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ANTI-EXPAT SENTIMENTS ON THE RISE INTERIOR PLANS TO RAISE FINES AND FEES

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior plans to ask the next National Assembly to approve decisions to increase charges of Ministry services as a whole and on residency services in particular, the head of the Residency Department said yesterday. Director of the General Department for Residence Affairs Major General Talal Maarafi also said that the Ministry plans to double the overstay fine from the current KD 2 per day to KD 4 for residence violators.

Maarafi did not provide further details on the type of charges the ministry plans to raise and whether the KD 600 ceiling fine for residence violators will be also increased. Currently, foreigners who overstay their residence permits are required to pay a fine of KD 2 per day up to a maximum ceiling of KD 600 regardless of the duration. He did not explain if the overstay fine for visitors will also be raised. The fine for visitors who overstay is KD 10 per day with a ceiling not exceeding

KD 1,000. Maarafi said other decisions include toughening penalties on those who provide shelter or work to absconding foreign workers and also on those workers themselves.

The official also said that the residence department has started implementing the recent increase in the salary cap required by expatriates to be able to sponsor their wives and children which was raised from KD 250 to KD 450. He said the measure is primarily aimed at reducing the number of so-called "marginal" or unskilled foreign workforce. He also said that the ministry will introduce new measures with the aim to further cut the number of unskilled laborers.

At present, Kuwait is home to 1.3 million native citizens and around 3 million foreigners, a majority of them Asians with close to a record-breaking 1 million Indians. There are over 650,000 domestic helpers, a majority of them female, among the expatriates. Maarafi regretted that this important issue has escaped the attention of a majority of candidates in the November 26 snap polls.



KUWAIT: Suspected visa violators are detained in this file photo as Ministry of Interior intensifies crackdown on illegals. — MOI

Kuwait has witnessed a significant rise in anti-expat, anti-foreigner sentiment in recent years, with many social problems

include excessive traffic, youth unemployment and other issues often blamed on the country's foreign population.

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PHOTO OF THE DAY



Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi, a symbol of Islamic architecture. — Photo by Mustafa Albader / KUNA

Local Spotlight

PROSTITUTION AND SOCIAL MEDIA



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Two Romanian prostitutes were arrested in Mahboula last week. The news of the arrests itself is not new or surprising, or even the fact that European women come to Kuwait for this type of work. It has happened before and there are even stricter measures for unmarried women to receive visit visas due to such occurrences in the past. But who helped these women to come to Kuwait? And were they arrested as well?

According to local authorities, detectives were monitoring videos on social media showing the two women offering their services around the world. The two later arrived in Kuwait, and I would assume they were either invited or made a deal to come and meet people here. An undercover agent was asked to strike a deal with them and they agreed to receive KD 200 each per hour. The two were then arrested in a flat in Mahboula. The women admitted offering to have sex with men for money, and were transferred to the deportation center.

Now the police have all the names and information about the clients of these two women. Reports suggest it was to inform them should the women be found to carry infectious diseases and illnesses, but why weren't the men paying prostitutes for sex also arrested? Both the women and men know that prostitution is prohibited and punishable by law in Muslim Arab countries. The women want to make some money, while the men want an hour or two of pleasure. Neither care about the law. Worse, the men ignore the probability that these women might have infectious diseases. It's disgusting, but true.

And we have no idea if this phenomenon is getting worse or more frequent. Is prostitution growing more common in Kuwait, not only by foreign women coming on visit visas, but also in brothels already established here illegally? Arab societies tend to condemn and deny such acts, but this doesn't mean they don't take place.

It is a societal and security problem that threatens the safety of the community. The process of raising awareness and warnings must reach everyone, and border posts should not be lenient over the entry of foreign women without having a contract of employment or family members in the country, for example. Let's be clear about it - we are not a touristic destination.

The great influence of social media on our youth needs to be reviewed, because the youth can easily be victimized by communicating with people they do not know. This issue may be local, but it's a global concern too. Even in the West, young girls or teenagers fall victim on social networks to unknown persons, dragged into a vortex of human trafficking, sexual slavery or drugs that sometimes ends their young lives. We need to raise awareness about the dangers of social networking with faceless people, whether men or women.

IN MY VIEW

ARE OUR IDEALS IDEAL?

By Nejouad Al-Yagout

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Love can slice us open, until we find nothing there: no beliefs, no separation, even no you and me. And, paradoxically, in this nothingness, everything, everyone is welcome.

For as long as we pledge allegiance to a nation, an ideology, a race, a gender, we are excluding others. And love never excludes, so the only way to choose love is to be love. A love that accepts all. A love that encourages everyone to grow into who or what they were meant to be. A love that allows us to question, to doubt, to believe, to renounce, to profess, to ponder, to thrive. To be, without being spoon-fed.

Sometimes, letting go of all we have learned is the hardest thing to do, but there is no other way around it. Our minds will build up fortresses of defense, claiming that others who share our beliefs are not practicing it the right way, though we inherently know that there is no room for misinterpretation when it comes to love and inclusiveness. We either love everyone or have hearts that are partially closed. And let us admit that we have not found a path that has completely opened our hearts as yet. This will naturally arise when we are willing to evolve. Each and every one of us. As individuals. As unique souls.

Let us look at the news and the wars around us being fought in the name of our beliefs. Let us take a closer look at the antagonism toward those who do not conform and the way we impose our ideals on others. Let us

ask ourselves truthfully: Are our ideals ideal?

We need to ponder for ourselves and witness the world around us. Or more importantly, let us observe the state of our inner world that continues to hold onto our truth alone at the expense of others. Can our truth sustain everyone? If not, there is something inherently unfair about it. And when life is unfair, when we are unfair to each other, this is when disease is allowed to grow and love is repressed. This is why we are so sick. Sometimes, we do not even know how sick we are because we share the same views with so many others. But as Jiddu Krishnamurti wisely stated: It is no sign of health to be well-adjusted to a profoundly sick society.

And when we realize, when we allow ourselves to face our own perversion, our own sickness, our own darkness, we begin to recover from the collective madness through unconditional love. Love is not conditional on the way we behave, what we wear, who we love, how we worship, what we say and do. This is the beauty of awakening. We give ourselves permission to outgrow what we once perceived was the only truth. And until we know this, we will continue to love others conditionally, and will continue to judge and feel judged. We will continue to kill those we were taught to fear. We will divide the world into us and them and continue to prosecute those who we perceive as threats to our shaky foundations. Is it not time to heal? We can do this. You and me. Together. With our hearts.

Our minds have made a mess of everything, so it is time to let go and welcome nothingness into our lives. The only thing keeping us from liberation is fear, but love is stronger, way stronger, than fear. And love can only guide us when we are open, empty. The time is now. Now.

Nejouad Al Yagout - Photo by Djinane Alsuwayeh






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A Wonderful World

TRAFFIC JAMS EMERGE AS ELECTION DAY APPROACHES



By Oqab Al-Qoubaa

KUWAIT: As the polling day for the upcoming parliamentary elections 2016 on November 26th approached, signs of traffic jams across the five constituencies start to emerge. The candidates are now entering the heated phase to lure a big number of voters, thus, causing unwanted traffic jams in areas where candidates' headquarters are situated. Though many candidates use valet parking services, large

gatherings of crowds are still causing traffic congestion and overparking in some areas.

And with the transformation of the country into an electoral carnival, the Interior Ministry has set up a plan ahead of the elections aimed at increasing awareness on safety measures, as well as the necessity to ease traffic jams, whereas Kuwait Municipality has urged all candidates to ensure adequate parking space at their electoral headquarters. — Kuna

OBITUARY

Mrs Anita Suresh, wife of well-known Indian cardiologist at Mubarak Al Kabir hospital and prominent community member Dr C. G. Suresh passed away in Kuwait on Wednesday. She was under treatment for the past few months. She was 49 years old.



Mrs Anita Suresh hailing from Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala was working with Kuwait University. The couple have two daughters Dr. Aswathi (UK) and Dr. Revathi (Amruta Medical College, Cochin).

The mortal remains will be taken to Kerala on Friday evening and will be available to pay last homage at Sabah mortuary on Friday morning from 10 AM to 11 AM.





A restaurant in Salmiya offers free food as charity. The sign in Arabic reads: Those who cannot pay may take the food for free. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

Free lunch: RESTAURANT IN SALMIYA FEEDS THE POOR FREELY

'If you can't pay for the food, take it for free'

By Nawara Fattahova

There's a saying that there's no such thing as free lunch. But at a restaurant in Salmiya, lunch is free and so too is dinner for those who can't afford it. Wadi Rum, a small restaurant that opened four years ago near Marina Mall, offers charity in the way of meals for free for people in need. Customers entering the restaurant see a very unusual sign, which reads in Arabic: 'If you can't pay for the food, take it for free'.

"Since the restaurant opened on November 3, 2012, the owner Jalal Bader decided to offer this option as charity. We know there are poor people who are not able to afford a meal every day, so he decided to let them enjoy the food even if they are not able to pay for it," Renald, manager of Wadi Rum, told Kuwait Times.

Around 10 people benefit from this daily. "There are regulars who come daily to take their meal, and some even come twice a day - for lunch and dinner. Others are first-timers, usually laborers or cleaners who work nearby. Some of them take meals with them for their needy friends who couldn't come with them," he explained.

It seems the offer of free food is hard to resist. Even those who clearly aren't destitute take advantage of the charity. "Many a time, we have people asking for free food although they seem to be in a good financial situation, with expensive mobiles or watches. But the owner has told us to give them the food if they claim they can't pay. Also, children and youngsters come daily, and some think it's a joke, but we also give them free food," explained Renald. The sign for free food elicits another type of response too. "Some customers who see the sign and the poor people taking the food offer to give us donations as a way to support us in what we do, but we don't accept any charity," he added.

Wadi Rum is open from noon until 2am. "We offer a

limited selection of food. We have chicken and meat shawarma and mansaf, which is a Jordanian meal consisting of rice and lamb served with a special kind of yogurt. The majority of those who take the free meal choose mansaf, as many of them are Jordanian and Arab nationals," Renald pointed out.

The restaurant's shawarma cones are of a very large size, which is unique. "The huge size of our shawarma cone attracts people to come and take photos of it. We usually make two cones of chicken and one of meat daily. If anything remains at the end of the day, we distribute it

to workers near Marina Mall," he said.

There's another saying that what goes around comes around, and Renald believes this good act brings success to the business. "I came to Kuwait nine years ago and worked in various restaurants, but this is the place where I have stayed the longest, as I'm satisfied here. This restaurant has been operating for more than four years now very successfully, while the previous restaurants kept going bust in short periods. I assume it's from giving," he concluded.



THE IMPACT OF REMOVING HIJAB

By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

The Kuwaiti society is an open one, yet still very conservative too. One of the demonstrations of this contradiction is seen in women who wear the abaya - a black outer full-length garment - in Kuwait, while dressing in colorful clothes when they travel. Another paradox that people fear to talk about publicly is how they respect women who have never worn a hijab, but harshly judge those who used to wear it and later decide to take it off. The response, especially from family, can sometimes reach even to the point of domestic violence.

Piety is not linked with a specific outfit in Islam, as women and girls of all ages - veiled or unveiled - can be found filling mosque halls to pray on time. Based on the stories of the women in this article, religiosity is not a major reason to wear the hijab, as all of them ended up wearing it due to social and peer pressure. Some people in their life convinced them to wear it to gain their blessing. The fear of rejection, the need for security and a constant search for acceptance and appreciation also played a part.

Media and perception

In fact, Kuwaiti soap operas have contributed greatly to shaping a unified image of veiled women, where the actress who plays a veiled girl is usually a committed and respectable woman, or a wise old grandmother. Promoting this stereotype in the media has magnified social norms and led to maintaining the "pure" image of veiled women.

Maysa, 35-year-old former hijabi, said she was very concerned about her mother, who's very conservative and God-fearing. "She did not understand the process of thought that guides individuals to something other than the religion she loves and believed in, no questions asked. She was the most affected. For her, taking off my hijab meant leaving Islam and being someone else. She thought that I would stop praying and start doing bad things," she said.

"With time, she realized that I am myself - nothing changes except the freedom of my hair. My dad went with the flow, telling my mom that I am a grown woman now, not her child, and have the right to live my life the way I desire. Other family members, acquaintances and colleagues gossiped and talked about it for a while, then they found something more interesting to talk about. The novelty faded and I won back myself," Maysa



'This is an unislamic abay', be careful, you're a preserved diamond, and it will be a huge regret when you enter into the darkness of grave'. These comments are painted on electric substations in some residential areas of Kuwait. — Photos by Athoob Al-Shuaibi

Piety is not linked with a specific outfit in Islam, as women and girls of all ages - veiled or unveiled - can be found filling mosque halls to pray on time.

explained.

When 40-year-old Taiba tried to take off her hijab, she suffered from physical violence by her mother. "When my mother found out that I used to take my hijab off before going to work, she beat me all over my body, and there were bruises everywhere. I was in my 20s. My brother was more understanding and believed in the freedom of choice, but he didn't want to upset her. So he suggested I take it off after she dies. I took it off a few years after her death," she said.

Parents and the hijab

Fear and respect of parents is ingrained in Islamic teachings, which pairs parents' satisfaction

with the consent of God. Some parents abuse this power to enslave their children to obey decisions they don't want for themselves. So some daughters wait until they find an open-minded person to marry.

Fatima, 33, tells her story: "What matters the most is my family. My father, I guess, till this moment, is not happy about my choice. I had to take his permission for taking off the hijab and he did not agree. So I waited two years to get married, then I didn't need his approval. The workplace and society was fine with it because I was more myself. I couldn't pray when I was forced to wear it. Now, my spirituality is healed and I have a better relationship with God," she said.

Hind, a 30-year-old teacher, grew up in a profoundly religious family, and faced many conflicts with her family and most of her relatives, who no longer talk to her. "I wore the hijab when I was six years old. I only removed it two years ago. However, I'm the same girl who's been brought up on ideals and morality, and have not changed. My students are teenagers, which makes me careful to not mangle the image of the hijab in front of them. When they ask, my answer is usually that the veil should be taken up after understanding its responsibilities, with conviction and choice of self. Sticking to it or giving it up entails great consequences," said Hind, who doesn't want her personal experience to bear on her students' decisions.

The role of education, as stated by Dr Ghadeer Aseeri, a specialist in social policy, is vital. "Wearing the hijab must be well thought out objectively, taking into account individual differences, to teach what the veil is and the obligations to wear it. I'm not against wearing the hijab. But, the decision to wear it should be taken mindfully, so girls don't suffer psychological problems later. Some of them resort to marriage to get rid of it, away from parental authority. The society is less harsh in treating those who take it off after they marry. According to many people, she's free to do anything as long as she's under the shade of her husband," added Aseeri.

"There's a great injustice that society heaps on a woman who leaves the hijab. They look at her with disgrace and contempt as if she is committing a crime. However, I'm betting on change. The future of the Kuwaiti society is a part of a moral force of social change that occurs in all parts of the world. Overall, the social punishment for those who took off their hijab at the turn of the century was much tougher than those who only decided to take it off a week ago. Like it or not, society will change," Dr Aseeri believes.

"It's time to bring a law to protect the rights of girls to wear the hijab contentedly or to take it off freely. Also, we demand to monitor the wearing of the hijab by young children to make sure that the practice is far from intimidation. We are a nation of laws, and we call for a law to regulate these things to shelter the freedoms of individuals from all forms of intellectual repression," Dr Aseeri added.

It's worth remembering that in the first article of the election law issued in 2005, women have to conform to the rules and provisions of Islamic sharia, which indicates gender inequality.

NOTE: Names of the women who shared their stories have been changed to preserve their privacy.



'Thrill, false delight, then punishment'.



T'ranslation: Sister, you are like a preserved Pearl'.

CANDIDATES SPEAK



KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti man shows a leaflet as he attends a campaign meeting of candidate Ghadeer Aseri in Kuwait City on November 16, 2016, ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat/Kuwait Times



Candidate Ghadeer Aseri speaks during a campaign meeting in Kuwait City on November 16, 2016.

EDUCATION, FREEDOM AND CHANGE

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: As part of the coverage of the 2016 parliamentary elections, Kuwait Times is interviewing candidates and attending symposiums to hear their views on challenges facing Kuwait. Dr. Ghadeer Aseri, candidate of the first district held a symposium on Wednesday at the Radisson Blu Hotel. She focused her talk on the issues of education and general freedom in Kuwait.

"The society can be changed through changing the laws. We should have laws that respect people. We need to open our country and to have more freedom. This is related to all issues in our life including discrimination in the university, freedom of speech, and even the

freedom to wear what we see suitable. I consider it ridiculous not to be able to enter a health club at night just because I'm a woman," Dr. Ghadeer Aseri said during the symposium.

According to her Kuwait should be a civil country. "We need to respect Article 30 of the Kuwaiti Constitution that respects our freedoms. We should all be able to live in harmony in one society and our minds should be open to respect each other," she pointed out. "Our demands are simple but we can make a change. The simple demands can bring freedom. We need to have the freedom to listen to music of any style or kind. Everybody in this country should have the freedom of religion and beliefs. With more tolerance we will improve our daily life and the country as

whole," added Aseri.

On her vision

Dr. Aseri has three major issues that she plans to work on if she is elected to the parliament: Changing civil law, youth and change, and women's rights in Kuwait. "Change needs power, which comes from the people so they should choose right candidates," she said.

On education

"The average age of Kuwaitis is 29 years old, while the average age in Europe is 42 years. So the majority of our society are young people, and we need to improve our youth to have more qualified individuals in the future. The correct education is necessary for future generations,"

she stated. "We can change the community through the education and I can also change the attitude of individuals. I have long term plans as I don't aim to make a change for just four years when I will be an MP, thus to set a law to change the community for the next 20 or 30 years," highlighted Aseri.

"I aim to change the curriculum, the system of education, the quality of teachers. Many Kuwaitis register their children in private schools, as they think they should invest in their children. They believe how important the education is for the future of their kids. Today children play with iPads and smart phone, which are considered toys today. This is globalization and we have to move with it, so I have to fix some policies to apply with this development," she concluded.

EX-LAWMAKER DR ABDULLAH AL-TREIJI SPEAKS OUT AGAINST CORRUPTION, SECURITY THREATS

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Former MP and candidate in the first district Dr. Abdullah Al-Treiji held a symposium for female voters at the Regency Hotel on Wednesday. Al-Treiji focused on security issues facing Kuwait including concerns about threats posed by regional instability and neighbors as well as problems of corruption domestically.

According to Al-Treiji, Iran represents a systematic threat to Kuwait's security. "The arrested members of the 'Abdali Cell' who stored huge quantity of weapons in a farm admitted they are convinced of what they do and that they have relation with Iran. Our region is in danger and many events took place since 1979 from the Iran-Iraq war, Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Arab Spring, and the latest is the Yemeni conflict," he said during the symposium.

Economic challenges

"After 50 years we are going backwards instead of developing. This was caused by the corruption and wrong acts taken by the government. When the government decided to

increase the price of electricity I was against this decision. Then last August the government issued the fuel price increase and I also rejected it from the first day. The government then issued the grant of 75 liters of fuel for citizens which I also refused as it was humiliating decision," explained Al-Treiji.

Corruption

"After the scandal of the Dow Chemical Company which caused losses of billions to public money, other corruption was unveiled. It was distribution of agricultural properties for farms. There were tens or maybe hundreds of forgery cases, in which the persons who got the license for a farm registered more names with them for other lands through false claims and all were registered for the Amiri Diwan. Fortunately I succeeded with other MPs to report these cases to the prosecutor general before the parliament was dissolved, as this is stealing of Kuwait property," he noted.

Other corruption. "The Olympic Asian Council is an example of other corruption. The owner only pays a rent of KD 20 per year for the whole building, while he is making a revenue of KD 12 million per year. I also worked



KUWAIT: Women voters gather to hear candidate and ex-MP Dr Abdullah Al-Treiji — Photo by Yasser Al Zayyat

hard on this case with other MPs to withdraw it from the owner and correct this great corruption," stressed Al-Treiji.

He denied being sectarian or talking about religious issues. "It's true that I banned some religious sheikhs from entering Kuwait, thus these

only were the extremists who were insulting 'Shaba' (friends of Prophet Mohammed PBUH). I also spoke about some spies working as staff at the Iranian embassy even before we discovered the Abdali Cell. All these issues are part of state's security," he concluded.

BOOK FAIR HIGHLIGHTS LATE AMIR'S REIGN

KUWAIT: The 41st Kuwait international book fair organized Wednesday a special lecture on the reign His Highness late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The lecture, entitled "Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad .. A Home March", recalled the late Amir's major accomplishments throughout his political life, beginning with his role as former senior state official, and his reign as the Amir of Kuwait, from 1977 to 2006, that shaped and developed Kuwait's economic and political status on regional and international arenas.

Kuwait National Library's General Manager Kamel Al-Abduljaleel hosted the event, which was lectured by Dr Benayan Turki, a history professor at Kuwait University, and Dr Nada Al-Mutawa, a political science and economy researcher, and a specialist in strategic affairs. The late Amir had key and direct role in the humanitarian and philanthropic action inside and outside Kuwait, aiding the poor and needy people from all over the world, Al-Abduljaleel said at the lecture's opening speech.

Turki highlighted Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad's

most important philanthropic actions, in which, as a result, he was chosen as the Philanthropic Personality of the year 1995, pointing out that the late Amir was the founder of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED). In several UN General Assembly speeches, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad called for international efforts to repay debts of poor and developing countries, particularly the African ones. The initiatives came out of his love and passion for charitable actions and philanthropic initiatives that also aimed at narrowing the gap between the rich and poor, he noted.

Meanwhile, Al-Mutawa pointed out the late Amir's charismatic personality that was admired by a large number of leaders and key figures around the world, noting that these qualities helped Kuwait to become a member in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), the United Nations (UN) in 1962, when Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad was the country's finance minister.

Due to his long financial expertise, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad was also an instrumental fac-



tor in establishing and organizing the banking system in Kuwait as a tool to manage the financial affairs in the country, she noted, adding that he was also the founding father of the Future Generation Reserve Fund. Al-

Mutawa also pointed out the late Amir's direct supervision of Kuwait's foreign investments and Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) before becoming the country's Prime Minister. — KUNA



KUWAIT SPONSORS 'THE WAR TO FREE KUWAIT' EXHIBITION IN US

NEW YORK: A new Kuwait-funded exhibition opened at the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh, honoring those who served and sacrificed to liberate Kuwait in 1990-1991. The exhibition, that will run through January 15, 2017, titled "The First Gulf War: The War to Free Kuwait," is funded by the Kuwaiti Government to honor the 75,000 men and women, and their units, stationed in North Carolina, who served and sacrificed to liberate Kuwait.

The exhibition features eight informational panels, filled with photographs, recounting the conflict that began when

Saddam Hussein of Iraq attacked Kuwait on August 2, 1990. The resulting conflict became known as the Gulf War of 1990-1991, when the US led the most diverse coalition of nations in recent history in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm to oust Iraqi forces that had invaded Kuwait. The First Gulf War exhibition highlights Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, weapons of the Gulf War, and the liberation of Kuwait. The North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Secretary Susan Kluttz expressed in a press release that she is proud to take every opportunity to

"acknowledge and thank the members of our military."

"It is important to remember that our freedom is due to the men and women who have sacrificed, and continue to sacrifice, for us every day," she added. On behalf of the NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Secretary Cornell Wilson, said this travelling exhibit is a unique way to highlight North Carolina's many contributions to the Gulf War, where over 75,000 service members contributed 45 percent of the combat power to Operation Desert Storm. "We look forward to this multi-agency effort educating the public as this memorial travels across the state," he added. The exhibit recognizes numerous units from North Carolina that played important roles in Gulf War. These range from Fort Bragg to Seymour Johnson Air Force Base to Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, along with several National Guard and Reserve facilities. The final panel of the exhibit is titled "The Cost of War," where it acknowledges 17 service members from North Carolina who gave the ultimate sacrifice. Each year more than 300,000 people visit the museum to see some of the 150,000 artifacts in the museum collection. —KUNA

WELLS (JLEEB) - AN ESSENTIAL PART OF TRADITIONAL KUWAITI HOUSES

KUWAIT: Back in the old days, the process of acquiring water in Kuwait was not as easy as opening a tap or buying a bottle. In the past, before pipelines existed, Kuwaitis used to dig wells (jleeb) in their houses to provide a steady source of water for the dwellers. Speaking on the matter, Researcher Saleh Al-Methen said that the extracted water used to taste a bit

salty due to the proximity of the houses to the sea. He added that the water was used for cleaning utensils and clothes in addition to other purposes. The maintenance and cleaning of the wells were handled by people with specific set of skills, said the researcher, adding that some wells were also located near mosques for worshippers to perform ablution. — KUNA

News

in brief

Kuwait envoy presides over 5th UNCAC session

VIENNA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria and its permanent envoy to international organizations Sadiq Marafi chaired the fifth session of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) yesterday. The two-day meeting is expected to yield reviews of previous suggestions and decisions made during the sixth UNCAC Conference held in the Russian city of Saint Petersburg last November, the Kuwaiti diplomat said. Moreover, he revealed that Kuwait is presiding over such a monumental meeting for the first time - an achievement he described as the latest in a spate of diplomatic accolades. By virtue of his victory in UNCAC Asian elections in November 2015, Marafi holds the position of Deputy Head of the UNCAC conference.

Kuwait to head MENA 'Financial Task Force'

DOHA: Kuwait will head the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF) in 2017, said Chairman of the Kuwaiti Financial Intelligence Unit (KWFIU) and President of the National Committee for Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism, Talal Al-Sayegh yesterday. On the sidelines of the 24th meeting of the MENAFATF, which began on November 12, Al-Sayegh said that Kuwait is keen on carrying out the efforts to prevent organized crime and terrorism from flourishing in the MENA region and the world. He added that Kuwait will launch a study during its presidency to evaluate MENAFATF members' commitment to proposals and decisions made by the task force. Kuwait is keen on forwarding and supporting MENAFATF agenda on the global scene, said Al-Sayegh, adding that all members of the task force will be given equal opportunities to provide their vital inputs to the organization.

Kuwait's Amal team spreads hope amongst Benin people

COTONOU: Kuwait's Amal team (part of the Direct Aid Society) continues to spread hope while carrying out relief aid operations in the West African nation of Benin. In 2008, the team erected the Amal (hope) center in the town of Bobe, a two-hour rough drive from the capital Cotonou. The center provides educational and health services in addition to handing out rations and other necessities. Head of the Amal center Abdulaziz Bin Al-Sheikh said that they were contributing to the development of education in Bobe, revealing that graduates of their facility were heavily sought by the job market. Many of the towns dwellers have held respectively jobs due to the involvement of the center, said the official, adding that they have hired 77 employees to help run the Amal center.



'ARABIAN GULF SECURITY 1'

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Deputy Premier, Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said he is proud of the efforts of the Kuwait security force that is participating in the joint mobilization exercise "Arabian Gulf Security 1" and the efficiency and professionalism it showed, beside a distinguished level of cooperation and coordination with the Gulf security forces. He said the participation of Gulf security forces in this exercise which is the first of its kind

sends a decisive message to everyone that the six member states of the GCC are brought together by common goals. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid thanked the Kingdom of Bahrain for hosting the exercise.

Suspect, sergeant charged

Relations and Security Information at the Interior Ministry said concerned authorities have charged suspect Khalifa Ali Al-Athby of illegal entry to the country hours after his arrival at the Kuwait Airport, and being able to leave the VIP

hall with the help of a bedoon named Hazza Mijbel who works for the Defense Ministry as a sergeant. The sergeant was also arrested. The Interior Ministry took legal action against the uniformed man and charged him accordingly.

Public Cleanliness campaign

Municipality Public Relations Department said the Public Cleanliness Department carried out field campaigns - targeting abandoned and scrap vehicles in Hawally governorate. 125 vehicles and 5 boats were removed.

Crime

Report

MAID ACCUSED OF STEALING

KUWAIT: A citizen accused her maid of stealing jewelry worth KD 5000. She told police that she received a call from her son that a cupboard was broken - then she discovered that the jewelry was missing. The Asian maid later confessed to the theft.

A fake detective

Abu Halaifa detectives have arrested a citizen who confessed to committing several robberies. A security source said an Asian complained that someone stopped him - claiming to be a detective, so he told him to talk to his sponsor. The man pulled a knife and attempted to stab him. The victim escaped after noting the license plate number. The rented car was found later and the suspect was identified and arrested.

Prisoner escaped

Detectives are looking for a prisoner who escaped from the Psychiatric hospital under mysterious circumstances.

Illicit substances

Farwaniya police have arrested an Indian couple who sell Indian "Mood Moasel". Police found 1250 bags of the illicit substance in their possession. The arrest was made by patrol officers who referred them to concerned authorities for prosecution. In another development, Ahmadi police arrested an Indian for trading locally made liquor in Mahboula area. They found 62 bottles with him.

Pornographic videos

An Asian sold a Juvenile a CD that contained pornographic videos, and gave him his phone number in case he wants more. The Juvenile's father noticed that his son is always playing with his computer, and demanded to see what he was watching. Five minutes later, pornographic scenes came up, so he closed the computer and went to police. Detectives are looking for the suspect.

Marijuana sent by mail

Customs officers foiled an attempt to smuggle 8 kg of Marijuana by a mail parcel. The parcel was addressed to a courier company from India, with a claim that it contains homemade food items. Investigations are underway to find out who imported it. —Al Anbaa, Al Rai.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN HEATS UP

By B Izzak, Agencies

KUWAIT: Around 360 hopefuls remain committed to the polls with just two days left for candidates to pull out of the election race. They do not include the 47 candidates barred by the election committee and some of whom have already been re-instated by courts. Former Islamist opposition MP Bader Al-

Dahoum yesterday received a clearance from the Appeals Court to remain in the race after the court rejected a government objection against a ruling allowing him to run.

Former MP Safa Al-Hashem and new candidates Mane Al-Ajmi and Khaled Al-Mutairi were among those re-instated. Former Shiite MP Abdulhameed Dashti and Shiite lawyer Hani Hussein were

among several candidates whose ban was supported by the court. The election campaign meanwhile heated up with opposition figures announcing they will not vote for Marzouq Al-Ghanem to become a speaker for a fresh term. Former Islamist MP Nayef Al-Merdas yesterday said he will vote for former opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri as the next assembly speaker if they get elected.

BRITISH-KUWAITI FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY HOLDS BOOK AWARD

LONDON: The British-Kuwaiti Friendship Society yesterday held its annual award ceremony for the best English books on Middle Eastern studies, sponsored by the Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Foundation. The ceremony was held in Kuwait's embassy in London, with a bevy of Arab and foreign academics and diplomats from the UK and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in attendance. Moreover, Kuwait's Ambassador to the UK Khaled Al-Duwaisan noted that 20 years have elapsed since the inception of this "highly prestigious" award, thanking Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah for his support. He also underscored culture and arts as an integral component that links vast religions and cultures together, adding that this ceremony is solid affirmation of close ties enjoyed by Kuwait and the UK.

Meanwhile, representative of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak said that this ceremony has proved to be instrumental in the development of relations between both nations, by bringing Middle Eastern affairs to the limelight. On the books displayed at the ceremony, he said they run the gamut from humanitarian and social studies to scientific and

anthropological ones, adding that this ceremony aims to bring the Middle East and Arab world closer together. The award for the best book of the year went to Christian Lange's "Islamic

Traditions in Hell and Paradise," while the second best book was Bauer Karen's "Gender Hierarchy in the Quran." Samin Nadav's "Of Soil or Sand" won the award for third best book. — KUNA



Kuwait's Ambassador to the UK Khaled Al-Duwaisan poses for a group photo with other officials during the ceremony

International

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Iraq forces move on two airports in Mosul battle

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Clinton urges backers to 'never give up'

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Modi crackdown hits rivals' campaign coffers

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RAQA, Syria: A commander of the Kurdish female Women's Protection Units (YPJ) speaks in the village of Tuwaylaa, just outside the city of Raqa, yesterday. The YPJ are female brigades fighting alongside male fighters of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the militia alliance supported by the United States in the offensive launched to capture Raqa from IS jihadists. — AFP

SYRIA AIR STRIKES KILL 25 IN ALEPPO

TURKEY ARRESTS 2 CZECHS WHO 'FOUGHT FOR SYRIA KURDISH MILITIA'

BEIRUT: Syrian air strikes and shelling killed 25 civilians in eastern districts of Aleppo yesterday, a monitor said, on the third day of a wide-ranging regime assault on rebel-held areas. The bombardment hit at least six rebel-held neighborhoods, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said. At least 65 civilians have been killed in east Aleppo since the start of the regime offensive on Tuesday, the Observatory said.

The renewed bombardment has shattered a month of relative calm in the devastated east of the divided northern city. An AFP correspondent in the eastern districts said the sounds of dropping barrel bombs had been heard since 10 am (0800 GMT).

One of the air strikes targeted a civil defense centre in the Bab Al-Nayrab neighborhood with no reported casualties, the correspondent said. Once Syria's economic powerhouse, Aleppo has been roughly divided into a regime-controlled west and a rebel-held east since 2012.

The city has been ravaged by a civil war that has killed more than 300,000 people since it started in March 2011 with anti-government protests.

Turkey arrests

Meanwhile, Turkey has arrested two Czech nationals on suspicion of fighting for the Syrian Kurdish Peoples' Protection Units (YPG), seen as a terror group by Ankara but an ally by Washington, a Czech official and Turkish reports said yesterday.

Turkish security forces detained the man and woman-Miroslav Farkas and Marketa Vselichova-in the southeastern Sirnak province that borders Syria and Iraq, the pro-government Sabah daily said.

It said this was the first time Turkey has detained foreigners suspected of working with the YPG. In Prague, the Czech foreign ministry confirmed the arrest of the pair, saying they had been detained while crossing the border from Iraq into Turkey.

"The police seized documentation from them mentioning the YPG group," ministry spokeswoman Michaela Lagronova told AFP. "They were interrogated by the prosecutor and accused of belonging to the YPG." She said the Czech authorities had first become aware of their arrest on November 13 and the pair were now jailed in Sirnak city. — AFP

BOLLYWOOD ACTRESS ATTACKED IN PARIS

PARIS: Bollywood actress Mallika Sherawat was punched in the face and sprayed with tear gas by masked attackers in an upmarket area of Paris, police said yesterday. The 40-year-old star and her partner were attacked by three masked men who tried to steal her handbag.

The couple told police the men had ambushed them in the lobby of the apartment building where they were staying in the chic 16th arrondissement of the French capital on November 11.

The incident comes just weeks after US reality TV star Kim Kardashian was attacked in Paris in a robbery in which a masked gang stole jewellery worth more than \$10 million (9.3 million euros). However, investigators said they were mystified that although the attackers had tried to take Sherawat's handbag, they had fled empty-handed. "We cannot understand why the attackers fled without taking anything," a source in the investigation told AFP.

Sherawat, whose real name is Reema

Lambha, came to prominence from 2004 thanks to a raunchy film that helped bust taboos around sex in the conservative Indian film industry. She is well-known for her role in the film "Murder" and also starred in Jackie Chan's "The Myth" in 2005. She is also a women's rights activist and caused controversy with comments about how Indian society is "regressive and depressive" because of how it treats women. — AFP



Bollywood actress Mallika Sherawat

IN BATTERED TOWN SEIZED FROM IS, IRAQ'S YAZIDIS DREAM OF RETURN

BASHIQA, Iraq: For the first time since Islamic State militants swept into Bashiqa two years ago forcing him to flee, 61-year-old Barakat has finally found work - on Sunday he will be coming back to help clear debris from the destruction wrought upon his home town.

He and others who have been living in exile gathered in the town on Wednesday, just over a week after Kurdish peshmerga forces drove the jihadists out. Yazidi, Christian and Muslim former neighbours and old friends kissed and greeted each other. But it will be a long time before they can move back for good.

Homes have been flattened by bombardment, shopfronts and garages gutted, burnt and looted, and black patches from mortar explosions scorch the ground along the main road. Bashiqa's residents fled in different directions and at different speeds when the militants took over in 2014 after sweeping into Iraq from Syria.

"We left immediately," said Bakar, a Yazidi like most people from the town. Islamic State has killed Muslims and non-Muslims alike, but has been particularly brutal with the Yazidi minority, whose beliefs combine elements of several religions. Thousands have been killed, captured and enslaved by the group in what the United Nations says is genocide.

Bakar said some Muslim inhabitants had stayed on for a while, but Christians and Yazidis knew exactly what their fate would be if they did not get out straight away. Those who were better off rented homes in other towns, and those without the means went to camps.

Bakar and his family still live in the northern city of Duhok. With most of Bashiqa destroyed and no services or supplies, they expect it will be a long exile. "We can begin to clean up this mess, but there's no point returning to live until there's electricity, water, and most importantly full security," he said on his first trip back, declining to give his full name in a sign of lingering concern. — Reuters

YEMEN'S REBELS SAY THEY BACK US-BROKERED TRUCE

SANAA: Amid more clashes yesterday in Yemen, the country's Shiite rebels confirmed their endorsement of a US-brokered cease-fire deal previously announced by US Secretary of State John Kerry.

However, the backing of the deal by Yemeni rebels, also known as Houthis, was a moot point since Yemen's internationally-recognized government has already dismissed the plan as "unilateral," saying it was not involved in recent talks between Kerry and a Houthi delegation in Oman.

On the ground, government forces expelled rebels from several districts in the western city of Taiz while an international rights group issued a damning report yesterday, criticizing the Houthis' detentions of political opponents. Human Rights Watch said the Shiite rebels have carried out hundreds of unlawful detentions and torture since capturing the country's capital, Sanaa. The New York-based group said it has documented two deaths in custody and 11 cases of alleged torture and abuses. HRW also called upon the Houthis in Sanaa to hold officials accountable and to release the detainees - without forcing them to sign false confessions of cooperating with a Saudi-led coalition that is waging a war to expel the Houthis from territory the rebels captured.

Sarah Leah Whitson, the Mideast director at Human Rights Watch, said the war between the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition "provides no justification for torture and 'disappearance' of perceived opponents." Houthis descended from their northern enclave in 2014 to take Sanaa and much of northern Yemen. The rebels forced President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi to flee the country and seek shelter in Saudi Arabia, which subsequently launched the intervention by mostly Gulf Arab states that has consisted mainly of a punishing air campaign.

The airstrikes, together with the ground fighting, have pushed the already impoverished nation to the brink of famine and displaced nearly three million people. The conflict has killed over 4,000 civilians. In his announcement, Kerry said the cease-fire was supposed to start yesterday and lead to the formation of a unity government before the end of the year. Mohammed Abdel-Salam, the Houthi spokesman, told Al-Masirah TV late on Wednesday that the rebels agreed to the deal. — AP



MOSUL: Army medics and volunteers attend to an influx of patients suffering a multitude of injuries at an Iraqi Special Forces 2nd division open air field clinic in the Samah neighborhood of Mosul yesterday. — AFP

IRAQ FORCES MOVE ON TWO AIRPORTS IN MOSUL BATTLE

BAGHDAD, KURDS AT ODDS OVER POST-MOSUL DIVISION OF TERRITORY

MOSUL: Iraqi forces piled pressure on the Islamic State group around Mosul yesterday, moving closer to cutting off the jihadists' escape route west to Syria and thrusting deeper into the east of the city.

Pro-government paramilitaries advancing on the town of Tal Afar, which commands the city's west approaches, entered its airport, while troops moving up from the south had the Mosul airport in their sights. Wounded civilians continued to stream out of the east of Mosul as government forces battled IS fighters on the streets.

The first casualties began arriving at a field clinic on the city's eastern edge after a mortar attack at around 11:00 am (0800 GMT), filling its nine blood-stained cots within minutes. Others were forced to sit on plastic chairs or lie on rugs in the dirt awaiting treatment. Mortar fire and bombs killed three children and wounded more than two dozen people yesterday morning alone, one of the clinic's staff, Hossam Al-Nuri, told AFP.

Medics zipped a white body bag around one of the dead, as a relative sobbed nearby. "We were waiting at home in Al-Samah to have lunch when the mortar round hit," said Hassan, who was wounded along with three of his brothers.

Lying on his side on a cot, Hassan frantically asked passing medics about his infant son Jassem, who was being treated nearby for wounds to his eyes.

Iraqi forces and civilians alike have paid a heavy price in the first month of the battle for Mosul, although casualty figures have not been released by the authorities.

Tightening noose

Hashed Al-Shaabi paramilitaries

allied to the government were battling IS fighters and looking for booby traps inside Tal Afar airport, the last major objective before the town itself.

"Daesh has planted bombs in large parts of Tal Afar airport and operations are under way to clear it completely," the Hashed Al-Shaabi said in a statement. Control of Tal Afar, some 50 kilometres (30 miles) from Mosul, would bring pro-government forces closer to surrounding IS in its last major Iraqi stronghold.

The city would be cut off from IS-controlled territory in Syria, where its de facto capital Raqa is also in the sights of US-backed forces. South of Mosul, advancing troops were nearing the city's airport.

An officer with elite interior ministry forces said a planned advance yesterday would bring them to within four kilometres (two and a half miles). Anti-IS fighters were also within striking distance of Mosul's northern neighborhoods while in the east elite counter-terrorism forces and army troops punching in from two directions were expected to join up despite stiff resistance.

Mass grave

Their strategy remains unclear, however, and Michael Knights of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy said it was hard to know whether the worst was yet to come. "We could be fighting through a hard crust with a soft inside, or it could be all hard," he said. Human Rights Watch issued a statement yesterday that included accounts by residents of the Hamam al-Alil area south of Mosul suggesting that a mass grave found there contains the bodies of former police killed by IS.

The grave was found outside the

town of Hamam Al-Alil on November 7 after troops overran it in their drive north. One witness told HRW that over two nights last month at least 230 people, some of them former police, were brought to the site and may have been executed there.

"This is another piece of evidence of the horrific mass murder by (IS) of former law enforcement officers in and around Mosul," said HRW deputy Middle East director Joe Stork.

According to the United Nations, nearly 60,000 people have been displaced since the offensive to retake Mosul was launched on October 17.

Division of territory

Iraq's premier and its Kurdish regional chief were publicly at odds yesterday over territorial control after the recapture of Mosul, even with the battle for the city far from over. The war against the Islamic State (IS) group to recapture Mosul, the jihadists' last main stronghold in Iraq, has seen the autonomous Kurdistan region gain or solidify control over swathes of disputed territory in northern Iraq. A long-running territorial row between Kurdistan and Baghdad has been overshadowed by the battle against IS, but with the end of largescale fighting against the jihadists in sight, it is again moving to the fore.

Kurdish leader Massud Barzani and Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi are giving vague but nonetheless differing interpretations of understandings on who will control territory in the Mosul area after the city is retaken. "We are in agreement with the United States on not withdrawing from the areas of Kurdistan," Barzani said during a visit to the recaptured town of Bashiqa on Wednesday. — Agencies



GAZA CITY: Palestinian women march on a street demonstrating and carrying signs reading in Arabic "Upright, walk" (C-F), "restore your youth by walking" (L), and "Let's walk" (R), calling for the rehabilitation of marginalized women in Gaza City yesterday. — AFP

HAMAS CLAMPS DOWN ON GAZA'S 'INSECURE' ISRAELI SIM CARDS

GAZA: Hamas-run authorities in Gaza are trying to stop the sale and distribution of pre-paid SIM cards from Israeli cellular providers, arguing the cards pose economic and security risks and allow users to access "immoral" content. Officials from the Palestinian telecommunications and interior ministries, which are overseen by Hamas, the Islamist group that controls Gaza, said there have always been restrictions on the use of Israeli SIMs in the territory, but now they are determined to stamp them out entirely.

Cards from Israel's two biggest providers, Cellcom and Partner, can be

found for sale under the counter in kiosks and shops in parts of Gaza, where they are brought in by businessman and traders returning from trips to Israel. "These companies are not registered in Palestinian areas and therefore we can't allow them to operate," Zeyad Al-Sheikh Deeb, director of licensing at the Gaza telecommunications ministry, told Reuters. "They represent an unfair competition to national companies and cause damage to our economy."

Partner Communications said it had no business activity in Gaza, pointing out that the pre-paid cards were

bought from independent distributors in Israel. Cellcom declined to comment.

Neither company operates in Gaza, where Palestinian firm Jawwal, owned by PalTel, runs the only network. But because Partner and Cellcom have towers just across the border in Israel, their 3G and 4G signals can be reached from parts of the territory that are closer to the frontier or on high ground.

Cellcom's signal is said to be more reliable, making its SIMs more popular. For 50 Israeli shekels (\$13), Gazans can pick up a SIM giving them 5,000 minutes of talk-time and potentially unlimited Internet access via a virtual private network. By comparison, a Jawwal SIM for the same price provides just 130 minutes of talk-time and more restricted Web access.

Vendors in the Palestinian enclave who stock Israeli cards said Hamas had been trying to crack down for years but had renewed its push. Those caught selling are threatened with "sanctions", they said. "We got a new warning," said one salesman in Gaza city, asking not to be identified for fear of repercussions. "Two weeks ago I got a police order not to sell Cellcom SIMs."

FREER ACCESS

Iyad Al-Bozom, spokesman for the interior ministry in Gaza, said Israeli cards presented a number of problems. As well as shifting users away from the Palestinian network, undercutting its revenue, they carry security risks, he said. "Conversations made via these cards can be stored on Israeli servers and used by the occupation," he told Reuters, referring to Israel's near 50-year-old occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Gaza remains blockaded by Israel 11 years after Israeli forces withdrew from the small coastal territory. — Reuters

ISRAEL PLANS TO REVIVE BID TO QUIET MOSQUE CALLS TO PRAYER

JERUSALEM: A controversial Israeli bill to limit the volume of calls to prayer at mosques may be revived after it appeared to have been buried thanks to opposition from ultra-Orthodox Jews, reports said yesterday. Health Minister Yaakov Litzman, from the ultra-Orthodox United Torah Judaism party, may now lift his objection to the bill if an exception can be included for Jewish rituals, the Jerusalem Post reported.

The minister had feared that the bill, approved by a government committee, would also limit sirens and trumpets used for Jewish holidays or the Sabbath, the weekly Jewish day of rest. "Discussions are ongoing," Litzman's spokesman told AFP. The lawmaker sponsoring the bill, Moti Yogev of the hardline Jewish Home party, says it is meant to target noise at night, which would exclude Jewish rituals.

According to the Jerusalem Post, Yogev also told Litzman as part of discussions to gain his support that depriving a person of sleep is considered theft in Jewish law "since it cannot be returned," in a reference to Muslim calls to prayer awakening residents.

If Litzman removes his objection, the bill could go before a government committee on Sunday and Israel's parliament for an initial reading as early as Wednesday. The proposal has outraged Palestinians and Arab Israelis, while government watchdogs call it a threat to religious freedom and an unnecessary provocation. The draft law would also apply to east Jerusalem, occupied and later annexed by Israel and where more than 300,000 Palestinians live. Israeli Jews living in settlements in the east of the city had protested against the volume of prayer calls. — AFP

ARMY ON RISE IN LIBYA'S EAST, SPURRING HOPES OF NORMAL LIFE

BENGHAZI, Libya: At Benghazi University, graduation pictures shot at a wrecked campus symbolize hope for a return to normality in the city after more than two years of war.

It is a war in which the eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA) has been slowly prevailing against a coalition of Islamists and former revolutionaries. Its commander, Khalifa Haftar, is gaining political influence, his popularity boosted by the army's advance. "We can't pursue our studies here but thanks to our army I've been able to return, if it wasn't for them I wouldn't be standing here," said Amal Al-Obeidi, a law graduate. "The situation will get back to normal and we hold great hope in our army."

But while the LNA's progress has brought relative calm to parts of Benghazi, continued clashes and bomb attacks have exposed the limits of the army's control and raised questions about its ambitions to dominate Libya's rival factions. While Obeidi spoke, the rumble of war could still be heard in the besieged district of Ganfouda, less than 2 km (1 mile) to the south. Residents across Benghazi struggle with deteriorating living conditions and critics are alarmed at the spread of military rule in the city where the 2011 uprising against Muammar Gaddafi began.

Haftar, a former Gaddafi ally who fell out with him and returned to Libya during the revolution, is the figurehead for one of two loose alliances that began fighting for power in 2014. His rivals in the Islamist-leaning Libya Dawn faction took Tripoli that year but later splintered and largely swung behind the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA), which moved to the capital in March.

Haftar and an eastern parliament and government that back him have refused to endorse the GNA, becoming more confident as the GNA has struggled. Two months ago, they gained new momentum when the Libyan National Army seized oil ports south-west of Benghazi from a GNA-aligned faction, fuelling speculation that Haftar had western Libya - and Tripoli - in his sights. Clashes in Benghazi have been contained to two or three areas. Some residents in the centre of the port city of 700,000 feel safe for the first time in years, remembering the bombings and assassinations that preceded the May 2014 launch of Haftar's Operation Dignity, his campaign against the Islamists, and the fighting that followed.

New measures include electronic traffic surveillance, car bomb detection squads and female police patrols. "We have brought security back in more than 90 percent of the city," said Saleh Huwaidi, head of Benghazi's security administration. "We're not denying that there are sleeper cells, but they aren't easily able to activate."

Such claims have been tested by recent events, however. In the past month two bomb attacks in Benghazi have struck prominent Haftar allies.

RENEWED CLASHES

Violence has flared between the LNA and its main opponent, the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council (BRSC). This week at least 20 LNA troops were killed when Haftar launched his latest offensive, which included air strikes over parts of the city. In Ganfouda, human rights groups estimate that more than 130 families have been trapped for months without access to fresh food by an LNA siege, though the army says it has offered them a chance to leave. When LNA air strikes have hit civilians, the army has accused its opponents of using human shields.

The LNA's real power can be hard to gauge. Supporters say training and organization have improved, but the army's strength depends on complex and shifting local alliances. Analysts attribute its breakthroughs in Benghazi against the BRSC and Islamic State partly to injections of material and intelligence support from Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and France.

Rumours swirl of counter attacks against the oil ports, Benghazi, and in the city of Derna, close to the Egyptian border, where the LNA is fighting a separate coalition and clashes resumed over recent days. Wissam Bin Hamid, a BRSC leader who along with others has sought refuge in Tripoli, told Al Jazeera this week that his group's goal remains "to secure Benghazi ... remove the intimidation against people who live with Haftar's militias, and allow the return of our displaced people and loved ones". — Reuters

FRENCH PM SAYS 'POSSIBLE' LE PEN COULD WIN IN 2017

TRUMP'S SHOCK VICTORY BOOSTS MOMENTUM: VALLS

BERLIN: French Prime Minister Manuel Valls warned yesterday that far-right leader Marine Le Pen had a chance of winning next year's presidential election, boosted by the momentum of Donald Trump's shock victory in the United States. "It's possible," Valls said in response to a question at an economic conference in Berlin on whether the candidate of France's anti-immigration National Front could win in light of the US upset.

"All the opinion polls have the candidate Marine Le Pen making it to the second round" of France's presidential race in May, the Socialist premier said.

"If she does make it to the second round, she will face either a candidate of the left or the right. This means that the balance of politics will change completely," he added, warning of "the danger presented by the extreme right". There is growing concern in France that the same wave of populist, anti-globalisation anger that carried Trump to the White House and saw Britons vote to leave the EU could hand Le Pen the keys to the Elysee Palace. "Of course there are risks in France, I am struck by the tone of the public debate," Valls said. But he stressed that there were differences between Trump and Le Pen, noting that the American billionaire was the candidate of a mainstream party even though his "speeches and proposals are worrying".

Valls is suspected of having presidential ambitions himself but has yet to officially throw his hat in the ring to go up against his party's deeply unpopular head of state Francois Hollande.

executive powers than the US commander-in-chief, including the authority to send the country to war without parliamentary approval. Polls currently show Le Pen making it past the first round to the May 7 run-off, where she is expected to face off against a conservative candidate from the centre-right.

While the country's two-round electoral system makes it difficult for outsiders to cause an upset, observers believe that the Trump and Brexit earthquakes have shown that old certainties can no longer be relied on. Le Pen, who is currently polling at around 25-28 per-

cent, has gleefully seized on Trump's win as proof that nothing is "set in stone".

Trump "made possible what had previously been presented as impossible," she said in a recent BBC interview. She was among the first European politicians to congratulate the Republican on his win last week and has praised his opposition to free trade, globalization and the "warlike interventions that are the source of the huge migratory waves that we are suffering".

In Berlin, Valls pleaded for a new approach to globalization to respond to the kind of

"anger" that led to the Brexit decision and the US election result.

"I am for a globalization that serves the people," he said. His comments echoed those of US President Barack Obama, who was also in Berlin yesterday as part of a European farewell tour aimed in part at reassuring allies about transatlantic ties under Trump.

In a speech in Athens on Wednesday, Obama acknowledged that globalization had fuelled a "sense of injustice" and needed a "course correction" to address growing inequality. — AFP



BERLIN: US President Barack Obama waves as he walks back to his hotel after visiting US Embassy in Berlin yesterday. Walking with Obama is Ambassador Jurgen Mertens (right), German Chief of Protocol. —AP

'Nothing set in stone'

The French will hold the first-round vote in April for a president who enjoys even greater

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CALIFORNIA JUDGE REJECTS CHARGES INVOLVING MAJOR ESCORT SITE

SACRAMENTO: A California judge has agreed to give the state attorney general's office more time to persuade him that the operators of what she called "the world's top online brothel" should face charges of pimping after he tentatively rejected them in a ruling.

California Attorney General Kamala Harris, who referred to Backpage.com as an online brothel, had charged Backpage.com CEO Carl Ferrer, 55, with pimping a minor, pimping and conspiracy to commit pimping. Lacey, 68, and Larkin, 67, both from Arizona, were charged with conspiracy to commit pimping.

Sacramento County Superior Court Judge Michael Bowman, however, said in a tentative ruling Wednesday that Harris lacked authority to bring the charges because the federal Communications Decency Act, as a way of promoting free speech, grants immunity to website operators for content posted by users. "Congress has spoken on this matter and it is for Congress, not this court, to revisit," Bowman wrote in his seven-page tentative ruling, emphasizing the sentence in bold type.

He agreed after a brief court hearing Wednesday not to make the ruling final, allowing time for the attorney general's office and defendants to submit briefs before releasing a final ruling by Dec. 9.

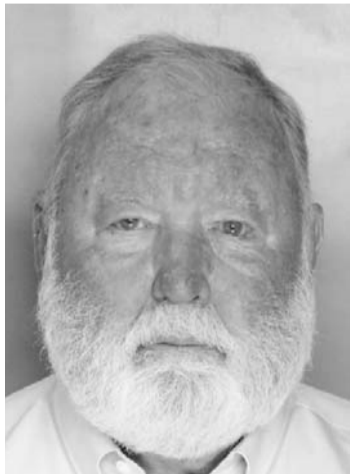
Eric Goldman, a professor at the Santa Clara University School of Law, said he was surprised by the initial charges because Harris was among 47 state attorneys general who asked Congress in 2013 to help change a provision of the Communications Decency Act that they acknowledged protected Backpage from prosecution.

If the judge upholds his tentative ruling and tosses out the charges, "it would be a pretty stinging rebuke of the attorney general's office," he said. Goldman said he wondered how Harris, known for being cautious, had brought a case her office knew was pre-empted by the law. "Why bring this crazy legal theory if they're proceeding so cautiously and then have it go nowhere?" Goldman said.

Arrest

Ferrer was arrested Oct. 6 at Houston's Bush Intercontinental Airport, having arrived from Amsterdam after his Dallas headquarters was raided. Harris, a Democrat who

was elected to the US Senate last week, alleged that more than 90 percent of Backpage revenue - millions of dollars each month - comes from adult escort ads that use coded language and nearly nude photos to offer sex for money. Bowman said that was not enough for criminal charges against the site's operators. "The victimization resulted from the third party's placement of the ad, not because (of) Backpage profiting from the ad placement," he wrote.



SACRAMENTO: This undated file photo provided by the Sacramento County Sheriff's office shows James Larkin.—AP

The section of the Communications Decency Act that applies to the case protects websites from content posted by third parties, said David

Greene, civil liberties director for the Electronic Frontier Foundation. It immunizes sites such as Yelp.com from being held accountable for scathing reviews left by customers or online news sites from vicious reader comments.

Without it, platforms for exchanging ideas or information wouldn't have an incentive to exist, he said. "Our interest isn't Backpage per se, it's preserving the structure of the internet where people can freely post information because these intermediary platforms exist," Greene said.

Harris spokeswoman Kristin Ford declined comment. Backpage lawyer Liz McDougall said she and her clients were optimistic, but she did not immediately respond to a telephone message after the hearing. The company and its operators have previously prevailed in four other legal actions, defense attorneys said previously.—AP



WASHINGTON: Hillary Clinton addresses the Children's Defense Fund's Beat the Odds celebration at the Newseum on Wednesday.—AP

IN PEP TALK, CLINTON URGES BACKERS TO 'NEVER GIVE UP'

ACKNOWLEDGES DIFFICULTY OF HER LOSS

WASHINGTON: Hillary Clinton is acknowledging the difficulty of her loss in the presidential race for her supporters and urging them to persevere through the Donald Trump era.

In remarks that were equal parts pep talk and funeral dirge, Clinton encouraged her backers to "never, ever give up." "I know this isn't easy. I know that over the past week a lot of people have asked themselves whether America is the country we thought it was," Clinton said Wednesday night at the annual gala of the Children's Defense Fund, the child advocacy organization where she started her legal career. "But please listen to me when I say this: America is worth it." She added: "It's up to each and every one of us to keep working to make America better and stronger and fairer."

Clinton never cited the president-elect by name in her remarks, making only an oblique reference to the controversial policies that fueled his rise to the White House. Instead, she focused on the future, asking her backers to "stay engaged on every level." "We need you. America needs your energy," she said.

Clinton's surprising loss threw her party into a period of intense soul-searching, with an ascendant liberal wing blaming Clinton's campaign for failing to embrace a more populist economic message. In private calls with donors and Democratic officials, Clinton has largely attributed her defeat to the decision by the FBI to re-examine her use of a private server as secretary of state.

In her remarks, Clinton offered no accounting for any failures she may have made during her presidential campaign, though she admitted that the past week hasn't been easy. "There have been a few

times this past week when all I wanted to do was just to curl up with a good book or our dogs and never leave the house again," she ruefully admitted.

She chose friendly ground to make her first public appearance since her emotional concession speech in New York City last Wednesday. Her first job out of law school in the 1970s was for Children's Defense Fund founder Marian Wright Edelman. She later became a staff attorney and chairman of the group's board.

Throughout her campaign, she cited her work for the group as her "north star," sparking her interest in standing up against injustice toward children and fami-

lies. The group, which helps disadvantaged children, tried to return some of the affection on Wednesday night. "We love her and we appreciate all the hard work she has done and say it's not going to be for naught," said Edelman, in her introductory remarks. "We're going to say that she is the people's president."

Still, in a sign of Clinton's new life as a private citizen, the event lacked many of the trappings of her presidential campaign. Security was light and she traveled with only a handful of aides. Sprinkled throughout the small theater where she addressed donors and supporters were a handful of empty seats.—AP

ACCUSED NEW YORK BOMBER INDICTED ON NEW CHARGES

NEW YORK: The man accused of injuring more than two dozen people in September bomb attacks in New York and New Jersey was indicted on Wednesday, as federal prosecutors in Manhattan added new charges that could result in a mandatory life prison sentence.

Ahmad Khan Rahimi, 28, was charged in an indictment filed in Manhattan federal court with eight counts, including using a weapon of mass destruction in an explosion in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood that injured 30 people.

The Sept. 17 attack came hours after prosecutors contend a pipe bomb planted by Rahimi went off along the course of a charity road race by the New Jersey shore, without injuring anyone. While the indictment

included no new factual allegations, it included two counts accusing Rahimi of using a destructive device during and in furtherance of a crime, charges that carry with them potential mandatory life prison terms. "Now indicted by a grand jury, Rahimi will face justice in a federal court for his alleged violent acts of terrorism," Manhattan US Attorney Preet Bharara said in a statement. Rahimi, an Afghan-born naturalized US citizen, is scheduled to be arraigned on the indictment on Thursday afternoon. His lawyer did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Rahimi, of Elizabeth, New Jersey, was arrested two days after the bombing following a gunfight with police, who found him sleeping in the doorway of a bar in Linden, New Jersey.—Reuters

NEW YORK WILL 'PROTECT' THE IMMIGRANTS, MAYOR TELLS TRUMP

NEW YORK: New York's liberal mayor, Bill de Blasio, told Donald Trump on Wednesday he will do all he can to prevent the large-scale deportation of immigrants, saying many in the city are

"fearful" of his presidency.

After visiting Manhattan's Trump Tower—where the billionaire president-elect is holed up assembling his cabinet—De Blasio said he told the

Republican he would push back against his signature pledge to deport millions of undocumented immigrants, and defend the American tradition of welcoming foreigners. "I reiterated to him that this city and so many cities around the country will do all we can to protect our residents and to make sure that families are not torn apart," the Democrat told reporters.

De Blasio—along with the mayors of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia and the US capital Washington—has declared his city a "sanctuary" for immigrants, vowing to protect the undocumented from deportation and extend public services regardless of their legal status.

Trump has vowed to deport or incarcerate up to three million undocumented immigrants with criminal records after he takes office on January 20. He has also pledged to end a program backed by President Barack

Obama that shields from deportation people who arrived in the country as children.

De Blasio, a left-leaning Democrat who backed Trump's rival Hillary Clinton for the White House, said his stance "flew in the face of all that was great about New York City, the ultimate city of immigrants." "The place that has succeeded because it was open for everyone, the place built of generation after generation of immigrants," he said.

Following Trump's election, de Blasio said the city would delete from its database the names of hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants who have received a city ID card, to stop the incoming administration from identifying or deporting them.

It was the latest in a string of confrontations between the two politicians. — AFP



NEW YORK: New York City mayor Bill de Blasio speaks to the press in front of Trump Tower after his meeting with president-elect Donald Trump on Wednesday. — AFP

CLINTON CAPTURED BY LEIBOVITZ LENS

'WOMEN' PHOTO EXHIBIT

NEW YORK: Some of the world's most irrepressible women stare out in neat rows from the walls of Annie Leibovitz's latest photo exhibit. Among them is Hillary Clinton, pictured above the words: "Never, never, never give up."

The acclaimed photographer willingly admits that Clinton's shock defeat in last week's presidential election has cast a bit of a shadow over her travelling show, entitled simply "Women." "This is not how we imagined this week would turn out," she told reporters at the gallery hosting the project—formerly a women's prison in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood. What was designed as an exuberant and joyful exhibit, she says, now appears more as an "emotional, sobering celebration" following the Democrat's

second failed attempt to break the highest glass ceiling of all.

The 67-year-old Leibovitz is acclaimed for decades of celebrity portraits, from a shot of Whoopi Goldberg submerged in a bathtub filled with milk, to her iconic image of a naked John Lennon wrapping himself around a clothed Yoko Ono, taken days before his assassination.

Her portrait of Clinton was a late addition to her latest project, launched in 1999 and featuring subjects from all stations of life and from all around the world. "I am not thrilled with my picture of secretary Clinton, but in the stream of it, it works," she said. It sits above the befitting quote on perseverance, written on a small tile that Clinton had in her State Department office.

The project took shape over the years with the help of Leibovitz's close friend, women's rights activist Gloria Steinem, who drew up a 20 page list of women whose portraits she simply had to take.

Like the ocean

"This is like photographing the ocean—a work in progress," said Leibovitz, immediately recognizable for her unruly mane of long gray hair. The project "keeps growing, it's not definitive," she said, adding that she hopes to photograph German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the notoriously camera-shy British writer J.K. Rowling some day.

Leibovitz first took Clinton's picture in the 1990s, back when she was first lady in Bill Clinton's White House, a portrait that appeared in *Vanity Fair*. With the former secretary of state seemingly poised to claim the US presidency, Leibovitz thought it would be a fine idea to retake the picture. "She was not in this wall until this show. I want to take a more updated photograph," explained Leibovitz, who was encouraged in the long-running project by her late partner Susan Sontag, a well-known writer who died of cancer in 2004.

Leibovitz's good friend Steinem, one of the founders of the National Organization of Women (NOW) and the country's best-known feminist, joined her in presenting the exhibition.

Steinem said she refuses to see Trump's ascension as a permanent setback for women's rights despite the president-elect's history of sexist comments and his checkered record towards women. "I am concerned, I am worried... but two million more people voted for Clinton than for Trump," said Steinem. Clinton's actual lead in the popular vote stands at just over one million. "We'll not go back," said the 82-year-old Steinem. — AFP



NEW YORK: Annie Leibovitz speaks during a press preview of her "Women: New Portraits" exhibition at the former Bayview Correctional Facility on Tuesday. — AFP



TOKYO: Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (R) leaves Tokyo's Haneda Airport yesterday. — AFP

JAPAN'S ABE HEADS FOR NEW YORK FOR FIRST TALKS WITH TRUMP

TOKYO: Japan's premier Shinzo Abe is headed to New York for talks with Donald Trump, the first leader to meet with the president-elect whose campaign pledges provoked anxiety over US foreign policy. The brash billionaire is set to receive Abe at his Trump Tower headquarters on Thursday evening, in an encounter that will be closely watched for hints on long-standing security pacts that he has called into question. "I'm honored to meet with President-elect Trump ahead of other world leaders," Abe told reporters. "I'd like to discuss with President Trump our dreams for the future."

Trump's blithe comment during the campaign that the US might be "better off" with nuclear-armed Asian allies has thrown into question the US security umbrella over Japan and South Korea. His later disavowal of the remarks has done little to restore confidence in Washington as the lone superpower ready to face down a rising China and a capricious North Korea.

Trump has also talked about yanking thousands of troops from the region unless Tokyo and Seoul pay more of their hosting costs, despite the opportunity that would present to China and its ambitions for regional supremacy. "The Japan-US alliance is the cornerstone of Japan's diplomacy and security," Abe said before departing. "The alliance works only when there is trust." "I'd like to build trust with Mr Trump and work together hand in hand for the peace and prosperity of the world."

Scramble for access

Dozens of leaders including China's Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin have spoken with Trump by phone since his shock November 8 election victory.

The New York Times said offices of foreign leaders were blindly dialing in to Trump Tower as they scrambled to get the future president on the phone, prompting a denial and an insistence the transition is proceeding smoothly. Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull was only the second to get through, in a call set up by sports legend Greg Norman who is golfing buddies with Trump, it emerged Thursday. — AFP

BANGLADESH COURT ORDERS ZIA'S ARREST OVER 'FAKE BIRTHDAY'

DHAKA: A Bangladesh court yesterday issued an arrest warrant for the country's opposition leader after she failed to appear for a hearing over the date of her birthday.

The bizarre controversy, which has been raging for more than a decade, centers on the fact that Khaleda Zia celebrates her birthday on August 15, the day Bangladesh's former leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated.

He was the father of current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Zia's bitter political rival, whose supporters allege that the opposition leader uses a fake birth date. Many Bangladeshis have no record of their birth dates and millions use fake dates to make them eligible for government jobs with age restrictions.

Magistrate Mazharul Islam delivered the arrest order in a Dhaka court after a pro-government journalist filed a case accusing the two-time prime minister of lying about her birth date. "The court issued the arrest warrant after she failed to appear in the court over her fake birthday case," the plaintiff's lawyer Dulal Mitra told AFP.

Police have now until March 2 to arrest Zia, who has faced two previous warrants in different cases. She is likely to avoid that fate however by surrendering to the court and seeking bail. Zia's lawyer Sanaullah Mia confirmed the arrest order, and told AFP he would consult her on how to proceed.

Rahman, who was brutally assassinated along with most members of his family in a military coup, is regarded as a hero of Bangladeshi independence and August 15 is a day of mourning.

The coup leaders appointed Zia's husband the head of the army and he eventually took power in November that year, leading to 15 years of military rule. Plaintiff Gazi Jahirul Islam, who is a senior journalist at a local television station, said he had copies of Zia's personal documents to prove his case. "Her August 15 birthday is fake. We've got copies of her school certificate, her machine readable passport and her marriage document. She had different birthdays in those documents," Islam told AFP. "She has been celebrating August 15 as her birthday since 1996 in order to insult supporters of a rival political party who observe the date as the national mourning day."

The 71-year-old leader of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) did not publicly celebrate her birthday this year following criticism even by some of her staunchest supporters. "I don't know how a birthday can affect someone or how it can defame him or anyone else," said her lawyer Mia.

Zia also faces at least 30 other charges, mostly related to alleged corruption.—AFP



DHAKA: Former Bangladeshi prime minister and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader, Khaleda Zia waves as she leaves after a court appearance on November 10, 2016.—AFP



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's President Mamnoon Hussain right, receives Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan the President House. Ahead of a visit by Turkey's president, Islamabad ordered 400 Turkish nationals affiliated with a chain of international schools in Pakistan to leave the country within 72 hours, officials said Wednesday.—AP

TURKS IN PAKISTAN CHALLENGE EXPULSION ORDER IN COURT

STUDENTS HIT STREETS TO DENOUNCE RULE

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's order for 400 Turkish nationals, mostly schoolteachers and their families, to leave the country within 72 hours was being challenged in court yesterday as hundreds of students took to the streets to denounce the expulsions.

The developments come as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is making a high-profile visit to Pakistan. The Turkish nationals include staff at the PakTurk International school chain and their family members. Ankara has accused the school of links with the movement of US-based dissident cleric Fethullah Gulen, which Pak-Turk denies.

Erdogan has accused Gulen supporters of staging the failed July 15 coup in Turkey. The school on Thursday posted a new statement on its website saying the "PakTurk International Schools and Colleges in Pakistan have no affiliation or connection with any political individual or any movement or organization."

The Islamabad High Court, which took up the petition by the 400 Turkish nationals, heard arguments from the school's lawyer yesterday before a break in the proceedings, according to court official Faheem Rizvi.

The petition said the expulsion would adversely affect 11,000 students in 28 branches of the school across the country. It requested that the orders be rescinded and that the school's expatriate staff be allowed to continue to work in Pakistan, he said.

Meanwhile, hundreds of PakTurk students blocked the main road in the eastern city of Lahore to protest the expulsion orders, said Pakistani police officer Adnan Naseer. "Don't play with our future," student Tariq Ahmad told Pakistani Capital News TV. After talks in Islamabad, Erdogan and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif held a joint press

conference, pledging to enhance bilateral cooperation, share their experience in fighting terrorism and complete a free trade agreement by the end of 2017.

Erdogan was to address the Pakistani parliament later in the day. On the expulsion issue, Erdogan thanked the Pakistani government for taking action

against what he described as supporters of Gulen's network, and assured the media that PakTurk students will not suffer. Erdogan also said Turkey is seeking help from allies in dismantling Gulen's "evil network," which he claimed was also a threat to Pakistan's security.—AP

MYANMAR BARS US PHOTOGRAPHER FROM OWN SHOW FEATURING ROHINGYA

YANGON: Myanmar has blacklisted a US photographer and prevented him from attending his own exhibition about stateless people, which would have included pictures of the persecuted Muslim Rohingya minority.

Award-winning documentary photographer Greg Constantine said he was stopped at Yangon airport and told he was on a "blacklist".

Constantine said he believed it was linked to his work documenting the lives of the Rohingya, whose status is a major flashpoint in Myanmar. Many in the Buddhist-majority country revile the million-strong Muslim minority, who are based in western Rakhine state, and vigorously oppose any move to grant them citizenship. "I've done a significant amount of work on stateless people in Rakhine... I can only speculate that that would be the reason, or one of the reasons, why I would be on this blacklist right now," Constantine told AFP.

Immigration officials confirmed that the photographer had been blacklisted but refused to say why. "I cannot tell you what kind of blacklist he is on," said Ye Tun Oo, the director of the immigration department.

Constantine's "Nowhere people", which explores the lives of stateless peo-

ple in 18 countries around the world, had been due to open in Yangon on Wednesday but has been temporarily postponed. The exhibition was to include images of Rohingya in the destitute camps where many have languished for years and face severe restrictions on their movement and access to basic services.

Hatred towards the minority has intensified since the government blamed Rohingya militants for deadly raids on police border posts last month. Troops have locked down the area since, sending more than 15,000 people fleeing and killing at least 69 people in their hunt for the attackers.

The government of democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi has rejected reports that troops have shot unarmed Rohingya civilians, raped women and torched homes. On Wednesday, director general of Myanmar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Aye Aye Soe accused media of colluding in a "misinformation campaign" by militants in Rakhine. Restricted access to the border region has made the allegations difficult to verify. Fears about press freedom have spiked after leading English-language daily the Myanmar Times banned writing on Rakhine and fired an editor for reporting allegations of gang rape by the military.—AFP

BANGLADESH ARRESTS FIVE LINKED TO DEADLY CAFE SIEGE

DHAKA: Five people linked to the Islamist extremist group behind July's Dhaka cafe siege that left 22 hostages, most of them foreigners, dead have been arrested, Bangladesh police said yesterday.

An Islamic spiritual leader and an explosives expert were among the group detained in a series of raids in the capital late Wednesday and early yesterday, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) police unit said. "They belonged to Sarwar-Tamim group of the Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB)," RAB said in a statement, referring to the extremist group the government has blamed for the July attack.

RAB said a 27-year-old electrical engineer who made explosives for the group and provided training, and a 40-year-old spiritual leader who preached Jihad to the group's budding extremists were among those arrested.

The Islamic State group and Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent claimed responsibility for the siege at Holey Artisan Bakery cafe in Dhaka's posh Gulshan neighborhood.

But Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government has blamed the homegrown JMB and another group called Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT). The leader of the JMB, Sarwar Jahan, and the mastermind of the cafe siege, Tamim Chowdhury, a Canadian citizen of Bangladeshi origin, were both killed in raids outside the capital by security forces in recent months.

The July carnage triggered a security force crackdown on Islamist extremists, with police shooting dead nearly 40 suspected militants and arresting scores more since.—AFP

THAI WEBSITES' SHUTDOWNS SOAR AFTER KING'S DEATH

BANGKOK: Thai authorities cracking down on online insults to the royal family following the recent death of their king pressed Google and Facebook for help as they shut down 1,300-plus websites last month. That's more than they had censored in the previous five years combined, according to records released exclusively to The Associated Press.

Data compiled by the Ministry of Defense's support group shows the government shutdown 1,370 websites in October, more than the 1,237 shut down in the previous five years. Just two had been shut down in September.

Thailand orders the country's internet service providers to block offensive websites. For Google, Facebook and other online and social media platforms based outside of Thailand, the government has asked that they monitor and remove content that could insult the monarchy.—AP



BANGKOK: A blocked website shows a notice from Thailand's Ministry of Digital Economy and Society with the message, "This website contains content and information that is deemed inappropriate. It has been censored by the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society" yesterday.—AP



NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (C) walks with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders as he prepares to address the media after arriving for the winter session of Parliament on Wednesday.—AFP

MODI'S CASH CRACKDOWN HITS INDIAN RIVALS' ELECTION CAMPAIGN COFFERS UNFAIRLY BOOST PARTY'S CHANCES

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's shock ban on high-value banknotes will hit the war chests of his rivals before a key state election next year, sparking accusations that his strike against "black cash" will unfairly boost his party's chances.

That is despite widespread anger among millions of Indians forced to queue outside banks to change small amounts of old money for legal tender, possibly denting support for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at least in the short term.

Opposition politicians are scrambling to redraft campaign plans ahead of the ballot expected early next year in Uttar Pradesh, a state of more than 200 million people which will be crucial to Modi's long-term plan for re-election in 2019. The prime minister last week outlawed 500 and 1,000 rupee notes in a drive to rein in corruption and a shadow economy that accounts for a fifth of India's \$2.1 trillion gross domestic product.

With no state election funding, illicit cash is the lifeblood for political parties that collect money from candidates and businessmen, and then spend it to stage rallies, hire helicopters and hand out "gifts" to win votes.

Spending on the Uttar Pradesh election is forecast to hit a record 40 billion rupees (\$590 million), despite the cancellation of big notes.

Mixed reviews

Modi's demonetization drive has so far proven popular among increasingly aspirational voters who are tired of corruption, although views among the broader population and economists are divided over the efficacy and fairness of the move.

Opposition politicians have united to decry it. "We will have to plan the entire election strategy all over again," said

Pradeep Mathur, a senior Uttar Pradesh leader of the Congress opposition party that was trounced by the BJP in 2014 national elections.

His concerns reflect a view that the BJP, with more members than its rivals and close ties to big corporate donors, can survive the cash crunch better, helping Modi win Uttar Pradesh and four other territories heading to the polls early in 2017. For Modi, winning India's main battleground state is vital to strengthen his party's position in the upper house of parliament, where it is still in the minority, before seeking a second term in the 2019 general election. "Their calculation is that this is going to hurt everybody, but in relative terms the BJP is going to come out stronger," said Milan Vaishnav, a South Asia expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington.

According to the Delhi-based Centre for Media Studies (CMS), which tracks campaign financing, the BJP relies on cash for less than two-thirds of its funding in a state like Uttar Pradesh.

Its regional rivals use cash to cover 80 to 95 percent of campaign spending.

Scaling back

Demonetization will force Congress to hold smaller rallies, said Mathur, and there will be fewer "freebies" for voters. Other parties are also adjusting plans in Uttar Pradesh. Ashok Agarwal, a politician with the incumbent Samajwadi Party in the city of Mathura, will have to rely more on his team of 1,000 volunteers to connect with voters. In a bid to limit the squeeze, parties are paying workers to queue at banks and swap old notes for new ones and evade scrutiny from tax inspectors, said party activists in Mathura. Event managers, whose businesses usually boom at election time, are worried. "No political party

except the BJP wants to organise big rallies before January. All of them depend on cash," said Rajesh Pratap, who has provided loudspeakers, outdoor air conditioners and security to party rallies for over a decade. Mayawati, a powerful former leader of Uttar Pradesh who Modi's aides view as his biggest electoral threat in the state, says the demonetisation timing appeared highly political. BJP officials accuse Mayawati of hoarding "black" money garnered from selling tickets to candidates to fund her campaign.

One senior official and a close aide to Mayawati said some of her party's rallies would be axed and replaced by more door-to-door campaigning. "Last month ... we had to bring over 300,000 villagers from across UP (Uttar Pradesh) to Lucknow city for a day ... It's not just us, but every political party spends money at grassroots level to win votes," the official said.

Modi has not explicitly linked demonetisation to a clean-up of electoral funding, but officials in his party say rivals should have heeded his warnings earlier this year that he was serious about clamping down on "black" cash. "You cannot call it a bolt from the blue because Modi ... had dropped sufficient hints that he will take strict action," said a close aide.

"Mother of all corruption"

While an immediate liquidity crunch for parties is clear, the longer-term impact on funding is less so. The symbiosis between businessmen seeking favors and parties needing cash has sent campaign funding soaring. In southern Andhra Pradesh state, three in four voters reported receiving money from parties during the last general election, according to research by CMS. The group's chairman N. Bhaskara Rao describes electoral corruption as "the mother of all corruption" in India.—Reuters



SEOUL: Protesters supporting South Korean President Park Geun-hye wave national flags during a rally opposing her resignation yesterday. — AP

S KOREAN LAWMAKERS PASS LAW ON INDEPENDENT PROBE OF PARK MANIPULATING POWER TO AMASS FORTUNE

SEOUL: South Korea's parliament yesterday passed a law that would allow a special prosecutor to investigate a corruption scandal threatening the presidency of Park Geun-hye.

The opposition-controlled National Assembly also voted for a parliamentary investigation into allegations that Park allowed a secretive confidante to manipulate power from the shadows and amass an illicit fortune.

The law on an independent investigation came as state prosecutors prepared to indict Park's friend by Sunday. Prosecutors had sought to question Park this week, but her lawyer on yesterday asked for another week to prepare.

Independent investigation

An independent investigation would increase the pressure on Park, who has

been facing growing calls by opposition lawmakers to resign. Although emboldened by a wave of massive protests, opposition parties have yet to seriously push for Park's impeachment over fears of triggering a backlash from conservative voters and negatively impacting next year's presidential election.

Park has apologized for letting her friend Choi Soon-sil, the daughter of a late cult leader who emerged as Park's mentor in the 1970s, edit some of her draft speeches and for the public anger caused by the scandal. But she has not commented on the most damning accusations that she let Choi manipulate important government decisions on policy and personnel.

Under South Korean law, the president has immunity from prosecution except in cases of treason, but she can be

investigated. The law passed yesterday requires Park to select a special prosecutor among two candidates proposed by opposition parties to lead an investigation that would obviously be aimed at exposing her own wrongdoings.

The special prosecutor can form a team of 60, including up to 20 state prosecutors, and will have 90 days to investigate and determine whether to pursue charges. The investigation period can be extended to 120 days, but only if Park approves. Opposition lawmakers have pushed for an independent investigation into the scandal over concerns that state prosecutors' close ties with presidential officials might inject bias into their probe.

Park's acceptance

In a televised apology earlier this month, Park said she would accept a direct investigation into her actions, including one pushed by a special prosecutor. The launching of an investigation by a special prosecutor would automatically stop the probe by state prosecutors. The special prosecutor can pursue additional charges against suspects that weren't included in indictments by state prosecutors.

Choi, who prosecutors arrested earlier this month, has been suspected of interfering with government decisions on policy and personnel despite holding no official government job, and exploiting her presidential ties to bully companies into donating tens of millions of dollars to organizations she controlled.

The increasingly strange scandal surrounding Choi has inspired rumors and left her being accused of everything from influencing national security decisions to swaying the careers of pop singers to swinging construction deals for the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. —AP

TRUMP'S GOLF BUDDY NORMAN PITCHES AUSTRALIA TO HEAD OF DIPLOMATIC QUEUE

SYDNEY: Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull became one of the first world leaders to speak to US President-elect Donald Trump this week, but only after one of Trump's old golfing buddies was asked to chip in.

Turnbull confirmed that Australian golfing great and former world number one Greg Norman had been tapped to help facilitate the introduction to Trump, who includes building golf courses among his many business interests.

The connection enabled Turnbull to jump the queue of world leaders waiting to get the new US leader on the phone, well ahead of larger allies like Britain and Japan, after Trump's

surprise win in last week's presidential election. "In diplomacy and policies, you use lots of networks. All I can say is we have great networks, great connections and Greg Norman is a great Australian," Turnbull said on yesterday. "(Norman) is a great advocate for strengthening the Australian-American alliance. One of our greatest assets is the more than million Australians who live overseas," he told reporters in Sydney.

Australia's unconventional diplomatic approach reflects the apparent confusion that surrounds the incoming Trump administration as it works on the transition before he is sworn in as president on Jan. 20. [nL1N1DH0X3 — Reuters

CHINA'S INTERFERENCE IN HONG KONG REACHING ALARMING LEVELS

HONG KONG: A US congressional panel has warned of an "alarming" rise in China's interference in Hong Kong, noting fears over the former British colony's continued role as a global financial hub.

In its annual report to Congress on Wednesday, the bipartisan US-China Economic and Security Review Commission highlights the "chilling" abduction and detention of five booksellers based in Hong Kong as well as pressure on media and academic freedoms. Britain handed Hong Kong back to China in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" agreement that ensures its freedoms, independent legal system and wide-ranging autonomy remain intact.

The commission, in a detailed 33-page section, urges a fresh probe from the State Department into Hong Kong's autonomy and freedoms, as well as continued congressional oversight. "Hong Kong's traditional standing as a global financial hub has significant economic implications for the United States, as US trade and investment ties with Hong Kong are substantial," the report notes.

It says the booksellers' detentions - including two foreign nationals and one who was abducted inside Hong Kong - broadened domestic fears of mainland encroachment and sparked a record turnout in September's legislative election. "This incident has threatened the maintenance of the 'one country, two systems' framework and led some observers to question Hong Kong's status as a leading global financial hub," the report warns. "The election took place against the backdrop of an alarming rise in mainland interference in Hong Kong."

US senators Marco Rubio and Tom Cotton also introduced a bill that would freeze US-based assets and ban US entry of those responsible for the "surveillance, abduction, detention, or forced confessions of certain booksellers and journalists in Hong Kong", according to a statement on Rubio's senate website. — Reuters

INDONESIA SAYS NOT TO BLAME FOR MISSING WWII SHIPWRECKS

JAKARTA: Indonesia refused to take the blame yesterday for the disappearance of at least six British and Dutch World War II shipwrecks-considered war graves-that investigators believe could have been salvaged for scrap.

Former colonial ruler The Netherlands has launched a probe into how three Dutch navy ships seemingly vanished from the bed of the Java Sea, while Britain has urged Indonesia to investigate what has happened to three of its vessels. It is believed the military wrecks-lost in 1942 during the Battle of the Java Sea-were removed by illegal scavengers looking for scrap metal, an effort that could have taken years.

More than 900 Dutch and 250 Indo-Dutch sailors died during the battle in which the Allied navies suffered a disastrous defeat by the Imperial Japanese Navy. Indonesian authorities have sought to distance themselves from the mystery, saying they could not be expected to protect the sites without assistance.

"The Dutch government cannot blame the Indonesian government because they never asked us to protect those ships," said Bambang Budi Utomo, head of the National Archeological Centre under the Ministry of Education and Culture. "As there was no agreement or announcement, when the ships go missing, it is not our responsibility."

Amateur divers in 2002 discovered the long-lost wrecks of three Dutch ships, 60 years after they sank while in action against Japanese forces. But an international expedition that sailed to the wreck site ahead of next year's 75th anniversary of the battle was shocked to discover the wrecks had vanished.

Britain expressed its distress at the disappearance of its own warships and asked Indonesia to "take appropriate action" to protect the sites from further disturbance. But Utomo said Indonesia did not have the resources to maintain a constant patrol over its vast archipelago, a hotspot for other criminal enterprises like illegal fishing and people smuggling. —AFP

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HONOREE MARC ANTHONY BRINGS LATIN GRAMMYS TO FEET

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Honoree Marc Anthony accepts the award for the Latin Recording Academy Person of the Year at the MGM Grand Garden Arena. — AP



Singer Marc Anthony attends the 2016 Nissan at Latin Grammys Person of the Year Gala Wednesday at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas.



Singer Marc Anthony performs during the show for the 2016 Latin GRAMMY's Person Of The Year.



Ricky Martin (center) and Gabriel Abaroa look on as Marc Anthony (right) dances during the show for the 2016 Latin GRAMMY's Person Of The Year honoring Marc Anthony. — AP/AFP photos



Gilberto Santa Rosa perform "Aguanile" on stage.



Ricky Martin speaks during the show for the 2016 Latin GRAMMY's Person Of The Year honoring Marc Anthony.



Victor Manuelle on stage.

Honoree **Marc Anthony** brings Latin Grammys to feet

Marc Anthony, who decided at age seven to be a singer and has gone on to sell 12 million records, was honored Wednesday at the Latin Grammys and celebrated by bringing the crowd to its feet. The Latin Grammys named the 48-year-old salsa singer its Person of the Year in recognition of his lifetime achievement and threw a gala for him on the eve of the main award ceremony in Las Vegas. No fewer than 22 artists took to the stage to hail the successes of Anthony, whose voice cracked with emotion as his eyes watered. "From the bottom of my heart, I tell you, my colleagues and friends, that we have lived through so many things over the past 30 years," he said.

"To be up here with so many people that I admire is an honor and a pleasure and I feel more alive than ever," he said. "They told me I didn't have to speak," he said. "I want to sing—that's my thing." And that is what he did, grabbing the microphone and leading a crowd of 1,400 — including some of the greatest names in Latin music—in dancing, starting with his song "Vivir Mi Vida," a cover of a track by Algerian singer Khaled.

Anthony, born in New York to Puerto Rican parents, joins a list of top Latin stars to be honored as Person of the Year. Previous winners include Roberto Carlos, Juan Manuel Serrat and Shakira. Ricky Martin presented the award to Anthony, recalling how his fellow Puerto Rican artist came to Florida to produce Menudo, the boy band that launched Martin's career. "Ever since then there has been a chemistry," Martin said. "I still take with me to the studio everything that you taught me—your passion, your honesty and your delivery." Stars who took to the stage included Laura Pausini and Carlos Vives who together sang "El Cantante" by

Hector Lavoe, the late salsa singer whom Anthony played on the big screen.

Anthony's father named him after the Mexican singing great Marco Antonio Muniz, leading the younger star to change his name to avoid confusion. At age seven, he asked to go to a music school in East Harlem and in 1992, after recording his first album, scored a break as he opened for Tito Puente at Madison Square Garden. "I never thought I was going to be singing in Spanish," he said. Anthony, who has won seven mainstream Grammys, is also known to the general public as the ex-husband of Jennifer Lopez. — AFP



Leonel Garcia (left) and Noel Schajris perform on stage.



Joy Huerta (left) and Fonseca perform on stage.



Draco Rosa performs on stage.



(From left) Mon Laferte, Gaby Moreno and Kany Garcia perform on stage.



Prince Royce performs "Cambio De Piel" on stage.



(From left) Gian Marco, Diego Torres and Tommy Torres perform on stage.



Karla Martinez



Milly Quezada and Johnny Ventura perform on stage.



Carlos Vives performs on stage.



Laura Pausini performs on stage.



(From left) Neil Portnow, president and CEO of the Recording Academy, Singer Marc Anthony, and Gabriel Abaroa Jr, president and CEO of the Latin Recording Academy.

Winners

- Top Latin Albums Artist of the Year, Male**
Juan Gabriel
- Tropical Songs Artist of the Year, Duo or Group**
Gente de Zona
- Hot Latin Song of the Year**
Nicky Jam & Enrique Iglesias, "El Perd?n"
- Tropical Song of the Year**
Gente de Zona Feat. Marc Anthony, "La Gozadera"
- Top Latin Album of the Year**
Juan Gabriel, Los D?o
- Tropical Album of the Year**
Victor Manuelle, Que Suenen Los Tambores
- Regional Mexican Album of the Year**
Gerardo Ortiz, Hoy M?s Fuerte
- Latin Rhythm Songs Artist of the Year, Solo**
Nicky Jam
- Latin Rhythm Song of the Year**
Nicky Jam & Enrique Iglesias, "El Perd?n"
- Airplay Song of the Year**
Nicky Jam & Enrique Iglesias, "El Perd?n"
- Streaming Song of the Year**
Nicky Jam & Enrique Iglesias, "El Perd?n"
- Hot Latin Songs Artist of the Year, Duo or Group**
Banda Sinaloense MS de Sergio Lizarraga
- Regional Mexican Songs Artist of the Year, Duo or Group**
Banda Sinaloense MS de Sergio Liz?rraga
- Latin Rhythm Songs Artist of the Year, Duo or Group**
Zion & Lennox
- Latin Pop Album of the Year**
Juan Gabriel, Los D?o
- Tour of the Year**
Juan Gabriel
- Artist of the Year**
Romeo Santos
- Artist of the Year, New**
Ariel Camacho y Los Plebes del Rancho
- Social Artist of the Year**
Shakira
- Crossover Artist of the Year**
Justin Bieber
- Hot Latin Song of the Year, Vocal Event**
Nicky Jam & Enrique Iglesias, "El Perd?n"
- Hot Latin Songs Artist of the Year, Male**
Romeo Santos
- Hot Latin Songs Artist of the Year, Female**
Shakira
- Digital Song of the Year**
Nicky Jam & Enrique Iglesias, "El Perd?n"
- Top Latin Albums Artist of the Year, Female**
Selena
- Top Latin Albums Artist of the Year, Duo or Group**
Man?
- Top Latin Albums Label of the Year**
Universal Music Latin Entertainment
- Top Latin Albums Imprint of the Year**
Fonovisa
- Latin Pop Song of the Year**
Man? Feat. Shakira, "Mi Verdad"
- Latin Pop Songs Artist of the Year, Solo**
Enrique Iglesias
- Latin Pop Songs Artist of the Year, Duo or Group**
Mana
- Latin Pop Albums Artist of the Year, Solo**
Juan Gabriel
- Latin Pop Albums Artist of the Year, Duo or Group**
Man?
- Tropical Songs Artist of the Year, Solo**
Romeo Santos
- Tropical Albums Artist of the Year, Solo**
Romeo Santos
- Tropical Albums Artist of the Year, Duo or Group**
Buena Vista Social Club
- Regional Mexican Albums Artist of the Year, Solo**
Joan Sebastian
- Regional Mexican Albums Artist of the Year, Duo or Group**
Juli?n ?lvarez y Su Norte?o Banda
- Latin Rhythm Album of the Year**
Pitbull, Dale
- Latin Rhythm Albums Artist of the Year, Solo**
Pitbull
- Latin Rhythm Albums Artist of the Year, Duo or Group**
Plan B
- Songwriter of the Year**
Anthony "Romeo" Santos.

Back from hiatus, **Metallica** still angry

Back with its first album in eight years, Metallica has returned to its thrash metal roots, making it clear the band hasn't lost its anger. "Hardwired... to Self-Destruct," which is out today, is the 10th album



This file photo shows Kirk Hammett (right) and James Hetfield of Metallica performing at the 2016 Global Citizen Festival in Central Park to end extreme poverty by 2030 at Central Park in New York City. — AFP

by a group determined to preserve its reign as one of the defining acts in heavy metal. "We're four angry guys," said lead guitarist Kirk Hammett, now 53 with a touch of grey in his long curly hair. "These songs have been written with a lot of anger, a lot of aggression, with a real sort of vision to do that," the California native told AFP during a visit to Paris.

The first track, "Hardwired," sets the tone for the 12-track album—uncompromising and ultra-fast with

enraged, nihilistic lyrics that recall Metallica's first opus, 1983's "Kill 'Em All." The title of the latest album is "a statement on the human condition and how we all kind of do things that we know are bad for us but we do it anyway," Hammett said. "We are hardwired to be a little naughty, a little bad, and on the extreme end of that, some people just self-destruct because they just can't get enough of that bad stuff."

Music as an outlet

The second song—"Atlas Rise!"—recalls "Master of Puppets," the title track of Metallica's 1986 album that was groundbreaking for the musical depth of a heavy metal song. While not as epic as the earlier music, "Atlas Rise!" runs for more than six minutes, shifting between vocal and instrumental passages and Hammett's celebrated guitar solos, free-flowing and true to form with a wah-wah pedal. Hammett, who said he first turned to music to release his anger, says he plays so ferociously on the guitar that he breaks more strings than he replaces.

"I always play very, very aggressively, and in a very angry way," he said. "It makes me feel better." His relationship with his instrument is still evolving, he added, saying he has "reconnected" with his guitar in recent years. "Every time I play my guitar, it's so different from two years ago or three years ago," he said. "It's different now and it feels good." Hammett is especially fond of jazz and bossa nova and has tried to deconstruct the genres' sounds and techniques.

"I learn stuff in those worlds and play it and I go, 'Yes, I totally can use it in heavy metal,'" he said. On its latest album, Metallica slows down on "Halo on Fire," with frontman James Hetfield taking on a more airy, nuanced voice, if not quite to the extent of "Nothing

Else Matters," the ballad from Metallica's top-selling work, 1991's "Black Album." "We wanted to create something with the simplicity and aggression of 'Kill 'Em All,' but what ended up happening is the songs sound like the first five albums," Hammett said, adding that the new work was not a "carbon copy."

Out to 'conquer'

Hammett has a keen ear for younger generations of heavy metal artists. He is fond of Lamb of God, saying he has "high hopes" for the group every time it releases an album. He heaped praise on a comparatively obscure group, Gojira, saying that the French metal-heads were "the best thing I've heard in a long time." "I love their new album," he said. "I think it's an incredible piece of art. It's heavy, it's vibey, it's moody. It has all the things you want to hear great complex rhythms, great drumming, great riffs, great songs."

But Metallica is not looking for early retirement. "We always want to be the best," Hammett said, describing his attention to his music as obsessive-compulsive. "We just want to go out and conquer." After the quiet spell in recent years, the quartet plans a world tour next year starting on January 11 in Seoul. "My goal is to live to 100 years old and be able to stand there with a guitar on and play 'Seek and Destroy,'" Hammett said, referring to the band's first recorded song. However, other songs might be more difficult for a centenarian metal-head, he added. "I don't know if I'll be able to do 'Fight Fire with Fire.' I might break in half," he said. "But I know I can do 'Seek and Destroy.'" — AFP

Review

Freeman to receive AARP lifetime achievement award

Morgan Freeman is adding another lifetime achievement prize to his mantelpiece. AARP said yesterday the actor will receive its Movies for Grownups Career Achievement Award at a gala ceremony next year. The 79-year-old actor has already received the American Film Institute's Life Achievement Award, the Golden Globes' Cecil B. DeMille Award and a National Medal of the Arts from President Barack Obama. "At a certain point in life, if you've had some success, awards start to fall from the sky. But this one really means something," Freeman said in a statement. "I started my movie career at 50 and some of the best years happened since then."

He will accept the AARP honor at a dinner Feb 6 in Beverly Hills, California. Previous recipients of the Movies for Grownups Career Achievement Award include Michael Douglas, Susan Sarandon, Robert De Niro, Sharon Stone and Robert Redford. Freeman won an Academy Award for 2004's "Million Dollar Baby" and has received four other nominations. His most recent film credits are "Ben-Hur" and "Now You See Me 2." — AP



In this file photo, actor Morgan Freeman attends the LA Premiere of 'London Has Fallen,' in Los Angeles. — AP

IN 'BLEED FOR THIS,' A COMEBACK TIMES TWO

Amelee has broken out in the boxing film. The genre's ring is so crowded, a fighter leaning back for a left hook might inadvertently sock the wrong opponent. Training montages could be combined to make a legitimate exercise video. The films are literally bleeding together: "Southpaw," "Hands of Stone," "Grudge Match," "Creed" and now "Bleed for This." Most of these have loyally kept to the boxing movie's conventions; only Ryan Coogler's terrific "Creed" had moves of its own (and it was a reboot). Ben Younger's "Bleed for This," starring Miles Teller, distinguishes itself by doubling down on some of the tried-and-true formulas. It's a comeback times two.

Teller plays Vinny Pazienza ("Paz" or "the Pazmanian Devil"), a lightweight and middleweight champ from blue-collar Providence, Rhode Island. He isn't exceptionally powerful or technical, but he thrives on pain. In the ring, he doesn't seem to get fired up until he's been hit a little. "You got heart, kid," one character tells him, "but you wear it on your chin." He's also brash. Though he refuses alcohol or drugs, Vinny will gamble past midnight before a fight or show up to a weigh-in in leopard-spotted underwear. (This is the late '80s, complete with big hair, Corvettes, black shades and leather jackets aplenty.) This makes him a perfect role for Teller who, following his turn as the tyrannically-tortured jazz drummer in "Whiplash," is steadily building an impres-

sively masochistic resume.

Bloody unconscious

Vinny's boxing career is on the ropes, and after a bad loss, he's left pleading his promoters for just another fight. When a knockout lands him in the hospital, he tells the doctor: "The pain doesn't bother me." This, it turns out, is tempting fate. Thanks to a rejuvenating new trainer, Kevin Rooney (an excellent Aaron Eckhart, almost unrecognizable with a bald head and round stomach), Vinny's career finally takes an upswing. But this is quickly wiped out, on a run to Foxwoods, by a car crash that nearly breaks his spine. In the wreckage, Vinny's bloody unconscious head rests gently on a shattered window as if it were a pillow. He's fitted with a "halo," a metal contraption that surrounds his head to keep his neck straight. Told he might not walk again, let alone fight, Vinny resolutely embarks on an almost quixotic comeback. The film's finest scenes are of a Vinny, a man built to hit things, wired with steel so that he can't touch anything let alone jab it. One less-than-enthusiastic girlfriend, who gets her hair caught in it, is replaced by a more accommodating brunette: "It's like braces times a thousand," she says, enthusiastically. Vinny's sister, across the kitchen table, deadpans to Vinny: "She might be the one." —AP

'The Shining' actress Shelley Duvall reveals mental illness

Actress Shelley Duvall has revealed her struggles with mental illness in an interview with "Dr Phil." Duvall is best known for her turns in the horror movie classic, "The Shining," and for playing Olive Oyl opposite Robin Williams' "Popeye" in the 1980 film version of the comic strip.

In a preview of Duvall's interview with Phil McGraw, the 67-year-old Duvall claims Williams, who died in 2014, is alive and "shape shifting." She also tells McGraw that she is "very sick" and needs help. The show's website says Duvall has been living "a life of near isolation." The interview is set to air today.



In this May 23, 1977, file photo, actress Shelley Duvall is seen in Cannes, France. — AP



This picture shows students standing in formation before wushu practice at the Tagou martial arts school in Dengfeng. — AFP photos



Students attending a football practice at the Tagou martial arts school.



Students practicing wushu at the Tagou martial arts school.



Students taking part in football practice at the Tagou martial arts school.



Students practicing wushu at the Tagou martial arts school.

Shaolin kungfu seeks to strike a blow for Chinese soccer

The young martial arts pupils cartwheeled across a pitch, before football coach Sun Dawei ordered one to deliver him a kung fu kick to the stomach. "You see I avoid the kick like this," Sun said, dodging out of harm's way before grabbing his young charge's leg and throwing him to the turf. As tackling and defensive techniques, both would be short cuts to a red card. But the "Shaolin soccer training base"—set up last year near the home of China's fighting monks—has ambitions to use traditional martial arts techniques to produce elite football players for Team Dragon.

China's national team is struggling: the world's most populous country ranks a lowly 84th according to FIFA and the latest setback to its fading hopes of qualifying for the 2018 World Cup in Russia was a 0-0 home draw this week with Qatar—which has only around 300,000 citizens. But China is investing hugely in football training and has vowed to have 50 million school-age players by 2020, as the ruling Communist party eyes "football superpower" status by 2050. The vast Tagou martial arts school, a few miles from the cradle of Chinese kungfu, the Shaolin Temple in Henan province, has 35,000 fee-paying boarders, who live in spartan conditions and are put through a rigorous training regime.

Some 1,500 of its students, both male and female, have signed up for its new soccer program, centered on a pristine green AstroTurf football pitch where dozens of children play simultaneous five-a-side-games. A concrete viewing stand is under construction to accommodate future spectators, with cement mixers churning and a crane swinging girders above the children as they practiced. "We are responding to the country's call," said Sun, a crewcutted former martial arts champion who took a soccer coach training course last year.

"What we want to do... is combine Shaolin martial arts with football and create an original concept," he added. Sun's class of 12-year-olds wore red jackets emblazoned "Shaolin" and the canvas-style shoes favored by practitioners of Chinese martial arts, known as wushu. They cartwheeled from one side of the pitch to another, before assembling in formation and running through tightly choreographed routines of high kicks and punches. "With a foundation in wushu, their bodily flexibility and force is a great help when they are playing football," said Sun. "Their jumping ability is helpful."

'Awesome things'

The training base has drawn comparisons with the hit 2001 Hong Kong film "Shaolin Soccer," about a ragtag band of out-of-shape martial artists who defy the odds to storm to victory in a football tournament. The film's heroes play in yellow monks' robes, flying through the air, carrying out dazzling dives and overhead kicks of tornado-like power and winning one game 40-0. "The flying... and those sort of awesome things I can't do," admitted 12-year-old winger Sun Linyuan. But he added: "In the future I will be able to do spinning kicks and bicycle kicks. Then I'll be a better footballer."

When the soccer program opened a year ago the province's top sport official Zhang Wenshan addressed a ceremony which

saw thousands of students carry out a tightly choreographed martial arts routine. "We have carried out deep research into using our province's advantage in traditional martial arts to develop youth football," he said. A provincial document vows to "build shaolin soccer into a brand", and the school has given itself five years to become one of the province's top three youth teams. Each child who signs up for the soccer program practices for several hours every day and the school has signed a deal with a British firm to import coaches.



Students practicing wushu at the Tagou martial arts school.

Nation's best

Sun's group split into two teams, with captains assigning positions. One striker in a number 10 jersey backflipped his way onto the pitch. Despite their years of kung fu training, the students' football skills were still a work in progress, school staff admitted, with sloppy defending, shaky shooting and poor ball control all in evidence. "You're just running wherever the ball is! Do you think that's ok?" an exasperated Sun told his students in a half-time huddle. "Should you be marking people or not?" "Yes!" the students all affirmed at once. Long a football fan, Sun admitted there was a "vast" difference between the Beautiful Game and Shaolin kungfu. Still, he said, "We are the number one school for martial arts. So we have the confidence that in another area we can also be among the nation's best." — AFP

Make these chocolate rosemary biscotti for a snack or a gift

By Melissa D'Arabian

I remember the first party I ever hosted. I was 5 and my mom invited all of my kindergarten girlfriends and their moms for a holiday singing gathering. We knoshed on homemade cookies dunked in hot cocoa made from packets of powder dissolved in boiling water. Standing there around our piano, surrounded by tiny off-key singers with crumbly, smiling mouths and steamy chocolate breath, I fell in love with hospitality. I felt in my heart the joy of feeding people, especially around the holidays. Joy to the world, indeed.

As the days grow colder and shorter, and cookie-baking season is ushered in, the calorie-counter in me steps aside just enough to strike that balance of reasonable, but small, indulgence. A perfect example of smart cookie indulgence is the biscotti. Biscotti are firm, dry Italian cookies that are typically served alongside an espresso or coffee for dunking. Biscotti are dryer and harder than your average cookie, due to a double-baking process (which is easy, so don't be intimidated) and relatively lower amounts of fat and sugar.

Ingredients

Dark Chocolate Rosemary Biscotti
Start to finish: 1 hour, 15 minutes
Servings: 16 biscotti
1 cup white whole wheat flour
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1 teaspoon baking powder
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
1/2 cup sugar
2 eggs
Advertisement (1 of 1): 0:17
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon finely-grated orange zest
2 teaspoons fresh rosemary, finely minced
1/2 cup dark chocolate chips, finely chopped

But the harder texture has a huge tactical advantage: biscotti take longer to nibble your way through, so the chances of me accidentally downing seven or eight are pretty small. One or two of these little guys, especially with a little espresso, and I feel like I've participated in the joy of holiday dessert. Plus, biscotti feel a little fancy. Fancy enough, in fact, to double as a holiday gift - wrap some up in cellophane and take as a hostess or neighbor gift, or even send home with your guests as a little party favor.

Today's recipe is flavored with dark chocolate and rosemary because they are classic winter flavors that I love together, but feel free to play with zests, spices, herbs and chocolate types to make a combo you love. Bonus points if you eat them with friends singing around the piano.

1/4 cup sliced almonds, toasted

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Combine the flours, salt and baking powder in a small bowl and set aside. In a medium bowl, cream the butter and sugar together with a hand or stand-mixer until light in color, fluffy and creamy, about 3 minutes.

Add the eggs in, one at a time, mixing well after each one. Add the vanilla, zest and rosemary and mix until incorporated. Add the flour, half at a time, mixing until incorporated after each half. Use a rubber spatula to fold in the dark chocolate and the almonds. Place the dough on a lightly-floured surface and divide into two. Shape into two logs, about 14 inches each, and place on a large baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Lightly press each log flatter, to make a rounded strip, about 15 inches long by 2 1/2 inches wide. Remove excess flour with a clean pastry brush.



Bake the logs until golden, about 20 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool 10 minutes. Meanwhile, reduce the oven temperature to 300 degrees. Carefully transfer each flattened log to a cutting board and cut each log on the bias into 8 slices (16 slices total). Place the slices cut side down on the parchment-lined baking sheet and continue baking until the cookies are golden and crisp, about 30 more minutes. Once baked, let cool completely. Can be stored in airtight container for several days.

Nutrition information per serving: 133 calories; 59 calories from fat; 7 g fat (4 g saturated; 1 g trans fats); 35 mg cholesterol; 41 mg sodium; 18 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; 9 g sugar; 3 g protein. — AP





Cooking on deadline: *Salted Caramel Sauce*

By Katie Workman

"Salted" and "caramel" are two words that make many people get misty in the eyes and weak in the knees. You can buy lovely salted caramel in the stores to drizzle over ice cream, cake, pie or just your tongue, but you can also make it easily at home, and for a lot less money. Do share the wealth - what a great holiday gift this makes.

How easy is it? There is no need for a thermometer, no special equipment, no difficult techniques. The thing to pay attention to is how fast the sugar mixture is browning. Resist the urge to wander away and clean out the vegetable bin, because the caramel will turn from pale to golden to dark to "oh no, what's that smell?" very quickly. A lighter color will produce a more delicate caramel sauce, while a richer golden brown will produce a more pronounced caramel flavor. And have that cream warmed and ready to go - seconds make a difference.

When you add the cream to the pot it will sputter and bubble quite a bit, so use a bigger pot than you think you need; it will shortly settle back down, but the last thing you want is hot caramel bubbling over onto your stove. Some caramel

recipes call for a pastry brush to brush down the sides of the pot which the sugar is caramelizing. I think nah, not necessary. Also, it's hard not to keep stirring the sugar melted with the water, but you have to trust in the caramelization process. Stirring makes the mixture grainy, whereas leaving it alone will let the sugar gently brown and prevent crystals from forming. Counterintuitive, but true.

Ingredients

Salted caramel sauce
Start to finish: 20 minutes
Makes about 1 1/2 cups, roughly 12 servings
1 cup heavy cream, warmed
1 cup sugar
1/4 cup water
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 teaspoon kosher salt

Preparation

In a large, heavy saucepan, combine the sugar and water and turn the heat to medium high. Stir just until the sugar is

dissolved and then stop stirring completely. Allow the mixture to come to a gentle boil. DO NOT STIR the mixture; even if it looks a little grainy, that's just the sugar doing its thing. Boil for 6 to 7 minutes until the mixture has turned golden brown and starts to smell like caramel; make sure it doesn't get too dark or start to burn.

When the mixture is a deep golden brown, turn the heat down to medium and stir as you slowly add the warmed cream. The mixture will bubble up vigorously (this is why you are using a large pot!). Remove the pot from the heat and stir in the butter until it is melted and the mixture is smooth. Stir in the vanilla and salt. Cool the mixture to room temperature and then use right away, or transfer to a glass jar or two with a tight seal. Store in the refrigerator for up to one month.

Nutrition information per serving: 178 calories; 134 calories from fat; 15 g fat (9 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 51 mg cholesterol; 172 mg sodium; 13 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 13 g sugar; 1 g protein. — AP

Friday Times Gift Ideas

GIFTS FOR THOSE WHO COOK AND THOSE WHO JUST EAT



This photo shows the No Kid Hungry Chef Series Silicone Spatulas and the 'God's Love We Deliver's Cookbook: Nourishing Stories and Recipes from Notable Friends,' in New York. — AP

Barbeque and southern foods expert Elizabeth Karmel rounded up her favorite products of the year and suggests these gifts for those who cook - and those who just like to eat:

Gifts that give back

God's Love We Deliver is an organization devoted that prepares and delivers meals to people who, because of serious illness, are unable to provide or prepare meals for themselves. The organization's first cookbook, "God's Love We Deliver's Cookbook: Nourishing Stories and Recipes from Notable Friends" is a star-studded compilation of favorite home recipes and the stories that tell them from culinary icons as well as fashion, music and theatre greats. Contributors include Mario Batali and Alice Waters, as well Stanley Tucci, Meryl Streep, Roseanne Cash and Donna Karan. All proceeds benefit the organization.

This photo shows the Wusthof Classic Series Uber Cook's Knife on an Acacia Concave Grilling and Carving Board in New York.



This photo shows the Revolo Christmas Crumpled Cups in New York.

Williams-Sonoma has teamed up with Share our Strength and celebrity food folks including Ina Garten, Chrissy Teigen and Trisha Yearwood to create artwork for the No Kid Hungry Kitchen Spatula. Proceeds from the silicone spatulas benefit No Kid Hungry in its campaign to end childhood hunger in the US Available in stores and online, 30 percent of the proceeds go to charity.

Stocking stuffers

Sukeno Donut Socks are the perfect (calorie-free) gift for the doughnut lover in your life. Designed to fit both men and women, they come folded up and packaged like a single doughnut, and are available in six different "flavors" such as Oreo Ring, Rainbow Sprinkles and Berry Sprinkles.

I use Revolo porcelain crumpled cups every single morning for coffee, and I love that they now have cups with a Christmas theme. The cups are perfect for coffee, cappuccino, hot chocolate or tea. I've also been known to use the porcelain cups for cocktails as well. The crumpled cup feels good in your hand because of the indentation that the crumpled part at the top makes in the round cup. A set of two cups is available exclusively on their website. You can choose between a set of 1 red and 1 Moose design, or 2 other holiday motifs, Gingerbread and Santa.

For cooks

The Wusthof classic 8-inch Uber Cook's Knife can be used to chop, slice, dice and mince everything. This essential, multi-purpose knife is a workhorse in the kitchen. The knife takes the traditional features of an 8-inch chef's knife and adds a bigger "belly" to create a smoother motion for all chopping, mincing and dicing tasks. I like to think of the knife as a mash-up of the popular Santoku knife and a classic chef's knife.

I had heard that the Breville Toaster oven was so good that it could rival my wall oven, but I didn't believe it until I tested the new Smart Oven Pro. I made a roast, a chicken, banana bread, and cookies as well as toast and they all came out as good if not better than in my oven. It also re-heated pizza to perfection. If you don't have the counter space for the PRO, get the Smart Oven mini which puts other small models to shame.

Gift Ideas



This photo shows Blondie's Cookies and a bottle of Eden Heirloom Blend Ice Cider.



Photo shows mini chocolate pecan pies at the Institute of Culinary Education in New York.

Edible gifts

Ice Cider made from heirloom apples ... can you think of anything more appropriate or delicious to serve with a warm apple crisp, apple cake or a nice wedge of cheddar cheese? Eleanor and Albert Leger, founders of Eden Ice Cider, produce a rich full-bodied ice cider from their apple orchards where they grow both sweet and sour heirloom varieties. A 375 ml bottle is made from more than 8 pounds of apples. They offer eight ice cider options including honeycrisp, as well as a smaller 187 ml limited release Brandy Barrel Heirloom Blend Ice Cider.

I met Brenda "Blondie" Coffman at last year's South Beach Wine & Food Festival. One bite of her buttercream-iced cookies and her s'mores bars transported me to cookie nirvana. I gave my sweet-toothed father a gift of the Blondie's Cookies cookie-of-the-month club and it quickly became his favorite gift. The beauty of this gift is that you choose how many months from 1 to 12 and the cookies are different each month so you never get tired of the assortment. Each from-scratch cookie is individually wrapped and can be frozen.

Kitchen essentials

The Cuisinart egg cooker changed my egg-eating life. Sure I can boil a soft-boiled egg but sometimes it's more cooked than I like it, especially if I get busy doing something else while I'm boiling the eggs. But this Egg Central uses steam to cook the eggs which also makes them easy to peel as the steam prevents the shell from sticking to the white- just make sure to load them with the smaller point of the egg facing down. All I have to do is crack it under cold running water and the shell literally slips off. The Egg Central also comes with attachments for poached eggs and

omelets. The brainchild of John Pittner who owns a kitchen shop in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, this acacia-wood cutting board is made with a slight concave center that holds exactly 1 cup of liquid. It also has heavy-duty silicone treads on each corner so that the board won't slip on your counter - especially helpful when carving. — AP



This photo shows the Egg Central by Cuisinart in New York.



This photo shows Sukeno Donut Socks.



This photo shows the Acacia Concave Grilling and Carving Board in New York.



Friday Times Travel



This undated photo shows Crystal Cruises CEO Edie Rodriguez at the top of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in Australia. — AP photos

Travel gift guide: Three travelers offer ideas and inspiration

What's the perfect gift for someone planning a trip? We asked three people who make their living in the travel industry to tell us what they always bring with them on trips. We also asked what they'd like to receive as a gift to take on trips, and what they'd give to someone planning a trip.

Here are ideas and inspiration for your travel gift list from Dylan Thuras, co-founder of the Atlas Obscura website; Crystal Cruises CEO Edie Rodriguez, and John Tanzanella, CEO of the International G and L Travel Association.



Photo shows John Tanzanella, while traveling in Sitges, Spain.

Dylan Thuras, co-founder of Atlas Obscura:

Must haves: One great backpack that fits in an overhead but can also fit all your stuff, with a laptop pocket for easy access on the security line. I am obsessed with not checking bags - I have a strange vendetta against the rolling bag, it feels like a defeat of the adventurer's soul. One bag forces you to shed needless items. I love the one I have now by d'emploi, It can stand up to serious wear and tear, I have stuffed a hundred pounds worth of camera gear into it and it held up no problem. It is simple, utilitarian, and really beautiful.

I also always travel with a camera or two, currently a Canon EOS 70D, which is a nice sturdy workhorse of a camera. I also often bring an old Nimslo 3D camera, which is a camera that shoots on film using four lenses to make those 3D postcards you have seen in gift shops. Now that my wife Michelle and I are traveling with our almost 2-year-old son, Phineas, I have found that a small portable child seat made to be attached to any chair is an essential.

Could use: A great coat. I have worn my two-piece Spiewak jacket to tatters and am in need of a great new coat. Coats are one of those things it is worth spending a bit on, and make a good "big gift" as you should be able to get years out of a good coat. I love the winter coats that have a detachable shell inside that can be worn as a lighter coat. Either the Spiewak Heron snorkel parka or the bomber with detachable jacket would be really amazing fancy gifts to get. A good rain coat is also much needed, and this all-season rain coat by Filson looks quite nice! I hope my wife is reading this.

To give: Besides the amazing new Atlas Obscura book? One thing I think it is really nice to give for a trip is a travel watercolor set. You can get a simple one or a fancy one and along with a set of watercolor postcards it is a really nice travel gift. Taking the time to sit down and paint a little scene, even if it only take 20 minutes helps etch it into your memory, and then you get to send it to someone you love!

Dream trip: A trip to Albania would be at the top of my fairy godmother wish list. I am deeply interested in the country's complex

history and beautiful countryside.

Edie Rodriguez, CEO of Crystal Cruises:

Must haves: I always travel with two passports with extra pages and my international electrical plug converter that works in any country. As a "mobile" CEO I must travel with both of my iPhones - yes I have two - chargers for those phones, and my make-up. My favorite things to travel with are quite simple: healthy snacks to stay nourished, bottled water to stay hydrated and moisturizer because traveling especially on planes and at sea can really dry out your skin.

Could use: I would love a new carry-on suitcase. My current one has traveled with me to many destinations and is now very worn and I just haven't had time to find a worthy replacement.

To give: I would definitely give any traveler an iPad complete with a charger and converter. I would probably also throw in a fabulous carry-on suitcase.

Dream trip: A trip on one of our new Crystal AirCruises 29-day itineraries which launch in August 2017.

John Tanzanella, CEO of the International G and L Travel Association:

Must-haves: Space-saver roll-up storage bags are essential for packing when I have to combine business and leisure travel or back-to-back trips in a variety of climates. Look for the ones that don't require a vacuum.

There's also a great app I use when I travel abroad, CityMaps2Go. Before you leave home, you download the map of the destination. The app doesn't require Wi-Fi or data roaming for access, but you can still see where you are on the map at all times via your phone's GPS.

Could use: Dress clothes that don't wrinkle!

To give: A Flytographer photo shoot. The company uses local photographers all over the world. While you explore, they capture the moments in an informal way. Much better than taking 1,000 selfies! — AP



Photo shows Dylan Thuras, cofounder of the Atlas Obscura website, in Brooklyn, N.Y., where the site is headquartered.



Photo shows the roll top pack, a \$380 backpack made by d'emploi, a Brooklyn, NY based company.



Photo shows roll-up space saver bags sold by Roomier Life.

Celebrating Friendsgiving, a Thanksgiving party for friends



This undated image provided by Evite shows one of several Friendsgiving invitation designs that the website is offering this year. — AP

Thanksgiving is traditionally a day for gathering with your family and eating turkey, but there's a twist on the holiday as a purely social gathering, and it's called Friendsgiving. The menu might include anything from juices and cheese fries to cocktails and salmon. But instead of the host slaving away for hours in a hot kitchen, it's more likely to be a party-style potluck.

The trend is also turning up in ads, charity promotions, Evites and even on a cruise ship, with Royal Caribbean's *Harmony of the Seas* ship hosting a Friendsgiving celebration for passengers two weeks before Thanksgiving this year. This fall's premiere issue of *The Magnolia Journal*, a magazine from HGTV's "Fixer Upper" stars Chip and Joanna Gaines, also featured a story about Friendsgiving.

And while Americans have long celebrated Thanksgiving with friends when they couldn't be with family - whether they were living abroad, at college or in the military - Friendsgivings aren't usually replacements for traditional family gatherings. Instead, Friendsgivings are held in addition to the traditional Thursday turkey dinner, specifically scheduled on a different day so as not to conflict with family get-togethers.

New Yorker Hannah Redfield says she and her 20-something friends are "really into" Friendsgiving, which they've celebrated since 2014. She calls it "a millennial-driven interpretation of Thanksgiving. This demographic of people isn't as concerned with preparing the traditional Thanksgiving meal but is looking for an excuse to celebrate friendship. In my experience, people aren't necessarily expected to show up with solely mashed potatoes, stuffing, cranberry sauce, etc." Instead, they bring everything from cheese fries to spaghetti squash - "whatever they could muster or afford with entry-level salaries."

Breaking traditions

Nina Foley of Chicago agrees that Friendsgivings offer an opportunity to break traditions: "While a family Thanksgiving would never allow for anything other than traditional canned cranberry, creamed corn casserole or green beans, because it's Friendsgiving, we have the freedom to get creative." One friend in her group went to culinary school and includes ingredients with his gourmet turkey that "none of us ever saw on our plates as kids - figs, preserved oranges, fried sage!"

Friendsgivings are also often more like parties than staid sit-down dinners. There are Friendsgiving pajama parties, and themed events with arts and crafts or games. Michelle Platt is hosting her third Friendsgiving this year - a potluck - in Briarcliff Manor, New York, for friends from college who are now in their 40s. "We almost all have kids, so I hire a babysitter to watch them so we can have some adult time,"

she said. Platt uses the online invitation service Evite for her Friendsgiving and noted that "the first year was slim pickings for invite designs, but now there are a lot to choose from." Evite reports a 29 percent increase this year over last in the number of events that its Friendsgiving designs are being used for, totaling in the thousands.

Some Friendsgivings double as fundraisers, with hosts inviting guests to support a good cause. A charity called No Kid Hungry, which focuses on ending childhood hunger by connecting kids to the meals

Fritinancy, that Friendsgiving first turned up online in 2004 and was popularized in part by a 2013 Taco Bell promotion. Some people think the term is connected to the TV sitcom "Friends," which was famous for its annual Thanksgiving-with-friends episodes, but Friedman doesn't think the word was ever used on the show, which ended in 2004. Danielle Paleafico, 29, started hosting Friendsgiving five years ago in one of her first apartments after college, and now it's grown into an all-day, drop-in event for 30 to 40 friends at her home in Morristown, New Jersey.



This photo provided by Royal Caribbean International shows guests gathered for a Friendsgiving celebration at sea aboard the Royal Caribbean cruise ship *Harmony of the Seas*.

they need, offered a Friendsgiving fundraising option last year and raised \$28,000 from some 50 participants. This year, No Kid Hungry has registered 1,400 Friendsgiving fundraisers, raising \$78,000 so far. Hosts ask guests for donations or charge for a specific cocktail or treat.

First apartments

Kory Stamper, associate editor for Merriam-Webster, says the term "Friendsgiving" hasn't yet made it into the company's dictionary, but "it's a good candidate for future inclusion." She says Friendsgiving started being used around 2007, with boosts from a 2011 Bailey's Irish Cream ad and also from a "Real Housewives of New Jersey" episode.

Branding expert Nancy Friedman said on her blog,

"We watch football, I make turkey, all the usual side dishes, homemade pasta and meatballs, dessert, etc.," she said. "Everyone usually brings a dish and a bottle of wine or beer and we all just come together casually, watch the games, catch up and enjoy each other." Timing is important: She picks a date before the real Thanksgiving, and then "we all go our separate ways for the holiday and give thanks with our own families." — AP



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Deeply rooted passions fuel your desire to connect with someone you love today. However, it may be tricky to articulate exactly what you want; you could miss your opportunity if you can't put your thoughts into words right now. But be wary of fabricating an emotional pipe dream because you might end up fooling yourself more than anyone else. Flights of fancy can be fun, but they're not a substitute for the truth. Keep it real when it comes to matters of the heart.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Contradictions abound today, making it exceptionally difficult to find your way as you drift through uncharted waters. Logical Mercury's square to indefinite Neptune widens the gulf between your ideals and the practical world in which you must exist. No matter what happens now, open your mind to imagine new goals, even if your actions are currently restrained. Aerosmith sang, "Dream on. Dream until your dreams come true."



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Explaining your thought process can be particularly problematic today, especially if you're talking with a pragmatic person who wants you to deal strictly in numbers and facts. However, imagination is at the forefront of your world as psychic images and fleeting impressions flood your mind. If your creative ideas aren't given an enthusiastic reception now, hold onto them until someone arrives who is capable of understanding your bold vision. French author La Rochefoucauld wrote, "Narrow-minded people generally condemn what is beyond their comprehension."



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

It's easy to misread a situation today and accept responsibility for more than you can handle. Mental Mercury on its journey through farseeing Sagittarius squares illusory Neptune, inspiring you to make grandiose promises that you struggle to keep. You are itching to speak, even if you're unsure of your intentions. Beginning a heartfelt conversation could be a blessing if you're motivated by a deep desire for the truth. But if you are expressing dissatisfaction, you might push someone away. You don't need a pile of instructions when your intuition will work better than the facts.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Your optimism about a creative project may be off the charts today, but you could be overstating your position simply to make your point. You might confuse your coworkers if you sound more certain than you actually are now. But it's not your responsibility to manage everyone else's expectations. Be true to your heart and give others enough room to do the same. Respect people's feelings; even if it doesn't mean much to you, it could mean everything to them.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

A small difference of opinion can balloon into a major disagreement today. Unfortunately, the communication planet's square to fantasy-prone Neptune promotes exaggeration when feelings are presented as facts. Nevertheless, you're able to keep your head in the clouds if your feet are solidly planted back on earth. Warren Buffett said, "I don't look to jump over seven-foot bars; I look around for one-foot bars that I can step over."



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Make sure you stick to the facts today because cerebral Mercury's confident square with confusing Neptune lures you into the least certain realms of your imagination. Unfortunately, your unbridled enthusiasm can trick you as well as others. Your sense of perception might be warped and you won't even know it until you check out your conclusions with someone you trust. Futurist Elon Musk wrote, "I think it's very important to have a feedback loop, where you're constantly thinking about what you've done and how you could be doing it better."



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Your stories might have very little in common with reality today, yet you could go on denying that something is amiss. However, your outlook on life is distorted by fantasy while Mercury the Winged Messenger flies through adventurous Sagittarius and squares blurry Neptune. What you say and what you hear now is likely disconnected from the truth. Nevertheless, you know what you want and imagine that your satisfaction will be found just around the next corner. Don't worry if people misjudge you; you'll be fine as long as you hold onto your integrity.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You could lose your temper today if you believe that someone recently undermined your efforts. However, it's nearly impossible to prove that others don't have your best interests at heart. Thankfully, the pieces begin to fall into place when a close friend steps forward to help you see the current situation in a more positive light. Finally, you gain the motivation to transform lingering fear of the unknown into trust in the cosmos. Author Victor Hugo writes, "There is nothing like a dream to create the future."



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Someone may awaken you to the inspiration potential of your imagination when communicator Mercury in your 12th House of Soul Consciousness squares illusory Neptune. You're more curious now about all aspects of metaphysics, even if you're not usually focused on spiritual matters. Give your mind permission to roam through unfamiliar territory. Author Gary Zukav wrote, "What is behind your eyes holds more power than what is in front of them."



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

No matter what kind of action you take now, it either feels like you aren't doing enough or like you're doing too much. It's nearly impossible to know the amount of pressure to apply to influence reality in your favor. Oddly, you might have trouble getting your bearings but there's no reason to be overly concerned. The outcome of even the simplest conversation is unpredictable today, because everything twists and turns in unexpected ways. Author Roald Dahl wrote, "Those who don't believe in magic will never find it."



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Discriminating between wishful thinking and realistic possibilities is the most important task before you now. Your judgment is blurred by your own dreams as a magical mystical weekend starts off with an enchanted evening. Don't make any major commitments or take what you hear today too seriously. Promises made in the heat of the moment may not stick long enough to matter in the long run. Indulge your imagination without doing anything you might later regret.

COUNTRY CODES

Afghanistan	0093	Jamaica	001876
Albania	00355	Japan	0081
Algeria	00213	Jordan	00962
Andorra	00376	Kazakhstan	007
Angola	00244	Kenya	00254
Anguilla	001264	Kiribati	00686
Antigua	001268	Kuwait	00965
Argentina	0054	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Armenia	00374	Laos	00856
Australia	0061	Latvia	00371
Austria	0043	Lebanon	00961
Azerbaijan	00994	Liberia	00231
Bahamas	001242	Libya	00218
Bahrain	00973	Lesotho	00266
Bangladesh	00880	Lithuania	00370
Barbados	001246	Luxembourg	00352
Belarus	00375	Macau	00853
Belgium	0032	Macedonia	00389
Belize	00501	Madagascar	00261
Benin	00229	Majorca	0034
Bermuda	001441	Malawi	00265
Bhutan	00975	Malaysia	0060
Bolivia	00591	Maldives	00960
Bosnia	00387	Mali	00223
Botswana	00267	Malta	00356
Brazil	0055	Marshall Islands	00692
Brunei	00673	Martinique	00596
Bulgaria	00359	Mauritania	00222
Burkina	00226	Mauritius	00230
Burundi	00257	Mayotte	00269
Cambodia	00855	Mexico	0052
Cameroon	00237	Micronesia	00691
Canada	001	Moldova	00373
Cape Verde	00238	Monaco	00377
Cayman Islands	001345	Mongolia	00976
Central African	00236	Montserrat	001664
Chad	00235	Morocco	00212
Chile	0056	Mozambique	00258
China	0086	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Colombia	0057	Namibia	00264
Comoros	00269	Nepal	00977
Congo	00242	Netherlands	0031
Cook Islands	00682	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Costa Rica	00506	New Caledonia	00687
Croatia	00385	New Zealand	0064
Cuba	0053	Nicaragua	00505
Cyprus	00357	Niger	00227
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Nigeria	00234
Czech Republic	00420	Niue	00683
Denmark	0045	Norfolk Island	00672
Diego Garcia	00246	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
Djibouti	00253	North Korea	00850
Dominica	001767	Norway	0047
Dominican Republic	001809	Oman	00968
Ecuador	00593	Pakistan	0092
Egypt	0020	Palau	00680
El Salvador	00503	Panama	00507
England (UK)	0044	Papua New Guinea	00675
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Paraguay	00595
Eritrea	00291	Peru	0051
Estonia	00372	Philippines	0063
Ethiopia	00251	Poland	0048
Falkland Islands	00500	Portugal	00351
Faroe Islands	00298	Puerto Rico	001787
Fiji	00679	Qatar	00974
Finland	00358	Romania	0040
France	0033	Russian Federation	007
French Guiana	00594	Rwanda	00250
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Helena	00290
Gabon	00241	Saint Kitts	001869
Gambia	00220	Saint Lucia	001758
Georgia	00995	Saint Pierre	00508
Germany	0049	Saint Vincent	001784
Ghana	00233	Samoa US	00684
Gibraltar	00350	Samoa West	00685
Greece	0030	San Marino	00378
Greenland	00299	Sao Tome	00239
Grenada	001473	Saudi Arabia	00966
Guadeloupe	00590	Scotland (UK)	0044
Guam	001671	Senegal	00221
Guatemala	00502	Seychelles	00284
Guinea	00224	Sierra Leone	00232
Guyana	00592	Singapore	0065
Haiti	00509	Slovakia	00421
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Slovenia	00386
Honduras	00504	Solomon Islands	00677
Hong Kong	00852	Somalia	00252
Hungary	0036	South Africa	0027
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	South Korea	0082
Iceland	00354	Spain	0034
India	0091	Sri Lanka	0094
Indian Ocean	00873	Sudan	00249
Indonesia	0062	Suriname	00597
Iran	0098	Swaziland	00268
Iraq	00964	Sweden	0046
Ireland	00353	Switzerland	0041
Italy	0039	Syria	00963
Ivory Coast	00225	Serbia	00381

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Insects

Find and circle all of the insects that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional insect.

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

- ANTS
- EARWIG
- MOSQUITO
- APHID
- FIREFLY
- MOTH
- BEDBUG
- FLEA
- SILKWORM
- BEETLE
- FLIES
- SILVERFISH
- BUMBLEBEE
- HORNET
- TERMITE
- BUTTERFLY
- LACEWING
- THRIP
- CATERPILLAR
- LADYBUG
- TICKS
- CICADA
- LICE
- WASP
- COCKROACH
- LOCUST
- WEEVIL
- CRICKET
- MAYFLY
- WORMS
- DRAGONFLY

CROSSWORD 1434



ACROSS

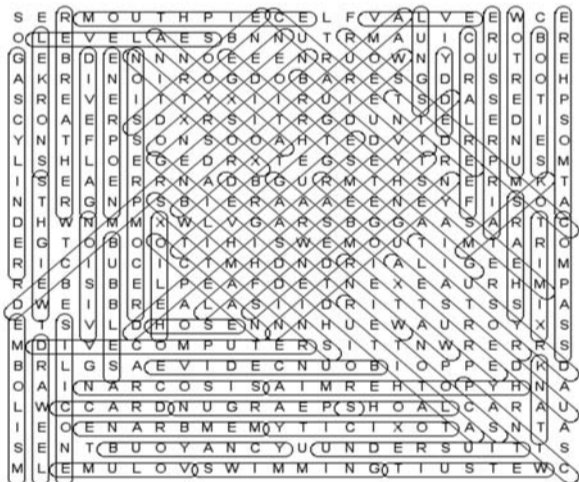
1. The compass point that is one point south of due west.
4. A resident of Alabama.
12. Rare (usually fatal) brain disease (usually in middle age) caused by an unidentified slow virus.
15. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
16. A city in southern Japan on Kyushu.
17. 10 hao equal 1 dong.
18. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
19. Fungus used in the preparation of punk for fuses.
20. Paper with a crinkled texture.
22. A sock with a separation for the big toe.
24. A master's degree in business.
26. Sustentacular tissue that surrounds and supports neurons in the central nervous system.
29. A river that rises in central Germany and flows north to join the Elbe River.
36. Great coolness and composure under strain.
37. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
38. A tenant who holds a lease.
40. Back and sides of a hog salted and dried or smoked.
41. The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
43. Hormones (estrogen and progesterone) are given to postmenopausal women.
44. (informal) Of the highest quality.
45. A public promotion of some product or service.
47. Legal document setting forth rules governing a particular kind of activity.
50. A collection of objects laid on top of each other.
52. A state in midwestern United States.
54. Of or relating to or characteristic of Angola or its people.
56. Any of various spiny trees or shrubs of the genus Acacia.
60. (of drugs) Through the mouth rather than through injection.
61. A medicinal drug used to evoke vomiting (especially in cases of drug overdose or poisoning).
64. Depressing in character or appearance.
66. Loose-fitting nightclothes worn for sleeping or lounging.
68. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
69. Largest known toad species.
73. The compass point midway between south and southeast.

DOWN

74. A palace and fortress built in Granada by the Moslems in the Middle Ages.
78. How long something has existed.
79. Greenwich Mean Time updated with leap seconds.
80. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
81. The United Nations agency concerned with the interests of labor.
82. The seventh and last day of the week.
83. A mountain peak in south central Sri Lanka (7,360 feet high).
84. Belonging to or on behalf of a specified person (especially yourself).
1. A long flag.
2. English monk and scholar (672-735).
3. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
4. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
5. The act of slowing down or falling behind.
6. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
7. An aggressive remark directed at a person like a missile and intended to have a telling effect.
8. The largest continent with 60% of the earth's population.
9. (British) A waterproof raincoat made of rubberized fabric.
10. A state in northwestern North America.
11. A rechargeable battery with a nickel cathode and a cadmium anode.
12. A Hindu disciple of a swami.
13. A humorous anecdote or remark.
14. A person who acts and gets things done.
21. Gymnastic apparatus consisting of a pair of heavy metal circles (usually covered with leather) suspended by ropes.
23. An Eskimo hut.
25. City in Sudan.
27. Minute aquatic herbs floating on or below the water surface of still water consisting of a leaflike frond or plant body and single root.
28. A soft heavy toxic malleable metallic element.
30. With rapid movements.
31. Genus of erect herbs of the Middle East having showy flowers.
32. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
33. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
34. Communicated in the form of words.
35. Clinical neurological syndrome characterized by muscular twitching and cramps and (when severe) seizures.
39. Be going to.
42. A group of African language in the Niger-Congo group spoken from the Ivory Coast east to Nigeria.
46. One species.
48. A city in northern India.
49. Sluggish tailless Australian arboreal marsupial with gray furry ears and coat.
51. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
53. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
55. The center point on a shield.
57. Any of several plants of the genus Camassia.
58. A state in the Rocky Mountains.
59. The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
62. Shaped and dried dough made from flour and water and sometimes egg.
63. Put out or expel from a place.
65. A native-born Israeli.
67. Adopted in order to deceive.
70. (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
71. Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
72. (in Gnosticism) A divine power or nature emanating from the Supreme Being and playing various roles in the operation of the universe.
75. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
76. The force of workers available.
77. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

Yesterday's Solution

SCUBA Diving



- AIR PRESSURE
- CURRENT
- HYPOTHERMIA
- RECOMPRESSION
- TIDE
- ALTITUDE DIVING
- DECOMPRESSION
- LEEWARD
- REGULATOR
- TOXICITY
- ANOXIA
- DEPTH GAUGE
- LUNGS
- SCOOTER
- TRIMIX
- ATMOSPHERE
- DIVE COMPUTER
- MASK
- SEA LEVEL
- UNDERSEA
- BAROTRAUMA
- DIVE FLAG
- MEMBRANE
- SHEARS
- UNDERSUIT
- BOOTIES
- DIVE MARSHAL
- MOUTHPIECE
- SHOAL
- UNDERTOW
- BOUNCE DIVE
- DRYSUIT
- NARCOSIS
- SILICONE
- VALVE
- BUBBLES
- EDDY
- NEOPRENE
- SNORKEL
- VISION
- BUDDY SYSTEM
- EMBOLISM
- NITROGEN
- SPEAR GUN
- VOLUME
- BUOYANCY
- GAS CYLINDER
- NITROX
- STROBE
- WATER
- C CARD
- GAS MIXTURE
- OCEAN
- SWIM FINS
- WEIGHT BELT
- COMPASS
- GIANT STRIDE
- OXYGEN
- SWIMMING
- WEIGHTS
- COMPRESSOR
- HELIOX
- PANIC
- TANK
- WETSUIT
- CORAL REEF
- HOSE
- REBREATHER
- THE BENDS
- WINDWARD

The hidden message is: SELF CONTAINED UNDERWATER BREATHING APPARATUS

Daily SuDoku

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

medium

Yesterday's Solution

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

easy

Yesterday's Solution

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

AUSTRALIAN EUTHANASIA LAW LOSES BY SINGLE PARLIAMENT VOTE

ADELAIDE, Australia: An attempt to legalize voluntary euthanasia in an Australian state was defeated by a single vote in parliament yesterday. The South Australian Parliament rejected the bill yesterday 24 votes to 23, after a heated overnight debate.

South Australia almost became the only Australian state or territory to allow assisted suicide.

Australia's Northern Territory became one of the world's first jurisdictions to legalize mercy killing in 1996. Renowned pro-euthanasia doctor Philip Nitschke helped four people die before the Australian Parliament overturned the law in 1997.

While the Australian Parliament can overturn territories' laws, it does not have the same power over state laws. South Australia Premier Jay Weatherill said yesterday he felt "gutted" by the defeat. But he was sure a new bill would be introduced in time.

The bill was introduced by an opposition lawmaker last month. The major parties do not have policy positions on euthanasia, so lawmakers were given a rare opportunity to vote according to their consciences rather than along party lines. The original bill required patients to have a terminal illness and to be suffering unbearable pain that could not be relieved before they could access medical help to end their lives.

They also needed to have their decision endorsed by at least two doctors. Several amendments were passed to tighten access to assisted suicide during the debate, including by making mental health assessments mandatory. The Australian Christian Lobby, a lobby group, described the amended bill as a "cobbled-together compromise" and welcomed its defeat. "As a just and compassionate society, we can find better ways to deal with the suffering which does not draw us into providing state-sanctioned killing," the lobby's managing director Lyle Shelton said.—AP

PAKISTANI DOCTOR TRANSPLANTS HOPE TO MILLIONS FOR FREE ALTERNATIVE TO PUBLIC HEALTH SECTOR

KARACHI: Camped on the baking concrete outside a gleaming transplant centre, Karachi's sick have come from miles around in desperate hope for a last chance at life.

There, Dr Adibul Rizvi provides free medical care to hundreds of thousands of people each year, providing a much-needed alternative to Pakistan's public health sector, which critics dismiss as chaotic, corrupt and vastly under-resourced.

Rizvi, with a thatch of white hair as springy as his step, roams the crowded halls of his life's work every day from 8:00 in the morning until midnight or later, visiting the bedsides of patients—children, criminals, VIPs alike. At 79 he is fuelled by love of his job, his enthusiasm evident as he recounts his 42-year odyssey from starting with an eight-bed ward to building one of the largest treatment networks in South Asia.

The achievement cannot be understated. His Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT) is funded largely by charitable donations, some as small as 100 rupees (\$1) at a time, and has treated millions of people over the last four decades.

More than 300 transplants and 260,000 dialysis sessions were carried out in 2015 alone, with follow-up treatments and medications provided for as long as it takes—all entirely for free. "Governments in a developing country... they cannot afford a state-of-the-

art health service," says Rizvi, describing the unimaginable poverty that staff in some of his 10 health centres across the country encounter.

The government does give money, its funding accounts for some 30 percent of SIUT's budget, but not enough



KARACHI: In this photograph taken on August 3, 2016, Pakistani doctor Adibul Rizvi, head of the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT), speaks during an interview with AFP.—AFP

to fulfil Rizvi's philosophy that "every human being... has got a right to access healthcare, to live with dignity".

The solution? Rizvi, inspired by Britain's National Health Service, "went to everyone, and we made them partner". But, when SIUT was founded in 1974, convincing Pakistanis to donate their hard-earned money for such a mission in the conservative Muslim country was a challenge.

While the giving of zakat, or charity, is one of the five pillars of Islam, many believed organ donation went against sharia, or Islamic law. No organs; no transplants. To break the impasse, Rizvi had to get the clerics on his side. "Luckily they all agreed... that organ donation is quite Islamic and should be done," he says—though with the caveats that all heirs must agree to the donation, and that a Muslim's organs could not be transplanted into the body of a non-Muslim. Even so, a lack of awareness in Pakistan about the value of organ donation is "pushing back our progress", Rizvi admits.

Next target: cancer

Pakistanis who enter SIUT's main centre in Karachi are taken aback by its spotlessness and efficiency, traits virtually absent in many of the country's other hospitals.

In a bright paediatric ward the young patients receive dialysis, resting on white sheets set off by sky-blue walls painted with cheerful murals. Roaming the ward is medical social worker Sanobar Ambreen, who describes her job as keeping the patients "calm and cool" throughout the uncomfortable procedure with music classes, paintings, even talent quests. Children face an added hurdle: coming to the hospital at least twice a week for hours on end can see them drop out of school entirely, she says.—AFP

CLINIC
PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
د. فهد علي المخيزيم
Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM

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

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Pedro Domingo Dias s/o Domingo Dias holder of Indian Passport No. G3441110 and Civil ID No. 268113001912 has changed my name Pedru Domingo Diasy to Pedro Domingo Dias herein after in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Pedro Domingo Dias. (C 5233)

I, Jujar Abbasbhai Dahodwala s/o Abbasbhai Dahodwala holder of Indian Passport No. H8465779 and Civil ID No. 268111401621 has change my surname to Jujar Abbasbhai Dalrotiwala here in after. In all my dealings and documents I will be known by name of Jujar Abbasbhai Dalrotiwala. (C 5231)

I, Shaik Mushtaq s/o Shaik Yousuf holder of Indian Passport No. G3955355 Civil ID No. 276030802124 has changed my name to Shaik Mukthar herein after in all my dealings and docements. I will be known by name of Shaik Mukthar s/o Shaik Yousuf. (C 5232) 16-11-2016

I, NAZEEMA MOHAMMED holder of Indian Passport No. L-4904837 and Civil ID No. 278022005597 has changed my name from NAZEEMA MOHAMMED to NASIMUNNISA hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of NASIMUNNISA. (C 5234) 17-11-2016

EMERGENCY 112

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr: 04:46
Shorook 06:07
Duhr: 11:32
Asr: 14:35
Maghrib: 16:56
Isha: 18:15

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- 2. AL JABRIYA AREA**
 ♦ Featured Site
 ♦ Near Royale Hayat Hospital
- 3. AL SALMIYA (Hamad Al Mubarak Street)**
 ♦ Features Site, Near from Al Mowasat Hospital, near from seaside.
- 4. AL SALMIYA (Amman Street)**
 ♦ Featured Site, near from Fifth Ring Road

All Apartments with Furnished and Unfurnished For Inquiries, please call: 96671717 - 95554549



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (17/11/2016 TO 23/11/2016)

SHARQIA-1 ATTEJ (Kuwaiti Film) BLEED FOR THIS TROLLS ATTEJ (Kuwaiti Film) ATTEJ (Kuwaiti Film) ATTEJ (Kuwaiti Film) BLEED FOR THIS	12:30 PM 2:15 PM 4:45 PM 6:45 PM 8:45 PM 10:30 PM 12:15 AM	FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM	3:00 PM 5:45 PM 8:45 PM 11:30 PM	FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM -3D -4DX FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM -3D -4DX (2D+3D+4DX) FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM -3D -4DX FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM -3D -4DX	3:00 PM 5:45 PM 8:30 PM 11:15 PM
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MUHALAB-1 FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM TROLLS ATTEJ (Kuwaiti Film) ATTEJ (Kuwaiti Film) FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM ATTEJ (Kuwaiti Film)	11:30 AM 2:00 PM 4:45 PM 6:45 PM 8:30 PM 10:15 PM 1:00 AM	FANAR-5 BLEED FOR THIS TROLLS BLEED FOR THIS GHOST COINS GHOST COINS BLEED FOR THIS	1:00 PM 3:30 PM 5:30 PM 8:00 PM 10:00 PM 12:15 AM	360°2 RAVEN THE LITTLE RASCAL- THE BIG RACE RAVEN THE LITTLE RASCAL- THE BIG RACE RAVEN THE LITTLE RASCAL- THE BIG RACE RAVEN THE LITTLE RASCAL- THE BIG RACE SHUT IN OPERATION CHROMITE OPERATION CHROMITE	12:30 PM 2:15 PM 4:00 PM 6:00 PM 8:15 PM 10:15 PM 12:45 AM
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FANAR-2 FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM	12:15 PM	AVENUES-1 JACK REACHER: NEVER GO BACK DOCTOR STRANGE JACK REACHER: NEVER GO BACK FORCE 2 - Hindi AE DIL HAI MUSHKIL -Hindi FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM	11:30 AM 2:00 PM 4:15 PM 6:45 PM 9:15 PM 12:30 AM	AL-KOUT.3 BLEED FOR THIS BLEED FOR THIS FRI BLEED FOR THIS BLEED FOR THIS FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM -3D BLEED FOR THIS	1:15 PM 1:30 PM 3:45 PM 6:15 PM 8:45 PM 11:30 PM
		AVENUES-2 FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM -3D -4DX	12:15 PM		

Friday Times BUSINESS

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2016



Modi govt draws flak as currency crisis deepens

PHILIPPINES' ROBUST Q3 GDP GROWTH BEATS EXPECTATIONS

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DOHA: Mohammed bin Saleh Al-Sada (C), Qatar's Energy Minister and Seyed Mohammad Hossein Adeli (L), GECF Secretary General are seen during the 18th Ministerial Meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) in the capital Doha yesterday. — AFP

SAUDI URGES OPEC TO CUT OUTPUT TO 32.5M BPD

QATAR ASKING IRAN, IRAQ TO FREEZE OIL OUTPUT AT CURRENT LEVELS

RIYADH: Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said yesterday that OPEC should cut oil output to 32.5 million barrels per day (bpd), the lower end of a previously agreed range, to balance the market. Falih, speaking to Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya TV, said he was optimistic that the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries would formalize a preliminary oil output deal reached in Algeria in September.

He said the oil market was on a path towards becoming balanced and that "reaching (a decision) to activate that ceiling of 32.5 million bpd will speed up the (market) recovery and will benefit producers and consumers".

Meanwhile, Qatar's Energy Minister Mohammed Al-Sada said yesterday that Iran and Iraq were being asked to freeze oil output at current levels as part of a wider deal to restrain production.

"We are discussing with both countries on that and we are looking at various ways and means of coming to a mutual understanding," Sada told reporters.

OPEC agreed in Algeria on Sept 28 to limit supply with special conditions given to Libya, Nigeria and Iran, whose output has been hit by wars and sanctions. The details are meant to be finalized when OPEC ministers meet in Vienna on Nov 30. Falih and other ministers have said previously that OPEC would reduce output to a range of 32.5-33.0 million bpd.

"I'm still optimistic that the consensus reached in Algeria for capping production will translate, God willing, into caps on states' levels and fair and balanced cuts among countries," Falih said. He said talks were ongoing

with Qatar's Energy Minister Mohammed Al-Sada, who had invited him to Qatar to continue discussions.

A number of OPEC energy ministers are likely to meet informally in Doha today to try to build consensus over decisions taken by the full group in September in Algiers. Russia is ready to support OPEC's decision on an output freeze and sees a good chance that the oil producer group can agree terms by Nov 30, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said on Wednesday.

Falih told Al-Arabiya that he hoped an agreement with Russia to cooperate on market stability would correspond with OPEC's meeting on Nov 30 in Vienna.

Crude prices rise

Oil prices rose yesterday as expectations of an OPEC deal to limit production outweighed growing evidence of global oversupply and rising inventories, particularly in the United States.

Brent crude oil was up 60 cents a barrel at \$47.23 by 1120 GMT. U.S. light crude was up 50 cents at \$46.07. US crude inventories rose by 5.3 million barrels in the week to Nov. 11, well above forecasts of an increase of 1.5 million barrels, data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration showed on Wednesday.

Stocks are also rising elsewhere, thanks to record output by OPEC, which pumps around 40 percent of world oil supply. "The name of the game is 'volatility' as confusing signals are arriving before OPEC meets," said Tamas Varga, senior analyst at London brokerage PVM Oil

Associates. "We have evidence of oversupply - US stocks rising - versus hopes for some action by OPEC."

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said on Wednesday OPEC countries are ready to reach a "forceful" agreement on cutting oil output. Maduro met OPEC Secretary-General Mohammed Barkindo in Caracas to discuss a possible OPEC deal. Russia has also expressed willingness to support an OPEC decision to freeze output, Russian Energy Minister

Alexander Novak said. But rising oil production and changing fundamentals "make a credible OPEC cut all the more difficult to achieve", Jason Gammel, analyst at US investment bank Jefferies, said.

"The physical market has shifted back to oversupply because of surging OPEC output, with the most material increases driven by improving security conditions in Libya and (tenuously) Nigeria," he said. Jefferies expects Brent to average \$58 a barrel next year. — Reuters



DOHA: Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak (C) arrives to attend the 18th Ministerial Meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) in Doha yesterday. — AFP

YELLEN SKETCHES A ROSY PICTURE OF US ECONOMY

FED CHAIR POINTS TO DECEMBER RATE HIKE

WASHINGTON: Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen sketched a picture yesterday of a US economy that's still not at full health but is showing enough gains in hiring and growth to raise expectations that the Fed will raise interest rates in December. In prepared testimony to a congressional committee, Yellen notes that the Fed concluded at its meeting early this month that the case for boosting its benchmark rate had strengthened and that an increase "could well become appropriate relatively soon."

Yellen, in her testimony, points out that the job market has made further improvement this year and that inflation, while still below the Fed's 2 percent target, has started to pick up. With investors and economists expecting the Fed to boost rates, Yellen notes that further delaying a rate increase would present its own risks.

The Fed chair's answers later to questions from Congress' Joint Economic Committee will be scrutinized for any hints of what action the central bank will announce at its meeting in mid-December.

Yellen is also sure to be asked about President-elect Donald Trump's plans for tax cuts and infrastructure spending - and their likely effects on government deficits. Since Trump's election victory last week, investors have driven up long-term bond yields in anticipation that his



WASHINGTON: Secretary of the Treasury and Council Chairperson Jack Lew speaks during the Financial Stability Oversight Council along with Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen, at the Treasury Department in Washington on Wednesday. — AP

economic proposals would increase federal debt and elevate inflation. The president-elect's idea to spend more to upgrade roads, bridges and airports,

though, in general mirrors Yellen's frequent point that Congress should act to supplement what the Fed has done through low rates to encourage spending and spur growth.

Trump's election could affect Yellen's Fed in other ways, too. The president-elect will be able to fill two vacant seats on the Fed's seven-member board, which wields outside power on the panel that sets rate policy. The board has, like Yellen herself, long favored a go-slow approach to rate increases. Trump's new appointees potentially could affect that consensus.

Next month, if it the Fed raises rates as expected, it will be its first move since December of last year, when it raised its key rate from a record low near zero, where it had been for seven years. The December meeting will include a news conference by Yellen, when she will be able to explain the Fed's action and perhaps provide guidance on how many further rate increases it foresees in 2017.

As measured by the gross domestic product, the economy grew at a 2.9 percent annual rate in the July-September quarter, the government has estimated, more than twice the rate in the April-June quarter. The unemployment rate is 4.9 percent, around the level typical of a healthy economy, down from 10 percent in 2009.

The housing market, whose meltdown triggered the 2008 financial crisis and the recession, has largely recovered, though. Still, the sharply higher bond yields that have followed Trump's election, if they continue, would mean higher mortgage rates that could depress home purchases. Even so, stronger economic growth and a recent uptick in inflation have bolstered the argument of Fed officials who have been pushing for a rate hike. — AP

AS MERCURY SOARS, ZIMBABWE'S FARMERS TEST MAIZE THAT CAN COPE

ZAKA DISTRICT, Zimbabwe: Aplonia Marutsvaka looks triumphant as she shows off one of her three bags of gleaming white maize. She harvested the grain in the midst of a drought and sapping heat that charred many other types of crop. The secret of her successful harvest is simple: A type of maize seed that has been bred to tolerate high temperatures. "It has never been this hot, but (this) variety of maize performs well in the heat," said the 62-year-old Marutsvaka. "I am preparing my maize field to plant it again."

Marutsvaka is hopeful the new variety will continue to ensure her a harvest even as temperatures soar above 30 degrees Celsius here in Masvingo Province and across Zimbabwe.

Maize is the key ingredient for sadza, a stiff porridge that is the national staple food. Worried about the projected impact of increasing heat on maize as a result of climate change, researchers at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and the Research Program on Maize of CGIAR, a global agricultural research organization, have bred heat-tolerant varieties of maize.

The seeds, developed over the past five years with funding from the US Agency for International Development, have been trialled by farmers in Algeria, Egypt, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and

Zimbabwe. For more than five years, drought-tolerant seeds have been available through a partnership between CIMMYT and the Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa project. Used in combination with good agricultural practices, they have performed better than other hybrid seeds, their backers say.

FACING HEAT AND DROUGHT

The new heat-tolerant seeds also have drought-tolerant characteristics, making them especially attractive to farmers in semi-arid areas like Zimbabwe's Masvingo Province which receives no more than 600mm of rainfall annually. Marutsvaka is one of the farmers who have tested the new maize variety, and she says it has worked in her fields. "In the last two seasons, I got nothing from my field," she explained. "All the maize plants shrivelled in the heat. But this season I harvested three 50kg bags and two 20-litre tins (40kg) of white maize."

"The flour pounds well and the sadza tastes so good," she added. Farmer Karikoga Muromo harvested 200kg of maize last season using the heat-tolerant seeds. He said the new variety works best when combined with farming practices such as planting the seeds on raised ridges of soil and keeping a careful record of rainfall patterns to know the best time to plant. — Reuters

News

in brief

Bahrain CB says no plans to issue bonds now

DUBAI: Bahrain's central bank said yesterday that it has no current plans to issue either conventional or Islamic bonds. "The Central Bank of Bahrain has no current intention to issue debt, either conventional or Islamic, at this time," a spokesman for the bank told Reuters. Quoting banking sources, Reuters reported on Wednesday that the kingdom was in talks with lenders about making an international issue of sukuk. The issue was expected in the first quarter of 2017, the sources said.

Egypt removes white sugar import tariffs until May 30

CAIRO: Egypt removed a 20 percent import tariff on white sugar imports effective Nov. 10 to May 30, a prime minister decree published in the country's official gazette said yesterday. The tariff has impeded private importers securing supplies and has contributed to Egypt's sugar shortage crisis. Egypt's supply minister on Nov. 3 announced the tariff would be slashed but traders have waited for an official decree.

Turkey's CB to boost forex liquidity

ISTANBUL: Turkey's central bank will boost forex liquidity to financial markets by making changes to reserve option coefficients, it said in a statement yesterday. The bank said some \$700 million of liquidity will be provided to the financial system should reserve option utilisation rates remain unchanged. The Turkish lira has hit a series of record lows in recent sessions, hit by both a resurgent dollar and concerns about domestic security issues.

Egypt's GASC to accept wheat tender offers

CAIRO: Egypt's General Authority for Supply Commodities (GASC) will accept offers for wheat from Paraguay, Hungary and Bulgaria in upcoming tenders, adding them to the list of permitted countries, traders told Reuters yesterday. GASC was not available for immediate comment. The state grain buyer's tenders have been dominated by Russian wheat this year.

BAHRAIN'S BAPCO IN TALKS WITH ECAS FOR REFINERY EXPANSION

DUBAI: Bahrain Petroleum Company (Bapco) is in talks with export credit agencies (ECAs) to finance the expansion of its Sitra oil refinery, a project estimated at around \$5 billion, sources familiar with the situation said yesterday.

The state-run Bahraini company is talking to seven or eight ECAs to back a component of the project financing, said one of the sources, who added that the financing could be finalised as early as the first half of next year. Bapco said in an emailed response to Reuters that it cannot disclose any information at this stage about the refinery expansion project until all formalities are finalised with all concerned parties.

BNP Paribas and HSBC are advising the company on the project financing, which according to one of the sources is expected to have an 18-year maturity, including a four-year construction period.

Bapco wants to increase the processing capacity of the Sitra oil refinery from the current 267,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 360,000 bpd. The companies that have formed consortia and submitted bids to work on the expansion include Japan's JGC Corp and South Korea's GS ; Technip, Tecnicas Reunidas and Samsung Engineering ; Fluor , Hyundai Engineering and Construction and Daewoo E&C; and CB&I and Petrofac, as previously reported. Wholly owned by the Government of Bahrain, Bapco's operations are in the refining, distribution, sale and export of crude oil and refined products. — Reuters

BRITAIN'S ROYAL MAIL TO CUT MORE COSTS AFTER PROFIT FALL

LONDON: Britain's Royal Mail Plc said it needs to cut more costs yesterday after the former state-owned monopoly's first-half profit dropped despite a stronger performance in Europe.

Royal Mail shares fell by 2.6 percent to 486.1 pence at 0812 GMT after it posted a 5 percent fall in first-half profit and said it aims to cut annual costs by 600 million pounds per year to March 2018, up from a 500 million target.

The group is cutting costs and modernizing its operations to gain a larger share of the parcels market as British households and businesses send fewer letters in an age of electronic communications and economic uncertainty. It has also been hurt by the loss of some business from Amazon, which recently started its own delivery network, while rivals such as UK Mail, which is being bought by Deutsche Post, have added extra capacity.

Royal Mail said the costs associated with the transformation of its UK business were now seen at 130 million to 160 million pounds for the year to March 2017, down from a previous forecast of around 160 million. It said the outcome for the full year will be dependent on its trading over the Christmas period, after operating profit before transformation costs fell to 320 million pounds in the half year to Sept. 25.

Jefferies analysts said in a note that Royal Mail's first-half profit was 8 percent below their expectation of 348 million pounds, driven by a deterioration of 6 percent in second-quarter letter volumes after Britain's vote to leave the European Union.

This was despite a one percent rise in revenue to 4.58 billion pounds, in line with its first-quarter growth, as strong trading conditions its continental European parcels unit continued to offset declines at home. "The key drivers for the UK letters and parcels markets remain unchanged. Letter volumes, particularly advertising letter volumes, are linked to movements in GDP and we are monitoring developments in the UK economy closely," it said. — Reuters



MANILA: A bird's eye view of two buildings under construction in Manila yesterday. The Philippines became developing Asia's fastest-growing major economy in President Rodrigo Duterte's first three months in office, officials said yesterday even as his fiery rhetoric hit the peso and stock prices. — AFP

PHILIPPINES' ROBUST Q3 GDP GROWTH BEATS EXPECTATIONS

GOVT LIKELY TO HIT 6-7 % GROWTH TARGET THIS YEAR

MANILA: The Philippine economy grew at its fastest pace in more than three years in July-September, most of President Rodrigo Duterte's first 100 days in office, setting him up to meet the ambitious target he set for the year.

Duterte's government was quick to take advantage of the favourable figures, saying they showed that the president "offers more than 'war on drugs'."

Duterte, a former prosecutor who was elected in May on promises of a fierce campaign against crime and illicit drugs, said in a speech yesterday that addressing corruption and criminality were the "building blocks of a strong and resilient economy." But the president's controversial comments, plus the uncertainty surrounding US labour and trade policies after the election of Donald Trump, have left the Philippines' economic outlook "much less certain," said Gareth Leather, senior Asia economist at Capital Economics in London.

"With Duterte in charge it is hard to rule out a sudden shift in economic policy or a disruption of the political stability that has characterized the last six years," Leather said in research note.

Duterte inherited an economy that has enjoyed 70 quarters of uninterrupted growth, buoyed mainly by domestic demand fuelled by remittances from migrant workers.

That momentum, further boosted by

election campaign spending in the first two quarters of the year, resulted in the third quarter's forecast-topping 7.1 percent growth.

Such rapid expansion made the Philippines the fastest-growing economy in Asia by far, outpacing even China. On a quarter-on-quarter basis, gross domestic product expanded 1.2 percent, the national statistics agency said, slightly above the 1.1 percent growth projected in a Reuters poll, but slower than the previous quarter's 2.1 percent.

"We are confident that we will grow within the 6-7 percent growth target," socio-economic planning director Reynaldo Cancio told a briefing.

Growth in the third quarter was supported by household consumption, which sustained its 7 percent-plus annual rate pace.

Fixed capital investment growth topped 20 percent, with public construction continuing its double-digit growth. Private construction grew a sharp 16.2 percent in the third quarter compared with 8.0 percent over April-June.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco said yesterday there was no need to adjust monetary policy at this time.

OUTLOOK UNCERTAIN

While it may be too early for

Duterte to take credit for the strong GDP result, it should give him a strong start, said Nomura economist Euben Paracuelles, noting investors would want to see signs that the momentum could be sustained. The 71-year-old Duterte has vowed to accelerate and raise infrastructure spending to lift growth to 7-8 percent during his six-year term, create more jobs and reduce poverty.

But the outspoken leader's anti-US rhetoric and brutal war on drugs, which has alarmed rights groups, are unnerving markets and foreign investors. The peso is hovering at near eight year lows while the stock market has nearly erased its gains this year.

Duterte's economic managers were quick to allay such concerns about Duterte's unpredictability and the resulting uncertainty, saying the government will aggressively push ahead with its infrastructure pledges. Duterte has approved the rollout of 500 billion pesos (\$10.12 billion) worth of roads, railways, airports and seaports to boost economic growth since he began his term on June 30.

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez said there would be no let-up in the government's commitment to spend heavily on urban and rural infrastructure to drive sustained, rapid and inclusive growth. — Reuters

FOREIGN BANKS SHAKEN BY MALAYSIA'S MOVE TO HALT CURRENCY SLIDE

HONG KONG/KUALA LUMPUR: Foreign banks in Malaysia yesterday were trying to work out how to comply with the central bank's clamp-down on offshore ringgit trading, a move the broader market views as a form of capital controls.

Form letters, sent this week from onshore banks to their offshore counterparts, asked compliance officers to sign commitments to cease trading the ringgit in the NDF markets and then send the letters back to Bank Negara, Reuters reported on Wednesday.

"There's a massive back and forth going on between banks and Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) now," said a banker at a foreign bank in Malaysia that deals in foreign currency transactions. "This is a type of indirect capital control ... I see a flood of people exiting Malaysia."

The ringgit had fallen nearly 1 percent yesterday to a fresh 11-month low of 4.3850 against the dollar. The offshore spreads in NDF markets widened, while bond yields shot higher with the 10-year benchmark yield trading 17 basis points up at 4.22 percent. It has risen nearly 60 basis points in the last week.

Investors typically use the liquid NDF markets in Singapore and Hong Kong to exchange ringgit for dollars because of the many restrictions in the domestic market. Singapore and Hong Kong are ranked third and fourth at \$517 billion and \$437 billion respectively on global daily average turnover of foreign exchange derivatives, according to the latest survey from the Bank of International Settlements. The United States and Britain are the top two.

'STATE OF LIMBO'

While Malaysia allows foreigners relatively open access to its domestic bond and stock markets, it prohibits any offshore trading of its currency or related derivatives. Some foreign banks said they were told their investments cannot be moved out of Malaysia if they don't sign the letter. The head of trading at a Western Bank in Hong Kong described the situation as "being in a state of limbo" due to the regulatory uncertainty. — Reuters



KOLKATA: A security guard checks fingers of customers for ink markings prior to allowing them to enter a bank to deposit or exchange discontinued currency notes in Kolkata yesterday. India's government said Tuesday that it will mark the fingers of people swapping scrapped currency notes at banks with indelible ink as authorities struggle to deal with the corruption and bedlam spawned by the demonetizing of the country's highest denomination currency. — AP

MODI GOVT DRAWS FLAK AS CURRENCY CRISIS DEEPENS

INDIA ACTS TO HELP FARMERS HIT BY CRACKDOWN

NEW DELHI: India's government yesterday announced some steps to ease a cash crunch for farmers amid widespread criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's shock decision to withdraw high-value bills in the middle of the sowing and wedding season.

Farmers have been left stranded as traders have no cash to pay for their produce, while millions of Indians lined up outside banks and post offices for the ninth day to exchange old banknotes or withdraw rationed money from their accounts.

Modi dropped a bombshell on Nov 8 by abolishing 500 and 1,000 rupee notes that accounted for 86 percent of cash in circulation. The move was aimed at cracking down on the shadow economy but has brought India's cash economy to a virtual standstill. In the latest in a series of ad hoc steps, Modi allowed farmers to withdraw up to 25,000 rupees (\$368) a week against their crop loans to ensure that sowing of winter crops "takes place properly", a senior finance ministry official said.

Economic Affairs Secretary Shaktikanta Das also said a time limit for farmers to pay crop insurance premiums has been extended by 15 days. Many of India's 260 million farmers have no bank accounts and depend on local money lenders to fund sowing, which means those that have to borrow to sow winter

crops like wheat or rapeseed could face debt trouble without a good harvest. But Das said families planning a wedding would now be able to withdraw up to 250,000 rupees in one go. "Various representations were made to the government," Das told journalists in New Delhi.

"(We) decided that for marriage ceremonies, up to 250,000 rupees will be permitted to be withdrawn from the bank account and it has to be drawn... from the father, mother or the person getting married."

LAVISH WEDDING

That however did not stop a mining tycoon from hosting a lavish wedding ceremony for his daughter on Wednesday, taking over a royal palace in the southern city of Bangalore at a reported cost of \$75 million.

The sudden withdrawal of the two highest denomination notes-aimed primarily at tackling tax evasion-has created huge problems for families planning weddings in India where most people still use cash, even for large transactions. The government also slashed the amount of old money people can exchange for new notes to 2,000 rupees - or just under \$30 - from a limit of 4,500 rupees.

The move sought to deter huge numbers of people queuing to swap cash repeatedly, some of whom are sus-

pected to be acting on behalf of racketeers trying to launder "black cash" before a Dec. 30 deadline for depositing or swapping old notes.

The shock move last week, which saw 85 percent of the cash in circulation suddenly withdrawn, has led to huge queues forming outside banks as people rush to exchange old notes for new, and has thrown plans into disarray as the wedding season gets under way in the country of 1.2 billion people.

The government has placed a weekly limit of 24,000 rupees (\$350) on withdrawals as banks struggle to cope with a shortage of cash and many ATMs run dry.

Agriculture has also been hit hard as farmers struggle to buy seeds and fertilizer with the winter crop-sowing season now under way. Das said farmers would now be able to withdraw a slightly higher amount-25,000 rupees-and would be given more time to repay government loans for crop insurance.

"Agriculture is an important component of our society," he said. "We are at the commencement of rabi (winter crop) season, and therefore to ensure that sowing takes place properly and farmers get smooth supplies like fertilisers, the farmers can withdraw up to 25,000 rupees per week." There was bad news, however, for anyone who did not fall into those two categories. —Agencies

EU AGREES LARGER 2017 BUDGET AFTER MARATHON TALKS, ITALY ABSTAINS

BRUSSELS: The European Union reached agreement in the early hours of yesterday on next year's budget, which will increase government spending to create more jobs and address the migration crisis, but Italy abstained, a new sign of Rome's tense relations with Brussels.

The EU states agreed to raise their spending for the 2017 EU budget to 134.4 billion euros (\$144.09 billion) from an initial offer of 133.7 billion. Lawmakers and the European Commission, the EU executive arm, had requested more.

The Council of EU states also agreed to raise to 157.8 billion euros next year's commitments to payments that may be incurred later, from an initial pledge of 156.3 billion.

Compared with this year, spending will increase mostly to resettle refugees within Europe and to enhance border control, as the continent grapples with an influx of migrants and asylum seekers from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. More will also be spent to create jobs in countries hit by high unemployment, particularly among the young. "We have reached our aims," said Jens Geier, a German centre-left lawmaker who took part to the negotiations. "The 2017 budget clearly focuses on our priorities of boosting growth, creating jobs - especially for youngsters - and tackling the migration crisis."

Less money will be spent next year on the bloc's least developed regions, which are mostly in the East. But that spending is expected to pick up in following years.

However, in an unprecedented move, Italy abstained from the vote, even though the higher spending on migration and youth unemployment is meant to address Rome's woes. The country is on the front lines of the migration crisis and has one of the bloc's highest unemployment rates.

On Dec 4, Italy will hold a referendum on constitutional reforms that has turned into a confidence vote on Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. As anti-establishment and anti-EU parties gain support in polls, Renzi has prepared an expansionary budget for next year that may breach EU fiscal rules, even if they have been relaxed in recent years mostly to accommodate Italy's spending needs. — Reuters

FACEBOOK BUYS FACIAL RECOGNITION STARTUP

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook on Wednesday said that it has bought facial recognition startup FacioMetrics, potentially using the technology for photo or video effects to better challenge rival Snapchat. "How people share and communicate is changing and things like masks and other effects allow people to express themselves in fun and creative ways," a Facebook spokesperson said in an email reply to an AFP inquiry.

"We're excited to welcome the FacioMetrics team who will help bring more fun effects to photos and videos and build even more engaging sharing experiences on Facebook." Silicon Valley-based Facebook did not disclose financial terms of the deal to buy FacioMetrics, which was spun out of Carnegie Mellon University in Pennsylvania.

FacioMetrics was founded in 2015 and specializes in using artificial intelligence to give facial image analysis capabilities to applications that run on smartphones. The technology has potential in a host of applications, including those focused on animation, measuring audience reactions, and virtual or augmented realities, FacioMetrics founder and chief executive Fernando De la Torre said in a release. "We're taking a big step forward by joining the team at Facebook, where we'll be able to advance our work at an incredible scale, reaching people from across the globe," De la Torre said.

Using FacioMetrics to let users of Facebook, or subsidiaries such as Instagram, have fun with photos or video could be a counter-move to those kinds of features offered in "filters" at vanishing message service Snapchat. Parent company Snap estimates it has more than 100 million users globally of the service for sending videos, images and text messages which vanish after being viewed. Some reports say it generates 10 billion video views per day. Since trying unsuccessfully to buy Southern California-based Snapchat several years ago, Facebook has turned to cloning popular features. — AFP

US PANEL URGES BAN ON CHINA STATE FIRMS BUYING US COMPANIES

WASHINGTON/HONG KONG: US lawmakers should take action to ban China's state-owned firms from acquiring US companies, a congressional panel charged with monitoring security and trade links between Washington and Beijing said on Wednesday.

In its annual report to Congress, the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission said the Chinese Communist Party has used state-backed enterprises as the primary economic tool to advance and achieve its national security objectives.

The report recommended Congress prohibit US acquisitions by such entities by changing the mandate of CFIUS, the US government body that conducts security reviews of proposed acquisitions by foreign firms. "The Commission recommends Congress amend the statute authorizing the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) to bar Chinese state-owned enterprises from acquiring or otherwise gaining effective control of US companies," the report said.

CFIUS, led by the US Treasury and with representatives from eight other agencies, including the departments of Defense, State and Homeland Security, now has veto power over acquisitions from foreign private and state-controlled firms if it finds that a deal would threaten U.S. national security or critical infrastructure.

If enacted, the panel's recommendation would essentially create a blanket ban on US purchases by Chinese state-owned enterprises. The report "has again revealed the commission's stereotypes and prejudices," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said in Beijing. "We ask that Chinese companies investing abroad abide by local laws and regulations, and we hope that relevant countries will create a level playing field," he told a daily news briefing.

EXTRA WEIGHT

The panel's report is purely advisory, but could carry extra weight this year because they come as President-elect Donald Trump's transition team is formulating its trade and foreign policy agenda and vetting candidates for key economic and security positions. Congress also could be more receptive, after US voter sentiment against job losses to China and Mexico helped Republicans retain control of both the House and the Senate in last week's election.

Trump strongly criticized China throughout the US election campaign, grabbing headlines with his pledges to slap 45 percent tariffs on imported Chinese goods and to label the country a currency manipulator on his first day in office. "Chinese state owned enterprises are arms of the Chinese state," Dennis Shea, chairman of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, told a news conference. "We don't want the US government purchasing companies in the United States, why would we want the Chinese Communist government purchasing companies in the United States?"

The recommendation to change laws governing CFIUS was one of 20 proposals the panel made to Congress. On the military side, it called for a government investigation into how far outsourcing to China has weakened the US defense industry.

The 16-year-old panel also said Congress should pass legislation that would require its pre-approval of any move by the US Commerce Department to declare China a "market economy" and limit anti-dumping tariffs against the country. The United States and US businesses attracted a record \$64.5 billion worth of deals involving buyers from mainland China this year, more than any other country targeted by Chinese buyers, according to Thomson Reuters data. The push into the United States is part of a global overseas buying spree by Chinese companies that this year has seen a record \$200 billion worth of deals, nearly double last year's tally.

CFIUS has shown a higher degree of activism against Chinese buyers this year, catching some by surprise. Prominent deals that fell victim to CFIUS include Tsinghua Holdings' \$3.8 billion investment in Western Digital. Overall, data do not demonstrate CFIUS has been a significant obstacle for Chinese investment in the United States. In 2014, the latest year for which data is available, China topped the list of foreign countries in CFIUS review with 24 deals reviewed out of more than 100 scrutinized by CFIUS. — Reuters



LIMA: A man dressed in traditional Andean clothes walks past the logo of the APEC 2016 summit in Lima on Wednesday. Lima will host world leaders at this week's Asian-Pacific economic summit. — AP

TRUMP'S FUTURE ROLE LOOMS OVER APEC SUMMIT IN PERU

CHINA PUSHING OWN TRADE DEALS TO GAIN EDGE OVER US

LIMA: Donald Trump will be on the minds of world leaders as they gather for an Asia-Pacific trade summit. The president-elect has made it clear that he is hostile to the kind of free trade deals that tend to be the focus of the annual Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, taking place this year in Peru's capital. He's also singled out group members China and Mexico in a populist campaign standing up for displaced American workers.

That has likely changed the tone and the agenda of a meeting that was expected to be part of a valedictory tour for US President Barack Obama. It will be his last international summit before he leaves office Jan. 20 and those in attendance are to include Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Instead of promoting a now all-but dead trade deal known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, economic experts expect Obama will field uncomfortable questions about Trump's pledges to overhaul U.S. trade policy, crack down on illegal immigration from Mexico and withdraw from a global agreement to fight climate change.

"World leaders like everyone else are hoping he will be more moderate in office than he was on the campaign trail," Fred Bergsten, a senior fellow the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington. "But they are going to be worried."

APEC's 21 member-nations comprise more than a third of the world's population and half of global trade. It was established three decades ago to accelerate economic growth by removing

trade barriers and helping integrate global supply chains.

The group's annual summits also deal with current international challenges such as security following the terrorist attacks on Sept 11, 2001, or in Paris last year or the global economic crisis of 2008. This year, the big issue is Trump.

"As you can imagine, the issue of the day will consume a lot of the energy," said Scott Miller, a senior adviser to the Center for Strategic and International Studies who previously advised the U.S. on APEC matters.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing has been declining in the US since the 1950s and today represents less than 10 percent of employment. Despite Trump's promises to revive industry, those jobs are unlikely to return in large enough numbers, said APEC executive director Alan Bollard. At the same time, developing nations - the biggest beneficiaries of globalization - are more upbeat about free trade.

"The pessimism about trade does seem to be more of a developed, affluent country phenomenon," Bollard said in an interview.

Bollard, a former central banker in New Zealand, said world leaders haven't done a good enough job selling the benefits of globalization and cited studies that credit trade for helping lift half a billion people out of poverty in the APEC region. He said there has also been an overriding focus on manufacturing, what Bollard called the "old wave" of globalization, instead of helping companies in the services industry navigate complex, cross-border regulations.

"With the advantages of electronic

commerce, it's possible for small, remote businesses to be world traders in a way they never could before," he said.

While Trump has threatened a trade war with China, vowing higher tariffs and declaring it a currency manipulator, the Asian giant has emerged as an unlikely champion of borderless buying and selling. The leaders gathering in Peru will be presented with a joint US-China study ordered up in 2014 about the feasibility of a vast free trade area including all APEC members.

Beijing is also promoting a regional trade partnership grouping it with 10 southeast Asian economies as well as Japan, India, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. That proposed pact has become more relevant with Trump's victory all but killing the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership, which excludes China and was widely seen as an attempt by the Obama administration to keep Asian trading partners in the US orbit.

When it comes to US trade, said Miller, Trump's actions as president seem unlikely to be as dramatic as he sounded on the campaign trail. He said 48 of the 50 states have either Canada or Mexico as their leading trade partner, which means disruptions to business from tearing up NAFTA could be politically as well as economically devastating.

"He's a skeptic of trade agreements, and he's held that position for a long time as a private citizen," Miller said of Trump. "What he has not been in a position to do is consider and then represent the broader interests of the American people. That's usually how presidents become free traders." — AP

CAPITALS ROUT PENGUINS 7-1

WASHINGTON: Determined to get out of their recent funk and motivated to measure up to the defending Stanley Cup champions, the Washington Capitals took out their frustrations in a 7-1 victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins on Wednesday night. The score was indicative of just how lopsided the game was as the Capitals got two goals and three assists from Nicklas Backstrom and two goals and two assists from TJ Oshie. They scored short-handed, at even strength and on the power play and skated the Penguins out of the building in the rivals' second meeting of the season.

"We played really quick tonight, we got on their D-men," said Backstrom, who tied his career high with five points. "We were hungry out there and we won battles and obviously we scored on our chances, too. That's huge." Washington had lost two in a row and three of four and didn't look at all like a team that lost in overtime Tuesday night at Columbus. Alex Ovechkin ended his four-game point drought with his eighth goal of the season, and Dmitry Orlov and Justin Williams also scored.

Ovechkin got a scare when he was taken down by Kris Letang in the second period, leaving the ice briefly before returning a few minutes later. He said his arm went numb but that he was healthy enough to come back and contribute to the blowout. "It's nice to see when we play like that, we stick together and we don't give them anything or much," Ovechkin said. "It's a good sign." It's a bad sign for the Penguins to put up that kind of effort despite being rested. Pittsburgh allowed a short-handed goal to Oshie early and took nine minor penalties as things fell apart. "These games are humbling," Pittsburgh coach Mike Sullivan said. "We were embarrassed out there tonight, all of us."

Cup-winning goaltender Matt Murray left the game late in the first period after teammate Evgeni Malkin accidentally hit him in the head when he was trying to shove Capitals defenseman Karl Alzner. Murray said he went through the NHL's concussion protocol and was medically cleared to return, but Sullivan opted to stick with Marc-Andre Fleury out of an abundance of caution. After Murray allowed two goals on 14 shots, Fleury gave up five goals on 25 shots.

Phil Kessel scored the Penguins' only goal in garbage time as they lamented a wasted game. "It's a couple my faults, a couple penalties," Malkin said. "We're not ready today. Washington lost last two games. They're hungry. They deserved this win." The Capitals didn't let up and poured on the points as the Penguins' penalties and mistakes added up. Twelve different players had at least one point, and the belea-



WASHINGTON: Alex Ovechkin #8 of the Washington Capitals reacts after being tripped by Kris Letang #58 of the Pittsburgh Penguins (not pictured) during the second period at Verizon Center on November 16, 2016. — AFP

guered power play got some much-needed practice and went 2 for 7, scoring at 4-on-3 and 5-on-3. No matter the source of the offensive explosion, this was the kind of game Washington would like to play on a regular basis.

"We played fast," said goaltender Braden Holtby, who stopped 25 of 27 shots. "We didn't stop skating all night. Just watching the last couple games, it seemed like we were just missing a couple strides here and there to keep that team speed up. Tonight guys were committed. I think it was a game where we realized we need to be better and play more to our

identity." NOTES: F Tom Sestito played for the first time since Nov. 3, replacing Tom Kuhnhackl in the Penguins' lineup. Sestito played just 4:49 and was given a 10-minute misconduct at the end of the second period.

UP NEXT

Penguins: Continue their three-game road trip at the New York Islanders on Friday night. Capitals: Host the Detroit Red Wings on Friday night as they continue a five-game homestand. — AP

MURRAY WOBBLER BUT HANGS ON TO BEAT NISHIKORI IN A THRILLER

WAWRINKA BEATS CILIC IN THE OTHER GROUP MATCH

LONDON: Andy Murray has already scaled the tennis summit but Japan's Kei Nishikori did his best to loosen his footing before falling in a three-hour thriller at the ATP World Tour Finals on Wednesday. Home favorite Murray's insatiable will power allowed him to prevail in a brutal encounter 6-7(9) 6-4 6-4, keeping him on course for his first title at the year-ender. Should he achieve that in his eighth attempt it would guarantee the 29-year-old end the year as world number one ahead of Novak Djokovic who would steal back the crown if he manages a fifth straight title at the O2 Arena.

The path will be a rocky one though if Wednesday's cliffhanger—the longest match in the event's seven-year residence in London—is anything to go by. Misfiring Murray looked in trouble when Nishikori edged a 20-point tiebreak to win an 85-minute opening set. But he clawed his way back to claim a 21st consecutive victory in three hours and 20 minutes. It avenged his five-set defeat at the hands of Nishikori in the US Open



LONDON: Britain's Andy Murray reacts against Japan's Kei Nishikori during their round robin stage men's singles match on day four of the ATP World Tour Finals tennis tournament in London. — AFP

quarter-finals—from which he has since embarked on the run that snapped Djokovic's 122-week hold on power. "I wasn't able to dictate many of the

points," Murray said. "More so in the third set. But not in the first couple. I was having to run, fight, get as many balls back as I could. — Reuters

NHL EXPRESSES WILLINGNESS TO TAKE PART IN 2018 GAMES

PYEONGCHANG: The NHL has expressed a willingness to take part in the 2018 Winter Olympics if the union representing its players agrees to extend the current labor deal, Canadian sports network TSN reported on Wednesday. NHL Players' Association chief Donald Fehr, who met with the NHL and International Ice Hockey Federation in New York on Wednesday to discuss the possibility of the league sending players to the Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea, did not deny an offer was made, the report said.

"There have been some suggestions which could be construed that that discussion would be worth having," Fehr said in the TSN report. "Obviously, we would discuss that with players. We have begun that process, but we're a long way from done." The current 10-year collective bargaining agreement expires in 2022 and both the NHL and NHLPA have the option in 2019 of notifying each other on opting out in 2020.

The TSN report said NHL players are unsatisfied with the current arrangement which calls for 16 per cent of their paychecks to be set aside in escrow to ensure a proper 50/50 revenue split with league owners. The NHL, which has sent players to the last five Winter Olympics, was not immediately available for comment. The participation of NHL players in Pyeongchang has been thrown into doubt after the International Olympic Committee said it would no longer cover insurance and travel costs, which have been widely estimated at around \$10 million. — Reuters

BIG 12 HAS PLENTY TO SORT OUT, INCLUDING CHAMPION

OKLAHOMA: While Oklahoma and West Virginia meet this weekend in a top-10 showdown with huge implications for the Big 12 title, there are plenty of teams farther down in the conference standings that can still end up eligible for a bowl game. With three weeks left in the regular season - one more than the other Power Five conferences, which all have championship games - Oklahoma (8-2, 7-0 Big 12), No. 13 Oklahoma State (8-2, 6-1) and West Virginia (8-1, 5-1) are the only teams still with a chance to win the Big 12 title. Games like Texas Tech-Iowa State and Kansas-Texas certainly aren't worthy of the kind of prime-time slot the eighth-ranked Sooners and 10th-ranked Mountaineers will have Saturday night. But they will go a long way toward determining whether half of the 10-team league all finish 6-6 overall.

TITLE CONTENDERS

Oklahoma could wrap up its 10th Big 12 title with a win in Morgantown combined with an Oklahoma State loss at TCU. If undecided this weekend, the Sooners get another chance against the Cowboys on Dec. 3. When Oklahoma State lost the Bedlam game last season, the Cowboys ended up as the Big 12 runner-up and

Oklahoma made the College Football Playoff. With wins over TCU and Oklahoma, the Cowboys would be guaranteed at least a share of the Big 12 title. Their only championship was five years ago. West Virginia was part of back-to-back Big East titles before joining the Big 12 in 2012. The Mountaineers, who have never finished among the top three in the Big 12, have to beat the Sooners to stay in contention. Then they go to Iowa State and host Baylor.

PICK 6 IN THE MIDDLE

Sliding Baylor (6-3, 3-3) is the only other Big 12 team already with the six wins needed for bowl eligibility. There is logjam in the middle of the standings, along with a longshot chance that five teams could all finish 6-6 overall. It would take a couple of upset victories by Kansas, but it's possible. Like Baylor, Kansas State, TCU and Texas all have three Big 12 wins. That trio each has only five wins overall, and some games against each other, ensuring at least one of them will get to six wins.

Different teams at 6-6?

Baylor, which has lost three straight and will be

without senior quarterback Seth Russell after his gruesome left ankle injury, would be 6-6 if it loses to Kansas State, Texas Tech and West Virginia. So if K-State won at Baylor, then lost to Kansas and TCU, the Wildcats would be 6-6. In that scenario, TCU could also finish 6-6 if the Horned Frogs lost to Oklahoma State and Texas before playing K-State in the regular-season finale. With Coach Charlie Strong's future still uncertain, Texas could be 6-6 with a loss to Kansas and a win over TCU the day after Thanksgiving. Texas Tech (4-6, 2-5), with national total offense leader Patrick Mahomes and a defense that has allowed at least 44 points seven times, could get to six wins by beating Iowa State and then Baylor.

AT THE BOTTOM

Iowa State (2-8, 1-6) has four conference losses of 10 points or less under first-year coach Matt Campbell. The Cyclones' only Big 12 win was over Kansas (1-9, 0-7), which has lost 19 consecutive league games and is close to finishing last in the Big 12 for the fifth time in six years. Unless, of course, the Jayhawks can pull off a couple of late-season wins to really jam up things up in the middle of the Big 12 standings. — AP



SYDNEY: US golfer Jordan Spieth hits his ball out of the bunker on the 13th hole during day one of the Australian Open golf tournament at the Royal Sydney Golf Club in Sydney yesterday. — AFP

LUCK, HERBERT LEAD; SPIETH'S PUTTER STUTTERS IN SYDNEY

SYDNEY: Local amateur prospect Curtis Luck and compatriot Lucas Herbert shot five-under-par 67s for a share of the lead as Jordan Spieth struggled with his putting in the opening round of the Australian Open yesterday. Luck, the US and Asia-Pacific Amateur champion, mixed seven birdies with two bogeys to upstage playing partners Spieth (69) and former US Open champion Geoff Ogilvy (70) after their early morning tee-off at a sunny Royal Sydney.

World number five Spieth, winner of the Stonehaven Cup two years ago, managed just one birdie on his front nine but three more after the turn kept him well in contention despite a bogey after driving through the green on his penultimate hole. A share of eighth, two shots off the pace, was a satisfactory return for the American as he re-tuned his putter after a six-week break. "I made a couple of putts from outside of five or six feet but that was it," the 23-year-old twice major champion told reporters.

"But they'll start falling and once a couple do and I start finding that confidence, the hole looks a bit bigger, that's when we can really open the floodgates. I certainly believe in my ability the rest of this week. I didn't find the hole to be very big today." Adam Scott missed out on a chance of a second Australian Open title when Rory McIlroy pipped him on the final hole the last time the tournament was played at Royal Sydney in 2013. Yesterday was another disappointing day for the world number

five - "nothing was good about that round" was his verdict - turning around at one-under before four bogeys and two birdies on the back nine left him with one-over 73.

Luck is one of a string of up-and-coming amateur Australians looking to join Scott and world number one Jason Day in the top ranks of the game and he was clearly not intimidated by being grouped with two former major champions. The 20-year-old is planning to turn professional after his maiden U.S. Masters appearance next year and impressed Spieth with the way he kept his composure after back-to-back bogeys at his 13th and 14th holes. "I think every child at some point has a few little issues with controlling their anger, but it's something I've got really good at," said Luck, who rebounded with birdies on three of his last four holes.

Herbert, who only got his invitation to play after a "cheeky" tweet to organizers last weekend, hit five birdies after the seventh in a flawless round that could have given him the outright lead had he not missed a birdie putt at the last. It was also a matter of what might have been for Australian veteran and Royal Sydney member Peter O'Malley, who chipped in from a bunker to take a share of the lead at the 14th but dropped back after finding the trees at the 18th. O'Malley's 68 gave him a share of third place with New Zealander Ryan Fox, New Zealand-based German David Klein and fellow Australians Ben Clementson and Adam Burdett. — Reuters

KO GOES FOR THREE-PEAT AT TOUR CHAMPIONSHIP

NAPLES: World number one Lydia Ko will be gunning for her third consecutive CME Globe title this week as the LPGA Tour season draws to a close with the 2016 Tour Championship. New Zealand's Ko won the coveted \$1 million Globe bonus in both 2014 and 2015. The cash prize goes to the player who finishes on top of the season-long points race. "For me to be in this position and have the opportunity to go for the Globe again it's a pretty cool position to be in," said Ko.

In 2014, the then 17-year-old Ko claimed her first Globe when she beat Carlota Ciganda and Julieta Granada in a playoff. She is the only player to win both the Tour Championship and the Globe in the same season. In 2015, Ko finished tied for seventh in the tournament but it was still good enough to give her the points title. This time Ko has her work cut out for her as she will have to catch current points leader Ariya Jutanugarn of Thailand.

Ariya will have a 500-point lead on Ko heading into the tournament which begins Thursday at the Tiburon Golf Club in Naples, Florida. "I'm in a bit of a different position to last year. I'm not really in the driver's seat. A lot of things have to happen. I kind of need to win this week. For me, it's more important to have a strong finish to the season. That's what I'm mainly thinking about," said Ko, who leads the Tour for lowest scoring average at 69.6.

The top three players on the list Ariya, Ko and Canada's Brooke Henderson will automatically win the points race if they win the tournament. There are six others who have a mathematical chance of claiming the prize based on various scenarios. Organizers have put the money in a large see-through box for the players to gawk at. "Of course everybody likes that box," Ariya said. "I just, I don't know. No matter what is going to happen this week, this year has been a great one for me."

Ariya said her season started to turn around at the ANA Inspiration in March, when she played superbly before blowing a two-shot lead in the closing holes to allow Ko to win. Since that event she has won five titles and finished in the top 10 12 times. "I think at the ANA I just started to feel like everything was getting better," Ariya said. "I learned a lot from that because I now know how to play under pressure. I know that when I'm really nervous and excited what I have to do to get through that." American Cristie Kerr will defend her title this week at the site of her 18th career LPGA victory. Kerr defeated South Korea's Jang Ha-Na and fellow American Gerina Pillier to claim her second win of the 2015 season. — AFP

THUNDER DOWN ROCKETS 105-103

CURRY, DURANT FIRE WARRIORS OVER RAPTORS

OKLAHOMA: Russell Westbrook scored 30 points, including a left-handed hammer dunk over Clint Capela in the closing seconds, to help the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Houston Rockets 105-103 on Wednesday night. Oklahoma City led by three when Westbrook dunked over the 6-foot-10 Capela with 5.5 seconds left to put the Thunder up five. Westbrook, the NBA No. 2 scorer, also had nine assists and seven rebounds. Victor Oladipo had season highs of 29 points and 10 rebounds for the Thunder. They snapped a four-game losing streak. James Harden had 13 points, 13 assists and seven rebounds. He made just 4 of 16 shots while being harassed by Andre Roberson. Capela added 13 points and 14 rebounds for the Rockets.

WARRIORS 127, RAPTORS 121

Stephen Curry had 35 points, Kevin Durant added 30 and Golden State beat Toronto for its fifth straight victory. The Warriors also have won five in a row against the Raptors, three in Toronto. NBA scoring leader DeMar DeRozan led the Raptors with 34 points, and Kyle Lowry had 24. DeRozan was 17 of 17 from the free-throw line, and had his ninth 30-plus-point game in 11 games this season.

GRIZZLIES 111, CLIPPERS 107

Marc Gasol hit a go-ahead 3-pointer from the left corner with 14 seconds left, and Memphis snapped Los Angeles' seven-game winning streak. Mike Conley scored 30 points, Gasol added a season-high 26 and the Grizzlies equaled a season high with 15 3-pointers, including a career high-tying seven by Conley. JJ Redick scored a season-high 29 points, Blake Griffin added 25, and DeAndre Jordan had 14 rebounds for the Clippers, who still have the NBA's best record at 10-2. Both of their losses have come at home.

PACERS 103, CAVALIERS 93

Paul George scored 21 points and the Indiana Pacers took advantage off the resting LeBron James' absence to beat Cleveland. Jeff Teague added 20 points and eight assists, and Thaddeus Young had 16 points to help the Pacers improve to 6-1 at home and 6-6 overall. James sat out for the first time this season. Averaging 23.4 points and 8.9 rebounds, he rested after playing Tuesday night in a home victory over Toronto. Guard J.R. Smith also missed the game because of a sprained right ankle. Kevin Love led Cleveland with 27 points and 16 rebounds, and Kyrie Irving had 24 points and seven assists. The Cavaliers dropped to 9-2 after matching the best start in franchise history with the victory over Toronto on Tuesday night.

KNICKS 105, PISTONS 102

Kristaps Porzingis scored a career-high 35 points and New York held off Detroit. The 7-foot-3 forward from Latvia hit three 3-pointers and converted a dazzling three-point play in the first half after dunking a lob pass on the break in the first 30-point game of his two-year career. Carmelo Anthony added 22 points to help the Knicks



SACRAMENTO: Sacramento Kings' Arron Afflalo (left) and Matt Barnes (right) double-team San Antonio Spurs forward Kawhi Leonard during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Sacramento, Calif on Wednesday, Nov 16, 2016. — AP

win their second straight. Joakim Noah bounced back nicely with seven points and 15 rebounds after he was benched in the second half of the Knicks' victory over Dallas on Monday night. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope led Detroit with 21 points.

HAWKS 107, BUCKS 100

Paul Millsap scored 21 points, Mike Muscala added 16 and Atlanta won its sixth straight game, beating Milwaukee. Muscala started in place of star center Dwight Howard, who was sidelined with a left quadriceps contusion. Atlanta improved to 6-1 at home and tied Cleveland for the best record in the Eastern Conference at 9-2. Giannis Antetokounmpo had 26 points and 15 rebounds for Milwaukee, and Jabari Parker scored 15 of his 23 points in the third quarter.

CELTICS 90, MAVERICKS 83

Isaiah Thomas scored 22 of his 30 points in the fourth quarter in Boston's victory over Dallas. Thomas scored 20 of Boston's final 24 points to help the Celtics beat back a late Mavericks' surge. After Dallas took a 70-66 lead, Thomas scored Boston's next 13 points

to put the Celtics back in front 79-76. Avery Bradley added 18 points and 13 rebounds. Harrison Barnes led the Mavericks with 28 points.

NUGGETS 120, SUNS 104

Wilson Chandler scored a season-high 28 points and Denver won for the first time at home this season, beating Phoenix. Kenneth Faried added a season-high 20 points and 15 rebounds to also help Denver snapped a four-game losing streak. Danilo Gallinari had 18 points, Jameer Nelson 17 and Emmanuel Mudiay 15. The Nuggets played their second straight game without starting shooting guard Gary Harris. He's expected to be out until mid-December with a foot injury. Brandon Knight scored a season-high 32 points for Phoenix, and Devin Booker had 24 before he was ejected with 17.8 left after receiving his second technical foul. The Suns have lost five of six.

MAGIC 89, PELICANS 82

Serge Ibaka scored 16 points and Nikola Vucevic broke out of his shooting slump with 10 points and 14 rebounds in Orlando's victory over New Orleans, Evan

Fournier also finished with 16 points, Terrence Jones led New Orleans with 26 points. He started at power forward in place of Anthony Davis, sidelined by a thigh injury.

76ERS 109, WIZARDS 102

Jahlil Okafor scored 19 points on 8-for-11 shooting to lead struggling Philadelphia past Washington. Ersan Ilyasova added 16 points to help the 76ers win for just the second time in 11 games this season. John Wall scored 23 of his 27 points in the second half for Washington.

SPURS 110, KINGS 105

Pau Gasol had 24 points and nine rebounds to lead San Antonio to its fourth straight win. LaMarcus Aldridge scored 21 points and Kawhi Leonard added 20 for the Spurs, who improved to 6-0 on the road this season. Tony Parker had 14 points and seven rebounds. DeMarcus Cousins had 26 points, 17 rebounds and six assists for the Kings, who dropped their third straight game. Matt Barnes had 15 points and Ben McLemore, Willie Cauley-Stein and Rudy Gay each added 11.—AP

DOPING SHOWDOWN COMES TO A CRUNCH AT WADA SUMMIT

LAUSANNE: Sports leaders are at loggerheads over how to fight the war against performance-enhancing drugs as the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) goes into a key reform summit this weekend. Who should control the global doping watchdog? What powers should it have? Who should pay? A welter of questions have been raised as the Olympic movement and sports federations seek to redeem their names after the Russia doping scandal.

The WADA Foundation will have to come up with at least the start of some solid answers after its meeting in Glasgow on Sunday. A new report on Russia is due out within weeks which could heighten pressure to clean up sport. International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach last month called on WADA to set up a new independent unit to manage testing around the world. He promised more money if the reforms are carried out.

The IOC blames sports federations for letting cheating flourish and wants to eliminate their role in testing, while transferring sanction-taking to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. The IOC has also criticized WADA for failing to act quickly on doping allegations in Russia, which was accused of operating a 'state-sponsored' scheme over several years. But there is widespread resistance to the IOC plan outside of WADA, with powerful federations indicating they want to be exempt from the reforms.

A system for all?

The head of FIFA's medical commission, Michel D'Hooghe, said world football's governing body would not surrender control of its drug testing to a new entity. "We respect the WADA and IOC proposals but they concern the smaller federations," he said. The head of another federation, who requested anonymity, said his sport would never outsource anti-doping efforts and described the IOC call for a new testing unit as "more political than practical."

In contrast, Tom Dielen who heads World Archery said there would only be a small impact on smaller sports. "We outsource our controls already," he said. While some federations have said the IOC proposals are too vague, WADA director general Olivier Niggli, "it will be up to the IOC to convince federations to be part of (the new system), just as it will be up to the IOC to finance it one way or another."

Despite tensions between WADA and the IOC, an Olympic source told AFP that the IOC was backing WADA president Craig Reedie's reelection, guaranteeing that the 75-year-old Scot will be tapped for another three-year term at Sunday's meeting.

Paying the bills

The IOC already funds half of WADA's \$27 million (25.2 million euros) budget. Bach said last month that if WADA leads the reform drive it would require "a substantial increase in financing." Financing from whom remains an open question. One idea calls for federations, freed from their drug-testing responsibilities, to allocate their anti-doping budgets to WADA and the proposed new testing agency. But if key federations like FIFA and the International Cycling Union opt out, it seems unlikely that contributions from minnow federations like archery and judo would be enough to support a new organization. One proposal was to see broadcasters contribute to the new unit, as they stand to benefit if the public sees competition as drug free. Bach distanced himself from that idea last month.

Russian factor

The banning of more than 110 Russian competitors from the Rio de Janeiro Olympics and complete ban from the Paralympics sparked outrage in Moscow and accusations of double standards. Russian Olympic Committee president Alexander Zhukov, made clear what he thinks of WADA in a letter issued ahead of the Glasgow meeting. "A lot of decisions are made behind closed doors and (WADA) becomes an instrument for manipulation, including those of a political nature," he said. But he did not rule out backing reforms that would see a WADA with more powers, removing international federations from the testing system. — AFP



VISAKHAPATNAM: A member of the ground staff prepares to throw his shoe at a dog that ran into the field during the first day of second cricket test match between India and England in Visakhapatnam yesterday. —AP

KOHLI, PUJARA PUT INDIA ON COURSE FOR BIG TOTAL

VISAKHAPATNAM: Skipper Virat Kohli and Cheteshwar Pujara hit majestic centuries to help India take opening day honors as they reached 317 for four at stumps against England in the second Test in Visakhapatnam yesterday. Kohli put on a marathon 226-run stand for the third wicket with Pujara (119) after the hosts lost their openers early to the England seamers. Fit-again paceman James Anderson enjoyed his return with three wickets only to see the rest of the English attack face a tough time after the hosts opted to bat first.

Kohli on 151 and Ravichandran Ashwin on one were at the crease when stumps were called. Kohli made full use of his reprieve on 56 when Adil Rashid dropped him at long leg off Ben Stokes to record his 14th Test century. The star batsman mixed the right dose of caution and aggression to thwart the English bowling attack at India's newest Test venue. Bringing up his 10th Test ton with a six off leg-spinner Rashid, the in-form Pujara tackled the English bowlers with aplomb. Pujara, who scored 124 in Rajkot, dominated play during his 204-ball knock, laced with 12 fours and two sixes, before being caught behind off Anderson in the final session.

Kohli carried on the good work with consummate ease in the company of Ajinkya Rahane (23) who lost his

cool in the penultimate over of the day as Anderson struck with the second new ball. The batting duo stitched together a 68-run partnership as skipper Alastair Cook juggled with his bowling options. England spinners, who gave India a run for their money in the drawn Test in Rajkot, returned wicketless in three sessions with Moeen Ali and Zafar Ansari taking a bit of a stick. Ali though did give Kohli a scare after going for an lbw referral, but the third umpire upheld the on-field call even though the ball would have clipped the leg stump according to the ball tracker.

Cricket apart, there was drama when a stray dog forced the umpires

to call tea four balls early due to it appearing from behind the sightscreen and evading attempts to chase it from the field. There are thousands of stray dogs on India's streets, and this was not the first time one has interrupted a sporting event. In 2011, India was forced to halt its first ever Formula One practice session when a stray dog ran onto the Buddh International Circuit. Earlier in the day, Stuart Broad got Lokesh Rahul for nought in the second over, while Anderson accounted for Murali Vijay (20). India handed off-spinner Jayant Yadav his Test debut with the Visakhapatnam pitch expected to turn as the match progresses.—AFP

SCOREBOARD

VISAKHAPATNAM, India: Scoreboard at stumps on the first day of the second Test between India and England at Visakhapatnam yesterday.

India 1st innings:		Bowling:	
M. Vijay c Stokes b Anderson	20	Anderson	16-3-44-3, Broad
L. Rahul c Stokes b Broad	0	Stokes	13-3-52-0 (w1),
C. Pujara c Bairstow b Anderson	119	Ansari	12-1-45-0, Rashid
V. Kohli not out	151	Rashid	26-1-85-0, Ali
A. Rahane c Bairstow b Anderson	23		11-0-50-0
R. Ashwin not out	1	To bat:	W. Saha, R. Jadeja, J. Yadav, M. Shami, U. Yadav
Extras (lb 2, w 1)	3	England:	A. Cook (capt), M. Ali, Z. Ansari, J. Bairstow, S. Broad, B. Duckett, H. Hameed, A. Rashid, J. Root, B. Stokes, J. Anderson
Total (4 wickets, 90 overs)	317		
Fall of wickets:	1-6 (Rahul), 2-22 (Vijay), 3-248 (Pujara), 4-316 (Rahane)		

ROONEY SORRY FOR 'INAPPROPRIATE' HOTEL PICTURES

LONDON: England football captain Wayne Rooney has apologized after "inappropriate" photos of him the worse for wear at the team hotel were published. Interim manager Gareth Southgate said meanwhile that a review would be carried out of how players spend their free time while on international duty. Rooney was thrown into the spotlight after The Sun tabloid alleged the Manchester United forward drunkenly gatecrashed a wedding at England's hotel in Watford, north of London, on Saturday.

Rooney started England's 3-0 World Cup qualifying win over Scotland on Friday, but suffered a knee injury that ruled him out of Tuesday's 2-2 friendly draw at home to Spain. A statement issued on Rooney's behalf, said: "Naturally Wayne is sorry that pictures taken with fans have been published today. "Although it was a day off for the whole squad and staff, he fully recognizes that the images are inappropriate for someone in his position."

The statement said Rooney had spoken to Southgate and FA technical director Dan Ashworth "to unreservedly apologize". "He would like to further extend that apology to any young fans who have seen these pictures." An FA spokesperson said: "All England personnel have a responsibility to behave appropriately at all times. We will be reviewing our policy around free time whilst on international duty." Southgate was adamant that Rooney had not been left out of the Spain game as a disciplinary measure. "Wayne picked up an injury in the game (against Scotland) on Friday," said Southgate. "He couldn't train on Sunday and that's it." Southgate, who is still waiting to hear whether he will get the England job full time, said he would review players' free time. "Over the last few years, the players have been allowed to go home during a period of time," Southgate told reporters after England's 2-2 friendly draw with Spain at Wembley. "They trained Saturday morning and they trained again on Sunday afternoon, and I gave the players a period of time off (in between). I'm not aware of anything else. "There were lots of changes we made to routines. Some things we thought we should keep the same and I'll have to review (it) — or maybe I won't have to review! Someone will have to review it."

Rooney's representatives have indicated that he believes he has been an unfair victim of the incessant media glare around top footballers. A Rooney spokesman said: "As he has always been, Wayne was happy to sign (autographs), pose for photos and chat with guests. "It is sad that one or two of them have now sought to turn Wayne's friendly good nature to their advantage." Rooney was recalled by Southgate for the win over Scotland, having been dropped for England's goalless draw in Slovenia, after winning back his place in the United first team. His status with both club and country appears uncertain as concerns grow over the 31-year-old's waning powers.—AFP



LONDON: England's striker Wayne Rooney (center) collides with Scotland's defender Christophe Berra (left) in this file photo during a World Cup 2018 qualification match between England and Scotland at Wembley stadium in London. —AFP

JOSE MOURINHO PUNISHED FOR 'ADDING PRESSURE' ON REFEREE

LONDON: Jose Mourinho was fined by the Football Association for pre-match comments about Anthony Taylor after his remarks were found to have brought "an additional layer of pressure" upon the referee, it was revealed Wednesday. Manchester United manager Mourinho spoke about Taylor ahead of last month's goalless draw away to arch-rivals Liverpool in the Premier League. Taylor's suitability to take charge of the game was widely questioned in the build-up, mainly on account of the fact he lives in Altrincham, near Manchester.

Mourinho, asked for his view, said: "I don't want to say anything about it, but I think Mr Taylor is a very good referee. But I think somebody with intention, is putting much pressure on him, that I feel it will be difficult for him to have a very good performance." Though far from the most incendiary remarks the Portuguese boss has made during his time in England, they were enough to land Mourinho with a misconduct charge by the Football Association, with his comments said to have been improper and/or brought the game into disrepute.

Mourinho accepted the improper conduct element but contested the disrepute charge. But an independent regulatory commission found against him and imposed a fine. Their reasons for doing so were made public on Wednesday. "Despite saying that he (Mourinho) did not want to say anything, he contradicts himself by offering actual comment on the match official," the commission found.

"This opinion, his opinion, was that he felt it would be difficult for Anthony Taylor to have a very good performance. There was no need for Mr Mourinho to be drawn into offering an opinion. "The regulatory commission considered this opinion to bring an additional layer of pressure and implication onto the referee which could have had a negative impact on the game." Taylor was widely considered to have had a good match at Anfield and the commission said: "The referee's performance in the game appeared to have been unaffected by this additional pressure.

"Nonetheless, the regulatory com-

mission judged Mr Mourinho's comments to have brought the game into disrepute. "In many ways, they created a sword of Damocles situation. The referee was damned if he did and damned if he didn't. "Despite Mr Mourinho's assertions that the comments were not intended to be critical of Mr Taylor and were positive in nature, the regulatory commission did not share this view. "The regulatory commission were unanimous in their view that these comments had brought the game into disrepute and that the second element of the charge had been proven," it added.—AFP

WENGER EYES GOLDEN CHANCE TO PUT ONE OVER MOURINHO

LONDON: Arsene Wenger has probably never had a better chance of finally beating a Jose Mourinho side than when Arsenal visit Old Trafford tomorrow to face a Manchester United team in underwhelming form and ravaged by injuries and suspensions. The Frenchman has never trumped Mourinho in 13 competitive games since they first clashed in 2004 and he has often been the loser off the pitch as well, with Mourinho taunting him about Arsenal's lack of title success over the past decade.

But Arsenal have a good opportunity to register their first Premier League win at Old Trafford since 2006 when they face a United team that could be without six players, including their first-choice defense. Striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic is suspended and centre halves Eric Bailly and Chris Smalling are injured along with right back Antonio Valencia who is recovering from surgery on a broken arm. There are also doubts about midfielder Marouane Fellaini and full back Luke Shaw as Mourinho grapples with the most serious injury crisis of his time at United.

Ibrahimovic's absence will give Marcus Rashford the chance to move to his natural position as central striker for the first of four straight United home games in all competitions. The Old Trafford faithful will be looking for signs that Mourinho is making progress despite a disappointing start to his reign which has left them sixth in the table, six points behind fourth-placed Arsenal and eight adrift of leaders Liverpool. Wenger's main injury doubt cleared up on Tuesday when forward Alexis Sanchez, whom he had urged to miss Chile's World Cup qualifier with Uruguay after tweaking a hamstring, showed no ill-effects after scoring twice in a 3-1 comeback win.—Reuters



Manchester United coach Jose Mourinho

UNBEATEN REAL SET FOR DERBY AGAINST ATLETICO

MADRID: The last Spanish league derby against Atletico Madrid marked a turning point for Zinedine Zidane's Real Madrid. The disappointing home defeat in February was the last time Madrid lost a game in the league. It rebounded from that 1-0 defeat at the Santiago Bernabeu by going on a streak that culminated with the club lifting the Champions League trophy - in a final against Atletico - and contending for the league title until the very end. Madrid won 12 straight after the loss, erasing 11 points off Barcelona's lead and finishing only one point from the title. This time, Madrid is just looking to keep its momentum when it plays city rival Atletico tomorrow.

Madrid arrives at the derby in a much better position than previously, holding a two-point lead over Barcelona and a six-point advantage over Diego Simeone's Atletico, which needs the victory to avoid losing more ground to the rivals. Atletico led the league until losing two of its last three games to drop to fourth in the standings. Atletico has won four league games in a row at the Vicente Calderon stadium, but it will be facing a Madrid team that has thrived away from the Bernabeu, having scored 20 goals in its last four away games in all competitions. Madrid isn't getting over-confident, however. "The next game will be a tricky one, like they always are against Atletico," Real Madrid defender Nacho Fernandez said.

Madrid's only loss since the league game against Atletico last season was at Wolfsburg in the Champions League in April. It remains unbeaten since then, with 21 wins and seven draws in all competitions. It has won four straight in the league and is the only team in the top tier not to have lost this season. Succeeding at the Calderon may be especially difficult this time as Zidane has been dealing with injuries to some of the team's top forwards. Alvaro Morata, who scored three goals in his last three games with Madrid, is out because of a hamstring injury sustained with Spain's national team, and it remains unclear if Karim Benzema will overcome a lingering hip problem.

The coach may have to change the team up front, or use some of his reserve players to fill the attack along with Cristiano Ronaldo and Gareth Bale. Among Zidane's options on offense are Lucas Vazquez and youngster Mariano Diaz. Other Madrid players uncertain to start tomorrow because of injuries include defender Pepe and defensive midfielder Casemiro. In better news for Zidane, midfielder Luka Modric will likely make his first start since undergoing a surgical procedure on his knee almost two months ago, and defender Sergio Ramos also is expected to play after his own knee problems. Midfielder Tony Kroos remains sidelined because of a foot injury.

Simeone, meanwhile, still doesn't know if he will be able to count on forward Antoine Griezmann, who is nursing a knock to his left foot sustained with France's national team in a World Cup qualifier last week. The forward has a good chance of playing after tests early in the week ruled out a serious injury. Madrid and Atletico drew 1-1 the last time they met at the Calderon. Madrid beat its city rival in a penalty shootout in the Champions League final in Milan. Barcelona hosts Malaga tomorrow, while third-placed Villarreal plays at Athletic Bilbao on Sunday. — AP



Zinedine Zidane



Marco Reus

REUS SEEKS COMEBACK IN BAYERN SHOWDOWN

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund winger Marco Reus is hoping to make his comeback from a six-month adductor injury against league leaders Bayern Munich tomorrow as the hosts look to close the gap on the leaders to three points. The 27-year-old Reus returned to training this week he could be available for the biggest Bundesliga game of the season even without any match practice. "It is a pleasure to see Marco back in training," coach Thomas Tuchel said. "He is in top shape and already has reached a noteworthy playing level." While Reus, out since May, is unlikely to be in the starting line-up, his presence on the bench will no doubt lift the 80,000 fans expected at the Signal Iduna park.

Tuchel will also have midfielder Sebastian Rode back following his appendicitis operation as well as fit-again full back Marcel Schmelzer as their injury crisis eases. Several others, including Portugal's Raphael Guerreiro, came back early following the international matches and will be rested as Dortmund gather as much firepower as they can to snap Bayern's unbeaten run this season. "There is tension in the air but that's normal when you play your biggest rival," Rode said. "We play at home, we can play freely and can close in to within three points. That is enough motivation for us."

Dortmund's Bundesliga campaign may be somewhat less consistent than Bayern's, chasing a record-extending fifth domestic league title, but the visitors have not had a flawless campaign. With only two wins in their last five league matches, Bayern, on 24 points, know another slip-up could prove costly. Dortmund are fifth on 18. The Bavarians had their own injury concerns, but keeper Manuel Neuer, who missed Germany's internationals due to illness, defender Jerome Boateng and winger Frank Ribery are back in training.

Dutchman Arjen Robben also looks to have overcome a minor thigh muscle

injury picked up on international duty but coach Carlo Ancelotti's biggest concern is over Chilean Arturo Vidal who played twice for his country despite an injury. Vidal will undergo a thorough medical check to determine the extent of his injury, sustained in the goalless draw against Colombia before he played

in their 3-1 win over Uruguay. "We need a top performance and the team is aware that this is what is needed from us," Bayern captain Philipp Lahm said. Second-placed RB Leipzig, unbeaten so far, can take over the top of the table - at least for a day - when they travel to Bayer Leverkusen today. — Reuters

GERMAN NEW-BOYS LEIPZIG EYE HISTORY IN LEVERKUSEN

BERLIN: RB Leipzig can claim a milestone in their fledgling history today by taking a point at Bayer Leverkusen to knock Bayern Munich from the top of the Bundesliga table. "We definitely want to take something there and remain unbeaten. If there is a point available, then there will also be three," said Leipzig's coach Ralph Hasenhuettl ahead of the clash at Leverkusen's BayArena.

Second-placed Leipzig, backed by Austrian drinks giants Red Bull, can become the first club to go 11 games unbeaten at the start of their first German league season if they avoid defeat. Ahead of the weekend's matches, both Bayern and Leipzig, who have earned four promotions in seven years, have 24 league points. A draw or win would see Leipzig top the table, at least overnight, ahead of Bayern, who are at Borussia Dortmund on Saturday evening in the battle of Germany's top clubs-dubbed 'Der Klassiker'.

But Hasenhuettl says usurping Bayern-who Leipzig face in Munich on December 20 in a pre-Christmas showdown-is not the priority. "If we take points, the table will look like that," said the Austrian. "But that's not a subject for us, it's neither the team's motivation, nor something we will let put us under pressure. "We have other things to worry about, namely a tough away match." Leipzig have question marks over top-

scorer Timo Werner (upset stomach), who has five goals in ten league games, and teenage Scotland winger Oliver Burke (virus).

"It will be close for Oliver, Timo will most probably be okay," said Hasenhuettl. Following their 1-0 win at Tottenham Hotspur a fortnight ago, Leverkusen are on course for the last 16 in Europe. Bayer, who are eighth in the table, need a win to warm-up for Tuesday's Champions League group stage match at CSKA Moscow, but their coach Roger Schmidt says Leipzig have proved they deserve respect. "Leipzig, with their financial possibilities and professional structure, are not your average newly-promoted team," said Schmidt, whose team won their three games before the international break.

"We want to climb the table, but we have our own goals. "Before the international break, we made a very good impression, which we want to resume today." Leverkusen hope to have midfield hard-man Charles Aranguiz, but the Chile international picked up an injury in a World Cup qualifier against Uruguay. Captain Lars Bender, also a candidate for the defensive midfield, has not trained for two weeks with a heel injury. Kevin Kampl (bruised foot), Omer Toprak (thigh), Joel Pohjanpalo (foot fracture) and Vladlen Yurchenko (hairline shin fracture) are all out. — AFP

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Friday Times

Sports

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18,

ORLANDO: Orlando Magic forward Bismack Biyombo dunks the ball during an NBA basketball game against the New Orleans Pelicans in Orlando on Wednesday, Nov 16, 2016. — AP

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