contractors to take part in the three-year project. — Al-Jarida

NEW FORGERY CASE: MAN RECEIVES KUWAITI CITIZENSHIP TWICE

KUWAIT: It may no longer be strange for someone to get Kuwaiti nationality in exchange of money to become a citizen with all advantages after being without a "nationality," or become a Kuwaiti with the power of money and add this to another to use the advantages of the first one, that is be a dual citizen.

Yet to become a Kuwaiti twice with two different names and two identical pictures with a beard as the only difference is a different issue and an unprecedented one. The hero of the new incident is a bedoon who sought to get nationality in the name of a Kuwaiti who became notorious for selling nationalities and claimed to be his son, so he

filed a pedigree complaint to enable his son to get Kuwaiti nationality, but a DNA test failed him.

The man did not give up and filed a complaint at the personal status court that took many years to decide, until he received three rulings that the person who failed the DNA test was his son, after preparing foolproof documents and testimonies in exchange of money, and so the "fake" son received Kuwaiti nationality and benefited from its advantages.

The case, as discovered and followed up by the public funds crimes fighting department, said the person who failed the DNA test did not lose hope in gain-

ing Kuwaiti nationality, and got it while waiting for the verdict of the personal status courts' ruling, after another Kuwaiti added him to his file, and by this he became a Kuwaiti with a different name and different tribe, and this way he benefited from the full advantages of the nationality through his "new personality".

Sources said Bahraini security authorities detained the "fake Kuwaiti" after suspecting his identity because the birth date on his ID could not be right due to changing it by at least 12 years, then found he was wanted to serve a five-years jail sentence, and was handed to Kuwait authorities.



The Jaber Hospital

MOH MULLS INTERNATIONAL ADMIN AT JABER HOSPITAL

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources said the health ministry is considering a proposal made to have an international administration run the new Jaber Hospital in South Surra and subject it to a governmental body like the investment authority.

The sources added that MoH committees have already reviewed similar experiences in Dubai and Qatar and that such a procedure might 'liberate' the new hospital from the bureaucracy found at public hospitals. "There is a tendency

to run the hospital, that is yet to be handed over by MPW, the same way Dasman Diabetes Research Center is run, by getting all medications from MoH and having an independent administration," explained the sources.

Notably, MoH expects to gradually launch the hospital by mid-2017 and Minister Ali Al-Obaidi has spoken about studying reserving the new hospital entirely for Kuwaitis. — Al-Jarida

INTERVIEW WITH KUWAIT OIL COMPANY CEO HASHIM HASHIM

KUWAIT: The following are transcripts from an interview conducted with Kuwait Oil Company CEO Hashim Hashim, which was published by Al-Rai yesterday:

Question: What are the operational and capital budgets of Kuwait Oil Company for 2016-2017?

Hashim: We would like to explain that the operational and capital budgets are still under approval. The operational budget for KOC in 2016/2017 is estimated at KD 1.68 billion, and the budget was prepared based on an expected production capacity of 3.15 million bpd and actual production of 3 million bpd. As for the

capital budget for 2016/2017, it is estimated at KD 1.7 billion and it is part of the five-year capital plan which aims at raising KOC's production capacity to 3.65 million bpd in 2020.

Question: What is the production capacity of KOC?

Hashim: The current production capacity of KOC is 3 million bpd, and the company achieved this level in 2015. It should be noted that KOC reached this level in an experimentation phase in 2010, and actual production in the '70s, but the '70s production was of easy oil as it did not have accompanying water and from

reservoirs that were considered to be at the start of their productive age then.

Question: Do you have a certain mechanism to qualify private companies to work in company projects?

Hashim: Yes, KOC has a mechanism to qualify private companies to work for projects, and this mechanism was placed on the basis that guarantees the qualification of competent companies and contractors.

Question: What is the cost of expected budgets during the next five years?

Hashim: The budget of proposed cap-



Hashim Hashim

ital projects for the next five years is around KD 17 billion, which includes projects under construction, projects that are being awarded and future projects.

Question: How far have you got in the northern fields? And what is the fate of qualified companies for the

heavy oil tenders?

Hashim: KOC continues to develop the conventional northern fields, and as said before, KOC is working on three main programs to develop the fields in the north. As for the development of heavy oil, KOC awarded the tender of developing the first stage which aims to build a production capacity of 60,000 bpd in 2018/2019, and there are several qualified companies and opportunities to cooperate with KOC.

Question: How do you see the condition of the major Burgan field following more than 80 years of production? And where is its production now, and what are the new projects to raise its production?

Hashim: First, we would like to confirm that Burgan field contains a strategic reserves that enable it to produce for

many years, as it is considered one of the biggest fields not in Kuwait but at the global level. Burgan field is characterized by containing huge reserves and has a large production capacity. It plays a basic role in achieving the strategic goal of KOC to reach 3.65 million bpd by 2020.

Question: Where have you reached in new discoveries that you announced earlier? And when are they expected to be included in production plans?

Hashim: Discovery programs aim at compensating for oil and gas production and increase reserves. These programs also include seismic surveys that cover all Kuwait land and sea areas, as discovery programs aim at discovering and developing nearly 700,000 bpd and one million cu ft of gas daily by 2030 as part of the 2030 strategy. — Al-Rai



Security forces hunt surviving Burkina hotel attackers

TRUMP TRENDS AMONG EVANGELICALS FOR CHRISTIAN VOTES

ISLAMIC STATE 'BRAND' SPREADING WORLDWIDE

JIHADISTS RALLYING OTHER GROUPS UNDER THEIR BANNER

PARIS: The Islamic State group may be losing ground in its strongholds of Iraq and Syria but as the attack in Indonesia this month showed, the jihadists are rallying other groups under their banner, analysts say. In most cases, these groups have no direct contact with the leadership of IS's self-proclaimed caliphate, but the group is happy to claim responsibility for the blood spilled in its name, the experts say.

"From the start, Islamic State has vowed to take its fight globally, but until recently it has been focused on managing its caliphate in Iraq and Syria," said Michael Kugelmann, of the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington. With the Iraqi army re-taking some of the territory the group had taken, IS "has re-dedicated attention to focusing on a more global approach," he said.

"The big question, after the Jakarta attacks and all of these attacks around the world in recent months that have been claimed by ISIS is-are these militants only inspired by ISIS or have they been directly managed by ISIS?" he said, using another name for the group.

Kugelmann, like all of the experts questioned by AFP, believes that IS is for now content to take credit for the attacks, using the "brand recognition" of its name that has spread across the world, partly through social media, without necessarily dedicating resources or manpower to these groups.

"What you have here are disillusioned, alienated militants, who have been fighting with a different organization, who are interested in identifying themselves with a more dynamic cause. And they see ISIS as a very dynamic cause — they are in the media all the time and commit spectacularly brutal attacks."

'Seeking new identity'

That is why in Afghanistan and Pakistan groups claiming to be IS have appeared in

recent months, claiming attacks or posing on the Internet with the group's black flag. "There are breakaway local militant groups seeking a new identity who are joining IS," Pakistan-based analyst Hasan Askari said.

"The IS ideology already exists in Pakistan, it is an extreme Salafi tradition and people are now following them for a new identity, (even though) they might not have direct links with the real IS leadership," he said, referencing a strict form of Islam. He said there was no evidence to suggest that the IS leadership had visited the groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan, which are both strongholds of Al-Qaeda.

Amedy Coulibaly, the French jihadist who killed four Jews in a kosher supermarket in Paris in January 2015, pledged allegiance to IS, but the investigation has so far found no evidence that he had ever been in contact with the organization, apart from viewing its propaganda videos on the Internet.

'This is new'

Indonesian police investigating Thursday's attack on a busy street in Jakarta lined with shopping malls, luxury hotels, and foreign embassies that left five assailants and three other people dead, have pointed the finger at Katibah Nusantara, a militant unit of Malay-speaking IS jihadists. Yet Kugelmann said: "In Indonesia, I heard no indication before these attacks of any form of formal ISIS presence. This is new."

IS has put on record its allegiance with extremist groups in eight countries-in Algeria, Nigeria, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Afghanistan and Pakistan-and claims it has directed or inspired attacks in at least 17 countries, killing around 1,000 people. Security services have long feared that IS will work with the equally bloodthirsty Boko Haram move-



SURABAYA: In this June 18, 2014, file photo, a man wears a headband showing the Islamic State group's symbol during a protest calling for the closure of a local prostitution complex. Experts say it is difficult to know how much of a foothold the Islamic State group has established in Indonesia. — AP

ment, which since 2009 has wreaked havoc as it seeks to impose Islamist rule in northern Nigeria. In May last year, IS accepted a pledge of allegiance from the group.

"For Boko Haram in Nigeria, there is no clear evidence of operational contacts, but there has been a clear sophistication in its

attacks," said Peter Pham, of the Atlantic Council in Washington, suggesting that the IS planners are having some influence.

Pham is worried by IS's advance into the Sahel region of North Africa. Pummelled from the air by a US-led coalition and by Russian jets in Syria and Iraq, IS has been rapidly

spreading into Libya, where affiliated groups have profited from the anarchy in that country to take control, and to secure the considerable oil reserves in some areas. "We have to bear in mind that Sahel is a very permeable region, so it's really a concern for the continent," Pham said. — AFP

JAPAN MARKS 21ST ANNIVERSARY OF DEADLY KOBE EARTHQUAKE

TOKYO: Japan yesterday marked the 21st anniversary of a devastating earthquake in the western city of Kobe that killed more than 6,400 people, as bereaved families looked to keep memories of the victims alive.

An estimated 9,000 people gathered for an annual early-morning commemoration at a public park in the port city, where a 7.2 magnitude quake hit at 5:46 am on January 17, 1995. It killed 6,434 people and leveled much of the city, forcing the quake-prone nation to conduct major upgrades of its disaster preparedness.

"Sadness never heals. But everyone is doing his or her best to continue living," an elderly woman told national broad-

caster NHK at the pre-dawn memorial. Participants held a candlelight vigil and observed a moment of silence at the park, which served as an evacuation centre after the 1995 jolt. But over time, memories of the quake have faded in the community.

A total of 59 civic events were planned this year for the anniversary, roughly half as many as a year ago, when the nation marked two decades since the disaster, the Yomiuri Shimbun said in its editorial. About 40 percent of Kobe's residents were either born after the quake or moved to the city in the years following the disaster, according to the top-selling daily. "How can the memories of that day be passed on to the next gen-

eration? That's an issue that the city that recovered from the disaster must face," the Yomiuri editorial said. NHK echoed the sentiment and said: "The city faces a challenge of providing support to those who experienced the disaster while also passing on the memories and lessons learned to the next generation." Japan suffers about a fifth of the world's most powerful tremors.

A 9.0 magnitude quake struck the nation's northern area in March 2011, triggering a huge tsunami that smashed into the country's northeast coast, killing around 16,000 people while some 2,600 people remain missing. The disaster also triggered the world's worst nuclear emergency in a generation. — AFP



KOBE: This overhead photo shows candles indicating "Future 1.17" during a memorial service to mark the 21st anniversary of the "Great Hanshin Earthquake" at a park. — AFP

SRI LANKA TURNS TO SOCIAL MEDIA TO HELP WITH NEW CONSTITUTION

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's prime minister yesterday announced officials would use social media to seek public opinion on a proposed new constitution aimed at preventing a return to ethnic war. Ranil Wickremesinghe said Sri Lanka will use social media to help draft a new statute to devolve more powers to minority Tamils and ensure unity after decades of war.

"Sri Lanka could be the first country to get views expressed on social media (to contribute to) drafting a new constitution," he said. "We want to seek the view and opinions of young people. Participate in this process."

Sites such as Facebook and Twitter played a key role in supporting Wickremesinghe's election in August as well as during the January 2015 presidential election at which he supported Maithripala Sirisena.

Since coming to power, the new government has set up free wi-fi zones in many public places to encourage the use of web-based services. The government is opening a new office in Colombo Monday to start receiving

written proposals from the public for the new constitution.

Wickremesinghe travelled to the former war-torn zone of Jaffna in the north Friday to pledge to devolve political power to minority Tamils. He has also promised to prosecute both state forces and Tamil rebels accused of war crimes in the final stages of the island's 37-year-old separatist war, in line with pledges to the UN Human Rights Council last year.

Sri Lanka's year-old government has begun drafting a new constitution aimed at resolving the drawn-out ethnic conflict which ended in 2009 and claimed 100,000 lives. The issue has been fraught, however, with hardline members of the Sinhalese majority opposing a federal system that would ensure more political power for minority Tamils. Some minorities fear a "unitary" constitution would see them lose out while moderate Tamils who want to remain in a single union have pressed for greater power in areas where they are in the majority. — AFP

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- Every participant is allowed to submit maximum five entries.
- The photos can be black and white or colour size 40X30 cm.
- All entries should be provided a hard copy and Soft Copy on a CD (in high resolution)with photo of the participant needs to be included in the CD.
- The original coupon should be attached to the back of each photo and should include a complete information about the participant.

The coupons are advertised at Kuwait Times and Al Anba newspapers during the period of competition.

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

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JERUSALEM CHURCH HIT BY ANTI-CHRISTIAN GRAFFITI

JERUSALEM: Anti-Christian graffiti has been sprayed on a wall of a Jerusalem abbey built where tradition says the mother of Jesus died, police said yesterday, in an incident similar to previous acts blamed on Jewish extremists. The graffiti written in Hebrew on an outside wall of the Dormition Abbey included phrases such as "kill the pagans" and "death to the Christian unbelievers, enemies of Israel", a spokesman for the Catholic Church in the Holy Land said.

Police said the graffiti had been discovered during a patrol and an investigation had been opened. The Benedictine abbey is located on Mount Zion across from east Jerusalem's Old City and next to the site where Christians believe Jesus's Last Supper

occurred. It was previously hit in 2014, when furniture and wooden crosses were burned.

"This time it amounts to a real call to murder Christians," said church spokesman Wadi Abu Nassar. Jewish extremists have targeted Palestinians, Christians and even Israeli military property in "price-tag" attacks—a term that indicates there is a price to be paid for moves against Jewish settlers.

Earlier this month, two Israelis, including a minor, were charged over the 2014 incident at the Dormition Abbey as well as an arson attack at the Church of the Multiplication on the Sea of Galilee. That church is located where Christians believe Jesus performed the miracle of loaves and fishes. The most

prominent suspected Jewish extremist attack recently was the July firebombing of a Palestinian home in the West Bank that killed a toddler along with his mother and father.

On January 3, an Israeli court charged two suspected Jewish extremists over the firebombing, including the minor accused in the 2014 arson at the Dormition Abbey. Vatican efforts to negotiate greater rights at the neighboring Upper Room, where the Last Supper is believed to have occurred, have sparked opposition from nationalist and Orthodox Jews, who revere part of the building as the tomb of King David. Pope Francis celebrated a mass at the Upper Room during a visit in 2014. — AFP



JERUSALEM: Father Nikodemus Schnabel spokesperson of the Dormition Abbey points towards anti-Christian graffiti in Hebrew, daubed on the Church of the Dormition, one of Jerusalem's leading pilgrimage sites. — AFP

NUCLEAR DEAL WILL INTENSIFY IRANIAN INFIGHTING BUT RELAX FOREIGN POLICY

RESTORING TIES WITH 'GREAT SATAN' NOT ON AGENDA

ANKARA: Iran's success in winning an end to international sanctions will only intensify a power struggle among the faction-ridden elite, and President Hassan Rouhani cannot count on domestic political support from the supreme leader before two critical elections. However, Tehran's leadership has now decided on a less confrontational foreign policy than in the past, although a restoration of full ties with the "Great Satan" — the United States — remains out of the question, officials say.

The scrapping of most US, European Union and United Nations sanctions on Saturday under a nuclear deal with six major powers should strengthen both the economy and Shi'ite Iran's hand in a Mideast region torn by sectarian strife. Rouhani, a pragmatist whose 2013 election cleared the way for the thaw in relations with the outside world, owes his success to Iran's top authority: Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei endorsed the nuclear agreement, overriding hardliners who oppose dealing with Washington.

"Every move by the government was approved by the leader. The leader protected us against hardliners' pressure," said a senior Iranian official, involved in the talks with the six powers which led to Tehran curbing its nuclear program in return for an end to the sanctions crippling its economy. But hardliners, wary of Rouhani's growing influence and popularity, have already taken off the gloves to display the limits of the president's power at home where they oppose any political liberalization.

They fear that voters, hopeful living standards can rise with the end of sanctions, will reward pro-Rouhani candidates in elections next month to parliament and the Assembly of Experts, a clerical body with nominal power over the supreme leader. "Rouhani has gained even more popularity compared to 2013 because of his nuclear success. This will help his allies greatly to win a majority in the elections," said another senior official. "People know that Rouhani's policy ended Iran's isolation and their economic hardship. He is their hero."

The elections to the Assembly of Experts are likely to be crucial in determining the future path of Iran, the top Shiite Muslim power which plans to pour large amounts of crude oil on to the global market now that the sanctions are gone. Khamenei underwent prostate surgery in 2014 and should the 76-year-old supreme leader be unable to continue through illness, the Assembly would have to select his successor.

Leaders at loggerheads

Rouhani's growing clout could put him at loggerheads with Khamenei, and any change in the balance of Iran's complex power structure might force the supreme leader to cut the president's domestic claws.

"Rouhani's political power will increase because of economic advances and this balance will be restored by more domestic pressure," said political analyst Hamid Farahvashian. "Without Khamenei's blessing, Rouhani cannot confront his rivals," Khamenei — who took over in 1989 from Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic — has always made sure that no group, including among his own hardline allies, gains enough power to challenge his authority.

"On the nuclear issue, Rouhani and Khamenei are in the same boat. But Khamenei will back hardliners in their political disputes against moderates," said a former official. As well as the Guardian Council, which vets laws and election candidates,



TEHRAN: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani speaks during a press conference yesterday in the capital after international sanctions on Iran were lifted — AFP

Khamenei controls the judiciary, the security forces, public broadcasters and foundations that control much of the economy.

The hardliners are likely to resort to a tactic they have successfully adopted in the past: finding grounds to disqualify pro-Rouhani candidates. "I expect stormy days before the elections. Pressure will mount on Rouhani and his allies, including moderates' mass disqualifications," said political analyst Saeed Leylaz.

Hardliners have stepped up their calls to suppress dissenting voices since September, when Khamenei warned of "infiltration" by Iran's enemies. They may also target political campaigners and reporters sympathetic to the president. "They will compensate for Rouhani's victory by more arrests of activists and more journalists will be summoned by the courts," said a pro-reform journalist, who asked not to be named for security reasons.

Opposition leaders Mirhossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karubi remain under house arrest following street protests against what activists say was a rigged presidential election in 2009. Rights groups and the United Nations have accused Iran of severely restricting freedom of expression, religion and the media as well as criticizing its high number of executions. Some analysts say Rouhani, who represented Khamenei at the Supreme National Security Council for over two decades, lacks the will to resist hardliners' pressure preventing the kind of social reforms that many young Iranians demand. Rouhani has occasionally criticized the crackdown but has done little to stop it.

Foreign policy moderation

Iran's internal struggle is unlikely to be fought out over foreign policy, where the leadership appears to have agreed on a less confrontational line. Its decision to release five Americans, including a Washington Post reporter, a few hours before the lifting of sanctions displayed this change of approach.

Tehran also swiftly ended an incident on Wednesday when it freed 10 US Navy sailors a day

after detaining them aboard their two patrol boats in the Gulf. "It was a decision made by Iran's top authorities. It shows that there is a consensus over foreign policy among our decision-makers," said a senior security official.

Similarly hardline and pro-Rouhani authorities alike have condemned the storming of Riyadh's embassy in Tehran early this month by protesters reacting to the execution of Shiite Sheikh Nimr Al-Nimr, an outspoken opponent of the ruling Al Saud family. Dozens were arrested, according to state media.

"Iran has already adopted a moderate foreign policy. Even the hostility with the US has transformed to a controlled one," said Leylaz. "We witnessed it during the sailors' capture and the Saudi embassy storming." With Rouhani willing to improve ties with the United States, Tehran and Washington will continue to cooperate on the regional crisis including the rise of Islamic State, often known to its enemies by the Arabic name of Daesh.

"Iran and America need to work together in the region ... the taboo is broken and this channel of communication will remain open between the two countries," said the second senior official. Tehran and Washington cut ties shortly after Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution and radical students stormed the US embassy in Tehran, taking 52 Americans hostage for 444 days.

The official made clear there were limits to the rapprochement between Iran and the United States. "They have common interests and enemies ... Iran's fight against Daesh in Iraq and Syria is a clear example of it." However, the official added: "Full restoration of ties will not happen." The elite Revolutionary Guards and its affiliated Basij militia forces have been leading Iran's effort against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. "In his public speeches and in private meetings with the government officials, Khamenei has made it very clear that the US and will remain Iran's foe," said Farahvashian. Under Iran's constitution, Khamenei, and not Rouhani, has the last say on all state matters. — Reuters

US SENATE TO TAKE UP BILL FOR MORE ARAB REFUGEE SCRUTINY

WASHINGTON: The Senate will consider new rigorous screening procedures for Syrian and Iraqi refugees seeking to enter the United States as national security looms large for voters in an election year. Propelled by the Islamic State group's attacks in Paris, the GOP-backed legislation raced through the House last November with 289 votes. That veto-proof margin included 47 Democrats despite the Obama administration's opposition to the measure.

The legislation will have a much harder time making it through the Senate in the week ahead. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky, needs at least six Democrats to join all 54 Republicans to approve a motion clearing the bill for final passage in the 100-member chamber. The Senate's top Democrat, Harry Reid of Nevada, said last year that was not going to happen. Even if it did, President Barack Obama has pledged to veto the bill if it got to him.

The clash may be more of the same on Capitol Hill: A war of words, with Republicans blasting Obama for failing to do what they see as necessary to secure the United States and Democrats accusing the GOP of fear mongering to score points with voters. Some of the key points to know about the Syrian-Iraqi refugee legislation:

What the house bill does

IS controls territory in Syria and Iraq. As a result of the extremists' harsh, uncompromising rule, people in those areas have tried to flee and make it to the United States. The House-passed American Security Against Foreign Enemies Act is rooted in concerns the current process of screening refugee is inadequate and could allow a terrorist to be admitted into the United States.

The legislation would order FBI background checks for Syrian and Iraqi refugees and require that the FBI, Homeland Security Department and the director of National Intelligence certify that each refugee is not a security threat. The bill's requirements would effectively suspend admissions of Syrian and Iraqi refugees.

Republicans pointed to the arrest this month of two Iraqi refugees with suspected links to terrorism as one more example of the flawed vetting system. Over the past few months, voters' concerns about terrorism have

surged and their confidence in the government's ability to defeat IS and other extremist groups has plummeted, according to a national survey conducted in December by the Pew Research Center. "I think there's a sense we need to do everything we can to demonstrate we take seriously the responsibility to protect the country," Republican Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, a member of the GOP leadership, said last week at a party retreat in Baltimore.

A promise to veto

The White House said Obama would veto the House bill. The legislation "would provide no meaningful additional security for the American people," it said in a Nov. 18 statement. Refugees of all nationalities, including Syrians and Iraqis, already face a demanding screening process, and the legislation "would unacceptably hamper our efforts to assist some of the most vulnerable people in the world," the statement said. The White House said more than 2,100 Syrian refugees have been admitted to the United States since 2001 and not one has been arrested or deported on terrorism-related grounds.

After the House passed the bill Nov. 19, Reid predicted it would die in the Senate. "Don't worry, it won't get passed," Reid told reporters. A final decision on how the Democrats will proceed is expected on Wednesday at their weekly caucus meeting. Without support from Democrats, the math doesn't work for McConnell. He needs a half-dozen Democrats to pass a motion to proceed and eventually allow a vote on the legislation. Thirteen more Democrats would be needed to reach a veto-proof tally. Despite Reid's optimism, the House vote demonstrated that opposing the legislation can be dicey for Democrats facing tight 2016 elections. Before the House vote, White House aides went to the Capitol to win over Democrats. Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney, D-NY, told them, in a forceful exchange, that voting "no" could hurt Democrats at the polls.

Sen Jack Reed, D-RI said other steps should include addressing illegal immigration more broadly and barring the sale of guns to people on federal terrorism watch lists — a move the Senate recently rejected. — AP



WASHINGTON: In this Sept 16, 2015 file photo, Senate Majority Leader Sen Mitch McConnell of Ky, (center) accompanied by Sen John Thune, R-SD (left) and Sen Roy Blunt, R-Mo speaks during a news conference on Capitol Hill. — AP

PAKISTAN PM TO VISIT SAUDI AND IRAN 'TO EASE TENSION'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will lead a high-level delegation to Saudi Arabia and Iran this week to try to ease tension between the Muslim countries, a minister said yesterday. Information minister Pervez Rashid told AFP Sharif would travel to Riyadh today and Tehran on tomorrow and would meet Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

Foreign ministry spokesman Qazi Khalilullah said Sharif would exchange views on regional and international issues and try to reduce tension between the two countries. "Pakistan is deeply concerned at the recent escalation of tensions between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran," the spokesman said in a statement.

He said the prime minister has called for the peaceful settlement of differences in the larger interests of Muslim unity. "The purpose of the visit is to mediate and to end the standoff

between the two countries," a third government official told AFP, requesting anonymity. Sunni Muslim Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran are already fighting a proxy war in Yemen and support opposing sides in the Syrian conflict. But tensions have reached new heights in the past two weeks.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its Sunni Arab allies cut diplomatic ties with Iran after protesters angry at Riyadh's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric on January 2 sacked its embassy in Tehran. Local media said Pakistan's powerful army chief General Raheel Sharif would accompany Premier Sharif. Pakistan is a majority Sunni country but 20 percent of the population is Shiite. Its decision this month to join Saudi Arabia's 34-country coalition against extremism sparked a domestic protest by the main opposition parties, who called for negotiations between Riyadh and Tehran and put Islamabad under pressure to mediate. — AFP

IS ABDUCTS OVER 400 IN SYRIA AFTER ASSAULT

BEIRUT: Jihadists from the Islamic State group have abducted more than 400 Syrian civilians after capturing new ground in a major assault on the city of Deir Ezzor that left dozens dead. The shock attack comes despite a Russian air campaign targeting the group that began in September, and more than a year of strikes by a US-led coalition against the jihadists in Syria.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said IS had killed at least 135 people in the multi-front attack that began on Saturday. The dead included 85 civilians and 50 regime fighters, according to the monitor, which said yesterday that IS had also kidnapped more than 400 civilians from captured territory.

"Those abducted, all of whom are Sunnis, include women, children and family members of pro-regime fighters," Observatory chief Ramil Abdel Rahman said. He said they had been taken to areas under IS control in the west of Deir Ezzor province and to the border with Raqa province—the main IS stronghold in Syria—to the

northwest.

The monitor said at least 42 IS fighters had been killed in the attack, adding that fighting was ongoing yesterday, with regime forces backed by Russian air strikes trying to recapture lost ground. Syria's state news agency SANA said at least 300 civilians, "most of them women, children and elderly people," had been killed in the assault. It denounced the deaths as a "massacre".

History of mass murders

The IS assault puts the group in control of around 60 percent of Deir Ezzor city, which is capital of the surrounding province of the same name, an oil-rich region that borders Iraq. The jihadist group already controls most of the province, but regime forces have clung onto part of the city and a neighboring air base despite repeated IS attacks.

If confirmed, the death toll in the assault would be one of the highest in a single attack by IS, though the jihadists have carried out mass murders before. In 2014, its fighters killed hundreds of

members of the Sunni Shaitat tribe in Deir Ezzor province after they opposed the jihadists. And in August 2014, the group massacred some 200 Syrian soldiers when it overran the Tabqa military base in Raqa province.

The jihadists have also carried out mass abductions before, seizing more than 200 civilians from central Homs province in August 2014, and at least 220 Assyrian Christians from villages in the northeast of the country months earlier.

Some of those abducted in those incidents have been freed in small batches, in some cases reportedly in exchange for ransoms. The assault came despite a Russian air campaign that began in September in support of the government, which Moscow says targets IS and other "terrorist" groups.

IS under pressure

The Russian strikes have so far killed at least 808 IS fighters, according to the Observatory, though they have also killed moderate and Islamist fighters and

civilians, it says. More than 3,700 IS jihadists have also been killed in US-led coalition strikes that began in Syria in September 2014.

Yesterday, the Observatory said 40 civilians including eight children had been killed in strikes on the IS bastion of Raqa city. The monitor said it was unclear if the strikes were carried out by regime or Russian planes. In recent months, IS has come under pressure particularly from Kurdish fighters backed by US strikes, and more recently regime forces supported by Russian air raids.

On Saturday, at least 16 IS fighters were killed in a failed attack on a government position in Aleppo province, where loyalist troops and pro-regime fighters have been advancing towards the group's stronghold of Al-Bab. Regime forces are now within 10 kilometers of Al-Bab, and are seeking to sever IS-held territory in Aleppo province from that held by the group in neighboring Raqa. More than 260,000 people have been killed in Syria since the conflict began in March 2011 with anti-government protests. — AFP

CZECH LEADER: EU MUSLIMS 'IMPOSSIBLE TO INTEGRATE'

PRAGUE: Czech President Milos Zeman, known for his fiery anti-migrant comments, said yesterday that it was almost impossible to integrate the Muslim community into European society. "The experience of Western European countries which have ghettos and excluded localities shows that the integration of the Muslim community is practically impossible," Zeman

said in a televised interview. "Let them have their culture in their countries and not take it to Europe, otherwise it will end up like Cologne," he added, referring to the mass New Year's Eve assaults on women in Germany and elsewhere. "Integration is possible with cultures that are similar, and the similarities may vary," pointing out that the Vietnamese and

Ukrainian communities had been able to integrate into Czech society. Zeman, a 71-year-old left winger and the first-ever directly elected president of the Czech Republic, has repeatedly spoken out against the surge of migrant and refugee arrivals in Europe. Earlier this month, Zeman claimed the influx was masterminded by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood which

uses money from several states to finance it in a bid to "gradually control Europe". Late last year, Zeman called the surge in refugee numbers "an organized invasion," urging young men from Iraq and Syria to "take up arms" against the Islamic State (IS) group instead of running away. More than one million migrants reached Europe

in 2015, most of them refugees fleeing war and violence in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, according to the United Nations refugee agency. But few asylum seekers have chosen to stay in the largely secular Czech Republic, an EU and NATO member of 10.5 million people, with the majority heading to wealthier Germany and other western EU states. —AFP

PRISONER RELEASE HELPS OBAMA BLUNT CRITICISM

WASHINGTON: The surprise release of five Americans held in Iran has helped a vulnerable President Barack Obama put his political foes on the back foot. On a day when the White House took the politically unpopular step of unfreezing up to \$100 billion dollars in Iranian assets, the administration pulled an ace from its sleeve.

After 14 months of stop-start secret talks between senior Iranian and US officials, Tehran announced the release of four Americans in exchange for seven Iranians being released in the United States. A fifth American, identified as Matthew Trevitick, was also released as a separate but "associated goodwill gesture." A senior US administration official said the timing of the two developments was coincidental. The swapped group included Americans Jason Rezaian, a Washington Post journalist, and Saeed Abedini, a Christian pastor from Idaho.

Republican air horns

Both men have become causes celebres for Republicans who oppose Obama's strategy of engagement with Iran. When a deal was reached last summer to significantly scale back Iran's nuclear program in return for sanctions relief, Obama was pilloried for leaving Rezaian and others languishing. Republican hopeful Ted Cruz - a Christian conservative has long demanded Abedini's release as one precondition for talking to Tehran. In a sign of how successful Republican criticism has been, ahead of "implementation day" much of the focus was on sanctions and Iran's return to the global economy.

Critics argued that the windfall would be used by Tehran to fund militants like Hezbollah or Yemen's Houthi rebels. Less noted was a report from international inspectors, also on Saturday, that precipitated sanctions relief. The IAEA reported that Iran, after decades of massive investment, had hobbled its own nuclear program. Republican attacks on Obama's policy of engagement had intensified this week as 10 American sailors were detained in the Gulf by Iran's hardline Revolutionary Guard Navy, but not before being paraded

in front of the cameras. The White House and its allies gamely pointed to the sailors' quick release as evidence that diplomacy is working.

It was an argument they reprised upon news that five more Americans would be released. "For all the bluster and bombast fashionable in some quarters, today's events underscore how important-and under-appreciated-diplomacy is," said David Axelrod, a long-time Obama advisor. Democratic presidential hopeful Martin O'Malley sent his own "memo" to Republican candidates. "Diplomacy beats carpet bombing," he said.

'Problematic aspects'

Republicans responded to the prisoner release with slightly more tempered criticism than had been seen in recent days. "We don't know the details of the deal that is bringing them home. It may well be that there are some very problematic aspects to this deal," said Cruz, referencing Abedini by name. Florida Senator Marco Rubio said he was happy for the families of the captives, but accused the Obama administration of "incentivizing" the detention of Americans by agreeing to a swap of seven Iranians imprisoned in the United States.

"It tells us all we need to know about the Iranian regime, that they take people hostage in order to gain concessions and the fact that they can get away with it with this administration," he said. "I think this created an incentive for more governments to do this around the world." Republican frontrunner Donald Trump, who has long portrayed himself as a master negotiator, questioned whether it was a good deal. With both Iranians and Americans heading to the polls this year, it may be too early for either side to declare victory.

According to Richard Nephew, a former US diplomat who negotiated with Iran, hardliners on both sides will be trying to "demonstrate that they remain 'tough' on their adversaries in the other capital and to appease their domestic hardliners." At the same time there are multiple points of possible friction between Tehran and Washington. —AFP



SOUTH CAROLINA: Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks at the South Carolina Tea Party Convention, Saturday, Jan. 16, 2016, at the Springmaid Beach Resort in Myrtle Beach. — AP

TRUMP TREADS AMONG EVANGELICALS IN SEARCH FOR HOLY CHRISTIAN VOTES

REAL ESTATE MOGUL CAN'T RECITE SINGLE BIBLE VERSE

WASHINGTON: Manhattan billionaire Donald Trump, a pro-abortion Republican until recently, appears to have little in common with evangelical Christians. But he is increasingly gaining their support as he openly courts this key voting bloc. Just two weeks out from the Iowa caucuses, Trump will speak today at Liberty University, a private school in Lynchburg, Virginia and an evangelical bastion. The visit coincides with a holiday commemorating civil rights leader Martin Luther King. Speaking at the university has been a rite of passage for conservative presidential candidates from Ronald Reagan in the 1980s to Ted Cruz, Trump's main Republican rival, who launched his campaign there in March. Cruz, a Texas senator whose father is a Cuban-born evangelical preacher, already enjoys strong support from the evangelical community.

Trump and Cruz are locked in a tight race in Iowa, which on February 1 becomes the first state to vote for party nominees. News that Trump, known more for womanizing, an extravagant lifestyle and bombastic rhetoric than for piety, will speak on campus triggered threats of student protests. Evangelical voters typically support candidates that are conservative on social issues, an area of weakness for Trump.

According to polls, nearly two-thirds of evangelical Republicans say a candidate's position on abortion is the most important issue during their voting decision. But Trump, 69, who during his political life has been a Democrat and an independent, is only a recent convert to the "pro-life" anti-abortion position prevalent among evangelical Christians. In recent weeks Trump has

stressed his own faith as he stepped up efforts to reach out to this critical Republican voter group. "I am an evangelical. I'm a Christian. I'm a Presbyterian," he said last month. And when asked recently about his favorite book, Trump simply responded: "the Bible." But the real estate mogul can't name a single verse. Winning over the evangelical voting bloc could set Trump on a path to become the Republican Party's presidential nominee.

Ready to say anything

About 70 percent of Americans describe themselves as Christian, and among Christians one in four say they are evangelical Protestants, according to a Pew Research Center study on religion. "It's quite mandatory for a Republican to get the support of the evangelicals," said Baylor University professor Lydia Bean, author of "The Politics of Evangelical Identity."

Trump, she said, "has absolutely no arguments. That's what is interesting." The reality TV star "has zero claim to be a Christian leader, absolutely zero. Behind the scene, I think that a lot of leaders don't want to support him, they'd rather prefer Ted Cruz," she said. "That's why he has to attack. Donald Trump doesn't care, he can literally say anything to get what he wants."

Trump is ready to battle Cruz on his own turf, and is not shy about launching personal attacks. In late December, Trump proclaimed: "Not a lot of evangelicals come out of Cuba," a thinly veiled attack on Cruz and his father, Rafael Cruz. Trump has also questioned whether Cruz, who was born to an American mother in Canada, can even run

for president. This strategy to play offense is already paying dividends.

An early January NBC News/SurveyMonkey poll gave Trump 35 percent support among evangelicals, just behind Cruz but well ahead of retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson, a Seventh Day Adventist. Trump is taking advantage of the lack of unity among evangelicals, whose leaders have been unable to publicly choose a candidate among a crowded Republican field that also includes Florida Senator Marco Rubio and ex-pastor Mike Huckabee.

The evangelical voter base feels forgotten by national leaders in Washington and is attracted by anti-establishment candidates like Cruz and Trump. Trump has an especially high anti-establishment ranking as he has never served in any public office or in the military.

Cruz may have fought the Republican establishment but he remains a US senator-in other words, a much-criticized Washington politician. Trump's anti-Muslim diatribes find resonance among evangelicals, a group that according to the Pew Research Center has the least favorable opinion of Muslims in the United States.

"It's an advantage" for Trump, Bean said. "Unfortunately, for most of the evangelicals, attacking Muslims is the moral thing to do and it is a very good point for him. So yes, we can imagine that he will give some new comments on that." And if evangelical leaders don't necessarily want him to represent Republicans come the November general election, many "are afraid to attack Donald Trump because he's popular with the base," Bean added. — AFP



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State John Kerry pauses while speaking to journalists about his negotiations with Iran upon his arrival from Vienna at Joint Base Andrews. —AP

NANNY NIGHTMARE: CHINESE PAIR IN COURT OVER BRUTAL MURDERS

PARIS: It started with a nannying job and ended with the parents chopped up in the bathtub: A Chinese couple go on trial in France Tuesday for a double murder worthy of a film plot. The baffling case first came to light in June 2012 when two women jogging in the Vincennes forest east of Paris stumbled upon a human leg "cut off at the ankle," according to a judicial source. Two days later, a dog dug up part of a human torso.

Efforts to find the rest of the bodies were in vain, and all investigators could determine was that the body parts belonged to an Asian woman and man. The discovery of the remains in the popular park came at the same time as Luka Rocco Magnotta, a Canadian convicted of killing and dismembering a Chinese student, was reported to have fled to Paris. In an unusual twist, a Chinese couple turned themselves in to police just over a week after the macabre discovery, and admitted killing another Chinese couple, Ying Wang and her husband Liangxi Xu. The woman, Hui Zhang, said she had been the couple's nanny.

She told police how one night several weeks earlier, she had found their two-year-old son Lucas dead, asphyxiated in his sleep. She and her partner Te Lu decided to offer the child's parents money to try to get them not to report the boy's death. They invited the parents to their home, but said their plans quickly went awry faced with the fury of the grieving couple.

A fight broke out and the nanny said she grabbed a small axe and slashed at the couple, who eventually fell to the floor, dead. Hui Zhang and Te Lu argue their actions were self-defense, saying the parents had attacked them with a butcher's knife. Te Lu was seriously injured in the fight. Hui Zhang said she put the two bodies in the bathtub and cut them up with an electric saw, putting the washing machine on to hide any noise. Then she and her partner got rid of the body parts, hidden in dustbin bags, and carefully cleaned the apartment.

The couple's confession led police to find further human remains in a dustbin bag in the forest, but not the body of the child, Lucas. Hui Zhang said she threw his body, as well as the rest of the remains, into dustbins. The couple-both aged 34—arrived in France in 2004. Psychological experts say Te Lu had no criminal leanings and Hui Zhang was "extremely intelligent" and dominated her husband. — AFP

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17	Rigger	3	5 years (Industrial experience)
18	Doc. Controller	5	5 years (Industrial experience)
19	Production Clerk	5	5 years' experience (Computer & English skills)
20	Laminator	10	5 years (GRP / GRE PIPES & FITTINGS)
21	Installer	10	5 years (GRP / GRE PIPES & FITTINGS)
22	Fabricator	5	5 years (GRP / GRE PIPES & FITTINGS)
23	Fitter	5	5 years (GRP / GRE PIPES & FITTINGS)
24	Mach. Operator	10	5 years (GRP / GRE Filament winding Machines)
25	Welder Steel	2	5 years (Industrial experience)
26	Draft Man	2	5 years (Auto CAD experience)
27	Construction Foreman	5	5 years' projects experience

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PAKISTAN ARRESTS IMAM AFTER BOY CUTS HAND OFF IN BLASPHEMY ERROR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani police have arrested the imam of a mosque for inciting violence after a 15-year old boy who was told by the cleric that he was a blasphemer went home and cut off his own hand. Shabbir Ahmed was delivering a sermon at a village in the east of Punjab province when he asked the gathering if

anyone did not love the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

Mishearing the question, the 15-year old boy raised his hand. Ahmed quickly singled him out and called him a "blasphemer" in front of the congregation, Noshir Ali, the head of the local police station, told Reuters yesterday.

After returning home, the boy cut his hand off, an act welcomed by the boy's father who told police he was proud of his son and did not want the cleric arrested. Police filed anti-terrorism charges against Ahmed and arrested him on Saturday, police chief Ali said. "Such illiterate imams of mosques

should not be allowed to deliver speeches. His arrest is under the National Action Plan that hate speeches inciting violence are no longer allowed in this country," Ali said.

Blasphemy is a highly controversial issue in Pakistan, and angry mobs have killed many people accused of insulting

Islam in the majority Muslim country. The law does not define blasphemy but stipulates that the penalty is death, although a death sentence has never been carried out. Human rights activists say accusations of blasphemy are sky rocketing because the law is often abused to settle personal grudges.—Reuters



OUAGADOUGOU: A policeman stands guard in front of the Splendid hotel yesterday following a jihadist attack by Al-Qaeda linked gunmen late on January 15.—AFP

SECURITY FORCES HUNT DOWN POSSIBLE SURVIVING BURKINA HOTEL ATTACKERS

REGIONAL JIHADISTS EXPANDING IN WEST AFRICA

OUAGADOUGOU: Security forces were hunting yesterday for any possible surviving gunmen from an attack on a top hotel in Burkina Faso that left at least 29 people dead and showed the expanding reach of regional jihadists in West Africa. The drama saw Burkinabe troops, backed

by French Special Forces, battle militants who stormed the four-star Splendid Hotel, which is popular with foreigners and United Nations staff.

At least 13 foreigners are among the dead, according to a government toll. Burkina Faso has declared three days of national mourning follow-

ing the onslaught, which echoed another Al-Qaeda attack last year on a luxury hotel in neighboring Mali where 20 people were killed, mostly foreigners.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed the latest attack on behalf of an affiliate, saying the gunmen were from the Al-Murabitoun group of notorious one-eyed Algerian extremist Mokhtar Belmokhtar. It is still not clear how many attackers took part in the onslaught—the bodies of three have been identified, but some witnesses reported seeing more.

Burkina Faso's Interior Minister Simon Compaore said search security forces were carrying out careful searches, while at the scene of the attack a security cordon was widened yesterday. Investigators wearing white protective gloves were seen in the streets around the Splendid and the Cappuccino cafe, which was also attacked. "People are afraid. Anyone who's not afraid isn't normal—this is guys with guns," said Souleymane Ouedraogo, who lives near the scene of the violence.

Violence spreading

Until recently Burkina Faso had largely escaped the tide of Islamist violence spreading in the restive Sahel region and the hotel assault will heighten fears that jihadist groups are casting their net wider in search of targets in West Africa. President Roch Marc Christian Kabore, who took office just last month, said Saturday that the country was in shock.

"For the first time in its history, our country has fallen victim to a series of barbaric terrorist attacks," he said, adding that the people of Burkina would nevertheless "emerge victorious". The attack began around 7:45 pm on Friday when an unknown number of attackers stormed the 147-room Splendid Hotel in the heart of Ouagadougou.

The hotel and surrounding area became 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 2:00 am.

Among those killed were six Canadians, two French nationals, two Swiss, an American, a Portuguese and a Dutch person, according to the prosecutor's office. Interior minister Compaore said the bodies of three "very young" jihadists had been identified, all of them men. 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 said.

Australians kidnapped

Highlighting the fragile security situation in Burkina Faso, an elderly Australian couple was kidnapped on 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".

The pair had been running a surgical clinic in the north of the country since 1972, and no reason has been given for their kidnapping, a statement from their family said. The hotel attack was the first of its kind in Ouagadougou and came as people were tentatively enjoying a return to stability after November elections which ended a shaky transitional period since veteran leader Blaise Compaore's 2014 ouster, including a failed coup. Al-Murabitoun had already begun to move into the impoverished country of around 17 million. In April, it claimed the abduction of the Romanian security chief of a mine in the country's north.—AFP

JAKARTA ATTACK TOLL RISES TO 8: POLICE

JAKARTA: The death toll in the Jakarta extremist attack has risen to eight, including four civilian victims and four militants, after a wounded Indonesian bystander died overnight, police said yesterday. Police had earlier put the toll of victims from Thursday's assault at two, but raised it with the latest death and confirmation that an Indonesian man originally suspected of being a militant was actually a civilian.

The coordinated bomb and gun attack along the capital's central thoroughfare has been claimed by the Islamic State (IS) group. Indonesian authorities blame it on an IS faction made up primarily of Malay-speaking Indonesians and Malaysians involved in the extremist group's ruthless fight for a self-proclaimed caliphate in Syria and Iraq.

The Jakarta attack also left two dozen people injured—including some foreigners—several of them in serious condition. "Another victim who was in a coma since the beginning died last night," Jakarta

police spokesman Muhammad Iqbal told AFP, confirming the latest death. He named him as Rais Karna, 37, an Indonesian who worked at a nearby bank and who died from severe gunshot wounds to the head.

The fourth victim, who was initially thought to be an attacker, was identified as Sugito. Many Indonesians go by a single name. Police previously confirmed a Canadian citizen was among the dead. All the others were Indonesian. Authorities in Southeast Asian countries with significant Muslim populations say hundreds of their citizens have gone to join the IS jihad in the Middle East, and have repeatedly warned that extremist violence could boomerang back home. Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim-majority country. Police said Saturday they had arrested 12 people in raids across Indonesia, including a man they believe handled financing for the Jakarta attacks, money that authorities allege came from the Islamic State group.—AFP

MERKEL'S MIGRANT ISSUES FLARE BUT CHANCELLOR STANDS FIRM

BERLIN: Chancellor Angela Merkel's migrant troubles have reignited in the New Year but the German leader is sticking to her guns, insisting her country will manage the challenge and that diplomacy can bring solutions. Germany registered nearly 1.1 million asylum-seekers last year, and 2,000 to 3,000 are still arriving daily even in mid-winter.

A surge of robberies and sexual assaults on New Year's Eve in Cologne - and the fact that some of the suspects were asylum-seekers - have highlighted the difficulty of integrating so many newcomers. With pressure mounting for the government to manage the influx, Merkel's Bavarian allies are once again pushing for a cap on asylum-seekers.

Public opinion toward refugees has been souring for months in Germany, although polls suggest political support for Merkel's conservatives is down only slightly. While Germany doesn't hold a national election until late 2017, smaller votes this year - starting with three state elections in March - will offer a test of the mood.

"The events of New Year's Eve have again shone a spotlight on the challenges we face, made them clear from a new side we had not viewed so far," Merkel acknowledged. Within days, her government proposed legislation to make it easier to deport criminal foreigners.

On the refugee influx itself, however, Merkel is standing firm - sticking to her much-criticized mantra that "we will manage it." The woman chosen as Time's person of the year insists that the solution is not to unilaterally close borders, but to work with reluctant European partners, Turkey and others to secure Europe's frontiers and share the burden of hosting refugees. That has been the central plank of her approach even as the government has tightened policy at home - taking steps to make it easier to send migrants from Balkan nations home and making clear that not all Afghans will be allowed to stay.

Whether Merkel will have any more success in Europe in 2016 than last year is questionable. Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, an outspoken opponent of compulsory refugee quotas, said after the Cologne assaults that migrants can't be integrated and "we don't want what happened in Germany to happen here."

Specific limit

Merkel has pledged to reduce the influx but resisted calls to set a specific limit on the number of refugees Germany can take. She rallied her conservative party behind her stance a month ago, heading off calls for a cap by conceding that an unabated influx would "overburden" the country in the long run. But after a few weeks' peace, her allies in the Bavaria-based Christian Social Union - her most prominent domes-

tic critics over recent months - renewed their drive for tougher border controls and for a cap. The party's leader, governor Horst Seehofer, suggested an annual figure of 200,000 asylum-seekers, and grumbling has resurfaced in Merkel's own party.

Yet Merkel isn't budging and won't say by when she aims to get the numbers down. "It wouldn't be right to name the exact day," she said. "We are working at high pressure on a sustainable reduction." Her finance minister, Wolfgang Schaueble, said Europe has only "finite" time to secure its external borders but wouldn't give a date. The daily *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* argued in an editorial that if things don't change by midyear, Merkel will have to declare a partial, temporary halt to admitting migrants.

The first electoral test since the refugee crisis escalated last summer comes on March 13. In principle, there's much to gain for Merkel's party in three state elections. It aims to win back a traditional stronghold, the southwestern state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, after five years under a liberal government. In neighboring Rhineland-Palatinate, it hopes to end the center-left Social Democrats' 25 years at the helm; and in eastern Saxony-Anhalt, it looks well-placed to keep the governor's office.

Still, lackluster conservative results or a strong performance by the upstart Alternative for Germany party could increase the pressure on Merkel. Alternative for Germany appeared to be fading last summer after its founding leader was ousted amid a switch from a euro-skeptic to an anti-immigration stance. It has since been bolstered by the huge migrant influx.

'We will manage it'

"While Merkel lulls the population with the empty phrase 'we will manage it,' it is now clear that she is not even able to protect women from attacks in public places," deputy leader Alexander Gauland said. The direct impact on opinion polls of the Cologne assaults appears so far to be limited, though one survey showed Merkel's popularity sliding again. National polls in the past week have put support for Alternative for Germany between 9 and 11 percent, at most a point or two higher than late last year, with Merkel's Union bloc at 37 or 38 percent - its losses so far within the margin of error. Still, Carsten Linnemann, a lawmaker with Merkel's Christian Democratic Union who has been critical of her open-ended approach, says "the mood among the grassroots is dreadful." A telephone survey of 1,203 people conducted Jan. 12-14 for ZDF television found that 33 percent said the assaults had significantly changed their attitudes toward asylum and refugee issues, while 66 percent said they hadn't.—AP

SUICIDE BOMBER KILLS 14 IN EASTERN AFGHAN CITY

KABUL: A suicide bomber targeting a gathering in a volatile eastern province of Afghanistan killed 14 people, including seven members of a prominent pro-government clan, Afghan officials said. Another 14 people were wounded in the attack on the home of Obaidullah Shinwari, a scion of the clan and member of the Nangarhar provincial council who was not harmed in the attack, the officials said.

The attack came a day before a second round of international talks aimed at reviving the peace process between the Afghan government and the Taleban. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. A Taleban spokesman tweeted that his group was not involved. The head of the council, Ahmad Ali Hazrat, told The Associated Press that the bomber mingled with a crowd at the family event in the provincial capital of Jalalabad before setting off his payload.

Malik Osman, the head of the family and a respected community elder in the Shinwar district near the Pakistan border was wounded and flown to Kabul for treatment, Hazrat said. The family has strongly supported President Ashraf Ghani's efforts to bring peace to the country after almost 40 years of war and 15 years of Taleban insurgency.

The family and guests had gathered to mark the release of another of Osman's sons, Samiullah, eight months after he was kidnapped and held by the Taleban. Samiullah was wounded in the attack, but not seriously, according to Zabiullah Zamaray, another provincial council member. The day before the attack, hundreds of residents of Achin district - where Shinwari's nephew Nasim is governor - held a demonstration calling on authorities to rid the region of insurgents, including a newly formed Islamic State affiliate that recently seized parts of the province after a summer of fierce fighting with the Taleban.

An attack last week on the Pakistani consulate in Jalalabad, which is close to Shinwari's home, was claimed by the IS affiliate, which refers to itself as Khorasan Province and was recently listed as a terror group by the US government. Ghani condemned the attack, saying in a statement that as "terrorists lose their ability to fight Afghan forces on the battlefield, now they are carrying out terror attacks on residential areas."

Representatives of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China are due to meet in Kabul on Monday for the second time this month to formulate a roadmap for peace talks between Kabul and the Taleban. The Taleban are not taking part in the talks. An official in Kabul from one of the countries involved in the talks said that another two rounds of "preparatory meetings" were likely to take place as they worked out the details of a future dialogue.

"There are different opinions about the methodologies and approaches in resuming these talks," he said. The roadmap would include "who do they want to talk to, on what timetable, what incentives are to be offered, and what kind of action will be taken with those people who want to talk and those who do not want to talk," the official said.

The official was not authorized to speak with reporters about the talks so spoke on condition of anonymity. The first meeting of the four-nation group took place in the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, on Jan 11. The meetings seek to revive a process that was derailed last July after the first and only face-to-face meeting between Afghan government and Taleban representatives in Islamabad. That initiative collapsed after Kabul announced that the insurgent group's leader had died in a Pakistani hospital more than two years earlier.—AP



JALALABAD: Afghan men inspect the site of a suicide bombing at the home of a prominent politician.—AFP



BERLIN: In this Jan. 23, 2014 file picture German Chancellor Angela Merkel arrives for a press conference after a cabinet meeting at the Meseberg palace.—AP

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CHINA'S ARAB POLICY 2016

Friendship between China and Arab states dates back to ancient times. Over two thousand years ago, land and maritime Silk Roads already linked the Chinese and Arab nations. In the long stretches of history, peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, learning from each other, mutual benefit and win-win results have always been the main theme of exchanges between China and Arab countries.

The founding of the People's Republic of China and the independence of Arab countries created a new era for China-Arab friendly exchanges. From 1956 to 1990, China established diplomatic relations with all 22 Arab countries. China firmly supports Arab national liberation movement, firmly supports Arab countries' struggle to uphold sovereignty and territorial integrity, pursue and safeguard national interests, and combat external interference and aggression, and firmly supports Arab countries' cause of developing the national economy and building up the countries. Arab countries have given China strong support in restoring its lawful seat at the United Nations and on issues like the Taiwan question.

In 2004, China-Arab States Cooperation Forum was set up. Since then, it has developed into a collective cooperation platform covering many fields and with more than ten mechanisms. In 2010, China and Arab countries established the strategic cooperative relations of comprehensive cooperation and common development, and China-Arab collective cooperation entered a new stage of comprehensive development and upgrading. President Xi Jinping delivered an important speech at the opening ceremony of the Sixth Ministerial Conference of China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, identifying key areas and priority directions of China-Arab collective cooperation, and providing guidance for the development of the China-Arab relations and the Forum.

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Arab countries 60 years ago, cooperation in all fields has been constantly deepened. China has built comprehensive strategic partnership, strategic partnership or strategic cooperative partnership with eight Arab countries, and has set up a strategic dialogue mechanism with the Gulf Cooperation Council. Arab countries as a whole have become China's biggest supplier of crude oil and the 7th biggest trading partner. China's proposed initiatives of jointly building the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road", establishing a "1+2+3" cooperation pattern (to take energy cooperation as the core, infrastructure construction and trade and investment facilitation as the two wings, and three high and new tech fields of nuclear energy, space satellite and new energy as the three breakthroughs), and industrial capacity cooperation, are well received by Arab countries.

Both sides have broad consensus on safeguarding state sovereignty and territorial integrity, defending national dignity, seeking political resolution to hotspot issues, and promoting peace and stability in the Middle East. We share similar views on issues such as reform of the United Nations, climate change and Doha Round trade negotiations, and maintain sound coordination and cooperation. Cultural and educational exchanges are more frequent and people-to-people ties are getting closer with enhanced mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples.

The Chinese government has issued the first China's Arab Policy Paper on the basis of reviewing and summarizing the experience in the development of China-Arab relations. It stipulates the guiding principle for developing China-Arab relations, offers the blueprint for China-Arab mutually beneficial cooperation, and reiterates the political will of commitment to peace and stability in the Middle East, in order to promote China-Arab relations to a new and higher level.

Part I Deepen China-Arab Strategic Cooperative Relations of Comprehensive Cooperation and Common Development

The world is experiencing profound and complex changes. The trend toward a multi-polar world and economic globalization is deepening, and cultural diversity and the information society continue to move forward. Changes in the international configuration and international order are accelerating. All countries in the world are seizing the opportunity to readjust their development strategies, promote reform and innovation, speed up economic transformation and open up new development horizons. At the same time, the world economy is still in a period of deep transformation, with geopolitical factors becoming more prominent, regional turbulences rising one after another, non-traditional security and global challenges increasing and the gap between the North and the South widening. It remains an arduous journey to advance mankind's noble cause of peace and development.

China is the largest developing country in the world and is working hard to realize the two centenary goals and the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation, which is to build a strong, prosperous, democratic, culturally-advanced and harmonious modern socialist country. China will continue to uphold the banner of peace, development and win-win cooperation, be committed to peaceful development, pursue a win-win strategy of opening up and promote the formation of a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation.

Arab states are situated in the converging area of the Asian and African continents, characterized by religious and cultural diversities, time-honored culture and history, unique resource endowment and great potentials for development. Currently, Arab states are independently exploring the development paths suited to their own national realities. They are committed to pursuing industrialization, enhancing employment and improving people's livelihood. They are active in promoting peace and stability in the region and are playing important roles in regional and international affairs.

China will continue to carry forward China-Arab traditional friendship, enrich and deepen our all-round, multi-layer, wide-ranging cooperation, promote sustainable and sound development of our strategic cooperative relations featur-

ing all-round cooperation and common development, and safeguard peace, stability and development of the region and the world at large.

Part II China's Arab Policy

Arab states are China's important partners in following the peaceful development path, strengthening unity and cooperation among developing countries and establishing a new type of international relations with win-win cooperation at its core. China has always approached the China-Arab relations from a strategic height. It is China's long-held diplomatic principle to consolidate and deepen China-Arab traditional friendship. China will adhere to the right approach to justice and interests and promote peace, stability and development of Arab states while seeking better development of China, to achieve win-win cooperation, common development and a better future of the China-Arab strategic and cooperative relations.

China upholds the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, namely, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence. China supports the Middle East peace process and the establishment of an independent state of Palestine with full sovereignty, based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. China supports the Arab League and its member states' efforts to this end.

We will enhance people-to-people exchanges, strengthen cooperation in such areas as science, education, culture, health, radio, film and television, deepen understanding and friendship between the two peoples, promote mutual learning and integration between the two cultures, build a communication bridge between the two peoples, and jointly contribute to the progress of human civilization.

China is willing to strengthen consultation and coordination with Arab states, and jointly uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, implement the United Nations 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, safeguard international equity and justice, and make the international order more fair and just. On major international issues, such as the United Nations reform, climate change, food and energy security, both sides respect each other's core interests and major concerns, support each other's justifiable demand and reasonable propositions, and staunchly safeguard the common interests of developing countries.

Part III Strengthen China-Arab Cooperation in an All-around Manner

1. Political Cooperation

1.1 High-Level Exchanges

We will keep the momentum of high-level exchanges and dialogues, make full use of meetings between high-level officials to guide the development of China-Arab relations. We will strengthen communication on bilateral relations and important issues of mutual concern, increase exchanges of experience of governance and economic development, consolidate political mutual trust, broaden common interests and boost practical cooperation.

1.2 Intergovernmental Consultation and Cooperation Mechanisms

We will further improve the mechanism of China-Arab intergovernmental consultation and cooperation, make the best of bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, such as the strategic dialogue and political consultation, and enhance exchanges and communication, in order to realize common development.

1.3 Exchanges between Legislatures, Political Parties and Local Governments

On the basis of mutual respect, deepening understanding and expanding cooperation, the National People's Congress of China is willing to further expand multi-level and multi-channel exchanges and cooperation with legislatures of Arab states.

In the principle of independence, equality, mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs, the Communist Party of China is willing to further enhance exchanges with friendly political parties and organizations in Arab countries, consolidating the political foundation of China-Arab relations.

We will continue to boost exchanges between local governments, strengthen the mechanism of China-Arab City Forum, support the establishment of more sister cities or provinces, and promote exchanges and cooperation on local development and administration.

1.4 Cooperation on International Affairs

We will strengthen consultation in international affairs, maintain communication and coordination on major international and regional issues, support each other on issues of core interests or major concern. We will keep closer cooperation and coordination in international organizations and defend the common interests of the two sides and all developing countries.

We will jointly uphold the international order and international system with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter at its core. We are actively involved in building a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation and jointly promoting world peace and development. We support the UN in playing a leading role in maintaining peace, promoting common development and enhancing international cooperation. We support the UN to undergo necessary and reasonable reforms and increase the representation and voice of developing countries, including Arab states, at the UN Security Council.

1.5 The Taiwan Question

The Taiwan question concerns the core interests of China. The one China principle is the important basis for China to establish and develop relations with Arab states and regional organizations. Arab states and regional organizations have always been committed to the one China principle, refrained from having any official relations or official exchanges with Taiwan, and sup-

ported China in peaceful development of cross-Straits relations and the great cause of national reunification. China appreciates all these.

2. Investment and Trade Cooperation

2.1 "The Belt and Road" Initiative

Joint efforts will be made by China and Arab countries to promote the "Belt and Road" initiative under the principle of wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefit. China and Arab countries will adopt the "1+2+3" cooperation pattern to upgrade pragmatic cooperation by taking energy cooperation as the core infrastructure construction and trade and investment facilitation as the two wings, and high and new technologies in the fields of nuclear energy, space satellite and new energy as the three breakthroughs.

2.2 Cooperation on Production Capacity

Following the principle of market-oriented business operation in which enterprises serve as the main player and government as the facilitator, we will combine China's advantage of production capacity with demands of Arab states, carry out with Arab states advanced, suitable, effective, employment-oriented and environment-friendly production capacity cooperation, supporting Arab states in their efforts to realize industrialization.

2.3 Investment Cooperation

On the basis of equality and mutually beneficial cooperation for win-win results, we encourage and support the expansion and optimization of mutual investment by enterprises from the two sides. We will expand cooperation areas, diversify cooperation methods, broaden investment and financing channels and strengthen cooperation on two-way investment and financing through equities and debts as well as the use of loans, mezzanine financing, direct investment and funds. China is ready to continue to provide foreign-aid loan on favorable terms to Arab countries, as well as export credits and overseas investment insurance. We will push for the signing of agreements with Arab countries on avoiding double taxation and tax evasion, thus creating a sound investment environment, providing convenience to investors from both sides and protecting their legitimate rights and interests.

2.4 Trade

We support the entry of more non-oil products from Arab states into the Chinese market. We will continue to improve the trade structure and push for sustained and steady development of two-way trade. We will strengthen exchanges and consultations between Chinese and Arab trade authorities, complete China-GCC FTA negotiations and sign a free trade agreement at an early date. We will oppose trade protectionism and actively remove non-tariff trade barriers, properly resolve trade disputes and frictions through friendly consultations, and gradually establish bilateral and multilateral mechanisms of early warning for trade disputes and cooperation on trade remedies. We will step up cooperation on inspection and quarantine, speed up the alignment of standards, enhance personnel exchanges and training and jointly crack down on fake and shoddy goods in exports and imports.

2.5 Energy Cooperation

We will carry out cooperation on the basis of reciprocity and mutual benefit, promote and support investment cooperation with Arab countries in the field of petroleum and natural gas, in particular, investment cooperation on oil prospecting, extraction, transportation and refining, and advance the synergizing of oilfield engineering technology service, equipment trade, and industrial standards. We will strengthen cooperation on renewable energy such as solar energy, wind energy and hydropower. We will jointly build the China-Arab clear energy training center and develop all-round cooperation in related areas.

2.6 Infrastructure Construction

We encourage and support broader participation by Chinese companies and financial institutions in the cooperation with Arab countries in such areas as railway, highway, ports, aviation, power, communications, Beidou Navigation Satellite, satellite ground stations and other infrastructure development fields and more extensive cooperation on project operation. According to the priority areas of development and needs of Arab countries, we will be actively engaged in cooperation on major projects in Arab countries to constantly improve Arab countries' infrastructure.

2.7 Space Cooperation

We will further develop space cooperation with Arab countries, actively explore joint projects in such fields as space technology, satellites and their application, space education and training, accelerate the applying of the Beidou Navigation Satellite system in Arab countries, and promote exchanges and cooperation on manned spaceflight, so as to enhance the level of cooperation in this field.

2.8 Civilian Nuclear Cooperation

We will strengthen China-Arab cooperation on the design and construction of nuclear power plants and nuclear technology training. We will be actively engaged in cooperation covering the whole nuclear industrial chain, and promote cooperation between the two sides in basic scientific research, nuclear fuels, research reactors, application of nuclear technologies, nuclear security, disposal of radioactive wastes, emergency responses and nuclear safety. We will accelerate the joint efforts of building an Arab training center for the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and upgrade the level of cooperation in the nuclear field.

2.9 Financial Cooperation

We support the establishment of branches in each other's countries by qualified financial institutions from both sides, and multi-sector operation cooperation, as well as strengthened exchanges and cooperation between regulators.

We will strengthen monetary cooperation between central banks, discuss the expansion of cross-border currency clearing and currency swap arrangements, and increase financing insurance support. We will strengthen coordination and cooperation in international financial organizations and mechanisms, improve and reform the international financial system, and increase the voice and representation of developing countries. China welcomes the Arab countries to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and their active role in it.

2.10 Development of Economic and Trade Cooperation Mechanisms and Platforms

We will give full play to the role of the inter-governmental economic and trade joint commissions, the China-Arab Joint Chamber of Commerce and other bilateral or multilateral mechanisms, make full use of China-Arab States Expo and other platforms, and promote the exchange of visits and communication between governments and enterprises of the two sides.

3. Social Development

3.1 Health Care

We will strengthen exchanges and cooperation in traditional and modern medicine, pay attention to the prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases, especially to cooperation on information sharing and monitoring of epidemics, and promote exchange of visits by experts from both sides. We will advance cooperation between medical institutions and enhance exchanges on clinical technology. We will continue to send medical teams and continuously improve service.

3.2 Education and Human Resources Development

We will strengthen cooperation on education and human resources development, expand the scale and innovate the ways of cooperation. We encourage colleges and universities from both sides to carry out joint scientific research in history and culture, scientific and technological application, region and country-specific studies.

3.3 Cooperation on Science and Technology

We will accelerate the development of China-Arab inter-governmental science and technology innovation cooperation mechanism. We will implement the China-Arab partner project of science and technology and continue to improve the science and technology capability of Arab states. Through the China-Arab technology transfer center, we will establish a China-Arab collaboration network of integrated technology transfer. We will implement the "Outstanding Young Scientist Coming to China Project" and encourage the exchanges between young scientific talents of China and Arab states. We will jointly establish a batch of joint national laboratories, joint research centers and specialized science parks, set up platforms for enterprises to go global and encourage hi-tech Chinese enterprises to innovate, start businesses and establish R&D centers in Arab States.

3.4 Agricultural Cooperation

We will strengthen China-Arab bilateral and multilateral cooperation in such fields as arid zone agriculture, water-saving irrigation, muslim food, food security, animal husbandry and veterinary medicine. We encourage agricultural science and technology personnel from the two sides to increase exchanges. We will continue to set up demonstration projects of agricultural technology in Arab countries, scale up agricultural management and technology training, and strengthen project follow-up and evaluation.

3.5 Cooperation on Addressing Climate Change, Environmental Protection and Forestry

We will vigorously promote communication and coordination with Arab states within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity and United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Control of Desertification.

4. Culture and People-to-people Exchanges

4.1 Exchanges Among Civilizations and Religions

We will promote dialogue between civilizations and promote exchanges between different religions. We will build bilateral and multilateral platforms for religious exchanges, advocate religious harmony and tolerance, explore cooperation on eradicating extremism, and jointly contain the breeding and expansion of extremism.

4.2 Cooperation on Culture, Broadcasting, Film, Television, Press, Publication and Think Tanks

We encourage regular exchange of visits of cultural officials, friendly partnership between cultural institutions and experience sharing between the two sides. We encourage mutual establishment of culture centers, and support holding culture years and participating in art festivals hosted by the other side. We will fulfill the plan of "China-Arab exchange of visits by 10,000 artists," strengthen cultivation of cultural professionals and cooperation of culture industries.

We will enhance China-Arab news media dialogue and cooperation, deepen business exchanges, news articles exchange and personnel training. We will support joint interviews, joint productions and joint operation of media institutions. The two sides will boost cooperation on broadcasting, film and television exchanges, and will continue to hold China-Arab broadcasting and television cooperation forum, conduct translation and authorized broadcasting of television programs and carry out broadcasting and television technology and industry cooperation.

4.3 Exchanges Between Non-governmental Organizations, Youth and Women

We will continue to enhance non-governmental exchanges, improve the mechanism of China-Arab friendship conference, and provide more

support to China-Arab friendship associations. We encourage and support orderly exchanges of various forms between non-governmental organizations and social groups.

We will actively promote China-Arab youth communications, and enhance exchanges between departments of youth affairs and young elites from all walks of life of the two sides.

We will continue to strengthen China-Arab exchanges and cooperation on gender equality, encourage and support high-level dialogues, seminars, cultural exchanges and capacity-building activities between departments and organizations in charge of women's affairs.

4.4 Cooperation on Tourism

We encourage tourism departments and businesses to introduce tourism resources and products to each other and carry out tourism cooperation. The Chinese side welcomes Arab states' application for the Approved Destination Status for outbound group tours by Chinese tourists.

5. Cooperation in the Field of Peace and Security

5.1 Regional Security

China calls for a concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security in the Middle East, and supports Arab and regional countries in their efforts to build an inclusive and shared regional collective cooperation security mechanism, so as to realize long-term peace, prosperity and development in the Middle East.

5.2 Military Cooperation

We will deepen China-Arab military cooperation and exchange. We will strengthen exchange of visits of military officials, expand military personnel exchange, deepen cooperation on weapons, equipment and various specialized technologies, and carry out joint military exercises. We will continue to support the development of national defence and military forces of Arab States to maintain peace and security of the region.

5.3 Anti-terrorism Cooperation

We resolutely oppose and condemn all forms of terrorism, and oppose coupling terrorism with any specific ethnic group or religion as well as double standards. We support the efforts of Arab States in countering terrorism and support their counter-terrorism capacity building. The Chinese side believes that counter-terrorism needs comprehensive measures to address both the symptoms and root causes, and counter-terrorism operations should comply with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international norms, and respect sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all countries.

China is ready to strengthen anti-terrorism exchanges and cooperation with Arab countries to establish a long-term security cooperation mechanism, strengthen policy dialogue and intelligence information exchange, and carry out technical cooperation and personnel training to jointly address the threat of international and regional terrorism.

5.4 Consular, Immigration, Judicial and Police Cooperation

We will earnestly safeguard the safety and legitimate interests of enterprises and citizens of China and Arab states in each other's countries, and actively make institutional arrangements for bilateral personnel exchanges. We will consolidate the results of bilateral cooperation in mutual legal assistance, extradition and repatriation, fugitive repatriation and asset recovery, and set up cooperation on the signing of treaties on legal assistance, as well as fighting transnational organized crimes and corruption.

5.5 Non-Traditional Security

We will jointly enhance the capability to cope with non-traditional security threats, support the international community's efforts to combat piracy, continue to send warships to the Gulf of Aden and waters off Somalia to maintain international maritime security, and conduct cyber security cooperation.

Part IV China-Arab States Cooperation Forum and Its Follow-up Actions

The China-Arab States Cooperation Forum was established 11 years ago with dialogue, cooperation, peace and development as its purposes. The mechanism has been gradually improved, and covered an increasingly wide range of areas. It has become an important platform for collective dialogue and pragmatic cooperation between the two sides based on equality and mutual benefit.

China will remain committed to the development of China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, and together with the Arab countries, further enrich China-Arab cooperation, make innovative efforts on cooperation models and upgrade the level of cooperation, put into play the leading role of the ministerial meeting, and constantly enrich and improvement cooperation mechanisms in trade, culture, media, non-governmental exchanges and other fields, so as to promote China-Arab exchanges and cooperation across the board.

Part V Relations Between China and Arab Regional Organizations

China attaches great importance to its relations with the Arab League, and respects the efforts by the Arab League in maintaining regional peace and stability and promoting regional development. We support a bigger role of the Arab League in other regional and international affairs. China is willing to continue to strengthen consultation and cooperation with the Arab League in various fields.

China appreciates the active role played by Arab sub-regional organizations such as the Gulf Cooperation Council in maintaining regional peace and promoting development, and stands ready to strengthen friendly exchanges and cooperation with these organizations.

— Embassy of the People's Republic of China

HONG KONG 'UMBRELLA' LEADERS SEEK CLOSER TIES WITH TAIWAN

TAIPEI: Student leaders of Hong Kong's pro-democracy Umbrella Movement said yesterday they would seek closer ties with Taiwan after the island elected a new president who pledged to stand up to China. Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan's main opposition party won by a landslide Saturday as voters expressed their discontent over warmer relations with China under the ruling Kuomintang (KMT).

"Whether it is the issue of Taiwan's sovereignty or the future of Hong Kong, we both face the China factor," said Joshua Wong, the teenage face of the Umbrella Movement which brought parts of Hong Kong to a standstill in 2014 seeking fully free leadership elections. "I think more exchange is very much needed," Wong told a press conference in Taipei.

The 19-year-old was in Taiwan as part of a pro-democracy group observing Saturday's elections. Hong Kong is semi-autonomous since being returned to China by Britain in 1997 and enjoys freedoms

unseen on the mainland, but there are fears those freedoms are being lost. The pro-democracy rallies in Hong Kong were sparked when Beijing insisted on vetting candidates for the city's next leader.

Self-ruling Taiwan split from China in 1949 after a civil war on the mainland. But Beijing still sees it as part of its territory awaiting reunification, by force if necessary. The KMT's Beijing-friendly strategy brought trade deals and a tourist boom but sparked fears that China was trying to erode Taiwan's autonomy through economic ties.

Own identity

Support for Tsai surged as Taiwanese sought to assert their own identity and reject China's influence. The island saw its own mass protests in 2014 when student-led demonstrators occupied parliament over a trade pact with China, in what became known as the Sunflower Movement. "We face the same threat, we have to guard our places, to own our des-

tiny. We need to have stronger alliances in all areas," said Alex Chow, another key Umbrella leader speaking in Taipei yesterday. He called for more dialogue, whether through civil groups or the new government. The calls for unity come in the wake of the disappearance of five Hong Kong booksellers from a publishing house known for titles critical of the Chinese government—the latest incident to exacerbate fears over the city's autonomy.

Sunflower activists gained seats in Taiwan's legislature in Saturday's parliamentary vote, standing for the New Power Party (NPP) which grew out of the protest movement. In Hong Kong, former Umbrella protesters also took seats in recent district elections. Wong said the NPP was an inspiration. "How they can turn street protests to power within the legislative system, I think that can serve as a very good reference for those in post-Umbrella student or civil movements in Hong Kong," he said. — AFP



TAIPEI: Joshua Wong (center), the teenage face of Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement which brought parts of the city to a standstill in 2014, walks into a press conference. — AFP

CHINA, ECONOMY TESTS AWAIT NEW TAIWAN PRESIDENT TSAI

MANAGING RELATIONS WITH CHINA WILL BE TRICKY

TAIPEI: Taiwan's presidential election victor Tsai Ing-wen will enjoy a broad mandate from her commanding victory and her independence-leaning party's new legislative majority, but managing the island's delicate relations with China will be tricky. Already, Beijing warned following her Saturday night victory that it will not budge on its bottom line that Taiwan's leader must agree that the communist mainland and self-governing island democracy are part of a single Chinese nation. The sides could be in for a lengthy wait as China assesses whether it feels it can trust Tsai.

"To handle cross-Taiwan Strait relations after Tsai's election will be difficult, not just for Taiwan but also for mainland China," said Huang Jing, a China expert at Singapore National University's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. Tsai, who will be Taiwan's first female president, won by 56 percent of the vote to 31 percent for her closest rival Eric Chu of the China-friendly Nationalist Party, which has held the presidency for the last eight years. Her Democratic Progressive Party won 68 of 113 parliamentary seats, giving it its first majority in the assembly long-dominated by the Nationalists.

"I wasn't surprised a bit by the outcome. The Nationalists had to go. Now Tsai just needs to focus on the economy so I don't expect she'll do anything to rile up China," Taipei tour bus driver Tan Kuang-jung said as a constant drizzle fell over the capital yesterday. The reasons for the massive win were many.

Stagnate wages, jobs

Outgoing President Ma Ying-jeou had been growing increasingly unpopular among Taiwan's 23 million people, largely due to perceptions that his push for closer economic ties with China was benefiting just a few and the futures of young Taiwanese who have seen wages stagnate and good full-time jobs harder to find.

Fearful of their original candidate's poor reception among voters, the Nationalists dumped her in favor of Chu, but even he proved unable to raise their prospects. He resigned as party chairman immediately after Saturday's defeat. Newly politicized young people had coalesced in opposing yet another trade agreement with China and are believed to have voted heavily for the DPP. A further backlash against the party's pro-China stance was prompted by a viral video of 16-year-old Taiwanese entertainer Chou Tzu-yu bowing in apology for waiving the Taiwanese flag on television. Her apology was triggered by her South Korean management company's fears that China would cancel appearances and endorsement deals.

"What happened surrounding Chou Tzu-yu, that whole controversy, made it almost a given (Tsai) would get over the 50 percent mark," said Raymond Wu, managing director of Taipei-based political risk consultancy e-telligence. "It's an indication that someone would continue to bully Taiwan, at all different levels, even a 16-year-old who's trying to make a name for herself in



BEIJING: Visitors look at souvenir plates bearing images of Chinese President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan on display for sale at a shop near Tiananmen Square. — AP

the entertainment field. This is something most Taiwanese find unacceptable," Chou said. The size of the win could also put additional pressure on Tsai and the DPP, said Larry Diamond, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution who closely follows Taiwanese politics. "When you do as well, as decisively as the DPP has done, there are no excuses" for failure, Diamond said. While China had largely refrained from commenting about the election beforehand, its Taiwan Affairs Office responded swiftly to the result with a statement reiterating that it would deal only with those who agree that the "two sides of the strait belong to one China."

Territorial integrity

That was followed by another statement from the Foreign Ministry stating that "China's sovereignty and territorial integrity brook no division. The result of the election in Taiwan will not change the basic fact and the consensus of the international community."

"On such a major issue as safeguarding state sovereignty and territorial integrity, the Chinese government has rock-solid determination and never tolerates any separatist activities aiming at Taiwan independence," said the statement, quoting ministry spokesman Hong Lei. Taiwan was a Japanese colony from 1895 to 1945, and split from the mainland amid the Chinese civil war in 1949, when leader Chiang

Kai-shek moved his Nationalist government to the island.

Reflecting public opinion on Taiwan and mindful of US and other countries' concerns about cross-strait tensions, Tsai has pledged to maintain the status-quo of de-facto independence without taking steps that might provoke China. In her remarks Saturday, she referred to Taiwan by its formal name, the Republic of China. However, unlike Ma, she has refused to endorse Beijing's "one China principle" - although she hasn't publicly repudiated it either - and told supporters Saturday night that she would work to strengthen Taiwan's status abroad.

Deprived of formal diplomatic relations with the world's major nations, Taiwan relies on its stable of 22 allies, mostly small, poor states in the Pacific, Africa and Central America and the Caribbean. Chinese pressure has barred Taiwan from the United Nations and Beijing strictly limits the island's participation in other groups or requires it to participate only under the name Chinese Taipei. Depending on how it interprets Tsai's actions, Beijing could ratchet up the pressure by luring away Taiwan's remaining diplomatic allies or further shutting it out of international organizations. It could also seek to exact economic costs, possibly by limiting Chinese tourism to the island or reducing Taiwanese imports. — AP

'SUNFLOWER' ACTIVISTS TURN LAWMAKERS IN VOTE VICTORY

TAIPEI: Beijing not only has to contend with a new president in Taiwan who is wary of relations with China, but a fresh batch of activists-turned-lawmakers from the island's boisterous Sunflower Movement.

Protesters from the student-led movement that dramatically occupied the island's parliament in 2014 over a trade pact with Beijing took their first step into mainstream politics after winning seats in parliamentary elections Saturday. The activists' success came on the night Taiwan voted in its first female president, Tsai Ing-wen of the main opposition Democratic Progressive Party, which has traditionally campaigned for the island's independence.

Both Tsai and the protesters' victory is symbolic of growing public resistance to Beijing after a rapprochement under outgoing president Ma Ying-jeou of the China-friendly Kuomintang which has sparked fears Taiwan's sovereignty is being eroded. "It's our first election battle and we have a long way ahead of us," said Huang Kuo-chang, an academic and leader of the Sunflower Movement who became a lawmaker Saturday. His New Power Party grew out of the protests and won five seats in parliament-making it the third-largest in the legislature.

"The NPP will not forget the principles of the Sunflower Movement. We will never compromise," Huang, 42, said. Rock star Freddie Lim, 39, was also among the successful NPP candidates, unseating a veteran KMT lawmaker in Taipei. The tattooed death metal singer grabbed headlines with his screaming, head banging campaign concerts ahead of the vote.

'First rocker'

"I'm the first rocker in Asia to go to parliament," said Lim after the victory. "This election shows anyone has the right to go into parliament to promote a better Taiwan." Taiwan is a self-ruling democracy since splitting with China in 1949 after a civil war on the mainland, but has never formally declared independence. But Beijing still sees it as part of its territory awaiting unification,



TAIPEI: Huang Kuo-chang, an academic and leader of the Sunflower Movement, listens during a press conference. — AFP

by force if necessary. Resentment towards the KMT over its China policy and Taiwan's economic woes saw it hemorrhage seats Saturday. The DPP gained a majority for the first time, surging from 40 to 68 seats out of a total 113. The KMT went from 64 to 35.

Among the beleaguered party's successful candidates was Chiang Wan-wan, great grandson of former KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek, who set up government in Taiwan after defeat by Mao Zedong's Communist troops. Chiang, 37, campaigned on a broad domestic platform promoting everything from care for the elderly to business start-ups.

For Huang, victory is a chance to stand up for Taiwan. "I call on China that if it wants to push forward ties with Taiwan ... they have to respect Taiwanese people who want to maintain their way of life, and respect Taiwan people's right to decide their future," he said. — AFP

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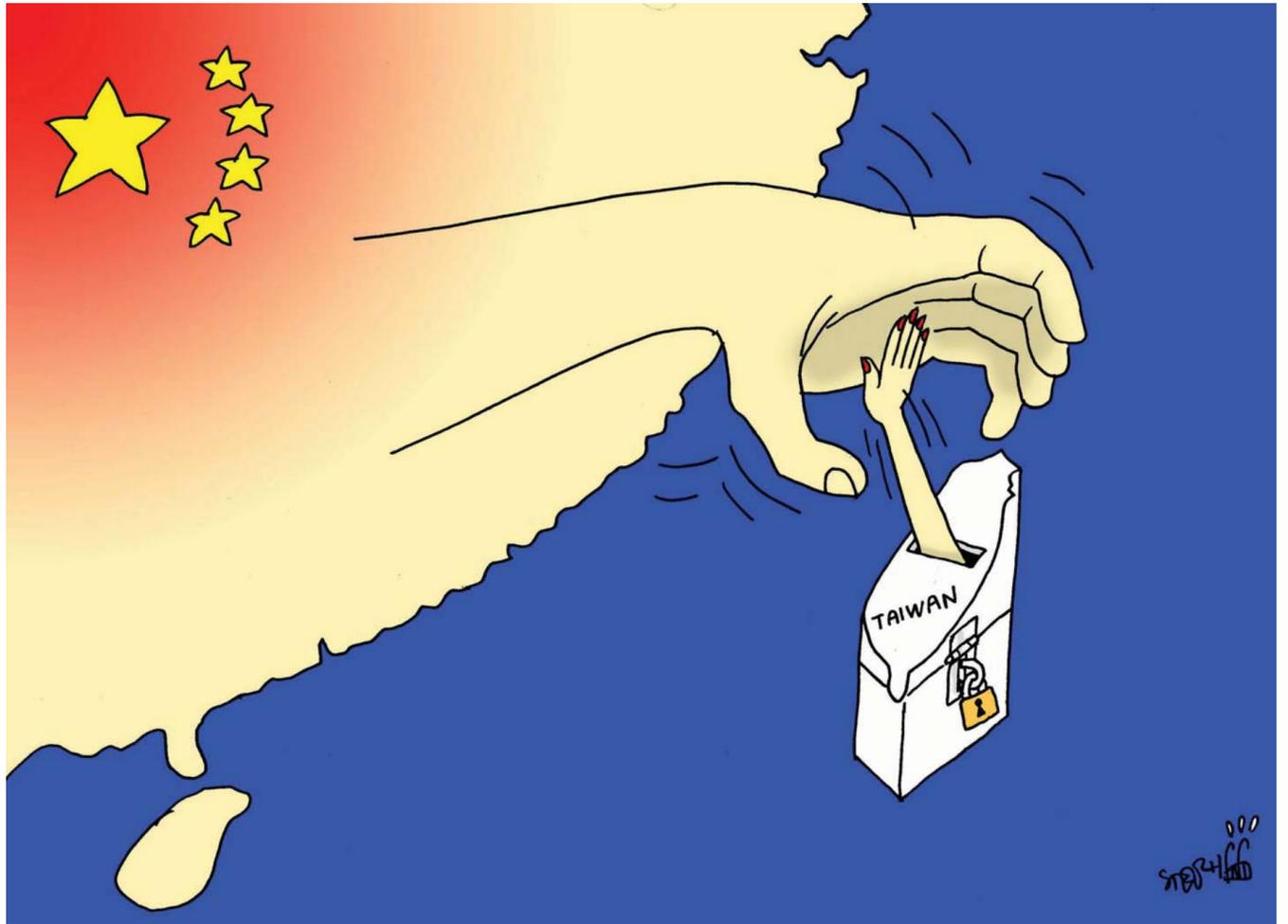
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PRISONER SWAP PUTS REPS IN A TOUGH SPOT

By Kathleen Hennessey

Iran's release of five Americans gives President Barack Obama the opportunity to deliver a harsh reminder to the Republicans wanting to succeed him: You can promise to pull back the hand I've extended to Iran and Cuba - nations the US once cut off - but it won't be easy and it may be lonely. As Republican candidates vow to rewind Obama's rapprochements on their first day in office, many US allies and business interests have pressed forward with outreach to Iran. The next president may find Iran has established itself as world player, a useful diplomatic power broker and a potential market for US businesses.

Vowing to isolate Tehran may only isolate the US from many of its allies. Similarly, in Cuba, where Obama reversed decades of Cold War policy, American businesses are eyeing a new market while US tourism is on the rise. Reversing the tide may prove as difficult as un-ringing a bell. "It's easy to reverse the policies, it's hard not to be isolated in the process," said Jon Alterman, Middle East analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "Can you force the rest of the world to see things the way you do? That's a big question."

The diplomacy with Iran after decades of a divide fulfills Obama's first inaugural promise "to extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist." But Republicans argue Obama reached out well before Tehran eased its grip. Its missile program has violated existing UN prohibitions, it supports terrorist groups and it has remained a key ally of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, they say.

But Saturday was a clear reminder of the forces working against the Republican contenders in Iran. The release of Americans - four of them negotiated as a prisoner swap alongside nuclear talks and one worked out separately - removed a key argument that the US should not lift sanctions while Americans are being held. Meanwhile, the US and other Western nations declared Iran had kept up its end of the landmark nuclear agreement completed last summer, triggering the removal of the billions of dollars in economic sanctions and beginning to open up the gates for international businesses. "Today marks the first day of a safer world," Secretary of State John Kerry said.

'Propaganda'

Republicans did not see the moment of an achievement. While they gently praised the return of the Americans, they blasted the release of Iranian prisoners by the US as part of the swap. "While we celebrate their return," Texas Sen Ted Cruz said of the released Americans, "this deal serves as piece of propaganda for both Iran and the Obama administration." Cruz reprised his promise to "rip to shreds this catastrophic Iran nuclear deal."

Former Florida Gov Jeb Bush said he saw "weakness" in the Obama administration's dealings with Iran. "Let's take a step back here," Bush told a town hall meeting in New Hampshire. "The bigger issue is that we've legitimized a regime who shows no interest in actually moving toward the so-called community of nations." In truth, the US has not been alone in shifting its pose toward Iran, which is part of what would make undoing it difficult. The nuclear deal was negotiated alongside France, Britain, Germany, Russia and China, a coalition that managed to hang together through lengthy discussions and difficult domestic politics. Since then, Iran has joined in international talks seeking an end to the Syrian civil war. White House officials say they see those talks as a test of whether other conversations are possible.

Some Republicans have acknowledged it may be difficult to cut off these ties. Bush has said "maybe we should check with our allies" before shredding the deal. Donald Trump, playing up his skills as a boardroom broker, has suggested he would renegotiate the nuclear deal. But others, including Marco Rubio and Cruz, have put tearing up the deal on their Day 1 to-do list. What would happen on Day 2 is unclear. In a global economy, imposing unilateral US sanctions would have limited impact on Iran and could serve to disadvantage US businesses. Iran has suggested businesses are waiting at the gates to engage - indeed, the transport minister on Saturday announced a deal with the European consortium Airbus to buy 114 passenger planes after sanctions are lifted.

Rubio has warned US businesses not to "gamble" on Iran, saying Tehran will inevitably violate the agreement, and if he's in the White House he'll ensure a harsh punishment. He's made similar warnings about Cuba, cautioning US companies that doing business under the current leadership would be difficult and expensive. Cuban officials have raised concerns about the Republicans' promises to backtrack, saying that casts uncertainty over negotiations. But there's little sign that the GOP rhetoric on Iran is slowing down Tehran's increasing role as a player on the world stage. —AP

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DEAL MARKS US-IRAN THAW, BUT SAUDIS SULK

By Dave Clark and Nicolas Revise

The implementation of the Iran nuclear deal marked a major step forward in Washington's cautious rapprochement with Iran, but will further strain ties with Saudi Arabia. While President Barack Obama's government insists its goal was simply to halt the spread of atomic weapons, experts detect an effort to bring a new balance to its Middle East relationships. That bore fruit this week with the quick release of 10 US sailors captured in the Gulf by Iranian forces, the freeing of five US prisoners in Iran and the formal implementation of the accord.

But, inevitably, with Tehran and Riyadh daggers drawn, the thaw in ties with Shiite powerhouse Iran can only feed paranoia in the Sunni Gulf monarchies, traditionally close US allies. "One of Obama's visions for this region, at least in the Gulf, is equilibrium. He uses that phrase a lot," said Frederic Wehrey of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

'Equilibrium Shattered'

Beyond ongoing wars in Syria and Yemen, where Saudi-backed forces are fighting Iran-backed forces, broader regional peace can only come when if the two build a working relationship. But, whatever Washington's ambitions, the rival powers are far from that. In fact, the US outreach to Iran over the nuclear deal has only served to make Saudi Arabia more anxious. At the New Year, Riyadh executed a Shiite cleric for sedition, provoking protests in Iran that led to the sacking of the Saudi embassy and a breakdown in diplomatic relations.

Wehrey said Obama had hoped that if the rivals could, "if not reach some detente or rapprochement, at least be balanced and to sort of get along" then US focus could turn to Asia. "Of course that ambition of equilibrium has been shattered," the Oxford University academic added. Experts predict that after the dust settles following implementation of the Iran deal, Obama will arrange a visit to the Arabian peninsula to mollify skeptical Saudi and Emirati leaders.

And Secretary of State John Kerry preempted the signature by flying to London on Thursday for talks with the angry Saudi foreign minister, Adel Al-Jubeir. Jubeir, a former ambassador to Washington, is used to getting a sympathetic

hearing from his ally, but Kerry made it clear going in to the meeting that there were issues to discuss. Kerry did not say so, but officials in Washington have made it clear that the administration was dismayed by Sheikh Nimr Al-Nimr's execution, which dramatically worsened the crisis. "The United States will stand with our allies and friends in the region, and we do. But we also want to see diplomacy work," Kerry told reporters ahead of the talks.

'Destruction'

For his part, Jubeir was keen to remind Kerry how Saudi Arabia had worked closely with its US partner in the past, and had tough words for the Iranian leadership Kerry is courting. Asked whether he was worried the windfall that Iran is about to enjoy as trade sanctions are lifted, Jubeir told Sky News: "Every country in the world is worried about this." "Iran's record has been one of war and destruction, terrorism, destabilization, interference in the affairs of other countries," he insisted, speaking after talking with Kerry.

Last week, Jubeir could be forgiven for seeking to underline what he sees as the Iranian threat to America: Iranian forces seized two boatloads of US sailors in the Gulf. Instead, the sailors were released within 16 hours and the State Department chalked up the resolution of the crisis to Kerry's relationship with Iran's foreign minister. Many in Washington, never mind Riyadh, are furious - alleging that the White House is soft-pedaling Iranian provocations to protect the Iran nuclear deal, despite the loss of face.

Junior Partner

"In my opinion what's paramount for Obama is to protect the Iran deal," said Karim Sadjadpour, Iran expert and another senior associate of the Carnegie Endowment. "You could argue it's not only the top of his agenda for the Middle East but arguably what his administration believes to be the crowning foreign policy achievement." Before Iran's Islamic revolution, former US presidents like Richard Nixon had a two-pillar strategy of maintaining ties with both the Shah's Iran and Saudi Arabia. After the United States cut its own ties with Tehran in 1979 in the wake of the embassy hostage drama, Riyadh became the preferred partner, and with the oil boom a rich one. —AFP

SANCTIONS GO, BUT DOUBTS IN IRAN ABOUT BETTER TIMES

By Ali Noorani

Mohammad Ehsani has just about had enough. A trader in Tehran's ancient Grand Bazaar, he doesn't think the lifting of international sanctions on Iran will benefit him at all. "Business will become even worse," he said, as one of his few customers haggled for a \$2 towel to be sold even cheaper. His frustration obvious, Ehsani surrendered, selling the item at a barely breakeven price. To him, an opening up of Iran's economy after the nuclear deal with the West spells disaster. "It will take a couple of years and a lot of local companies will go bankrupt during the transition," he said, complaining of taxes of \$7,000 a year, against sales of around \$100 a day. "Customers will seek foreign brands. Domestic goods don't have a chance. I plan to quit."

Nuclear-related sanctions on Iran were lifted Saturday in Vienna, after UN inspectors said the Islamic republic had met commitments given under a deal last July to scale back its atomic program. With 79 million people, Iran's economy has much potential if it becomes more accessible, as promised by President Hassan Rouhani, a moderate elected in 2013 on a pledge to end the nuclear crisis. The United Nations first imposed economic sanctions in 2006 after Iran was suspected of trying to develop an atomic bomb under the guise of civilian energy production, something it has always denied.

'Doesn't Mean Anything'

Not only did sanctions bar many companies it also stifled those who did business from operating freely. In 2012, the United States and the European Union ratcheted up the pressure, slapping punitive measures on Iran's energy and banking sectors. Re-admission to the SWIFT system of international transactions is likely to be transformational for liquidity - being shut out caused the economy to tank as cash dried up. But talk of a boom - foreign business delegations, particularly from Europe, surged after July's final nuclear deal - seems a world away to Ehsan Ahmadi, a 30-year-old salesman, browsing in the bazaar. "Removing sanctions will only benefit the government," he said. "It doesn't

mean anything to us. It's the people who feel the pain because prices will never go back to what they were."

Inflation has been slashed to 13 percent during Rouhani's presidency. It hit more than 40 percent under his hardline predecessor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, eroding people's savings and spending power. But the possibilities remain vast, according to Faranak Asgari, chief executive of tourism business Tolran.com, which is aiming to cash in on an influx of foreign travellers. "This is the best news Iran has had in 37 years," she said, a reference to the Islamic revolution of 1979, which ushered in clerical rule and a changed political and business environment. "Right now we have very low international investment. It may take a few years but it brings great opportunities for a large untapped market like ours. It will help the people economically," she said.

'They are Terrorists'

The lifting of sanctions, the main reason Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei backed Rouhani's government in the nuclear talks, could also mark a psychological shift among sceptical foreigners. "When under sanctions people think they are terrorists," Asgari said of some perceptions of Iran. "The world is afraid. Sanctions are not just economic. They also intimidate people." Deep problems, however, must be addressed. Iran needs billions of dollars of investment. Plummeting oil prices - gross domestic product fell to \$415 billion in 2014 from \$576 billion in 2011 - has led Rouhani to seek a less oil-based economy. Only 25 percent of next year's budget is forecast to come from selling crude.

But last November the government outlined 50 oil and gas projects, inviting international oil and gas companies to invest \$25 billion under improved contractual terms. Other industries in need of Western technology and modernization, such as aviation, auto production and tourism, are expected to make similar offers. A Western diplomat based in Brussels insisted the nuclear deal was a security decision and not business based, yet it aimed to ensure there are no legal barriers to investing in Iran. "But we have to be realistic, and not expect that on the first day everything will be smooth," he said. —AFP

DEAL WIN MAY BE SHORT-LIVED FOR ROUHANI

By Arthur Macmillan

It is the hard-fought central pillar of his presidency, an election pledge delivered, but Hassan Rouhani may yet find it difficult to capitalize on Iran's nuclear deal with world powers. The agreement, finally implemented Saturday in Vienna, consumed Rouhani's first two-and-a-half years in office but it will lift sanctions that had crippled Iran's economy. Having ended the 12-year international crisis over Iran's nuclear program, Rouhani wants to bolster his position at home, where Iranians want to see concrete economic improvements.

If candidates aligned with the moderate president make gains in parliamentary elections on February 26 they could shift the balance of power away from conservatives, allowing him to enact some social and political reforms. In Rouhani's favor is a high approval rating - more than 60 percent, analysts say - but his fate remains tied to the nuclear deal. A win for a Republican in November's US presidential election could see the agreement fall apart.

"If sanctions are removed with no problems, Rouhani will benefit as he will be seen as a good politician who kept his promise," Foad Izadi, a politics professor at Tehran University, told AFP. "But if what is happening in Congress continues, and the deal unravels without positive results, Iranians will reconsider what Rouhani did. They will be able to ask him: what happened?" Only in the United States have politicians spoken of ripping up the agreement. The other five powers involved - Britain, China, France, Russia and Germany - remain squarely behind it.

Republican in the White House?

The Republican-majority House of Representatives has proposed a bill that would bar President Barack Obama from lifting some sanctions. Although Obama can veto the measure, it shows the potential pitfalls for the nuclear deal - no Republican candidate running for president has pledged to keep it. Rouhani, facing a re-election race in

June 2017, remains exposed to such a shock. "Many Republicans were against the Iran talks from the beginning," Izadi said. "If they get their way Rouhani may not get a second term as president."

Such a result would be a first since the Islamic republic's formation in 1979. Rouhani is its seventh president. The first one fled and the second was assassinated, but the four who preceded him each served two consecutive four-year terms. Amir Mohebbian, a moderate conservative political analyst and strategist close to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, said Rouhani's government remains vulnerable to public opinion.

Managing People's Perceptions

The biggest potential weakness is that Iran's president has offered hope of better times yet the economy is flat. Rouhani has managed to cut inflation to 13 percent from above 40 percent under his hardline predecessor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, but growth remains weak. Iran's currency, the rial, has lost ground against the dollar since the nuclear deal was struck on July 14 last year. And income from oil sales has plummeted because of the falling price of crude. "Ordinary people's short term memories are awake. They still see the situation as worse

than before. They need to see a positive," Mohebbian said.

And if Rouhani cannot exploit the nuclear deal's benefits his opponents may be able to use it against him. "If I was him I would let the population know that after the nuclear agreement the economic situation will be better," Mohebbian said. "If people are disappointed now it shows Rouhani does not look at this closely enough. Without good perception management maybe he will be the first president in Iran to serve one term only."

Rouhani's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, had the final word on the nuclear agreement, backing Rouhani because he wanted sanctions to end. But Khamenei said in October that any new sanctions - even Obama's White House has threatened penalties over Iran's ballistic missile program last month - could constitute a breach.

Ellie Geranmayeh, an Iran specialist at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said getting the deal implemented is "perhaps a bigger victory" for Iran's president than the original agreement. "It was important for Rouhani that sanctions be lifted before the elections, even if the tangible impact in the next month is nominal," she said, agreeing that the vote's outcome remains unpredictable.

But Rouhani and his allies can push the nuclear deal as a solid victory, which also saw seven Iranians jailed in America exchanged for four dual citizens held in Tehran in an apparent goodwill gesture. "He has proved both domestically and to the West that he can deliver," Geranmayeh said, allowing him "to contrast his pragmatic diplomacy" against Ahmadinejad's antagonism. "He will ask the people who served Iran's national interests better?" Geranmayeh added of Rouhani. —AFP



IRAN MOVES FROM PARIAH STATE TO REGIONAL POWER

TEHRAN-US THAW MAY UNDERMINE RIYADH'S LEADING ROLE

BEIRUT: Iran's release from sanctions testifies to its new relationship with the United States as it moves from pariah state to regional power, a status that could come at the cost of Saudi Arabia, Washington's chief Arab ally. Enemies and allies alike must adjust to Iran becoming an uninhibited power broker in the Middle East after its nuclear deal with world powers and Saturday's lifting of sanctions that bring it to the top table of international politics. The swift release last week of US Navy sailors after they drifted into Iranian waters marked the new era in relations following decades of hostility with the West.

After the 1979 revolution that brought Shiite clerics to power, Iran would typically use hostages to extract concessions from its western adversaries. Early on, it held 52 hostages taken from the US embassy in Tehran for 444 days. That incident ranked alongside Iranian-backed suicide bombings against Western embassies and troops in Lebanon, the hijacking of planes and the kidnapping of Western hostages in the country.

All this left deep scars and incited hostility towards Iran as an outlaw, in the region and the world. Yet last week's naval incident contrasted to 2007 when Iran captured British sailors in similar circumstances, but accused of them of spying and held them for two weeks. The hiccup over the American sailors was easily contained by the new rapprochement and "summarizes the emergence of a new relationship between Washington and Tehran", said Fawaz Gerges, a Middle East expert at the London School of Economics.

No Longer a Spoiler?

Washington remains far from enamored of the mullahs ruling in Tehran, and is formally committed to Iran's archrival, Saudi Arabia. But Iran's attractions are both political and economic: A country that is "a potential regional superpower, and an emerging market with huge potential along similar lines to Turkey", said Gerges. "There is a new relationship based on a new understanding of Iran's pivotal role in the region - that Iran is here to stay," he said. So, for Washington, Iran would no longer be a spoiler state, but one that could play a positive role in stabilizing the region and "help put out the fires".

Saudi Arabia, however, remains implacably at loggerheads with Iran. Its rigid Wahhabi Sunni Muslim clerical leaders treat Shiites as heretics, not far short of how Islamic State jihadis regard Shiites as idolaters to be exterminated. The Saudis have been badly rattled by Iran's success in forging a Shiite axis stretching from Iraq through Syria to Lebanon, where Tehran's paramilitary ally Hezbollah is also the strongest political force.

Riyadh says Iran is also behind unrest in neighboring Bahrain, which has a Shiite majority, as well as the insurgency of Shiite Houthis in Yemen, where the Saudis launched an air war last year. It also believes Tehran is stirring up Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, which contains nearly all the kingdom's oil and most of its marginalized Shiite minority. The execution this month of Sheikh Nimr Al-Nimr, a dissident Saudi Shiite cleric, has further poisoned relations with Iran.

Yet for the United States and its European allies, getting Iran on-side is likely to be vital to their interests. In particular,

Tehran could be crucial in the fight against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The same goes for the search for ending the civil war in Syria. There Iran kept President Bashar Al-Assad in power as his sole foreign ally offering battlefield help until Russia arrived with its air force last autumn.

On the Defensive

While Iranian confidence grows, Riyadh appears defensive - and unpredictable since last year's succession of the King Salman, who has vested vast power in his young son, Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi watchers say. "There is a widespread perception that Saudi Arabia is pursuing chaotic, counter-productive policies," said Gerges. "The Saudis are really behaving with a sense of siege, reacting to events as if each was the end of the world," Gerges said, "lashing out angrily and recklessly, with no long-term perspective".

Iran, by contrast "believes it is a rising power, that the world needs it". Tehran also appears to have grasped that the huge increase in US shale oil production has freed America from its dependence on Saudi crude. Saudi officials say their regional policy is coherent, not ideologically or religiously motivated. "We will not allow Iran to destabilize our region. We will not allow Iran to do harm to our citizens or those of our allies and so we will react. But it is a reaction in response to Iranian aggression," Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir told Reuters this month.

Farhang Jahanpour of Oxford University argues that the Saudis need to agree a regional security structure with Iran and all other Gulf states, as well as Sunni powers Egypt and Turkey. "They should cooperate because if the present state of antagonism continues they will be the losers, and we will be witnessing wars for decades in the entire region and beyond," Jahanpour said.

New Dilemmas

Rivalry between Sunni and Shiite Islam goes back many centuries. In modern times, this often translated into a strategic contest between Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi version of Sunni orthodoxy and the Shiite theocracy of Iran. The 2003 overthrow of Sunni minority rule in Iraq by the US-led invasion and its replacement by a Shiite government under the sway of Iran has rekindled the sectarian firestorm.

Ali Al-Amin, a Lebanese analyst and researcher, says Riyadh seems to believe the real threat comes from Sunni rivals such as Islamic State and a restive young Saudi population indoctrinated with Wahhabi prejudice against Shiites. "The fight with Iran strengthens it internally, it strengthens its nerve," says Amin. "Its purpose is to protect the regime and rally all Sunnis behind it."

But Iran, too, has its vulnerabilities. It faces the dilemma of how far to liberalize once its economy reconnects to world markets and investment creates new power groups. Its successes in countries such as Lebanon, Iraq and Syria have come as these states were cracked open by war or invasion, leading to de facto partition. Tehran has advanced its interests by bypassing state institutions with unstable alternatives such as militias, its principal weapon of influence. — Reuters

EXPERTS ON COURSE TO UNRAVEL SECRETS OF EGYPT PYRAMIDS

CAIRO: Experts revealed yesterday new findings at two of Egypt's famed pyramids, boosting efforts to unravel whether the ancient world's iconic monuments contain secret chambers. For the past three months a team of researchers from Egypt, France, Canada and Japan have been scanning four pyramids with thermal cameras to see if they contain unknown structures or cavities. Operation ScanPyramids began on Oct 25 to search for hidden rooms inside Khufu - also known as the Great Pyramid - and Khafre in Giza and the Bent and Red pyramids in Dahshur, all south of Cairo.

The project is expected to continue until the end of 2016, and applies a mix of infrared thermography, muon radiography imaging and 3D reconstruction - all of which the researchers say are non-invasive and non-destructive techniques. Yesterday, experts revealed new findings on some of the limestone blocks that make up the western flank of the Red pyramid and northern flank of Khufu. "There is a clear separation of temperature on the west face of Red pyramid. The bottom is colder than the top," Matthieu Klein of Canada's Laval University told a news conference. "It's interesting. We have no answers yet... Could it be because of the wind?

Maybe, but it's interesting," he said, adding that the difference in temperature was of three to six degrees Celsius.

A video projection of the data recorded by the thermal cameras showed hues of red on the blocks where heat was detected and blue and magenta for the cooler ones. Klein said two anomalies were also located on the northern flank of Khufu, where experts have previously found similar "points of interest" on the monument's eastern face. Experts say they will carry out more investigations to include further data analysis of the anomalies detected so far.

"The primary result tells us that we have some news, some good news," Antiquities Minister Mamdouh Al-Damati said. "We will have some secrets to solve in the pyramids, but it's very early to say what they are." At 146 m tall, Khufu pyramid, named after the son of pharaoh Snefru, is considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, built some 4,500 years ago. It has three known chambers, and like other pyramids in Egypt was intended as a pharaoh's tomb. The Red pyramid, built by Snefru, is 105 m tall and located to the north of the Bent pyramid at the Dahshur necropolis. — AFP

ROUHANI, OBAMA HAIL NUKE DEAL...

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Tehran remained over its "destabilizing activities". In a sign of those differences, Washington announced it had decided to target the Islamic republic's ballistic missile program with new measures. Five Iranian nationals and a network of companies based in the United Arab Emirates and China were added to an American blacklist, the US Treasury Department announced.

The White House had threatened to impose the measures last month but withdrew them after Rouhani hit out at both their timing and intent. Missiles were not part of the nuclear agreement. Asked before the new sanctions were announced how Iran would react to fresh measures against it, Rouhani yesterday had said: "Any action will be met by a reaction."

The new sanctions came after three Iranian-Americans, including Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian, left Tehran following their release in a prisoner swap with the United States. The prisoner swap involved Rezaian, Christian pastor Saeed Abedini, former US Marine Amir Hekmati and a fourth man, Nosratollah Khosravi-Roodsari. Iranian state television said they departed on a special plane to Bern in Switzerland but US officials told American media that Khosravi-Roodsari was not on board. The Swiss foreign ministry confirmed that three US prisoners released by Tehran were due in the country. Washington Post publisher Frederick Ryan said in a statement: "We are relieved that this 545-day nightmare for Jason and his family is finally over."

Under the exchange, Washington said it had granted clemency to seven Iranians, six of whom were dual US-Iranian citizens, and dropped charges against 14 more. Obama welcomed the Americans' release, saying: "When Americans are freed, that's something we can all celebrate." For a decade the sanctions, imposed in condemnation of Iran's disputed nuclear program, had crippled the country's economy. Rouhani, who has promised that 2016 will be a "year of prosperity" for Iranians, told lawmakers on Sunday that following the lifting of sanctions Iran would seek foreign investment of \$30-\$50 billion annual-

ly, to dramatically spur growth to eight percent. Iran can now increase its oil exports, long the lifeblood of its economy though Rouhani has moved away from relying on crude. The nuclear deal will also open up business in the 79-million-strong country. US Secretary of State John Kerry said yesterday that the United States was to repay Iran a \$400 million debt and \$1.3 billion in interest due to the Islamic revolution. The repayment, arranged after an international legal tribunal, is separate from the tens of billions of dollars that Iran can now access after the end of nuclear sanctions.

The Vienna agreement was nailed down after two years of rollercoaster negotiations following Rouhani's election. It 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. International Atomic Energy Agency chief Yukiya Amano was also due in Tehran yesterday for talks on the UN watchdog's enhanced inspections to ensure Iran's continued compliance with the deal.

The steps taken so far by Tehran 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. They include slashing by two-thirds its uranium centrifuges, reducing its stockpile of uranium - enough before the deal for several bombs - and removing the core of the Arak reactor which could have given Iran weapons-grade plutonium. Iran has always denied wanting nuclear weapons, saying its activities are exclusively for peaceful purposes including power generation and medical research.

Critics, including Obama's Republican opponents, have poured scorn on the deal, saying it fails to do enough to ensure Iran will never acquire the bomb. Israel, widely assumed to be the Middle East's only nuclear-armed state and Iran's arch-foe, has repeatedly slammed the agreement. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Iran had not given up its hope of obtaining a nuclear weapon. "Israel's policy has been and will remain exactly what has been followed: to not allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapons," Netanyahu told cabinet yesterday. — Agencies



A musher and his sledging dogs race a stage during the 12th edition of 'La Grande Odyssee' sledging race across the Alps yesterday in Val Cenis Lanslevillard. — AFP

MUSLIM SCOUTS BALANCE FAITH, AMERICAN...

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"It's important to transmit the American values, the values Lincoln fought for," says Rashid. "They have to learn the history of this land. You have to get them concerned by American history," chimes in Jamal Amro, the owner of the bus and a Palestinian who emigrated to the United States in 1977.

Troop 114 had the chance to attend the second inauguration of Barack Obama in 2013, and the scouts hope to be present again in 2017 when the new president is inaugurated - even if it is Trump. But Rashid cannot disguise his anger at the provocative billionaire real estate tycoon, who leads in the polls among likely Republican voters. "Those boys are born here, they are American. They can't take it away from us. The one who is anti-American is the one who says such things," he says, referring to Trump's ban call.

Izzuddin, his 17-year-old son, will vote for the first time this year after turning 18. "Trump scares a lot of people. But also, he motivates people - you have to do something about it," he says, defiantly. After visiting the museum and the Gettysburg battlefield, the teens head

back to the bus for lunch - fast food. Along the way, Rashid distributes postcards. "Write a postcard for the veterans, they'll like it," he tells his charges. After eating, the group stops at a mosque on the edge of a highway to pray.

Then it's on to Amish Country, the community of traditionalist Christians in Pennsylvania known for their simple living and reluctance to adopt modern conveniences. It's a chance for Amro to grab the microphone once more and to describe to the teenagers how the Amish left persecution in Europe to settle in the United States, to find "religious freedom".

Chalnine, an Algerian woman who has lived in the United States since 1994, volunteered to accompany the group. She enrolled her two children, a son and a daughter, in scout troops "because they do a lot of volunteering". "It's the same values as Islam," she says. But she cannot hide her concern at the sometimes harsh focus on Muslims in America and says she cancelled the family's subscription to cable television at home so her children hear as little from Trump as possible. "I hope my children will feel more American than I do," she whispers. — AFP



GETTYSBURG, Pennsylvania: Scouts from Troop 114 pose with their parents and organizers at the Gettysburg Museum of the American Civil War on Jan 9, 2016. — AFP

AMIR ORDERS SLASHING AMIRI DIWAN BUDGET

Continued from Page 1

In a related development, liberal MP Rakan Al-Nasef questioned the finance minister about the government's procedures in collecting charges imposed on companies that utilize government land. The lawmaker asked if any of the companies failed to pay the charges and demanded a list of the names of such companies. Nasef asked about if the government has taken legal measures against companies that have not paid and inquired if the government has taken measures to stop these companies from using the land. He also asked if the ministry

has exempted any of the companies of the fees.

In the meantime, the Assembly's interior and defense committee discussed the issue of naturalization with Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. Head of the committee MP Sultan Al-Shemmari said the minister informed the committee that the files of 155 children of Kuwaiti widows and divorcees are ready and will be issued soon. Shemmari said that the head of the bedoon apparatus Saleh Al-Fadhlah told the committee that the files of 32,000 bedoons are under evaluation and citizenship will be granted to those who deserve it.

GULF SHARES PLUNGE AFTER OIL ROUT, IRAN...

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The bourses of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Abu Dhabi have already lost in the past two weeks more than they dropped in the whole of 2015. The Saudi Tadawul All-Shares Index, the largest Arab market, fell by over 7.2 during trading but recovered slightly to finish down 5.44 percent on 5,520.41 points, close to a five-year low. The leading petrochemicals sector dipped 5.1 percent, while banks lost 3.7 percent. Since the start of 2016, the TASI has dropped 20.1 percent, more than all of its losses last year.

The Qatar Exchange, the second largest in the Gulf after Saudi Arabia's, plunged 7.2 percent to close trading just above the 8,500-point mark, last seen in April 2013. All the listed firms were in the red and the bourse has so far dipped 18 percent this year, more than the 15 percent it lost in 2015.

The Dubai Financial Market dropped 6.0 percent at the opening but recovered slightly to close the day

down 4.64 percent on 2,684.9 points, a three-year low. Blue chip properties giant Emaar shed 4.0 percent and the leading construction firm Arabtec sank the maximum allowed 10 percent. Since the beginning of this year, Dubai has dropped 15 percent.

The Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange also slumped 4.24 percent but remained above the 3,700-point mark. All sectors were down with banks and real estate shedding above 5.0 percent. Dubai and Abu Dhabi bourses are the lowest since Sept 2013. The Kuwait Stock Exchange dropped 3.2 percent to just above the 5,000-point mark, levels only seen in May 2004. The small market of Oman dropped 3.2 percent to below the 5,000-point mark for the first time since mid-2009. Bahrain dropped 0.4 percent.

Since the beginning of 2016, the seven stock markets have shed more than \$130 billion of their market capitalization, which now stands at about \$800 billion. All Gulf stock exchanges ended 2015 in negative territory, led by Saudi Arabia, after the sharp decline in oil prices. — AFP



FOR MERCEDES-AMG, DUBAI 24-HOUR RACE MARKS THE START OF A NEW ERA

DUBAI: With the first competitive outing of the Mercedes-AMG GT3 by AMG Customer Sport Teams, an extensive phase of testing and development is coming to an end. Following the car's world debut at an exhibition in March, 2015, the first tests in competitive conditions were carried out at the occasion of the VLN endurance championship. After successful outings on the Nürburgring-Nordschleife and an extensive 30-hour-test at Portimao, the car now has to prove its potential in the demanding conditions of the 24-hour race in the Dubai desert.

With Black Falcon and RAM Racing, two of the most successful AMG Customer Sport Teams are responsible for running the new Mercedes-AMG GT3. Since 2012, Black Falcon has won the Dubai 24 Hours on three occasions. RAM Racing came second overall with the SLS AMG GT3 last year and won the GT3 class teams' title in the 24H Series. In the upcoming weeks and months, further

Mercedes-AMG GT3 will be delivered to AMG Customer Sport Teams for competitions all over the world. Based on the great demand for the new car, production capacity was significantly increased.

Additionally, a total of eight SLS AMG GT3s will also be on the grid in Dubai. AMG Customer Sport Teams Gravity Racing International, Hofer-Racing, V8 Racing, Preci-Spark, SPS automotive-performance, IDEC Sport Racing and GDL Racing are running one gullwing each. Next to its pair of Mercedes-AMG GT3s, Black Falcon is also running an SLS AMG GT3. AMG Customer Sport Teams will also be scoring points for the AMG Customer Sports Championship in Dubai. The internal championship, held for the second time in 2016, rewards the most successful AMG Customer Sport Teams and drivers.

The 24-hour race in Dubai got underway on Friday, 15 January, at 14.00 hrs (local time). Live streaming and live timing were available

on the organiser's website (www.24hseries.com).

Tobias Moers, Chairman of the Board of Management of Mercedes-AMG GmbH: "We are delighted that we can hand over the first Mercedes-AMG GT3s to our customer teams after an intense and successful time of testing and development. We are certain that our new car will enable the teams to build on the great achievements of the SLS AMG GT3. For us, the Dubai 24-hour race is the first benchmark for the new racing season."

Jochen Bitzer, Head of AMG Customer Sports: "We wish all the AMG Customer Sport Teams a good start into the new season. For us, the Dubai 24 Hours always have been a highlight at the start of the new year in the past couple of years. With three Mercedes-AMG GT3s and eight SLS AMG GT3s, we have a very strong line-up in Dubai. Moreover, we are delighted to welcome a new AMG Customer Sports Team with IDEC Sport Racing."



WENGEN: From left, second placed Italy's Giuliano Razzoli, first placed, Norway's Henrik Kristoffersen and third placed Italy's Stefano Gross celebrate at the finish line at the end of a men's Alpine Skiing World Cup slalom in Wengen, Switzerland yesterday. —AP

KRISTOFFERSEN WINS WORLD CUP SLALOM

WENGEN: It was Norway all the way, all weekend at Wengen.

Henrik Kristoffersen won a World Cup slalom yesterday to follow teammates Aksel Lund Svindal and Kjetil Jansrud in making Switzerland's signature Alpine ski meeting a three-race Norwegian sweep.

Kristoffersen's fourth win this season, all in slalom, was also a record 12th for Norway in a men's World Cup campaign. This one is still only 19 races old, and has two months and 24 scheduled races to go.

"It's pretty unique, it doesn't happen every year," said Kristoffersen, who also won last yesterday at nearby Adelboden. "I don't think it's a secret. The work that the individual athlete does makes the difference."

A bonus for Norway was Austrian Marcel Hirscher's failure to finish the race, meaning the four-time defending overall World Cup champion missed the chance to take back the standings lead from Svindal.

Kristoffersen added to his first-run lead to finish .30 seconds faster than Giuliano Razzoli, the 2010 Olympic champion from

Italy. Another Italian, Stefano Gross, was .68 back in third.

The 21-year-old racer's surge down the final section, after slipping .05 behind Razzoli's time split, carried him through the finish area and almost over a protective airbag at the back.

"I told the coaches, 'If I'm behind on the last steep, don't worry, I'm going to get it back,'" Kristoffersen said.

Hirscher made a surprise exit in the second leg, though he was only 10th fastest in the morning on a flat course that did not suit him.

"It could be that everything is over, the slalom and the overall globes," Hirscher said. "Now others are the favorites."

Kristoffersen made it four straight wins for Norway in eight days after Svindal won Saturday's downhill and Kjetil Jansrud took the combined event on Friday.

Norway is typically a cross-country skiing nation and Kristoffersen showed some Nordic skills on the flat course. The race was run in steadily falling snow on the lower part of the

downhill course rather than the adjoining slalom hill that was too difficult to prepare during recent warm weather with little snow.

On an uphill section of gates, Kristoffersen preferred to use a skating-style move while some rivals chose an aerodynamic tuck position typical of downhill racers.

"I haven't done that much (cross-country skiing) in my life, but I'm from Norway so I guess it's in my body," the 21-year-old Kristoffersen told The Associated Press after his first run in the morning.

"This is maybe a little bit too flat. But it's better to have a race than not."

While Wengen welcomed the Norwegians this weekend, it was unkind to Hirscher yet again. He has 36 career World Cup wins - tied for sixth in the circuit's 50-season history - but none at Wengen in nine tries.

Sunday's race was also the first time this season that Kristoffersen and Hirscher did not combine to finish 1-2 in slalom.

The World Cup now moves on to Austria's season highlight, the four-event Hahnenkamm meeting at Kitzbuehel. — AP

COE SAYS TRUST MAY TAKE OVER FOUR YEARS TO RETURN

LONDON: Sebastian Coe, the head of athletics' crisis-hit governing body, says trust in the sport may not return until "way beyond" his four-year term as president of the IAAF.

An independent commission of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) said in the second part of a damning report on Thursday that "corruption was embedded" at the International Association of Athletics Federations.

The report, whose first part was published in November, said Coe's predecessor, Lamine Diack, ran a clique that covered up organised doping and blackmailed athletes while senior officials looked the other way.

"Trust is not going to come overnight, it is not as if you make five changes and trust will follow in two weeks' time," Coe, who

came out from the report relatively unscathed, told the BBC on Sunday.

"It may be the case that trust does not return until way beyond my term in office," The WADA report's co-author Dick Pound said he thought Coe was the best man to reform the sport.

The Briton, a double Olympic 1500 metres champion who was elected president in August, said he took some comfort that the report found that the IAAF's systems were not chronically broken and that officials were not "asleep on the job". He said he understood that people would be sceptical that the IAAF's council, of which he had been a member since 2003, did not know about doping cover-ups, and added that his own focus had been "limited" due to his other commitments. — Reuters

CLARKE 'STILL HAS MUCH TO LEARN' AFTER EURASIA WIN

KUALA LUMPUR: Victorious EurAsia Cup captain Darren Clarke admitted yesterday he still had much to learn ahead of leading Europe in September's Ryder Cup against the US. Clarke led his team to an emphatic 13-point demolition of an Asian Tour team to win the EurAsia Cup in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

His 12-man team was never headed over the three days leading by three points after Friday's opening fourballs, six points after the second day foursomes before winning nine of the singles and sharing one in an 18.5-5.5 points triumph at the Glenmarie Golf and Country Club.

It was Clarke's first taste of team leadership victory. The Northern Irishman joins recent European Ryder Cup captains Paul McGinley (Seve Trophy 2009, 2011) and Colin Montgomerie (Seve Trophy 2002, 2003, 2005, Royal Trophy 2010) in having led a team to victory ahead of captaining in the Ryder Cup.

"There are a lot of things I have learnt this week-time being one of them that I didn't have an awful lot of," said Clarke.

"But there are a lot of positives I can take from this week and... hopefully I will do a better job when it comes to September.

"At the end of the day if your players don't perform you can be the best captain in the world but you're not going to win."

"But this week belongs to the players as they have just done fantastic. The quality of golf they have played has been impressive."

Right from the outset each of Clarke's dozen players have been praiseworthy of his captaincy including his two picks in Lee Westwood and Ian Poulter. Clarke indicated earlier in the week the veteran English pair will be a part of his Hazeltine Ryder Cup side whether competing or as one of five non-playing vice-captains.

"I have enjoyed this week immensely and it's been a wonderful learning experience," said Clarke. "As everyone knows I have been around the game for a long time and done most things in the game."

"But this week has been different with the guys seemingly keen to listen to what I have had to say and if my little part in this week has helped them along then well be it. "We will now go back after this week and sit down with the European Tour what I did well as a captain and what I could have done better, and then work on those areas so that we can get the whole package even better come September." — AFP



SUBANG: Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, right, presents the winning trophy to Team Europe's captain Darren Clarke of Northern Ireland during the EurAsia Cup golf tournament at the Glenmarie Golf and Country Club in Subang, Malaysia, yesterday. — AP

ENGLAND'S BROAD ON TOP OF THE WORLD

LONDON: Stuart Broad found himself ranked as the number one Test bowler in the world after leading England to victory over South Africa in Johannesburg.

Broad's best overseas innings figures of six for 17, including a spell of five for one in 31 balls on Saturday saw England to a series-clinching win. The England pacer's haul saw him replace India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin and South Africa fast bowler Dale Steyn, who didn't play at the Wanderers because of injury, into top spot.

Stephen Harmison was the last England

bowler to get to the top of the International Cricket Council rankings, in 2004, with Ian Botham also achieving the number one spot back in 1980.

Broad now sits on 880 points and leads Ashwin by nine points. England's win knocked South Africa off the top of the Test team rankings, with their place being taken by India. Joe Root's 110 at the Wanderers saw him return to second place in the Test batting rankings, above New Zealand's Kane Williamson and South Africa's AB de Villiers, but with Australia captain Steven Smith still on top.

NZ BEAT PAKISTAN BY 10 WICKETS IN 2ND T20

HAMILTON: Martin Guptill made 87 and Kane Williamson 72 in an unbroken record partnership of 171 that steered New Zealand to a 10-wicket win over Pakistan in the second Twenty20 cricket international yesterday, leveling the three match series at 1-1.

New Zealand took four leg byes from the fourth ball of the 18th over to win the match with eight balls to spare. In doing so Guptill and Williamson surpassed the Twentyn20 record partnership for all wickets against all nations that had been held for South Africa by Graeme Smith and Loots Bosman at 170.

Pakistan won the opening match by 16 runs on Friday, defending a total of 171-8 and left itself in a similar position at Seddon Park when it made 168-7 after winning the toss and batting.

While New Zealand botched its run chase in the first match, losing seven wickets for 48 runs after Williamson had made 70 and Colin Munro 56, the two New Zealand openers made no mistakes Sunday in steering their team to victory.

Williamson ran out Guptill for 2 in one of the most serious blunders of the first match at Eden Park and there seemed a clear determination from both batsmen to avoid similar missteps this time around.

Guptill and Williamson controlled New Zealand's chase, posting their century partnership in 12 overs to ensure the home team remained ahead of the required run rate and to leave Pakistan with few defensive options.

Outstanding bowling by Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi and Wahab Riaz in the first match sowed panic among the New Zealand middle order after Williamson and Munro were out but Williamson ensured there was no repeat of that incident.

There were moments during the New Zealand innings when Pakistan seemed set to slow New Zealand's scoring and when Guptill showed signs of concern. But Williamson helped him and New Zealand through those moments and eventually Guptill became the more vigorous of the two, reaching his half century from 40 balls and finishing with 87 from 58 balls with nine fours and four sixes.

Williamson's innings was just as influential. He had been the more productive of the two for much of the partnership, show-

ing an outstanding ability to punish even a fragmentary lapse in length or line.

BACKBONE

The boundaries at Seddon Park are relatively short, particularly square on the off side and Williamson punched anything short to boundaries that could not be adequately guarded. Williamson reached his half century from 35 balls and finished with 72 from 48 balls with 11 fours.

"I think we made those improvements that we wanted to from the last game," Williamson said. "I thought the bowling effort was pretty good considering that short side and the wind pushing the ball to the long side, so it wasn't easy.

"The Pakistan score was perhaps par and it was just good to get off to a good start in the second innings and watch (Guptill) bat at the other end."

Pakistan seemed to have posted a more-than-competitive total when it came in after batting on winning the toss with 168-7, just short of its winning tally in the opening match.

Umar Akmal provided the backbone of the innings with a superb 56 from 27 balls that included four fours and four sixes. He had support from Shoaib Malik who made 39, Mohammad Hafeez with 19 and Shoaib Maqsood with 18.

New Zealand took an innovative approach to containing the Pakistan batsmen, opening the bowling with left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner and allrounder Corey Anderson. While the tactic didn't work emphatically, it helped curb Pakistan's total.

"We wanted to mix it up and I guess when you play to spinners you want to share the seam over throughout," Williamson said. "That was a small plan. I guess it didn't come off today but that's Twenty20 cricket."

The teams next head to Wellington for the deciding match of the series on Thursday. "I think I don't have any words to describe the match but I think they played outstanding cricket," Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi said. "Especially Guptill and Williamson, they played very well, they played extraordinary. "I was happy, the team was happy with our total but the one thing, we didn't bowl with enough variation and that was the thing we missed." — AP



MELBOURNE: Australia's batsman Glenn Maxwell (R) plays a shot as India's wicketkeeper MS Dhoni looks on during the third one-day international cricket match between India and Australia at the MCG in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

MAXWELL HEROICS GUIDE AUSTRALIA TO VICTORY

MELBOURNE: Glenn Maxwell blasted 96 from just 83 deliveries to lead Australia to a thrilling three-wicket win over India in the third one-day international yesterday and a series victory.

After Australian captain Steve Smith won the toss at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and sent India in to bat, the visitors made 295 for six from their 50 overs thanks largely to a superb 117 from Virat Kohli.

The Indians were well in contention for their first win of the series when they had Australia in trouble at 215 for six. But Maxwell, who was out just one run short of victory, combined with James Faulkner to guide Australia home.

"The wicket was quite slow so I had to try and hit the ball in front of square," Maxwell said. "I tried to hit them as clean as I could over cover and luckily enough they came off the middle. "I feel like I've been making big strides over the last few months," he added.

"The way I'm hitting the ball and approaching the game is different to what I've been doing over the last few years." The win gives Australia an unassailable three-nil lead in the best-of-five series, but the match was much more of a contest than the first two encounters in Perth and Brisbane.

Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni said poor fielding had again cost his side. "It's tough to take," he admitted. "We didn't field well tonight. There were at least three boundaries we should have easily stopped."

Australia successfully chased down 309 and 308 in the opening two matches. On a lifeless MCG wicket, 295 did not look substantial enough to challenge the strong Australian batting lineup.

"The batsmen are working hard but we're always talking about 10-15 extra runs," Dhoni said. "This was a slightly different wicket but there was not much the batsmen could have done — 295 was a good total."

IN CONTROL

Australian openers Shaun Marsh and Aaron Finch attacked from the outset and cruised in the first few overs, punishing some wayward Indian bowling. Australia raced to 48 before Finch edged Umesh Yadav to wicketkeeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni for a quickfire 21. Marsh (62) and Steve Smith (41) continued the assault, but left arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja got the vital breakthrough when he had Smith caught at slip by Ajinkya Rahane. Jadeja managed to extract some turn from the otherwise placid wicket and struck again when he got a ball to spin past the edge of George Bailey's bat. Dhoni whipped off the balls to leave the Australians on 150 for three.

Shaun Marsh then edged a ball to Dhoni off Ishant Sharma and when Mitchell Marsh (17) and Matthew Wade (6) both fell cheaply, India were

right back in the game.

However, Maxwell stayed in control and gradually lifted the scoring with a mixture of audacious boundaries and quick running. Earlier, Kohli was in magnificent touch as he smashed his runs off just 117 balls, hitting seven fours and two towering sixes to the delight of the huge contingent of Indian supporters at the MCG.

In the process Kohli became the fastest man to reach 7,000 runs in one-day internationals, taking 161 innings to reach the milestone-four fewer than South Africa's AB de Villiers.

The 27-year-old from Delhi came in with India on 15 for one after in-form opener Rohit Sharma edged Kane Richardson to wicketkeeper Matthew Wade for six.

Kohli played superbly to notch up his 24th ODI century. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

MELBOURNE: Scoreboard from the third one-day international between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday:

India	Australia
R. Sharma c Wade b Richardson	6
S. Dhawan b Hastings	68
V. Kohli c Bailey b Hastings	117
A. Rahane c Maxwell b Hastings	50
M.S. Dhoni c Maxwell b Hastings	23
G. Singh b Faulkner	8
R. Jadeja not out	6
R. Dhawan not out	3
Extras (lb5 w9)	14
Total (6 wickets, 50 overs)	295
Fall of wickets: 1-15 (R. Sharma), 2-134 (S. Dhawan) 3-243 (Rahane), 4-265 (Kohli), 5-274 (Singh), 6-288 (Dhoni)	
Did not bat: U. Yadav, I. Sharma, B. Sran	
Bowling: Richardson 10-0-48-1 (2w), Hastings 10-0-58-4 (1w), Faulkner 10-0-63-1 (3w), Boland 9-0-63-0 (1w), Maxwell 9-0-46-0, Marsh 2-0-12-0.	
	S. Marsh c Dhoni b I. Sharma
	A. Finch c Dhoni b Yadav
	S. Smith c Rahane b Jadeja
	G. Bailey st Dhoni b Jadeja
	G. Maxwell c Dhawan b Yadav
	M. Marsh run out
	M. Wade c S. Dhawan b I. Sharma
	J. Faulkner not out
	J. Hastings not out
	Extras (lb3 w5 nb1)
	Total (7 wickets: 48.5 overs)
	Fall of wickets: 1-48 (Finch), 2-112 (Smith), 3-150 (Bailey), 4-167 (S. Marsh), 5-204 (M. Marsh), 6-215 (Wade), 7-295 (Maxwell)
	Did not bat: K. Richardson, S. Boland
	Bowling: Yadav 9.5-0-68-2 (1w 1nb), Sran 8-0-63-0 (2w), I. Sharma 10-0-53-2 (1w), R. Dhawan 6-0-33-0, Singh 5-0-27-0, Jadeja 10-0-49-2 (1w).
	Result: Australia won by three wickets.



HAMILTON: Corey Anderson of New Zealand bowls during the second Twenty20 cricket match between New Zealand and Pakistan at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

HAMILTON, New Zealand: Completed scoreboard in the second Twenty20 between New Zealand and Pakistan in Hamilton yesterday:

Pakistan	New Zealand
Mohammad Hafeez c Astle b Santner	19
Ahmed Shehzad c Williamson b Anderson	9
Sohaib Maqsood c Santner b Elliott	18
Shoaib Malik b McClenaghan	39
Umar Akmal not out	56
Shahid Afridi c Williamson b Milne	7
Imad Wasim c Milne b McClenaghan	8
Sarfraz Ahmed run out (Milne)	1
Wahab Riaz not out	0
Extras (b1, lb3, w7)	11
Total (7 wickets; 20 overs)	168
Fall of wickets: 1-29 (Shehzad), 2-34 (Hafeez), 3-67 (Maqsood), 4-130 (Malik), 5-137 (Afridi), 6-161 (Wasim), 7-163 (Sarfraz)	
Did not bat: Umar Gul, Mohammad Amir	
Bowling: Santner 3-0-29-1 (w2), Anderson 4-0-26-1 (w3), Milne 4-0-37-1 (w1), McClenaghan 4-0-23-2 (w1), Astle 1-0-13-0, Elliott 4-0-36-1	
	M. Guptill not out
	K. Williamson not out
	Extras (lb6, w6)
	Total: (no wickets; 17.4 overs)
	Did not bat: Colin Munro, Corey Anderson, Ross Taylor, Grant Elliott, Luke Ronchi, Mitchell Santner, Todd Astle, Adam Milne, Mitchell McClenaghan.
	Bowling: Umar Gul 2-0-18-0 (w1), Mohammad Amir 3-0-34-0, Imad Wasim 4-0-32-0, Shahid Afridi 4-0-38-0, Wahab Riaz 3-0-30-0 (w1), Shoaib Malik 1-4-0-13-0
	Result: New Zealand won by 10 wickets.

BANGLADESH WIN 2ND T20 BY 42 RUNS TO LEAD SERIES 2-0

KHULNA: Bangladesh tightened its grip on the four-match T20 series against Zimbabwe, securing a comfortable 42-run win in the second game yesterday.

The hosts scored a competitive 167-3 after opting to bat first, and a disciplined bowling display then restricted Zimbabwe to 125-8.

Sabbir Rahman was key to Bangladesh's victory with a brilliant all-round performance. He first hit an unbeaten 43 and then claimed 3-11 off 2.1 overs to rattle Zimbabwe.

Opener Soumya Sarkar also contributed 43 off 33 balls to give his side a fluent start. Shakib Al Hasan added 27 not out. Zimbabwe started well but Bangladesh's bowlers hit back to stall progress. Opener Hamilton Masakadza resisted with 30 while Malcolm Waller made 29.

Bangladesh leads the series 2-0. "Our goal was to win each and every match," Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Mortaza said. "We played well as a bowling unit. Batting wasn't that bad but we need more improvements. Those who get set should play a long innings."

Soumya and Tamim Iqbal combined for 45 runs in six overs in a boundary-filled start for Bangladesh but Tamim, who scored 23 off 17 balls, was dismissed before the first powerplay ended after a top edge off a slower delivery from Taurai Muzurabani.

Soumya continued hitting out but his aggressive mood led to his dismissal, caught while trying to hit leg spinner Graeme Cremer over the deep mid-wicket boundary.

Mahmudullah (1) was caught behind after trying to cut a delivery that didn't rise as he expected. Mushfiqur Rahim brought some calm to the crease, while Sabbir hit three sixes in three overs as Bangladesh gained the momentum.

While Sabbir was clearing the ropes effortlessly, Rahim smartly rotated the scoreboard with a series of singles and made 24 before retiring with a right hamstring injury, having added 52 runs with Sabbir.

Shakib accelerated the scoring with Sabbir to ensure Bangladesh set Zimbabwe a challenging total. The tourists also had a good start as Masakadza and Vusi Sibanda brought up 50 in seven overs. Mashrafe broke the partnership by dismissing Sibanda for 21 and Sabbir Rahman struck a bigger blow by removing in-form Masakadza after he looked set to hit out. Masakadza scored 30 off 28, leaving Zimbabwe at 55-2.

His dismissal sparked the collapse with Waller the only non-opener to make double figures. Left arm fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman had 2-19. "The bowlers did well to restrict them to 160-odd. We just needed a bit more with the bat than we managed," stand-in captain Masakadza said. The third T20 is on Wednesday. —AP

SCOREBOARD

KHULNA, Bangladesh: Scoreboard of the second Twenty20 international between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna yesterday:

Bangladesh	Zimbabwe
Tamim Iqbal c Vitori b Muzarabani	23
Soumya Sarkar c Waller b Cremer	43
Sabbir Rahman not out	43
Mahmudullah c Mutumbami b W. Masakadza	1
Mushfiqur Rahim retired hurt	24
Shakib Al Hasan not out	27
Extras (b2, lb1, w3)	6
Total (for three wickets)	167
Fall of wickets: 1-45 (Tamim), 2-75 (Soumya), 3-76 (Mahmudullah)	
Did not bat: Shuvagata Hom, Nurul Hasan, Mashrafe Mortaza, Al-Amin Hossain, Mustafizur Rahman	
Bowling: Vitori 4-0-29-0, Madziva 3-0-30-0, Muzarabani 4-0-35-1 (w2), W. Masakadza 4-0-32-1, Cremer 4-0-29-1 (w1), Williams 1-0-9-0	
	V. Sibanda b Mortaza
	H. Masakadza c Mahmudullah b Sabbir
	R. Mutumbami c Soumya b Sabbir
	S. Williams lbw b Shuvagata
	M. Waller c Soumya b Al-Amin
	P. Moor b Mustafizur
	N. Madziva b Mustafizur
	G. Cremer c & b Sabbir
	W. Masakadza not out
	Extras (lb5, w2, nb1)
	Total (for eight wickets)
	Fall of wickets: 1-50 (Sibanda), 2-55 (H. Masakadza), 3-65 (Williams), 4-68 (Mutumbami), 5-105 (Waller), 6-108 (Madziva), 7-109 (Moor), 8-125 (Cremer)
	Did not bat: T. Muzarabani, B. Vitori
	Bowling: Shuvagata 3-0-18-1, Shakib 4-0-26-0, Al-Amin 3-0-21-1, Mustafizur 3.5-0-19-2 (w1), Mortaza 4-0-25-1 (nb1), Sabbir 2.1-0-11-3 (w1)
	Result: Bangladesh won by 42 runs, lead four-match series 2-0.

FANS, RIVALS KEEN FOR HEWITT FAREWELL TO PLAY OUT

MELBOURNE: Lleyton Hewitt embarks on his emotional farewell tournament with rivals and fans hoping for a deep run at the Australian Open in his 20th and final attempt starting tomorrow. The Aussie warhorse, renowned for his all-or-nothing fighting spirit, is pitted against young compatriot James Duckworth in a likely night match on Rod Laver Arena with the threat that every match could be his last. Adding poignancy to his last hurrah is that the 34-year-old has not won his home Grand Slam in two decades, although he came close, losing

the 2005 final to Russian Marat Safin. Record Grand Slam champion Roger Federer said he has always admired Hewitt's work ethic and fighting spirit. "We always got along well. It was sometimes feisty on the court, but it was always respectful," said fellow 34-year-old Federer. "I always admired his work ethic, his on-court fighting spirit, even though it annoyed me sometimes because in the beginning it was more crazy than now." Rising home star Bernard Tomic said all of Australia would be cheering on Hewitt in the first of

hopefully many matches at this year's Australian Open. "We all want Lleyton to win. It's going to be an amazing match," Tomic said. "Then again, James is also Australian. It's a bit strange. But I think James is also looking at this, if he can win this match, he knocks off Lleyton in his last match in his career, it's also a big opportunity for him. "I'm excited. I'm going to be watching it. All of Australia is going to be watching it. It's going to be a very, very exciting match to watch." For his part Hewitt, a former world number one and two-

time Grand Slam-winner, said he would be in a unique situation playing an Australian for only the second time at his home Grand Slam in two decades. "It is a unique situation. It's something that I haven't had to deal with, playing another Aussie on Rod Laver Arena," Hewitt said. "Yeah, it's awkward, but in another way it's fun to go out there with 'Ducks'. I've been helping him the last few years. He's been part of the Davis Cup squad on a number of occasions. He's a great kid. "I'll just try to go out there and put on a good show."

Duckworth is one of Hewitt's proteges in Australia's Davis Cup squad, of which the veteran player is now captain. Duckworth, 23, finds himself in an invidious situation being in a position of possibly ending Hewitt's career and playing the spoiler. "It's not something that I'd like to do. But sort of been put in this position now," Duckworth said. "Yeah, I guess if I win, I'll apologise to him. But, yeah, I'm going to have to sort of put that out of my mind and go out there and try to play my game, give it my best shot." —AFP

HALEP KEEPING AUSSIE EXPECTATIONS IN CHECK

MELBOURNE: World number two Simona Halep said yesterday she is determined to taste Grand Slam glory but is keeping her expectations in check after an injury-marred build-up to the Australian Open.

The Romanian is enjoying her highest ever ranking after a stellar 2015 in which she won titles at Shenzhen, Dubai and Indian Wells, raking in more than US\$4.5 million in prize money.

The ultimate goal is Grand Slam glory, with world number one and 21-time major winner Serena Williams scheduled to meet her in the final if the seedings go to plan.

"I think to win a Grand Slam," she said when asked about her season's focus. "I don't know if it's going to happen this year, but this is my biggest goal. And to have good matches, have good tournaments, and to play everything I want, that I scheduled already."

Halep's chances of landing her first major in Melbourne could be hindered by an nagging achilles injury that forced her out of the lead-up Brisbane International.

She recovered to make the semi-finals

of the Sydney International last week but is not getting her hopes too high of breaking her Grand Slam duck over the next fortnight.

"I come here without expectations. I have only one tournament before this Grand Slam," she said. "Actually I feel good, I feel confident. You never know. I just have to go on court and take my chances every time."

Halep, now coached by Australian Darren Cahill, has failed to get beyond the quarter-finals in five previous attempts at Melbourne Park. Her best Grand Slam showing was reaching the 2014 French Open final.

She gets her tournament underway tomorrow against Chinese qualifier Zhang Shuai with a potential quarter-final looming against veteran eighth seed Venus Williams, who has been playing the Australian Open since 1998.

"I think the tournament is open," Halep said, with most of the women's top 10 having their Grand Slam build-up hampered by either illness or injury. "Everyone has a chance to win this title, I mean from top 10. I think every tournament is open." —AFP



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

DJOKOVIC, SERENA HOT TO TROT ON DAY ONE IN STEAMY MELBOURNE

MELBOURNE: Defending champions Novak Djokovic and Serena Williams will be hoping to get the Australian Open off to a sizzling start when they play back-to-back on Rod Laver Arena today. The weather also looks set to do its part in keeping temperatures high from the off at Melbourne Park with peaks of 37 Celsius (98.6 Fahrenheit) forecast for the opening day of the year's first grand slam.

The two dominant players of last year, Djokovic and Williams are no strangers to the heat of the Australian summer, of course, but sweltering conditions might help expose any flaws in their early season form or fitness.

That looks less likely to be the case with Djokovic, who opens his campaign to match Roy Emerson's record tally of six men's singles titles against South Korea's Chung Hyeon. Coming off a year in which he won 11 tournaments and three of the four majors, the 28-year-old Serbian ironman should safely negotiate his opening match whatever the weather. The condition of Williams, who faces unpredictable Italian Camilla Giorgi in her opener in the second

match on Rod Laver, is more open to question. The American has barely swung a racket since the semi-final defeat to Italy's Roberta Vinci at last September's U.S. Open denied her a shot at the single season grand slam. The 21-times grand slam champion said on Saturday the knee inflammation that has bothered her recently was no longer a problem and she was "at 130 percent" for her first round tie. Whether or not her comments can be taken at face value, writing off Williams for whatever reason is a dangerous business and it would be no surprise at all if she swatted Giorgi aside as she embarks on her bid for a seventh singles title. Her fellow 34-year-old Roger Federer, 17-times a grand slam winner, takes centre stage in the evening session on Rod Laver Arena as he embarks on his quest for a fifth Melbourne Park crown against Georgian Nikoloz Basilashvili. Another former champion, women's fifth seed Maria Sharapova, takes on Japan's Nao Hibino in the prime-time match on Margaret Court Arena but local eyes might be more on Hisense Arena where Australian young gun Nick Kyrgios plays Pablo Carreno Busta. — Reuters



MELBOURNE: Serbia's Novak Djokovic plays a forehand return during a practice session ahead of the 2016 Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP



MICHIGAN: Golden State Warriors guard Klay Thompson (11) towers over Detroit Pistons guard Reggie Jackson during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Saturday, in Auburn Hills, Mich. —AP

PISTONS DENY WARRIORS SHARE OF NBA WIN-LOSS RECORD

AUBURN HILLS: Kentavious Caldwell-Pope held his own against Stephen Curry for most of the night, scoring 20 points as the Detroit Pistons handed the Golden State Warriors their second loss in three games, 113-95 on Saturday. Much of the pregame talk centered around how well Caldwell-Pope might be able to defend Curry. The Golden State star scored 38 points, but Caldwell-Pope gave the Pistons a boost offensively. The Warriors (37-4) reached the midway point of the regular season a win short of the best 41-game start in NBA history. The 1971-72 Los Angeles Lakers and 1995-96 Chicago Bulls started 38-3. Detroit retired Ben Wallace's No. 3 jersey at halftime, and by that time the Pistons led 65-49 on a raucous night at the Palace. Andre Drummond had 14 points and 21 rebounds, and Reggie Jackson scored 20 points for Detroit. The Pistons had six players in double figures, while Golden State had only three. Klay Thompson scored 24 points for the Warriors.

GRIZZLIES 103, KNICKS 95

Memphis beat New York in the first game between the teams since the NBA suspended Grizzlies forward Matt Barnes for two games for his fight with Knicks coach Derek Fisher in October. Barnes finished with two points and nine rebounds in 26 minutes. Despite the buildup to the first game between the sides, there were no incidents between Barnes and Fisher. Marc Gasol had 37 points and eight rebounds to help the Grizzlies to their fourth win in five games. He was 15 for 29 from the field. Kristaps Porzingis led the Knicks with 17 points, while Kyle O'Quinn added 15 points.

KINGS 110, CLIPPERS 103

DeMarcus Cousins had 19 points and 13 rebounds, Omri Casspi added 17 points and the Kings stopped the Clippers' 10-game win streak. Casspi went 5 for 8 from 3-point range. J.J. Redick scored 22 points, hitting five 3-pointers, and reserve Jamal Crawford added 20 points for the Clippers, who were tied with the idle Spurs for longest active win streak in the NBA. Cole Aldrich had 19 points and 10 rebounds in his second start for the Clippers, who never led in the second half. Sacramento's Rudy Gay added 18 points and Darren Collison had 17.

HAWKS 114, NETS 86

Paul Millsap scored 21 points and went past 10,000 for his career, leading Atlanta to a dominant second half. Brooklyn scored the first seven points of the third quarter, tying it at 55. The Hawks pulled away from there, pushing the lead to 84-68 by the end of the period and as many as 33 in the final quarter. Atlanta stopped a two-game losing streak and reached the midpoint of the season at 24-17. A year ago, the Hawks were 33-8 on the way to claiming the top seed in the Eastern

Conference. Millsap, who has scored at least 18 points in 11 straight games, reached the career milestone on a layup in the second quarter. Thaddeus Young led the Nets with 18 points. Only two other Brooklyn players were in double figures.

76ERS 114, TRAIL BLAZERS 89

Jahlil Okafor had 25 points and 10 rebounds to help Philadelphia snap a four-game losing streak. Richaun Holmes added 17 points and Ish Smith and Robert Covington scored 16 apiece for the Sixers, who enjoyed a rare blowout victory. They improved to 5-37 with their most lopsided win of the season. Damian Lillard scored 14 points for the Blazers, who dropped to 18-25 as their three-game winning streak ended. C.J. McCollum finished with 13 points, and Mason Plumlee and Miles Leonard had 12 apiece.

JAZZ 109, LAKERS 82

Rudy Gobert had 18 points, 18 rebounds and five blocked shots, leading Utah to the easy win. The Jazz used a 26-5 spurt in the first quarter, including three baskets by Trey Burke, to run away with the game. The Lakers' last lead came at 7-4. Gobert recorded his first double-double since returning from an MCL injury. Gordon Hayward added 14 points for Utah, and Trey Lyles finished with 17 points and nine rebounds. Lou Williams led the Lakers with 20 points and D'Angelo Russell added 13. Kobe Bryant played 15 minutes and

scored five points. The Lakers have lost six of seven since a season-high three-game win streak.

CELTICS 119, WIZARDS 117

Jae Crowder had a go-ahead layup with 3.9 seconds left off a pass from Marcus Smart, lifting Boston to the road win. Isaiah Thomas scored 32 points for the Celtics, who earned their third consecutive victory. They had dropped their last three road games. Crowder added 22 points for Boston, which had five players in double figures and trailed by as many as 11 before halftime. John Wall scored a season-high 36 points for Washington, but missed a potential tying runner at the buzzer. He also had 13 assists and seven steals in 44 minutes. Washington was missing Bradley Beal, who sat out the second of back-to-back games.

BUCKS 105, HORNETS 92

Khris Middleton scored 24 points on 11-of-16 shooting, leading Milwaukee to the road win. Greg Monroe had 19 points and 10 rebounds for Milwaukee, and Giannis Antetokounmpo finished with 14 points and 11 boards. Jabari Parker scored 15 points. Milwaukee shot 54.2 percent (39 for 72) from the field in its fourth win in six games. The Bucks also had a 46-35 rebounding edge. Charlotte has lost nine of 10. Jeremy Lin led the Hornets with 15 points on 6-of-13 shooting. —AP

NBA Results/Standings

LA Clippers 103, Sacramento 110; Washington 117, Boston 119; Atlanta 114, Brooklyn 86; Detroit 113, Golden State 95; Philadelphia 114, Portland 89; Utah 109, LA Lakers 82; Memphis 103, New York 95; Charlotte 92, Milwaukee 105.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference				
Atlantic Division				Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB				
Toronto	25	15	.625	—	Oklahoma City	29	12 .707	—
Boston	22	19	.537	3.5	Utah	18	22 .450	10.5
New York	20	22	.476	6	Portland	18	25 .419	12
Brooklyn	11	30	.268	14.5	Denver	15	25 .375	13.5
Philadelphia	5	37	.119	21	Minnesota	12	29 .293	17
Central Division				Pacific Division				
Cleveland	28	10	.737	—	Golden State	37	4 .902	—
Chicago	23	16	.590	5.5	LA Clippers	26	14 .650	10.5
Indiana	22	18	.550	7	Sacramento	17	23 .425	19.5
Detroit	22	18	.550	7	Phoenix	13	28 .317	24
Milwaukee	18	25	.419	12.5	LA Lakers	9	33 .214	28.5
Southeast Division				Southwest Division				
Atlanta	24	17	.585	—	San Antonio	35	6 .854	—
Miami	23	17	.575	0.5	Dallas	23	18 .561	12
Orlando	20	19	.513	3	Memphis	23	19 .548	12.5
Washington	19	20	.487	4	Houston	21	20 .512	14
Charlotte	18	22	.450	5.5	New Orleans	13	26 .333	21

MONACO WIN 2-0 AT LORIENT TO GO 2ND IN FRENCH LEAGUE

PARIS: Monaco moved up to second place in the French league after winning 2-0 at Lorient yesterday, with both goals coming in an improved second-half performance.

Promising midfielder Thomas Lemar put Monaco ahead with a shot that crashed in off the underside of the crossbar in the 54th minute, and Portugal midfielder Joao Moutinho curled in an excellent free kick four minutes later.

"It was a tough game against a good passing side," Monaco center half Andrea Raggi said. Lorient played better in the first half but striker Benjamin Jeannot failed to muster a shot on target.

"I don't know how we lost this game, they created absolutely nothing in the first half," Lorient defender Francois Bellugou said. "Once they scored early in the second half we were all a bit stunned." Monaco is two points ahead of third-place Angers

but trails runaway league leader Paris Saint-Germain by a massive 21 points. PSG won 1-0 at Toulouse on Saturday thanks to a late header from Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

Elsewhere, Marseille moved provisionally up to seventh place with a much-needed 3-1 win away to Normandy side Caen.

Marseille had drawn its previous four league matches, and also lost 2-1 at Toulouse midweek in the League Cup

quarterfinals. But Spanish coach Michel's team got off to a good start when Belgium striker Michy Batshuayi put the visitors ahead in the 12th minute, finishing from close range after good work from midfielder Abdelaziz Barrada.

Having grabbed his 12th league goal of the season, Batshuayi missed a great chance to make it 2-0 in the 28th when he volleyed wide from Bouna Sarr's cross. Batshuayi then turned provider in

the 60th, latching onto a pass from midfielder Barrada and setting up winger Georges-Kevin Nkoudou.

But Marseille's defense fell asleep moments later and forward Ronny Rodelin was left unmarked to head in Julien Feret's free-kick Marseille rallied and, after Nkoudou and Sarr both missed chances in quick succession, Sarr wrapped up the win in the 83rd when he volleyed in a cross from midfielder Alaixys Romao. —AP

NEVILLE STILL WINLESS IN LIGA AFTER VALENCIA DRAW

MADRID: Valencia coach Gary Neville called his side's first-half performance "unacceptable" after they were held to a 2-2 draw at home to Rayo Vallecano in La Liga on Sunday but said he was confident they could turn things around soon.

Neville is still without a win in six Spanish top flight games in charge since taking over from the sacked Nuno Espirito Santo last month and Valencia are stuck down in 10th place after four draws and two defeats during the former Manchester United and England defender's tenure.

The ambitious Singapore-owned club are in danger of missing out on a berth in continental competition for 2016-17 and are eight points adrift of the European places with just over half the season played.

"It's hard to explain what happened in the first half, it was a very disappointing performance," Neville told a news conference after Valencia twice had to come from behind to rescue a point at the Mestalla.

"In football you have to win and enjoy yourself and we didn't show any of that," added the 40-year-old. "We have to correct

this immediately."

Valencia, who last won La Liga in 2004 under Rafa Benitez, are struggling in their domestic league but still have a chance of silverware in the Europa League and the King's Cup.

They play Las Palmas home and away in the quarter-finals of the Spanish Cup this month and the first leg of their Europa League tie against Rapid Vienna is at the Mestalla on Feb. 18.

Neville, whose contract runs until the end of the season, said there were two positives from Sunday's setback, which prompted whistling from disgruntled home fans:

"Our response in the second half and the fact that the players showed a will to fight," he said.

"I have confidence in the work that we are undertaking and I agree that the results aren't what we had hoped for.

"It isn't due to a lack of effort from the players. We've got a point, we will carry on working tomorrow and I'm sure that if we apply ourselves as we did in the second half we will get more points." — Reuters



UDINE: Juventus's Kwadwo Asamoah, center, and Udinese's Molla Wague, left, challenge for the ball during the Serie A soccer match between Udinese and Juventus at the Friuli Stadium in Udine, Italy, yesterday. — AP

VILLARREAL DRAW TO PULL LEVEL WITH REAL MADRID IN LIGA

BARCELONA: Villarreal's scoreless draw with Real Betis was good enough for it to provisionally pull level on points with third-place Real Madrid in the Spanish league on Saturday. Villarreal's best scoring opportunity came just moments after kickoff of the evenly contested match at El Madrigal Stadium, when Roberto Soldado sent the ball off the far upright.

Fourth-place Villarreal's winning streak ended at six straight rounds, but it equaled Madrid on points, and moved within four points of leader Atletico Madrid and two points of Barcelona before all three title rivals play.

"Those were a lot of victories, but they covered up how we were playing. We need to rest our minds and then get back to training," Villarreal coach Marcelino Garcia said. "This can help us to improve."

Elsewhere, Celta Vigo got two goals from John Guidetti to earn a 4-3 win after weathering bottom-side Levante's spirited second-half rally, while Sevilla downed Malaga 2-1. Guidetti turned in Iago Aspas' back pass to break through in the first half, and five minutes later the striker chipped home his second.

Aspas added a third from a solo effort, but Celta staggered after Levante's Deyverson and Pedro Lopez scored twice in a three-minute span with 20 minutes left.

Fabian Orellana's goal appeared to have finished Levante off, until Jose Morales added drama to the end after

scoring in the 88th.

"We played more with heart than with good football, now we must start winning games," Levante goalie Diego Marino said. Manuel "Nolito" Agudo watched from the stands amid speculation of a transfer to Barcelona, as his Celta broke a three-game losing streak to remain in fifth place. Sevilla stayed in sixth after striker Kevin Gameiro scored two goals just before halftime to help beat Malaga for its ninth consecutive home win.

Gameiro ran onto a long free kick by Adil Rami and lifted the ball over goalkeeper Carlos Kameni to open for the hosts before halftime.

He made it 11 league goals this season just two minutes later when Sevilla struck on the break, this time using a deft flick with the inside of his boot to beat Kameni.

Charles scored in the second half for Malaga, which had its first defeat in eight rounds. "This team needs confidence and Kevin showed that today," Sevilla manager Unai Emery said. "He has a knack for scoring and it's our job to create chances for him." Sevilla's Vicente Iborra and Malaga's Arthur Boka were sent off for two yellow cards each. Also, Real Sociedad midfielder Xabi Prieto earned and converted a penalty in the 75th to salvage a 1-1 draw at home with Deportivo La Coruna, after Luis Alberto put the visitors in front. Sociedad hit the crossbar twice in the final minutes, and settled for a point. — AP

MILAN: Juventus beat 10-man Udinese 4-0 to move back into second spot in Serie A yesterday, while Luciano Spalletti's second spell in charge of Roma began with a 1-1 draw against bottom side Hellas Verona.

Paulo Dybala scored twice, including a 25th-minute penalty after Udinese defender Danilo was sent off for bringing down Mario Mandzukic. Dybala also provided two assists for Sami Khedira and Alex Sandro as Juventus dominated the first half.

With its 10th consecutive league win, Juventus moved two points behind Napoli after the Serie A leader's 3-1 win over Sassuolo on Saturday. Inter Milan, which drew at Atalanta on Saturday, was two points further back.

"There are still 18 games to go, we need to get a lot more wins to get to the right amount for the title," Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri said. "Napoli is on an extraordinary run, it is the favorite at the moment, but the top five in the table all have the chance to win it."

Fiorentina can leapfrog above Inter with a win at AC Milan later. Roma is nine points behind Napoli.

"We didn't do very well, even if we tried to and created chances which we then didn't make the most of," Spalletti said. "It's a difficult result to

accept, but there are things to take from it, like the great work rate and the disappointment of the team when they came back into the dressing room. We have to work."

Elsewhere, Lazio fought back from two goals down to draw 2-2 at Bologna after home defender Adam Masina was sent off, while relegation-threatened Carpi beat Sampdoria 2-1 for a second successive win. Chievo Verona drew 1-1 against Empoli and Genoa beat 10-man Palermo 4-0 in the lunchtime kickoff.

Udinese had beaten Juventus on the opening day and was looking for a similar result to celebrate the inauguration of the Nuovo Stadio Friuli, where all 25,000 seats were sold out.

EMBARRASSING ROUT

However, Juventus took the lead in the 15th minute when Dybala curled a free kick over the wall and matters grew worse three minutes later.

Udinese failed to clear a corner and Dybala nodded the ball across the six-yard box for an unmarked Khedira to head home.

Any hope Udinese had of rescuing something from the match evaporated in the 25th. Stephan Lichtsteiner sent Mandzukic clear and he was brought down by Danilo, who was duly sent off.

Dybala converted for his 11th goal of the sea-

son. Alex Sandro netted his first in Serie A three minutes from halftime, firing into the far corner from the edge of the area to complete the embarrassing rout.

Udinese almost got a consolation in the second half but Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon fingertipped Francesco Lodi's free kick onto the post.

Spalletti, who first coached Roma from 2005-09, returned to the club this week after Rudi Garcia was sacked following just one win in its last 10 matches in all competitions.

But Roma's struggles continued against Verona, which hasn't won a match all season.

Radja Nainggolan broke the deadlock four minutes from halftime with his first league goal of the season after a brilliant backheeled assist from Daniele De Rossi.

The goal came moments after Edin Dzeko had hit the post, prompting hope of a better second half for the hosts.

Both sides hit the woodwork after the break before Verona levelled just after the hour when Leandro Castan brought down Pawel Wszolek and Giampaolo Pazzini fired the resulting penalty in off the underside of the crossbar. Dzeko should have won it for Roma in stoppages but headed over the bar from close range. —AP

HIGUAIN HITS 20 FROM 20 AS NAPOLI STRETCH LEAD

MILAN: Gonzalo Higuain took his tally to 20 goals in as many Serie A games this season as Napoli went four points clear of Inter Milan after a thrilling 3-1 win over Sassuolo on Saturday.

Until Saturday's clash in Naples, impressive Sassuolo had gone unbeaten against five of this season's title challengers having claimed wins over Napoli, Juventus and Inter and drawn with Roma and Fiorentina.

But Higuain, who is well on his way to this season's Capocannoniere (top scorer) award, did brilliantly to give Napoli a 42nd minute lead after Jose Callejon's 19th-minute header cancelled out Diego Falcinelli's opener from the spot.

Even before his second goal, he had already done enough to earn the praise of Sassuolo coach Eusebio Di Francesco. "For 41 minutes my defenders made sure he didn't get a touch. Then on his first touch of the ball he showed all his class," said Di Francesco.

"You don't need me to explain how good he is." Just as Napoli were hanging on to a 2-1 lead, Higuain beat Andrea Consigli with a fierce shot from inside the area in the third minute of added-on time to wrap up the win.

Napoli's 13th win of the campaign leaves them top on 44 points with a four-point cushion on Inter, who scraped a 1-1 draw away to Atalanta to drop points for the second consecutive match after last week's defeat to Sassuolo.

It means champions Juventus, in third at five points off the pace, can move back up to second and two points clear of Inter with a win away to Udinese yesterday.

Napoli coach Maurizio Sarri has been credited with transforming a side that finished fifth

under Rafael Benitez last season, but he was quick to praise his players. "This was a good and important win for us," he said. "It wasn't easy to come back into the game but the reaction the lads gave showed that they are a real team."

Napoli had the worst possible start, Nicola Sansone earning an early penalty after being fouled by Raul Albiol and Falcinelli stepping up to wrong-foot Pepe Reina in the Napoli goal after just three minutes.

If memories of Napoli's defeat to Sassuolo on the opening season floated back, they were soon put to rest as Napoli replied in positive fashion.

When Insigne ran half the length of the pitch to set up Higuain the Argentine's drive sailed off target while under pressure. The threat of pacy front man Insigne finally came good on 19 minutes when he got deep, waited for Callejon's call and watched as the Spaniard flicked a near post header past Consigli to claim his first league goal of the season.

Napoli immediately took the momentum, and although Reina had to look sharp to palm Matteo Politano's angled drive to safety the hosts saw Insigne hit the upright with a curler after he had nutmegged a defender.

The stadium erupted three minutes before half-time when Higuain put his predator's instincts on display to give the hosts a 2-1 lead, throwing Lorenzo Ariaudo to the ground and off his scent before rushing in to pounce on Hamsik's pinpoint delivery.

Napoli enjoyed a bright start to the second half and twice Higuain came close inside the opening six minutes, his second effort notably flashing inches wide of Consigli's upright.



NAPLES: Napoli's Argentinian-French forward Gonzalo Higuain (R) kicks and scores a goal during the Italian Serie A football match between Napoli and Sassuolo Calcio at the San Paolo stadium in Naples on Saturday. — AFP

Insigne came close again when he curled an effort just over, minutes before being replaced by Dries Mertens. Napoli, however, remained under threat and Pepe Reina did well not to panic when he desperately pushed away a cross before seeing a diving header

from Lorenzo Pellegrini go wide.

Reina wasn't helping to settle nerves either, the Spaniard scuffing a clearance that he chased down and swept from the feet of Falcinelli 35 metres out from his goal.

But Sassuolo took their eye off the ball, lit-

erally, in the final minute of added-on time. Callejon did well chasing to stop the ball going out of play and found Higuain unmarked inside the area to beat Consigli down low in what was the final kick of the game. — AFP

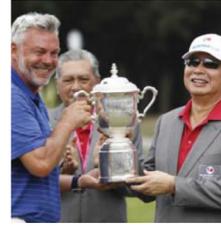
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LIVERPOOL: Manchester United's English striker Wayne Rooney (R) tackles Liverpool's Spanish defender Alberto Moreno (L) during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Manchester United at Anfield yesterday. — AFP

LIVERPOOL FELLED BY ROONEY SUCKER-PUNCH



LIVERPOOL: It was only three weeks ago that Manchester United was on an eight-match winless streak, Wayne Rooney was so out of form he was dropped to the bench, and manager Louis van Gaal appeared to be contemplating resigning. Now, United is unbeaten in 2016, Rooney can't stop scoring and Van Gaal is talking optimistically about winning the Premier League after a 1-0 victory at fierce rival Liverpool on Sunday. Rooney grabbed his fifth goal in four games since the turn of the year, rifling home a volley from close range after Marouane Fellaini's header rebounded off the bar to settle a poor-quality game between English

football's two most successful clubs. "I am a happy coach," said Van Gaal, who has won all four games against Liverpool since joining United in 2014. "I think this game will give a big boost to players, fans, everyone in the environment of Manchester United. We have to continue this ... we can do it (win the league)." United stayed two points behind fourth-place Tottenham in the race for Champions League qualification, and moved up a place to fifth thanks to only a second win in nine league games. With leader Arsenal drawing 0-0 at Stoke, United is only seven points off first place. Playing at Anfield without a recognized striker and a starting lineup containing only six league goals this season, Liverpool largely dominated its biggest rival but only created half-chances - the two best falling to midfielder Emre Can. United goalkeeper David de Gea kept out both shots, again demonstrating his importance and Liverpool's need for a top-quality striker to finish off good build-up play. "It's a derby and you only have one job to do: To win it," Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said. "I think Man United, if they talk about this performance, they will say

it's not that good but they won. I feel really frustrated. A lot of the things we did were good but our finishing wasn't good." **BEST FORM** Rooney appears back to something close to his best form after a disappointing first half of the season. He was even dropped for the Dec. 26 match against Stoke, but was recalled for the next match - against Chelsea at home two days later - and has scored in every game since then. "A striker who scores is always very important," Van Gaal said. "And now he is scoring in a row and we are winning in a row. I am very happy for him." Rooney was isolated for much of this game, feeding off scraps, but took his chance well with a true strike after Fellaini rattled the crossbar with a header following a short corner. "Scoring a winning goal at Anfield, it's been a long time since that happened for me," said Rooney, who last achieved that feat in 2005, "so I will be a bit selfish today and enjoy that one." Many global football fans mark this fixture as one of the games of the Premier League season - the rivals have 38 league titles between them - but the two powers have struggled this campaign.

United and Liverpool kicked off lying in sixth and ninth place in the standings, respectively, and the first half showed just why. There was plenty of energy and snappy tackles but little quality, especially from United. The teams were involved in thrilling 3-3 draws in mid-week. They went from feast to famine a few days later. Liverpool carved out some openings, for lone striker Roberto Firmino, Jordan Henderson and James Milner, but De Gea wasn't tested once and the shots were from long range. At the other end, opposite goalkeeper Simon Mignolet was little more than a bystander. "I admit, we survived the first half," Van Gaal said. De Gea stepped up for United in the second half, though. He saved with his feet a low shot from Can, who then brought a superb diving save out of the Spain international with a fierce drive. In between those chances, Anthony Martial finally got in behind Liverpool's defense and flashed a left-foot shot just past the far post - United's first genuine effort. It meant Rooney's goal came against the run of play for United, which maybe made it even sweeter for the celebrating visiting fans, including injured United players Phil Jones, Marcos Rojo and Michael Carrick. — AP

BALE INJURED AS ZIDANE'S MADRID HIT FIVE AGAIN



MADRID: Real Madrid's Raphael Varane, top right, jumps over Sporting Gijon's players to head the ball during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Real Madrid and Sporting Gijon yesterday. — AP

MADRID: Zinedine Zidane's dream start to life as Real Madrid boss continued as Los Blancos scored four times in the opening 18 minutes on their way to a 5-1 rout of Sporting Gijon yesterday. However, Madrid's joy was tempered as Gareth Bale and Karim Benzema both had to be replaced due to injuries. Bale limped off with what looked like the recurrence of a calf problem just before half-time having scored his 11th goal in eight games. Benzema and Cristiano Ronaldo also scored twice in the first-half before the former picked up a knock in a collision with teammate James Rodriguez. Madrid have now scored 35 goals in six games at home since losing to 4-0 to Barcelona in November. Victory takes Madrid above Barcelona and to within a point of leaders Atletico Madrid at the top of La Liga. However, Atletico and Barca are in action later when they face Las Palmas and Athletic Bilbao respectively. "We played very well in the first-half. We were concentrated and up for the game from the start. We prepared well and are happy with how the match went," said Zidane. "Karim just has a knock, which isn't so bad. Gareth is a little more complicated because it is his calf and in his left leg which is a problem. He will have a scan tomorrow and we hope it is nothing serious." Having thrashed Deportivo la Coruna 5-0 in his managerial bow at the Bernabeu last weekend, Zidane made just one change with Raphael Varane replacing injured captain Sergio Ramos. Sporting had surprisingly held Madrid to a 0-0 draw on the opening day of the season, but were powerless to stop Real's rampant 'BBC' frontline of Bale, Benzema and Ronaldo early on.

Bale scored his seventh headed goal of the season from Toni Kroos's corner on seven minutes to get the hosts off to the perfect start. Ronaldo showed his frustration at not getting on the scoresheet against Deportivo last weekend and made amends moments later by smashing Benzema's through ball into the roof of the net. Benzema then produced a special finish of his own as he acrobatically swivelled to volley home Bale's cross. And another flowing Madrid move saw Ronaldo sweep home Dani Carvajal's cross at the near post two minutes later. There was some brief respite for Sporting as Zidane's men waited 23 minutes to add the fifth when brilliant play from Isco freed Benzema to roll in his 20th goal in 19 appearances this season. However, Madrid suffered a setback when Bale pulled up seconds before the break and had to be replaced by Jese Rodriguez for the second period. Without the Welshman, Sporting managed to restore some pride after half-time and were rewarded when Isma Lopez rounded off a fine team goal just after the hour mark. Benzema also then had to be replaced after colliding with Rodriguez on the edge of the box, but the Frenchman was able to walk off the field and his problem seems less of a concern than the injured suffered by Bale. Earlier, Gary Neville's winless streak as Valencia boss in La Liga stretched to six games in a disappointing 2-2 draw at home to relegation threatened Rayo Vallecano. Los Che were heavily favoured to end a two-month run without a league win against a

ARSENAL ON TOP AGAIN



STOKE-ON-TRENT: Arsenal returned to the top of the Premier League but their Britannia Stadium hoodoo was extended with a goalless draw against Stoke City yesterday. A point was enough to take Arsene Wenger's side clear of Leicester City on goal difference but it was another afternoon of frustration in the Potteries for the veteran French manager. His side have now failed to win at Stoke's home ground in six attempts-a sequence that dates back to a 3-1 success in February 2010. That victory became infamous for the sickening broken leg suffered by Gunners midfielder Aaron Ramsey, who was again singled out for some unsavoury abuse by Stoke fans during his 250th Arsenal appearance. The bad blood from the injury and Ramsey's refusal to accept Ryan Shawcross's apology for the challenge that caused it remains for Stoke fans, who taunted Ramsey throughout on Sunday with boos and a chant about the damage caused to his leg. Arsenal could not silence the home crowd as Stoke held their own, with both Potters goalkeeper Jack Butland and Arsenal counterpart Petr Cech in good form. After a scrappy opening littered with fouls and poor passes, it was Stoke who carved out the first chance through Marko Arnautovic. The Austrian wandered in off the left flank to collect possession in a central area 30 yards from goal, but his ambi-

tious effort flew high into the Arsenal fans behind Cech's goal. The game finally came to a semblance of life in the 20th minute when Glen Johnson and Jonathan Walters found space on the Stoke right to pick out Joselu on the edge of the area. His deft flick teed up Ibrahim Afellay, whose long-range effort flew a yard wide of the target. Arsenal immediately broke and created an opening of their own thanks to a fine pass by Joel Campbell and an equally clever run by Olivier Giroud. The Frenchman found himself one on one with Butland but the England international spread himself well to make an important stop. The game remained disjointed but, when Stoke failed to clear their lines in the 28th minute, Ramsey had a goal-bound shot deflected wide for a corner which was dealt with easily by the Potters. Ten minutes before half-time Arsenal failed to deal with Erik Pieters's dangerous cross but Joselu headed straight at Cech. The Gunners then handed cheap possession to Stoke, for whom Bojan fired just wide. Just over a minute into the second half, Butland denied Arsenal what looked like a certain goal. The goalkeeper reacted superbly to dive low to his left and turn away a free header from Giroud, who had been left unmarked to meet Ramsey's corner. Then Stoke were denied as the tempo of the game was raised a notch. Arnautovic advanced and fed Joselu, whose shot was clawed away superbly by Cech. The former Chelsea star then reacted well to scramble Bojan's follow-up around the post. Arsenal needed Cech again in the 66th minute as he turned a shot from Joselu around the post. The game became scrappy once more but it was Arsenal who made most of the running in the closing stages and Campbell tried his luck from a tight angle with five minutes remaining. — AFP

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AIRBUS PLAN HERALDS IRAN BOOM AS SANCTIONS LIFTED

ROUHANI SAYS ECONOMY NOW 'FREE OF CHAINS,' EYES \$30-50BN IN FDI

DUBAI: A purchase of more than 100 aircraft from Europe's Airbus may be one of Iran's first big deals in a trade and investment boom that could reshape the economy of the Middle East.

"The legs of Iran's economy are now free of the chains of sanctions, and it's time to build and grow," President Hassan Rouhani tweeted yesterday, a day after world powers lifted sanctions on Tehran in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program.

Hours earlier, his transport minister Abbas Akhondji told the Tasnim news agency that Iran intended to buy 114 civil aircraft from Airbus - a deal that could be worth more than \$10 billion at catalogue prices. Airbus said yesterday it had not yet held commercial talks with Iran, and businesses operating in the Islamic republic will continue to face big obstacles for the foreseeable future.

Risks include indebted Iranian banks, a primitive legal system, corruption and an inflexible labor market. Many foreign companies will remain wary of investing in Iran because of concern that the sanctions could "snap back" if Tehran is later found not to be complying with the nuclear agreement.

Output boost

Iran is ready to increase its crude oil exports by 500,000 barrels a day, the deputy oil minister said yesterday, hours after international sanctions on Tehran were lifted, removing an obstacle to exports.

The Islamic Republic emerged from years of economic isolation on Saturday when world powers lifted sanctions after confirming that Tehran had curbed its nuclear program. "With consideration to global market conditions and the surplus that exists, Iran is ready to raise its crude oil exports by 500,000 barrels a day," Deputy Oil Minister Amir Hossein Zamaninia was quoted as saying by the Shana news agency. Iran's return to an already glutted oil market is one of the factors contributing to a global rout in oil prices, which fell below \$30 a barrel this week for the first time in 12 years.

FDI inflow

Iran needs annual foreign investment of \$30-\$50 billion to reach an eight percent growth target and cash in on a nuclear deal with world powers, Rouhani said. Laying out the budget for the next Iranian year which starts March 20,



TEHRAN: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, center, gestures as he is greeted by lawmakers at the parliament to present draft of the country's next year budget and sixth development plan in Tehran yesterday. — AP

Rouhani told parliament, a day after the implementation of the historic deal, that the collapse in global oil prices meant the government had to look to abroad to boost the economy.

"Untapped potential in many industries indicates that domestic demand cannot solely push the economy toward eight percent growth," he said, signalling a shift in policy. "Attracting foreign investment will be the best way of using the opportunity of sanctions relief to boost the economy and security." Low oil prices and years of US and European Union sanctions that barred much of Iran's foreign oil sales hammered its income from crude. But despite global prices falling below \$30 Iran intends to increase production after the nuclear deal to recoup lost market share.

Rouhani's government used a projected \$40 per barrel

price and exports of 2.25 million barrels per day—a doubling of current sales.

Even at that level Iran's budget would be less than 25 percent reliant on oil sales, with a much higher 68 percent of revenues coming from taxes. A 75 percent drop in oil prices, from \$110 to \$30 meant "oil revenues would not be considerable," Rouhani said.

"Such drastic drop in oil prices has been unprecedented in the past decades and we cannot base economic growth and employment on optimistic estimations." The International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed Saturday that Iran had carried out measures agreed under last July's nuclear deal, ensuring sanctions would be lifted. As well as next year's budget Rouhani submitted the Islamic republic's sixth five-year development plan, based on policies set by

supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's ultimate authority. "Reaching eight percent growth requires attracting \$30-\$50 billion in foreign investment each year," he said. Iran's budget had been ready and printed for weeks, but Rouhani decided not to present it until the nuclear deal was implemented because it was based on sanctions being lifted.

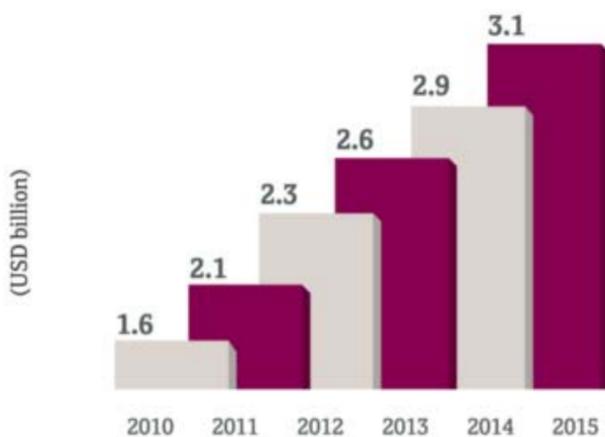
Potential

But the Airbus plan underlined Iran's potential: with about 80 million people and annual output of some \$400 billion, it is the biggest economy to rejoin the global trading system since the Soviet Union broke up over two decades ago. The nuclear deal removed restrictions that stifled Iran's economy for most of this decade - on banking, money transfers, insurance, trade, transport and procurement of technology. This will allow Iran to satisfy pent-up demand for goods and services that it had trouble obtaining at affordable prices under sanctions, from aircraft to factory machinery, medicines and some consumer goods such as cosmetics and branded clothing.

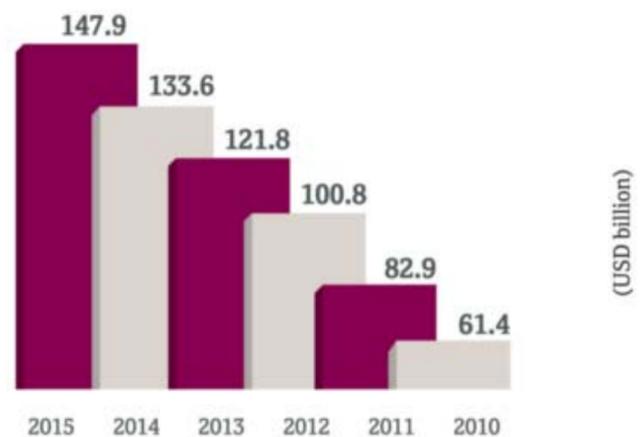
Iran will immediately have more money to pay for imports, as the government gains access to tens of billions of dollars of its assets that were frozen abroad by the sanctions. US officials have estimated the amount of funds to be unblocked at over \$100 billion. Iran's central bank has said the total is much smaller at \$29 billion, but that would by itself still cover several months of imports of goods and services. Iran will also gain financial strength from an increase in oil exports, as it becomes able to sell freely into the global market once again - though ultra-low oil prices, and the need to repair ageing oil facilities, mean the rise in revenues may initially be small.

Iran's trade with the European Union totalled 7.6 billion euros (\$8.4 billion) in 2014. In 2011, before banking sanctions hit, it was 27.8 billion euros - a measure of the ground that may be recovered. US companies look set to lag rivals from other countries in restoring trade with Iran, because Washington will retain broad sanctions that predate the nuclear crisis and were imposed over other issues such as terrorism and human rights abuses. But US business with Iran may still increase, after the US Treasury said on Saturday that it would permit foreign subsidiaries of American companies to trade with Iran - a channel that big multinationals may be able to exploit. — Agencies

Net Profit US\$3.1 billion up by 8% on 2014.



Total Assets US\$147.9 billion up by 11% on 2014.



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DUBAI: Traders sit at the Dubai bourse as prices of shares are reflected on screens in red above them yesterday. Share prices in the energy-rich Gulf states nosedived following the sharp decline in oil prices and the expected rise in Iranian crude exports after the sanctions imposed on it were lifted under Tehran's historic nuclear deal with global powers. — AFP

News

in brief

US dollar stable against Kuwait dinar at 0.303

KUWAIT: The exchange rate of the US dollar against the Kuwaiti dinar yesterday was stable at KD 0.303, while the euro went up to KD 0.331 compared to the exchange rates for Thursday, said a statement by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). According to the CBK, the exchange rate of the Sterling pound went down to KD 0.432 while the Swiss franc went up to KD 0.302. Exchange rate of the Japanese Yen remained the same at KD 0.002.

Egyptian pound steady at forex sale

CAIRO: Egypt's central bank kept the pound steady against the dollar at its official foreign currency auction yesterday, and the currency also held steady on the black market. Egypt, which depends on imported food and energy, is facing a dollar shortage and increasing pressure to devalue the pound. The central bank surprised markets when it strengthened the pound on Nov 11 by 20 piasters against the dollar and has bucked expectations by holding it steady ever since. The central bank sold \$39.1 million at a cut-off price of 7.7301 pounds to the dollar, unchanged from the previous auction.

Saudi's Almarai Q4 profit rises 13%

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's Almarai, the Gulf's largest dairy company, reported a 13 percent increase in fourth-quarter net profit yesterday, in line with analyst estimates as sales grew faster than costs. Almarai made a profit of 483.7 million riyals (\$129.06 million) in the three months to Dec. 31, up from 428 million riyals in the year-earlier period, it said in a bourse statement. Five analysts polled by Reuters had forecast on average Almarai would make a quarterly profit of 480.2 million riyals. Almarai said its fourth-quarter sales were 3.58 billion riyals, versus 3.33 billion riyals in the same period of 2014. "(The) cost of sales increased at a lower rate due to improving in-put costs and better cost management," Almarai's statement said.

Qatari developer Barwa signs \$157.1m Islamic loan

DUBAI: Qatar's Barwa Real Estate has signed a \$157.1 million sharia-compliant five-year loan, the developer said yesterday. Barwa said it would use the money to refinance an existing Islamic financial liability but did not provide further details. The company on Thursday announced it had signed a \$444.3 million sharia-compliant loan with Islamic bank Masraf Al-Rayan.

UAE's RAKBANK to cut up to 250 jobs

ABU DHABI: National Bank of Ras Al-Khaimah (RAKBANK) will cut up to 250 jobs as part of a review of the lender's organizational structure, a spokeswoman for the Abu Dhabi-listed bank said yesterday. Banks in the United Arab Emirates have been adjusting staffing levels in recent weeks as they react to deteriorating market conditions and tighter liquidity caused by lower oil prices. "RAKBANK revisited the organization structure of select departments and made changes where necessary to improve synergy and efficiency across the bank. We are confident the new structure is better positioned for continued success," the bank said in a statement. The spokeswoman confirmed the number of job losses in response to questions from Reuters.

MULTINATIONALS READY TO JUMP INTO IRAN MARKET

BUSINESS EXECs FROM GERMANY, FRANCE, ITALY HEADING TO TEHRAN

PARIS: With global growth moribund, multinational firms have been waiting with bated breath for the lifting of international sanctions against Iran for access to a country in desperate need to modernize.

After nearly a decade of limited access to the outside world, many sectors of the Iranian economy need new equipment including the oil and gas industry, railways, and airlines. Plus there are 80 million Iranian consumers, many of them keen to buy cars and other goods. Access is expected to begin opening up, now that the International Atomic Energy Agency has issued a report concluding that Iran has fulfilled its obligations under a nuclear deal reached last year with world powers.

Since that deal was reached in July, delegations of officials and business executives from Germany, France and Italy have headed to Iran to prepare the ground to win back some of the market share lost to emerging nations like China and Turkey, or countries like Russia and Japan which kept friendly nations with Tehran.

Germany's BGA foreign trade federation believes that country will have a difficult time reclaiming its former status as Iran's largest trade partner as Chinese firms have swooped in dur-

ing sanctions. Deputy Foreign Minister Zhang Ming of China, the top buyer of Iranian crude, said during a recent visit Beijing intends to fully exploit the potential for cooperation with Tehran in the manufacturing sector and construction of infrastructure. US companies like Boeing and General Electric are also interested by the opportunities in Iran, but are handicapped by the fact Washington has not had diplomatic relations with Tehran for 35 years and will keep certain sanctions in place.

Meanwhile the Iranians are looking for foreign firms to help modernize the country's infrastructure, which has suffered from a lack of investment and technology as the economy was largely cut off from the outside world for the past decade. A resumption of trade should also help put the Iranian economy, which suffers from high unemployment and hyperinflation, back on its feet.

Oil sector still attractive

The slump of global oil prices to under \$30 per barrel—partially due to expectations of Iranian crude flooding back onto markets—is not good news for Tehran as it means less money flowing into government coffers. Nevertheless,

with the country holding the world's fourth-largest oil reserves and currently pumping a million barrels per day less than it did before sanctions, the Iranian energy sector is still attractive for foreign firms and Tehran is looking for \$25 billion in investment in the oil and gas sectors. "The infrastructure and energy sectors offer the best opportunities for our firms", Italy's economic development ministry said recently. Russia, which has maintained close relations with Iran, has a leg up on the competition and is willing to put money on the table to achieve its goal of boosting its annual trade turnover with Tehran from \$1.6 billion currently to \$10 billion. Russian President Vladimir Putin offered to open up a \$5 billion credit line to Iran during a visit to Tehran in November. Not only has Russia recently sold long-range S-300 surface-to-air missiles to Iran, but it has received orders to build two new reactors at the Bushehr nuclear power plant.

State-owned Russian Railways is after work electrifying Iranian rail lines. Russian gas giant Gazprom and the country's number two oil firm Lukoil are looking not only for production opportunities, but to stocking and transporting energy as well. Certain western oil companies,

like France's Total and Italy's Eni, are after joint venture contracts where their Iranian partner will retain majority control.

"We will be well placed to examine the opportunities in the gas, oil and petrochemicals and fuel distribution sectors, but all of that will be subject to good contractual conditions," said Total's chief executive Patrick Pouyanne recently.

'Promising market'

The automobile sector is also attractive as the rate of car ownership in Iran is just 100 per 1,000 people—six times less than in Europe—and consumers have had limited access to new vehicles under Western sanctions. France Renault has already negotiated a minority stake in Iranian auto manufacturer Pars Khodro, according to Iranian officials. "Iran is a very promising market," Renault chief executive Carlos Ghosn said on the sidelines of the Detroit auto show last week. "Today it's more than one million cars, it has the potential to go to 1.5 or 2 million." In the food and agriculture sector it may be harder going due to the "strong involvement of public firms and semi-public owners of farm land," according to a French agriculture ministry report. — AFP

US MANUFACTURING STALLS, CUTTING FUEL CONSUMPTION

LONDON: Excess inventories at every stage along the supply chain are weighing down business activity as well as depressing freight demand and diesel consumption in the United States.

Businesses have made little progress in reversing the unwanted buildup in inventories that occurred during the second half of 2014 and early 2015. Stocks of finished items, raw materials and work progress held by manufacturers, distributors and retailers were \$28 billion or 1.6 percent higher at the end of November than the same month a year earlier. Sales were down \$37 billion or 2.8

percent, according to the US Census Bureau. The ratio of seasonally adjusted inventories to sales has risen from 1.32 in November 2014 to 1.38 in November 2015. Inventory ratios have risen at all stages of the supply chain from manufacturers through wholesalers to retailers, according to Census Bureau data.

Freight shipments have fallen for the first time in almost three years as businesses try to reverse overstocking, so far without success. Destocking, as well as poor export demand as a result of the strong dollar, is also weighing on manufacturing output. Even excluding the

troubled energy sector, US industrial production was up less than 1 percent in November and December compared with the same months a year earlier, according to the US Federal Reserve.

Growth in industrial production outside the energy sector has been slowing since the start of 2015 and is now running at some of the slowest rates since the recession. Sluggish freight and industrial output are weighing on demand for distillate fuel oil, where consumption growth has been weakening since the start of 2015 and became negative in October. — Reuters

BANKS LOSING SHARE IN FOREX BUSINESS

LONDON: Small and medium-sized British companies are increasingly looking outside banks for foreign exchange in search of better rates and services, a survey showed yesterday. Research company East & Partners' survey of more than 2,200 UK firms with annual revenues of up to 100 million pounds (\$143 million) showed roughly 10 percent use at least one of the dozens of brokerages specialising in payments in and out of foreign currencies.

It listed the top six brokers in the space by market share as Western Union, Monex, CMC, American Express, Alpari and UKForex. More than 8 percent of those that trade in the more sophisticated currency options market also use brokers instead of banks, the survey showed.

By offering companies currency at

much tighter "spreads" between buy and sell prices than the rates banks give each other and their biggest clients, the brokers have been instrumental in making forex trading as a whole more competitive.

The biggest brokers say they have grown strongly by watching over the currency needs of company managers too busy to notice that, say, the dollar has hit levels where they would like, or need, to buy or sell. That has made millions for a generation of forex entrepreneurs but has also begun to draw a response from banks. A number have tightened the spreads offered on ordinary corporate transfers and some, such as German lender Deutsche Bank, have invested in new client service centres in cheaper locations outside London to help address the challenge.

The survey showed Barclays, HSBC and Lloyds all still enjoy double-digit percentage shares of the spot trading market, at respectively 14.7 percent, 13.6 percent and 10.8 percent. Citi and Deutsche dominate on options with 11.9 and 11.1 percent respective shares.

"While high street banks continue to perform strongly, there are clear examples of other FX providers gaining market share, particularly in the Micro and SME segments," said Graham Buck, senior analyst at East & Partners.

"Newer market entrants that differentiate their offerings by service quality or value for money can capitalize on any complacency from their more established competitors and gain ground across market, mind and wallet share," he said. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.601
Indian Rupees	4.507
Pakistani Rupees	2.901
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.122
Nepali Rupees	2.819
Singapore Dollar	212.870
Hongkong Dollar	39.064
Bangladesh Taka	3.878
Philippine Peso	6.381
Thai Baht	8.391

GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.217
Qatari Riyal	83.661
Omani Riyal	791.060
Bahraini Dinar	808.820
UAE Dirham	82.920

ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	39.800
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	38.942
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.421
Tunisian Dinar	150.690
Jordanian Dinar	429.130
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.029
Syrian Lira	2.170
Morocco Dirham	31.061

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	304.400
Euro	435.450
Sterling Pound	437.270
Canadian dollar	210.800
Turkish lira	99.920
Swiss Franc	306.850
Australian Dollar	212.320
US Dollar Buying	303.200

GOLD	
20 Gram	226.690
10 Gram	116.040
5 Gram	58.700

UAE EXCHANGE CENTRE WLL

CURRENCIES	TELEX TRANSFER PER 1000
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	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.800
Canadian Dollar	216.885
Sterling Pound	443.575
Euro	334.510
Swiss Frank	304.295
Bahrain Dinar	806.370
UAE Dirhams	83.225
Qatari Riyals	84.445

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	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.435506	0.438506
Czech Korune	0.004358	0.016358
Danish Krone	0.040705	0.045705
Euro	0.327400	0.335400
Norwegian Krone	0.030724	0.035924
Romanian Leu	0.087320	0.087320
Slovakia	0.009099	0.019099
Swedish Krona	0.031628	0.036628
Swiss Franc	0.297700	0.307900
Turkish Lira	0.096113	0.106413
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.201249	0.212749
New Zealand Dollar	0.191101	0.200601
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.204376	0.212876
US Dollars	0.300300	0.304800

US Dollars Mint	0.300800	0.304800
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003524	0.004124
Chinese Yuan	0.044655	0.048155
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037174	0.039924
Indian Rupee	0.004225	0.004615
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002527	0.002707
Kenyan Shilling	0.003164	0.003164
Korean Won	0.000241	0.000256
Malaysian Ringgit	0.066139	0.072139
Nepalese Rupee	0.002886	0.003056
Pakistan Rupee	0.002640	0.002920
Philippine Peso	0.006345	0.006625
Sierra Leone	0.000067	0.000073
Singapore Dollar	0.208549	0.214549
South African Rand	0.012504	0.021004
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001766	0.002346
Taiwan	0.008975	0.009155
Thai Baht	0.008081	0.008631

Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.800536	0.808536
Egyptian Pound	0.035165	0.039504
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000201	0.000261
Jordanian Dinar	0.425434	0.432843
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000153	0.000253
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021558	0.045558
Nigerian Naira	0.001259	0.001894
Omani Riyal	0.784229	0.789909
Qatar Riyal	0.082900	0.084113
Saudi Riyal	0.080287	0.081237
Syrian Pound	0.001290	0.001510
Tunisian Dinar	0.146471	0.154471
Turkish Lira	0.096113	0.106413
UAE Dirhams	0.081896	0.083045
Yemeni Riyal	0.001376	0.001456

OPTIMISTIC NAIMI SAYS IT WILL TAKE TIME TO STABILIZE OIL MARKET

RIYADH: Saudi oil minister Ali Al-Naimi said yesterday it would take "some time" to restore stability to the global oil market in the midst of a glut but he remained optimistic about the future.

Naimi's comments come at a time when OPEC member Iran is preparing to raise oil exports after international sanctions were lifted on Saturday. Brent LCOc1 plunged to \$28.94 a barrel on Friday, its lowest in 12 years, on the prospect of additional Iranian barrels.

"As you know, the oil market has witnessed over its long history, periods of instability, severe price fluctuations, and petro-economic cycles," Naimi said in a speech at an energy event in Riyadh attended by the Mexican president and energy minister. "This is one of them. Market forces, as well as the cooperation among the producing nations, always lead to the restoration of stability. This, however, takes some time," he said.

"I am optimistic about the future, the return of stability to the global oil markets, the improvement of prices and the cooperation among the major producing countries," he added.

Naimi made a reference to the Asian financial crisis of 1998-1999 when oil crashed and Riyadh helped organise a production cut with other non-OPEC producers, including Mexico, to support prices.

Meanwhile, Iran is ready to increase its crude oil exports by 500,000 barrels a day, its deputy oil minister said yesterday. Such comments could put Iran on a collision course with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf members, who have been resisting cutting production to shore up prices.

For the past 18 months, oversupply has been the main factor responsible for dragging down prices by two-thirds, after Saudi Arabia led OPEC in a shift of its policy in November 2014 by deciding against cutting production to support prices.

Naimi said that Saudi Arabia and Mexico were to sign on Sunday "a petroleum cooperation agreement between the two countries, covering several areas including the exchange of experts, establishment of joint ventures and encouragement of mutual investments." Naimi declined to make any further comments to reporters after the event. —Reuters

CHINA GROWTH SLID TO 25-YEAR LOW IN 2015

AUTHORITIES STRUGGLED TO STOP MARKET CRASH

BEIJING: China recorded its lowest growth in a quarter of a century in 2015, an AFP survey has forecast, projecting a further slowdown in the world's second-largest economy this year. Official gross domestic product (GDP) statistics for 2015 will be announced tomorrow, and the median prediction in the poll of 18 economists put expansion at 6.9 percent-down from 7.3 percent the year before.

The Asian giant is a key driver of the world economy, affecting businesses and employment across the planet, and worries about its health have roiled global markets in recent weeks and months.

The figure would be the weakest growth in the People's Republic since the 3.8 percent of 1990, a year after the bloody Tiananmen Square crackdown rocked the country and isolated it internationally.

Growth will slow further this year, the survey forecast, with the median projection for 2016 coming in at 6.7 percent. One bank, Nomura, forecast a precipitous drop to 5.8 percent.

"The real economy will continue the downturn because of destocking, the reduction of overcapacity and deleveraging," its economist Zhao Yang told AFP, citing in particular declining investment in property, a key sector. "I don't think economic growth will bottom out in 2016," he added. "It will be under rather big downward pressure for the next two to three years."

Equity slump

Chinese authorities struggled to keep control of a bucking stock market last year, weakening investor confidence in policymakers' ability to implement reform and manage the transition to a more market-driven economy.

An oversupply of empty housing in second-tier cities and stubborn overcapacity in industries dominated by legacy state-owned enterprises continue to weigh on growth.

The expansion slowdown has stalled Beijing's efforts to move the country's economic model

away from reliance on exports and infrastructure investment towards consumer spending.

Even so some analysts believe that markets have overreacted to negative factors and underestimated the fundamental resilience of China, whose official growth rates still far exceed those of the developed world. In the AFP survey, economists forecast 2015 fourth quarter growth of 6.8 percent,

Off target

The 2015 forecast in the AFP poll was close to the official growth target of "around 7 percent" for the year-but questions have repeatedly been raised about the accuracy of official Chinese economic statistics, which critics say can be subject to political manipulation. Even Premier Li Keqiang reportedly once expressed doubts, telling the then-US ambassador in

hide capital flight, was responsible.

The world's biggest trader in goods saw its two-way business fall eight percent year-on-year to \$3.96 trillion, the figures showed, far below the government's target of six percent annual growth.

At a meeting of G20 officials this week, China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi warned that "it is not possible to completely dis-



BEIJING: A waitress waits for customers outside a restaurant in Beijing yesterday. China recorded its lowest growth in a quarter of a century in 2015, an AFP survey has forecast, projecting a further slowdown in the world's second-largest economy this year. —AFP

down from 6.9 percent in the previous three months-when US growth stood at 2.0 percent.

"In spite of the strong global market response to the rout on China's equity market, we do not expect the equity slump to have a major impact on China's real economy," Louis Kuijs, an economist with Oxford Economics in Hong Kong, told AFP in an email. "Indeed, we think that global markets have overreacted."

The company expects growth to slow to 6.3 percent this year, again pointing to the property sector, but added: "Those pressures remain cushioned by robust consumption."

2007 that some Chinese data was "man-made" and thus unreliable, and pointing to power consumption and rail cargo volume as better indicators of the true health of the economy.

But now that the services sector has grown to 51 percent of GDP, economists are divided over what alternative measurements to use. Two months ago, state media proposed a "new Keqiang index" focused on measurements of employment, income, and energy consumption per unit of GDP.

December export figures that came in ahead of expectations this week prompted doubts about whether over-invoicing, which can be used to

card the possibility that an economic crisis could once again take place, and the problem should not be neglected."

Unexpected moves in the yuan exchange rate-after a surprise devaluation in August-have disturbed investors in recent weeks, who worry that the real picture is worse than portrayed and authorities are trying to boost the competitiveness of domestic manufacturers.

Analysts forecast a rocky year ahead. "The on-going deleveraging process, sluggish external trade outlook, and soft domestic demand will continue to weigh on growth," Louis Lam, China economist from ANZ Research, said. —AFP

GERMAN BUSINESSES PUT ON BRAVE FACE AMID CHINA CRISIS

FRANKFURT: German companies are trying not to let themselves be spooked by the economic slowdown in China, even if they concede they are currently seeing a drop in demand for their products there. "Of course we're experiencing a fall-off in demand in China at the moment," said Franz Hampel, head of Garant-Moebel, a furniture wholesaler.

"Our Chinese partners have become jumpy. Business has been good for them the past few years. But they're now asking themselves what the future will bring," Hampel said.

Employing a workforce of around 230 and active in around 20 countries, Garant-Moebel opened an office in Hong Kong two years ago where it employs a dozen people. However, the strong fluctuations in the Chinese currency, the yuan, resulting from the country's recent financial woes, are leading Chinese furniture retailers to roll back business, Hampel said.

Garant-Moebel is not alone in watching economic developments in People's Republic with a wary eye. "It seems obvious that the period of double-digit growth is behind us," said Jan-Christoph Block, head of international sales at drive systems specialist Getriebebau Nord in Bargteheide, north Germany.

"It's still possible to achieve growth, but it's become more difficult," he said. Both companies can be seen as representative of the mostly family-owned small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) that form the backbone of the German economy and were quick to establish a foothold in China.

It is not just big companies like Volkswagen, BMW and BASF that are suffering from China's woes, the SMEs are feeling the pinch too.

'Enormous potential'

China's economic growth is projected to slow to 6.7 percent in 2016 — its lowest growth rate since 1990 — from 6.9 percent in 2015, according to the latest forecasts from the World Bank.

The slowdown is worrying for German exporters, since China is their most important market after Europe and the United States. In 2014, Germany exported a total 74 billion euros (\$81 billion) worth of goods to China, not including the sales generated by companies' local subsidiaries in China.

According to the specialist consultancy

firm EAC, some of the major players listed on the Frankfurt stock exchange generated combined turnover in China of 131 billion euros in 2014, an increase of nearly 10 percent over the previous year.

So it hardly comes as a surprise that the market turbulence in China has left its mark on Germany's blue-chip DAX 30 index, too. It has lost more than seven percent since January 1.

Nevertheless, China's "enormous growth potential remains," said Block of Getriebebau Nord.

"Currently, more than 5,200 German companies are active in the People's Republic, employing a combined workforce of more than one million there," said Alexandra Voss, head of the German Chamber of Commerce in China.

"The economic slowdown in China will certainly not be painless. But the huge growth potential remains," Voss told AFP.

Exaggerated fears

A number of companies are hoping to benefit from the massive investment programme launched by Beijing to transform China from the world's biggest factory to the world's leading market place for innovation in services and technology. And the sectors covered by German companies were "particularly well placed" to take advantage of this, said Voss.

UniCredit economist Erik Nielsen also argued that "concerns over China are overdone." China's "real economy leaves no particular reason to worry, at least not in the short term," Nielsen said.

"Recent indicators suggest economic activity has stabilised and, if anything, it has probably picked up in the last few months." In November, German factory orders, a key measure of demand for goods in Europe's top economy, beat expectations, driven by rising demand both inside and outside Germany. "It would be virtually impossible for German companies to report these numbers if China was slowing dramatically," Nielsen argued.

Despite China's current woes, Garant-Moebel chief Hampel remains confident. "China remains an opportunity, thanks to rising incomes and the fact that more and more people there are able to buy consumer goods," he said. "Our sales grew in 2015 and we expect them to do the same in 2016," he concluded. —AFP

IMF RESISTS A RETURN TO STILL-STRUGGLING GREECE

WASHINGTON: The Europeans want it and Athens is resigned to its presence. But the International Monetary Fund has still not decided whether it will participate in the third financial bailout for Greece, and continues to set out its conditions.

"We have not decided anything in the financial sense on a possible participation," IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde said in an interview published Friday.

In 2010 and again in 2012, the world's crisis lender was a key member of the "troika" behind the rescue plans for Greece, together with the European Commission and the European Central Bank.

Deeply worried over a meltdown of the eurozone, the IMF had gone so far as to create a special "systemic exception" that allowed it to go beyond its loan limit rules in special situations. It then committed its largest loan in history to Athens, eventually close to 50 billion euros (\$55 billion) in total. The IMF then took a central role in setting the terms for Athens's rescue, dictating economic reforms and instituting financial discipline, which included a harsh dose of austerity, in return for its involvement.

IMF wants to move on

But the times have changed, even as the country remains in recession after five years under the stewardship of the troika. The IMF does not appear now so willing to join the Europeans, who agreed last summer on a new 86-billion-euro plan to support Greece.

Yet, under pressure from the Germans, the European institutions have made the

IMF's involvement a primary condition of their deal. And the Greeks, who have alleged that the Fund bears "criminal" responsibility for their suffering under the first two programs, which failed to stabilize the economy, have also accepted the idea. "The IMF's participation is planned. We are sticking to this commitment," Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos told the German newspaper Handelsblatt this week.

So far the IMF has remained unmoved by the appeals. Before it gets involved again, the Fund is pressing Greece to implement more tough austerity measures.

It also insists that the European institutions cut Greece's debt burden, which has reached nearly 200 percent of the size of its economy. "We need both legs," IMF spokesman Gerry Rice said this week, referring to the two conditions. He stressed that the Fund remains in talks with the other parties.

But the IMF also appears desirous of moving beyond the controversial chapter in its history, which saw it twisting its own rules to lend huge sums to Greece before, the country had stabilized its finances, or made its debt "sustainable," as is usually required for a Fund loan.

"There are a lot of people at the IMF, particularly in the emerging markets, who are saying, 'What's going on here? The IMF has got one set of rules for the emerging markets where they're tough, and when it comes to the Europeans, they don't mind that the country doesn't meet the conditions,'" said Desmond Lachman, a former IMF official. —AFP

WARBA BANK LAUNCHES A FIRST OF ITS KIND SALARY PROGRAM IN KUWAIT

KUWAIT: Warba Bank, one of the fast-growing banks in Kuwait offering the entire spectrum of world-class Sharia-compliant banking and investment services in Kuwait and the region, has announced the launch of a state-of-the-art new campaign offering an all new unparalleled salary package program for the first time in the market.

Based on the campaign, whenever an account holder transfers his salary to Warba Bank, they will get to select one of six exclusive gifts. The first gift consists of customers to be classified as Al-Safwa customers. This classification comes with a number of exclusive perks such as a concierge service that provides access to lounges, and a personal assistant, a dedicated RM, an initial welcome gift as well as an annual gift, and preferential rates on financing.

While the second gift is about cash prizes starting from KD 50 to KD 2500 deposited into the customer's account. Each customer is entitled to an electronic coupon for

every KD 100 of their salary and will receive between 10 and 25 electronic coupons. Each coupon entitles them to prizes of KD 5, KD 10 or KD 100.

For customers willing to have profit free loans, they can select 'Al Qard Al-Hasan', another prize included in the salaries' campaign, offering up to KD 5,000 which must be settled within 18 months, without profits or management fees. As per the credit policy, this option is only available for customers who

have not previously obtained Qard Hasan.

Account holders can also select the fourth prize which offers a financing option of up to KD 50,000 over five years. This is the equivalent of taking a five-year loan and paying the profit on four years only. Financing terms are based on the credit regulations policy.

As for the fifth prize, customers can choose to open a fixed deposit Wakala of up to KD 30,000 which is expected to offer an expected prof-

ite rate of 2.5 percent for one year. Rules and regulations apply.

The sixth final option is three free of charge cards for a period of three years. These cards include a full payment platinum card, a supplement full payment platinum card and a pre-paid card.

Warba Bank is also still running its cash back campaign encouraging customers to use their credit cards. Upon each usage of their pre-paid or post-paid cards at any Point of Sale, customers will have the chance to enter the monthly draw which offers them to get back up to 100 percent for each KD100 spent.

Salary account holders also benefit from a number of other perks such as instant card issuance from the bank's branches, free SMS service, and competitive profit rates on Investment Savings Accounts.

For more details about the bank's products and services as well as its branch locations, exclusive offers, terms and conditions and customer rights, visit www.warbabank.com or Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Transfer your salary and choose your prize instantly

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- Upgrade to Al-Safwa Account
- Financing of up to KD 50,000 with 5% 4 Years Profit

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MEMORIES OF SWISS FRANC CRISIS LINGER ONE YEAR ON

LONDON: Switzerland's notorious Swiss franc crisis, which rocked markets one year ago and sent the currency spiking, could return to haunt traders, some analysts warn.

The nation's central bank stunned foreign exchange and other financial markets on January 15, 2015, when it unexpectedly scrapped efforts to stop the franc rising against the European single currency. The Swiss National Bank (SNB) decided to abandon the minimum rate of 1.20 francs against the euro that it had been defending for more than three years. Following the announcement, the Swiss national currency immediately spiked in value, sparking turmoil on global financial markets. However, fast forward one year, and the Swiss franc has erased a large part of those hefty

gains. The SNB's decision last year to abandon the franc's exchange rate floor was felt globally as the franc immediately strengthened by 30 percent against the euro.

Share prices of Swiss companies heavily dependent on exports took a nosedive. The crisis also wiped out at least two international foreign exchange brokers-London-based Alpari UK and Global Brokers NZ in New Zealand-which both declared insolvency after clients' losses were passed on.

"2015 started with a bang," said Simon Smith, chief economist at currency broker FxPro, describing the Swiss franc crisis as a "black swan" moment, or extremely rare and unexpected event that alters the markets landscape. —AFP

JOB OPPORTUNITY

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CHINESE GDP TO WORRY CBS AT HOME AND ABROAD

GLOBAL ECONOMY WEEKAHEAD

FRANKFURT: China is set to report its weakest full-year growth figure in 25 years tomorrow on the back of slowing output and sagging investments, troubling news that will likely dominate discussion at the European Central Bank and Bank of Canada policy meetings.

Economists said the expansion of the Chinese economy was held back by sluggish domestic and external demand, weak investments, factory overcapacity and high property inventories, which exacerbated deflationary pressures in the economy. The poor figures bolster arguments for more Chinese monetary policy easing on top of the six interest rates

cuts seen since November 2014 and suggest that more currency depreciation is coming to prop up corporate profitability, bad news for advanced economies.

An even weaker yuan will export China's deflationary pressures to advanced economies that are already struggling with anaemic price growth, amplified by a fall in oil prices to 12-year lows.

China's annual fourth-quarter GDP likely slowed to 6.8 percent from 6.9 percent in the third quarter, the weakest reading since the global financial crisis, while full-year growth is seen at a 25-year low of 6.9 percent. "The Chinese yuan has been caught up in a vicious cir-

cle than can but lead to further depreciation of the currency," Nordine Naam, an analyst at brokerage Natixis, said.

"Concerns over the extent of the slowdown in Chinese growth risk fuelling capital outflows and in turn a further depreciation of yuan, to which the People's Bank of China seems resigned," Naam said.

The Chinese government is expected to target economic growth of at least 6.5 percent in 2016, but that could require more rate cuts, increased government spending on infrastructure and easing curbs on the cooling property sector.

ING expects Chinese authorities to restrict interna-

tional capital flows and tighten systemic regulation so the central bank can cut rates further without exerting further downward pressure on the currency, also known as renminbi.

But Albert Edwards, a strategist at Societe Generale known for his bearish stance, has bigger fears: "Investors are coming to terms with what a Chinese renminbi devaluation means for Western markets. It means global deflation and recession," he said. "The western manufacturing sector will choke under this imported deflationary tourniquet. Indeed U.S. manufacturing seems to be suffering particularly badly already," Edwards added.

Still, economic activity is holding up well in the euro zone for now, with domestic consumption and factory activity supporting growth, offsetting weakening export prospects.

And the ECB has barely had any time to gauge the impact of its most recent set of measures, suggesting the central bank could wait until mid-year before acting again. "We expect the ECB to ease policy further in 2016 as deflationary pressures worsen," Barclays said. "However, we think new measures are unlikely to be deployed before June, unless we see another bout of euro appreciation or a further significant drop in inflation expectations."

Canada's central bank will have a tougher time deciding. Although most analysts expect rates to remain on hold at 0.5 percent, markets see a bigger chance of a cut to 0.25 percent on lower growth prospects, falling oil prices and a poor Bank of Canada survey.

"The decision remains an exceptionally close call," TD Securities said. "On one front, the economic uncertainty has risen enough to fully support a cut, and the additional insurance would be wise." "On the other hand, the Bank may want to wait and see how the temporary factors weighing on late-2015 growth evolve," it added.

Bank of Canada Governor Stephen Poloz also cast doubt on the cut recently when he praised the effect of the weaker Canadian dollar, which trades at a close to 13-year low. — Reuters

CENTRAL BANKS

Although China was a fading concern for central banks in recent months, market turbulence at the start of the year will likely propel it back on top of the agenda, particularly after another plunge in oil prices, a factor of weak emerging market demand.

Meeting for the first time since it cut interest rates and extended quantitative easing in December, the ECB is expected to remain on hold on Thursday but will likely express serious concern about emerging market prospects as the euro area inflation and growth outlooks fade. At the previous policy-setting meeting the ECB was already worried that its inflation forecasts may be too optimistic and said it needed to maintain firepower if risks materialize.

Global

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price Index	▼ -167.52	5,098.42	5,265.94	5,265.59	5,095.08
Weighted Index	▼ -15.36	340.03	355.39	354.66	339.89
KSX 15	▼ -40.34	788.04	828.38	825.56	787.71

Volume	208,306,861
Value (KWD)	27,704,689
Number of Trades	2,983

Security	Trades						Change
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	
MARIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	114	0.0
IKARUS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	83	0.0
IPG	315	315	3,125	984	1	315	▼ -5.0
NAPESCO	660	630	23,801	15,270	4	630	▼ -20.0
ENERGYH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	36.5	0.0
GPI	42.0	42.0	15,500	651	3	42.0	▼ -2.5
ABAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	118	0.0
Oil & Gas			42,426	16,905	8	779.66	▼ -17.05
KFOUC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	204	0.0
BPCC	475	455	503,327	234,351	22	455	▼ -25.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	610	0.0
ALQURAIN	178	170	569,930	97,882	23	170	▼ -10.0
Basic Materials			1,073,257	332,232	45	879.64	▼ -35.79
KCEM	370	370	30,358	11,232	3	370	▼ -25.0
REFRY	300	300	20,000	6,000	2	300	0.0
CABLE	315	300	32,906	9,962	9	300	▼ -25.0
SHIP	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	146	0.0
PCEM	1,000	970	31,500	31,330	10	980	▼ -40.0
PAPER	390	380	19,054	7,291	3	380	▼ -10.0
MRC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	54	0.0
ACICO	300	300	10	3	1	300	▲ 15.0
GMCM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	490	0.0
HCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	132	0.0
KPAK	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	360	0.0
KBMMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	250	0.0
NICBM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	230	0.0
EQUIPMENT	51	49.0	326,086	16,323	22	51	▼ -2.0
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	99	0.0
GYPSUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	102	0.0
SALBOOKH	73	72	33,650	2,441	3	72	▼ -2.0
AGLTY	385	375	2,634,883	993,479	89	375	▼ -25.0
EDU	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	228	0.0
CLEANING	37.5	37.5	179,000	6,713	9	37.5	▼ -2.5
CITYGROUP	380	380	2,000	760	1	380	▼ -25.0
KGL	39.0	37.5	94,510	3,594	7	38.5	▼ -0.5
KPC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	218	0.0
HUMANSOFT	800	800	105	84	1	800	▼ -50.0
NAFAIS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	114	0.0
SAFWAN	285	275	20,010	5,703	2	275	▼ -46.0
GFC	25.5	25.5	52,934	1,350	3	25.5	▼ -2.5
MAYADEEN	16.5	16.0	4,040,878	65,142	69	16.0	▼ -2.5
CGC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	780	0.0
MTC	55	55	311,980	17,159	8	55	▼ -5.0
UPAC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	650	0.0
ALAFCO	198	194	538,951	105,651	12	194	▼ -4.0
MUBARRAD	70	63	1,801,100	114,562	47	63	▼ -5.0
LOGISTICS	49.5	45.5	431,842	19,698	26	49.0	▲ 1.0
SCEM	81	79	689,700	55,196	10	80	▼ -3.0
GCEM	71	67	140,230	9,401	9	67	▼ -5.0
QCEM	73	73	78,688	5,744	1	73	▼ -1.0
FCEM	69	66	59,901	3,953	2	69	▼ -2.0
RKWC	95	90	301,189	27,370	6	90	▼ -5.0
SPEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	88	0.0
Industrials			11,871,465	1,520,143	355	950.92	▼ -23.48
KSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	220	0.0
NSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	62	0.0
PAPCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	106	0.0
CATTL	122	114	229,646	27,118	12	120	▼ -4.0
DANAH	76	75	77,490	5,835	6	75	▼ -5.0
POULT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	196	0.0
FOOD	1,900	1,900	4,296	8,162	1	1,900	▼ -0.0
Consumer Goods			311,432	1,115	19	1,033.25	▼ -16.36
MHC	180	180	38,000	6,840	1	180	0.0
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	920	0.0
YIACO	122	120	2,876	350	2	122	▼ -6
Health Care			40,876	7,190	3	873.16	▼ -42.12
KCIN	930	880	2,688	2,374	4	880	▲ 10
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	220	0.0
SULTAN	54	53	71,600	3,805	10	53	▼ -5
CABLETV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	27.5	0.0
EYAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	335	0.0
IFAH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	204	0.0
ULAFUEL	102	98	254,827	25,407	31	100	▼ -2
MUNTAZAHAT	89	89	3,000	267	1	89	▼ -5
JAZEERA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	820	0.0
SOOR	106	100	408,015	41,048	29	102	0.0
FUTUREKID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	110	0.0
ALNAWADI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	84	0.0
ALRAI	142	132	113,318	14,998	7	132	▼ -8
ZIMAH	95	95	5,300	504	2	95	▼ -5
UFIG	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	132	0.0
KOUTFOOD	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	660	0.0
Mezzan	1,040	960	852,390	836,956	40	960	▼ -30
Consumer Services			1,711,138	925,358	124	952.54	▼ -16.90
ZAIN	330	320	3,718,857	1,201,529	137	320	▼ -15
OOREDOO	1,060	1,060	1,479	1,568	2	1,060	0.0
HITSTELEC	26.0	24.5	1,328,889	33,038	16	24.5	▼ -3
VIVA	990	980	1,316,449	1,302,321	145	980	▼ -10
Telecommunications			6,365,674	2,538,455	300	573.43	▼ -13.62
NBK	730	690	5,303,412	3,731,849	156	690	▼ -50
GBK	224	222	792,500	176,267	23	222	▼ -10
CBK	500	500	394,972	182,486	11	500	0.0
ABK	320	320	221,664	70,932	3	320	▼ -25
ALMUTAHED	490	470	728,047	349,123	8	470	▼ -25
KIB	204	198	279,733	55,416	12	198	▼ -10
BURG	315	305	432,787	133,572	33	310	▼ -20
KFIN	470	450	5,755,381	2,620,825	262	450	▼ -25
BOUBYAN	400	400	1,866,088	746,435	77	400	▼ -25
AUB	198	190	1,209,977	233,946	30	190	▼ -10
ITHMR	41.5	38.5	5,238,650	201,693	84	38.5	▼ -3
WARBAANK	172	166	1,147,032	191,872	74	166	▼ -10
Banks			23,340,243	8,694,417	773	794.54	▼ -43.82
KINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	310	0.0
GINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	750	0.0
AINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	460	0.0
WINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	106	0.0
KUWAITRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	200	0.0
FTI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	56	0.0
WETHAQ	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	39.0	0.0
BKIKWT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	355	0.0
Insurance			0	0	0	1096.02	0.0
SOKOUK	32.0	32.0	212,710	8,807	7	32.0	▼ -2.5
KRE	49.0	46.5	1,992,714	92,737	25	46.5	▼ -2.5
URC	97	92	47,429	4,364	5	97	0.0
NRE	82	79	86,000	6,797	8	79	▼ -5.0
SRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	360	0.0
TAM	600	590	301,766	180,663	7	600	▼ -40.0
AREEC	138	138	500	69	1	138	0.0
MASALEH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	61	0.0
ARABREC	27.0	25.5	153,696	3,939	9	27.0	▼ -1.0
ERESCO	56	53	277,041				

FED IN TIGHTENING MODE AMID ASIAN MELTDOWN

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

KUWAIT: Interest rates hike expectations in the US have created a new world where consumers refuse to return to the debt-fueled demand growth of the previous years. After a massive expansion of its balance sheet, the Fed is now in a tightening mode, where Fed members are probably wondering if they acted too fast and what to do in the next FOMC meetings. As the world was waiting for the first rates hike in 2015, the problem today is in the interest rates path going forward.

Since the later part of 2015, we have seen carnage in emerging markets currencies and equities. Since the beginning of 2009, as funds were cheap, the Fed quantitative easing led to massive emerging market inflows, which led to years of foreign exchange intervention in an attempt for countries to keep their currency pegged or fight the increase relative to the Dollar. This phenomenon translated into a large investment in commodities which ultimately resulted in the burst we are currently witnessing.

The current situation is forcing consumers and investors to change their behavior as the old carry trade mechanism, where people used cheap funding currency to invest in higher yielding vehicles seems to be completely broken.

The drama is mainly hitting Asia, and mostly China. Even with Chinese authorities attempting to turn the country into a consumer driven society, it remains primarily an export oriented economy. With the Chinese export dropping significantly, authorities had no choice than to start devaluing the currency.

Having been pegged to the Dollar, the Yuan suffered major drawbacks relative to its competition. We are likely to witness a continuation of a drop in the Chinese Yuan into 2016, which ultimately will keep volatility elevated into emerging markets for the short term.

Since the start of 2016, China limit down was reached twice before authorities decided to scrap the newly adopted mechanism. Hibor rates which stand for interbank lending rates in Hong Kong have also exploded higher for two days this week in a sign that banks are desperate for liquidity and are extremely concerned

about one another's counterparty risk. In all this meltdown, Chinese authorities waged war on speculators defending the Yuan offshore and Onshore continuously.

After continuous attempts of stabilization, Asian stock markets continue to bleed into the weekend with contagion spreading globally. Year to date, global indices are down almost double digits with Shanghai index down almost 20%, the Japanese Nikkei down 8%, while US and Europe indices down almost 8.5%.

On the currency front, the drop continues in commodities currencies, with year to date, Australian dollar down by 5.6 percent Canadian by 5 percent, South African by -6 percent and the list goes on.

Being the funding currency of choice, the Euro and the Yen are up against most of their counterparts. Euro closed the week at 1.0916 against the USD while the Japanese Yen closed the week at 117.00. The sterling Pound remains in a no man's land after investors remain on the sideline while the UK decides to remain or leave the Eurozone in 2016. On the commodities side, this week's comments from Nigeria's Oil Minister suggesting that a few OPEC member countries wanted to request an emergency meeting saw the price of oil attempting to move higher. Nonetheless, his comments were quickly downplayed by his counterpart in the UAE who said that the OPEC will not change its policy despite the latest price collapse. Oil is now down 50 percent from its peak in June last year, or over 72 percent from the highs of June 2014. Brent ended the week down over 20 percent since the beginning of the year at \$29.42, while West Texas crude closed below the \$30 level the first time since 2003 at \$28.94.

Worried Fed

President of St Louis Fed, James Bullard who is seen to be a hawkish member of the FOMC committee, commented this week, saying that 'with renewed declines in crude oil prices in recent weeks, the associated decline in market based inflation expectations measures is becoming worrisome'. Bullard noted that while Central Bankers tend to 'look through'

the changes in the price of oil, one circumstance where one may be concerned is when inflation expectations themselves begin to change due to the changes in crude oil prices.

After ruling out a January rate move, he said that no decision on March can be made until we "get more information and see how things play out". The probability of a March hike has fallen from as much 52 percent at the start of the year to just 33 percent now.

Another Fed member, president of San Francisco Fed John Williams admitted this week that "the Fed got it wrong when it predicted a drop in oil prices would be a big boom for the

changes in the price of oil, one circumstance where one may be concerned is when inflation expectations themselves begin to change due to the changes in crude oil prices.

Last but not least, Chicago Fed President Evans reiterated his view that "we are likely headed toward a lower resting point" for the fed funds rate relative to the past, while also citing that the policy of normalization should be "very gradual" to bring inflation to target in a reasonable amount of time.

Europe & UK

German 2015 GDP growth came



economy. It turned out the world had changed; the US has a lot of jobs connected to the oil industry. Now that gas prices have been low for over a year, consumers will finally change their behavior having expected the gas drop to be temporary. Consumer spending that has been growing faster last year will eventually stop, making the Fed realize that the world wasn't ready for a major lift off as planned

Boston Fed President Rosengren also attracted some attention this week making reference to the fact that "policy makers should take seriously the potential downside risks to their economic forecasts and manage those risks as we think about the appropriate path for monetary policy".

Rosengren continue saying that

in +1.7 percent on a yearly basis, which was as expected and slightly better than 2014, 1.6 percent. The outcome is in line with the expectations of the German government and the Bundesbank. Preliminary GDP data for Q4 signaled a slight loss in momentum in the second half of the year. Germany's GDP expanded around 0.25 percent in the final quarter of 2015 from the previous period. Europe continues to steal growth from its major partner with the help of a falling Euro. A week ago, the eurozone PMI came at 54.2, unchanged from November, but up from the prior 53.9. Firms in Europe as well continue to add new jobs at the fastest rate since May 2011 anticipating better business this year. The employment sub-index was 52.8 in December from 52.2

The ECB meeting minutes

The minutes of the latest ECB meeting released this week highlighted that policy action was widely seen as warranted and a 'reassessment could be made in the future' about increasing the size of monthly purchases. Highlighting a split amongst the board, the minutes notes in the text were that 'going beyond the ultimately agreed 10bp cut would, in the view of some members, raise issues about increase side effects over time'.

The minutes also reiterated that these issues concerned the profitability of banks and other financial institutions whereby banks could try to recoup possible losses by increasing lending margins and so leading to a tightening instead of a further easing in financing conditions.

Dim forecasts for UK

The Bank of England kept rates unchanged once again this week after an 8-1 majority vote. Officials said the near-term outlook for UK growth and inflation has weakened further.

In the minutes of the January meeting, published this week, officials said they needed time to assess the implications of recent market volatility. With inflation far below the BOE's 2 percent target, officials also noted that pay growth remains "restrained" and has dipped in recent months. The expected pickup in the headline rate would be "a little more modest than previously assumed," while business surveys point to a slower pace of growth. The minutes also highlighted that the falls in energy prices meant that the increase in inflation is now expected to be slightly more gradual in the near term than forecast in the committee's November Inflation report, although the comments were somewhat balanced out with the reference to potentially being positive for consumer spending.

Bank of Japan

This week, Japan machine orders dropped this week by 14.4 percent on a monthly basis, worth 773.8 billion yen. The headline figure missed forecasts for a drop of 7.3 percent, following the 10.7 percent increase in October. Bank of Japan said that producer prices were also down 0.3 per-

cent on a monthly basis in December.

For now, the continuation of the global meltdown has supported the Yen, as well as Japan's balance of payments. On the trade side, although the trade deficit has shrunk to close to zero, falling energy import prices have offset the export drag from the lower in Asia.

Australia's Job data

On the data front this week, employment declined by 1,000 since November against expectations of 10,000 drop while unemployment was at 5.8 percent versus expectations of 5.9 percent. We believe that Australia continues to be mostly vulnerable to the Chinese currency weakness. If the depreciation of the Yuan remains aggressive in 2016, it is likely to generate additional stress for the Australian economy. Indeed, the longer the crisis prolongs in Asia, the more difficult it would be for new mining investment to take place.

The latest trade numbers were released with the data better than expected this week. In yuan terms, exports were up +2.3 percent on a yearly basis in December against -4.1 percent from -3.7 percent in November. It was the first positive reading since June last year. Imports printed at -4.0 percent on a yearly basis, against expectations of -7.9 percent, from -5.6 percent the prior month.

When translated in USD terms, exports rose to -1.4 percent against expectations of a 8.0 percent drop from -6.8 percent the previous month, while imports came at -7.6 percent against expectations of -11.0 percent. With the devaluation of the Yuan, that data is likely to provide a lift to the PBoC. Taken together, the data suggest a favorable impact from currency depreciation.

With the December trade data, China's is attempting to reassure markets despite the turmoil on the stock and FX markets. Despite taking long time to materialize, Chinese authorities are betting the strategy is moving in the right path.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30355
The USDKWD opened at 0.30355 yesterday morning.

VIETNAM SEES REFORM OPPORTUNITIES, LABOR CHALLENGES IN TPP

HANOI: After organizing communist Vietnam's first peaceful mass strike at a shoe factory, labor activist Do Thi Minh Hanh was arrested, beaten bloody by police, and jailed for four years. Authoritarian Vietnam does not allow the millions of workers in its export-orientated factories, which are driving impressive economic growth, to form independent trade unions.

But this should change with the coming into force of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a deal that has been touted as a foundation for "21st century trade" by US President Barack Obama. The TPP seeks to liberalize commerce in some 40 percent of the global economy, and if ratified would oblige signatories-be they the US, Japan, Canada or Vietnam-to allow independent trade unions.

But activists like Hanh say the one-party state is a long way from concretely committing to that kind of change. "Vietnam still wants to maintain its monopoly on trade unions," said Hanh, who was released from prison in 2014 but lives under constant police surveillance. Currently, all unions are part of the Vietnam Confederation of Labour, which is older than the ruling communist party.

Such official unions are "established to control workers, not to represent them," activist Hoang Dung said. The lack of meaningful representation is counterproductive as it leads to more wildcat strikes, said labor activist Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh.

"Workers demonstrate as they cannot negotiate," she said. Quynh is not optimistic about the TPP as "who can ensure that the trade union is really independent and will listen to workers' concerns?"

Company vs worker rights

The TPP contains a controversial investor-state dispute settlement mechanism which allows companies to take governments to court if they feel their rights are violated. But the deal has no equivalent enforcement mechanism to make sure member states live up to their commitments on labor or the environment.

Oxfam's Andrew Wells-Dang notes that Vietnam has signed up for numerous rights and labor agreements in the past but failed to implement them. The TPP "could contribute to opening up space on labor issues... but what happens if it doesn't?" he said.

The risk is the deal will simply "replace one set of (local) state owned actors with another set of international corporate actors," and do little to benefit workers or farmers.

Vietnam, whose low-wage economy

relies heavily on exports, is projected to see the biggest percentage boost to the economy of any country in the TPP-about 10 percent by 2030, mostly thanks to textiles and apparel, according to World Bank figures. Last year the economy grew at 6.68 percent, its fastest pace in five years, partially thanks to record foreign investment.

But in order to attract new high-quality TPP-linked investment, the communist country, which has the lowest GDP per capita and competitiveness ranking of the group, will have to introduce wide-ranging reforms.

"It requires a lot of effort for Vietnam to develop a full market system and define better the role of the state," said economist Pham Chi Lan. From brewing to baby formula, often inefficient state-run companies still have their fingers in every sector of the economy, and restructuring will be a long and painful process, she said.

But when the country signed on to the TPP it showed "they are serious about changing the system," she said.

Geopolitical victory

Vietnam's participation in the TPP reflects a "new consensus" among the country's ruling elite about their foreign policy direction, said Jonathan London, a Vietnam expert at City University of Hong Kong.

The communist country wants to move close to the US and Japan, but is also eager not to antagonize its current largest trading partner Beijing, he said. "Hanoi recognizes the TPP for what it is: a once in a generation opportunity to bolster the country's standings, economically and strategically," he said. The TPP will help Vietnam's domestic reform by putting "structure and direction" into long-running efforts to overhaul the state sector, but while the pact offers tremendous opportunities to Vietnam, it is no magic bullet, said Virginia Foote of Bay Global Strategies.

"Companies look at the overall picture, if the only thing that is better is tariff levels, you might not move your factory or supply chain (there)," she said. At the Garment Textile Corporation factory on the outskirts of Hanoi, the company has been planning eagerly for a post TPP era, said deputy director Than Duc Viet. It has nearly doubled production capacity and is busy securing local supplies to take advantage of a provision which rewards member states for using yarn from other TPP countries.

The deals new labor standards are no concern, he added, as his company already invests heavily in perks to help retain skilled workers. "With or without TPP, we will certainly be bankrupt if workers don't want to stay," he said. —AFP



KANO: A trader sorts a basket of tomatoes at the Yankaba vegetables market in northern Nigerian city of Kano, yesterday. —AFP

NIGERIA TACKLING POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT WITH TOMATOES

AFRICA'S RICHEST MAN DANGOTE HOPING TO BOOST OUTPUT, CREATE JOBS

KANO, Nigeria: It's a situation that mirrors the giant oil industry, where Nigeria has abundant resources but has lacked the capacity, will or ability to exploit it, forcing a reliance on imports.

But Africa's richest man Aliko Dangote is hoping to change tomato production with a giant factory that will boost domestic output, create jobs-and even, indirectly, fight Boko Haram.

For the past five years, the Dangote Group conglomerate he heads has been working to build a \$20-million (18.4-million-euro) tomato processing plant outside the northern city of Kano. The city and state of the same name has been blighted by poverty and unemployment, seen as key drivers to radicalisation fuelling the Islamist insurgency in the wider north since 2009. But it's hoped the giant factory the size of 10 football pitches, set alongside 17,000 hectares (acres) of irrigated fields, will help by tapping a potential agricultural goldmine.

The country's agriculture ministry puts annual current demand for tomato puree at 900,000 tons. When the Dangote factory opens from next month it will provide 430,000 tons of paste that is used widely in Nigerian dishes from jollof rice to fiery soups. "Nigeria is such a huge market for tomato paste that we will find quite challenging to satisfy," the factory's general manager, Abdulkarim Kaita, said.

"Already local tomato paste packaging companies have placed orders with us which we will have to work hard to satisfy. "We are set to begin operations. We are only waiting for the tomatoes which are ripening in the fields."

Supply boost

Nigeria grows some 1.5 million tons of tomatoes every year, making it the 14th biggest producer in the world. But it's forced to rely on imports of tomato puree, mostly from China, because of a lack of processing plants. Dangote's factory, built by Switzerland-based Syngenta, will directly employ 120 people and 50,000 farmers have been engaged to grow the tomatoes required for the process of making concentrate. The Central Bank of Nigeria has provided technical assistance such as soft loans for seeds and fertilizer. The factory will then buy the produce at competitive rates, said Kaita.

Currently, about half of the local tomato crop rots because of a lack of storage facilities, poor pricing and access to markets, which has prompted many farmers to stop cultivation, said the CBN.

The improved seed varieties to increase yields, access to chemicals, more up-to-date farming techniques and a ready market for the produce is designed to entice farmers back.

"Once we start production the factory will be providing employment to farmers and (the) tomato paste packaging industry, traders, haulage operators and many others to support the tomato value chain," said production manager Ashwin Patil. Plans to increase production-and acquire an idle tomato paste factory in neighboring Kaduna state-are in the pipeline, he added.

For farmers such as Yusuf Ado Kadawa, it's a lifeline. "We really incur heavy losses from our yield, which rots away due to lack of (a) ready

market for our tomatoes, which is a perishable produce. But now we have a market close to us," he said.

Challenges

President Muhammadu Buhari is keen to diversify Nigeria's economy away from an over-reliance on oil as revenues have been severely depleted by the global slump in crude prices. Former agriculture minister Akinwumi Adesina, now head of the African Development Bank, in 2013 described the sector as "the new oil". Some 30 percent of Nigeria's estimated 170 million people are employed in agriculture, mostly at a subsistence level, although moves have been made to commercialize production. Erratic power supply, which Nigeria has been grappling with for more than two decades, and lack of import controls remain the factory's main challenges.

The factory will have to rely on diesel-hungry generators for electricity, adding to production costs and reducing competitiveness with cheaper imports.

Both issues contributed to the collapse of hundreds of factories in Dangote's home state of Kano in the past two decades, including his textile and wheat flour factories. But the vice-president of Nigeria's manufacturers union, Ali Madugu, said the future still looked bright.

"Once the government can place restrictions on the import of Chinese tomato pastes... the sky's the limit for the Dangote tomato paste because the market is there for them to exploit," he added. —AFP

KIPCO REPAYS KD 80 MILLION BOND

'OUR PRUDENT FUNDING POLICIES HAVE SERVED US WELL: ' GROUP CFO

KUWAIT: KIPCO, the Kuwait Projects Company, has announced that it has repaid its KD 80 million (\$264 million) bond. The bond, which was issued in January 2012, was the largest local bond issued by a Kuwaiti corporate.

As part of its strategy, KIPCO regularly raises money in the local and international debt

markets, and will continue to do so with the aim of diversifying its investor base and providing the company with financial flexibility. KIPCO is also on schedule to repay its \$500 million bond in October 2016, issued under its international bond program. The company will have no debt repayments to make in 2017.

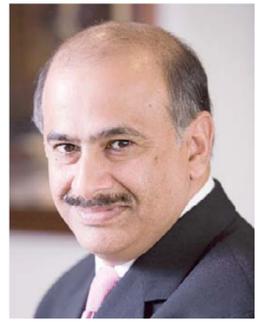
Commenting on the transac-

tion, KIPCO's Group Chief Financial Officer, Pinak Maitra, said: "Our prudent funding policies have served us well and KIPCO's liquidity remains strong. We ended 2015 with one billion dollars in cash, which will allow us to comfortably cover our commitments in 2016. The excellent reputation that KIPCO enjoys in the global

investment community, together with its prudent financial practices, ensures that the company can always make true on its promises and distinguishes KIPCO as a role model in the region."

The KIPCO Group is one of the biggest holding companies in the Middle East and North Africa, with consolidated assets of \$31.4

billion as at 30 September 2015. The Group has significant ownership interests in over 60 companies operating across 24 countries. The group's main business sectors are financial services, media, real estate and manufacturing. Through its core companies, subsidiaries and affiliates, KIPCO also has interests in the education and medical sectors.



Pinak Maitra

HAS THE DEMAND FOR OIL PEAKED?

By Hayder Tawfik

The recent big falls in oil price may be justifying a peak in demand rather than just a supply and demand issue. May be the assumption that the demand for oil will continue rising is wrong or has been wrong for a while. At some point in the future global oil use will start to fall.



We have always been told that population growth and a rising global middle class guarantee the steady demand for oil and other energy. This will lead to rising prices in

the future. This theory has been universally accepted by literally everyone. Investors, governments and industries alike. But maybe we should start questioning this theory for the sake of better understanding why oil price has been falling. I strongly believe that the world economy is going through a massive change when it comes to oil consumption. This will dramatically change the patterns of energy use in the near future. This change has been ongoing and I believe will accelerate in the coming years with a dire impact on oil demand.

Global industries are more productive than ever added to the technological revolution in recent years that have saved money and energy in its usage. The rapid development and the building of urban cities and infrastructure require far less energy these days than before. The increased political turmoil in key regions of the developing world, and large bets on renewable energy are among the many factors that will combine to slow the previous breakneck growth for oil. Last year \$265 billion were spent on renewable energies in most countries in the world. This figure was much higher than the money spent on oil investments. I believe the world is changing very fast and the global demand for oil demand will peak within the next two decades.

The geopolitical and economic implications of peaking demand will be huge for some oil producing countries. As economic growth becomes increasingly disconnected from oil, the focus will likely be on other scarce resources that are more critical for the human being. Food, water and natural commodities that help in generating energy away from oil.

Those who argue against the peak in demand for oil uses the ever-increasing world middle class in places like China, India, Indonesia and some part of Africa. It has always been in the interest of the oil industry to promote such argument. We know that the growth of the middle class mean more cars on the road and more fuel consumption. Officially, the International Energy Agency forecasts oil demand rising to 104 million barrels a day by 2040 from 90 million barrels a day in 2013, as surging demand in the developing world dwarfs the demand declines expected in the industrialized countries.

I believe these forecasts misses one

important point and that is the developed world has been very effective in saving energy. So, maybe there is an underestimation of the actual demand for oil in the developed economies and at the same time an overestimation of the future demand for oil from the emerging economies.

The developed economies have been in the forefront of introducing measures that have led to being more effective in using oil or energy. Most countries have in place energy taxes some are very high and some are going up every year. The technological breakthroughs has resulted in a peak in oil demand in the most industrious economies such as Japan, US and Europe. According to the latest energy research Europe's oil use last year hit its lowest level since the mid-1990s. The U.S. Energy Information Administration declared 2007 as the peak year for oil use in the U.S., with demand expected to fall by between 1.8 million and 2.7 million barrels a day by 2035 based on improvements in automotive efficiency and demographic trends.

Also, there are signs that slowing oil demand even in China, which has been the biggest source of growth in consumption over the past decade. China has been quite successful in making its economy less dependent on oil. It has been promoting renewable energy and advanced automotive technology at home and for export. Over the past few years China has spent billions on developing new cities that are energy efficient and has connected these cities with a huge network of high speed trains that run on electricity and very energy efficient too.

The new trend of massive urbanization will more likely reduce the viability of private car ownership. Old and new cities around the world are seeking smarter designs for transport systems as well as penalties and restrictions on car ownership. The number of people using trains for the daily journey in the UK has hit record highs. Aging population in the US, Japan and Europe drive far less and use buses and trains more than ever. At the same time, increased turmoil and low oil prices are crippling economic activity in some parts of the oil producing countries and Africa. Many state-sponsored fuel-price subsidies, which have been a key driver of oil demand in the developing world, are rapidly disappearing.

Over the past few years, the cost of producing renewable energy being wind power, solar or electric cars have fallen dramatically. They are now very promising than expected. China's commitment to an industrialization program pushing itself to be the world's major exporter of solar panels and advanced vehicles, including the production of five million electric vehicles a year, is another source of caution to those who forecast oil demand will rise exponentially forever.

Obviously none of this is for sure but the signs are there already. A lot could happen in the future and changes bound to occur. Future, changes in politics, economics and technology could easily alter the demand for oil. - Rasameel

BENEFITS OF CHEAP OIL WILL COME, BUT NOT SOON

WASHINGTON: With petroleum investment and the manufacturing sector sagging and the stock market in free fall, many Americans are wondering when they will begin to see the benefits of cheap oil. Crude oil prices have tumbled by 70 percent since mid-2014, dropping this year below \$30 a barrel, a price unimaginable as recently as 18 months ago, when they were at \$110 a barrel.

The technological breakthroughs of hydraulic fracturing or fracking have revolutionized the market for black gold, making the United States the world's leading petroleum exporter.

So why do things feel so bleak to many Americans? It may be just a question of timing, some economists say. "On a net basis, the decline of oil prices is or will be positive for the US economy," said Angel Ubide, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics. Because the negative impact is "faster and more concentrated in time," people are already feeling it, Ubide told AFP. "If we look at it in two or three years' time, we'll be able to conclude that the decline in oil prices on net was positive. But we need some time for that."

Steve Murphy of Capital Economics sounded a note of caution, however, saying much will depend on how long oil prices remain low. "The magnitude and duration of the slump in oil prices

has far exceeded what we originally expected, and the longer it persists, the harder it is to argue that decline will ever be a net positive for the US economy," he said.

"Lower prices should have boosted real economic growth in the US. Instead, the hit to domestic investment has been unrelenting, while households still haven't spent any of their savings."

US financial authorities, starting with Fed chair Janet Yellen, insist that lower gasoline prices should free consumers' purchasing power. Premium gas at the pump is now below \$2 a gallon on average (0.48 euros a liter), a seven-year low.

And yet few signs of impact on consumer spending seem to have materialized, even if the American consumer remains the locomotive of today's modest levels of US growth. Retail sales rose only 2.1 percent in 2015, according to official figures published Friday, down from a yearly average of 5.1 percent from 2010 to 2014. Murphy said Americans have saved \$115 billion thanks to cheap gas over the past 18 months, but rather than spending it, "Personal saving has increased by US\$120 billion, suggesting that households have saved every last dime from lower pump prices." —AFP



BAHRAH TRADING COMPANY WINS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FROM HINO

KUWAIT: Bahrah Trading Company (BTC), one of the Al-Sayer Group Holding Companies has won top honor at the Middle East and Africa Region HINO Service skill contest recently held at Hino Sharjah Training Center.

Scripting a remarkable achievement Jonathan Galvez Mariano, Specialist Technician - BTC Hino service won the Champion Award at the event. Hino Middle East Office and Training Centre, a branch of Hino Motors Ltd. Japan, has organized a regional skills contest at its center in Sharjah Airport International Free Zone, SAIF Zone. Apart from BTC Kuwait team the contest was participated in by various Hino distributors from UAE, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman and Qatar.

"This contest was to recognize the abilities of our technicians and to encourage continuous improvement in our after-sales service. This annual event is an initiative of Hino as part of our commitment to attain its ultimate goal of "Total Support", said Takeshi Yasuda, Senior General Manager of Hino Motors.

Top Training Put To Test, Best Of The Best Battle For Top Honors:

Crediting BTC on winning this award Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer, CEO Al-Sayer Group said "This achievement is all the more heartening and significant given the fact Bahrah is the youngest Hino dealership in the region, just about a year old, which amply demonstrate the resilience and adaptability of new products by Bahrah's technical cadre. The HINO Service Skills Contest is an important event for the brand's continued success. We aim to gain the best competitive advantage for sales and service and such world-class training and assessment is vital to the growth of our business"



Kenichi Sekine, Chief Representative of Hino Middle East Office and Hino Middle East Parts Depot in UAE lauded the achievement and heaped compliments on Joe; he also praised Bahrah Service' high level of comprehensive competency.

Hamza Melakandy GM and Krishna Raj Assistant Manager Hino Center Ahmadi were present at the venue of the contest which encouraged Joe aim higher with confidence.

"Joining us in 2007 as Technician, heavy equipment service, by dedication and sincere efforts rose steadily in the ranks, promoted to master technician, eventually to the position of Specialist Technician. His overall professional conduct and attitude has been exemplary" added Mr. Hamza Melakandy.

Reliable Service from BTC for World Leading Brand HINO: All HINO technicians receive skill training at HINO facility in Sharjah. BTC ensures availability of sufficient inventory at warehouse considering the Units in operation in

Kuwait are in place at the warehouse. Appropriate maintenance arrangements are also in place including special tools and diagnostic equipment and instruments to assist the service operations while BTC Ahmadi Center is the hub of Hino activities. Meanwhile Al Rai and Ardiyah facilities are fully equipped to extend all assistance to support the service and parts operations.

Hino has maintained a proven record as one of the world market leaders with representation and presence in GCC and Africa since 1960's with trucks for powerful driving performance, durability, and reliability featuring tomorrow's technology for today's environment.

For the year 2015, HINO marked record growth in Kuwait since BTC officially re-launched the brand in November 2014. Hino's recognition as the largest manufacturer of trucks and buses in Japan rightfully proves that the company's technicians are among the best.

ASIA WILL CONTINUE TO OUTPERFORM OTHER EMERGING REGIONS

By Jordi Rof

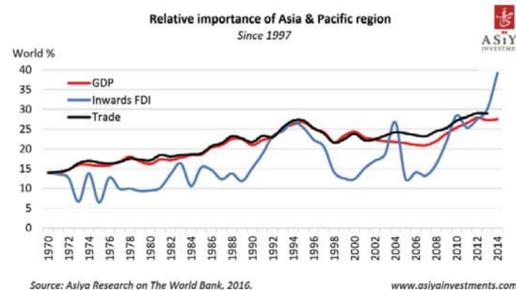
Asiya Capital Investments Company

KUWAIT: 2016 has started with a dramatic selloff in equities across the globe. The erratic performance of Chinese stock markets has been pointed at as one of the trigger of the global correction, and investors look with concern at emerging markets, including Asia. Indeed, the combination of diverging policy cycles in the United States and the rest of the world, declining oil prices, decelerating growth and policy fatigue constitutes a sobering context to invest, in which no asset or region seems attractive. In moments like this, it is useful to think long term, and resource to economic fundamentals. Historically, macroeconomic performance remains the best explanatory factor for investment returns. What are the global macro trends?

The weight of most regions in terms of GDP barely experienced any changes in the last 40 years. Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for 6% of GDP in 1970 versus 8% in 2014. Sub-Saharan Africa's contribution to global output remained steady at 2.2% in the same period. Middle East and North Africa (MENA) improved substantially, from 1.3 percent to 4.5 percent of global GDP, but mainly due to the rise of oil-exporting economies. Emerging Asia is the only undisputable story of successful development among developing economies. The region almost doubled its weight, from

almost 14 percent in the 1970s to 27.5 percent of global GDP in 2014, mostly at the expense of European and North American economies. The improvement was not only quantitative but qualitative, as GDP per capita at current prices improved from 4.9 percent to 17.3 percent measured as a percentage of the same measure in the United States.

What made Asia different? Research



Source: Asiya Research on The World Bank, 2016.

www.asiainvestments.com

suggested that circumstances such as the colonial legacy and institutional quality could have played a significant role. However, macroeconomic explanations stand out. For instance, from 1970 to 2010 East Asia registered substantially lower inflation rates than most other developing regions. Fiscal prudence created an ample fiscal space which allowed the implementation of counter-cyclical stabilizing fiscal policies. In fact, in the region, debt to GDP

ratios remained below 50 percent, and primary deficits under 2 percent, in the last 15 years. Foreign investment flocked in, averaging over 3 percent of GDP in the 1990-2010 period. Investment levels are even more striking, as they remained consistently above 30 percent of GDP since the 70s and above 40 percent in the last five years.

Back in the 1960s, Latin America

was the most promising region, but it did not live up to the expectations. From 1980 to 2014 real GDP growth averaged 2.9 percent, less than half of Asia's (7.4 percent), and significantly more volatile. Inflation was higher, and investment lower averaging about 21 percent of GDP from 1970 to 2014. Other factors such as financial instability -27 banking crises between 1980 and 2000- and lower trade levels -62 percent of GDP in Asia vs. 50 percent in

Latin America- also contributed to the weak performance. Trade is not only less prominent in Latin America than in Asia, but exports are more commodity based. Low sophistication of exports in the region is also shown by the percentage of high-tech exports over merchandise exports, 10 percent in 2014, compared to 25 percent in Emerging Asia.

A combination of appropriate fiscal and monetary frameworks, effective industrial policies, which targeted sectors with high value added, and high levels of investment made the Asian awakening possible. The foundations of these fast, stable and sustainable development remain unchanged so far. Capital formation (41 percent of GDP), trade levels (63 percent of GDP) remained high compared to other emerging regions in 2014. A high real GDP growth (6.8 percent) in a context of low inflation in 2014 (2.7 percent) are still contributing to attract large amounts of inward investment. In 2014 the region received a record 40 percent of global investment. Moreover, the latest slump in commodity prices could have positive implications for the region, while hurting other emerging commodity-exporting economies in South America, Africa or the Middle East. In spite of the deceleration that the region is experiencing, economic fundamentals remain strong in Asia, and the region is expected to keep outperforming other emerging economies.

NEW NIKON D5 BRINGS SHEER IMAGING POWER TO THE HANDS OF PHOTOGRAPHERS

MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA: The next-generation flagship model that expands photographic possibilities for professional photographers, the Nikon D5, is announced by Nikon Middle East FZE today. This latest Nikon-FX format DSLR camera is developed with advanced specifications that include significantly improved moving subject acquisition capabilities, and compelling image quality at high sensitivities to enable excellent response to a wide variety of scenes and subjects.

"We understand the importance of a millisecond when it comes to capturing a remarkable competitive sporting moment or the intensity of a ground-breaking news piece. The camera companion has to outperform the expectations by delivering a potent fusion of extensive image capturing power alongside a detailed and immediate acquisition performance, regardless of the environment," said Takashi Yoshida, Managing Director, Nikon Middle East FZE. "Following this train of thought, Nikon presents the new FX-format flagship DSLR, the Nikon D5. Engineered with all of the mentioned, and housed in a camera body of exceptional reliability and operability, the D5 is a professional's formidable photography partner. Nikon D5, I am vision outperformed."

Photographers on the beat, needing to keep up with the constant change of pace of a subject under a variety of conditions, will enjoy the new 153-point autofocus (AF) system and a stable viewfinder image that makes tracking moving subjects easy, even with high-speed continuous shooting at approximately 12 fps*1. Visual aesthetics are heightened with the collaboration of a new Nikon FX-format CMOS sensor and a new EXPEED 5 image-processing engine, both developed by Nikon, producing the highest standard ISO sensitivity in Nikon history with up to an ISO of 102400. This helps to expand photographic possibilities by liberating photographers from lighting restrictions, not only with the capture of still photos, but also with recordings of 4K UHD (3840 x 2160) movies, the latter being a new feature introduced with the D5.

Workflow is notably amplified in time and function, as more new, improved features and functions are introduced with the 20.8-megapixel D5. A high-resolution touch screen LCD monitor, fast communications with both wired networks via built-in Ethernet connector and wireless networks*2, alongside double memory card slots*3 make for a highly efficient workflow.

Contributing to greater autofocus (AF), auto exposure (AE) and auto white balance (AWB), is the incorporation of a new 180K-pixel RGB sensor for the Advanced Scene Recognition System. The winning combination of these features and functions comes fitted with a design that consumes less power and adoption of a highly precise and durable shutter, while increasing camera reliability in terms of control precision, strength and durability. The D5 also supports the new Nikon Creative Lighting System functions, Radio-controlled Advanced Wireless Lighting (AWL) and Unified Flash Control.

D5 Primary Features

1. Swift response, astounding tracking
* New AF system that demonstrates excellent response to moving subjects and tracking performance, even under a variety of circumstances: Pivotal moments happen in the blink of an eye, and photographers are constantly on their toes to capture the action regardless of the lighting conditions. These needs are addressed with a



complete overhaul of the D5's AF system with an adoption of the Multi-CAM 20K autofocus sensor module. The AF sensor module offers 153 focus points, 99 of which are cross-type sensors, for broad and dense coverage of the image area. The centre focus point has a detection range beginning at an incredible 74 EV, and detection with other focus points begins at 73 EV*5, enabling autofocus even under extremely dim lighting, and with subjects exhibiting very low contrast. In addition, equipping the camera with a dedicated AF engine capable of high-speed calculation and collaboration with the 180K-pixel RGB sensor have ensured that extremely reliable AF performance is demonstrated with a variety of scenes.

Incessant clicks without missing a beat

High-speed continuous shooting at approximately 12 fps with a stable viewfinder image that makes tracking moving subjects easy: Photographers will find their new photography companion being capable of approximately 12 fps*1 continuous shooting with AF and AE tracking in all image quality modes, and across all ISO sensitivity settings. The addition of a new mirror drive mechanism achieves a more stable viewfinder image that makes constant tracking of rapidly moving subjects easy. Matching to the pace is the accessibility of capturing up to 200*6 12-bit lossless compressed RAW images with a single burst.

Expressions unbound with bold image storytelling

Higher standard ISO sensitivities that ensure superior image quality within the most frequently used high sensitivity range: The potent combination between the new Nikon FX-format CMOS sensor and the new EXPEED 5 image-processing engine have enabled the highest standard ISO sensitivity in Nikon history of up to ISO 102400. High-sensitivity image quality at these never-before-seen levels achieves superior imaging quality, even within the high ISO 3200 to 12800 range that is often used with sports photography and the likes. In addition, the image sensor's broad dynamic range enables rich and natural expression of tones for accurate reproduction of the finest details, even extremely vivid subjects with difficult texture expressions.

Taking the director's seat in ultra high definition

Cinematic brilliance with 4K UHD (30p)

movie capability: The D5 supports 4K movies, which offers higher resolution than HD or Full-HD movies, capable of recording 4K UHD (3840 x 2160)/30p, 25p, 24p movies to a memory card inserted in the camera. Alternatively with a simultaneous HDMI output, movies can also be displayed on an external monitor or recorded as uncompressed video to an external recorder. With the maximum standard sensitivity of ISO 102400, as well as even higher sensitivity settings up to Hi 5 (equivalent to ISO 3280000), superior picture quality is still assured even when recording movies at these high sensitivities. Rounding off the spectacular movie-making experience is

the capability to generate 4K UHD time-lapse movies in-camera.

Advanced specifications for on-site demands, efficient workflow

A high-resolution 3.2-inch, approximately 2,359k-dot touch screen LCD monitor: Adoption of a touch screen for the display monitor enables nimble confirmation and high-speed navigation of a large number of images using a frame advance bar, and supports an efficient workflow with text input and the like. The high-resolution monitor enables extremely clear display with live view photography, even when the display is enlarged, for fast focus confirmation.

Greatly increased communications performance with both wired and wireless networks: The communications system has been significantly improved to support communications at least twice as fast as with the D4S, with both wired networks using the Ethernet connector built into the D5, and wireless networks when the new Wireless Transmitter WT6 (available separately) is used with the D5.

Versatile image storage options: Two versions of the D5 are available. Both are equipped with double memory card slots supporting a single media type, one being for XQD cards and the other for CompactFlash cards.

Bridging the gap of networks

The Wireless Transmitter WT-6, available separately, comes handy for high-speed wireless network communications: When connected to the D5, high-speed transfer of image data to a computer*7 or an FTP server over a wireless network is possible

with a maximum range of approximately 200 m*8. Communications are significantly faster with support for the new IEEE 802.11ac (202 VHT80) standard. Wireless control over the camera from a computer is also possible using Camera Control Pro 2 (available separately). With the WT-6 connected to a D5, the combination also serves as a wireless LAN access point, enabling possibilities of direct connection to a computer or smartphone.



1- Possible in Continuous high speed (CH) release mode with shutter speeds of 1/250 seconds or faster

2- When used with the Wireless Transmitter WT-6 (available separately)

3- The camera is available in two versions, one that uses two XQD cards and one that uses two CompactFlash cards

4- When used with the Speedlight SB-5000 (available separately)

5- At ISO 100, 20°C/68°F

6- When Lexar Professional 29330 XQD 2.0 memory cards are used

7- The Wireless Transmitter Utility (available for download from Nikon's website) must be installed on the computer

8- With a large antenna at the wireless LAN access point. Range varies with signal strength and presence or absence of obstacles.

SEEING MACHINES TECHNOLOGY IN DEMAND FROM CRASH-PROOF CAR MAKERS

NEW YORK: The first public pictures of Seeing Machines' display prototype of technology developed with Samsung. Icons are activated with the driver's eyes. Photo: Supplied

In future, cars will be watching their drivers more closely than any police highway patrol officer.



Cars will have a safety brain that can look at their driver's eyes and assess their ability to handle whatever is happening outside of the moving vehicle.

Crash-proof cars coming closer to production will integrate technology conceived at the ANU, Canberra, and now commercialised throughout the world by the spin-off company Seeing Machines. Seeing Machines uses smart cameras

and algorithms to track drivers' face, eyes and eyelids to monitor their attention and alertness levels in real time.

Seeing Machines chief executive Ken Kroeger says the company has 160 people, including 23 engineers, working on crash-proof car technology, and cannot meet all the requests from car manufacturers.

what is happening outside the car, and smart enough to know what the driver is capable of doing through all sorts of technologies."

Seeing Machines is working with Samsung converting a windscreen into a transparent television screen. The road scene in the picture is from another television in front of the car.

Still five or six years away from production, the technology will enable drivers to operate icons on the screen with their eyes, to access a phone and contacts and other devices.

Seeing Machines' technology is being integrated with other innovations in a central safety brain in the car of the future. Mr Kroeger says it is this integration into newly available, advanced driver assistance systems that will make a difference.

"Imagine a world where your car knows how able, or available, you are to properly operate your vehicle, and automatically compensates by seamlessly taking away and handing back control to you on a continual basis, without you even knowing that it's happening," he said.

Mr Kroeger hopes that within the next five years the Australasian New Car Assessment Program's safety rating and the Australian Government will consider mandating crash-proof technology, as is happening now in Europe.

He expects technology will become crucial in future in allowing older drivers to continue to drive into old age. "Now my mother should not be driving, but in three years time I won't be so worried about her driving," he said.

BUILD A BETTER WEATHER NETWORK? NEW YORK TAKES THE DARE

ALBANY: Counting every raindrop or measuring every gust of wind is impossible, but New York is getting closer with a uniquely extensive statewide system of automated weather stations that should paint a dramatically clearer picture of developing storms.

Described as the new "gold standard" of automated systems, the long-planned network of 125 weather stations stretching from the shores of Lake Erie to the tip of Long Island is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Fourteen stations are already transmitting temperature, pressure and other data every five minutes. When all the stations are operating, forecasters, emergency officials and ordinary weather wonks will be able to get a fine-grained look - a million data points a day - that will hopefully lead to better predictions.

"That's the problem with the current network. There are serious gaps and so you can't see enough of the weather as it's evolving," said Chris Thorncroft, chairman of the University at Albany's atmospheric and environmental sciences department.

Thorncroft is helping lead the development of the New York State Mesonet, which is being funded with a \$23.6 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The new system will augment the 27 stations now used by federal forecasters.

People in New York will never be more than 25 miles from a station. The new system will also take in types of data that the current stations do not, such as soil temperature and

moisture, and solar radiation. Each site even transmits pictures every five minutes.

Select data from the working stations is already being posted to the Web.

Slightly more than half the states have some kind of network of stations augmenting those the federal government relies on. But the dense and sophisticated network being built in New York will surpass the sophistication of the current "gold standard" system in Oklahoma, according to Curtis Marshall, the National Mesonet program manager.

Oklahoma Mesonet manager Chris Fiebrich said that state's 120-station network, which dates to the early '90s, provided crucial information for public safety officials and meteorologists last year, the wettest in Oklahoma's history.

"Every season, at least, the Mesonet proves its value in just recording incredibly extreme weather," Fiebrich said.

Discussions about a New York Mesonet began in earnest after the Catskills were deluged by the remnants of Hurricane Irene in 2011, Thorncroft said. Record-setting rain had fallen in areas without a gauge, leading to delayed information, he said. A year later, Superstorm Sandy sent a surge into the New York City area and killed 53 people in the state.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has been promoting the weather detection system since 2014, though not always in a welcoming way. The governor mentioned the coming forecast improvements that November as the Buffalo area dug out from a jaw-dropping 7 feet of

snow. His claim that the weather service was "off" in its own snow forecast turned out to be fighting words to meteorologists who had spent days warning about a major storm.

Actually, the National Weather Service will take the data into their own system and use it for their own forecasts. Raymond O'Keefe, meteorologist-in-charge at the service's Albany bureau, said forecasters have already used data from the existing stations to check on whether local ground was frozen before a recent soaking rain as a way to forecast runoff. The attraction to O'Keefe is simple: more data going into models, better data coming out.

"Better observations, better predictions, better forecasts, better warnings," he said.

Utilities and other businesses wanting the data sent to them will pay a fee. New York's Mesonet is temporarily housed in a sub-basement at the University at Albany until newer space is ready elsewhere around the campus. The automated stations will look pretty much the same, with 30-foot metal towers topped by wind sensors. Most are being built in open fields, though five New York City stations will be on rooftops. Some of the stations, mostly in the Adirondack Mountains and the adjacent Tug Hill Plateau, will measure snowfall.

Significantly, 17 stations will be able to measure conditions in the atmosphere miles above, a job done now on a much more limited basis now by weather balloons. Marshall, at the National Weather Service, said such "vertical profiling" is done in some other areas, but not in the systematic way New York is deploy-



ALBANY: In this Monday, Jan. 11, 2016 photo, Professor Chris Thorncroft, chairman of the Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences Department at the University at Albany and co-principal investigator for the New York State Mesonet, poses in the Mesonet operations center at the university in Albany, N.Y. Described as the new "gold standard" of automated systems, the long-planned network of 125 weather stations stretching from the shores of Lake Erie to the tip of Long Island is expected to be completed by the end of the year. Thorncroft is helping lead the development of the New York State Mesonet, which is being funded with a \$23.6 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. — AP

ing them. Thorncroft called the array of profilers a "game changer," since they will provide much more real-time information about three-

dimensional aspects of the atmosphere. "Knowing what's happening now will allow you to say something intelligent about the next few hours," he said. — AP

PREGNANT WOMEN TOLD TO AVOID COUNTRIES WITH ZIKA OUTBREAKS

NEW YORK: Pregnant women should avoid traveling to Latin America and Caribbean countries that have outbreaks of a tropical illness linked to birth defects, health officials said Friday. The illness is caused by the Zika virus which is spread through mosquito bites.

It causes only a mild illness in most people. But it's been spreading around the world, and there's mounting evidence linking it to a terrible birth defect, especially in Brazil. Late Friday, US health officials said pregnant women should consider postponing trips to 14 destina-

tions - Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Martinique, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, Suriname and Venezuela.

They also advised women who are trying to get pregnant or thinking of getting pregnant to talk to their doctor before traveling to those areas, and to take extra precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

What is Zika?

Zika (ZEE'-ka) is the name of a virus discovered in a monkey in the Zika forest of Uganda in 1947. It is native to tropical Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. But infections have exploded recently in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is spread through bites from the same kind of mosquitoes that can spread other tropical diseases, like chikungunya and dengue fever.

What are the symptoms?

Experts think that only about 1 in 5 people who are infected with the Zika virus develop any symptoms. For those that do, Zika illness usually involves fever, rash, joint pain, and red eyes - which usually last no more than a week. There is no medicine or vaccine for it. Hospitalizations are rare, and deaths

from Zika have not been reported.

Why is it a concern now?

Two reasons. First, there's been growing evidence linking Zika infection in pregnant women to a rare condition called microcephaly, in which the head is smaller than normal and the brain has not developed properly. US health officials are heading to Brazil, where there's been a recent spike in the birth defect, to further study the actual risk to pregnant women. More than 3,500 cases have been reported in Brazil since October.

Second, the threat seems to be moving closer. Infections are occurring in our southern neighbor, Mexico, and the kind of mosquitoes that can carry the virus are found along the southern United States, too. Experts think it's likely the pests may end up spreading the virus here, though probably on a smaller scale than what's been seen in the tropics.

Have there been cases in the US?

At least 26 Americans have been diagnosed with Zika since 2007, all of them travelers who are believed to have caught it overseas. In addition, a person in Puerto Rico who had not traveled was diagnosed with the illness last month.

What's the advice?

Last month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advised US travelers to take protection themselves against mosquito bites if they visit places in Latin America or the Caribbean where Zika has been spreading. The advice includes wearing long sleeves and long pants and using insect repellent. On Friday, the CDC came out with an alert asking pregnant women - at any stage of pregnancy - to postpone travel to 14 destinations in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In Brazil, most of the mothers who had babies with the condition - called microcephaly - were apparently infected during the first trimester, but there is some evidence the birth defect can occur later in the pregnancy, said the CDC's Dr Cynthia Moore.

Another CDC official, Dr Lyle Petersen, said the virus seems to remain in the blood only about a week or two. Why hasn't a link between Zika and the birth defect been noted earlier? Previous outbreaks were much smaller, and the problem may have occurred less often - and so was harder to recognize, he said. There's another travel alert for pregnant women already in place, discouraging travel to areas where malaria is spreading. —AP



NEW YORK: This 2003 photo provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows a female *Aedes albopictus* mosquito acquiring a blood meal from a human host. —AP

SIERRA LEONE PUTS OVER 100 PEOPLE IN QUARANTINE AFTER NEW EBOLA DEATH

FREETOWN: Sierra Leone's government on Saturday urged the public not to panic as it announced that more than 100 people had been quarantined following a new death from Ebola just as the country seemed to have overcome the epidemic. The World Health Organization on Friday confirmed

that a 22-year-old woman who died after falling ill near the Guinean border last week had tested positive for the tropical fever. The announcement came a day after West Africa was celebrating the end of the outbreak after Liberia became the last of the three worst-hit countries in the region to be declared Ebola-

free. Sierra Leone had received the all-clear last November, and Guinea in December.

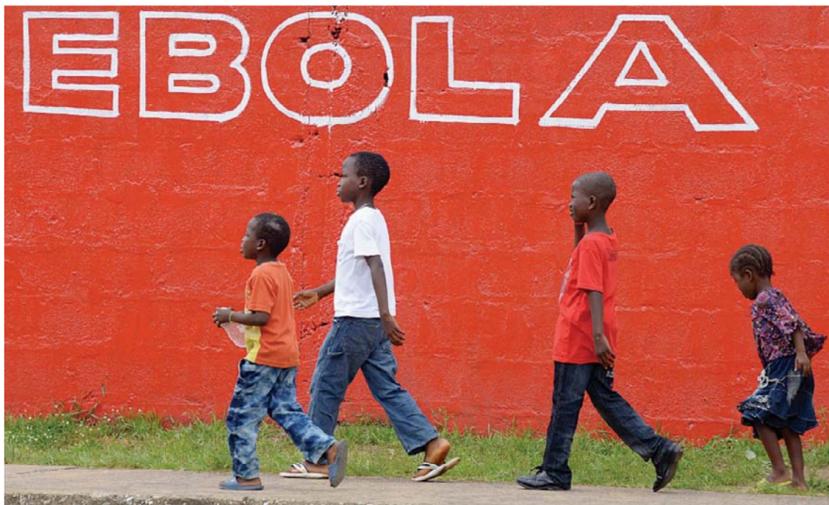
Health officials in Freetown said they had placed a total of 109 people who had been in contact with the student before her death in isolation. Of those, 28 were considered "high risk" and three contacts had

yet to be located, Ishmael Tarawally, the national coordinator of the Office of National Security, said at a press conference.

"We are worried and concerned about this new development but call on the general public not to panic and more than ever before, all Sierra Leoneans must work together to prevent further infection," he said.

The woman died in the northern Magburaka township in the district of Tonkolili but Tarawally said "active case investigations" were ongoing in all the districts where the victim was known to have recently travelled. Those include the districts of Kambia, Port Loko, Bombali and Freetown. "The source of infection and route of transmission is being investigated and the government urges all Sierra Leoneans to continue being vigilant," Tarawally added. The country's chief medical officer, Dr Brima Kargbo, said that when the woman arrived at Magburaka Government Hospital she showed "no signs or symptoms that fitted the case definition of Ebola".

"She had no fever or redness of the eyes when she was examined at the outpatient ward. What was detected was dizziness. We are now going to revisit the Ebola case definition," he added. The Ebola outbreak, which began in Guinea in December 2013, killed more than 11,000 people and was the deadliest outbreak of the virus yet. —AFP



MONROVIA: This file photo taken on August 31, 2014 showing children walk past a slogan painted on a wall reading "Ebola". —AFP

HAWAII REPORTS FIRST US CASE OF ZIKA-LINKED BRAIN DAMAGE

WASHINGTON: The United States has reported its first case of a newborn suffering from brain damage linked to the mosquito-borne Zika virus that has caused birth defects in Latin America. The baby, born in a hospital in Oahu, suffers from microcephaly, a rare condition that means its brain and skull are abnormally small, the Hawaiian state health department said late Friday. The mother was probably infected with the virus early in her pregnancy while living in Brazil in May 2015 and transmitted it to the fetus, the health department said. It added that neither mother nor child is still infected and that there is no danger to anyone in Hawaii. There is no vaccine to prevent the disease. The Zika virus, which

can impair normal intellectual development in newborns, has affected several thousand babies in Brazil in recent months.

The case in Hawaii was confirmed by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "We are saddened by the events that have affected this mother and her newborn," said Sarah Park, a Hawaiian state epidemiologist. She said it underscored the warning issued Friday by the CDC for pregnant women to avoid traveling to regions or countries where Zika has been found. Most are in Latin America, including Brazil, and the Caribbean. The Zika virus, which is transmitted by mosquitos, cannot spread between humans. It often produces flu-like symptoms

(fever, headaches and joint pain) as well as skin rashes and conjunctivitis. Those symptoms appear within three to 12 days of the mosquito bite.

In 80 percent of cases, the infection goes unnoticed, and it is very rarely fatal. In Brazil, more than 3,500 cases of microcephaly were recorded between October and January, just as the Zika epidemic was spreading. Tests indicated that in at least four cases, the fetus developed the malformation during pregnancy because of the virus, the CDC said. It said that 26 cases of Zika infection have been diagnosed in the United States since 2007 among people who contracted the disease outside the country. —AFP

MAN DIES AFTER BEING LEFT BRAIN-DEAD IN FRENCH DRUG TRIAL

RENNES: A man who was left brain-dead after suffering serious side-effects during a drugs trial in France died yesterday, according to the hospital which had been treating him. Five other volunteers hospitalized a week ago when the drugs trial went wrong were "in a stable condition", the hospital in the western city of Rennes said in a statement. The private laboratory Biotrial was testing a new pain and mood disorder medication for Portuguese pharmaceutical company Bial on humans for the first time, in what is known as a Phase I trial, to test the drug's safety.

A total of 108 volunteers took part in the trial, 90 of whom received the drug at varying doses while the rest were given placebos. The six men who were hospitalized were the group which received the highest dose. Pierre-Gilles Edan, head of the neurology department at the Rennes hospital said Friday that three of the men were suffering a "handicap that could be irreversible" and another also had neurological problems. The sixth volunteer had no symptoms but was being monitored.

"The 84 other volunteers exposed to



RENNES: In this file photo French Health Minister Marisol Touraine, left, and Professor Gilles Edan, the chief neuroscientist at Rennes Hospital, address the media during a press conference held in Rennes, western France. —AP

the drug" have been contacted, said the hospital. Ten of them came in to be examined and did not have the "anomalies" seen in the hospitalized patients. The incident is the worst of its kind ever to have taken place in France, which has launched three separate probes to determine whether the tragedy was caused by an error in the trial's procedures or in the sub-

stance tested. Bial is cooperating with the investigation and vows it followed "international best practice" in developing the drug. "Our principal concern, at the moment, is taking care of participants in the trial," Bial said in a statement on Friday.

Damaged for life

Such serious mishaps are rare during

the development of a drug, which begins in the laboratory before being animal tested and then three phases of human trials before it can be brought to market. France's public body ONIAM, which is responsible for compensating the victims of medical accidents, said it had in its files only around 10 cases of accidents during drugs trials over the past 15 years, and "with consequences infinitely less serious" than the case in Rennes.

Although a rarity, there have been precedents in other countries. A comparable accident took place in 2006 in London when six people taking German drug manufacturer TeGenero's TGN1412, which it was developing to treat certain types of cancer and other immunological diseases, fell seriously ill, with one suffering from multiple organ failure. Two of the volunteers were in a critical condition and one lost all his fingers and toes. The victims said they had the impression that their brains were on fire and that their eyes were coming out of their sockets. Although they all survived, experts said at the time that their immune systems would be damaged for life. —AFP



MINNEAPOLIS: In this Jan 14, 2016 photo, Dr John Hick, a Hennepin County Medical Center emergency physician and a national expert in disaster planning, demonstrates preparation of an injection at the Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis. —AP

STATES HONE HEALTH CRISIS PLANS TO ACTIVATE IN CATASTROPHES

ST PAUL, Minnesota: The scenarios are grim: A pandemic influenza swamps the availability of hospital ventilators. A chemical spill exhausts antidote supplies and decontamination abilities. A terror attack overwhelms ambulances and trauma centers. A big earthquake, wildfire or hurricane throws emergency rooms into crisis. At the prodding of the federal government, state health departments nationwide are hurrying to complete "Crisis Standards of Care" plans to guide medical professionals in such catastrophes and determine what should trigger them. It's no easy task: Plan architects must navigate the ethical and legal minefields that would arise if there are more patients than providers at hospitals, clinics and other medical settings are set up to handle in usual fashion.

"When they are facing these decisions the last thing you want to do is make it up as you go along," said Dr John Hick, an emergency physician at Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis and a national expert in disaster planning. "Don't leave this on the shoulders of the caregiver at the bedside." Major emergency response planning isn't new, but this process is focused on catastrophic events that would go beyond the ability of individual hospital systems to manage. The Ebola outbreak that killed thousands in Africa and put about a dozen patients in US hospitals focused new attention on the wider health system's readiness to handle something so dramatic. Closer to home, the examples used are Hurricane Katrina and the deadly 2011 tornado in Joplin, Missouri.

Hospital admission

Once a disaster like those imagined by the planners is designated a crisis by a state official or a panel, care would shift from focusing on individual patients to sharing "limited resources" so that there are "best possible health outcomes for the population as a whole," as described by the Institute of Medicine, a national advisory body. That could mean people without acute conditions are denied hospital admission, scarce antiviral medicine is distributed more selectively, medical equipment is substituted with other devices and people judged unlikely to survive don't get typical interventions.

Such trade-offs are unimaginable to some in modern medicine, according to Judy Marchetti, an emergency preparedness manager helping write the Minnesota Department of Health's plan. "Five people need a ventilator and you have one venti-

lator, do you reallocate it or is it first-come, first-serve?" Marchetti said. But some doctors consider the conversation misguided, find the terminology about differing standards worrisome and chafe at the idea that physicians would need special instructions to handle calamities the right way.

Dr Carl Schultz, director of the Center for Disaster Medical Services at the University of California at Irvine, sees it as a move to shield providers from liability for actions during disasters - even if the prospect of being successfully sued is small. "Bad medical care is worse than no medical care at all," Schultz said, adding, "Even disaster victims can be mismanaged. Just because it is a disaster does not mean you throw out any responsibility." At the request of federal agencies, the Institute of Medicine developed a framework to guide states in making their plans. Federal money tied to the effort sets a mid-2017 deadline for completion.

Possible update

Arizona completed its 148-page plan in February. Andrew Lawless, who led the project for the Department of Health Services, said it was tough to create a plan that meshes with ones that hospitals and emergency managers already have in place for care surges. Lawless' team held an exercise in May to hunt for gaps that might be addressed in a possible update. "We asked our stakeholders to come in and try to kick holes in the plan," Lawless said. Other states aren't even at that point. Minnesota's health agency expects to hire a special facilitator soon and wants to have a version by December.

Texas got going in June 2013 and originally set a Jan 31 deadline, but that won't be met. The Department of State Health Services is examining "the best way to move forward considering the size, scope and diversity of the state," said spokeswoman Christine Mann. Kentucky also has slowed its planning, citing in part a drop-off in 2014 in federal funding for the project. "We recognize the importance of Crisis Standards of Care plans in a health emergency," said Dr Kraig Humbaugh, senior deputy commissioner at the Department of Public Health. Until a statewide plan comes together, he said the agency "has developed a template that hospitals can use to formulate their own plans." Hick said the public should be comforted that discussions of worst-case scenarios are occurring. But, he acknowledged, "it's time-consuming planning for an event that may not happen." —AP

DOG BLESS YOU: PETS HEAD TO CHURCH IN SPAIN

MADRID: Dogs, cats, rabbits and even iguanas, many decked out in colorful sweaters to keep warm, trooped into Spanish churches yesterday for a blessing on the Day of Saint Anthony, patron saint of animals. Pet-owners lined up around the block of the Church of San Anton in central Madrid to wait for a priest who stood at the entrance of the building to sprinkle holy water on their animals. "For those of us who are believers we believe it provides health and well-being to the animal as well as their owner," said 40-year-old waiter Francisco Javier Carvajal Aceves as he waited in line with his 13-month-old Chihuahua Lula cradled in his arms.

"Animals also are beings created by God and deserve to be blessed," he added as other dogs wait-

ing with their owners barked in the background. Aceves said he has come to the church every year to have his pets blessed since he moved to Madrid from Mexico 16 years ago. He dressed his dog in a red and white sweater, while other pet-owners brought their dogs in brightly-colored coats or with bows in their fur. One woman brought a grey rabbit inside a red gym bag to be blessed, an elderly man cradled a white dove in his hand and a young man took an iguana in a shoebox.

Blanca, a 54-year-old decorator, waited for half an hour for her turn to have her Labrador Retriever blessed by a priest. "You always have to wait because a lot of people in Madrid have pets and everyone wants to come to have them blessed," she said. —AP

KUWAITI MOHAMMAD AL-KHALAF DISCOVERS A NEW STUDY

KUWAIT: A new study from the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute and University of Ottawa, at the Dr Megeny Regenerative Medicine program laboratory, recently published at Nature Cell Discovery 2016, uncovers a fascinating link between the process of muscle generation and DNA damage repair within newly developing cells.

Lead author of the study, Kuwaiti PhD candidate Mohammad Al-Khalaf, describes the results as "exciting link between two independently well

researched areas of molecular biology, one being Stem Cell Differentiation and the other is DNA Damage Response". The study uncovers the role of X-ray cross-complementing protein 1 (XRCC1) in early myoblast differentiation. There is a need to coordinate repair of DNA breaks with genes involved in the process of transforming muscle progenitor cells into mature myofibers, and XRCC1 is shown to be the protein responsible for repairing these DNA breaks. Al-Khalaf says "we are one step closer to understanding the integral processes

needed to allow cells to transform from stem-like states, into mature differentiated cells". The ultimate goal of this research has tremendous potential in the emerging health field of Regenerative Medicine.

The role of XRCC1, the study shows, is limited to a short window during early differentiation of the progenitor cells. When the researchers inhibited or completely deleted the XRCC1 gene, they were able to halt the fusion of individual muscle cells to form the long muscle fibers that make up the structure of adult muscle

tissue. The Megeny group has long been interested in uncovering the molecular pathways responsible for muscle development. Now moving forward, they are looking into discovering all the potential genes being targeted for repair and activation during early muscle differentiation. Al-Khalaf concludes by saying "The nature of science is that we can only move one step at a time, we can't skip over or take shortcuts. We have to be Patient and we have to let the data guide us in whatever direction it leads. Learning to be patient might be

the most important lesson I had during my years in university and in the lab!"

Original journal article reference:

Mohammad H Al-Khalaf, Leanne E Blake, Brian D Larsen, Ryan A Bell, Steve Brunette, Robin J Parks, Michael A Rudnicki, Peter J McKinnon, F Jeffrey Dilworth, and Lynn A Megeny. Temporal activation of XRCC1-mediated DNA repair is essential for muscle differentiation. Cell Discovery, 2016. DOI: 10.1038/celldisc.2015.41 <http://www.Nature.com/articles/celldisc201541>



Mohammad Al-Khalaf



WASHINGTON: Smithsonian's youngest giant panda cub Bei Bei makes his public debut following his birth last August at the National Zoo. —AFP photos



WASHINGTON: Two years old Watson Grace from Durham, NC chooses one of the Panda hats at a store.

WASHINGTONIANS, MEET BEI BEI THE GIANT PANDA

WASHINGTON: Washingtonians got their first close-up look Saturday at the giant panda cub Bei Bei, the new star of the National Zoo. Until now, the cub could be viewed only through the so-called Panda Cam, a video hookup that has allowed people to watch the now five-month-old cub since its birth. A line formed outside the panda enclosure Saturday morning before opening time to get a look at the ball of fur inside its sound-proof glass enclosed pen.

Some wore hats, sweaters and gloves with pandas on them. Visitors came into the pen in groups of 50 at a time and were allowed about 10 minutes to view the panda, an endangered species. Upon leaving, some got right back in line to see Bei Bei again. His keepers had

worked to get him used to people by having zoo employees and reporters stop by to see him. The official media debut was a month ago. Bei Bei has already been fussed over by two first ladies-Michelle Obama and her Chinese counterpart Peng Liyuan-during a state visit to Washington in September.

Bei Bei means precious in Mandarin. Like his big sister Bao Bao and their older sibling Tai Shuan, Bei Bei will be handed over to China at age four. (Bei Bei's twin brother died shortly after birth.) Their parents, Mei Xian and Tian Tian, are on loan from China and will remain in Washington at least until 2020 under a recently renewed agreement. Under that accord, the zoo pays \$500,000 a year to support conservation efforts in China.—AFP

WHEN TO STOP MAMMOGRAMS TRICKY ISSUE AS US AGES

WASHINGTON: Lost in the arguing over whether women should begin mammograms at age 40 or 50 or somewhere in between is the issue they'll all eventually face: when to stop. "There's a point at which everybody begins to scratch their head and say how much longer do you have to keep doing this?" said American Cancer Society specialist Robert Smith. It's an increasingly complex balancing act as older women are living even longer. The risk of breast cancer rises with age. But so do the odds of other serious illnesses that may be more likely to kill in a senior's remaining life span - or to make them less able to withstand the rigors of cancer treatment.

"If we pick up a cancer in someone who's 75 and they die at 76 of something else, did it really matter? That's really the question here," said Dr Susan Boolbol, breast surgery chief at Mount Sinai Beth Israel Medical Center in New York. Medical guidelines don't agree. The cancer society's advice: Women should continue mammograms as long as their overall health is good and they have a life expectancy of at least 10 more years. Last week, guidelines issued by the US Preventive Services Task Force said there's not enough evidence to recommend for or against mammograms at age 75 and older, because that age group just hasn't been studied enough to tell.

Start discussing

Getting such evidence is "critical, given the graying of America," said Dr Jeanne Mandelblatt, an expert on cancer and aging at Georgetown University. Indeed, some in the 80-and-beyond crowd are as spry as 60-somethings. "People are taking better care of themselves," said Yale University pathologist Dr Fattaneh Tavassoli. "If we don't start discussing it, it's going to be more difficult to come up with management approaches for these patients." She recently reported that Yale's medical center is diagnosing more breast cancer at 90 and older, averaging about eight diagnoses a year since 2000, compared with one a year during the 1990s. Many were diagnosed after the woman or doctor detected an abnormality, not from routine mammograms, Tavassoli said. But she's asked if other hospitals see a similar trend and also wants to study what treatment they underwent.

Marion Jones was 84 and active when a mammogram spotted breast cancer. Surgeons removed a small tumor but during follow-up chemotherapy Jones developed pneumonia and blood clots. She needed a portable oxygen tank for a year until her lungs healed. For Jones, mammograms were "just a habit" that she didn't question when a new doctor said she was due, and she's grateful her cancer was

mammogram within two years, compared with 41 percent of the 85-plus group, according to 2013 government figures.

Mammograms bring pros and cons for the oldest women like they do for middle-aged ones, the possibility of reducing breast cancer death versus false alarms, unneeded biopsies and detection of a tumor so small or slow-growing that it never would have posed a threat.



SILVER SPRING, Maryland: Marion Jones, who was treated for breast cancer, poses for picture beside her painting "Street in Provence" at her house in Silver Spring, Md. —AP

detected. But now 86 and healthy again, the Silver Spring, Maryland, woman recently told her oncologist that if her cancer ever returns, she doesn't want chemo.

Analyze that balance

"She said, 'Marion, at your age you probably won't die of breast cancer anyway. It'll be something else,'" Jones recalled. "That's nice to hear." About 26 percent of breast cancer deaths each year are attributed to a diagnosis after age 74, according to the American Cancer Society. "The question we have not really studied very carefully is what fraction of those deaths is truly avoidable," Smith said. Mammography does decline as women get older. About three-quarters of women age 50 to 74 have had a

Georgetown's Mandelblatt used math models to analyze that balance, and estimated that healthy older women could benefit from regular screening through age 78 or 80. But among women who already had other moderate to severe illnesses, the harms of screening could outweigh benefits as early as 68, she said.

If cancer is found in the frail, Mount Sinai's Boolbol notes there are less aggressive options that aim to stop a tumor's growth rather than eradicate it. She wants doctors and patients to have frank discussions about the woman's overall health in deciding how long to continue mammograms. "It really needs to be based on their health status, and not your age," Boolbol said. "Because it's not one-size-fits-all." —AP

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KUWAIT'S BOOKR PROJECT WINS FIRST PLACE IN AMC IN ALGERIA

The small projects group Brilliant Lab recently concluded the competitions of the 3rd Arab Mobile Challenge (AMC) in Algeria where Kuwait's project BOOKR won the first place in addition to a financial reward of \$ 20,000. The competition was held under auspices of the Algerian minister of higher education and scientific research, Taher Hajjar and with the attendance of the Algerian minister of youth and sports, Al-Hadi Weld Ali, Kuwait's ambassador to Algeria, Mohammed Al-Shabo and Arab diplomats designated to Algeria. Notably, 24 teams took part in the competition and the jury panel included experts from Russia, USA, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan and Algeria.



CUSTOMERS CONTINUE TO WIN BIG AT MALABAR GOLD & DIAMONDS FESTIVAL



Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the prominent jewelry retailer unfurled details of the 5th edition of 'Malabar Gold & Diamonds Festival' in GCC, Singapore & Malaysia. The festival that runs from 16 December 2015 to 31 January 2016 will display distinctive pieces of jewelry from across the world and offers massive gifts and irresistible offers.

This much-awaited festival is one of the biggest jewelry events in GCC and the customers get unprecedented opportunities to win a total of 250,000 gold coins. Customers have already won over 90,000 gold coins through this promotion with the successful completion of the 25 days of the festival; the customers continue to win big across all the outlets of Malabar Gold & Diamond. This great winning has created excitement among customers.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds Festival will captivate the customers by exhibiting eye catching designs in gold, platinum, diamonds and precious stones from different parts of the world to flaunt any occasion or event and are well priced too. The festival stands apart from the usual jewelry exhibitions and promotions and as the tag line indicates- 'Everyone Wins', ie every customer gets a chance to be a winner through this festival.

For every purchase of gold jewelry above KD150, the customers get a 'Scratch & Win' coupon through which they can win a guaranteed gold coin or up to 100 gold coins instantly. With every diamond jewelry purchase worth KWD 250, the customers will

get 1 gm free gold coin.

To add customer's delight, the group also offers 'Zero Deduction Exchange' scheme through which customers can update their old ornaments to the latest collection of Malabar Gold & Diamonds without any loss. Any 22 ct old gold ornaments can be exchanged with the latest Malabar Gold & Diamonds designs by paying only making charges ensuring they don't lose any value on the rate of gold.

Furthermore, 8 gm gold coins can be bought from their outlets with absolutely no making charge during this period.

Keeping up with customer demands, the jewelry chain offers a fabulous collection of gold, diamond and platinum jewelry to suit the tastes of both resident and international customers, skillfully crafted by jewelry specialists from Italy, Singapore, Turkey, Bahrain and India. This is in addition to their exclusive branded jewelry - Mine- Diamonds Unlimited, Era- Uncut Diamond Jewelry, Ethnix- Handcrafted Designer Jewelry, Divine- Indian Heritage Jewelry, Precia- Precious Gem Jewelry and the unique jewelry for kids- Starlet.

Operating 144 retail outlets globally, the group is always at the forefront when it comes to promotions and celebrations. The last four editions of the 'Malabar Gold & Diamonds Festival' elicited tremendous response from jewelry lovers from all over the Gulf. This time also the customers are excited to be a part of this much awaited festival to witness the rarest collection of jewelry from across the world and to avail fabulous offers.

13TH MAGNIFICENT MEGA CARNIVAL AT ICSK



The Indian Community School Kuwait held a spell-binding and magnificent 13th mega carnival on 15th January, 2016. A bright sunny day, fun-activities on the stage, dances, songs, battle of bands, couple-show, talent show and so much more made it a mega successful show. The ICSK carnival is the most-awaited event among the Indian Community of Kuwait.

The Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sunil Jain, Lt Col Faris

Jatly Al-Azemi from the Salmiya Police Station, Manager of Activity Department of the Ministry of Private Education Ali Jawhar, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Indian Embassy Subhashis Goldar, ICSK Board of Trustees Chairman S K Wadhawan, Vice-Chairman Bobby Mathew, Secretary Vijay Karayil, Treasurer Sunil C, Joint Secretaries Santhosh Mathew and Sherin Mani, Carnival Convener George Mathew, other members, members of the Council of

Elders, members of the Ex-Students Association, members of the Parent Advisory Council, principals, vice-principals and staff members graced the event. The inaugural ceremony was based on the theme of rustic India with the grand entry of a beautifully crafted bullock cart. The programs that followed entranced the audience.

The master of ceremonies for the day kept the audience entertained throughout the day. Performance by

Mubarak, the renowned Kuwaiti singer, along with our ICSK singer Julia put the crowd in rhapsody. The parents and 7,500 students of ICSK enjoyed the annual fun and frolic event.

The proceeds of the mega carnival; with the help of sponsorships, advertisements and ticket sales; build the school endowment fund which is used for the noble cause of paying the fees of needy children.



The Ambassador Mohammad Al-Kayed with his wife Khawla Al-Abdlat.



IWG HOLDS JORDANIAN CULTURAL EVENT

By Faten Omar

As part of their monthly activities, the International Women's Group (IWG) held a Jordanian cultural and traditional event yesterday at the Radisson Blu Hotel, which was attended by IWG members. The Jordanian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Al-Kayed and his wife

Khawla Al-Abdlat welcomed the guests and thanked the attendees for their support.

"Jordan is a small country with limited national resources but it is welcoming to all religions and nationalities. Jordan is known for its health tourism sector and we are receiving a lot of patients from GCC countries because of our good reputation in the medical field. Jordanian Muslims and Christians are living together in a harmony. In Jordan, some Muslims celebrate Christmas and some Christians fast during Ramadan as a show of solidarity. Today, we are facing the Syrians refugee crisis and we are hosting around 1.5 million Syrians." He said. He added that the relations between

Kuwait and Jordan are strong and there is an excellent relationship between the two countries. The event included a short film showing the touristic places of Jordan. This was followed by a dance performance by Jordanian girls, where they presented a traditional Jordanian dance wearing the traditional costume. At the event, there

were some new members who joined the IWG, as new ambassadors were appointed to their posts.

The activities of this event were part of the regular meetings and activities held by IWG members. These events include cultural activities which are presented by diplomat's spouses from their respected countries. The members of the

organization are entertained by various cultural activities and cross-cultural programs that aim to introduce the different cultures of the organization's members. The IWG has a regularly scheduled monthly meeting on the first Sunday of every month. Apart from these meetings, they also organize trips to museums and various touristic places around Kuwait.



- Discovery Channel HD**
- 00:20 Misfit Garage
 - 01:10 Impossible Engineering
 - 02:00 Impossible Engineering
 - 02:50 Wheeler Dealers: Trading Up
 - 03:40 Storage Hunters UK
 - 04:05 The Liquidator
 - 04:30 Storage Wars Canada
 - 05:00 What Happened Next?
 - 05:30 How Machines Work
 - 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 Misfit Garage
 - 11:25 Street Outlaws
 - 12:15 Engine Addict With Jimmy De Ville
 - 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 Gold Rush
 - 19:20 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown
 - 20:10 The Liquidator
 - 20:35 Storage Wars Canada
 - 21:00 Gold Rush
 - 21:50 Gold Divers
 - 22:40 Catching Monsters
 - 23:30 Wheeler Dealers

- EHD**
- 00:00 The Soup
 - 00:30 WAGs
 - 01:25 Sex With Brody
 - 01:50 The Grace Helbig Show
 - 02:20 E! News
 - 03:15 Extreme Close-Up
 - 04:10 The E! True Hollywood Story
 - 05:05 Beyond Candid With Giuliana
 - 06:00 Kourtney & Kim Take New York
 - 07:50 Style Star
 - 08:20 E! News
 - 09:15 Giuliana & Bill
 - 11:10 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
 - 12:05 E! News
 - 13:05 Fashion Police
 - 13:35 The Grace Helbig Show
 - 14:05 Hollywood Cycle
 - 15:00 Kourtney And Khloe Take The Hamptons
 - 17:00 Stewarts And Hamiltons
 - 18:00 E! News
 - 19:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 - 20:00 House Of DVF
 - 21:00 Christina Milian Turned Up
 - 22:00 WAGs
 - 23:00 Sex With Brody
 - 23:30 Fashion Bloggers

- OSN FIRST HD**
- 00:00 Defiance
 - 01:00 Scandal
 - 02:00 How To Get Away With Murder
 - 03:00 Show Me A Hero
 - 04:00 Switched At Birth
 - 05:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 - 06:00 White Collar
 - 07:00 Switched At Birth
 - 08:00 Witches Of East End
 - 09:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 - 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 Live Good Morning America
 - 17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 - 18:00 Witches Of East End
 - 19:00 Scandal
 - 20:00 How To Get Away With Murder
 - 21:00 Quantico
 - 22:00 Rosewood
 - 23:00 Allegiance

- OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL**
- 01:00 Manny
 - 02:45 Jayne Mansfield's Car
 - 05:00 We Are Family
 - 07:00 Belle
 - 09:00 Secret Window
 - 11:00 Atlas Shrugged Part 2: The Strike
 - 13:00 Rushmore
 - 15:00 Jodorowsky's Dune
 - 17:00 Secret Window
 - 19:00 Half Of A Yellow Sun
 - 21:00 Bugsy
 - 23:15 Northern Soul

- OSN MOVIES HD**
- 01:00 The Courier-PG15
 - 03:00 Robot & Frank-PG15
 - 04:45 The Fault In Our Stars-PG15
 - 07:00 Admission-PG15
 - 09:00 Alexander And The Terrible... Very Bad Day-PG
 - 10:30 Before I Go To Sleep-PG15
 - 12:15 HairBrained-PG15
 - 14:00 Billy Elliot The Musical-PG15
 - 17:00 Alexander And The Terrible... Very Bad Day-PG
 - 18:30 Divergent-PG15
 - 21:00 Beneath-PG15
 - 23:00 Wild Card-18

- OSN MOVIES HD KIDS**
- 01:00 Cher Ami
 - 02:45 The Adventures Of Don Quixote
 - 04:30 Goat Story 2
 - 06:00 Memory Loss
 - 08:00 Marco Macaco
 - 10:00 The Heart Of The Oak
 - 11:30 Minusule: Valley Of The Lost Ants
 - 13:00 The Adventures Of Don Quixote
 - 14:30 Blackie And Kanuto
 - 16:00 Jungle Shuffle
 - 18:00 The Heart Of The Oak
 - 20:00 Blue Elephant 2
 - 22:00 Blackie And Kanuto
 - 23:30 Jungle Shuffle

- OSN MOVIES HD PREMIERE**
- 00:00 Fatal Instinct-PG15
 - 02:00 Vamps-PG15
 - 04:00 Searching For Sugar Man-PG15
 - 06:00 Toxin
 - 08:00 I, Frankenstein
 - 10:00 Falcon Rising
 - 12:00 Northmen: A Viking Saga
 - 14:00 Superfast
 - 16:00 I, Frankenstein
 - 17:45 Star Trek
 - 20:00 Falcon Rising
 - 21:45 RoboCop
 - 23:45 Let The Bullets Fly

- OSN MOVIES HD ACTION**
- 00:00 Comedown-PG15
 - 02:00 Northmen: A Viking Saga-PG15
 - 04:00 Toxin-PG15
 - 06:00 I, Frankenstein-PG15
 - 08:00 Falcon Rising-PG15
 - 10:00 Northmen: A Viking Saga-PG15
 - 12:00 Superfast-PG15
 - 14:00 I, Frankenstein-PG15
 - 15:45 Star Trek-PG15
 - 18:00 Falcon Rising-PG15
 - 19:45 RoboCop-PG15
 - 21:45 Let The Bullets Fly-PG15

- OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY**
- 00:00 High Road
 - 02:00 When In Rome
 - 04:00 Mousehunt
 - 06:00 UHF
 - 08:00 Simon Birch
 - 10:00 Mousehunt
 - 12:00 When In Rome
 - 14:00 Mr. Wonderful
 - 16:00 Simon Birch
 - 18:00 Tooth Fairy
 - 20:00 Life Of Crime
 - 22:00 Let's Be Cops

- OSN MOVIES HD DRAMA**
- 01:00 InSight-PG15
 - 03:00 Jamie Marks Is Dead-PG15

- Food Network**
- 00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 - 01:00 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
 - 02:00 All Star Academy
 - 03:00 Australian Food Adventures With Matt Moran
 - 04:00 The Freshman Class
 - 05:00 Chopped
 - 06:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 - 07:00 Man Fire Food
 - 08:00 Chopped
 - 09:00 Grandma's Secret Cookbook
 - 10:00 The Kitchen
 - 11:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
 - 11:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
 - 12:00 Chopped
 - 13:00 Guy's Big Bite
 - 14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 - 15:00 Man Fire Food
 - 16:00 Chopped
 - 17:00 The Kitchen
 - 18:00 Siba's Table
 - 18:30 Grandma's Secret Cookbook
 - 19:00 Chopped
 - 20:00 Guy's Grocery Games
 - 21:00 Staten Island Cakes
 - 22:00 Mystery Diners
 - 22:30 Mystery Diners
 - 23:00 BBQ Crawl
 - 23:30 BBQ Crawl

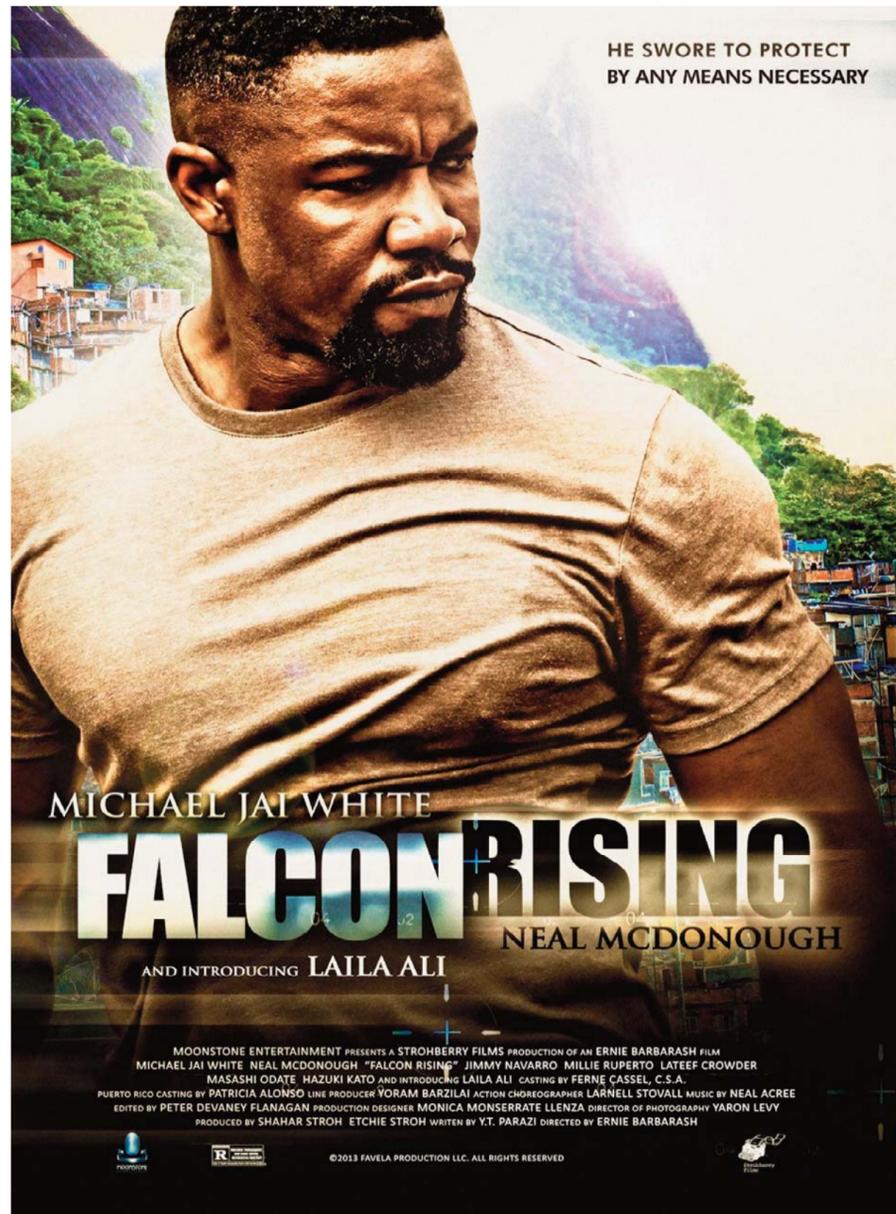
- itv HD CHOICE**
- 00:10 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
 - 01:05 Emmerdale
 - 02:00 Coronation Street
 - 02:30 Murdoch Mysteries
 - 03:25 Safe House
 - 04:20 The Syndicate
 - 05:15 The Chase
 - 06:10 Paddock To Plate
 - 07:05 Coach Trip
 - 07:30 Grantchester
 - 08:25 The Syndicate
 - 09:20 Murdoch Mysteries
 - 10:15 The Chase
 - 11:10 Coach Trip
 - 11:35 Grantchester
 - 12:30 Paddock To Plate
 - 13:25 Emmerdale
 - 13:50 Coach Trip
 - 14:20 Coronation Street
 - 14:45 Murdoch Mysteries
 - 15:35 Pick Me!
 - 16:30 Endeavour
 - 18:20 Cook Me The Money
 - 19:10 Coronation Street
 - 19:35 Pick Me!
 - 20:30 Endeavour
 - 22:20 Coronation Street
 - 22:50 Emmerdale
 - 23:15 Cook Me The Money

- OSN FIRST HD COMEDY**
- 02:30 The Big C
 - 04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
 - 05:30 Young & Hungry
 - 06:00 Til Death
 - 07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
 - 08:30 Young & Hungry
 - 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

- Discovery Science**
- 00:35 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
 - 03:42 Food Factory
 - 07:37 How Do They Do It?
 - 08:23 Mythbusters
 - 09:08 How The Universe Works
 - 09:53 Mega Builders
 - 10:38 How It's Made
 - 11:30 Strangest Weather On Earth
 - 12:08 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
 - 12:53 Mega Builders
 - 13:38 Mythbusters
 - 14:23 How It's Made
 - 15:10 How The Universe Works
 - 15:57 Strangest Weather On Earth
 - 16:44 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
 - 17:31 Prototype This
 - 18:18 How The Universe Works
 - 19:05 Mythbusters
 - 19:50 Strangest Weather On Earth
 - 20:40 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
 - 21:25 How It's Made: Dream Cars
 - 22:15 How The Universe Works
 - 23:00 Strangest Weather On Earth
 - 23:45 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

- ID. INVESTIGATION DISCOVERY**
- 00:40 Scorned: Crimes Of Passion
 - 01:30 California Investigator
 - 01:55 California Investigator
 - 02:20 Deadly Affairs
 - 03:10 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
 - 04:00 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
 - 04:45 Scorned: Crimes Of Passion
 - 05:30 California Investigator
 - 05:55 California Investigator
 - 06:20 The Will
 - 07:10 The Will
 - 08:00 Dr. G: Medical Examiner
 - 08:50 On The Case With Paula Zahn
 - 09:40 Fatal Encounters
 - 10:30 Murder Shift
 - 11:20 Deadly Affairs
 - 12:10 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
 - 13:00 The Will
 - 13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
 - 14:40 California Investigator
 - 15:05 Dr. G: Medical Examiner
 - 15:55 Fatal Encounters
 - 16:45 On The Case With Paula Zahn
 - 17:35 Murder Shift
 - 18:25 I Almost Got Away With It
 - 19:15 The Will
 - 20:05 Deadly Affairs
 - 20:55 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
 - 21:45 California Investigator
 - 22:10 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
 - 22:35 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
 - 23:00 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
 - 23:50 California Investigator

- Disney Channel**
- 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 Sofia The First
 - 06:50 That's So Raven
 - 07:15 Gravity Falls
 - 07:40 Jessie
 - 08:05 Shake It Up
 - 08:30 Shake It Up
 - 08:55 That's So Raven
 - 09:20 That's So Raven
 - 09:45 Austin & Ally
 - 10:10 Austin & Ally
 - 10:35 A.N.T. Farm
 - 11:00 A.N.T. Farm
 - 11:25 Jessie
 - 11:50 Jessie
 - 12:20 Hank Zipzer
 - 12:45 Fish Hooks
 - 13:10 Good Luck Charlie
 - 13:35 I Didn't Do It
 - 14:00 Dog With A Blog
 - 14:30 H2O
 - 14:55 Girl Meets World
 - 15:20 Liv And Maddie
 - 15:45 Jessie
 - 16:10 Violetta
 - 16:10 The Next Step
 - 17:25 Liv And Maddie
 - 17:50 Jessie
 - 18:15 Austin & Ally
 - 18:40 I Didn't Do It
 - 19:05 First Class Chefs
 - 19:30 Violetta
 - 20:20 The Next Step
 - 20:45 Good Luck Charlie

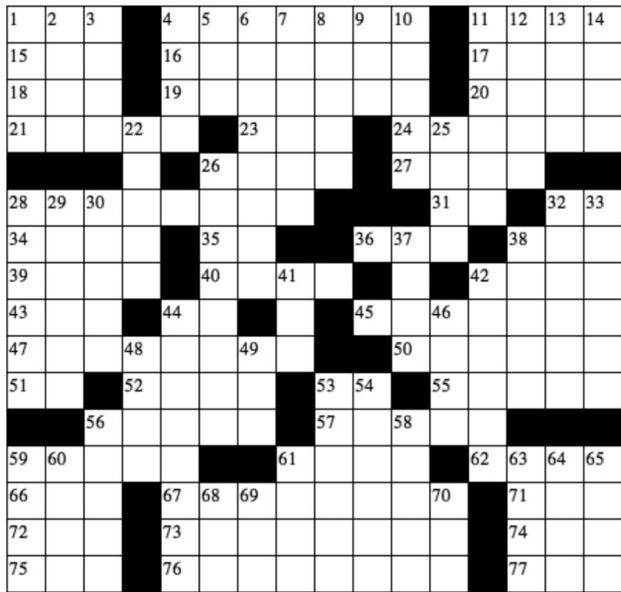


- FALCON RISING ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD**
- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 09:00 Surveillance Oz | 08:00 Callmero | 22:50 Gummi Bears | 16:55 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything |
| 10:00 Frenemies | 08:10 Zou | 23:20 Lilo And Stitch | 17:25 K. C. Undercover |
| 10:30 Frenemies | 08:25 Loopdidoo | 23:45 Cars Toons | 17:50 K. C. Undercover |
| 11:00 Crimes That Shook Britain | 08:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates | 23:50 Zou | 18:15 Lab Rats |
| 12:00 Crime Stories | 09:05 Sofia The First | 00:05 Henry Hugglemonster | 18:40 Mighty Med |
| 13:00 Homicide Hunter | 09:30 Miles From Tomorrow | 00:20 Callmero | 19:10 Annedroids |
| 14:00 I Survived | 09:55 The Hive | 00:35 Zou | 19:35 Star vs The Forces Of Evil |
| 15:00 Frenemies | 10:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse | 00:50 Loopdidoo | 20:00 Kirby Buckets |
| 15:30 Frenemies | 10:35 Doc McStuffins | 01:05 Art Attack | 20:25 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything |
| 16:00 Crimes That Shook Britain | 11:00 Sofia The First | 01:30 Henry Hugglemonster | 20:55 K. C. Undercover |
| 17:00 Crime Stories | 11:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates | 01:45 Callmero | 21:20 K. C. Undercover |
| 18:00 The First 48 | 12:00 Miles From Tomorrow | 02:00 Zou | 21:45 Lab Rats |
| 19:00 I Survived | 12:25 Special Agent Oso | 02:15 Loopdidoo | 22:10 Mighty Med |
| 20:00 Homicide Hunter | 12:40 The Hive | 02:30 Art Attack | 22:40 Super Matrak |
| 21:00 Crime Stories | 12:50 Handy Manny | 02:55 Henry Hugglemonster | 23:05 Super Matrak |
| 22:00 Crimes That Shook Britain | 13:15 Jungle Junction | | 23:30 Boyster |
| 23:00 Killer Kids | 13:50 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse | | 00:00 Programmes Start At 7:00am KSA |
| 00:00 Ms. Homicide | 16:35 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse | | |
| 01:00 Born To Kill | 14:00 Sofia The First | | |
| 02:00 The Haunting Of... | 14:25 Doc McStuffins | | |
| | 14:50 Henry Hugglemonster | | |
| | 15:15 Zou | | |
| | 15:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse | | |
| | 15:55 Loopdidoo | | |
| | 16:10 Miles From Tomorrow | | |
| | 16:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates | | |
| | 17:00 Sofia The First | | |
| | 17:25 Jungle Cubs | | |
| | 17:50 Aladdin | | |
| | 18:15 Gummi Bears | | |
| | 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 | | |
| | 15:10 Disney Mickey Mouse | | |
| | 15:40 Rocket Monkeys | | |
| | 16:05 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero | | |
| | 16:30 Star vs The Forces Of Evil | | |
| | 16:30 Kirby Buckets | | |



I, FRANKENSTEIN ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

CROSSWORD 1141



ACROSS

1. Humorously sarcastic or mocking.
4. A small container (as one holding electronic equipment).
11. An Iranian language spoken in Afghanistan.
15. Step on it.
16. Lacking fresh air.
17. Norwegian mathematician (1802-1829).
18. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
19. A tax imposed on ships that enter the US.
20. Excavation in the earth from which ores and minerals are extracted.
21. Shrubby tree widely distributed along tropical shores.
23. A federation of North American labor unions that merged with the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1955.
24. (trademark) An antacid.
27. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
28. Small swift bat with leathery ears and a long tail.
31. A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
34. A fabric with prominent rounded cross-wise ribs.
35. Being ten more than one hundred ninety.
36. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
39. A member of the Siouan people inhabiting the valleys of the Platte and Missouri rivers in Nebraska.
40. United States writer noted for his droll epigrams (1902-1971).
43. A local computer network for communication between computers.
45. A nonstandard form of American English spoken by some African Black people.
47. Not based on fact.
50. Any member of Athapaskan tribes that migrated to the southwestern desert (from Arizona to Texas and south into Mexico).
51. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
52. Type genus of the Anatidae.
55. An independent ruler or chieftain (especially in Africa or Arabia).
57. The third canonical hour.
59. A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
62. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
66. The cry made by sheep.
67. A fatty deposit in the intima (inner lining) of an artery.
71. Someone who is morally reprehensible.
72. An implement used to propel or steer a boat.
73. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
74. A master's degree in fine arts.
75. Late time of life.
76. Thin-shelled freshwater mussels.
77. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.

DOWN

1. Hit hard.
2. Port city that is the capital and largest city of Latvia.
3. Not only so, but.
4. Attractive especially by means of smallness or prettiness or quaintness.
5. (Babylonian) The sky god.
6. Low stinging nettle of Central and South America having velvety brownish-green toothed leaves and clusters of small green flowers.
7. Characterized by iniquity.
8. A mountain range in western Russia extending from the arctic to the Caspian Sea.
9. A human limb.
10. Swelling from excessive accumulation of serous fluid in tissue.
11. The occurrence of a change for the worse.
12. A promontory in northern Morocco opposite the Rock of Gibraltar.
13. A city in western Nevada at the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.
14. A large genus of dicotyledonous trees and shrubs of the family Aquifoliaceae that have small flowers and berries (including hollies).
22. Large African forest tree yielding a strong hard yellow to golden brown lumber.
25. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
26. The honeycreepers.
29. Small genus of mediterranean shrubs.
30. (possibly Roman) Goddess of horses and mules and asses.
32. A trite or obvious remark.
33. Someone given to teasing (as by mocking or stirring curiosity).
37. A communist state in the Caribbean on the island of Cuba.
38. A share of something.
41. An honorary degree in science.
42. Hard white substance covering the crown of a tooth.
44. The capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Congo river opposite Brazzaville.
46. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
48. (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
49. Standard time in the 5th time zone west of Greenwich, reckoned at the 75th meridian.
53. (electronics) Designating sound transmission from two sources through two channels.
54. Spiritually reborn or converted.
56. The hair growing on the lower part of a man's face.
58. The act of remitting (especially the referral of a law case to another court).
60. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
61. A group of cattle or sheep or other domestic mammals all of the same kind that are herded by humans.
63. The highest level or degree attainable.
64. A Chadid language spoken south of Lake Chad.
65. The sixth month of the civil year.
68. Administration of a nutritionally adequate solution through a catheter into the vena cava.
69. 10 hao equal 1 dong.
70. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

A stay-at-home morning gives you the opportunity to catch up on some of the little odd jobs that need your attention. Community affairs may surface today but the time for action is not quite yet. This afternoon, you and your friends could enjoy the fun of just being together with the opportunity to express yourselves freely. Your outward and social success is highlighted now, a kind of peak, after which you should turn your attention to concentrating on what you have set in motion up to this point. A short trip this evening, perhaps with family members, will create a different atmosphere to enjoy. Your frame of mind is quite improved over a year ago. You may enjoy a bit of music that is different from the usual.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Focus in on the things that really need accomplishing this morning and then the rest of the day is yours. Sexual need is just one of life's pleasures emphasized for you at this time. There are lots of energies available to do as you please for now. Don't be too surprised when you find relatives dropping by later this afternoon. There seems to be plenty of requests for your time and your opinion. You express your opinion when you have an understanding of a situation. Sympathy and understanding are emotional qualities that take on importance. A strong urge for a change in scenery may bring about the suggestion of a movie in the evening. If the weather is good, a walk to identify the stars and enjoy a bit of fresh air would be an excellent choice.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This morning you may gain some insight into some political news in the country. Starting with your own town, you could make your own thoughts known by writing the editor of your city newspaper or in publishing your own website with your personal slant to the news. There could be some ideas that you will want to submit to the media through your voice or in writing. A love relationship blossoms this afternoon. You reach out to every opportunity that comes your way in order to keep this relationship close. You find some wonderful rewards for your efforts in many ways. Now may be a good time to add a little spice to your love relationship-use your imagination and perhaps a party can be planned or a short vacation for just you two.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Imagination and creativity are in full swing today. This, together with the ability to put your thoughts into words, allows you to captivate and spell-bind. You have been thinking of writing a book and today would be a good time to start an outline, if you have not done so already. Have you taken a writing course you could consider a writing course through your community college now. Just breaking away from the usual is something you may look forward to doing; perhaps a play or a movie, the theater, a special showing at a museum. You will be surprised to find some money that you had forgotten you had.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

The temptation to spend money is strong today. Hold back a bit longer-you will find a much better bargain soon. You have wanted to put a story to paper and to try your hand at becoming published. Saying and writing things with style counts for a lot now-this tends to bring out the social butterfly in all of us. A college writing course could help to keep you on the right track and give you constructive ideas on ways in which to reach your goal. You may also meet someone today that could be a big help in this area. A friend needs your advice today. You are sincere and considerate and your optimism is upbeat-your friend cannot help but be influenced in positive ways.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

It might be easy to be a bit bossy today-careful. If you are dieting, eat plenty of protein-often. Balance is the word for now. Lovers, children and other people or things dear to your heart are emphasized. The powers of persuasion is working in your favor and you will have the last word on whatever activities you and your friends or family enjoy today... The choice is yours. You are enthusiastic and optimistic about any sort of challenge. Much of your strength arises from the creative side of you. One way to have a more fulfilling relationship is to stay aware of the differences between your needs and the needs of others.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This is a lucky day for making plans or decisions and finding your way through just about any problem you may uncover. Do you suppose it is your attitude that is changing you will feel successful and feel able to cope with most any situation. Good advice from a guide or older person may be in the making; listen. When someone pushes your temper buttons, remember that they are your buttons and you have power over whether you become emotional or not. Agree to disagree, because that is a very growth-oriented action. Tact and wisdom are things that someone asks you to teach them. You are a loyal friend and will often go the extra mile to help others; you may be helping to paint, move or any number of other things today.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

While shopping today, you may have your patience tested. You may have found a desired piece of furniture... Only thing is you have to put it together. This afternoon the boxes and instructions may have you stumped for a while-but not too long. While looking for tools to put together this piece of furniture, you may find a lost item that you did not think you would ever see again. You have always had a magical way in finding or bringing things back into your life that you have lost. Think ahead and keep an even pace with your activities; rushing may not be as important as you think. Perhaps you are trying to push too much into one day. Relax tonight and enjoy the young people that are around you-they will create in you a grateful spirit!



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

There are some confusing circumstances, paperwork or issues that have gone unresolved and can be resolved now. Take a little trip or get outside today. You may want to break with your standard activities and try something new or different. You may discover some insights that will be of great value later. Someone will be repaying a debt or a family member is ready to support your plans. A few tasks and lots of interaction with friends make this wonderful day. Coming to the aid of an older person or a handicapped individual will satisfy a deep emotional need. Communicating feelings becomes more important as you find yourself laughing and talking about things you have in common with others. Keep practicing your talent.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You have a quick wit about you and may find yourself talkative with clever ideas and remedies to most situations. You may be able to converse with an elder member of your family and have little difficulty. This person may have been very difficult in the past. All of this healing and talking with people may make you expressive of your appreciation regarding surroundings and family. Others have plans for your birthday celebrations-go with the flow and allow others to pamper you. If you have been expressive, they will know exactly what you want. There is a bit of luck or good fortune this afternoon as you make a discovery or hear a positive sound.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Everything comes around to value and bring out your dramatic, unique and unusual qualities. You may find that someone close to you understands and is supportive of your eccentricities. You could come up with new solutions or inventions as your creative mind is working well. A clear-minded insight into your own plans and methods is available. You could be helping young adults in some decision-making process toward their future goals. Some guidance in creating a resume would be a good start for these young people. If you want to enjoy your friends in a quiet environment later, you might invite them for an after-dinner get-together this evening. If you have children, you may want to hire a sitter for the kids and go out for dinner with friends.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You might feel that some avenue of support has been cut off or blocked. Arguments of an emotional kind could be easy to find. However, you are learning to expand your vision-accepting the things you cannot change. Keeping a balance in mind, body and soul means that if frustrations come up, your own outlook will remain positive. Through this balance, you will be able to help many people. Independence, as well as anything unusual or different, is valued now. Depending on your family's wishes, you may want to invite some friends over this evening. There is a chance to understand those around you and to have a special time with someone you love. You could feel real support and harmony at this time.

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Restaurant

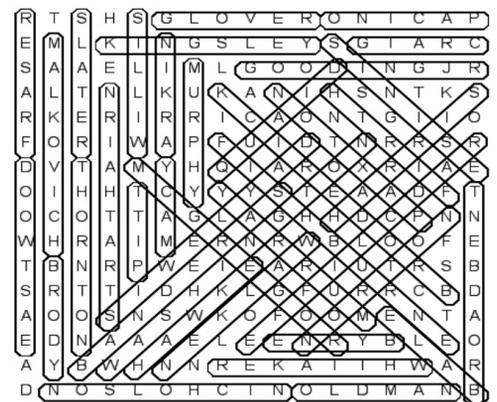
Find and circle all of the Restaurant words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional word.

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

- | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|---------|------------|
| APERITIF | CUPS | MANAGER | SPOON |
| APPETIZER | CUSTOMER | MEAL | TABLECLOTH |
| BILL | DESSERT | MENU | TABLES |
| BUSBOY | DISHWASHERS | NAPKINS | TEA |
| CASHIER | DRINKS | ORDER | TIP |
| CHAIRS | ENTREE | PLATES | WAITER |
| CHEF | FORK | SALAD | WAITRESS |
| COFFEE | GLASSES | SAUCERS | WATER |
| COOKS | KNIFE | SERVERS | WINE |

Yesterday's Solution

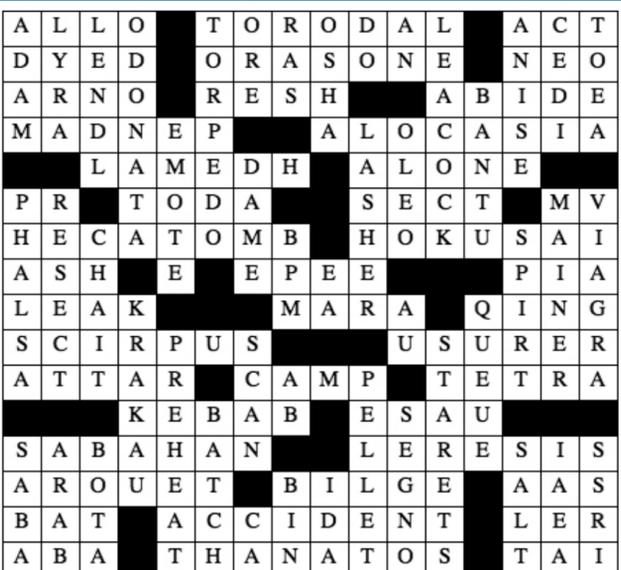
Movie Actors 3



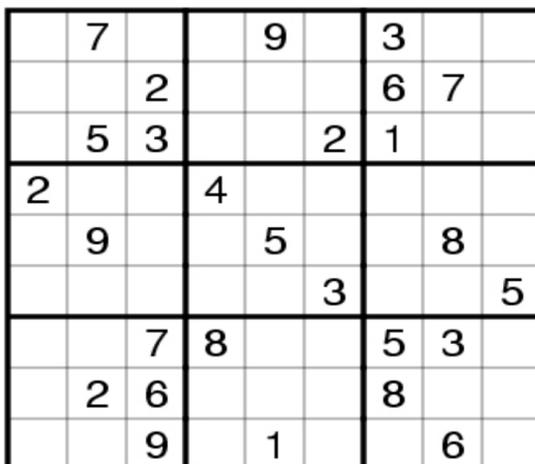
- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| ARKIN, Alan | GOODING JR, Cuba | PACINO, Al |
| BALE, Christian | HARRIS, Ed | PAXTON, Bill |
| BANDERAS, Antonio | HAWKE, Ethan | PITT, Brad |
| BROADBENT, Jim | KINGSLEY, Ben | QUAID, Dennis |
| BRODERICK, Matthew | MACY, William H. | RADCLIFFE, Daniel |
| BRODY, Adrian | MALKOVICH, John | SINISE, Gary |
| BYRNE, Gabriel | MCGREGOR, Ewan | SLATER, Christian |
| CRAIG, Daniel | MURPHY, Eddie | STRATHAIRN, David |
| DAY-LEWIS, Daniel | MURRAY, Bill | THORNTON, Billy Bob |
| EASTWOOD, Clint | NICHOLSON, Jack | WALKEN, Christopher |
| FIRTH, Colin | NORTON, Edward | WASHINGTON, Denzel |
| FISHBURNE, Laurence | OLDMAN, Gary | WHITAKER, Forest |
| FRASER, Brendan | | WILLIS, Bruce |

The hidden movie title is: THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



very hard

Yesterday's Solution



hard

For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadisiya	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	Fahaee 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

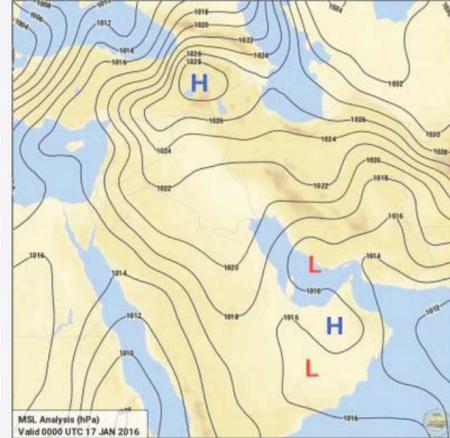
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 17/01/2016-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 21 °C

By Day : Sunny with light to moderate north westerly to light variable later on wind, with speed of 10 - 32 km/h
By Night : Cold with light to moderate north westerly to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Expected Weather	sunny	warm + raising dust over some areas	sunny	sunny
Min Temp °C	10	12	10	09
Max Temp °C	22	26	22	22
Wind Direction	variable wind changing to light to moderate south easterly	south easterly changing to north westerly later on	north westerly to northerly	north westerly to northerly
Wind Speed km/h	08 - 28	15 - 40	10 - 30	08 - 28

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	12		22	
KUWAIT AIRPORT	10		21	
ABDALY	07		21	
BUBYAN	09		21	
JAHRA	11		23	
FAILAKA ISLAND	11		21	
SALMIYAH	13		20	
AHMADI	13		19	
JAL ALIYAH	08		21	
QAROH ISLAND	15		19	
UMM AL-MARADEM	15		19	
NUWAISIB	11		24	
WAFRA	10		24	
MANAGISH	08		22	
SALMY	07		20	
MUTRIBA	07		21	

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	22
Min Temp (°C)	08
Max Rel Hum (%)	95
Min Rel Hum (%)	44
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	32 N
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

Sunrise	06:43
Sunset	17:13

Prayer Times

Fajr	05:20
Sunrise	06:43
Zuhr	11:58
Asr	14:54
Sunset	17:13
Isha	18:34



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	
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)	
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	24555050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	24555050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhaizeem	22629920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Rafea	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abdallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Plastic Surgeons	
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Family Doctor	
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Psychiatrists	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr. Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	
Dr. Adrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s. Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliyami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
General Surgeons	
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
Internists, Chest & Heart	
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr. Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Paediatricians	
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarroof	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gujare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dentists	
Dr. Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdalateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist	
Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924
Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288
Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Internist, Chest & Heart	
DR. Mohammed Akkad	24555050 Ext 210
Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC Assistant Professor Of Medicine Head, Division of Cardiology Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital	25339667
Dr. Farida Al-Habib MD, PH.D, FACC	2611555-2622555
Inaya German Medical Center	Te: 2575077 Fax: 25723123



DS Action: Sporty action and precision accuracy

Equipped with a three-row brushed stainless-steel bracelet, the new DS Action is an impressive timepiece. Its broad bezel, oversized indices and skeletonized hands make reading the time a quick and easy task under all conditions. Those sporty attributes are enhanced by the uncompromising accuracy of its cutting-edge precision movement. The DS Action's bold dial comes in a variety of different colors, black, blue or green, to match the preferences of every watch lover-gentleman or lady.

The brushed 316L stainless-steel case of the new, precision-equipped Certina DS Action is slightly oversized at 41 mm, to ensure a comfortable fit on both masculine and feminine wrists. Its broad, polished unidirectional bezel wears large, highly-visible numerals, as well as Superluminova markings around the first quadrant, from 12 to 3 o'clock. Behind a sapphire crystal treated with anti-reflective coating on both faces, the black dial carries a date window conveniently placed at 3 o'clock. Additional Superluminova has been applied to the skeletonized HM hands, red-tipped central second hand, large dots at each five-minute mark and inside the bold triangular indices at 12, 6 and 9 o'clock, to ensure optimal underwater readability.

The multiple safety features and famous DS Concept (Double Security) assembly make the DS Action especially well-suited to demanding environments. A screw-on case back, as well as a protected screw-in crown inscribed with the letters "DS", allow a very high level of protection. The

timepiece is water-resistant up to a pressure of 30 bar (300 m) and the presence of the historical Certina turtle logo on its case back is a faithful reminder of the DS Action's outstanding quality and reliability. Other versions of the DS Action are available to suit different tastes. A three-row stainless-steel bracelet version, another in full titanium, and a model with a rubber strap, all three of which are equipped with the same twin-push-button buckle with diver extension, for highest safety.

Reliability, precision and innovation have underlined the Certina philosophy since 1888, year of the foundation of the company by the Kurth Brothers. In 1959, Certina developed its famous Double Security DS Concept, to bring to its watches exceptional sturdiness and outstanding water resistance. Certina has a long-standing commitment to sport, and motor racing in particular. It has stood next to an ever-growing list of great sport stars such as Mike Doohan, Alex Criville, Petter Solberg, Sete Gibernau, Thomas Luthi, Robert Kubica and also boxing legend Muhammad Ali. Since 2005, Certina has been Official Partner of the Sauber F1 Team and since 2013 Official Timekeeper of the FIA WRC World Rally Championship. A subsidiary of the world's largest international watchmaking organization Swatch Group, Certina is currently world leader in the sport watch segment, and is represented in more than 60 countries.



Mexican actress and producer Salma Hayek poses for pictures during a news conference to promote her new movie "The Prophet," in Mexico City. Hayek produced and voices a character in the animated film adaptation of Lebanese writer Kahlil Gibran's 1923 book of prose poetry.—AP

Celine Dion's brother dies days after death of her husband

The 59-year-old brother of award-winning Canadian singer Celine Dion died after a long battle with cancer on Saturday, two days after the death of Dion's husband, her representatives said in a statement. Daniel Dion, the eighth oldest of 13 siblings, "passed away peacefully" surrounded by family at the La Maison Adh mar-Dion care center in Qu bec, Canada, the statement posted on the singer's website said.

Celine Dion, 47, asked for privacy after she announced on Thursday the death of her husband and long-time manager, Ren  Ang lil, at the age of 73 after fighting throat cancer. Ang lil, who discovered Dion when she was 12 years old and drove her career to stardom, married her in 1994. The couple have three sons, Ren -Charles, 14, and 5-year-old twins Nelson and Eddy.—Reuters



This July 26, 2013, file photo shows Canadian music star Celine Dion, right, and husband Ren  Ang lil posing for photos after being decorated with the Order of Canada in Quebec City.—AP



In this photo provided by Paramount Pictures shows Pablo Schreiber, from left, as Kris "Tanto" Paronto, John Krasinski as Jack Silva, David Denman as Dave "Boon" Benton and Dominic Fumusa as John "Tig" Tiegien, in the film, "13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi" from Paramount Pictures and 3 Arts Entertainment/Bay Films. The movie releases in US theaters.—AP

Director Bay: Benghazi movie steers clear of politics

The very word "Benghazi" screams politics to most people - especially in this election year. So, is it even possible to make a movie about the deadly 2012 attacks in Benghazi, Libya, that's NOT political? Director Michael Bay says it is - by focusing on what he calls the "great human story" that's never been fully told, that of the security contractors who fought through the night of the deadly Benghazi attacks on a US diplomatic compound, in which four Americans died - including Ambassador Christopher Stevens - but many others were saved during a 13-hour siege.

Bay, known best for his blockbuster "Transformers" series, sat down with the Associated Press in Miami recently to discuss "13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi," which opened Friday. (The interview has been edited for length and clarity).

AP: How is this movie not political?

Bay: How is it not political? Because listen, we all think we know Benghazi. But there was a great human story, that got buried. And that's the story I'm telling: the guys who were on the ground. The men and women that were stuck in the CIA annex, and how they fought for 13 hours to get out of there alive. We worked very hard to get the facts right from the research of the book that (author Mitchell Zuckoff) did to the amazing access I have from working 20 years with the military, from the boots on the ground, the people who were in country to the CIA at a high level meeting to get just the facts right, the recently released emails. We just had to get it right.

AP: What do you think was to blame for what happened?

Bay: Listen it was 13 hours, 13 hours. There's a pink elephant sitting in the room when you've got the most powerful country in the world, bases. I mean when I sat with the CIA I said 'C'mon guys, I started naming Aviano, Sigonella (bases), really? It's an F16 flight, its 50 minutes - flight time overhead is 30 minutes. Listen I'm

just saying, we show what was out there, and that's what we did. I'm not pointing fingers, I'm just giving the facts, I'm showing what was out there.

AP: Do you think the movie will influence the election?

Bay: No, no. What this is is an inspirational human story. And this is a classic nightmare story. It's a story when you have a nightmare, you want heroes like this to rescue you from your nightmares. And this is a movie - because I worked with so many special operators in the military, I worked in the military for so long, I'm personal friends with so many of them, I wanted to give integrity to the story, I wanted to tell the story because there's a positive message in it, in the human spirit... It's a movie that honors all first responders, from firemen to policemen to the men and women in the military that do this.

AP: Was it important to leave out the name of Hillary Clinton?

Bay: It wasn't even on the radar for this movie. I was telling their story on the ground from these guys' point of view.

AP: What kind of reaction do you hope from the military community?

Bay: People who have seen it have said it's one of the finest, most accurate military movies they've seen - that was a direct quote from somebody. One of the best friends of Tyrone Woods (a security team member who died) said, 'I want to thank you so much, you did my friend justice and honor.'

AP: What do you hope viewers will take away from this film?

Bay: Just the great human story that you never are told. It just wasn't covered. I mean I watched every news station. I'm a news junkie.

AP: Will this movie appeal more to conservatives or liberals?

Bay: I think it's even, because at the heart, it's a human story. That's what shines here.



Turkish Jewelry festival at Joyalukkas

World's favorite jeweler has announced a Turkish jewelry Festival across its showrooms to launch their refreshed brand, Zenina. Under Zenina Collections, Joyalukkas will offer spell binding designs created by master craftsmen in Turkey. The Zenina range will showcase never before designs and collections crafted in 22 K gold.

"Turkey is renowned for its Jewellery and their exquisite designs are a rage across the world. Under Zenina, we will now offer the best of Turkish Jewellery to our discerning customers who are constantly looking for new and trendy designs," said Joy Alukkas, Chairman & MD, Joyalukkas Group.

Turkish Jewellery Festival was inaugurated by Kerim Doganay, Commercial Counselor of Turkish Embassy to Kuwait, on January 14, 2016 at Joyalukkas Panasonic Tower, Kuwait City branch.

Zenina collection will offer a choice of mid range and premium Jewellery to make it accessible to all types of customers. The Zenina range of Jewellery is a spectacle of rare designs and beautiful works of art that will appeal to every Jewellery lover.

"We are proud to relaunch Zenina, Jewellery inspired by Turkey. Our designs have a contemporary look with intricate ethnic art embedded to create a fusion that is breathtaking. Our Turkish Fest is a grand celebration of incredible Turkey and their amazing craftsmanship," said John Paul Joy Alukkas, Executive Director, Joyalukkas Group.

During the Turkish Jewellery Fest, customers are also being offered an opportunity to purchase 8 gms gold coin with Zero Making Charges. This is a first time event which every Jewellery lover should surely not miss.

Prince reschedules piano shows, but at studio

Prince has rescheduled aborted concerts featuring the maverick pop star alone on piano, but this time he will perform at his home studio instead of Europe. After days of hints on social media, Prince announced that he will play two back-to-back shows Thursday at his Paisley Park complex in a suburb outside Minneapolis. Prince had initially planned a tour of Europe in November and December which the Purple One would sing and play piano without further adornment, in a first since his rise to stardom three decades ago.

Acclaimed as a guitar virtuoso and dancer, Prince had explained that he had grown accustomed to favorable reviews and wanted a musical challenge. But Prince abruptly postponed ticket sales minutes before they were due to start for the first European dates, outraged that resellers were already offering tickets at prices far above face value. He later canceled the whole tour, which would have taken him to at least 11 countries, as he cited the November 13 attacks on Paris that included an assault on the Bataclan concert hall.

Prince announced the Paisley Park concerts on Saturday over social media, with tickets quickly selling out. Prince, on a dedicated website for the concerts, said there would be no actual tickets and that Paisley Park would instead keep a list of buyers at the door with name changes forbidden. Built after the huge success of Prince's 1984 album "Purple Rain," Paisley Park has been the Minneapolis-born star's primary center of creative output with state-of-the-art studios, a concert space and a secure vault for his master recordings.

Paisley Park looms large in the imagination of Prince fans as well as many ordinary people in Minneapolis and adjacent St. Paul, for whom a chance to see the reclusive pop star's inner world can be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Prince has nonetheless been opening up Paisley Park with growing frequency. In September he welcomed fans for a three-day "international dance party," and in November announced his European tour with a pajama party for journalists that reportedly culminated in a screening of the latest James Bond film "Spectre" at a nearby cinema he rented out for the occasion. Prince has in recent years battled ticket scalpers by announcing his concerts only a few hours before taking stage.—AFP



This June 30, 2011 file photo shows US singer and musician Prince performing on stage at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, outside Paris.—AFP



Models wear creations for Versace men's Fall-Winter 2016-2017 collection, part of the Milan Fashion Week, unveiled in Milan, Italy, Saturday. — AP/AFP photos

Milan menswear designers pay tribute to David Bowie

Milan designers paid tribute to music and fashion icon David Bowie as Milan Fashion Week menswear previews for next fall and winter continued on Saturday. Costume National designer Ennio Capasa and Roberto Cavalli's Peter Dundas both said that the musician had often been a font of inspiration, apparent also in these collections previewing just a week after Bowie's death. Donatella Versace saluted the singer with a single burst of Bowie's hit "Ground Control to Major Tom" at the end of her futuristic, outer-space-inspired runway show. Some highlights from Saturday's shows, including collections from Dolce&Gabbana, Marni and Jil Sander.

course night black. Versace has taken her shows out of the relative security of her traditional showroom into new, more spacious venues, this time a modernistic theater in one of Milan's newly gentrified districts. The change of venue appears to be part of the brand's transformation into something more disciplined and urban, less Miami pool party than in the recent past. The designer even introduced a new motif, if not logo, seen here as a metallic V overlaying an elliptical galaxy. The Medusa was replaced, at least temporarily, by a Pegasus.

Under pressure
Costume National creator Ennio Capasa titled his menswear preview for the next cold weather season "Under Pressure," for the Bowie hymn, for the state of the world amid repeated violent attacks and for the condition of a fashion industry being consumed by fast-fashion. The collection featured feminine touches for men that embodied early Bowie, from silken scarves tied loosely below the neck, to concentric silver beading on jackets and deep scoop necklines on soft velour tops. Yet at the same time, Capasa underlined the converse, the



Celestial Versace

Donatella Versace drew inspiration from the stars for her latest collection. The results are sleek and futuristic looks, appealing to the urban gentleman, international adventurer and even, should the occasion arise, interstellar traveler. The Versace man starts his journey dramatically enough, running through the darkness in a lit-up track suits, as futuristic as ever a runway show opening. Pound, pound, pound. Many of the looks had an active, if not athletic, silhouette, with snug-fitting knitwear trousers worn with bomber jackets or soft mohair sweaters. There were also sleek silvery day suits and bomber jackets with matching pants for an out-of-this-world impact.

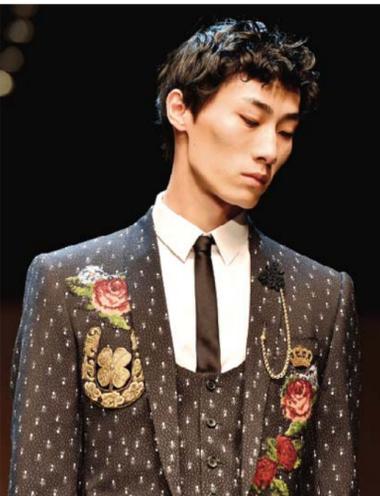
Backpacks often mimicked the color or print of the coat, and outerwear was adorned with shiny spare electronic parts, standing in for studs of the past, for a robotic effect. Calming monochromes were central to the collection's mood: gray, silver, white offset by celestial purple, sky blue, and of



Italian fashion designer Donatella Versace acknowledges the applause of the audience at the end of the Versace men's Fall-Winter 2016-2017 show.



Models present creations for fashion house Dolce & Gabbana.





adaptability of men's fashion for women. A red velvety three-piece suit was worn in turn by both a male, then a female, model. Booties finished all the looks. Capasa said breaking gender barriers is an idea that drew him into fashion in the 1990s "and I think it is coming back."

Bowie, he said, has always been one of his icons. On Capasa's story board backstage was a Costume National photograph of Bowie from the early 2000s flanked by two wild wolves, looking, said the designer "like a Roman emperor. Even the wolves are subdued." "The magic, beside the incredible talent of his music, is that everything he touched became an icon. That is the meaning of a true artist," Capasa said. Capasa said he is fighting to protect his own creations against the "vampires" of fast-fashion that copy innovation, losing one battle against a copycat's powerful lawyers. "The only defense I have is creativity," he said.



Sicilian spaghetti western

The invitation to the Dolce&Gabbana show came with its own soundtrack, playing Ennio Morricone's "A Fistful of Dollars" when opened, clearly foreshadowing that the designers Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana had applied their Sicilian lens to the Spaghetti Western. The cinematically styled collection, titled "Sicilian Western" and inspired by Sergio Leone's popular 1960s films, had flashes of both of whimsy and danger. Light-hearted repeating motifs of cacti, crossed revolvers, a mustachioed cowboy and a saloon dancer were embroidered or printed on sweaters and shirts, as well as tailored jackets and suits, three-piece and double-breasted.

A bit more backcountry, a big furry brown coat recalled Leonardo DiCaprio clad in the skin of the bear that mauled him in "The Revenant." There were also bushy lambswool pants, worn with scoop-neck sweaters or thermal tops. Embroidery is emerging as an early trend in Milan, and the designers featured needlework on denim jeans, jackets

and shirts. Some models filmed the runway and fashion front-row as they displayed their wears, with the designers again upping their social media engagement by live streaming the films. Models in silken pajamas swarmed the runway for the finale, bringing sleepwear out of the bedroom and onto the street. Silken trousers were worn with thick-knit sweaters and pajama tops were tucked into straight trousers, completed with a bandanna knotted around the neck.

Super hero

German designer Philipp Plein taps the superhero in all men for next fall and winter. There's Bruce Wayne in an elegant tuxedo jacket with a not-so-discreet batman logo, carrying a leather backpack strapped to a skateboard. He soon transforms himself into Batman proper with a gold-embossed Batman logo on a sweatshirt with quilted shoulders. Luxurious backpacks carry the logos of Captain America and Super Man, while Spiderman graces a leather coat. Models carried leather-clad skateboards



Italian designers Stefano Gabbana (right) and Domenico Dolce greet the audience at the end of their show.

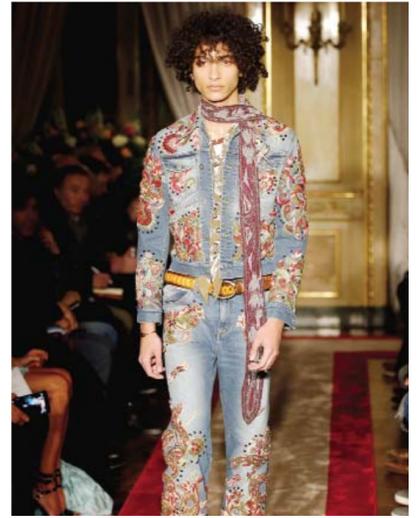


Models wear creations for Philipp Plein men's Fall-Winter 2016-2017 collection.

Fashion



German designer Philipp Plein acknowledges the applause at the end of his men's Fall-Winter 2016-2017 collection.



Models wear creations for Roberto Cavalli.



down a runway dotted with ramps traversed pre-show by professional skateboarders and BMX bikers.

The collection was heavy on leather jackets and trousers, alternating with comfortable, textured knitwear. The looks were finished with brimmed hats and studded footwear. Plein is the master of spectacle, and this season invited Lil Wayne to serenade the fashion crowd backed by an orchestra and laser show.

Rock 'n roll femininity

Peter Dundas' menswear debut at Roberto Cavalli embraced feminine touches in ways familiarized by Bowie, tempered with masculine features. Sheer shirts adorned with silver beading were paired with a tweed jacket, or silken floral scarves knotted below the neck with an open front polka-dotted shirt and suede jacket, and even an embroidered black velour jacket over corduroy flairs. Winter was a parade of luxury, from oversized animal-print furs worn

over Norwegian-patterned scarves and sweaters, to rich reptile-skin coats and jackets in contrasting stripes of color worn with jeans.

A long, sweeping coat draped casually cool over the shoulders, flowing down into open-slit arms, both evoked superstars of 1960s and '70s rock and contrasted pointedly with the crystal chandeliers and Canaletto originals in the Napoleon-era Crespi Palace where the show took place. Discordantly fitting, sneakers finished the looks.

Easy intimacy

Marni creative director Consuelo Castiglioni provided a carefree, easy menswear silhouette for next winter. Big overcoats had deep slits on the sides to create movement, while others were so wide they recall ponchos. Painter's shirts provided whimsy with their gathered necklines, unfinished hems, and button-down backs, left open to reveal layers, and worn with wide pants that narrow at the ankle. Pinstripes

clashed with each other, thick over thin on coats and shirts.

Castiglioni used casual necklines, favoring V-necks. A castorino fur stole provided serious closure to a suit. Winter colors included calming blues, military greens, burgundy and mustard. Shoes were neat leather high-top or low-top sneakers with pronounced treads in contrasting red and go-anywhere tan.

Repurposed uniforms

Rodolfo Paglialunga has reinvented the uniform for Jil Sander's next collection. A high-collared olive-colored wool coat drapes informally, taking its rigor from a cross-body harness that appears also on suits. Leather tunics, snapped together in panels, give a futuristic look, while sleeveless sweaters with oversized scarves hint at fragility. The color-scheme is a disciplined range of khaki, military green, gray and black, while fabrics are stiff, providing definition. — AP



Models wear creations for fashion house Marni.



Models present creations for fashion house Jil Sander.



JAPAN: Japan's car accessory company Garson displays the demo car Luxury Crystal Benz, the Mercedes-Benz SL600 with Swarovski crystals on the whole body, at Tokyo Auto Salon 2016 at Makuhari Messe in Chiba on January 15, 2016.—AFP

West Bank city's

only church keeps the faith in turbulence



Larisa Loukianova, a Russian Orthodox woman who married a Palestinian Muslim and moved to the West Bank city of Hebron 25 years ago, decorates her Christmas tree inside her home in Hebron.—AFP photos



Dmitry Dub, one of the six Russian priests living at the Russian Orthodox Oak of Mamre Church.



Father Eliseev, one of the six Russian priests living at the Russian Orthodox Oak of Mamre Church.

Father Eliseev enters the cavernous church, room enough for 200 people, yesterday. But he won't be giving a sermon today, nor any week in the foreseeable future. Eliseev is head of the only church in a city where there are almost no Christians. His Russian Orthodox Oak of Mamre Church is in Hebron in the Palestinian West Bank, a city holy to both Muslims and Jews, but which holds less significance for Christians. Hebron has also been among the areas hardest hit by a wave of deadly violence that began in October, putting the church even further out of consideration for pilgrims who might otherwise be enticed to see the site where tradition says Abraham met three angels.

But Eliseev, 46 with a round face and beard, argues the lack of Christian interest in the city is mistaken, pointing out that the church's gardens contain the Oak of Mamre, where Abraham's mystical meeting is believed to have occurred. "This is a very sacred place to me," he says, wearing a long black robe and traditional black klobuk on his head. "The relationship with this monastery is like a relationship with God." Hebron is in particular known for the site Jews refer to as the Cave of the Patriarchs and Muslims as the Ibrahim Mosque, where the biblical Abraham is believed to be buried.

Around 500 Israeli settlers now live near the site protected by an army buffer zone in the Palestinian city of over 200,000, a constant source of tension and violence.

Both Israel and the Palestinian territories are dotted with Christian communities, small pockets in most cities. But in Hebron that isn't the case—Bethlehem, 20 kilometers (12 miles) north, and Jerusalem, a further eight, are Christianity's holiest sites, but Hebron has far less importance. Eliseev compared the church's continued presence to some of Abraham's visits to the city, including when he overpaid for land where he intended to bury his wife Sarah. "People said (to Abraham) 'Are you crazy, where are you going?'"

Foreign pilgrims
The church itself is behind a gate on a bustling main road. A guard swings it open and a road winds past the oak to the church—an imposing stone building with two cross-adorned domes. Its famous oak looks nearly dead—propped up by a metal structure behind a fence. While outside Hebron bustles, on the grounds there is near silence. It is called a church, but is closer to a monastery. Neither Eliseev nor the five other Russian priests speak more than a few words of Arabic. They rely on Mohammed, a local Hebron resident who lived in Russia, to translate. Eliseev, who has been at the site since 2010, admits it can feel like they are forgotten. "People forget what this place is and why Abraham came here." But he will remain there until the church says otherwise. "Maybe I will die

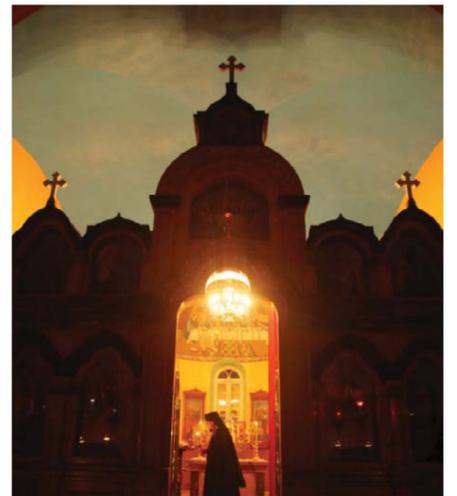
here," he smiles. Dmitry Dub, a 29-year-old priest, explains they rarely have reason to leave the compound.

"I occasionally walk into town for a shawarma (sandwich) or ride my bike," he said. It wasn't always that way. After the church was bought by the Russian church in 1868, a small number of pilgrims would come—from Russia but also elsewhere. After the Russian revolution of 1917, religion was suppressed and the church fell into the hands of the Russian Orthodox church overseas. In the late 1990s, after a decades-long dispute between the two rival Russian Orthodox churches, Palestinian security forcibly evicted the monks and nuns and handed it back to representatives of the Russian Patriarch in Moscow.

Christmas at war

On the night of January 6, a Wednesday, Father Eliseev did finally have a rare occasion to lead a communion service as the Russian Orthodox Church celebrated Christmas. But it came at a fraught time for Hebron. Since October 1, 152 Palestinians and 23 Israelis have been killed in violence across Israel and the Palestinian territories. Over half the Palestinians killed have been attackers in a spree of lone-wolf assaults, mainly with knives and mostly carried out by frustrated youths. Around a third of all incidents have occurred in and around Hebron, and the Ibrahim Mosque/Cave of the Patriarchs site has seen multiple attacks.

In response, Israeli forces have periodically stepped up their restrictions on movement, with night-time raids relatively common. "We are scared," said Larisa Loukianova, a Russian Orthodox who married a Palestinian Muslim and moved to Hebron 25 years ago, in front of her family Christmas tree a few minutes from the church. Unlike other churches in the West Bank, which are mostly attended by Palestinian Christians and have often overtly criticized Israel's occupation of the territory, Eliseev takes an apolitical line. Speaking before Christmas, he admitted celebrations would be smaller this year "because of the situation." "But should we (abandon) Christmas? That is wrong. But also to celebrate in a big way would be wrong," he says. "You need a middle way, like a Christmas in a war." They needn't have worried. On the night of the mass, six priests prepared the church for their guests. Three turned up.—AFP



A general view shows the Oak of Mamre, where Abraham's mystical meeting is believed to have occurred, outside the (PBUH) Russian Orthodox Oak of Mamre Church.



Dmitry Dub, one of the six Russian priests living at the Russian Orthodox Oak of Mamre Church.