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150 FILS | NO: 16766 | 40 PAGES

Turaiji slams KIA chief over press statement 4

Egypt president praises 2011 uprising, urges patience 7

Big dreams but little action for Manila's traffic nightmare 14

Costa checks 10-man Arsenal's title charge 20

MPs reject building of new churches in Kuwait

Panel approves 75% govt ownership in Kuwait Airways

Min 10°
Max 21°
High Tide 13:48
Low Tide 09:25 & 19:08

By B Izzak and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Municipality has initially approved requests to build new churches in Kuwait, but faces opposition from lawmakers and councilors. Islamist lawmaker Ahmad Al-Azemi yesterday said he and other MPs will reject the plan because this contradicts Islamic sharia laws. He said his rejection is based on constitutional and religious grounds since Islam is the official religion of the country and the main source of legislation, adding that Islamic scholars are unanimous in banning the building of non-Muslim worship places in the Arabian Peninsula.

Azemi's statement came after a top Municipality official said in comments yesterday that the municipality has allocated a number of sites for the construction of churches in the country. The official also said that the decision to approve the allocations will be made by the Municipal Council. The head of the council's technical committee Fahd Al-Sane said that the committee had not yet received any such request.

Council member and head of the Ahmadi committee Mane Al-Ajmi said that he was against building churches in Kuwait because of the awqaf ministry's fatwas against it. Head of the Capital committee Hassan Kamal said that the topic was not yet discussed by the council and that if all needed documents were in order, the municipality's primary approval would be taken into consideration.

There are several churches in Kuwait, while some churches are operating from leased houses. MP Azemi urged the government against taking decisions that are not accepted by Kuwait's conservative society.

Continued on Page 13

KUWAIT: Injured workers are seen after an under-construction school building collapsed yesterday.

20 workers injured in school collapse

KUWAIT: Twenty people who were injured in an under-construction school building in Sabah Al-Ahmad City have been taken to four hospitals by medevac planes and ambulances, the Health Ministry said yesterday. Injuries varied between bruises, spine, head and thigh fractures, Assistant Undersecretary of the Health Ministry for Supportive Medical Services Dr Jamal Al-Harbi told KUNA.

Earlier, State Minister of Housing Yasser Abul warned that anyone found negligent in the school collapse would face legal and administrative punishment. After attending a meeting with the parliament, Abul said that the Public Authority for Housing Welfare will investigate the incident. Wishing those

Continued on Page 13

Iraq summons Saudi envoy

BAGHDAD: Iraq's foreign ministry summoned Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Baghdad yesterday to protest his "interference" in the country's internal affairs over remarks on militia forces fighting the Islamic State group. Thamer Al-Sabhan is the first Baghdad-based Saudi ambassador in a quarter century, but while full diplomatic relations are restored, there is still significant hostility to Riyadh in some quarters and there have already been calls for the envoy's expulsion.

The foreign ministry summoned Sabhan "to inform him of its official protest regarding his media statements that represented interference in Iraqi internal affairs", it said in a statement. Sabhan said in interview with Al-Sumaria television that the Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary forces, which are dominated by Iran-backed Shiite militias, are not wanted in Sunni Arab and Kurdish areas as "they are not accepted by the sons of Iraqi society".

In a separate statement, the ministry said the foreign ministers of both countries had met yesterday on the sidelines of a conference in Bahrain and rejected Sabhan's remarks. "The Saudi foreign minister said these statements do not reflect the official position of the kingdom towards brotherly Iraq," the statement said. There was no immediate report of the minister's comments on the Saudi state news agency.

Continued on Page 13

SIDI BOU SAID, Tunisia: This file photo shows a Chinese tourist taking pictures on March 19, 2015 in this village some 20 km northeast of Tunis, a day after an attack on the Bardo National Museum in the Tunisian capital. — AFP

Arab nations eye China, locals to revive tourism

Record 3m people visited Qatar in 2015

MADRID: Arab nations are looking to Chinese visitors to revive their tourism sectors, battered by security fears, and also need to develop homegrown tourism as a lifeline, ministers from the region say. Bookings to nations in North Africa and the Middle East, which had been recovering after the Arab Spring unrest, fell last year following deadly attacks claimed by Islamic extremists in Tunisia and Egypt that caused foreigners to shun beaches and historic sites across the region.

But visitor numbers from China to Egypt soared last year despite a series of security blows to the country's key tourism sector in 2015 because the government began to allow charter flights from the Asian country, Egyptian Tourism Minister Hisham Zaazou said. The number of Chinese visitors to Egypt more than doubled from 60,000 in 2014 to 135,000 in 2015, "in a year in which we suffered a lot", he said at a conference on tourism policies in Arab nations at the Madrid international tourism fair Fitur, which wrapped up yesterday.

In September eight Mexican tourists were mistakenly killed by Egyptian security forces in the vast Western Desert. The following month a Russian airliner crashed in the Sinai desert shortly after taking off from the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, killing all 224 people on board.

Continued on Page 13

Amir to attend flag hoisting ceremony

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

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will attend and inaugurate a flag hoisting ceremony at Bayan Palace today. The event, due to be held at 10:30 am, will also be attended by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and senior state officials, according to an Amiri Diwan statement.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince is set to patronize the trophy-giving ceremony of the Horse Racing Championship at Kuwait's Hunting and Equestrian Club for the 2015-2016 season. Hunting and Equestrian Club Chairman Sheikh Dhari Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah will represent His Highness the Crown Prince at the event, to be held at 5:00 pm.—KUNA

Crown Prince receives Saudi official

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Seif Palace the presidential advisor of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities Abdullah Bin Mohammed Al Al-Sheikh, as well as Kuwait's Ambassador to Mexico Sameeh Johar Hayat. Earlier, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Crown Prince also received First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister, Finance Minister and Acting Oil Minister Anas Al-Saleh and Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. —KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives the presidential advisor of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities Abdullah Bin Mohammed Al Al-Sheikh. — KUNA

Ghanem rejects Iranian speaker's statements against Saudi Arabia

Speaker urges 'Islamic battle' against terrorism

BAGHDAD: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem yesterday objected a statement by Iranian counterpart Ali Larijani against Saudi Arabia, during the 11th conference of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC (PUIC) member states in Baghdad.

If the Saudi delegation is not present at the conference, "I, personally, and the Kuwaiti delegation, represent Saudi Arabia, and will not under any conditions accept interference in the Kingdom's internal affairs," Ghanem told the conference, quashing Larijani's statement. Ghanem stressed that the aim of the PUIC Baghdad conference is to bolster a unity discourse, not a divisive one.

BAGHDAD: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem speaks during the 11th conference of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC (PUIC) member states in Baghdad. — KUNA

Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament Salim Al-Jabouri is presiding over the gathering, which is attended by delegations from more than 40 countries, among them parliament speakers from Kuwait, Syria, Iran, Somalia, Tunisia, Turkey, Algeria, Pakistan, Mali and the Sudan. Iraqi President Fuad Massoum and Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi are attending the event, together with senior officials and Arab and foreign envoys to the country.

Cultural battle

Addressing the conference, Ghanem called for waging an "Islamic cultural battle" against growing terrorism. "As no country is now safe from terrorism, time is ripe for an Islamic cultural battle against this surging phenomenon," he said. He added that since terrorism could hit any country, all-out cooperation among Muslim countries against this phenomenon has become a religious, moral and human duty. "This cooperation cannot be restricted to security, though significant, as it should be a cultural one armed with science, justice, development, democracy, transparency, good governance, culture of human rights and teachings of the great Islamic religion," he said.

"We have to defeat terrorism by waging our real wars on illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, inequity, injustice, administrative backwardness, bureaucracy and corruption...the wars which we can wage through our parliaments, judiciaries, universities, libraries and research centers," he noted. However, the speaker warned that while terrorism is growing in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya and Egypt's Sinai and other areas, the central Palestinian issue should not be forgotten.

Threat to Islam

In his opening address to the 11th PUIC conference, Iraq's chief parliamentarian Jabouri urged the Muslim states to counter sectarianism and terrorism "that came to threaten Islam as a whole." He said that the ongoing conflict in the region is perilous, resulting from disputes among regional powers, and embroiled other countries, directly or indirectly.

Jabouri called for an overall settlement of the issue of the region through "some concessions" to realize, and guarantee regional and international peace and security. In the meantime, he urged the international community to offer assistance to Iraq in the face of "terrorism" which has deeply hurt the country, before further losses could be caused and a "disaster occurs." He also stressed the dire need for a national reconciliation in Iraq, through toleration among all spectrums of the society.

Meanwhile, Iraqi President Fuad Massoum urged the Muslim countries to extend further support to Iraq which is "facing a fierce attack" that distorts Islam and fuels sectarianism to divide Muslims, and arouse trouble with followers of other religions, he said.

Iraq, which is facing "terrorism putting on a religion cloak," is defending itself and the entire world, Massoum added, noting that his country has recently taken the initiative to defeat "terrorists and takfiris." (takfiri: is an Arabic word that indicates rejection of religious beliefs of the same sect or another.)

Preparatory meetings for the conference were held as of last Thursday, and the conference wraps up meetings today. On Saturday, President of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU) and Speaker of Kuwait's National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem chaired a meeting of the Arab Group in PUIC.

Representatives' election

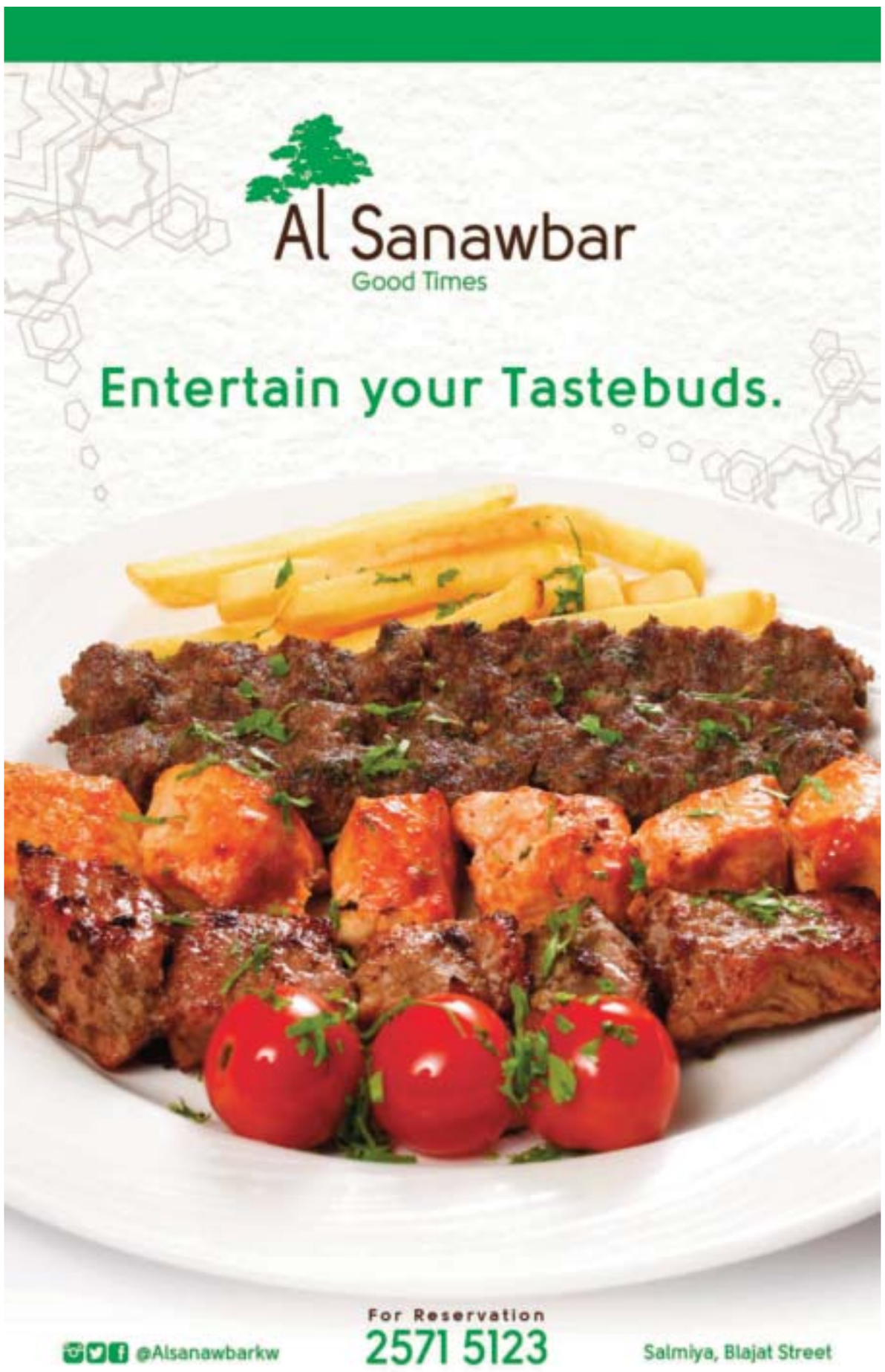
During the meeting, Ghanem declared the agenda of the meeting, including election of representatives of the Arab Group in the PUIC permanent committees, and shortly later ordered suspension of the session for 10 minutes to enable participants hold deliberations.

The conferees, after resumption of the session, elected by consensus Algeria, Lebanon, Sudan and Saudi Arabia as members of the executive committee. Mauritania, Palestine, Morocco and the UAE were chosen for the commission of political affairs and external relations.

Morocco, Bahrain, Iraq and Djibouti were given membership in the committee of economic affairs and environment. Mauritania, Jordan, Kuwait and Tunisia for the committee of human rights, women and family, while Syria, Oman, Egypt and Libya for the cultural affairs committee. Then, Ghanem called off the session.

Earlier on Saturday, Ghanem held talks with his Iraqi counterpart on sidelines of the meeting, the Assembly General Secretariat said in a statement released here. The two sides discussed means of boosting bilateral relations between Kuwait and Iraq, particularly at the parliamentary level, main topics on the meeting agenda, regional and international issues.

The statement added that Ghanem had also held talks with the first vice chairman of the Iraqi parliament, Hammam Hammoudi. The two meetings were attended by the second deputy of the Iraqi speaker, Aram Sheikh Mohammad, members of the Kuwaiti parliamentary caucus taking part in the PUIC meeting and the State of Kuwait Ambassador in Baghdad, Ghassan Al-Zawawi. — KUNA



Arab-Indian ministers' meeting reaches understandings on regional, int'l issues

MANAMA: The first ministerial meeting of the Arab-India Cooperation Forum (AICF) held in Bahrain yesterday has reached understandings on several regional and international issues, as well as bilateral ties.

The Manama Declaration issued by the meeting stressed the necessity of concluding a comprehensive and lasting settlement for the Arab-Israeli conflict, based on the resolutions of international legitimacy, and the two-state solution, namely establishing an independent Palestinian state on the pre-June 1967 borders, with Jerusalem a capital.

On Syria, the meeting underlined the importance of maintaining the country's unity and sovereignty, as well as concluding a political solution to the crisis there based on Geneva I and the two Vienna statements.

The Declaration called for providing further support to the Syria's neighbors hosting refugees, lauding His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for hosting the First, Second and Third International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria, over the past three years.

The Arab and Indian sides reiterated respect of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, of Iraq and Libya, as well as the principle of no-interference in their internal affairs. They condemned violence committed by terrorist groups in both, especially the so-called Islamic State (IS), against the Iraqi people. In addition, the two sides welcomed the Skhirat Agreement seeking a political way out for Libya.

Meanwhile, they voiced support to the Yemeni people's expectations for freedom, democracy and social justice, reiterating significance of full commitment to the country's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as no-interference in its internal affairs.

Moreover, the Declaration, reaffirmed the relevant UN Security Council resolutions supporting the legitimate government, and in the meantime, condemning unilateral measures by the Houthis that undermine political transition in the country. The AICF ministerial meeting, expressed support to peaceful efforts, including those exerted by the UAE to reach a political solution to the country's three islands sized by Iran.

In addition, they stressed that relations between the Arab countries and Iran have to be based on the principles of good-neighborliness and no interference in the internal affairs of each other, as well as respect of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, in addition to settling disputes through peaceful channels in line with the UN Charter and the International Law.

The Manama Declaration condemned the aggression that took place earlier this month on the Saudi embassy in Tehran and the Kingdom's consulate in Mashhad. They also held the Iranian authorities fully responsible for the protection of the diplomatic premises.

Executive program

Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah stressed that the meeting has developed harmony and agreement on many regional and international issues such as terrorism, Syria, Yemen and Libya. Jarallah told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after the conclusion of the meeting that all these issues which were discussed with the Indian side were understood as they expressed their willingness to work with the Arab side to face these challenges.

He pointed out that the existence of an executive program between the two parties, besides the Manama Declaration, which was approved together, will constitute a future road map for the Arab and the Indian groups. The minister added that the Arab group has a special historical relations with India, due to the awareness of India's importance on the regional and global level.

Meanwhile, Jarallah noted that the Arab countries are working to strengthen cooperation with India in many fields, due to India's enormous economic bloc which can create economic and commercial relations with the Arab countries.

Fight against terrorism

Jarallah had stressed the importance of Arab-Indian dialogue as a path to cooperation on the fight against terrorism and issues of mutual concern. "Recent developments in Syria, Libya and Yemen, the tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia and increasing international terrorist attacks are threatening security and stability everywhere," Jarallah said during the ministerial meeting.

The minister also mentioned the recent attacks on the Saudi Embassy in Iran, and the Iranian occupation of Emirati islands that is leading to further tension in the region. "We Arabs look forward to cooperate with India in facing such challenges and benefitting from the country's role in resolving international issues," the official said.

Jarallah also noted the strong historical ties between Kuwait and India on all levels. He also added that trade exchange between the two countries is currently estimated at $18 billion dollars. Moreover, the two sides share a strong economic partnership, as trade balance between them has jumped from about $5 billion in 2011 to about $50 billion in 2014, said the minister.

$200 billion

In the meantime, Bahraini Minister of Foreign Affairs Khalid bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa said that trade exchange between the GCC states and India was recorded at $200 billion in 2014. The FM, meanwhile, stressed on the importance creating further cooperation between the two sides. He also called for expanding permanent and non-permanent membership in the Security Council, to equally allow all world powers to represent their regions and play effective roles in resolving issues.

Furthermore, Secretary General of the Arab League Nabil Al-Araby hoped India would play a role in supporting Arabs' efforts in the Palestinian Cause. Israel is violating holy monuments including mosques in Palestine and expanding its settlements, he said, adding that international laws issued on the case are not yet implemented or respected by Israel.

No mediation

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the meeting, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir said that the situation of Saudi-Iranian relations does not require mediation as Iran knows well what it exactly should do.

Jubeir said several countries have asked to act as facilitators between Riyadh and Tehran, but "there is no need for that as Saudi Arabia knows its own position very well and Iran also knows what it is required to do".

"Once Iran does what it should do, there will be no need for mediation," he said, accusing Tehran of supporting terrorism, adopting hostile policies against the Arab world, poking its nose into the affairs of Arab countries and fomenting sectarian strife.

The Saudi foreign minister reiterated that several Iranian officials and organizations are involved in terrorist activities. He urged Iran to change its policies in dealing with its neighbors and to observe the principle of good-neighborliness instead. —KUNA

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Ahmad Al-Hassan

Ministry announces partial opening of Jahra Road mainline

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Public Works announced yesterday the partial opening of one of the largest elevated road projects in the world, the Jahra Road Development Project. The joint venture of Pace and Louis Berger are the consultants on this mega-project, with The Arab Contractors undertaking the contracting works. The opening, which commences at the intersection of Jahra Road with Al-Jahez Street, and until just after the United Nations Roundabout, will significantly ease the flow of traffic in that area.

Engineer Ahmad Al-Hassan, the Assistant Undersecretary for Road Engineering Affairs at the Ministry of Public Works, commented: "This opening marks a major milestone for the project, and in Kuwait's strategic plans to reduce traffic congestion in vital areas. In addition to easing the flow of traffic, the partial opening will result in road users having a greater ease in movement. The total distance of the opening extends 4km and is accessible by ramps in both directions, drivers will be able to bypass the UN roundabout and the hospital road. Work is ongoing on the remaining sections of the project."

"We work closely with a number of governmental bodies, and for this opening we have been actively involved with the Ministry of Interior and the General Directorate of Traffic. Inspections were undertaken to ensure that all safety standards and necessary opening procedures were met. With more openings expected this year, there will be visible significant improvements on the Jahra Road and its surrounding areas," added Yasser Boudastour, Project Engineer at the Jahra Road Development Project.

This mega project involves the construction of 17.7 km of viaducts (7.3 km of mainline Jahra Road, 2.4 km of bridges on linked roads and 8.0 km of ramps), including a trough at the 2nd Ring Road intersection, 10 pedestrian bridges, and service roads. The Jahra Road project also includes major utility relocation and works, such as 3.5 km of storm water box culverts, 33 km of water lines, 8.0 km of sanitary sewer, 51 km of electric cables, and 12 km of communication ducts.

'Fintas Group' case adjourned

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and A Saleh

KUWAIT: The criminal court yesterday adjourned hearing the 'Fintas Group' case to allow the defendants' attorney to make his final argument. Thirteen people including media figures, lawyers and ruling family members are accused in the case of slandering the government and some state departments. The next hearing was set for March 6, 2016.

Scholarships remain

The Civil Services Commission (CSC) strongly denied rumors about suspending masters and PhD scholarships, underlining that no decision had been made yet in this regard. The denial was made through CSC's Twitter account.

Suicide attempt

A 44-year-old female citizen was rushed to Jahra Hospital for treatment after she consumed pesticide in an attempt to kill herself over family disputes. The woman was subjected to gastric lavage and survived the attempt, said security sources, noting that a case was filed pending further investigations.

Maid accused of theft

A citizen reported that his housemaid vanished after stealing jewelry and cash from his house, said security sources, noting that eyewitnesses said that the maid had taken advantage of her sponsors' absence and let her boyfriend into the house before they both disappeared. A case was filed and a search is on for the suspects.

Turaiji slams KIA official over press statement

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Chairman of the parliament's public funds protection committee MP Dr Abdullah Al-Turaiji slammed statements made by the Kuwait Investment Authority's (KIA) Managing Director Badr Al-Saad, noting it was very sarcastic against MPs and their rights to use their constitutional tools.

Saad had urged Turaiji in a press statement to approach the public prosecution with accusations in which the lawmaker claimed that he sold his brother 20 percent of a company's shares illegally.

Turiaji quickly responded to Saad, saying in a statement: "Will the finance minister approve such statements making fun of lawmakers? Will His Highness the Prime Minister accepts them and will lawmakers themselves accept them?" Turaiji asked, saying Saad had suddenly found himself in a critical situation due to 'parliamentary follow-up of his multiple mistakes and violations'.

MP Dr Abdullah Al-Turaiji

"It seems that Saad felt bad about the exposing of his violations. We highlighted these violations pending Saad's actions to undo them," added Turaiji, noting that instead of refuting such accusations, Saad used many slogans. "How can we trust someone who has been selling public properties to his brothers and close acquaintances?" he wondered.

Notably, Saad had earlier called on Turaiji to act upon his keenness on protecting public funds and the related law number 1/1993 and file a report to the public prosecution about the 'alleged' accusations. "According to MP Dr Abdullah Al-Turaiji's statements, he is not talking about suspicions - he is rather talking about confirmed facts, which means that he alone has all the proofs and documents proving a crime, and thus he should respect the oath he made and show abidance of article 18 of the public funds protection law by filing a report with the public prosecution, which is the shortest and most effective way if his goal is to protect public funds," Saad said in a statement distributed to newspapers yesterday.

Mobile clinic boosts diabetes awareness

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Under auspices of Health Minister Dr Ali Al-Obaidi and with the attendance of his assistant undersecretary for technical affairs Dr Qais Al-Dowairi, the Ministry of Health (MoH) yesterday launched a mobile clinic to boost public awareness about diabetes. Notably, diabetes is one the most serious challenges facing health facilities in Kuwait, that has been ranked third worldwide in the percentage of people with diabetes.

Kuwait determined to operate direct flights instead of transit

MANAMA: The Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) is determined to restore its market quota by cancelling transit flights and working on direct ones (point to point) to its destinations, KAC CEO Rasha Al-Roumi has affirmed.

Speaking at a news conference held by the corporation on the sidelines of the 2016 Bahrain International Airshow (BIAS) on Saturday, she added depending on direct flights will be in favor of all destinations and will create a good competition. She revealed that the corporation will appear in a new look to cope with the coming period, but will maintain the same slogan.

Asked about the participation in the BIAS, she said the company is taking part in such an event for the first time and this is a new achievement. In a reply to reporters on meeting commitments amid the continued decline in oil prices, Al-Roumi stressed that the corporation meets its financial commitments regularly without any delay.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Al-Sharhan, a KAC senior official, said the company's financial performance improved during 2014 and indicators in 2015 gave better results, expecting that financial data of 2015 would be announced in February. He revealed that about ten 777-300ER passenger aircraft from manufacturer Boeing will arrive in Kuwait next November and 15 A320 aircraft in 2019-2022, noting that some 10 A350 aircraft will be added to the fleet in 2020-2022. —KUNA

Housing projects unaffected

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Housing Affairs Yasser Abul asserted yesterday that housing projects will not be affected by the rationalization of the general state budget, especially that the budget for projects included in the development plan has already been earmarked. The minister said in a statement to reporters after the parliamentary priorities committee meeting that the electrical work in the new housing projects are ongoing in accordance with the agreed schedule with the Ministry of Electricity and Water.

CPI increased by 3.03%

The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) for the month of December 2015 showed an increase of 3.03 percent compared to the same period of last year, the Central Statistical Bureau said in its report yesterday. The monthly report added that the country's inflation rate increased during last December 0.87 percent compared to the previous month.

The monthly price index figures during the month of December 2015, also recorded in seven major influential groups an increase, while two groups witnessed a decrease, and another two were stable.

Coupons for needy people

Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) yesterday announced it would distribute coupons on some 1,500 needy families inside the country in coordination with the Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation. KRCS' Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer said that the beneficiaries have the option to determine the cooperative societies they need to shop from after the agreement with those co-ops to facilitate the shopping procedures of the beneficiaries. —KUNA

Legalese

Common questions regarding divorce in Kuwait

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

Law can be a very negative career and that is because when things get tough, the toughest get a lawyer! Something that is very difficult for many lawyers dealing with family disputes. No one wants to see a family split up or argue. It is a horrible sight and I can only imagine how much harder it is for the family members to find a lawyer and understand the actions and consequences. I am not a professional at family law but there is an increasing concern as divorce statistics rise to unprecedented levels in Kuwait. I have been getting a lot of inquiries and therefore I decided to put together the most common basic concerns and answer them from a practical point of view and not necessary theoretical and as always I have carefully chosen simpler words that are not necessary diplomatic or legal, but are understood by the general layman and therefore the most amount of readers can benefit from this article.

Divorce without notice

Question: My husband and I split up a long time ago. He keeps threatening me with divorce. I heard in Kuwait a man can divorce a woman without her presence is this true? How do I know if a divorce has been filed against me?

Fajer: When one of the parties involved files for divorce, the other party is notified through an actual physical paper that I will refer to as a notice. The notice is delivered to your address were you will need to sign that you have received the documents. If, for some reason the notice did not reach you, or let's say someone signed on your behalf, you could always go to the Ministry of Justice and check if there is any case against you and this goes for all other cases and not just divorce.

Length and counselors

Question: I also heard that divorce generally takes a very long time, is that true? What should I expect?

Fajer: It really depends on the circumstances. If there was any physical abuse, if there are kids involved, the court where you married, if the husband and wife are agreeing to disagree or not and so on.

Something to keep in mind though is that the judge will not look into the divorce without referring you to a marriage counselor first. There is a team of experienced professional counselors that aim to have both parties work on the marriage. Sometimes a partner doesn't want to cooperate or both parties agree not to go to counseling, if that's the case then a paper is signed by both parties and is taken back to the court where the proceedings would start. I know quite a few married couple who were determined to obtain a divorce but came out of the marriage counseling program to reevaluate their marriage.

After counseling the case is taken to court, the divorce settlement is purely for the divorce, it won't include other disputes like custody of a child, money settlements and so on. If there is no cooperation from both sides if can take a really long time, up to a year, if not longer.

Dowry and settlements

Question: When we first married I was told that I will receive a dowry from my husband and also a payment of money should we get divorced, is this true?

Fajer: This depends on what you agreed upon when you got married. It should be stated clearly on your marriage certificate. For example let's say you agreed to KD 1,000 as a dowry and another KD 1,000 should you get divorced. These amounts are to be paid by the husband to his wife. If your husband did not pay you, you can file a lawsuit to obtain these amounts. Please note that this is a separate case all together. Separate of the divorce, therefore most lawyers will charge extra fees to do so.

Expat wives and visa issues

Question: I am not a Kuwaiti citizen but I have been married to a Kuwait man and now that we are filing for divorce I am worried about my legal status/visa, how can I keep my visa, if my husband is no longer my sponsor?

This question also depends on whether you have children and whether you are their sponsor, then obtaining a visa should be easier. But let's assume you don't have children and once the divorce is finalized your former husband will no longer be your sponsor, what can you do? Unfortunately in this scenario you will have to obtain a working visa to stay in Kuwait. You will have a few months after your divorce to change your status.

I hope the questions above helped answering the basic inquiries of divorce, I will get into the details of child custody in a near future post.

For any legal questions or queries, email ask@fajerthelawyer.com.

KILS opens registration for UN Model Conference

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Kuwait International Law Society (KILS) announced the opening of registrations for the United Nations Model Conference which will be held from March 3 to 5, 2016 at the Gulf University for Sciences and Technology (GUST). "KILS is the first professional club founded at the Faculty of Law at Kuwait University and it is an independent student society that aims to improve academic work. KILS is not a member of any student political party in the Faculty of Law or the National Union of Kuwait Students," said Noora Al-Roudhan, President of KILS and head of the organizing committee, during a press conference.

KILS is the Kuwaiti branch of the International Law Society which is a global organization. "This organization has a branch in all prestigious universities that teach law around the world, so we thought it should also have a branch here in Kuwait. KILS was founded in Nov 2012. The upcoming conference is a mini model and simulation of what's happening in different committees of the UN," Roudhan added.

Third edition

This will be the third edition of the conference. "The first edition of this conference was held in 2014 and only consisted of two committees representing a model of the Arab League. The conference was presented in both Arabic and English, and it discussed the most important Arab issues. Last year's conference (2015) represented the UN and it included four committees - two in Arabic and two in English - that discussed international political events. It was held in cooperation with the Higher Commissioner of the UN in Kuwait and it took place at their premises. It was the first-of-its-kind event hosted there," explained Roudhan.

This year's conference is targeting 300 students from inside and outside Kuwait. "The students will be divided in nine committees - five Arabic and four English. The inaugural session will be held on March 3 at GUST and will be attended by Sheikh Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, who will speak about his diplomatic and political experience as former foreign minister. We also have a parliament committee that will hold its first session at the Kuwait parliament, which will be attended by Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. It will only be attended by Kuwaiti students," she pointed out.

Cultural sense

"This conference aims to raise the cultural sense of students about important issues and increase the oratory skills of participants in front of the audience, in addition to teaching them the principles of debate and convincing the other party," Roudhan said.

The registration to participate in this conference will open from Feb 7 to 17, 2016. "Personal interviews will then be conducted with the applicants, and those who pass will pay nominal fees and will participate in training workshops. This year's conference will discuss important issues such as the definition of 'terrorist', especially after Kuwaiti citizens were detained at Guantanamo for years without a trial. It will also discuss the issue of Syrian refugees, the issue of drinking water, and the effect of arms companies on the security of the community. The parliament committee will discuss the drop in oil prices and finding alternative economic sources, and the amendment of the nationality law," concluded Roudhan.

KUWAIT: US Ambassador to Kuwait Douglas Silliman visits the Green Flames Gas Company Booth at the Horeca Kuwait 2016 exhibition.

US Ambassador visits Green Flame Gas Co booth at Horeca exhibition

KUWAIT: US Ambassador to Kuwait Douglas Silliman visited the Green Flames Gas Company Booth at the Horeca Kuwait 2016 exhibition. The Horeca show was held in Kuwait at the Jumeriah Beach Hotel, between the 18-20 of January 2016. The US Ambassador and his wife were pleased for the activities at the show, stating the importance for such a specialized exhibition while enhancing and supporting the Commercial Trade and the Government Development Plan.

Chairman of the company Bashar Al-Qattan had the pleasure to greet Silliman and his wife's visit. During the discussion the US Ambassador appreciated the importance of The Green Flame Gas Company in executing the Mega Project in Kuwait such as The Avenues Mall that has used 60 percent of US made materials. Silliman has cherished The Green Flame Gas Company's choice is introducing the US made products in this vast Project, and setting an example for improving the Commercial Trade between the USA and Kuwait.

Qattan has mentioned the importance of participating of The Green Flame Gas Company at the Horeca Show. It emphasized the organization of the show and the exhibitors that offer the latest hospitality in Hotel Technology. It also mentioned that The Green Flame Gas Company is one of the leading Companies that specializes in Design, Execution, and maintenance of Gas pipe Lines in Kuwait and the G.C.C countries. The Green Flame Gas Company executes its network as per the international standard, we carry out works such as Private Villas, Commercial Malls, Hotels, Restaurants, Factories and Catering Companies that are also the agents for 14 International Companies in the field of Gas. At the conclusion of this statement Eng. Bashar mentioned the G.F.G.C is a certified ISO 9001-2008 and member of International Code Counsel since 2007 and N.F.P.A. member since 2008. The company is leading in Project timing and precise specification in the Execution of its projects. The Company is 10 years old and has achieved all of the past mentioned, and considered to be one of the First Companies specialized in Gas Piping.

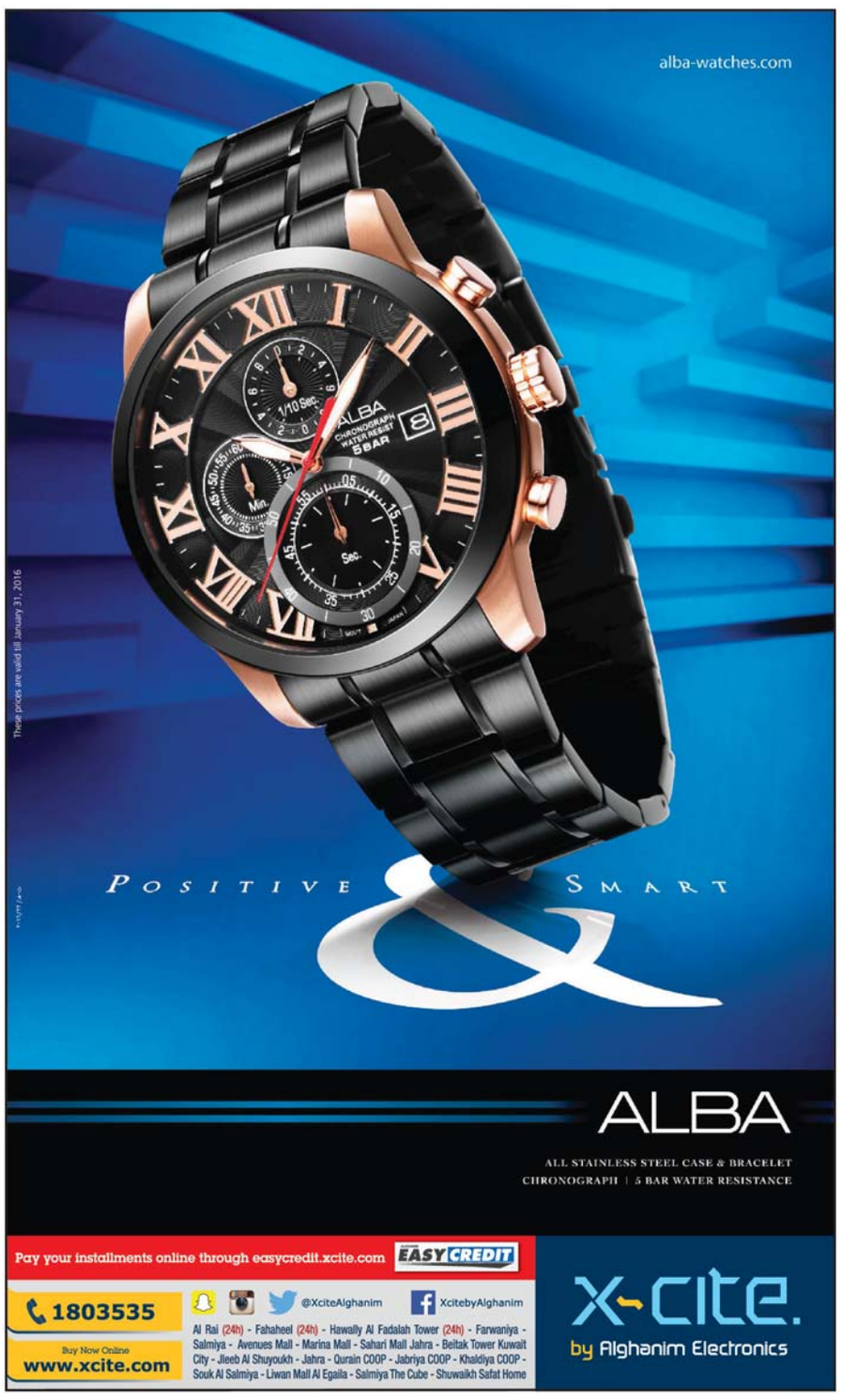
GUST to represent Mideast in final anti-extremism contest

KUWAIT: A team of five Kuwaiti students from the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) is to head to Washington DC in February to participate in the final stage of an anti-extremism competition as part of an initiative by US state bodies after winning the preliminary stage in Kuwait, US Ambassador to Kuwait Douglas Silliman said yesterday.

"The GUST team is one of four international universities that is going to go to the United States in the next week to finish the competition and also to participate in programs in Washington DC, New York City, and San Francisco," Ambassador Silliman addressed the attendants at the GUST Auditorium for the students' presentation of their qualified campaign.

During the fall semester 2015, students; Yousef, Ghalia, Hanan, Fatima, and Salem took part in the "Peer 2 Peer (P2P): Challenging Extremism" initiative, sponsored by the US Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs, Department of Education, and State Department. The program, which is also facilitated by EdVenture Partners, tasked student teams to develop campaigns and strategies on various social media networks in order to counter the presence and effectiveness of violent extremists' online messaging.

"The State Department has had a competition that involved 45 universities from the United States and around the world to find ways to get the message to youth about peace and tolerance, and the need to expand them in the world," the US diplomat stated to KUNA. GUST's students were one of four international teams selected to participate in the Facebook Global Challenge finals which will be held in Washington, DC on February 3rd, he indicated. "The group from GUST has won the competition for the Middle East and will be the only university from the Middle East region going to Washington in February to participate in the final evaluation and competition," he said, noting that the five Kuwaiti students will also take part in the P2P final presentation at the State Department. — KUNA



Fare conditions: Selling Period: All year-round. Travel Period: January 18 to December 10, 2016. Subject to seat availability. Fare is subject to change due to currency conversion rate. Fare is not guaranteed until final purchase. All-in economy roundtrip fare is quoted per person. Fare includes government taxes, other charges and fees that are collected at the airport. Terminal fee is collected at the airport. Taxes are approximate. Breakdown of taxes and fees can be viewed at philippineairlines.com. Fare is valid for a minimum stay of 2 days and a maximum stay of 4 months. Ticket is non-refundable. Change fee is KWD25 per transaction. No-show fee is KWD23 per sector. Infant fare for infant without a seat under 2 years is 10% of adult fare. Child fare is 75% of adult fare. 50% Mabuhay Miles credit. Quoted fare is rounded off to the nearest whole number. Other travel conditions apply. Baggage Allowance: Fare is inclusive of 7-kg hand carry baggage. Free check-in baggage allowance is 2 pcs. at 50 lbs. (23 kgs.) per piece. There may be additional fees for your checked baggage in excess of your free baggage allowance.

Al-Anbaa

Integrating students with special needs in education - Part I

By Dr Zainab Al-Hasawi

This article was previously published in another newspaper but in view of specialized readers' wish to know the strategy of vocational development for the directors of schools to be integrated in mainstream public education schools in detail, I intend to explain this strategy in several articles of which this is the first.

Integration is educating students with special needs in mainstream schools and providing them with special education services. Integrating students with special needs into mainstream schools has become an urgent social necessity because school is an individual's second environment and plays a great role in forming their characters, tendencies and developing their talents. Therefore, when all those elements reasonably combine, they will qualify and enable students of this category grow healthily into productive citizens instead of overburdening the state. Kuwait has shown special care for integrating students with special needs into public education as it started back in 1943-1944 when blind students were allowed to attend regular Kuttab classes at Al-Mubarakiya school that only taught Quran recitation at the time.

When the religious institute was opened in 1948, blind students attended regular classes with mainstream students and formed the majority of the students as four out of seven were blind students. Kuwait then experimentally integrated students with weak hearing in Mohammed Al-Shayeji primary school for boys in 1993-1994. The most important results of this experiment was that students with weak hearing surpassed their healthy peers and scored higher.

Accordingly, Kuwait is a leading country in terms of caring for people with special needs as law number 49/1996 pertaining caring for the disabled was issued and an independent authority was established under the name of the Supreme Council For Disabled Affairs, and then the name was changed to the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs as per law number 8/2010, which is under direct supervision of the first deputy PM. It is authorized to carry out activities needed to take care of people with special needs, rehabilitate them and integrate them into the society.

Many studies have been made on integrating students with special needs into mainstream schools with each focusing on a specific aspect on educational integration. For example, studies made by Nasser Al-Moussawi and others in 2006 and Lindsay in 2007 probed the process of education through integration in mainstream schools and the obstacles faced on application and assessed the main goal of integration through identifying the following: (a) integration programs followed in integrated schools, (b) the impact of the educational environment on academic achievement, adaptive behavior and self-concept, (c) public and special education staff's attitudes towards educational integration, (d) attitudes of mainstream students, students with special needs and their parents and (e) the negative side effects resulting thereof.

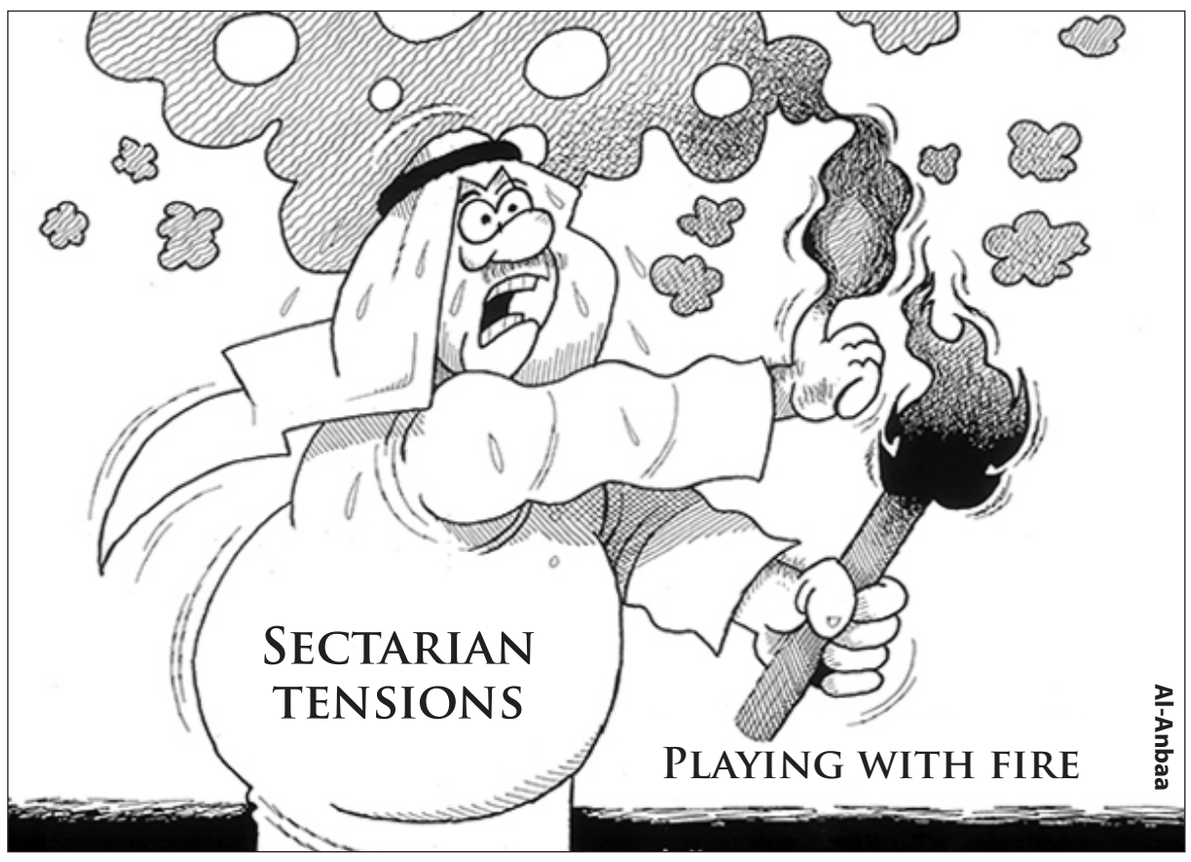
Results have shown that in terms of the learning environment, equipment and staffs, it is suitable to integrate students with special needs in mainstream schools and make the best use of them. They also showed that the integrated education environment had very positive impacts on both mainstream and students with special needs who both scored higher. In addition, students with special needs started to fit in and feel being accepted without discrimination by schoolmates, teaching staff and parents.

Having students from both categories in the same educational building increased educational and social interaction and provided chances for students to help and assist their peers with special needs, which in turn leads to individuals growing up with great social responsibility towards others. In addition, education based on integrating both categories would increase specialized staff efforts with the educational facility.

By reviewing some countries' experiences in applying integration in mainstream education, it is clear that societies become more balanced with stronger beliefs in education-based justice and equality on grounds that education is a right of all citizens without discrimination and not limited to the healthy.

Those countries have achieved different levels of success, and so the most important element needed to make integration work lies in MoE's need to apply vocational development programs on all public education school directors in order to qualify them to lead schools where students with special needs are integrated. This calls for a further question about vocational development strategies followed over the past three years in Kuwait in accordance to UN specifications adopted to fit the Kuwaiti society. (To be continued)

— Translated by Kuwait Times



KUFPEC Publishes 'Coral Reefs of Kuwait' Book

Commitment towards environmental awareness

Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) announced today the publication of 'Coral Reefs of Kuwait,' a book that explores the amazing diversity of marine ecosystems in the Arabian Gulf, shedding light on the multiple risks endangering the sustainability of the coral reefs of the State of Kuwait.

The publication of the 'Coral Reefs of Kuwait' book follows on the success of its predecessor 'Birds of Kuwait' book, released by KUFPEC two years ago. The 270-page 'Coral Reefs of Kuwait' is also the culmination of 8 years of research and underwater photography in cooperation with the non-governmental organization 'Biodiversity East' assisted by many professional photographers, experts and scientific research institutions inside and outside Kuwait.

"Our coral reefs are as important as any other natural resource and they must be protected and preserved for future generations", says KUFPEC Chief Executive Officer, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah. "KUFPEC," he added, "is committed to protecting and preserving our natural and environmental resources and ensuring the sustainability of our unique ecological diversity."

KUFPEC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), is an international petroleum company engaged in exploration, development, and production of crude oil and natural gas outside the State of Kuwait. It is currently active in 15 countries with 64 projects in the international upstream sector. KUFPEC continues to work aggressively towards meeting its targets and achieving its strategic plans, aiming to increase its production to 200,000 BOEPD with reserves of 650 MMBOE by the year 2020, while delivering value to the Kuwaiti oil sector.

Crime Report

Teens stab friend in Jahra

KUWAIT: Jahra police arrested four juveniles who beat a friend in Jahra and stabbed him in the chest. The victim was admitted to Jahra Hospital's ICU in a critical condition. The four suspects were sent to the juvenile protection department. The four said that they had previous disputes with the victim.

Harboring absconders

Residency detectives put an end to illegal activities of an Ethiopian man who ran a network of 47 males and females absconding from their sponsors' homes. They were all sent to concerned authorities. Information was received that a man harbored absconding maids and forced them on prostitution. When the information was confirmed, the arrests were made.

Harassers arrested

Four citizens harassed female shoppers in a Jahra mall and exchanged blows with mall guards who attempted to throw them out. Police received a call about a fight in the mall, so police patrols went to the scene, broke up the fight, arrested the four and took them to Jahra police station.

Pipe removed

Coastguardsmen pulled out a plastic pipe with a four-meter diameter that constituted a navigation hazard. The pipe was moved to a safe area. Concerned authorities are being contacted to collect the pipe.

Drug possession

A bedoon man was arrested by patrolmen while roaming in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh with five envelopes of shabu and drug paraphernalia. He was sent to the Drugs Control General Department for further legal action.

Boat stolen

A citizen sought the help of Fahaheel police and accused three Indians working for him of stealing a boat and fishing tools, along with money, and refusing to return it. Detectives are working on arresting them.

Pharmacy vandalized

A citizen was surprised to find her pharmacy vandalized, so she called police and filed a complaint at Salmiya police station. Criminal evidence men went to the scene, inspected the pharmacy and lifted fingerprints. Detectives are working on the case. — Al-Rai

Kuwait Plans $100 billion sovereign wealth fund

KUWAIT: Kuwait plans a new state-owned fund to manage as much as $100 billion in local assets with the goal of selling them to private investors in five to seven years, Bloomberg.com reported yesterday quoting Al-Anbaa newspaper.

The new sovereign wealth fund will include local assets managed by Kuwait Investment Authority, which has been burdened by its domestic mandate and will focus more on its international portfolio, Al-Anbaa reported, citing unidentified officials. Stakes in local companies, as well as power and water projects, will be included in the new fund, the paper said. Energy-exporting countries that amassed large financial reserves over a decade-long oil boom are exacerbating a collapse in asset prices by selling off holdings to meet their obligations, according to Jefferies LLC. Such nations are also shifting investment strategies with an eye on boosting returns.

Kuwait's plan to privatize utilities while removing domestic energy subsidies is intended to make its power and water assets more profitable for the fund and attractive to potential investors, Al-Anbaa said. Saudi Arabia plans to set up a sovereign wealth fund to manage part of its oil fortune and diversify its investments, according to Reuters.

Bankers discuss how to protect savings in times of recession

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait Chairman of the Board Ali Al-Mousa said all global reports point to the start of a world economic crisis, as its indicators began with the drop in oil prices and bourse collapses, especially in our region and Gulf bourses in particular.

He said in this regard, the search for investment opportunities has become a difficult mission for investors big or small, adding that the successful investor is the one who takes the opportunity of the economic recession and buys when others sell, bearing in mind that it should be according to a good reading of those investment opportunities to select the best available one that brings good returns.

Mousa said even KD 50,000 is not enough to invest. The citizen does not save money due to high inflation and a rise in the cost of living, adding that the number of citizens who have large capitals that are enough to invest has become limited.

Investment sector

He asked the government to pay attention to the private sector, and particularly the investment sector, because "we are not through with the repercussions of the 2008 financial crisis to enter a new one", and wondered whether the state needs private or investment sectors under the challenges it is facing. If the answer is yes, then the government must prove this through clear measures and new economic laws that allow the private sector to play an effective role in the local economy.

"We are suffering from the state's negligence of the investment sector in general, as there are 20 to 25 investment companies only who have human competences, good financial assets and follow a professional work model, and here the state must differentiate between these companies and those who form a burden on the sector. He said banks have started to avoid granting loans to investment companies, not because of lack of competence, rather became they became worse than "orphans". Banks are not social institutes - rather they seek profits through avoiding investment risks, so they are excused in not meeting the financing requirements of this group of companies," said Mousa.

Mousa said many countries including Gulf states supported the private sector during the world financial crisis in 2008 in order to rescue their financial systems. He expected a new financial crisis and said the state must take preemptive steps to find solutions before the economic situation worsens. When asked about the available opportunities which normally emerge from crises, Mousa said "there are not investment opportunities with regret, and one who has money must look for the best opportunities among the bad choices, as there is an investment rule that says: If people begin selling, buying will be good".

"He who sells is a person who is compelled to meet his financial commitments or one who is afraid, and naturally he is the worst seller as he does not deal with reality but ideas in his mind about coming crises," Mousa added. About the expected reflections of rising interest rates on the Kuwaiti dinar during 2016 as expected, Mousa said he does not expect the raising of interest rates in Kuwait three times this year as rumored, while the drop in oil prices does affect other countries, only Kuwait and countries that rely on oil for revenues. Mousa asked the government to explain its stand towards what citizens are afraid of, because the dinar maintained its price after liberation as it was before liberation due to a deliberate and declared decision, although many countries lose more than half of their currencies' value because of occupation. But the state persevered and "we maintained deposit accounts and there was strong confidence in Kuwait by other countries".

Bank deposits

Mousa advised investors, due to stock markets fluctuations and high risk factors, to go towards bank deposits because they are the most secure instruments despite low returns. Mousa advised investors to keep their savings in banks as they are 100 percent secure. He said investment in bank shares in the bourse is another thing that requires the ability of the investor to make decisions, read financial data and bear his investment decision. He also advised investors not to use all their savings in high-risk investments, because the more the profits, the higher the risks. About the effects of oil prices collapse on Kuwait and falling below $20 per barrel, Mousa said Kuwait can manage two to three years without exporting oil, and "we have this experience during the invasion, as Kuwait did not produce oil for one year and seven months and was able to overcome the crisis due to countries' confidence in it". He said Kuwait is the only country that does not put all its oil income in the budget, as it puts part of it the future generations fund.

Chairman of International Financial Advisors (IFA) Saleh Al-Selmi said during the 2008 financial crisis, 35 investors met then Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, as well as members of the legislative authority, and all problems resulting from this crisis were discussed, and "we demanded that they find the necessary treatment to avoid the dangerous problems of this crisis". The view was that the financial crisis' repercussions will not affect the public sector as much as the private sector. He said this sector had good financial reserves all along the years that preceded the crisis, but the money evaporated.

Selmi said the amount of that was managed by investment companies before 2008 surpassed deposits that were in banks, and this was out of investors' confidence in investments companies before the financial crisis. Selmi wondered about the government's will to have an effective role for the private sector, adding that if the government is serious in giving clear duties to the private sector, then there will be real opportunities.

Selmi said that during 2009/2010 to years following the financial crisis, the investment sector made contributions to the local GDP of nearly 14%, and now this has dropped to zero. He said the private sector has solutions to get out of the current economic situation due to its ability to provide job opportunities for the youth and transform the economy from welfare to a productive one.

He pointed to a defect in the employment system in Kuwait when 110 employees were terminated from the private sector during the financial crisis, they cost the state through support of national labor KD 7 million per year, but when the state took them, the figure jumped to KD 77 million. He said the middle class in Kuwait has started to disappear, and it's being looked down at.

Foreign factors

When asked about the Kuwait bourse as the largest investment vessel in Kuwait and the opportunities in it, Selmi said that the problem the bourse is suffering from is the result of foreign factors represented in the defect in the Kuwait economy on one hand and geopolitical conflicts in the region on the other, apart from the drop of oil prices, adding these factors combined led to this situation in the bourse.

Selmi said steps taken by the state to deal with the economic situation in general during the crisis years, such as the financial stability law and the deposits guarantee law and the national portfolio to support the bourse, proved ineffective. The deposits support law serves banks in the first place, and the goal behind it is not to face the effects of the 2008 crisis, as much as facing a crisis one of the banks had. As for establishing the national portfolio, it was a big mistake, because the Public Investment Authority does have rescuing the market among its authorities, but growing state savings, and with that it entered the market as an investing party that seeks profits.

About what he believes as a defect in the government's actions to cover the budget, Selmi said it resorted to imposing taxes instead of finding an added value to the local economy represented by production and diversifying sources of income instead of relying on one source of income, which is oil.

Real estate

Real estate expert and developer Hussein Al-Ghais said real estate is an integral pillar in Kuwait economy and has a lot of influence, though the size of real estate trading does not exceed KD 5 billion per year, which is an amount that is not considered big in the trading markets, but its importance and effect comes from affecting the citizen on a large scale, so its influence on the economy comes quickly in case of rises or drops. Ghais said "we can say real estate is going through a crisis since the start of 2015, and the value of real estate trading in Kuwait in all sectors is 27 percent compared with what was achieved in 2014, which is a very big percentage." He referred this drop to several accumulated factors, adding that the sector suffered two strong blows - in 2007, when the real estate sector saw very high prices, then in 2008, when it went down during the international financial crisis. The second blow was the mortgage law and imposing taxes on open lands and banning the private sector from development, and this led to a bigger problem, because the private sector was building many residential areas before the passing of the law. For example, 75 percent of South Surra area came from the request of real estate development for the private sector.

"Following these two blows, the real estate sector began to regain its balance. The average price of a square meter in South Surra, for example, during the crisis fell to KD 400 from KD 600 in 2007, then began to recover and reached an average price of KD 1,000 and above in 2014. He said the reason for this huge rise in land price is due to the real estate mortgage law and imposing taxes on lands which made land owners hike prices to pay taxes on the lands in order to make profits, in addition to the fact that the supply of lands inside Kuwait is very limited," said Ghais.

Meanwhile, looking at the real estate sectors, it is expected that the "commercial" and "investment" sectors will face problems during the recession that will cause many companies to go bankrupt, as the weak GDP will affect the state's general budget, and consequently affect the projects which will face difficulties if not halted, bearing in mind that those projects' foundations is infrastructure and real estate, besides the fact that real estate relies on returns, and there is no doubt that real estate returns will drop. The rent of commercial land will drop to prices equal to the rent of warehouses as in the past, as the price of renting a square meter in warehouses varies between KD 2 and 3 while for offices, the price is between KD 5 and 6. — Al-Anbaa

Kuwait Times
International
MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 2016

Hollande starts India visit, says jet deal will take time
Page 12

SYRIA REGIME ADVANCES AHEAD OF PEACE TALKS
Page 8

SISI PRAISES 2011 UPRISING, URGES PATIENCE

CAIRO: Egypt's president paid tribute yesterday to the country's 2011 uprising that toppled longtime ruler Hosni Mubarak, saying that protesters killed during the 18-day revolt had sought to revive "noble principles" and found a "new Egypt". President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi delivered his remarks via a televised speech on the eve of the fifth anniversary of the uprising. A recent spate of arrests and a heightened security presence in the capital Cairo have made clear Egyptian authorities' determination that the occasion will not be marked by popular demonstrations- or militant attacks.

Sisi said the 2011 uprising had deviated from its course and was forcibly hijacked for "personal gains and narrow interests". That was a thinly veiled reference to the Muslim Brotherhood, which has been banned and declared a terror group after Sisi, as military chief, led the ouster in July 2013 of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi, who hails from the Brotherhood.

The "June 30 revolution" - a reference to the day in 2013 when millions of Egyptians demonstrated on the streets against the rule of Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood - corrected the course of the 2011 uprising, Sisi said. The June 30 revolution, he said, took place to "restore the free will of Egyptians and continue to realize their legitimate aspirations and deserved ambitions".

Sisi, who came to office in 2014 after a landslide election win, cautioned against high expectations for democracy and freedoms. "Democratic experiences don't mature overnight, but rather through a continuing and accumulative process," he said, before emphasizing the need to exercise "responsible freedom" to avoid "destructive chaos"- rhetoric harking back to Mubarak's 29-year authoritarian rule, when he repeated assertions that gradual democratization ensures stability.

"Egypt today is not the Egypt of yesterday, we are building together a modern, developed and civilian state that upholds the values of democracy and freedom," he said of the 2 1/2 years since the removal of Morsi, Egypt's first freely elected president. Sisi has since presided over one of the harshest crackdown seen in Egypt in decades, detaining thousands of Brotherhood leaders and supporters as well as scores of the liberal, pro-democracy activists who fueled the 2011 uprising.

Under Sisi, rights activists say, the country's highly militarized police have resumed the Mubarak-era practices that played a large part in igniting the uprising, including torture, random arrests and, more recently, forced disappearances. Sisi supporters, however, say the ex-general has tirelessly worked to spare Egypt the chaos and bloodshed roiling regional neighbors like Libya, Syria and Iraq. —AP

CAIRO: A woman walks past an Egyptian policeman a day ahead of the fifth anniversary of the Jan 25, 2011 uprising in Tahrir Square yesterday. (Right) Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi gives a televised address from the presidential palace. — AFP

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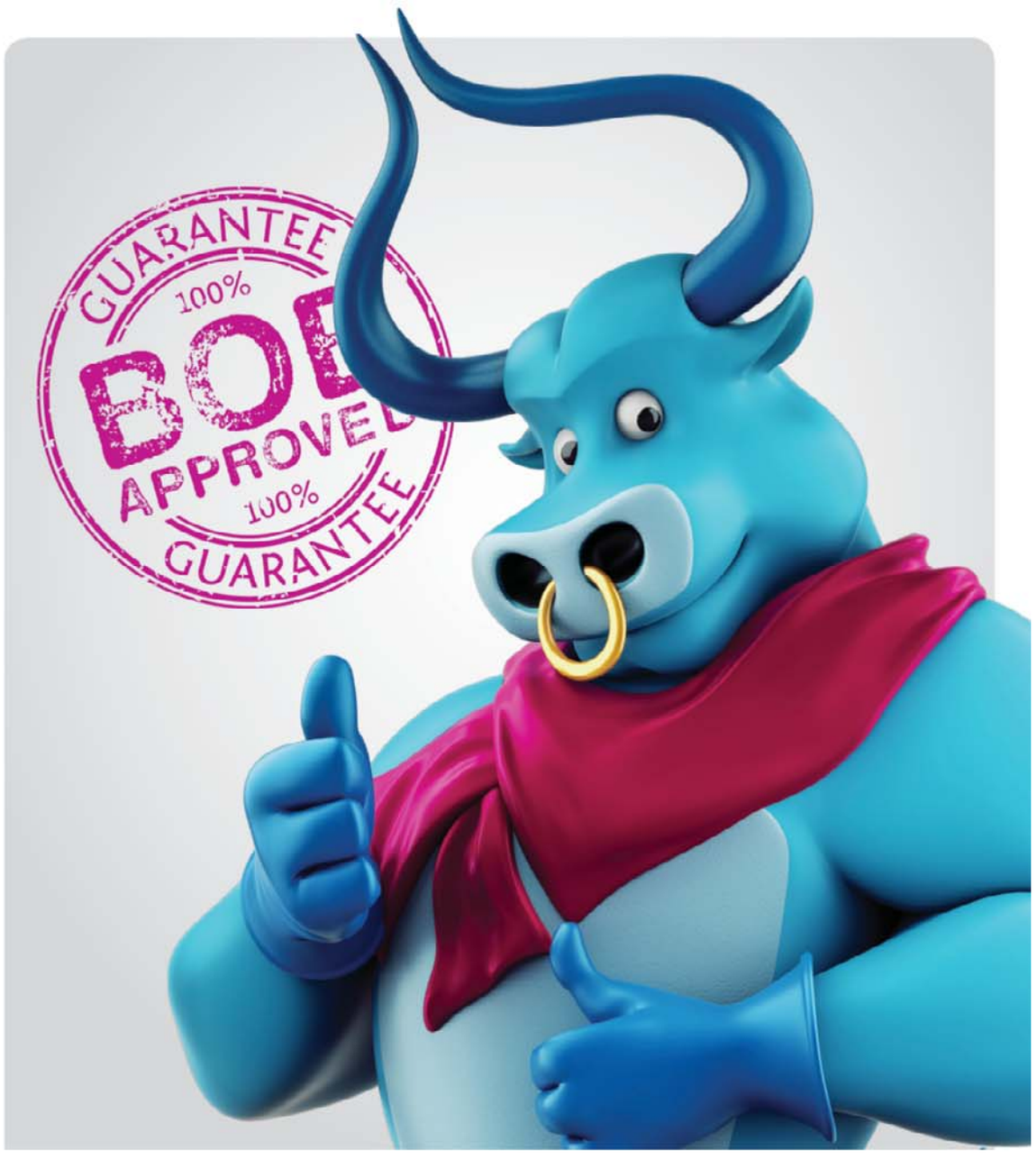

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Fourth prize
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- Free Camera Bag.
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Fifth prize
- Canon Camera EOS 760D + Canon EF 70-300mm f/4.5-5.6 DO IS USM.
- Free Camera Bag.
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Sixth prize
- Canon Camera PowerShot G15.
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All photos should be submitted at the Kuwait Times newspaper before 17th of March 2016.

Rules & Conditions:
- The competition is open to individuals of all ages.
- The submitted photos should be taken by the participant.
- 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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Bahrain oppn chief in trouble over tweets

DUBAI: The jailed leader of Bahrain's main opposition bloc, Sheikh Ali Salman who is currently serving four years for inciting disobedience, could face new charges over messages posted on Twitter. The Al-Wefaq chief has been "referred to the public prosecution following violations posted on his Twitter account", the authorities announced yesterday on the official BNA news agency. Al-Wefaq denounced the move, saying it "violates the Bahraini constitution and national law, as well as international covenants related to freedom of opinion and expression".

The Shiite grouping in the Shiite-majority but Sunni-ruled Gulf kingdom said Salman's tweets "focused on the values of peace and love". It said they shared quotes by American civil rights leader Martin Luther King "about freedom and justice". It was unclear whether Salman was himself tweeting from prison, or how. The opposition chief was sentenced on June 16 to four years after being convicted of inciting disobedience and hatred. An appeals court is reviewing that conviction, but the prosecution is demanding the annulment of his acquittal on the more serious charge of plotting to overthrow the regime and seeking a tougher sentence. A ruling on the appeal is expected on March 30. Al-Wefaq renewed earlier calls for its leader to be released "immediately". The group once held the most seats in parliament, but its 18 MPs walked out in 2011 in protest at violence against demonstrators during pro-democracy rallies.

Bahrain's authorities crushed Shiite-led protests a month after they erupted on Feb 14, 2011. The gap has since been growing between the Sunni authorities and their mainly Shiite opponents. Tiny but strategic Bahrain across the Gulf from Shiite Iran is home to the US Fifth Fleet, and on October 31, construction work also began on Britain's first permanent military base in the Middle East since 1971. — AFP

Taleban reaffirms authority of its Qatar 'political office'

DUBAI: The Afghan Taleban said yesterday that its "political office" in Qatar is the only entity authorized to carry out negotiations on its behalf, reinforcing the authority of the man who took control of the group amid a tussle over command following the death of longtime leader Mullah Mohammad Omar. The Taleban made the declaration in a summary emailed by spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid of a statement it made during unofficial, closed-door talks taking place in the Qatari capital, Doha.

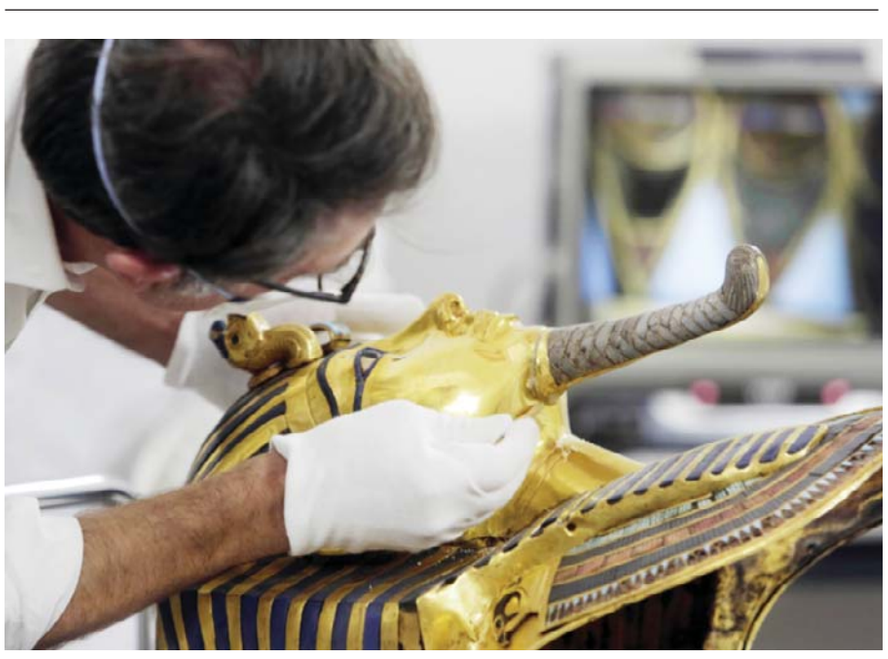
Calling itself the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan", the group also laid out a series of demands including the release of an unspecified number of prisoners and the removal of senior members from a UN blacklist. It described the demands as "preliminary steps needed for peace". The talks in Qatar are organized by Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, a Nobel Peace Prize-winning group focused on resolving conflict. Pugwash last year organized similar talks that were also attended by Afghan officials.

The discussions are separate from official peace efforts involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the United States. Those negotiations, which do not include the Taleban but aim to pave the way for talks between the militants and Kabul, are expected to resume in Islamabad on Feb 6. Earlier peace talks faltered last summer after the Afghan government announced Mullah Omar had been dead since 2013. That announcement prompted the Taleban to pull out of talks and led to a power struggle within the group over who would represent it.

Members of the Taleban's unofficial Qatar office are believed to be directly linked to Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, who officially assumed the top position after Omar's death was announced last year. He was previously Omar's long-serving deputy. The Taleban first opened an office in Qatar in 2013, but when it hoisted the white flag flown during the Taleban's five-year rule of Afghanistan it sparked outrage from then-President Hamid Karzai and the US. The move derailed a previous round of peace talks and led to the Taleban office being officially closed in 2013. Members of the group have remained in the oil and gas-rich country, however.

In 2014, Qatar helped American officials negotiate the release of captive US Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl in exchange for five Taleban detainees sent to Qatar from the US prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In its statement from the latest Qatar talks, the Taleban said it is serious about peace should it succeed in its aims of ending foreign intervention in Afghanistan and establishing an "independent Islamic system."

It said it is committed to "civil activities", free speech and "women's rights in the light of Islamic rules, national interests and values". The group added that it wants good relations with the world "on the basis of mutual respect". "We do not want to interfere in others' affairs, nor do we use our soil to harm others, nor allow others to interfere in our affairs," it said. The Taleban ruled Afghanistan according to a harsh version of Islamic law from 1996 until the US-led invasion launched after the Sept 11 attacks. — AP



CAIRO: In this Oct 20, 2015 file photo, German restorer Christian Eckmann begins restoration work on the golden mask of King Tutankhamun over a year after the beard was accidentally broken off and hastily glued back with epoxy, at the Egyptian Museum. — AP

Tut mask scratched, eight sent to trial

CAIRO: Eight Egyptians involved in a botched repair of the famed burial mask of King Tut, which was corrected late last year, were referred to a disciplinary court yesterday for "gross negligence" after prosecutors said that the golden treasure was scratched. The 3,300-year old mask, whose beard was accidentally knocked off and hastily glued on with epoxy in 2014, was scratched and damaged as a result of the amateur repair job, prosecutors said in a Sunday statement, which implicated the then-head of the Egyptian Museum and the chief of the restoration department.

"In an attempt to cover up the damage they inflicted, they used sharp instruments such as scalpels and metal tools to remove traces of adhesive on the mask, causing damage and scratches that remain," it said, citing an investigation. The eight now face fines and disciplinary measures including dismissal. The mask was put back on display last month after a German-Egyptian team of specialists removed the epoxy and reattached the beard using beeswax, used as an adhesive in antiquity.

A year ago, a museum conservator who was present at the time of the repair told the Associated Press that epoxy had dried on the face of the boy king's mask and that a colleague used a spatula to remove it, leaving scratches. Another conservator who inspects the artifact regularly also saw the scratches and said it was clear that they had been made by a tool used to scrape off the epoxy. They both spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of repercussions.

Restoration specialist Christian Eckmann said shortly thereafter that the cause of a scratch found on the mask had had not been determined, but that it could have been recent. The mask was discovered in a tomb along with other artifacts by British archeologists in 1922, sparking worldwide interest in archaeology and ancient Egypt. It is one of the world's most priceless artifacts and the best-known piece in the Egyptian Museum, a major tourist draw in Cairo that was built in 1902 and houses ancient Egyptian artifacts and mummies. Lately, King Tut has been at the focus of new archaeology and media buzz after British Egyptologist Nicholas Reeves theorized that Tutankhamun, who died at the age of 19, may have been rushed into an outer chamber of what was originally Queen Nefertiti's tomb. — AP

RABIA, Syria: Syrian pro-government forces inspect a building in this town in Syria's coastal Latakia province yesterday. — AFP

Syria regime advances ahead of peace talks

Senior Russian military officials oversee battle

BEIRUT: Pro-government forces overran the last major rebel-held town in Syria's coastal Latakia province yesterday, as the United Nations prepares to host talks this week on ending the country's nearly five-year war. State television said army forces, working with pro-regime militia, had seized control of the town of Rabia after heavy fighting with rebels. It was the second strategic victory for pro-regime forces in Latakia in less than two weeks, after government troops seized the town of Salma from rebels on January 12.

"In the coming weeks, we will be able to announce that all of Latakia - city and province - is free from armed groups," a Syrian army commander in Latakia told AFP. The army would use Rabia as a launching point for ground operations against rebel-held towns to the east in the adjacent Idlib province, he said. Rabia had been held by the opposition since 2012 and was controlled by a range of rebel groups including some made up of Syrian Turkmen, as well as Al-Qaeda affiliate Al-Nusra Front.

State news agency SANA said government forces were "combing the area to dismantle any explosive devices or mines planted by the terrorists". It said many rebels had been killed in the fighting but provided no other details. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Rabia fell yesterday after a regime advance that left the town surrounded.

Blocking Rebel Attacks

"In the past 48 hours, regime forces surrounded the town from three sides - the south, west, and north - by capturing 20 villages," Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP. He said senior Russian military officials oversaw the battle and that Russian air strikes "played an essential role" in the fight. With Rabia's capture, government troops are closing in on rebel supply routes through the Turkish border to the north, he added.

Armed opposition factions have used northern parts of Latakia province to carry out rocket and bomb attacks on the provincial capital along the coast. Backed by Russian air power, pro-regime forces are chipping away at that territory in a bid to secure the Assad clan's heartland. Rabia "is at the crossroads of supply routes in this region" leading northwest towards the Turkish border and further east to other rebel strongholds, said Syria analyst Fabrice Balanche. "By controlling this road, the Syrian army can block rebel movements towards the south, towards Latakia, and the rebels will have a hard time getting close and firing missiles at the (coastal) airport," he added.

Russia's air force has operated out of the Hmeimim military airport in Latakia province since Sept 30. The regime's latest advance came as world powers intensify efforts to reach a political solution to Syria's war. Representatives of the government and opposition are set to meet in Geneva this week as part of a UN-endorsed 18-month peace plan. But sharp disagreements over the makeup of the opposition delegation - namely, the inclusion of armed groups among negotiators - have slowed momentum.

Dispute Over Opposition

Yesterday, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said upcoming talks should include Islamist rebels, though not "terrorists and Islamic extremists". "Where do you expect to find moderate groups after more than five years of civil war, extreme violence and spreading brutalisation?" Steinmeier was quoted as telling the newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung. "I'm afraid we are past the point where we can really pick and choose all counterparts and negotiators," Steinmeier said.

The High Negotiations Committee, a Riyadh-based alliance of opposition groups including the National Coalition, has already announced three delegates it will send to Geneva. But it came under fire for naming Mohamed Alloush from the powerful rebel group Jaish al-Islam (Army of Islam) as chief negotiator. Syria's government regularly refers to Jaish al-Islam and other armed opponents as "terrorists groups" with whom it will not negotiate.

Staunch regime ally Moscow has stood by the government's demand, saying the opposition delegation should be broadened to include other groups, like Syria's Kurds. The talks had originally been due to begin on Monday but officials have said they expect a delay of a few days. On the Turkish-Syrian border, Turkish authorities have detained 23 suspected militants with the Islamic State group who were trying to cross over illegally from Syria. In a statement published yesterday, the army said 21 children were with the jihadists and were also being held.—AFP

No bomb found on flight from Texas

ISTANBUL/DUBLIN: A Turkish Airlines flight from Houston, Texas, diverted to Shannon, Ireland, yesterday was found to have no explosive devices on board and would take off to Istanbul soon, a spokesman for the flag carrier said. The plane, bound for Turkey's largest city, was diverted after a piece of paper with "bomb" written on it was discovered in the toilet, a spokesman for Turkish Airlines said.

Nothing was found in the search of the aircraft in Shannon, the Turkish Airlines spokesman said, adding that the plane would take off again to Istanbul. An airport spokesman said the Boeing 777 touched down without incident and all 209 passengers, plus crew, disembarked safely. "The incident is now the subject of a follow up investigation from an Garda Siochana (Irish police)," he said. Turkish Airlines has been targeted with a series of hoax bomb warnings over the last year. — Reuters

Teen Canada shooter charged with murder

MONTREAL: A 17-year-old male student has been charged with four counts of first-degree murder following a shooting spree that left two brothers and two teachers dead in western Canada, authorities said Saturday. The high school student was also charged with seven counts of attempted murder over those injured in Friday's rampage at a home and nearby school in remote La Loche, in Saskatchewan province, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superintendent Grant St. Germaine told reporters.

Prime Minster Justin Trudeau called the shooting "every parent's worst nightmare". Unlike in the United States, mass shootings are rare in Canada, where firearms are more regulated than south of the border. The teenager, who has not been named, is suspected of having killed two brothers - Drayden and Dayne Fontaine, aged 13 and 17 - at their home before going to a nearby school. There, he allegedly opened fire again and shot dead two teachers, 21-year-old Marie Janvier and 35-year-old Adam Wood, while also injuring seven other people, according to police.

He was taken into custody after police received an emergency call about "a person discharging a weapon in the community," RCMP superintendent Maureen Levy said earlier. The suspect was also charged with one count of unauthorized possession of a firearm, according to St Germaine. He is due to make a court appearance in the coming days. The possible motive for the crime was not immediately clear.

Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall called the incident in the small aboriginal community a "terrible tragedy ... unimaginable and surreal". — AFP

TEHRAN: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday greets a group of Revolutionary Guard officers who were involved in the detention of US Navy sailors earlier this month. — AFP

Iran arrests 100 over Saudi embassy attack

TEHRAN: Iran has arrested around 100 people over the attack on Saudi Arabia's embassy that led to Riyadh cutting diplomatic ties with Tehran, a judiciary spokesman said yesterday. "Since the attack, about 100 people have been arrested, of whom some have been released," Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejeie was quoted as saying by the official IRNA news agency. The ransacking of the embassy earlier this month "has been condemned by all authorities and we have taken immediate and serious action," he added. One individual was also arrested "abroad" and returned to Iran, he said. "He had given orders to certain individuals who entered the embassy," Ejeie added, without providing further details.

Demonstrators stormed and burned Riyadh's embassy in Tehran and its consulate in second city Mashhad on Jan 2 to protest against the execution of a prominent cleric from Saudi Arabia's Shiite minority. The Gulf kingdom and some of its allies the next day severed diplomatic relations with Iran over the incidents.

The Islamic republic's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Wednesday condemned the attack. "Like the British embassy attack before it, this was against the country (Iran) and Islam, and I didn't like it," he said, referring to a mob ransacking Britain's embassy in Tehran in 2011. President Hassan Rouhani also condemned the attacks as "totally unjustifiable" and called on the judiciary to put on trial those accused of being involved. Iran previously said it had arrested 40 people over the embassy attack in Tehran, and another four after the consulate was torched in Mashhad. — AFP

Storm-hit US digs out, travel woes continue

Record blizzard paralyzed NY, Washington

NEW YORK: Millions of people in the eastern United States started digging out yesterday from a huge blizzard that brought New York and Washington to a standstill, but the travel woes were far from over. The storm - dubbed "Snowzilla" - killed at least 18 people after it walloped several states over 36 hours on Friday and Saturday, affecting an estimated 85 million residents who were told to stay off the roads and hunker down in doors for their own safety.

Forecasters said the storm dumped more than 22 inches (56 cm) of snow on the paralyzed capital Washington and the 26.8 inches that fell in New York's Central Park was the second-highest accumulation in the city since records began in 1869. Near-record-breaking snowfall was also reported in other major cities up and down the US East Coast, with Philadelphia and Baltimore also on the receiving end of some of the worst that Mother Nature could fling at them.

With the storm finally tapering off overnight, officials in New York lifted a travel ban at 7:00 am Sunday (1200 GMT), restoring access to roads throughout the city and in Long Island and New Jersey. "You never like to disrupt transportation and commerce. However, the storm was fast and furious," said New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo. "So far, so good, but we have more work to do."

Forecasters were predicting an altogether more forgiving outlook for the remainder of the weekend in New York and Washington - blue skies and sunshine with temperatures hovering at about zero Celsius. However, there were concerns about lingering strong winds and melting snow, with streets in some New Jersey coastal towns filled with water and ice, raising the specter of flooding and dangerous black ice.

"This system dumped copious amounts of snow over West Virginia, Virginia, Washington DC, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. A few locations came close to, or surpassed all-time one-day and two-day snow records," said the National Weather Service. The fatalities occurred in Arkansas, Kentucky, New York, North Carolina, Maryland and Virginia, while more than 200,000 people were left without power at the height of the storm.

'Please be Careful'

Despite the generally better weather outlook, for many the hard work was just beginning and there was no immediate end in sight to the misery for thousands of air passengers. Nearly 3,500 domestic and international flights were canceled yesterday, adding to a growing backlog that had built up at major airports in New York, Philadelphia, Washington and Baltimore, which all ground to a halt at the height of the wintry onslaught.

Authorities said they were working around the clock to restore operations, with the first arrivals and departures expected later in the day in New York. But Reagan National and Dulles International airports in the US capital were expected to remain closed through yesterday, and buses and the metro system were also not due to return to action until today.

Back on the streets, plows struggled to clear large mounds of snow in an attempt to get New York and the eastern portion of the US back on its feet as soon as possible. Parked cars were buried under heavy snow and sidewalks were still impassable in places, as authorities scrambled to clear away the deluge for the start of the working week. "People want to start to go outside and start shoveling and clearing their walks and driveways," said New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, a Republican presidential contender who left the campaign trail to oversee the emergency response in his state. "This is very heavy snow so I ask that they please be careful as they clean up their own property today or their businesses."

It was not just the major cities that were hard hit. Snow and sleet also buffeted the southern states of Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, West Virginia and Virginia - unusual for the region. Nearly 150,000 power outages were reported in North Carolina alone at the height of the storm, emergency officials said. Yesterday, that number had been whittled down to about 50,000. — AFP

WASHINGTON: People take part in the DC Snowball Fight at Dupont Circle yesterday. Snowball fights have become a tradition after every major snowstorm in the US capital. — AFP

Alaska hit by 7.1-magnitude earthquake

WASHINGTON: A 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck southern Alaska at 1030 GMT yesterday, US seismologists said. The US Geological Survey, updating its earlier location for the quake, said it was centered about 83 km east of Old Iliamna. The USGS estimated it had a depth of 127 km. It was not immediately known if it had caused any injuries or serious damage.

Twitter however was awash with posts saying the shaking was pronounced and prolonged. "Everyone in Anchorage is awake and on Twitter right? Biggest longest #earthquake of my entire life. Family is all hanging in our bed now," wrote @jgrenn. Another Twitter user, @Shelbae97, wrote: "Thank Alaska for that earthquake," and posted a photo a broken mirror and other household objects flung to her feet. The Hawaii-based Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said there was no risk of a tidal wave "because the earthquake is located too deep inside the earth." — AFP

13 Costa Ricans die as ship sinks off Nicaragua

MANAGUA: Thirteen Costa Ricans died Saturday when a small ship carrying 32 tourists from Central America and the United States sank off Nicaragua's Little Corn Island in the Caribbean, officials said. Nicaraguan government spokeswoman and First Lady Rosario Murillo said that "of the 32 passengers, 13 lost their lives, all of them are Costa Rican". She said the other passengers survived and were taken to nearby Big Corn Island. The Corn Islands, made up of Big Corn Island and Little Corn Island, are located around 70 km off Nicaragua's mainland.

Although remote, they are becoming increasingly popular with tourists. Costa Rica's foreign ministry identified nine of its citizens who drowned, two of whom were US residents. It said in a statement there had been 25 Costa Ricans, four US citizens and three Nicaraguans on the small vessel, which got into trouble "after strong winds... on Little Corn Island." Media reports said the captain, who was also owns the vessel, was arrested after being rescued, as authorities began an investigation. —AFP

Despite patrols, sealing Greek sea border is near impossible

CHIOS, Greece: In the inky nighttime blackness, a small red dot appears on the radar screen, moving fast. "That's a smuggler," the captain of the coast guard's lifeboat says, swinging the vessel around and opening up the throttle, the boat cutting through the water on a frigid January night. But the lifeboat, designed for search and rescue operations rather than high-speed chases, is no match for the smuggler's speedboat. The smuggler ignores the searchlight, the shouts and the warning shots fired by the coast guard, deftly navigating his small white vessel onto a tiny patch of beach among rocks.

There he disgorges his human cargo - men, women and children risking their lives in a quest for safety and a better future in Europe. They use ropes to scramble up a cliff, heading toward a lighthouse on an island they are soon to discover is deserted save for an army outpost. They will spend a cold, wet, uncomfortable night there until the coast guard can send boats in the morning.

Hour after hour, by night and by day, Greek coast guard patrol and lifeboats, reinforced by vessels from the European Union's border agency Frontex, ply the waters of the eastern Aegean Sea along the frontier with Turkey, on the lookout for people being smuggled onto the shores of Greek islands - the frontline of Europe's massive refugee crisis.

Though smugglers are often arrested, the task is mainly a search and rescue role. Hours spent on patrol shows the near-impossibility of sealing Europe's sea borders as some have demanded of Greece, whose islands so near to Turkey are the most popular, if dangerous, gateway into Europe.

HARSH WEATHER

Some European countries - notably Hungary and Slovakia - have blasted Greece for being unable to secure its borders, which also form part of the external limits of Europe's borderless Schengen area. "We have been saying all along that if the Greeks are unable to protect the borders of their country, we should jointly go down south and protect them," Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said in November, with his Slovak counterpart Robert Fico echoing the thought.

But such calls ignore the realities at sea. No matter how many patrol boats are out in Greek waters, attempting to force a vessel of asylum-seekers back into Turkish waters is both illegal and dangerous, even in calm seas. So unless a Turkish patrol stops a migrant boat and returns it to Turkey, there is little Greek or Frontex patrols can do once it has entered Greek territorial waters but arrest smugglers, and pick up the passengers or escort the vessel safely to land.

The sheer numbers have been overwhelming. More than 850,000 people, most fleeing conflict in Syria and Afghanistan entered Greece by sea in 2015, according to the UNHCR. Already in 2016, 35,455 people have arrived despite plunging winter temperatures and days of stormy weather.

The island of Chios, second in the number of arrivals after Lesbos, has three coast guard vessels and Frontex reinforcements. "But when you have 50 or 60 (migrant) boats daily, you understand that these vessels can't cope," said Chios coast guard deputy head Commander Christos Fragias. "Both the crews and the vessels are strained from the overwork."

Those reaching Chios have been lucky. The island has seen few deaths - about four or five, Fragias said, out of 118,000 arrivals in 2015. Others have not fared so well. Two boats sank off the tiny islets of Kalolimnos and Farmakonissi Friday, drowning at least 42 people, including 17 children. In all, more than 700 people have died or gone missing in the Aegean Sea, in both Greek and Turkish territorial waters, since the start of 2015. The crew of Chios' lifeboat has performed dozens of rescues. "We make superhuman efforts. The five of us pick up 50, 60 people in 10 minutes," says its captain. Last year, they rescued nearly 3,000 people, he said. Coast guard crews cannot be cited by name as they are not authorized to speak on the record.

Racing across choppy seas to check on a dinghy sighting as the weather turns for the worse, the captain of one of the island's patrol boats described dramatic scenes of plucking struggling refugees out of stormy seas, where waves can hide victims from sight and maneuvering a pitching vessel in a sea full of people becomes precarious. "It's very difficult to save people in bad weather," he said. "If there are incidents at sea, we only have a limited capacity so we have to prioritize which boats are in danger."

JOURNEY

The dinghy he was called on to check arrived safely on a beach on southern Chios, so the captain turned the patrol boat north, heading to the deserted island that the smuggler was ferrying passengers to the previous night. By morning, 283 people, including dozens of children, a disabled elderly woman and an amputee await rescue. They will be transported to Chios, which will have received 1,026 people by the end of the day.

The patrol vessel and a Dutch Frontex speedboat take turns ferrying people in batches of about 25 to the nearby island of Oinousses, from where a large privately owned tug converted into a rescue boat will take them to Chios. Among the new arrivals was Faysal, a middle-aged man from Damascus who would only give his first name after fleeing Syria following kidnapping threats.

"It was a horrible, horrible trip," he said of the boat ride from Turkey, crouching on the patrol boat's deck, his hood pulled up to ward off the rain. "They told us it would take 15 minutes, but it took 2 1/4 hours." The smuggler waited at sea for an hour to evade a coast guard boat, Faysal said. "We have no sea in Damascus, we are not used to this. We were all sick, and the boat was full of water."

Once on land they lit fires, burning their lifejackets to keep warm. Next to him, tears of pain trickled down the soot-blackened face of a woman who had hurt her leg on the rocks getting off the smuggler's boat. Faysal ran a successful heating business in Damascus, but said he no longer had the option of staying.

"There is no safety. I left everything behind; my business, my home." He hopes to reach Holland, where his sister lives. But the onward journey will have to wait a day or two. "We have no strength to go on tonight," he says. "We have to have some rest." — AP

KIPOI: Demonstrators shout slogans during a pro-migrant protest march in Kipoi yesterday against the fence of Evros intended to stop the flow of migrants across the Turkey-Greece border. — AFP

Demonstrators march against Greece-Turkey border fence

Russia closes Norway border to migrants over security

ORESTIADA, Greece: Hundreds of people protested in north-east Greece yesterday against the security fence along the Turkish border, demanding the opening of safe routes for migrants, two days after 45 died making the risky Aegean Sea crossing. Demonstrators, some wearing life jackets as a symbol of the flow of thousands of people making the perilous sea journey from Turkey to Greece, marched from the village of Kastanies, which lies close to the frontier.

Police stopped the marchers a few hundred metres (yards) away from the border fence, located in a restricted-access military zone. The protesters waved placards demanding the opening of borders and a group of Pakistani migrants carried a picture of drowned Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi. A picture of his body lying on a beach became a global symbol of Europe's refugee crisis.

Europe is battling to deal with its biggest migration crisis since World War II, but member states are split on what to do and despite deteriorating winter weather, thousands are attempting the risky sea passage every day.

In the latest tragedy, on Friday coastguards pulled 45 bodies including 20 children from the cold waters of the Aegean after their boats capsized while on their way to Greece.

Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias asked for more help from EU border agency Frontex to send migrants rejected for asylum in Europe back to Turkey. Kotzias said Frontex should deploy about 100 boats in the narrow stretch of water separating Greece from Turkey, the main launching pad for 850,000 refugees and migrants who reached Greece's shores last year.

Long a hotspot for illegal migration, the Greece-Turkey land border was secured in 2012 with a 12.5-kilometre fence despite concerns from the European Commission. Some campaigners have argued a corridor should be opened for migrants to enter Greece, but the authorities have rejected the idea, with other EU countries putting pressure on Athens to do more to stem the flow of people.

"It is not a bad thing that this fence exists... Greece cannot take any more people than it is at the moment," foreign minister Nikos Kotzias said on Saturday at the end of a trip to Berlin, according to Greek news agency Ana.

Ankara reached an agreement with the EU in November to stem the flow of refugees heading to Europe, in return for financial assistance of three billion euros ($3.2 billion) in cash.

After talks with Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu in Berlin on Friday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said both sides signed an agreement to "do everything to reduce the number of refugees" crossing into the EU. Yesterday's protests came on the eve of a meeting in Ankara between senior EU officials and the Turkish government on further implementation of the November agreement.

Arctic border closure

Russia yesterday confirmed it had shut for "security reasons" an Arctic border post with Norway to migrants being controversially returned from the Nordic country. Norway on Saturday said it was temporarily halting its return of migrants mainly from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq-who had entered from Russia following a request from the authorities there.

Some 5,500 migrants crossed from Russia into Norway last year, on the last leg of an arduous journey through the Arctic to Europe. But the right-wing government in Oslo has decided that migrants who had been living legally in Russia, or had entered Russia legally, should be immediately returned there, on the basis that Russia is a safe country.

Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told AFP that Moscow had informed Norway on Friday that it was halting the return of migrants through the Borisoglebsk-Storskog crossing in line with a 2011 bilateral agreement. Exceptions will, however, be made for any migrants who can be shown to meet the criteria of an earlier agreement that obliges Moscow to readmit them if they do not fulfil Norwegian immigration laws and have valid Russian visas or residence permits.

"The steps taken by Russia were dictated by security reasons and based on bilateral agreements with Norway," Zakharova said. Norwegian police returned 13 migrants by bus to Russia on Tuesday and two similar operations were scheduled for Thursday and Friday but were then cancelled, for what officials said were logistical reasons. The foreign ministry in Norway said there would be no more returns "until further notice" and that Russian border authorities "want more coordination" in future. —AFP

A refugee woman with a baby eats hot soup on the arrival at the transit center for refugees near northern Macedonian village of Tabanovce, before continuing their journey to Serbia yesterday.—AP

Scottish leader warns against June EU referendum

LONDON: Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon warned yesterday it would be a mistake to hold Britain's European Union membership referendum in June. British Prime Minister David Cameron hopes to finalise a renegotiation of the UK's terms of membership at the European Council meeting on February 18 and 19.

An in-or-out referendum on Britain's membership of the bloc must be held by the end of 2017, with commentators believing it could come this year. Sturgeon said holding it in June would be "disrespectful" to the Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish and London mayoral elections, which are taking place in May. Speaking about a possible June vote, Sturgeon told BBC television: "I think it would be a mistake for David Cameron.

"Two reasons why I would not be in favour of a June referendum. "The Scottish election is in May, indeed the Welsh, Northern Irish, London elections are in May.

"To have a referendum campaign starting in parallel would be disrespectful to those important elections. "The second reason is I think it would be better for David Cameron... if he does get a deal at the February European Council: to leave more time between that deal and the point of decision."

Cameron wants to renegotiate Britain's terms of membership, then recommend that the UK remains in the 28-country bloc on that basis.

Sturgeon said: "One of the big problems I see for the In campaign at the moment is that as far as David Cameron is concerned it is very much focused on these narrow issues of renegotiation, when in actual fact, if the In campaign is going to prevail, this is going to have to become a positive in principle campaign about why it is better for the UK to stay within the European Union."

Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond has ruled out a referendum in July or August. Cameron wants a referendum campaign lasting at least three months. — AFP

Merkel's party weighs German 'border centers'

BERLIN: A senior figure in Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative party has proposed setting up "border centres" along the frontier with Austria to speed up the repatriation of those asylum seekers deemed unqualified to stay. Julia Kloeckner, leader of Merkel's Christian Democrats in the western state of Rhineland-Palatinate, was careful to style her proposal as a "Plan A2" rather than a "Plan B", adding that the chancellor's push for a European solution to a large influx of asylum seekers into the continent was still right.

"We want to complement it," she wrote in a paper setting out her position, a copy of which Reuters obtained. In the paper, Kloeckner proposed that: "On the German-Austrian border, border centres will be set up." The proposal, endorsed by the Christian Democrats' (CDU) secretary general, highlights the frustration in Merkel's party with the slow progress in achieving a European Union-wide solution to the refugee crisis, which is straining the infrastructure of many German municipalities.

Germany attracted 1.1 million asylum seekers last year, leading to calls from across the political spectrum for a change in its handling of the number of refugees coming to Europe to escape war and poverty in Syria, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Growing concern about Germany's ability to cope with the influx and worries about crime and security after assaults on women at New Year in Cologne are weighing on support for the CDU and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU).

An Emnid poll for the newspaper Bild am Sonntag showed support for the CDU/CSU bloc down 2 percentage points at 36 percent from the previous week. The right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) gained 1 point to 10 percent. Merkel's coalition partners, the Social Democrats (SPD), gained a point to 25 percent.

Camp controversy

Merkel, despite appearing increasingly isolated over her open-door policy on refugees, has resisted pressure from some conservatives to cap the influx, or to close Germany's borders. Instead, she has tried to convince other European countries to take in quotas of refugees, pushed for reception centres to be built on Europe's external borders, and led an EU campaign to convince Turkey to keep refugees from entering the bloc. But progress has been slow.

CDU Secretary General Peter Tauber presented Kloeckner's proposals as underscoring the government's course thus far. "The proposed border centres are a development of existing structures," he said in a statement. "The ball is now with the Social Democrats: they can't always say what doesn't work, and must fulfil their responsibility as a governing party."— Reuters

OUAGADOUGOU: People light candles during the memorial ceremony for the victims of the recent hotel attack where extremists killed foreigners and Burkina Faso nationals, in Ouagadougou yesterday. —AP

White-clad marchers pay homage to Burkina victims

OUAGADOUGOU: Hundreds of people dressed in white took to the streets of Ouagadougou to pay homage to the victims of a jihadist attack on a top hotel and a restaurant that left 30 dead and 70 injured, an AFP reporter said. Dubbed a "chain of light", the silent march began at 19:40 GMT on Saturday, the exact time that Al-Qaeda-affiliated gunmen had launched their deadly attack eight days before.

It was organized over social media by music manager Walib Bara and journalist Raissa Compaore. "This demonstration was called 'chain of light' because we know that the intention of those who waged the attacks was to plunge the country into darkness," Bara told the press. "We came to the site of the attack to say that we will continue to drink Cappuccinos in a splendid Burkina," Bara said, using a play on words referencing two of the attack sites-the Cappuccino cafe and the Splendid hotel, both popular with foreigners.

Marchers sang the national anthem and carried signs reading "je suis Splendid" and "je suis Cappuccino", in a move mirroring the "je suis Charlie" rallying cry used after the January 2015 Paris jihadist attacks. People walked about a half a mile to the site of the attacks, where they placed candles in a tribute to the victims.

"I'm not afraid to come to the Kwame N'Krumah avenue because I see the government has taken security measures to protect us," Issouf Cisse, a sales agent working close to the Cappuccino cafe, said. "Life goes on despite the attacks."

A national tribute is planned for today, with President Roch Marc Christian Kabore expected to attend a public ceremony. The first such attack in Burkina Faso, it was claimed by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and came weeks after Islamists claimed an attack on a top hotel in Bamako, capital of neighboring Mali.—AFP

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Nepal ethnic minorities reject charter amendment

KATHMANDU: Nepal's ethnic minorities have rejected a constitutional amendment, dashing hopes of an end to a political crisis that has led to fuel shortages and hampered deliveries of relief materials to survivors of last year's earthquakes. More than 50 people have died since the ethnic Madhesis, backed by some other smaller ethnic groups, launched protests in the landlocked, Himalayan country's southern plains against the amendment to the constitution.

Protests at the border have prevented trucks from entering from neighbouring India since September, causing fuel shortages and rationing in Nepal. Deliveries of relief supplies to communities hit by earthquakes in April and May last year have also been disrupted.

The Nepalese people had hoped the charter, the country's first since the abolition of the monarchy in 2008, would bring peace and stability closer after years of conflict. However, the Madhesis, who have close familial, linguistic and cultural ties with Indians across the border, say Nepalese authorities have failed to meet their aspirations for greater participation in government.

The 597-member parliament voted 461-7 late on Saturday in favor of a provision of "proportionate inclusion" of minority groups in all government institutions including the army, and to carve out electoral constituencies on the basis of their population to increase their representation in parliament.

The rest of the lawmakers either did not vote or walked out. "The government believes that the amendment will address the problems in the Tarai and hopes that the protests will end," Law Minister Agni Prasad Kharel told parliament before the vote, referring to the lowlands bordering India in the south.

Madhesi lawmakers protested and walked out of parliament, saying the changes had loopholes and were incomplete. "It is a complete farce. It does not address our demands," said Hridayesh Tripathi, a leader of Tarai Madhes Loktantrik Party, part of the Madhesi Front that is leading the protests.

Nepal's giant and influential neighbor India said the changes were positive. "We hope that other outstanding issues are similarly addressed in a constructive spirit," the Indian External Affairs Ministry said in a statement. The Nepali government says a political panel will be tasked to redraw the internal boundaries of federal provinces within three months, another key demand of the Madhesis.

It says other demands such as citizenship cards for foreign spouses of Nepali nationals will also be resolved through political consensus. But the Madhesis are opposed to splitting their region into more than two provinces, as the government plan envisages, saying this would scupper their chances of controlling the provincial governments. Many in Nepal blame India for quietly supporting the Madhesi protesters, a charge New Delhi denies.—Reuters

Obama urges 'serious' action against Pakistan extremists

NEW DELHI: US President Barack Obama has urged Pakistan to show it is "serious" about crushing extremist networks operating on its territory, saying the latest mass killing of students underlined the need for more decisive action. In an interview with the Press Trust of India published yesterday, Obama praised recent crackdowns by Pakistani security forces but said more should be done to eradicate violent Islamist groups.

"Pakistan has an opportunity to show that it is serious about delegitimizing, disrupting and dismantling terrorist networks," Obama told the news agency in Washington. "In the region and around the world, there must be zero tolerance for safe havens and terrorists must be brought to justice." Twenty-one people were killed last Wednesday in an attack at a university campus in Pakistan's tribal northwest which was claimed by a faction of the Pakistani Taleban, barely a year after a massacre at a school in Peshawar that killed more than 150 people.

A military offensive against extremists in Pakistan's tribal areas was intensified after the Peshawar attack, although Indian officials say authorities across the border still turn a blind eye to jihadist groups. Obama said the crackdown on extremists was "the right policy" but was quoted as saying that Pakistan "can and must" take more effective action.

"Since then (Peshawar), we have seen Pakistan take action against several specific groups," said Obama. "We have also seen continued terrorism inside Pakistan such as the recent attack on the university in northwest Pakistan."

India has blamed gunmen belonging to the Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed for an attack on one of its air force bases close to the Pakistan border earlier this month that left seven soldiers dead. Obama said that attack in Punjab was "another example of the inexcusable terrorism that India has endured for too long". The attack came only days after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had paid his first visit to Pakistan, dropping in for talks with his counterpart Nawaz Sharif on his way home from Afghanistan.

Modi has resisted pressure to put ties with Pakistan back in deep freeze after the air base attack, and Obama endorsed the continuation of contacts. "Both leaders are advancing a dialogue on how to confront violent extremism and terrorism across the region," Obama said. — AFP

Armed teachers in classrooms: Pakistan's horrifying new world

PESHAWAR, Pakistan: Headmaster Naveed Gul walked past the armed guard at the gate into his office. As primary school pupils studied their morning lessons outside, he reached beneath his warm woolly sweater, and pulled out a gun. "This is an M20 pistol," he said. "It's made in China and it works perfectly." A debate over arming teachers has surged in Pakistan once more, days after assistant chemistry professor Syed Hamid Husain opened fire on the Taleban gunmen who stormed the university campus where he worked.

Students told how the 33-year-old father-of-two died shielding them with a handgun during the attack that claimed 21 lives at the Bacha Khan university in northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Teachers there had been given permission to carry firearms after the Pakistani Taleban massacred more than 150 people, the majority of them children, at a school in the provincial capital Peshawar in 2014. At the Government Primary School Akhunabad in the city, Gul slid his own gun-a Chinese knockoff of a Soviet WWII-era pistol-quickly into the desk drawer, saying weapons in school give him confidence.

"You have guns with you. You can fight it out," he said. The headmaster, his waxed moustaches straight out of the Wild West, already has the scenario played out in his mind. "If one terrorist were to come and I'm sitting here... I will automatically take out my pistol," he said gesturing. "So if I take cover from here, and fire with a sharp mind."

'Where did he get the courage?'

Psychologists discussing mass shootings in the US recently told AFP that post-traumatic stress can translate into such hypervigilance: a state of alert close to paranoia. But Gul is matter-of-fact. Militants have long targeted education in Pakistan, from the shooting of schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai in Swat in 2012 to the Peshawar massacre and Wednesday's assault.

On Friday, the Taliban faction behind the Bacha Khan attack vowed to continue targeting schools and students, calling them "nurseries" for those who challenge Allah's law.

"I want to protect myself and my students," Gul said. Provincial spokesman Shaukat Yousafzai said that with 68,000 schools and just 55,000 policemen in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the government cannot provide security, so it gave in to the teachers' demand they be allowed to carry weapons.

"There is no harm in using them in case of an attack," Yousafzai said. But Peshawar-based analyst and retired brigadier Saad Khan said arming teachers is "stupid".

"These are young men," he said. "If a fight breaks out, you know, the rush of blood, and if somebody has a gun." Instead of killing attackers on the spot, Khan called for rooting out the long-term causes of militancy, echoing critics of a national crackdown on extremism who say it has failed to go far enough.

"Let them become men of books," he said. Syed Hamid Husain, by all accounts, had been just such a man-a brilliant academic lecturing at a university named after a peace icon known as the "Frontier Gandhi". Husain's family said that changed after the Peshawar school massacre in 2014.

Elder brother Sajjad expressed a baffled pride in the actions of his kind-hearted sibling, who he said as a child would faint at the sight of blood. "We don't know where he got that much courage from," Sajjad told AFP tearfully at the family home in Swabi, near Charsadda, clutching his three-year-old nephew in one arm and a picture of the child's father in the other. The Taleban's cold slaughter of dozens of children in the Peshawar massacre had changed his "soft" brother into something more "cruel", Sajjad said. "He said he felt a trembling inside... that something should be done."

'We are not scared'

In the US the debate over arming teachers is nuanced. President Barack Obama's recent tears over the shooting of 20 children in Connecticut in 2012 prompted powerful arguments on both sides, as did Republican presidential candidate Ben Carson's call for guns in schools last October.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, for parents and students, the question appears unsettlingly one-sided. "They (teachers) can fight and kill maybe two, three, four people," said Ehsanullah, whose son attends the Akhunabad school. "When they come, our teacher will attack them," said ten-year-old pupil Shafey Hussain. "We are not scared of anybody." He spoke with heartbreaking certainty: both that the attack will come, and that the adults can save him when it does. — AFP

PESHAWAR: A Pakistani private security guard watching out as students arrive at a government primary school in Peshawar. — AFP

CHANDIGARH: French President Francois Hollande (center left) and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (center right) pose for a group photo with Indian folk dancers at the government museum and art gallery in Chandigarh yesterday.—AP

Hollande starts India visit, says jet deal will take time

French president chief guest at R-Day parade

CHANDIGARH: France's President Francois Hollande played down the prospect of a swift conclusion to a drawn-out deal for New Delhi to buy 36 French jet fighters as he began a three-day visit to India yesterday.

The invitation for Hollande to be chief guest at India's Republic Day military parade tomorrow had raised expectations that the multi-billion dollar agreement for the Rafale jets would finally be sealed.

But after landing in the northern city of Chandigarh, Hollande cooled talk that the contract was on the verge of being signed. He said further discussions were needed on a prior inter-governmental agreement. "We are going to take another step on the road which we hope will lead us to India's acquisition of the 36 Rafale jets," Hollande told reporters.

"India needs them and France has shown that it has the world's best aircraft. "The commercial contract can only come after the inter-governmental accord... which will be discussed during my visit."

While Hollande said he was "optimistic" about the inter-governmental accord being agreed on Monday, a senior French official acknowledged negotiations were still snagged on the price.

And in an interview with the Press Trust of India news agency, the French president said that "agreeing on the technicalities of this arrangement obviously takes time". Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in Paris last year that his government had agreed to buy the jets as India looks to modernize its Soviet-era military and keep up with neighboring Pakistan and China. The two leaders stepped into the long-delayed deal after tortuous negotiations over a much-larger agreement first signed with France's Dassault Aviation in 2012 broke down.

A sticking point has been Delhi's insistence that arms makers invest a percentage of the value of any major deal in India, known as the offset clause. Hollande began his second official visit to India in Chandigarh, which was designed by French architect Le Corbusier more than 60 years ago.

After Modi greeted Hollande with a hug, the two leaders strolled through Chandigarh's renowned rock garden, with its sculptures made out of rubble from the city's construction, before heading to an archaeological museum. Ministers and business executives travelling with Hollande meanwhile signed a series of accords with their Indian counterparts on issues such as e-commerce, renewable energy and the development of "smart cities" which is one of Modi's pet projects.

Today the leaders are expected to announce a roadmap for building six French nuclear reactors in the western state of Maharashtra, more than five years after a bilateral civil nuclear cooperation agreement was signed, according to the Times of India newspaper. They will also lay a foundation stone at the new headquarters of the International Solar Alliance, a 121-nation group launched by Modi at the Paris COP21 conference in November, to expand affordable solar power.

Solar push

Hollande said he hoped some of the French businesses travelling with him would be at the forefront of the solar energy push. "We are going to translate our shared commitment to implement what was agreed in Paris into action by launching the solar alliance here," he said at Chadigarh's military airport.

Security will be high on the agenda after deadly Islamist attacks in Paris in November that evoked memories of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, which left 166 people dead.

India launched a nationwide security crackdown in the lead-up to Republic Day, arresting a string of suspected Islamic militants. Security was tight for Hollande's arrival, with armed police and paramilitary forces patrolling the streets of Chandigarh. Hollande and Modi are expected to sit side by side to watch tomorrow's pomp-filled spectacle of military might-which includes columns of soldiers and Soviet-era tanks-along Delhi's central Rajpath avenue.

The parade is the highlight of annual celebrations of the birth of modern India. US President Barack Obama was last year's chief guest. —AFP

Large metal chunk investigated after washing onto Thai beach

BANGKOK: A large chunk of metal that could be from an aircraft washed ashore in southern Thailand, but Malaysian authorities yesterday cautioned against speculation of a link to a Malaysia Airlines flight missing almost two years. Flight MH370 lost communications and made a sharp turn away from its Beijing destination before disappearing in March 2014. It is presumed to have crashed in the Indian Ocean, and only one piece of debris has been identified as coming from the plane, a slab of wing that washed ashore on Reunion Island in the western Indian Ocean last July.

Malaysian Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai said he instructed Malaysian civil aviation officials to contact Thailand about the newly found wreckage, a curved piece of metal measuring about 2 meters by 3 meters (6 1/2 feet by 10 feet) with electrical wires hanging from it and numbers stamped on it in several places.

"I urge the media and the public not to speculate because it will give undue pressure to the loved ones of the victims of MH370," he said.

Thailand's Transportation Ministry said four Malaysian officials and two Thai experts will visit the site today. Liow said the search for the missing jet, which carried 239 people, is ongoing in the southern Indian Ocean and that its second phase is expected to be completed by June. Australia has led a multinational search that has so far cost more than $120 million.

Australian Transport Safety Bureau spokesman Dan O'Malley said the agency was awaiting results of an official examination of the debris. The debris was found on the eastern coast of southern Thailand's Nakkon Si Thammarat province, about 370 miles (600 kilometers) south of Bangkok on the Gulf of Thailand.

While debris can drift thousands of miles (kilometers) on ocean currents, that location would be a surprise based on the data from Flight MH370. The plane was tracked by radar flying over the South China Sea then making a sharp turn west for unknown reasons. It crossed the Malay Peninsula and Straits of Malacca, which would put it off Thailand's west coast. Radar contact was lost shortly after the plane entered the airspace over the Indian Ocean. Analysis of exchanges between its engine and a satellite determined the plane flew south on a straight path for hours, leading authorities to believe it flew on autopilot until it ran out of fuel and crashed into the water. — AP

Thai hospital workers transport an injured Thai ranger on a stretcher after he was shot by suspected separatist militants in the Rueso district of Thailand's restive southern province of Narathiwat yesterday. — AFP

A girl stands high on a snow pile as she poses for a family photo in New York's Times Square on Saturday, as a large winter storm hit the East Coast. — AP

Arab nations eye China, locals to revive...

Continued from Page 1

The Islamic State jihadist group said it downed the aircraft and tens of thousands of foreign tourists, including some 80,000 Russians and 20,000 Britons, were stranded in the resort after flights were cancelled for security reasons.

Egypt has also boosted promotion efforts in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab nations, leading to a sharp increase in the number of visitors from those nations and is doing more to promote domestic tourism, Zaazou said. The country is banking on the short memory of global travellers who have been scared off and returned to the country before, most vividly after the Luxor massacre in 1997 in which over 60 people were killed, mostly Swiss and Japanese, he added. "I believe 2016 will be the year tourists come back to Egypt and our part of the world," the minister said.

Like Egypt, Morocco has stepped up its efforts to develop its domestic tourism market to help offset fluctuations in the arrival of foreigners, Morocco's Tourism Minister Lahcen Haddad said. The domestic market now accounts for 33 percent of the nation's total tourism activity, up from 25 percent in 2012. "The more domestic tourism you have the more mature your destination (becomes), the more your industry is used, and also the more resilient your destination becomes because people domestically will travel no matter what," he said.

"That has also encouraged a lot of investors to stay in Morocco to invest more. We have been able to draw more investment despite the crisis that started in mid-2014. We have also seen more creation of jobs and seen more hotel brands interested in Morocco." Swiss group Movenpick opened its third hotel in Morocco in Marrakech at the end of last year, one of several major hotel investments in recent years.

Except for one attack against tourists in 2011 in Marrakesh - the kingdom's biggest tourism centre - Morocco has been calm for the past decade. But it still suffered a slump in visitors last year after 38 people, mainly British holidaymakers, were gunned down at Tunisia's seaside resort of Sousse in June. "Domestic tourism is the thing that will keep you going during difficult times. And we have neglected in our region local tourism. I think maybe what happened to us in the region is a wake up call," said Jordanian Tourism Minister Nayef Al-Fayez.

The Madrid-based United Nations World Tourism Organization predicts the number of international tourists to the Middle East and North Africa will triple to 195 million in 2030. But the head of the body, former Jordanian tourism minister Taleb Rifai, warned that "the new reality of safety and security and the perception of the region is a great big challenge". "Nobody is denying the challenges and difficulties that are coming from the Middle East," he added.

Separately, almost three million people visited Qatar in 2015, a record number for the energy-rich Gulf country, its tourism authority said yesterday. A total of 2.93 million people travelled to Qatar last year for a holiday, business or personal reasons, according to figures in an annual report released by the Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA). That represented an increase of almost four percent on 2014, at a time when the country is looking to diversify its economy away from its reliance on gas and oil, which accounts for more than 50 per of GDP.

"The report shows that despite global developments, which have adversely affected travel patterns, Qatar has shown resilience as a burgeoning tourist destination with growing arrival figures and steady hotel occupancy rates," the QTA stated. The largest number of visitors, 855,000, came from Saudi Arabia. India provided more 375,000 visitors and the United Kingdom 135,000. There was also an increase in the number of Chinese and French visitors in 2015.

Tourism contributed the equivalent of $3.7 billion to the economy in 2015, the QTA said, around two percent of total GDP. QTA forecasts up to nine million people will visit Qatar by 2030, allowing tourism to contribute to just over five percent of the total economy. — Agencies

MPs reject building of new churches...

Continued from Page 1

Former Islamist MP Mohammad Hayef expressed similar opposition to the proposal, saying that the number of churches in Kuwait "exceeds the number of Kuwaiti Christians". Kuwaiti Christians number around 200, while about half a million Christian foreigners live in the country.

Meanwhile, a team from the ministry of finance was scheduled to meet MP Yousef Al-Zalzalah late yesterday to discuss government plans to reduce or lift subsidies on fuel and services. The government has pledged not to take any unilateral decision on subsidies and vowed to brief the National Assembly on the planned measures.

MP Mohammad Tana said that there are many solutions through which the government can finance the budget deficit instead of raising the burden on the people, especially low and middle-income people. A large number of MPs have publicly rejected government plans to raise charges on public services after a sharp fall in oil revenues. The government has said that reducing subsidies on fuel and public services has become necessary to reduce the budget deficit. Tana meanwhile yesterday urged the Assembly's interior and defense committee to approve a proposal he submitted to grant the relatives of stateless martyrs Kuwaiti citizenship.

Separately, the Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee yesterday approved amendments to the Kuwait Airways privatization law giving the government the right to retain 75 percent of the airline and effectively end the privatization plan. Acting head of the panel MP Mohammad Al-Jabri said under the new amendments, 20 percent of the carrier will be offered in an initial public offering (IPO) and the remaining five percent will be given to current and retired employees.

Jabri also said the panel agreed to grant the national carrier another KD 600 million from state reserves to help it in its development plan and modernization of its fleet. KAC has placed orders for 25 Airbus and 10 Boeing jets with delivery starting later this year. It has also leased 12 Airbus planes.

Iraq summons Saudi envoy

Continued from Page 1

Iraq turned to Shiite militia forces in 2014 to help counter an IS onslaught that overran large areas north and west of Baghdad, and they have played a key role in the fight against the jihadists. But militias and their affiliates have also carried out abuses including summary executions, kidnappings and destruction of property, and many members of the Sunni Arab and Kurdish minorities view them with suspicion. The foreign ministry defended the Hashed al-Shaabi, "which is fighting terrorism and defending the sovereignty of the country, and works under the umbrella of the state".

Shiite politicians had earlier reacted angrily to the Saudi ambassador's comments, but the country's largest Sunni bloc defended him. "The remarks of the Saudi ambassador indicate clear hostility and blatant interference in Iraqi affairs," Khalaf Abdulsamad, the head of the Dawa parliamentary list, said in a statement. "His talking about the Hashed al-Shaabi in this way is considered a major insult," Abdulsamad said, calling on the foreign ministry to "preserve the dignity of the Iraqi state and summon the Saudi ambassador and expel him from Iraq".

Alia Nasayif, an MP from the State of Law bloc, said the ambassador's remarks "included clear attempts to provoke sectarian strife". And Hashed al-Shaabi spokesman Ahmed Al-Assadi termed Sabhan an "ambassador of a state that supports terrorism" and called for Iraq to "expel this ambassador and punish him for his statements". Among Iraqi Shiites, Saudi Arabia is widely viewed as a supporter of extremists and opponent of their community.

But Sabhan's comments were not universally panned, with the Alliance of Iraqi Forces, the main Sunni Arab bloc in parliament, describing his remarks as "very natural" and criticizing the "political campaign" against him. Sabhan's tenure in Iraq, which officially began when he presented his credentials 10 days ago, was off to a rocky start even before his recent remarks. Saudi Arabia's execution of activist and Shiite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr at the beginning of the month sparked widespread anti-Riyadh anger, protests and calls for Sabhan to be kicked out of Iraq.

Iraq has been plagued by years of tensions between its Shiite majority and Sunni minority, which ruled the country under Saddam Hussein, with tens of thousands killed in sectarian violence over the past decade. The United Nations said last week that more than 18,000 Iraqi civilians had been killed in the previous two years, many due to an upsurge in violence with the rise of IS. — Agencies

20 workers injured in school collapse

Continued from Page 1

injured in the incident swift recovery, he told reporters "we will not hesitate to hold those found guilty of negligence accountable".

Construction accidents are all too common in Kuwait. According to a 2010 research paper published in the peer-reviewed Journal of Performance of Constructed Facilities, "the construction industry is the most hazardous industry in Kuwait. On average, falls are the major type of accident (33.2 percent) followed by being crushed or struck by a falling object (25.2 percent). Use or misuse of tools caused the third largest number of accidents in Kuwait (18.1 percent).

"The most frequent type of injury is fractures (52.6 percent) and the most common injured body part is the upper body (53.4 percent). An average of (82.7 percent) of victims of construction accidents in Kuwait sustain permanent disabilities. It is clear that the Kuwaiti construction industry has a safety problem and that there is a pressing need to change current practices and legislation in construction and building sites." — Agencies

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Focus

Disquiet grows over French state of emergency

By Martine Nouaille

When a state of emergency was imposed in France after the November attacks, numb and terror-weary citizens welcomed the show of force. But a sense of creeping unease over civil liberties has turned to outright opposition in many quarters as French President Francois Hollande indicated this week he would seek to renew the measure for another three months. The state of emergency was imposed after gunmen and suicide bombers attacked a string of Parisian cafes and restaurants, a concert hall and football stadium, leaving 130 dead and hundreds injured on Nov 13.

It has led to over 2,500 police raids and hundreds of arrests under emergency policing powers that government wants written into the constitution. The French Human Rights League (LDH), one of many bodies now questioning the efficacy of the harsher measures, said recently that only four legal procedures relating to terrorism had emerged from the spate of police operations. "The political trap of a state of emergency is closing on the government (because) there will always be a good reason to keep" it in place, said LDH lawyer Patrice Spinozi. And Jean-Jacques Urvoas, the president of the parliamentary commission of laws argued that the "element of surprise" against potential terrorist networks has been "largely reduced".

The Council of Europe's human rights commissioner Nils Muiznieks warned earlier this month that the state of emergency could constitute a "threat" to democracy. He raised concerns about ethnic profiling of suspects facing police searches. And a panel of UN human rights experts said last week the measures placed what they saw as "excessive and disproportionate" restrictions on key rights.

One and Indivisible

The current three-month state of emergency expires on Feb 26 and an extension will give government time to adopt reforms to enshrine new security measures into the constitution. None has been more divisive than a reform proposed by the Socialist president to strip French citizenship from people convicted of terrorist offences, if they have another nationality. Rights activists, intellectuals as well as those within the Socialist party have criticised a measure they see as a betrayal of France's founding principles, in which the republic is "one and indivisible".

France's National Human Rights Commission (CNCDH) said the loss of nationality was "of no use in the prevention of terrorist acts." The commission said it would establish "different treatment" between French people holding dual citizenship and those who are only French, a move "radically opposed to all republican values." A group of 70 nongovernmental organizations have called for a protest on January 30 against the measure. "For us it is definitely non!" they wrote in a declaration.

On Saturday the National Council of Bars, which represents French lawyers, said it was concerned to see the construction of "a judicial and social model which breaks with republican values". Prime Minister Manuel Valls told the BBC on Friday that France would "use all means" at its disposal to combat terrorism "until we can get rid of Daesh," an acronym for Islamic State.

However, a source close to Valls told AFP "it is not envisaged in any way to extend it indefinitely." When asked about the government's intentions regarding the state of emergency, the source said simply that France was at "war", hence "we shall see if we are going to extend it (for) as long as necessary." The state of emergency boosts police powers, allowing house arrests, raids both day and night and the banning of public gatherings, without permission from a judge.

The lives of the majority of French people have not been affected by the state of emergency, and a recent poll showed 70 percent of people wanted it kept in place. But there have been cases of violence during police raids, mistaken identity and people losing their jobs because they were placed under house arrest. For the first time on Friday the Conseil d'Etat - the highest administrative court -stopped a house arrest and fined the state as the person in question had not been proved to belong to an Islamist grouping. The Conseil d'Etat will on Tuesday examine a request from the LDH to end the state of emergency. —AFP

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Lenin watches on over indifferent Russians

By Nicolas Miletitch

To reach the gigantic statue of Vladimir Lenin that overlooks Moscow's October Square, pedestrians can stroll down streets named after the Bolshevik revolutionary's wife or mother, or cross Lenin Avenue that intersects with a road named after his brother. More than a quarter of a century has passed since the fall of Communism but reminders of the Soviet Union's founding father Lenin -who died on Jan 21, 1924 - are still easy to find. Yet the man himself seems increasingly to mean little to many people in Russia, the cradle of his revolution.

Lenin monuments, busts and eponymous streets commemorating the leader of the 1917 October Revolution still dot cityscapes across the country and his body still lies embalmed for tourists to visit in the mausoleum on the capital's iconic Red Square. "On July 19, 1918, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin met in this building with the party members from factories of the Zamoskvorechye neighbourhood," reads a plaque in the centre of the Russian capital. Down the street, another plaque reminds passersby that the Communist leader addressed workers from the Yaroslavl and Vladimir regions from a balcony above their heads. And Moscow's sprawling subway system - which carries an average of seven million passengers every day - also officially bears Lenin's name.

'Relics From Our History'

In some other former Soviet republics, most prominently Ukraine, many statues of Lenin have been dismantled, toppled or vandalized since the fall of Communism. But for ordinary Russians the lingering presence of the Communist leader among the advertising hoardings and shopping malls of their consumerist society appears to stir mixed opinions - or more often just indifference. Every year on the key Communist holidays such as May 1 or the anniversary of the revolution on Nov 7 dwindling groups of ageing supporters gather with portraits of Lenin at monuments to him across the country.

But while some who are old enough to remember the Soviet epoch view these vestiges of another era with nostalgia, others look on them with resentment. "These monuments bother me," said 60-year-old Muscovite Viktor Dzyadko, whose hostility toward the Soviet revolutionary is tangible. "They should all be sent to some museum." For the younger generation, who have grown up outside the Soviet system, the presence of Lenin is often little more than a historical oddity. "During the Soviet era, all these monuments had an ideological role but now they are just relics from our history," said Alexander Polyakovsky, a 20-year-old student.

"We are witnessing growing indifference," sociologist Lev Gudkov, the head of independent pollster Levada Centre, told AFP. "Lenin does not represent anything to the young generations, who only have a vague idea that he was the founder of the Soviet state." In a poll conducted by the Levada centre about views of Lenin in 2015 only five percent of people said they thought his ideas will influence people in the future.

A file picture taken on Nov 21, 2011 shows people standing in front of a mosaic portrait of the Soviet founder Vladimir Lenin at the Kiyevskaya subway station in Moscow. —AFP

'Atomic Bomb'

In the heady days of the early nineties during the collapse of the Soviet Union, some of the key symbolic statues of Soviet leaders - most famously secret police founder Felix Dzerzhinsky outside the KGB headquarters - were toppled. But as the new country plunged into chaos, Russia's first president Boris Yeltsin - often keen not to alienate the large chunk of the population that looked back on the Soviet era with fondness - left most of the Lenin statues untouched.

President Vladimir Putin, a former KGB agent whose rule has seen the revival of Soviet traditions and controls, followed in Yeltsin's footsteps and just let Lenin be. That includes leaving the embalmed remains of the leader on display outside the Kremlin, despite polls showing that the majority of people are in favor of finally saying goodbye Lenin and burying his body.

But that does not mean that Putin, who has surrounded himself with ex-Soviet security agents and been accused of playing down the crimes of Stalinism, is harking back to the ideals of Lenin. "Allowing your rule to be guided by ideas is right, but only when that idea leads to the right results, not like it did with Vladimir Ilich," Putin said in a rare reference to Lenin on the anniversary of his death. "In the end that idea led to the fall of the Soviet Union," he added. "They planted an atomic bomb under the building called Russia and it later exploded. We did not need a global revolution." —AFP

No end to Manila's traffic nightmare

By Mynardo Macaraig

Web designer Maria Zurbano kisses her three-year-old daughter goodbye and sets out in the predawn darkness for a torturous commute through the Philippine capital. Her ordeal, a return trip of up to six hours every weekday, is expected to get even worse as the number of cars explodes in the chaotic Asian mega-city of more than 12 million people. Dubbed "carmaggedon" by locals, business leaders are warning Manila could come to a total standstill despite grand government plans to tackle its traffic.

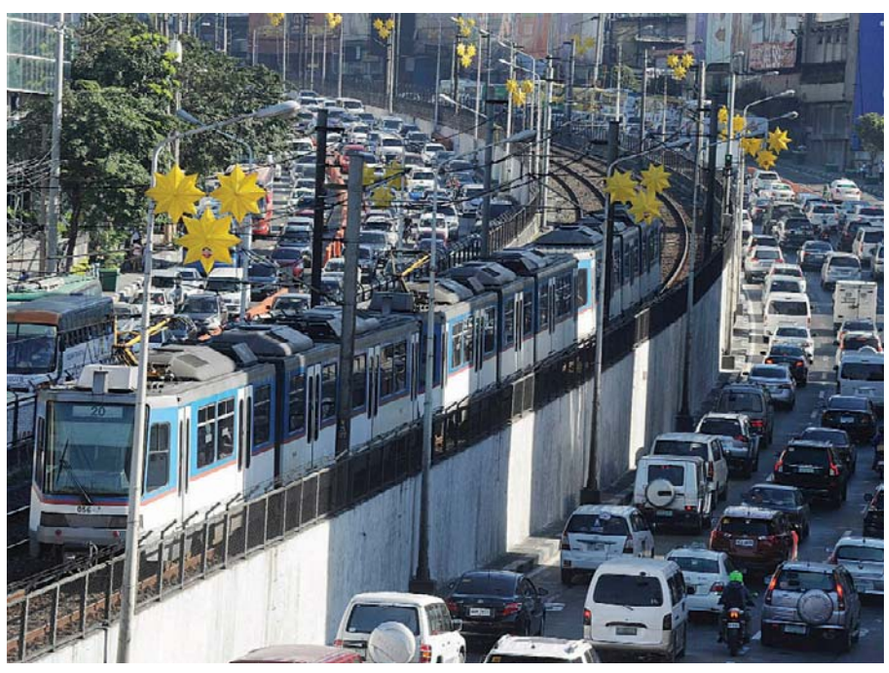
"Physically, during these trips, I feel ill. My back is always hurting. It affects my health to have to sit down for so long," said Zurbano, 36, as she waited for a bus outside her home at 5:00 am. After finally ending a cramped minibus trip of just 17 km to the financial district of Makati, Zurbano despaired of being trapped in a traffic hell. "Traffic just gets worse and worse. I just get more stressed and stressed but it doesn't look like anything will change. I will just have to learn to bear with it," she said.

Huge Traffic Costs

Traffic in the capital and its surroundings is already costing the country about three billion pesos ($64 million) a day, or about 0.8 percent of gross domestic product, according to government figures. And it is steadily worsening as an emerging middle class fuels an auto boom - car sales rose 23 percent last year with nearly 300,000 new vehicles hitting the roads. Compounding the problem, decades of infrastructure neglect has left Manila with a just a few major roads across the city and their gridlock "peak hours" often last for three or four hours.

Commuters have few other options with Manila's dilapidated rail network tiny in comparison with neighbouring Southeast Asian capitals such as Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok. A chaotic private bus and mini-bus network with drivers who regularly flout traffic laws by, for instance, stopping in the middle of roads to pick up passengers, is widely perceived as adding to the problem. "This is going to be the most critical problem the next administration faces," John Forbes, a senior adviser at the American Chamber of Commerce in Manila, told AFP.

Forbes warned Manila risked becoming "uninhabitable" in the next three to five years - meaning people would simply be unable to get around the city - if urgent action was not taken to build roads and rail lines. Elections for a successor to President Benigno Aquino, who is required by the constitution to stand down after a single six-year term, will be held in May. Aquino has proved a generally popular president but he has been the target of fierce public criticism for a perceived lack of urgency in updating the nation's creaking infrastructure. He earned widespread condemnation midway through his term with comments that worsening traffic was merely a sign of a growing economy.



In this photo taken on Jan 11, 2016, a major thoroughfare is clogged with traffic as an overhead train passes by in Manila.—AFP

Dreams of Urban Bliss

His aides have since sought to project a sense of empathy and urgency, pointing to new expressways and an extension of a train line as planned projects that will ease the congestion. They have also emphasized the adoption in 2014 of a "Dream Plan" to fix the urban chaos, which outlines $65 billion of infrastructure spending by 2030. The plan envisages a wide range of massive and unprecedented projects for the Philippines, such as a subway, satellite cities linked to Manila by high-speed rail, relocating air and sea ports, as well as many new roads.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran, an economist who has studied the traffic problem, said the plan's huge price tag is within the government's reach. "Financing should not be a problem because the funders are ready," Beltran told AFP, pointing to the nation's improved credit rating that will allow cheaper loans, as well as expected help from the Japanese government and multilateral lenders.

But many experts believe there is little chance of many projects going ahead. They point to the nation's chaotic and corrupt democratic system, as well as a strangling bureaucracy, which prevent infrastructure development. A glaring example is the construction of a 19-kilometre light rail line on the outskirts of the capital that was meant to have been finished by the end of last year - but it has not even been started.

Touting the project in 2013, Aquino joked he was ready to be run over a train if it was not completed by the end of 2015. But his government has not even finalized the tender process. Gilbert Llano, president of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, a government think-tank, echoed the ironic tones of many experts when talking about the government's infrastructure plan. "It's called a dream plan (because) it will stay in the realm of dreams," said Llanto. —AFP

Another day, another record for Lindsey Vonn in Cortina

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO: Another day in Cortina, another record for Lindsey Vonn. The American won a World Cup super-G yesterday for her 11th career victory in Cortina, breaking the resort record of retired Austrian standout Renate Goetschl.

"It's incredible to think back to when I was racing with Renate - it seemed like she won every single race in Cortina and she seemed unbeatable," Vonn said. "And to have surpassed her now it's kind of hard to process all of these records. It's hard to imagine having more success than my idols." With another near-perfect run down the Olympia delle Tofane course, Vonn beat Tina Weirather of Liechtenstein by 0.69 seconds, with Viktoria Rebensburg of Germany third, 1.15 back.

Vonn made a slight bobble toward the end of her run but was otherwise smooth and error-free, leaning into turns further than other competitors to maintain speed and increasing her lead at each checkpoint.

At the finish, Vonn pumped her fists a few times and pointed at the crowd basking in the sun on another crystal-clear day in the town known as the Queen of the Dolomites Range. Vonn took the lead in the overall standings from Lara Gut, who finished fifth, and now leads her Swiss rival by 45 points.

By winning a downhill on Saturday, Vonn eclipsed Annemarie Moser-Proell's mark of 36 career wins in skiing's marquee event And last year in Cortina, Vonn surpassed Moser-Proell's women's record of 62 wins across all events. "When I look back on my career after I'm retired, I'll really be able to appreciate what I've done," Vonn said. "I can't really think about it too much at this point because I'll get distracted. I need to stay focused on my job. Right now it's just my job and when I retire then that will be my legacy."

Vonn now has 75 wins across all disciplines, and is approaching Ingemar Stenmark's all-time mark - among men and women - of 86. Vonn recalled how when she recorded the very first podium result of her career in Cortina 12 years ago, she finished third behind then-reigning Olympic downhill champion Carol Montillet and Goetschl. "I never thought that I would make it this far in my career," Vonn said. "If you would have made a bet, I would have definitely bet against me. Now here I am, so it's pretty incredible."

'Pretty good statistic'

During the podium ceremony, Vonn and the US ski team were presented with the Cortina Super Trophy - awarded to the team that gained the most points over the two-day meet - which coincided with the 60th anniversary of the 1956 Olympics in Cortina. Vonn also holds the record for wins at any single resort with 18 at Lake Louise - giving her a total of 29 victories between the Alberta, Canada, ski area and Cortina.

"That's a pretty good statistic," Vonn said. "I think I've had more wins in Lake Louise because we usually have three races there. I think if we had more races here it might be a similar statistic. "But I think both courses really suit me and my style, my tactics and how I'm able to carry the speed," Vonn added. "It's so important on both courses to execute certain turns to be able to get the speed you need to win the race and I think I've always understood that really well on those two courses."

For Weirather, meanwhile, it was a bit of revenge after being denied an apparent podium result a day earlier due to strong winds. Rebensburg had trouble landing the final jump coming into the finish, almost did the splits but recovered to hold on to a podium position 0.04 ahead of fourth-place finisher Conny Huetter of Austria. Vonn has won all three super-G races this season and leads the discipline standings by 130 points ahead of Huetter. Next up for the women's circuit are giant slalom and slalom races in Maribor, Slovenia, next weekend. —AP

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO: Lindsey Vonn, of the United States, poses with the Super Ski Trophy after winning a women's alpine skiing World Cup super-G race. — AP

CENTURION: England's batsman Moeen Ali (right) plays a shot during day 3 of the fourth Test match between England and South Africa at Supersport stadium. — AFP

Rabada rocks England with six wickets

CENTURION: South African fast bowling prodigy Kagiso Rabada took six wickets to put South Africa on top on the third day of the fourth and final Test against England at SuperSport Park yesterday. England were 318 for eight at tea, still 157 runs behind South Africa's first innings total of 475.

Rabada, 20, took six for 101, including a devastating burst of three wickets in 12 balls shortly before lunch. Rabada dismissed Joe Root, James Taylor and Jonny Bairstow in quick succession - all caught behind by wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock - to claim his second five-wicket haul in successive matches.

He followed up by ending an aggressive innings of 33 by Ben Stokes, who was caught at first slip by Hashim Amla off the second delivery with the second new ball. Chris Woakes was dropped by a leaping De Kock off Morne Morkel when he had one but went on to score 26, helping Moeen Ali add 43 for the eighth wicket, before he was caught at slip in part-time off-spinner JP Duminy's first over. Root, who hit a century and two fifties in the first three Tests, made 76 off 128 balls with 11 fours before edging Rabada to wicketkeeper De Kock. Batting conditions were tricky under a heavily overcast sky on a pitch with occasional variable bounce but England lost only one wicket before Rabada's burst.

Alastair Cook and Root made their third wicket stand worth 99 with largely watchful batting, adding 37 runs in an hour before Morne Morkel dismissed Cook. The tall fast bowler, who had been wayward, followed up a wretched wide with a superb delivery from around the wicket which squared up Cook, straightened off the pitch and found the outside edge for wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock to take the catch. Cook made 76 off 186 balls with 11 fours. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

CENTURION, South Africa: Scores at tea on the third day of the fourth and final Test between South Africa and England at SuperSport Park yesterday.

South Africa, first innings, 475

England, first innings (overnight 138-2)

A. Cook c De Kock b Morkel	76
A. Hales c Piedt b Rabada	15
N. Compton lbw b Rabada	19
J. Root c De Kock b Rabada	76
J. Taylor c De Kock b Rabada	14
B. Stokes c Amla b Rabada	33
J. Bairstow c De Kock b Rabada	0
M. Ali not out	45
C. Woakes c Elgar b Duminy	26
S. Broad not out	4
Extras (b1, lb7, w2)	10
Total (8 wkts, 98 overs)	318

Fall of wickets: 1-22 (Hales), 2-78 (Compton), 3-177 (Cook), 4-208 (Root), 5-211 (Taylor), 6-211 (Bairstow), 7-252 (Stokes), 8-295 (Woakes)

Bowling: Abbott 19-9-36-0, Rabada 26-6-101-6 (1w), Piedt 23-4-74-0, Morkel 23-4-72-1 (1w), Elgar 4-0-13-0, Duminy 3-0-14-1

To bat: J. Anderson.

Match situation: England trail by 157 runs with two wickets remaining in the first innings.

Maxwell to miss T20 opener against India

SYDNEY: All-rounder Glenn Maxwell will miss Australia's T20 opener against India in Adelaide with a hamstring injury, acting coach Michael Di Venuto said yesterday. Maxwell flew straight to Melbourne where the second game in the three-match series will take place on Friday, skipping the opener in Adelaide tomorrow.

"He has still got a little, slight hamstring niggle so he flew straight to Melbourne and will spend a few days in Melbourne at home and join the squad when we get there in a couple of days," Di Venuto told reporters in Adelaide. Maxwell was also ruled out of the fifth one-day international against India in Sydney on Saturday. The series is seen as a preparation for the T20 World Cup in India in March, with Di Venuto-who has replaced Darren Lehmann while the coach is being treated for deep vein thrombosis-hoping to give every player in the 17-man squad "one or two games at least".

"Obviously, there's a big carrot at the end of this with the World Cup team being picked, and you know you can only pick 15 people, so we want to give people opportunities to see what they can do," Di Venuto, usually the team's batting coach, added. The third game takes place in Sydney yesterday. —AFP

Serena serves up glamour spar with rival Sharapova

MELBOURNE: Serena Williams served up a glamour Australian Open quarter-final against arch-rival Maria Sharapova yesterday as she looks to extend her iron grip over the Russian star. The world number one and defending champion smacked down Margarita Gasparyan 6-2, 6-1 in just 55 minutes on Rod Laver Arena to ensure the mouth-watering showdown.

Sharapova holds the dismal record of never beating her nemesis in 17 contests dating back 12 years. The last time she managed a win was at the WTA Tour Championships in 2004. She now has another chance to finally get the monkey off her back after coming through a 7-5, 7-5 thriller against fast-rising Swiss teen Belinda Bencic.

The Russian world number five, who lost to Williams in the Melbourne Park final last year, said she was always looking to improve and used the losses against the mighty American to examine what she could do better. "Absolutely. It's not like I think about what I can do worse!" she said. "You're always trying to-always trying to improve. I got myself into the quarter-final of a Grand Slam.

"There is no reason I shouldn't be looking to improve and to getting my game in a better position than any other previous round. It's only going to be tougher, especially against Serena." A nonchalant Williams, who rarely looks beyond her next opponent in the draw, claimed she didn't know Sharapova was now in the way of her bid to win a 22nd Grand Slam and equally Steffi Graf's Open-era record.

"I'll be ready, she had a really good match-I had no idea I was playing her (Sharapova) next," she told the courtside interviewer after taming Gasparyan. "That will be a good match, I have nothing to lose. We are both doing the best we can. It'll be fun." Polish fourth seed Agnieszka Radwanska will face Spain's 10th seed Carla Suarez in the other quarter-final tomorrow after both players came through testing three-setters.

Radwanska was pushed to the limit by unseeded Anna-Lena Friedsam, winning 6-7 (6/8), 6-1, 7-5 with the German, who struggled with injury and cramp, leaving the court in tears. "I had no choice, just to fight till the end for each point. That's what I did," said the composed Radwanska, who kept her cool as Friedsam wilted. Suarez ended the dream run of local hope Daria Gavrilova 0-6, 6-3, 6-2 to make the last eight for the first time since her tournament debut in 2009.

Real deal

Williams has been in ominous form this year at Melbourne Park and easily swatted aside Gasparyan. It wasn't vintage Serena but even operating at 50 percent she was too good for the world number 58 and a rout was always on the cards. Williams won three majors-the Australian and French Opens and Wimbledon in 2015 which took her to within one of Graf's long-time record of 22. Margaret Court, who was in the stadium to watch Williams play, holds the all-time Grand Slam record of 24. Sharapova had a much harder task against Bencic, the WTA's highest ranked teenager, who has gone from rising star to the real deal over the past year, having already claimed 10 top-10 wins in her career.

Coached by Melanie Molitor, mother of Martina Hingis, she won tournaments in Eastbourne and Toronto in a breakout 2015 and was a major hurdle for the Russian. But Sharapova-the last teen to win a Grand Slam title, aged 19 at the 2006 US Open-has also been in good touch in Melbourne, where she won in 2008, and ultimately her experience proved decisive. "These are the players that will ultimately take our spot," she said of the talented Bencic. "But not just yet." —AFP

MELBOURNE: Serena Williams of the US returns against Russia's Margarita Gasparyan during their women's singles game on day seven of the 2015 Australian Open tennis tournament. —AFP

MELBOURNE: Switzerland's Roger Federer plays a forehand return during his men's singles match against Belgium's David Goffin on day seven of the 2016 Australian Open tennis tournament. — AFP

'Brain freeze' for Djokovic as Federer nails Goffin

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic dished up 100 unforced errors in a five-set struggle with Gilles Simon yesterday as Roger Federer roared into the Australian Open quarter-finals with ruthless efficiency. After the top seed's "match to forget", Federer looked in a hurry to brush off David Goffin when they came on court just before 11:00 pm-and he duly thrashed the Belgian 6-2, 6-1, 6-4 in 88 minutes.

There was a big contrast between defending champion Djokovic, who is going for a record-equaling sixth Australian Open title, and the 34-year-old Federer, who hasn't won in Melbourne since 2010. While Simon patiently pushed and prodded Djokovic during his 6-3, 6-7 (1/7), 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 win, Goffin couldn't lay a glove on Federer as the clockwork Swiss purred through. But both are safely into the quarter-finals, with Djokovic facing Kei Nishikori in his 27th consecutive Grand Slam last-eight clash and Federer up against Tomas Berdych.

Berdych also had to come through a marathon five-setter as he outlasted Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut 4-6, 6-4, 6-3, 1-6, 6-3 to reach the last eight for the sixth year in a row. By comparison, Nishikori's win was a stroll as he crushed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in straight sets, and he may fancy his chances against Djokovic after the Serb's flustered performance against Simon.

"Actually, it gives me great joy to know that I can't get worse than that, than what I played today," Djokovic said. "I was obviously pleased to win the match, but in terms of the performance itself, I haven't done well at all... It's a match to forget for me." He was at a loss to explain his tactic of continually trying drop shots, which either found the net or were returned with interest by the fast-moving Simon. "Sometimes you have a brain freeze, if I can call it that way," the 10-time Grand Slam champion said.

Frustrations show

Tomorrow's clash will be Djokovic and Nishikori's first Grand Slam meeting since the 2014 US Open semis, when the Japanese player won in four sets to become the first Asian man to reach a major singles final. Djokovic hadn't lost to Simon in nine matches stretching back to 2008, but the Frenchman's probing and counter-punching rattled the game's top player.

The Serb took nearly an hour to win the first set and his frustrations were palpable as Simon took the second on a tiebreak, ending an unbeaten sequence of 26 sets stretching back to the World Tour Finals. He got the crucial break to take the third set but the persistent Simon took it into a fifth after he broke late in the fourth set, amid another flurry of errors from the Serb. Djokovic got two service breaks in the fifth set only to be broken back once, but he finally clinched victory on his third match point with a backhand winner. Earlier Nishikori produced his best tennis of the tournament to breeze past former finalist Tsonga 6-4, 6-2, 6-4 in just over two hours on Hisense Arena. "Today was one of the best matches I've had this week. Played good tennis, through in three sets," beamed Nishikori, who showed no sign of his troublesome right wrist injury.— AFP

TS030

Landspeed Prius

Supra HV-R

A New Age: Hybrid racing

The fierce roar of powerful engines reverberating through your body. The smell of oil and burning rubber. The excitement of drivers battling through corners, fighting for position bumper to bumper. There is nothing like high performance racing to get your blood pumping.

The sport appears to be in direct contrast with the ecological path that Toyota has chosen. However, a new type of racing has been born: hybrid racing. Many people think of the Prius as a quiet, fuel-friendly, family and youth-oriented car, because it is based on hybrid technology. However, the technology is versatile enough to be used in full-fledged racecars, which can zoom down a track at over 300 km/h.

The fact is that the hybrid system is a winner in all respects, offering genuine performance advantages as well as environmental benefits. Racing not only proves how sophisticated hybrid technology is, but it also represents the fast lane towards developing ever-better hybrid technology and drives our engineers to attain quantum leaps in innovation. We race to win, and to win, we must continue learning.

The Prius: Clean, green and fast

Before we dive into hybrid racing, let's first take a look back at the THS, or Toyota Hybrid System. The first-generation Prius was released in 1997, utilizing the THS to offer dramatic improvements in fuel efficiency. Unfortunately, while the Prius offered amazing fuel economy, it still needed more power. In 2003, Toyota released the first big evolution to the hybrid system with the THS II, equipped in the second-generation Prius. Not only was its fuel economy better than ever, but it also featured higher battery voltage and increased electric motor output-resulting in far greater acceleration. The third-generation Prius debuted in 2009, featuring a plethora of new innovations. The gasoline engine was increased in size from 1.5 liters to 1.8 liters. The reduction gear was extensively redesigned to be extremely compact, and the electric motor was reworked to not only allow for higher output, but to also facilitate higher speeds.

Toyota had been planning a high performance Prius for hybrid racing since early in the vehicle's development. The Landspeed Prius debuted at Bonneville National Speed Week in 2004, based on the second-generation Prius. It set a record speed for hybrids at an impressive 130.794 miles (210.5 kilometers) per hour.

Proving hybrids have what it takes

"Whenever we talk about applying environmental technologies to racing, hybrid technology comes up. This is something we have to commit to as a company," Yoshiaki Kinoshita, President of Toyota Motorsport GmbH

Yoshiaki Kinoshita's visionary concept came to fruition with Toyota's hybrid racing project in late 2005. Mr. Kinoshita later became the President of Toyota Motorsport GmbH (TMG), where he would focus on unifying Toyota motorsports activities. Today, Hisatake Murata, the General Manager of the Motorsport Unit Development Division, is the driving force behind Toyota's hybrid racing development.

Toyota entered into the Tokachi 24-hour race again the following year, this time using a Toyota Supra with a specialized hybrid racing system and achieving a splendid overall victory. In the wake of this impressive 2007 win, hybrid racing seemed to fall out of the limelight at Toyota. But Mr. Kinoshita and Mr. Murata had actually set a new target: winning the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Tucked away behind closed doors, they worked feverishly to develop a brand new, dedicated hybrid racecar that would eventually be known as the TS030. The TS030 and its successor were about to change the course of modern-day motorsports forever.

Toyota Supra HV-R

The FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) series is a grueling endurance championship that includes the time-honored 24 Hours of Le Mans. Just as the series kicked off in 2012, Toyota entered the Le Mans race with the TS030 Hybrid equipped with the new THS-R (Toyota Hybrid System-Racing). In the qualifying stage, the TS030 achieved an impressive speed of 335.2 kilometers per hour, the fastest speed of any competitor.

But that was just the beginning.In 2014, Toyota debuted their all-new TS040 Hybrid racecar, and at that time, it was considered a rank outsider when the series began. This vehicle had an additional electric motor on the front axle, giving the racecar four-wheel drive and dramatically improving regenerative braking. The vehicle delivered around 1000 horsepower and could attain a top speed of 340 kilometers per hour on the straightaway. The TS040 went on to help Toyota Racing win the 2014 drivers' and manufacturers' titles to mark a successful conclusion to the FIA WEC season. The win was a clear demonstration of the capabilities of a hybrid racecar and its high performance prowess in a challenging racing environment. It also endorsed Toyota's global leadership and progress in developing advanced hybrid technology.

Racing helps develop ever-better road cars

A hybrid system generates electricity to recharge the batteries during deceleration by converting kinetic energy into electrical energy for storage. Racing cars have to brake violently and repeatedly throughout the race, so a lot of effort must be spent ensuring that a large amount of energy can be generated over a short time. When this technology is fed back into production cars, it allows for the development of extremely efficient hybrid cars that can regenerate electricity at any speed range.

Toyota's philosophy of utilizing motorsports as a tool to make ever-better road cars has been embraced by the WEC program, with hybrid technology transfer from the race track benefiting road car development since the beginning of the project in 2012.The WEC's revised 2014 regulations put new emphasis on energy efficiency, requiring almost 25% improvement in fuel economy on each lap. This meant that Toyota had to focus on reducing fuel usage and improving recovered energy. In other words, the same things we focus on for production cars. Of course, better aerodynamics and lower weight, which are extremely important in racecars, play a massive role in creating fuel-efficient, high-performing production cars as well. In short, racing is how Toyota tests and develops its world-class hybrid technology.

As Mr. Murata says,

"The components and technology developed for the TS040 Hybrid will provide the basis for Toyota production cars in the future."

A powerful hybrid system from Toyota is thus quietly changing the face of modern motorsports and perceptions about the capabilities of hybrid racing cars. Racing not only brings out the best in our engineers, but also spurs technological innovation. The next-generation Prius is a result of these dedicated efforts.

TS040

'Goliath squashes David': Israelis slam Blatt's firing

JERUSALEM: Israelis yesterday harshly criticized the firing of local hero David Blatt as coach of the NBA's Cleveland Cavaliers, calling him the victim of superstar LeBron James's influence over the team. One sports commentator even compared Israelis' hate of James to their hate of Islamist movement Hamas.

The 2014 hiring of Blatt, an Israeli citizen who led powerhouse Maccabi Tel Aviv to a European title, gave Israelis a jolt of pride. When the Cavaliers played in last year's NBA finals, many stayed up late to watch the games. But a rift between Blatt and James, the Cavaliers star player who many rank among the greatest ever, reportedly led to his downfall, with the team announcing Friday that they were firing him despite having one of the league's best records.

"LeBron James is now the most hated person in Israel," Sharon Davidovitch, a sports journalist for Israeli news site Ynet and Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper said. He said the decision to move on from Blatt was correct since the players and coach apparently did not get along, but noted that Israeli fans were taking the decision hard.

"It's a little bit joking and a little bit true: These days I can only compare the Israeli hate for LeBron James to the hate for Hamas," he said, speaking of the Palestinian Islamist movement that runs the Gaza Strip and which calls for Israel's destruction. Israeli newspapers gave the firing front-page treatment yesterday.

One said "Goliath eliminates David," referring to James and Blatt. A cartoon on the back cover of Yedioth Ahronoth showed Blatt walking away from the locker room with a box of belongings as James uncorks champagne behind his back. For The Jerusalem Post, Blatt's firing meant "the dream came to an abrupt end."

Trouble from the start

Basketball is the second most-popular sport after football, but Israelis rarely have success in the NBA, the world's biggest basketball league. When the Cavaliers advanced to the NBA finals last season in Blatt's first year as coach, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called to congratulate him. They eventually lost to the ascendant Golden State Warriors and their star Steph Curry.

Blatt was not always so lauded in Israel, where he was for a time seen by some as an outsider since he was born in the United States. He relocated to the country more than three decades ago, volunteered on a kibbutz, performed his mandatory military service and married an Israeli woman. Skeptical Israelis embraced him as a coach after his success on the court.

Blatt also had success as a coach in Russia and was named Euroleague coach of the year. But there were apparently troubles from the start in Cleveland, with US media reports saying James did not sufficiently respect Blatt. The rift appeared to play out in public at times, with James admitting to overriding his coach and calling his own plays.

Still, his firing came as a shock both in Israel and the US, as the Cavaliers led their Eastern Conference with a 30-11 record at the time. Cavaliers general manager David Griffin said he was "measuring more than wins and losses." "I'm focusing on a bigger picture and I'm really trying to decide-are we working toward a championship, are we building a championship culture?" he said. James denied any involvement in the decision and said he was "caught off guard" by the move.—AFP

David Blatt

CLEVELAND: Jimmy Butler #21 of the Chicago Bulls shoots over Tristan Thompson #13 of the Cleveland Cavaliers during the second half at Quicken Loans Arena. — AP photos

Cavs gored by Bulls as Tyronn fails on debut

CLEVELAND: Tyronn Lue didn't make much of a difference in his coaching debut for Cleveland as Pau Gasol scored 25 points, leading the Chicago Bulls to a 96-83 win over the Cavaliers on Saturday night. Lue was promoted Friday, when the Cavaliers fired David Blatt despite him taking the team to the NBA Finals last season and currently leading the Eastern Conference. The coaching swap didn't have any immediate impact on the Bulls, who outhustled the Cavs to loose balls and won for just the third time in nine games.

Jimmy Butler scored 20 points, Nikola Mirotic added 17 and Taj Gibson 15 for Chicago, which opened a 17-point lead in the third quarter and never let the Cavs get closer than eight in the fourth. LeBron James just missed his first triple-double this season, finishing with 26 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists. J.R. Smith added 18 points.

CLEVELAND: Cleveland Cavaliers coach Tyronn Lue answers questions during a news conference before an NBA basketball game between the Chicago Bulls and the Cavaliers.

SUNS 98, HAWKS 95

Archie Goodwin hit a 3-pointer from atop the arc with 0.1 seconds left and Phoenix beat Atlanta to end a six-game losing streak. Goodwin led the Suns with 24 points, and Phoenix won for the second time in 17 games. Tyson Chandler tied a Suns record with 27 rebounds, including 17 in the first half, and also had 13 points and a season-high five assists. Kent Bazemore led the Hawks with 21 points. Bazemore hit a tying 3-pointer with 47.4 seconds left, but Chandler's tip-in with 24.6 seconds remaining gave the Suns a 95-93 lead. Bazemore tied it again 5 seconds later, setting up Goodwin's 3. Alex Len had 16 points and 12 rebounds for Phoenix, while P.J. Tucker scored 16 points and Devin Booker had 15.

TIMBERWOVLES 106, GRIZZLIES 101

Shabazz Muhammad scored 25 points and Minnesota snapped Memphis' four-game winning streak. Ricky Rubio had 15 points, 12 assists and six rebounds and Andrew Wiggins scored 19 points for the Timberwolves, who beat a team with a winning record for the first time since Nov. 25. Minnesota improved to just 7-17 at home this season. Mario Chalmers scored 19 points for the banged-up Grizzlies. Marc Gasol played through pain and finished with 17 points in 32 minutes. The Grizzlies had the ball down one with 35 seconds to play but were whistled for a 5-second call on the inbound.

NUGGETS 104, PISTONS 101

Danilo Gallinari scored 30 points, including the go-ahead jumper with 23.8 seconds remaining, and Denver rallied to beat Detroit. Emmanuel Mudiay added 18 points and Nikola Jokic 17 for the Nuggets, who won their sixth in a row against the Pistons in Denver. Marcus Morris had 20 points to lead the Pistons, who have lost five of their last seven games. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope added 16 points and Aron Baynes had 13 points and 10 rebounds.

KINGS 108, PACERS 97

DeMarcus Cousins had a career-high 48 points along with 13 rebounds to help Sacramento beat Indiana for its season-high fifth straight win. Rajon Rondo had 11 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for his second straight triple-double and sixth of the season for Sacramento. Darren Collison had 11 points and rookie Willie Cauley-Stein had 12 rebounds. The Kings, winners of eight of 11 in January, used a strong third quarter to build an 11-point lead and never relinquished it in the fourth. Sacramento has beaten Indiana four straight times, sweeping the season series the last two years. Paul George had 24 of his 34 points in the second half for the Pacers, who have lost two straight and five of six. Jordan Hill had 17 points and 13 rebounds, Monta Ellis scored 16 and rookie Myles Turner added 11 points and five blocks.

TRAIL BLAZERS 121, LAKERS 103

Damian Lillard had 36 points and the Trail Blazers beat Los Angeles for Kobe Bryant's last game in Portland. CJ McCollum added 28 points and the Blazers led by as many as 27 points in the first half on the way to their eighth straight victory over the Lakers. D'Angelo Russell came off the bench with 21 points for the Lakers, who dropped their sixth straight game. But all eyes were on Bryant, a Portland nemesis dating back to the 2000 Western Conference finals, who finished with 10 points. It was the second of a back-to-back for the Lakers, who fell 108-95 to the San Antonio Spurs on Friday night. The game fell on the 10th anniversary of Bryant's 81-point game against Toronto, which remains the second-highest scoring game in NBA history.

HORNETS 97, KNICKS 84

Jeremy Lin and Kemba Walker scored 26 points each and Charlotte beat New York for its third win in the last four games.

Lin and Walker were a combined 19 of 19 from the free-throw line. Charlotte only shot 34 percent from the field but made 32 of 37 free throws as a team. PJ Hairston chipped in with a season-high 20 points and 10 rebounds for the Hornets, who beat the Knicks for the fifth straight time at home despite being without five players, including three starters. Derrick Williams led the Knicks with 19 points and 14 rebounds, and Kristaps Porzingis had 13 points.

PELICANS 116, BUCKS 99

Ryan Anderson scored 23 points and tied a season-high with six 3-pointers, leading hot-shooting New Orleans to a win over Milwaukee. New Orleans trailed 71-69 after Milwaukee's Khris Middleton scored 14 points in the first 9 minutes of the third quarter, but the Pelicans responded with a 31-14 run. Jrue Holiday, Toney Douglas, Tyreke Evans and Anderson all hit 3-pointers during that stretch, and Anderson's sixth 3 giving the Pelicans a 100-83 lead with 6:30 left. Anthony Davis had 22 points, seven rebounds and five assists for New Orleans, which hit a season-best 17 of 31 3s. Holiday added 13 points and nine assists off the bench. Middleton and Greg Monroe each scored 22 points for Milwaukee, which had all five starters in double figures but got only 16 points from its reserves. The Bucks have lost two straight. — AP

NBA results/standings

Cleveland 83, Chicago 96; Portland 121, LA Lakers 103; Sacramento 108, Indiana 97; Denver 104, Detroit 101; Phoenix 98, Atlanta 95; Minnesota 106, Memphis 101; Charlotte 97, New York 84; New Orleans 116, Milwaukee 99.

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division	W	L	PCT	GB
Toronto	28	15	.651	—
Boston	23	21	.523	5.5
New York	22	24	.478	7.5
Brooklyn	11	33	.250	17.5
Philadelphia	6	38	.136	22.5
Central Division				
Cleveland	30	12	.714	—
Chicago	25	18	.581	5.5
Indiana	23	21	.523	8
Detroit	23	21	.523	8
Milwaukee	19	27	.413	13
Southeast Division				
Atlanta	26	19	.578	—
Miami	23	21	.523	2.5
Washington	20	21	.488	4
Charlotte	21	23	.477	4.5
Orlando	20	22	.476	4.5

Western Conference

Northwest Division				
Oklahoma City	33	12	.733	—
Utah	19	24	.442	13
Portland	20	26	.435	13.5
Denver	17	27	.386	15.5
Minnesota	14	31	.311	19
Pacific Division				
Golden State	40	4	.909	—
LA Clippers	28	15	.651	11.5
Sacramento	20	23	.465	19.5
Phoenix	14	31	.311	26.5
LA Lakers	9	37	.196	32
Southwest Division				
San Antonio	38	6	.864	—
Memphis	25	20	.556	13.5
Dallas	25	20	.556	13.5
Houston	23	22	.511	15.5
New Orleans	16	27	.372	21.5

Al-Sabah Annual Shooting Tournament concludes

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The late Sheikh Fahad Al-Salem Al-Sabah Annual Shooting Tournament concluded Saturday at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex with a ceremony attended by the tournament patronizer Sheikha Latifa Al-Fahad Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Information Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, Sheikh Mubarak Fahad Al-Salem Al-Sabah, President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Eng Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi, Secretary General of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Obaid Mnahi Al-Osaimi and KSSF Board members Adnan Nasser Al-Ibrahim and Eng Hussam Al-Roumi, the tournament enjoyed large participation by Kuwait shooters competing in the 10m air pistol and rifle and archery.

Eng Duaij, Al-Otaibi, in his speech, welcomed the guests and thanked Sheikha Latifa Al-Fahad Al-Salem Al-Sabah for the annual patronage of this dear tournament, he also thanked Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and the late Sheikh Fahad Al-Salem family, for attending the closing ceremony and handing the cups and prizes to the winners, as this tournament comes shortly before organizing HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad International Grand Prix to be held from 1st-8th March with the participation of 45 countries. Al-Otaibi said 80 shooters participated in this tournament from the club, National Guard and Saad Al-Abdallah Olympic Shooting Academy.

Results of the tournament are as follows:

Air pistol - men:
Ahmad Anwar Al-Ahmad, Saad Mane Al-Ajmi, Suhail Al-Shimmari

Air rifle - men:
Abdallah Al-Harby, Mohammad Adel, Suleiman Al-Asousi.

Air pistol - women:
Athari Qurban, Israa Dashti, Mariam Ahmad.

Air rifle - women:
Heba Irzouqi, Mariam Irzouqi, Duaa Al-Thuwaikhi

50m rifle - prone -men:
Khalid Ibrahim, Torki Al-Shimmari, Mishref Al-Daihani

50m - 3 position - men:
Abdallah Al-Harby, Mohammad Adel, Khalid Ibrahim

50m pistol - men
Ali Al-Mutairi, Mideth Al-Sahly, Abdallah Al-Mulla

50m rifle - prone - women:
Mariam Irzouqi, Heba Irzouqi, Amal Al-Asem

Compound Archery - men
Ahmad Al-Shatti, Amer Al-Hajiri, Salem Al-Saeed

Olympic archery - men:
Abdallah Taha, Faisal Al-Rashidi, Bader Al-Mutairi

Bayern injuries bother Guardiola as Juve loom

BERLIN: Bayern Munich's Pep Guardiola admits the latest blow to Jerome Boateng is a concern, amidst reports he will be out for three months, as Juventus loom in the Champions League. Boateng limped out of Friday's 2-1 victory at Hamburg and a scan in Munich on Saturday revealed a torn groin muscle, which German daily Bild claim will keep him out for the next three months and possibly the rest of the season.

Bayern have put out a statement simply saying Boateng faces a "long pause" with their last 16, first-leg clash at Juventus now exactly a month away. The news will also be a concern to Germany coach Joachim Loew as the world champions' squad meets today when preparations start for March's friendlies against England and Italy ahead of the European championships in France. Bayern are eight points clear in the Bundesliga, but are low on defenders with centre-backs Boateng and Medhi Benatia, plus right-back Rafinha out, while Javi Martinez and Juan Bernat have only just returned from injury.

"Without Benatia, Boateng and with Javi Martinez not quite fit yet, we have a problem," said Guardiola, who has just one fully fit centre-back in Holger Badstuber. "But if we lose Jerome Boateng for a long time, we'll still field 11 players." Bayern host strugglers Hoffenheim in the league next Sunday, then have three away games at Bayer Leverkusen, second-division Bochum in the cup and Bavarian neighbors Augsburg before hosting Darmstadt at home.

Netherlands captain Arjen Robben says the Reds can ill afford to think about the Juventus match with five games yet to play. "If you allow yourself to gradually think about the Juventus game, then you're not paying enough attention," said Robben. "We have to give our all in every game." Especially as the Bayern squad has made no secret of their desire to see off Guardiola with the treble of Champions League, German Cup and Bundesliga titles before he leaves at the end of the season to be replaced by Carlo Ancelotti. —AFP

Pellegrini: City not just one-man Aguero show

LONDON: Manuel Pellegrini insists Manchester City are more than a one-man team, despite again needing Sergio Aguero to dig them out of a hole in a 2-2 draw at West Ham. Aguero grabbed an 80th-minute equaliser for his second of the game at Upton Park on Saturday while Enner Valencia also scored twice-within the first 60 seconds and then on the 56th minute-for West Ham.

Pellegrini's side have only won one away game since September, and have not claimed successive league wins since October 17. On Saturday, it could have been a lot worse had it not been for Aguero. "I don't think our team is just Sergio Aguero," said Pellegrini. "If you see, we play 23 games, there are 11 players that play more minutes (than the Argentine)."

He did, however, insist on the importance of Argentine star Aguero now staying fit and reaching his top form. "It's very important for him to be 100% fit. Always when he comes back from injury, he needs two or three games to come back to his best performance. (In recent games) he was making the movements that show us he will be there soon.

"I don't know if he is at his best moment. I think it is the moment that Sergio normally has when 100% fit. I hope he continues like this because he is a top player." City did not show their best defending on Saturday.

They were caught out almost straight from kick-off, as Cheikhou Kouyate exposed the slowness of their defense to set up Valencia for the first. Aguero equalised within seven minutes through a penalty, given away by Carl Jenkinson who was shortly afterwards taken off with an injury to give Sam Byram his debut, just days after signing from Leeds United.

West Ham were back in the lead just minutes after half-time, though, as a long Michail Antonio throw was allowed to bounce into the area for Valencia to finish. "Of course, we were not very concentrated," Pellegrini said of the second goal. "Maybe a throw-in you are not thinking it could be dangerous. We knew before game he has long throw-in. Unfortunately, at that moment we had a distraction." Pellegrini still felt his team "deserved" more as he didn't think goalkeeper Joe Hart was tested too much in the second half.

But West Ham manager Slaven Bilic believed his side should have won, and declared himself "disappointed...but proud" of the performance. He also said his team feel they can finish in the top six. "They believe. And there's nothing wrong in it. For me it's great if they believe. For me, part of that belief is to know what you have to do to play like this," said Bilic whose team hit the crossbar late one.

He also said he would like to see City win the title due to the quality of their football."So far in the Premier League, I've never seen a team that is so dangerous, every time you give them a little bit (of space). For me, it would be good if they win the league." —AFP

NORWICH: With his shirt off, Liverpool's English midfielder Adam Lallana (center) celebrates scoring their late winning goal with teammates and Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp (2nd R) during the English Premier League football match between Norwich City and Liverpool at Carrow Road. —AFP

Van Gaal admits United getting more furious

MANCHESTER: Louis van Gaal admitted the furious reaction of Manchester United supporters to their side's dismal 1-0 defeat against Southampton was the worst he has experienced in an increasingly turbulent season. Van Gaal's side failed to score at Old Trafford for the seventh time this term and were eventually beaten by a late headed goal from Southampton debutant Charlie Austin.

United are now five points adrift of a top-four place in the Premier League and their dejected players trudged off with boos ringing in their ears at full-time. Inevitably, beleaguered boss van Gaal was also subjected to renewed derision from disgruntled fans who have given the Dutchman plenty of abuse for his conservative tactics over the last few months.

The pressure on van Gaal will only increase with United having won just three of their last 13 games and he accepted the criticism from supporters was more vitriolic than ever. "Yes, because it was very clear," he said. "I can imagine (why) also because I have seen a poor match. "I cannot change that feeling. I can only work hard with my players to improve our game and that is what I am doing.

"Of course I am disappointed but I have to think and already I put the question how I can change this because we have to change this. "That is my job and it's not an easy job at the moment. Nevertheless, we have won three times in 2016 and had a draw, so they were very good results in January. "But we could not show it in this game. I did not see that confidence today."

Under threat

Although van Gaal knows his approval rating is at an all-time low with United fans, the former Barcelona and Bayern Munich manager refused to be drawn on whether his job may be under threat. "I cannot answer that because normally I communicate everything with everybody so it is not for me to answer these kinds of questions," he said.

United are in desperate need of a lift to prevent their season disintegrating even further, but van Gaal could give no guarantees that it may come via a move into the January transfer market. He has already indicated that he would like to strengthen his defensive options with Matteo Darmian, who he said had gone to hospital for checks after spitting blood following a collision with Southampton striker Shane Long, potentially adding to a lengthy injury list.

But regarding the much-needed arrival of creative talents, van Gaal said: "I think one player cannot change everything. Sometimes it looks like it but it is always the process of team building that makes a team stronger. "Sometimes one individual can give the first stimulus for that process but it is not so easy as you say or ask." Southampton manager Ronald Koeman - an old rival of van Gaal from their time together in Dutch football, appears to have managed just that with the capture of Austin, whose goal secured a third straight league win for the Saints.

The 26-year-old is a proven goalscorer but only Southampton was willing to meet QPR's modest £4 million ($5.7 million) asking price. "We are very happy we had the possibility to sign Charlie and Charlie was happy to sign for Southampton because he knows Southampton produces good football and gives young players a chance and all the chance to play for their national team," Koeman said.

"That is the reason we liked to sign Charlie Austin - a great numbers of goals. With Shane together in the last 10-15 minutes they did a great job but it is not fair to mention one player. "It was a great win. I think it was a difficult game for both teams today. We knew they are under pressure and if you keep the organization in your team, they will be nervous." —AFP

MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Dutch manager Louis van Gaal leaves the pitch at full-time during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Southampton at Old Trafford. — AFP

5-4 thriller a heart stopper for Klopp

NORWICH: Jurgen Klopp admitted his heart was palpitating after Liverpool stole the points in dramatic fashion in their sensational 5-4 win over Norwich at Carrow Road. Klopp's side went ahead through Roberto Firmino but Norwich hit back with goals from Diemerci Mbokani, Steven Naismith and a Wes Hoolahan penalty.

The Reds responded superbly to draw level through Jordan Henderson and another Firmino goal before James Milner put them ahead with 15 minutes remaining. But that set the stage for Saturday's heart-stopping finale, which left the always emotional Klopp beside himself with frustration and then jumping for joy.

The Liverpool boss was crestfallen when Sebastien Bassong fired home to equalise for Norwich in stoppage-time, but just seconds later he was sprinting down the touchline to join his players in a jubilant huddle after Adam Lallana scored with virtually the last kick of the game.

"Until now my heart has been very stress resistant," Klopp said. "I have had a few games in my life similar to this but not with this happy end. I have not often had a 5-4 win. "At the end we can be really happy with nearly everything, especially three points after almost a draw. A draw would have been deserved for both teams.

"It was spectacular, wild, good football. It was an impressive fightback to be honest. It was really good."

Klopp's relief was so overwhelming that he laughed off having his glasses broken in the celebrations following Lallana's goal. "I have had had this before (smashed glasses)," the former Borussia Dortmund manager added. "They are in a museum at Dortmund because we won first time against Bayern Munich. And Nuri Sahin broke my glasses-and today it's Adam. "I won't be making Adam pay for the glasses. Usually I have a second pair but it's really difficult to look for glasses without glasses."

Defensive horror show

Klopp could have been forgiven for wishing his eye-sight had been impaired earlier as Liverpool's defensive horror show made for difficult viewing. Yet, despite conceding four goals against one of the league's lesser lights, Klopp claimed Liverpool were improving at the back.

"It's not easy to create chances against us. It's very frustrating in the end of course. Today we scored five," Klopp said. "It will make me sound crazy but we defended better today. Now we have to solve this problem. I am not happy with the situation for sure."

Meanwhile, Norwich manager Alex Neil voiced his frustration at his side's even more porous defence, after conceding 14 goals in their last four matches. "We managed to score four goals at home and that should mean three points," Neil said. "The amount of goals we are conceding is concerning.

"It was frustrating because with the forward play we had we should have come away winners. "All your hard work goes to waste. They did all the hard work to get us to 3-1 so it is extremely frustrating." Although outwardly calm, Neil admitted he was furious inside and hoped his players would be too as they try to pull clear of the relegation zone. "I'm angry, extremely angry, the players should be too. They should be feeling the pain," he said. — AFP

Rampant PSG crush Angers to extend huge table lead

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain served another reminder of their Ligue 1 supremacy with a thumping 5-1 victory at home to Angers on Saturday that moved the reigning champions 24 points clear at the top. Zlatan Ibrahimovic opened the scoring at the Parc des Princes with his 17th league goal of the season before Lucas doubled the lead for Laurent Blanc's side just before half-time.

The floodgates then opened after the break with Gregory Van der Wiel rounding off a superb team move for PSG's third, only for Pierrick Capelle to pull one back, but Angel Di Maria then scored twice in the space of four minutes to complete the rout.

"It was a great second half, although the first was a bit trickier against a well-organized opponent, which we noticed in the first meeting this season," said Blanc, whose team won for the 19th time in 22 league games. "The first goal was crucial. Once we led things became a bit easier, but the team stayed focused and sharp. We were rewarded with the goals and it was really enjoyable." With Paris still competing in four competitions, the capital club face a fixture backlog that will see them play seven games in three weeks ahead of their Champions League last 16, first leg against Chelsea on February 16.

Imposing line-up

Blanc was without captain Thiago Silva, Marquinhos, Marco Verratti and Javier Pastore through injury but still fielded an imposing line-up, although there was no place for Uruguayan striker Edinson Cavani, whose future remains unclear amid reports this week linking him to Manchester United. Angers held Paris to a 0-0 draw when the sides met in December, the last time the capital club dropped points this season and the only occasion in which they have failed to score in Ligue 1 this term.

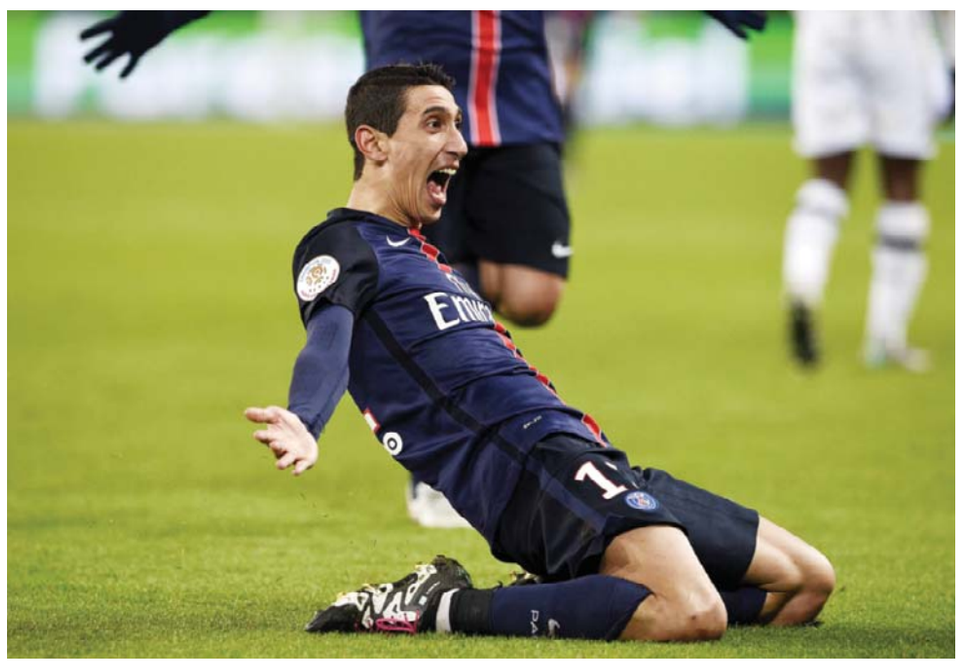
The visitors entered the weekend with the league's second meanest defence, with goalkeeper Alexandre Letellier denying both Van der Wiel and Blaise Matuidi with his feet in the opening half hour. However, there was little the Angers keeper could do on 32 minutes when PSG broke the deadlock through Ibrahimovic, whose low shot from the right side of the area took a slight deflection as it flashed through the legs of Letellier.

Di Maria then released Van der Wiel down the right eight minutes later and the Dutchman broke into the box, recovering the ball after an attempted tackle by Romain Thomas, before knocking it back for Lucas to sweep home. Home keeper Kevin Trapp was a spectator for much of the first half, aside from a Thomas header that forced the German to pluck the ball out of the air under heavy pressure inside his six-yard box.

The hosts' two-goal lead allowed them to showcase the more expansive side of their game, with PSG's third goal on 54 minutes emanating from a slick interchange between Ibrahimovic and Di Maria before Matuidi's superb volleyed cross was turned in by Van der Wiel at the far post. But Angers continued to battle and reduced the deficit five minutes later as Capelle latched on to a headed clearance and steered a low volley just inside the post.

That proved merely a blip on the radar, though, as PSG reasserted their dominance with a fourth goal on 63 minutes when a tumbling Lucas scooped the ball back to Di Maria and the Argentine brilliantly fired past Letellier on the volley from outside the box.

Di Maria struck again moments later after he was put through by Matuidi and he once more produced a high-quality finish, chipping over the advancing Letellier to round out an 11th straight win in all competitions. Hatem Ben Arfa netted his 10th goal of the season as Nice beat Lorient 2-1 to climb to second, while Caen won 2-1 at Montpellier and Guingamp secured a 1-0 victory over nine-man Bastia. —AFP



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Argentinian forward Angel Di Maria celebrates after scoring a goal during the French L1 football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Angers. —AFP

Football Results/Standings

Arsenal 0 Chelsea 1 (Costa 23); Everton 1 (Cork 26-og) Swansea 2 (Sigurdsson 17-pen, Ayew 34); Crystal Palace 1 (Vertonghen 30-og) Tottenham 3 (Kane 63, Alli 84, Chadli 90+5); Leicester 3 (Drinkwater 42, Vardy 66, Ulloa 87) Stoke 0; Manchester United 0 Southampton 1 (Austin 87); Norwich 4 (Mbokani 29, Naismith 41, Hoolahan 54-pen, Bassong 90+2) Liverpool 5 (Firmino 18, 63, Henderson 55, Milner 75, Lallana 90+5) Sunderland 1 (Van Aanholt 45+1) Bournemouth 1 (Afobe 13); Watford 2 (Ighalo 46, Cathcart 58) Newcastle 1 (Lascelles 71); West Brom 0 Aston Villa 0; West Ham 2 (Valencia 1, 56) Manchester City 2 (Aguero 9-pen, 81).

French Ligue 1 results
Monaco 4 (Silva 28, Coentrao 36, Carrillo 70, Costa 90+3) Toulouse 0; Paris Saint-Germain 5 (Ibrahimovic 32, Lucas 40, van der Wiel 54, Di Maria 63, 66) Angers 1 (Capelle 59); Montpellier 1 (Bensebaini 23) Caen 2 (Rodelin 40, Delort 52); Lille 1 (Boufal 25-pen) Troyes 3 (Cabot 77, 80, Pi 86); Nantes 2 (Sigthorsson 1, Bedoya 30) Bordeaux 2 (Diabate 84, Cana 90+1-og); Guingamp 1 (Giresse 90+4-pen) Bastia 0 ; Nice 2 (Ben Arfa 35, Koziello 43) Lorient 1 (Jouffre 23).

Spanish La Liga results
Athletic Bilbao 5 (Aduriz 12, 52, Merino 27, Laporte 40, Dos Santos 80-og) Eibar 2 (Baston 4, 49-pen); Malaga 1 (Juanpi 32) Barcelona 2 (El Haddadi 2, Messi 51); Espanyol 2 (Caicedo 3, Moreno 39) Villarreal 2 (Trigueros 23, Musacchio 88); Granada 3 (Rico 27, El-Arabi 36, Rochina 77) Getafe 2 (Scepovic 71, MoisÈs 73); Rayo Vallecano 3 (Miku 21, Tito 26, Jozabed 36) Celta Vigo 0

Italy Serie A results
Fiorentina 2 (Ilicic 24, Rodriguez 83) Torino 0; Verona 1 (Pazzini 39) Genoa 1 (Coppola 19-og); Inter Milan 1 (Palacio 39) Carpi 1 (Lasagna 90+2); Lazio 4 (Candreva 66-pen, 81, Cataldi 72, Keita 90+6) Chievo 1 (Cesar); Palermo 4 (Quaison 35, Hiljemark 56, Lazaar 77, Trajkovski 87) Udinese 1 (Thereau 79); Sampdoria 2 (Correa 45, Eder 73) Napoli 4 (Higuain 9, Insigne 18-pen, Hamsik 60, Mertens 79); Sassuolo 0 Bologna 2 (Giaccherini 68, Floccari 90+4).

European league tables after yesterday's early match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

English Premier League table

Leicester	23	13	8	2	42	26	47
Man City	23	13	5	5	45	23	44
Arsenal	23	13	5	5	37	22	44
Tottenham	23	11	9	3	41	19	42
Man Utd	23	10	7	6	28	21	37
West Ham	23	9	9	5	36	28	36
Liverpool	23	9	7	7	30	32	34
Southampton	23	9	6	8	32	24	33
Stoke	23	9	6	8	24	25	33
Watford	23	9	5	9	27	26	32
Crystal Palace	23	9	4	10	24	27	31
Everton	23	6	11	6	40	34	29
Chelsea	23	7	7	9	32	34	28
West Brom	23	7	7	9	22	30	28
Swansea	23	6	7	10	22	31	25
Bournemouth	23	6	7	10	27	38	25
Norwich	23	6	5	12	28	43	23
Newcastle	23	5	6	12	25	41	21
Sunderland	23	5	4	14	28	46	19
Aston Villa	23	2	7	14	18	38	13

Spanish La Liga table

Barcelona	20	15	3	2	52	16	48
Atletico Madrid	20	15	2	3	30	8	47
Real Madrid	20	13	4	3	57	19	43
Villarreal	21	12	5	4	28	18	41
Celta Vigo	21	10	4	7	32	33	34
Eibar	21	9	6	6	34	26	33
Sevilla	20	9	5	6	28	22	32
Athletic Bilbao	21	9	4	8	32	30	31
Deportivo	20	6	10	4	27	24	28
Getafe	21	7	5	9	26	31	26
Valencia	20	5	9	6	25	21	24
Malaga	21	6	6	9	16	19	24
Espanyol	21	6	4	11	20	35	22
Real Sociedad	21	5	6	10	24	33	21
Real Betis	20	5	6	9	13	28	21
Granada	21	5	5	11	24	43	20
Rayo Vallecano	21	5	4	12	26	45	19
Las Palmas	20	4	6	10	19	30	18
Sporting Gijon	20	5	3	12	22	35	18
Levante	20	3	5	12	17	36	14

French Ligue 1 table

Paris SG	22	19	3	0	56	10	60
Monaco	22	10	9	3	33	25	39
Nice	22	10	6	6	37	26	36
Rennes	22	8	10	4	32	25	34
Angers	22	9	7	6	21	18	34
Caen	22	10	3	9	24	28	33
Saint-Etienne	21	10	2	9	24	24	32
Bordeaux	22	7	9	6	27	30	30
Marseille	21	7	8	6	31	22	29
Lyon	21	8	5	8	27	25	29
Nantes	22	7	8	7	20	22	29
Lorient	22	6	9	7	30	32	27
Ajaccio	22	6	8	8	24	27	26
Lille	22	5	10	7	17	18	25
Bastia	22	7	4	11	21	27	25
Guingamp	22	6	6	10	20	29	24
Montpellier	22	6	4	12	23	29	22
Reims	21	5	7	9	22	29	22
Toulouse	22	4	8	10	24	39	20
Troyes	22	1	8	13	16	44	11

Italian Serie A table

Napoli	21	14	5	2	45	18	47
Juventus	20	13	3	4	37	15	42
Fiorentina	21	13	2	6	39	21	41
Inter Milan	21	12	5	4	26	14	41
Roma	20	9	8	3	37	23	35
AC Milan	21	9	6	6	29	25	33
Sassuolo	21	8	8	5	25	23	32
Empoli	21	9	5	7	27	26	32
Lazio	21	9	4	8	29	30	31
Chievo	21	7	6	8	27	26	27
Torino	21	7	5	9	27	28	26
Bologna	21	8	2	11	24	27	26
Atalanta	21	7	5	9	21	24	26
Palermo	21	7	3	11	23	34	24
Udinese	21	7	3	11	19	35	24
Genoa	21	6	5	10	24	27	23
Sampdoria	21	6	5	10	31	36	23
Carpi	21	4	6	11	20	36	18
Frosinone	21	4	4	13	22	45	16
Verona	21	0	10	11	14	33	10

GENOA: Napoli's forward Gonzalo Higuain (R) from Argentina scores during the Italian Serie A football match Sampdoria Vs Napoli on January 24, 2016 at 'Luigi Ferraris Stadium'. — AFP

Seria A Roundup

Higuain becomes Europe's top scorer as Inter stumble

MILAN: Gonzalo Higuain struck his 21st goal in as many games to help Napoli tighten their grip on Serie A with a 4-2 win at Sampdoria as title challengers Inter Milan were stunned by a late Carpi leveller. As Napoli battled to their 14th win of the campaign, Inter paid the price for a series of first-half misses when Kevin Lasagna levelled at the death for the league minnows to secure a 1-1 draw at a stunned San Siro. Napoli now sit five points ahead of Juventus, who host Roma in Sunday's late game, and have a six-point lead on Fiorentina after their 2-0 win over Torino earlier in the day.

Inter have dropped to fourth at six points adrift, enforcing the pundits' belief that it is now a two-horse race for the title. After what has been a trying week for Napoli, the Azzurri showed their mettle. Coach Maurizio Sarri was caught in the eye of a homophobic storm after calling fellow coach Roberto Mancini a "poof" during a post-match tirade following defeat to Inter Milan in the quarter-final of the Italian Cup. Inter drew a line under the controversy on Friday by publicly accepting Napoli and Sarri's apology.

A trip to Sampdoria looked a challenging prospect for Sarri's title challengers, but after ballooning an early chance over Higuain was soon into his usual, predatory stride. In the ninth minute the Argentinian pounced on a poor Edgar Barreto back-pass to power towards the area and fire past onrushing Emiliano Viviano. Another Barreto blunder helped Napoli double their lead by the 18th minute, the defender hauling down Raul Albiol and the referee pointing to the spot. Despite Higuain's chance to match the 22-goal tally that won the league's Capocannoniere (top scorer) award for Luca Toni and Mauro Icardi last season, Lorenzo Insigne stepped up to beat Viviano at his near post. Napoli were in command but the visitors were pegged back after Carlos Carbonero did well to win back possession and powered down the right flank. Sampdoria striker Eder's dummy was crucial, allowing Joaquin Correa to run in and beat Pepe Reina first-time from 12 yards.

A superb piece of individual skill from Napoli captain Marek Hamsik helped Sarri's men restore their lead, the Slovakian shimmying past three players inside the area to toe-poke the ball past Viviano at his far post on the hour. Sampdoria pulled one back on 73 minutes when Eder rose to meet a corner to fire a glancing header through the legs of Reina, but six minutes later the match was effectively over.

Dries Mertens had replaced Insigne with 15 minutes remaining and only four minutes later the Belgian international took on two Samp defenders before beating Viviano with a low shot at his far post.

Elsewhere, Lazio and Palermo gave their stuttering campaigns a boost by recording impressive 4-1 wins over Chievo and Udinese respectively. Bologna's purple patch under coach Roberto Donadoni continued with a shock 2-0 win away to Sassuolo, who remain seventh but are now only one point ahead of a resurgent Lazio.

Viola up to third

Elsewhere, Slovenian Josip Ilicic curled in his 10th goal of the season and Gonzalo Rodriguez added a late second as Fiorentina got back to winning ways with a 2-0 home win against Torino yesterday. Fiorentina welcomed Giampiero Ventura's men to the Artemio Franchi stadium desperate to get their title chase back on track after consecutive defeats to Lazio and AC Milan.

In spring-like conditions, Ilicic's superb free-kick gave the hosts a 24th minute lead and pulled the Slovenian international level with the club's top scorer, Nikola Kalinic. But Paul Sousa's men were on tenterhooks for the remainder until Rodriguez rose to beat Torino goalkeeper Salvador Ichazo at his near post seven minutes from time with a powerful header from a corner.

New Fiorentina recruits Tino Costa and Mauro Zarate, signed in midweek when striker Giuseppe Rossi moved on loan to Spanish league side Levante, made their debuts in the final stages. Costa replaced Ilicic midway through the second half and Zarate replaced Nikola Kalinic with seven minutes remaining. Fiorentina's 13th win moved them up to provisional third place at three points behind leaders Napoli ahead of the remaining Serie A fixtures, with Inter Milan, who host strugglers Carpi, dropping one place to fourth.

Milan held by Empoli

Mario Balotelli struggled to make an impact in a second-half substitute's appearance as Empoli dug deep to hold AC Milan 2-2 and dent the Rossoneri's European hopes on Saturday. Milan travelled to the Castellani stadium buoyed after a 2-0 defeat of Fiorentina last week that left Sinisa Mihajlovic's men 12 points behind leaders Napoli and within sight of the European qualifying places. But the visitors had left themselves exposed on the half hour when Empoli forward Piotr Zielinski was unmarked to level Carlos Bacca's eighth-minute opener. And the Milan defence was at fault on the hour when veteran striker Massimo Maccarone pounced at the back post to convert a rebound from teenaged goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma to level again after Giacomo Bonaventura had restored their lead on 48 minutes.

Milan's sixth draw of the season left them in sixth place, with Empoli one point and two places further adrift. Bacca spurned an opportunity to create a last-gasp chance, prompting Mihajlovic to speak to the Colombian directly after the final whistle. But the Serbian coach said Bacca alone wasn't to blame.

"We came here to win and I'm disappointed because we took the lead twice and that should have been enough for victory," he told Sky Sport. "We made mistakes but in the end it's a fair result." He added: "Bacca wasn't the only culprit. We had a couple of late chances but we weren't clinical enough." — AFP

Guidolin off to winning start as Everton falls to Swansea

LIVERPOOL: Francesco Guidolin's first game in charge of Swansea saw them win 2-1 away to Everton yesterday as the Welsh club moved four points clear of the Premier League relegation zone. A hard fought victory saw Swansea climb to 15th place. just three positions behind Everton, who've now won just once in their last 10 league games and only three times in their past 14 at Goodison Park.

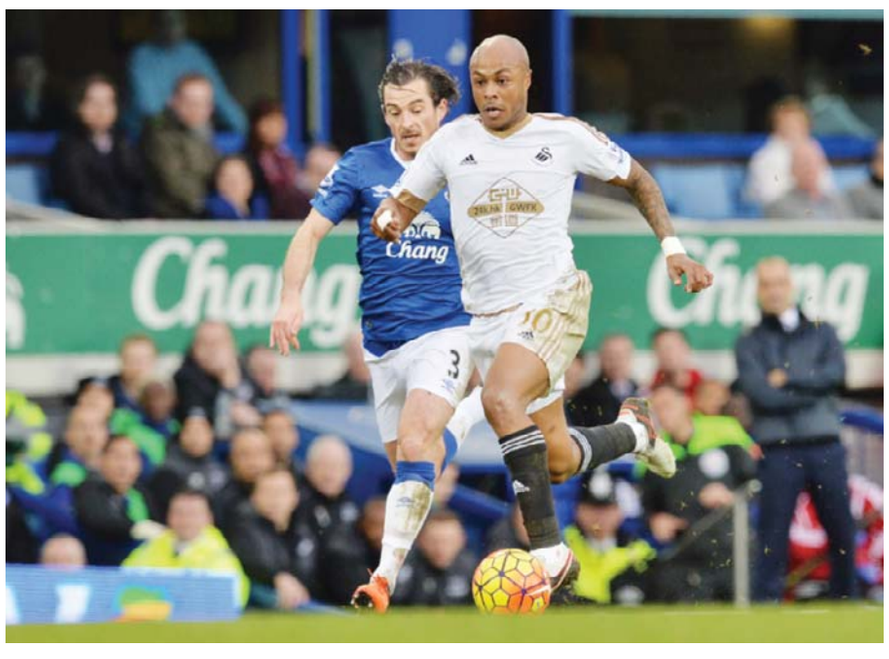
Swansea went ahead though Gylfi Sigurdsson's 17th-minute penalty but Everton were level nine minutes later when Gareth Barry's near-post flick was turned into his own net by the Swans' Jack Cork. But Swansea regained the lead in the 34th minute. Left-back Neil Taylor burst clear and released Andre Ayew, whose shot deflected in off the sliding John Stones. It appeared Swansea defender Ashley Williams may have handled the ball in the build-up but referee Anthony Taylor was happy that the contact was not deliberate and waved play on.

For highly-regarded England central defender Stones, this was a match to forget as it was his under-hit backpass that led to Swansea's penalty, with goalkeeper Tim Howard hacking down Ayew as he tried to clear. There were several occasions when Stones was guilty of overplaying the ball, whereas Swansea centre-back Williams adopted a more traditional approach by concentrating on getting the ball clear.

Everton had to make two substitutions before the break as both Muhamed Besic and Kevin Mirallas went off injured. Swansea were forced to fight a rearguard action in the second half as Everton winger Gerard Deulofeu got into the game by producing several excellent crosses.

Guidolin responded by sending on defender Jordi Amat for winger Wayne Routledge and Eder for Ayew in an attempt to bolster Swansea at the back. But the Toffees were unable to take advantage of Deulofeu's fine play, squandering a host of chances, with one of their best coming with the final kick of the game when Seamus Coleman lofted the ball over the crossbar from six yards out.

This was a notable win for Swansea as it meant they had recorded back-to-back league successes for the first time this season following last week's 1-0 defeat of Watford. As well as giving Italian boss Guidolin a victory in his first game in charge, this result was also Swansea's first league victory over Everton, whose manager Roberto Martinez made his name in charge of the Welsh side. —AFP



LIVERPOOL: Swansea City's Ghanaian striker Andre Ayew (R) runs with the ball, chased by Everton's English defender Leighton Baines during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Swansea City at Goodison Park. — AFP

Atletico miss chance to top table in Sevilla stalemate

MADRID: Atletico Madrid spurned the chance to move back on top of La Liga as they failed to break down 10-man Sevilla in a 0-0 draw yesterday. Antoine Griezmann had the hosts' best effort when he headed against the post early in the second-half, but Atletico failed to take advantage after Vitolo was shown a second yellow card just after the hour mark.

A point means Atletico and Barcelona are now level on points at the top of the table ahead of their meeting at the Camp Nou next weekend, although Barca also have a game in hand. Real Madrid can close to within two points of the leaders when Zinedine Zidane gets his first taste of action as boss away from the Santiago Bernabeu at Real Betis.

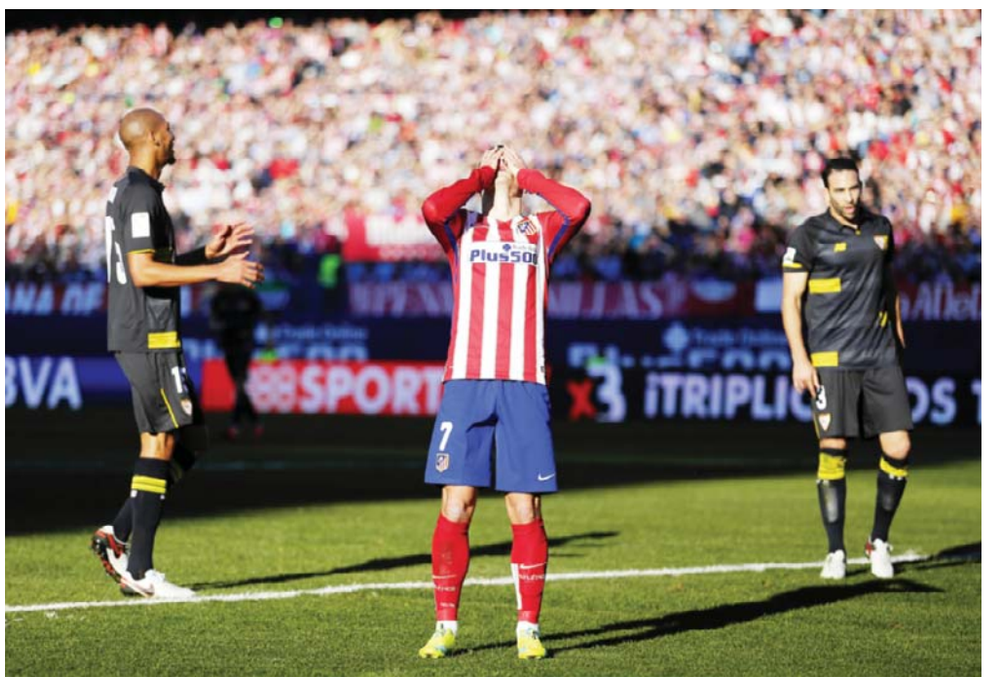
"When you don't score it is normal that is what people talk about, but we had plenty of chances today," said Atletico boss Diego Simeone. "We hit the post, their keeper made a great save and the only way to score in football is by creating chances. "The team worked hard and there were positives from the game in how we kept going. We tried in every way to break down the Sevilla defense."

There have now been just 17 goals in Atletico's 10 matches at home in La Liga this season and clear-cut chances were again hard to come by for both sides. Greizmann just couldn't stretch to turn Diego Godin's header across goal in at the far post early on. Meanwhile, at the other end, Sevilla's best chance fell to Ever Banega but his deflected shot spun inches over the bar.

Griezmann was desperately unlucky when he timed his run to meet Koke's cross perfectly just after the break only to see his bullet header come back off the post. Atletico were gifted the initiative for the final half hour when Vitolo was handed a second booking for chopping down Luciano Vietto just outside the box.

The hosts still struggled to open up the Sevilla defense, but a well-worked free-kick freed Yannick Ferreira Carrasco inside the area and his fierce shot was brilliantly saved by Sergio Rico. The goalkeeper also did well to turn Gabi's pile-driver over before Carrasco's free-kick at the death was deflected behind as Sevilla held on for a point that keeps them in the race for fourth place, eight points adrift of Villarreal.

Earlier, Athletic Bilbao gunned down high-flying Eibar 5-2 in a Basque derby at San Mames. On-loan Atletico striker Borja Baston scored twice for the visitors to take his tally for the season to 15. However, two goals from Aritz Aduriz and strikes from Sabin Merino, Aymeric Laporte and a late Mauro dos Santos own goal moved Athletic up to eighth. — AFP



MADRID: Atletico Madrid's Antoine Griezmann, center, reacts after missing a chance to score during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Atletico Madrid and Sevilla at the Vicente Calderon stadium. — AFP

Kuwait Times

Sports

MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 2016

Serena serves up glamour spar with rival Sharapova 16

Higuain becomes Europe's top scorer 19

Cavs gored by Bulls as Tyronn fails on debut Page 17

LONDON: Arsenal's Spanish defender Nacho Monreal (L) vies with Chelsea's Serbian defender Branislav Ivanovic during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Chelsea at the Emirates Stadium yesterday — AFP

It had to be Costa: Spaniard halts Arsenal's title charge

Reckless Per sees red in 18th minute

LONDON: Diego Costa scored as Chelsea renewed their hold over Arsenal with a 1-0 win at the Emirates Stadium on Sunday that dented their London rivals' Premier League title hopes. Costa had been the central figure in Chelsea's 2-0 win over Arsenal in September, when he goaded Gabriel into getting sent off, and he drew the foul that saw Per Mertesacker dismissed in the 18th minute before neatly converting the game's only goal five minutes later.

It was Arsenal's first defeat in 10 home league games and left Arsene Wenger's side in third place, below Manchester City on goal difference and three points shy of leaders Leicester City. Chelsea rose one place to 13th, calming any relegation concerns, after only their second win in six league games under interim manager Guus Hiddink. Arsenal, who welcomed Alexis Sanchez back from injury, have now gone nine league games without beating Chelsea, during which they have not scored in over nine and a half hours, and their latest failure left them without a win in three league games.

Europe still unlikely

Chelsea remain 14 points below the top four, but while Champions League qualification remains an unlikely goal, this was further proof that, even without the departed Jose Mourinho, they continue to hold the Indian sign over Arsenal.

Arsenal recalled Mesut Ozil after he missed the 0-0 draw at Stoke City with a sore foot and he was a typical buzzing presence as the hosts forced their opponents back early on. But Arsenal lacked precision in the final third, Joel Campbell miscuing a volley from Theo Walcott's cross and Mathieu Flamini slipping as he attempted to shoot, and the best chances fell to Chelsea.

In the second minute, Petr Cech had to drop to his right to turn a shot from Oscar around the post after Laurent Koscielny had tamely conceded possession. When Cesar Azpilicueta crossed from the left, Willian was given two bites at the cherry, seeing his initial volley scuffed back to him by Mertesacker and then putting his follow-up straight at Cech. In the 18th minute came the game's decisive moment. Costa reached Willian's through-ball just ahead of Mertesacker and with the German already committed to a sliding tackle, the Chelsea striker tumbled and referee Mark Clattenburg brandished the red card.

Hazard returns

Gabriel, sent off for kicking Costa in September, unsurprisingly came on to plug the gap, but there were boos when the number held up on the fourth official's electronic board was striker Olivier Giroud's. It was typical of Costa to find himself centre-stage and barely a minute after Gabriel's entrance, he stole between the Brazilian and Koscielny to convert Branislav Ivanovic's cross with an adroit near-post volley. The Spain striker threatened to add a second before half-time, but after gathering Willian's square pass with a clever touch that took him past Nacho Monreal, his shot was repelled by Cech.

From the ensuing corner, Ivanovic's header was headed off the line by Monreal. Arsenal finally got in behind Chelsea in first-half stoppage time when Aaron Ramsey clipped a pass into the area for Flamini, but the Frenchman-not renowned for his penalty-box prowess-jabbed a volley over. With Chelsea continuing to probe in the second half-ex-Arsenal favorite Cesc Fabregas seeing a strong penalty claim waved away after being impeded by Koscielny-Wenger turned to Sanchez.

The Chilean, sidelined for 10 matches with a hamstring injury, replaced Campbell and spurned a chance to level when he took an airshot as the ball ricocheted around the Chelsea box following a free-kick. Costa departed, beneath a hail of boos, in the 68th minute, with Loic Remy coming on, while Eden Hazard made his return following a three-game groin injury layoff as a replacement for Oscar. With Wenger watching anxiously from the corner of his technical area, a late chance fell to Flamini, but his deflected back-heel was fielded by Chelsea goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois. — AFP

Kuwait Times
BUSINESS
MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 2016

Saudi to seek foreign non-oil investors
Page 23

ECB dovish comments lift market sentiments
Page 25

Iranian and foreign firms await the good times
Page 22

BEC reveals new brand character
Page 26

VIVA announces net profit of KD 43M for 2015

Profits increase 6% • Total revenues reach KD 277 million

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, announced its financial results at the end of the 2015, with net profits of KD 43 million, a 6 percent increase compared to 2014.

Dr Mahmoud Ahmad Abdul Rahman, VIVA's Chairman, commenting on the financial results: "VIVA reached in 2015 the best financial and operational results and achieved a level of growth and success that foster its position as leader Telecom Company in Kuwait and the region, due to plans, strategies, services and creative offers that meet deeply the market's needs and the customers' expectations."

"VIVA was able to generate KD 43 million in net profit (earnings per share of 86 fils) in 2015 compared to KD 40 million (earning per share 81 fils) in 2014. These results reveal the solid performance of the company's revenues and operations through the continued upward trend of financial and operational indicators. This reflected positively on shareholder equity which reached KD 93 million, also the Company's board of directors recommended not to distribute any dividends for the fiscal year ended 31 December 2015, this recommendation is subject to the approval of the shareholder's at the annual general assembly and the specialized regulating authority," Dr Abdul Rahman added.

VIVA Chairman
Dr Mahmoud Ahmad Abdul Rahman

Technology

Eng Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Badran, VIVA's Chief Executive Officer stated: "VIVA was able to accomplish this growth in an extremely competitive telecom market in Kuwait. VIVA was able to maintain its position as the second largest telecom operator in the Kuwaiti market in term of subscribers and revenues, which positively affected the company's financial performance, expanded our market share while increasing our customer base by 2 percent to reach 2.5 million subscribers in 2015. Total revenues reached KD 277 million, representing a strong growth of 16 percent compared to the same period last year," added Al-Badran.

"VIVA continues to build on past successes and look forward to benefiting from the best new technologies to provide our clients with advanced innovative services while achieving further growth and accomplishments. We are proud to be the first leading telecom company to launch the Voice Over Long Term Evolution (VoLTE) in partnership with Huawei for the first time in Kuwait and the Middle East. This is in addition to VIVA's commercial presence across Kuwait, which was expanded to 70 branches, enabling us to be closer to our customers and to meet the growing demand for our products and services. Our achievements were also recognized in the second half of the current year as shown by our winning of several awards for excellence in the Kuwaiti telecom sector, including "Best Industry Call Center" and "Best Medium Help Desk" from Insights - Middle East Call Center Awards 2015, the only Call Centre dedicated, Professional Services Organization in the Middle East," continued Al-Badran.

"We are optimistic in the role played by the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority in Kuwait that will have a positive impact on the development of the telecom sector and create a fair regulatory environment for all local telecom companies," concluded Al-Badran.

Abdulaziz Abdullah Al-Qatie, VIVA's Chief Financial Officer said: "VIVA's performance continued to be steady and strong which enhanced the company's main financial indicators, and increased its customer base. This has positively affected free cash flow, which has reached KD 32 million in 2015, reflecting a growth of 67 percent, compared to 2014."

Missing from US race: Economy

WASHINGTON: As the US presidential race picks up pace, the speeches and debates are full of character attacks, arguments on immigration and worries about national security.

But there is one glaring omission in the battle for the White House: serious talk about the economy. On both the Republican and Democratic sides, the state of the world's largest economy is mentioned, of course. But the exchanges in debates have mostly been about sound bites good for rebroadcast and social media, rather than serious discussion of issues.

Why such reticence to engage on a subject crucial in the past two presidential races? Aside from the dryness of the topic, the answer comes from the relative health of the US economy. "The economy is doing reasonably well, although not spectacularly well," said Joseph Gagnon of the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

"So it's good enough for Republicans not to have an angle of attack, but it's not so good as Democrats can brag about it." The US unemployment rate has fallen to half of its peak in 2009 and now sits at five percent, close to full employment. The economy is growing at a modest pace, and the government deficit has shrunk.

Those are reasons, Democratic President Barack Obama says, that voters should support a Democrat to succeed him.

Wages still weak

Certainly, the economic crisis that dominated previous presidential elections, especially in 2008 when Obama won his first term, has disappeared. And that complicates efforts by Republicans to brand Obama's record a disaster as they woo voters. They try nevertheless to exploit weaknesses in the Obama recovery-especially how it has not benefitted everyone. For the Republicans, said Lawrence Mishel of the Economic Policy Institute, "There's no easy target, even if there's definitely a general sense that people... haven't really benefited from the recovery." The one issue that has voters on both sides unhappy is the weak growth in wages during the recovery, roughly half the pace that it was before the financial crisis. Ted Cruz, running second to Donald Trump in the race for the Republican nomination to the White House, has tried to draw support on the issue.

"If you make your money in and around Washington, things are doing great. The millionaires and billionaires are doing great under Obama," he said. And another Republican hopeful, Marco Rubio, highlighted it as well: "The economy is not providing jobs that pay enough."

Even so, the Republicans as a group, who advocate for tax cuts and economic freedom, are not at ease with making wages a political issue. Most oppose mandated increases to the minimum wage, for example, an issue the Democrats embrace. Republicans have also tried to chip away at Obama's record of slashing unemployment. They point to the still-high level of Americans who are unemployed and have dropped out of the workforce, which, as a percentage of the population, remains at a four-decade high.

But also grabbing this issue to make political gain is Democratic candidate Bernie Sanders, who argues that the real unemployment rate for Americans is over 10 percent, if one includes people forced to work part time. Other issues pull together White House hopefuls from the two parties, making it hard for them to stand out. Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton and Trump both oppose the huge new trade deal, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, achieved late last year by Obama. And both are against US companies being able to move their official addresses offshore to lower their taxes. Even so, the candidates so far have stuck to criticism and complaints without offering much in the way of detailed proposals.

"Taxes too high, wages too high, we're not going to be able to compete against the world," says Trump, for example. Barry Bosworth, of the Brookings Institution think tank, said it may take several more weeks or months for real proposals on the economy to emerge. "Neither party has any great suggestions on how to deal with the issues of employment and income growth that seem to be the dominant economic concerns of voters," said Bosworth. But he said their views could become clearer once the parties choose their final candidate for the November election, and that voters will pay more attention then. — AFP

2015

The board of directors of Kuwait Telecom Company (VIVA) is pleased to announce to all of its shareholders that the company has achieved a net profit of KD 43 million for the Financial Year ended 31December 2015.

43
KD million
Net Profit for the Financial Year ended 31 December 2015

Subscribers (Mn)
+2%
2.4 — Financial Year 2014
2.5 — Financial Year 2015

Revenues (KD Mn)
+16%
239 — Financial Year 2014
277 — Financial Year 2015

	Financial Year 2014	Financial Year 2015	Growth
Subscribers (Mn)	2.4	2.5	+2%
Revenues (KD Mn)	239	277	+16%
Operating Profit (KD Mn)	45	49	+8%
Net Profit (KD Mn)	40	43	+6%
EPS (fils)	81	86	+6%

Operating Profit (KD Mn)
+8%
45 — Financial Year 2014
49 — Financial Year 2015

Net Profit (KD Mn)
+6%
40 — Financial Year 2014
43 — Financial Year 2015

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VIVA

Turkish elite bids farewell to industrial dynasty chief

ISTANBUL: Turkey's political and business elite yesterday made a rare show of unity to turn out in force at the funeral of the head of Turkey's biggest family-run industrial conglomerate, Mustafa Koc, who died last week aged only 55.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu were among the mourners at the funeral at an Istanbul mosque for the Koc Holding CEO, who died on Thursday after a massive heart attack.

Koc was the leader of the third generation of the dynasty founded by his grandfather Vehbi Koc in the 1920s and which now has interests in energy, finance and autos grouped together under Koc Holding. Mustafa Koc took over as chief executive of Koc Holding in 2003 after the retirement of his father Rahmi Koc, now 85, who survives his son.

Rahmi Koc greeted the mourners along with his younger son Ali Koc in front of the coffin draped in a banner with an inscription in Ottoman Turkish script. The coffin also bore a ribbon from the family's favourite football team, Fenerbahce of Istanbul. Turkey's family-run conglomerates are the mainstays of the country's economy with interests in every sector. Koc Holding alone accounts for around nine percent of Turkish exports and eight percent of its GDP.

Prominent Turkish businessmen also made rare public appearances at the funeral. "Mustafa Koc is an incredible loss. Look at the size of the crowds here," banking tycoon and founder of the FIBA holding Husnu Ozyegin told NTV television.

Mustafa Koc was respected in business circles for presiding over sustained growth at Koc Holding. But he also won admiration from Turkish liberals with support of anti-government protesters in 2013.

Koc allowed protesters in Taksim Square in Istanbul to take refuge in the nearby Divan Hotel, which is owned by the group, infuriating Erdogan who criticised Koc for harbouring "criminals".

The group then found itself the target of probes over alleged tax violations. But Erdogan on Friday paid warm tribute to Koc, revealing that he had held talks with the businessman in Ankara just a day before he died. "We even joked. We talked about weight loss issues. And I even quipped 'did you cut down on alcohol? It's time to stop completely'," said the pious president. Mustafa Koc was buried in the family plot at the Zincirlikuyu cemetery in Istanbul, next to his grandfather Vehbi Koc. — AFP

ISTANBUL: People carry the coffin of Mustafa Koc, chief executive of Turkey's biggest industrial conglomerate Koc Holding, during his funeral yesterday in Istanbul. — AFP

Iranian and foreign firms await the good times

Iranians see opportunities in Gulf states

DOHA: A decade ago, Foad Fanaei packed his belongings and left sanction-hit Iran in the hope that the family's engineering firm would thrive in Qatar. Starting up in the Gulf Arab state proved to be hard for a 27-year-old outsider who had to grapple with Qatar's complex business laws and navigate the international financial constraints imposed over Iran's nuclear program.

Since then Fanaei has endured years of financial losses but kept the business going in the hope that one day the nuclear-related sanctions would be lifted. Cherishing the same hope, his father continued to run a parent company in Iran.

Now that day has come, Fanaei believes his hard work is about to be rewarded. "I came here with experience and new technology. I met with many companies but it was tough. We missed out on a lot of deals," he explained. "Now, though, politics is in the past. It took a long time, but we are moving forward."

Fanaei is blazing a trail that other Iranian businesses are likely to follow. His company, Reign Engineering & Trading Co, has forged a partnership with Abu Dhabi-based construction firm AlJaber Group which is set to enter an agreement with industrial group Siemens to start manufacturing high-specification electricity-saving devices.

If the deal goes ahead, Fanaei, one of a handful of Iranian businessmen in Qatar, will be involved in the development of the largest electronics factory in the country and, together with the AlJaber Group, will bid on tenders for multi-million dollar government infrastructure projects.

The venture will not be directly affected by the easing of sanctions - it relies on local manufacturers - but the prospect of being able to transfer money in and out of Iran, travel more freely and sign contracts with Western companies - all curtailed under sanctions - Fanaei says, will allow him and other Iranians to thrive in the region. "We invested heavily in Qatar and honestly we lost a lot of money, but we still had hope," he said.

Arab firms too stand to benefit from Iran's opening.

The likely surge in business between Iran and other countries in the Gulf will be just one part of the boom in business expected following the lifting of the nuclear-related sanctions on Jan 18.

The deal with world powers that ended Iran's international isolation, in exchange for restrictions on Tehran's nuclear program, restored its access to tens of billions of dollars in frozen assets, reopened the country to foreign investment and allows it to sell oil again on world markets.

President Hassan Rouhani, who championed the deal, says Iran needs $30-$50 billion a year in foreign investment to meet its economic growth target of eight percent. He has ordered a sharp increase in oil output and, in a sign of the size of the business opportunities that are up for grabs, Iran has said it wants to buy more than 100 Western planes.

Some companies have moved quickly to gain or regain access to a country that is rich in natural resources and has a young, well educated population of about 80 million. European and Asian firms have a head start as some US sanctions remain, tying the hands of American companies.

But many international banks, businesses and investors are not rushing in because of the risk of falling foul of the residual US sanctions and legal uncertainties.

Some are also concerned that a diplomatic incident could flare between Iran and the United States, undermining the nuclear deal, and that the US presidential election this year might bring to power an opponent of the deal.

WAITING GAME

For some foreign companies, it has been a waiting game. They stayed in Iran when the sanctions hit and, like Fanaei in Qatar, put up with the bad times in the hope that the good times would eventually return.

Landi Renzo, an Italian producer of autogas and compressed natural gas kits for cars, saw annual revenues in Iran sink from about 35 million euros to about 3 million when sanctions hit, said Pierpaolo Marziali, the firm's head of mergers and acquisitions.

There were no Western banks ready to offer guarantees and letters of credit, and the sharp decline of Iran's currency under sanctions made matters worse.

"But we stayed the course and never stopped producing, albeit at minimal levels, and that's put us in a strong position now since we have a kind of preferential channel. Our staff is regularly in Tehran and we're looking forward to relaunching production," Marziali said. Another Italian company that stuck it out was SABAF, which makes components for household cooking appliances, although its annual sales in Iran fell from about 10 billion euros to around 3 million, Administrative Director Gianluca Beschi said.

"We've already started talks in the country and we hope to be able to boost our sales in 2016 to get back to pre-sanction times," she said. Italy hopes its trade with Iran will now surge and sees the best opportunities in oil and gas, cars and transport, and construction and furniture. But China, India, Russia and Brazil have kept or gained a foothold in Iran since sanctions were imposed, and Beijing is the top exporter to Tehran.

For some companies, the race has already begun.

Senior Iranian officials said yesterday that Iran plans to buy more than 114 aircraft from European plane maker Airbus as soon as March, and is looking for other deals.

The trucks division of German automobile maker Daimler quickly signed letters of intent with joint venture partners in Iran and India's state-run National Aluminium Co Ltd (NALCO) said it was sending experts to Iran to explore the possibility of setting up a $2-billion smelter complex.

Russia's second-largest state-controlled bank, VTB , said it hoped to carry out its first banking operations with Iran within months. And a British investor, Dominic Bokor-Ingram, launched a joint venture fund with an Iranian investment fund on Jan. 19 - two decades after he took a suitcase of cash onto the floor of the Moscow stock exchange to buy up shares after the end of communist rule.

But many other banks and firms, ranging from international oil companies to small investors, are treading carefully because of legal uncertainties and making sure they will not face heavy fines by violating the residual US sanctions.

LOOKING FOR OPPORTUNITIES

Small firms face similar concerns to bigger companies as they weigh up the risks and opportunities. Like their bigger counterparts, some had been preparing for years for the opening of Iran. "I have friends in Iran who have been waiting for the sanctions to end so they can come and invest here," Fanaei said in his office in Qatar.Iranian businessmen have for decades been travelling to Gulf Arab states that provide access to Gulf waters and free-trade zones in cities such as Dubai, re-exporting goods and circumventing sanctions. Their number should now grow.

"Qatar is an ideal market for us. There is rapid growth ahead of the World Cup (to be hosted by Qatar in 2022). Local partners here appreciate Iran's expertise in industry and technology," Fanaei said.

Fanaei's new business partner, Mohammed Sultan Al-Jaber, who is chairman of the AlJaber Group, said "political issues" such as a rift between Iran and Saudi Arabia would not impede Arab-Iran business partnerships. "Iran has so many things that Qatar needs. Qatar used to import a lot of materials from Iran like cement, ceramics and soil. It was halted," said Al-Jaber.

Looking ahead to more cooperation in the post-sanctions era, he said: "I see no reason why it won't resume." — Reuters

Thousands of Moroccans protest over job cuts

RABAT: Thousands of Moroccan trainee teachers and their families took to the streets of the capital Rabat yesterday to protest against government plans to cut education jobs, defying an official ban on demonstrations. Waving banners and chanting "Repression won't scare me", several thousand protesters marched past hundreds of riot police who watched nearby with water canon trucks, just weeks after police were accused of violently repressing an earlier protest.

Large-scale protests remain rare in Morocco, where the king holds sway. When pro-democracy unrest toppled leaders in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya in 2011, the palace calmed similar protests with limited reforms, spending and tougher security. The teacher trainee protests are one of several rallies that have taken place in the last few months against government plans to cut spending and reduce public sector hiring as part of reforms meant to revive state finances. "I have three children, and I thought we had finally found a job for one, but it doesn't seem so," said Hassan Dehih, who came from the city of Kenitra to support his daughter. "At least if they beat her, I will be beaten too."

The government said on Thursday that it would not allow any unauthorized protests. Organizers said they had the right to protest under the constitution. Moroccan police have broken up most of the previous teacher trainee demonstrations across the kingdom, but protesters say they will keep on fighting to cancel government decrees. Dozens have been injured, including three who needed medical care.

The police handling of the protests prompted Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane's government to order an inquiry into police violence. More than its North African neighbors, Morocco has been applauded by multilateral lenders for progress in controlling high public spending that analysts says has also been a problem in neighboring Tunisia and Algeria.

But touching public jobs, subsidies and other benefits that Moroccans have enjoyed for years is starting to generate social tensions, triggering protests, sit-ins and strikes that may test the government's nerve. In neighboring Tunisia, frustration over unemployment and lack of jobs last week exploded into rioting in a string of towns, especially in the impoverished central city of Kasserine, but a curfew helped restore calm.

Around 10,000 young Moroccans passed the examination to begin training to be teachers in public schools. On Oct. 8, the government said another exam would be required at the end of the year to be hired. Only 7,000 would pass the final tests, according to government data. Rachid Oussaid, a spokesman for trainee teachers, said the government had held talks with protesters on Saturday, in a meeting facilitated by labor unions. — Reuters

Aramco head says IPO could be open to international markets

DUBAI: An initial public offering of Saudi Aramco, the world's biggest oil company, could be on the local or international markets but would not include Saudi energy reserves, the company's chairman told Saudi-owned al-Arabiya television.

"The reserves would not be sold, but the company's ability to produce from the reserves is being studied," Khalid Al-Falih told the channel in an interview from Davos, Switzerland where the annual World Economic Forum was held last week.

In an interview with The Economist earlier this month, Saudi Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said Riyadh might sell shares in Aramco as part of a privatization drive. Aramco has crude reserves estimated at about 265 billion barrels, over 15 percent of all global oil deposits, so it could become the first listed company valued at $1 trillion or more if it went public, analysts have estimated.

But several sources familiar with official thinking told Reuters that Aramco's massive size, and the confidentiality surrounding it as the main instrument of the kingdom's oil policy, pose hurdles to any listing of the parent firm. They said Saudi Arabia is considering selling shares in refining ventures with foreign oil firms.

Falih said there would be legal studies to make sure that what is offered is not the kingdom's crude reserves "but the company's ability to convert the production of these reserves to a financial value that the owners can benefit from. "The economic value of Saudi Aramco as a company is what will be offered. Naturally, the primary field of Saudi Aramco's work is managing the reserves of Saudi Arabia," Falih said.

"The reserves belong to the state but the company's ability to convert these reserves... into a financial value and at the same time for the company to have a portion of these profits will be part of the value of the company," he told Arabiya. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.560
Indian Rupees	4.501
Pakistani Rupees	2.897
Srilankan Rupees	2.118
Nepali Rupees	2.815
Singapore Dollar	214.080
Hongkong Dollar	38.980
Bangladesh Taka	3.873
Philippine Peso	6.350
Thai Baht	8.450

GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.110
Qatari Riyal	83.551
Omani Riyal	790.021
Bahraini Dinar	807.760
UAE Dirham	82.811

ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	38.550
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	38.890
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.419
Tunisian Dinar	149.170
Jordanian Dinar	428.440
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.027
Syrian Lira	2.168
Morocco Dirham	31.179

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	304.000
Euro	333.250
Sterling Pound	437.150
Canadian dollar	216.910
Turkish lira	101.300
Swiss Franc	302.490
Australian Dollar	215.840
US Dollar Buying	302.800

GOLD	
20 Gram	225.300
10 Gram	115.570
5 Gram	58.630

UAE Exchange Centre WLL

CURRENCIES	TELEX TRANSFER PER 1000
Australian Dollar	198.53
Canadian Dollar	211.29
Swiss Franc	308.28
Euro	336.12
US Dollar	304.30
Sterling Pound	433.24
Japanese Yen	2.64
Bangladesh Taka	3.879
Indian Rupee	4.483
Sri Lankan Rupee	2.119
Nepali Rupee	2.798
P0kistani Rupee	2.897
UAE Dirhams	0.08281
Bahraini Dinar	0.8087
Egyptian Pound	0.03876
Jordanian Dinar	0.4328
Omani Riyal	0.7902
Qatari Riyal	0.08390
Saudi Riyal	0.08111

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.350
Canadian Dollar	209.745
Sterling Pound	431.695
Euro	334.625
Swiss Frank	305.475
Bahrain Dinar	805.175
UAE Dirhams	83.105
Qatari Riyals	84.320
Saudi Riyals	81.840
Jordanian Dinar	428.735
Egyptian Pound	38.757
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.119
Indian Rupees	4.475
Pakistani Rupees	2.897
Bangladesh Taka	3.871
Philippines Pesso	6.367
Cyprus pound	579.695
Japanese Yen	3.600
Syrian Pound	2.380
Nepalese Rupees	3.795
Malaysian Ringgit	70.420
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	46.605
Thai Bhat	9.365
Turkish Lira	99.960

Bahrain Exchange Company

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.428174	0.437174
Czech Korune	0.004219	0.016219
Danish Krone	0.040217	0.045217
Euro	0.323777	0.331777
Norwegian Krone	0.030823	0.036023
Romanian Leu	0.087205	0.087205
Slovakia	0.009081	0.019081
Swedish Krona	0.031566	0.036566
Swiss Franc	0.293260	0.303460
Turkish Lira	0.095638	0.105938
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.205220	0.216720
New Zealand Dollar	0.191600	0.201100
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.209802	0.218302
US Dollars	0.299900	0.304400
US Dollars Mint	0.300400	0.304400
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003519	0.004119
Chinese Yuan	0.044805	0.048305
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037123	0.039873
Indian Rupee	0.004219	0.004609
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002501	0.002681
Kenyan Shilling	0.003159	0.003159
Korean Won	0.000244	0.000259
Malaysian Ringgit	0.066864	0.072864
Nepalese Rupee	0.002882	0.003052
Pakistan Rupee	0.002606	0.002886
Philippine Peso	0.006275	0.006555
Sierra Leone	0.000067	0.000073
Singapore Dollar	0.209842	0.215842
South African Rand	0.012505	0.021005
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001763	0.002343
Taiwan	0.008927	0.009107
Thai Baht	0.008138	0.008688
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.799476	0.807476
Egyptian Pound	0.035418	0.039754
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000200	0.000260
Jordanian Dinar	0.424776	0.432276
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000152	0.000252
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021514	0.045514
Nigerian Naira	0.001256	0.001891
Omani Riyal	0.783190	0.788870
Qatar Riyal	0.082790	0.084003
Saudi Riyal	0.080180	0.081130
Syrian Pound	0.001289	0.001509
Tunisian Dinar	0.145708	0.153708
Turkish Lira	0.095638	0.105938
UAE Dirhams	0.081787	0.082936
Yemeni Riyal	0.001374	0.001454

Return of Iran oil into global market will be slow

ASIYA CAPITAL INVESTMENTS REPORT

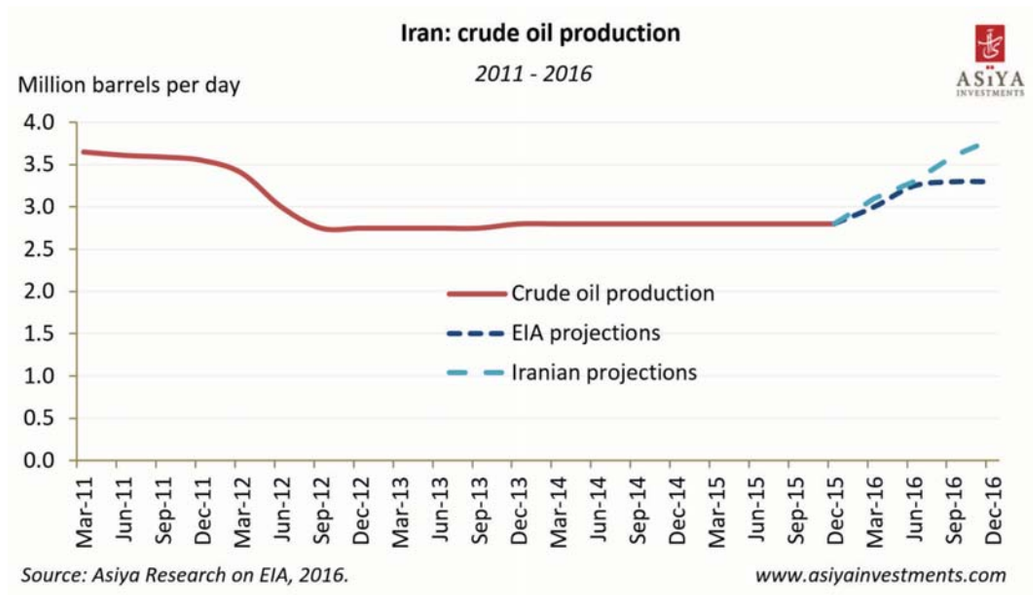
By Camille Accad

KUWAIT: Western sanctions crippled Iran's oil sector in the four years leading to 2016, losing around one million barrels per day of oil exports and production. With major sanctions lifted, more Persian crude will be available this year, but the pace and scale at which it will return into the market is unclear. In our view, the increase will be slower than generally expected.

Iranian officials have expressed their intention to increase the nation's crude exports, first by 500,000 barrels per day, and by another 500,000 by year-end. Iran is capable of producing the oil needed to reach those targets. First, around twenty million barrels of crude oil are held in inventory, with half stored in tankers waiting to be shipped, according to EIA and IEA. This is the equivalent of forty days of 500,000 barrels per day. Second, Iran will not be pressured by OPEC due to its current strategy of gaining market share. The likelihood of a joint OPEC decision to cut output is also low due to Iran's rising tensions with Saudi Arabia. Third, the agreement with the West will release frozen Iranian assets, estimated to be worth between $10 and $20 billion annually until 2020. These funds may be used to pay for much-needed investment in the sector. Fourth, Iran has improved conditions for foreign firms planning to invest in the country. The outdated buyback contracting process is replaced by the new Iran Petroleum Contract whereby foreign companies will be able to sign longer term, less risky, deals that would not require the contractor to hand over their oil field work by the end of the project. A conference in London in February will reveal more details as Iranian officials plan to unveil a number of oil and gas projects worth more than $150 billion. Overall, there are reasons to believe the country with the fourth largest proven oil reserves in the world has the ability to raise production to meet its export targets.

However, Iran's plans might not materialize. On the demand side, the Chinese economic slowdown is contributing to the emerging market deceleration. Global oil demand is expected to be weak this year, with IEA and OPEC projecting a deceleration in oil consumption for 2016. On the supply front, Iran will also face difficulties. First, Iran is still subject to a number of restrictions. Conducting US dollar transactions, dealing with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, which is heavily involved in the energy sector, and using American technology are still prohibited. Second, sanctions have deteriorated Iran's upstream infrastructure, requiring massive investment in the sector. Iranians claim $100 billion of investment is needed to bring oil production back to pre-sanction levels, compared with Western estimates of around $300 billion. Finally, Iran requires the investments of international oil companies to develop its oil exploration and production technology. However, with oil prices at multi-year lows, energy firms' earnings are falling rapidly, forcing them to cut near-term capital expenditure.

IEA projects that, with the help of foreign investment, Iran could reach a production capacity of four million barrels per day by 2020. However, the current environment of low oil prices, geopolitical uncertainty and the outcome of the US elections in November may affect the pace of foreign investment into the country. In spite of the lift of sanctions, the safer bet for Iran is to rely in the Asian powers, which never stopped doing business there: China and India maintained a strong trade partnership with Iran, while Chinese investments in upstream infrastructure in the last several years is expected to generate an additional 200,000 barrels per day by 2017.



AMRITSAR: An Indian Sikh vendor sorts onions as he sell vegetables from his horse cart in Amritsar yesterday. —AFP

Saudi to seek foreign non-oil investors

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia aims to at least double annual inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI) over the next 10 years by focusing on new sectors such as mining, health care and information technology, the head of its investment agency said yesterday.

The plan outlined by Abdullatif Al-Othman, governor of the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA), is part of a radical revamp of economic policy as the kingdom seeks to adapt to an era of cheap oil. In the past, foreign investment was heavily concentrated in the oil and gas sector of the world's top crude exporter, as well as downstream industries such as petrochemicals.

But the plunge of oil prices over the past 18 months has called that strategy into question. Othman said SAGIA was now seeking foreign capital in a wide range of sectors without direct links to oil.

"If you look at an economy that has been able to fetch about $10 billion a year in the traditional sector...we should be looking at multiples of that," he said in an interview.

"So our hope is that we would double or triple this level of FDI on a rolling average for the next 10 years." SAGIA faces big obstacles. A sluggish bureaucracy and an undeveloped legal system have deterred foreign investment in the past; now low oil prices are slowing growth of the Saudi economy. Geopolitical tensions in the region may also weigh.

Inflows of FDI peaked at about $40 billion in 2009 but have been trending down since then and totalled just $8.0 billion in 2014, figures from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development show. Othman said SAGIA would seek to remove bureaucratic or regulatory obstacles to investment by talking to foreign firms to identify their concerns, then discussing them with ministries and other government bodies. The investment push is part of a larger economic reform drive conceived by Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Details of the program, which includes privatization, changes to the way in which Saudi Arabia manages its oil wealth and efforts to make state spending more efficient, are expected to be announced in coming days or weeks.

Initially, mining may prove one of the most attractive investment areas for foreigners. While the kingdom has been extensively explored for oil and gas, Othman said deposits of many other minerals had not yet been fully identified. It is believed to have big deposits of phosphate, bauxite, base metals and gold. In a joint venture that could become a model for future projects, a local firm, majority state-owned Saudi Arabian Mining Co, began producing copper last month at a mine near Madina along with Canada's Barrick Gold Corp. Othman said Saudi Arabia aimed to move far beyond resource extraction, partly because it needs to generate hundreds of thousands of jobs for a rapidly growing local population.

Last September, the government said it would let foreign investors own 100 percent of retail and wholesale businesses. Previously, the ceiling was 75 percent. Authorities have since received expressions of interest from foreign retailers, Othman said, declining to name them.

Saudi Arabia does not have a major domestic automobile industry. Othman said authorities were in discussions with auto companies, especially makers of spare parts and firms in the area of buses and trucks, but did not identify the firms. —Reuters

Gulf stocks rebound on rising oil price

KUWAIT: Stock markets in the energy-rich Gulf states rebounded yesterday, the first trading day of the Islamic week, after a rally in oil and global share prices. The bourses of Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Qatar each gained more than 5.0 percent at the start of trading before cooling off.

Dubai Financial Market Index shot up 6.6 percent at opening before closing the day up 5.15 percent, above the 2,700-point mark. Market leaders Emaar properties and construction firm Arabtec gained 8.0 percent and 10 percent, respectively.

Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange finished the day up 2.7 percent supported by the real estate sector, which gained 7.3 percent. Qatar Exchange, the second largest Arab bourse, gained 5.0 percent at opening to climb above the key 9,000-point barrier, but ended the day below that benchmark.

Kuwait Stock Exchange added 0.6 percent but remained below 5,000 points. In Oman, the small Muscat Securities Exchange rose 1.54 percent, and the Bahrain bourse was down 0.64 percent.

The Saudi stock market, the largest Arab bourse, opened the day up 6.6 percent but was trading at 4.1 percent higher by mid-session, just below the 5,700-point mark.

All seven Gulf bourses however remain well below last year's closing levels. Oil prices surged for a second straight day Friday amid an equities rally on hopes of extra stimuli for Japan and the eurozone.

US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) for March leapt $2.66 to $32.19 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent North Sea crude for delivery in March, the European benchmark for crude oil, finished at $32.18 a barrel in London, a 10-percent jump over Thursday's settlement. The gains on Thursday and Friday amounted to 13.5 percent for WTI and 15.4 percent for Brent. —AFP

Iran to buy 114 Airbuses to revamp ageing fleet

Representatives from 85 aviation firms in Tehran

TEHRAN: Iran said yesterday it will buy 114 Airbus planes to revitalize its ageing fleet, in the first major commercial deal announced since the lifting of sanctions under its nuclear agreement. Transport Minister Abbas Akhoundi said a deal on the purchase would be signed between national carrier Iran Air and Airbus during a visit to Paris this week by President Hassan Rouhani.

Rouhani will travel to Italy and France from Monday to Wednesday, on his first visit to Europe since the implementation of the deal curbing Tehran's nuclear activities in exchange for the lifting of punishing economic sanctions. Rouhani has hailed the agreement as a "new chapter" for Iran as its economy returns to global markets.

Modernising the country's air fleet and infrastructure is a top priority, with Akhoundi saying Sunday that only 150 of the country's 250 planes are operational. "We have been negotiating for 10 months" for the purchase of planes but "there was no way to pay for them because of banking sanctions," Iranian state media quoted Akhoundi as saying.

"We need 400 long- and mid-range and 100 short-range planes," he said. He said the first batch of new planes would arrive in Iran by March 19 but provided no financial details of the deal with Airbus. An Airbus spokesman declined to comment.

Iran, with a population 79 million, has a good road network but still needs major transport upgrades, which Tehran hopes will boost tourism and trade. Iran's airports also need $250 million (230 million euros) worth of upgrades in navigation systems, Akhoundi said.

Talks with Boeing

Only nine of Iran's 67 airports are currently operational. Iran has suffered several air crashes in recent years blamed on ageing planes, poor maintenance and a shortage of new parts. News of the Airbus deal came as aviation industry representatives from 85 companies met in Tehran yesterday to assess opportunities in the Islamic republic after sanctions were removed.

"It's a really exciting time, there's never been a situation like this," said Peter Harbison, the head of the CAPA consultancy which organized the conference.

"A whole array of different aviation services and new jobs obviously are going to be created," Harbison told AFP. "Aviation is one of those industries that creates massive economic flow-on benefits, so tourism will expand, so you'll need more infrastructure growth in hotels and right across the board."

Akhoundi said yesterday Iran was also negotiating with US plane manufacturer Boeing, but provided no details. He said Iran was in talks with the United States on the possibility of reopening direct air routes, which were cut after the 1979 hostage crisis that ended all diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Rouhani's European tour will see him seeking to restore commercial ties with Italy and France, which were among Tehran's main economic partners before the tightening of international sanctions in January 2012. Competition to tap the Iranian market has been fierce as it emerges from international isolation.

Meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday, Rouhani said the two countries aim to build up economic ties worth up to $600 billion in the next 10 years.

They signed a slew of trade agreements, including a $2 billion contract for China to electrify the railway line linking Tehran with second city Mashhad. —AFP

TEHRAN: Iranian minister of transportation Abbas Ahmad Akhoundi (R) speaks during the CAPA 2016 Iran Aviation Summit in the capital Tehran yesterday. —AFP

Protests rattle Azerbaijan as oil slump hits economy

BAKU: Hit hard by falling oil prices, ex-Soviet Azerbaijan has plunged into an economic crisis that has seen rare protests shake the authorities in the tightly-controlled nation.

Over the last week, violent clashes broke out between riot police and thousands of demonstrators who took to the streets in cities across the energy-rich Caspian nation to express their discontent against price hikes and unemployment.

The government-which under strongman Ilham Aliyev allows few signs of dissent-sent in troops to quell the unrest in the city of Siazan and several other provincial towns where tear gas, water cannon, and rubber bullets were reportedly used against stone-throwing protesters. Some 100 people were arrested in the aftermath, Sadiar Osmanov, head of the opposition Musavat party's local branch, said. The government blamed opposition activists for staging riots, an accusation they rejected as groundless.

"People speak out about their woes and the government responds with violence," Musavat's leader Isa Gambar said. "As a result, the protest movement will gain momentum, economic turmoil will spiral into a political unrest," he told AFP.

Exports of hydrocarbons constitute up to three quarters of Azerbaijan's state revenues, making the Caucasus country's economy highly dependent on global energy prices.

As oil prices fall to 12-year lows and the manna of petrodollars diminished, Azerbaijan's once-booming economy quickly hit the skids, the national currency plummeted and inflation soared. After having depleted over half of its foreign currency reserves, Azerbaijan's central bank admitted in December that the economy was being hurt by falling oil prices and moved to stop propping up the national currency.

The manat plunged immediately by over a third against the dollar, with major retailers halting business and anxious consumers fearing for their future. Many Azerbaijanis rushed to the banks to withdraw savings. Others expressed fears that the weak value of the manat would threaten the banking sector's stability and lead to loan defaults as a majority of mortgages and loans in the nation of 9.5 million people are dollar-denominated.

'Soap bubble'

"I don't know if I will be able to repay my mortgage," said 40-year-old Baku resident Arif Gasanov, one of some 2.5 million Azerbaijanis who have taken a mortgage in dollars. "After the manat collapsed I'll have to pay to my bank much more than expected, much more than I can afford," he told AFP.

Highlighting the seriousness of the situation, a spate of suicides were reported by local media, with several people who were unable to make payments on their bank loans setting themselves on fire.

The currency turmoil was followed by an 11-fold acceleration of inflation, with consumer prices rising in December by 4.4 percent after a 0.4 percent increase in November.

Annual inflation stood at 7.6 percent in December, but prices for food and medicine rose dramatically. "People are paying the price of the government's incompetence and corruption," Baku resident Reyhan Ghafarova, 34, said.

"No one believes any longer the government's claims about Azerbaijan's strong economy, the myth has burst like a soap bubble." In a bid to defuse public discontent, Aliyev moved to cut taxes on essential foods such as flour and bread and ordered the government to draw up a major privatization program to revive the stalling economy.

"The government will do its best to minimize the negative consequences" of the economic crisis, Aliyev's top aide Ali Gasanov told AFP. "All the necessary measures will be taken to stimulate the industrial sector, eradicate official corruption, and improve the business climate in the country," he said. On Tuesday, the parliament endorsed the central bank's initiative to introduce a 20-percent tax on foreign exchange taken out of the country for investment, securities, and real estate purchases.

Other steps included insuring all bank deposits and imposing limits on foreign currency sales.

For the time being the measures seem to have put a lid on the situation but analysts warned that the country needed more profound change if it was weather the storm long term. "Too little, too late," said Azerbaijani economic analyst Natig Jafarli, denouncing the measures as "cosmetic." "It's impossible to save the country without serious economic reforms and a political change." —AFP

Fed to shed light on depth of growth concerns

GLOBAL ECONOMY WEEKAHEAD

MADRID: For more clues as to how slumping oil prices and a faltering Chinese outlook could sway policymakers in the coming months, look no further than January's meeting of US Federal Reserve rate setters. Concerns over weaker global growth are casting doubt on the pace at which the US central bank will continue hiking interest rates, after December's first rise in nearly a decade.

Expectations for a March rate increase are already starting to fade, and economists polled by Reuters now forecast three hikes in 2016 rather than the four initially floated by the Fed.

Against a backdrop of volatile trading in global stocks, Fed officials have shrugged off in recent weeks the impact of financial market swings on their decisions. The Fed is widely expected to leave its federal funds rate unchanged at 0.25-0.50 percent when policymakers conclude their meeting on Jan. 27. But falling inflation assumptions, coupled with the market turbulence, could lead them to signal deepening concern over the US and world economic outlooks.

"If the statement acknowledges increased risks without mention of expected resilience in the medium-term outlook, this would be a dovish sign," analysts at BNP Paribas said in a note.

US data paints a more subdued domestic picture, too, as a strong dollar buffets the economy. Consumer prices unexpectedly fell in December. Recent weak reports on retail sales, housing starts and industrial production suggest a slowdown in activity at the end of last year, as did a six-month high in US jobless claims reached in mid-January.

Preliminary fourth quarter data on US output due on Jan. 29 should confirm the easing momentum, with the annual pace of expansion seen coming in at 0.7 percent, according to the latest model from the Atlanta Federal Reserve.

The most recent Reuters poll put US growth at 1.3 percent, following a 2 percent rise in the third quarter. Some believe a weaker fourth quarter is unlikely to cloud longer-term prospects, however, with underlying trends in the labour market still robust.

"A fourth quarter slowdown is not likely to derail the economy from growing at close to the 2.2 percent trend rate in 2016," HSBC analysts said.

GLOBAL GROWTH IN FOCUS

The Fed will lay its cards on the table days after the European Central Bank signalled that further easing of its monetary policy was likely in March. Tumbling oil prices have sunk the outlook for inflation, pushing the ECB to flag its willingness to act again after a deposit rate cut and an extension of its government bond-buying program in December.

A preliminary reading of consumer prices in the euro-zone due on Jan. 29 should give more clues. Prices are expected to have risen 0.4 percent year-on-year, though economists believe they will soon head back into negative territory. ECB chief Mario Draghi stressed on Friday the outlook for a gradual economic recovery in the euro-zone had not changed. But concerns are mounting about the impact of weaker growth elsewhere after China confirmed its 2015 expansion was the slowest in 25 years and the International Monetary Fund cut growth forecasts, citing the effects of the rout in commodities.

In Russia, where the next regular interest rate decision is due on Jan. 29, the central bank has warned the government faces "difficult choices" as the price of oil, its main export, falls.

The ruble has crashed to record lows in recent days and officials now expect an economic contraction in 2016. Markets are also bracing for a rate review in Japan on Jan. 28-29, as speculation grows that the central bank may expand its stimulus program. Economists expect a cut in inflation forecasts, and some are not ruling out more surprises.

"We maintain our core scenario of no easing at this meeting, but acknowledge the risk of an unexpected announcement from the BoJ next week," said Betty Rui Wang, an economist at Standard Chartered. The Bank of Japan meeting coincides with data, including on factory output and jobs for December, that could reinforce fears the economy is still struggling after years of stagnation. —Reuters

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

جلوبل Global

Sunday 24 January 2016

Index		Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price index	▲	28.62	4,974.95	4,946.33	5,019.15	4,947.36
Weighted Index	▲	5.79	336.03	330.24	340.38	332.44
KSX 15	▲	18.23	785.97	767.74	800.10	776.20

Volume	220,505,401
Value (KWD)	16,090,334
Number of Trades	4,366

Security	High	Low	Trades Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last		Change
MARIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	114	—	0.0
IKARUS	70	68	30,400	2,068	4	70	▲	2.0
IPG	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	315	—	0.0
NAPESCO	600	600	98	59	1	600	▼	-30.0
ENERGYH	37.5	34.5	4,048	147	3	34.5	▼	-2.5
GPI	38.5	37.0	1,691,030	63,975	36	38.0	▲	1.5
ABAR	114	99	502	50	2	114	▲	6.0
Oil & Gas			**1,726,078**	**66,298**	**46**	**743.76**	▼	**-5.64**
KFOUC	212	212	8,750	1,855	2	212	▲	4.0
BPCC	440	430	101,140	44,501	7	440	—	0.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	610	—	0.0
ALQURAIN	160	148	110,884	17,172	19	154	—	0.0
Basic Materials			**220,774**	**63,528**	**28**	**849.02**	▲	**4.92**
KCEM	360	360	10,000	3,600	1	360	▲	10.0
REFRI	305	305	40,000	12,200	3	305	▲	5.0
CABLE	325	320	35,010	11,236	12	325	▲	10.0
SHIP	146	128	1,179	153	3	132	▼	-6.0
PCEM	1,020	980	25,040	24,591	5	980	—	0.0
PAPER	380	380	3,000	1,140	1	380	—	0.0
MRC	57	57	10	1	1	57	▲	3.0
ACICO	280	280	1,000	280	1	280	—	0.0
GGMC	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	350	—	0.0
KBMMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	250	—	0.0
NICBM	230	210	13,133	2,960	10	230	—	0.0
EQUIPMENT	52	50	158,335	8,080	12	52	▲	3.5
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	99	—	0.0
GYPSUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	102	—	0.0
SALBOOKH	70	67	129,000	8,932	14	67	▼	-1.0
AGLTY	420	405	1,194,425	494,421	58	415	▲	15.0
EDU	202	178	171	31	4	178	▼	-20.0
CLEANING	37.0	37.0	200,000	7,400	6	37.0	▲	0.5
CITYGROUP	380	380	10	4	1	380	—	0.0
KGL	38.0	37.0	288,500	10,835	10	37.5	▲	0.5
KCPC	200	200	9,355	1,871	1	200	▼	-10.0
HUMANSOFT	850	760	27	22	6	770	▼	-30.0
NAFAIS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	130	—	0.0
SAFWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	300	—	0.0
GFC	25.5	25.0	15,999	405	4	25.5	▲	2.5
MAYADEEN	19.0	17.0	5,700,384	102,844	100	17.0	—	0.0
CGC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	780	—	0.0
MTCC	51	49.5	827,511	41,311	37	51	▲	2.5
UPAC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	600	—	0.0
ALAFCO	194	192	276,607	53,309	8	192	—	0.0
MUBARRAD	62	60	622,098	37,565	23	60	▲	2.0
LOGISTICS	45.5	44.0	479,700	21,334	17	45.5	▲	1.5
SCEM	81	80	201,000	16,081	4	81	▲	2.0
GCEM	68	68	130	9	1	68	▼	-3.0
QCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	70	—	0.0
FCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	71	—	0.0
RKWC	95	95	15,610	1,483	4	95	▼	-5.0
SPEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	88	—	0.0
Industrials			**10,247,234**	**862,095**	**347**	**928.61**	▼	**-4.86**
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	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	118	—	0.0
DANAH	73	69	430,000	30,330	14	69	▼	-4.0
POULT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	196	—	0.0
FOOD	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,840	—	0.0
Consumer Goods			**430,000**	**30,330**	**14**	**1006.99**	▼	**-4.97**
MHC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	180	—	0
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	920	—	0
YIACO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	118	—	0
Health Care			**0**	**0**	**0**	**891.29**	—	**0.00**
KCIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	940	—	0
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	220	—	0
SULTAN	50	50	15,000	750	1	50	▲	1
CABLETV	23.5	22.5	77,000	1,743	8	22.5	▼	-3
EYAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	335	—	0
IFAHR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	194	—	0
OULAFUEL	106	100	278,697	29,432	16	106	▲	4
MUNTAZAHAT	89	86	74,789	6,482	5	89	▲	3
JAZEERA	790	740	1,872	1,472	3	790	▲	40
SOOR	104	100	66,014	6,821	11	100	▼	-6
FUTUREKID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	110	—	0
ALNAWADI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	84	—	0
ALRAI	130	122	19,500	2,528	4	130	—	0
ZIMAH	81	73	1,186,384	94,686	101	80	▲	2
UFIG	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	132	—	0
KOUTFOOD	560	560	5	3	1	560	▼	-50
Mezzan	960	920	92,290	87,084	21	940	▲	10
Consumer Services			**1,811,551**	**231,000**	**171**	**918.72**	▲	**1.70**
ZAIN	345	330	2,290,873	770,569	102	330	▲	5
OOREDOO	1,040	1,040	1,405	1,461	2	1,040	—	0
HITSTELEC	26.5	25.0	496,561	12,858	18	26.0	▲	2
VIVA	1,000	980	1,679,095	1,659,326	129	1,000	▲	10
Telecommunications			**4,467,934**	**2,444,214**	**251**	**584.71**	▲	**9.52**
NBK	700	660	3,495,982	2,388,065	136	670	▲	20
GBK	212	206	898,749	188,640	38	208	—	0
CBK	520	510	24,000	12,280	3	510	▲	10
ABK	350	345	60,000	20,750	2	350	▲	10
ALMUTAHED	425	420	288,783	121,589	5	420	—	0
KIB	198	194	553,271	108,201	11	198	▲	8
BURG	310	305	626,934	193,350	18	305	▲	5
KFIN	465	450	3,583,042	1,649,085	181	455	▲	15
BOUBYAN	400	390	567,250	223,436	40	390	▲	15
AUB	190	186	901,015	168,858	45	188	▲	4
ITHMR	36.5	32.0	71,301,792	2,387,359	738	32.0	▼	-3
WARBABANK	168	160	1,308,512	214,485	117	160	—	0
Banks			**83,609,330**	**7,676,099**	**1,334**	**773.28**	▲	**11.54**
KINS	320	315	16,000	5,044	3	320	—	0
GINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	750	—	0.0
AINS	435	425	12,104	5,165	2	435	▲	20.0
WINS	100	98	1,212	120	2	100	▲	2.0
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	34.0	—	0.0
BKIKWT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	355	—	0.0
Insurance			**29,316**	**10,330**	**7**	**1067.76**	▲	**9.06**

Security	High	Low	Trades Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last		Change
SOKOUK	31.5	29.5	2452707	75,153	59	29.5	▲	0.5
KRE	44.5	43.0	1,742,633	76,444	45	43.0	▲	1.0
URC	92	92	45,404	4,177	1	92	▲	3.0
NRE	80	77	907,303	71,186	29	79	▲	4.0
SRE	320	320	30,500	9,760	7	320	▲	10.0
TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	620	—	0.0
AREEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	136	—	0.0
MASSALEH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	61	—	0.0
ARABREC	25.5	23.5	2,918,090	69,464	26	24.0	▲	0.5
ERESCO	57	54	217,500	12,080	11	57	▼	-1.0
MABANEE	850	820	100,297	83,806	27	850	▲	40.0
INJAZZAT	84	84	5,300	445	2	84	▲	5.0
INVESTORS	20.5	19.0	6,060,435	119,210	76	19.0	▲	0.5
IRC	24.0	23.5	238,250	5,599	7	24.0	▲	1.0
ALTIJARIA	76	74	370,080	27,826	12	74	▲	2.0
SANAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	41.0	—	0.0
AAYANRE	69	69	3,750	259	1	69	▲	4.0
AQAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	80	—	0.0
ALAQARIA	19.0	19.0	2,500	48	1	19.0	—	0.0
MAZAYA	99	94	4,104,200	402,819	41	98	▲	4.0
ADNC	23.0	22.0	16,437,192	371,019	99	23.0	▲	2.5
THEMAR	75	75	4,387,123	329,034	1	75	▼	-5.0
TIJARA	39.5	39.5	20	1	1	39.5	▲	0.5
TAAMEER	19.0	18.0	95,000	1,739	4	18.5	▲	0.5
ARKAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	110	—	0.0
ARGAN	166	160	243,650	39,207	15	160	▼	-6.0
ABYAAR	26.0	24.0	666,923	16,636	19	24.5	▲	0.5
MUNSHAAT	49.0	47.0	2,332,700	112,216	73	47.5	—	0.0
FIRSTDUBAI	38.0	36.0	1,977,530	73,550	63	36.5	▲	0.5
KBT	36.5	34.5	2,560,150	90,655	80	34.5	—	0.0
REAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	140	—	0.0
MENA	18.0	17.0	245,301	4,237	12	17.0	—	0.0
ALMUDON	28.0	27.0	1,323,250	36,456	27	28.0	▲	1.5
MARAKEZ	19.0	17.5	61,500	1,108	8	18.0	▲	0.5
REMAL	31.0	29.0	64,000	1,861	4	29.0	▼	-1.5
MASHAER	102	98	356,050	35,613	15	98	▼	-8.0
Real Estate			**49,949,338**	**2,071,607**	**766**	**803.84**	▲	**11.19**
KINV	93	90	97,100	8,820	11	90	▼	-3.0
FACIL	150	150	51,750	7,763	6	150	—	0.0
IFA	24.0	22.5	970,169	22,335	35	23.0	▲	1.0
NINV	69	67	365,404	24,892	22	67	▲	1.0
KPROJ	510	500	1,511,155	764,537	42	500	—	0.0
COAST	23.0	21.5	1,188,100	26,330	46	21.5	—	0.0
SECH	29.0	27.0	5,275,525	150,495	85	27.5	▲	0.5
SGC	97	90	1,980,500	178,299	4	97	▲	2.0
ARZAN	35.5	33.5	179,310	6,059	7	33.5	▼	-2.0
MARKAZ	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	89	—	0.0
KMEFIC	25.5	24.0	7,500	184	3	25.5	▲	1.5
ALAMAN	51	50	150,540	7,547	8	50	—	0.0
ALOLA	48.0	45.0	504,340	23,463	24	45.0	▼	-0.5
ALMAL	23.0	21.5	3,048,912	67,939	72	22.0	▲	1.5
GIH	20.0	18.5	2,845,984	55,372	43	19.0	▲	1.0
AAYAN	42.5	40.0	259,222	10,931	10	42.5	▲	2.0
BAYANINV	30.0	28.0	1,277,862	37,165	40	29.5	▲	1.5
OSOUL	35.0	32.5	204,562	6,656	14	32.5	▼	-5.0
KFIC	34.0	31.5	623,000	19,930	61	34.0	—	0.0
KAMCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	102	—	0.0
NIH	39.0	36.0	217,100	8,091	17	37.5	▲	1.0
ISKAN	24.5	23.5	1,424,962	34,300	46	24.0	▲	1.5
MADAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	20.5	—	0.0
ALDEERA	23.5	21.5	124,989	2,843	8	23.0	▲	1.5
ALSALAM	28.0	26.5	1,932,594	52,250	41	27.0	▲	1.0
EKTTITAB	27.5	25.5	368,029	9,461	21	25.5	—	0.0
ALMADINA	27.5	26.0	4,124,042	110,152	54	26.0	▲	1.0
NOOR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	53	—	0.0
TAMINV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	395	—	0.0
EXCH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	130	—	0.0
TAIBA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	300	—	0.0
KSHC	21.5	20.0	583,000	12,098	31	20.0	—	0.0
STRATEGIA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	35.5	—	0.0
ASIYA	36.0	35.5	151,250	5,428	10	36.0	▲	0.5
GNAHC	23.0	21.0	2,624,200	57,485	72	21.5	▲	1.0
AMWAL	23.0	22.0	116,714	2,582	11	23.0	▲	2.0
ALIMTIAZ	73	71	278,300	20,252	10	72	▲	4.0
MANAZEL	20.0	18.0	11,053,903	211,563	140	18.0	▼	-0.5
NIND	112	106	1,760,735	191,743	74	110	▲	4.0
BIIHC	27.5	24.0	2,564,802	66,066	81	24.0	▼	-1.5
SENERGY	9.5	8.5	11,882,843	106,857	99	9.0	▲	0.5
AGHC	76	72	35,000	2,640	3	72	▼	-4.0
KPPC	44.5	42.5	214,588	9,308	14	43.5	▲	1.5
TAHSSILAT	36.5	35.0	4,503	160	6	36.5	▲	1.5
JEERANH	62	61	200	12	2	62	▲	1.0
EKHOLDING	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	156	—	0.0
GFH	41.0	40.0	6,361,705	259,491	74	40.5	▲	2.0
INOVEST	50	49.0	150,300	7,440	4	50	—	0.0
Financial Services			**66,514,694**	**2,588,938**	**1,351**	**513.47**	▲	**6.75**
Investment Instruments			**0**	**0**	**0**	**1081.97**	—	**0.00**
ASC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	310	—	0.0
OSOS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	80	—	0.0
FUTURE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	100	—	0.0
HAYATCOMM	43.5	39.0	110,900	4,661	13	43.5	▲	2.5
Technology			**110,900**	**4,661**	**13**	**816.17**	▲	**6.16**
BAREEQ	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	104	—	0.0
AFAQ	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	182	—	0.0
ALSHAMEL	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	100	—	0.0
SAFRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	16.5	—	0.0
AJWAN	26.0	24.0	1,235,241	30,984	31	24.5	▼	-0.5
MASAKEN	68	66	153,011	10,249	7	68	▲	1.0
DALQAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	350	—	0.0
ALEID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	95	—	0.0
MIDAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,220	—	0.0
FLEX	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	50	—	0.0
THURAYA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	140	—	0.0
KCLINIC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	27.0	—	0.0
AMAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	65	—	0.0
Parallel Market			**1,388,252**	**41,233**	**38**	**1270.35**	▲	**0.98**

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National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report

الوطني NBK

At 02:00 PM Previous Day

Global Stock Indices

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change		Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %
Dow Jones	15,882.68	16,093.51	210.83	▲	1.33	-7.64
NASDAQ	4,472.06	4,591.18	119.12	▲	2.66	-8.31
S&P 500	1,868.99	1,906.90	37.91	▲	2.03	-6.70
Financial Times	5,773.79	5,900.01	126.22	▲	2.19	-5.85
DAX	9,574.16	9,764.88	190.72	▲	1.99	-9.97
CAC 40	4,206.40	4,336.69	130.29	▲	3.10	-6.48
Swiss	8,035.06	8,271.11	236.05	▲	2.94	-6.20
Nikkei 225	16,017.26	16,958.53	941.27	▲	5.88	-10.90
Topix	1,301.49	1,374.19	72.70	▲	5.59	-11.19
Hang Seng	18,542.15	19,080.51	538.36	▲	2.90	-12.93
Straits Times	2,532.70	2,577.09	44.39	▲	1.75	-10.60

MENA Stock Indices

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change		Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %
Kuwait	4,946.33	4,974.95	28.62	▲	0.58	-13.52
Saudi Arabia	5,463.60	5,659.29	195.69	▲	3.58	-20.95
Dubai	2,621.96	2,757.08	135.12	▲	5.15	-16.79
Abu Dhabi	3,736.95	3,839.05	102.10	▲	2.73	-13.24
Bahrain	1,165.49	1,158.03	-7.46	▼	-0.64	-4.15
Qatar	8,584.01	8,981.61	397.60	▲	4.63	-17.69
Oman	4,867.00	4,941.75	74.75	▲	1.54	-9.97
Lebanon	1,163.70	1,161.41	-2.29	▼	-0.20	-0.50
Jordan	2,097.39	2,132.44	35.05	▲	1.67	-1.82
Egypt	5,713.35	5,936.49	223.14	▲	3.91	-18.45
Morocco	8,862.43	8,868.44	6.01	▲	0.07	-0.71
Tunisia	5,295.24	5,250.61	-44.63	▼	-0.84	5.02

Global Currencies Exchange Rate

Currency	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	US Dollar	Euro	Sterling Pound	Swiss Franc	Japanese Yen	Australian Dollar
Kuwait Dinar		12.2512	3.2792	3.0372	2.2978	3.3304	389.47	4.6813
Saudi Riyal	0.08162		0.2677	0.2479	0.1876	0.2718	31.79	0.3821
US Dollar	0.30495	3.7360		0.9262	0.7007	1.0156	118.77	1.4276
Euro	0.32925	4.0338	1.0797		0.7575	1.0974	128.29	1.5419
Sterling Pound	0.43519	5.3316	1.4271	1.3201		1.4514	169.67	2.0367
Swiss Franc	0.30027	3.6786	0.9846	0.9112	0.6890		116.96	1.4056
Japanese Yen	0.00257	0.0315	0.0084	0.0078	0.0059	0.0085		0.0120
Australian Dollar	0.21362	2.6171	0.7005	0.6486	0.4910	0.7114	83.20	

MENA Currencies Exchange Rate

Currency	US Dollar	Kuwaiti Dollar	Saudi Riyal	Bahraini Dinar	Qatari Riyal	Omani Riyal	Emirates Dirham	Egyptian Pound
US Dollar		0.30495	3.7360	0.3740	3.6265	0.3831	3.6571	7.7201
Kuwaiti Dinar	3.2792		12.2512	1.2265	11.8921	1.2563	11.9925	25.3160
Saudi Riyal	0.2677	0.08162		0.1001	0.9707	0.1025	0.9789	2.0664
Bahraini Dinar	2.6737	0.81533	9.9888		9.6960	1.0243	9.7778	20.6409
Qatari Riyal	0.2757	0.08409	1.0302	0.1031		0.1056	1.0084	2.1288
Omani Riyal	2.6101	0.79596	9.7515	0.9762	9.4657		9.5456	20.1506
Emirates Dirham	0.2734	0.08339	1.0216	0.1023	0.9916	0.1048		2.1110
Egyptian Pound	0.1295	0.03950	0.4839	0.0484	0.4697	0.0496	0.4737	

Global Interest Rates

Currency	1-Week	1-Month	3-Month	6-Month	1-Year
Kuwaiti Dinar	0.00	1.19	1.44	1.63	1.94
US Dollar	0.38	0.42	0.61	0.86	1.15
Euro	-0.26	-0.22	-0.16	-0.08	0.02
Sterling Pound	0.48	0.51	0.59	0.73	1.01
Swiss Franc	-0.81	-0.78	-0.75	-0.69	-0.62
Australian Dollar	2.09	2.16	2.01	1.95	1.89
Canadian Dollar	0.00	0.85	0.85	0.94	1.00

Global Bond Yields

Country	2-Year	5-Year	10-Year	30-Year
United States	0.87	1.48	2.06	2.83
Europe	-0.46	-0.23	0.48	1.26
United Kingdom	0.43	1.07	1.72	2.50

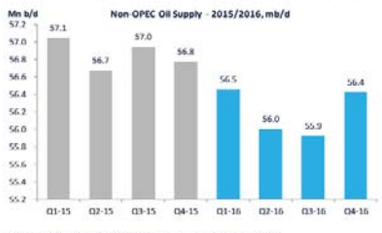
Commodities

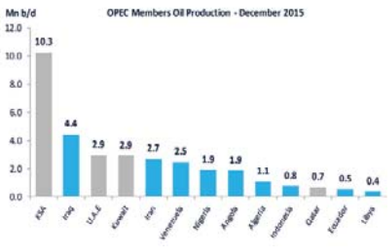
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change		Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %
Kuwait Oil	22.79	23.37	0.58	▲	2.54	-26.15
Brent	30.22	30.20	-0.02	▼	-0.07	-24.39
West Texas	32.12	32.02	-0.10	▼	-0.31	-15.60
Gold	1097.91	1097.91	0.00	-	0.00	3.33
Silver	14.01	14.01	0.00	-	0.00	1.14

Source: National Bank of Kuwait

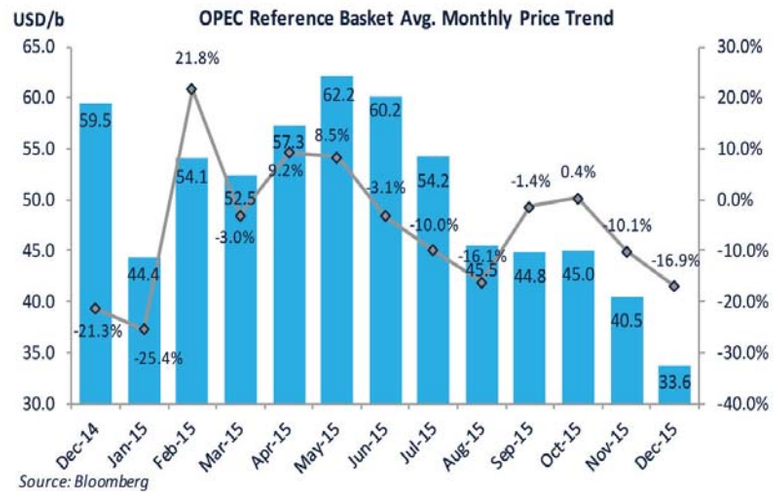
ECB dovish comments lift market sentiments

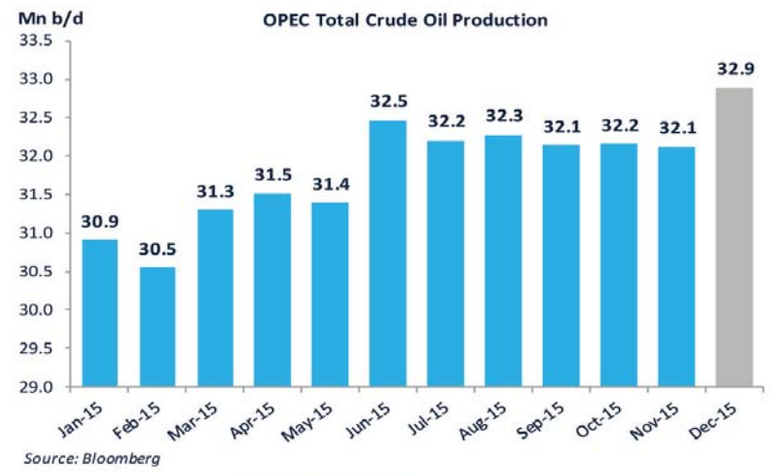
NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

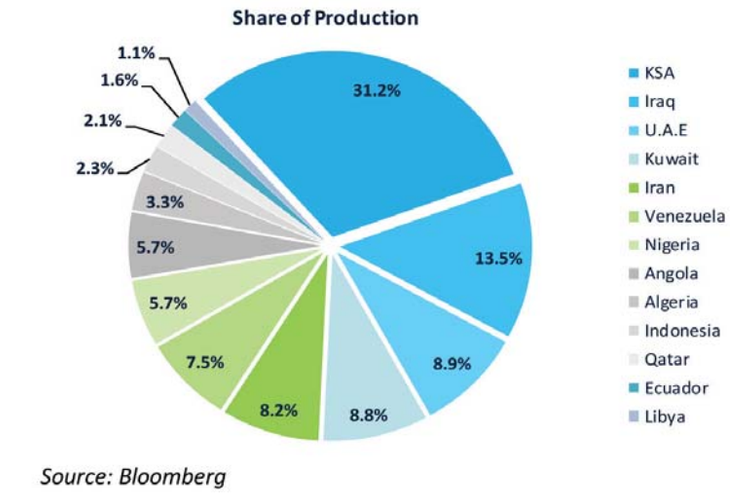




Source for the above charts : OPEC and Bloomberg







KUWAIT: Last week, global markets remained on a downturn as negative figures from China and the US continued to bring down market sentiments. However, sentiments were lifted a more dovish statement than anticipated from the ECB meeting pushing global equities to stage a slight rebound at the end of the week. On the foreign exchange side the US dollar strengthened last week as divergence in monetary policy between the Fed and other major central banks continues to widen. Demand for the greenback has risen against the Euro and the Yen on the back of growing expectations for further monetary easing from the ECB and the BoJ on the back of the recent negative developments in the global financial scene.

The Euro opened the week at 1.0915 and managed to reach a short lived high at 1.0976. The currency quickly weakened after European Central Bank President Mario Draghi said on Thursday that it would be necessary to "review and reconsider" the bank's monetary policy stance at its next meeting in March, when new economic projections become available. The statement brought down the euro to a low of 1.0778. The currency closed the week at 1.0796. Cable reached a 7-year low against the US dollar amid data showing that the pay growth in the UK slowed, indicating that the Bank of England will likely keep rates unchanged for now. The pound opened the week at 1.4258 and dropped to a low of 1.4080. Nevertheless, the Pound managed to stage a comeback and closed the week higher amid disappointing figures from the US. The currency closed the week at 1.4265.

The Japanese Yen opened the week with a strong footing, gaining amid the risk-off trade triggered by PBoC devaluation of the Yuan a week earlier. Still, the Yen managed to lose that momentum amid improved sentiments and rising expectations of further easing from the Bank of Japan. The USD/JPY opened the week at 116.98. The pair dropped to a low of 115.98. On Friday the Dollar surged against the Yen to close at 118.78.

On the commodities side, volatility in oil prices continued to be a major point of concern for investors as crude traded below $27 for the first time since September, 2003. Meanwhile, oil prices bounced from 12-year lows and managed to close higher as dovish comments from Mario Draghi on the possibility of further easing measures from the European Central Bank helped boost the price of oil. Oil managed to regain its losses at the end of the week and closed at 32.19 after touching a low of 26.18 due to an unexpected jump in US oil inventories.

Disappointing housing figures

New-home construction in the US unexpectedly fell in December, indicating that the industry lost some momentum entering 2016. Residential starts declined 2.5 percent to a 1.15 million annualized rate, from the prior month's revised 1.18 million pace, a Commerce Department report showed Wednesday. Economists called for an increase to 1.2 million. Additionally, building permits, a measure of future starts, has also dropped from its previous level from 1.28 million to 1.23 million. Expectations were for a drop to 1.20 million.

Weak inflation data

US consumer prices unexpectedly fell in December as the cost of energy products and food declined, offering signs of weak inflation that further diminish expectations of a Federal Reserve interest rate hike in March. Given the renewed weakness in oil prices which touched new lows on Wednesday; economists say the expected reversion to the Fed's 2 percent inflation target is slowing. The Labor department said its Consumer Price Index slipped by 0.1 percent after being unchanged in November. Despite last month's drop, the CPI rose 0.7 percent in the 12 months through December, the biggest gain in a year. The data followed a 0.5 percent increase in November. Economists had forecasted an unchanged CPI in December and rising 0.8 percent from a year ago.

The so-called core CPI, which removes any food and energy costs, edged up 0.1 percent in December after advancing 0.2 percent in each of the prior three months. In the 12 months through December, the core CPI increased 2.1 percent, the largest rise since July 2012, after climbing 2.0 percent in November.

Philly Fed manufacturing index

Manufacturing activity in the Philadelphia-region contracted for the second straight month in January, dampening optimism over the health of the economy. In a report, the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia said that its manufacturing index improved to -3.5 this month from December's reading of -5.9. Analysts had expected the index to rise to -5.0 in December.

Claims higher but still below 300k

The number of people who filed for unemployment assistance in the US rose unexpectedly last week to the highest level since April. The number of Americans filing for initial jobless benefits in the week to January 15 rose by 10,000 to 293,000 from the previous week's total of 283,000, compared to forecast for a fall of 5,000. The rise in jobless claims could indicate some loss of momentum in the labor market amid a global economic slowdown and financial market volatility. However, claims have now remained below the 300,000 mark, which is associated with strong labor market conditions, for 46 straight weeks.

ECB will reconsider monetary policy

European Central Bank head Mario Draghi stated that financial market turmoil would make it necessary to reconsider its monetary policy stance in March, raising the prospect of further stimulus measures. Draghi added that while the recovery in the Euro area was moving ahead, risks to the outlook "remain on the downside", citing the fragility of the global economy and geopolitical risks. "As we start the New Year, downside risks have increased again amid heightened uncertainty about emerging market economies' growth prospects, volatility in financial and commodity markets and geopolitical risks," he said. "It will therefore be necessary to review and possibly reconsider our monetary policy stance at our next meeting in early March."

The euro zone inflation outlook is now "significantly lower"' than expected in December, Draghi said. Risks from second round effects from oil prices should be "monitored closely," he added. Draghi said inflation expectations will be low in coming months, and will only pick up later this year.

The ECB left the deposit rate at -0.3 percent earlier Thursday after December's cut and held the benchmark refinancing rate steady at 0.05 percent. The bank expects interest rates to remain at present or lower levels for an extended period of time, Draghi said. He noted that asset purchases under the banks quantitative easing program were proceeding smoothly and added that it clear its monetary policies were working. Finally, he reiterated that the ECB governing council has the determination to act and there are no limits within its mandate.

German ZEW economic sentiment

German economic sentiment deteriorated less than expected in January, underlining optimism over the health of the eurozone's largest economy. In a report, the ZEW Centre for Economic Research said that its index of German economic sentiment declined by 5.9 points to 10.2 this month from December's reading of 16.1. Analysts had expected the index to fall by 7.9 points to 8.2 in January. Meanwhile, the index of euro zone economic sentiment dropped to a 14-month low of 22.7 in January from 33.9 a month earlier, missing forecasts for 27.9.

UK inflation rises

Consumer price inflation in the UK inched up more than expected in December, but concerns over deflationary pressures remained. In a report, the UK Office for National Statistics said the rate of consumer price inflation rose by a seasonally adjusted 0.2 percent last month, above expectations for a gain of 0.1 percent and up from 0.1 percent in November.

Consumer price inflation rose 0.1 percent in December, matching forecasts and following a flat reading November. Jobless rate in the UK unexpectedly fell to the lowest level since 2006 in November, while the average earnings index increased less than forecast, painting a mixed picture of the labor market. The Office for National Statistics said that the rate of unemployment dipped to 5.1 percent in the three months to November from 5.2 percent in the preceding three-month period. Analysts had expected the jobless rate to hold steady at 5.2 percent. The report also showed that the claimant count fell by a seasonally adjusted 4,300 in December, compared to expectations for an increase of 2,500 people, and following a drop of 2,200 a month earlier, whose figure was revised from a previously reported gain of 3,900.

Meanwhile, the average earnings index, including bonuses, rose by a seasonally adjusted 2.0 percent in the three months to November, missing forecasts for a gain of 2.1 percent and after increasing by 2.4 percent in the three months to October. Excluding bonuses, wages rose by 1.9 percent, above expectations for 1.8 percent and following a 2.0 percent increase in the three months to October. That may add to the case for the Bank of England to keep its benchmark interest rate at a record-low 0.5 percent for now.

China's GDP lower

Chinese GDP rose 1.6 percent quarter-on-quarter, slightly lower than the 1.7 percent expected, while year-on-year GDP for the same quarter slowed to the weakest level since the financial crisis at 6.8 percent. Concerns about China's policy making abilities, have shot to the top of global investors' risk lists for 2016 after a renewed plunge in its stock markets and currency. Weak exports, factory overcapacity, slowing investment, a soft property market and high debt levels are all compounding problems for the PBoC.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30340

The USDKWD opened at 0.30340 yesterday morning.

World Oil Demand - 2014/2015, mb/d	2014	Q1-15	Q2-15	Q3-15	Q4-15	2015	Y-o-Y Growth	% Chg.
Americas	24.18	24.25	24.12	24.77	24.89	24.51	0.32	1.34
of which US	19.43	19.60	19.47	19.99	20.10	19.79	0.36	1.87
Europe	13.39	13.49	13.52	13.98	13.47	13.61	0.23	1.71
Asia Pacific	8.16	8.77	7.74	7.61	8.26	8.09	(0.07)	(0.84)
Total OECD	**45.73**	**46.50**	**45.38**	**46.36**	**46.62**	**46.21**	**0.48**	**1.06**
Other Asia	11.42	11.46	11.95	11.89	11.78	11.77	0.35	3.07
of which India	3.79	4.01	3.98	3.91	4.07	3.99	0.21	5.43
Latin America	6.60	6.40	6.66	6.89	6.54	6.62	0.02	0.30
Middle East	8.14	8.24	8.21	8.74	8.22	8.35	0.21	2.59
Africa	3.78	3.88	3.85	3.79	3.94	3.86	0.09	2.25
Total Developing Countries (DCs)	**29.95**	**29.99**	**30.66**	**31.31**	**30.48**	**30.61**	**0.67**	**2.22**
Former Soviet Union (FSU)	4.58	4.43	4.27	4.66	4.97	4.58	0.00	0.09
Other Europe	0.65	0.66	0.62	0.66	0.75	0.67	0.02	2.79
China	10.46	10.44	11.06	10.69	11.13	10.83	0.37	3.51
Total "Other Regions"	**15.70**	**15.53**	**15.95**	**16.01**	**16.84**	**16.09**	**0.39**	**2.48**
Total World	**91.38**	**92.01**	**92.00**	**93.68**	**93.95**	**92.92**	**1.54**	**1.68**

Source: OPEC Monthly Oil Market Report - January 2016

Oil demand growth in 2016 was also increased slightly to 1.26 mb/d to average around 94.17 mb/d according to the latest OPEC report. However, the latest IEA report says, while highlighting the negative impact of a strong USD on oil importers, oil demand is expected to grow at a relatively slower pace of 1.2 mb/d. According to OPEC, oil demand in OECD Americas is expected to rise on the back of economic improvements in US and Mexico whereas Canada is expected to see slight demand growth. For OECD Europe, oil demand is expected to slightly decline due to economic uncertainty and downside risks on related to taxation policies and fuel substitution. OECD Asia Pacific is expected to see a steeper slide in oil demand on the back of bearish economic forecasts for Japan partially offset by higher demand in South Korea. In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is expected to be the key driver of demand growth partially offset by subsidy reductions.

World Oil Demand - 2015/2016, mb/d	2015	Q1-16	Q2-16	Q3-16	Q4-16	2016	Y-o-Y Growth	% Chg.
Americas	24.51	24.54	24.44	25.05	25.15	24.80	0.29	1.19
of which US	19.79	19.86	19.75	20.24	20.33	20.04	0.25	1.26
Europe	13.61	13.50	13.51	13.96	13.44	13.60	(0.01)	(0.08)
Asia Pacific	8.09	8.64	7.62	7.50	8.15	7.98	(0.12)	(1.43)
Total OECD	**46.21**	**46.68**	**45.57**	**46.52**	**46.74**	**46.38**	**0.17**	**0.36**
Other Asia	11.77	11.79	12.27	12.21	12.10	12.09	0.32	2.73
of which India	3.99	4.18	4.14	4.07	4.24	4.16	0.17	4.13
Latin America	6.62	6.53	6.78	7.00	6.66	6.74	0.12	1.79
Middle East	8.35	8.42	8.39	8.93	8.40	8.54	0.18	2.19
Africa	3.86	3.98	3.95	3.89	4.05	3.97	0.11	2.75
Total Developing Countries (DCs)	**30.61**	**30.72**	**31.40**	**32.02**	**31.21**	**31.34**	**0.73**	**2.38**
Former Soviet Union (FSU)	4.58	4.49	4.33	4.71	5.02	4.64	0.05	1.13
Other Europe	0.67	0.68	0.64	0.68	0.77	0.69	0.02	2.98
China	10.83	10.73	11.35	10.99	11.42	11.13	0.29	2.71
Total "Other Regions"	**16.09**	**15.89**	**16.32**	**16.37**	**17.21**	**16.45**	**0.37**	**2.27**
Total World	**92.92**	**93.30**	**93.29**	**94.91**	**95.17**	**94.17**	**1.26**	**1.36**

Oil markets remain under pressure in January

KAMCO INVESTMENT RESEARCH REPORT

KUWAIT: Continued high oil inventory levels globally during 2015 coupled with rising oil supply with OPEC producing at historical high production rates led to a second consecutive year of fall in oil price in 2015. OPEC oil price declined by 40 percent during the year after a 52 percent slump during 2014 as the supply demand gap worsened also due to an exceptionally mild winter temperatures in the US and Europe during Q4-15. The year also saw two OPEC meetings that failed to decide on production caps for its member countries despite the situation severely affecting the respective state budgets.

Moving into 2016, oil market saw further pressure at the start of the year when economic sanctions over Iran were lifted sending oil to its lowest level since 2003. OPEC oil closed at $ 23.6/barrel on 18-January-16, a decline of almost 26 percent as compared $ 31.3/barrel at the end of 2015. The lifting of sanctions over Iran could add another 0.5-0.6 mb/d of additional oil in the market by mid-2016. However, in order to reach pre-sanction levels, Iran could require an investment of around $ 150 Bn, which could delay the production ramp-up considerably.

According to the IEA, 2016 is once again expected to see supply exceed demand by almost 1 mb/d on the back of a first half loaded supply that will decline slightly during the second half. The agency expects non-OPEC production to decline by 0.6 mb/d, slightly lower than the 0.66 mb/d decline expected by OPEC in its latest monthly report; however, this decline is expected to be offset by more Iran oil pouring in the market. On the positive side, talks of production cut gained momentum after Oman said it is ready to slash production by 5-10 percent if other countries decide to do so in order to stabilize oil prices.

The economic slowdown in China, which is undergoing a transition to a more consumer-led expansion, was one of the key factors that affected global economic growth and oil demand. According to preliminary estimates, China recorded a GDP growth of 6.9 percent in 2015 (7.3 percent in 2014), the lowest growth recorded in the past 25 years (since 1990), after consistent decline in quarterly GDP growth during the year. The country also recorded 10 consecutive months of PMI contraction recorded during December-15.

The uneven distribution of growth across the globe was also one of the key factors that affected oil prices during the year. Moreover, risk is expected to be on the downside for a majority of the economies, including fragile recovery in Europe and other emerging and developing markets partially offset by apparently improving fundamentals in the US. On the other hand, oil importers that got a windfall gain from lower oil prices were affected due to the strengthening dollar, especially after the US rate hike decision in December-15 and the competitive devaluation of emerging market export oriented currencies.

Average monthly oil prices reached the lowest level since April-04 to reach $ 33.6/b during December-15. The year saw a decline of $ 20.7/b to reach $ 31.27/b for OPEC oil. The price had already declined to $ 23.58/b on 18-January-16 following trade and manufacturing data from China coupled with depressed sentiments since the start of the year on the back of continued weakness in global economic fundamentals. The latest update from the IMF further lowered global growth expectations to 3.4 percent and 3.6 percent for 2016 and 2017 from 3.1 percent in 2015 as the agency expects growth pickup to be more gradual than previously expected. Advanced economies are expected to post uneven and modest recovery whereas growth in emerging and developing markets are expected to be diverse but challenging.

Oil demand growth in 2016 was also increased slightly to 1.26 mb/d to average around 94.17 mb/d according to the latest OPEC report. However, the latest IEA report says, while highlighting the negative impact of a strong $ on oil importers, oil demand is expected to grow at a relatively slower pace of 1.2 mb/d. According to OPEC, oil demand in OECD Americas is expected to rise on the back of economic improvements in US and Mexico whereas Canada is expected to see slight demand growth. For OECD Europe, oil demand is expected to slightly decline due to economic uncertainty and downside risks on related to taxation policies and fuel substitution. OECD Asia Pacific is expected to see a steeper slide in oil demand on the back of bearish economic forecasts for Japan partially offset by higher demand in South Korea. In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is expected to be the key driver of demand growth partially offset by subsidy reductions.

China is threatening the world economy

By Hayder Tawfik

Should we worry about economic slowdown in China, the turmoil in the world financial markets or the sharp fall in oil price? The latest economic data from China are not encouraging at all. They are actually worrying. China's Gross Domestic Products has been weakening over the past few years. Remarkably, the official data shows that GDP has been weakening by around 0.1 to 0.3 each quarter. It seems that the figure is literally massaged so not cause havoc in the market. I am not surprised if the GDP numbers is literally engineered and manipulated by the authority. But the most worrying is the deflationary wave that is taking hold there. I strongly believe that deflation in China will cause havoc around the world. I hope they don't start to export their deflation to the rest of the world.

The Chinese government has been acting quickly by lowering interest rates. I am sure they will try again and again and for sure they will come up with some other measures. They have spent around $600 billion to support the stock market with no luck. What a way to waste money. They have been trying to resist devaluing their currency. But as a typical of any managed economy, they are trying to do it step by step and at their leisure. One pure economic way to counter deflation is to devalue your currency. China is suffering from a slump in the housing market. Most of its competitors in Asia have been busy devaluing their currencies. Because China is not an open economy, it will be difficult for outsiders to get a true picture of the severity of the crisis.

The majority of the big banks in China are state owned and are run by politburo members. Some state owned industries such as utilities, railways and constructions have been experiencing real slump. This kind of big slow down happened in Japan in the early 90s, when Japan was going through huge economic boom lead by the construction industry and financed by very cheap credit. Japan is still suffering from the bust which followed the boom and let deflation take hold on the economy. All this created "Deflation" and this is what we should worry about. When consumer prices, investment costs and export prices start falling at the same time in the second biggest export lead economy in the world, then we indeed should worry.

The rest of the world should be fully alerted to this and should take drastic measures to prevent their own economies from importing deflation. Europe and to lesser extent USA should equip themselves as the lenders of the last resort and make sure that their economies do not suffer from default. One of the main reasons that caused the financial crises back in 2008 was the collapse of Leman Brothers bank. At present my biggest fear is another financial crises caused by some countries going bust. I do not see these events unraveling but the risks are there and should not be ignored.

China and India have become very competitive and now are moving up the scale, which is a big challenge for manufacturers in US and Europe. If it becomes more challenging than they could experience collapse in prices with a big deflationary impact for consumers. Some industries such electrical, electronic and the auto industry are complaining about overproduction and price weakness. Again it brings back the memory of the Japanese boom and bust story. These problems are not yet severe to worry about but they do need immediate attention. World leaders from the G20 should act together with strong determination and put measures in place to prevent a worldwide deflation that started in China. —Rasameel.

BEC reveals new brand character

Introducing Bob, the customers' BEC buddy

MANAMA: Bahrain Exchange Company (BEC), specialists in worldwide money transfers and currency exchange, has announced yesterday the launch of its new brand ambassador - Bob, Your BEC buddy.

As the new friendly face of BEC, Bob's role as brand ambassador is to be the customers' BEC Buddy providing his guarantee they will receive great rates and customer service with every transaction undertaken across its network of over 40 retail branches in Kuwait. Bob, a strong yet trusted and friendly character, who embodies BEC's core values of Care, Trust and Efficiency, will feature in branch, online and through social media communicating BEC's money transfer and currency exchange products and services to the public.

The creation of Bob is a global initiative led by BFC Group Holdings, the parent company of BFC in Bahrain, Bahrain Exchange Company in Kuwait, BFC Forex in India and BFC Exchange in the United Kingdom and Malaysia.. The unveiling of its new brand character is in conjunction with its recently renewed vision 'To be the prominent money service company that fully engages with its customers, keeping money flowing across borders'. With a history dating back to 1917, when BFC in Bahrain first began trading in gold bullion and currency exchange, the Group has built a strong and trustworthy brand that customers rely on to send money worldwide and exchange foreign currency at great rates.

Whilst maintaining its roots, the arrival of Bob signifies the company's strategy to strengthen its brand in its current markets and make it a key player as it expands into newer territories. Commenting on the launch of Bob, Ebrahim Nonoo, Managing Director and CEO of BFC Group Holdings said, "Our objectives when creating a brand ambassador were to develop a character that could convey our brand story, embrace our ethics and be engaging for both our customers and employees. Being part of a highly competitive and dynamic industry, with frequent new entrants into the market, we must continually seek ways to reinforce our brand position as a trusted money service provider that cares about our customers. We believe that Bob is the ideal ambassador to represent our company and elevate our brand to the next level."

BEC has over 40 branches across Kuwait and specializes in sending money around the globe safely and quickly to over 54,000 locations in 30 countries, through its own money transfer product - EzRemit. Its global reach is extended to over 200 countries through its partnership with MoneyGram an international remittance company.

BEC Brand ambassador Bob with BFC Group Holdings Managing Director & CEO Ebrahim Nonoo.

Al-Tijari announces winners of Najma Account

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait held the Al-Najma Account draw on January 24, 2016. The draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry represented by Saquer Al Manaie. The winners of the Najma daily draw are:

Nadia Abdulla Al-Sairafi — KD 7000, Sikander Ali Mohammed — KD 7000, Hani Mustafa Hachicho— KD 7000, Osamah Abu Zaid Jumaah Hasan — KD 7000, Faisal Mohammed Arafat — KD 7000.

The Commercial Bank of Kuwait announces the biggest daily draw in Kuwait with the launch of the new Najma account. Customers of the bank can now enjoy a KD 7,000 daily prize which is the highest in the country and another 4 mega prizes during the year worth KD 100,000 each on different occasions: The National Day, Eid Al-Fitr, Eid Al-Adha and on the 19th of June which is the date of the bank's establishment.

With a minimum balance of KD 500, customers will be eligible for the daily draw provided that the money is in the account one week prior to the daily draw or 2 months prior to the mega draw. In addition, for each KD 25 a customer can get one chance for winning instead of KD 50.

Commercial Bank of Kuwait takes this opportunity to congratulate all lucky winners and also extends appreciation to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for their effective supervision of the draws which were conducted in an orderly and organized manner.

MOSCOW: Currency exchange rates are illuminated at an exchange office as the street is reflected on a shop window in downtown Moscow yesterday. —AP

Oil wealth a blessing, but energy dependence a curse for Russia

MOSCOW: Abundant oil and gas deposits have been a blessing for Russia, but they now feel like a curse as low prices propel the country into a deep economic crisis that shows no signs of abating.

The ruble fell to a record dollar low this past week as global crude prices slumped to 12-year lows, highlighting at once Russia's vulnerability to changing oil prices and the fact President Vladimir Putin's government has squandered opportunities to diversify the economy.

Although the ruble bounced back on Friday after a slight recovery of the oil market, the head of Russia's central bank, Elvira Nabiullina, publicly called for "structural efforts to diversify the economy."

"We should not expect to see oil prices return to high levels," she said. Calls to develop long-neglected sectors of the economy come as the government faces increasing pressure to react to a crippling economic crisis that has seen inflation soar and Russians' purchasing power shrink dramatically. Booming oil prices in the 2000s when Putin came to power helped fill state coffers and ushered in an era of prosperity. Oil wealth, which led to higher living standards after the country's tumultuous transition to capitalism in the 1990s, also boosted Putin's popularity.

But for the past decade, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has urged Russia use its oil revenues to support revamping the economic sectors that have been overlooked since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

"Oil is both a blessing and a curse," IMF mission chief to Russia Antonio Spilimbergo warned in 2012, urging Russia to improve its business climate and fight corruption to attract foreign investment.

The Kremlin has also acknowledged the need for change. In his 2006 address to the nation, Putin called on his government to restructure the economy to focus on new technologies.

In a much-touted modernisation drive, the country founded Rosnano, a public holding company specialised in nanotechnology, and Skolkovo, an innovation centre that has branded itself as Russia's answer to Silicon Valley.

But these initiatives have not come anywhere close to challenging the deep-rooted public energy giants. "It's easy to talk a good game on the need to diversify away from energy sectors, but the reality of pushing through the necessary reforms is more difficult," said Neil Shearing, chief emerging markets economist at Capital Economics.

"This is particularly true when oil and gas prices are high." High oil prices in fact enabled the authorities to adopt a wait-and-see policy and prop up the ruble, which in turn made Russian companies less competitive on the international stage.

"Ironically, it could be the collapse in global energy prices and the ruble that gives the biggest spur to diversification," Shearing added.

'New realities'

The financial crisis of 2008 and 2009, accompanied by an oil price slump, had sounded alarm bells among Russian authorities. Then-president Dmitry Medvedev said there would be "fatal" consequences to waiting for the oil market to rebound before revamping the economy. —AFP

Zain reveals new thought leadership report at Davos

Report links innovation to overcoming regional challenges

KUWAIT/DAVOS: Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces the publication of its latest thought-leadership report entitled, 'Bringing the Future Closer with Innovation: Pursuing Innovation as a Means to Overcome Challenges in the MENA Region'. The report sets about illustrating the indispensable role of innovation in achieving sustainable development and transitioning towards a knowledge-based economy, from a regional perspective.

The report was revealed and discussed at the annual World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland 20-23 January, 2016, where Zain Group CEO, Scott Gegenheimer; Emre Gurkan, Group Chief Strategy and Business Development Officer; and the Group's Head of Corporate Sustainability, Jennifer Suleiman, conveyed the findings of the report liaising with leading political and economic personalities from across the globe.

Importantly the report emphasised the role of innovation in enabling the MENA region to overcome prevalent socioeconomic deficits and promote overall human development. It addresses the question: "How can stakeholders in the region come together to further society's innovative capacity as a means to driving sustainable, inclusive growth while promoting human development?"

Commenting on the release of the report, Scott Gegenheimer said, "Given the high-profile nature of our business, and the profound impact it is able to have on people's lives across the region, we feel it is our responsibility to publish information that offers insights into how innovation and technology in general can drastically improve living standards."

Gegenheimer continued, "As with any region in the world, MENA faces specific challenges that we can overcome collectively through our desire of a more enabling environment. From Zain's perspective, our ties to the region run deep, and we look forward to continuing to render support and inspiration that results in positive outcome to people's lives even beyond our own customer base."

The challenges faced by the region include: High unemployment (particularly amongst youth); insufficient economic growth; undiversified economies; ongoing socio-economic exclusion and inequality; high rates of displacement due to conflict; an innovation deficit; and high vulnerability to climate change, to name only some.

Jennifer Suleiman commented, "Corporate social responsibility and sustainability initiatives represent an integral part of Zain Group's strategy and are taken very seriously at all levels of the organization. Our thought-leadership efforts are an opportunity for us to review the factors that can aid socio-economic development from a technological standpoint, and also gives us a chance to draw attention to our own efforts given our position as a leading regional innovator."

Bringing the Future Closer with Innovation: Pursuing Innovation as a Means to Overcome Regional Challenges in the MENA Region showcases Zain's innovation by providing case studies undertaken by the company including:

* The Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) in Jordan dedicated for the purpose of building and empowering a more vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem in Jordan;

* The Zain Great Idea challenge in Kuwait that aims to generate and incubate fresh new ideas in the country;

* The Taaleb E-Learning Project in Kuwait, an online education portal that links students, parents and teachers through a digital platform to improve communication between the parties and make educational process more effective that has seen over 650,000 register;

* The Smart Schools Project in Jordan highlighting the long-term benefits of familiarizing young students with the application of modern technology and exposing them to the tangible benefits that can be produced through ICT.

* Zain's support of the MIT Enterprise Forum Pan-Arab Startup Competition to enable and assist aspiring entrepreneurs from across the region convert their startup concepts into viable businesses;

* The Light a Candle App in Lebanon aimed at enabling people to easily donate money towards assisting children with cancer that saw over 770,000 people donate

* The Family Reconnection Project that was launched in Jordan and South Sudan as part of an effort to reconnect displaced people that were separated from their loved ones due to conflict.

* The strategic collaboration with neXgen Group, a leading regional smart city advisory and consulting services provider, for the purpose of deploying smart city solutions across the region

* Zain's strategic partnership with Uber across the region that provides Zain customers preferential treatment when using the Uber platform, with Uber drivers benefitting from preferred telecommunication services .The partnership was recognized by the global research company, Ovum, as the most innovative service for November 2015 due to the vast opportunities for mutual gain that it provides.

Zain believes that by developing the innovative capacity of the region through a multi-stakeholder approach, the MENA can overcome these challenges and achieve sustainable growth solutions.

Burgan Bank announces Yawmi account winners

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the lucky winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners for the daily draws took home a cash-prize of KD 5,000 each, and they are:

1. Hekmah Owayed raihan Al-Mutairi
2. Ali Saleh Ali Al Rashid
3. Bojan Georgievski
4. Salman Ahmad Mohammad Al-Rasheed
5. Nawal Dhar Adwan Mohammad

To further add to the anticipation of Yawmi account customers, Burgan Bank now offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, entitling one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account now offers Daily and quarterly Draws, the Quarterly Draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for 2 months prior to draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account, will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances to becoming a winner. The more customers deposit, the higher the chances they receive of winning.

For more information on opening a Yawmi account or about the new quarterly draw, customers are urged to visit their nearest Burgan Bank branch and receive all the details, or simply call the bank's Call Center at 1804080 where customer service representatives will be delighted to assist with any questions on the Yawmi account or any of the bank's products and services. Customers can also log on to Burgan Bank's www.burgan.com for further information.

X-cite's out-of-this-world digital Festival

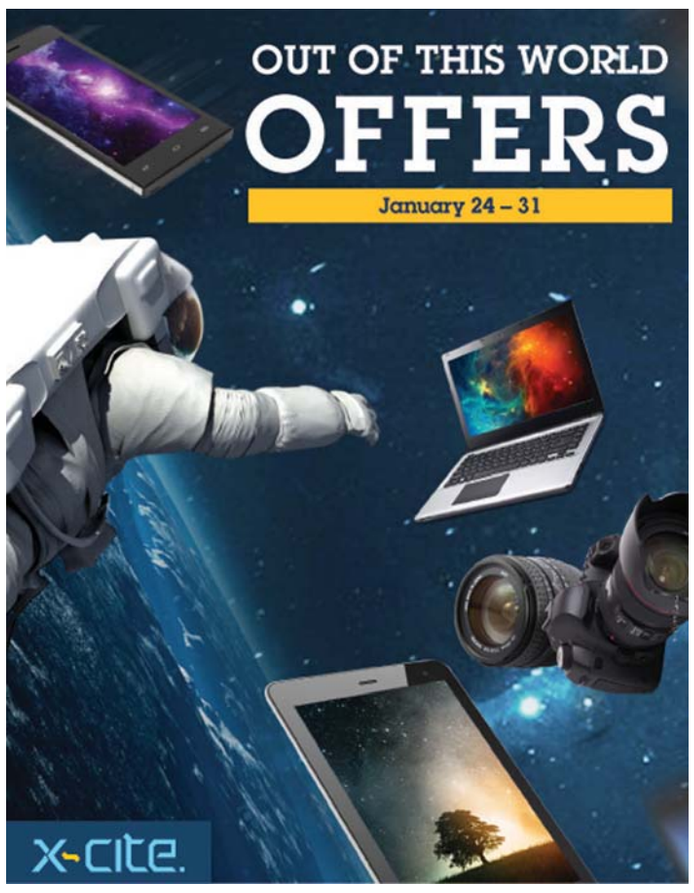
KUWAIT: X-cite by Alghanim Electronics is no stranger to offering its customers the newest and best gadgets and gizmos available to the world market. In celebration of the New Year, X-cite will be launching a major promotion on customers' favorite digital electronics including smartphones, wearables, computers, tablets and other IT-related devices, cameras and gaming all of which are offered at never seen before prices and bundles. With over eighteen showrooms in strategic locations across Kuwait, X-cite makes it easy for anyone to benefit from this incredible promotion that is available for a limited time period from January 24 until January 31, 2016.

It truly is a time to celebrate as anyone can enjoy amazing new technology, offered at X-cite such as the Microsoft Surface Pro. Powered by Windows 10, the Surface Pro 4 is an ultra-convenient device as it works as a tablet as well as a conventional laptop that runs perfectly with your desktop software. Other technologies include the Lumia 950 smartphone that also works like your PC, iPad Pro, the complete smart watch lineup including Apple and Android devices, new JBL audio systems and new HP printers. The promotion also includes dozens of offers on highly sought after computers and laptops including the Windows 10 and 6th Generation Intel processor personal computers as well as an exclusive selection of Dell laptops and convertible computers.

X-cite's Out-of-this-World Digital Festival complements our customers' IT experience with rich entertainment by offering free 2 months subscription to Telly, the first website in the Middle East that offers users TV shows and movies ordered through Video-on-Demand content. This offer is available on most smartphone and computers.

All these offers and special contests are available on X-cite's Social Media Channels (Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat: @xcitealghanim), (Facebook: @xcitebyalghanim)

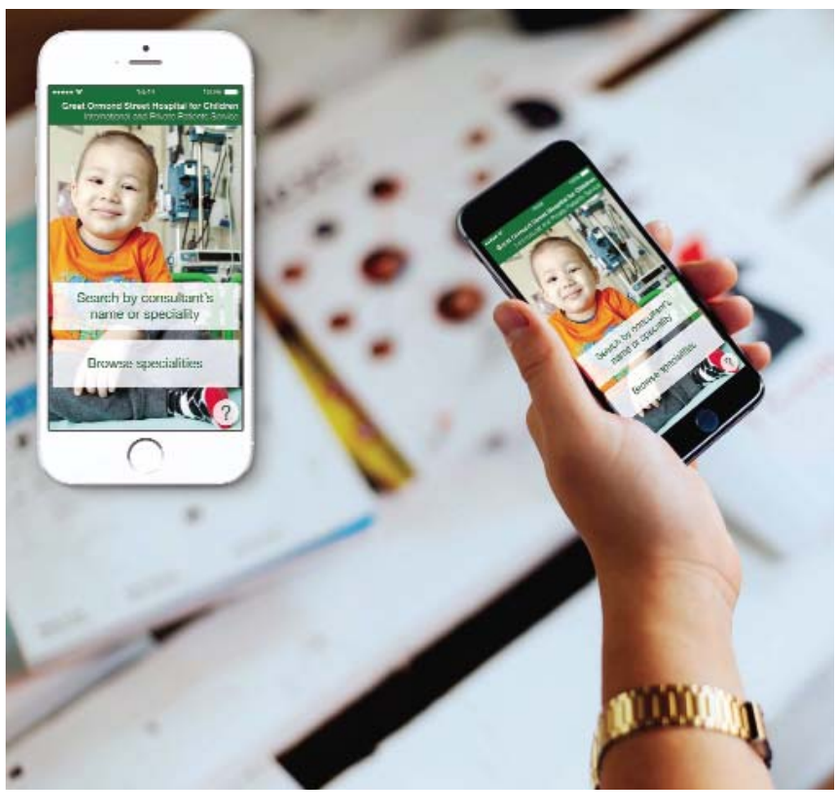
Make it a mission to get your hands on this year's newest digital devices by visiting the nearest X-cite store or www.xcite.com for more deals from January 24 until January 31, 2016.



Harnessing app technology in International Healthcare

KUWAIT: Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital (GOSH), one of the top five children's hospitals in the world, located in London, England, has developed GOSH Global, a free-to-download app that allows healthcare professionals throughout the world to access a comprehensive database of clinical specialties and world-leading consultants, and make an instant referral of a patient for treatment.

With an increase in international patient referrals, GOSH wants to streamline the way patients were referred for treatment. They also want healthcare professionals worldwide to be able to view the services and consultants available at GOSH at the click of a button.



"We know that our partners overseas need an easy way of accessing a database of our services and consultants, and want to be able to refer a patient quickly and efficiently," said Trevor Clarke, Director of International Services at GOSH. "We work hard to provide effective and efficient care to patients and now we're thrilled to be able to match that in our referral process"

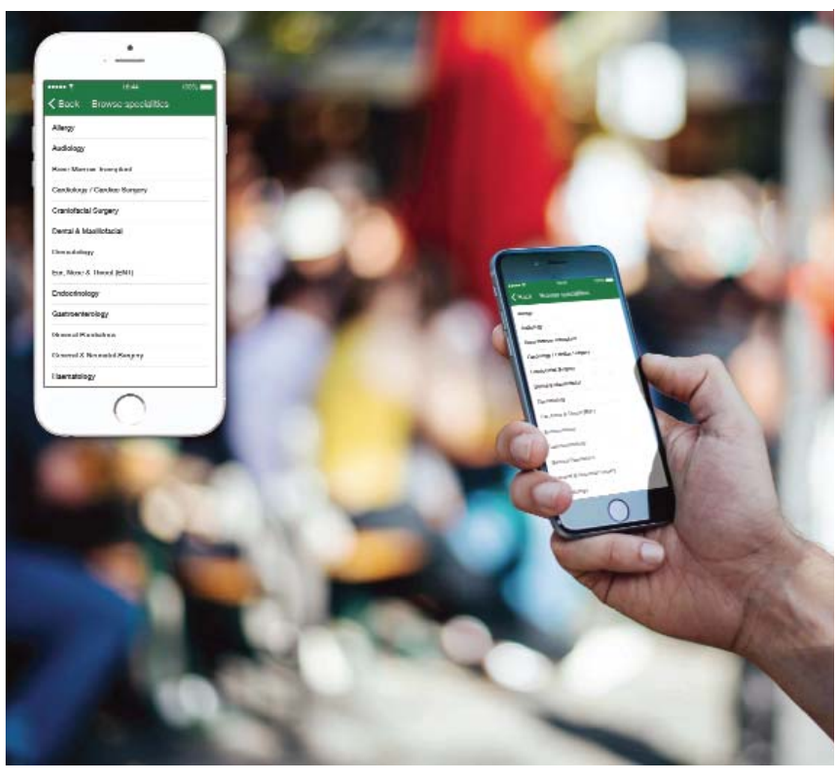
The International and Private Patients Service at GOSH treats over 5,000 children from over 80 different countries each year. The service is tailored to the referral and treatment of international patients and their dedicated, multi-lingual team ensure a smooth and efficient patient experience.

GOSH treats over 2,000 patients from the Middle East every year, specifically Gulf and UAE national patients. Research shows that:

- 1 in 10 Gulf in-patients travel overseas for specialist care
- Over 1,000 patients were sent to London from Kuwait in 2013
- 25% of UAE nationals choose to seek medical treatment abroad
- 65% of Kuwaitis prefer medical care abroad
- In Saudi Arabia, the number of people who travel overseas for the purpose of medical tourism is around 200,000
- In 2010 nearly 3,000 citizens from Qatar received treatment overseas

More about GOSH Global:

- New free-to-download app that facilitates the easy referral of international and private patients for treatment
- Users can browse the wide range of clinical specialities available through the International and Private Patient Service and view an extensive list of world-leading consultants
- Users can search for a consultant by name or speciality and then either make an instant referral, email that consultant's profile to another contact, or make an enquiry to the dedicated GOSH referrals team
- The dedicated referrals team at GOSH will respond to all enquiries within two working days



For more information about Great Ormond Street Hospital visit www.gosh.com/kw

Thanks to big data, US parties decode voters

WASHINGTON: If you're an American voter and have provided personal information to a company, chances are data groups have shared it with political parties to help them target potential supporters. One of the main players is NGP VAN, which manages the Democratic National Committee's database.

Its name recently surfaced in connection with a data breach blamed on a technical glitch that enabled the campaign of presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders to access voter data belonging to rival Hillary Clinton. The incident raises questions about the reach of the database. "Everyone" is in there, Kevin Thurman, who served as Clinton's deputy Internet director during her last campaign in 2008, said with a laugh.

"Every voter in America, since 2004, dead or alive." NGP VAN estimates the number at about 195 million people, far more than the 146 million currently registered as voters. Voter registration is not mandatory in the United States. The database even includes adults who don't vote but who the campaigns hope to convince to turn out ahead of the November presidential election.

All Democratic candidates-be they involved in local elections or a major presidential campaign-use NGP VAN's data. The group helps candidates better target potential voters by avoiding those who will probably never cast a ballot for them, thereby reducing campaign expenses. Other companies provide similar services, including for Republicans. "If you're Trump, you're not going to lose time targeting the Clinton list," explained Brandi Travis, spokeswoman for NGP VAN competitor Aristotle.

Companies sell data

The Democratic Party has been collecting information on American voters since 2004. The data-which includes a registered voter's age, address and history of election participation-is based on publicly available information.

Through brokers, the party then buys information that private companies own on their clients. CVS pharmacies, for example, sell this information. The National Rifle Association, America's leading gun lobby, also shares data on its members. "They buy information from corporate databases... or newspaper subscriptions," Thurman explained.

Clients may not necessarily be aware of this practice, which is legal. "They want to know what type of product you bought," said Sasha Issenberg, a journalist who has published a book, "The Victory Lab," on the issue. These groups also sell their clients' email address.

With NGP VAN's information, the Democratic Party can also learn about someone's educational history and, often, his or her ethnic background. Then comes the analysis. A 30-year-old woman living in a major city and subscribed to a literary magazine, for example, has more chances of voting for Clinton than a 60-year-old man living in a southern rural area and subscribed to a magazine for weapons enthusiasts. When they go knocking on doors, volunteers can then further refine the data by asking whether the targeted voter cares more, say, about climate change or ending unemployment.

Among NGP VAN's dozens of competitors, some, like Aristotle, build their own databases. NationBuilder said that French political parties have sought its services ahead of next year's presidential election in France. The Republicans have a similar database.

'I agree'

Data collectors stress that all information is obtained legally, even if Americans are often unaware of the extent of parties' knowledge of details of their personal lives. "When you click the 'I agree' button online, you don't read the text, but you accept that your information can be sold," said Joe Curran, founder of Filpac, which works with the Republicans.

"It's public, but people just don't know it." Thurman agreed-people simply don't realize what they've signed up for when they register on a website. "There is no way our information can compete with the information the private companies have on Americans," Thurman added. "Compared to them, we are weak." — AFP

Tech 'Unicorns' may be mauled by bear market

WASHINGTON: After a year in which free-flowing capital fueled unprecedented growth in so-called tech "unicorns," the sector is bracing for a slowdown which could thin the herd. Unicorns-a term coined for the usually rare billion-dollar, privately funded startups-have been proliferating in the United States, China and elsewhere as venture capital investors bet on the next Google or Facebook.

But the prospect of a "bear market" where prices are falling, combined with other factors, could send unicorns running for cover, observers who follow the sector say. Some warnings have already appeared.

Venture-backed startups globally saw a 30 percent drop in funding in the fourth quarter to $27.2 billion, according to a survey by KPMG and research firm CB Insights. A separate survey by 451 Research found more than half of tech investment bankers predict venture funding will tighten in 2016 compared to last year, the most bearish outlook since the 2008-2009 recession.

Some unicorns have seen their value slashed by investors aiming to put a fair market evaluation on their holdings. Mutual fund company Fidelity last year marked down the value of its Snapchat holdings by 25 percent. In this scenario, cash-hungry unicorns are likely to face a harder time getting fresh capital, said David Erickson, a senior fellow at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School and former Wall Street banker who led technology share offerings.

'Down rounds'

The weak stock market could impact private firms, potentially forcing a delay of initial public offerings (IPOs). If they need to raise cash, it will likely be "down rounds" with a lower valuation than prior funding efforts. "Valuations will typically come down," he said.

Since the "softness might be prolonged, venture capital firms will be focused on protecting the value in their existing investments rather than spending too much time investing in new names." Erickson said there are some similarities to the tech bubble of 1999-2000, even if the new firms have more developed business models. "While the companies are more seasoned, the issue similar to 2000 is that many are burning tons of cash," he said.

"If they need to have enough cash to break even and if they can't access capital either through the public markets or private markets, then they face more difficult decisions." Erickson added that "we are not quite at that dire stage now," but that if capital dries up it may mean that promising startups would either need to sell themselves or "hit the wall."

Wounded unicorns

The unicorn population-estimated by Forbes this month at 173 companies worth a collective $585 billion-is still alive, but some are hurting. CB Insights chief executive Anand Sanwal said he expects to see "some wounded unicorns" but that there is still capital available from private equity and corporate venture funds.

"Some of those companies that got ahead of themselves on valuation are going to have difficult conversations. You can't just keep selling your dream and your business model can't be raising venture capital." Charlie O'Donnell at Brooklyn Bridge Ventures said many of the unicorns are likely to face a "down round" if they need new capital, because investors are more cautious. "It's not that they're concerned that the world will implode and that startups won't still be a good bet over the long term," O'Donnell said in a blog post. "They're just.... busy taking care of their wounded."

A report by KPMG and research firm CB Insights found that 2015 was a blockbuster year for startup venture funding despite a cooling in the fourth quarter. For the year, the report found $128 billion in venture funding for startups, up 44 percent from 2014. The number of funding rounds was more than 7,800. But it noted that some companies which went public "fell short of recent private valuations, no doubt rattling VC (venture capital) investor confidence."

The most prominent in the group was mobile payments startup Square, led by Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey. Square debuted with a market value of just over $4 billion-well below the $6 billion value assigned by private investors in its latest funding round. Square's value has since fallen to less than $3.4 billion. Most stock markets are in a "correction," which means a drop of 10 percent from their peak.

Some Asian bourses however are in "bear" territory, with a drop of 20 percent or more, and the tech-heavy Nasdaq has neared that level. Unicorns, say analysts, may not fare well if the bears come out in force."If indeed venture firms start keeping their money in their own bank accounts-rather than investing it in entrepreneurs-that could well put startups under pressure, resulting in slower growth rates and lower valuations for those that survive tighter times as well as dramatic flameouts for those that don't," wrote 451 Research analyst Brenon Daly in a blog. Daly said the message has not yet reached the unicorns.

"Most money-burning startups continue to run their businesses as if there's an inexhaustible supply of money," he said. "But at some point this year, startups will almost certainly have to make different decisions than they've made up to now." — AFP

Cuba, US officials hold meeting on Internet

HAVANA: Cuban officials say they have held two days of talks with their US counterparts about telecommunications and the Internet. A Foreign Ministry statement says the two sides exchanged views on using the Internet for "economic and social development."

The Ministry said Friday that Cuban officials also raised complaints about the US Embargo's negative impact on island communications. It said US telecom executives accompanied the delegation to Cuba, but did not give details.

Washington and Havana have advanced talks on several areas of cooperation in the year since they announced they would restore diplomatic relations. Internet access in Cuba remains rare and restricted. Last year the government opened up dozens of public Wi-Fi hotspots, though the cost is prohibitively expensive for many islanders at $2 per hour. — AP

KITCHENER: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, back second right, and Jennifer Flanagan, center, president and CEO of Actua, pose with children after taking part in a virtual reality tour at the new Google Canada Development headquarters. — AP

'Citizen Scientists': Drones to map El Nino flooding

LONG BEACH: Forget about selfies. In California, residents are using smartphones and drones to document the coastline's changing face. Starting this month, The Nature Conservancy is asking tech junkies to capture the flooding and coastal erosion that come with El Nino, a weather pattern that's bringing California its wettest winter in years - and all in the name of science.

The idea is that crowd-sourced, geotagged images of storm surges and flooded beaches will give scientists a brief window into what the future holds as sea levels rise from global warming, a sort of a crystal ball for climate change. Images from the latest drones, which can produce high-resolution 3D maps, will be particularly useful and will help scientists determine if predictive models about coastal flooding are accurate, said Matt Merrifield, the organization's chief technology officer.

'Projected models'

"We use these projected models and they don't quite look right, but we're lacking any empirical evidence," he said. "This is essentially a way of 'ground truthing' those models." Experts on climate change agreed that El Nino-fueled storms offer a sneak peak of the future and said the project was a novel way to raise public awareness. Because of its crowd-sourced nature, however, they cautioned the experiment might not yield all the results organizers hoped for, although any additional information is useful. "It's not the answer, but it's a part of the answer," said Lesley Ewing, senior coastal engineer with the California Coastal Commission. "It's a piece of the puzzle."

In California, nearly a half-million people, $100 billion in property and critical infrastructure such as schools, power plants and highways will be at risk of inundation during a major storm if sea level rises another 4.6 feet - a figure that could become a reality by 2100, according to a 2009 Pacific Institute study commissioned by three state agencies.

Beaches that Californians take for granted will become much smaller or disappear altogether and El Nino-fueled storms will have a similar effect, if only temporarily, said William Patzert, a climatologist for NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. "When you get big winter storm surge like they want to document, you tend to lose a lot of beach," he said. "In a way, it's like doing a documentary on the future. It'll show you what your beaches will look like in 100 years." — AP

E-cigarettes tied to reduced odds of quitting smoking

NEW YORK: People who use electronic cigarettes, or e-cigarettes, are less likely to quit traditional cigarettes than people who don't use the devices, suggests a fresh look at some past research. "The odds of quitting were 28 percent lower for smokers using e-cigarettes than people not using e-cigarettes," said senior author Stanton Glantz, of the Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education at the University of California, San Francisco. E-cigarettes often look like traditional cigarettes, but they use a battery and heating device to deliver nicotine and possibly other flavorings through vapors instead of smoke.

Glantz and his co-author Sara Kalkhoran write in The Lancet Respiratory Medicine that people use e-cigarettes for various reasons, including to quit smoking traditional cigarettes and to get nicotine where smoking is prohibited. Both motivations are themes in e-cigarette marketing, they add. For the new review, the researchers searched online catalogs of medical research to find studies that examined e-cigarette use and whether people ultimately quit smoking. They found 38 studies, and combined the data from the 20 that compared cigarette smokers who use e-cigarettes to smokers who don't use them.

The 20 studies with combined data were conducted between 2008 and 2015, and they all followed between one hundred to several thousand smokers, typically tracking them from a few months to a couple of years. Overall, they found that the odds of quitting smoking were 28 percent lower among people who used e-cigarettes. The researchers also checked to see if the results differed depending on study design, how e-cigarette use was measured, the type of people included in the study and other factors - but the results were the same. "So e-cigarettes are not only not helping people quit smoking, they're also inhibiting people from quitting smoking," Glantz told Reuters Health.

It's not clear why e-cigarettes may keep people from quitting smoking, he said. One possible explanation is that e-cigarettes have been allowing people to get their nicotine fix in otherwise smoke-free environments. Smoke-free environments are known to be very effective in getting people to quit, Glantz said. "By blunting that effect it's probably undermining the motivation to quit and the ease of people quitting," he said.

Gold standard

Dr Steven Bernstein wrote in an editorial that one limitation of the new review is that the odds of quitting smoking were not tied to e-cigarette use when the analysis was restricted to people who said they actually wanted to quit. An additional limitation is that there are only two randomized trials - considered the "gold standard" of medical research - included in the analysis, wrote Bernstein, of the Yale School of Medicine and the Yale School of Public Health in New Haven, Connecticut. "This is not the fault of the authors; abundant, published, methodologically rigorous studies simply do not exist yet," he wrote.

Glantz said that it's important to acknowledge that some people have quit smoking while using e-cigarettes. Also, four of the studies included in the new analysis found e-cigarettes may help people quit smoking. But, he said the overall pattern was that e-cigarettes reduced the odds of quitting. The researchers also caution that these results may changes in the future. "It may be that next year or five years from now the product will be different along with the marketing and regulation environments," said Glantz. —Reuters

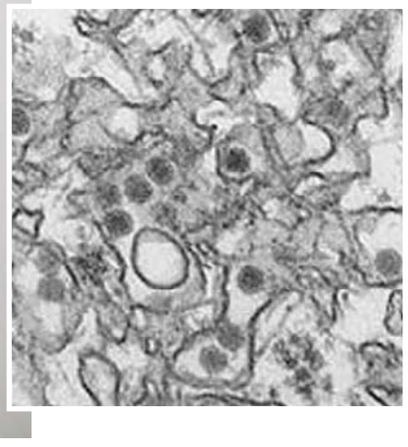
Rio carnival goers celebrate Olympics but fear Zika virus

RIO DE JANEIRO: Rio de Janeiro carnival goers celebrated the coming Olympics on Saturday and even turned fear of infection from Zika-carrying mosquitos into an excuse to party. Participants at one of the many street parties popping up ahead of the official carnival, which starts February 5, honored the city's hosting of the Summer Games in six months by dressing in ancient Greek garb. Some came as Dionysus, others as Aphrodite and Apollo. Rio will be the first South American city to host the Olympics and with the country facing deep recession, a vast corruption scandal and an impeachment attempt against President Dilma Rousseff, Brazilians can't wait to lighten the gloom.

"We picked the Rio Olympics theme for the party because this year our magnificent city Rio will host the Games for the first time," said Chico Nogueira, coordinator of the pre-carnival event known as a "bloco." "This is the veritable Olympus of the gods here," he said, looking around at the samba dancers. "The gods of Rio are mixing with the gods of the whole world." The bloco also had a serious health message for the carnival, now in its warm-up phase ahead of the five official days and their famously elaborate parades.

Authorities in Brazil are struggling to combat the rapid spread of the Zika virus, which is carried by mosquitoes and is believed to cause serious defects among babies born to women infected while pregnant. Those fears are accelerating with the onset of carnival and mass tourist travel. So Saturday's "bloco" did its bit to aid the anti-mosquito war, including with a song advising against leaving stagnant water around. "If the water stops, the larvae come, the larvae give birth to the mosquito," one verse went. "Chase away Zika!"

Condoms were handed out and a pregnant woman danced in a Wonder Woman costume. "This illness is very serious and everyone must take part in fighting it," Nogueira said. "Everyone must unite against the mosquito." "I'm very worried," said Paula Couto de Oliveira, 35, who is 19 weeks along and was attending the "bloco." "Every few hours I put repellant on, but I'm trying not to go crazy or become paranoid and not going out of the house," she said. "But I'm avoiding dark clothes because they attract mosquitos." —AFP



BRAZIL: A graduate student works on analyzing samples to identify the Zika virus in a laboratory at the Fiocruz institute in Rio de Janeiro. (Inset) This January 2016 image provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows a Zika virus, a mosquito-borne disease that has been linked in Brazil to a large number of cases of microcephaly, a rare birth defect. —AP photos

HONG KONG: Three girls walk in the Tsim Sha Tsui district of Hong Kong yesterday. —AFP

Hong Kong hit by coldest temperatures in nearly 60 years

HONG KONG: A cold snap gripped Hong Kong yesterday, with residents shivering as temperatures plunged to the lowest point in nearly 60 years and frost dusted the mountaintops of a city accustomed to a subtropical climate. Weather officials issued a frost warning saying an "intense cold surge" was in place, coupled with chilling monsoon winds. Morning temperatures dropped to 3.3 Celsius (38 Fahrenheit) in urban areas of the southern Chinese city, where most buildings lack central heating, and below freezing on the hills. It is the coldest weather in 59 years, senior scientific officer Wong Wai-kin told AFP.

"It is the coldest day since 1957. The daily minimum dropped to 3.3 degrees Celsius, the previous record was 2.4 degrees in February of 1957," he told AFP. While the cold snap is by no means on the scale of the weather now affecting the US and swathes of mainland China, such temperatures are a novelty for many residents. "It is very cold and windy over Hong Kong. People are advised to put on warm clothes and to avoid prolonged exposure to wintry winds," read a note published on a city government website.

As the mercury dropped, curious residents flocked to higher ground in search of frost, according to local broadcaster Cable TV. "It's very cold, my feet feel numb," a young visitor to Tai Mo Shan, the highest mountain in Hong Kong, told the broadcaster. Screenshots of flakes also swamped social media but weather forecasters said the precipitation was "rain with small ice pellets" rather than snow. About 20 participants of a cross country race were sent to hospital after experiencing symptoms associated with hypothermia, according to local media.

Conditions are not expected to warm up until the middle of the week, said weather forecasters. According to the Hong Kong Observatory, the coldest weather occurred in January 1893, when temperatures plunged to 0 C. Meanwhile, the state-run People's Daily in China said on its weibo social networking account that the city of Guangzhou recorded its first snowfall since 1929. —AFP

Classroom standing desks may curb kids' sedentary time

'Children spend over 50 percent of the school day sitting'

NEW YORK: Standing desks in classrooms could be an easy way to help make kids' time in school less sedentary, a new research review suggests. The study team analyzed data from eight previously published papers and found, not surprisingly, that kids spent more time on their feet when these desks were used instead of traditional classroom furniture. Standing desks were also linked to a decrease in sitting time ranging from 59 to 64 minutes per school day. "In schools, children spend over 50 percent of the school day sitting - traveling to school, during class, at lunch, sometimes during recess, traveling home after school, etc," said lead study author Karl Minges of the Yale School of Nursing in Connecticut.

"While one cannot easily reduce sitting time at lunch or during transportation, changing the classroom environment to be more conducive to standing seems like low-hanging fruit," Minges added by email. Reducing sedentary time among school-age children is important because inactivity is linked to a wide range of health problems including obesity and diabetes, Minges and colleagues note in the journal Pediatrics. Some previous research has also linked sedentary time to poor academic achievement and low self-esteem.

For the current study, researchers focused on standing desks used in first through sixth grades. Students in the studies were around eight to 12 years old, on average, and the studies ranged in size from eight to 337 participants. Four studies were done in the US, while two were from New Zealand and one was in Germany. An additional article included data from Australia and the UK. The types of desks varied across the studies, with some configurations fixed at a standing height and other adjustable options that allowed students to alternate between sitting and standing throughout the day.

Five of the studies tracked the effect of these desks on standing time. In two studies, children spent significantly more time standing after they got the desks than they did before, with increases ranging from about 26 percent to 31 percent. In two other studies, children stood 24 minutes longer per school day with standing desks. One study also looked at screen time, often used as a proxy for sedentary behavior, and found that after standing desks were put in classrooms, students spent 71 fewer minutes each day watching television and using computers.

Educational benefits

Six studies looked at physical activity and didn't find significant changes with standing desks by looking at total steps or time spent stepping. Limitations of the analysis include the small number of studies and participants, as well as the varied ways of tracking the impact of standing desks, the authors acknowledge. More research is needed to determine whether standing desks might be cost-effective or feasible to provide in schools, and additional studies are also necessary to assess any potential health or educational benefits of standing desks.

Still, the preliminary evidence on standing desks points to their potential to help reduce sitting time and increase standing time among elementary children, the authors conclude. "The long term use of these desks might result in reduction in sedentary behavior amongst children not just in schools but even outside the school environment," said Dr Seema Kumar, a pediatric endocrinologist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, who wasn't involved in the study. "Children may become more active overall and these changes in behavior may translate into better weight outcomes, improved ability to learn and pay attention and greater self-esteem." —Reuters

CHINA: This photo taken on January 23, 2016 shows a ship stuck in the ice after coastal waters froze in Dalian, in northeast China's Liaoning province. —AFP

Rapid early weight gain tied to higher childhood blood pressure

CALIFORNIA: Infants and preschoolers who gain weight rapidly may have higher-than-average high blood pressure later in childhood, a US study suggests. The relatively small differences in blood pressure linked to rapid weight gain for youngsters in the study may be tied to an increased risk of other health problems in young adulthood, such as high cholesterol or elevated blood sugars, say the authors of the study.

The researchers tracked changes in weight and height for 957 babies up to age four and found the children who gained excessive weight for their height, as reflected by higher body mass index (BMI), tended to have higher blood pressure than peers at ages 6 to 10 years. Each additional increment of BMI gained as an infant or toddler was linked to an increase of about 1 to 1.5 mmHg (millimeters of mercury) in systolic blood pressure.

"Previous studies have emphasized the importance of rapid weight gain in early infancy in determining later blood pressure; the current study adds to emerging data that weight gain during the preschool years is at least as important as infancy weight gain in relation to blood pressure," said senior study author Dr Mandy Belfort of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. Linear growth - when children add pounds at a steady pace - doesn't appear to be a problem for childhood blood pressure, Belfort added by email. Instead, the culprit may be sudden surges in weight that aren't matched by increases in height.

"Our finding that gain in body mass index, not linear growth, predicted later blood pressure suggests that more rapid accumulation of fat may be important," Belfort said. "Our research does suggest that more is not always better when it comes to weight gain in babies." Belfort and colleagues reviewed data from medical records starting when babies were born. On average, the kids were around 8 years old at the mid-childhood checkup, with average systolic blood pressure (the top number) of 94.4 mmHg and average diastolic blood pressure (the bottom number) of 54.3 mmHg.

Solid food

While ideal blood pressure for children at any given age varies by gender and height, this average for 8-year-olds would be in a range generally considered healthy. High blood pressure is harder to detect in children than in adults. In adults, 140/90 or greater is considered high. There's no single cutoff in children, however. In general, children with blood pressure higher than 95 percent of children of the same gender, age and height can be diagnosed with high blood pressure. Since children's blood pressures will vary greatly based on these factors as they're growing up, there is no set range that defines normal or high.

Kids in the study who experienced unusually large surges in BMI before 6 months of age or between ages 2 and 3 years had higher systolic blood pressure in mid-childhood then their peers who experienced steadier growth throughout those periods. The magnitude of the increase in systolic blood pressure was larger for the preschoolers than the infants, the study also found. Birth size didn't appear to influence the results. One limitation of the study is that it can't prove that rapid increases in BMI directly caused higher blood pressure, only that there was a connection between the two things, researchers acknowledge in the journal Hypertension. Still, the findings support recommendations that mothers breastfeed infants until age 6 months because this is linked to less weight gain than formula feeding, noted Caryl Nowson, a diet and nutrition expert at Deakin University in Australia who wasn't involved in the study. Once young children move on to solid food, parents should avoid giving kids soft drinks and limit consumption of fruit juice, both of which can contribute to weight gain, Nowson added by email. —Reuters

WASHINGTON : Michael speaks during an interview with Agence France-Presse in Washington, DC. —AFP photos

Art soothes kids in gun-plagued Washington neighborhood

'Connect, create, contribute, celebrate'

WASHINGTON: This is one place where Jamar feels safe, painting with other boys to escape from the gunshots that ring out through his Washington neighborhood, one of the most violent in the United States. "Life Pieces is a good place. You'll always be safe at Life Pieces," says Jamar, who is nine years old. Ward 7 of the US capital is home to 70,000 people — 95 percent of them black-and has an unemployment rate more than double that of national levels. "I prefer to do my homework here-it's not safe at Grandma's," Jamar, a bit shy at times, told AFP.

Jamar says he wants to be a firefighter or a police officer when he grows up. He is among 140 boys aged three to 17 who attend the Life Pieces to Masterpieces (LPTM) after school program each day. The non-profit group, launched in 1996, provides an oasis of calm for young boys living in an area east of the US Capitol that is prone to gang activity and where the murder rate is among the nation's highest. LPTM "focuses on the development of black men using the concept of artwork," explained executive director Selvon Malcolm Waldron.

"It's a safe space to be, in a loving environment." That's a sharp contrast with what many of these children experience on a daily basis. Most live in single-parent homes, where they are awakened by police sirens in the dead of night and shootings. And sometimes, their reality hits even harder than that. One of the LPTM "apprentices," as the children are called here, was playing with friends when he saw his grandfather killed in a drive-by shooting, Waldron said. Jamar says he once found a firearm abandoned in an alley near his home. "When I hear shootings, I'm scared they will kill me, that they will shoot at me," said Michael, 11.

The Four Cs

Life Pieces aims to "connect, create, contribute, celebrate" through its art program-the so-called 4Cs. Students connect by choosing a theme after discussing it and meditating, create by working on a piece, contribute by working together on the artwork and celebrate by exhibiting the works. Dozens of the pieces are exhibited at shows, especially in Washington's busy downtown Chinatown neighborhood-brimming with art galleries, upscale dining and young professionals.

Last year, the group raised $22,000 from sales of the artwork. Other works are loaned out to places like libraries and children's hospitals for free, or, for a fee, to the headquarters of Capital One bank. "It's very empowering for them to see their artwork exhibited elsewhere," said Waldron. These collaborative acrylic paint canvases are in fact a patchwork, with different pieces sewn together.

The boys can also paint their own individual pieces. "We have fun at Life Pieces. There's food, we read, we draw. We do a lot of fun stuff," said Jamar, a regular here for the past four years. Michael has enjoyed the food, art activities and mentors at LPTM for the past five years. "Life Pieces is like a second home. It helps you to get your act together."

Citizens of the world

The organization also seeks to open up the world to these boys, with special presentations from outside speakers and trips beyond Ward 7. "We offer them a role model, an example. We provide a structure, a male model. We teach them values, life lessons," said Maurice Kie, known at Life Pieces as Brother Mo. "We take the young men on a good ride." A former LPTM apprentice, Brother Mo has served as program coordinator since 2006.

"It's kind of a therapeutic process, like a good group therapy," he explained. "We teach them to be gentlemen, global citizens." In a neighborhood where only 33 percent of youths graduate from high school, Life Pieces apprentices have had a 100 percent success rate over the past five years. Some have gone on to university or job training programs. An additional 25 teens aged 14 to 17 participate in a university preparation program once a week.

And the organization also trains 10 to 15 young adults each year to become teachers' aides. Waldron wants to "shake up this profession," where 60 percent are white women and only two percent are black men. LPTM has about 30 paid employees and around 50 volunteers, and operates on the grounds of a primary school. Its $1.5 million budget is largely funded by local private foundations. —AFP

Miss Universe to push HIV awareness after crowning blunder

MANILA: The new Miss Universe, back in the Philippines after an epic televised blunder surrounding her crowning, said yesterday she would use the attention the incident attracted to campaign for HIV awareness, especially in her home country. In front of an estimated one billion television viewers worldwide last December, pageant host Steve Harvey mistakenly announced Miss Colombia, Ariadna Gutierrez, as Miss Universe before correcting himself minutes later. The diamond and sapphire crown was removed from the head of a sobbing and humiliated Gutierrez and transferred to Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach of the Philippines.

Wurtzbach, speaking to reporters about her plans, said she would undergo a "public testing" for HIV when she returns to the United States where the Miss Universe Organization is based, to erase the stigma surrounding the disease. "It's about time someone like me should step up and hopefully others would follow suit as well," Wurtzbach, 26, told AFP. "I think in the Philippines, there's a bit of a stigma because we're a conservative country." The Philippines reported a 22 percent increase in HIV infections year-on-year in September last year. Four in ten of the new cases were reported in the capital Manila.

The nation of 100 million people, on whom 80 percent are Catholic, is heavily influenced by the church which frowns on contraceptive use. Testing for HIV is also considered taboo. In the very few minutes she stood at the back of the Las Vegas stage at the end of the pageant, Wurtzbach said she accepted being first runner-up as a huge crowd of disappointed but proud fans in the audience waved Filipino flags. "I told myself, I fell short, what a waste. But it's okay. I did everything I could and the most important thing is everybody is proud of me," she said. That was until Harvey admitted his unprecedented gaffe.

"I was so happy. I was so excited. I couldn't describe it. It was something the Philippines has been waiting for for a long time." Wurtzbach said

MANILA: Miss Universe Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach of the Philippines waves during her homecoming press conference at a hotel in Manila yesterday. —AFP

she stood by her statement during the pageant's interview question, that Filipinos welcomed the return of US soldiers to their former bases in the Philippines. "The Americans have always been our friend, we've always worked with them... I don't think there's anything wrong with asking for help when we need it," she said. Beauty pageants like Miss Universe have cult followings in the Philippines and former titleholders go on to lucrative careers in movies and modeling.

It was the Philippines' first title in 42 years and the third since the pageant started in the 1950s. Her one-week long homecoming itinerary includes a grand parade around Manila today, courtesy calls on President Benigno Aquino and both houses of parliament and a concert at one of the capital's biggest indoor stadiums. Wurtzbach had been modeling since she was 11 and played bit roles in movies and television, but her entertainment career never hit the big league until she won Miss Universe. She lost in the local contest twice before earning the right to represent her country in the pageant.

The Filipina-German, with her smoldering gaze, said she dreams of becoming a "Bond Girl" in future 007 movies. Wurtzbach, who is rumored to have dated the 55-year-old Aquino, said she would stay single to concentrate on her duties as Miss Universe and pursue her Hollywood dream. "This is my boyfriend for now," a beaming Wurtzbach said, as she clutched the porcupine-shaped crown on her head. —AFP

California marijuana growers face new crop of local bans

SACRAMENTO, California: When the California Legislature passed the state's first comprehensive medical marijuana regulations in September, pot advocates hoped the move heralded a new era of trust in their often-tumultuous relationship with wary local officials and police. So far, it hasn't turned out that way. Facing what appears to be a rapidly closing window for action, dozens of cities and counties from across California are racing to enact new bans on marijuana-growing. Some apply only to commercial cultivation, both indoor and outdoor, but many would also prohibit personal pot gardens that have been legal - or at least overlooked - for 19 years.

"Any other industry that created four months of seasonal labor and hundreds of thousands of jobs...we would be giving tax breaks to those businesses," medical marijuana dispensary owner Robert Jacob, a member of the Sebastopol City Council who has been fighting pot-growing bans proposed in Sonoma County. At issue is a paragraph in the 70-page framework approved in the closing hours of the legislative session that would give the state alone authority to license growers in jurisdictions that do not have laws on the books by March 1 specifically authorizing or outlawing cultivation.

Lawmakers involved in crafting the package say the deadline ended up by mistake in the final compromise regulations. Assemblyman Jim Wood, a Democrat who represents California's prime pot-growing region, included it in earlier versions as a way to free local governments from a responsibility they might not want, spokeswoman Liz Snow said. "It was a way to try to make it clearer in terms of, 'OK, local jurisdictions. If you want to act, you should be thinking about it, working on it now. Otherwise, we will all defer to the state,'" Snow said.

Cultivation bans

Even before Gov Jerry Brown signed the regulations, which create the first statewide licensing and operating rules for California's sprawling medical marijuana industry, Wood announced he would introduce an emergency bill this month deleting the March 1 deadline. The League of California Cities and the California Association of Police Chiefs, while supporting the fix, nonetheless have advised their members to enact cultivation bans ahead of the original cutoff date as a precaution to preserve local control. The two groups fought hard last year for provisions stating that to be eligible for licenses the state expects to start issuing in about two years, anyone involved in the commercial medical marijuana trade must first obtain a local operating permit.

Tim Cromartie, a lobbyist with the League of California Cities, said the guidance to ban all medical marijuana growing outright stemmed from the conclusion that the short time frame did not give local officials enough time to draft, debate and refine their own cultivation rules. "Most cities, their staff have no clue how to begin writing one of these ordinances. Their first thought is, 'Don't the feds prohibit this? How can we do this?'" Cromartie said. "We know of jurisdictions that didn't want to have to ban, but they did it under the point of a gun."

Agriculture licenses

With new proposals being introduced and voted on almost daily, no one knows yet how many of California's 58 counties and 482 cities have taken the league's advice. The California branch of the National Organization for the Repeal of Marijuana Laws, or NORML, which has been monitoring what it's termed "the banapalooza," said more than 160 jurisdictions either have passed or introduced legislation to outlaw only commercial cultivation or both commercial and personal growing.

The crackdown has been a source of frustration for veteran pot farmers who hoped the new state regulations would bring clarity to their gray corner of the medical marijuana industry and instead find themselves "recriminalized," said Hezekiah Allen, executive director of the newly formed California Growers Association. Unless the local bans are lifted or modified, they would make medical marijuana growers in those areas automatically ineligible for the potentially lucrative and limited number of agriculture licenses the state expects to start issuing in 2018. "Certainly we have been disappointed with the League of Cities, how they have chosen to proceed," Allen said. "A lot of the jurisdictions had a predisposition to ban, and the March 1 deadline unfortunately gave them cover to ban." —AP

British expert: We cooperate with College of Aviation Technology to provide our expertise to students

British expert Robert Sutherland with the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the College of Aviation Technology Dr Abdul Razak Al-Mahmoud, and member of the Board of Trustees Marzouk Al-Sharifi.

The College of Aviation Technology in Kuwait is currently being visited by the British expert and representative of "AST" Scottish Center, Robert Sutherland, who confirmed that "AST" Center is the oldest in Europe in the field of aviation, and its most prominent alumni include Jordan's late King Hussein, and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum. Further, the first generation of pilots in the Kuwaiti Air Force and Kuwait Airways trained in "AST" Center in Scotland, and currently, there is cooperation with the air force in the Sultanate of Oman and the Ministries of Defense and Interior in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Professional license

Sutherland said in a press statement after arriving in the country, as he represents "AST" Center in the Board of Trustees of the College of Aviation Technology in Kuwait: cooperation with the College academically and in training is the first of its kind in the Gulf region and the Middle East, where the student at the College of Aviation Technology in Kuwait studies to obtain the aircraft maintenance engineer license, approved by the European Aviation Security Association "EASA" which gives graduates the opportunity to work in various countries of the world and different airlines, including Kuwait Airways. The graduate receives an academic diploma, in addition to the professional license in accordance with the standards adopted in Europe and internationally.

He added that selecting Kuwait to be the regional center for cooperation through the College of Aviation Technology was not fortuitous, but began since 2005, when a decree was issued establishing the college, in addition to the historical relations between Kuwait and "AST" Center in Scotland, as most of the leaders of the Kuwaiti Air Force and Kuwait Airways are graduates of "AST" Center, as we are working in the field of aviation maintenance in Europe since long decades and our graduate receives a certificate by the "British National Aviation Authority", a prestigious certificate due to being the best license in Europe.

Sutherland pointed out that the graduate has 13 fields of work represented in the following : engineering management, aircraft design engineering, aircraft pressure engineering, performance engineering, engineering procurement, asset management, technical services, engineering support, reliability and planning engineering, payment engineering, quality and safety engineering, aircraft systems engineering , aircraft maintenance engineering, equipment sales, and operations management and logistics.

Prestigious center

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the College of Aviation Technology, Dr Abdel Razek Al-Mahmoud said: cooperation with a prestigious center such as "AST", comes out of concern for the settlement and expansion in the field of aviation engineering and technology in the country and ease the trouble of travel by our sons and daughters overseas in demand for information from certified universities and scientific centers. Therefore, we are keen that the study at the "College of Aviation Technology" is accredited, not only locally, but also internationally, from long-standing global institutions with academic weight. Hence, the "College of Aviation Technology" awards the graduate with a diploma in aviation engineering, and a license approved by " EASA "International, in cooperation with AST / Perth College of Highlands Wayland HI University "in Scotland.

Saudi artist Huda Tutunji opened her gallery in Kuwait recently as part of the 22nd Al-Qurain Cultural Festival, and Kuwait's celebrations as the Capital of Islamic Culture 2016. —KUNA

SKM celebrates 16th grand event

Senthamil Kalai Mandram (SKM) Kuwait is a non-profit association exclusively for Indian Tamil speaking Community. SKM celebrated its 16th grand event at Mugalai auditorium, Fahaheel, to commemorate New Year, Pongal festival and Indian republic day.

People Gathering and celebration begun at 9:30 am with preparation of Pongal by SKM ladies wing subsequent to that various colorful cultural programs staged by SKM children and members, such as Pongal and traditional Dance, Bharathanathiyam, comedy skit, cinematic dance, allocutions, debate, light music songs, Tamil traditional songs etc.

The daily calendar of 2016 was launched by our chief guest Kumar, Thamizhosai to SKM president Rajashekar and distributed it to all the members of SKM.

The event structured with the core objective of Indian traditional values and sacrifices related to Republic day and Tamil formers festival Pongal, our invited guests Kumar, Ramasubramanium and Thamizhosai office bearers were addressed in the stage about the precious traditional value of our soil. Musical extravaganza by renowned musical troop of Themmangu pattu and colorful cultural and entertainment programs performed by highly talented SKM members were also highlights of the event. The program was culminated with delicious south Indian traditional food, served in Banana leaf.

Kuwait University's College of Engineering and Petroleum students recently finished a field training program organized by Kuwait Oil Company, Schlumberger, Kuwait Gulf Oil Company and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation for the first semester of the 2015/2016 academic year.

Hala February camp opens

The 17th Hala February Camp was recently launched along Benaider highway number 258. The camp remains open until March 1st. Speaking on the occasion, the Information Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for TV Affairs Yousif Mustafa praised the camp, noting that it has turned into an annual social and recreational activity for families and visitors. "The Hala February Festival has also enhanced the culture of patriotism through various competitions and seminars," he underlined. Further, Mustafa stressed that the information ministry provided all equipment needed for live coverage throughout the festival, namely a carnival due on January 29. Notably, Ooredoo took part in opening the camp and presented awards and gifts to participants who took part in competitions held on the sidelines of the inauguration.

Discovery Channel HD

00:20 Superhuman Science
00:45 Alaskan Bush People
01:35 Alaskan Bush People
02:25 Alaskan Bush People
03:15 Alaskan Bush People
04:05 Alaskan Bush People
05:00 Alaskan Bush People
06:00 Yukon Men
06:50 Wheeler Dealers
07:40 Misfit Garage
08:30 Storage Hunters UK
08:55 The Liquidator
09:20 Storage Wars Canada
09:45 What Happened Next?
10:10 How Machines Work
10:35 Alaskan Bush People
11:25 Alaska: The Last Frontier
12:15 Railroad Alaska
13:05 Storage Hunters UK
13:30 The Liquidator
13:55 Storage Wars Canada
14:20 Yukon Men
15:10 Wheeler Dealers
16:00 Misfit Garage
16:50 What Happened Next?
17:15 How Machines Work
17:40 Street Outlaws
18:30 Engine Addict With Jimmy De Ville
19:20 Troy
20:10 The Liquidator
20:35 Storage Wars Canada
21:00 X-Ray Mega Airport
21:50 X-Ray Mega Airport
22:40 Wheeler Dealers: Trading Up
23:30 Wheeler Dealers

Discovery Science

00:35 How The Universe Works
02:55 Strip The Cosmos
03:42 Mythbusters
07:37 How Do They Do It?
08:23 Food Factory
12:08 How It's Made: Dream Cars
19:50 How The Universe Works
23:45 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

ID Investigation Discovery

00:40 Serial Killers
01:30 Deadly Sins
02:20 Deadly Devotion
03:10 Swamp Murders
04:00 Deadly Women
04:45 Serial Killers
05:30 Deadly Sins
06:20 The Will
08:00 Fatal Encounters
08:50 Disappeared
09:40 Disappeared
10:30 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
12:10 The Will
13:50 California Investigator
14:40 Dr. G: Medical Examiner
15:30 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
16:20 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
17:10 Disappeared
18:50 California Investigator
19:40 I Almost Got Away With It
23:00 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
23:50 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall

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 Jessie
10:10 Violetta Recipes
10:25 16 Wishes
12:00 I Love Violetta
12:20 Jessie
12:45 Jessie
13:10 Liv And Maddie
13:35 Liv And Maddie
14:00 Austin & Ally
14:30 Austin & Ally
14:55 Lolirock
15:20 I Didn't Do It
15:45 I Didn't Do It
16:10 Best Friends Whenever
16:35 Best Friends Whenever
17:00 Girl Meets World
17:25 Girl Meets World
17:50 The Good Dinosaur Movie Special
18:00 Frenemies
19:30 Gravity Falls
19:55 Dog With A Blog
20:20 Mako Mermaids
20:45 Good Luck Charlie
21:10 Good Luck Charlie
21:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place
22:00 Binny And The Ghost
22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
22:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:10 Wolfblood
23:35 Wolfblood

E! HD

00:00 New Money
00:30 Fashion Bloggers
00:55 Fashion Bloggers
01:25 Stewarts And Hamiltons
02:20 E! News
03:15 Eric And Jessie: Game On
03:40 Eric And Jessie: Game On
04:10 E! Entertainment Special
05:05 E! Entertainment Special
06:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
06:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
07:50 Style Star
08:20 E! News
09:15 House Of DVF
10:15 House Of DVF
11:10 Fashion Bloggers
11:35 Fashion Bloggers
12:05 E! News
13:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
14:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:00 Dash Dolls
16:00 Christina Milian Turned Up
17:00 New Money
17:30 New Money
18:00 E! News
19:00 Fashion Bloggers
19:30 Fashion Bloggers
20:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
21:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
22:00 Christina Milian Turned Up
23:00 Dash Dolls

Food Network

00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:00 Chopped
02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
03:00 Man v Food
04:00 BBQ Crawl
05:00 Chopped
06:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
07:00 Man Fire Food
08:00 Chopped
09:00 Amazing Wedding Cakes
10:00 The Kitchen
12:00 Chopped
13:00 Guy's Big Bite
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
17:00 Chopped
18:00 Siba's Table
18:30 Siba's Table
19:00 Dinner At Tiffani's
20:00 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
21:00 All Star Academy
22:00 Ching's Amazing Asia
23:00 The Freshman Class

ITV HD Choice

00:20 Coronation Street
01:10 Pick Me!
02:00 Coronation Street
04:15 Murdoch Mysteries
05:55 The Jonathan Ross Show
06:50 Vera
08:40 Safe House
09:35 Endeavour
11:20 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
12:15 Grantchester
13:10 Murdoch Mysteries
15:00 Code Of A Killer
15:55 Pick Me!
16:45 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
17:40 The Jonathan Ross Show
18:35 Coach Trip
19:00 Code Of A Killer
19:55 Pick Me!
20:50 The Jonathan Ross Show
21:45 Safe House
22:45 Coronation Street
23:15 The Jonathan Ross Show

OSN First HD Comedy

01:30 Saturday Night Live
02:30 The Big C
04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
05:30 Young & Hungry
06:00 Til Death
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
18:30 The Goldbergs
19:00 Grandfathered
19:30 Melissa & Joey
20:00 Bad Judge
22:00 Married
23:00 The Big C
23:30 Bad Judge

OSN First HD

00:00 Defiance
01:00 Heroes Reborn
02:00 The Blacklist
03:00 Minority Report
04:00 Stitchers
05:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
07:00 Drop Dead Diva
08:00 Witches Of East End
09:00 Stitchers
11:00 Drop Dead Diva
12:00 Coronation Street
12:30 Coronation Street
13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
14:00 Witches Of East End
16:00 Live Good Morning America
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
18:00 Witches Of East End
19:00 Heroes Reborn
20:00 The Blacklist
21:00 Scandal
22:00 How To Get Away With Murder
23:00 Show Me A Hero

OSN First More

00:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
01:00 Survivor: Cambodia
02:00 Good Morning America
03:00 Satisfaction
04:00 Blood & Oil
05:00 Survivor: Cambodia
06:00 Good Morning America
07:00 Coronation Street
07:30 Coronation Street
08:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
09:00 Supernatural
10:00 Coronation Street
10:30 Coronation Street
11:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
12:00 Resurrection
13:00 Shark Tank
14:00 Supernatural
15:00 Survivor: Cambodia
16:00 The Voice
18:00 Shark Tank
19:00 Supernatural
20:00 Resurrection
21:00 Shark Tank
22:00 Satisfaction
23:00 Blood & Oil

OSN Movies Action

00:00 American Heist
02:00 Patrick
04:00 Hours
06:00 The Scorpion King 4: Quest For Power
08:00 Abandoned Mine
10:00 The River Wild
12:00 Android Cop
14:00 Destruction: Las Vegas
16:00 The Scorpion King 4: Quest For Power
18:00 The River Wild
20:00 Don't Look Back
22:00 Turbulence

OSN Movies HD Action

00:00 Patrick-18
02:00 Hours-PG15
04:00 The Scorpion King 4: Quest For Power-PG15
06:00 Abandoned Mine-PG15
08:00 The River Wild-PG15
10:00 Android Cop-PG15
12:00 Destruction: Las Vegas
14:00 The Scorpion King 4: Quest For Power-PG15
16:00 The River Wild-PG15
18:00 Don't Look Back-PG15
20:00 Turbulence-PG15
22:00 Lone Survivor-PG15

OSN Movies HD Comedy

00:00 We'll Never Have Paris
02:00 Cas & Dylan
04:00 Beethoven's Treasure Tail
06:00 The Love Punch
08:00 A Simple Twist Of Fate
10:00 Beethoven's Treasure Tail
12:00 Cas & Dylan
14:00 Chef
16:00 A Simple Twist Of Fate
18:00 A Case Of You
20:00 Pretty Woman
22:00 Mad Dog And Glory

OSN Movies Drama

01:30 The Wicked Within-PG15
03:00 Decoding Annie Parker-PG15
05:00 Grand Central-PG15
07:00 I Will Follow You Into The Dark-PG15
09:00 A Promise-PG15
11:00 Grand Central-PG15
13:00 At Middleton-PG15
14:45 For Greater Glory-PG15
17:15 A Promise-PG15
19:00 Inside Llewyn Davis-PG15
21:00 The Trials Of Cate McCall
23:00 Third Person-18

OSN Movies HD Festival

01:00 Heaven's Gate
04:30 To Write Love On Her Arms
06:30 Upside Down
08:30 Waitress
10:45 Heaven's Door
12:45 The Mirror Has Two Faces
15:00 The Bag Man
17:00 Waitress
19:00 Out Of The Furnace
21:00 The Color Of Money

OSN Movies HD

01:00 Left Behind-PG15
03:00 Taken 3-PG15
05:00 Earth To Echo-PG
06:45 Salinger-PG15
09:00 Breathe In-PG15
11:00 Taken 3-PG15
13:00 The Mark-PG15
15:00 Good Deeds-PG15
17:00 Breathe In-PG15
19:00 Good People-PG15
21:00 Some Girls-PG15
23:00 The November Man-18

OSN Movies HD Kids

01:30 The Elf Who Stole Christmas
03:00 Snow Queen
04:30 Marco Macaco
06:00 Mostly Ghostly: Have You Met My Ghoulfriend
08:00 Miffy The Movie
09:45 Hatching
11:15 Tarzan
13:00 Snow Queen
14:30 Bolts And Blip
16:00 Sir Billi
18:00 Hatching
20:00 Jingle All The Way 2
22:00 Bolts And Blip
23:30 Marvel's Planet Hulk

OSN Movies HD Premiere

01:00 Anna Nicole-PG15
02:30 Le Weekend-PG15
04:15 Bad Parents-PG15
06:00 August: Osage County-PG15
08:00 A Common Man-PG15
10:00 The Good Witch's Wedding-
12:00 Stonehearst Asylum-PG15
14:00 40 Days And Nights-PG15
16:00 A Common Man-PG15
18:00 Kristy-PG15
20:00 Winter's Tale-PG15
22:00 Dom Hemingway-18

AMC

03:50 Robinson Crusoe
05:25 Little Sister
07:00 The Watsons Go To Birmingham
08:30 Separate Tables
10:10 Apache
11:40 The Crocodile Hunter: Collision Course
13:10 Big Screen
13:25 Inspector Clouseau
15:00 Music Of The Heart
17:05 The Man In The Iron Mask
19:15 Mannequin
20:45 Big Screen
21:00 Venom
22:30 London
00:00 Dracula 2000
01:40 Road House

Ci

03:00 Born To Kill
04:00 Born To Kill
05:00 The Haunting Of...
06:00 Celebrity Ghost Stories
07:00 The FBI Files
08:00 After The First 48
09:00 After The First 48
10:00 The FBI Files
11:00 The FBI Files
12:00 Killers
13:00 Killers
14:00 Killers
15:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
16:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
17:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
18:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
19:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
20:00 I Didn't Do It
21:00 I Didn't Do It
22:00 I Didn't Do It
23:00 Killer Kids
00:00 Killer Kids
01:00 The Haunting Of...
02:00 I Escaped My Killer

Disney Junior

03:05 Calimero
03:20 Zou
03:30 Loopdidoo
03:45 Art Attack
04:10 Henry Hugglemonster
04:20 Calimero
04:35 Zou
04:45 Loopdidoo
05:00 Art Attack
05:25 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 Calimero
05:50 Zou
06:00 Loopdidoo
06:15 Art Attack
06:35 Henry Hugglemonster
06:50 Calimero
07:00 Zou
07:20 Loopdidoo
07:35 Art Attack
08:00 Calimero
08:10 Zou
08:25 Loopdidoo
08:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
09:05 Sofia The First
09:30 Miles From Tomorrow
09:55 The Hive
10:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
10:35 Doc McStuffins
11:00 Sofia The First
11:30 Captain Jake And The Never Land Pirates
12:00 Miles From Tomorrow
12:25 Sofia The First
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
21:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
21:35 Sofia The First
22:00 Jungle Cubs
22:25 Aladdin
22:50 Gummi Bears
23:20 Lilo And Stitch
23:45 Cars Toons
23:50 Zou
00:05 Henry Hugglemonster
00:20 Calimero
00:35 Zou
00:50 Loopdidoo
01:05 Art Attack
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
01:45 Calimero
02:00 Zou
02:15 Loopdidoo
02:30 Art Attack
02:55 Henry Hugglemonster

THE SCORPION KING 4: QUEST FOR POWER ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

Disney XD

07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
07:25 K. C. Undercover
07:50 Supa Strikas
08:15 A Goofy Movie
09:35 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything
10:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
10:25 K. C. Undercover
10:50 Supa Strikas
11:20 Lab Rats
11:45 Annedroids
12:10 Kirby Buckets
12:35 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything
13:00 Lab Rats
13:30 Lab Rats
13:55 Lab Rats
14:20 Lab Rats
14:45 Lab Rats
15:15 Lab Rats
15:40 Lab Rats
16:05 Lab Rats
16:30 Lab Rats
16:55 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
17:25 K. C. Undercover
17:50 Supa Strikas
18:15 Lab Rats
18:40 Mighty Med
19:10 Annedroids
19:35 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
20:00 Kirby Buckets
20:25 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything
20:55 K. C. Undercover
21:20 Supa Strikas
21:45 Lab Rats
22:10 Mighty Med
22:40 Super Matrak
23:05 Super Matrak
23:30 Boyster
00:00 Programmes Start At 7:00am KSA

Nickelodeon HD

03:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
03:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
03:48 Henry Danger
04:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
04:36 The Haunted Hathaways
05:00 Winx Club
05:24 Sanjay And Craig
05:48 Sanjay And Craig
06:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:36 SpongeBob SquarePants
07:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:48 Sanjay And Craig
08:12 Harvey Beaks
08:36 Breadwinners
09:00 Get Blake
09:24 Rabbids Invasion
09:48 Henry Danger
10:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
10:36 The Haunted Hathaways
11:00 Winx Club
11:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
11:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
12:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
12:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
13:00 Breadwinners
13:24 Breadwinners
13:48 Get Blake
14:12 Rabbids Invasion
14:36 100 Things To Do Before High School
15:00 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
15:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
15:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
16:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
16:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
17:00 Sanjay And Craig
17:24 Harvey Beaks
17:48 Breadwinners
18:12 Henry Danger
18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
19:00 100 Things To Do Before High School
19:24 Max & Shred
19:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
20:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
20:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
21:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
21:24 Breadwinners
21:48 Breadwinners
22:12 Sanjay And Craig
22:36 Sanjay And Craig
23:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
23:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
23:48 Henry Danger
00:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
00:36 Max & Shred
01:00 100 Things To Do Before High School
01:24 Sanjay And Craig
01:48 Sanjay And Craig
02:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
02:36 SpongeBob SquarePants

Sundance Channel

04:35 Mary Is Happy, Mary Is Happy
06:40 Ben Lee: Catch My Disease
08:10 Kumiko, The Treasure Hunter
10:00 Circles
11:50 A Sea Turtle Story
12:00 All On The Line
13:00 The Red Road
14:00 Everest
16:05 Dear Lemon Lima
17:30 Movie Talk
17:55 Discovering: Zeffirelli
18:40 Circles
20:30 The Red Road
21:30 All On The Line
22:30 Theatreland
23:00 Hollywood's Best Film Directors
23:30 A Sea Turtle Story
23:40 Barking Water
01:00 For Ellen
02:40 Broke Sky
02:45 Barking Water

TLC HD

03:15 Long Island Medium
03:40 Long Island Medium
04:05 World's Worst Mum
05:00 World's Worst Mum
06:00 Say Yes To The Dress ,Äì Bridesmaids
06:25 Super Soul Sunday
07:15 Hoarding: Buried Alive
08:05 My Giant Life
08:55 Curvy Brides
09:20 Curvy Brides
09:45 Jon & Kate Plus 8
10:10 Little People, Big World
10:35 My Five Wives
11:25 Cake Boss
11:50 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
12:40 Super Soul Sunday
13:30 7 Little Johnstons
14:20 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
14:45 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
15:10 Jon & Kate Plus 8
15:35 Little People, Big World

DOM HEMINGWAY ON OSN MOVIES PREMIERE HD

CLASSIFIEDS

Kuwait Times
MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 2016

Kuwait CINEMA

KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (21/01/2016 TO 27/01/2016)

SHARQIA-1
LOST IN THE SUN 12:15 PM
LOST IN THE SUN 2:30 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 4:30 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 6:30 PM
LOST IN THE SUN 8:30 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 10:30 PM
LOST IN THE SUN 12:30 AM

SHARQIA-2
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 12:15 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 2:00 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 3:45 PM
THE 5TH WAVE 6:45 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 9:15 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 12:15 AM

SHARQIA-3
RIDE ALONG 2 1:00 PM
THE BOY 2:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 4:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 6:45 PM
THE BOY 8:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 10:45 PM
THE BOY 12:45 AM

MUHALAB-1
DARKNESS DESCENDS 11:30 AM
KUNG FU STYLE 1:30 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 3:30 PM
DICTATOR - Telugu 3:30 PM
OUR BRAND IS CRISIS 6:30 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 8:45 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 10:45 PM
OUR BRAND IS CRISIS 12:45 AM

MUHALAB-2
RIDE ALONG 2 12:00 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 2:00 PM
THE REVENANT 4:00 PM
SOGGADE CHINNI NAYANA -Telugu 4:00 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 7:00 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 9:00 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 11:00 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 1:00 AM

MUHALAB-3
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 11:45 AM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 2:45 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 5:45 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 8:45 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 11:45 PM

FANAR-1
OUR BRAND IS CRISIS 11:45 AM
OUR BRAND IS CRISIS 2:00 PM
OUR BRAND IS CRISIS 4:15 PM
THE REVENANT 6:30 PM
OUR BRAND IS CRISIS 9:30 PM
THE REVENANT 11:45 PM

FANAR-2
DARKNESS DESCENDS 1:00 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 3:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 5:00 PM
DICTATOR - Telugu 5:00 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 8:00 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 10:00 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 12:05 AM

FANAR-3
RIDE ALONG 2 12:30 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 2:30 PM
KUNG FU STYLE 4:30 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 6:30 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 8:30 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 10:30 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 12:30 AM

FANAR-4
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 12:15 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 1:30 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 3:15 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 6:15 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 9:15 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 12:15 AM

FANAR-5
THE BOY 11:45 AM
THE BOY 1:45 PM
THE BOY 3:45 PM
THE 5TH WAVE 5:45 PM
THE BOY 8:15 PM
THE 5TH WAVE 10:15 PM
THE BOY 12:45 AM

MARINA-1
LOST IN THE SUN 11:30 AM
THE 5TH WAVE 1:30 PM
OUR BRAND IS CRISIS 3:45 PM
LOST IN THE SUN 6:00 PM
THE 5TH WAVE 8:00 PM
OUR BRAND IS CRISIS 10:15 PM
LOST IN THE SUN 12:30 AM

MARINA-2
RIDE ALONG 2 12:00 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 2:00 PM
THE REVENANT 4:00 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 7:00 PM
THE REVENANT 9:00 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 12:05 AM

MARINA-3
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 12:30 PM
KUNG FU STYLE 1:30 PM
KUNG FU STYLE 3:30 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 5:45 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 8:45 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 11:45 PM

AVENUES-1
KUNG FU STYLE 11:30 AM
THE 5TH WAVE 1:30 PM
THE 5TH WAVE 4:00 PM
TWO COUNTRIES - Malayalam 6:30 PM
THE 5TH WAVE 9:30 PM
THE 5TH WAVE 12:15 AM

AVENUES-2
DARKNESS DESCENDS 12:00 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 2:15 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 4:30 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 6:45 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 9:00 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 11:30 PM

AVENUES-3
OUR BRAND IS CRISIS 1:00 PM
OUR BRAND IS CRISIS 1:30 PM
FRI
OUR BRAND IS CRISIS 3:45 PM
OUR BRAND IS CRISIS 6:15 PM
OUR BRAND IS CRISIS 8:45 PM
OUR BRAND IS CRISIS 11:15 PM

360°- 1
RIDE ALONG 2 11:45 AM
RIDE ALONG 2 1:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 3:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 5:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 7:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 9:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 11:45 PM

360°- 2
KUNG FU STYLE 12:15 PM
KUNG FU STYLE 2:15 PM
KUNG FU STYLE 4:15 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 6:15 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 9:30 PM
THE BOY 12:30 AM

360°- 3
DARKNESS DESCENDS 1:00 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 3:15 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 5:30 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 7:45 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 10:00 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 12:15 AM

AL-KOUT.1
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 12:15 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 1:30 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 3:15 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 6:15 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 9:15 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 12:15 AM

AL-KOUT.2
RIDE ALONG 2 11:30 AM
THE 5TH WAVE 1:30 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 3:45 PM
THE 5TH WAVE 5:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 8:15 PM
THE 5TH WAVE 10:15 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 12:45 AM

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CHANGE OF NAME

I Hozefa, holder of Indian Passport No. J5394193, Mohammediya colony, VPO Galiyakot, Dist Dungerpur, Rajasthan - 314026, hereby change my name from Hozefa to Hozefa Fauji.
(C 5116)
25-1-2016

REQUIRED
KITCHEN STAFF
(visa transfer immediately)
Indian or Filipino
For a good salary
Career.kuwait.01@gmail.com
69999081

Flight Schedule

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

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

Arrival Flights on Monday 25/1/2016

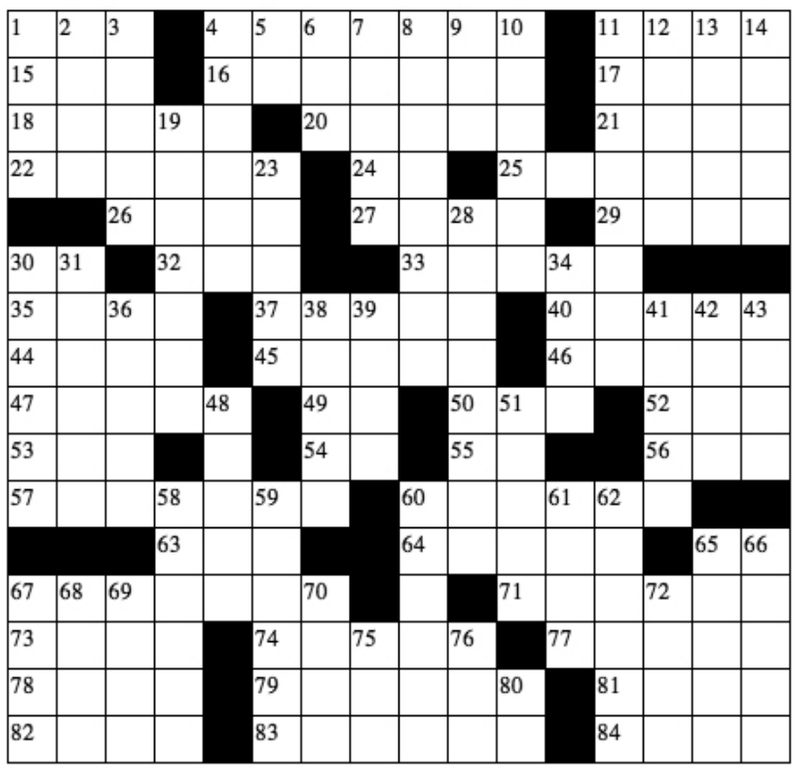
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MSC	415	Sohag	00:05
JZR	239	Amman	00:25
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55
RJA	642	Amman	01:05
THY	772	Istanbul	01:05
ETH	3402	Addis Ababa/Riyadh	01:30
DLH	635	Doha	01:35
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:45
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00
JZR	555	Alexandria	02:25
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55
FDB	067	Dubai	03:05
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10
CEB	7694	Manila	03:15
QTR	1076	Doha	03:15
KKK	6507	Istanbul	03:20
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:25
KAC	544	Cairo	03:35
LMU	510	Cairo	04:05
PGT	860	Istanbul	04:15
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:40
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55
QTR	8511	Doha	06:10
FDB	5061	Dubai	06:30
BAW	157	London	06:40
KAC	412	Manila/Bangkok	07:20
FDB	053	Dubai	07:25
QTR	1086	Doha	07:40
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50
SVA	512	Riyadh	07:50
OMA	641	Muscat	08:00
KAC	354	BLR	08:15
KAC	206	Islamabad	08:25
KAC	352	Kochi	08:30
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	08:30
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:50
KAC	362	Colombo	08:50
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:20
QTR	1070	Doha	09:25
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:40
IRC	528	Ahwaz	10:00
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40
UAE	873	Dubai	11:05
SYR	341	Damascus	11:25
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30
AGY	682	Asyut	11:40
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55
SAW	701	Damascus	12:20
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50
JZR	175	Dubai	13:00
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00
KAC	382	Delhi	13:50
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10
FDB	057	Dubai	14:10
AXB	393	Kozhikode	14:20
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:30
KAC	284	Dhaka	14:45
KAC	672	Dubai	14:45
KAC	788	Jeddah	14:50
GFA	221	Bahrain	15:00
KNE	472	Jeddah	15:05
OMA	645	Muscat	15:30
KAC	562	Amman	15:40
ABY	127	Sharjah	15:45
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45
JZR	535	Cairo	16:10
QTR	1072	Doha	16:10
JZR	787	Riyadh	16:25
FDB	051	Dubai	16:30
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	16:40
RJA	640	Amman	16:55
KAC	542	Cairo	16:55
SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15
GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30
KAC	678	Muscat/Abu Dhabi	17:50
MSR	614	Cairo	17:50
JZR	777	Jeddah	17:55
UAE	875	Dubai	18:00
KAC	502	Beirut	18:00
FDB	063	Dubai	18:05
KAC	792	Madinah	18:10
JZR	177	Dubai	18:20
KAC	786	Jeddah	18:30
ABY	123	Sharjah	18:45
QTR	1080	Doha	18:55
KAC	742	Dammam	19:05
KAC	774	Riyadh	19:25
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30
KAC	166	Paris/Rome	19:30
KAC	618	Doha	19:35
JZR	483	Istanbul	19:35
KAC	674	Dubai	19:45
KAC	102	New York/London	19:55
FDB	061	Dubai	20:20
OMA	647	Muscat	20:20
MSR	606	Luxor	20:45
FDB	5053	Dubai	20:50
JAI	572	Mumbai	20:55
DLH	634	Frankfurt	20:55
QTR	1088	Doha	21:00
MEA	402	Beirut	21:20
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20
ALK	229	Colombo	21:25
UAE	859	Dubai	21:40
GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45
QTR	1082	Doha	22:00
JZR	125	Bahrain	22:00
KLM	417	Amsterdam	22:05
AIC	981	Chennai/Ahmedabad	22:25
ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:25
FDB	059	Dubai	22:30
KAC	172	Frankfurt	22:35
MSC	501	Alexandria	23:00
JZR	239	Amman	23:05
JZR	185	Dubai	23:15
PIA	205	Lahore	23:40
FDB	071	Dubai	23:45
THY	764	Istanbul	23:50
JAI	574	Mumbai	23:55

Departure Flights on Monday 25/1/2016

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05
FDB	072	Dubai	00:40
JAI	573	Mumbai	00:55
MSC	416	Sohag	01:00
KAC	283	Dhaka	02:10
THY	773	Istanbul	02:30
DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:35
ETH	621	Addis Ababa	02:45
ETH	3403	Addis Ababa	03:05
KAC	381	Delhi	03:30
UAE	854	Dubai	03:45
PGT	859	Istanbul	03:55
OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
FDB	068	Dubai	04:00
MSR	613	Cairo	04:10
ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:15
KKK	6508	Istanbul	04:20
PGT	861	Istanbul	04:55
QTR	1077	Doha	05:00
LMU	511	Cairo	05:05
THY	765	Istanbul	05:15
CEB	7695	Manila	05:20
JZR	560	Sohag	06:10
FDB	070	Dubai	06:30
JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
RJA	643	Amman	07:05
THY	771	Istanbul	07:05
FDB	5062	Dubai	07:10
GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
QTR	8512	Doha	07:40
FDB	054	Dubai	08:10
JZR	174	Dubai	08:25
QTR	1087	Doha	08:40
BAW	156	London	08:45
SVA	513	Riyadh	08:50
OMA	642	Muscat	08:55
KAC	171	Frankfurt	09:05
JZR	534	Cairo	09:15
KAC	787	Jeddah	09:25
ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
UAE	856	Dubai	09:55
KAC	117	New York	09:55
KAC	541	Cairo	09:55
KAC	561	Amman	10:00
KAC	671	Dubai	10:05
ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:25
KAC	501	Beirut	10:30
FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
JZR	482	Istanbul	10:35
IRA	664	Shiraz	10:40
KAC	677	Abu Dhabi/Muscat	10:50
QTR	1071	Doha	11:00
IRC	529	Ahwaz	11:00
GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
JZR	776	Jeddah	12:20
SYR	342	Damascus	12:25
KAC	103	London	12:25
UAE	874	Dubai	12:30
AGY	683	Alexandria	12:40
MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
KAC	785	Jeddah	13:00
FDB	076	Dubai	13:10
JZR	786	Riyadh	13:10
KAC	791	Madinah	13:25
SAW	702	Damascus	13:35
JZR	176	Dubai	13:45
MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
FDB	058	Dubai	15:10
QTR	1079	Doha	15:10
AXB	394	Kozhikode	15:20
SVA	503	Madinah/Jeddah	15:45
GFA	222	Bahrain	15:45
KAC	617	Doha	15:45
KAC	773	Riyadh	15:50
KAC	741	Dammam	15:55
KNE	473	Jeddah	16:05
ABY	128	Sharjah	16:25
OMA	646	Muscat	16:30
JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	17:30
JZR	238	Amman	17:30
FDB	052	Dubai	17:35
QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
RJA	641	Amman	17:55
SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
MSR	615	Cairo	18:50
JZR	124	Bahrain	19:10
FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
ABY	124	Sharjah	19:25
UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
KAC	361	Colombo	20:45
QTR	1081	Doha	20:50
KAC	351	Kochi	20:50
OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
FDB	062	Dubai	21:20
MSR	619	Alexandria	21:45
DLH	634	Doha	21:45
DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
FDB	5054	Dubai	21:50
JAI	571	Mumbai	21:55
QTR	1089	Doha	22:00
JZR	502	Luxor	22:00
ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
KAC	301	Mumbai	22:10
MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
QTR	1083	Doha	23:05
KLM	417	Dammam/Amsterdam	23:05
KAC	205	Islamabad	23:10
ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:15
FDB	060	Dubai	23:35
KAC	411	Bangkok/Manila	23:35
KAC	415	Kuala Lumpur/Jakarta	23:40

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

CROSSWORD 1148



ACROSS

1. United States liquid unit equal to 4 quarts or 3.785 liters.
4. The basic unit of money in Guatemala.
11. An inclined surface or roadway that moves traffic from one level to another.
15. Used of a single unit or thing.
16. A bitter yellow powder used to treat skin diseases.
17. English essayist (1775-1834).
18. A member of the Uniat Church.
20. Measuring instrument in which the echo of a pulse of microwave radiation is used to detect and locate distant objects.
21. (heraldry) An ordinary consisting of a broad horizontal band across a shield.
22. A motley assortment of things.
24. Being one more than one hundred.
25. Smooth and soft to sight or hearing or touch or taste.
26. Queen of the Olympian gods in ancient Greek mythology.
27. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
29. Suggestive of the supernatural.
30. Being ten more than one hundred ninety.
32. Either of two folds of skin that can be moved to cover or open the eye.
33. Type genus of the Culicidae.
35. Type genus of the family Arcidae.
37. A member of a Turkic people of Uzbekistan and neighboring areas.
40. Capable of being corrupted.
44. British artist and writer of nonsense verse (1812-1888).
45. A river that rises in central Germany and flows north to join the Elbe River.
46. Deduce (a principle) or construe (a meaning).
47. A genus of Ploceidae.
49. A unit of weight equivalent to 1000 kilograms.
50. Resonance of protons to radiation in a magnetic field.
52. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
53. Goddess of criminal rashness and its punishment.
54. A state in midwestern United States.
55. The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
56. A lipoprotein that transports cholesterol in the blood.
57. An order of Eutheria.
63. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
64. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
67. Childcare during the day while parents work.
71. German dramatist (1813-1863).
73. A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.
74. City in Sudan.
77. Fleshy spore-bearing inner mass of e.g. a puffball or stinkhorn.
78. Informal terms for a human head.
79. A short trip that is taken in the performance of a necessary task or mission.
81. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
82. A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
83. An analgesic for mild pain.
84. A small cake leavened with yeast.

DOWN

1. Wild ox of mountainous areas of eastern India.
2. A former copper coin of Pakistan.
3. English film actress (1913-1967).
4. Of or concerning Qatar.
5. An ancient city of Sumer located on a former channel of the Euphrates River.
6. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
7. An extended area of land.
8. Relating to or included in the zodiac.
9. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
10. Immature of its kind.
11. (of leaves) Bent downward and outward more than 90 degrees.
12. A nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (trademarks Aleve and Anaprox and Aflaxen).
13. A stingy hoarder of money and possessions (often living miserably).
14. Resembling paste in color.
19. French philosopher and theologian.
23. Type genus of the Gadidae.
28. A famous waterfall in Venezuela.
31. Make or cause to be or to become.
34. At any time.
36. A military trainee (as at a military academy).
38. Any of various cycads of the genus Zamia.
39. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
41. The back side of the neck.
42. Harsh or corrosive in tone.
43. (archaic or Scottish) Faithful and true.
48. The capital and largest city of Ghana with a deep-water port.
51. Tropical Asian starlings.
58. A city in western Germany near the Dutch and Belgian borders.
59. Gained or acquired.
60. The basic monetary unit in many countries.
61. The dialect of Albanian spoken in northern Albania and Yugoslavia.
62. 1 species.
65. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
66. Tropical American tree grown in southern United States having a whitish pink-tinged fruit.
68. In a murderous frenzy as if possessed by a demon.
69. God of the Underworld.
70. Long-bodied long-tailed tropical American wildcat.
72. English monk and scholar (672-735).
75. The products of human creativity.
76. Black tropical American cuckoo.
80. A metric unit of volume equal to one tenth of a liter.

Yesterday's Solution

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

STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)

You could be teaching a school class or attending a spiritual meeting today. Refinement and relationships are the keys to emotional satisfaction for you now. Harmony and beauty are deeply satisfying-the lack of them can be disconcerting. Circumstances converge this day that will reveal you at your most elegant, particularly in social situations. A reunion of some sort takes place and brings plenty of smiles and times of reminiscing. You will have a grasp for abstract and spiritual ideas and the ability to present or communicate these to others. You and a close friend will have fun generally just hanging out together. Close special ties to other people are a focal point for your feelings. Future plans to gather are finalized.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Young people surround you today and you will enjoy guiding them in their activities. Loved ones, children and other people or things dear to your heart are emphasized this day. Being appreciated and admired for your gifts and talents are powerful needs. Taking chances can bring big rewards. Responsibilities may balance out the remainder of the day. An important friendship is growing and you will find mutual interests will bring you even closer. There are fun times for communicating back and forth with ideas and shared interests can have you talking for hours. You can be one of the most exciting companions and your respect for others along with your attention to their needs is probably all that one could ever ask.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

As a lover of freedom and liberty you may be creating music, poetry or some other sort of writing today. You will find that if you stick with this for a time you will be able to have some great results-possibly a profitable piece of art. You could also come up with new solutions or inventions today. Some interruptions may occur-but the sooner you learn to work with the interruptions, the faster you will see results. You may be in a rare mood of self-enjoyment and can appreciate your own better qualities. You may have much compassion for an older person in your family. You will find the work you have done towards better health is taking hold and your level of energy is improved. Your loved ones notice and enjoy your positive presence.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

What you thought you wanted is not as important as you once used to think. This realization may start you to thinking about working up a short questionnaire to keep your customers happy. Helping them to be happy with their shopping tendencies may take a little psychological insight but you have what it takes to work up something catchy. If you get too deep in the search you may forget the humor. Special attention to an old project makes your afternoon move along quickly. Take some time to be with nature this afternoon-perhaps while you are walking a dog or walking for exercise.

Leo (July 23-August 22)

Harmony and beauty are what you strive for this morning-you may decide to consider a plan for home or neighborhood landscaping-perhaps you will be planting bulbs for spring. Friends may enjoy your company this afternoon; however, you will need to take the back seat and let others express their opinions. You can draw on the passion and ideas of others at this time. Enlightenment through your relationships is the key to emotional satisfaction. Harmony and beauty are deeply satisfying-and the lack of them can be emotionally disturbing. You are one of those wonderful people that feel that, regardless of what you have already learned, there is always room to expand and grow.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Making a good impression and putting your best foot forward take on a greater importance as a new cycle begins. Appearances and style may count more than substance. Romance, the arts and others of life's pleasures seem to take center stage. If you want to win someone's attention today, you will find positive results. Reach for the brass ring-grab the merry-go-round ring. Whatever you are planning, today will be successful. You are in the mood to be expressive, insightful, creative and lighthearted. Everything seems to bring out your unique qualities. There are opportunities to join your friends this afternoon-perhaps a play or movie. Afterward, there is much talk about how the movie or play relates to each person's personal life.

Libra (September 23-October 22)

There may be a new system of communication between family or roommates now. Everyone in your living area may be quite busy today. Domestic problems cannot be ignored for too long. In order for everyone's living space to run smoothly, you may want to initiate family or roommate meetings once a month. You will have a better grasp of expectations and may even gain some insight. A keen interest in what makes things tick may find you inventing the latest shortcut to wherever or whatever. Others may tease you because you have dreams and a highly creative mind. The pay for your hard work may be slow in coming but you will certainly receive acknowledgment. The poorest of all men is the man without a dream.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may discover there is enough money this month to use toward the updating of furniture or painting your house. When people visit you, they rarely want to leave. You create a warmth that brings people in out of the cold. Elegance and family ties are the keys to emotional satisfaction for you. Harmony and beauty are deeply satisfying-and the lack of them can be emotionally disquieting. You demonstrate to others the feelings that our capacity to be happy and useful cannot truly be hampered by external conditions. Continue to seek happiness from the inside. Laughter is more fun with two. There is talk of wanting to adopt an animal. Romantic opportunities are pleasant this evening. Perhaps a romantic dinner out could be enjoyed.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Harmony is important to you and having clean surroundings will contribute to those feelings. You may feel a push to clean clothes-do some mending-pick up around the house or work on your car. This is a busy but productive and rewarding day. You may find yourself being put to good use by your friends this afternoon. There are some wonderful opportunities to deepen a friendship. Deep and serious conversations along with funny anecdotes can be shared. A serious matter can also be tended to today. A situation with some budgeting problems can turn into a compromise. You have a clear vision into your own inner sense of values, how you appreciate and love.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Caution while exercising today is a wise move. Warm up before exercising and try walking instead of running, pushing instead of pulling, twisting instead of lifting, etc. Removing stress through exercise is important and caution is necessary in order to avoid pulling muscles. A domestic situation may call for you to intervene with your more commonsense qualities. You will be able to settle some confusion and simplify some matters today. This is a time to broaden your horizons both intellectually and spiritually. There are plenty of professional opportunities in teaching, education, publishing, broadcasting, legal and political interests and advertising, if you are looking for them.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

This is another inventive and creative day! Your creative style today goes in the direction of art instead of human care. It is about time you balanced those energies. You may decide to color or dye sheets in order to make curtains or chair covers, or perhaps you will be making birdhouses. Whatever you design or create will be attractive and a noticeable addition to your surroundings. You may just decide to keep your hobby to yourself but it could become profitable. You may also decide to look into alternative health remedies, homeopathic, reflexology, zone therapy, acupuncture, herbal medicines, i ching, yoga, etc. Join in the fun and do something different. There are plenty of opportunities today to celebrate life.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This morning there may be a situation that could present a test of faith. Through study you will be able to understand what has been misunderstood. Ultimate answers come from a surprise pathway. After lunch and perhaps out with friends, you may feel like really joining in the laughter and camaraderie. There is a lot of pleasure in the simple things. You could find ways to spend your money today but take care that you do not indulge too much for now. A team sport may be considered. You could sway someone around to your way of thinking later this afternoon-perhaps that friend gone astray. Only some of us learn by other people's mistakes; the rest of us have to be the other people. You have a grateful heart.

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

90's Songs 1

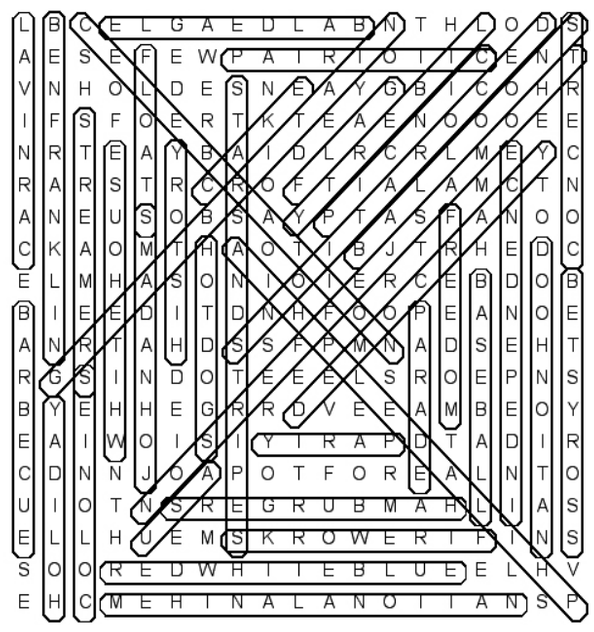
Find and circle all of the 1990's songs that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional song.

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

ALL STAR	HOLE HEARTED	MY ALL	SOMEDAY
ALWAYS	I WISH	NEVER EVER	SUMMERTIME
BLACK VELVET	IESHA	ONLY YOU	TENNESSEE
CARNIVAL	INVISIBLE MAN	PUSH	THA CROSSROADS
COME UNDONE	JOYRIDE	RHYTHM NATION	THE ONE
DO ANYTHING	JUMP	ROAM	TOM'S DINER
EVERY HEARTBEAT	LITHIUM	ROMANTIC	TORN
FREAK ME	LOSER	RUN AWAY	VOGUE
GLYCERINE	MACARENA	RUSH RUSH	WICKED GAME
HAZARD	MMMBOP	SCAR TISSUE	WONDER
HEARTBREAKER	MOVE THIS	SENSITIVITY	YOU LEARN
HEY LOVER	MR. WENDAL	SHOOP	

Yesterday's Solution

Fourth Of July



BALD EAGLE	CONCERTS	HOLIDAY	PATRIOTIC
BALLOONS	DECORATIONS	HOT DOGS	PHILADELPHIA
BARBECUE	DEMOCRACY	INDEPENDENCE	PICNIC
BASEBALL	FIREWORKS	JOHN ADAMS	RED WHITE BLUE
BEN FRANKLIN	FLAG	LIBERTY	STARS AND STRIPES
BETSY ROSS	FLOATS	NATIONAL ANTHEM	STREAMERS
CAKE	FREEDOM	NATIONHOOD	THOMAS JEFFERSON
CARNIVAL	GREAT BRITAIN	PARADE	USA
CELEBRATION	HAMBURGERS	PARTY	WHITE HOUSE
COLONIES	HISTORY		

The hidden quote is: THOSE WHO DENY FREEDOM TO OTHERS, DESERVE IT NOT FOR THEMSELVES

Daily SuDoku

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

very hard

Yesterday's Solution

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

medium

For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322

PHARMACIES
ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan	Fahaeel Makka St	23915883
	Abu Halaifa	Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd	23715414
	Danat Al-Sultan	Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1	24575518
	Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 92	24566622
Capital	Ahlam	Fahad Al-Salem St	22436184
	Khaldiya Coop	Khaldiya Coop	24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa	Farwaniya Block 40	24734000
	Ferdous Coop	Ferdous Coop	24881201
	Modern Safwan	Old Kheitan Block 11	24726638
Hawally	Tariq	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St	25726265
	Hana	Salmiya-Amman St	25647075
	Ikhlas	Hawally-Beirut St	22625999
	Hawally & Rawdha	Hawally & Rawdha Coop	22564549
	Ghadeer	Jabriya-Block 1A	25340559
	Kindy	Jabriya-Block 3B	25326554
	Ibn Al-Nafis	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St	25721264
	Mishrif Coop	Mishrif Coop	25380581
	Salwa Coop	Salwa Coop	25628241

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

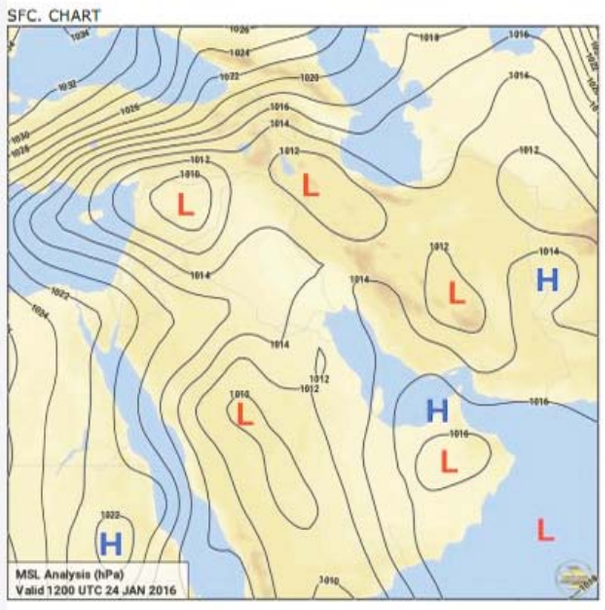
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours
Issued 24/01/2016-19:00 LT UTC +3hr

MIN Temperature 11 °C

By Night : Partly cloudy with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 35 km/h with a chance for scattered rain

By Day : Mostly sunny with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 35 km/h

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Expected Weather	Mostly sunny	sunny + scattered clouds latter on	cloudy + scattered thunderstorms	sunny + raising dust
Min Temp °C	11	07	04	03
Max Temp °C	20	18	15	13
Wind Direction	north westerly	north westerly to light variable	north westerly	north westerly
Wind Speed km/h	12 - 35	08 - 30	20 - 40	20 - 45

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches
no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C EXP	Max °C REC
KUWAIT CITY	13	23
KUWAIT AIRPORT	11	25
ABDALY	10	22
BUBYAN	12	18
JAHRA	10	25
FAILAKA ISLAND	14	21
SALMIYAH	12	18
AHMADI	13	19
JAL ALIYAH	11	22
QAROH ISLAND	15	20
UMM AL-MARADEM	14	20
NUWAISIB	12	26
WAFRA	10	26
MANAGISH	09	23
SALMY	10	20
MUTRIBA	09	21

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	20
Min Temp (°C)	11
Max Rel Hum (%)	92
Min Rel Hum (%)	37
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	39 SE
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	.45 mm

Sunrise	06:41
Sunset	17:20

Prayer Times

Fajr	05:19
Sunrise	06:41
Zuhr	12:00
Asr	14:59
Sunset	17:20
Isha	18:40

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
Antiga	001268	Malaysia	0060
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	Nigar	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	San Marino	00378
Falkland Islands	00500	Sao Tone	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		

PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists

Dr. Abidallah 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-Daaory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426

General Practitioners

Dr. Mohamme Y Majidi	24555050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhazeem	23926920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abidallah Al-Refae	25333501

Urologists

Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abidallah 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

DrAdrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s.Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliytami	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 Maaroof	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. Abidallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdallateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abidallah 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 Abidallah 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. Musaed Faraj Khamees	22666288

Rheumatologists:

Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290

Internist, Chest & Heart

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PGA Awards: 'The Big Short' wins Top Movie Award

This photo provided by Paramount Pictures shows, Jeremy Strong, from left, Rafe Spall, Hamish Linklater, Steve Carell, Jeffry Griffin and Ryan Gosling in the film, "The Big Short." — AP

In this file image released by Paramount Pictures, Christian Bale appears in a scene from "The Big Short.-AP photos

The fifth season of HBO's "Game of Thrones" has won the Norman Felton Award for top drama series from the Producers Guild of America. Amy Winehouse documentary "Amy" won for top documentary for James Gay-Rees. "Amy," the front-runner for the Oscar, topped "The Hunting Ground," "The Look of Silence," "Meru" and "Something Better to Come."

Disney-Pixar's "Inside Out" won the award for top animated movie for producer Jonas Rivera. "Inside Out," which delved inside the mind of an 11-year-old girl and became a surprise hit with worldwide grosses of $856 million, topped "Anomalisa," "The Good Dinosaur" and "The Peanuts Movie."

"We set out to make a movie that spoke to us as parents," Rivera said in his acceptance speech. The second season of FX's "Fargo" won the David L Wolper Award for long-form television for the second year in a row. Producer Noah Hawley noted in his acceptance that the season had been a challenge because "The Revenant" had the snow makers in Calgary tied up. The first season of "Transparent" won the Danny Thomas Award for top comedy series. Amazon's transgender skein won the award for producers Jill Soloway, Andrea Sperling, Victor Hsu, Nisha Ganatra, Rick Rosenthal and Bridget Bedard. It topped "Modern Family," "Inside Amy Shumer," "Silicon Valley" and "Veep"; "Orange Is the New Black" won the award last year. Winners of the 27th Producers Guild of America Awards were announced Saturday night at the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles. "Last Week with John Oliver" won the Live Entertainment and Talk Television award. NBC's "The Voice" took the competition TV award for the second year in a row. "The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst" won the non-fiction TV award.

Lady Gaga dazzled the audience with her performance of "Til It Happens to You" as part of the introduction to "The Hunting Ground" winning the Stanley Kramer Award. The song, co-written with Diane Warren, is up for the Oscar for Best Original Song. The theatrical motion picture and television nominees are as follows (winners in boldface):

The Darryl F Zanuck Award for Outstanding Producer of Theatrical Motion Pictures:

1- The Big Short: Producers: Brad Pitt & Dede Gardner, Jeremy Kleiner

2- Game of Thrones: Norman Felton Award for Outstanding Producer of Episodic Television, Drama

3- Inside Out: Award for Outstanding Producer of Animated Theatrical Motion Pictures

4- Amy: Award for Outstanding Producer of Documentary Theatrical Motion Pictures

5- Fargo (Season 2): David L. Wolper Award for Outstanding Producer of Long-Form Television

6- Transparent (Season 1): Danny Thomas Award for Outstanding Producer of Episodic Television, Comedy

7- The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst: Award for Outstanding Producer of Non-Fiction Television

8- The Voice: Award for Outstanding Producer of Competition Television

9- Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (Season 2): Award for Outstanding Producer of Live Entertainment & Talk Television

10- Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel: Award for Outstanding Sports Program

11- Sesame Street: Award for Outstanding Children's Program

12- Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee: Award for Outstanding Digital Series. — Reuters

'Morris from America' is a vibrant, fresh coming-of-age tale

Morris from America" isn't your typical coming of age story. The film, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival on Friday, focuses on a pair of Americans - a widowed father and son - living in Heidelberg, Germany. The father coaches a soccer team. The 13-year-old son, Morris, is trying to learn the language and make some actual friends. And, to make matters even more trying, they are essentially the only black people in town.

The result is delightful. In "Morris From America," Chad Hartigan, who came to Sundance previously with "This Is Martin Bonner," avoids both the clichès and banalities of this tired genre and has instead made something entirely fresh. This big-hearted film about that strange time in life when adolescents dip their toes into reckless teenager-dom is not to be missed. Stars Craig Robinson (Curtis) and newcomer Markees Christmas (Morris) bring Hartigan's vibrant story and script to life with their effortless chemistry and nuanced performances.

Curtis isn't a run-of-the-mill father, and Morris isn't the prototypical rebellious youth either. They are profane, they are sentimental, they are difficult - they are fully drawn characters with complexities, contradictions and all. Morris isn't having a great time in Germany until his sweet tutor (Carla Juri) suggests he hang out at a youth center to try to make friends. It doesn't go very well - one kid gives him a hard time, while the others mostly ignore him. But he does become attached to a beautiful, troubled 15-year-old girl, Katrin (Lina Keller, an ethereal, beguiling Julie Delpy-type), who lets him tag along with her on her increasingly defiant exploits.

The film never goes exactly where you'd expect, and Hartigan and his lovely cast keep the energy up and the scenes moving throughout, whether it's just a language lesson or an awkward talent show. Hartigan also imbues the film with gorgeous cinematic flair that's always interesting, if not always completely coherent within the language of the film. For example, in one scene, Morris is listening to a hip-hop song while touring a castle and everyone (even the stained glass windows and sculptures) bob their heads along with it. This surreal moment is strangely affecting, but it's an odd one off, too. — AP

From left, actors Carla Juri, Craig Robinson, and Markees Christmas pose with filmmaker Chad Hartigan for a portrait to promote the film, "Morris From America", at the Toyota Mirai Music Lodge during the Sundance Film Festival on Friday. - — AP photos

Chris Rock still hosting Oscars

Chris Rock is still on board to host the Oscars this year despite calls for him to join the boycott protesting the Academy's lack of diversity. Variety had first reported Friday that sources said Rock would remain as host of the ceremony. Academy Awards producer Reginald Hudlin told Entertainment Tonight at Saturday's NAACP Image Awards lunch that Rock's opening monologue will address the #OscarsSoWhite conversation in a big way. Rock reportedly reworked his entire set of jokes when such figures as Jada Pinkett Smith and Will Smith announced they would be boycotting the ceremony.

"Chris is hard at work. He and his writing staff locked themselves in a room," Hudlin told ET. "As things got a little provocative and exciting, he said, 'I'm throwing out the show I wrote and writing a new show.'" He added, "Chris is that thorough. He's that brilliant, and I have 1000 percent confidence that he will deliver something that people will be talking about for weeks." Hudlin indicated that he and his team are prepared for Rock to make some controversial statements.

"And, yes, the Academy is ready for him to do that," Hudlin said. "They're excited about him doing that. They know that's what we need. They know that's what the public wants, and we deliver what the people want." Confirmation of Rock's hosting duties come on the heels of the Academy's Friday announcement that it would overhaul its membership in order to promote diversity, aiming to double its number of female and minority members by the year 2020. — Reuters

In this file photo, Chris Rock appears onstage at Comedy Central's "Night of Too Many Stars: America Comes Together for Autism Programs" at the Beacon Theatre in New York. — AP

Sundance film review: Ellen Page in 'Tallulah'

Ellen Page lands her best starring vehicle since "Juno" in "Tallulah," a very different story of a young woman coming to terms with the idea of being a mother. The feature-length scripting-directing debut of "Orange Is the New Black" staff writer Sian Heder offers juicy roles not only to Page but also to Allison Janney and Tammy Blanchard, in a strong showcase of female talent both behind and in front of the camera. Netflix acquired SVOD rights prior to the pic's premiere in competition at Sundance, but Heder's compassionate, audience-friendly dramedy deserves a shot in theaters, too.

Vagabond Tallulah (Page) lives out of her van and drifts from city to city with no ties to anyone or anything, except her boyfriend, Nico (Evan Jonigkeit), and that's just the way she likes it. When Nico surprises her one night by suggesting they go back to his hometown in New York and maybe settle down or start a family, she flips out. The next morning Nico is gone, and a penniless Tallulah, who goes by "Lu," makes her way to New York City anyway and barges into the fancy apartment building of Nico's mother, Margo (Janney).

Extramarital hook-up

Dealing with issues of her own-stemming from Nico's two-year long absence and her ex-husband (John Benjamin Hickey) coming out of the closet and asking for a divorce-Margo slams her door in Lu's face, despite the young woman's connection to her missing son. Wandering into a swanky hotel to scavenge for room service scraps, Lu is mistaken for a maid by spacy trophy wife Carolyn (Blanchard), who is desperately looking for anyone to babysit her 1-year-old daughter, Madison (Evangeline and Liliana Ellis), while she tries to score an extramarital hook-up.

Seduced partly by the wads of cash and jewelry Carolyn leaves lying around, and partly by Madison's obvious need for a responsible caretaker (the toddler roams around diaperless, peering out the balcony window and grabbing at bottles of drinks), Lu stays and Carolyn bolts. When a drunk and defeated Carolyn returns hours later and promptly passes out on the bed, Lu can't bring herself to leave a wailing Madison alone and makes a rash decision to bring her into the van overnight. The next morning Carolyn wakes up in a panic and by the time Lu arrives to hand Madison over, the police are already on the scene and Lu makes another rash decision to take off with Madison in tow.

With nowhere else to go, she winds up back on Margo's doorstep-this time telling her Madison is Nico's child. Margo reluctantly lets Lu into her home, and even more reluctantly into her life. Meanwhile, Carolyn hopes to prevent her husband (Fredric Lehne) from finding out what happened, which makes both the lead detective (David Zayas) and child protection agent (Uzo Aduba) assigned to the case dubious of her motives. One woman's coincidences are another woman's contrivances, and Heder's script likely won't please those who prefer their indie dramas naturalistic and event-free. But the freewheeling storytelling enacted here has an excellent anchor in the grounded work of the ensemble cast. Even Lu's initially inexplicable actions in holding onto Madison become more understandable as the film progresses, and Heder does a commendable job of opening up the characters' backstories without over-analyzing their behavior.

Physical comedy

Page is simply superb in a complex role that perfectly plays to her gift for balancing deadpan comedy with surprisingly deep emotional reserves. And while she was a sterling support opposite Page in "Juno," Janney rises here nearly to the level of co-lead as an uptight control freak whose desire to cling to her family only serves to push them away. The film could probably do without a half-baked subplot involving Margo's relationship with her doorman (Felix Solis), but even in that digression Janney nails the physical comedy and pathos of a woman looking to make a connection.

Reliable character actress Blanchard is perhaps the biggest revelation, playing Carolyn at first as a spot-on parody of a certain kind of real housewife of self-absorption, but gradually peeling back her layers-in collaboration with Heder-to reveal the wounded woman underneath. The men on hand are asked to do more with less, and Jonigkeit sells Nico's love for Lu with only a handful of scenes. — Reuters

Actress Allison Janney, left, and director and writer Sian Heder, right, pick up and swing actress Ellen Page, center, as they pose at the premiere of "Tallulah" during the 2016 Sundance Film Festival .— AP

DeVito shines in Solondz's dark, twisted 'Wiener-Dog'

Cast and filmmakers of "Wiener-Dog" pose at the premiere during the 2016 Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. — AP

Imagine Danny DeVito walking down the street with a dachshund bedecked in a yellow polka-dot dress. To be clear, the dachshund is wearing the dress, not DeVito. In any other film, it would be an obvious joke. But this is a Todd Solondz movie, and, thus nothing plays out as you might expect. Everything in "Wiener-Dog" is both funny and tragic, heartbreakingly sincere and laced with stomach-knotting cynicism, and it's perfect. The film, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival on Friday, was said to be a sort of spiritual sequel to Solondz's "Welcome to the Dollhouse," but Solondz warned before the Festival that those looking for a sequel might be "a little disappointed."

Indeed, though "Welcome to the Dollhouse's" Dawn Wiener does reappear for a segment (played this time by Greta Gerwig, not Heather Matarazzo), "Weiner-Dog" is not a sequel by any means. It's a series of loosely connected vignettes following a toffee-colored dachshund around from owner to owner. There's the young only child of a wealthy, unhappy family (Tracy Letts and Julie Delpy), there's a grown Dawn Wiener who goes on a road trip with an old classmate (Kieran Culkin), there's a depressive screenwriter/professor (DeVito), and there's an elderly grump (Ellen Burstyn) and her troubled granddaughter (Zosia Mamet). — AP

Lee lauds academy changes, still plans to skip Oscars

Spike Lee applauds the Academy for making changes to increase diversity in its ranks, but he is still skipping the Oscars. "We have principles," Lee said in an interview with The Associated Press. "I commend the Academy for what they've done. But that does not change our mind. The Knicks will be victorious - I hope. I'll be at the Garden." After last week's Oscar nominations revealed an all-white slate of acting nominees for the second consecutive year, Lee said he would skip the Feb. 28 Academy Awards and go to the Knicks game instead.

"My wife and I will be in my courtside seats," he said. Still, he praised Academy president Cheryl Boone Isaacs and the organization's board of governors for "trying to do the right thing." The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced Friday that it would double the number of its female and minority members by 2020 and implemented other changes aimed at increasing diversity among the largely white and male organization. Lee thinks the changes could help: "It's a start." The filmmaker is at the Sundance Film Festival this week to premiere his new documentary, "Michael Jackson's Journey from Motown to 'Off the Wall.'" —AP

This image provided by courtesy of the Sundance Institute and Optimum Productions shows director Spike Lee whose documentary film, "Michael Jackson's Journey from Motown to Off the Wall," is included among the documentaries premiering at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. — AP

Paris catwalks

rediscover their cavalier swagger

Hold onto your horses. French fashion is back to its swashbuckling best and the designer leading the charge is a young mixed-race man determined to give post-attacks Paris a new swagger. "I want to make all men feel like princes again," Olivier Rousteing declared Saturday after his dashing, unashamedly masculine show for Balmain. Not since the days of the Charge of the Light Brigade has there been such an onrush of braid, breeches and boots. Rousteing's models were not the pallid sexless automatons of so many shows.

Instead, they were dashing hussars and Cossack officers you half expected would pull cavalry swords from their gorgeous scarlet and leather cummerbunds as they thundered through a Parisian mansion. Half of them looked like they had come straight from the ball the night before

Waterloo in their silk and velvet breeches, with big brass-buttoned greatcoats thrown on their shoulders, and fur and tassels flying.

'Bring back the dream'

"Paris is the City of Light and those lights should continue to shine," the 30-year-old designer, a favorite of pop divas Beyonce and Rihanna, told AFP. "I want to bring back the dream and beauty that is Paris... and make all men feel like princes again. "I want to show the diversity and colors of France and to show that Paris has a past, a present and it will have a future," he added. Rousteing, who was adopted by his white parents when he was one year old, said his show was an ode to the racial and cultural diversity of the French capital.

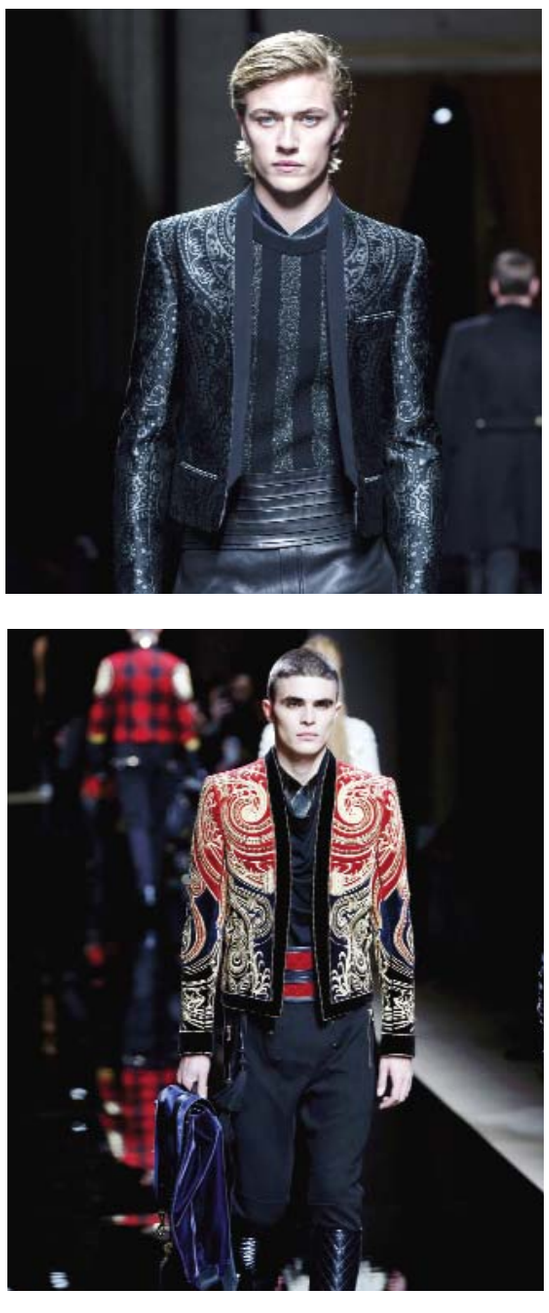
A symphony orchestra, playing live to a hip-hop soundtrack, provided the musical tone. "Mixing Kanye West and Rihanna with a symphony orchestra is my universe. I am French in a French fashion house with a couture tradition which also has a very international influence. That for me is Paris-it is that internationalism and the richness of the mixing of cultures. This singular eagerness to embrace a diversity of cultures and ideas... enrages intolerant minds both here and abroad," he said. An Internet darling, with 2.1 million Instagram followers, Rousteing has become a reference for stars as diverse as Jane Fonda and Nicki Minaj, who even rapped on the venerable couture brand's name as sales have soared.

'Selfie-made man'

Rousteing's high-cheekboned good looks, social media savvy and friendships with stars such as West and his wife Kim Kardashian has led to him being called a "selfie-made man"-a joke he appears to delight in. Earlier in the day there was a similar defiance against giving in to fear after the November massacres from Dior's Kris Van Assche.

Although much of his collection was in black, it was not the black of mourning, he insisted."The events mean that we have to be stronger to make people dream. The darkness is so omnipresent that as a

Models present creations by Givenchy



designer who have to go further. You need more power and strength," he told AFP. "In fact I like the idea of darkness pushing creativity," he said, echoing the sombre luxuriance of Dries Van Noten stand-out line, and fellow Belgian creator Walter Van Beirendonck, whose show was simply called "Woest", which means furious in Flemish. Paris-based label Etudes-whose studio is near the Bataclan concert hall were 90 people died in November's attacks-seemed almost to be on a war footing in their Saturday show, with a collection largely comprised of military-inspired and camouflage outfits, fighter pilot fatigues and parachute suits.

There was a similar ready-for-anything air in newcomers OAMC, whose nifty high-end functional streetwear is also created only a few blocks away and is replete with the spirit of Parisian resistance. But if you were looking for a sign that "Paris will always be Paris", look no further than the Hermes show on Saturday night. All the elements of ineffable casual French style were there, the discreet charm of the bourgeoisie personified. Only that dried-blood red, a color that crops up across the collections like a wound, would lead you to believe that anything untoward had happened.

Bondage hits the runway at Paris Fashion Week

The odd-couple mix of bondage and big sizes collided on the Paris catwalk Friday, in clothing that was at once roomy and adorned with nude women who were tied up tight. Japanese label Christian Dada-in its first official appearance on a Paris Fashion Week runway-showed off models in ballooning stovepipe trousers and oversized overcoats, some with belts as wide as a copy of Vogue. The bondage crept in with the image of a nude kneeling woman-hands bound together behind her back-printed onto some of the spacious coats paraded on the catwalk to the echoing sound of a beating heart.

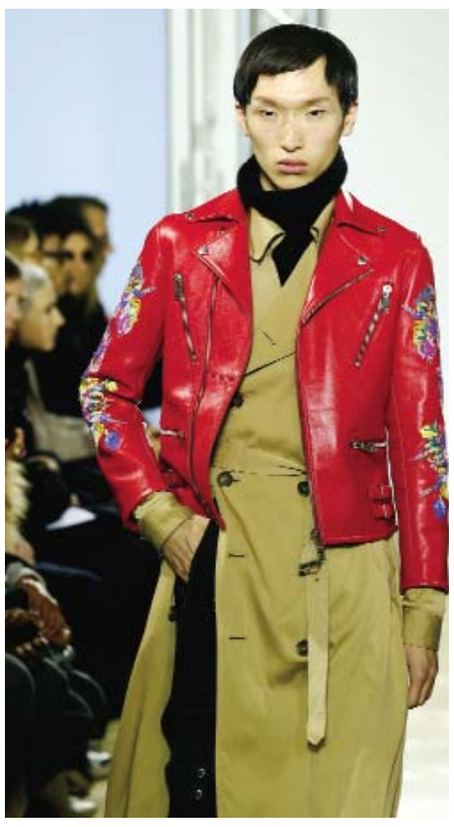
The risque theme did not stop there, with designer Masanori Morikawa saying he sprinkled the autumn and winter collection with embroidered flowers and elephants to represent male and female naughty bits. "This collection is about tying, like everything, like belts, like buckles, like bondage," Morikawa told AFP after the show, which was inspired by controversial Japanese photographer Nobuyoshi Araki. "I'm really mixing his iconic things and my iconic things." Founded in 2010, Christian Dada-a mashup of Christian Dior and the anarchic art movement-is known for an edgy, rock n' roll influence on its designs, which have included chain mail t-shirts and studded shoes.

Cerruti stays chic

Cerruti's new star designer, American-born Jason Basmajian, sent a serious, subdued collection onto the catwalk that was certain not to offend house founder-Nino Cerruti. High-end materials-cashmere, silk and sheep skin-formed the basis for the somber-coloured collection that deviated little from standard suit and coat cuts. "I imag-

Models present creations by Balmain, during the men's Fashion Week 2016-2017 Fall/Winter collection in Paris. —AP/AFP photos

French fashion designer Olivier Rousteing acknowledges the audience at the end of the Balmain show.



Models wear creation for Christian Dada fashion house's men Fall-Winter 2016-2017 fashion collection.

ined a luxurious, masculine chic, but without pretension, a subtle collection with a focus on the cut and a choice of top-of-the-line materials," Basmajian told AFP. "Working for this international house, with Italian roots and based in Paris, allows me to take advantage of all my past experiences. Ahead of his arrival at Cerruti last year, Basmajian had worked at Calvin Klein, Donna Karan, ST Dupont and Brioni before taking his talents to legendary British tailor Gieves & Hawkes.

Dior: Kraftwerk cool

Van Assche said he took his new dark-and-dangerous-to-know look-a big departure from the bright and flowery colors of his previous more "bourgeois" collection-from a mix of eighties New Wave music, the Berlin of electronic pop pioneers Kraftwerk and skateboard culture. In case you didn't get those influences, WestBam's "You Need The Drugs" was playing as guests were led into the show's set, the world's blingiest skate park lit by a huge red chandelier and ramps edged with red neon. With long sleeves that almost become mittens, Dior has mostly resisted that baggy giganticism that has been seen a lot elsewhere in Paris this week.

Van Assche did however combine big baggy belted trousers with Scandinavian knit jumpers and hoodies, although most of the trousers with his more tailored pieces were short and close-fitting to showcase red-laced shoes. "I am distancing myself from Christian Dior," the designer told AFP before the show. "We wanted to be radically 2016-2017. There is a younger, more fashion, perhaps less middle-class edge about this collection that is not at all nostalgic." "It is good to have certain references, but we mustn't abandon ourselves to that nostalgia, it won't get us very far," he said. His last collection full of the white rose Dior motif was "particularly colorful for me", he said.

Black as night

"After that I wanted to do the opposite, to do black, the night, Berlin, a collection with a very different tone." And it seemed to go down well with his celebrity guests. Korean K-pop star T.O.P said he "loved it" while Chinese movie heartthrob Yang Yang was equally taken. "It's great," he said. Van Assche denied, however, that the collection's heavy reliance on black and other sombre colors was a reflection of the mood in Paris after the terror attacks.

"I have never found that black was about darkness. I think there is a lot of beauty and romanticism in it," he said. Earlier the Paris-based label Etudes-whose studio is near the Bataclan concert hall were 90 people died in November's attacks — seemed almost to be on a war footing, with a collection largely comprised of military-inspired and camouflage outfits, fighter pilot fatigues and parachute suits. — AFP

Models present creations by Cerruti.

Models wear creations as part of Dior men's Fall-Winter 2016-2017 fashion collection.

Kuwait Times
Lifestyle
MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 2016

PGA Awards: 'The Big Short' wins Top Movie Award
36

A woman wearing Indonesian dress takes part in a fashion shoot in the Tsim Sha Tsui district of Hong Kong yesterday. Indonesian and Filipino women were taking part in a fashion show on one of the cruise ships docked at Ocean Terminal in Hong Kong. — AFP

Virtual reality experience highlight of new Dali Museum show

Visitors to a new exhibition at The Dali Museum in St Petersburg, Florida, won't just be looking at art. Thanks to virtual reality, they'll be exploring a Dali painting in a dreamy, three-dimensional world that turns art appreciation into an unforgettable, immersive experience. The new exhibition, "Disney and Dali: Architects of the Imagination," tells the story of the relationship between Salvador Dali, the surrealist artist, and Walt Disney, the great American animator and theme-park pioneer.

But the museum exhibition's highlight comes after visitors have seen the Disney-Dali show's paintings, story sketches, correspondence, photos and other artifacts. As visitors leave the exhibition area, they'll be invited to don a headset to try the virtual reality experience. Called "Dreams of Dali," the VR experience takes viewers inside Dali's 1935 painting "Archeological Reminiscence of Millet's 'Angelus.'" The painting depicts two towering stone figures along with tiny human figures in a bare landscape with a moody sky.

Stone tunnel

Users can move around inside the painting, using Oculus Rift headsets to navigate a trippy three-dimensional environment that includes motifs from other Dali works like elephants, birds, ants and his "Lobster Telephone" sculpture. Accompanied by a haunting piano soundtrack punctuated by bird cries, the VR visuals also include a crescent moon, a stone tunnel and even an image of rocker Alice Cooper, whom Dali featured in a hologram he created in 1973. "You actually have a three-dimensional feeling that you're inside a painting," said Jeff Goodby, whose firm Goodby Silverstein & Partners created the VR experience. "It's not just like you're inside a sphere with things being projected. It's actually like there are objects closer and further away and you're walking amidst them. It's a vulnerable feeling you give yourself up to. It's not like anything you've ever felt before." The VR experience was previewed in New York for the media 10 days before its opening Saturday at the Florida museum.

Disney and Dali met in the 1940s in Hollywood, according to museum director Hank Hine. "Their sensibilities were very connected," Hine said. "They wanted to take art off the palette, out of the canvas and into the world." The exhibition looks at the castle motif that became a symbol of Disney parks, along with Dali's "Dream of Venus" pavilion from the 1939 World's Fair, which some consider a precursor of contemporary installation art.

Surrealist work

Disney and Dali also collaborated on a short animated movie, "Destino," that was eventually completed by Disney Studios. The six-minute movie, which can be found on YouTube, features a dancing girl with long dark hair, a sundial motif and a song with the line, "You came along out of a dream. ... You are my destino." Clips will be played within the gallery for the Disney-Dali exhibition and the full short will be shown at the museum's theater. The show also displays the Dali painting that inspired the VR experience, "Archeological Reminiscence of Millet's 'Angelus.'" The surrealist work was Dali's interpretation of a 19th-century painting by Jean-Francois Millet depicting two peasants in a field, heads bowed in prayer. Dali said that his work was a "fantasy during which I imagined sculptures of the two figures in Millet's 'Angelus' carved out of the highest rocks."

Museum marketing director Kathy Greif said record numbers of visitors attended its last two major shows exploring Dali's relationships with Andy Warhol and Pablo Picasso. Given the Disney brand's immense popularity and the VR novelty, attendance expectations for this show are high as well. Dali "wanted art that took you over," said Goodbye. "He wanted to take you away and do something different with your head and that's what this does."

If you go...

Disney and Dali: Exhibition through June 12 at the Dali Museum, One Dali Blvd, St Petersburg, Florida; http://www.thedali.org or 727-823-3767. Open daily 10 am -5:30 pm and Thursdays until 8 pm Adults, $24; discounts for seniors, military, students, children. — AP

This image provided by The Dali Museum in St Petersburg, Fla, shows a 1957 photo of artist Salvador Dali and Walt Disney by the beach in Spain. — AP photos

This image provided by The Dali Museum in St Petersburg, Fla, shows artist Salvador Dali's surrealist painting, "Archeological Reminiscence of Millet's 'Angelus.'

This Jan 14, 2016 photo shows Skift.com reporter Dan Peltier using an Oculus Rift headset as he tries out a virtual reality experience presented by The Dali Museum at a preview in New York.

A one-of-a-kind ice sculpture, carved from 300-pound blocks of solid ice, are on display as part of the Ice Magic Festival in Lake Louise. — AP

Furniture from JFK's Florida home fetches $400,000 at auction

Furnishings from late US president John F Kennedy's winter retreat in Palm Beach, Florida sold Saturday for some $400,000, an auction house said. Leslie Hindman Auctioneers sold furniture and decorative arts from the famed "Winter White House" with best-selling items including twin beds and a massage table. "Popular items include a pair of Venetian style walnut twin beds where the future president slept alongside his brother Joe, and later (first lady) Jackie Kennedy" Hindman said in a statement, adding that the beds sold for $20,000.

"The walnut framed massage table where the president took massages to relieve his back pain sold for $10,625," it said. "A pair of green faux leather chairs from the bedroom where John F. Kennedy stayed sold for $6,250." The auction was conducted simultaneously online and at the Hindman Palm Beach showroom. The collection of Kennedy paraphernalia was consigned by John and Marianne Castle, a couple who purchased the home and much of its contents from the Kennedy family in 1995.

The walled, beachfront Kennedy estate in Palm Beach and its contents had been sold to the Castles after the death of family matriarch Rose Kennedy in 1995. JFK as a child vacationed at the mansion, and spent a great deal of time there after being elected president in 1960, holding staff meetings and numerous press conferences. — AFP