SUBSCRIPTION

Kuwait Times

ESTABLISHED 1961

THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

ANNIVERSARY 55 Years Kuwait Times

TUESDAY, JANUARY 3, 2017 | RABI AL-THANI 5, 1438 AH | www.kuwaittimes.net

150 FILS | NO: 17099 | 40 PAGES

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Min 10°
Max 19°
High Tide 01:00 & 14:26
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By B Izzak

KUWAIT: In a major development, Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh yesterday issued a decision sending the director of the customs department Khaled Al-Saif into retirement following a controversy over two containers that left Shuwaikh Port without being searched, and which were later found to contain liquor. The minister's decision came after a number of MPs strongly condemned the incident and called for a parliamentary investigation, while other lawmakers called for the sacking of the customs chief.

Before the retirement decision was announced, Islamist opposition MP Mohammad Hayef said that dismissing the customs head was the least the minister should do regarding the two containers. He said that allowing the containers to leave unchecked from the port constituted a security risk to the country, because the nature of the shipment was unknown and could have included some dangerous materials. Social media activists also wondered why the owner of the shipment was not identified or arrested.

The interior ministry said the two containers were later found in Amghara and were full of liquor. Police identified five suspects, all of whom are Indian nationals, and the main suspect was nabbed as he attempted to leave the country on Saturday. His accomplice was also detained in the country, while another was apprehended in the UAE. Two other suspects managed to flee to India, the ministry statement said. Interrogations with the suspects disclosed that they had previously smuggled in another container, and alcohol and firecrackers were found inside it, the statement added.

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IS claims Istanbul attack, gunman at large

ISTANBUL: Islamic State militants yesterday claimed the shooting rampage at a glamorous Istanbul nightclub on New Year's night that killed 39, while police arrested eight suspects but the attacker remained on the run.

The statement by the extremist group - which Turkey is fighting in neighboring Syria - was the first undisputed claim it has made for an attack in Turkey despite being blamed for several assaults over the last year.

Handout police photo shows the main suspect in the rampage.

Anti-terror police made their first arrests over the attack, which unleashed scenes of panic among partygoers at one of Istanbul's swankiest venues and killed mostly foreign tourists.

The shooting took place just 75 minutes into 2017 after a bloody year in Turkey in which hundreds of people were killed in violence blamed on both IS jihadists and Kurdish militants. In a statement circulated on social media, the jihadist group said one of the "soldiers of the caliphate" had carried out the attack on the Reina nightclub. It accused Turkey, a majority-Muslim country, of being a servant of Christians, in a possible reference to Ankara's alliance with the international coalition fighting IS in Syria and Iraq.

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ISTANBUL: People carry the coffin of Yunus Gormek, 23, one of the victims of the Reina nightclub attack, during his funeral ceremony yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

Parents handed death sentence for killing child

KUWAIT: A court yesterday sentenced a couple to death after finding them guilty of torturing their three-year-old daughter until she died, it said in a statement. The parents, both Kuwaitis, were arrested in May and accused of beating and torturing the girl until she died and then keeping her body in a freezer for a week. The court statement only gave the verdict but, according to media reports at the time of their arrest, they had been annoyed by their daughter's constant crying. The father, 26-year-old Salem Buhan, and mother, 23-year-old Amira Hussein, were charged with murder after police found burn marks on the shoulders and legs of the toddler's body, according to the interior ministry. The ministry also said they were drug addicts. The verdict is not final as it must be reviewed by the appeals and supreme courts.

Dubai to build largest marina in Middle East

DUBAI: The Gulf emirate of Dubai yesterday announced plans to build the largest marina in the Middle East and North Africa with 1,400 berths. The "Dubai Harbour" will also feature a cruise ship port and a terminal that can accommodate 6,000 passengers at a time, a government statement said. Home to Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest tower, Dubai said the new project will include a 135-m lighthouse featuring a hotel and observation deck. The marina will expand Dubai's yacht capacity by around 50 percent from its current 3,000 berths, the statement said. The project will be located off the upmarket Dubai Marina neighborhood and next to the man-made Palm Island.

Iran denies receiving invite for hajj talks

TEHRAN: Iran has denied receiving any invitation from Saudi Arabia for talks on the hajj, after a row between the arch-foes saw its pilgrims stay at home last year. The Al-Hayat daily reported on Friday that Saudi pilgrims minister Mohammed Bentin had opened discussions with more than 80 countries, including Iran, to work out the details of the 2017 hajj. "No invitation from Saudi Arabia has been received by Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization or the foreign ministry," the head of the Hajj Organization, Hamid Mohammadi, was quoted as saying in Iranian media reports yesterday. Once the invitation was received, Iranians would only be able to take part in the hajj if "the Saudi side secures the conditions of dignity and security" for them, said Mohammadi. Iran was doing all it could to open the "blocked path" to the hajj, he said.

Kuwait aims to emulate financial hub Shanghai PAGE 3

Packers, Lions in playoffs; Chiefs, Falcons earn byes PAGE 16

60 killed, beheaded in Brazil riot

MANAUS, Brazil: Rioting inmates in Brazil decapitated and brutally assaulted their rivals, killing at least 60, when fighting erupted between two gangs at a prison in the Amazon region, officials said yesterday. The 17-hour riot broke out Sunday afternoon and lasted through the night at a prison on the outskirts of Manaus, the capital of Amazonas state, said state public security secretary Sergio Fontes. He called it "the biggest massacre" ever committed at a prison in the state.

Bloodied and burned bodies were stacked in a concrete prison yard and piled in carts, an AFP photographer at the scene said. Outside, heavily armed police hunted for inmates feared to have escaped through a series of tunnels discovered at the Anisio Jobim penitentiary complex. Fontes said 16 tunnels were discovered in all. He told journalists that authorities were still trying to determine whether any inmates had escaped. Brazilian news site G1 reported that more than 130 had escaped.

Police were only able to restore order at the prison yesterday morning, freeing 12 guards who had been taken hostage, Fontes said. They found a horrific scene inside. "Many (victims) were decapitated, and they all suffered a lot of violence," Fontes told a press conference. He said the gruesome scene appeared aimed at sending a message from the Family of the North (FDN), a powerful local gang, to rivals from the First Capital Command (PCC), one of Brazil's largest gangs, whose base is in Sao Paulo, some 2,700 km to the southeast.

"During the negotiations (to end the riot), the prisoners had almost no demands," Fontes told local radio network Tiradentes. "We think they had already done what they wanted: kill members of the rival organization." Authorities have counted 60 bodies so far, all of them inmates, the head of the state's prisons administration, Pedro Florencio, told journalists. It was the latest eruption of horrific violence to hit Brazil's underfunded and overcrowded prisons. In October, deadly riots broke out at three separate prisons blamed on fighting between members of the country's two largest gangs, the PCC and the Red Command (CV). During that episode, rioting inmates took visitors hostage, beheaded rivals and burned others alive, killing 33 people in all, authorities said.

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MANAUS, Brazil: Military police officers collect the bodies of inmates killed during a riot at the Anisio Jobim Penitentiary Complex yesterday. — AFP

KUWAIT: A photo shows the crescent moon's conjunction with Venus, as seen from Kuwait yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

For Trump, the 1980s still hold relevance

NEW YORK: Bobby Knight. Don King. Sylvester Stallone. Many of President-elect Donald Trump's cultural touchstones, which he'd frequently name-drop at campaign rallies and on Twitter, were at their peak in the 1980s - the decade Trump's celebrity status rose in New York, Trump Tower was built, "The Art of the Deal" was published and he first flirted with running for public office.

The "Go Go 1980s" of New York were spurred by Wall Street's rise. It was a brash decade in which excess was the norm and ostentatious displays of wealth and power were celebrated in pop culture and among Manhattan's elite. And while much of what defined the 1980s has since gone out of style, Trump has seemingly internalized its ethos, which is reflected in the decor of the Trump Tower lobby and the celebrities he stood alongside during the campaign.

An outer-borough New York developer trying to prove himself across the East River, Trump always sought approval of Manhattan's ruling class and was eager to make a name for himself, according to those who tangled with him during that formative decade. "He would relentlessly promote himself in the newspapers or on TV. He knew how to get press and squash his enemies," said Geoge Arzt, press secretary for former

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ATLANTIC CITY, New Jersey: In this Dec 1987 file photo, Donald Trump (right) participates with his father Fred Trump (left) and boxing promoter Don King in a news conference. — AP

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

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Amir receives top officials

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Khaled Al-Saleh.

His Highness finally met with Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Amir sent a congratulatory cable yesterday to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on the occasion of the second anniversary of his ascension to the throne. In the cable, His Highness the Amir extolled deep and firm fraternal historical relations between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and lauded the prominent development renaissance involving various fields under the leadership of the Saudi King.

His Highness the Amir also wished the Saudi King wellbeing and success in pursuing development in the kingdom and serving both Arab and Muslim worlds. Two cables of similar sentiments were sent to the Saudi King by His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister.

Separately, His Highness the Amir has cabled Bahraini King Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifa robustly denouncing the armed attack on a prison in the Gulf Kingdom. His Highness the Amir condemned in strong terms this terrorist and gruesome act that targeted souls of the innocents, thus jeopardizing security of the brotherly country.

He re-affirmed the State of Kuwait's unwavering stance, rebuffing all "forms and pictures" of terrorism, its stand on side of the brotherly Kingdom of Bahrain and supporting any measures it may take in this respect. Moreover, His Highness expressed solace to the King and family of the 'martyr' who lost his life while he was on duty when the attack was carried out on the prison. Cables of identical sentiments were addressed to the Bahraini Monarch by His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister. Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem sent a cable to his Bahraini counterpart Ahmad bin Ibrahim Al-Mulla, expressing his deepest sympathies over the policeman's death. —KUNA

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Finance Minister Anas Khaled Al-Saleh, Information Minister Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and Cabinet Affairs Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the cabinet's meeting yesterday. — KUNA

Cabinet examines manifesto, submits it to National Assembly

Ministers deplore attacks in Bahrain, Turkey, Iraq

KUWAIT: The Cabinet, at its weekly session yesterday, examined the Government manifesto, entitled 'toward sustainable development,' and referred it to the National Assembly. Minister of Social Affairs, Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Dr Hind Al-Subaih briefed the ministers during the session, noting that the platform includes basic topics outlined in His Highness the Amir's address and the two statements made by His Highness the Prime Minister at the inaugural session of the parliament's current legislative term and the first meeting of the recently formed cabinet.

The task program includes remarks put forward by the Supreme Planning and Development Council, said the minister, who also presented the cabinet with the government priorities for the coming four years.

These priorities address attaining sustainable public funding, privatization, launching small and medium enterprises, regulating labor market, establishing a social security network, overhauling teaching, health care, achieving youth empowerment, revamping information and communication infrastructures, developing housing care, setting up basis for the informatics economy, boosting performance of the government institutions, employing renewable energy and upgrading the public infrastructure.

Minster Subaih indicated that the system for working out annual plans has been established according to certain criteria; such as its development and economic feasibility, impact on international competition indexes, creating jobs in the private sector and encouraging direct foreign enterprise.

Also in this respect, the minister indicated establishing Kuwait center for public policies, the national center for informatics economy, with the aim of mapping out and assessing strategies on the basis of advanced scientific methods, in partnership with international strategic think tanks.

Arab Summit

Yesterday's cabinet session, held at Bayan Palace under chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, got started with briefing about a message addressed to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah from King Abdullah of Jordan, inviting him to the 28th Arab Summit, due in the Hashemite Kingdom on March 29.

The ministers, said the Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah in a post-session statement, were also briefed about other messages to His Highness the Amir; one from Yemeni President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi expressing readiness to refine Kuwaiti crude oil at Aden's refinery, another from Iraqi Premier Haidar Al-Abadi pledging to deepen bilateral ties and mutual cooperation, a third from British Prime Minister Theresa May hailing the meeting with His Highness during the recent GCC summit and noting her aspiration to cement mutual cooperation between the two states.

FM's visits

Moreover, First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah addressed the session about outcome of his recent visit to Saudi Arabia and his talks with the Saudi King on regional and international issues and outcome of the meeting of the higher Kuwaiti-Iraqi commission, during which means of cementing mutual cooperation were examined.

Furthermore, Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled informed his fellow ministers about his recent meetings with Iraqi President Dr Fuad Masum, Al-Abadi, parliament speaker Salim Al-Jabouri, addressing ways of enhancing the mutual cooperation in various spheres, as well as the outcome of the recent visit to the country by Jordanian Minister of Immigrants Nasser Joda-during which he delivered a message from the Jordanian Monarch inviting His Highness the Amir to the upcoming Arab summit.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah made a presentation about his recent visit to Saudi Arabia where he held talks with the Deputy Crown Prince and inspected Kuwaiti forces taking in the Arab coalition for restoring legitimacy in Yemen.

Terrorist attacks

In the meantime, the Cabinet condemned a 'terrorist' attack that targeted a prison in Bahrain on Sunday and led to the killing of a policeman. The cabinet said in a statement issued following its customary weekly meeting today that Kuwait stands side by side with Bahrain in all measures it is taking to maintain its security and stability.

It also voiced emphatic condemnation of a 'terrorist' attack that hit a nightclub in Istanbul early Sunday and left dozens of people dead or wounded. The cabinet further denounced suicide explosions that took place in several cities in Iraq and claimed the lives of scores of people and injury of many others.

An explosion that took place in the Somali capital of Mogadishu yesterday was also condemned during the weekly meeting. In this regard, the cabinet reiterated Kuwait's rejection of terrorist acts that breach all divine religions and human values and norms, while supporting all measures being taken by the affected countries to fight terrorism and maintain their security and stability. It also called on the international community to take all urgent and decisive measures to wipe out the scourge of terrorism in order to safeguard world security and stability.

Furthermore, the cabinet congratulated new UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, wishing him best of luck in his new mission in order to bolster the principles and goals of the UN Charter. It also appreciated outgoing UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's efforts. The Kuwaiti ministers further welcomed a recent UNSC resolution aiming to put a ceasefire in Syria in place, to support peace there and to allow urgent humanitarian aid to affected people. — KUNA

Foreign policy aims at preserving national security: Deputy FM

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti foreign policy's ultimate goal is to preserve national security and stability, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah said yesterday. Jarallah made this remark in a lecture he delivered to some trainees at Saud Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute.

Kuwait has established trust and respect among world nations due to its rigid commitments to international laws and values, he said. Hence, he encouraged trainees to become excellent diplomats to be able to deliver the country's diplomacy in the future.

In other news, Jarallah chaired a meeting of the ministry's revamp committee examining steps that had been taken to develop performance at the department. The commission has been formed in coordination with Ernst and Young consultancy company to examine blueprints to improve task performance in the ministry. Jarallah praised efforts that have been exerted at this level, noting that they are up to the aspiration to lift the level of works in the department to that of counterpart departments abroad. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah speaks before trainees at Saud Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute. — KUNA

Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah chairs a meeting of the ministry's revamp committee with Ernst and Young consultancy company.

Kuwait to develop new projects for youth: Information Minister

KUWAIT: Kuwait is continuously developing the talents and skills of youth in all fields, said Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. Kuwait aims to allow youth to express their creativity on local, regional and international levels, said Sheikh Salman in a statement released by the Public Authority for Youth (PAY) yesterday, on the sidelines of the ninth meeting of its board of directors. The authority has approved projects on scientific development, self-confidence and promoting ethics, he added.

Meanwhile, PAY's Director General Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi in a press statement said that the authority regularly holds discussion sessions with youth, to learn about their needs and ideas on projects and programs. During the celebration of the International Youth Day on August 12 last year, PAY has adopted a five-year plan to develop activities and projects for youth. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah chairs the ninth meeting of the Public Authority for Youth's board of directors. —KUNA

Legalese

Inheritance law in Kuwait

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

I want to start this article on a positive note, and would like to wish all my readers and their families a Happy New Year. Spending time with family around the holiday is a cherished blessing that we should all be very grateful for. Legal family issues can be very sensitive for the family to discuss openly, but I personally think that a healthy family that cherishes healthy relationships should discuss legal matters that may arise from misfortunes in the future, like having to deal with inheritance laws.

Having a death in the family is not easy to bear, and even those who have lost loved ones before can't understand what you are going through. Everyone deals with things differently, and I can imagine how hard it would be to deal with a lawyer while you are mourning. Today I will answer questions related to this matter in hopes that families will be more open to the idea of discussing such issues.

Which law?

Question: Fortunately, my family comes from different religions and different backgrounds - which law will apply to us, should there be a family death?

Fajer: This depends greatly on who has passed away and where they are from, and whether the dead person has made a will or not. In Kuwait, Shiite and Sunni courts deal with inheritance differently. The matter is very complicated and it is not something that you want to find out at a time of mourning. This is why I always suggest for my clients to see a lawyer before anything happens and to ask these questions and to understand what law applies to them or what law they would like to be applied to them, so they have the full picture. I also suggest they hire a lawyer before anything happens, so when an unfortunate event takes place, they are prepared.

Inheritance's distribution

Question: We are a Kuwaiti family. Is it true that men get twice as much as women when it comes to inheritance? How can we avoid this? How is this fair?

Fajer: This is true for children or for brothers and sisters. A brother will receive twice as much as a sister. Although this is by law, lawyers can assist parents who would like their children to have approximately equal amounts with other legal procedures that they can do prior to death, to ensure that when they do pass away, their daughters/sons will receive a fair share of the inheritance.

Many Muslim scholars say that although there is no equality between the two genders under law when it comes to inheritance, it is still fair because by law, a man is required to take full responsibility of his family financially, including his wife. So if a grandparent passes away and has two sons and two daughters, the wealth will be divided into three parts - one for each son, and one part to be shared by the two daughters. The daughters though will not have to share this amount with their children, whereas the man should share the amount with his wife and children.

A will

Question: I am not Kuwaiti but I would like to make a will for my wife to manage all my belongings in Kuwait should something happen to me in the future. Can I do this?

Fajer: Yes, you could, but this depends on what law applies to you or what law you have your marriage under. If the applicable law prohibits your wife from managing your wealth in Kuwait, then you could give her the right through the Kuwaiti courts or have the will written in your country but notarized in Kuwait.

For any legal questions, queries or if you need legal assistance, email ask@fajerthelawyer.com

Drainage outlets closed near Kuwait Bay

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: In collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works (MPW), the Environment Public Authority (EPA) yesterday closed two sewage drainage outlets which discharged into Kuwait Bay near the Free Trading Zone after tests proved that the drained water contained polluters. EPA also stressed that it continues to take samples from various sewer drainage outlets, especially at FTZ where there are 12 outlets, as polluters were found in four of them. In addition, EPA set a timetable to examine all sewer outlets along Kuwait Bay's coast. Article 108 of the environmental protection law states that hazardous activities affecting the environment are strictly banned within the Kuwait Bay area, especially draining sewage water, industrial waste, burying wastes that can block navigation lines, building fishing traps or fish farms, building chalets and fishing.

Polling results

Constitutional court chancellors Khaled Al-Waqian and Ibrahim Al-Saif were assigned to re-open and examine the recent parliamentary election boxes yesterday after a number of candidates challenged the polling results.

8,157 illegal residents adjusted their status

KUWAIT: Between 2011 until end of December 2016, some 8,157 illegal residents have adjusted their status in Kuwait, said the Central Agency for Illegal Residents Affairs on Sunday. Head of the status adjustment department of the apparatus Colonel Mohammad Al-Wohaib said that 5,637 illegal residents have adjusted their status and reverted back to their Saudi nationality, 923 to the Iraqi and 816 to the Syrian.

He added that 94 persons reverted back to the Iranian nationality, 49 to the Jordanian and 638 to other nationalities. He called on illegal residents, who are yet to adjust their status in the country, to visit the headquarters of the central apparatus to do the necessary measures needed.

Wohaib affirmed that those complying with the law will be given residency visas which could be renewed every five years in addition to healthcare, education and ration cards. Other privileges such as priority in employment after Kuwaiti nationals and facilitating procedures for obtaining driving licenses will also apply upon adjustment of their status, said the official. —KUNA

1,403,457 expats working in private sector by year end

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The total number of expats working for the private sector amounts to 1,403,457, according to official statistics as of Dec 31, 2016, said Abdullah Al-Motoutah, Acting Director of the Public Authority for Manpower. The total number of residency visa transfers made as of that date was 197,000, residency renewals totaled 797,000 and 47,000 residency cancellations for departure were processed.

Motoutah also noted that the total number of employers' violations was 1,091, and that the joint committee for reorganizing expatriate labor arrested 1,238 people, including 1,076 wandering handymen, 151 peddlers and 11 beggars. Motoutah said the total number of complaints filed by laborers was 11,000, of which 4,204 were amicably resolved.

Customer verification

From Jan 1, 2017, Kuwait Shared Electronic Banking Services Company (K-Net) started activating a new customer verification technology will be used by adding more security elements and a special verification code to transactions worth KD 25 and higher. K-Net CEO Abdullah Al-Ajmi said customers will no longer be able to use their cards for online shopping or paying bills unless they have their information updated with their banks, especially their mobile phone number, on which the bank will text clients a secret onetime code. Ajmi said 230 million cash withdrawals and online shopping and POS transactions were made in 2016, with a total value of KD 15 billion.

Budget imbalance

Acting Chairman of the State Audit Bureau Adel Al-Saraawi warned that the government still did not resolve the state budget structure imbalance amidst a number of variables including the fall in state revenues due to the continuation of an international drop in oil prices. Addressing both powers' remarks on the State Audit Bureau report, Saraawi said oil revenues formed 88.6 percent of 2015-2016 total revenues, compared to the huge expenditure, on top of which was payroll at KD 9.2 billion - 76.5 percent of oil revenues. He added payrolls totaled KD 8.7 billion in 2014-2015 and KD 8.2 billion in 2013-2014. "This indicates a deficit growth of KD 5.98 billion as per the 2015-2016 budget," he underlined, noting that the deficit was covered from the state's general reserves, with an increase of 119.6 percent compared to the deficit in 2014-2015.

Egyptian strawberries

Manager of the imported food department Ayyad Al-Mutairi said on recommendations made by the higher committee for food safety, preventive measures imposed on importing Egyptian strawberries were lifted and imports were allowed after conducting routine lab tests on both fresh and frozen strawberries. Mutairi added that the municipality allows Egyptian strawberry imports on condition that shipments are accompanied by special certificates from the Egyptian ministry of agriculture stating that it is free of the hepatitis A virus, in addition to testing specimens after arrival in Kuwait to make sure they are safe for human consumption.

Remanded

A court yesterday ordered a chef accused of murdering a ruling family member, his friend and his Asian maid, to be remanded in custody after he confessed to committing the crime.

SHANGHAI: Kuwaiti Ambassador to China Samih Johar Hayat meets with senior Chinese officials. —KUNA

Kuwait to follow footsteps of Shanghai as world's financial hub

SHANGHAI: Kuwait expressed a desire to follow the footsteps of the Chinese city of Shanghai, the world's financial center, in pursuing the right paths to a better trade, investment and economy, Kuwaiti embassy in China said yesterday.

Kuwaiti Ambassador to China Samih Johar Hayat expressed this keenness during a meeting he held with Shanghai Mayor Yang Xiong and a number of senior officials. Shanghai is one of the four direct-controlled municipalities of the People's Republic of China. It is the most populous city in the world. It is a global financial center and has the world's busiest container port. —KUNA

Commuters face bus fare increase

KUWAIT: This undated file photo shows commuters take a public transportation bus in Kuwait City.

By Ben Garcia

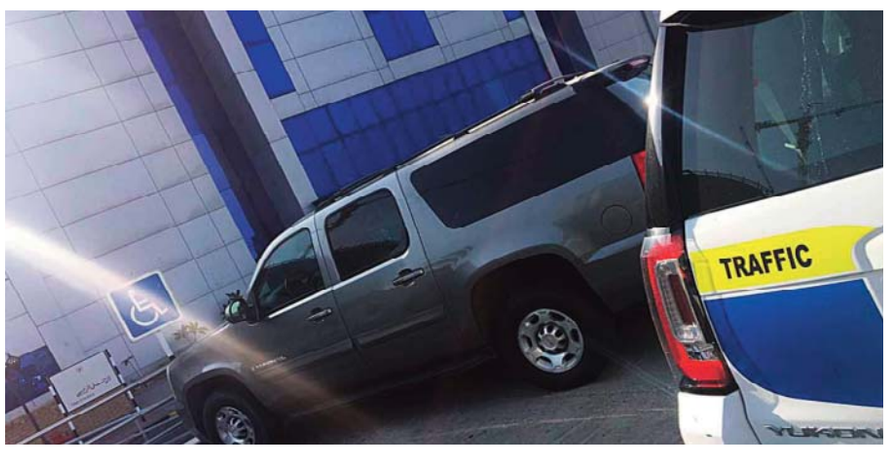
KUWAIT: Commuters in Kuwait using public transport saw an increase in some fares from January 1. A popular private bus operator increased its ticket prices from 250 fils to 300 fils, but the government-owned Kuwait Public Transport Company and another privately-owned transport company have refrained from doing so. An official at KPTC said there were no plans to increase KPTC bus fares presently, but some commuters - and drivers - worry that an across-the-board increase is likely.

The fare hikes follow the government's decision in September to increase petrol prices, an unpopular move that led to the dissolution of parliament. "The fare increase was bad news for me because I frequently take the bus," lamented Roy T, an Indian salesman working in Kuwait. "In fact, I take the bus more than six times daily to travel from one place to another. Imagine the problems I have to face financially due to this sudden increase," he told Kuwait Times.

Yvonne Florentino, 43, a Filipino commuter, is not bothered by the increase. However, she was annoyed when the driver demanded 300 fils in exact change. "I am not worried as it's only a 50 fils increase, and I rarely take the bus," she said. "My workplace is near my house in Hawally. The only problem I encountered was with a driver. It is not possible to carry exact change all the time. Thank God a Filipina gave me (the extra) 50 fils," she said.

Yvonne said bus drivers and even passengers should be ready with loose change. "If you are the bus driver, please do not insist on passengers to provide you with change - you should be the one providing us the change. If you are a passenger, always keep 50 fils in your pocket. I think the problem of loose coins will continue if the company drivers themselves are unprepared," she said.

Binu, another commuter from India, who is a regular passenger, said he rides the bus four times daily. So for him, it is an increase of about 200 fils a day. "When you multiply it by around 30 days, it is roughly an increase of about KD 6. My salary hasn't increased, but my fares have," he rued.



104 disabled parking violations committed

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's General Traffic Department began implementing article 63 of law number 8/2010, which punishes people using the parking spots designated for disabled persons for a one-month jail sentence and/or a KD 100 fine. On the first day after the law went into effect last Sunday, traffic department carried out several traffic campaigns resulting in issuing 104 traffic citation for use of the said parking spots; 21 in Farwaniya, 15 in Ahmadi, 21 in Hawally, 10 in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, 20 in the Capital and 17 in Jahra.

Repeated offenses could also result in suspending the driver's license for a month and impounding his/her vehicle for two months, the ministry's Relations and Security Information Department said in a statement yesterday.

Liquor possession

Hawally police arrested an Indian man for liquor possession. The suspect was seen in Meidan Hawally, and when he was approached by police, he attempted to drive away. He was chased and forced to pull over, and then arrested after police found 154 liquor bottles inside his vehicle. He was sent to concerned authorities.

In Brief

Violations referred to prosecution

KUWAIT: Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced yetserday that it has spotted a number of violations represented in expiry date and non-adherence to price reductions. The ministry said that such violations would be referred to the commercial prosecution. The ministry added that the emergency team was able to thwart a number of irregularities represented in the date expiration, rotten food and price differences. It pointed out that those violations would be referred to prosecution in the coming period to be given proper actions. — KUNA

Holding company founded with KD1 million capital

KUWAIT: Faith Capital Holding was been founded as a Kuwaiti joint stock close company with capital worth KD one million, according to a news report on Sunday. The new company will own Kuwaiti and foreign stocks, shares in Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti firms of limited liability, or taking part in founding and managing them, Al-Kuwait Al-Youm, the official gazette, said yesterday. Faith Capital is capable of lending a company where it has a share of not less than 20 percent in the capital, the report noted. — KUNA

US Dollar down against KD at 0.305

KUWAIT: The US Dollar's exchange rate against the Kuwaiti Dinar went down yesterday exchanging at 0.305, whereas the euro rose to KD 0.321, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). The rate of the Sterling Pound went up to KD 0.377 while the Swiss Franc also rose to KD 0.299, said the CBK, adding that the Japanese Yen stood still at KD 0.002. — KUNA

Photo of the day

KUWAIT: A recent view of Kuwait City's skyline. — KUNA

Gain peace, safety influence investment in property, bourse

KUWAIT: Many Kuwaiti investments are lured to trading in Boursa Kuwait and the realty sector but experts have divergent views about feasibility of dealings in the two fields. In general, the stock exchange market is attractive for quick earnings and the real-estate sector for long-term profits-with some opining that profit making in this sector is "100 percent guaranteed". Some traders invest their funds in both, the stock and development sector, seizing feasible opportunities and heding to lessen risks by putting the money in more than one sector.

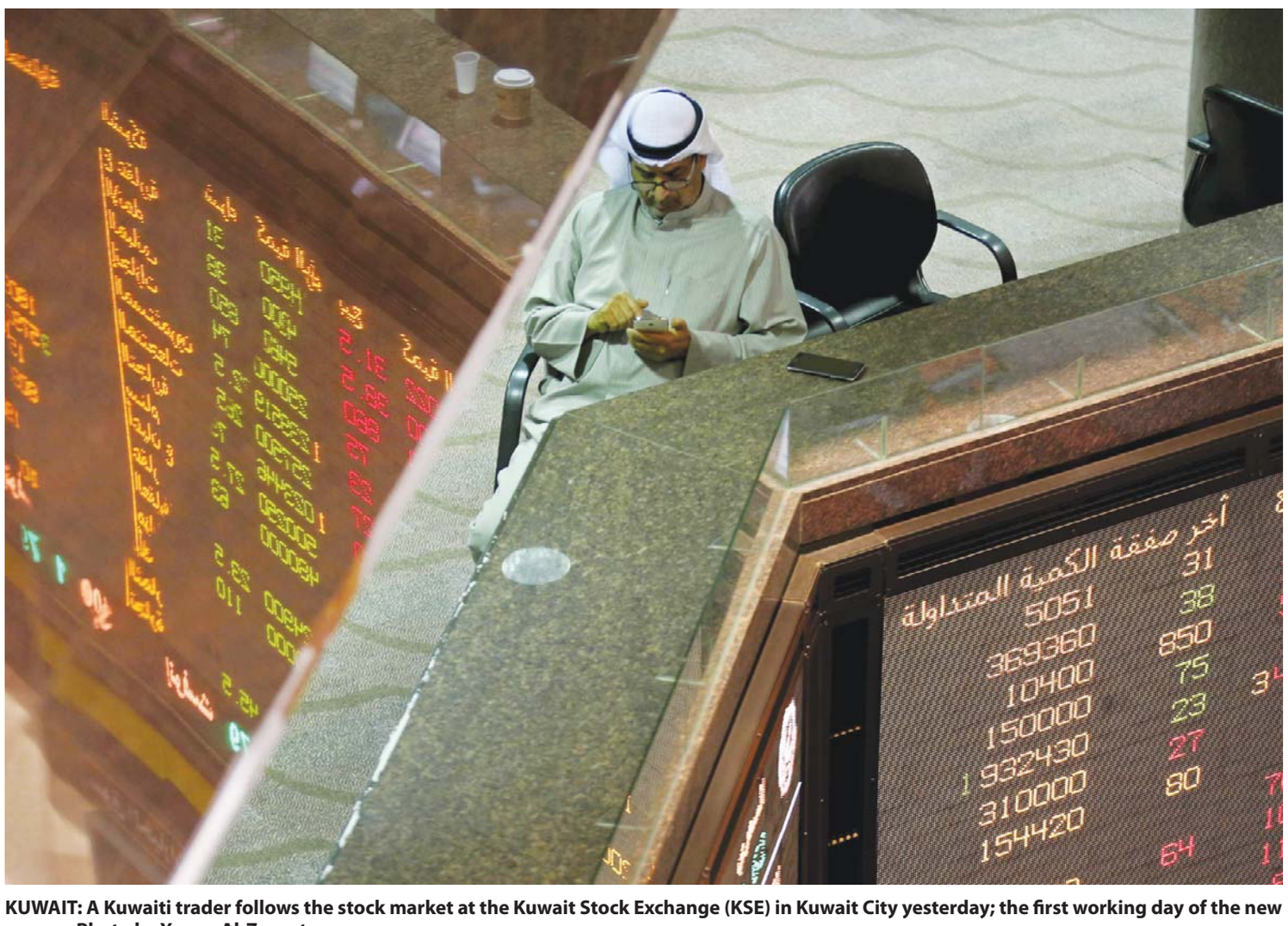
Muhannad Al-Sane, Chief Executive Officer at Al-Riyada Finance and Investment Company, said in an interview that the stock investor usually faces high risks because he (or she) may encounter a wave of developments in a single session. On the other hand, the real-estate dealer desires financial stability despite long-time waiting for the earnings. Contrary to the stock market, a realty trader is not compelled to be vigilant all the time. Moreover, Sane added, property investing requires large funding, unlike the stock transactions.

Meanwhile, Salah Al-Sultan, an advisor at Arzaq Capital Company, opined that the realty trader, in general, aspires to 5.5-6 percent proceeds. Investments in the property sector are largely safe, even in a bullish status, however, in the stock market, traders, particularly inexperienced ones, may incur heavy losses particularly when encountering heated speculations. Kuwaiti women traders "enjoy a large share in the realty investments," he elaborated.

Dr Haidar Al-Jumaa, board member in Kuwait International Bank, says the real-estate trader may wait for years to start putting some gains in his pocket, unlike the stock trader who can bag rapid earnings.

"A clever investor determines the domain of business according to his living circumstances and his (her) needs for finances," said jumaa who also expressed his belief that "the property investment is the ideal option with 100 percent guaranteed returns, contrary to the shares which are susceptible to losses."

Adna Al-Dulaimi, the general director at Mina Company, said the domestic property market is currently stagnant, unlike the stock market which is witnessing "robust trades." He expressed his belief that the stock trader can make profits with good calculations and knowledge of the market status as well as local and external conditions and events. He also expressed his opinion that the realty sector is "not a good investment tool without the housing sector which is a refuge where the investor can reap profits in the range of 6-7 percent maximum." He also indicated that some development investors have sold their assets to invest in the bourse. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti trader follows the stock market at the Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) in Kuwait City yesterday; the first working day of the new year. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Professor Maher Atari

Arab leading researcher makes breakthrough progress to protect teeth

MADRID: A leading Kuwaiti-born researcher has made a breakthrough innovation in dentistry that is likely to curb the loss of teeth, either through erosion or taking them out. The "bone marrow fluid" makes up for the dental bone loss, and protects the teeth against erosion and decomposition, Director of the International University of Catalonia (UIC) Regenerative Medicine Research Institute, Barcelona, professor Maher Atari said in an interview.

Atari, who is now Professor of UIC's Surgical Medical Pathology Department, added that the fluid fights gum diseases that are known to lead to erosion of the bone around the teeth, which in time become lose and then fall, Atari explained, In teeth implant, the fluid shortens the time of fixing the titanium post into one's jawbone to be later topped by an artificial tooth, from 3-6 teeth to 15 days only.

A third function of the fluid is fighting various types of inflammation that invade the area around implanted teeth after three to five years. It is efficient and effective, he stressed. In teeth implants, the post is immersed in the fluid before it is fixed, then the artificial tooth or the crown is fitted, only after 15 days, instead of months, he noted.

Atari noted that Kuwait's Dasman Institute took part in the research, analyzing the proteins around the bone. On the mechanism of treatment, he said that it lies in moving the cells through electrical charges, he said.

Healthy cells have negative charges, opposite to inflammatory ones. The fluid is charged with positive charges, to cause the healthy cells to move to the inflammatory ones, where they settle and reproduce to rebuild the tooth, Atari explained.

The process has no side effects, he stressed, as the electrical charges disappear in 24-48 hours. The treatment is not confined to dentistry, but also to major bone fractures where titanium posts are needed to be fixed. The marrow fluid is applied to the bone, for rebuilding it.

The fluid will be available in the near future at dentistry clinics, Atari said. Born in 1972, Atari is a Spanish of Palestinian origin and has three Mas, and two PhDs from the US University of Minnesota and the UIC. He is also a visiting professor in some European universities. — KUNA

KNPC, KIPIC sign cooperation protocol

KUWAIT: The Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) will offer support to the recently-founded Kuwait Integrated Petrochemical Industries Company (KIPIC), due to a cooperation protocol both signed yesterday.

The KIPIC, a relatively nascent company, is in need of logistic and technical services during the initial period of the foundation, the KNPC said in a statement.

The protocol allows the KIPIC to exploit the operational and services contracts of the KNPC for a three-year renewable period, it added. The statement quoted the CEO of the KNPC Mohammad Ghazi Al-Mutairi as saying that his company would do its best to support the KIPIC over the foundation period.

Meanwhile, the CEO of the KIPIC Hashim Hashim said that they would coordinate with the KNPC over the coming period in a way that does not contravene with the latter's plans and schedule of bids. The KIPIC was founded two months ago to serve as Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC)'s subsidiary that runs refining and petrochemical projects, including running and executing the integration project between the refining and petrochemical complex in Al-Zour, which includes Al-Zour Refinery, a petrochemical complex and a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) importing facility.

LPG prices

In other news, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday announced new prices of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) for the month of January. The price of Propane will be sold at $435 per metric ton and Butane will be sold at $495 per metric ton, KPC said in a statement.

Propane or Butane are flammable mixtures of hydrocarbon gases; they are used as fuel in heating appliances, cooking equipment, and vehicles. Prices of liquefied gases are affected by international oil prices, the performance of the US dollar against other main currencies, natural disasters, economic crises and geopolitical factors. — KUNA

KUWAIT: CEO of the KNPC Mohammad Ghazi Al-Mutairi (right) and CEO of the KIPIC Hashim Hashim shake hands after signing the cooperation protocol. —KUNA

KU to re-evaluate its buildings' air environment

KUWAIT: Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and Kuwait University (KU) yesterday signed a contract on evaluating internal environmental health for the buildings and labs of KU. KISR's Director General Sameera Al-Sayyed said in press remarks that this two-year project aims at reaching a comprehensive evaluation of the internal air quality and performance of air conditioning systems at a convenient level and sufficient quality for closed places. KISR has conducted a series of similar studies and projects in order to evaluate and resolve the problems related to environmental health in closed buildings, and their effects on the human's health, she said. KISR is capable of working on such studies as it has a group of specialized experts, labs and equipment in this fields, she affirmed.

Sayyed expressed her thanks and appreciation to Kuwait University's Director General and all its employees, as well as all those responsible for conducting this project. Meanwhile, Kuwait University Rector Dr Hussein Al-Ansari stressed the university's keenness in providing a convenient and healthy working environment for all students and workers. —KUNA

Kuwait Airways celebrates New Year with arrival of second Boeing 777-300ER

Aircraft is second of 10 ordered; all to be received by Q3 2017

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways, the official national carrier of the State of Kuwait, has an extra reason to celebrate the New Year, in 2017, with the second of 10 Boeing 777-300ER aircraft ordered arriving in Kuwait on 1st January. With the first aircraft welcomed less than a month ago, December 2016, Kuwait Airways remains on schedule to have all 10 aircraft received and in commercial service by the end of Q3 2017.

The new arrival will be the second aircraft to bear the dynamic new livery of Kuwait Airways - as revealed in October last year - and as is the tradition with the airline, the aircraft has been named. Following the island theme of the first aircraft's naming, the second B777-300ER will be called 'Um Almaradim' - after the Kuwaiti island situated near its maritime border with Saudi Arabia.

Historically, Um Almaradim was a busy hub for maritime trade and for pearl diving - the deep waters surrounding the island allowing for large ships to land close to its shores. Um Almaradim Island was also the first Kuwaiti territory to be liberated after the 1991 invasion.

Kuwait Airways' new B777-300ER fleet will initially be deployed on high traffic routes on its network, including: London, New York, Paris and Bangkok. As the remaining B777-300ER aircraft join the fleet, it is expected that other long-haul routes on the airline's network will also be served by the new aircraft.

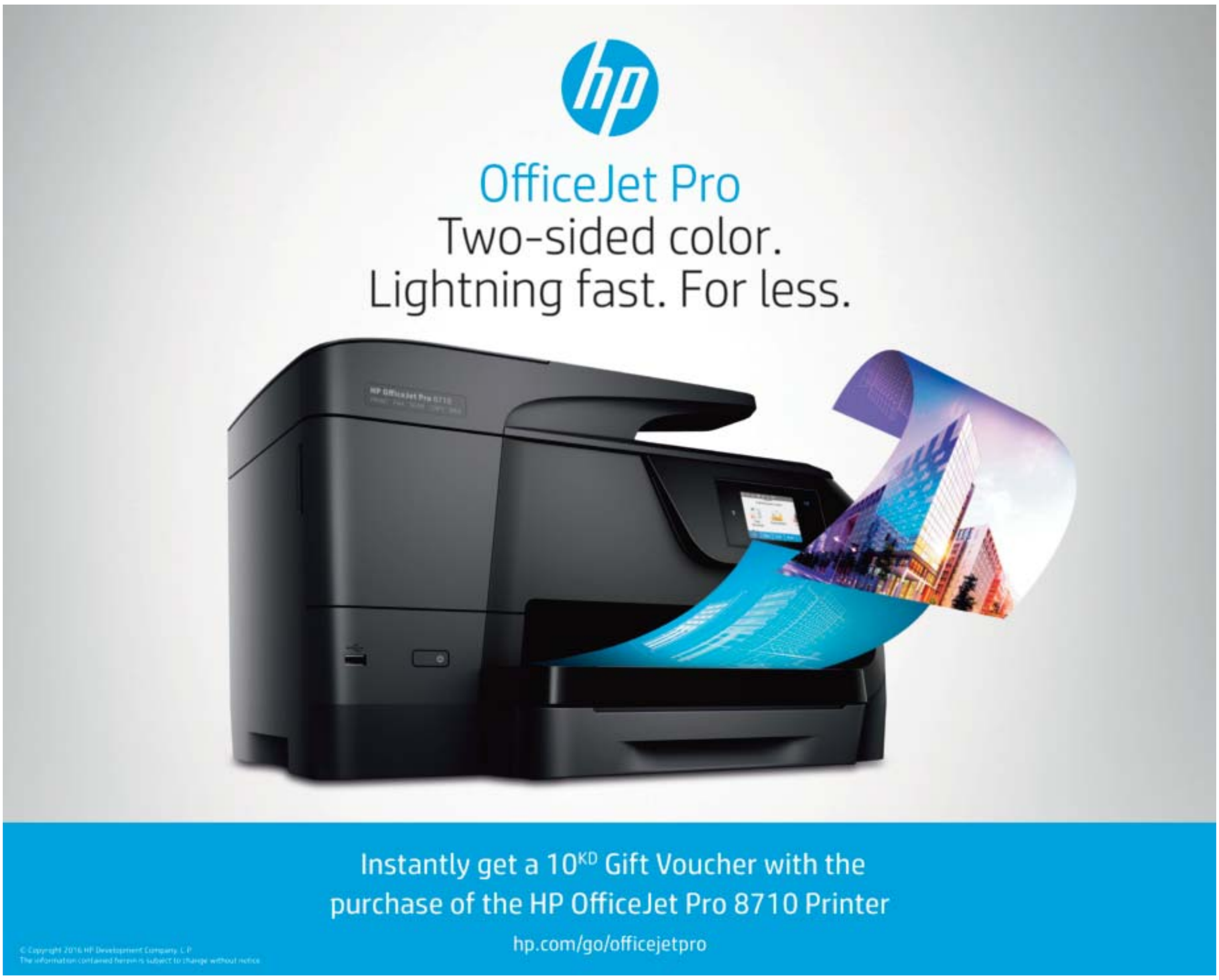
Step forward

Commenting ahead of the arrival of the second Boeing 777-300ER, Rasha Al-Roumi, Chairperson and CEO of Kuwait Airways, said: "The delivery of the second Boeing 777-300ER is another significant step forward for Kuwait Airways and yet another milestone achieved on our five-year transformation plan."

"The second aircraft's arrival is further proof of the support that all stakeholders share in realizing the vision of having a prominent, official national carrier that is both the pride of a nation and a strong ambassador for Kuwait, within the global and aviation community," Roumi added.

According to airline sources, the arrival of the remaining eight Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, to be delivered before the end of September 2017, is part of a larger "fleet acquisition plan" that will see the addition of 10 A350 and 15 A320neo aircraft arrive, between 2019 and 2021. At the conclusion of the airline's transformation plan (2021), Kuwait Airways has claimed it will have the youngest commercial airline fleet in the world.

One of the airline's immediate-term priorities has been to increase market share by enhancing its services on existing routes and this will certainly be supported through the deployment of the new aircraft and their onboard features. Going forward, the arrival of the Boeing 777-300ER (the "ER" standing for "extended range"), will also allow Kuwait Airways to look at adding more non-stop, long-haul routes to its network.



Crime Report

Gay man kills boyfriend in Subhan

KUWAIT: A gay Nepalese man could not bear the taunts of his partner and other roommates in Subhan. So after a few drinks, he pulled out a knife, killed his boyfriend, cut up parts of his body and displayed them to those who had ridiculed him. He said he had taken revenge against the person who had dishonored him. The suspect was arrested and confessed to the murder.

Containers found

Concerned police authorities in cooperation with customs department detectives located the two containers that were smuggled out of Shuwaikh Port on Dec 14. Investigations indicated the containers were in a fenced off area in Amghara, and found to contain liquor brought in from a neighboring country. The Ministry of Interior's relations and security information department said in a statement five suspects, all Indian, were identified, and the main suspect was arrested at Kuwait International Airport while attempting to flee the country. His partner who had moved the two containers was also arrested, while a third is being arrested by a Gulf country. The fourth and fifth suspects were able to escape to India via a Gulf country. The first and second suspect told police they had brought another container before, which was located and found to contain liquor and fireworks.

Reckless drivers arrested

A large number of youths celebrated New Year by showing off their driving skills and endangering motorists, while a large number of spectators were watching. Three reckless drivers spent the night at the traffic department's holding cell. The stunts took place in Wafra, and when police responded to calls, the reckless drivers sped off, except for the three.

Search for swindler

Several female citizens complained at the criminal detectives department about a young swindler. They said the man lured them through Snapchat, and after they gave him money, he disappeared and did not answer their calls. The women said the man says he is a poet, and told them their money will be invested in the real estate market. They later discovered he had been jailed before on similar charges. Detectives said the suspect worked in three major real estate companies and was fired for breach of trust and had a bad reputation in the real estate market. He was also wanted for several other cases. Detectives are looking for him.

Campers attacked

An unidentified person entered a family camp and stabbed two persons. One of them is in critical condition and was admitted to Adan Hospital's intensive care unit. A security source said the suspect was drunk.

Forgery

A Kuwaiti teacher told Salam police that KD 778 were stolen from his bank account online, and that he had informed the bank about the withdrawal.

Drug possession

A bedoon, who was in an abnormal condition, was arrested in Fintas with 'chemical' drug (spice) and cigarette rolling paper. —Translated by Kuwait Times from the Arabic press

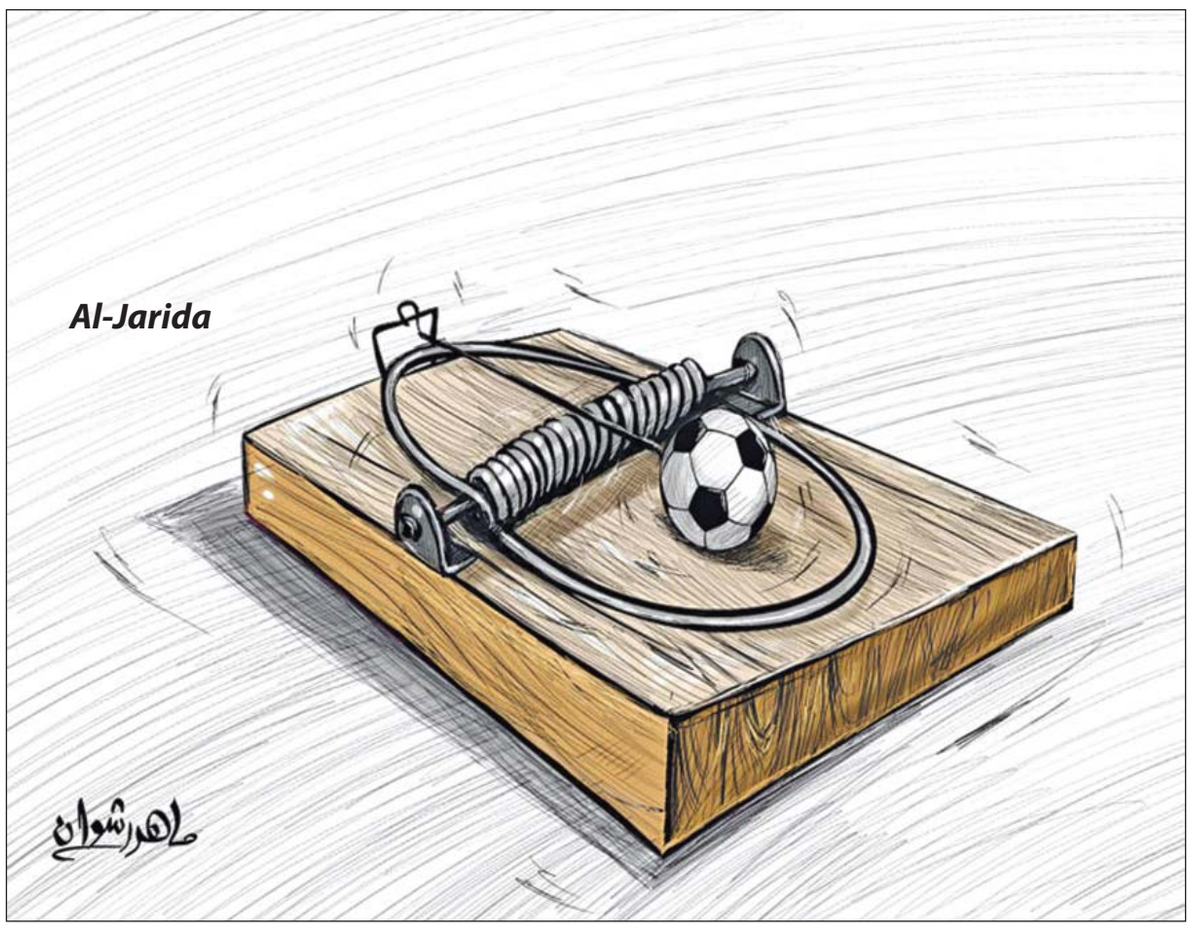
Minister praises municipality workers

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality released a statement yesterday quoting Mohammad Al-Jabri, the Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Minister of State for Municipality Affairs, who praised efforts of municipality inspectors which helped confiscate expired food products during recent raids at warehouses in Rai and Shuwaikh.

Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri

Jabri urged Engineer Ahmad Al-Manfouhi, Director General of Kuwait Municipality to finalize necessary procedures in order to refer the warehouse owners to the public prosecution for questioning. Meanwhile, Jabri emphasized the necessity of continuing and intensifying inspections on stores, warehouses and other outlets to make sure that food products put for sale are on par with the highest safety regulations.

"Inspectors and observers shall not show leniency towards any violators who deliberately change expiration dates on food packaging, thus endangering consumers' safety and health," Jabri said. He assured that surprise inspection campaigns will continue in order to make sure that food products are safe before they reach to consumers.



Al-Jarida

A letter to decision makers

By Dr Nermin Al-Houti

To start with, we must thank the Interior Ministry for their efforts in protecting Kuwait's security and instilling safety in our society. But despite of the safety provided, the youth have become reckless these days. For example, they drive their vehicles at extremely high speeds, while showing off with their vehicles aggressively and randomly, creating disturbing noises that annoy pedestrians and lead to obstruction of traffic.

We see young people riding their motorcycles in a uncontrollable way. We are experiencing the start of a 'romantic' winter, which encourages youth men to take their female friends on a ride. Some people might call this as 'personal freedom,' but the girls in these cases have forgotten that they do not live in a foreign country, but a Muslim nation, and that this behavior is not part of our society. We cannot force those girls to change their behavior, but all we can do is pray for them and their families, and this is where our real issue starts.

What families cannot do, the interior ministry must correct. This does not mean that the interior ministry is not doing what it should towards our society, but our message today is directed to the decision makers, who are urged to give more authority to implement decisions and change many laws, and to transformed punishment into a tool that teaches values to be learnt by the future generation. For example, in the United Arab Emirates, when the family fails to correct its children, the father reports his son and hands him over to military authorities. It is not a prison, but rather a military school where a child learns discipline, so that children can become components of a generation why can depend on in the future. Why can't we implement this experience in Kuwait?

In the past, our schools used to commit students, both girls and boys, to military education. There were many obstacles faced then, but I believe that the interior ministry can overcome the obstacles and implement this idea. Whoever is arrested while a juvenile should be sent to a military college, be it in the interior ministry or the army according to the needs and the juvenile's capabilities. I believe that this should not be limited to youth men only, but also young women. I think that this will provide a radical solution for youth recklessness. After the idea is implemented, the youth will fear the law, and behave in a more disciplined way.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

Al-Jarida

Santa, I am terrified

By Salah Al-Sayer

Phobia is a mental illness by which a person feels extremely terrified about certain things. There are many types of phobia, like of the fear of height, darkness or socializing. Some people carry hand sanitizers along wherever they go as they are phobic to germs and infections. During exams, some students suffer from sleeplessness, irritation and headaches due to exam phobia. It is also well-known that most women are phobic of cockroaches.

It is as if loving and respecting others and sharing their joys and sorrows are not an integral part of our religious values

However, the weirdest type of phobia that is infecting all human beings is 'wealth phobia.' The symptoms include asceticism about getting wealthy and making more money.

While our Christian brothers celebrated Christmas, a renewed state of phobia spread in our society. It is a well-known phobia in our region where the culture of hate, lack of tolerance and hedonophobia (fear of pleasure and delight) prevails. Some people try to intimidate us from celebrating this occasion with the excuse of protecting our religious values. It is as if loving and respecting others and sharing their joys and sorrows are not an integral part of our religious values. Some have even forgotten that the Christmas tree is considered as a human heritage.

The Christmas season in our Arab societies has turned into a seasonal war against the tree; a war waged by hordes of people working on cogitating, theorizing, expiating, banning and incriminating with the aim of besieging the 'tree' and portraying it in popular minds as a symbol of evil, while in fact it represents a good occasion commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ (PBUH). On this occasion, churches hold prayers for our Christian brothers, while families and friends' gather there and exchange gifts. Christmas marks the end of the year and the beginning of a new one. It is a season of good and virtue, but has been turned into something evil, because some people have chronic phobias.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

KFH participates in health, nutrition conference

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the Health and Nutrition for Special Needs Conference held under the patronage of Health Minister Dr Jamal Al-Harbi as part of the bank's social responsibility and keenness to contribute in raising the health awareness and support the people with special needs. KFH confirms its ongoing commitment towards supporting people with special needs and giving them special care especially that KFH has long track record of social initiatives and contributions, underpinned by its prestigious status and leading position, not to mention the Islamic identity.

The conference tackled the health and nutrition expo that hosts auditoriums for medical and health seminars dedicated for people with special needs, sport activities in addition to an equipped kitchen to demonstrate the healthy cooking styles. On the sidelines of the conference, KFH was honored in recognition of its distinguished contributions in the field of corporate social responsibility and the endeavors to support to all segments of society.

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's Retired Officers Department hosted the weekly meeting for retirees at its camp in Subhan recently, in attendance of Major General Adeeb Suwaidan, Director of the General Department of Services Centers, and Colonel Saif Al-Mutairi, Director of the Retired Officers Department.

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Playboy son of E Guinea leader on trial in France

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BAGHDAD: Iraqis inspect a charred vehicle on the site of a bomb attack yesterday in Sadr City, a majority Shiite neighborhood in the northeast of the capital. (Inset) Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi greets Hollande prior to their meeting yesterday. — AFP/AP

Hollande vows to tackle foreign fighters

French president visits Iraq • Baghdad suicide car blast kills 32

ARBIL, Iraq: Western support for military action against the Islamic State group is key to preventing attacks at home, French President Francois Hollande said yesterday in Iraq, where yet another bombing killed dozens. A suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden car on a square in Baghdad's Sadr City neighborhood, killing at least 32 people in the latest attack on the Iraqi capital claimed by IS.

France, one of the most active members of the US-led coalition fighting the extremist group, is particularly concerned over the return of a large contingent of French militants from Syria and Iraq. "Taking action against terrorism here in Iraq is also preventing acts of terrorism on our own soil," Hollande said at a base where French soldiers have been training elite Iraqi forces. Hollande, the only major Western head of state to have visited Baghdad since the coalition was set up in 2014, stressed that supporting Iraq was one of the surest ways of securing Europe. Of European countries targeted by terror attacks claimed or inspired by IS, France has been the worst hit, but attacks have also been carried out in Belgium and Germany. Besides the defeated fighters who are expected to return to Europe in the coming months, radicalized children who grew up in the "caliphate" IS proclaimed in 2014 are also seen as ticking bombs. "We will have to deal with the issue of the return of foreign fighters... who committed crimes, who brought their families with them, including in some cases very young children," Hollande said.

Since it joined the United States in the coalition in September 2014, France says its warplanes have conducted 5,700 sorties, around 1,000 strikes and destroyed more than 1,700 targets. France has 14 Rafale fighter jets that are stationed in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates and taking part in coalition operations. It also has 500 soldiers training and advising elite Iraqi forces and CAESAR artillery vehicles stationed south of Mosul to provide support for ongoing operations to retake the city. Australia, Britain and Italy are also part of the 60-member coalition supporting Iraq's efforts against IS.

2017 'year of victories'

Hollande said the recapture of Mosul, Iraq's second city and the militants' last major bastion in the country, was a matter of weeks but warned efforts should then focus on Raqqa in Syria. "If Daesh is eradicated in Iraq but remains in Syria, we know full well that acts will be carried out here in the Middle East but also on our own soil in France, in Europe," said Hollande. He met Iraqi President Fuad Masum, a Kurd, and Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi, from the largest Shiite political bloc, and called for reconciliation and unity after IS is defeated. He then flew to the northern city of Arbil, the capital of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, where he met local leader Massud Barzani. Hollande began his trip with a visit to a base near Baghdad where French forces are training Iraq's elite Counter-Terrorism Service, the force that has spearheaded most major anti-IS operations in Iraq since 2014. It was CTS that first breached the city limits of Mosul late last year in an effort to retake it from IS.

But the going has been tough for Iraqi forces, partly because hundreds of thousands of civilians have remained in the city, slowing their advance. Abadi had promised his forces would rid the country of IS by the end of 2016 but he said last week that three more months would be needed to achieve that goal. Some observers argue the new timeline remains ambitious, given the continued presence of IS fighters in other parts of the country. Hollande predicted yesterday that 2017 would be "a year of victories" against terrorism but, while its "caliphate" appears doomed, IS still has the ability to sow chaos by attacking softer targets.

Deadly Baghdad bomb

A suicide car bomb blast killed at least 32 people and wounded more than 60 yesterday in Baghdad's Shiite majority neighborhood of Sadr City. Police officials said the bomber struck on a square where daily laborers were waiting for jobs, causing one of the highest casualty tolls in the capital in months. Pictures posted on social media shortly after the explosion showed a huge plume of black smoke billowing into the sky and seriously injured people being evacuated. IS claimed responsibility for the attack via its propaganda agency Amaq, saying the "martyrdom operation" had killed about 40 people. It also claimed another bombing on Saturday that left at least 27 dead in a busy area of central Baghdad. — AFP

Bloody Chicago year ends with 762 murders

CHICAGO: One of the most violent years in Chicago history ended with a sobering tally: 762 homicides, the most in two decades in the city and more than New York and Los Angeles combined. The nation's third largest city also saw 1,100 more shooting incidents last year than it did in 2015, according to data released Sunday by the Chicago Police Department. The statistics underline a story of bloodshed that has put Chicago at the center of a national dialogue about gun violence.

The numbers are staggering, even for those who followed the steady news accounts of weekends ending with dozens of shootings and monthly death tolls that hadn't been seen in years. The increase in homicides compared to 2015, when 485 were reported, is the largest spike in 60 years. Police and city officials have lamented the flood of illegal guns into the city, and the crime statistics appeared to support their claims: Police recovered 8,300 illegal guns in 2016, a 20 percent increase from the previous year.

Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson said during a news conference Sunday that Chicago is among many US cities that have seen a spike in violence, including in attacks on police. He said anger at police, including in the wake of video released that showed a white Chicago officer shooting a black teenager 16 times, has left criminals "emboldened" to violent crimes. He also said it's becoming clearer to criminals that they have little to fear from the criminal justice system. "In Chicago, we just don't have a deterrent to pick up a gun," he said. "Any time a guy stealing a loaf of bread spends more time pre-trial in jail than a gun offender, something is wrong."

Johnson, who has for months complained about Illinois' lax gun laws, said he thinks more and more gang members are arming themselves because the price for being caught is small compared to other large cities. He said gang members he has spoken to consider the court system "a joke". The bulk of the deaths and shooting incidents, which jumped from 2,426 in 2015 to 3,550 last year, occurred in only five of the city's 22 police districts on the city's South and West sides, all poor and predominantly black areas where gangs are most active.

Police said the shootings in those areas generally weren't random, with more than 80 percent of the victims having previously been identified by police as more susceptible because of their gang ties or past arrests. The city has scrambled to address the violence. Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced last year that 1,000 officers would be added to the police department. At the same time, police officials have been trying to figure out why homicides and shootings - which began climbing the year before - suddenly surged.

'Viral video'

On Sunday, Johnson said he hoped several initiatives - including more street cameras in some of the city's most dangerous neighborhoods, and the expansion of gunshot-detection systems - would lead to more arrests and drive down the violent crime rate. Johnson has said several factors have contributed to the increased violence.

He noted 2016 was the first full year since the city was forced in Nov 2015 to release video of the fatal police shooting of Laquan McDonald, the black 17-year-old boy who was shot 16 times by a white police officer. The video cost former Chicago Police Superintendent Garry McCarthy his job, sparked major protests around the city, and led to federal and state investigations of the police department. It also left Johnson with the task of trying to restore public trust in what appeared to be a weakened police force, a perception that was only buttressed by a dramatic drop in the number of arrests in 2016.

The police department has cited several factors for the declining numbers, including a concerted effort not to make minor drug arrests and focus on gun violence. Johnson pointed to gun arrests and gun seizures as evidence that his officers are aggressively fighting crime.

But critics said they have no doubt that officers have become far more reluctant to do their jobs since the McDonald video was released and the officer who killed the teen was charged with murder. "It's almost like a pull back so they (gangs) can kill each other sort of thing," said the Rev Marshall Hatch, a prominent minister in one of Chicago's most dangerous neighborhoods on the West Side.

Johnson acknowledged in a recent interview with AP that officers have become more cautious - in part out of fear of becoming the next "viral video". He also said a state law that took effect last January requiring officers to fill out lengthy contact cards when they stop someone has resulted in fewer stops, because the cards require more paperwork for officers and the cards are "scrutinized" by federal judges. He said those concerns are not lost on criminals. "Criminals watch TV, pay attention to the media," he said. "They see an opportunity to commit nefarious activity." — AP

Hasidic woman judge: 'It's the American dream'

NEW YORK: In some ways, Rachel Freier has a background that might be expected in a new civil court judge. She is a real estate lawyer who volunteers in family court and in her community, where she even serves as a paramedic. But Freier starts work today as something quite unexpected. She's believed to be the first woman from Judaism's ultra-Orthodox Hasidic community to be elected as a judge in the United States.

A proud product of a world with strict customs concerning gender roles and modesty, the new Brooklyn civil court judge started college as a married, 30-year-old mother of three children and had three more before graduating. A pathbreaker who embraces tradition, she has sometimes had to explain herself to both outsiders and fellow believers. "My commitment to the public and my commitment to my religion and my community - the two can go hand in hand," she says.

NEW YORK: In this Dec 29, 2016 photo, Rachel Freier looks up from her phone while posing for pictures at her law office in the Borough Park section of Brooklyn. —AP

At a swearing-in ceremony last month, she both vowed to uphold the Constitution and pledged to illuminate the Hasidic world for her new colleagues. "This is a dream," she told the gathering. "It's the American dream." There's no official tally of American judges' religions, but experts aren't aware of any Hasidic woman before Freier winning a judicial post. It is extremely rare even in Israel for Hasidic or other ultra-Orthodox women to hold any elected position.

Freier, a political newcomer whose uncle is a former judge, won a three-way Democratic primary and the general election in a swath of Brooklyn that includes the heavily Hasidic Borough Park neighborhood. Her election is "a step for the ultra-Orthodox community at large", showing it's open to women making progress on the political ladder, said Yossi Gestetner, a longtime Hasidic political activist and public relations consultant who co-managed Freier's campaign.

Hasids and other ultra-Orthodox groups together make up only 6 percent of America's estimated 5.3 million adult Jews, according to a 2013 Pew Research Center study. Dating to 18th-century Eastern Europe, Hasidism combines stringent adherence to Jewish law and a joyful belief in mysticism. Followers often speak Yiddish, wear traditional dress including beards and sidelocks for men and wigs for married women, and separate men and women in contexts ranging from buses to classrooms.

"The very idea that an ultra-Orthodox woman could be a judge" is notable, said Samuel Heilman, a City University of New York sociology professor who studies Orthodox Judaism. Under the strictest interpretations of Jewish law, women can't be judges or largely even witnesses in the rabbinical courts that weigh various disputes in Orthodox communities. (Freier notes that her new post is separate from those tribunals.)

Freier, 51, nicknamed Ruchie, started working as a legal secretary after high school. College wasn't customary for Hasidic women, though it has since become more common. But when her husband, David, got a college degree, she aspired to one of her own. After graduating from a women-only, Orthodox Jewish-friendly program at private Touro College, she went on to Brooklyn Law School, finishing in 2005.

Some other Hasidic Jews questioned what she was doing. But they came to realize "I was completely devoted to our religion and our tradition, and this was something I wanted to do regardless," she says. "I didn't want to ever be considered someone who was turning away from my community," but rather to work within its structure, she said. That has sometimes required finding creative ways to resolve issues. An appeal for help from boys who had chafed in Orthodox Jewish schools, for example, led Freier to found a program that helps young men get general-equivalency diplomas.

Then Freier was enlisted to represent Orthodox Jewish women who wanted to join an all-male volunteer ambulance corps, aiming to aid fellow women during childbirth or gynecological emergencies. After ambulance corps leaders rebuffed the idea, which a well-known Orthodox Jewish blog called a "new radical feminist agenda," Freier helped the women launch their own volunteer service and joined it herself. She was still taking her turn on call this past week. If there's a message she hopes her election sends, it's "don't give up". "And don't let go of your standards." —AP

Netanyahu questioned as part of graft probe

Bibi denies any wrongdoing

JERUSALEM: Police arrived at the residence of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday evening to question him as part of a graft probe that has shaken Israeli politics, media reports said. Three investigators arrived at the residence in central Jerusalem at around 6:30 pm (1630 GMT), according to public radio and other reports. Police declined to comment. Ahead of their arrival, Netanyahu denied any wrongdoing and told his political opponents to put any "celebrations" on hold.

Police were expected to question Netanyahu over whether he illegally accepted gifts from wealthy supporters. The long-running inquiry has looked into whether Israeli and foreign businessmen have offered gifts worth tens of thousands of dollars as well as another unspecified issue, according to media reports. Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit has reportedly decided to upgrade the inquiry to a criminal probe, although he has yet to confirm this.

Earlier yesterday, screens were mounted at the entrance to the compound in central Jerusalem in an apparent bid to shield the investigators' arrival. "We hear all the media reports. We see and hear the festive spirit and atmosphere in television studios and in the corridors of the opposition," Netanyahu told lawmakers from his Likud party yesterday, according to a video posted to his Facebook page. "I want to tell them to wait for the celebrations. Do not rush. I told you and I repeat: There will be nothing because there is nothing. You will continue to inflate hot air balloons and we will continue to lead the state of Israel."

JERUSALEM: An Israeli police car is seen at the entrance to the residence of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as members of the media wait for the arrival of police investigators yesterday. (Inset) Netanyahu gestures during a Likud faction meeting at the Knesset (Israel's parliament) yesterday. —AFP

Months-long inquiry

Police have carried out the inquiry in secret over the course of some eight months and recently arrived at an important breakthrough, reports said. Some 50 witnesses are said to have been questioned. In July, Mandelblit said he had ordered a preliminary examination into an unspecified affair involving Netanyahu, with no details given. US billionaire and World Jewish Congress president Ronald Lauder has been among those questioned in the probe over gifts he allegedly gave Netanyahu and alleged spending on trips for him, Israeli media reported.

Lauder, whose family founded the Estee Lauder cosmetics giant, has long been seen as an ally of Netanyahu, who in the late 1990s put him in charge of negotiating with then Syrian president Hafez Al-Assad. Netanyahu has acknowledged receiving money from French tycoon Arnaud Mimran, who was sentenced to eight years in prison over a scam amounting to 283 million euros involving the trade of carbon emissions permits and the taxes on them. Netanyahu's office said he had received $40,000 in contributions from Mimran in 2001, when he was not in office, as part of a fund for public activities, including appearances abroad to promote Israel.

He has also come under scrutiny over an alleged conflict of interest in the purchase of submarines from a German firm. Media reports have alleged a conflict of interest over the role played by the Netanyahu family lawyer, David Shimron, who also acts for the Israeli agent of Germany's ThyssenKrupp, which builds the Dolphin submarines. Beyond those issues, Israel's state comptroller released a critical report in May about Netanyahu's foreign trips, some with his wife and children, between 2003 and 2005 when he was finance minister.

'Campaign of provocation'

Netanyahu, 67, is in his fourth term as prime minister and currently heads what is seen as the most right-wing government in Israeli history. Widely known by his nickname Bibi, he has served as premier for a total of nearly 11 years, fast approaching revered founding father David Ben-Gurion's 13 years. Polls have shown that if elections were held now, his Likud party would finish behind the centrist Yesh Atid, but that voters still prefer Netanyahu as prime minister.

The inquiry has led to fierce debate in Israeli politics, with Netanyahu's allies accusing opposition politicians and some in the news media of unfairly pressuring the attorney general. Regional Cooperation Minister Tzachi Hanegbi, in comments on army radio yesterday, denounced what he called a "campaign of provocation and incitement" against Mandelblit. However, others have accused Mandelblit of moving too slowly in the highly charged case.

Netanyahu's predecessor as prime minister, Ehud Olmert, was forced to resign while dogged by corruption allegations. Olmert entered prison in February and is serving 27 months for corruption, making him Israel's first former premier to serve jail time. —AFP

ALEPPO: This undated handout photo released by the Russian Defense Ministry claims to show Russian military engineers in their APCs in Aleppo. —AFP

Army presses fight near Damascus despite truce

BEIRUT: Syria's army advanced yesterday as it battles to capture a rebel region that is key to the capital's water supply, launching strikes and artillery fire threatening a fragile nationwide truce. Brokered by regime ally Russia and opposition supporter Turkey, the ceasefire is now in its fourth day despite sporadic violence and continued fighting in the Wadi Barada area near Damascus. "Regime forces and fighters from Lebanon's Hezbollah group are advancing in the region and are now on the outskirts of Ain Al-Fijeh, the primary water source in the area," said Rami Abdel Rahman, director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor.

He said government troops and allied fighters were engaged in fierce clashes with rebels, including former Al-Qaeda affiliate Fateh al-Sham Front, a claim denied by opposition fighters. The monitor said government forces were carrying out air strikes and artillery fire on the area, northwest of the capital, and that two civilians were shot dead by snipers. Two other civilians were killed in regime bombardment of the town of Rastan in central Homs province, it added. Government forces have surrounded Wadi Barada since mid-2015, but the siege was tightened in December as the army piled on the pressure.

Four million without water

The Syrian government says rebels have targeted key water infrastructure, causing leaking fuel to poison water supplies and then cutting it off altogether. The United Nations says at least four million people in Damascus have been without water since Dec 22. The Observatory said around 1,000 women and children fled the area over the weekend. The violence threatens the delicate truce that came into force last week and is intended to pave the way for new peace talks in Kazakhstan later this month.

In a statement, rebels fighting under the Free Syrian Army banner in Wadi Barada warned that the truce was in danger. "We call on the sponsors of the ceasefire agreement to assume their responsibility and pressure the regime and its allied militias to stop their clear violation of the agreement," the statement said. Otherwise, they warned, "we will call on all the free military factions operating inside Syria to overturn the agreement and ignite the fronts in defense of the people of Wadi Barada". The statement said that Wadi Barada was included in the deal brokered by Moscow and Ankara and accused the regime of violating the agreement.

Talks due in Astana

The ceasefire deal, and the plan for new talks, received the unanimous backing of the UN Security Council on Saturday, despite offering a competing track to UN-sponsored negotiations. Turkey and Russia are organizing the talks in Astana along with regime ally Iran, and say they are intended to supplement, not replace, UN-backed negotiations scheduled to resume in February. Despite backing opposite sides in Syria's conflict, Ankara and Moscow have worked closely in recent months on the war, brokering a deal to evacuate civilians and surrendering rebels from Aleppo last month before the regime recaptured the northern city in full.

Both countries are also waging their own military interventions in Syria, with Russian forces fighting to bolster President Bashar Al-Assad's government since Sept 2015. Turkey launched a military campaign in northern Syria in August 2016, targeting the Islamic State group but also Kurdish militants. The Syrian conflict has also spilled over into Turkey, with several attacks blamed on Kurdish or IS. Yesterday, IS claimed responsibility for a New Year's Eve attack on an Istanbul nightclub that killed 39 people. Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus warned that Ankara was determined to press on with its military operation in Syria "until these terror organizations no longer remain a threat to Turkey". A string of efforts to find a political solution to Syria's war have failed since it began with anti-government protests in March 2011.

The conflict has killed more than 310,000 people, and displaced over half the population, including millions who have fled abroad, becoming refugees. —AFP

Shabaab bombers attack checkpoint, hotel

MOGADISHU: Suicide bombers attacked the main peacekeeping base in Somalia's capital yesterday, killing at least three Somali security officers, police said. Islamist Shabaab militants, who want to topple the Western-backed government, said they carried out the assault near Mogadishu's main airport, an area used by several embassies, aid groups and telecoms companies. One bomber drove a car into a checkpoint outside the headquarters of the African Union peacekeeping force AMISOM, killing three Somali officers stationed there, police officer Mohamed Ahmed said.

Another vehicle then drove through towards the base's main gates but came under fire from peacekeepers. "It exploded about 200 meters from the gate. Civilian buildings were damaged," AMISOM said on its Twitter feed. The powerful blasts damaged the front of the nearby Peace Hotel, though there were no immediate reports of casualties there. The burned-out shell of one of the wrecked vehicles lay outside.

MOGADISHU: Somali soldiers stand by a destroyed building near the scene of a suicide car bomb attack in Mogadishu, Somalia, yesterday. —AP

Shabaab's military spokesman Sheikh Abdiasis Abu Musab said the fighters had intended to attack the hotel, as African leaders seeking a solution to Somalia's decades-long turmoil had met there last year. Nearly 300 members of Somalia's federal parliament were sworn in last week after elections and are expected to pick a new president.

The blasts left a scene of destruction with rubble strewn across the road and some nearby villas all but collapsed. "The mujahedeen fighters carried out two suicide attacks one of them targeting a checkpoint alongside the road to Halane," the Shabaab statement said using the local name for the airport compound. "This was to clear the way for another bomber who was driving a truck which targeted Peace Hotel."

The Shabaab is fighting to overthrow the internationally backed government in Mogadishu and regularly uses suicide bombers against government, military and civilians. Mogadishu airport is a regular target but this is the first time the well-known and popular Peace Hotel has been attacked. Somalia is in the midst of a drawn-out election process to choose a new government. —Agencies

KARACHI: Activists from the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Pakistan party take part in a protest on Sunday. The event was organized to express solidarity with Muslims in Myanmar and Syria. —AFP

WASHINGTON: In this, file photo, President Barack Obama speaks during a news conference in the briefing room of the White House in Washington. —AP

Under 3 weeks left: Obama in closing stretch of presidency

HONOLULU: His last presidential vacation behind him, Barack Obama is entering the closing stretch of his presidency, an eleventh-hour push to tie up loose ends and put finishing touches on his legacy before handing the reins to President-elect Donald Trump. Obama returns to Washington midday Monday from Hawaii with just two-and-a-half weeks left. His final days will largely be consumed by a bid to protect his endangered health care law, a major farewell speech and the ongoing handover of power to Trump.

In an email to supporters on Monday, Obama said he'll deliver a valedictory speech on Jan. 10, following a tradition set in 1796 when the first president, George Washington, spoke to the American people for the last time in office. The speech will take place at McCormick Place, a giant convention center in Obama's hometown of Chicago. "I'm thinking about them as a chance to say thank you for this amazing journey, to celebrate the ways you've changed this country for the better these past eight years, and to offer some thoughts on where we all go from here," Obama said.

Obama's chief speechwriter, Cody Keenan, traveled with Obama to Hawaii and spent much of the trip working on the speech. The Chicago trip will likely be Obama's last outside Washington as president and will be include a "family reunion" for Obama's former campaign staffers. Obama is also planning last-minute commutations and pardons, White House officials said, in line with his second-term effort to cut sentences for inmates given unduly harsh sentences for drug crimes. Though prominent offenders like Edward Snowden and Rod Blagojevich are also asking for leniency, Obama's final acts of clemency are expected to remain focused on drug offenders whose plight Obama tried but failed to address through criminal justice reform.

After taking office eight years ago, Obama and his aides were effusive in their praise for how Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, helped his team take over the massive federal bureaucracy. Obama has vowed to pass on the favor to Trump. But the transition hasn't been without incident. The two teams have clashed over the Trump team's requests for information Obama aides fear could be used to eliminate government employees who worked on Obama priorities like climate change and minority rights overseas.

Offloading

Trump's team, meanwhile, has been frustrated by Obama's attempts to box Trump in with parting moves to block ocean drilling, declare new monuments and further empty out the Guantanamo Bay prison. While on his annual vacation in Oahu, Obama asserted himself forcefully on two foreign policy issues that put him in direct conflict with Trump. Obama directed the US to defy tradition by allowing a UN Security Council resolution criticizing Israel on settlements to pass, then slapped Russia with sweeping penalties over US allegations of hacking.

The final days are Obama's last chance to define his presidency before his loses the bully pulpit and cedes his legacy to historians. For Obama, helping Americans understand how his two terms have reshaped American life is even more critical amid concerns that Trump may undo much of what he accomplished, including the health law. As Trump and Republicans vow to gut the Affordable Care Act, Democrats are working to devise a strategy to protect the law by exploiting GOP divisions about how to replace it. To that end, Obama will travel Wednesday to the Capitol to meet with House and Senate Democrats, likely his last meeting with his party's lawmakers as president.

His administration is also working feverishly to finish up regulations in the pipeline that Obama hopes can be completed in the final days, perhaps increasing the likelihood his policies carry over. But the closer it gets to Trump's inauguration, the harder those tasks become. Though Obama remains president until Jan 20, the White House can't process the departure of all its staffers on a single day. So this week Obama aides will start "offloading," turning in their Blackberries and shutting down their computers for the last time, leaving a smaller staff on hand for the final days.

Obama must also prepare to become a private citizen for the first time in two decades. An office of the former president must be stood up, and Obama's family will be making arrangements to move into a rental home in Northwest Washington where they plan to stay until youngest daughter Sasha finishes high school. The Obamas have long lamented how the presidency denied them freedom and privacy, with first lady Michelle Obama likening the White House to "a really nice prison." —AP

Afghan refugees coming to California struggle with PTSD

'I feel like I'm drowning here'

SACRAMENTO, California: California's capital has emerged as a leading destination for Afghan refugees who were awarded special visas because of their service to coalition forces in the war. But life in the United States for them has proven a constant struggle. These former translators, engineers and doctors awarded Special Immigrant Visas must start over in bug-infested, low-rent apartments with minimum-wage jobs while dealing with PTSD and other health problems. More than 2,000 such visa holders and their family members have settled in Sacramento since October 2010, and many of them say they are struggling with anxiety and depression that have developed or been greatly exacerbated by their struggles in the United States.

They say they feel helpless and abandoned, lacking decent jobs, housing or an understanding of US culture. One of them is Faisal Razmal, a former interpreter for US soldiers battling the Taliban in Afghanistan who was shot in the face in front of his Sacramento apartment in August 2015 by an assailant wielding a flare gun. A neighborhood teenager and alleged member of a gang has been charged and is awaiting trial. Razmal, 28, who lost the sight in one eye after the attack, said he feels like he also lost a piece of his soul. "I feel like I'm drowning here," said Razmal, a father of two and whose wife is expecting. "I'm not mentally fixed."

Before he was shot, Razmal worked as a security guard at a shopping center. Since then, he has tried working as a taxi driver, gas station attendant, security guard and dishwasher. But his limited vision and PTSD have compromised his ability to keep a job, said licensed clinical social worker Jason Swain, who has counseled Razmal 18 times since the assault. Razmal's fate and his ability to support his family remain uncertain. The state Department of Rehabilitation said a decision on his application for disability payments may take a year, Swain said. Razmal, who survived roadside bombs and firefights during the war, said he was never evaluated for PTSD in Afghanistan or the United States.

CALIFORNIA: In this photo, Afghan SIV Faisal Razmal, right, talks about the paperwork he needs to get his disability payments with therapist Homeyra Ghaffari, left, in Sacramento, California. —AP Photos

Razmal's therapist, Homeyra Ghaffari, said she thinks he was already afflicted with PTSD from his experiences in Afghanistan, and he was "re-traumatized" by his shooting here. "People hear about America and think it is a dreamland and everything is law and order and they are going to be absolutely safe, and when they enter they are in shock as they try to find their way around," said Ghaffari, an Iranian marriage and family therapist in Sacramento who speaks the same Dari language as the Afghan refugees. She now counsels about 30 Afghans seeking help with mental health and domestic violence issues. "They feel isolated, don't have any clear direction," she said. "Their dream shatters right away."—AP

States face off over future of Obama global warming plan

ALBANY, New York: Two weeks after officials in two dozen states asked Republican President-elect Donald Trump to kill one of Democratic President Barack Obama's signature plans to curb global warming, another group of state officials is urging Trump to save it. Democratic attorneys general in 15 states plus four cities and counties sent a letter to Trump asking him to preserve Obama's Clean Power Plan, New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, the lead author, announced Thursday.

The letter was a rebuttal to one sent this month by Republican officials from West Virginia and 21 other states and Democrats from the coal-producing states of Kentucky and Missouri urging Trump to issue a Day 1 executive order declaring the Clean Power Plan unlawful and prohibiting the US Environmental Protection Agency from enforcing it. The Clean Power Plan aims to reduce carbon dioxide emissions at existing power plants, the nation's largest source of the pollution, by about one-third by 2030.

Opponents say the Environmental Protection Agency lacks authority to implement the rules. The plan is already the subject of a legal fight. Trump has called the science showing climate change a hoax. His choice to head the EPA, Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, has sued the EPA repeatedly to stop its climate agenda including Obama's sweeping power plant rules. And his nominee to run the Department of Energy, former Texas Gov. Rick Perry, has questioned climate science while working to promote coal-fired power in Texas. But in a television interview this month Trump said he was "still open-minded" about the science of climate change.

Schneiderman said states like New York are "on the front lines of climate change" and have demonstrated how to cut pollution and emissions while protecting affordable and reliable electricity, creating jobs and growing the economy. "The Clean Power Plan builds on that successful work and is a blueprint for the critical action needed to fight climate change's devastating environmental, economic and public health impacts," he said. Under Democratic Gov Andrew Cuomo's Clean Energy Standard, established this year, 50 percent of New York state's electricity must come from renewable energy sources like wind and solar by 2030.

Supporters of the plan

New York and eight other states are part of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a cap-and-trade program that has reduced carbon dioxide emissions from electrical generation in the region by 40 percent from 2005 levels. In California, the nation's most populous state, which also signed the letter, the goal is also to have half of its energy from renewable sources by 2030 and a 40 percent reduction of greenhouse gases. The letter to Trump lists local impacts of climate change from fossil fuel emissions, including drought in California, catastrophic storm surge in New York City, a record deluge on Colorado's Front Range, high-tide flooding in Virginia and South Florida and diminished shellfish harvest in Oregon and Washington state.

The legal challenge, filed by 27 states that oppose the Clean Power Plan, is before a federal appeals court in Washington, DC A decision on the plan could come at any time, but the US Supreme Court has temporarily blocked implementation of the rule until the court challenge is resolved. Still, even if Trump wants to scrap the plan, it would be a large, time-consuming task. David Doniger, a climate policy expert with the Natural Resources Defense Council who served on Democratic President Bill Clinton's White House Council of Environmental Quality, said the Trump administration "can't make it go away unless they go through rulemaking process and unwind it." —AP

Armless Syrian boy thrives in US, hopes family can join him

SHARON, Massachusetts: Ahmad Alkhalaf has had a busy year. He attended Democratic President Barack Obama's final State of the Union address as a special guest of a congressman. He learned to bike and rollerblade, took martial arts and gymnastics classes and spent his summer playing soccer and swimming in a lake at a day camp in the Boston suburbs. And he received his first pair of prosthetic arms after his were blown off three years ago in a refugee camp bomb blast that also killed three of his siblings. But as the 11-year-old Syrian boy looks to another year in his adopted home, he says his dream is to be reunited with his mother and four surviving siblings, who are living in Istanbul.

"I want my mom to come here," he said on a recent Saturday as he kicked around a soccer ball in a park. "I feel like I'm losing her. It's been too long. I can't take it anymore."Ahmad's father, Dirgam Alkhalaf, said those hopes largely hinge on whether Republican President-elect Donald Trump follows through on his pledge to curtail the flow of Syrians and Muslims to the US. Alkhalaf has applied for asylum and hopes to petition for the rest of the family if he and Ahmad are permitted to stay. "I can only be hopeful he'll do the right thing," Alkhalaf said of Trump through an interpreter. "No matter what people say, I'm optimistic." Trump transition team officials didn't return emails seeking comment on the family's case.

Alkhalaf said he can't return to Turkey after renouncing his temporary residency status there. Returning to Syria, where the Sunni Muslim family lived just outside the battle-scarred city of Aleppo, also isn't an option. "There is nothing left in Syria for us. Our home is destroyed; the government is out to get us," he said, referring to Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime, which he says conducted the 2013 bombing. "I've got nowhere to go if the US doesn't want me." The father and son have been living among a rotating group of Muslim families since their arrival in June 2015 on a medical visa for Ahmad.

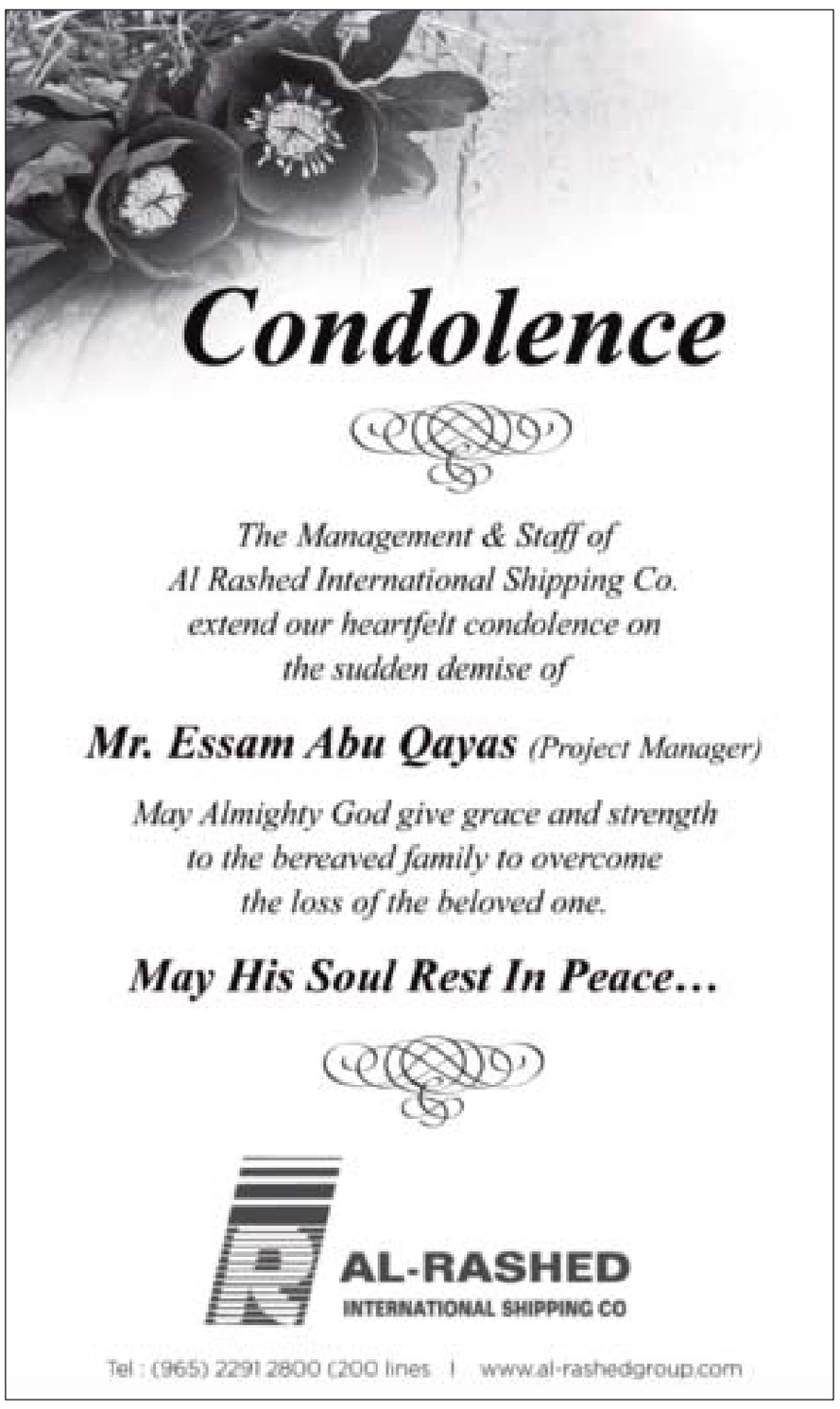
Emotionally drained

Alkhalaf works as a security guard at a mosque after receiving his work permit in July. He hopes to take his driver's license exam soon. The emotional strain of separation has taken its toll on the family, Alkhalaf said. His youngest son in Turkey has developed asthma-like problems, his wife is being treated for high blood pressure and Ahmad doesn't always sleep well, a problem that started with night terrors following the bomb blasts. "Emotionally, I'm drained," Alkhalaf said. "If we were all together, I think a lot of us would feel better. It's half the battle." Ahmad talks with his mother often and knows she's struggling to provide for his siblings.

MASSACHUSETTS: In this photo, Syrian refugee Ahmad Alkhalaf plays soccer with friends during a day camp for local Muslim children in Sharon, Massachusetts. —AP

The family largely lives off the charity of the Muslim community in New England and what Alkhalaf can send from his wages. Ahmad said he tries to perk his mother up by telling her about the new things he's experiencing. "I try to make her happy, but it's hard," Ahmad said. He enrolled in the fourth grade this past fall at a school in the Boston suburbs. He is awaiting a more advanced pair of prosthetic arms. And he hopes to join a soccer team this spring. Officials at Heights Elementary say Ahmad's stresses haven't appeared to affect his schooling.

If anything, they say, they're impressed with how quickly he has embraced his new environment, where he is receiving physical and occupational therapy, one-on-one reading and math help and other support. "He really wants to talk to people and understand things on many levels," said Holly Geiger, Ahmad's teacher. "He's not shy, and I think that's helped." Supporters have purposely jam-packed Ahmad's schedule, said Nabil Jalal, a Sharon resident who is among those helping Ahmad and his father. As Ahmad ran off to join an arts and craft session, Jalal worried what the new year might bring. "You can't have one parent and not the other, no matter how good the life is here," Jalal said. "There's a big missing part."—AP



Ukraine lawmaker sparks scandal by shooting man

KIEV: New Year's Eve passed off peacefully enough in war-torn Ukraine-until a senior lawmaker shot a man in the leg during a testosterone-charged road rage incident. Ukrainians bored by a relative lack of news over the holiday period have been gripped by accounts of the fight between the man and the senior politician that also involved an assault with a bottle. Local media interviewed the gunshot victim Vyacheslav Khimikus from his hospital bed. He admitted that he had attacked the MP with a bottle before being shot.

Khimikus was helping to push a broken-down bus just outside Kiev after stopping his own car but forgetting to switch on his flashing emergency lights.Into this scene rolled deputy Sergiy Pashynskiy and his wife in a Mercedes Benz. Khimikus said the lawmaker's wife rolled down her window and began swearing at him. This prompted Khimikus to challenge Pashynskiy-who was in the passenger seat-to come out "and settle things man-to-man". The ensuing duel saw Khimikus whack Pashynskiy in the head with a bottle before the lawmaker shot him in the leg.

"I used the gun only after being hit by a glass bottle and firing a warning shot in the air," various media quoted Pashynskiy as saying.

The deputy added that his gun was licensed and his actions legal. One of the biggest mysteries intriguing Ukrainians was why he was carrying a gun in the first place. Pashynskiy heads parliament's security and defence committee but is not required by law to carry a weapon. People were also asking why he was in a Mercedes Benz car-a luxury vehicle few Ukrainian officials can afford. The lawmaker has immunity from prosecution and may not be investigated for any crime while in office. But Ukrainian media reported that he has had a series of other run-ins with the law.

The former Soviet republic is infamous for having a raucous parliament in which fistfights and all-out brawls are not uncommon but gun use by Ukrainian officials is rare.—AFP

BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel poses for photographs after the television recording of her annual New Year's speech at the chancellery in Berlin. —AP

Germany's Merkel to skip Davos on eve of Trump presidency

BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel is steering clear of the World Economic Forum in Davos, a meeting expected to be dominated by debate over the looming presidency of Donald Trump and rising public anger with elites and globalization. Merkel has been a regular at the annual gathering of political leaders, CEOs and celebrities, travelling to the snowy resort in the Swiss Alps seven times since becoming chancellor in 2005. But her spokesman told Reuters she had decided not to attend for a second straight year.

This year's conference runs from Jan. 17-20 under the banner "Responsive and Responsible Leadership". Trump's inauguration coincides with the last day of the conference. "It's true that a Davos trip was being considered, but we never confirmed it, so this is not a cancellation," the spokesman said. It is the first time Merkel has missed Davos two years in a row since taking office over 11 years ago and her absence may come as a disappointment to the organizers because her reputation as a steady, principled leader fits well with the theme of this year's conference.

The German government declined to say what scheduling conflict was preventing her from attending, nor would it say whether the decision might be linked to the truck attack on a Berlin Christmas market that killed 12 people in mid-December. But after the Brexit vote in Britain and the election of Trump were attributed to rising public anger with the political establishment and globalization, leaders may be more reluctant than usual to travel to a conference at a plush ski resort that has become synonymous with the global elite.

Trump

One European official suggested that the prospect of having to address questions about Trump days before he enters the White House might also have dissuaded Merkel, whose politics is at odds with the president-elect on a broad range of issues, from immigration and trade, to Russia and climate change. During the US election campaign, Trump described Merkel's refugee policies as "insane". Like Merkel, French President Francois Hollande, who announced in early December that he would not seek a second term next year, will not be in Davos.

The WEF had also hoped to lure Matteo Renzi, but he resigned as Italian prime minister last month. European leaders that are expected include Mark Rutte of the Netherlands and Enda Kenny of Ireland. British Prime Minister Theresa May could also be there. Although the WEF does not comment on which leaders it is expecting until roughly a week before the meeting, the star attraction is expected to be Xi Jinping, the first Chinese president to attend.

Members of President-elect Donald Trump's team, including Davos regulars like former Goldman Sachs president Gary Cohn and fund manager Anthony Scaramucci, are also expected. WEF Chairman Klaus Schwab was invited to Trump Tower last month, although the purpose of the visit was unclear. German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen, who was elected to the WEF board of trustees last year, is expected to attend, as are senior ministers from a range of other European countries, as well as top figures from the European Commission.—Reuters

Turkish attacks tied to IS group

ISTANBUL: The Islamic State (IS) jihadist group has claimed responsibility for the New Year's Eve attack on an Istanbul nightclub that killed 39 people. This is the first time that IS has issued a clear and undisputed claim for an attack inside Turkey. But it has in the past claimed individual assassinations of Syrian anti-jihadist activists in the south of the country. Moreover, Turkish officials have accused it of carrying out a string of attacks in Istanbul and elsewhere which were never claimed by the extremist group from the summer of 2015.

2017

January 1: A hail of bullets at the upscale Reina nightclub in Istanbul leaves 39 people dead, including 27 foreign tourists. The gunman opened fire on hundreds of people celebrating New Year's eve before he managed to escape. The IS said a day later that the attack was carried out by "a soldier of the caliphate".

2016

November 4: Nine people, including two police officers, die when a car bomb explodes in front of a police station in Diyarbakir, the regional capital of a predominantly Kurdish area in southeastern Turkey. Officials initially blame Kurdish separatists for the attack but a news agency affiliated with IS claims responsibility for the jihadists. Two days later, the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK), a splinter group of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) also claims responsibility. August 20: An unclaimed suicide attack against a Kurdish wedding celebration kills 57 people in Gaziantep, southeastern Turkey near the Syrian border. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan blames the IS group. June 28: At least 47 people are killed, including foreigners, and over 200 injured in a triple suicide bombing and gun attack at Istanbul's Ataturk airport. There is no claim of responsibility, but authorities say evidence points to IS.

May 1: Three police officers are killed when a car explodes in Gaziantep. Ankara blames the IS. March 19: Three Israelis and an Iranian are killed and dozens injured in a suicide bombing targeting Istanbul shopping thoroughfare Istiklal Caddesi. Authorities blame IS extremists. January 12: Twelve German tourists are killed and more than a dozen others wounded in a suicide attack by a Syrian bomber in Istanbul's Sultanahmet district, the ancient tourist heart of the city and home of the Blue Mosque. Turkey's prime minister said the bomber belonged to IS.

2015

October 10: In the bloodiest attack in Turkey's history, 103 people are killed and more than 500 wounded in twin suicide bombings targeting a pro-Kurdish peace rally in Ankara. The prime minister says IS was the main suspect. July 20: 34 people are killed in a suicide bombing in the predominantly Kurdish town of Suruc near the border with Syria. Turkish officials blame IS.—AFP

Russian diplomats expelled from US arrive in Moscow

MOSCOW: A plane carrying 35 diplomats expelled from the United States over Russia's alleged meddling in the US presidential election arrived in Moscow early Monday, Russian state television reported. A Russian Il-96 plane carrying the diplomats and their families landed at Moscow's Vnukovo airport at 2:05 am local time (23:05 GMT) after having taken off from Washington on Sunday, state television said. State television showed the diplomats and their families gathering their luggage on the tarmac in the rain before heading inside the terminal. US intelligence says the Kremlin ordered a hack-and-release of Democratic Party and Hillary Clinton campaign staff emails in a bid to put Donald Trump in the White House.

Moscow has repeatedly dismissed the allegations. The expulsions of the diplomats-described as intelligence operatives based at the Russian embassy in Washington and the consulate in San Francisco were part of a package of sanctions ordered by President Barack Obama Thursday in the final weeks of his administration. —AFP

Cuba puts on show of strength as Trump inauguration nears

HAVANA: Cuba yesterday paraded troops and hundreds of thousands of citizens through its emblematic Revolution Square in a traditional show of nationalist fighting spirit as it faces a tough political and economic year. A replica of the yacht Granma, which brought the Castro brothers, Ernesto "Che" Guevara and others from Mexico to Cuba to start the revolution in 1959, surrounded by schoolchildren in red and white young pioneer uniforms, led off the five-yearly event.

Troops wielding automatic rifles followed, marching in lock step, then a sea of banner- and flag-waving Cubans, many bussed in and organized through their workplaces and neighborhoods. The head of the University Students Federation, Jennifer Bello Martinez, opened the march with a fiery speech as President Raul Castro and other leaders watched and waved from the base of a huge monument to independence hero Jose Marti.

"Cuba will not abandon a single one of its principles ... not its independence and not its sovereignty," she said. The military parade and march normally takes place every five years on Dec. 2 to mark armed forces day and commemorate the Granma landing but it was postponed a month due to the death of Cuban leader Fidel Castro in late November. The event, first announced last April, has taken on added significance since the Nov 8 US election.

President-elect Donald Trump, who takes office on Jan. 20, has threatened to rip up a detente with Cuba begun by President Barack Obama two years ago unless he gets a "better deal" and has resorted to the hostile rhetoric of the past when referring to the Communist-run Caribbean island. "We are braced for conflict with the USA, we always have been, but I hope Trump will instead follow the path of Obama towards normalization," said 70-year-old Marcial Garcia, who still does logistical work for the army, as he watched the parade.

The threat to the gradual and still fragile warming trend could not come at a worse time for Cuba, which was plunged back into recession last year for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union a quarter century ago, as its strategic ally Venezuela floundered. A tourism boom that brought 4 million visitors in 2016, in part sparked by detente and looser travel restrictions on Americans, was not enough to overcome dwindling oil shipments from the South American country on beneficial terms, and less cash for Cuban doctors and other professionals working overseas.—Reuters

How ties to an 'equestrian princess' led to scandal

SEOUL: Samsung Electronics Co's sponsorship of the equestrian-athlete daughter of a long-time friend of President Park Geun-hye has helped to land South Korea's top company in the center of the country's influence-peddling scandal. Samsung agreed last year to pay $18 million to Core Sports International GmbH, a consulting firm controlled by Park's friend Choi Soon-sil, who is in jail and faces charges of abuse of power and fraud in a criminal trial that began this month. A South Korean court has also issued an arrest warrant for Choi's Germany-based horse-riding daughter, 20-year-old Chung Yoo-ra - who has been the main beneficiary of the sponsorship - for alleged criminal interference related to her academic record, and other unspecified charges.

The sponsorship deal is being examined by prosecutors as they try to ascertain whether Samsung, which was also funding and chairing the Korea Equestrian Federation (KEF), sought favors from Choi and President Park in return for funding initiatives backed by them. In particular, they are looking at whether favors included the National Pension Service' support for Samsung's founding family in a shareholder vote last year. "A crucial part of our investigation is to look into why Samsung and the KEF supported Choi Soon-sil and her daughter Chung Yoo-ra and transferred funds to companies set up by Choi or involved with Choi," an official at the special prosecutor's team told Reuters by phone.

He declined to be identified because he is not authorized to speak with the media. Park has been impeached by parliament over her role in a wide-ranging influence-peddling scandal linked to Choi, and now awaits a Constitutional Court review of that decision, which if upheld would make her the first democratically-elected South Korean leader to leave office in disgrace.

A horse named Vitana V

Reuters has reviewed a copy of Samsung Electronics' August 2015 contract with Core Sports to sponsor the team at a German facility in Biblis, a small town south of Frankfurt. Neither party announced the sponsorship. "Samsung wishes to develop an Equestrian Team, including overseas training of athletes to prepare for 2018 Asian Games and World Equestrian Games," the consulting agreement says. Samsung Electronics ended up spending about 8 billion won ($6.6 million) on the team, which went to support Chung, according to testimony by Samsung Group's de facto head, Jay Y. Lee, during parliamentary testimony earlier this month. A more precise accounting, including whether some of that funding supported her coach and fellow rider, Park Jae-hong, was not available.

The team was meant to include six riders with 12 horses, Samsung's contract says, but never grew beyond Chung and her coach, according to lawmakers on a parliamentary committee investigating the presidential scandal. Reuters was unable to determine why the team did not expand beyond the two riders. Samsung's outlay included the 1 million Euros ($962,000) purchase of a horse to be used by Chung named Vitana V, according to Lee. He told the hearing there was a reason the group felt compelled to fund the equestrian team, but did not say what that was. "I was told there were inevitable circumstances ... But I admit that the deal was done in an inappropriate way and regret that I didn't look into it more thoroughly," Lee testified. He didn't elaborate further. Chung was not available for comment and her lawyer, who also represents her mother, did not return multiple requests for comment.

Choi, who has denied legal wrongdoing, told lawmakers on Dec. 26 that she had not sought the sponsorship from Samsung. Reuters could not reach Park Jae-hong for comment. Samsung Electronics declined to comment for this story. Sung-Kwan Park, a Frankfurt-based lawyer who was Core's managing director, declined to discuss details of the deal when approached by Reuters, citing attorney-client privilege.

Sport for the elite

Samsung Electronics' support for Choi-backed initiatives also included 1.6 billion won to a foundation run by Choi's niece Jang Si-ho, and another 20.4 billion won, funding shared with the company's affiliates, to two foundations set up by a major business lobby to support Park policies. Prosecutors say in their indictment of Choi that they suspect that she controlled the foundations, including choosing staff. Jang has said the foundation she ran was established to support young athletes and that Choi had asked her to set it up. Her lawyer told a court hearing on Thursday that Jang put pressure on Samsung to sponsor the foundation, but said it was not clear that was the reason for Samsung's backing.

Lee told lawmakers Samsung's contributions to the two foundations backing Park's initiatives were not made with any quid pro quo expected. Samsung's offices have been raided twice by prosecutors but none of its officials have been charged with any wrongdoing. The Samsung Group, which has been a major sponsor of the Olympic Games, has also funded a range of sports in South Korea in the past 20 years, including soccer, baseball, basketball, and volleyball.

While those sports have mass appeal, equestrian, as in many countries, is seen as a sport for the wealthy elite - there were just 251 registered equestrian riders in the country in 2014, according to the KEF. The conglomerate and its founding family have a long-term relationship with the sport. The 48-year-old Lee, grandson of the group's founder, is an accomplished horseman and represented South Korea at international events, winning medals in various competitions in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Fake documents

In 2010, Samsung pulled out of sponsoring the KEF only to return to the sport in March 2015 when Samsung Electronics President Park Sang-jin took over the chairmanship of the KEF. That was at a time when the KEF was being accused by lawmakers and local equestrian federations of granting Chung undue favors, including selection to the national team, because of her mother's perceived influence with Park.

In 2014, Chung was labeled the "Equestrian Princess" by South Korean media, though she partially answered her critics by winning a group dressage gold medal at the 2014 Asian Games. The KEF declined to comment, citing the ongoing investigation by prosecutors. Park Jong-so, a veteran rider and former national team head coach, said many in the country's equestrian community were puzzled when Samsung resumed its leadership of the federation. Samsung gave 2.6 billion won to the KEF between resuming the sponsorship and August this year, according to a document it filed to parliament and shown to Reuters by a lawmaker. The country's culture ministry, which oversees sports, said in a December audit report that the KEF signed fake documents provided by Chung to excuse her absences from high school and gain credit for volunteer activities she never did.

The saga has left equestrian sports in South Korea in a state of flux. Some local media have reported that Samsung has canceled the contract with Core, which has been renamed Widec Sports GmbH. Samsung declined to comment. Hwang Young-shik, who won two 2014 Asian Games gold medals, including one with Chung in the group dressage, and now trains young riders at his own farm, said the whole saga has been embarrassing for the sport in South Korea. "Young riders are frustrated over this," he told Reuters, adding that everyone in the equestrian world now "knows who Chung Yoo-ra is."—Reuters

SEOUL: In this photo, South Korean President Park Geun-hye makes a televised live address in Seoul, South Korea.—AP

India, Sri Lanka to release fishermen in each others' custody

COLOMBO: India and Sri Lanka agreed to release fishermen in each others' custody, a joint statement said on Monday, a move that is likely to ease tensions between the countries which have held fishermen captive for crossing territorial waters. After ministerial level talks in Colombo, Sri Lanka reiterated its demand to end the practice of bottom trawling, a technique that involves sweeping the sea bed for fish, and India gave assurances that it would gradually phase it out. Critics oppose the method because the catch is indiscriminate and could wipe out entire fishing species, making areas unsustainable for fishing.

It was not immediately clear from the statement issued by the two governments and published on the website of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs how many fishermen were being held by either side, or for how long they had been detained. Pakistan released 220 Indian fishermen in December as a goodwill gesture aimed at easing tensions with its neighbor. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea states that fishermen who cross territorial waters can be warned and fined but not arrested. —Reuters

PARIS: Teodorin Obiang, the son of Equatorial Guinea's president in Paris. —AFP

Playboy son of E Guinea leader on trial in France

PARIS: The playboy son of Equatorial Guinea's leader, notorious for his extravagant taste in cars, homes and Michael Jackson memorabilia, goes on trial yesterday in Paris charged with plundering his country's coffers to fund his jet set lifestyle in France. Teodorin Obiang, his country's vice-president, is accused of using state money to buy a mansion on one of the swankiest avenues in Paris as well as a collection of Italian supercars and other luxury items. His lawyers have said they will call Monday for the trial to be adjourned, saying they need more time to prepare his defense.

The trial is the first arising out of an investigation into the French assets of a trio of African leaders accused of leading a life of luxury abroad while their citizens live in poverty. The 47-year-old shopaholic is not expected to attend the trial where he has been charged with corruption, embezzlement, misuse of public funds and breach of trust. US officials have already forced him to forfeit property bought with the proceeds of corruption, accusing him of "shamelessly" looting his country. His house on Avenue Foch in Paris, which boasts a cinema, spa, hair salon and taps covered in gold leaf, is estimated to be worth around 107 million Euros ($112 million).

When French judicial officials first launched raids in Paris in 2011, they hired trucks to haul away his Bugattis, Ferraris, Rolls Royce and other cars. The case sets a precedent for France which has long turned a blind eye to African dictators who routinely park their ill-gotten gains in Parisian real estate and luxury products. It came about after nearly a decade of lobbying by anti-corruption groups Sherpa and Transparency International. "In the beginning, there was simply no political will in France to listen to us," William Bourdon, a lawyer for Sherpa, wrote in September.

Timber wealth

French prosecutors allege that party-loving Obiang lined his pockets to the tune of nearly 110 million Euros between 2004-2011, when he was agriculture minister for his father, President Teodoro Obiang Nguema. As agriculture minister, the permanent bachelor held a powerful position that gave him control over the lucrative timber industry which is Equatorial Guinea's main export after oil. A so-called "revolutionary" tax imposed on wood sales was transferred to his personal accounts, prosecutors allege. He has "always said that he earned the money legally in his country," one of his lawyers, Emmanuel Marsigny, said. Obiang fought unsuccessfully to prevent the trial. In December, the International Court of Justice in the Hague rejected a request by Equatorial Guinea to suspend the case.

Shopaholic

Born in 1969, Obiang was 10 when his father overthrew his bloodthirsty uncle, the dictator Francisco Macias Nguema. Now Africa's longest-serving ruler, Teodoro Obiang Nguema made his son vice-president in June just after being re-elected with his usual score of more than 90 percent of votes cast. During one of his appeals against the French trial, a lawyer acting for the French government said Obiang had a "compulsive need to buy". In a US cable published by the WikiLeaks website in 2010, Teodorin was said to live "the life of an international playboy and is widely accused of corruption." In a settlement with US prosecutors in 2014, Obiang agreed to turn over more than $30 million in property-including a Malibu villa, a Ferrari and Michael Jackson memorabilia.

The music fan is known to have bought a crystal-covered glove worn by Michael Jackson during his "Bad" tour, which is worth hundreds of thousands of Euros. The US Justice Department said he "embarked on a corruption-fuelled spending spree in the United States" after racking up $300 million through embezzlement, extortion, and money laundering. In November, Swiss prosecutors said they had opened a money laundering probe targeting Obiang and seized 11 luxury cars in Geneva, including a Bugatti Veyron worth around two million Euros.

As part of that investigation, his luxury 76-metre (250-foot) yacht "Ebony Shine" was seized in the Netherlands in December, according to the Swiss magazine L'Hebdo. Equatorial Guinea, Africa's only Spanish-speaking nation, is the continent's third-biggest oil producer. Analysts say the energy boom has benefitted only a select few. The country is also regularly criticized by human rights groups for repressive laws, unlawful killings, torture and corruption.—AFP

India test fires nuclear capable ballistic missile

NEW DELHI: India yesterday successfully conducted test-firing of nuclear-capable ballistic missile Agni-IV from a mobile launch pad off the Eastern Indian state of Odisha. Quoting sources from the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO), Press Trust of India said the test firing of the surface-to-surface missile with a strike range of 4,000-km was made from launch complex-4 of the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Dr Abdul Kalam Island.

The two-stage missile is 20 meter-long, weighing 17 tons. According to the sources, the DRDO positioned radars and electro-optical systems along the coast of Odisha for tracking and monitoring the movements of the missile. Two naval ships were also posted near the target area to witness the event. India had successfully test-fired its nuclear capable Ballistic Missile (Agni-5) with a strike range of 5,000-km in December 2016, from a launch pad at the Dr Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha. India owns Agni-1 with 700-km range, Agni-II with 2,000-km range, Agni-3 with 2,500 km and Agni-4 to more than 3,500-km range. —KUNA

Afghan minister suspended over phone tax investigation

KABUL: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani suspended his minister for telecommunications and information technology yesterday while he is investigated over a levy on mobile telephone charges, officials said. The removal of Communications Minister Abdul Razaq Wahidi adds to a lingering political crisis in Afghanistan, heightened in November when parliament passed no confidence votes against a number of ministers over poor performance and budgetary issues. Yasin Sameem, a spokesman for the communications ministry, said the decision to suspend Wahidi was taken after an audit into the collection of a 10 percent tax on mobile phone topups imposed in 2015.

He said the president's office, which has declared the fight against graft as a top priority, felt the ministry had not cooperated sufficiently with an investigation into alleged corruption surrounding the levy. "We are committed to accountability and the minister will wait for the findings of the investigation," Sameem said.

The mobile phone levy, which has raised millions of dollars for government coffers, was imposed as part of efforts to raise domestic tax revenue to make up for a gradual reduction in international donor aid in coming years.

While Wahidi's suspension will not immediately affect the day-to-day functioning of the government, it highlights the difficulties Ghani has had in pushing through major reforms of the economy while fighting the Taliban insurgency. Ghani ordered ministers removed by parliament to remain in their posts until a Supreme Court ruling on the affair but the standoff underlined the weakness of the national unity government formed after a disputed election in 2014. —Reuters

Myanmar detains police over Rohingya abuse video

Stories of abuse by security forces raise global alarm

YANGON: Myanmar yesterday said it has detained several police over a 'selfie-style' video that appears to show officers beating Rohingya civilians, a rare admission that security forces may have carried out abuses against the Muslim minority. Tens of thousands of people from the persecuted ethnic group-loathed by many of Myanmar's Buddhist majority-have fled a military operation in Rakhine state, launched after attacks on police posts in October. Bangladesh says some 50,000 Rohingya have crossed its border over the past two months.

Many have brought harrowing accounts of rape, murder and arson at the hands of Myanmar's security forces. Their stories have raised global alarm and galvanized protests against Myanmar's de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been accused of not doing enough to help the Rohingya. Her government has said troops are hunting militants behind the deadly raids on police border posts, denying claims of atrocities with a flurry of public statements. However, yesterday authorities pledged to take action "against police who allegedly beat villagers during area clearance operations on 5 November in Kotankauk village".

Suu Kyi's office named four officers who were involved in the operation including constable Zaw Myo Htike, who looks nonchalantly into the camera smoking as he records the video. "Those who (were) initially identified were detained," it said in a statement. "Further investigations are being carried out to expose other police officers who beat villagers in the operation." Dozens of videos have emerged apparently showing security forces abusing Rohingya, but this is the first time the government has said it will take action over them.

'Human tragedy'

The footage shows police hitting a young boy around the head as he walks to where dozens of villagers are lined up in rows seated on the ground, hands behind their heads. Three officers in uniform then start attacking one of the sitting men, beating him with a stick and kicking him repeatedly in the face. A Rohingya activist contacted by AFP said the footage had been verified by a refugee from the nearby camp, Shilkhali.

MYANMAR: Myanmar State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi speaks during the Peace Talks at the Myanmar International Convention Centre in Naypyitaw, Myanmar. —AP

Around 600 people have been detained since the military operation, according to state media, including six who died in police custody in largely unexplained circumstances.

"Unfortunately the scene this video depicts isn't unique or an isolated event," said Matthew Smith, chief executive of Fortify Rights. "It's significant the government acknowledged the video, but it remains to be seen what will come of it. Impunity still rules the day in Rakhine state."

Myanmar has long discriminated against the stateless Rohingya, who rights groups say are among the most persecuted peoples in the world. More than 120,000 have been trapped in squalid displacement camps since violence erupted in 2012 in Rakhine, where they are denied citizenship, access to healthcare and education. Over a dozen Nobel laureates wrote to the UN Security Council last week urging action to stop the "human tragedy amounting to ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" in northern Rakhine. Under Myanmar's junta-era constitution Suu Kyi's civilian administration has limited power over the army, which maintains control of the defence, home and border ministries. —AFP

HYDERABAD: People watch Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing the nation, on television in Hyderabad, India. —AP

Indian court bans politicians from using caste to win votes

NEW DELHI: India's top court yesterday prohibited politicians from using religion and caste to garner votes, a verdict that could force political parties to change their strategy in upcoming elections. "No politician can seek vote in the name of caste, creed or religion," said Chief Justice T.S. Thakur in an order, adding that election process must be a "secular exercise." India is officially secular but political parties have traditionally used religion and caste as the main criteria to select candidates and to appeal to voters.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has for years fought elections on a Hindu nationalist agenda, with party members in the past being accused of making anti-Muslim statements to polarize Hindu voters. The court ruling comes just weeks ahead of a state election in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state where the two issues of religion and caste generally dominate campaigns. Results of the election will be important for Modi's expected bid for a second term in 2019.

State elections are also due this year in the states of Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur. The Supreme Court, ruling on a petition filed by a politician in 1996, wrote in its opinion that the secular ethos of the constitution had to be protected.

The majority view of the seven-judge Supreme Court bench held that elections would be void if a politician made an appeal for votes on the basis of religious sentiment.—Reuters

Security operation kills 12 IS militants in E Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD: At least 12 militants of the so-called Islamic State (IS) were killed in clearing operation and drone strikes in Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province, said Ministry of Defense (MoD) yesterday. A statement by Afghan MoD said that the operation launched on the outskirts of Haska Mena district of Nangarhar killed at least 12 IS militants. The governor's spokesman, Attuallah Khogyani told media that the operation was jointly conducted by the US drone strikes and Afghan ground forces. "Two notorious commanders of the group Maulvi Abas and Abu Hanifa were also arrested in Gargarai locality of the district," he said. A weapons' depot belonging to the group was also reportedly destroyed in the operation. The security operation came at a time when Afghan security forces have paced up their offensives against IS militants to maintain law and order in the country. —KUNA

China says Hong Kong must not infiltrate or subvert mainland

BEIJING: China warned Hong Kong it would not tolerate anyone using the city to damage mainland stability, Beijing's top official in the city said, as concerns rise over an emerging independence movement. Tensions have flared in the semi-autonomous territory after the ousting of two pro-independence lawmakers ignited fresh concern over Beijing's tightening controls on Hong Kong, which enjoys a separate political and legal system from the mainland. Britain handed Hong Kong back to China in 1997 under a deal which gives the city broad autonomy and preserves its freedoms and the rule of law for 50 years. But many warn these freedoms are being eroded by Beijing.

In an interview with state broadcaster CCTV late Sunday, the head of China's liaison office in Hong Kong, Zhang Xiaoming, said that controlling the city's independence movement requires strengthening "bottom-line awareness" among its people. "As for Hong Kong, no one is permitted to engage in any form of activity that harms national sovereignty and security, or challenges the authority of the central government or Hong Kong's Basic Law, or uses Hong Kong to infiltrate and subvert the mainland's social and political stability," Zhang said. "These are the three bottom lines."

China's Communist Party authorities have viewed the emergence of openly pro-independence politicians with alarm, though only a minority of the city's residents support such a move. Beijing's increasingly brazen attempts to stifle dissent in Hong Kong have prompted worries over the erosion of its identity as a rules-based business hub its major draw over mainland rivals such as Shanghai- and a vibrant city with a free press and a distinct way of life.

The disappearance last year of five booksellers known for publishing salacious titles about Chinese political leaders earned international condemnation and realized many residents' worst fears when they resurfaced in detention on the mainland. The city's unpopular leader Leung Chun-ying, who has been vilified by critics as a puppet of Beijing, said last month he would not run again for office. Regina Ip, a former security chief and hardliner who is loathed by Hong Kong's pro-democracy camp, has said she will run for his position, in a move opponents fear would be a further sign of tightening controls by Beijing.—AFP

N Korea's claim on ICBM test plausible

SEOUL: North Korea has been working through 2016 on developing components for an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), making the isolated nation's claim that it was close to a test-launch plausible, international weapons experts said yesterday. North Korea has been testing rocket engines and heat-shields for an ICBM while developing the technology to guide a missile after re-entry into the atmosphere following a lift-off, the experts said. While Pyongyang is close to a test, it is likely to take some years to perfect the weapon.

Once fully developed, a North Korean ICBM could threaten the continental United States, which is around 9,000 km from the North. ICBMs have a minimum range of about 5,500 km, but some are designed to travel 10,000 km or further. North Korea's state media regularly threatens the United States with a nuclear strike, but before 2016 Pyongyang had been assumed to be a long way from being capable of doing so. "The bottom line is Pyongyang is much further along in their missile development than most people realize," said Melissa Hanham, a senior research associate at the US-based Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, California.

She said the North's test in April of a large liquid-fuel engine that could propel an ICBM was a major development. "The liquid engine test was astounding," Hanham said. "For years, we knew that North Korea had a Soviet R-27missile engine design. They re-engineered the design of that engine to double its propulsion." North Korea has said it is capable of mounting a nuclear warhead on a ballistic missile but it claims to be able to miniaturize a nuclear device have never been independently verified. The isolated nation has achieved this progress despite UN Security Council imposed sanctions for its nuclear tests and long-range rocket launches dating back to 2006.

The sanctions ban arms trade and money flows that can fund the country's arms program. North Korea has enough uranium for six bombs a year and much of what it needs for its nuclear and missile programs relies on Soviet-era design and technology.

Labor is virtually free. It can produce much of its missile parts domestically and invested heavily in its missile development infrastructure last year, funded by small arms sales and by taxing wealthy traders in its unofficial market economy.

Propaganda offensive

Throughout the year, North Korean state media showed images of numerous missile component tests, some of which revealed close-up details of engines and heat shields designed to protect a rocket upon re-entry into the earth's atmosphere. The propaganda offensive may have revealed some military secrets, but it may have also been a bid to silence outside analysts, many of whom had remained skeptical of the North's missile program. "They're answering the public criticisms of US experts," said Joshua Pollack, editor of the US-based Nonproliferation Review. "A lot of people had questioned whether they had a working ICBM-class heat shield." "So they showed us."

Despite the research, Pyongyang has experienced considerable difficulties getting its intermediate-range Musudan missile, designed to fly about 3,000 km, off the ground.

It succeeded just once in eight attempted launches last year. North Korea has fired long-range rockets in the past, but has characterized those launches as peaceful and designed to put an object into space. Still, the South Korean defense ministry believes the three-stage Kwangmyongsong rocket used by Pyongyang to put a satellite in space last February already has a potential range of 12,000 km, if it were re-engineered.

Doing so would require mastering safer "cold-launch" technology, and perfecting the ability of a rocket to re-enter the earth's atmosphere without breaking up. "North Korea is working hard to develop cold-launch technology and atmospheric re-entry but South Korea and the US will have to assess further exactly which level of development they have reached," South Korean defense ministry official Roh Jae-cheon told a briefing yesterday. North Korea began stepping up its missile development in March 2016, Roh said, but added that there were no "unusual signs" related to test preparations, according to the South Korean military.

That same month, Kim Jong Un was photographed looking at a small, ball-like object that North Korean state news agency KCNA said was a miniaturized nuclear warhead - the device North Korea would need to fulfill its ICBM threat. "2016 marked the year North Korea truly ramped up their WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction) program," Hanham at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey said. "I think we're going to see a (ICBM) flight test in 2017." —Reuters

DENMARK: Picture taken yesterday shows a Korean journalist entering the courthouse in Aalborg, Jutland, Denmark, where the daughter of Choi Soon-Sil, is being held in remand hearing. —AFP

Daughter of South Korea's 'Rasputin' jailed in Denmark

Chung detained until issue of extradition decided upon

SEOUL: The daughter of Choi Soon-Sil, the woman at the centre of a corruption scandal that led to the impeachment of South Korea's President, has been arrested in Denmark after months in hiding, Seoul prosecutors said yesterday. Chung Yoo-Ra, the 20-year-old daughter of the woman dubbed South Korea's "Rasputin" is one of the figures in the influence-peddling scandal that sparked massive street protests demanding the removal of President Park Geun-Hye. Danish police arrested Chung Sunday night for overstaying her visa, Korean prosecutors said, adding they were in talks with authorities there to have her deported to Seoul.

Chung was arrested in the northern town of Aalborg after a tip-off from a Korean journalist, Danish police said in a statement yesterday. At a court hearing yesterday, police would ask that Chung be detained "until the issue of extradition is decided upon". Danish police said Chung was aware that South Korean authorities wanted to talk to her. She was in the country "in connection with equestrian sports." Choi, a secret confidante of Park, is accused of using her ties with the president to force top firms including Samsung to "donate" nearly $70 million to non-profit foundations which Choi then used as her personal ATMs.

Raw nerve

She is also accused of using her influence to secure her daughter's admission to an elite Seoul university, with a state probe revealing the school had admitted Chung at the expense of other candidates with better qualifications. The revelation touched a raw nerve in education-obsessed South Korea and prosecutors sought to question Chung over her admission to Ewha Women's University in 2014. Park stands accused of colluding with Choi to extract money from the firms and also of letting her meddle in state affairs including nominating top officials. The president denies all charges against her.

Parliament voted on December 9 to impeach Park over the scandal and her executive powers have been handed to an acting president, Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-Ahn. The impeachment case is being considered by the Constitutional Court-which has up to six months to reach a ruling-but hundreds of thousands of South Koreans have joined weekly protests calling for Park's immediate departure from office. If the impeachment is confirmed, a presidential election will have to be held within 60 days. Choi, daughter of a controversial religious figure who was close to Park until his death in 1994, is awaiting trial on charges including coercion and abuse of power. Several professors at Ewha Women's University, including a former school president, have been investigated for giving Chung preferential treatment. One professor was arrested over the weekend for allegedly giving Chung a good grade for a class she never attended and for forcing his teaching assistants to forge exam records for her. —AFP

SEOUL: A man watches a TV screen showing the news program about Chung Yoo-ra, the daughter of the Choi Soon-sil who the confidante of disgraced President Park Geun-hye, at the Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea, yesterday. —AP

PYONGYANG: In this undated image from video distributed yesterday, by North Korean broadcaster KRT, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un delivers a speech in Pyongyang. —AP

Tourists burned by Thai full moon party pyrotechnics

BANGKOK: Tourists attending a full moon party in southern Thailand on New Year's Eve said they were left with burns when a pyrotechnic display showered revelers with red-hot embers. Footage of the incident on the popular backpacker island of Koh Phangan was posted online, showing how cheers turned to screams of panic as a giant sign reading "Happy New Year 2017" was set alight at midnight. Sparks could be seen raining down on the crowd, aided by an onshore breeze. Eyewitnesses described mass panic as people scrambled to get out of the way of the display.

"It was just like a shower of burning sparks," Lucy Coyle, a 20-year-old British tourist attending the party with her boyfriend, said. "It felt like people were stabbing you with pins all over your body... everyone was trying to get out." Coyle later posted pictures on Twitter of what she said were dozens of burns across her body. Freddie Jacobs, another British tourist, said thousands were crammed onto the beach at the stroke of midnight, many under a sign they had no idea was about to be set alight.

"My girlfriend fell to the floor, she was getting so many burns I had to cover her like a blanket," the 23-year-old said, adding he and his partner were covered in burns the next day. Backpackers flock to Koh Phangan for its famously raucous full moon parties.

But its laid-back charm belies an equally relaxed attitude to safety. Police confirmed the incident but played down tourist reports of injuries and mass panic. "One female tourist aged around 30 was slightly injured, she got treated and went away," Colonel Somchai Noppasri, the island's police chief, said. —AFP

Thai army chief vows no more army coups

BANGKOK: They may have successfully seized power twelve times in the last eight decades but Thailand's army chief has said military coups are officially a thing of the past. The comments caused much merriment on social media given the military's long track record of toppling elected governments-the latest a 2014 putsch that brought the current junta to power. The military have promised to hold elections once a new constitution is in place, although the date for polls keeps slipping.

In an interview with Thai media outlets published yesterday, General Chalermchai Sitthisat was asked whether the military would intervene if civilian politicians disliked by the army brass were voted back in. "I can confirm that there won't be a coup. What would be a reason for having to have the coup? There won't be a coup. We have already learned from what happened (in the past)," he said. The remarks were soon seized upon in Thai social media, one of the few sites where dissent still flourishes given the junta's ban on political gatherings and protests.

"If the army says something like that it means they will do the opposite for sure," joked Eakapong Leesinla on Facebook. "Why ask such a question," added Pim Pongchandr on Facebook. "We all know what he was going to answer, who would say yes?" Chalermchai, a former head of Thailand's special forces, was appointed by coup leader and current Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha in September. In 2014, then army chief Prayut famously declared there would be no coup days before his military toppled the administration of Yingluck Shinawatra.

His predecessors removed her brother Thaksin in 2006 and have a raft of previous successful putsches to their name including three takeovers each in both the 1950s and 1970s. Prayut says he was forced to seize power to curb political corruption and bring much-needed stability to the country after a decade of political turmoil between Shinawatra supporters and their opponents. But critics say the putsch was an attempt by the military and its allies within Bangkok's elite to ensure the Shinawatras, who are seen as champions of the downtrodden by large swathes of the rural and urban poor, are never in power again. —AFP

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte reviews the troops as he leads the flag-raising ceremony to commemorate the 120th death anniversary of the country's national hero Jose P. Rizal in Manila, Philippines. —AP

Duterte seeks 'strategic shift' from US to China

MANILA: The Philippines is tilting away from its traditional ally the United States towards China in a bid to "normalize" relations following a longstanding territorial dispute, the country's incoming ambassador to Beijing said yesterday. Manila has been one of Washington's most loyal allies in Asia, but Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has threatened to end the decades-long alliance after the US criticized his bloody war on drugs that has killed over 5,000 people since he took office in June.

His fiery rhetoric against the US has been followed by overtures to China as he has sought to assuage Beijing's concerns over Manila's competing claims to the South China Sea. The new Philippine ambassador to China, Jose "Chito" Sta. Romana, said the move represented "a strategic shift in our foreign policy." "We were one-sidedly imbalanced in favor of the US," he said. "We are not abandoning our alliance with the US. We are basically trying to normalize our relations with China." Beijing claims most of the South China Sea despite competing claims from the Philippines and other Asian countries, but a UN-backed tribunal ruled in July that China's claims had no legal basis in a resounding victory for Manila. Duterte's decision to set aside the territorial conflict in exchange for Chinese investment and

A man walks with his camel across the Liwa desert, some 250 km west of the Gulf emirate of Abu Dhabi, during the Liwa 2017 Moreeb Dune Festival yesterday. The festival, which attracts participants from around the Gulf region, includes a variety of races (cars, bikes, falcons, camels and horses) and other activities aimed at promoting the country's folklore. — AFP

IS claims Istanbul attack, gunman at large

Continued from Page 1

The IS statement said the attack was in response to Turkey's military intervention against the jihadists in war-ravaged Syria where Turkish troops are pressing on with a four-month incursion to oust IS militants from the border area. Turkey is also spearheading a ceasefire plan with Russia to form a basis for peace talks on Syria. But after a cabinet meeting in Ankara chaired by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the government vowed that the operation in Syria, dubbed Euphrates Shield, would continue.

"This was a message for our cross-border operations, above all the Euphrates Shield," said Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus. "We will carry on our cross-border operations and Euphrates Shield and with determination," he added. After a lightning successful start to the operation recapturing towns from IS including Jarabulus, the Turkish military has taken dozens of casualties as it tries to capture Al Bab where IS has put up a stronger fight to remain in control. Arriving by taxi at the plush Reina nightclub on the shores of the Bosphorus, the gunman produced a weapon, reportedly a Kalashnikov, and shot dead a policeman and civilian at the entrance. He then fired off four magazines containing a total of 120 bullets around the club which was filled with an estimated 700 people. Terrified guests flung themselves into the freezing waters of the Bosphorus in panic.

But after changing clothes, the gunman left the nightclub in the ensuing chaos and has managed to evade security forces. There were no reports that security services had come close to detaining the gunman but Kurtulmus said physical and fingerprint data had been obtained. "It is a difficult investigation," he said, vowing to "speedily" identify the attacker and "if there are outside supporters and the forces behind them".

Kurtulmus said anti-terror police have detained eight suspects. But there was no indication of their relationship to the attacker and the minister did not comment on the IS claim. Hurriyet daily said investigators believe the gunman may be from the Central Asian states of Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan. The attacker may be linked to the same cell that in June carried out a triple suicide bombing and gun attack at Istanbul's Ataturk airport blamed on IS that left 47 people dead, the paper added. But pro-government daily Yeni Akit caused a furore on social media with a headline declaring the United States was the "number one suspect" over the attack. Twelve Turks were killed in the attack alongside 27 foreigners, including one Belgian-Turkish dual national. Sixty-five people were wounded.

The foreigners who died - most of them from Arab countries and including Muslims - had come to the club to celebrate a special night in style. They included three Lebanese nationals, two Jordanians and three Iraqis, officials in their respective countries said. At least one German was killed.

A Canadian woman, a Russian woman and a teenage Arab Israeli were also among the dead. Turkish press reports said at least seven Saudi nationals died but this has yet to be confirmed by Riyadh. Indian film producer Abis Rizvi, son of a former MP, was also among those killed, prompting tributes from the Bollywood community. The attack evoked memories of the Nov 2015 carnage in Paris when IS militants unleashed a gun and bombing rampage on nightspots in the French capital, killing 130 people including 90 at the Bataclan concert hall.

"I think back to those moments, I can't erase them from my memory," survivor Yusuf Kodat from Alsace in France told AFP as he returned to the scene of the attack by the Bosphorus. "The people panicking, the blood, the noise of the gunshots, the explosions. That's what I keep on thinking about," Kodat said.

A Kuwaiti national was killed and five others wounded in the attack, said Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah. Four of the injured are currently receiving treatment, while the fifth left the hospital after recovery, he told KUNA. He added that the Kuwaiti consulate in Istanbul and its embassy in Ankara are constantly following up the citizens' health.

Turkish authorities are investigating people who were at the site when the attack occurred, he said, adding that "our consulate is following up these investigations". Jarallah reiterated Kuwait's condemnation and denouncement of such heinous acts of terrorism. He also affirmed that Kuwait rejects all forms and manifestations of terrorism, and stands side by side with Turkey in all measures taken to counter and uproot terrorism.

Kuwaiti Consul General in Istanbul Mohammad Fahd Al-Mohammad said under the instructions of First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, a team has been set up to care for and communicate with those wounded and their families, he told KUNA. — Agencies

60 killed, beheaded in Brazil riot

Continued from Page 1

Brazil's prisons are often under the de facto control of drug gangs, whose turf wars on the outside are also fought out among inmates. "There is a silent war of drug trafficking, and the state needs to intervene," Fontes said. "What did we see in this case? One faction fighting another, because each wants more money. The fight is for money and space."

Brazil has struggled for years against a lucrative and violent drug trade. But jailing drug traffickers has done little to solve the problem. It may even fuel it, critics say. Human rights groups have long complained about the conditions in Brazilian prisons. Some 622,000 people were imprisoned in Brazil as of the end of 2014, most of them black males, according to a justice ministry report. That makes it the world's fourth-largest prison population, the report said, after the United States, China and Russia. Brazil's prisons need 50 percent more capacity to handle the current number of inmates, the justice ministry report found. There were 1.67 prisoners for every available space, it said. In Amazonas state, the figure was 2.59 prisoners for every space. — AFP

For Trump, the 1980s still hold relevance

Continued from Page 1

New York City Mayor Ed Koch, who served from 1978 to 1989. The me-first attitude that defined the 1980s "has long been a part of who Trump is," Arzt added.

In the 1980s, as Trump came of age as a public figure, he opened up a refurbished Grand Hyatt on 42nd Street, took over the long-stalled renovation of Central Park's ice skating rink and purchased the New York-area team in the fledgling United States Football League. He fashioned himself into a regular in the gossip pages, playing the city's tabloids off each other as he promoted his personal brand. He also took his first steps onto the national media stage, making his debut on "60 Minutes" in 1985. The long-running news magazine broadcast has continued to hold a special place in his heart. Several times at rallies, Trump invoked a "60 Minutes" segment he had just watched and he gave his first post-election interview to the show last month. That show was at its apex in the ratings in the 1980s.

Time Magazine, which also wielded significant clout in the 1980s, also has remained an obsession for Trump. The celebrity businessman, who complained in recent years that he wasn't named the magazine's Person of the Year, received the award in 2016. He called it a "very, very great honor". That marked his eighth time on the cover this year alone - something that Trump would brag about during campaign rallies. He has taken to giving out autographed copies of the cover to visitors, including rapper Kanye West.

But while West is a current megastar, Trump mostly chose to trot out 1980s celebrities during his campaign, even if many of them had seen their star fade in the ensuing 30 years. Knight, the former Indiana University basketball coach who captured college basketball national titles in 1981 and 1987 but was later fired for attacking a student, became a favorite sidekick. He first appeared with Trump during the spring's Indiana primary and reappeared at rallies in the Midwest during the general election stretch run. "One of the reasons I won: Bobby Knight! That's the gold standard, right?" Trump exclaimed in August.

King, the flamboyant boxing promoter who hyped Mike Tyson's 1980s fights, was also saluted by Trump as "a phenomenal person" despite a conviction for manslaughter. King appeared with Trump in September at a Cleveland church and stood with the president-elect last week while Trump was answering questions from the press at his Palm Beach resort.

Trump has been drawn to other 1980s stars. Tyson endorsed the celebrity businessman. Actor Scott Baio, an outspoken Trump supporter, reached the zenith of his fame in the 1980s with the shows "Happy Days" and "Charles in Charge." And on Saturday, actor Sylvester Stallone - who starred in three "Rambo" movies and two "Rocky" sequels in the 1980s - was a star guest at Trump's New Year's Eve bash at Mar-a-Lago, the lush Florida estate Trump bought in 1985 two years after he opened Trump Tower on Fifth Avenue in New York.

Much of Trump's political philosophy was formed in the 1980s too. In 1987 as he first floated running for president, he took out a full page ad wondering why the U.S. was "paying to defend countries that can afford to defend themselves." His frequent depictions of inner cities as dangerous and crime-ridden seem to to harken to the crack-plagued life of urban areas in the 1980s, more than the largely safer big cities of today.

In "The Art of the Deal," he voiced positions on trade he still holds today. That book, which made him a household name when it was published in 1987, also holds many of the principles that guided Trump's business career - and, decades later, his bombastic campaign for the White House. "I play into people's fantasies," he wrote. "People may not always think big themselves, but they can still get very excited by those who do. That's why a little hyperbole never hurts. People want to believe that something is the biggest and the greatest and the most spectacular." — AP

Customs chief 'sacked' over booze...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, the sports crisis returned to the National Assembly yesterday after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) bluntly rejected a Kuwait government request to temporarily lift a 14-month suspension in return for a pledge to amend Kuwaiti sports legislation within two months. Several MPs led by Islamist opposition lawmaker Waleed Al-Tabtabaei threatened to grill Minister of Information and Youth Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah if the suspension is not lifted.

MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain said the Assembly's sports and youth committee will hold a lengthy meeting with the minister today to review the situation and how to act after the IOC's letter. The IOC, FIFA and several international sports federations suspended Kuwait from international sports in Oct 2015 over the government's alleged interference in sports and for violating the Olympic Charter.

Following the election of the new Assembly, it was agreed that the government will pledge to amend the controversial legislation within two months and then request the IOC to lift the suspension immediately. The IOC turned down in a letter dated Dec 31 to Sheikh Salman the Kuwaiti request to lift the suspension temporarily, saying that it will not be in a position to reconsider Kuwait's situation unless Kuwait has taken three important steps:

Firstly, it should finalize the revision of sports laws and make them fully compatible with the Olympic Charter. Secondly, to reinstate with immediate effect all bodies of the Kuwait Olympic Committee and sports federations and clubs that were dissolved by the sports authority a few months ago and which are recognized by international sports organizations. Thirdly, to withdraw with immediate effect all pending legal actions initiated by Kuwait against IOC and international federations. Babtain considered this as a roadmap from IOC to resolve the sports crisis, while Tabtabaei called on the minister to respond positively to the three demands of the IOC. Tabtabaei said he will wait until January 11, the ultimatum given by the Asian Football Federation to Kuwait, and if no steps are taken, he will file to grill the minister. The lawmaker said that the number of MPs needed to support a no-confidence motion against the minister is available. If this is true, such a vote will automatically dismiss the minister. MP Safa Al-Hashem said on her Twitter account that the minister is required to reinstate the dissolved sports bodies, withdraw all court cases and then step down.

Separately, the court of cassation yesterday accepted a request by the government to freeze the application of a verdict by the lower and appeals courts that ordered the government to return the revoked citizenship of media owner Ahmad Jabr Al-Shimmari and his children. Shimmari, the owner of Al-Youm television and Alam Al-Youm newspaper, both shut by the government, won orders from the criminal court that his citizenship should be reinstated two years after it was revoked. The ruling was supported by the appeals court which ordered that the citizenship should be returned immediately. As the case went to the cassation court, the last stage of the lawsuit, the government asked the court to suspend implementing the decision until its ruling on the case.

Kuwait Times
THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

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EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
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Focus

Colombia war traumas leave deep mental scars

Colombian rebels may be preparing to lay down their guns, but the nation faces a deeper challenge to heal itself: treating mental illnesses stemming from the trauma of a half-century war. The 260,000 people killed and 60,000 missing in the civil conflict are quantified in official statistics - but uncounted millions still suffer the psychological scars. Maria - a pseudonym which the woman agreed to use for this story - was a small girl when fighting between the government and leftist FARC rebels struck the village near her family's farm.

Now 49, she speaks in a scarcely audible voice about the horrors she lived through and the fear that stalks her to this day. "I still live in a state of anxiety," she told AFP in her gloomy apartment, in a back courtyard on the outskirts of Bogota. Her father narrowly survived an attack by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), who targeted him because he refused to join their ranks. "I was six years old. I was always afraid," said Maria. "We had to spend every night in the village because the guerrillas used to venture up to the farm to kill people."

Emotional rescue

Colombia's government last month pushed through Congress a peace accord meant to end the 52-year conflict - a controversial move since it made concessions to FARC members blamed for atrocities. The rebels promised to disarm and compensate victims. But the deal contains few details on how to treat those traumatized by the war. The 300-page text includes a few lines calling for "emotional recovery measures" to help "relieve victims' suffering".

Under the accord, the government commits to "improving psychological social care," without indicating how much it might spend on it. The International Committee of the Red Cross has warned that unresolved traumas can spawn fresh violence. "The victims bear the scars of violence also in their minds," it warned in a report in October.

Living in fear

After a childhood of fear, Maria ran away from an abusive husband. She was penniless and had an ill son to care for. She ended up working for the Colombian Self-Defense Units (AUC), rightwing paramilitaries armed by wealthy landowners to fight the leftist guerrillas. "I made their meals and washed their clothes," she said, scraping a fingernail nervously on the table. I never asked where they were from or what they were doing."

Even though she says she never used a weapon, Maria ended up being listed as a member of the AUC when the government ordered their disbandment in 2006. Though she now lives four hours away from her home region by road, she still fears the paramilitaries' leftwing foes might one day catch up with her. "There were a lot of rumors that all the people who had worked with them were going to be killed," she said. "That makes me afraid."

Post-traumatic stress

The war started in 1964 when the FARC launched an uprising to fight for peasant land rights. It drew in various groups who carved up the country between government- and rebel-held zones and fought each other to the death, massacring and kidnapping. "Drawing a line between who is the victim and who is the aggressor is very complex," said Joshua Mitrotti, head of the Colombian Reintegration Agency. The agency helps settle former fighters back into civilian life, working alongside the public health sector to provide them with psychological counseling.

Many of them have witnessed massacres, or been raped or kidnapped. Some were recruited to fight as children. "Out of the 49,000 people we have handled so far, 90 percent have (mental health) problems," he told AFP. "About 30 percent are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder." A further third of them suffer alcohol or drug addiction and about a quarter suffer from anxiety. Colombian public health specialist Mary Luz Dussan said the country must raise the level of "effective psychological and social treatment" for such people. "That can still be done," she said. "You have to start by rebuilding the person that has been destroyed by this war." —AFP

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Child refugees taught to release stress

The screams of a dozen Syrian and Palestinian children pierce the air of a community centre in Lebanon's Shatila refugee camp. Yet the children are not hurt. They are yelling to express the anger and fear they feel as victims of conflict in special "peace education" classes. "We don't hit each other. We don't say bad things about each other. Boys don't hit girls," said 11-year-old Hala, who asked not to be identified for security reasons.

Hala fled Deir el Zor in Syria and has been living in Lebanon for less than two years. She said one of her favourite activities is "playback", where each child will tell a story or describe a situation that is bothering them and will have the other children act it out. Organized by Basmeh and Zeitooneh, a local charity, the classes in a chaotic fifth floor room were set up to help children voice their opinions, release the stress caused by war and displacement and rediscover their imaginations, staff say.

They hope by providing children with activities such as painting, dram and storytelling, they will be less vulnerable to recruitment by militant groups preying on children and teenagers who may be out of school with little to occupy them. "These kids have been through a lot. They're traumatized in many different ways," said "peace education" project manager Elio Gharios. "They're agitated, maybe introverted, aggressive at times," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Lebanon is home to more than 1 million Syrian refugees, half of them children. In 1949, it opened the Shatila camp in Beirut to host Palestinian refugees fleeing Israel's founding in 1948. As a new wave of Syrian refugees joined the ranks of the displaced, Shatila has grown upwards, with some buildings now six floors high.

Houses are damp and overcrowded, and the tangled electricity wires that hang across the streets cause multiple deaths a year. More of an urban slum than a traditional refugee camp, Shatila which covers one square kilometre is home to as many as 42,000 people, according to Rasha Shukr, the Beirut area manager for Basma and Zeitooneh.

Brainwashing

Gharios, a charismatic 24-year-old Lebanese psychology graduate, said children aged between seven and 14 attend the classes with up to 20 children in each session. Each class starts with the children deciding on rules for how they can and cannot treat each other. "They need to know that finding peaceful ways to resolve conflicts is a very important matter ... They are reminded every time that violence is not the solution, it's not the way," Gharios said. "They're young, it is the teenagers who are easiest to brainwash. Many children know how to roll a joint, say, and they're 12 or 11. Many have witnessed things happen in here where someone would hold a gun against someone else's head."

Young Syrian refugees are at particular risk of being recruited by extremist groups in Lebanon and elsewhere because their recent displacement often fuels a sense of hopelessness, says UK-based charity International Alert, which funds projects in Shatila camp, including the classes. Palestinian groups including Hamas militants and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah movement are active inside Shatila, according to charities working there.

Islamic State and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, another extremist group, have also been known to target young refugees online, they say. International Alert says these classes make children less vulnerable to recruitment because they provide them with a safe environment to discuss problems, learn conflict resolution skills and to rebuild a sense of purpose.

Recruitment

Caroline Brooks, Syria projects manager at International Alert, which supports similar programmes throughout Lebanon, Syria and Turkey, said there were many reasons why children may join an extremist group. Often there is a need for a sense of significance, purpose, and belonging, and sometimes there is a desire for revenge, she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. A lack of alternatives and the need to make a living are also strong pull factors, Brooks said.

Conflict and displacement tend to fuel the abuse and exploitation of children, refugee experts say. For example, many children are forced to work or beg to feed themselves and their families, young girls face greater risk of being married off and domestic violence increases, they say. "Peace education" classes, which started this year, have already had some impact, Brooks said citing a 17-year-old in the program who was approached by an Islamic State recruiter through Facebook. The teenager immediately reported it to a member of staff involved in the classes. For Hala, the classes which she has been attending for right months have made a huge difference to her and her younger siblings. "My brothers changed. They became much happier," she said. —Reuters

Actors seek posthumous protections

Last Tuesday's death of actor Carrie Fisher, who played Princess Leia in "Star Wars", set off waves of remembrance among fans - but also speculation over her character's return in yet-to-be-filmed episodes. Filmmakers are tapping advances in digital technology to resurrect characters after a performer dies, most notably in "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story." The film, in theaters now, features the return of Grand Moff Tarkin, originally played by a long-dead actor.

The trend has sent Hollywood actors in the here-and-now scrambling to exert control over how their characters and images are portrayed in the hereafter. "Celebrities are increasingly involved in making plans to protect their intellectual property rights," said Mark Roesler, an attorney and chairman of CMG Worldwide, an agency representing celebrity estates. "They understand that their legacy will continue beyond their lifetime."

Roesler said at least 25 of his clients are engaged in actively negotiating the use of their or their loved ones' computer-generated images in movies, television or commercials. Employment contracts govern how they can be used in a particular film or commercial, while a performer's will can address broader issues. Some actors or heirs worry that overexposure will tarnish a celebrity's image, Roesler said. Some explicitly rule out posthumous depictions involving sex or violence, while others focus on drugs or alcohol. "We have seen people address marijuana," he said. "We've seen liquor addressed."

California law already gives heirs control over actors' posthumous profits by requiring their permission for any of use of their likeness. As technology has improved, many living actors there are more focused on steering their legacy with stipulations on how their images are used - or by forbidding their use. Robin Williams, who committed suicide in 2014, banned any use of his image for commercial means until 2039, according to court documents. He also blocked anyone from digitally inserting him into a movie or TV scene or using a hologram, as was done with rapper Tupac Shakur at Southern California's Coachella music festival in 2012 - 16 years after his murder.

Virtual characters have been used when an actor dies in the middle of a film production, as when Universal Pictures combined CGI and previous footage for Paul Walker's role in 2015's "Furious 7" after Walker's 2013 death in a car crash. But "Rogue One" broke new ground by giving a significant supporting role to a dead star. A digital embodiment of British actor Peter Cushing, who died in 1994, reprised his role from the original 1997 "Star Wars" film as Tarkin. Walt Disney Co recreated Tarkin with a mix of visual effects and a different actor.

A Disney spokeswoman declined to comment on whether Princess Leia would appear in films beyond "Episode VIII", set for release in 2017. Fisher had wrapped filming for the next "Star Wars" episode before she died. She suffered a heart attack on a flight from London to Los Angeles. Fisher had been expected to play a key role in the ninth installment of the sci-fi saga, due for release in 2019. Fisher's attorney, Frederick Bimbler, did not return requests for information on any stipulations the actress may have made about use of her image.

Disney bought "Star Wars" producer Lucasfilm in 2012 for $4 billion. The two new films since released have sold some $2.7 billion worth of tickets and boosted sales of toys and other related merchandise. Disney would need to negotiate "reuse fees" with Fisher's estate to resurrect her character for future films, said Mark Litwak, an entertainment attorney in Los Angeles. The rights of actors' heirs are rooted in a 1985 California law requiring filmmakers to obtain permission from a celebrity's estate to use his or her image after death. The law was enacted after a campaign by the son of Dracula actor Bela Lugosi, a lawyer who objected to widespread use of his late father's image.

In this May 23, 1980 file photo, actress Carrie Fisher hugs a person dressed as a stormtrooper in London while promoting the 'Star Wars' epic 'The Empire Strikes Back'. —AP

With today's movie technology opening up so many possible scenarios, actors' union SAG-AFTRA is lobbying for all states to enact protections on the use of celebrity images after they die. Minnesota began considering such legislation this year following the death of music legend Prince, who was from Minneapolis. "The issue for us is straightforward and clear: The use of performers' work in this manner has obvious economic value and should be treated accordingly," a SAG-AFTRA spokesperson said.

Celebrity deaths often spur big increases in sales of music and movies. Michael Jackson and Elvis Presley regularly top Forbes list of dead celebrities with annual earnings of tens of millions of dollars. If Disney decides to resurrect Leia, the costs could go much higher than what it might have to pay her surviving family. The technology and time involved in CGI recreations for major roles can make the prospect more costly than hiring even a first-tier actor. "It's very expensive," Litwak said.

What about other characters in the blockbuster franchise? James Earl Jones, who is 85, provided the menacing voice for Darth Vader in the original "Star Wars" trilogy, in an animated TV series and again in "Rogue One". An assistant to Jones declined to comment on whether any provisions are in place regarding use of his voice after his death. A bigger question for filmmakers and fans is whether the technology provides a realistic portrayal, Litwak said. "Most people in the movie industry don't think it's quite there yet," he said. "It's amazing what they can do, but it's not as good as a real actor. It still seems a bit artificial."

Tarkin's resurrection in "Rogue One" sparked debate among fans over whether the portrayal was realistic, with some complaining it did not look human enough to be convincing. "Does Disney want to have people scrutinizing how real that synthetic character is, rather than talking about the movie itself?" he asked about the prospect of Leia's return. "It would be a distraction." —Reuters

Quagliarella wants to extend Sampdoria stay

LONDON: Sampdoria forward Fabio Quagliarella would like to settle down and end his career at the Genoa-based club after switching teams several times in his career, he told Sky Sport yesterday. The former Italy international, capped 25 times, joined Sampdoria in February after 18 months at Torino. He previously had a one-year spell at the club in 2006-07. "I hope, first of all, to extend my contract with Sampdoria because it expires in June ... I don't think that there should be problems for the renewal," the 33-year-old said. "For superstition though I will not say the words 'end of career' because in the past I have changed many shirts," he added. Quagliarella, who spent four years with Juventus from 2010-14, has scored 100 goals in Italy's top division. Sampdoria, 13th in the standings, travel to third-placed Napoli on Saturday, their first Serie A game after the holiday break. — Reuters

Leicester sack director of rugby Richard Cockerill

LONDON: Leicester have sacked long-serving director of rugby Richard Cockerill and head coach Aaron Mauger will replace him on an interim basis, the Premiership club said yesterday. The Tigers lost their last two games against Exeter and Saracens to drop out of the playoff places and fall 15 points behind league leaders Wasps. They also suffered a record 38-0 European defeat by Munster last month. "It is with great sadness and regret that I leave my position as director of rugby with immediate effect," Cockerill said in a statement on the club website. "I still believe that I am the right person to lead the team at this present time but respect the Board's decision to make change as they see fit in the best interests of the club." Cockerill enjoyed two spells with the Tigers during his playing career, making over 250 appearances for the club before joining the backroom staff in 2004. The former England hooker was appointed head coach in 2009 and director of rugby a year later, leading Leicester to a record 10th English top-flight title in 2013.—Reuters

Shanghai SIPG fans cheer as Oscar arrives in China

SHANGHAI: Brazilian international midfielder Oscar was cheered by supporters of his new Shanghai club yesterday where some media reports said he would earn nearly $500,000 a week, making him the highest-paid player in the world. Financial details of Oscar's transfer to Shanghai SIPG from English Premier League club Chelsea have not been released, but media reports have suggested Shanghai paid 60 million euros ($62.6 million) to lure the 25-year-old to the Chinese super league club. Fans wearing the team's red and white colours shouted "Oscar, Oscar!" when the Brazilian arrived at Shanghai's international airport on Monday. He stopped to sign autographs before being led away by team officials. "I think it will definitely enhance the team's capabilities," Shao Lei, a 30-year-old SIPG supporter, said of the latest Brazilian to sign with the Shanghai club. "Our goal is to strive for the championship, nothing else," he told Reuters Television. The figures cited in British media reports would make Oscar the world's highest paid player at about 400,000 pounds a week ($490,760).—Reuters

SHENZHEN: Agnieszka Radwanska of Poland hits a return during her match against Duan Ying-Ying of China at the WTA Shenzhen Open in Shenzhen, in China's southern Guangdong province yesterday. — AFP

Radwanska survives battle in Shenzhen

BEIJING: Top seed and defending champion Agnieszka Radwanska of Poland scraped a hard-fought 6-2, 6-7(4), 7-5 victory against lower-ranked Ying-Ying Duan at the WTA Shenzhen Open yesterday to advance to the second round.

Radwanska, ranked third in the world, took nearly two and a half hours to overcome a stiff challenge from her 103rd-ranked Chinese opponent, winning fewer of her first service points but slamming down seven aces to Duan's four. The Pole saved three match points in the third set on her way to claiming victory.

Second seed Simona Halep of Romania triumphed in a three-set thriller 6-1, 3-6, 6-3 over Jelena Jankovic of Serbia, formerly the world's top-ranked female player.

Halep bounced back after a second-set loss to win a place in the second round against Katerina Siniakova, who defeated hometown favourite Shuai Peng 6-3, 7-5.

Third seed Johanna Konta of Britain made a strong start to the tournament with a dominant 6-2, 6-0 performance over Caga Buyukakcay, taking less than an hour to defeat her Turkish opponent.

Konta enters 2017 as a top ten player for the first time in her career. She will face 27-year-old American veteran Vania King. Fourth seed Timea Bacsinszky of Switzerland pulled out of the tournament yesterday due to an abdominal injury. —AFP

Federer returns in style to beat Evans at Hopman

PERTH: An emotional Roger Federer made an impressive comeback to tennis yesterday with an easy win over Great Britain's Dan Evans at the Hopman Cup in Perth. The Swiss champion, who has been out of action for six months due to injury, helped his country make a clean sweep of the tie against the Brits when he cruised to victory in 61 minutes with scores of 6-3, 6-4.

Teammate Belinda Bencic also beat Heather Watson before the Swiss pair triumphed in the dead mixed doubles rubber. The men's singles was Federer's first match after a half-year break due to knee and back injuries, which saw him slide out of the top 10 for the first time since late 2002. The 35-year-old, who entered 2017 ranked 16th-his lowest placing since 2001 — admitted he felt emotional on his return to the court but said the knee didn't trouble him at all.

"For a first match it was great, because obviously expectations were quite low," he said. "For three and four weeks now I have stopped thinking of it (the knee). I don't have any pain. "I am in a way sad it (the comeback) is over, because I enjoyed it so much, I feel a bit relieved but sad."

Despite plenty of practice in Dubai in recent weeks, Federer said it was important to test himself in an actual match. He first hurt his knee after a semi-final loss to Novak Djokovic at the Australian Open in January while filling a bath for his children.

He required minor surgery on a torn meniscus and was then hampered by a back injury which forced him out of the French Open.

The 17-time Grand Slam singles champion then suffered another knee complaint at Wimbledon in his semi-final loss to Milos Raonic, before electing to rest for the remainder of the year. But there were immediate signs of the Federer class against the 66th-ranked Evans, as he opened the match with an ace and then reeled off a couple of superb passing shots in the fourth game.

Playing in front of a crowd of 13,684, a record for a tennis match in Perth, Federer delighted the fans when he broke Evans in the sixth game to take control of the first set.

He will face emerging German teenager Alexander Zverev on Wednesday in a much-anticipated match-up.

FRANCE BEATS GERMANY

After Federer gave Switzerland the lead, Bencic secured the tie with a three-set win over Watson, 7-5, 3-6, 6-2. In the Fast Four mixed doubles, Federer and Bencic made quick work of the match, winning, 4-0, 4-1.

Earlier, cagey veteran Richard Gasquet led France to a 2-1 win over Germany. Gasquet beat rising star Alexander Zverev 7-5, 6-3 in their men's singles match and then teamed with Kristina Mladenovic to win the deciding mixed doubles rubber.

Germany had earlier taken the lead when Andrea Petkovic benefited from an early arrival in Australia and an unorthodox preparation to put in a quality performance against Mladenovic, winning 6-2, 6-1.

"I normally spend Christmas with the family but I decided it was time to make a sacrifice," said Petkovic. "I spent Christmas in Melbourne watching Seinfeld and eating burgers, but it has paid off."— AFP

PERTH: Roger Federer of Switzerland hits a return against Dan Evans of Britain during their fourth session men's singles match on day two of the Hopman Cup tennis tournament in Perth yesterday. — AFP

Nadal hopes schedule change brings success

BRISBANE: Spanish superstar Rafael Nadal hopes a dramatic change to his longstanding schedule will lead to success in the Australian Open later this month.

After opening his season in Doha for seven of the past eight years, Nadal has this year opted to begin his Melbourne campaign at the Brisbane International.

It will be the first time since Sydney in 2009 that Nadal will have played an Australian ATP tournament in the lead-up to the year's first Grand Slam. The 30-year-old said he decided to change his schedule to give himself the best chance of acclimatising to the Australian summer.

"Doha has worked well for me in the past but Brisbane will help me adapt and get used to Australian conditions, which are a little bit tougher because of the weather," he said on arrival in Brisbane on Monday. "Every year is different. All the players are changing schedules," he added. "Being here in Brisbane is good news for me. I like Australia. Last year I decided already to come here before. "I don't know if that's going to help me better or not-I'll tell you after Melbourne."

Nadal arrived in Brisbane after winning the Mubadala World Tennis Championship exhibition tournament in Abu Dhabi on Saturday, proving he has recovered from the wrist injury that plagued him in 2016.

"I played well in Abu Dhabi. I played three good matches and that's important for me," he said. "Last year I was playing great but I got injured in the worst moment possible. "I'm happy to be back in competition again. Abu Dhabi was a good start. I need to continue that way."

A relaxed Nadal, who moments earlier had been swamped by fans as he held a koala outside the Queensland Tennis Centre, insisted that if he was fully fit he could add to his tally of 14 Grand Slam singles titles. "I cannot predict the future (but) I can say if I am healthy, I believe that I can do it," he said. "If not, I will be at home fishing." — AFP

BRISBANE: Rafael Nadal of Spain takes part in a training session at the Brisbane International tennis tournament in Brisbane yesterday. — AFP

BRISBANE: Garbine Muguruza of Spain hits a return against Samantha Stosur of Australia in the women's round one at the Brisbane International tennis tournament in Brisbane yesterday. —AFP

Muguruza beats Stosur at Brisbane International

BRISBANE: French Open champion Garbine Muguruza finished off a first-round match for the first time at the Brisbane International, and extended Sam Stosur's unhappy run in the process with a 7-5, 6-7 (2), 7-5 win yesterday.

The fourth-seeded Muguruza saved three set points in the first and rallied from a break down in the third to finish off in 2 hours, 45 minutes on a humid afternoon. In two previous trips to the season-opening tournament, Muguruza struggled with injuries and hadn't completed a match. "It was a battle," Muguruza said. Stosur "played very well today. She served like a beast. It took three hours for that battle to see what happens in the end." Muguruza beat Stosur in the French Open semifinals last year and went on to beat then No. 1 ranked Serena Williams in the final to claim her first major title.

The loss extended a slump for Stosur, the 32-year-old Australian who hasn't won a competitive singles match since the first round of the US Open in September and hasn't advanced past the second round at her home tournament in Queensland state.

No. 5 Svetlana Kuznetsova, No. 6 Elina Svitolina and No. 8 Roberta Vinci were among the women's seeds advancing today.

Svitolina, the only player to beat both Serena Williams and Angelique Kerber in 2016, opened with a 6-3, 6-3 win over Olympic champion Monica Puig.

Kuznetsova beat American Louisa Chirico 6-2 6-4 and Vinci was pushed all the way in a 7-6 (4), 6-7 (4), 7-6 (5) win over qualifier Kateryna Bondarenko. American qualifier Asia Mohammed advanced with a 7-6 (5), 6-1 win over Donna Vekic, and Zhang Shuai of China beat Laura Siegemund 4-6, 7-6 (3), 6-3. In the men's draw, another of Australia's local hopes went out in the first round with No. 8-seeded David Ferrer beating error-prone Bernard Tomic 6-3, 7-5. Nicolas Mahut advanced to the second round with a 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 win over fellow Frenchman Stephane Robert and Kyle Edmond held off American qualifier Ernesto Escobedo 7-6 (4), 7-6 (6).

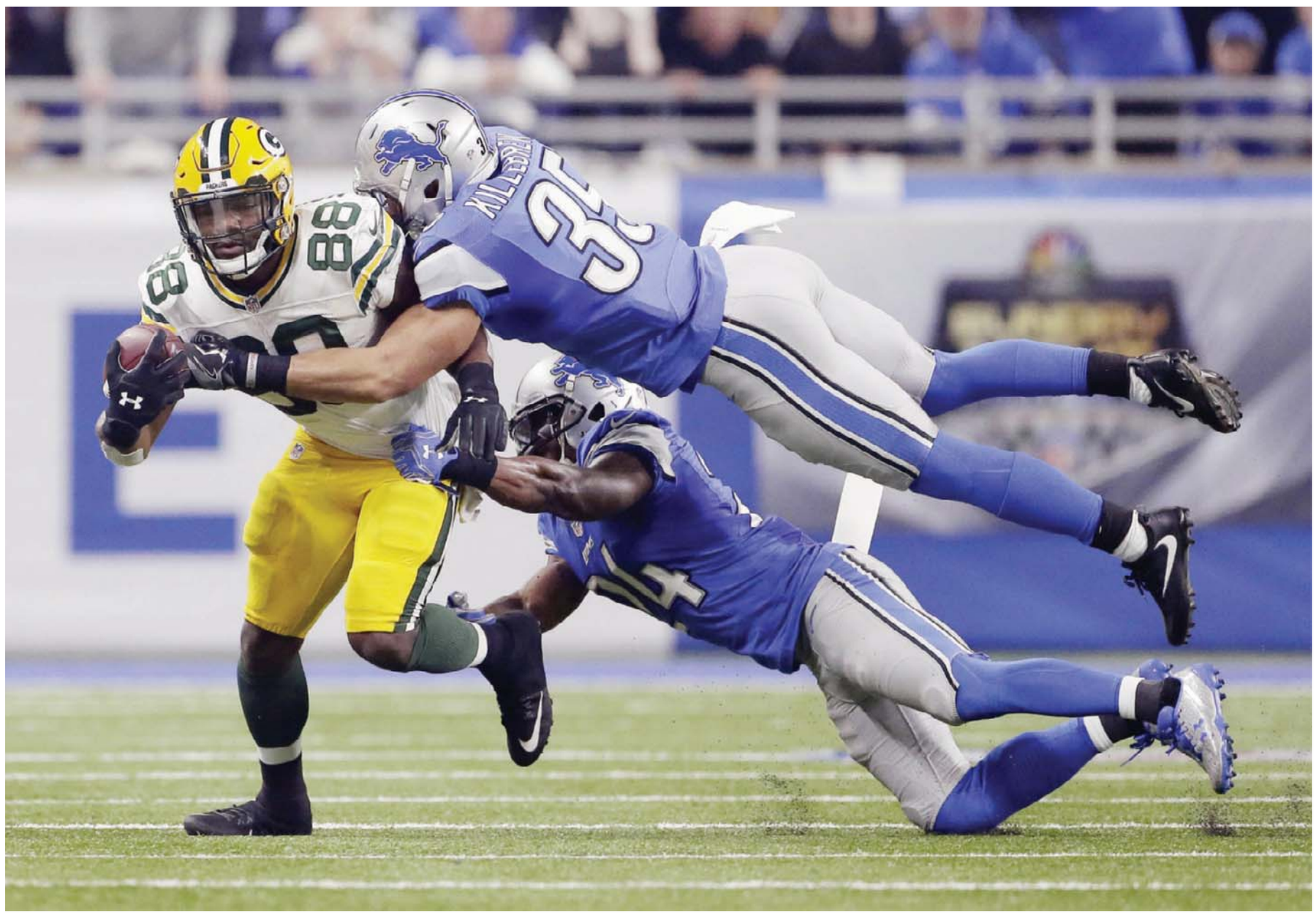
In a late match interrupted by thunderstorms, seventh-seeded Grigor Dimitrov needed three match points before beating Steve Johnson 6-2, 6-3 on center court. Play on outside courts was postponed for today. — AP

NFL Results/Standings

Cincinnati 27, Baltimore 10; Tennessee 24, Houston 17; Tampa Bay 17, Carolina 16; Pittsburgh 27, Cleveland 24 (OT); Philadelphia 27, Dallas 13; New York Jets 30, Buffalo 10; Minnesota 38, Chicago 10; Indianapolis 24, Jacksonville 20; New England 35, Miami 14; New York Giants 19, Washington 10; Arizona 44, Los Angeles 6; Seattle 25, San Francisco 23; Atlanta 38, New Orleans 32; Kansas City 37, San Diego 27; Denver 24, Oakland 6; Green Bay 31, Detroit 24.

	W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA
American Football Conference						
East						
Z-New England	14	2	0	.875	441	250
X-Miami	10	6	0	.625	363	380
Buffalo	7	9	0	.438	399	378
NY Jets	5	11	0	.313	275	409
North						
Y-Pittsburgh	11	5	0	.688	399	327
Baltimore	8	8	0	.500	343	321
Cincinnati	6	9	1	.406	325	315
Cleveland	1	15	0	.063	264	452
South						
Y-Houston	9	7	0	.563	279	328
Tennessee	9	7	0	.563	381	378
Indianapolis	8	8	0	.500	411	392
Jacksonville	3	13	0	.188	318	400
West						
Y-Kansas City	12	4	0	.750	389	311
X-Oakland	12	4	0	.750	416	385
Denver	9	7	0	.563	333	297
San Diego	5	11	0	.313	410	423
National Football Conference						
East						
Z-Dallas	13	3	0	.813	421	306
X-NY Giants	11	5	0	.688	310	284
Washington	8	7	1	.531	396	383
Philadelphia	7	9	0	.438	367	331
North						
Y-Green Bay	10	6	0	.625	432	388
X-Detroit	9	7	0	.563	346	358
Minnesota	8	8	0	.467	327	307
Chicago	3	13	0	.188	279	399
South						
Y-Atlanta	11	5	0	.688	540	406
Tampa Bay	9	7	0	.563	354	369
New Orleans	7	9	0	.438	469	454
Carolina	6	10	0	.375	369	402
West						
Y-Seattle	10	5	1	.656	354	292
Arizona	7	8	1	.469	418	362
Los Angeles	4	12	0	.250	224	394
San Francisco	2	14	0	.125	309	480

(X-clinched playoff berth, Y-division winner, Z-first-round bye)



DETROIT: Green Bay Packers running back Ty Montgomery (88) is tackled by Detroit Lions cornerback Nevin Lawson and strong safety Miles Killebrew (35) during the second half of an NFL football game, Sunday in Detroit. — AP

Patriots clinch home-field advantage

Redskins miss playoffs

MIAMI GARDENS: Tom Brady threw for 276 yards and three scores Sunday as the Patriots clinched home-field advantage throughout the AFC playoffs by beating the Dolphins 35-14. New England took a 20-0 lead in the first half and turned away Miami's comeback bid with the help of a 77-yard touchdown catch-and-run by Julian Edelman and a 69-yard fumble return by linebacker Shea McClellin. The Patriots (14-2), already assured of a first-round bye, became the ninth team since 1972 to go undefeated on the road during the regular season. The Dolphins (10-6), beaten for only the second time in the past 11 games, had already earned an AFC wild-card berth. They play their first postseason game since 2008 next weekend at Pittsburgh.

GIANTS 19, REDSKINS 10

Facing an opponent with nothing to play for, Washington blew their chance to make the playoffs with an uninspired loss to New York. The Redskins would have made the playoffs with a win as long as the Green Bay Packers-Detroit Lions night game didn't end in a tie. Instead, Kirk Cousins was intercepted twice in the second half by Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie and Washington (8-7-1) goes into an offseason filled with questions. The Packers and Lions each qualified as a result of the Redskins' loss to New York (11-5), which will be the first wild card. Eli Manning played the entire game, going 17 of 27 for 180 yards despite the Giants opting for a conservative approach for much of the second half.

CHIEFS 37, CHARGERS 27

Alex Smith threw for two touchdowns and ran for another as the Chiefs clinched the AFC West title and a first-round playoff bye in perhaps the final NFL game in San Diego. The Chiefs (12-4) took the division with the win and Oakland's loss at Denver. San Diego fired coach Mike McCoy after the game. Smith scored on a 5-yard scramble early in the second quarter to tie the game at 10. He threw a 4-yard touchdown pass to wide-open Charcandrick West later in the quarter to put the Chiefs ahead for good. That followed the first of two interceptions of Philip Rivers that led to 10 points for the Chiefs.

Smith was intercepted once, on a deflected pass that Jahleel Addae returned 90 yards for a touchdown to pull the Chargers (5-11) to 20-17 in the third quarter.

BRONCOS 24, RAIDERS 6

In a game that couldn't have gone much worse, Oakland lost its latest starting quarterback, Matt McGloin, to a shoulder injury, then fell to a team with nothing to play for as Denver coach Gary Kubiak told his players he will be stepping down for health reasons. Combined with Kansas City's win over San Diego, the Raiders (12-4) squandered the AFC West title and the first-round bye that went with it - and instead fell to the No. 5 seed. Now, they are a wild card with a rookie third-stringer, Connor Cook, as their only fully healthy quarterback. Oakland is at Houston next weekend.

FALCONS 38, SAINTS 32

Matt Ryan bolstered his MVP credentials with a brilliant first half, throwing four touchdown passes to secure a first-round playoff bye. Ryan was 17 of 19 for 235 yards by halftime, directing the Falcons (11-5) to touchdowns on all five possessions and a commanding 35-13 lead. He finished 27 of 36 for 331 yards, leaving him with a franchise-record 4,944 yards, 38 touchdowns and just seven interceptions this season.Atlanta is seeded second in the NFC to Dallas. The Saints (7-9) came into the regular-season finale looking to finish another disappointing season with a three-game winning streak and avoid a third straight losing mark. But they were blitzed early and often by the league's highest-scoring offense. One consolation for New Orleans: Drew Brees became the first quarterback in league history to throw for 5,000 yards five times. He was 29 of 50 for 350 yards, giving him 5,208 on the season. His 471 completions this season set an NFL record.

LANDOVER: Washington Redskins tight end Jordan Reed celebrates his touchdown catch during the second half of an NFL football game against the New York Giants in Landover, Md., Sunday.—AP

STEELERS 27, BROWNS 24

Steelers backups assured the Browns of the top pick in the 2017 draft. Landry Jones hit Cobi Hamilton with a 26-yard touchdown with 2:57 left in overtime. The Browns took a lead on Cody Parkey's 34-yard field goal with 7:17 remaining in the extra session. Jones, who started while the playoff-bound Steelers rested Ben Roethlisberger, took the Steelers 75 yards in nine plays. The last was a pretty lob to the end zone that Hamilton hauled in to give Pittsburgh (11-5) its seventh straight victory. Jones finished with 277 yards passing and three touchdowns and one interception. Isaiah Crowell ran for a career-high 152 yards for the Browns (1-15), who finished with the worst record in franchise history.

JETS 30, BILLS 10

Ryan Fitzpatrick threw two touchdown passes in what was likely his final game for the Jets. Despite a 5-11 record, the Jets are making no changes in leadership, meaning both coach Todd Bowles and general manager Mike Maccagnan will remain with the team next season. Bowles is 15-17 in his two-year tenure with New York, which hired him in January 2015 after firing Rex Ryan. Maccagnan is also in his second season with the Jets, and had also been criticized for the team's roster, which likely faces an overhaul this offseason. The Bills (7-9) also face some uncertainty this offseason after firing Ryan earlier in the week and elevating offensive coordinator Anthony Lynn to the interim role. Two other people with direct knowledge of the situation told the AP before the game that Lynn is the clear favorite to take over the job permanently.

TITANS 24, TEXANS 17

A concussion that sidelined quarterback Tom Savage could have the biggest impact coming out of the Texans' loss. Savage started for the AFC South champions, left in the second quarter to be evaluated for a concussion and was cleared. He took a snap to kneel down on the final play of the first half and was diagnosed with a concussion after being re-evaluated at halftime. That left Brock Osweiler, benched for Savage last month, running the offense. He threw for 253 yards and a touchdown and also ran for a 1-yard TD on fourth-and-goal in the fourth quarter. Houston (9-7) will host Oakland next weekend, possibly with uncertainty at quarterback. DaQuan Jones recovered a fumble for a touchdown in the first quarter and the Titans never trailed to finish with their first winning season since 2011.

EAGLES 27, COWBOYS 13

Tony Romo threw his first touchdown pass in nearly 14 months as the playoff-bound Cowboys played it safe. The Cowboys (13-3) had already locked up the No. 1 seed and home-field advantage throughout the NFC playoffs so Dak Prescott played only two series and Ezekiel Elliott watched from the sideline. Carson Wentz tossed two TD passes to Zach Ertz to help Philadelphia finish with a two-game winning streak. Prescott was 4 for 8 for 37 yards before giving way to Romo, who hadn't played in a regular-season game since Thanksgiving 2015 when he broke his left collarbone for the second time in less than three months. Romo broke a bone in his back in the third preseason game against Seattle this season, paving the way for Prescott to have one of the best years by a rookie quarterback in NFL history.

BUCCANEERS 17, PANTHERS 16

Jameis Winston threw for 202 yards and one touchdown as the Buccaneers broke up Cam Newton's 2-point conversion throw in the closing seconds for their first winning season in six years. Winston threw a 10-yard pass to Mike Evans to snap a fourth-quarter tie and became the first player in NFL history to start his career with consecutive 4,000-yard seasons. But the Bucs (9-7) were eliminated from playoff contention, not getting the help they needed in other games for their first berth since 2007. Winston's franchise record-setting 28th TD pass put the Bucs ahead 17-10 with 3:10 remaining. Newton, however, moved the Panthers (6-10) right down the field, with help of a 47-yard pass to Kelvin Benjamin and two fourth-down completions to set up a 5-yard scoring pass to trim Carolina's deficit to one with 17 seconds left.

VIKINGS 38, BEARS 10

Sam Bradford concluded his first season with Minnesota with three first half touchdown passes. Bradford went 25 for 33 for 250 yards and one interception, finishing with a 71.6 percent completion rate to set an NFL single-season record. Kyle Rudolph caught 11 passes for 117 yards and a score for the Vikings (8-8), who started 5-0 before stumbling out of their bye week and never recovering. The Bears (3-13) wound up with their fewest wins in a non-strike year since 1973 after turning the ball over five times. Everson Griffen returned one of their three lost fumbles for a touchdown. Jordan Howard, the lone bright spot, rushed for 135 yards on 23 carries to break Matt Forte's franchise rookie record and finish with 1,313 yards for the season for Chicago.

COLTS 24, JAGUARS 20

Andrew Luck threw a 1-yard touchdown pass to Jack Doyle with 9 seconds left. Indy (8-8) went 75 yards in 84 seconds with no timeouts to avoid its first losing season since 2011, sending retiring linebacker Robert Mathis out with a win in his final NFL game. Jacksonville (3-13) matched the second-worst record in franchise history after blocking a punt with 1:54 to go and breaking a 17-17 tie with 1:33 left. Instead, Luck took the Colts right downfield for the score. Mathis extended his league record of strip-sacks to 41 in the fourth quarter, two days after announcing he would retire.

BENGALS 27, RAVENS 10

Andy Dalton completed his first 10 passes, one for a touchdown, and Rex Burkhead ran for a pair of scores in the Bengals' fifth straight win at home over the Ravens. The Bengals (6-9-1) missed the playoffs for the first time in six years. Coach Marvin Lewis says he'll return in 2017. Baltimore (8-8) failed to reach the playoffs for the third time in four years. The Ravens played their final game as if they were emotionally hung over from a last-minute loss at Pittsburgh last Sunday that eliminated them.

SEAHAWKS 25, 49ERS 23

Russell Wilson threw for 258 yards and a touchdown as the Seahawks rallied from an early 11-point deficit in what could be coach Chip Kelly's final game with the 49ers. The NFC West champion Seahawks (10-5-1) head to the playoffs as the third seed in the NFC. The Seahawks will host the loser of Sunday night's game between Detroit and Green Bay next week. The loss capped an awful season for the 49ers (2-14), who matched the franchise record for losses in a season previously reached in 1978, '79 and 2004. San Francisco general manager Trent Baalke told the team's flagship radio station KNBR before the game that he had been fired. Seattle receiver Doug Baldwin caught two passes for 44 yards, tying the franchise record for catches in a season with 94. Baldwin tied Bobby Engram's mark set in 2007 with an acrobatic 41-yard catch in the second quarter.

CARDINALS 44, RAMS 6

Carson Palmer threw touchdown passes to Jeremy Ross, Darren Fells and Larry Fitzgerald, and the Cardinals wrapped up a frustrating season. Fitzgerald caught five passes and took the overall NFL lead with 107 catches in perhaps his final game for the Cardinals (7-8-1). Arizona missed the playoffs one year after reaching the NFC championship game despite an offense and a defense ranked in the top quarter of the league. Arizona still finished the year strong with wins over NFC West champion Seattle and Los Angeles (4-12), which has lost seven straight. — AP

Chargers dump McCoy as coach, 49ers axe GM

LOS ANGELES: Mike McCoy was fired as coach of the NFL's San Diego Chargers, the club announcing after a season-ending loss Sunday that he would not return for the next campaign.

In four seasons, McCoy had an overall record of 28-38, his farewell bow a 37-27 home loss to the Kansas City Chiefs which left the Chargers a 5-11 record this season.

The Chargers were 1-1 in the playoffs under McCoy, reaching the post-season during his tenure only in his 2013 campaign debut, and they have already started the search for his replacement.

"Mike McCoy is a man of high character and we thank him for his dedication to the Chargers," Chargers president of football operations John Spanos said. "The decision to dismiss Mike was made in the best interests of our franchise.

"Our team's disappointing performance has not matched this team's potential and has fallen short of the demanding standards that we seek to impose throughout our organization."

McCoy went from 9-7 in the 2014 campaign to 4-12 in 2015 and struggled this season again, going only 7-17 against AFC West division rivals.

"I want to thank Mike for his tireless work and commitment to this organization," said Chargers general manager Tom Telesco. "He instilled a culture of work ethic and togetherness we can build on for years to come."

McCoy was the fastest firing but likely far from the last, with axes notoriously falling in past seasons in the days after the NFL regular season concludes.

San Francisco 49ers general manager Trent Baalke told KNBR Radio he had been fired, although the club had not yet announced such a move. After a 2-14 season, 49ers coach Chip Kelly is also expected to be swept out in a bid to change the club's fortunes.

And another coach might be leaving on his own terms, with Denver's Gary Kubiak reportedly retiring due to health concerns.

NFL Network reported Kubiak, 55, told players he was stepping down over health issues. Kubiak, who missed a game last October for what the Broncos called a "complex migraine condition," said he would address his future later. Just 11 months ago, Kubiak guided the Broncos to a Super Bowl title in his first season. —AFP

Mike McCoy

Cartwright, O'Keefe in Australia third Test team

SYDNEY: All-rounder Hilton Cartwright will make his Test debut among two changes in the Australia team for this week's final Test against Pakistan in Sydney, captain Steve Smith said yesterday. Zimbabwe-born Cartwright and left-arm spinner Steve O'Keefe replace Nic Maddinson and Jackson Bird in the team that demolished Pakistan by an innings in Melbourne last week to clinch the three-match series. "Cartwright is an extra bowling option to go with the two quicks and the two spinners," Smith told reporters.

"It just adds a little bit to the bowling stocks, and he deserves an opportunity to play at number six." The 24-year-old Cartwright is a batting all-rounder who bowls medium pace and will support front-line fast bowlers Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood. "He's improved (his bowling) a lot over the last year or so. He's gained 10 kph," Smith said of Cartwright.

The need for a second spinner in Sydney had been flagged by selectors, with O'Keefe getting the final nod over Ashton Agar. "We're playing the two spinners, traditionally out here it does take some spin," Smith said.

O'Keefe will partner veteran spinner Nathan Lyon, who cemented his place in the team with a crucial three-wicket spell on the final day of the Melbourne Test. O'Keefe has played three Tests, including in Sydney against the West Indies last season, and partnered Lyon in the first Test in Sri Lanka in July before injury ruled him out for the remainder of the series.

'EYE ON INDIA'

Explaining Agar's inclusion in the expanded squad, Smith said: "It was to bring him into the mix and have those three spinners working together. "I think the selectors probably have an eye on India and the guys that are possible to be there. "I think it was just a good opportunity for those three to come together and do a little bit of work together." Cartwright said he was ready to step up with the ball. "I can definitely contribute overs during a game," Cartwright told reporters on Sunday.

"That's always been a part of my game. The bowling's been there. I've just been trying to get it to work as close to (as good) as my batting." While Cartwright has taken only 14 Sheffield Shield wickets at 42.50 in his career, he is averaging 36.67 with the bat in the Shield so far this season, including three half-centuries. Smith said pace bowler Bird could consider himself unlucky to miss out after taking 13 wickets in the last three ests. "I thought he bowled particularly well in Melbourne but, look, conditions sometimes change the team," Smith said. "We've gone with two spinners on this occasion and it's unlucky for Jackson." Australia are chasing a 3-0 whitewash in the Test that starts in Sydney today.

Australia: David Warner, Matthew Renshaw, Usman Khawaja, Steve Smith (capt), Peter Handscomb, Hilton Cartwright, Matthew Wade, Mitchell Starc, Steve O'Keefe, Josh Hazlewood, Nathan Lyon.— AFP

SYDNEY: Pakistan cricket captain Misbah-ul-Haq (R) speaks with team coach Mickey Arthur (L) during a training session at the SCG in Sydney yesterday. Pakistan take on Australia in the third cricket Test match starting today. — AFP

Misbah to captain Pakistan in Sydney

SYDNEY: Pakistan captain Misbah-ul-Haq said yesterday he will lead the side in the third Test against Australia in Sydney, dismissing suggestions he is about to retire.

Misbah, 42, raised the possibility following his team's abject innings defeat in the second Melbourne Test last week to lose the series, when he said he would contemplate his future and may even retire before today's final Test.

But Pakistan's most successful skipper yesterday appeared at the captain's media conference before the Test to hose down speculation of his imminent retirement.

Misbah, who has scored a total of 20 runs in four innings in the series, said his comments after the innings and 18-run defeat in Melbourne were triggered by frustration.

"That was 2016 — now it's 2017," he told reporters. "That is gone, that is gone. "You have to fight as a sportsman and that's important for me also. "I'm happy that I've got a very good family, all the team. The way they supported me (was appreciated).

"Everyone, from the support staff to the players-and they're up for that (fight), so I'm also up. I need to play at my best." Misbah said he was not thinking about the end of his international career that started in 2001, although well-placed sources said he would make the final decision about his playing status once he returns home to Pakistan.

Misbah now concentrates only on Test cricket and retired from one-day internationals after Pakistan's defeat to Australia in the World Cup quarter-final in 2015.

After the Australia Test series Pakistan do not have any Tests scheduled until April, when they will tour the West Indies for a four-match series.

Misbah's most immediate assignment after the Australia series will be in the United Arab Emirates in the Pakistan Super League with Islamabad United, which starts on February 9.

Misbah opted against naming a final Test team yesterday, admitting there could be changes after his side's woeful last day in the Melbourne Test. "Traditionally, Sydney is a bit different. It all depends on the final look of the pitch," he said.

Australia hold an unassailable 2-0 lead in the Test series. Heading into Sydney, Pakistan have not won a Test Down Under since their 'dead rubber' victory at the Sydney Cricket Ground in 1995. —AFP

Indian court orders removal of BCCI chief

NEW DELHI: Judges ordered the dismissal yesterday of the Indian cricket board's president over the failure to enact a series of recommended reforms, plunging the game's most powerful body into turmoil.

In a shock ruling, a panel of Supreme Court judges said Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Anurag Thakur and its number two Ajay Shirke must stand down immediately.

Thakur said he would respect the decision, while voicing bitterness at the court for siding with a retired judge who had been demanding the shake-up in the BCCI's governance. "The Supreme Court passes an order directing the BCCI president and secretary to desist from any board functions from hereon," said the ruling.

The order comes after judges slapped restrictions on the BCCI's accounts last year over its failure to implement a series of reforms recommended by a panel headed by a former top judge, Rajendra Mal Lodha.

Cricket's massive popularity in India has helped the BCCI become by far the wealthiest of all of the sport's national boards, netting massive money from sponsorship and TV deals. But it has also been embroiled in a series of scandals, including accusations of corruption and match-fixing that tarnished the Indian Premier League (IPL) — the board's lucrative Twenty20 competition. A corruption and match-fixing scandal in the sixth edition of the IPL in 2013 brought about the downfall of the board's then-president Narayanaswami Srinivasan after his son-in-law was accused of betting on matches.

The elevation of Thakur and Shirke had been seen as representing a break with the past. But the board's reluctance to implement Lodha's recommendations, which included age limits and term limits on office-bearers, had triggered a number of legal battles.

The recent series against England was nearly cancelled on the eve of the first Test as a result of the funding restrictions.

'NOTHING PERSONAL'

In a video message posted on social media, Thakur indicated he would abide by the verdict while expressing bitterness at the decision.

"For me, it was not a personal battle. It was a battle for the autonomy of the sports body," said Thakur, who is a lawmaker for India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

"I respect the Supreme Court as any citizen should. Supreme Court judges feel that BCCI could do better under retired judges, I wish them all the best. I am sure Indian cricket will do well under their guidance."

DHARAMSALA: In this photograph taken on June 24, 2016, President of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Anurag Thakur addresses a press conference in Dharamsala. — AFP

Lodha said Thakur's removal was an inevitable consequence of the board's foot-dragging. "One should understand that when the order of the Supreme Court, which is the highest court of the land, has come, it has to be obeyed by all. It is the law of the land. Nobody can escape it," Lodha told reporters.

The judges also ordered Thakur to explain why he allegedly lied on oath about seeking a letter from the International Cricket Council stating that Lodha's recommendations amounted to government interference. They threatened to charge him with perjury and contempt of court.

Thakur, who has until January 19 to reply to the contempt notice, only took over as head of the BCCI in May 2016.

But he had been effectively running the board for much of the previous year as secretary as a result of the illnesses and absences of his superiors. Thakur said the game's administration and development had been at "its very best" under his stewardship.

"India has the best cricket infrastructure, built and maintained by the state associations with the help of BCCI," he said. "India has more quality players than anywhere in the world."

India, the world's number one-ranked Test team, is in the middle of a busy season, with England due to play a one-day series later this month ahead of tours by Australia and Bangladesh. Veteran commentator Ayaz Memon said the turmoil should not have an impact on the field but important issues would remain up in the air until a new leadership team is put in place. "It's not just hosting of the IPL but there are broadcast rights and so many other things," he told AFP. Cricket writer Prem Panicker agreed that the players would be unaffected. "They will go about their business as usual," he said. —AFP

Elgar century leads South Africa fightback

CAPE TOWN: Dean Elgar's century and a quickfire unbeaten 68 from Quinton de Kock lifted South Africa to 297 for six on the opening day of the second test against Sri Lanka at Newlands yesterday.

Elgar scored a career-high 129 and shared a 103-run partnership with De Kock to lift the home side into a handy position after they had struggled early on.

The opener went past his previous top test score and his ton came up off 186 balls before he was caught by wicketkeeper Kusal Mendis off Suranga Lakmal half an hour before the close. De Kock, whose runs came off 90 balls, will resume with night-watchman Kyle Abbott unbeaten on 16.

Teenager Lahiru Kumara claimed three wickets, including two in the same over, after he was brought into the side following Sri Lanka's 206-run defeat in the first test in Port Elizabeth.

But the touring side will feel they did not take full advantage of the seamer-friendly track as they took as many wickets in the second two sessions as they had before lunch when South Africa were teetering on 69-3 after losing the toss and being put into bat.

There was an immediate breakthrough before the home team had scored a run with Stephen Cook, who made a century and was named man of the match in the first test, out to the fourth ball of the game. He pushed at a rising delivery from Lakmal and got a faint edge to Mendis.

The 19-year-old Kumara dismissed Hashim Amla and JP Duminy in the same over just before lunch. Amla, continuing his indifferent form, was clean bowled for 29 and five balls later Duminy gloved a quick leg-side delivery to be caught for a duck after an acrobatic leap by Mendis.

In the second session, captain Faf du Plessis was the only wicket to fall, making 38 in a 76-run partnership with Elgar that launched South Africa's fightback. He was caught at first slip by Angelo Mathews off the left-arm spin of Rangana Herath.

After tea, Temba Bavuma, who twice went out cheaply in the first test, was caught for 10 trying to flick a delivery over the field but taken at square leg by Upul Tharanga off Kumara. Elgar followed with a thick edge off the second new ball but not before seeing his team into a relatively strong position.— Reuters

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the first day in the second Test between South Africa and Sri Lanka yesterday in Cape Town, South Africa.

South Africa 1st innings	
S. Cook c K. Mendis b Lakmal	0
D. Elgar c K. Mendis b Lakmal	129
H. Amla b Kumara	29
J. Duminy c K. Mendis b Kumara	0
F. du Plessis c Mathews b Herath	38
T. Bavuma c Tharanga b Kumara	10
Q. de Kock not out	68
K. Abbott not out	16
Extras (lb-2 nb-1 w-4)	7
Total (for 6 wickets, 90 overs)	297

Fall of wickets: 1-0 S. Cook, 2-66 H. Amla, 3-66 J. Duminy, 4-142 F. du Plessis, 5-169 T. Bavuma, 6-272 D. Elgar.

To bat: V. Philander, K. Maharaj, K. Rabada.

Bowling: S. Lakmal 21-3-69-2; N. Pradeep 15.4-3-46-0; A. Mathews 14-3-30-0(w-1); L. Kumara 17-1-86-3(nb-1 w-3); R. Herath 14.2-3-34-1; D. de Silva 8-0-30-0.

CAPE TOWN: South African batsman Dean Elgar plays a shot during the second Test between South Africa and Sri Lanka yesterday at Newlands Cricket Stadium in Cape Town, South Africa. — AFP

KUWAIT TIMES NBA POWER RANKINGS

By Ahmad Jabr

KUWAIT: In addition to its usual coverage of the NBA, Kuwait Times introduces a new feature this year: the NBA Power Rankings. It is a weekly list ranking each team based on its performance during the week. The actual record for each team (put between brackets, for games played as of Sunday morning in Kuwait's local time) plays a role in the assessment process but is not the main factor for deciding each team's ranking, thus making it different from traditional league standings. This week's edition is one day later than usual courtesy of the New Year's Day holiday. (For any comments or suggestions, e-mail the writer at: a.jabr@kuwaittimes.net)

1- Cleveland Cavaliers (25 - 7) Last week: 2 - The only two losses that the Cavs suffered in their last 10 games came when LeBron James sat for rest. 'The King' celebrated his 32nd birthday on Friday, and became the only player in NBA history to have 27,544 points at that age. He also helped his team end 2016 with a win over Charlotte while playing without Kyrie Irving; but perhaps none of that feels sweeter than beating Golden State on Christmas Day.

2- Golden State Warriors (29 - 5) Last week: 1 - The Warriors shook off their Christmas Day defeat to the Cavs by making quick work of the Raptors and Mavs, capping their last 10 games with a 9 - 1 record. Kevin Durant recorded his first triple-double as a Warrior with 19 points, 11 rebounds, and 10 assists in his team's victory over Dallas on Friday.

3- Houston Rockets (26 - 9) Last week: 5 - Saturday was undoubtedly the best night to support James Harden's case for the MVP award. By scoring a career-high 53 points, grabbing 16 rebounds and tying a career-high with 17 assists, he became the only player in history to have at least 50 points, 15 rebounds and 15 assists in an NBA game. Ever. That is extremely hard to accomplish, and shows how much he has thrived in coach Mike D'Antoni's offense-driven system.

4- San Antonio Spurs (27 - 7) Last week: 3 - The Spurs survived the Suns and Trail Blazers in two games they played without Kawhi Leonard who sat out because of a stomach flue, but fell in overtime against the Hawks in his first game back to the starting lineup. They have showed a type of offensive versatility as of late that they can rely on as the season progresses.

5- Toronto Raptors (23 - 10) Last week: 4 - The Raptors finished December ranked second in offensive rating, fourth in defensive rating and second in net rating. A season-high six-game road streak - which included a forgettable loss to Phoenix Thursday night - ends in San Antonio tonight.

6- Utah Jazz (21 - 13) Last week: 9 - Georg Hill, who is averaging a career-best 19.1 points along with 4.2 assists and 3.7 rebounds, missed last night's game against the Nets with concussion-like symptoms; an injury that came at the wrong time as Utah entered a tough five-game road trip with games in Boston, Toronto and Memphis.

7- Oklahoma City Thunder (21 - 13) Last week: 8 - It is difficult to talk about Russell Westbrook (or the Thunder in general) without mentioning his triple-double accolades. He recorded his league-leading 16th triple-double of the season on Saturday (53rd overall), entered 2017 averaging a triple-double, and became the first player with back-to-back seasons of at least 15 triple doubles since Magic Johnson. Most importantly, his team's winning percentage when he scores a triple-double is 81 percent so far this season.

8- Boston Celtics (20 - 14) Last week: 10 - One statistic that stands out in Isaiah Thomas' historic performance in Boston's win over Miami on Friday is not his career-high 52 points. His 29 points in the fourth quarter are the most in a quarter by a player in the Celtics' storied history.

9- Memphis Grizzlies (22 - 14) Last week: 7 - Memphis entered 2017 leading the league in defensive efficiency; and their defensive prowess was put on display in Thursday's win over Oklahoma in which they held Russell Westbrook to 0 assists and six turnovers. On the other hand, the Grizzlies set a franchise record with 17 three-pointers in Saturday's win over Sacramento.

10- Charlotte Hornets (19 - 15) Last week: 11 - Kimba Walker became the fourth player in franchise history to record 7,000 career points, but the story in Charlotte has been Nicolas Batum's stellar play that led his team to victories last week over divisional rivals the Magic and Heat.

11- Los Angeles Clippers (22 - 14) Last week: 6 - Perhaps the most worrisome part about the Clippers' current six-game losing streak is that it gives other playoff contenders the key on how to beat them come April-May: figure out a way to shutdown Chris Paul - who missed five of his team's last six games with a lingering leg injury - and the rest would be history.

12- Atlanta Hawks (18 - 16) Last week: 15 - Atlanta's coach Mike Budenholzer finally recorded his first win over Gregg Popovich, his longtime former boss in San Antonio, after the Hawks beat the Spurs on Sunday night. They hope to extend their current three-game winning streak and fend-off distractions in the form of rumors that management is listening to trade offers for Paul Millsap ahead of his impending free agency.

13- Washington Wizards (16 - 16) Last week: 17 - With his 36 points and 11 rebounds in Washington's Wednesday win over Indiana, John Wall became the first player in franchise history to have a 35-point, 10-rebound game since Michael Jordan had one in 2003.

14- Milwaukee Bucks (16 - 16) Last week: 12 - The Bucks may have lost the 'young stars' battle against the Wolves, but they recorded statement wins against potential Eastern Conference playoff contenders in the Pistons and the Bulls last week.

15- Indiana Pacers (17 - 18) Last week: 16 - The Pacers' win against the Bulls on Friday ended a four-game losing streak and came against a team that is similarly vying for a position in the East's playoff race. They beat the Magic two nights later behind Myles Turner's 23 points and 12 rebounds.

16- Chicago Bulls (16 - 18) Last week: 14 - Benching Rajon Rondo in favor of the returning Michael Carter-Williams did not translate into success for the Bulls, who suffered a tough loss against the Bucks on Saturday. Rondo's recent fall out with coach Fred Hoiberg suggests that the free-agent-to-be guard's days in Chicago could be numbered.

17- New York Knicks (16 - 17) Last week: 13 - Finishing 2016 on a four-game losing streak is not the best way to begin the new year, and the Knicks need to find some answers on defense to stay competitive in 2017 and keep their playoff hopes alive.

18- Detroit Pistons (16 - 20) Last week: 18 - Coach Stan Van Gundy, who is never shy to criticize his players' performance, took the blame for the Pistons' blowout loss to the Bucks on Wednesday. But he knows that the team needs to put the 'blame game' aside and start focusing on turning the season around; starting from two key matchups ahead against the Pacers and Hornets.

19- Denver Nuggets (14 - 19) Last week: 20 - Denver has emerged among the hottest topics for trade scenarios ahead of the Feb 23 trade deadline. The latest news in this regard are surrounding young prospect Jusuf Nurkic, who has been unhappy with his diminished role and could be shipped for a veteran who can help the Nuggets in the West's tight playoff race.

20- New Orleans Pelicans (14 - 21) Last week: 25 - Moving Anthony Davis, a traditional power forward, into the center position in the starting lineup seems to have rejuvenated the Pelicans who entered last night's game against the Cavs on a four-game winning streak. Meanwhile, their small and athletic lineup is proving to be too much for opponents to defend.

21- Portland Trail Blazers (15 - 21) Last week: 22 - In the last four games played in the league, Portland recorded the second best defensive rating in games that were all played without injured point guard Damian Lillard - a far cry from their defensive performance that was good for 29th in the league by the end of December. It goes without saying that the Blazers have played considerably better defense with only one primary ball handler in the backcourt.

22- Sacramento Kings (14 - 19) Last week: 19 - The future of DeMarcus Cousins, who is having the best year in his career and is currently the league's third highest scorer at 29 points per game, in Sacramento could largely hinge on the Kings' ability to reach the playoffs this season.

23- Orlando Magic (15 - 20) Last week: 21 - The Magic have allowed their opponents to score nearly 113 per game in their last five matches, of which they lost three. Their recent defensive woes add more misery to their underwhelming season in which their offense has so far been better only than the lowly 76ers'.

24- Minnesota Timberwolves (11 - 23) Last week: 24 - Karl-Anthony Towns became the youngest player in Wolves' history to record a triple-double with his 15 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists in Wednesday's loss against the Nuggets.

25- Dallas Mavericks (10 - 24) Last week: 26 - The Mavs played with visible frustration in their loss to the Rockets last Tuesday, reflective of their frustrating season so far. They have shown some promising performances whenever they played with a full lineup, although they have not been able to sustain having a healthy squad for a long time so far this season.

26- Phoenix Suns (10 - 24) Last week: 28 - The Suns were able to beat one of the league's better teams this year last Thursday in the Raptors; who were playing in the second night of a back-to-back and near the end of a grueling road trip. Meanwhile, Tyler Ulis' notable performance lately has casted more shadow on Brandon Knight's future in Phoenix.

27- Los Angeles Lakers (12 - 25) Last week: 27 - Beating an injury-riddled Clippers' squad on Christmas Day must have felt great for the young Lakers - at least while it lasted. They returned back to their losing ways and dropped three straight games against the Jazz, Mavericks and Raptors respectively.

28- Miami Heat (10 - 25) Last week: 23 - A five-game losing streak, being on the receiving end of Isaiah Thomas' career-high 52 points and losing Hassan Whiteside to a right eye injury is not the best way the Heat had hoped to start the new year with.

29- Philadelphia 76ers (8 - 24) Last week: 29 - The 76ers finished 2016 with a two-point victory over the Nuggets, and it was their first win in their last 15 games that were decided by one possession (per the Elias Sports Bureau). Being unable to win close games is expected from a young squad.

30- Brooklyn Nets (8 - 24) Last week: 30 - The Nets broke the Hornets' hearts when Randy Foye made a three-point buzzer beater to lead Brooklyn to victory last Monday, only to have their own hearts broken by Jimmy Butler's game winner in their loss to Chicago two nights later.

INDIANAPOLIS: Indiana Pacers guard Glenn Robinson III (40) is fouled by Orlando Magic forward Serge Ibaka (7) as he shoots during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Indianapolis, Sunday. The Pacers defeated the Magic 117-104. — AP

Atlanta Hawks beat Spurs, Blazers defeat Timberwolves

ATLANTA: Tim Hardaway Jr tied his career high with 29 points, including the go-ahead free throw in overtime, to help the Atlanta Hawks beat the Spurs. San Antonio had a chance to tie the game at the buzzer but Kawhi Leonard's layup rolled around the rim and spun out. Hardaway scored 21 points in the second half and scored the first eight points in overtime. He made the first of two free throws with 10.8 seconds left to put Atlanta ahead for good. Atlanta's Paul Millsap scored a season-high 32 points to keep the Hawks within reach.

PISTONS 107, HEAT 98

Reggie Jackson scored 27 points while Andre Drummond added 25 points and 18 rebounds as the Detroit Pistons beat the Miami Heat. The Pistons trailed by 14 points in the first half and took their first lead at 75-73 on Kentavious Caldwell-Pope's jumper with 4:01 remaining in the third period to cap a 11-0 run. Caldwell-Pope finished with 23 points. Detroit extended their lead after a second 11-0 surge across the third and fourth quarters, with Andre Drummond's hook shot with 9:42 remaining capping the run and giving the Pistons a 91-81 lead. Tobias Harris finished with 17 points for the Pistons.

PACERS 117, MAGIC 104

Myles Turner scored 23 points and grabbed 12 rebounds to lead the Indiana Pacers to victory over the Orlando Magic. Turner sank 7 of 13 field goals and 8 of 9 free throws. Paul George added 19 points for the Pacers, while Jeff Teague contributed 12 points and nine assists. Nikola Vucevic led Orlando with 18 points. Jeff Green and Serge Ibaka each added 17 points. Trail Blazers 95, Timberwolves 89 C.J. McCollum scored a career-high 43 points to lead the Portland Trail Blazers to victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves. McCollum surpassed his previous career-high of 37 points set in two previous games. It was the seventh time McCollum scored at least 30 points this season. Andrew Wiggins led the Timberwolves with 24 points.

MINNEAPOLIS: Portland Trail Blazers guard Allen Crabbe (23) left his feet on a fake by Minnesota Timberwolves guard Zach LaVine (8) during the third quarter of an NBA basketball in Minneapolis, Sunday. The Trail Blazers defeated the Timberwolves 95-89.— AP

RAPTORS 123, LAKERS 114

Kyle Lowry and DeMar DeRozan combined for 72 points as the Toronto Raptors became the latest team to take advantage of a fading Los Angeles Lakers team. Lowry led all scorers with 41 points and added seven assists and nine rebounds for the Raptors. DeRozan scored 31 points. The Lakers, meanwhile, continued their trend of fading late in games as they led until midway through the third quarter. D'Angelo Russell scored 28 points while Nick Young added 26 points.—Reuters

NBA result/standings

Detroit 107, Miami 98; Indiana 117, Orlando 104.

Eastern Conference	W	L	PCT	GB
Atlantic Division				
Toronto	23	10	.697	-
Boston	20	14	.588	3.5
NY Knicks	16	17	.485	7
Philadelphia	8	24	.250	14.5
Brooklyn	8	24	.250	14.5
Central Division				
Cleveland	25	7	.781	-
Milwaukee	16	16	.500	9
Indiana	17	18	.486	9.5
Chicago	16	18	.471	10
Detroit	16	20	.444	11
Southeast Division				
Charlotte	19	15	.559	-
Atlanta	18	16	.529	1
Washington	16	16	.500	2
Orlando	15	20	.429	4.5
Miami	10	25	.286	9.5

Western Conference				
Northwest Division				
Utah	21	13	.618	-
Oklahoma City	21	13	.618	-
Denver	14	19	.424	6.5
Portland	15	21	.417	7
Minnesota	11	23	.324	10
Pacific Division				
Golden State	29	5	.853	-
LA Clippers	22	14	.611	8
Sacramento	14	19	.424	14.5
LA Lakers	12	25	.324	18.5
Phoenix	10	24	.294	19
Southwest Division				
San Antonio	27	7	.794	-
Houston	26	9	.743	1.5
Memphis	22	14	.611	6
New Orleans	14	21	.400	13.5
Dallas	10	24	.294	17

F1 waits for Mercedes announcement

LONDON: The time for talking is fast approaching as Mercedes start a new year with Formula One waiting for a big announcement about who is going to replace retired world champion Nico Rosberg alongside Lewis Hamilton.

The team made clear before the Christmas break that they would have nothing to say before the full return to work today. There is evidence, however, to suggest the decision is all but made. According to the motorsport.com website, Finnish driver Valtteri Bottas was at the Mercedes factory at Brackley before Christmas to meet team engineers and try out the cockpit of the 2017 car.

Bottas has raced for Mercedes-powered Williams since his Formula One debut in 2013 and Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff, a former Williams shareholder, has also been involved with the 27-year-old's management team.

The Finn is the bookmakers' favourite to replace Rosberg, who quit unexpectedly last month only five days after winning his first title, but other elements may need to slide into place before a deal can be announced. One would be for Brazilian veteran Felipe Massa to agree to abandon his announced retirement and return to Williams as Bottas's replacement.

Claire Williams, deputy principal of the team founded by her father, indicated last month that Williams would be open to Bottas leaving if "an experienced, credible alternative was available" - such as the 35-year-old Massa.

Pascal Wehrlein, the 22-year-old Mercedes reserve driver who might have expected to take Rosberg's place but lacks experience, is another piece of the jigsaw.

The young German raced for tail-enders Manor last year, scoring the only point for a financially-challenged team whose future remains uncertain, but is expected to join Ferrari-engined Sauber alongside Sweden's Marcus Ericsson. Wolff, in his final words to the team before the break, gave no clues but emphasised that Mercedes' best interests would always come first.

"Our position in the spotlight puts every decision taken and every word spoken under an intense microscope," said the Austrian. "They are debated passionately among our fans and interpreted by the media.

"But there has been enough talking, now. This is the period for calm and considered reflection, to savour our achievements and prepare for the next campaign."

With testing due to start in Spain late next month, ahead of the opening race in Australia on March 26, the factories are now entering their busiest period. The time for reflection is coming to an end. —Reuters

Valtteri Bottas

Uninspired Leicester held by Middlesbrough

Middlesbrough 0

Leicester City 0

MIDDLESBROUGH: Troubled champions Leicester City were held to a turgid 0-0 draw at Middlesbrough yesterday to edge further clear of the Premier League relegation zone. Leonardo Ulloa missed the visitors' best chance when he headed a Christian Fuchs corner straight at Brad Guzan in the 69th minute, although the Foxes were largely toothless without strikers Islam Slimani and Jamie Vardy, who was serving the final match of his three-game suspension. "Both teams didn't create much," Leicester captain Wes Morgan told Sky Sports. "It was tough with the quick turnaround, playing on Saturday, then again today.

"On reflection, 0-0 is a good result for us and a clean sheet is always good."

Middlesbrough, now 16th on 19 points, enjoyed the better of the action and threatened through Adama Traore, the game's outstanding individual, but he struggled to find an end product to accompany his scintillating work out wide. "It's a good result for us," Boro coach Aitor Karanka told reporters. "I'm really pleased with the performance. "We showed that we are better than them and we can't forget they are a Champions League side and the Premier League champions. We have to continue to be organised and not concede goals."

Gaston Ramirez fired an 83rd-minute effort into the side netting, but Boro were unadventurous and have now won just once in their last six matches.

Leicester kept consecutive clean sheets for the first time since April but the champions, who moved seven points clear of the drop zone ahead of the matches later on Monday, are still awaiting their first away win of the season. — Reuters

Super-sub Valencia helps Everton sink Southampton

Everton 3

Southampton 0

LIVERPOOL: Enner Valencia came off the bench to make a decisive impact as the Colombian striker inspired Everton's 3-0 win over Southampton yesterday.

Valencia hadn't scored a club goal since netting twice for West Ham against Manchester City in January 2016. But the 27-year-old was back on the scoresheet at Goodison Park as he bagged his first goal in 12 appearances since joining on loan from West Ham.

Valencia's second-half strike was followed by late goals from Leighton Baines and Romelu Lukaku, ensuring Everton manager Ronald Koeman could savour a winning start to 2017 at the expense of his former club.

After Everton lost 1-0 on Koeman's first return to St Mary's earlier this season, the Dutch coach condemned Southampton to a third successive defeat that represented their worst losing run in the league for more than two years.

It took Southampton just 41 seconds to score when they faced Everton in November, but the early stages weren't so kind to them this time.

In the third minute, Saints right-back Cedric Soares was forced off in the third minute after sustaining a nasty gash in his head following a collision with an advertising board around the pitch.

Everton midfielder Ross Barkley threatened to add to Southampton's problems with a powerful strike that was pushed away by Fraser Forster.

Koeman had given a first start to 19-year-old forward Dominic Calvert-Lewin, but his chance to impress was curtailed by an early injury after just 11 minutes.

Jay Rodriguez went close twice in quick succession with a snap-shot pushed away by Everton goalkeeper Joel Robles and then a powerful effort over the bar.

With both sides struggling to find any momentum after the interval, chances were at a premium and even when Nathan Redmond was clean through he fired straight at Robles after a rare menacing moment from Southampton.

But Valencia had come on for Aaron Lennon after 61 minutes and the Everton substitute broke the deadlock 12 minutes later with a close-range finish after Lukaku's header had been parried into his path by Forster. Everton's second goal owed much to the threat posed by Valencia as he forced a rash challenge from Saints defender Maya Yoshida in the 81st minute, earning a penalty that Baines dispatched with typical efficiency.

Lukaku sealed Everton's late goal blitz in the 89th minute when the Belgium striker took a Tom Davies pass and blasted into the top corner. — AFP

LIVERPOOL: Everton's Spanish goalkeeper Joel Robles jumps to make a save during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Southampton at Goodison Park in Liverpool, north west England yesterday. —AFP

Brighton back on top after Newcastle slip up

LONDON: Brighton stormed back to the top of the Championship with a 2-1 win at Fulham, overhauling a Newcastle side who crashed to a surprise 1-0 defeat at Blackburn yesterday.

Chris Hughton's side were in danger of losing their 17-match unbeaten run when Lucas Piazon gave Fulham the lead 10 minutes into the second half at Craven Cottage.

Brighton goalkeeper David Stockdale had earlier denied his former club by saving a first-half penalty from Stefan Johansen.

But Brighton hit back with two goals in two minutes as Tomer Hemed levelled from the penalty spot before Lewis Dunk headed the 75th-minute winner.

The Seagulls are two points clear of Newcastle after Charlie Mulgrew fired struggling Blackburn to a 1-0 win at Ewood Park. Mulgrew's 74th-minute free-kick was his second goal of the season, with his first coming in the 1-0 win at Newcastle.

Newcastle pushed hard for an equaliser but were frustrated by two disallowed goals. Reading remain third-only the top two automatically go into the Premier League-six points behind Newcastle, after they came from behind to win 3-2 at Bristol City. Tammy Abraham's brace, the second coming from the penalty spot, put City in control but Liam Kelly gave Reading a lifeline before Yann Kermorgant struck twice late on to complete the comeback.

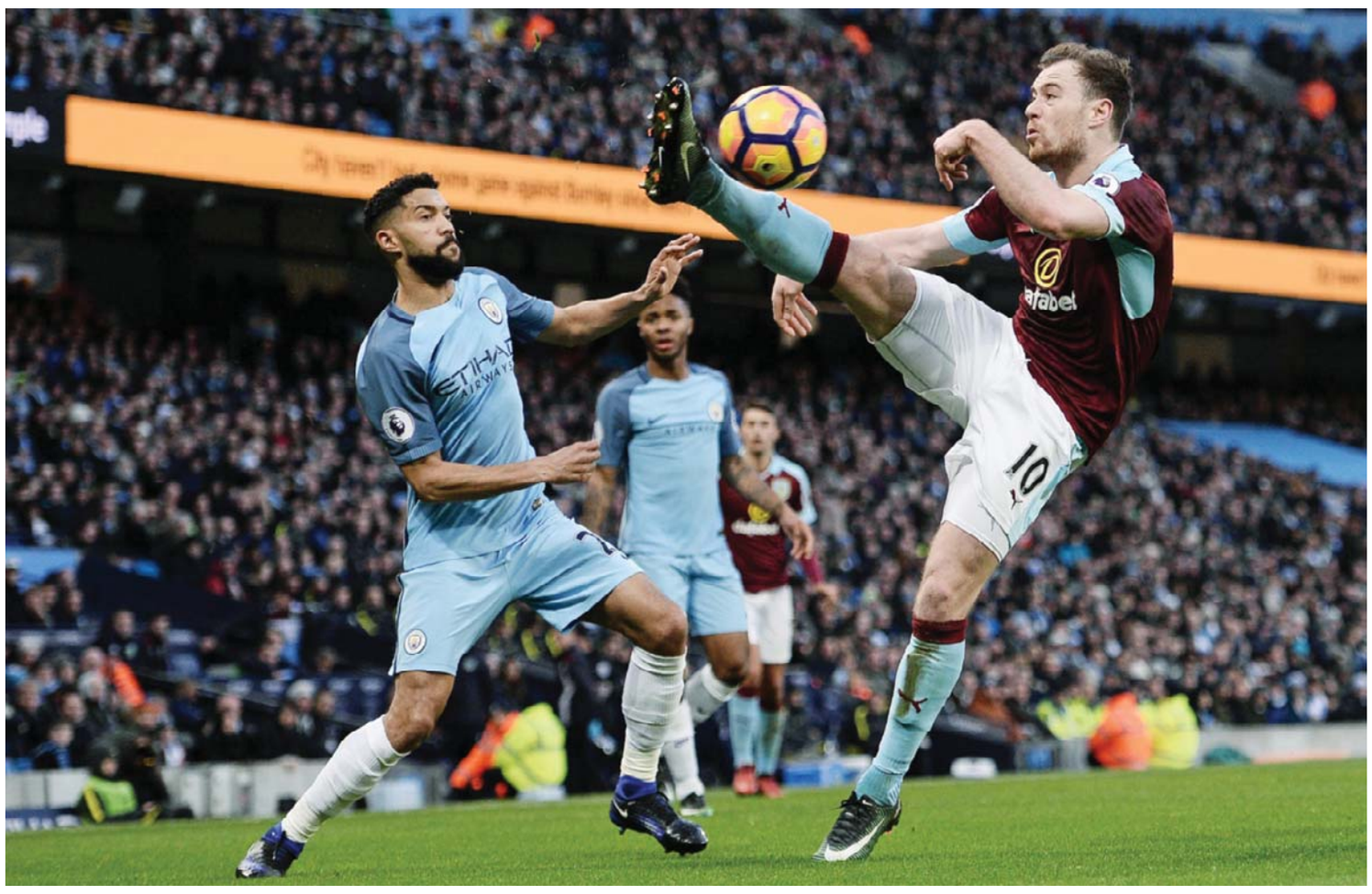
Fourth-placed Huddersfield won 1-0 at Wigan and fifth-placed Leeds beat Rotherham 3-0.

Nelson Oliveira's hat-trick guided Norwich to an emphatic 3-0 win over Derby that eased the pressure on manager Alex Neil. The Canaries had taken just seven points from their previous 11 games but Oliveira completed the perfect treble with a goal each with his left foot, right foot and head. Joe Ralls scored the only goal as Cardiff edged out Aston Villa 1-0 and Tom Clarke's goal in first-half stoppage time was enough for Preston to beat Burton 1-0.

Birmingham's poor form under new boss Gianfranco Zola continued as they slumped to a 3-1 defeat at home to Brentford.

Barnsley won 1-0 at Nottingham Forest and Sheffield Wednesday had to settle for a goalless draw at home to Wolves.

Pawel Wszolek scored a late QPR winner for the second game running as they beat Ipswich 2-1 at Loftus Road. —AFP



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's French defender Gael Clichy (L) vies with Burnley's English striker Ashley Barnes during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Burnley at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England, yesterday. — AFP

Clichy, Aguero get 10-man Man City back on track

Man City 2

Burnley 1

MANCHESTER: Manchester City overcame the first-half dismissal of Fernandinho and another Claudio Bravo error to secure a nervy 2-1 Premier League victory over Burnley yesterday.

Fernandinho's third red card in six games will lead to a four-game suspension, but after City's worst first half to a league season in eight years manager Pep Guardiola will be relieved just to get the three points through goals from Gael Clichy and Sergio Aguero.

French full-back Clichy struck a rare goal on 58 minutes after a Bacary Sagna cross was headed to him on the corner of the area by the visitors' Michael Keane. Clichy cut inside a half-hearted challenge from Scott Arfield before planting a low shot through the crowded box and into the bottom right-hand corner.

Four minutes later City took further control when Kevin De Bruyne's pass played Raheem Sterling into the area, thanks to a slip by defender Ben Mee. Sterling fell as goalkeeper Tom Heaton blocked at his feet, but substitute Aguero was on hand to steer the ball into an empty net from a wide angle via the post and defender Matt Lowton.

Yet City still faced an anxious conclusion to the game after a mistake by goalkeeper Bravo from a corner saw Nicolas Otamendi clear off the line and Mee fire in the rebound off the underside of the crossbar.

The win allowed City to close to within two points of second-place Liverpool, who were held 2-2 at Sunderland, and to within seven of Chelsea, ahead of the leaders' trip to Tottenham Hotspur tomorrow.

City had made a bright start before Fernandinho's rash challenge left referee Lee Mason with little choice but to show him a straight red card on 32 minutes.

The Brazilian flew into a challenge on Johann Berg Gudmundsson with both feet off the ground, which saw him become the sixth City player to be sent off in Guardiola's 30 games at the helm.

Instantly, Burnley had their best chance of the game, Ashley Barnes shooting well wide from a promising position on the edge of the area, and they enjoyed the majority of possession for the rest of the first half.

But Guardiola, who tore off his overcoat in frustration at Fernandinho's premature departure, should have seen his team in the lead by that point.

FINGERTIP SAVE

After dropping the high-profile trio of John Stones, Aguero and David Silva following Saturday's 1-0 defeat at Liverpool, City started with pace and intent.

On six minutes Mee's poor pass was intercepted by Sterling and he played Kelechi Iheanacho clean through, only for the youngster to be denied by Heaton.

Yaya Toure worked the ricochet back to Sterling who was, again, denied by Heaton, who saved bravely at his feet.

Moments later Iheanacho got into a promising position in the Burnley area, but succeeded only in lifting his shot over the target.

After Arfield wasted a free-kick just outside the City area, Guardiola's team broke upfield, only for Sterling and Jesus Navas to squander what had appeared a promising break.

City pressed and, on 18 minutes, Heaton proved unbeatable again as he dived smartly to cover Toure's 18-yard shot, but Fernandinho's loss dramatically altered the pattern of the game. Burnley, who have won just one away point on their league travels all season, must have fancied their chances of improving that statistic. But Guardiola's response was to bring on Silva and Aguero, two of the mainstays of City's success in recent years, at the interval.

Aguero might have done better after Sterling's shot was blocked and the loose ball spun in his direction, but defender Stephen Ward reacted quickly to intercept.

The three goals quickly followed, in the space of 12 minutes, although chances were scarce for the remainder of the game.

Aguero and Burnley's Andre Gray both missed the target with half-chances, while Keane's injury-time shot bounced awkwardly off the ground and forced Bravo into a fingertip save. —AFP

Live Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

Spain Copa del Rey

Valencia v Vigo	**21:00**
beIN SPORTS 3 HD	
Osasuna v Eibar	**21:00**
beIN SPORTS	
Las Palmas v Madrid	**23:15**
beIN SPORTS 3 HD	
Coruna v Alaves	**23:15**
beIN SPORTS	

English Premier League

Bournemouth v Arsenal	**22:45**
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
Crystal Palace v Swansea City	**23:00**
beIN SPORTS	
Stoke City v Watford	**23:00**
beIN SPORTS	

Morrison completes West Brom comeback to worsen Hull plight

West Bromwich 3

Hull City 1

WEST BROMWICH: James Morrison rounded off a superb second-half performance by West Brom as they came from behind to beat struggling Hull 3-1 and mark their 400th Premier League appearance in style yesterday.

Morrison's goal added to those of Chris Brunt and Gareth McAuley saw the hosts come from 1-0 down at half-time-Robert Snodgrass's seventh of the season-and looking distinctly second best to extend Hull's away win drought to nine.

West Brom remain in eighth place in the table whilst Hull-who have won just once in their last 18 Premier League games-are second from bottom four points adrift of safety.

Their inability to keep a clean sheet has also hurt them with this match making it 22 in all competitions without a clean sheet-their worst run since January 1991 when they also conceded in 22 successive games. Hull had looked in good shape when Snodgrass put away a neat half volley from Ahmed Elmohamady's cross for their first away goal in six matches.

It was no more than the visitors deserved and emboldened by their 2-2 draw with Everton on Friday they had started the brightest with Snodgrass, Adama Diomande and skipper Michael Dawson going close.

West Brom sprang to life when Cameroon defender Nyom came on for the injured Jonny Evans-his cross finding leading scorer Salomon Rondon but the Venezuelan headed tamely straight at David Marshall.

Marshall-whose howler of an own goal on Friday gifted Everton their first equaliser-made a cracking save a few minutes later getting down superbly to stop in-form Matt Phillips' diving header. Hull went down the other end straight away with Diomande in a terrific spot to shoot but McAuley did a brilliant job in blocking his strike, the ball flew out to Hull midfielder Tom Huddlestone whose shot was tipped away by Ben Foster for a corner.

West Brom manager Tony Pulis must have given his players a roasting at the break because they came out a side transformed and went level within four minutes.

Phillips's corner was met by an unmarked Brunt at the back post and he made no mistake with his header for his second of the season.

The hosts barely allowed Hull a touch and it was little surprise when they went ahead in the 62nd minute McAuley's effort from a corner adjudged by Mark Clattenburg to have crossed the line despite being stopped by Sam Clucas.

West Brom should probably have been punished a few moments later as Elmohamady found Ryan Mason in acres of space in the penalty area but the former Spurs man sent his header harmlessly over the bar.

His miss proved even costlier as the hosts ended the match as a contest almost straight-away Morrison slotting home from 10 yards out after being teed up by Rondon. — AFP

WEST BROMWICH: The Hawthorns West Bromwich Albion's Darren Fletcher, left, and Hull City's Tom Huddlestone in action during their English Premier League soccer match at the The Hawthorns, West Bromwich, yesterday. — AP

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Sports
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Federer returns in style to beat Evans at Hopman 15

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Indian court orders removal of BCCI chief Page 17

SUNDERLAND: Liverpool's Dejan Lovren, bottom, and Sunderland's Jermain Defoe during their Premier League soccer match at the Stadium of Light in Sunderland, England, yesterday. — AP

Liverpool momentum checked by Defoe brace

Sunderland	2
Liverpool	2

SUNDERLAND: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp was an angry man after two penalties from Jermain Defoe slowed his team's pursuit of the Premier League leaders Chelsea as they were held to a 2-2 at lowly Sunderland yesterday.

Liverpool led twice through goals from Daniel Sturridge and Sadio Mane, but two disputed decisions by the referee, Anthony Taylor, enabled Sunderland to emerge with a point and prompted Klopp to confront him on the pitch after the final whistle. Liverpool are five points adrift of Chelsea, who could extend their lead to eight points if they beat Spurs tomorrow. This was Mane's final game for Liverpool before he departs to play for Senegal in the African Cup of Nations-and it was incident-packed farewell as he conceded one of the penalties after scoring his goal.

Klopp's frustration was fuelled by the fact that Liverpool looked to be heading for a routine win when they went ahead through a goal that exposed the uncertainty that has dogged Sunderland's defence throughout the season.

Sunderland granted Dejan Lovren too much space on the edge of the area at a corner and he hooked in a shot that bounced into the ground before Sturridge diverted it past Vito Mannone from close range. Mannone, back in the side because of an injury to Jordan Pickford had been shaky and at fault for at least one goal in a 4-1 defeat at Burnley in their previous game. But he pulled off two excellent saves in quick succession in the eighth minute to deny Sturridge and Georginio Wijnaldum goals and Sturridge was frustrated again in the 18th minute.

Sunderland had not been totally inactive, however, and their former keeper Simon Mignolet went down well to deal with a shot from Jack Rodwell in the 13th minute. But they had been second-best until they managed to break Liverpool's stranglehold on the game and equalise in the 25th minute with their first controversial goal.

There certainly appeared to be little contact when Didier Ndong tried to find a way between Wijnaldum and Ragnar Klavan, but Taylor awarded a penalty when he went down.

Defoe scored from the spot for his 10th goal of the season and almost added a second two minutes later when Adnan Januzaj's well-judged ball sent him clear.

'MANNONE HAD TO BE ALERT'

Mignolet did well, though, to get a hand to the ball as Defoe tried to round him and was fortunate when Fabio Borini's shot from the loose ball was deflected wide.

Liverpool's early authority had now vanished and Rodwell, who has never tasted victory after starting 33 games for Sunderland, forced a good save from Mignolet from outside the area.

But Sturridge remained a formidable threat and Mannone had to be alert to save twice from the England international before the interval. There was further encouragement for Sunderland when they continued to match Liverpool after the restart and had powerful claims for a penalty rejected by the referee when Emre Can appeared to handle a cross from Januzaj.

Liverpool thought they had secured a vital victory 18 minutes from time with another goal that tested the officials.

Mane was marginally offside when a corner was diverted to him in front of goal, but Taylor and his assistant decided the ball had reached him via the head of Sunderland's Papy Djilobodji. But there was to be one more contentious moment in the 84th minute when Mane stretched out an arm to block Sebastian Larsson's free-kick. Taylor pointed to the spot-with some justification on this occasion-and Defoe beat Mignolet again. — AFP

Al Attiyah blazes to victory, Dakar kicks off

ASUNCION: Qatari two-time winner Nasser Al Attiyah overcame a fire in his Toyota to win a dramatic opening stage of the 2017 Dakar Rally yesterday. Al Attiyah completed the 38.5km special stage in 25min 41sec, the first on a high-octane, high-altitude 8,800km (5,500 mile) continent-crossing trek from Asuncion in Paraguay to Buenos Aires.

"About a dozen kilometres out from the finish we smelt smoke by (co-driver) Matthieu's (Baumel) seat and there was a bit of a fire. We slowed down to finish the stage and were able to put it out at the finish," the Toyota driver said after arriving in the Argentinian city of Resistencia. The Qatari's teammate Giniel de Villiers had to come to the rescue and tow him away. Former World Rally Championship driver Xevi Pons was 24sec adrift in his Ford Ranger while fellow Spaniard Nani Roma came in a further 5sec back in his Toyota.

Nine-time world rally champion Sebastien Loeb was 55sec off the pace as he came in sixth while defending champion Stephane Peterhansel was 1min 34sec behind Al Attiyah in 12th. Peugeot's Peterhansel is seeking to add to an extraordinary record in the race which comprises six wins apiece in both moto and auto categories. Earlier, Australian KTM rider and defending champion Toby Price set out at the start of the two-week rally, which will take participants via Bolivia through unforgiving mountainous terrain.

Competitors were watching the skies before the start following days of violent tropical storms in the Paraguayan capital. Participants swiftly resumed last-minute technical checks after seeing in the New Year ahead of the traditional pre-race briefing Sunday evening. Riders and drivers must negotiate some 4,000km of special stages before reaching Buenos Aires on January 14.

ALTITUDE CONCERNS

Five stages will be held at above 3,500 metres altitude-and participants will get a day off on Sunday to see a little of the Bolivian capital La Paz, the world's highest capital at 3,600m. The thin conditions of the region will pose a severe endurance challenge. "There is a little uncertainty as regards the altitude... I don't really know how we shall react-drivers, co-drivers, but also assistants and mechanics," said Peterhansel, who started off in 1988, when the race still remained true to its African origins. "If you feel a little off one day you could lose everything and that's true for all drivers, even those who have spent time at altitude and are well prepared."

For Peterhansel, "it's very open. I'd say there are six or seven drivers capable of winning-at Peugeot of course but also Toyota, and even Mini, with Mikko Hirvonen coming up on the rails", following his maiden fourth place showing last year. The motorbikes section is also looking open coming out of a decade of domination by Frenchman Cyril Despres and Spaniard Marc Coma, five-time winner with KTM and now on board with organisers ASO. Many eyes will also be on the progress of brave Frenchman Philippe Croizon, a quadruple amputee who will be driving a specially adapted buggy. Croizon, 48, lost his limbs after he suffered a massive electric shock while working on a television antenna at his home 22 years ago. — AFP

Man United sink Hammers

Man Utd	2
West Ham	0

LONDON: Manchester United clinched a sixth consecutive Premier League win for the first time since April 2015 as Juan Mata and Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored second-half goals in a controversial 2-0 victory at 10-man West Ham United yesterday.

The game was overshadowed by referee Mike Deanís harsh decision to send off home midfielder Sofiane Feghouli in the 15th minute for a challenge on Phil Jones, while Ibrahimovicís goal, coming after Mataís 63rd minute opener, looked offside. Mata sneaked into the box to knock fellow substitute Marcus Rashfordís cut-back into the net after a marvellous piece of skill from the England forward, while Ibrahimovic volleyed in a blocked attempt from Ander Herrera with 12 minutes remaining. Despite their numerical disadvantage the home side had three chances to take the lead but were denied by Spain goalkeeper David de Gea, who helped sixth-placed United move provisionally within a point of Arsenal in fourth spot. — Reuters

LONDON: West Ham United's Spanish midfielder Pedro Obiang (R) vies with Manchester United's Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic during the English Premier League football match between West Ham United and Manchester United at The London Stadium, in east London yesterday. — AFP

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Hyundai aims to sell 8.2 m cars in 2017 Page 23

GCC Equity Markets: 2016 - The year that was Page 25

Mexicans march to protest rise in gasoline prices Page 23

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwaiti traders follow the stock market at the Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) in Kuwait City yesterday, the first working day of the New Year. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Gulf mixed, Oman falls after budget

Saudi's Al Tayyar pulls back after surge

DUBAI: Gulf stock markets were mixed yesterday as most reopened after the New Year, with Oman falling after the release of an austere state budget for 2017. Egypt edged down although foreign investors remained net buyers of stocks. Dubai's index rose 0.2 percent as much activity focused on speculative stocks with prices below 1 dirham. Islamic Arab Insurance, the most heavily traded stock, rocketed 15 percent in its largest volume since April.

Abu Dhabi fell 0.3 percent, partly due to a 7.6 percent slide in Abu Dhabi National Energy. Qatar edged down 0.1 percent. Islamic bank Masraf Al Rayan dropped that much after saying it would suspend its brokerage business, Al Rayan Financial Brokerage Co. It said the brokerage's paid-up capital represented just 0.06 percent of the bank's total assets.

Saudi Arabia's index ended 0.1 percent higher but 0.7 percent off its intra-day peak, with petrochemicals lagging slightly. Travel agency Al Tayyar, which had climbed 7.4 percent on Sunday in unusually heavy trade, fell back 1.3 percent.

Oman dropped 0.8 percent after the government released a 2017 budget plan on Sunday that projected a smaller deficit but included fresh austerity steps and tight curbs on spending because of low oil prices. Oman Telecommunications lost 2.1 percent after tumbling 4.3 percent on Sunday in response to an increase in the royalty that it must pay the government. Rival Ooredoo Oman fell 2.0 percent after plunging 7.9 percent on Sunday.

Bahrain listed its first sharia-compliant retail real estate investment trust, Eskan Bank Realty Income Trust. The REIT rose 7 percent in very thin trade. In Egypt, the index pulled back 0.4 percent but exchange data showed non-Arab foreign investors remained net buyers of stocks by a small margin, continuing a streak that began with the floating of the Egyptian pound on Nov. 3.

Investment firm Qalaa Holdings was the most heavily traded stock, shooting up 9.7 percent to 1.13 pounds in its largest daily volume since it listed in late 2009. The stock has been in a downtrend for several years from a peak of 5.45 pounds in 2014, but it may now be reversing that trend. Its surge in the past two days triggered a reverse head & shoulders pattern formed by the highs and lows since June and pointing up to around 1.40 pounds.

Monday's highlights

KUWAIT
The index added 0.5 percent to 5,775 points.
SAUDI ARABIA
The index edged up 0.1 percent to 7,247 points.
DUBAI
The index rose 0.2 percent to 3,539 points.
ABU DHABI
The index fell 0.3 percent to 4,534 points.
QATAR
The index edged down 0.1 percent to 10,429 points.
EGYPT
The index fell 0.4 percent to 12,291 points.
OMAN
The index dropped 0.8 percent to 5,700 points. — Reuters

US Senator seeks to pull pot out of banking limbo

BOSTON: As marijuana shops sprout in states that have legalized the drug, they face a critical stumbling block - lack of access to the kind of routine banking services other businesses take for granted. US Sen Elizabeth Warren, a Massachusetts Democrat, is leading an effort to make sure vendors working with legal marijuana businesses, from chemists who test marijuana for harmful substances to firms that provide security, don't have their banking services taken away. It's part of a wider effort by Warren and others to bring the burgeoning $7 billion marijuana industry in from a fiscal limbo she said forces many shops to rely solely on cash, making them tempting targets for criminals.

After voters in Warren's home state approved a November ballot question to legalize the recreational use of pot, she joined nine other senators in sending a letter to a key federal regulator, the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, calling on it to issue additional guidance to help banks provide services to marijuana shop vendors.

Twenty-eight states have legalized marijuana for medicinal or recreational use. Warren, a member of the Senate Banking Committee, said there are benefits to letting marijuana-based businesses move away from a cash-only model. "You make sure that people are really paying their taxes. You know that the money is not being diverted to some kind of criminal enterprise," Warren said recently. "And it's just a plain old safety issue. You don't want people walking in with guns and masks and saying, 'Give me all your cash.'"

Pot money

A spokesman for the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network said the agency is reviewing the letter. There has been some movement to accommodate the banking needs of marijuana businesses. Two years ago, the US Department of the Treasury gave banks permission to do business with legal marijuana entities under some conditions. Since then, the number of banks and credit unions willing to handle pot money rose from 51 in 2014 to 301 in 2016.

Warren, however, said fewer than 3 percent of the nation's 11,954 federally regulated banks and credit unions are serving the cannabis industry. Taylor West, deputy director of the National Cannabis Industry Association, a trade organization for 1,100 marijuana businesses nationwide, said access to banking remains a top concern.

"What the industry needs is a sustainable solution that services the entire industry instead of tinkering around the edges," Taylor said. "You don't have to be fully in favor of legalized marijuana to know that it helps no one to force these businesses outside the banking system." Sam Kamin, a professor at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law who studies marijuana regulation, said there's only so much states can do on their own.

"The stumbling block over and over again is the federal illegality," he said. The federal government lumps marijuana into the same class of drugs as heroin, LSD and peyote. Democratic President Barack Obama's administration has essentially turned a blind eye to state laws legalizing the drug, and supporters of legalizing marijuana hope Republican President-elect Donald Trump will follow suit.—AP

DENVER: In this Sept 16, 2015, file photo, customers shop for marijuana inside a recreational marijuana store. — AP

Dollar recovers from lows in holiday-thinned market

LONDON: The dollar recovered from a two-week low against a basket of six major currencies on yesterday, though trade was thin with many markets closed for the New Year holiday. The greenback had soared to 14-year highs in December, boosted by market expectations that the US Federal Reserve will hike rates as many as three times this year, and that President-elect Donald Trump will stoke growth and inflation with a program of fiscal expansion.

The dollar finished the year with an almost 4 percent annual rise, the fourth consecutive year of gains but the index that measures the currency against six major rivals lost more than 1 percent during the last three days of last week, its weakness exacerbated on Friday during a flash surge for the euro in low volumes of trading in Asia.

The single currency jumped two full cents to as high as $1.07, before quickly retreating, prompting analysts to draw parallels with a "flash crash" in October that briefly knocked almost 10 percent off the value of Britain's pound. Yesterday, the euro fell 0.4 percent to $1.0513 despite strong manufacturing data for the currency bloc, while the dollar index climbed half a percent to 102.68, close to the 14-year peak of 103.65 it touched on Dec. 30.

"In the last days of 2016 we saw the dollar retreat somewhat, and there might be some sense of a correction from Europe this morning. I don't see any fundamental drivers for the moves," said Commerzbank currency strategist Esther Reichelt in Frankfurt. Data released on Friday showed speculators once again taking a bullish stance on the dollar, increasing their bets in the week up to last Tuesday after cutting their long positions for the first time since October in the previous week.

The Swedish crown rose half a percent to a 3-1/2-month high of 9.5285 crowns per euro after the purchasing managers' index for the manufacturing sector rose to 60.1 points in December, up from 57.3 the previous month. The main data focus for the week will be Friday's US non-farm payrolls report. "This week's NFP figure is likely to confirm (the) assumption ... that if the FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) hopes to get at least two hikes in during the year, one of them should be out of the way by the middle of the year," wrote FXPrimus's head of investment research, Marshall Gittler.

A gun attack in Istanbul that killed 39 people was seen having little impact on the currency market, with the Japanese yen - traditionally used as a safe haven - falling against the dollar and the Turkish lira slipping only 0.4 percent "The market is unfortunately getting increasingly used to such events - it barely reacts to them anymore," said Commerzbank's Reichelt. "When we had that attack in Berlin recently, there was barely any move - the euro moved a few pips. — Reuters

Utilities and education to benefit

SPECIAL REPORT

Speaking at a conference in late November, Mutlaq Al Sanei, general manager of the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP), said the authority will invite advisory proposals for the third phase of the Az Zour North independent water and power project (IWPP) during the first half of next year.

As the state's fourth IWPP project, phase three of Az Zour North is expected to have 1.8 GW of power generation capacity and a water desalination capacity of 75m imperial gallons per day (MIGD). The conference also saw KAPP announce plans to issue a request for proposals for the Al Khairan IWPP before the end of the year. The facility is slated to have 1.5 GW of generation capacity and 125 MIGD of desalination capacity.

In October the state invited two bidders to talks for the second phase of the Az Zour North project. Part two of the five-phase project will see private sector involvement on a build-finance-operate-transfer basis. Like the first phase, the second will run on natural gas and, with a planned budget of KD820m ($2.7bn), will add 1.8 GW of generation capacity and 102 MIGD of desalination capacity. While many of Kuwait's headline PPP projects are utilities related, a major collaboration in the education sector is also moving ahead.

The Kuwait Schools Development Program took a step forward last month, when it was reported that the project had moved into the financial evaluation phase. Collaborating with the Ministry of Education (MoE), KAPP is pursuing the development of nine schools across Kuwait. The project is to be built, financed and maintained by private investors, while the MoE will recruit staff. If completed as planned, the PPP will be the first of its kind in the Middle East.

Progress picking up

The promulgation of the new PPP Law No. 116 of 2014 and its executive regulations strengthened the PPP program's institutional framework and offered new benefits to projects, including tax and fee exemptions. It also established the KAPP - previously known as the Partnerships Technical Bureau - as the main body responsible for implementing the state's PPP program launched in 2008.

However, progress since the reforms has been slow, and the country's first PPP project - the initial phase of Az Zour North IWPP, awarded in 2013 - is the only one to have been implemented to date. The plant is 40% owned by a private consortium composed of French utilities multinational Engie, Japanese trading company Sumitomo Corporation, and Kuwait's Abdulla Al Hamad Al Sager & Brothers. The government owns the remaining 60 percent.

Private sector participation set to rise

Successfully launching new PPPs will be a top priority for the government moving into 2017, as it seeks to maintain momentum on its infrastructure agenda despite a mid-2014 decline in global oil prices, which led to a record deficit of KD 8.7 billion ($28.5 billion) projected for FY 2016/17. According to Al Sanei, the PPP model offers mutual benefits and should see private investors help offset the costs of mega-projects. This in turn should help Kuwait balance its books, and generate new investment opportunities for private developers and contractors. In a November report published by the National Bank of Kuwait, the state's projects market was maintaining healthy momentum during the third quarter, when KD 1 billion ($3.3 billion) worth of contracts were awarded - a 14.8 percent quarter-on-quarter increase. This brought the total value of contracts awarded in the first nine months of 2016 to KD3.6bn ($11.8bn), of which KD 1.5 billion ($4.9 billion) were for oil and gas projects.

MEED forecasts an additional KD 2.3 billion ($7.5 billion) in contracts will be awarded by the end of the year, while the total value of awarded projects is set to rise to KD 11.5 billion ($37.7 billion) in 2017, surpassing last year's record of KD 10 billion ($32.8 billion). Strong government commitments to both project delivery and PPP implementation are expected to compensate for lower oil receipts and a subdued foreign direct investment environment, and media reports suggest the private sector could benefit from at least eight PPP projects in the country in the years ahead.

—From Oxford Business Group

Kitty litter helps Wyoming bentonite in drilling slump

Petroleum companies look to drill more soon

CHEYENNE: The market for a peculiar type of clay is looking up thanks to improved prospects for oil and gas drilling and to cat owners who use the stuff to soak up their pets' business. Over 90 percent of all bentonite mined in the US and almost half worldwide comes from beds of ancient volcanic ash in Wyoming. Some call bentonite the mineral of 1,000 uses: It clarifies wine and other alcoholic beverages, forms an impervious liner to keep landfills from leaking, removes ink during paper recycling, and goes into a slew of homeopathic remedies. But two of the biggest uses are in kitty litter and drilling mud, the goop pumped down oil and gas wells during drilling to keep the bit cool and carry cuttings to the surface.

As the oil and gas industry's fortunes rise and fall, so can bentonite's. Over the past two years, bentonite mining companies that do a lot of business with the oilfield services industry suffered while the oil and gas industry experienced its worst slump in 20 years or more. Now, oil and gas prices have recovered somewhat, and petroleum companies look to drill more soon. Bentonite sales likewise show new signs of life, said Rick Magstadt, vice president of manufacturing for bentonite miner Wyo-Ben Inc.

"I'm not going to hex it by saying that I think it's going to be a lot better, but we expect a better year than we did last year," Magstadt said. Bentonite assists drilling because of a property called thixotropy, which causes drilling mud to liquefy in the friction of drilling and solidify when the motion stops. Cat litter has helped the industry ride out the oil and gas downturn, said Wyoming Mining Association Executive Director Travis Deti. "The pet litter industry has been very steady," Deti said. "That's a remarkable thing that I don't think people realize. We're kind of like the pet litter capital of the world."

Mud accounts

Drilling mud accounts for the largest portion of Wyo-Ben's business, while kitty litter and environmental lining round out the company's top three markets, Magstadt said. Other bentonite mining and processing companies focus almost exclusively on kitty litter, and business has been steady, said Tom Thorson, president of Black Hills Bentonite, which gets 80 to 90 percent of its business from Clorox and other companies that make kitty litter.

Bentonite kitty litter isn't terribly kind to the environment because it comes from surface mines and flushing the stuff, which can absorb up to 10 times its weight in water and swell up to 16 times its original size, isn't a good idea. Bentonite-based kitty litter - millions of tons a year - takes up space in landfills and doesn't decompose. But alternatives, such as corn-based litter, haven't really caught on despite growing demand for environmentally friendly pet products, said Shannon Brown, an analyst with the market research firm Packaged Facts.

CHEYENNE: In this Dec 16, 2016, photo, kitty litter products are displayed at a local store. — AP

Cat owners often find that biodegradable kitty litters, which can be quite a bit more expensive, doesn't work as well as bentonite-based litters, she said. "They either don't like them or their cats don't like them. And so, in many cases, people will try them and then just go back to their standard, clay litter," Brown said. Nationwide, sales of kitty litter approached $2.9 billion last year. Three-quarters of cat owners buy kitty litter and three-quarters of those buy clay clumping kitty litter, according to Packaged Facts.

Recently the US Bureau of Land Management approved Wyo-Ben's plans to expand a bentonite pit near Thermopolis in north-central Wyoming. It was a rare bit of good news for Wyoming's mining industry, hit hard by a downturn in coal and a recent BLM coal-leasing moratorium. Wyoming, the top coal-mining state, produces about as much coal in four days as the state's nine bentonite mines do all year. The 4.3 million tons of bentonite mined nationwide last year was down 10 percent from the year before, according to the US Geological Survey. Bentonite mining and processing continues to employ almost 700 people in Wyoming, thanks in no small part to cat owners."It doesn't sound that sexy, but it's good for business," Magstadt said. — AP

News in brief

KARACHI: A Pakistani stockbroker monitors share prices during a trading session at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX). — AFP

Pakistan inflation eases to 3.70 pct

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's annual inflation rate eased to 3.70 percent in December from 3.81 percent in November, the Bureau of Statistics said yesterday. On a month-on-month basis, prices decreased by 0.68 percent in December compared with November, the bureau said. Average inflation for the July-December period stood at 3.88 percent, compared with the same period last year. The steepest rise in year-on-year prices was seen in the prices of gram flour, pulse gram and besan. The steepest drop in year-on-year prices was in the price of onions, tomatoes and chicken.

Saudi cabinet stresses need to implement oil output cut

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia stressed yesterday the importance of co-operation among oil producers to abide by a decision in November to cut production. OPEC agreed in November its first oil output cuts since 2008 after Saudi Arabia accepted "a big hit" on its production and dropped its demand that arch-rival Iran slash output. "The council (of ministers)...asserted the importance of stability and coordination and increased cooperation between member states and commitment to implement the agreement to cut production reached last November," the cabinet said in a statement carried by state news agency SPA.

Turkish trade deficit shrinks 11.1 percent

ISTANBUL: Turkey's trade deficit narrowed 11.1 percent year-on-year in December to $5.56 billion, data released by the Customs and Trade ministry showed yesterday. Exports rose 9.3 percent in December to $12.8 billion and imports climbed 2.2 percent to $18.4 billion, the data showed. In 2016 as a whole, the trade deficit narrowed 11.7 percent to $55.97 billion, with exports down 0.84 percent and imports down 4.17 percent.

Iran certifies int'l companies to bid for oil, gas projects

DUBAI: Iran has pre-qualified 29 companies from more than a dozen countries to bid for oil and gas projects using the new, less restrictive Iran Petroleum Contract (IPC) model, the oil ministry news website SHANA reported yesterday. The list included Shell, France's Total, Italy's Eni, Malaysia's Petronas and Russia's Gazprom and Lukoil, as well as companies from China, Austria, Japan and other countries. Iran hopes its new IPC, part of an effort to sweeten the terms it offers on oil development deals, will attract foreign investors and boost production after years of sanctions. State-run National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) signed the first oil output contract under the IPC model in October with an Iranian firm identified by the United States as part of a conglomerate controlled by Iran's supreme leader. — Agencies

Burgan Bank announces lucky winners of Yawmi account

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced today the names of the lucky winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a prize of KD 5,000. The lucky winners for the daily draws took home a cash-prize of KD 5,000 each, and they are:

1. FAROUQ MOHAMMAD NOUR SAEED ALAWADHI
2. TAHA HASSAN HASSAN
3. NASER ABDULAZIZ ABDULLAH AL AWADHI
4. JUMANAH NAWAF MOHAMMAD ALMUTAIRI
5. FAHAD ABDULKAREEM MOHAMMAD ALQATTAN

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, entitling one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers Daily and quarterly Draws, the Quarterly Draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for 2 months prior to draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account, will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws. Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances to becoming a winner. The more customers deposit, the higher the chances they receive of winning.

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

Manufacturing boosts eurozone equities gains

PARISL: European equities got off on the right foot in 2017, pushed higher yesterday by a stellar set of data showing eurozone manufacturing growth at a 68-month high. With major Asian, London and US markets still closed for the New Year holiday, trading was expected to be light. But sentiment was brightened by final results of December manufacturing surveys that showed robust performances across most of the eurozone, where the uncertainty over the impact of Britain's exit from the EU has threatened a tepid recovery.

The final eurozone manufacturing PMI figure for December came at 54.9 points, up from 53.7 in November. With a result above 50 indicating expansion, the result was the best since April 2011.

The surveys of companies about their performance and outlook are an important early indicator of how economies are faring before official data is collected and processed.

Germany's DAX 30 index rose 0.8 percent in midmorning trading, while the CAC 40 in Paris added 0.2 percent. Manufacturing in the Netherlands and Austria were also at 68-month highs, with France close behind at a 67-month high, according to IHS Markit. — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.612
Indian Rupees	4.532
Pakistani Rupees	2.930
Srilankan Rupees	2.055
Nepali Rupees	2.837
Singapore Dollar	213.190
Hongkong Dollar	39.549
Bangladesh Taka	3.880
Philippine Peso	6.158
Thai Baht	5.573
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.921
Qatari Riyal	84.375
ani Riyal	797.817
Bahraini Dinar	815.730
UAE Dirham	83.628
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.750
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	15.740
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.233
Tunisian Dinar	133.890
Jordanian Dinar	432.610
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.047
Syrian Lira	2.189
Morocco Dirham	30.547
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	307.000
Euro	322.350
Sterling Pound	381.140
Canadian dollar	229.620
Turkish lira	87.920
Swiss Franc	300.980
Australian Dollar	224.111
US Dollar Buying	305.800
GOLD	
20 Gram	232.84
10 Gram	119.34
5 Gram	60.51

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	306.550
Canadian Dolla	230.500
Sterling Pound	384.385
Euro	322.080
Swiss Frank	300.105
Bahrain Dinar	812.640
UAE Dirhams	83.855
Qatari Riyals	85.080
Saudi Riyals	82.675
Jordanian Dinar	433.540
Egyptian Pound	16.830
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.060
Indian Rupees	4.530
Pakistani Rupees	2.924
Bangladesh Taka	3.887
Philippines Pesso	6.143
Cyprus pound	168.345
Japanese Yen	3.600
Syrian Pound	2.435
Nepalese Rupees	3.825
Malaysian Ringgit	69.340
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	31.240
Thai Bhat	9.535
Turkish Lira	87.725

Bahrain Exchange Company WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.371545	0.381545
Czech Korune	0.003871	0.015871
Danish Krone	0.039121	0.044121
Euro	0. 316357	0.325357
Norwegian Krone	0.031270	0.036470
Romanian Leu	0.085056	0.085056
Slovakia	0.009215	0.019215
Swedish Krona	0.029340	0.034340
Swiss Franc	0.292878	0.303878
Turkish Lira	0.083732	0.094032
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.212617	0.224617
New Zealand Dollar	0.205431	0.214931
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.221563	0.230563
Georgina Lari	0.138615	0.138615
US Dollars	0.302800	0.307200
US Dollars Mint	0.303300	0.307200
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003527	0.004111
Chinese Yuan	0.042685	0.046185
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037484	0.040234
Indian Rupee	0.002785	0.005519
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002534	0.002714
Kenyan Shilling	0.003157	0.003157
Korean Won	0.000245	0.000260
Malaysian Ringgit	0.064809	0.070809
Nepalese Rupee	0.002941	0.003111
Pakistan Rupee	0.002618	0.002908
Philippine Peso	0.006077	0.006377
Sierra Leone	0.000068	0.000074
Singapore Dollar	0.207315	0.217315
South African Rand	0.016364	0.024854
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001649	0.002229
Taiwan	0.009514	0.009694
Thai Baht	0.008222	0.008770
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.807486	0.815986
Egyptian Pound	0.013671	0.023124
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000181	0.000241
Jordanian Dinar	0.427814	0.436814
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000149	0.000249
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020232	0.044232
Nigerian Naira	0.001274	0.001909
Omani Riyal	0.790721	0.796401
Qatar Riyal	0.083486	0.084936
Saudi Riyal	0.080753	0.082053
Syrian Pound	0.001302	0.001522
Tunisian Dinar	0.129004	0.137004
Turkish Lira	0.083732	0.094032
UAE Dirhams	0.082133	0.083833
Yemeni Riyal	0.001016	0.001096

New Indian land laws to expedite projects hurt farmers: Activists

MUMBAI: Farmers and activists are protesting legislative efforts in two south Indian states that would make it easier to acquire land for infrastructure projects, as the battle for scarce land in the country becomes more contentious. Andhra Pradesh state will introduce a law to accelerate land acquisitions for "public purposes", Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said over the weekend. Neighboring Telangana state last week passed a law that drops the federal requirements for public consensus and a social impact study for land acquired for infrastructure projects.

"Telangana's new law shuts the doors on farmers and other vulnerable communities who depend on the land for their livelihood," said Kiran Kumar Vissa at Rythu Swarajya Vedika, an umbrella organisation of non-profits focused on agriculture. "It puts all the power in the hands of the state and wealthy land owners. The state will become nothing but a real estate agent for corporations."

His organisation has held protests in Telangana's capital Hyderabad, and plans a statewide campaign against the law, he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao defended the new law, saying India's 2013 Land Acquisition Act had slowed Telangana's development projects. "It is not possible to do development projects without taking land. We have a right to amend the act," Rao said.

Land-related conflict is the main reason behind stalled industrial and development projects in India, affecting millions of people and putting billions of dollars of investment at risk, according to a recent report. Federal law requires consensus to buy land, a social impact assessment, rehabilitation for those displaced, and compensation up to four times the market value. States including Rajasthan and Gujarat have introduced laws that dilute some of the federal law's provisions. Activists say states' ability to bypass these requirements sets a dangerous precedent, dismantling vital checks and balances. The All India Kisan Sabha, a union fighting for peasants' and farmers' rights, has also held protests.

India has introduced several land laws in the past decade to give the vulnerable more rights, but many of these laws are diluted and do not protect poor farmers enough, activists say. In Telangana, protests had erupted over the state's plan to acquire land for a reservoir with its controversial GO123 order that diluted several conditions of the federal law. Andhra Pradesh recently introduced a land pooling scheme for its capital city Amaravati that activists say puts pressure on owners to give up their land.

The proposed new law gives the state even greater power, said EAS Sarma, a land rights activist. "In the name of expediting infrastructure projects, the new law does away with key safeguards," he said. "The proposed amendments are highly regressive, anti-farmer and facilitate human rights violations. You can expect to see more protests." — Reuters

BEIJING: A man and a boy watch musicians performing to entertain shoppers and Chinese models wearing NE TIGER creations posing on stage set behind the fashion boutique window panel decorated with Rooster stickers for the upcoming Chinese Lunar New Year at an up-scale shopping mall. — AP

China to ease curbs on foreign investment after complaints

BEIJING: The Chinese government said Friday it will ease restrictions on foreign investment in sectors ranging from banking and internet services to rail equipment and motorcycles, in response to mounting complaints from foreign business groups and governments. An official with China's National Development and Reform Commission, the economic planning agency, said service sectors such as accounting and auditing, architectural design and ratings services will be open to foreign investment.

In manufacturing, barriers to foreign investment will be lowered in sectors such as rail transportation, motorcycles and ethanol fuels, according to an official transcript of a briefing by Ning Jizhe, vice-chairman of the commission.

The moves are part of a set of guidelines approved by China's Cabinet this week Beijing says are aimed at leveling the playing field for foreign companies and boosting investment, which has been slowing. No specific details were immediately released.

Ning said the guidelines would "help ensure and promote fair competition between domestic and foreign companies" and attract more investment. He said foreign investment in China rose 3.9 percent from January to November, slower than the rate of growth in the previous year. China would also work to open up areas typically deemed sensitive by the government, such as internet services, telecoms and education, in "an orderly way," Ning said. But the extent to which such sectors would be liberalized was unclear. Earlier this year, China passed a law on cybersecurity seen as enabling the ruling Communist Party to exert greater control over the internet and technology products and moved to more tightly control schools.

'Opening-up strategy'

Premier Li Keqiang, who chaired the State Council's executive meeting that passed the guidelines Wednesday, said China should take measures with "great effectiveness in attracting foreign capital," according to the official Xinhua News Agency. "China's economy develops as we continue our opening-up strategy," Li was quoted as saying. "Besides advanced technology and experience in management, China also needs capital investment from overseas."

The Chinese leadership is trying to shore up economic growth which has cooled steadily over the past six years as communist leaders try to steer it to more self-sustaining growth based on consumer spending instead of trade and investment.

Washington and Europe complain Beijing blocks access to its markets in violation of its free-trade commitments. Foreign companies complain Chinese regulators are trying to squeeze them out of technology and other promising industries. In an interview with a Hong Kong newspaper published last week, the German ambassador to China said that Beijing was not living up to pledges to open its markets and give unfettered access to foreign investment. "We sense a growing tendency in China towards market closure and favoring of indigenous production," Ambassador Michael Clauss told the South China Morning Post. —AP

Mexicans march to protest steep rise in gasoline prices

Ukraine slashes gas use as subsidies phased out

MEXICO CITY: Hundreds of irate Mexicans marched in Mexico City on Sunday to protest a steep rise in gasoline prices. They carried signs denouncing President Enrique Pena Nieto, whose government announced last week that the price of gasoline would increase by as much as 20 percent to 0.88 dollars per liter on New Year's Day, while diesel would rise by 16.5 percent to 0.83 dollars.

Pena Nieto has promised that fuel prices will eventually fall thanks to a landmark 2014 energy reform he instituted, which ended a seven-decade-old monopoly held by the state-run firm Pemex. The government plans to end subsidies and let the market dictate prices in March. But Mexicans will feel the pinch at the pump before they start falling.

The protesters marched Sun along Mexico City's Reforma avenue towards the vast central square called the Zocalo. "With this news about gasoline I don't know how much more we can take," said Dulce Maria Coeta, a homemaker. "Even as it is, the minimum wage is not enough to buy groceries. Now, it will be even worse."

Mexicans flocked to gas stations last week to fill their tanks before the price rise. News reports Sunday said some ran out of fuel. Pemex said this happened in less than one percent of its service stations. The protests are the latest headache for Pena Nieto. His popularity has plummeted below 25 percent this year due to his government's failure to curb drug-related violence, disappointing economic growth and his unpopular decision to host Donald Trump before the anti-immigration Republican won the US presidential election.

The fall in global oil prices in recent years has forced the government to cut its budget and slash spending at Pemex. And the peso has fallen to historic lows due to Trump's protectionist rhetoric against Mexico. The liberalization of gasoline prices was supposed to begin in 2018, but the government decided to start it now.

Ukraine slashes gas use

In other news, Ukraine yesterday reported a one-third drop in its use of natural gas and general energy savings that will be cheered by its financial backers from the International Monetary Fund. The IMF has long identified Ukraine as one of Europe's most inefficient countries when it comes to fuel consumption.

MEXICO CITY: A man holding a flag that reads "No more gasoline price hikes" films other protestors in as they chant anti-government slogans in front of the National Palace. — AP

A large part of the problem came from state subsidies that homes and enterprises had been awarded since Soviet times. That assistance was a vast drain on the budget and allowed Ukrainians to use gas cheaply and without conservation. This all changed last year as the government started to push up prices levied on home users. Many people saw their gas and energy bills double-a change that prompted some protests on the streets. Prices on companies had gone up even earlier. Data released by Ukraine's main energy transport company showed gas use falling by 32.7 percent last year. Ukraine has not imported any blue fuel from Russia in 13 months because of a freeze in ties between the two neighbors and disputes over prices.

Most of the imports came from Slovakia. Ukraine also imported much smaller amounts from Hungary and Poland. The IMF has long demanded energy savings to be part of Ukraine's austerity measures that were approved when the Fund awarded cash-starved Kiev a $17.5-billion (16.7-billion-euro) rescue package last year. Ukraine's state energy company said last week that it could survive the winter without purchasing any Russian gas. Brussels is still trying to find a compromise between Kiev and Moscow that would reduce Ukraine's demand from EU countries and lower prices for European consumers. Yet some analysts noted that the gas consumption figure was not all good news.

Ukraine's economy shrank by nearly 10 percent last year and output at the country's giant steel and chemical companies fell by even greater amounts. The reduced production meant that companies used less natural gas for conversion into energy. The Ukrainian economy is budgeted to grow by three percent this year and analysts will be watching closely to see what that does to gas consumption. A continued decline would mean that industries and homes really are being more efficient. A rise in gas use would imply that neither have done as much to cut down on wasteful consumption as the IMF had hoped. — Agencies

Westar increases use of drones in Kansas

TOPEKA: Westar Energy is increasing the use of drones for such things as inspecting equipment, navigating remote areas and managing some emergencies, as the utility tries to improve safety and efficiency while also saving money, company officials said. Westar and Kansas State University's Polytechnic Campus offer an unmanned aircraft systems program and have one of the nation's largest enclosed drone flight facilities on the polytechnic campus in Salina. Now, it has begun deploying unmanned aircraft commercially, The Topeka Capital-Journal reported.

"It's absolutely a cost savings at this point," said Jason Klenklen, supervisor of transmission maintenance. "Instead of using manned aircraft, we're using unmanned aircraft." The drones also can reduce risk for employees and contractors, Klenklen said. For example, fewer employees would need to travel during an ice storm to determine the cause of an outage.

Using drones to inspect boilers also would be safer, said Sam Sharp, a Kansas State Polytechnic USA Laboratory researcher and Westar's primary liaison. The work takes extensive training to fly the aircraft because boilers have no internal lights or GPS signal. "It allows employees to view the internal components of the boiler through real-time imagery captured by a drone while securely staying on the outside," he said.

Line of sight

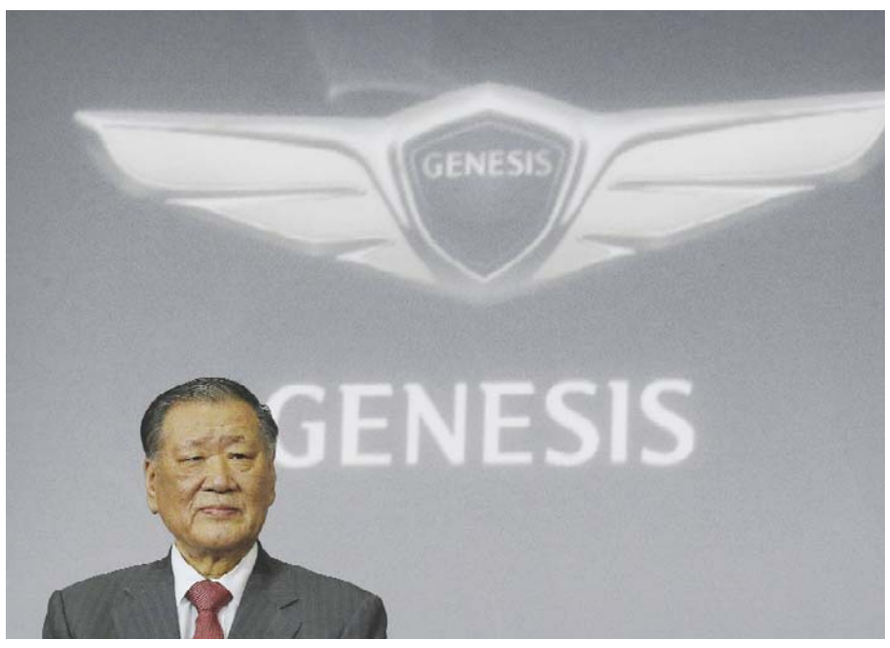
The drones are primarily being used in rural areas to gather information about transmission lines, specifically lines that are 69,000 volts and above, Klenklen said. The drones face some airspace restrictions, such as in Wichita and Topeka, and unmanned aircraft are required to be in the operators' line of sight, although waivers are available in some instances.

"Within line of sight, that's still a pretty big restriction on us," Klenklen said. "That being said, there are times we're able to see several miles down the line with one of these." Drones also can find potential issues that lead to outages more quickly than having somebody drive to find an issue or have somebody walk to the area, he said.

The drones help alleviate concerns with landowners who don't want trucks or people on their land. The utility can send drones to areas within its easements but it still contacts landowners before sending a drone in to inspect lines.

Westar Energy uses quadcopters or multi-copters, which are four-bladed machines that can fly anywhere from 20 minutes to more than 45 minutes. "We have a lot of areas our lines traverse that are environmentally sensitive, through wetlands and even through croplands," Klenklen said.

A new federal law passed earlier this year cleared the way for non-pilots to fly unmanned aircraft for commercial purposes with a Remote Pilot in Command certificate. The designation takes significant training and information although the actual flying of a drone isn't difficult, he said. — AP



SEOUL: In this Wednesday, Dec 9, 2015 file photo, Hyundai Motor Co Chairman Chung Mong-koo attends a press unveiling of Genesis' new model EQ900. — AP

Hyundai aims to sell 8.2m cars in 2017

SEOUL: South Korea's largest automakers Hyundai Motor and its affiliate Kia have forecast sales of 8.25 million vehicles this year amid hopes that new factories will tap into emerging markets. The projected sales for 2017 mark a slight increase from the previous year's target of 8.13 million, the Hyundai Motor group chairman Chung Mong-Koo said in a New Year email message to employees yesterday.

Hyundai, which along with Kia forms the world's fifth-largest automaking group, has seen profits falling for years amid slowing demand in its key China market and a strong won that hurt its competitiveness overseas. The group missed its annual sales target for a second year in a row last year when major strikes by South Korean workers hit production.

Hyundai-Kia jointly sold a little over 7 million units from January to November in 2016. But it hopes to turn things around with a new factory to open in Chongqing, China, and the launch of new vehicles. "We should strengthen production networks among 35 plants in 10 countries, including the Chongqing plant to open this year," Chung said. "We...will also strengthen product lineup in luxury and environmentally-friendly cars and introduce more than 10 new vehicles this year," he added.

New models-including sports utility vehicles popular in China-will also be produced at newly-opened plants in Changzhou in China and Mexico, according to the group. The Chongqing plant-Hyundai's 5th plant in China-is aimed at exploiting the fast-growing mid-western region in the country, the world's largest auto market.

The group has struggled to boost its market share in China, which fell to 8.1 per cent in 2016 following growing competition from Japanese rivals and homegrown Chinese brands. In October Hyundai Motor announced a sharp fall in profits for a third quarter, hit by lengthy industrial action that also took a toll on the national economy.

Tens of thousands of workers at the firm's plants in South Korea staged full or partial strikes for several weeks through July to October demanding higher wages. Production losses were estimated at 3 trillion won ($2.6 billion), and Hyundai said its third quarter net profit fell 7.2 percent from the previous year to 1.1 trillion won. It was the 11th consecutive quarter of profit downturn for Hyundai. — AFP

Korea considers 'measures' as China blocks charter flights

SEOUL: South Korea's government and airline companies will meet today to discuss China's rejection of applications by Korean carriers to add charter flights between the two countries for early this year, a government official said yesterday. South Korean Finance Minister Yoo Il-ho said on Sunday he would look into whether China's decision, which came ahead of a traditional surge in Lunar New Year travel, was "related to" the planned deployment of a US anti-missile system in South Korea.

Yoo told reporters there were "several suspected cases of non-tariff barriers" following last year's decision to deploy the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system and South Korea needed to determine China's "real intention". China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on a holiday, while China's Civil Aviation Administration was not immediately reachable.

China worries that the THAAD's powerful radar can penetrate its territory and has objected to the deployment, which South Korea and the United States say is aimed solely at countering any threat from North Korea. South Korean carriers Asiana Airlines, Jeju Air and Jin Air, an affiliate of Korean Air Lines , said their applications for charter flights to China were rejected for January and February, with no reason given. "It is regrettable," a spokesman at Jeju Air said.

The companies already operate scheduled flights to China but wanted to add charter flights at busy times. The transport ministry had sent a letter to China's ministry seeking cooperation on the proposed flights and it would also meet the companies to ponder a next step, a ministry official said. "We will hold a closed-meeting with major airline affiliates tomorrow morning to discuss measures," the ministry official said, without elaborating on what type of measures might be considered.

China Eastern Airlines and China Southern Airlines had asked South Korea to hold off on approving their applications to add charter flights in January, citing "a situation in China", said the official who is not authorized to speak to media and declined to be identified. A China Eastern press official denied that it had asked South Korea to hold off approving applications to add charter flights. A China Southern media official was not immediately available.

The Korea Tourism Organization said charter flights typically accounted for 4 to 5 percent of available seats between the two countries. "Travelers can switch over to regular scheduled flights, so we do not expect huge losses," said Han Hwa-joon, China team director. Shares in South Korean cosmetics-related companies and airlines dropped on news reports of the charter denials. Korean cosmetics are a hot-selling item for visitors from China, South Korea's biggest source of tourists. Shares in cosmetics maker Amorepacific Corp were down 5 percent on Monday, their biggest daily percentage loss since Oct. 25 and Korean Air Lines Co Ltd shares fell 2.2 percent to their lowest level since July 14. — Reuters

New Year, new high for euro zone markets

LONDON: Euro zone stocks opened 2017 by climbing to their highest in more than a year yesterday after data showed manufacturers in the currency bloc ramped up activity at the fastest pace in more than five years. With all of Asia's major markets closed for the New Year holiday - along with Britain and Switzerland in Europe - trade was thin, which could cause some volatility. The United States and Canada will also be closed.

The euro zone's blue-chip Euro STOXX 50 index rose half a percent to its highest since December 2015 after the purchasing managers' index (PMI) for factories in the currency bloc came in at 54.9 - well above the 50 mark that separates growth from contraction. The euro, though, took no comfort from the figures, slipping 0.4 percent back below $1.05 after climbing to as high as $1.07 during a flash surge in low trading volumes in Asia on Friday.

Analysts said the fall was mainly due to a resumption of an up-trend in the greenback that saw it surge to 14-year highs in December on the view the US Federal Reserve will hike rates as many as three times this year, and that Donald Trump's administration will stoke growth and inflation with a program of fiscal expansion.

The dollar index - which measures the greenback against six major rivals - climbed half a percent, having hit a two-week low on Friday. "In the last days of 2016 we saw the dollar retreat somewhat, and there might be some sense of a correction from Europe this morning. I don't see any fundamental drivers for the moves," said Commerzbank currency strategist Esther Reichelt, in Frankfurt.

Italy's top share index hit its highest level since January last year, outperforming other major European stock indexes, with a rally in its banks and a strong manufacturing report improving sentiment. Italy's FTSE MIB index was up 1.5 percent by 1215 GMT at its highest level since January 15 of 2016. Germany's DAX was up 0.9 percent at its highest in nearly 17 months, while France's CAC was up 0.5 percent at a 13-month peak. As European stocks climbed, a rally in risk appetite also pushed down the yields on lower-rated government bonds in the euro zone to multi-week lows. Italian, Spanish and Portuguese 10-year bond yields were down roughly 8 basis points each on the day.

IS attacks

A gun attack in Istanbul that killed 39 people was seen having little impact on markets, with the Japanese yen - traditionally used as a safe haven - falling 0.3 against the dollar, close to an 11-month low. Islamic State claimed responsibility yesterday for the New Year's Day mass shooting, which was carried out by a lone gunman in a packed nightclub in the Turkish city. A separate Islamic State attack in Baghdad killed 24 people yesterday.

"After all the big political shocks last year and muted market reaction, it is tempting to argue that the markets are very resilient," said Finland-based Nordea chief market strategist Jan Von Gerich. "I would say this is too optimistic an assumption and I think we will see more volatility this year." The Turkish lira slipped half a percent after the attack to 3.5440 per dollar, close to a record low of 3.5840 the lira touched in December.

"The problem is that this once again stresses the increasing instability and the security issues, and we're seeing tourist numbers going down, which will have a lasting negative impact on the Turkish economy...and that's Turkish lira-negative," said Commerzbank's Reichelt.

Data released earlier in the day showed China's manufacturing sector expanded for a fifth month in December, though growth slowed a touch more than expected in a sign that government measures to rein in soaring asset prices are starting to have a knock-on effect on the broader economy.

The Chinese yuan suffered its biggest annual loss in more than 20 years in 2016, with an almost 7 percent fall making it the worst-performing currency in Asia. Digital currency bitcoin started the year by jumping above $1,000 for the first time since late 2013. — Reuters

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Global

Monday 02 January 2017

Index		Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price index	▲	27.26	5,775.35	5,748.09	5,775.80	5,748.43
Weighted Index	▲	0.23	380.32	380.09	382.04	379.37
KSX 15	▲	0.73	885.75	885.02	892.31	882.70

Volume	102,712,479
Value (KWD)	9,090,922
Number of Trades	2,451

Security	High	Low	Trades Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last		Change
MARIN	68	68	300	20	1	68	▲	4.0
IKARUS	42.0	41.0	2,253,300	93,820	18	41.5	—	0.0
IFG	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	355	—	0.0
NAPESCO	820	820	1,000	820	1	820	—	0.0
ENERGYH	42.5	40.0	68,700	2,766	4	42.5	▲	0.5
GFI	43.5	42.5	760,969	32,752	25	43.5	▲	0.5
ABAR	100	100	5,000	500	1	100	▲	1.0
Oil & Gas			**3,099,289**	**130,709**	**60**	**784.97**	▲	**4.31**
KFOUC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	182	—	0.0
BPCC	500	490	2,368	1,171	7	500	▲	5.0
ALKOUT	660	660	2,500	1,650	1	660	—	0.0
ALQURAIN	230	228	204,479	46,677	12	228	▼	-2.0
Basic Materials			**209,347**	**49,498**	**20**	**1004.49**	▲	**-0.32**
KCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	410	—	0.0
REFRI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	315	—	0.0
CABLE	380	380	14,200	5,396	1	380	▲	6.0
SHIP	168	168	59,543	10,003	7	168	—	0.0
PCEM	910	910	36,382	33,108	1	910	—	0.0
PAPER	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	295	—	0.0
MRC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	60	—	0.0
ACICO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	275	—	0.0
GGMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	300	—	0.0
HCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	118	—	0.0
KBMMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	190	—	0.0
NCBM	210	208	2,215	462	2	210	—	0.0
EQUIPMENT	59	56	1,461,864	83,754	72	56	▼	-2.0
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	45.0	—	0.0
GYPSUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	95	—	0.0
SALBOOKH	67	61	16,100	1,019	5	66	▲	1.0
AGLTY	630	620	331,407	206,472	7	630	▲	10.0
EDU	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	206	—	0.0
CLEANING	47.0	46.0	885,409	41,097	33	46.5	—	0.0
KGL	67	64	1,226,840	79,883	84	64	—	0.0
KCPC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	172	—	0.0
HUMANSOFT	2,760	2,680	308,000	828,540	35	2,700	—	0.0
NAFAIS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	206	—	0.0
SAFWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	385	—	0.0
GFC	32.5	32.5	1	0	1	32.5	▲	2.5
MAYADEEN	27.0	26.5	1,090,300	29,128	19	27.0	—	0.0
CGC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	600	—	0.0
MTCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	56	—	0.0
LPAC	720	690	25,331	17,702	7	720	▲	60.0
ALAFCO	244	240	132,150	31,660	7	244	▲	4.0
MUBARRAD	59	59	50	3	1	59	—	0.0
LOGISTICS	74	73	140,000	10,320	5	73	—	0.0
SCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	86	—	0.0
GCEM	75	74	131,000	9,700	5	74	▼	-1.0
QIC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	75	—	0.0
FCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	80	—	0.0
RKWC	93	90	102,675	9,244	3	93	▲	3.0
SPEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	80	—	0.0
Industrials			**5,963,467**	**1,397,811**	**295**	**1351.43**	▲	**7.40**
KSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	136	—	0.0
NSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	64	—	0.0
PAPCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	95	—	0.0
CATTL	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	214	—	0.0
DANAH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	87	—	0.0
POULT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	196	—	0.0
FOOD	2,600	2,600	11,362	29,541	1	2,600	—	0.0
Consumer Goods			**11,362**	**29,541**	**1**	**1125.06**	—	**0.00**
MHC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	250	—	0
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	920	—	0
YIACO	355	350	70,000	24,600	5	355	▼	-5
Health Care			**70,000**	**24,600**	**5**	**1240.85**	▲	**-3.59**
KCIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,240	—	0
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	255	—	0
SULTAN	58	57	300,500	17,229	9	57	—	0
CABLETV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	50	—	0
EYAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	385	—	0
IFAHR	192	182	30,000	5,470	2	192	▲	10
OULAFUEL	118	118	14,748	1,740	6	118	—	0
MUNTAZAHAT	82	79	283,667	23,042	18	82	▲	2
JAZEERA	750	750	473	355	1	750	▼	-20
SCCR	116	116	202,032	23,436	13	116	—	0
FUTUREKID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	106	—	0
ALRAI	140	140	2,000	280	2	140	▲	2
ZIMAH	42.5	42.5	351,992	14,960	13	42.5	—	0
Mazzan	930	930	97,500	90,675	4	930	—	0
Consumer Services			**1,282,932**	**177,186**	**68**	**927.46**	▲	**2.90**
ZAIN	415	410	356,161	146,039	19	410	—	0
OOREDOO	1,200	1,140	2,767	3,289	3	1,140	▼	-60
HITSTELEC	43.5	41.0	8,687,321	367,687	157	43.0	▲	2
VIVA	920	920	28,751	26,451	37	920	▼	-10
Telecommunications			**9,075,020**	**543,466**	**226**	**630.91**	▲	**-5.25**
NBK	650	640	1,198,610	768,262	38	640	▼	-10
GBK	240	238	262,940	62,590	4	238	▼	-2
CBK	410	410	2,071	849	2	410	—	0
ABK	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	300	—	0
ALMUTAHED	410	410	10,000	4,100	1	410	—	0
KIB	206	204	1,030,000	210,140	9	204	▼	-2
BURG	305	300	256,317	78,168	9	305	—	0
KFIN	550	540	592,562	325,867	28	550	▲	10
BOUBYAN	400	396	44,566	17,662	8	395	—	0
AUB	194	194	530,450	102,907	16	194	—	0
ITHMR	39.5	38.0	5,752,525	224,765	69	39.5	▲	2
WARBABANK	224	222	136,590	30,365	53	222	—	0
Banks			**9,826,621**	**1,825,674**	**237**	**839.61**	▲	**2.40**
KINS	250	270	21,652	5,974	5	280	—	0
GINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	670	—	0.0
AINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	455	—	0.0
WINS	104	104	7,480	778	1	104	▲	2.0
KUWAITRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	180	—	0.0
FTI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	49.0	—	0.0
WETHAQ	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	31.0	—	0.0
BKIKWT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	355	—	0.0
Insurance			**29,132**	**6,752**	**6**	**996.54**	▲	**2.25**
SOKOUK	36.0	35.5	370865	13,257	13	35.5	▼	-0.5
KRE	62	61	3,800,000	232,071	45	62	▲	1.0
URC	96	96	1,500	144	1	96	▲	2.0
NRE	104	102	88,478	9,188	12	104	—	0.0
SRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	365	—	0.0
TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	470	—	0.0
AREEC	190	190	1,000	190	1	190	—	0.0
MASSALEH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	40.0	—	0.0
ARABREC	31.5	31.0	77,551	2,404	4	31.0	—	0.0
ERESCO	38.0	37.5	374,380	14,151	9	38.0	▲	0.5
MABANEE	860	850	210,866	179,241	11	850	—	0.0
INJAZZAT	75	75	186,000	13,950	5	75	▲	1.0
INVESTORS	23.0	22.5	4,142,749	93,239	67	22.5	—	0.0
IRC	27.5	26.5	311,000	8,349	11	27.5	—	0.0
ALTIJARIA	80	80	189,420	15,154	5	80	—	0.0
SANAM	31.5	27.5	11	0	2	31.5	▲	1.5
AAYANRE	64	64	200,000	12,800	4	64	▼	-1.0
AQAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	69	—	0.0
ALAQARIA	24.0	22.5	162,750	3,794	19	23.5	—	0.0
MAZAYA	110	108	388,845	42,686	19	110	▲	2.0
ADNC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	11.0	—	0.0
THEMAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	89	—	0.0
TIJARA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	48.0	—	0.0
TAAMEER	22.0	21.0	477,250	10,282	14	21.5	▼	-1.0
ARKAN	91	90	20,000	1,810	2	90	▼	-2.0
ARGAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	166	—	0.0
ABYAAR	23.0	22.0	3,014,500	67,704	36	23.0	▲	0.5
MUNSHAAT	57	56	388,685	21,857	16	57	▲	1.0
FIRSTDUBAI	65	64	546,453	35,258	26	65	▲	2.0
KBT	42.0	41.0	2,232,297	92,181	54	41.5	—	0.0
REAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	196	—	0.0
MENA	20.5	20.0	647,797	12,956	10	20.5	—	0.0
ALMUDON	41.0	38.5	8,250,429	330,520	154	40.0	▲	1.5
MARAKEZ	29.0	29.0	1	0	1	29.0	▲	2.5
REMAL	69	67	781,000	52,556	15	67	—	0.0
AWJ	66	64	765,100	51,027	23	64	▼	-1.0
Real Estate			**27,648,917**	**1,316,877**	**589**	**875.01**	▲	**4.83**
KINV	85	85	13,021	1,107	5	85	▼	-1.0
FACIL	156	156	40,000	6,240	4	156	—	0.0
IFA	31.5	31.0	702,151	21,737	22	31.5	▲	0.5
NINV	97	96	361,210	34,681	21	96	▲	1.0
KPROJ	510	510	15,000	7,650	1	510	▲	10.0
COAST	39.5	38.5	2,265,032	88,336	51	38.5	—	0.0
SECH	44.5	43.5	1,845,711	81,799	48	44.5	▲	0.5
SGC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	89	—	0.0
ARZAN	32.0	31.5	371,500	11,799	11	31.5	▼	-1.0
MARKAZ	93	93	1,500	140	1	93	▲	5.0
KMEFIC	25.0	23.5	25,040	589	2	23.5	—	0.0
ALAMAN	49.0	48.5	222,414	10,812	3	49.0	▲	0.5
ALOLA	46.5	46.0	630,754	29,026	20	46.5	▲	1.0
ALMAL	20.0	19.5	1,808,611	36,081	39	20.0	▲	0.5
GIH	30.5	29.5	1,501,000	44,915	32	30.0	—	0.0
AAYAN	33.0	32.5	1,051,650	34,179	21	33.0	▲	0.5
BAYANINV	33.5	33.0	20,000	666	3	33.5	—	0.0
OSOUL	60	56	30,999	1,838	5	60	▼	-1.0
KFIC	39.5	35.0	117,500	4,340	10	38.0	▲	1.0
KAMCO	96	96	3,000	288	1	96	▼	-1.0
NIH	64	62	614,400	38,376	29	64	▲	3.0
UNICAP	48.5	48.0	647,500	31,215	18	48.5	▼	-0.5
MADAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	12.5	—	0.0
ALDEERA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	32.0	—	0.0
ALSALAM	48.5	48.0	722,000	34,882	23	48.5	—	0.0
EKTTITAB	37.0	37.0	90,000	3,330	2	37.0	—	0.0
ALMADINA	43.0	42.0	528,981	22,444	21	42.5	▼	-1.0
NOOR	47.0	46.0	245,100	11,407	17	46.5	▲	1.0
TAMINV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	280	—	0.0
EXCH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,500	—	0.0
TAIBA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	75	—	0.0
KSHC	30.0	30.0	10	0	1	30.0	—	0.0
ASIYA	32.0	30.5	7,100	217	2	32.0	▲	0.5
GNAHC	36.0	36.0	350,000	12,600	10	36.0	—	0.0
AMWAL	24.5	23.5	124,394	2,986	12	24.5	▲	0.5
ALIMTIAZ	110	102	22,868,062	2,414,658	215	106	▲	4.0
MANAZEL	29.5	28.0	2,352,461	66,969	82	29.5	▲	1.5
NIND	124	122	647,315	80,212	17	124	▲	2.0
BIINC	25.0	24.5	1,041,607	25,811	11	24.5	▼	-0.5
SENERGY	34.0	34.0	31,607	1,075	2	34.0	▼	-0.5
AGHC	65	63	121,950	7,805	7	65	—	0.0
KPPC	43.5	43.0	120,000	5,170	7	43.5	▲	0.5
TAHSSILAT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	43.0	—	0.0
JEERANH	49.0	46.5	270	13	4	49.0	—	0.0
EKHOLDING	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	176	—	0.0
GFH	168	164	1,623,158	270,080	48	166	▼	-2.0
INOVEST	79	78	140,000	11,040	5	78	—	0.0
Financial Services			**43,102,028**	**3,466,522**	**815**	**601.68**	▲	**4.63**
Investment Instruments			**0**	**0**	**0**	**1081.97**	—	**0.00**
ASC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	244	—	0.0
OSOS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	130	—	0.0
HAYATCOMM	53	50	1,720,142	87,859	104	52	▲	2.5
Technology			**1,720,142**	**87,859**	**104**	**611.57**	▲	**4.42**
SANAD	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	100	—	0.0
AFAQ	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	162	—	0.0
ALSHAMEL	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	460	—	0.0
EFFECT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	40.0	—	0.0
AJWAN	52	52	1,100	57	2	52	▲	3.5
MASAKEN	73	65	573,122	39,418	32	73	▲	5.0
DALQAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	350	—	0.0
ALEID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	90	—	0.0
MIDAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,220	—	0.0
FLEX	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	47.0	—	0.0
THURAYA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	168	—	0.0
AMAR	49.5	49.5	100,000	4,950	1	49.5	▼	-4.5
Parallel Market			**674,222**	**44,426**	**35**	**1113.40**	▲	**13.01**

For more information, call Global Investment House on 1 80 42 42, www.globalinv.net

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report

At 02:00 PM Previous Day

Global Stock Indices

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change		Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %
Dow Jones	19,819.78	19,762.60	57.18	▼	0.29	13.42
NASDAQ	5,437.09	5,383.12	-48.97	▼	-0.90	7.50
S&P 500	2,249.26	2,238.83	10.43	▼	0.46	9.57
Financial Times	7,170.76	7,147.83	22.57	▲	0.32	14.43
DAX	11,481.06	11,576.69	95.63	▲	0.83	0.83
CAC 40	4,862.31	4,879.63	17.32	▲	0.36	0.36
Swiss	8,251.13	8,219.87	31.26	▼	0.38	6.78
Nikkei 225	19,145.14	19,114.37	-30.77	▼	-0.16	0.42
Topix	1,518.39	1,518.61	0.22	▲	0.01	1.85
Hang Seng	21,790.91	22,000.56	209.65	▲	0.96	0.39
Straits Times	2,889.15	2,880.76	8.39	▼	0.29	0.00

MENA Stock Indices

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change		Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %
Kuwait	5,748.09	5,775.35	27.26	▲	0.47	0.00
Saudi Arabia	7,237.95	7,277.42	39.47	▲	0.55	0.38
Dubai	3,530.88	3,538.68	7.80	▲	0.22	0.00
Abu Dhabi	4,546.37	4,533.87	12.50	▼	0.27	1.67
Bahrain	1,720.45	1,719.82	-0.63	▼	-0.05	0.00
Qatar	10,436.76	10,428.72	8.04	▼	0.08	0.00
Oman	5,744.59	5,700.21	-44.38	▼	-0.77	-0.66
Lebanon	1,212.73	1,212.73	0.00		0.00	0.00
Jordan	2,170.29	2,176.45	6.16	▲	0.28	0.00
Egypt	12,344.89	12,348.52	3.63	▲	0.03	0.00
Morocco	11,644.77	11,618.63	-25.59	▼	-0.22	0.00
Tunisia	5,488.77	5,480.68	8.09	▼	0.15	0.00

Global Currencies Exchange Rate

Currency	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	US Dollar	Euro	Sterling Pound	Swiss Franc	Japanese Yen	Australian Dollar
Kuwait Dinar		12.1503	3.2531	3.1032	2.6433	3.3289	381.72	4.5282
Saudi Riyal	0.08230		0.2677	0.2554	0.2175	0.2740	31.42	0.3727
US Dollar	0.30740	3.7350		0.9539	0.8125	1.0233	117.34	1.3920
Euro	0.32225	3.9154	1.0483		0.8521	1.0723	123.02	1.4593
Sterling Pound	0.37832	4.5967	1.2307	1.1736		1.2592	144.50	1.7151
Swiss Franc	0.30040	3.6500	0.9772	0.9326	0.7942		114.82	1.3603
Japanese Yen	0.00262	0.0318	0.0085	0.0081	0.0069	0.0087		0.0119
Australian Dollar	0.22084	2.6832	0.7184	0.6853	0.5831	0.7351	84.30	

MENA Currencies Exchange Rate

Currency	US Dollar	Kuwaiti Dollar	Saudi Riyal	Bahraini Dinar	Qatari Riyal	Omani Riyal	Emirates Dirham	Egyptian Pound
US Dollar		0.30740	3.7350	0.3741	3.6269	0.3832	3.6574	18.2900
Kuwaiti Dinar	3.2531		12.1503	1.2168	11.7986	1.2464	11.8979	59.4990
Saudi Riyal	0.2677	0.08230		0.1001	0.9711	0.1026	0.9792	4.8969
Bahraini Dinar	2.6734	0.82182	9.9853		9.6963	1.0243	9.7778	48.8972
Qatari Riyal	0.2757	0.08476	1.0298	0.1031		0.1056	1.0084	5.0429
Omani Riyal	2.6099	0.80230	9.7481	0.9762	9.4660		9.5456	47.7359
Emirates Dirham	0.2734	0.08405	1.0212	0.1023	0.9917	0.1048		5.0008
Egyptian Pound	0.0547	0.01681	0.2042	0.0205	0.1983	0.0209	0.2000	

Global Interest Rates

Currency	1 Week	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year
Kuwaiti Dinar	0.75	1.13	1.44	1.75	2.06
US Dollar	0.72	0.77	0.99	1.31	1.68
Euro	0.39	0.37	-0.33	-0.22	-0.08
Sterling Pound	0.23	0.25	0.36	0.53	0.77
Swiss Franc	0.81	0.79	-0.72	-0.66	-0.49
Australian Dollar	1.58	1.68	1.64	1.66	1.71
Japanese Yen	0.09	0.08	-0.05	0.01	0.13

Global Bond Yields

Country	2-Year	5-Year	10-Year	30-Year
United States	1.19	1.93	2.44	3.06
Europe	-0.81	-0.58	0.15	0.89
United Kingdom	0.01	0.47	1.23	1.87

Commodities

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change		Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %
Kuwait Oil	53.21	53.27	0.06	▲	0.11	0.00
Brent	54.67	54.65	-0.02	▼	-0.04	0.02
West Texas	53.80	53.70	0.10	▼	0.19	0.09
Gold	1151.46	1151.65	0.19	▲	0.02	-0.03
Silver	15.93	15.93	0.00		0.00	0.03

Source: National Bank of Kuwait

GCC Equity Markets: 2016 - The year that was

KAMCO MARKET REPORT

A wave of positive sentiment and optimism in the GCC led to gains for almost all the markets over the last quarter of 2016. This comes after a year when all the markets recorded steep declines (in 2015). DFM was the only market that managed to stay in the green for the most part of the year, whereas Saudi Arabia and Kuwait recorded negative YTD gains almost until the third quarter ended. The year closed with DFM recording the highest gain of 12.1% followed by MSM 30 index with a return of 7.0%.

Oil continued to remain the key contributor to the direction of the GCC markets for the second consecutive year. The price of oil steered oil-dependent economies to the lowest levels in almost two years and after the oil output agreement was sealed after a rigorous negotiation that lasted for more than a year, oil price surged to an 18-month level by year-end and gradually pulled up GCC markets.

Nevertheless, markets like Dubai continue to remain largely immune to the trends in oil price owing to its relatively lower dependence on oil revenues. Globally, markets in general closed higher as compared to previous year as seen in the MSCI World Index that reached an 18-month high level in December-16. Sentiments remained high especially in the United States with USD and the Dow Jones Industrial Average reaching a 14-year high level on the back of expectations of faster economic growth after the new government takes power. 2016 was also the year of shocks and unexpected results related initially to the Brexit vote followed by US elections. In addition, we believe that oil producers reaching an output deal were no less than a shock, especially after Russia and other non OPEC-producers committed to slash their output levels. KAMCO Research expects recovery in the GCC to be faster in 2017 led by a faster pace of economic growth and corporate profitability that continues to remain largely resilient backed by higher state spending.

Global market performance

Assets globally witnessed a significant change from last year with almost all of the asset classes recording positive returns during 2016. Commodities, which was reeling under significant pressure with declines since 2010, was investor's favorite category recording the first positive annual performance in six years.

Oil topped the yearly gains with an increase of 52.4%, followed by Global Natural Resources at 31.5% and overall the commodities basket recording a return of 11.4%. Within the commodities space, natural gas was the years best performer with a return of 59% on the back of colder weather conditions coupled with supply constraints. On the other hand, the annual return for oil was the highest since the financial crisis that came as a result of the agreed supply cuts expected to be implemented starting from January-17. Moreover, all of the aforementioned indices had witnessed steep negative returns during 2015.

The year also saw capital flight from global emerging market equities to bond markets, especially in the US following higher economic growth and the rate hike in December-16. Meanwhile, MENA equities witnessed the third-best performance globally with the MSCI MENA index up by 16.4% vs. a negative return of 22.4% during 2015. Egypt was one of the best performing equity markets with the EGX 30 index up by 76.2%, followed by Morocco with an annual return of 30%.

For 2017, KAMCO Research believes that downside risks largely points to be political in nature due to the uncertainties surrounding the policies expected to be formulated in the US followed by Europe choosing populist government in recent elections. In the US, we believe the Trump story is oversold and this would result in calmer markets in 2017. Europe also faces a wave of elections in 2017 starting with general election in the Netherlands in March-17, followed by France in April-17. Germany will see Angela Merkel fight to retain her position as the Chancellor in September-17.

In addition, Greece faces another rising issue of bailout packages. On the positive side, growth and economic activity remains positive in the region with resilient private sector growth. This has also led to the planned tapering of quantitative easing during 2017 leading to positive market outlook on the back of datapoints. For the MENA region, diversification efforts in the GCC would drive private sector activity thereby boosting corporate profitability. This coupled with stable oil prices should provide a push to markets in the region.

GCC market performance

GCC equity markets witnessed extreme volatility during 2016 as markets were largely swayed by oil price. Geopolitical issues had minimal impact as experienced in the past few years, although the issues in some of the neighboring regional economies continue to prevail. 1H-16 witnessed weak oil prices that pushed markets to multiple-year lows. However, talks of an oil output agreement supported markets during 2H-16, particularly during the last quarter, pulling benchmark indices from negative YTD performance into the positive zone. In addition, events like Brexit and the US elections had its share of shock on the GCC markets, but the recovery in US post the election also provided support to markets globally.

By year end, all of the seven exchanges in the GCC had already recovered from the yearly lows and closed the year on a positive note with Dubai leading the yearly performance recording a growth of 12.1% followed by Oman at 7.0%. Trading activity on the GCC exchanges declined for the second consecutive year although the overall value traded witnessed a strong rebound during November-16 and December-16 on the back of investor optimism related to oil output agreement. Nevertheless, value of shares traded in the GCC remains at a 5-year low level of USD 388.2 Bn, with Saudi Arabia accounting for 79% of this value followed by 9.3% for Dubai.

In terms of index performance, the real estate sector had a largely positive performance in Saudi Arabia and UAE, whereas petrochemical and utilities sectors were the best performer in Saudi Arabia during the year. Banking indices witnessed either negative performance or were marginally positive during the year as the ongoing liquidity crunch due to the fall in oil deposits affected sentiments for the sector. However, as also pointed out by some of the rating agencies, GCC banks continue to enjoy comfortable coverage ratios as compared to their global counterparts. We believe this was primarily due to policy adjustments by the governments as well as the existence of a healthy balance sheet by these banks. Corporate earnings have remained resilient despite the weak markets for the past two years and for the most of 2016. Overall 9M-16 earnings have although declined, it remains at healthy levels as compared to the lows of financial crisis.

For 2017, we believe that corporate earnings would continue to remain a primary support for listed companies in the GCC, whereas oil prices are expected to remain range bound between USD 50 - USD 60/b. Project execution in the GCC is expected to improve as compared to 2016 as the pipeline continues to remain strong. The projects market continues to remain robust with almost USD 5.5 Bn worth of projects already under execution as of the end of November -16 and a total of USD 2.8 Trillion worth of projects planned or under way in the GCC. We expect economic growth rate to have bottomed in 2016 and government policy changes and new investment initiatives like subsidy reduction, non-oil sector diversification, wage and labor force rationalization and taxes would result in higher growth and would be positive for the stock markets in the near term.

Boursa Kuwait

Boursa Kuwait witnessed mixed performance during 2016, with the Price Index up by 2.4%, whereas the weighted Index ended almost flat due to the poor performance of large-cap stocks. This was also evident from the 1.7% decline in the Kuwait 15 Index on the back of weak trends especially during the first half of the year partially offset by a 9% recovery in the index during the last quarter of the year. Eleven out of the 15 stocks in the large-cap index declined during the year with Burgan Bank leading the decliners list with a fall of 20.8% followed by Mezzan Holding (-15.8%) and AUB Kuwait (-14.9%). In line with the rest of the GCC markets, all of the aforementioned KSE indices witnessed positive performance during the last quarter of the year.

Prominent gainers during the year included Gulf Finance House that closed the year with more than three-fold increase in its share price followed by Human Soft Holding with an increase of 184.2%. Kuwait National Cinema and Al Imtiaz Investment also surged 35% and 34% during the year, respectively. On the other hand, key yearly decliners included Tamdeen Real Estate with a decline of 24% followed by Burgan Bank and ABK Kuwait with declines of 21% and 20%, respectively.

The sectoral performance chart also indicated weakness in the oil sector with the Oil & Gas Index being the biggest yearly decliner witnessing a fall of 15.2% followed by Technology (-13.7%) and Insurance (-10.8%) indices. Within the Oil & Gas sector, the individual stock performance was equally split between gainers and losers, but relatively bigger names in the sector, including Contracting & Marine (-39.8%) and Ikarus Petroleum (53.9%) witnessed higher declines. Meanwhile, all of the stocks in the Insurance sector witnessed declines during the year with Wethaq Takaful recording the steepest decline of 24.4% followed by Ahleiah Insurance (-14.2%) and First Takaful (- 12.5%). In terms of sectoral gainers, the Healthcare sector saw the biggest jump of 25.2% followed by Industrials (+17.9%) and Consumer Goods (+16.5%).

Within the Healthcare space, shares of Yiaco Medical surged 1.5 times during the year while Al Mowasat Healthcare surged 38.9%. In the Industrial Index, decliners outnumbered gainers, however, most of the large-cap stocks in the sector witnessed positive performance including Human Soft Holding (+184%), Agility (+29.2%), ALAFCO (+14.3%) and Kuwait Cement (+3.8%). Telecom was the other large-cap sector (along with Industrials) that recorded positive performance with a return of 11.3% during the year on the back of 17.1% gain in shares of Zain, 9.1% gain in Ooredoo and 46% gain in Hits Telecom, partially offset by 6.1% decline in Viva Kuwait shares.

Trading activity during the year declined in line with the rest of the markets in the GCC. Total value traded declined by 27.5% to KWD 2.9 Bn (USD 9.5 Bn) while volume traded during the year declined by 27% to 30.3 Bn shares. NBK topped the yearly value traded chart with KWD 307.8 Mn worth of shares traded during the year followed by KFH (KWD 305 Mn) and Zain (KWD 215.7 Mn).

Saudi Arabia

From being the worst performing market in the GCC until September-16 with a YTD-16 decline of 22%, TASI witnessed a spectacular recovery and closed the year with a return of 4.3% after witnessing consecutive gains over the last three months of the year. The index closely followed the trends in oil market and a got a boost after the successful agreement to cut oil production by key global major oil producers. With the gains that ensued, the benchmark TASI index broke the psychologically important resistance level of 7,000 points at the start of December-16 and closed the year at 7,210.43 points.

Meanwhile, the sector performance chart indicated that the yearly gains for the market were primarily on the back gains in large sectors whereas a majority of the smaller indices declined during the year. The Energy & Utilities and the Petrochemical sectors surged the most during the year with a return of 41% and 25%, respectively, reflecting the optimism in the oil market. Also, both these oil-related sectors have remained YTD-16 positive consecutively over the past nine months. In the Petrochemical sector, merely three stocks declined during the year, namely Nama Chemical (-13.2%), SAFCO (-9.1%) and Rabigh Refining and Petrochemical (-4.2%), whereas the rest of the sector witnessed strong gains. Top gainers in the sector included YANSAB (+66.7%) followed by National Industrialization (+64.6%) and APPC (+46.0%) while shares of SABIC surged 19.6% during the year. In the Energy & Utilities sector, both the constituent stocks witnessed positive returns during the year with SEC gaining 43.7% while NGIC was up by 29.9%.

The Real Estate sector also witnessed strong gains of 21.5% led by gains in all the constituent stocks in the sector, with the exception of marginal declines in Makkah Construction (-2.5%) and Dar Al Arkan Real Estate (-0.6%). Among the gainers, Jabal Omar Development witnessed the biggest surge of 32.6% during the year followed by Emaar Economic City at 32.6%. The year also saw the listing of the first REIT (Riyad REIT Fund) on the Tadawul Exchange after the CMA approved rules that allowed the listing of Real Estate Investment Traded Funds on the exchange.

On the decliner's side, the Hotels & Tourism index saw the steepest slide of 44% with all the four stocks within the sector witnessing double digit declines. The Media & Publishing index followed with a decline of 23.5% led by fall in shares of SRMG (-41.4%) and SPPC (-23.5%) that was partially offset by Tihama Advertising (+13.9%). The Retail sector also declined as only five out of the 17 stocks in the sector reported positive returns. Sector majors Jarir Marketing and Fawaz Abdulaziz AlHokhair witnessed steep declines of 27.8% and 47.9%, respectively. Meanwhile, both Building & Construction and Cement sectors declined highlighting difficulties faced by companies due to the slowdown in economic growth.

Insurance stocks topped the gainers chart with 3 out of 5 gainers (Walaa, Al Rajhi Co-op Insurance and Arabian Shield) from the sector. Insurance companies also dominated yearly decliners with top three decliners (Malath, Alamiya and Saudi Enaya) from the insurance sector. Furthermore, a prolonged period of downturn affected value traded on the exchange that declined by almost a third to SAR 1.12 Trillion (USD 308.1 Bn). However, volume traded improved by 2.7% to reach 67.7 Bn shares by year end. Alinma Bank saw the highest trades during the year at SAR 149 Bn followed by SABIC at SAR 129.6 Bn and Dar Al Arkan Real Estate at SAR 54.0 Bn.

Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange

The ADX General Index cooled off in 2016, after ending 2015 as the best performing market in the GCC, but still managed to move up by 5.6% for the current year. The index ended at 4,546.4 points and moved into the green, largely due to a 5.5% gain in Dec-16. The best performing sectoral index was the Real Estate index, which rose by over 20% for the year, as behemoth Aldar Properties buoyed the sectoral index with gains of over 13% for the year.

Telecoms also continued to do well in 2016, similar to 2015, as Etisalat moved up by close to 17% for the current year. Banks remained flat in 2016, despite the approval of the merger between the largest two banks in the sector, FGB and NBAD. Other sectors which gained included the Energy sector which saw healthy volumes being traded and also moved up 7.2% in 2016, despite volatility in the energy commodities' markets, as both index constituents Dana Gas and Abu Dhabi National Energy moved up during the year. Insurance and Services sectors also gained by the end of the year, as they went up by 6.6% and 3.6% respectively.

The laggards for the year were mainly Industrial (-13%), followed by Investment & Financial Services (-11%), as the sectors saw another year of declines, and Consumer Staples which went down marginally by 1%.

Activity on the exchange in terms of trading activity was down y-o-y, as against 2015. Total value traded during the year declined by 20% to AED 47 Bn, as compared to AED 58 Bn achieved in 2015. Volume traded went down marginally by 2% in 2016, as 25 Bn shares were traded during the year. Total number of trades fell as well in the current year and declined by 17%, as trades recorded amounted to 0.36 Mn in 2016, as against 0.44 in 2015. Real Estate was the most actively traded sector both in terms of trading volumes and value traded, as 15 Bn of turnover was recorded for the sector, while the value traded reached AED 16 Bn for 2016. Energy followed in terms of traded volumes with a turnover of 4.2 Bn, while Banks came in second in terms of value traded with AED 14.7 Bn worth of share traded.

The top gainers for 2016 was led by Eshraq Properties which jumped by over 85% during the year, and was followed by International Fish Farming Co. and Emirates Driving Co which gained by over 61% and 59% respectively. In terms of laggards for the year, United Arab Bank declined by over 70% for the year followed by Al Khaleej Investment and RAK Ceramics as they saw their stock prices recede by over 52% and 25% respectively. Eshraq Properties led most active stocks for the year 2016 in terms of volume, with over 10.1 Bn shares traded on the exchange. Dana Gas and Aldar Properties followed with 3.5 Bn shares & 2.5 Bn shares for the year. Etisalat secured the top spot for top stocks traded by value with over to AED 8.9 Bn of turnover, as Eshraq Properties and Aldar followed with a value traded of over AED 8.3 bn and AED 6.5 Bn respectively.

The month of Dec-16 marked the UAE Central Bank duly following the Federal Reserve in terms of policy action, and raising interest rates of its Certificates of Deposits by 25 bps. In oil related developments, in response to OPEC agreeing to cut production Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) reportedly informed customers that it will cut crude supplies by 3%-5% across its three export grades.

Dubai Financial Market

After closing 2015 as the worst performing index, DFM reversed trends and ended 2016 as the best performing index as it proved a safer haven than other GCC markets. As a result, the index was up in the green seven months of the year and closed 2016 with a strong 5.1% move up in Dec-16. Nevertheless, the DFM Index did remain volatile through the year, but closed the year up by 12.1% y-o-y. The index closed at 3,530.9 points, but witnessed mixed trends in yearly trading activity, as volumes were up y-o-y for 2016, while traded value was down as against the previous year.

All the sectors barring the Industrials sector closed the year on a positive note as the sector closed lower by double digits, by over 16.7% In terms of top performing sectors, Services index led all other sectors as it gained by 36% for the year. Telecoms and Consumer Staples followed with gains of 22% each, as defensive sectors continued to do well in 2016, similar to trends witnessed in 2015. Heavyweight rate sensitive sectors such as Real estate and Banks went up as well, despite slowing credit conditions and monetary tightening. The Real Estate sector gained by 17% in 2016, after being the worst performing index in the previous year, while Banks went up moderately by 3%. The Transportation and Insurance index also gained during the year as they gained by 11.2% and 2.4% respectively.

Trading activity statistics in terms of yearly value traded recorded a 12% decline to reach AED 132.9 Bn during 2016, as compared to AED 151.3 Bn during 2015. Total volumes traded during the year however improved by 8% to 105.8 Bn shares as compared to 98.2 Bn shares during 2015. The number of trades during the year declined by 17% to 1.3 Mn trades as compared to 1.6 Mn trades during 2015.

In terms of sector contribution, the Banking and the Real Estate & Construction sectors continued to account for the lion's share of the trading activity, accounting for 70% of the value traded during the year. The yearly gainers chart was topped by Shuaa Capital as its stock price went up by over 3.6 times, followed by Takaful House and Gulf Navigation Holding with yearly gains of over 164% and 157% respectively.

The yearly decliners chart saw Insurance names lose the most with National General Insurance leading the pack with a decline of 51.3%, followed by Oman Insurance and Ajman Bank with yearly declines of 35.2% and 25.0%, respectively. The chart for the most active stocks by volume was topped by GFH with 18.0 Bn shares traded during the year, followed by 13.2 Bn shares traded in Arabtec and 10.5 Bn shares for DSI. Meanwhile, in terms of yearly value traded, Arabtec and GFH topped the chart with AED 19.5 Bn and AED 18.6 Bn worth of shares traded in the stocks, respectively.

In Dec-16, Dubai approved their 2017 budget of AED 47.3 Bn, up 2.6% y-o-y from AED 46.1 Bn in 2016. The budget includes a 27% surge in infrastructure spending as against the previous year, as well as the creation of 3,500 jobs. Other allocations include reportedly a 20.5% of the 2017 budget earmarked for the education sector, 8.6% to the healthcare sector, 8.2% to public sector wages, 6.6% to social development and 3.3% to housing.

Qatar Exchange

Qatar Exchange stayed in the green in 2016, after witnessing a down year in 2015. The QE 20 index inched up by just 0.1% in 2016 and reached 10436.76 points, while the broader Total Return Index moved up by 4%. The year 2015 saw 12 out of the 44 listed companies ending the year higher, while 31 lost ground.

Similar to trends witnessed in other GCC markets, Telecoms in Qatar did well in 2016 as well, and was the best performing sectoral index as it went up by 22% y-o-y, buoyed by Ooredoo, which went up by over 36% for the year. Larger sectoral indices such as Banking & Financial Services and Industrials were up as well, as both indices gained close to 4% for the year. The Insurance index also closed the year strong as it went up by 9.9%, while Transportation gained by 4.8% in 2016. The two sectoral indices which receded were led by the Real Estate index which went down by 3.8% while Consumer Goods and Services index declined by a lower 1.7% for the year.

Value traded during 2016 decreased by 25% to reach QAR 70 Bn compared to QAR 93 Bn in the year prior. Trading volumes also declined by 26% to reach 1.98 Bn shares, as against 2.67 Bn shares, while the number of transactions fell by 16% to reach 1.0 Mn transactions as compared to 1.2 Mn transactions. Banks and Financial Services led the sectoral indices in terms of value traded during this year, accounting for over 35% of the total value traded, followed by Industrials sector, which accounted for close to 24%. The Real Estate sector followed, accounting for close to 12%, of the value traded during the year. In terms of trading volumes, Banks and Financial Services sector led all sectors during the year, accounting for over 30% of the total volumes traded, followed by Real Estate sector, which accounted for 20% and the Industrials sector with a contribution of over 18% to volumes traded for the year.

The top gainers for 2016 was led by Qatari Investors Group which jumped by over 55% during the year, and was followed by Oreedoo and Widam which gained by over 35% and 28% respectively. In terms of laggards for the year, Medicare saw its stock price decline by over 47% for the year and was the worst performer followed by Gulf International Services and Qatar First Bank, as they saw their stock prices recede by over 39% and 38% respectively. QNB led the most active stocks for the year 2016 in terms of value traded as it accounted for 9.5% of the total value traded, followed by Masraf Al Rayan and GISS as they contributed to 7.2% and 6.9% of the total value traded on the exchange .

Qatar is expected to post a budget deficit of QAR 28.3 Bn in 2017 as per their state budget, after reporting its first deficit in 15 years in 2016, mainly due to lower hydrocarbon prices. Revenues are reportedly estimated to come in at QAR 170.1 Bn, while expenditure for the coming year is estimated at QAR 198.4 Bn. The shortfall in revenues is reportedly expected to be covered by local and international debt issues. Capital spending is reportedly planned to increase 3.2% with its share of total spending rising from 46.7% in 2016 to 49.1% in 2017. Education, health and infrastructure will reportedly account for nearly half of all expenditures at QAR 87.1 Bn and will include building projects for Qatar's hosting of the 2022 World Cup.

Bahrain Bourse

After dropping by around 15% y-o-y in 2015, the Bahrain All Share Index remained range bound in 2016 and went up marginally by 0.4%, as the index was aided by a 3.9% increase in Dec-16. The market capitalization as of December end was BHD 7.2 Bn and remained broadly stable from the previous year. In terms of sectoral performance, the Investment index was able to close the year strong in the green, gaining by 12%. Commercial Banks followed with returns of 0.8% for the year. Hotels & Tourism and Industrials sectors were the worst performing sectors plunging by over 14.3% and 13.5% respectively, while Services and Insurance followed, receding by 8.3% and 4.1% respectively.

The top gainers chart for 2016 was led by GFH, which ended the year up by over three times. Inovest came in second in the gainers list as it went up by over 31% as compared to the previous year, and also gained by 16.7% in the month of December in 2016, while InvestCorp managed to end the year on a positive note and finish third on the gainers list, gaining by c.22.7%. The laggards were led by Zain Bahrain which witnessed a drop of over 44.4% for the year ended 2016, as compared to the previous year. Takaful and Bahrain Family Leisure followed on the list of losers, declining by over 31% and 27% respectively.

In ratings related action for corporates, Moody's Investors Service reportedly assigned first-time long and short-term local and foreign currency issuer ratings of Ba3/Not-Prime to Khaleeji Commercial Bank BSC (KHCB) and a baseline credit Assessment (BCA) and adjusted BCA of b1. At the same time, Moody's has also assigned a Counterparty Risk Assessment of Ba2(cr)/Not-Prime(cr). The long-term issuer ratings was kept as negative.

Kuwaiti Actor and Radio celebs to host Gulf Bank's Al Danah Millionaire draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank's Al Danah Millionaire Draw 2017 will include special appearances by Kuwaiti celebrities, ranging from actors to media personalities. There are only two days left until the big event which will be held on Thursday, 5 January 2017 at The Avenues Mall, starting 7:00 pm. Gulf Bank invites you to participate and attend a very special Al Danah Millionaire Draw this year!

Gulf Bank is proud to have "Weld Al Deera, Mr Khaled Al Agrooga" as the special guest at the event! After six years of fighting against cancer, Weld Al Deera has come back to Kuwait full of life, energy and hope. This renowned actor will be running the show featuring his distinctive sense of humor and wit that will add laughs and atmosphere to this year's Al Danah Millionaire!

As a co-host, Khaled Al Ansari, the notable radio host and media personality, will also take part in Al Danah Millionaire Draw 2017 to spice the show up with his engaging humor and commentary. No need to wait for Khaled Al Ansari on the radio anymore, you will have the chance to interact with him live and in person at the event! If you have been listening and fancying music by 'The Concert,' Gulf Bank is also pleased to inform you that Mohammad Al Sarraf, the lead singer of this popular musical group and a member of Gulf Bank family, will be present as part of this great lineup.

In addition to Al Danah Yearly Millionaire Draw, cash prizes up to KD 1,000 each and a brand new Cadillac Escalade will be won on the spot at the event with Gulf Bank's Salary and red accounts. New red Account or Salary Account customers who have opened an account and transferred their student allowance or salary are also eligible to enter the draws.

For further information about the Al Danah, Salary, red accounts, and the cash prizes, visit one of Gulf Bank's 56 branches, or call Gulf Bank's Customer Contact Center on 1805805. General information about Gulf Bank's products and services can also be found at the Bank's website at www.e-gulfbank.com.

AUB ready to accommodate special needs customers' requirements

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) has always been on a continued drive to provide the best array of banking services to the Bank's special needs customers, ensuring that they have easy access to the best banking services. In line with and in response to the Central Bank of Kuwait's (CBK) guidelines of supporting special needs customers, AUB announced that it is fully ready to accommodate and offer the best banking technologies that support special needs customers' varied requirements. The Bank was successful in fully equipping 7 branches, including Mishref, Al Qadsiya, Al Farwaniya, Sabah Al Salem, Al Ahmadi, Al Ouyoun, as well as Al Jahra, while also further developing a large section of the bank's main headquarters to accommodate the requirements and needs of special needs customers.

Mrs Huda Al-Madani, AUB's Assistant General Manager- Alternative Distribution Channels said, AUB developed a number of important steps that aim at supporting special needs customers with various challenges. The Bank provides its aurally challenged customers a series of recorded videos which have been produced in sign language in an effort to include all the necessary information and procedures to complete their financial transactions. The Bank has also trained a number of qualified employees to communicate in sign language and are ready at all times to engage with customers."

AUB's efforts towards the visually challenged customers include developing a fully integrated platform to communicate information using Braille, including printing account and credit card statements in Braille and enhancements to the ATM fleet. The Bank's ATMs include a host of features such as Braille keypads as well as large fonts and specially designed screens with contrasting backgrounds to provide an easy-to-read experience, along with voice guidance features as well as various techniques to ensure privacy and client confidentiality.

Voice guidance can be activated by inserting standard headphones into a special port on the ATM. Once voice guidance is activated, for the security of our customers, the ATM's screen deactivates and the ATM does not print any statements or receipts. All cards issued by AUB are embossed for easy identification and customers may choose to enhance the cards with a personal photo.

To better serve its customers who are physically challenged AUB's ATM vestibules and branches have been designed for ease of mobility. Modifications such as the ATM height and teller kiosks ensure that these areas are at the appropriate levels for customers with wheelchairs. The Bank has also allocated dedicated parking spaces for its special needs customers across selected branches along with Braille enhanced elevators to provide an easy experience to and from the branch. The Bank has also allocated dedicated counters which aims at facilitating requests in a timely and efficient manner.

AUB continues to drive a number of benefits that have been tailored specifically to special needs customers, which include a discount on the fees across a number of financial transactions.

The Bank ensures that its product and services marketing campaigns reaches special needs through a number of communications channels that are match the type of their disabilities, to reflect AUB's commitment to informing its customers with the latest information. AUB has also enhanced its ATMs by enabling its mobile PIN platform (TPIN), where customers are able to conduct their transactions in a secure manner in a closed room with electronic doors that are equipped with sensors and safety button to alert security in case of an emergency. The Bank has also developed the Qmatic system to ensure priority is given to special needs customer service.

Mrs Huda Al-Madan, concluded, "AUB has fully upgraded its electronic banking services via the Internet and smart phones to accommodate the needs of their blind and visually impaired customers. By facilitating monitor readers on the Bank's e-channels via the Internet, smart phones in addition to the Bank's website, customers can access their accounts and credit cards and implement their banking transactions with great ease and a high degree of safety."

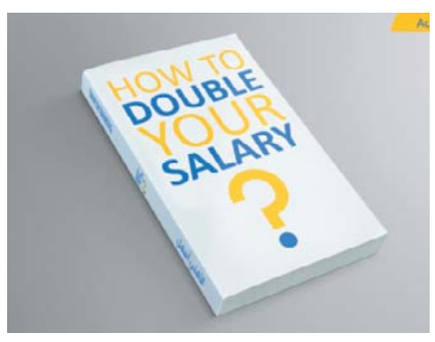
ABK announces winners of 'Double Your Salary' draws

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) held its 35th'Double Your Salary' weekly draw on 26th December, 2016 at the Bank's Head Office in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce, announcing the names of the winners for this week. The promotion includes weekly draws, with two winners per draw. The campaign will run until 27th June, 2017. The winners this week were:

1) Mahmoud Ali Rashed Habeeb, Sharq Branch

2) Suzan Homoud Ahmad Homoud, Hawally Branch

New customers who transfer their salary to ABK receive KD 100 and will automatically be entered into the weekly draws to double their salaries. Existing customers who are already transferring their salary to ABK are entered into a separate draw.



NBK Capital named Regional Equities Manager of the year

KUWAIT: Watani Investment Company KSCC (NBK Capital) won the "Regional Equities Manager of the year 2016" from Global Investor Middle East. According to Global ISF, NBK CAPITAL MENA AM outperformed most managed equities during the judging period. This is due to mainly the unique design of their products that constantly meet their clients' shifting requirements.

The NBK Gulf Equity Fund returned -22.92% net of fees while the regional markets, as measured by the S&P GCC Composite Large Mid Cap Index, returned -23.48%. The NBK Qatar Equity Fund returned -16.68% net of fees, beating its benchmark, which returned -16.85%. The NBK Kuwait Equity Fund returned -11.30% net of fees, in-line with its benchmark. The SMA mandates portfolios recorded returns -23.02% net of fees with an alpha of 0.44%.

Commenting on this achievement, CEO of NBK Capital, Faisal Al-Hamad, said, "NBK Capital takes pride in continuously being nominated and delivering the highest standards of products and services to our clients and investors". Mr Al-Hamad also added "Year after year, the MENA Asset Management Team has delivered strong relative performance to our investors.

The Team has also succeeded to innovate and offer new investment solutions that best fit our clients' needs. The next challenge for the team is to deliver an even stronger performance for our equity investors and develop the platform and track record for the Fixed-Income line of business." NBK Capital wide product offerings, best practices in investment and risk management processes has a clear edge over regional peers to deliver the best asset management solutions.

Shaker Al Tabtabaie wins NBK's Al Jawhara draw

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announced Khaldoun Shaker Al Tabtabaie the winner of KD 250,000, NBK's Al Jawhara quarterly prize. The winner's name was announced live on FM 88.8 and the draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

NBK has added a new feature to the Al Jawhara account recently by doubling customers' chances to win in the weekly, monthly and quarterly draws when they do not withdraw or transfer from their accounts. Al Jawhara Quarterly draw is one of the biggest cash prizes in Kuwait. NBK customers have the opportunity to double their chances to win the next quarterly draw in June.

NBK customers have chances to win KD 5,000 weekly, KD 125,000 monthly and a grand prize of KD 250,000 quarterly. Each KD 50 in a customer's account entitles them to one entry in the draw, thus more money in an account means more chances in each draw. The new feature introduced to Al Jawhara Account enables customers to double their chances when maintaining their balance without withdrawing. Al Jawhara is the most popular prize-giving account in Kuwait. Al Jawhara account entitles account holders to enter the weekly, monthly and quarterly Al Jawhara draws. All prizes are automatically credited to the winners' accounts the day after the draw. Al Jawhara accounts are available to both Kuwaitis and expats and can be opened at any one of NBK's branches around Kuwait, or through NBK website for existing customers.

Murouj - Kuwait's Premium Leisure and Entertainment Destination

ICSC

Winner of 2016 MECSC / ICSC Award for Design and Development Excellence

Developed by - Al-Jazeera Real Estate Development Co.
Designed by - R204DESIGN

MUROUJ wins Silver in the ICSC MENA Shopping Centre and Retailer Awards

DUBAI: The International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) has announced the winners of the 2016 Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Shopping Centre and Retailer Awards, recognizing the region's most innovative shopping centers for outstanding achievement in retail, retail store design, design and development, and marketing. ICSC has named MUROUJ, Kuwait as a Silver Award winner in the development and design category.

Murouj is a Premium Leisure and Entertainment Destination in Kuwait developed by Al-Jazeera Real Estate Development Co. and designed by R204DESIGN, Los Angeles / executed by Lab 100, Kuwait, as an exclusive mixed-use development with unique food & beverage offerings, high-end brands, health, fitness and recreation outlets. Designed as an outdoor retail and entertainment venue part of the Sahara Golf & Equestrian Club, Murouj defies all conventional norms of shying away from the exterior environment and harsh climatic conditions of Kuwait, by nestling it within a serene garden setting and creating a "comfortable place" for people to meet, dine, chat and enjoy the landscape.

"We are very excited that the ICSC / MECSC Jury has recognized Murouj as a unique project and selected it as a 2016 Award winner for Design and Development Excellence in the MENA region. The development team deserves significant credit for upholding the original vision and ensuring successful execution of the project" - Sidhartha Sabikhi AIA, Founder & Director of International Projects for R204DESIGN. R204DESIGN is a global planning and architecture firm with offices in Los Angeles, New Delhi, and Dubai. The firm has recently formed a strategic alliance to establish presence in Kuwait by appointing Waleed Shaalan as its Director of Projects for MENA region to serve the needs of the market providing comprehensive planning & architecture services and delivering quality projects in the GCC region.

The 2016 ICSC Middle East and North Africa Shopping Centre and Retailer Awards competition was open to shopping center owners, developers, management companies, architects and designers, and retailers. ICSC announced the winners at an awards ceremony during ICSC RECon Middle East and North Africa in Dubai. All 2016 Gold award recipients receive automatic entry into the 2017 ICSC VIVA Awards, the international program that honors the retail real estate industry's most cutting-edge properties, innovative solutions, and creative responses to market trends. ICSC will announce the victors of the VIVA Awards during RECon 2017 in Las Vegas.

Tijari announces winners of Al Najma Mega Draw

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait held the Mega Draw for the 4th Quarter and the Daily Draw on 2nd January, 2017. The draws were held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry represented by Mr Abdulaziz Ashkanani. The winner of the Mega Draw of KD 250,000 is Khamees Ibrahim Al Ali while the winners of the Al Najma Daily Draw are:-

Helal Ali Al Jadi KD 7000/-
Nancy Helmi Ragheb Hanna KD 7000/-
Meranda Shkri Kafalanti KD 7000/-
Jafar Ali Rehmat Bashir KD 7000/-
Tawfiq Nasertey Murad KD 7000/-

Al Najma awards are now brighter and bigger than ever. With the revamped Al Najma account, all your dreams will be turned to reality. On top of offering the highest daily prize in Kuwait for KD 7,000, now our Mega prize draws got bigger to reach KD 250,000.

Tech show looks beyond 'smart,' to new realities

SAN FRANCISCO: The mega-extravaganza of the tech world in Las Vegas is showcasing an array of new devices that get smarts from computer chips, sensors and artificial intelligence, but go further by opening doors to augmented or virtual realities. The Consumer Electronics Show, which begins with a series of media events today will offer trade professionals a look at new robotics, connected cars and a dizzying assortment of gizmos from connected sneakers to drones. This year's show will see results of a boost in computing power from artificial intelligence, which can help power things like autonomous cars, and deliver new experiences such as augmented or virtual reality.

"Virtual reality is changing the game for a variety of industries including health care, agriculture, manufacturing and business," said Gary Shapiro, president of the Consumer Technology Association that organizes the annual show, in a Reddit chat. "Doctors are using VR to enhance traditional therapies, architects use VR to design stronger buildings and travel agencies are using it to simplify vacation planning." CES will celebrate its 50th anniversary at the gathering, and organizers promised it would have the largest showcase of VR technology ever.

One CES panel discussion will examine how virtual reality is transforming television, movies and even news with immersive forms of video. A host of virtual reality experiences will entice attendees at the trade-only show. Cars will feature virtual reality displays to provide a better sense of the environment around them, while similar technologies will be showcased for smart glasses, medicine and beauty makeovers.

Enhancing reality

Robin Raskin, who heads the Living in Digital Times center of the show, said augmented reality is catching on with try-and-see beauty apps, in-store virtual mirrors and toys. Augmented reality, she said, "lets us look at the real world and add valuable, entertaining and immersive information to it." Analyst Jack Gold at J. Gold Associates said that despite the potential benefits of virtual and augmented reality in business or industry, "gaming is where it is going to take off first," because that's where people are spending money. "The issue is not whether it has the potential to transform things, but whether you can put it into a space where consumers can afford it and give enough additional information so people are able to use it," Gold said.

CES is among the world's biggest trade shows, and last year drew 177,000 attendees over exhibit space of 2.47 million square feet (230,000 square meters). This year, 150 countries will be represented. It will include big industry names such as Sony, LG and Samsung in electronics, with the perennial battle to have the sleekest most gorgeous television screen. Meanwhile, in attendance will be more than 600 startups from 33 countries, including first-time participants-the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Ukraine. Auto-industry titans including Ford and BMW are increasingly using CES to show off technology packed into vehicles for efficiency, safety, entertainment and navigation.

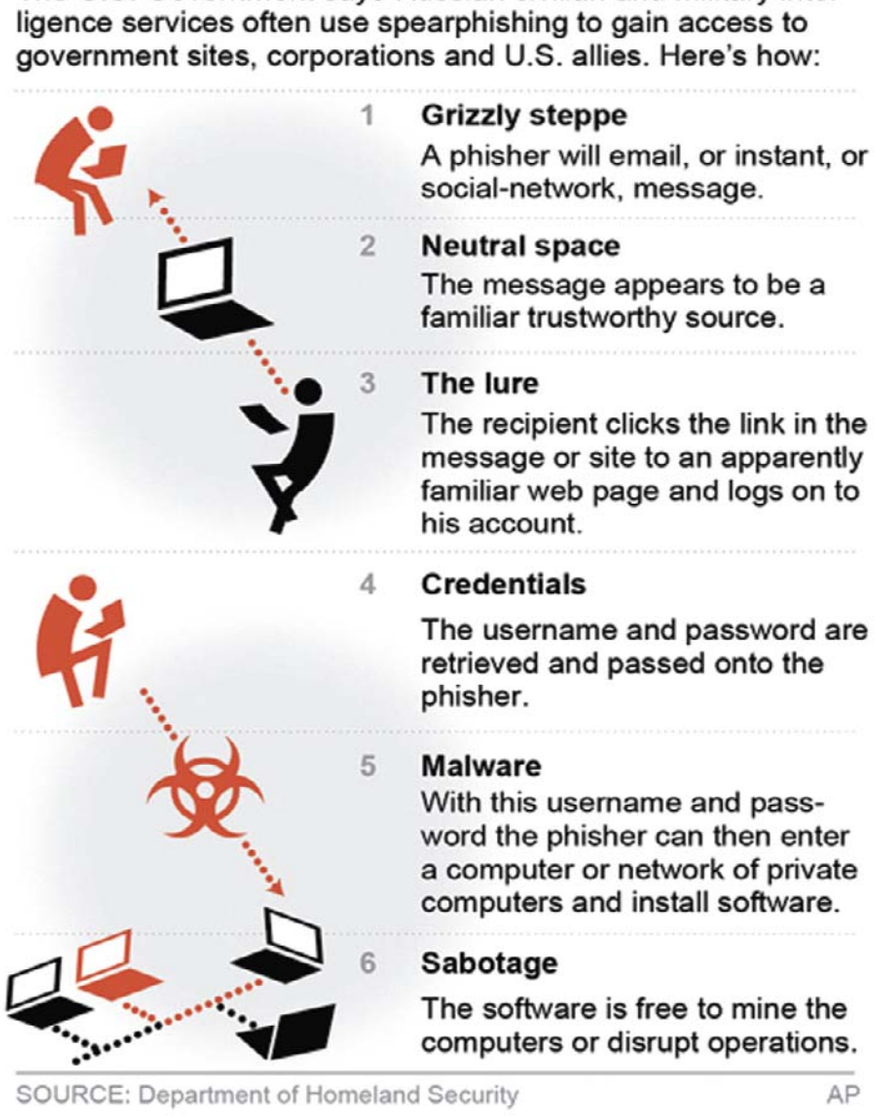
Race for autonomy

The show will feature demonstrations of autonomous or semi-autonomous vehicles, including one from Japan's Honda said to be equipped with an artificial intelligence "emotion engine" that aims to better understand its occupants. Electric car startup Faraday Future, one of several manufacturers taking on Tesla, is expected to unveil its first production car a year after showing a prototype. Renault-Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn has promised to discuss "a major technological breakthrough in the realization of a zero-emission, zero-fatality world for everyone," according to a statement from CES organizers.

Humanoid robots

The show is also expected to feature advances in robotics, with more human-like robots and the public debut of "Professor Einstein" from Hanson Robotics. Getting a boost from artificial intelligence, some new robots at the show will keep an eye on the kids, play chess or help with homework. Gold said he expects to see a large number of drones looking for a slice of a surging market. "This is really the year of the drone, and everybody is trying to get into this market," he said. But he added that the strongest potential for drones may be with businesses, with uses including aerial photography. On the smartphone front, South Korea's LG will show a range of new "mid-range" handsets and China's Huawei has a smartphone event scheduled.

TCL, the Chinese firm which owns the Alcatel brand, will unveil new BlackBerry handsets following its deal for the troubled Canadian brand. The show floor will see a host of new and improved connected home technologies that manage everything from light bulbs to refrigerators. "We're pretty close on things like the smart home, where we're going to get up one day and everybody is going to speak to their refrigerators," said NPD analyst Stephen Baker. Carolina Milanesi of the consultancy Creative Strategies said 2016 "has seen material progress" in some new technologies that will result in products hitting the marketplace, even though not all will be hits. "In some cases, it's because the consumers weren't really asking for it," she said. —AFP



US re-examines cyber security

BURLINGTON, Vermont: Several states around the country on Saturday asked cyber security experts to re-examine state and utility networks after a Vermont utility's laptop was found to contain malware US officials say is linked to Russian hackers. The Burlington Electric Department, one of Vermont's two largest electric utilities, confirmed Friday it had found on one of its laptops the malware code used in Grizzly Steppe, the name the US government has given to malicious cyber activity by Russian civilian and military intelligence services.

A Burlington Electric Department spokesman said federal officials have told company officials the threat was not unique to them. The Department of Homeland Security said it had no information indicating the power grid was penetrated in the cyber invasion. A spokesman wouldn't say whether any other utilities, organizations or entities had reported similar malware on their systems but said any such information would be confidential. Officials in New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut said they're more closely monitoring state and utility networks for anything suspicious.

"We have not detected any activity matching the reported malware at this time," Connecticut governor's office spokesman Chris Collibee said. New Jersey's homeland security director said the state had no reports of malicious activity associated with Grizzly Steppe at major utility systems. In New York, Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo directed all state agencies to re-examine their computer systems for security breaches. Nothing had been found. An attack on a US power grid has long been a nightmare scenario for top US officials.

Alarmed and outraged

The National Security Agency and US Cyber Command chief Adm. Michael Rogers have previously warned it's not a matter of if but when attackers target US power systems. On Dec 23, 2015, a highly sophisticated cyber attack on the power grid in Ukraine hit three regional electronic power distribution companies, blacking out more than 225,000 customers. Democratic Vermont Gov Peter Shumlin said his administration has been in touch with the federal government and the state's utilities. He said people should be "alarmed and outraged" that Russia "has been attempting to hack our electric grid, which we rely upon to support our quality-of-life, economy, health and safety."

Burlington Electric noted it wasn't connected to the grid system and didn't explain how the malware got onto the computer. The company said US government authorities alerted American utilities about the malware code Thursday in a report released when Democratic President Barack Obama announced the US response to election hacking. Obama ordered sanctions on Russian intelligence agencies, closed two Russian compounds and expelled 35 diplomats the US said were spies. A Russian state television channel on Saturday sought to discredit reports linking the malware to the Kremlin.

If Russia is found to be connected to widespread hacking of US utilities, it will make it more difficult for Republican President-elect Donald Trump to soften anti-Russian sentiment on Capitol Hill, where hearings on hacking are scheduled next week. Rep. Peter Welch, a Democrat from Vermont, said the incident proves Obama's response was warranted. "This attack shows how rampant Russian hacking is. It's systemic, relentless, predatory," Welch said in a statement. "They will hack everywhere, even Vermont, in pursuit of opportunities to disrupt our country." The Washington Post first reported on the Vermont utility's malware discovery. The Rossiya state television channel said the Post provided no confirmation Russia was involved.

It said the Post report spoke only about the identification of malicious software code that Washington previously concluded had been used by the Russian intelligence services in the cyber attack on US political institutions. In a report released Thursday, Homeland Security and the FBI provided technical details about the tools and infrastructure they say Russian civilian and military intelligence services have used to compromise and exploit networks "associated with the US election as well as a range of US government, political and private sector entities." "This activity by the Russian civilian and military intelligence services is part of an ongoing campaign of cyber-enabled operations directed at the US government and its citizens," the report said.—AP

Obama boosted White House technology; Trump sees risks

'Trump leans towards old tech'

WASHINGTON: As Barack Obama began preparing to leave office, the first smartphone-toting US president ordered his team to upgrade the White House's aging technology for his successor. New computers were purchased and faster internet was installed. Not included in the modernization plans? A courier service. But that delivery method of a bygone era may be in for a comeback under Donald Trump. Despite his voracious use of Twitter, the president-elect appears to be leaning toward old tech to ensure the security of sensitive messages.

"It's very important, if you have something really important, write it out and have it delivered by courier, the old-fashioned way because I'll tell you what, no computer is safe," Trump told reporters Saturday in response to questions about Russia's alleged hacking of Democrats during the presidential election. Trump, who doesn't email or surf the internet, said days earlier that computers "have complicated lives very greatly." Trump's skepticism of some technology marks a sharp contrast from the president he'll replace on Jan 20.

Obama, who was a youthful 47 years old when he took office, carries a specially outfitted Blackberry, emails with a small number of friends and aides, and has received some of his daily security briefings on an iPad. He celebrated technological innovations at an annual science fair, created the job of chief technology officer in the White House and viewed technology as key to making the sprawling federal government more efficient and responsive to the public.

A much less frequent Twitter user than Trump, Obama let loose Sunday with a volley of tweets highlighting some of his accomplishments as president: boosting clean energy, bringing troops home, delivering "the longest streak of job growth in our history," passing a law to make health care affordable, reducing dependence on foreign oil and working "to reaffirm that all are created equal." But technology has also been a burden for Obama. Online sign-ups for his health care law were crippled by massive technical issues, resulting in one of the most embarrassing episodes of his presidency.

Tweet storms

National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden stole classified information that he leaked to journalists, revealing the Obama administration's bulk collection of millions of Americans' phone records, as well as US spying on some friendly foreign leaders. Trump, 70, rarely uses a computer and sifts through stacks of newspapers, magazines and printed articles to read the news. He panned candidates' reliance on data and technology in presidential campaigns, preferring to make decisions in part based on the reaction from audiences at his rallies.

WASHINGTON: In this file photo, President Barack Obama meets with President-elect Donald Trump in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington.—AP

While Trump's tweet storms are already legendary, he utters some of his messages out loud and leaves the actual typing to aides. Incoming White House press secretary Sean Spicer said he expects Trump to continue using Twitter and other social media sites as president, casting it as an effective way to communicate with Americans. "Absolutely, you're going to see Twitter," Spicer said Sunday on ABC's "This Week." "I think it freaks the mainstream media out - that he has this following of 45-plus million people that follow him on social media" and he "can have a direct conversation" with them.

Trump has shown some interest in technology since winning the White House. Billionaire tech investor Peter Thiel has been working with Trump's transition team and could serve as an adviser to the administration. Trump met with several Silicon Valley executives last month, telling them his administration was "here to help you folks do well." As Trump heads into the White House, some of the biggest questions surrounding his relationship with technology will involve security.

US intelligence agencies say Russia hacked the Democratic National Committee and a top aide to Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton during the election, exposing the vulnerabilities of systems in Washington. Revelations that Clinton used a personal email and private internet server during her four years as Obama's secretary of state highlighted the lax practices that exist in government. As a candidate, Trump called for an immediate review of US cyber defenses and vulnerabilities, though he has not detailed specific steps he plans to take to bolster cyber security and has not publicly accepted the intelligence community's conclusion that Russia was behind the election year hacking.

Nor has Trump outlined any changes in the way he expects the White House to use technology for day-to-day work. Bruce Schneier, a technology security expert, said Trump was right to question the safeguards that exist for protecting his own communications as president. "If the Russian spies want to get at his data, no computer is probably safe," said Schneier, a fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. "Everything is vulnerable." Of course, the courier system Trump suggests is hardly foolproof, either. After the US killed 9/11 mastermind Osama bin Laden, administration officials said they had gleaned crucial information on his whereabouts by tracking the al-Qaida leader's courier.—AP

Is humanoid robot Pepper practical?

SAN FRANCISCO: This photo shows Pepper the robot at Westfield Mall in San Francisco. —AP

SAN FRANCISCO: While merrily chirping, dancing and posing for selfies, a robot named Pepper looks like another expensive toy at a San Francisco mall. But don't dismiss it as mere child's play. Pepper embodies the ambitions of SoftBank Robotics, an Asian joint venture formed by a trio of major technology companies that's aiming to put its personable robots in businesses and homes across the US over the next few years. If the technology advances as Softbank Robotics hopes, Pepper could become a playmate, companion and concierge. It could eventually respond to voice commands to retrieve vital information, make reservations and control home appliances that are connected to the internet.

That's the theory, anyway. For now, Pepper is more amusing than practical, Forrester Research analyst JP Gownder says. For instance, Pepper has been directing shoppers to stores in the mall through text messages because it still isn't advanced enough to say them out loud. And Pepper still has trouble understanding what people are asking, requiring shoppers to type in their requests for mall directions on a tablet mounted on the robot's chest. SoftBank is trying to improve Pepper's capabilities by focusing first on the business market - retailers, hotels, auto dealerships and even hospitals. SoftBank hopes to use those environments to learn more about what consumers like and don't like about Pepper and, from that, teach it more tasks, said Steve Carlin, the venture's vice president for marketing and business development in North America.

Greetings in the mall

The recently launched test runs in Westfield Corp.'s malls in San Francisco and Santa Clara, California, mark the first time that Pepper has made an extended appearance in the U.S. The robots began appearing just before Thanksgiving and will stick around through mid-February. Carlin says about 300 to 500 people per day engaged with Pepper during its first month in the San Francisco mall. During a recent visit, kids flocked around the 4-foot-tall humanoid as it spoke in a cherubic voice that could belong to either a boy or girl.

Westfield views Pepper as a way to make shopping in the mall more entertaining and enjoyable at a time when people are increasingly buying merchandise online. Three Peppers are sprinkled in heavily trafficked areas around Westfield's San Francisco mall and the two more are in the Santa Clara center. If all goes well, Westfield also plans to bring Pepper to its New York mall at the World Trade Center and Garden State mall in Paramus, New Jersey. "We put her in our (human resources) system and have given her a name tag," says Shawn Pauli, senior vice president for Westfield.

Market ambitions

Pepper got its start two years ago in Japan before expanding into Europe. In those two markets, more than 10,000 Peppers are already operating in grocery stores, coffee shops, banks, cruise lines, railway stations and homes. Most of the robots are in businesses. SoftBank hasn't disclosed how many have been sold to consumers. Carlin acknowledges the US will be a tougher market to crack than Japan, where he says consumers tend to embrace new technology more quickly. —AP

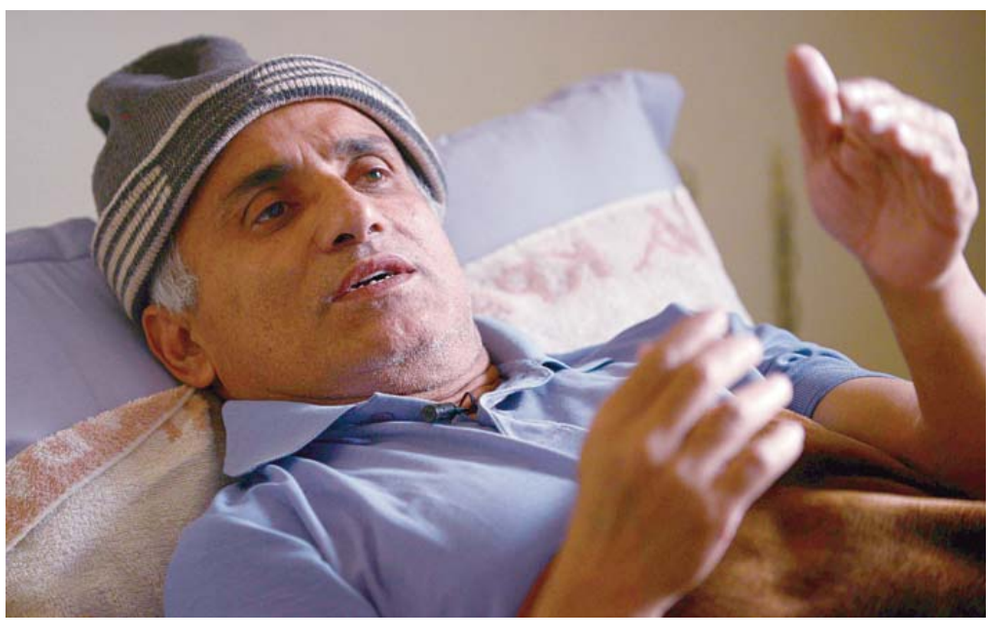
Hunger striking doctor demands better healthcare in Nepal

'It turned to be a profit making sector for the political parties'

KATHMANDU: Dr Govinda KC spent 22 days lying on a gurney in a hospital in Nepal's capital Kathmandu, but he was not a patient. The orthopaedic surgeon was on hunger strike. Dr KC has gone on hunger strike 10 times over the past four years in an attempt to pressure the government to improve healthcare in the impoverished Himalayan nation-and he is sure he will have to strike again. "The hospitals and medical institutions, they don't have proper infrastructure. They don't have adequate manpower, adequate equipment," said Dr KC from a hospital bed where he is recovering from his latest fast.

Nepal-a country of 28 million people-has only seven doctors, nurses and midwives, and 50 hospital beds, for every 10,000 people, according to the World Health Organization. The WHO recommends at least 34.5 skilled healthcare professionals per 10,000 people. The limited health sector was further strained after the devastating 2015 earthquake, which damaged nearly a third of public clinics and hospitals. More than 80 percent of the population live in rural areas, reliant on rudimentary state-run clinics, while hospitals are concentrated in cities-and are mostly private. "Private health care is linked to higher out-of-pocket payments, which leads to more people being impoverished as a result of health care," said Jos Vandelaer, country director for the WHO in Nepal.Health Minister Gagan Thapa said that while Nepal has made improvements, reducing child and maternal mortality, healthcare remained limited-and expensive. "You have one liver problem and you are back into poverty," he said. Something of a medical Robin Hood, Dr KC, 60, is well known in Nepal for his philanthropic work, travelling to some of the country's most remote communities to provide medical care and train local health workers. He lives in doctors' quarters at the back of the hospitals where he works and spends less than a third of his salary on himself, using most of it to buy drugs and basic equipment for his clinics. His only luxury is a 20-year-old television. He has travelled alone to help out in disaster zones around the world, offering his services to local hospitals in Haiti following the 2010 earthquake and the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan.

KATHMANDU, Madhyamanchal: Nepalese orthopaedic surgeon Govinda KC has a sample taken by a medical attendant as he lies in a hospital bed in Kathmandu. —AFP photos



KATHMANDU, Madhyamanchal: Nepalese orthopaedic surgeon Govinda KC gestures as he speaks during an interview with AFP as he lies in a hospital bed in Kathmandu.

Broken promises

Nepal has been plagued by political instability since it transformed from a Hindu monarchy to a federal state in 2008, two years after the end of the bloody decade-long Maoist insurgency. The revolving door politics has seen competing parties seek to retain influence by stacking loyalists within the bureaucratic structures-including in the health sector. A new constitution agreed last year included a pledge for universal healthcare, but the charter is yet to be implemented. Private hospitals and medical colleges have mushroomed, filling a hole left by the limited government-run health sector, and often owned by the politically well-connected.

"It is supposed to be a service-orientated sector, but it has turned to be [a] profit making sector for the political parties, for the politicians themselves," said Dr KC. Top of Dr KC's demands is an end to the political meddling that he says is putting business interests ahead of developing public health services. Training is particularly contentious, dominated by fee-based medical schools which critics say lack basic facilities and enrol too many students each year.

"There is no commercialization of the medical education sector in the big developed countries, whereas in our country it is so rampantly commercialized," said Dr KC, who trained in Bangladesh with residencies in Britain and Switzerland. Health minister Thapa said at least six members of the government's advisory health committee, which has consistently blocked the passing of a medical education bill to regulate doctor training, had links to private medical colleges.

The bill was one of the main demands Dr KC made in his latest strike, his longest yet, which ended in early December after he reached an agreement with the government. But the surgeon and his supporters have little confidence things will change quickly. "This is the tenth time that Dr Govinda KC has been in hunger strike, that means there has been nine times the agreement has been broken," said Dr Lijan Maharjan, part of his negotiating team. Lying on a hospital bed, a woollen hat pulled down low against the cold, Dr KC appeared resigned to another strike. "They won't let it happen if I don't," he said. —AFP

BALTIMORE COUNTY: In this file photo, Patrick Conway, director of the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation, poses for a photograph in the center's offices in Baltimore County, Md. —AP

Medicare launches revamp for heart attacks, hip fractures

WASHINGTON: Heart attacks and broken hips cause much suffering and worry as people grow older. This year, Medicare wants to start changing how it pays for treatment of these life-threatening conditions, to promote quality and contain costs. Beneficiaries and family members may notice a new approach. Hospitals and doctors in dozens of communities selected for large-scale experiments on this front are already gearing up. The goal is to test the notion that better coordination among clinicians, hospitals, and rehab centers can head off complications, prevent avoidable hospital re-admissions and help patients achieve more stable and enduring recoveries. If results back that up, Medicare can adopt the changes nationwide.

The cardiac and hip fracture experiments are the latest development in a big push under the Obama administration to reinvent Medicare, steering the program away from paying piecemeal for services, regardless of quality and cost. It's unclear whether Donald Trump as president will continue the pace of change, slow down or even hit pause. Trump's Health and Human Services nominee, orthopedic-surgeon-turned-congressman Tom Price, has expressed general concern that the doctor-patient relationship could be harmed by Medicare payment changes seeking to contain costs. And the Medicare division that designed the experiments - the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation - is itself under threat of being abolished because it was created by President Barack Obama's 2010 health care law.

Innovation center

Some outside groups, including AARP, worry that Medicare may be moving too fast and that focusing on cost containment could lead to beneficiaries being short-changed on rehab care. Innovation center director Patrick Conway, who also serves as Medicare's chief medical officer, is plowing ahead nonetheless. "Delivery system reform and paying for better care are bipartisan issues," Conway said. And quality ranks ahead of cost savings in evaluating any results, he added. The cardiac and hip fracture experiments focus on traditional Medicare, which remains the choice of nearly 7 in 10 out of Medicare's 57 million beneficiaries. The cardiac experiment involves both heart bypass and heart attack patients. The trials join similar ongoing tests involving surgery for hip and knee replacement, as well as care for cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy.

In the experiments, doctors, hospitals, and rehab centers get paid the regular Medicare rates. But hospitals are given responsibility for overall quality and cost, measured against benchmarks set by Medicare. If the hospital meets or exceeds the goals, it earns a financial bonus, which can be shared with other service providers. If the hospital falls short, it may have to pay the government money. "Now your doctor and hospital are working together to make sure they are well coordinated," said Conway. Under the old system, if a patient was discharged from the hospital after a heart attack, "they might hand you a piece of paper that said please follow up with your primary care doctor," Conway continued. "In this model, the hospital is going to have a strong incentive to make sure you follow up."

Widely recognized

Overall, about 168,000 Medicare beneficiaries are treated for heart attacks in a given year, while 48,000 undergo heart bypass surgery for clogged arteries and 109,000 have surgery for broken hips. Around the country, hospitals in 98 metro areas will be involved in the cardiac experiment. The hip surgery experiment involves 67 areas that are also part of Medicare's ongoing test with hip and knee replacements.

Areas in the cardiac test include Boston, as well as Akron, Ohio; Charleston, South Carolina; Fort Collins, Colorado; Utica, New York; and Yuma, Arizona. A smaller group of communities will be involved in a related experiment that pays hospitals for coordinating rehab care for heart patients. Although the benefits of cardiac rehab are widely recognized, only a small share of patients receives it. The hip fracture test includes the Miami, New York, and Los Angeles metro areas, as well as Austin, Texas; Bismarck, North Dakota; Flint, Michigan, and New Orleans.

Hospitals are not happy with the changes, though doctors have generally been supportive. A big concern for hospitals is that Medicare requires mandatory participation by all the facilities in areas selected for these tests. But Conway says that's likely to lead to even better results. The idea is that hospitals will watch each other's performance closely, and the ones that have room to improve will try to catch the high achievers. —AP

Q&A: How would GOP repeal health care law?

WASHINGTON: The stakes confronting Republicans determined to dismantle President Barack Obama's health care law were evident in one recent encounter between an Ohio congressman and a constituent. "He said, 'Now you guys own it. Now fix it. It's on your watch now,'" recalled GOP Rep. Pat Tiberi, chairman of a pivotal health subcommittee. "And this is a supporter." Republicans have unanimously opposed Obama's law since Democrats muscled it through Congress in 2010. They've tried derailing it scores of times but have failed, stymied by internal divisions and Obama's veto power.

With the Republicans controlling Congress and Donald Trump entering the White House on Jan 20, their mantra of repeal and replace is now a top-tier goal that the party's voters fully expect them to achieve - starting this week. But by unwinding the statute, the GOP would kill or recast programs that provide coverage to 20 million Americans who will be wary of anyone threatening their health insurance. And continuing Republican rifts over how to reshape the law, pay for the replacement and avoid destabilizing health insurance markets mean party leaders have a bumpy path ahead.

Q: What's first?

A: When the new Congress convenes Tuesday, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has said his chamber will begin debating a bare bones budget for next year. Most significantly, that would trigger a special procedure letting Republicans repeal much of Obama's law by a simple Senate majority. That's big because GOP senators will have only a 52-48 edge. The debate will also be a way for Republicans to signal quickly to voters that they're starting to erase the law, even as they save actually doing it for later.

Q: And then?

A: Lawmakers will work on legislation actually repealing much of Obama's law. The legislation is likely to erase the mandate that people buy insurance or face hefty IRS fines, which Republicans despise. Also facing elimination or reductions: taxes Obama imposed on upper-income people to finance the law, subsidies that help millions afford health care and the expansion of Medicaid health coverage to more lower-earning people. Federal aid to Planned Parenthood would be halted, reflecting GOP opposition to the right to abortion, one of the women's health services provided by the organization.

They hope to pass the bill by late spring, but its provisions probably won't take effect for up to four years to give lawmakers time to craft a replacement. This won't be easy. Many congressional Republicans are from states like Arizona, Nevada and Pennsylvania that have added about 10 million people to Medicaid and will oppose abandoning so many voters. Others will be nervous about voting to repeal the overall law without having replacement legislation to show constituents. Republicans also worry that during the transition to a new system, health insurers - already struggling in some states - might protect themselves by leaving some markets and boosting premiums. To ease that, GOP aides say they're considering including some kind of stabilization fund in the repeal bill to protect insurers against losses. That remains a work in progress.

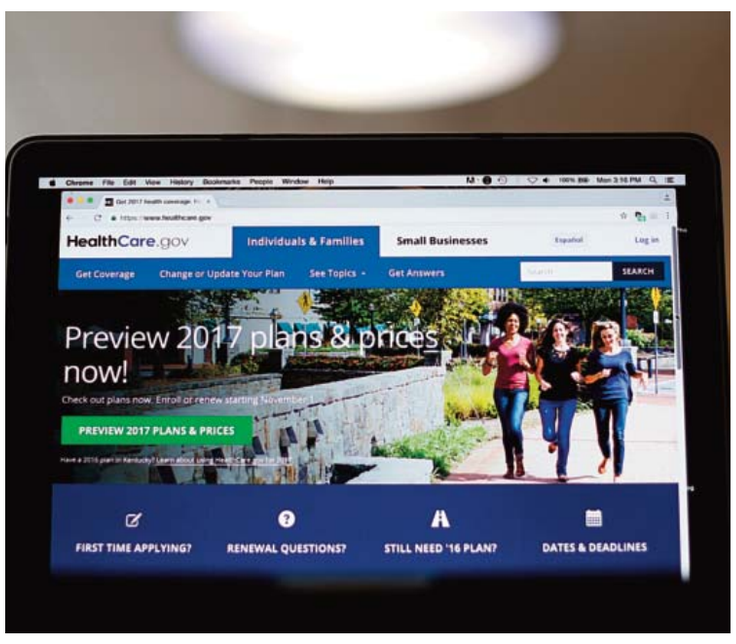
Q: Will the 20 million people now covered lose their benefits?

A: Some probably will, a byproduct of reducing Medicaid coverage and dropping the requirement that individuals buy insurance. That could be partly offset by some who'd purchase less expensive policies because the bill will probably let insurers drop coverage for some of the 10 services they now must provide, such as outpatient care and pregnancies. At a briefing for reporters, top House GOP aides said the goal is "universal access" to health benefits, as opposed to aiming for coverage of all Americans. They said Obama's law ended up with many policies that are too expensive and offer limited access to doctors, but the shift in focus to "access" suggests Republicans don't want to be measured by the number of people actually covered.

The Senate's new minority leader, Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said recently that repealing Obama's law without a replacement would mean "huge calamity from one end of America to the other." House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady, R-Texas, called claims that 20 million people will lose coverage a "big lie." He said Republicans will provide "an adequate transition period to give people piece of mind."

Q: What about the replacement legislation?

A: Its ingredients remain unclear. Trump, who's been vague, has proposed tax breaks to help people afford insurance, letting insurers sell policies across state lines and freeing states to decide how to spend Medicaid dollars. House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., has offered similar ideas plus transforming Medicare into a system that offers subsidies for buying policies. He'd tax - for the first time - the most expensive employer-provided health benefits. The GOP effort might involve several bills, with Republicans pushing measures through Congress as they're ready. And it will probably take years, which would put political pressure on the GOP. "The American people will want to see change overnight," said Rep. Kristi Noem, R-S.D. —AP



WASHINGTON: In this file photo, the HealthCare.gov 2017 website home page is seen in Washington. —AP

US scrambles to clear egg exports to bird flu-hit Korea

CHICAGO: US officials are urgently seeking an agreement with South Korea that would allow imports of American eggs so farmers can cash in on a shortage caused by the Asian country's worst-ever outbreak of bird flu. The two sides are negotiating over terms of potential shipments after South Korea lifted a ban on imports of US table eggs that it imposed when the United States grappled with its own bout of bird flu last year, according to the US Department of Agriculture. If an agreement is reached, US shipments could bring some relief to South Koreans who have faced soaring egg prices and rationing since the outbreak there began last month.

The egg shipments also would help US farmers cope with an oversupply that is depressing prices. The opportunity to profit by filling South Korea's shortfall with US eggs has sent brokers and traders into overdrive. About 26 million birds, more than a quarter of South Korea's poultry stock, have been culled to control the outbreak, and most of the birds have been egg-laying hens. Strains of bird flu, which can be spread to poultry by wild birds, have been detected across Asia and in Europe in recent weeks. Two people in China and one person in Hong Kong have died in the outbreaks.

The United States could reach agreement to open trade with South Korea as early as next week, said Mark Perigen, national supervisor for shell eggs for a division of the USDA. "Everybody's working hard to get it done," Perigen said in an interview on Friday, adding that USDA employees had worked during holiday vacations on the issue. "They're desperate for eggs over there, and the government realizes that," Perigen said. South Korea's embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a phone message seeking comment.

Glenn Hickman, chief executive of Hickman's Eggs in Arizona, has received calls from brokers searching for US eggs to ship to South Korea. "Everybody in Korea who needs eggs has Googled everybody in the world who might have eggs," Hickman said. "We're getting calls from brokers who have no idea even the right questions to ask us," he added. "It's just somebody who knows how to freight stuff from the US to Korea." With no agreement yet between the two countries, Hickman is asking employees to take contact information for the potential customers.

Our phone is blowing up

United States Egg Marketers, a cooperative of farmers that was established to export eggs, has received "numerous inquiries about this already, including from people who have never exported anything in their lives," said Eka Inall, the group's president. "Our phone is blowing up, our email is blowing up," she said. Last year, US food companies imported eggs from Europe after bird flu ravaged domestic chicken flocks and sent egg prices to record highs.

Since then, US prices have tumbled as farmers have ramped up production. The United States produced 7.44 billion table eggs in November, up 11.5 percent from a year earlier, and there were 312 million hens laying table eggs on Dec 1, up 8 percent from a year before, according to USDA. On Dec 26, the average price for a dozen large white US eggs was $1.17, down from a high of $2.88 in August 2015, according to market data firm Urner Barry.

"Current conditions in the US are definitely a motivating factor to get this thing done," Brian Moscogiuri, an Urner Barry egg analyst, said about US efforts to start shipments to South Korea. If South Korea begins importing US eggs, its residents may need to adjust to a different appearance of the food staple. Jim Sumner, president of the US Poultry and Egg Export Council, said many Koreans prefer brown colored eggs, while the United States mostly produces white eggs. "As they say, beggars can't be choosers," he said. —Reuters

PAKISTAN: A Pakistani health worker gives polio vaccine to a child in Quetta yesterday. —AP

Anti-polio drive kicks off in southwestern Pakistan

QUETTA, Pakistan: A Pakistani health official says a special five-day anti-polio drive is being launched in the capital of southwestern Baluchistan province after traces of polio virus were found in the sewer system. Syed Faisal Ahmed, the coordinator for Emergency Operation Centre in Quetta, said yesterday that some 400,000 children under age five will be immunized against the deadly virus. He said decision to launch the special drive was made after environmental samples in Quetta confirmed the presence of the virus. Ahmed said 1,345 teams will cover 39 local councils of the city amid tight security. Multiple anti-polio drives enabled Pakistan to announce last year that the virus had largely eliminated. —AP

Snap! Selfie-seeking tourist bitten by croc

BANGKOK: A French tourist was bitten by a crocodile inside a Thai national park as she tried to get close to the fearsome animal to take a selfie, an official said yesterday. The incident took place on Sunday afternoon in Khao Yai, a popular national park filled with dense jungle hiking trails and waterfalls three hours north of Bangkok. "She wanted to take selfie with the crocodile who was lying down near a stream," a park official told AFP, asking not to be named because he did not have the authority to speak to the media.

"It was startled and bit her on her on the leg." The official said two crocodiles had made their home on that particular section of the park for years with warning signs laid out. "I guess that she wanted to see it for real," he added. Local media posted pictures of park rangers dressed in camouflage carrying the 47-year-old victim strapped to a stretcher, a thick bandage wrapped around her knee.

Another shot showed a ranger pointing to a pool of blood close to a sign saying in Thai and English "Danger Crocodile No Swimming". The victim was taken to hospital for treatment and is expected to recover. Siamese crocodiles were once ubiquitous across South East Asia but their populations have been decimated in the last century by hunting and habitat loss. They are currently listed as critically endangered on the IUCN's red list. In Thailand there are just a handful of wild populations left in central and western national parks. Most tourists will only see them in crocodile parks, many of which have been criticized by animal rights groups for controversial feeding practices. —AFP

HUAY LAMTAKONG, Thailand: In this handout photo by Thai authorities of the Khao Yai National Park and taken on January 1, 2017, French national Muriel Benetulier (partially obscured) is tended to by Thai medics and Park Rangers in Thailand after she was bitten by a crocodile. —AFP

Concussions on the Brain: Pushing for more research on women

HARTFORD, Connecticut: Katherine Snedaker says she has had 20 concussions, the first three decades ago from a car accident when she was 16. But it wasn't until her son suffered a series of concussions in the sixth grade, around 2008, that she felt compelled to learn all she could about head injuries to help him recover. During her journey of learning, she has become a nationally known advocate for better research, medical care, and support for girls and women with brain injuries, including concussions.

She founded her nonprofit advocacy group PINK Concussions in 2013 in response to what she discovered was a lack of information and research on female concussions. She formed the group during a yearlong medical leave to treat breast cancer and while rebuilding her home, damaged by Superstorm Sandy.

Some studies show females suffer more concussions than males when playing similar sports. Doctors agree more research is needed on any gender differences and whether women experience more severe symptoms or take longer to recover. Most research has focused on men, especially dozens of former football players who died from a degenerative brain disease that has been linked to concussions. "There's a lot we don't know," said Snedaker, 49, a licensed clinical social worker who gave up her regular job to advocate full-time at her own expense. "What I wanted to do was educate the public."

Snedaker has sought to keep a light shining on the need for more research, better medical care, and more community support for girls and women with concussions and other brain injuries suffered through sports, military service, domestic violence and accidents. She has organized several conferences that have brought together medical experts and military leaders she has met, done dozens of media interviews, and launched a website - Pink Concussions - to share information. In March, Pink Concussions will hold its second annual international summit on female concussions and traumatic brain injuries; it will be hosted by the National Institutes of Health.

"Katherine has done a lot of great work as an activist," said Dr Zachary Kerr, an assistant professor in exercise and sport science at the University of North Carolina and former director of the NCAA's injury surveillance program. "There are all these different theories out there about why concussions are higher in women than in men, but we really don't know why," he said. "We need more data collection. We need more surveillance at all levels. We need to get more information out there." Snedaker, Kerr and other advocates and doctors are optimistic about a $30 million, three-year study being done by the NCAA and the Department of Defense. The study is billed as the largest ever of concussion in sports, involving more than 25,000 student athletes. Preliminary results are expected to be released in late January.

International guidelines

Dr Brian Hainline, chief medical officer of the NCAA, said it also will be the largest-ever study of female concussions. The results may lead to sports rule changes and international guidelines on prevention and treatment, he said. A major impetus to Snedaker's activism has been hearing stories in support groups and in surveys from women and girls suffering from concussions. Many shared similar stories of not healing as fast as people thought they should, doctors minimizing their conditions and feeling isolated while recovering at home, she said.

"These girls had been cycled through the medical community and kind of spit out," Snedaker said. "What totally got me were these women who were isolated and alone." Snedaker said she suffered her concussions in a series of accidents, but has been lucky not to develop permanent symptoms. Other sources of her concussions include a car accident in college, being hit by a lacrosse ball, hitting her head on a door frame and slamming her head against a wall while flopping onto a bed, she said. "These are all total screw-up accidents," she said. —AP

China starts 2017 engulfed by smog, issues pollution alerts

BEIJING: Beijing and other cities across northern and central China were shrouded in thick smog yesterday, prompting authorities to delay dozens of flights and close highways. The Beijing Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau extended an "orange alert" for heavy air pollution for three more days. Beijing's smog had initially been forecast to lift by yesterday. The "orange alert" is the third level, preceding a "red alert," in China's four-tiered warning system. On Sunday, 25 cities in China issued "red alerts" for smog, which triggers orders to close factories, schools and construction sites.

Air pollution readings in northern Chinese cities were many times above the World Health Organization-designated safe level of 25 micrograms per cubic meter of PM 2.5, the tiny, toxic particles that damage lung tissue. The readings exceeded 400 by yesterday afternoon in several cities in the northern province of Hebei. Expressways in Shijiazhuang, Hebei's capital, and more than a half-dozen other cities there were temporarily closed, according to notices posted on the official microblog of the province's traffic police.

In the central city of Zhengzhou, authorities ordered students from kindergarten through high school to stay home today because of the smog. More than 300 flights out of the northern city of Tianjin were canceled Sunday due to poor visibility. Authorities have deployed teams of inspectors to check on polluting factories, reports said. China has long faced some of the worst air pollution in the world, blamed on its reliance of coal for energy and factory production, as well as a surplus of older, less efficient cars on its roads. Researchers at Germany's Max Planck institute have estimated that smog has led to 1.4 million premature deaths per year in China, while the nonprofit group Berkeley Earth in California has had a higher figure, 1.6 million. —AP

BEIJING: This combo shows buildings on a polluted day in Beijing on January 1, 2017 (top) and on a clear day on December 23, 2016 (bottom). —AFP

Pastamania Kuwait launches 'Doughworkz' concept for kids

Pastamania Kuwait is pleased to announce the launch of 'Doughworkz' for kids - an edutainment (education with entertainment) concept specially designed for learning through fun activities and a hands on simulation in pizza making.

Schools can register for 'Doughworkz' from all kids aged between 4 to 12 years of age. The session highlights include an introduction to a world of Italian cuisine, theoretical fun learning sessions and a live demonstration and live simulation into pizza making for the kids.

The children not only develop key motor skills but also have very interactive sessions under the guidance of our team of expert Doughworkz ambassadors. A typical session concludes in 2.5 hours and the children feast on their freshly baked pizza and all kids are awarded a return gift which includes goodies and a certificate of participation.

Speaking on the launch of Doughworkz- Ahmed Al Ghannam - the Chairman of KAPICO group - "The Doughworkz program is designed to provide knowledge to children in an environment of fun, learning and away from the regular classroom concept of education."

Pradeep Handa the CEO and Vice Chairman of KAPICO Group said: "Doughworkz by Pastamania is a unique program which not only provides hands on pizza making live simulation but also helps in developing social and team work skills. I am sure that this will be a thoroughly enjoyable experience for children of all ages." The Doughworkz program is also available for family bonding sessions, private birthday parties and corporate team building sessions.

Pastamania is the leading Italian casual dining concept specializing in Pasta and Pizza and all things Italian. Making humble beginnings in 2002; today across 10 locations in Kuwait and increasing footprints steadily across the region. The menu features mouth-watering appetizers, traditional Italian pastas and pizzas, delectable salads and authentic Italian desserts, in addition to a whole range of beverages to choose from.

Christmas celebrated with gaiety in ICSK Khaitan

Christmas, the festival of joy, hope, peace and fun was celebrated in ICSK Khaitan with great vigor. Christmas is a time of rejoicing and sharing. The whole world waits for the chilly days of December when they decorate their homes, public places and have carols and gatherings.

Students and staff at ICSK Khaitan also celebrated Christmas with great fervor and gaiety. Assemblies were conducted by students of different levels of the school. Choir sang carols of renown. Skits relevant to the season were performed. Santas of ICSK who were dressed in red and white clothes, carried bags full of goodies and distributed candies and gifts. Children were overjoyed seeing Santa and his goodies, coming in to the music of Jingle Bells. The students enthralled the audience by enacting the scene of Nativity. They emphasized the importance of caring and sharing and spreading goodness all around. The children spread cheer with their smiles and lovely attires.

K G Shirsath, the principal, expressed his delight on seeing such enthusiasm in the children who brought the spirit of Christmas to life. He said that happiness lies in celebrating together as a family. He also gave the message of Christmas and wished all a 'Merry Christmas' and to be ready to welcome the New Year.

Tamdeen Group's 'My Book My Friend' 2016 reading session culminated with Amal Al-Randi's creative workshop

'My Book My Friend', a CSR reading program by Kuwait's Tamdeen Group, hosted its last reading session for 2016 in association with the well-known Kuwaiti author Amal Al-Randi. The Arabic reading session was held on December 17 at Make Meaning, 360 Mall, for children between 9 and 13 years old. As the finale for the season, the eminent author organized a special workshop for children on 'How to Write a story', with the aim to get children to freely explore their imaginative story-telling skills.

Muath Al-Roumi, General Manager, Corporate Marketing, Tamdeen Group, said: "While writing and reading skills are closely connected, writing is an often overlooked tool for improving reading skills and content learning. Studies have shown that the process of creating content prompts children to be more thoughtful and engaged when reading text produced by others."

Roumi further added: "We are glad to associate our last reading session of the year with Amal Al-Randi as she has been strongly advocating the importance of reading within the region. Our initiative is impelled by the directives of Tamdeen group's responsibility towards future generations to spread knowledge and encourage reading among community members as a daily habit. 'My Book My Friend' is focused on creating a community of readers in Kuwait."

Randi, who has won Kuwait's children's literature award, has been strongly supporting reading programs and praises the efforts of national organizations in developing a reading culture within the region.

The 2017 'My Book My Friend' reading program will further offer children the space and opportunity to enjoy reading and story-telling sessions with their parents. The program will further aim to challenge not only children but also their parents in fostering a culture of reading which will see Kuwait grow even greater in the years to come.

Qatar Airways introduces new luxury brand to premium on-board experience

Qatar Airways has launched a new partnership with The White Company to provide exclusively-designed sleepwear to First and Business Class passengers travelling across the airline's global network. In line with Qatar Airways' commitment to provide a world-leading premium service, the newly-designed sleeper suits are bespoke for First Class passengers and are individually styled for men and women. The men's sleeper suit is designed in a charcoal grey marl, and the women's in a contemporary, mid-grey, both are made of 100 per cent cotton to provide the highest level of comfort. Both sets come with matching luxury cotton slippers, with a faux fur interior sole for extra warmth and comfort.

The premium passenger experience will be further enriched throughout the brands' three year partnership with the addition of new sleeper suits in a range of fresh colors and styles. First Class passengers travelling on board Qatar Airways A380 flights to London, Bangkok, Paris, Sydney, and Guangzhou can enjoy the new luxury sleeper suits exclusively designed for Qatar Airways. The new sleepwear will debut in Business Class in early 2017.

Qatar Airways' Senior Vice President of Customer Experience, Rossen Dimitrov, said: "This exciting three-year partnership with The White Company will provide our premium passengers with exclusively-designed sleepwear offering stylish comfort throughout their journey. This partnership with an iconic global brand, known for providing sumptuous style and beautifully designed products, perfectly complements the bespoke premium experience created on board for our travellers."

The White Company is known globally for its stylish home wear, designer-quality white linens, home accessories and clothing and nightwear. Chrissie Rucker, MBE, Founder of The White Company, said: "We are delighted to partner with Qatar Airways on our first foray into airline sleepwear. At The White Company we are proud of our commitment to supply our customers with the highest quality products and saw in Qatar airways a shared value. We look forward to a long and successful partnership."

Qatar Airways recently launched new designer amenity kits from BRICS featuring products from Italy's Castello Monte Vibiano Vecchio, the environmentally friendly olive oil company, including lip balm, hydrating facial mist and City Cream anti-ageing moisturizer in Business Class, with the added Night recovery cream for First Class kits.

Dar Lulua Productions announced its first movie of the year 'Al-Atar' which is a classic family oriented comedy spoken in classical Arabic. It was shot in settings reminiscent to classical comedy films of the 1960s, and attempts to deliver a valuable message in a sophisticated yet cheerful way, Dar Lulua Productions Director Sheikha Intisar Al-Sabah said in a statement.

The higher committee for academic societies' elections at Kuwait University hosted a ceremony recently to honor students' lists which followed academic regulations during students' elections held for the 2016/2017 academic year.

OSN MOVIES ACTION

00:00 Contraband
02:00 The Man With The Iron Fists
03:45 Jurassic Hunters
05:30 Con Air
07:30 Taken 3
09:30 Heatstroke
11:15 Hidalgo
13:30 Con Air
15:30 Taken 3
17:30 Ladder 49
19:30 Avengers: Age Of Ultron
22:00 The Covenant

ANIMAL PLANET HD

00:50 Big Fish Man
01:45 Bondi Vet
02:10 Bondi Vet
02:40 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
03:35 Tanked
04:25 Tigers Attack
05:15 Gator Boys
06:02 Big Fish Man
06:49 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
07:36 Night
08:00 Night
08:25 Groomer Has It
09:15 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
10:10 Mutant Planet
11:05 Tanked
12:00 Groomer Has It
12:55 Bondi Vet
13:20 Bondi Vet
13:50 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
14:45 Gator Boys
15:40 Mutant Planet
16:35 Tanked
17:30 Tigers Attack
18:25 Big Fish Man
19:20 Lone Star Law
20:15 Tanked
21:10 Tigers Attack
22:05 Mutant Planet
23:00 Lone Star Law
23:55 Gator Boys

crime & investigation network

00:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
01:00 Britain's Biggest Heists
02:00 I Escaped My Killer
03:00 Homicide Hunter
04:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
05:00 Britain's Biggest Heists

CONTRABAND ON OSN MOVIES ACTION

06:00 I Escaped My Killer
07:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
08:00 Evil Up Close
09:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
10:00 Homicide Hunter
11:00 Frenemies
11:30 Frenemies
12:00 Frenemies
12:30 Frenemies
13:00 Frenemies
13:30 Frenemies
14:00 Frenemies
14:30 Frenemies
15:00 Evil Up Close
16:00 The First 48
17:00 Homicide Hunter
18:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
19:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
20:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
21:00 The First 48
22:00 Evil Up Close
23:00 Killers: Behind The Myth

COMEDY CENTRAL

00:00 The Half Hour
00:25 South Park
00:50 South Park
01:15 Tosh.0
01:40 Inside Amy Schumer
02:05 South Park
02:30 South Park
03:00 Workaholics
03:25 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
04:15 Key And Peele
04:40 Impractical Jokers
05:05 Ridiculousness
05:30 Tattoo Disasters
05:55 Tattoo Disasters
06:20 Catch A Contractor
07:15 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
08:05 Impractical Jokers
08:30 Ridiculousness
08:55 Tosh.0
09:20 Key And Peele
09:45 Workaholics
10:10 The It Crowd
10:35 Ridiculousness
11:00 Tattoo Disasters
11:25 Tattoo Disasters
11:50 Idiotsitter
12:15 Workaholics
12:40 The It Crowd
13:05 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
13:55 Ridiculousness
14:20 Tattoo Disasters
14:45 Tattoo Disasters
15:10 Idiotsitter
15:35 Ridiculousness
16:00 Impractical Jokers
16:30 Workaholics
16:55 Tosh.0
17:25 Workaholics
17:50 Frankenfood
18:15 Frankenfood
18:39 The It Crowd
19:04 Tattoo Disasters
19:27 Tattoo Disasters
19:50 Idiotsitter
20:13 Impractical Jokers
20:37 Ridiculousness
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 The Meltdown With Jonah And Kumail
21:54 The Jim Gaffigan Show
22:18 Broad City
22:42 Broad City
23:05 Tosh.0
23:30 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah

Discovery Family

00:30 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
01:20 Don't Drive Here
02:10 David Baddiel On The Silk Road
03:00 Destroyed In Seconds
03:25 Destroyed In Seconds
03:50 Beyond Survival With Les Stroud
04:40 How It's Made
05:05 How It's Made
05:30 Storm Chasers
06:20 Mythbusters
07:00 Do You Know?
07:15 Kenny The Shark
07:35 Awesome Adventures
08:00 K9 Cops
08:45 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
10:20 Mythbusters
11:10 Storm Chasers
12:00 K9 Cops
12:50 Beyond Survival With Les Stroud
13:40 How It's Made
14:05 How It's Made
14:30 Storm Chasers
15:15 Mythbusters
16:00 Kenny The Shark
16:20 Awesome Adventures
16:45 Do You Know?
17:00 Lost & Found With Mike & Jesse
17:50 Guinness World Records Smashed UK
18:40 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Mythbusters
21:10 Lost & Found With Mike & Jesse
22:00 Guinness World Records Smashed UK
22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
23:15 Destroyed In Seconds
23:40 Beyond Survival With Les Stroud

ID X

00:40 The Perfect Murder
01:30 A Crime To Remember
02:20 Killer Instinct With Chris Hansen
03:10 Las Vegas Law
04:00 The Perfect Murder
04:48 I Almost Got Away With It
05:36 Tabloid With Jerry Springer
06:24 Suspicion
07:12 Blood Relatives
08:00 Nowhere To Hide
08:50 Nowhere To Hide
09:40 Nowhere To Hide
10:30 Nowhere To Hide
11:20 Nowhere To Hide
12:10 Momsters: When Moms Go Bad
12:35 Momsters: When Moms Go Bad
13:00 I'd Kill For You
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:40 Tabloid With Jerry Springer
15:30 Suspicion
16:20 Blood Relatives
17:10 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
18:00 I'd Kill For You
18:50 I Almost Got Away With It
19:40 Tabloid With Jerry Springer
20:30 Suspicion
21:20 Blood Relatives
22:10 Disappeared
23:00 Judgment Day: Prison Or Parole
23:50 I Am Homicide

Disney Channel HD

00:10 Hank Zipzer
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Violetta
01:45 The Hive
01:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:40 Hank Zipzer
03:05 Binny And The Ghost
03:30 Violetta
04:15 The Hive
04:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
05:10 Hank Zipzer
05:35 Binny And The Ghost
06:00 Violetta
06:45 The Hive
06:50 Mouk
07:00 Dog With A Blog
07:25 Dog With A Blog
07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
07:55 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
08:20 Elena Of Avalor
08:45 Star Darlings
08:50 Liv And Maddie
09:15 Jessie
09:40 Jessie
10:05 Jessie
10:30 Frenemies
12:00 The 7D
12:10 Austin & Ally
12:35 Austin & Ally
13:00 Liv And Maddie
13:25 Liv And Maddie
13:50 Shake It Up
14:15 Shake It Up
14:40 Dog With A Blog
15:05 Dog With A Blog
15:30 Good Luck Charlie
15:55 Good Luck Charlie
16:20 Girl Meets World
16:45 Girl Meets World
17:10 Elena Of Avalor
17:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
18:00 The Next Step
18:25 Descendants Wicked World
18:30 Liv And Maddie
18:55 Star Darlings
19:00 Bunk'd
19:25 Disney Mickey Mouse
19:30 Austin & Ally
19:55 Descendants Wicked World
20:00 Backstage
20:25 Tsum Tsum Shorts
20:30 Elena Of Avalor
20:55 Best Friends Whenever
21:20 Jessie
21:45 Jessie
22:10 Jessie
22:35 H2O: Just Add Water
23:00 Binny And the Ghost
23:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

Disney Junior

00:20 Henry Hugglemonster
00:35 The Hive
00:45 Loopdidoo
01:00 Henry Hugglemonster
01:15 Calimero
01:30 Art Attack
01:50 Zou
02:05 Loopdidoo
02:20 Henry Hugglemonster
02:35 Calimero
02:50 Zou
03:05 Art Attack
03:30 The Hive
03:40 Loopdidoo
03:55 Henry Hugglemonster
04:10 Art Attack
04:35 Loopdidoo
04:50 Calimero
05:05 Art Attack
05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
05:45 Zou
06:00 Art Attack
06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
06:45 Loopdidoo
07:00 Zou
07:15 Calimero
07:30 Loopdidoo
07:45 Henry Hugglemonster
08:00 Minnie's Bow-Toons
08:05 PJ Masks
08:15 Goldie & Bear
08:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
08:45 Miles From Tomorrow
08:55 Sofia The First
09:20 Doc McStuffins
09:35 Goldie & Bear
09:50 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
10:00 PJ Masks
10:15 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
10:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
10:35 Sofia The First
11:00 Sofia The First
11:30 Doc McStuffins
11:55 Doc McStuffins
12:20 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
12:50 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
13:15 Gummi Bears
13:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
14:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
14:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
15:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
15:30 Little Mermaid
15:55 Unbungalievable
16:00 Miles From Tomorrow
16:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
16:55 The Lion Guard
17:20 Goldie & Bear
17:50 PJ Masks
18:15 Sofia The First
18:40 Doc McStuffins
19:05 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
19:30 Little Mermaid
20:00 Sofia The First
20:30 Sofia The First
21:00 Unbungalievable
21:05 Goldie & Bear
21:35 Miles From Tomorrow
22:00 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
22:25 Gummi Bears
22:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons
23:00 Doc McStuffins
23:30 Doc McStuffins
23:55 PJ Masks

Discovery Channel HD

00:20 Wheeler Dealers
01:10 Gold Rush
02:00 Deadliest Catch
02:50 Catching Monsters
03:40 Fat N' Furious: Rolling Thunder
04:30 The Liquidator
05:00 How Do They Do It?
05:30 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Deadliest Catch
06:50 Wheeler Dealers
07:40 Fat N' Furious: Rolling Thunder
08:30 The Weapon Hunter
09:20 The Liquidator
09:45 How Do They Do It?
10:10 How Do They Do It?
10:35 Gold Rush
11:25 Deadliest Catch
12:15 Catching Monsters
13:05 How Do They Do It?
13:30 Storage Hunters UK
13:55 The Liquidator
14:20 Alaska: The Last Frontier
15:10 The Weapon Hunter
16:00 Deadliest Catch
16:50 Fat N' Furious: Rolling Thunder
17:40 Wheeler Dealers
18:30 How Do They Do It?
18:55 How Do They Do It?
19:20 The Weapon Hunter
20:10 Storage Hunters UK
20:35 The Liquidator
21:00 Still Alive
21:50 Kings Of The Wild
22:40 Venom Hunters
23:30 Fat N' Furious: Rolling Thunder

Disney XD

06:00 Supa Strikas
06:25 Supa Strikas
06:50 Counterfeit Cat
07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
07:15 K.C. Undercover
07:40 Atomic Puppet
08:10 Lab Rats
08:35 Danger Mouse
09:00 Coopers Re-Activated
09:50 Kirby Buckets
10:20 Kirby Buckets
10:45 Gravity Falls
11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
11:35 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
12:00 Counterfeit Cat
12:30 K.C. Undercover
12:55 K.C. Undercover
13:20 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
13:45 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
14:40 Counterfeit Cat
14:50 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
15:05 K.C. Undercover
15:30 Atomic Puppet
15:55 Lab Rats
16:25 Danger Mouse
16:50 Future-Worm!
17:15 K.C Undercover: Tightrope Of Doom
18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
18:10 Supa Strikas
18:35 Supa Strikas
19:00 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
19:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
19:55 K.C. Undercover
20:20 Counterfeit Cat
20:45 Mighty Med
21:10 Pickle And Peanut
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Guardians Of The Galaxy
22:10 Ultimate Spider-Man
22:35 Boyster
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA

E! HD

00:50 Rob & Chyna
01:50 Hollywood Cycle
02:50 Hollywood Cycle
03:45 Hollywood Cycle
04:40 LA Clippers Dance Squad
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
06:25 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
06:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
07:25 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
07:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
08:25 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
08:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
09:20 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
09:50 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
10:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
10:45 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
11:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
11:40 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
12:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
12:35 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
13:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
13:30 Botched
14:20 Botched
15:15 WAGs Miami
16:15 WAGs Miami
17:10 WAGs Miami
18:05 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
19:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
20:00 Celebrity Style Story
20:30 Celebrity Style Story
21:00 Rob & Chyna
22:00 Rob & Chyna
23:00 E! News
23:15 Mariah's World

Food Network

00:00 Mystery Diners
00:30 Mystery Diners
01:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
02:00 Man Fire Food
02:30 Man Fire Food
03:00 Chopped
04:00 Guy's Grocery Games
05:00 Barefoot Contessa
05:30 Barefoot Contessa
06:00 The Kitchen
07:00 The Pioneer Woman
07:30 The Pioneer Woman
08:00 Siba's Table
08:30 Siba's Table
09:00 Anna Olson: Bake
09:30 Anna Olson: Bake
10:00 The Kitchen
11:00 The Pioneer Woman
11:30 The Pioneer Woman
12:00 Siba's Table
12:30 Siba's Table
13:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
13:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
14:00 Chopped
15:00 The Kitchen
16:00 Anna Olson: Bake
16:30 Anna Olson: Bake
17:00 Chopped
18:00 Iron Chef America
19:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
19:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
20:00 Man Fire Food
20:30 Man Fire Food
21:00 Man v Food
21:30 Man v Food
22:00 Iron Chef America
23:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
23:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives

ITV hd CHOICE

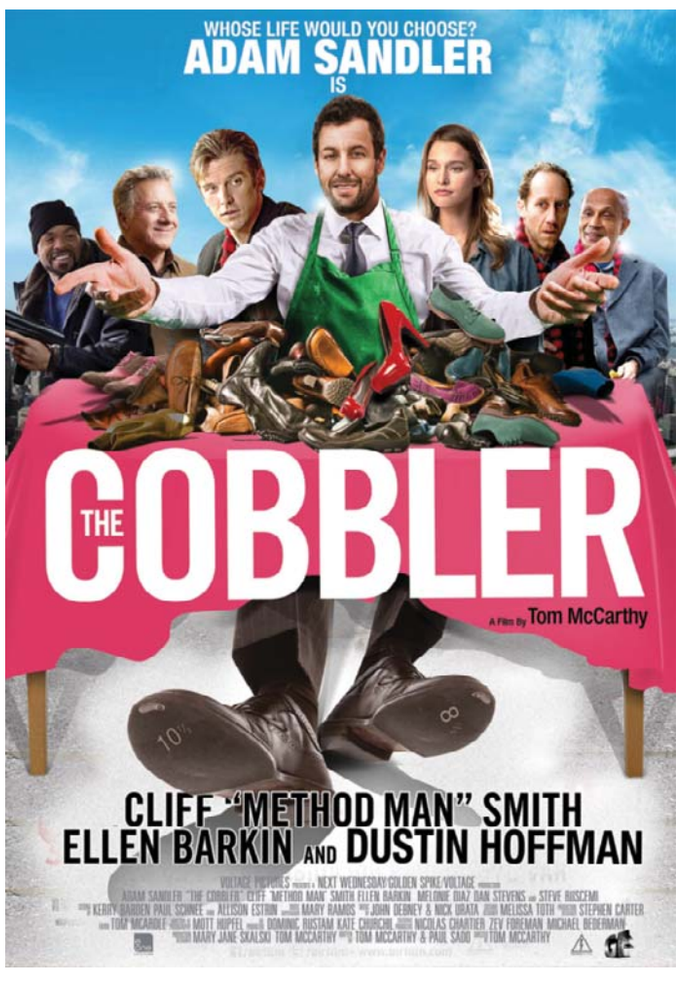
00:10 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Alphabetical
03:25 Paul O'grady's Favourite Fairy Tales
04:20 5 Star Family Reunion
05:15 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
06:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
07:05 Alphabetical
08:00 The Royal Variety Performance 2015
10:30 Royal Stories
11:00 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
11:50 Alphabetical
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Coronation Street
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
15:10 Alphabetical
16:00 Murdoch Mysteries
16:55 Murdoch Mysteries
17:50 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Coronation Street
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 Alphabetical
21:00 Murdoch Mysteries
21:55 Murdoch Mysteries
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Coronation Street
23:40 Coronation Street

H2 HD

00:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
01:00 How The States Got Their Shape
02:00 Ancient Impossible
03:00 America's Book Of Secrets
03:50 Ancient Aliens
04:40 Monster Quest
05:30 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
06:20 The Universe
07:10 The Universe
08:00 Ancient Impossible
09:00 America's Book Of Secrets
10:00 Ancient Aliens
11:00 Monster Quest
12:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
13:00 How The States Got Their Shape
14:00 Ancient Impossible
15:00 America's Book Of Secrets
16:00 Ancient Aliens
17:00 Monster Quest
18:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
19:00 How The States Got Their Shape
20:00 Ancient Impossible
21:00 America's Book Of Secrets
22:00 Ancient Aliens
23:00 In Search Of Aliens

History HD

00:20 Time Team
01:10 Aussie Pickers
02:00 Hunting Hitler
02:50 Storage Wars
03:15 American Pickers
04:05 Pawn Stars
04:30 Pawn Stars
05:00 Mountain Men
06:00 Swamp People
06:50 Ax Men
07:40 Counting Cars
08:05 Counting Cars
08:30 Storage Wars Texas
08:55 Ultimate Wheels
09:45 Ultimate Wheels
10:35 Counting Cars: Best Of
11:00 Mountain Men
11:50 Mountain Men



THE COBBLER ON OSN MOVIES HD

BLUE STREAK ON OSN MOVIES COMEDY HD

12:40 Mountain Men
13:30 Mountain Men
14:20 Mountain Men
15:10 Mountain Men
16:00 Mountain Men
16:50 Mountain Men
17:40 Hunting Hitler
18:30 Aussie Pickers
19:20 Ax Men
20:10 American Pickers
21:00 Mountain Men
21:50 Ozzy & Jack's World Detour
22:40 Ozzy & Jack's World Detour
23:30 American Pickers

NAT GEO people HD

00:10 Home Strange Home
01:00 Around The World In 80 Dishes
01:50 Around The World In 80 Dishes
02:40 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
03:05 Valentine Warner Eats Scandinavia
03:30 Miguel's Feasts
03:55 The Food Files
04:20 The Food Files
04:45 Fusion Forager
05:35 What's For Sale?
06:00 What's For Sale?
06:25 My Restaurant In India
06:50 Around The World In 80 Dishes
07:40 Around The World In 80 Dishes
08:30 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
08:55 Valentine Warner Eats Scandinavia
09:20 Miguel's Feasts
09:45 The Food Files
10:10 The Food Files
10:35 Fusion Forager
11:25 What's For Sale?
11:50 What's For Sale?
12:15 My Restaurant In India
12:40 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
13:05 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
13:35 Street Food Around The World
14:00 Street Food Around The World
14:30 Wineroads
14:55 Great Escapes
15:25 Miguel's Feasts
15:50 The Food Files
16:20 The Food Files
16:45 Ariana's Persian Kitchen
17:15 My Dubai
17:40 What's For Sale?
18:10 What's For Sale?
18:35 Food School
19:05 Great Escapes
19:30 Miguel's Feasts
20:00 The Food Files
20:25 The Food Files
20:50 Ariana's Persian Kitchen
21:15 My Dubai
21:40 What's For Sale?
22:05 What's For Sale?
22:30 Food School
22:55 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
23:20 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
23:45 Street Food Around The World

National Geographic Channel HD

00:10 The Border
01:00 Highway Thru Hell
02:00 Dirty Rotten Survival
02:55 Continent 7: Antarctica
03:50 The Border
04:45 Born To Ride
05:40 Access 360 World Heritage
06:35 Live Free Or Die
07:30 Highway Thru Hell
08:25 Bad Trip
09:20 Born To Ride
10:15 Years Of Living Dangerously
11:10 Continent 7: Antarctica
12:05 Air Crash Investigation
13:00 Bad Trip
14:00 Highway Thru Hell
15:00 Live Free Or Die
16:00 Years Of Living Dangerously
17:00 Continent 7: Antarctica
18:00 Air Crash Investigation
19:00 Live Free Or Die
20:00 Years Of Living Dangerously
20:50 Continent 7: Antarctica
21:40 Air Crash Investigation
22:30 Live Free Or Die
23:20 Access 360 World Heritage

NAT GEO WILD HD

00:20 Amazonia's Giant Jaws
01:10 Man V. Monster
02:00 The Phantom Cat
02:50 Savage Kingdom
03:45 Ultimate Animal Countdown
04:40 World's Wildest Encounters
05:35 The Phantom Cat
06:30 Savage Kingdom
07:25 Ultimate Animal Countdown
08:20 World's Wildest Encounters
09:15 Going Wild
10:10 Monster Fish
11:05 David Attenborough's Rise Of Animals
12:00 Catching Giants
12:55 Black Mamba: Kiss Of Death
13:50 Savage Kingdom
14:45 Ultimate Animal Countdown
15:40 World's Wildest Encounters
16:35 World's Deadliest
17:30 Monster Fish
18:25 Natural Born Monsters
19:20 Ultimate Animal Countdown
20:10 World's Wildest Encounters
21:00 World's Deadliest
21:50 Monster Fish
22:40 Natural Born Monsters
23:30 Catching Giants

OSN MOVIES DRAMA

01:00 The Reckoning
03:00 You're Not You
05:00 Touched With Fire
07:00 Fast Girls
09:00 Rosewater
11:00 Touched With Fire
13:00 The Reckoning
14:30 Jappeloup
17:00 Rosewater
19:00 Oliver's Deal
21:00 Lullaby
23:00 Cold In July

OSN MOVIES HD

01:00 Pay The Ghost
03:00 The Cobbler
05:00 Barely Lethal
06:45 Woodlawn
09:00 Krampus
10:45 Hello Carter
12:15 The Dressmaker
14:15 Madoff Part 1
15:45 Madoff Part 2
17:15 Ride
19:00 Kindergarten Cop 2
21:00 Black Mass
23:15 Straight Outta Compton

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

00:00 Adventures Of A Pizza Guy
02:00 Forces Of Nature
04:00 Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey
06:00 National Security
08:00 Coneheads
10:00 Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey
12:00 Forces Of Nature
14:00 Overboard
16:00 Coneheads
18:00 Blue Streak
20:00 Cooties
22:00 Cyrus

OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL

01:00 Ronaldo
02:30 Masaan
04:30 Eight Men Out
06:30 The Express
09:00 Atlas Shrugged Part 2: The Strike
11:00 Ronaldo
13:00 God Help The Girl
15:00 Young Ones
17:00 Atlas Shrugged Part 2: The Strike
19:00 The Last Tycoon
21:00 Bus 657
23:00 American Sniper

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

00:45 Virus Attack The First Antivirus
02:15 Scooby-Doo! And The Beach Beastie
02:45 Blue Elephant 2
04:30 Daddy I'm A Zombie
06:00 Rugrats Go Wild
07:45 Egon And Donci
09:30 Rugrats In Paris: The Movie
11:15 Scooby-Doo! And The Beach Beastie
12:15 Blue Elephant 2
14:15 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
16:00 Savva
18:00 Rugrats In Paris: The Movie
20:00 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants
22:00 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
23:30 Savva

OSN MOVIES PREMIERE

00:15 Exeter
02:00 Draft Day
04:00 Murder, She Baked: A Chocolate Chip Cookie Mystery
06:00 Android Cop
08:00 Snow White And The Huntsman
10:15 All She Wishes
12:00 Stonehearst Asylum
14:00 My Stepdaughter
16:00 Snow White And The Huntsman
18:15 Lila & Eve
20:00 Break Point
22:00 American Heist

CLASSIFIEDS

Kuwait Times

TUESDAY, JANUARY 3, 2017

Kuwait CINEMA

KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (29/12/2016 TO 04/01/2017)

SHARQIA-1	
LA LA LAND	12:15 PM
SING	2:45 PM
LA LA LAND	5:00 PM
MOANA	7:30 PM
ESHTEBAK	10:00 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	12:05 AM
SHARQIA-2	
ASSASSIN'S CREED	12:30 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	3:00 PM
MOANA	5:30 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	8:00 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	10:30 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	1:00 AM
SHARQIA-3	
DANGAL -Hindi	12:45 PM
MOANA	4:00 PM
DANGAL -Hindi	6:15 PM
THE MONSTER	9:30 PM
THE MONSTER	11:30 PM
MUHALAB-1	
DANGAL -Hindi	12:15 PM
MOANA	3:30 PM
DANGAL -Hindi	6:00 PM
ESHTEBAK	9:15 PM
ESHTEBAK	11:15 PM
MUHALAB-2	
MOANA	11:30 AM
MOANA	1:45 PM
SING	4:00 PM
MOANA	6:15 PM
THE MONSTER	8:30 PM
THE MONSTER	10:30 PM
THE MONSTER	12:30 AM
MUHALAB-3	
ASSASSIN'S CREED	11:30 AM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	2:00 PM
PASSENGERS	4:30 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	7:00 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	9:30 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	12:05 AM
FANAR-1	
WITHIN	12:15 PM
THE MONSTER	2:15 PM
MOANA	4:15 PM
THE MONSTER	6:30 PM
WITHIN	8:45 PM
THE MONSTER	10:45 PM
WITHIN	12:45 AM
FANAR-2	
SING	12:00 PM
MOANA	2:30 PM
SING	4:45 PM
MOANA	7:15 PM
ESHTEBAK	9:45 PM
ESHTEBAK	11:45 PM
FANAR-3	
LA LA LAND	12:45 PM
GHOST SHIP	3:30 PM
LA LA LAND	5:30 PM
ESHTEBAK	8:00 PM
GHOST SHIP	10:00 PM
LA LA LAND	12:05 AM
FANAR-4	
ASSASSIN'S CREED	12:15 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	2:45 PM
PASSENGERS	5:15 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	7:45 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	10:15 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	12:45 AM
FANAR-5	
MOANA	11:30 AM
DANGAL -Hindi	2:00 PM
DANGAL -Hindi	5:15 PM
DANGAL -Hindi	8:30 PM
DANGAL -Hindi	11:45 PM
MARINA-1	
PASSENGERS	12:45 PM
MOANA	3:15 PM
MOANA	5:45 PM
MOANA	8:00 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	10:30 PM
NO THU+FRI+MON	
LA LA LAND	10:30 PM
THU+FRI+MON	
ASSASSIN'S CREED	1:00 AM
MARINA-2	
SING	12:00 PM
THE MONSTER	2:15 PM
SING	4:15 PM
ESHTEBAK	6:30 PM
THE MONSTER	8:30 PM
ESHTEBAK	10:30 PM
THE MONSTER	12:30 AM
MARINA-3	
ASSASSIN'S CREED	11:30 AM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	2:00 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	4:30 PM
PASSENGERS	7:00 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	9:15 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	11:45 PM
AVENUES-1	
THE MONSTER	12:00 PM
THE MONSTER	2:00 PM
13 DAYS	4:00 PM
THE MONSTER	6:00 PM
THE MONSTER	8:00 PM
THE MONSTER	10:00 PM
THE MONSTER	12:05 AM
AVENUES-2	
MOANA -3D- 4DX	12:15 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED -3D- 4DX	2:45 PM
MOANA -3D- 4DX	2:45 PM
MOANA -3D- 4DX	5:15 PM
PASSENGERS -3D- 4DX	7:45 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED -3D- 4DX	10:15 PM
PASSENGERS -3D- 4DX	10:15 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED -3D- 4DX	12:45 AM
PASSENGERS -3D- 4DX	12:45 AM
AVENUES-3	
DANGAL -Hindi	11:45 AM
ROGUE ONE:A STAR WARS STORY	3:00 PM
DANGAL -Hindi	5:45 PM
DANGAL -Hindi	9:00 PM
ROGUE ONE:A STAR WARS STORY	12:15 AM
AVENUES-4	
ASSASSIN'S CREED	11:30 AM
MOANA	2:00 PM
DANGAL -Hindi	4:15 PM
DANGAL -Hindi	7:30 PM
ESHTEBAK	10:45 PM
WITHIN	1:15 AM
360°- 1	
MOANA	11:30 AM
MOANA	1:45 PM
MOANA	4:00 PM
MOANA	6:30 PM
DANGAL -Hindi	9:00 PM
WITHIN	12:15 AM
360°- 2	
THE MONSTER	1:15 PM
THE MONSTER	3:15 PM
THE MONSTER	5:15 PM
13 DAYS	7:15 PM
THE MONSTER	9:15 PM
THE MONSTER	11:15 PM
THE MONSTER	1:15 AM

URGENTLY REQUIRED

A Leading Interior Design and Construction Company is looking for a self-motivated and skilled Site Engineer.

Candidates must possess the following requirements:

- B.Sc Civil Engineering
- Currently in Kuwait
- Knowledge of Kuwait market
- 5 years of experience in Kuwait
- Valid Kuwait Driving License
- Immediate Transfer of Visa
- Familiar in preparing Bill Of Quantity (BOQ) and Project Monitoring Software

Eligible candidates may send their CV's to:
info@mconceptkw.com

REQUIRED

Sales Engineer

For chemical and water proof company

- Experience minimum 3 years
- Have kuwaiti licence driving

Please send your CV:
positechq8@mail.com
Fax: 24817837

JOB VACANCY

A Leading Interior Design and Construction Company

Is looking for self-motivated and skilled individuals for the following posts :

Marketing/Sales Personnel

- Bachelor Degree in Marketing
- Must have sales experience in Interior Design and Construction Projects
- Minimum 3 years experience in Kuwait market
- Transferable Visa
- Valid Kuwait Driving License
- Fluency in Arabic and English
- Presentable (Female)

Full- Time Draftsman

- Capable of producing Interior Design and Architectural drawings
- Minimum 2 years experience in Kuwait
- Can create 2D and 3D design

Relevant skills:-

- AutoCAD 2D
- 3D MAX
- Autodesk Revit
- Adobe Photoshop
- SketchUp 3D

Eligible candidates that meet all the requirements may send their CV's to: info@mconceptkw.com

LOST

Lost British Passport by name Peter Brian Steveson, bearing passport No. 504707693, at the Kuwait Airport or Car Park on December 20th around 5 pm. If found please **call 66825077. (C 5252)**
1-1-2017

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SHEEMA ALTAF SAIN W/o ALTAF ABDUL WAHAB SAIN, holder of Indian Passport No. J3509095 and Civil ID No. 282102803398 want to change my name to SHEEMA BASHARAT FAZILI. Hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of SHEEMA BASHARAT FAZILI.

FOR SALE

PRADO 4 cylinder, Model GX-L 2005, Golden color (wheel Rim-CD-Rear A/C) good condition, no damage, 174000 km, Cash KD 3000. Call: 97800987.
(C 5251)
28-12-2016

For sell new white faux fur (artificial) coat size M and pre owned like new black leather coat size M made in Turkey **Tel. No: 55020291**
22-12-2016

ACCOMMODATION

For Filipino Bachelor ONLY near Big Jamiya Farwaniya. Available on December 25, Contact 66826412 or 97512782
22-12-2016

Flight Schedule

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

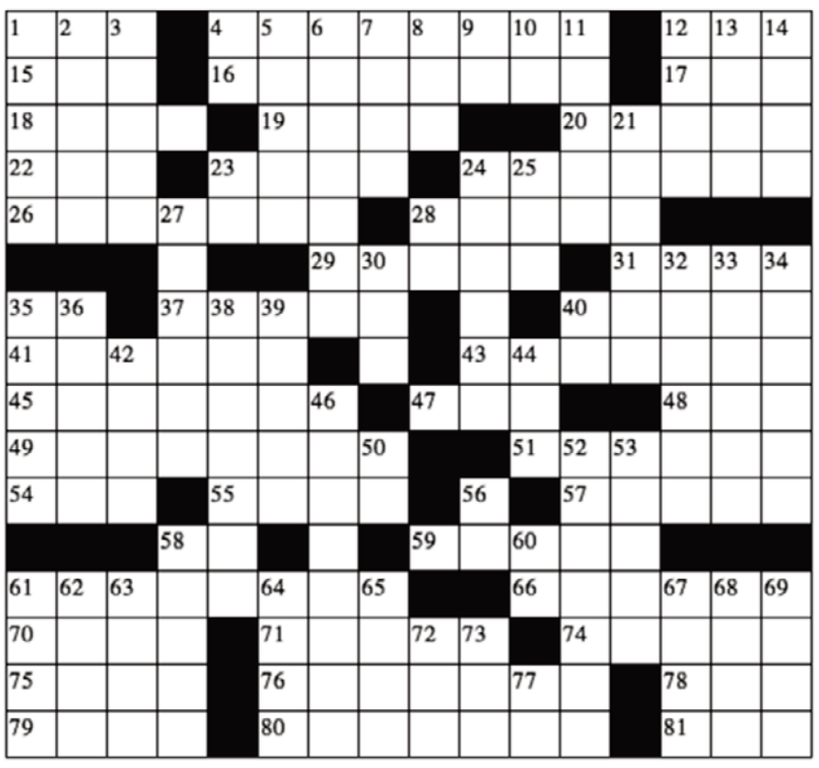
Arrival Flights on Tuesday 3/1/2017

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MSC	405	Sohag	00:05
KAC	776	Riyadh	00:20
KLM	411	Amsterdam/Dammam	00:20
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55
MSC	411	Asyut	01:00
QTR	1086	Doha	01:15
MEA	408	Beirut	01:45
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50
DLH	635	Doha	01:55
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00
AXB	395	Kozhikode	02:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:05
MEA	406	Beirut	02:10
MEA	400	Beirut	02:30
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55
KKK	6506	Istanbul	02:55
FDB	069	Dubai	03:05
RJA	644	Amman	03:05
MEA	412	Beirut	03:10
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10
KAC	358	Kochi	03:30
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30
KAC	206	Islamabad	03:45
KAC	1544	Cairo	03:55
LMU	5510	Cairo	04:00
KAC	418	Manila	04:25
UAE	873	Dubai	04:55
THY	6376	Istanbul	05:05
JZR	502	Luxor	05:10
JZR	529	Asyut	05:15
KAC	354	BLR	05:20
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20
KAC	344	Chennai	05:35
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:45
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55
KAC	364	Colombo	06:05
KAC	384	Delhi	06:05
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	06:25
BAW	157	London	06:40
PAL	668	Manila/Dubai	07:00
FDB	5061	Dubai	07:15
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50
KAC	302	Mumbai	08:20
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40
KAC	382	Delhi	08:45
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30
IRC	6507	Shiraz	09:30
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00
AVV	651	Asyut	10:10
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40
IRA	675	Lar	10:40
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00
KAC	774	Riyadh	11:05
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:15
MSC	403	Asyut	11:15
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55
QTR	8511	Doha	12:00
MSC	401	Alexandria	12:30
JZR	561	Sohag	12:40
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50
KAC	680	Dubai	12:55
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:10
GFA	221	Bahrain	13:15
BON	101	Sarajevo	13:30
KAC	564	Amman	13:40
KAC	788	Jeddah	13:45
KAC	792	Madinah	13:50
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10
FDB	059	Dubai	14:20
KAC	692	Muscat	14:30
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:30
KAC	542	Cairo	14:45
KAC	672	Dubai	14:50
KNE	529	Jeddah	14:55
KAC	618	Doha	15:00
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15
KAC	286	Dhaka	15:20
OMA	645	Muscat	15:35
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45
ABY	127	Sharjah	15:50
KAC	154	Istanbul	15:55
JZR	535	Cairo	16:10
QTR	1072	Doha	16:10
FDB	051	Dubai	16:25
CLX	784	Luxembourg	16:30
KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	16:35
RJA	640	Amman	16:55
KAC	118	New York	17:00
SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15
GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30
JZR	777	Jeddah	17:45
JZR	325	Al Najaf	17:50
NIA	251	Alexandria	17:55
UAE	875	Dubai	18:00
FDB	063	Dubai	18:10
JZR	177	Dubai	18:20
MSR	620	Cairo	18:30
QTR	1080	Doha	18:50
KAC	746	Dammam	19:10
ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30
KAC	502	Beirut	19:30
KAC	778	Riyadh	19:35
KAC	674	Dubai	19:45
KAC	514	Tehran	19:50
FDB	057	Dubai	19:50
KAC	168	Paris	19:55
MSR	618	Alexandria	20:05
OMA	647	Muscat	20:10
QTR	1088	Doha	20:35
KAC	562	Amman	20:40
DLH	634	Frankfurt	20:45
FDB	5053	Dubai	20:50
KAC	616	Bahrain	20:50
JAI	572	Mumbai	20:55
KAC	786	Jeddah	21:15
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20
MEA	402	Beirut	21:20
ALK	229	Colombo	21:25
KAC	172	Frankfurt	21:35
UAE	859	Dubai	21:40
GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45
QTR	1082	Doha	22:00
JZR	125	Bahrain	22:05
KLM	415	Amsterdam/Dammam	22:10
NIA	151	Cairo	22:10
ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15
AIC	987	Chennai/Hyderabad	22:25
PIA	239	Sialkot	22:35
JZR	241	Amman	22:45
JZR	185	Dubai	23:15
JZR	555	Alexandria	23:20
FDB	071	Dubai	23:45
JAI	574	Mumbai	23:50

Departure Flights on Tuesday 3/1/2017

Airlines	Flt	Route	TimeAIC
976	Goa/Chennai	00:05	
FDB	072	Dubai	00:40
ETD	920	Abu Dhabi	00:45
JAI	573	Mumbai	00:50
MSC	406	Sohag	01:00
BBC	144	Chittagong/Dhaka	01:30
KLM	411	Amsterdam	01:35
MSC	412	Asyut	01:55
KAC	417	Manila	02:00
THY	773	Istanbul	02:25
KAC	285	Dhaka	02:25
MEA	409	Beirut	02:45
DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:55
AXB	396	Kozhikode	02:55
ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
MEA	407	Beirut	03:10
MEA	401	Beirut	03:30
PGT	859	Istanbul	03:35
UAE	854	Dubai	03:45
KKK	6505	Istanbul	03:55
OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
THY	765	Istanbul	04:00
ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:10
MEA	413	Beirut	04:10
KAC	167	Paris	04:25
QTR	1077	Doha	04:40
LMU	5511	Cairo	05:00
QTR	1087	Doha	05:50
JZR	560	Sohag	06:05
FDB	070	Dubai	06:30
THY	6376	Dubai/Istanbul	06:35
UAE	874	Dubai	06:50
THY	771	Istanbul	06:50
KAC	153	Istanbul	06:50
JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
RJA	645	Amman	07:05
GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
KAC	541	Cairo	07:15
KAC	773	Riyadh	07:30
KAC	787	Jeddah	07:45
FDB	5062	Dubai	07:55
KAC	171	Frankfurt	07:55
KAC	563	Amman	08:00
KAC	679	Dubai	08:10
BAW	156	London	08:40
FDB	054	Dubai	08:55
KAC	791	Madinah	09:00
KAC	691	Muscat	09:00
KAC	117	New York	09:00
JZR	534	Cairo	09:15
KAC	101	London	09:35
ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
UAE	856	Dubai	09:55
KAC	671	Dubai	10:05
ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10
IRC	6508	Shiraz	10:30
FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
QTR	1071	Doha	10:40
SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00
AVV	652	Sohag	11:10
KAC	617	Doha	11:10
KAC	501	Beirut	11:15
IRA	674	Lar	11:40
RBG	554	Alexandria	11:55
SYR	342	Damascus	12:00
KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	12:05
JZR	776	Jeddah	12:05
MSC	404	Asyut	12:15
MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
GFA	214	Bahrain	13:25
QTR	8512	Doha	13:30
MSC	402	Alexandria	13:30
JZR	176	Dubai	13:45
MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:10
UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
JZR	324	Al Najaf	14:25
BON	102	Sarajevo	14:55
KAC	561	Amman	15:00
KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
KAC	785	Jeddah	15:15
PAL	669	Dubai/Manila	15:20
GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
KAC	513	Tehran	15:25
QTR	1079	Doha	15:40
SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
KAC	745	Dammam	16:00
KAC	777	Riyadh	16:00
JZR	554	Alexandria	16:10
ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KAC	357	Kochi	16:20
ABY	128	Sharjah	16:30
OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
JZR	240	Amman	17:15
FDB	052	Dubai	17:25
KAC	615	Bahrain	17:35
QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
KAC	343	Chennai	17:40
UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
RJA	641	Amman	17:55
KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	205	Islamabad	18:25
CLX	713	NBO	18:30
JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
FDB	064	Dubai	18:50
NIA	252	Alexandria	18:55
JZR	124	Bahrain	19:15
UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
QTR	1081	Doha	19:50
ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
KAC	361	Colombo	20:35
KAC	1543	Cairo	21:00
MSR	607	Luxor	21:05
OMA	648	Muscat	21:10
KAC	345	Ahmedabad	21:30
QTR	1089	Doha	21:35
DLH	634	Doha	21:35
DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
FDB	5054	Dubai	21:50
JAI	571	Mumbai	21:55
KAC	351	Kochi	22:00
KAC	783	Jeddah	22:10
ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:15
KAC	413	Bangkok	22:15
KAC	203	Lahore	22:15
MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
KAC	381	Delhi	22:45
KAC	301	Mumbai	22:45
UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
NIA	152	Cairo	23:10
QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
KLM	415	Dammam/Amsterdam	23:20
PIA	240	Sialkot	23:35

CROSSWORD 1479



ACROSS

1. Not divisible by two.
4. Semi-parasitic herb with purple or white or pink flowers.
12. A small drink of liquor.
15. Electronic equipment that provides visual images of varying electrical quantities.
16. A porch along the outside of a building (sometimes partly enclosed).
17. A reptile genus of Iguanidae.
18. A stick that people can lean on to help them walk.
19. The part of an organism that connects the head to the rest of the body.
20. A member of the Nahuatl people who established an empire in Mexico that was overthrown by Cortes in 1519.
22. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
26. A law officer having duties similar to those of a sheriff in carrying out the judgments of a court of law.
29. Fear resulting from the awareness of danger.
31. Divulge information or secrets.
35. Before noon.
37. The capital and largest city of Ghana with a deep-water port.
41. Any of various hard resins from trees of the family Dipterocarpaceae and of the genus Agathis.
43. A reminder of past events.
45. A tiny drop.
47. A conspicuous disparity or difference as between two figures.
48. A white linen liturgical vestment with sleeves.
49. Of or relating to or characteristic of Europe or the people of Europe.
51. Absence of the pupil in an eye.
54. Acute delirium caused by alcohol poisoning.
55. A town and port in northwestern Israel in the eastern Mediterranean.
57. A unit of dry measure used in Egypt.
59. Sports equipment that is worn on the feet to enable the wearer to glide along on wheels and to be propelled by the alternate actions of the legs.
61. A fragment of brick used as a weapon.
66. The sixth month of the Hindu calendar.
70. United States educator who introduced reforms that significantly altered the system of public education (1796-1859).
71. Jordan's port.
74. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
75. An instinctive motive.
76. In an exposed manner.
78. Hormone produced early in pregnancy by the placenta.
79. A small hard fruit.
80. A festival featuring African-American culture.
81. A unit of length of thread or yarn.

DOWN

1. English scholastic philosopher and assumed author of Occam's Razor (1285-1349).
2. Any of numerous low-growing cushion-forming plants of the genus Draba having rosette-forming leaves and terminal racemes of small flowers with scapose or leafy stems.
3. The Teutonic god of thunder.
4. The eleventh month of the civil year.
5. A seaport in northwestern Italy.
6. Relating to or like or divided into areolae.
7. The state of needing something that is absent or unavailable.
8. A liquid used for printing or writing or drawing.
9. A yellow trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
10. A state in midwestern United States.
11. Be going to.
12. Informal or slang terms for mentally irregular.
13. A distinct part that can be specified separately in a group of things that could be enumerated on a list.
14. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
21. A dead body that has been brought back to life by a supernatural force.
23. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
24. Abnormal dryness of the conjunctiva and cornea of the eyes.
25. Edible tuber of any of several yams.
27. Caught in European waters.
28. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
30. A boy or man.
32. German physicist who studied cathode rays (1862-1947).
33. British statesman and leader of the Labour party who instituted the welfare state in England (1883-1967).
34. African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
36. Any of a group of storm gods.
38. A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
39. A natural stream of water smaller than a river (and often a tributary of a river).
40. After noon.
42. (Roman mythology) Roman god of death.
44. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
46. The highest waterfall in Canada.
50. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
52. Chinese evergreen conifer discovered in 1955.
53. (Greek mythology) One of the mountain nymphs.
56. A radioactive transuranic element.
58. (of complexion) Blemished by imperfections of the skin.
60. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
62. Not widely known.
63. English prelate noted for his pessimistic sermons and articles (1860-1954).
64. A financial institution that accepts deposits and channels the money into lending activities.
65. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
67. Tropical woody herb with showy yellow flowers and flat pods.
68. Belonging to some prior time.
69. Kamarupan languages spoken in northeastern India and western Burma.
72. (in Scotland or Ireland) A mountain or tall hill.
73. An edge tool used to cut and shape wood.
77. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.

Yesterday's Solution

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

STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)

Patience is the only way to handle today's and tomorrow's busy events. There is an importance in protecting company secrets-perhaps new purchasing plans. Do not be surprised if, after you have begun a project, there are interruptions. Starts and stops may be commonplace. Pace yourself so there will be less need to redo. Listen to your intuition when you are in doubt. You may find yourself feeling temporarily blocked and unable to express yourself when in group situations. However, thinking things through with any of the projects, you will find answers. Refinement and relationships are the keys to emotional satisfaction now. Harmony and beauty are deeply satisfying. Marriage and partnerships could take center stage at this time.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

In the workplace you are beginning to really enjoy the opportunity to spread your wings. This is a time of experimenting with new concepts and putting aside the old. Young people surround you in the afternoon and you enjoy helping to guide their activities. Lovers, children and other people or things dear to your heart are emphasized. Being appreciated and admired for your gifts and talents is a wonderful feeling and encourages you to move forward. Taking chances can bring large rewards. Responsibilities may balance out the remainder of your day. An important friendship is growing and you will find mutual interests bringing you closer. Fun times communicating back and forth with ideas and interests can have you talking for hours.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

As a lover of freedom and liberty, you may be creating music, poetry or doing some creative writing. Regardless of whether your work or your life project is in an office or in your home, you are able to create and progress in positive ways. You may be able to express your inventive side and come up with new solutions. You are in a rare mood of self-enjoyment and can appreciate your own better qualities. You may see value in or feel love for an older person or someone in authority today. This person may need your attention, help or perhaps your time this afternoon. You may be quite pleased to be of service. People seem to notice your positive attitude and enjoy your presence. Later this afternoon you may want to exercise by walking.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Energies are high and self-confidence is strong. This is a good time for accomplishing heavy-duty work projects. Your work seems more advantageous than usual and you are able to get a lot done. In addition, this is a very good time for physical competition within a group environment-business, workout room, etc. Your enthusiasm is good. Your abilities to save and increase your finances may slack off through the end of this month. As a result, you need to pay attention to your budget. Your environment may go through some temporary changes. You are expressive and encouraging to neighbors. Perhaps a project is in the works in your neighborhood. A covered bus stop for the school kids or a tree-planting project would be good.

Leo (July 23-August 22)

Talking about your goals will help you to have a better focus. Keeping your eye on the prize may be the very thing that helps you stay on the path of success. This year finds a much more independent and adventurous you, however. Your timing should be perfect and those around you will find you naturally energetic and ready for adventure. Other than thinking about goals, this is a day of clearing away or settling old debts. There is a new friendship waiting to happen this afternoon and you will find that this person brings you new insight into yourself as well as some good insight into the psychology of life. There are opportunities now to repair any uncertain relationships at home. You are optimistic and see favorable ways to learn and grow.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Reach for the brass ring now. Have you ever tried to grab the merry-go-round ringthis is the feeling this morning. Now you are in the spirit to be expressive, creative and lighthearted. Everything seems to bring out your exceptional qualities. There are some enthralling subjects to investigate now and in the future. Decide where you want to make your discoveries. Many subjects will march up in front of you and if you do not choose one, there could be much frustration. These subjects will likely be law, politics, education, business advancement, travel and religion. Acquire a focus of your own and on your own. Set your goals. Harmony and beauty are yours. There are many answers you have received but have not yet heard.

Libra (September 23-October 22)

Expect a boost in attitude today. From now through the end of this month, you will see a gradual spiraling of positive input. This is a wise time to secure a better working status. You will find this is a very good time to put your ideas into words. Your curiosity may lead you into some research after work today. Since you can become easily bored with routine days, you find intriguing and educational ways to fill up your mind. Your enthusiasm and energy are strong especially when finding new enterprises with which to become involved. Romance and travel may go hand in hand in the near future. There could be plans in the making. Share a conversation regarding goals. Loved ones find you inspiring-particularly tonight.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Everything points to your taking the project in hand today, even if the plan is to motivate yourself. However, you feel great support from those around you. You could be the spokesperson that represents a group of people today. Communication, particularly with superiors, could prove troublesome-but there is a need. An agreement will be reached. You have the ability to impress all the right people, particularly this afternoon. A reliable friend or business partner offers a share in a joint venture that could make you financially secure. Some friends do you favors so that you can be available to help others. If past resolutions were only a rough draft-consider firming up your plans to make this year's resolutions more secure.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your career situation looks up. You successfully analyze problems and find excellent solutions. There is good news on the work front and business-related travel is yours for the asking. A serious matter that you have been considering can be approached now with positive results. Your communication skills help you forge a bond with a business friend. There are some wonderful opportunities to visit with friends and bond with your own sex. Deep and serious conversations along with funny anecdotes can be shared this afternoon. There will be changes in the family budget, but a compromise may be reached. There are energies available now that help singles find partners and married people improve their relationships.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Rushing through your day may be much like rushing through a chore that ends with the need to do the thing over. How sad that would be, particularly on your special day. When you slow down a bit, you will find that you may have accomplished more than you thought possible. This day and this week may set the pace for your birth year. You will need to take note as to what necessitates hurrying and establish that in your thinking each day, at least until you feel the steady flows happening within you. The reason for all this need to hurry is that you sense the most enchanting, meaningful and growth-happening year is ahead and you are ready for your new year to start. You are tuned in to all the great possibilities.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

A plea for understanding from a loved one today could bring about some long debate. A healing is possible and opening up a two-way conversation is the best type of beginning. Make sure you have compliments to dole out for the effort that this other person is putting forth to heal. Financial problems may seem to loom ahead, but you can change things as you rethink your budget. Your timing is perfect here in avoiding possible future frustrations. There could be some opportunity to change parts of your environment. You may come up with successful moneymaking ideas; your ideas flow easily and your communication with those on the home front is strong. Most of this month is for rest, fun, renewal of friendships.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)

An electronic glitch can be fixed quickly today. This should be a good day for a cash bonus if the trends are accurate. Check on bank and money matters and try to keep a grip on important messages and bits of paper. If you are going to travel today, stay tuned to your local radio station for traffic updates. If you have to negotiate with anyone, then do so in person or by phone rather than by letter or through another person. If you are married or involved in a close relationship, this influence will deepen your commitment and add to your happiness. If, however, you are single, the events of the next few weeks could easily change your status. Someone special is due to enter your life-soon. While shopping this afternoon, avoid impulse buys based on packaging.

WORD SEARCH

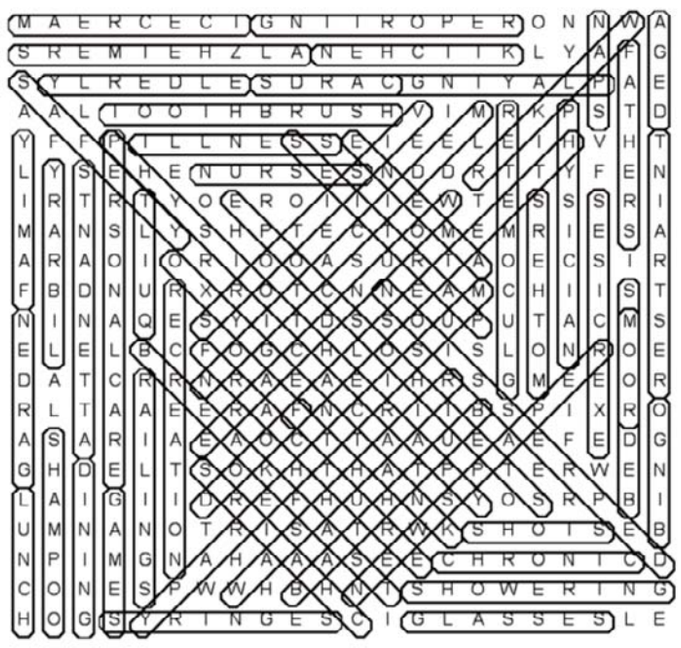
Candy

Find and circle all of the Candy treats that are hidden in the grid.
The remaining letters spell a secret message.

ALMOND JOY
BABY RUTH
BAZOOKA GUM
BOTTLECAPS
BUBBLE YUM
BUTTERFINGERS
CANDY NECKLACE
CHICLETS
CHUCKLES
CLARK BAR
COFFEE CRISP
CRACKER JACK
DUBBLE BUBBLE
GOOBERS
GUMMI BEARS
HERSHEY KISSES
HUBBA BUBBA GUM
JAW BREAKERS
JUJUBES
KIT KAT
LEMON DROPS
LICORICE PIPE
LIFESAVERS
LOLLIPOPS
MILK DUDS
MILKY WAY
MOUNDS
NECCO WAFERS
OH HENRY
PEPPERMINT PATTY
PEZ
POP ROCKS
PUMPKIN SEEDS
RED HOTS
SEN-SEN
SLO-POKES
SMARTIES
SOUR BALLS
SPEARMINT LEAVES
SWEETARTS
TOOTSIE ROLLS
TWIX
TWIZZLERS
WAX LIPS

Yesterday Solution

Nursing Home 3



AGED
ALZHEIMERS
ATTENDANTS
BATHTUB
BEDROOM
BINGO
BREAKFAST
CARDS
CHAIRS
CHRONIC
DEPRESSION
DINING
ELDERLY
ENEMA
EXERCISES
FALSE TEETH
FAMILY
FATHERS
FOOD
FRACTURE
GAMES
GARDEN
GLASSES
GLUCOMETER
ICE CREAM
ILLNESS
KITCHEN
LIBRARY
LUNCH
MEDICATION
MOTHERS
MUSIC THERAPY
NAPS
NEWSPAPER
NURSES
OXYGEN TANK
PARTIES
PERSONAL CARE
PHYSICIAN
PHYSIOTHERAPY
PLAYING CARDS
QUILT
RAILINGS
RECREATION
REPORTING
RESTRAINT
ROOMS
SAFETY
SHAMPOO
SHOTS
SHOWERING
STETHOSCOPE
SYRINGES
TOOTHBRUSH
VISITORS
WALKER
WASH HAIR
WOUND CARE

The hidden message is: ONLY A LIFE LIVED FOR OTHERS IS A LIFE WORTHWHILE

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322

PHARMACIES
ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan	Fahaeel Makka St	23915883
	Abu Halaifa	Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd	23715414
	Danat Al-Sultan	Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1	24575518
	Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 92	24566622
Capital	Ahlam	Fahad Al-Salem St	22436184
	Khaldiya Coop	Khaldiya Coop	24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa	Farwaniya Block 40	24734000
	Ferdous Coop	Ferdous Coop	24881201
	Modern Safwan	Old Kheitan Block 11	24726638
Hawally	Tariq	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St	25726265
	Hana	Salmiya-Amman St	25647075
	Ikhlas	Hawally-Beirut St	22625999
	Hawally & Rawdha	Hawally & Rawdha Coop	22564549
	Ghadeer	Jabriya-Block 1A	25340559
	Kindy	Jabriya-Block 3B	25326554
	Ibn Al-Nafis	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St	25721264
	Mishrif Coop	Mishrif Coop	25380581
	Salwa Coop	Salwa Coop	25628241

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

DAY: Monday 02/01/2017 Valid From 7 AM To 7 PM

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

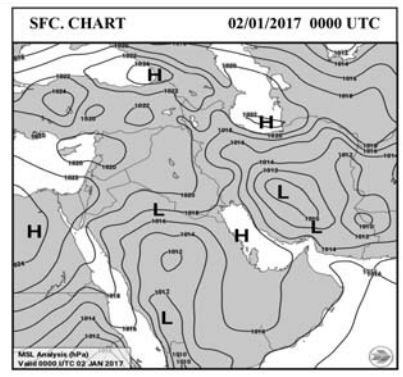
BY DAY: Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening gradually north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h

BY NIGHT: Cold with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 38 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	21 °C	13 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	11 °C
ABDALY	21 °C	10 °C
BUBYAN	21 °C	11 °C
JAHRA	21 °C	12 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	20 °C	12 °C
SALMIYAH	19 °C	13 °C
AHMADI	19 °C	13 °C
NUWAISIB	22 °C	10 °C
WAFRA	22 °C	11 °C
SALMY	18 °C	07 °C

SFC. CHART 02/01/2017 0000 UTC



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures MAX.	Temperatures MIN.	Wind Direction	Wind Speed
Tuesday	01/03	Sunny + scattered clouds	19 °C	10 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h
Wednesday	01/04	Sunny + high clouds	18 °C	09 °C	NW	15 - 38 km/h
Thursday	01/05	Sunny + blowing dust	17 °C	08 °C	NW	20 - 45 km/h
Friday	01/06	Sunny + scattered clouds	19 °C	08 °C	NW	20 - 40 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:18
Sunrise	06:43
Zuhr	11:52
Asr	14:43
Sunset	17:01
Isha	18:23

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	22 °C
MIN. Temp.	14 °C
MAX. RH	78 %
MIN. RH	28 %
MAX. Wind	N 43 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP.0 2017/01/02 02:44 UTC V1.00 T2.4 ق.ت.ع/1-2

INTERNATIONAL CALLS

Afghanistan	0093	Lithuania	00370
Albania	00355	Luxembourg	00352
Algeria	00213	Macau	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antiga	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Azerbaijan	00994	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahamas	001242	Martinique	00596
Bahrain	00973	Mauritania	00222
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritius	00230
Barbados	001246	Mayotte	00269
Belarus	00375	Mexico	0052
Belgium	0032	Micronesia	00691
Belize	00501	Moldova	00373
Benin	00229	Monaco	00377
Bermuda	001441	Mongolia	00976
Bhutan	00975	Montserrat	001664
Bolivia	00591	Morocco	00212
Bosnia	00387	Mozambique	00258
Botswana	00267	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brazil	0055	Namibia	00264
Brunei	00673	Nepal	00977
Bulgaria	00359	Netherlands	0031
Burkina	00226	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Burundi	00257	New Caledonia	00687
Cambodia	00855	New Zealand	0064
Cameroon	00237	Nicaragua	00505
Canada	001	Nigar	00227
Cape Verde	00238	Nigeria	00234
Cayman Islands	001345	Niue	00683
Central African	00236	Norfolk Island	00672
Chad	00235	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
Chile	0056	North Korea	00850
China	0086	Norway	0047
Colombia	0057	Oman	00968
Comoros	00269	Pakistan	0092
Congo	00242	Palau	00680
Cook Islands	00682	Panama	00507
Costa Rica	00506	Papua New Guinea	00675
Croatia	00385	Paraguay	00595
Cuba	0053	Peru	0051
Cyprus	00357	Philippines	0063
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Poland	0048
Czech Republic	00420	Portugal	00351
Denmark	0045	Puerto Rico	001787
Diego Garcia	00246	Qatar	00974
Djibouti	00253	Romania	0040
Dominica	001767	Russian Federation	007
Dominican Republic	001809	Rwanda	00250
Ecuador	00593	Saint Helena	00290
Egypt	0020	Saint Kitts	001869
El Salvador	00503	Saint Lucia	001758
England (UK)	0044	Saint Pierre	00508
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Vincent	001784
Eritrea	00291	Samoa US	00684
Estonia	00372	Samoa West	00685
Ethiopia	00251	San Marino	00378
Falkland Islands	00500	Sao Tome	00239
Faroe Islands	00298	Saudi Arabia	00966
Fiji	00679	Scotland (UK)	0044
Finland	00358	Senegal	00221
France	0033	Seychelles	00284
French Guiana	00594	Sierra Leone	00232
French Polynesia	00689	Singapore	0065
Gabon	00241	Slovakia	00421
Gambia	00220	Slovenia	00386
Georgia	00995	Solomon Islands	00677
Germany	0049	Somalia	00252
Ghana	00233	South Africa	0027
Gibraltar	00350	South Korea	0082
Greece	0030	Spain	0034
Greenland	00299	Sri Lanka	0094
Grenada	001473	Sudan	00249
Guadeloupe	00590	Suriname	00597
Guam	001671	Swaziland	00268
Guatemala	00502	Sweden	0046
Guinea	00224	Switzerland	0041
Guyana	00592	Syria	00963
Haiti	00509	Serbia	00381
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Taiwan	00886
Honduras	00504	Tanzania	00255
Hong Kong	00852	Thailand	0066
Hungary	0036	Togo	00228
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Tonga	00676
Iceland	00354	Tokelau	00690
India	0091	Trinidad	001868
Indian Ocean	00873	Tunisia	00216
Indonesia	0062	Turkey	0090
Iran	0098	Tuvalu	00688
Iraq	00964	Uganda	00256
Ireland	00353	Ukraine	00380
Italy	0039	United Arab Emirates	00976
Ivory Coast	00225	United Kingdom	0044
Jamaica	001876	Uruguay	00598
Japan	0081	USA	001
Jordan	00962	Uzbekistan	00998
Kazakhstan	007	Vanuatu	00678
Kenya	00254	Venezuela	00582
Kiribati	00686	Vietnam	0084
Kuwait	00965	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands US	001340
Laos	00856	Wales (UK)	0044
Latvia	00371	Yemen	00967
Lebanon	00961	Yugoslavia	00381
Liberia	00231	Zambia	00260
Libya	00218	Zimbabwe	00263
Lesotho	00266		

PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists

Dr. Abidallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabeea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223

Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)

Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	24555050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daaory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426

General Practitioners

Dr. Mohamme Y Majidi	24555050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhazeem	23926920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abidallah Al-Refae	25333501

Urologists

Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abidallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Plastic Surgeons

Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60

Family Doctor

Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581

Psychiatrists

Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0

Gynaecologists & Obstetricians

DrAdrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s.Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliytami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787

General Surgeons

Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148

Internists, Chest & Heart

Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Paediatricians

Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maaroof	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gujare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282

Dermatology

Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955

Dentists

Dr Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abidallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdallateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abidallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111

Neurologists

Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875

Gastrologists

Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abidallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist

Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924

Physiotherapists & VD

Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. Musaed Faraj Khamees	22666288

Rheumatologists:

Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290

Internist, Chest & Heart

DR.Mohammes Akkad	24555050 Ext 210

Dr. Mohammad Zubaid
MB, ChB, FRCPC, PACC
Assistant Professor Of Medicine
Head, Division of Cardiology
Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital 25339667

Consultant Cardiologist

Dr. Farida Al-Habib 2611555-2622555
MD, PH.D, FACC
Inaya German Medical Center
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Fax: 25723123

Psychologists /Psychotherapists

Soor Center
Tel: 2290-1677
Fax: 2290 1688
info@soorcenter.com
www.soorcenter.com

Kaizen center 25716707

Noor Clinic 23845955

William Schuilenberg, RPC 2290-1677
Zaina Al Zabin, M.Sc. 2290-1677

Natasha Poly is 'addicted' to Nutella

The 31-year-old model admits she'd love to get junk food banished so she wouldn't be tempted, and she's always particularly drawn to the chocolatey hazelnut spread. Asked what she'd consign to Room 101 - a place for fears and pet hates - she said: "Rude people. I had bad behavior. And I'd put junk food in there, so that I wouldn't eat it all. It's bad, but so good. "I'm addicted to Nutella. Once you take a bite, you just can't stop." Natasha loves her modeling career, but she finds it tough being away from her family as much as she is because of her career. She said: "I miss my family the most. I live in Amsterdam and they're in Russia. I only get to see them a few times a year and I miss them a lot. "My grandmother passed away at the beginning of this year and I regret not spending more time with her before she died. It's hard when you live in different countries. "My biggest extravagance is travel. I love to explore and I always bring my parents and family along with me." But Natasha - who has three-year-old daughter Aleksandra with husband Peter Bakker - is thankful to have the support and companionship of fellow model Eugenia Volodina. She told Grazia magazine: "My best friend is Eugenia Volodina. We've been best friends since I started modeling. "She's always there for me and is the godmother to my daughter, so she's part of the family."

PINK'S DAUGHTER MEETS HER NEW BABY BROTHER JAMESON

Pink has shared an adorable snap of her daughter bonding with her new baby brother. The 'Just Give Me A Reason' hitmaker gave birth to Jameson Moon Hart last week, and has now taken to Instagram to share a sweet photo of her daughter Willow - whom she also shares with husband Carey Hart - holding her new baby brother with a grin on her face as the family welcomed in the new year together. Posting the photo on Sunday 37-year-old Pink - whose real name is Alecia Moore - wrote: "Happy New Year #newlove#newlife #newenergy #newhope #newday the harts thank you for your love and we send it back to you in spades. (sic)" The photo comes after 41-year-old Carey previously claimed their daughter was "over the moon" that her parents were expecting another addition to the family. He said: "Willow is over the moon. She's been talking about how she wants a baby sister. She built a bicycle for him or her. So we're going to finish it up after No. 2 shows up. She tore the bike all apart and after No. 2 shows up, she's going to decide the colours that she wants to do for it. I told her, 'Look, he or she is not going to be able to use it for a while - but they'll be ready for it' ... Right now, she's very excited, until they start taking her toys and breaking her stuff, and then we'll see how it goes." Pink announced her pregnancy in November, when she shared a picture of her blossoming baby bump with her 28 million followers on Twitter.

Louis Tomlinson couldn't wait to see the back of 2016

The One Direction singer took to Twitter and Instagram on New Year's Eve to share a selfie of himself looking sad after ringing in 2017, and thanked his fans for helping him through a tough year, which saw him lose his mum, who died at the age of 43 following a long battle with an "aggressive" form of leukaemia. Alongside his selfie on Instagram, he wrote: "I've felt better ! Hello 2017 !! (sic)" And he added to his Twitter: "Excited for what 2017 brings ! Thank you again for helping me to do what I love. Love you all x (sic)" His post came a few days after he said goodbye to his mother Johannah Deakin during a private funeral service in his hometown Doncaster, South Yorkshire, England, on December 21. Prior to that Louis, 25, returned to Instagram for the first time since the tragic death of Johannah, in order to thank fans for their support. Louis shared a photo of himself and Steve Aoki performing their track 'Just Hold On' at the 'X Factor' final and captioned the Instagram post: "Thank you for the incredible support," Louis had previously thanked his loved ones and fans for helping him through the live TV performance. He tweeted after the show: "That was harder than I ever imagined. I want to thank everyone around me and all of the amazing fans out there that made that so special! "Feeling so much love around me and my family . Mum would have been so proud, love you !(sic)" And he also praised his collaborator Steve, who helped fulfil Johannah's wish; for Louis to debut his solo single on the show that made him famous. He posted: "Also @steveaoki , you have been such a rock and inspiration throughout this ! Pure talent and a real gent ! (sic)" But Steve shared the sentiments, replying to the message: "U were the rock my brother. U are my inspiration. U have the biggest heart and I'm so proud of u. Blew us all away for her. (sic)"

Orlando Bloom changed by son's birth

Orlando Bloom admits watching his son being born had a "profound effect" on him. The 39-year-old actor has five-year-old Flynn with ex-wife Miranda Kerr and seeing the 33-year-old beauty go through a long labour with the youngster gave him even more respect and admiration for mothers. He said: "No single moment has had such a profound effect on my life as when I held my son after his mother had endured 27 hours of labour. "That should teach any man the meaning of respect for mothers the world over." The British actor - who is dating singer Katy Perry - divides his time between the UK and US and admits he can only spend short stints in one place before he craves a return to his other home. He told Empire magazine: "I live between the US and the UK. Too long in one and I crave the other. "I've called Shanghai home for the last two months, I'm here filming." Outside of his work, Orlando's biggest "passion" is trying to "master the art of living", something he knows he can never fully achieve. He said: "[My passion is] mastering the art of living, which I will never do, so that learning curve keeps me thoroughly occupied." But the 'Lord of the Rings' star worries about the impact of "stupidity, fear and greed" on the world. Asked what he thinks is most destructive to the soul, he said: "Well, Albert Einstein, one of the wizards of our time, said, 'stupidity, fear and greed'. "There's a lot of that around, particularly if you turn on the news. "The antidotes are courage, wisdom and compassion - which are coincidentally the qualities of most Hobbits. The rest of us elves and humans have to work harder to manifest them."

Amelle Berrabah isn't 'ready' for children

The former Sugababes singer married Marcio Sousa Rosa in a low-key ceremony in Mauritius just six days after the hunk popped the question during a trip to the exotic island in October 2014 and, although they'd like to start a family together, she doesn't know when they'll start trying for a baby. She explained: "I love babies, I love kids. I would definitely like to have them in the future but I'm not ready yet. I'm too busy with my career but I would like to have them one day." The couple were the hot topic of conversation last year when divorce rumors began to swirl but the 32-year-old star is adamant she and Marcio are still in love and are even planning another wedding. She said: "It's funny how we were suddenly getting divorced when it wasn't even an issue. That was never the case. We're still together, still happily married, still got my ring. Maybe it's my fault because when I get asked about my personal life, I don't comment so I don't set the record straight." And, although she understands that her relationship is bound to attract attention because of her celebrity status, Amelle tries not to let the cruel rumors get to her or affect her marriage. She explained: "It's annoying but it's the industry. I try not to take it personally and that's why I pick and choose what I do, who I talk to and what I say. Thinking about it, we don't even concern ourselves with it to be honest because luckily he knows what the industry is like. We just get on with life. We got married very, very soon after he proposed. "There's due to be a second marriage because my Moroccan Jewish family won't let us go without a massive party. It's a beautiful thing because we got that moment of privacy but then you get that whole big family thing as well. It'll be like a party. We tried to do it last year but we were too busy."

Khloe Kardashian owns over 200 pairs of sunglasses

The 'Keeping Up With the Kardashians' beauty revealed her impressive collection of eyewear in a new post on her app where she showed off her new storage box she has bought to store them in. She wrote: "It makes things so easy. They're kinda color-coded, but you don't have to go that far. Colored aviators are colored aviators. (sic)" Meanwhile, the 32-year-old beauty - who has recently finalised her divorce with her ex-husband Lamar Odom who tied the knot in 2009 but split four years later - recently admitted she needed an "outlet" to help her get through her break-up, and although the star has admitted her release used to come from gorging on food, this time saw her turn to fitness. She said: "I was going through my divorce, and I just really needed an outlet. I had turned to food and had an unhealthy relationship with food my whole life, and I was like, 'Food has never helped me lose weight.' " And the 'Strong Looks Better Naked' star has revealed this time around she bucked the habit and turned to fitness instead to help her "block out" the stress from her personal issues. She explained: "So I joined Equinox, and I would go there and put my headphones on and get on the elliptical or the stairs, and no one would bother me or ask me questions because even at Starbucks, I would get the, 'I'm sorry...' I would watch the 'Real Housewives' or something mindless, and I felt like all the stress I was under, all the paparazzi, I blocked out all that noise. "I escaped there and as a byproduct, I started losing weight. Then I thought, 'OK, I'm gonna call a trainer and Gunnar Peterson has been a family friend of ours.' He changed my body." The television personality has since moved on from her former partner and is dating the 25-year-old sportsman Tristan Thompson, who she has described as a "little cutie". She gushed: "I love athletes. Someone who has the same interests as me, who likes to work out, like that's their hobby or their job, that's fine. Tristan is who I'm into. He's a little cutie."

Ariana Grande will be in a Final Fantasy game

Ariana Grande plays a part in the 'Final Fantasy: Brave Exvius' mobile game. The 'Dangerous Woman' hitmaker will appear in the next series dressed in a black latex bunny costume and she functions by signing and casting spells in the role playing game. The brunette beauty is thrilled to have been invited to portray a character and cannot "contain" herself with excitement. Taking to Instagram to share a picture of what looks like a board meeting for the new app, she wrote: "pretty lil thing holds her own in a room of men in suits I'm SO so excited to finally share that I'll be featured in FINAL FANTASY BRAVE EXVIUS crying check out my character in the game, it's the cutest thing i've ever seen in my entire life and i'm so excited and in love with it i cannot contain myself. #FFBEWW (sic)" The RPG game is free for Android and Apple phone owners and includes the characters Cloud, Squall and Noctis from previous installment 'Final Fantasy XV'. It comes after the 23-year-old singer revealed she was left feeling "sick and objectified" after an encounter with a male fan. In a lengthy note to her fans, she spoke about a fan she had met whilst out with her boyfriend Mac Miller, and how he told the rapper he could see him "hitting that" in reference to Ariana, which she says left her feeling "hurt". The note read: "went to pick up food with my boyfriend tonight and a young boy followed us to the car to tell Mac that he's a big fan. "He was loud and excited and by the time M was seated in the drivers seat he was literally almost in the car with us. I thought all of this was cute and exciting until he said 'Ariana is sexy as hell man I see you, I see you hitting that!!!' "*pause* "Hitting that? This may not seem like a big deal to some of you but I felt sick and objectified. I was also sitting right there when he said it. (?) "I've felt really quiet and hurt since that moment. Things like happen all the time and are the kind of moments that contribute to women's sense of fear and inadequacy. I am not a piece of meat that a man gets to utilize for his pleasure. I'm an adult human being in a relationship with a man who treats me with love and respect. "It hurts my heart that so many young people are so comfortable using these phrases and objectifying women with such ease. And the 'Side to Side' singer went on to state the she spoke out about this example in particular as she feels the need to "share and be vocal" so that acts such as this one don't continue. She wrote: "I felt like speaking out about this once experience tonight because I know very well that most women know the sensation of being spoken about in an uncomfortable way publicly or taken advantage of publicly by a man. We need to talk about these moments openly because they are harmful and they live on inside of us as shame. We need to share and be vocal when something makes us feel uncomfortable because if we don't, it will just continue. We are not objects or prizes. We are QUEENS. (sic)"

CAREY CLAIMS HER DISASTROUS NEW YEAR'S EVE PERFORMANCE WAS 'SABOTAGED'

The 46-year-old singer stormed off stage after technical difficulties at the Times Square gig in New York marred her performance and her manager Stella Bulochnikov has blamed the producers. In a letter sent to Dick Clark Productions, and obtained by the New York Post's Page Six, Stella raged: "You know her inner ears were NOT working and your entire production team did not set her up to win. "AND MARIAH KEPT TELLING THEM ON STAGE IN REAL TIME. "THEY KEPT IGNORING HER. SHE TOOK A HIT HONORING HER COMMITMENT TO YOU. I SHOULD HAVE PULLED HER OFF THE STAGE THIS IS SABOTAGE (sic)." Stella told Billboard in a statement: "We told them [the stage managers] that the in-ears were not working 10 minutes before the performance. They then changed the battery pack, and they were still not working on the frequency four minutes before the show. We let them know again, and they just kept counting her down and reassuring her that they will work as soon as they go live, which never happened-at which point she pulled them out but could not hear the music over the crowd. "After the show, I called [Dick Clark Productions'] Mark Shimmel and I said, 'What happened?' He said, 'Let me call you back,' then called me back and confirmed the in-ears were not working and asked if I would make a joint statement. I said, 'No way.' I asked him to cut the West Coast feed. He said he could not do that. I asked him why would they want to run a performance with mechanical glitches unless they just want eyeballs at any expense ... It's not artist-friendly, especially when the artist cut her vacation short as a New Year's Eve gift to them." However, Dick Clark Productions have denied the claims, saying: "As the premier producer of live television events for nearly 50 years, we pride ourselves on our reputation and long-standing relationships with artists. To suggest that DCP, as producer of music shows including the American Music Awards, Billboard Music Awards, New Year's Rockin' Eve and Academy of Country Music Awards, would ever intentionally compromise the success of any artist is defamatory, outrageous and frankly absurd. In very rare instances there are of course technical errors that can occur with live television, however, an initial investigation has indicated that dcp had no involvement in the challenges associated with Ms Carey's New Year's Eve performance. We want to be clear that we have the utmost respect for Ms Carey as an artist and acknowledge her tremendous accomplishments in the industry."

Pixie Lott wants to have two weddings

The 25-year-old singer only got engaged to her beau Oliver Cheshire a few weeks ago but she's already thinking about her nuptials later this year and would really like to have a huge white wedding in England for her friends and extended family and then a smaller, intimate, ceremony abroad. She said: "I've always said I wanted to have two weddings - to the same person, obviously. But I'd like a massive one in England and then a really small one somewhere hot, in a different county. I just love stretching out celebrations as much as possible." The blonde beauty would like to have children with her handsome partner in the near future too but has admitted she's way too busy focusing on her wedding and music career for the time being. She said: "At some point [I'd like to have children]. But not soon - there's too much to be done!" Pixie is also considering moving back to Essex to be near her family - who live in Brentwood - when she's got hitched because her flat in London is too small to raise a brood with the fashion model. She explained to Britain's OK! magazine: "I've started to look near my sister in Chelmsford because I need to get a house with more space. I'm in a really small flat that I've had since I was 18. It's just not enough space, so I'm starting to look at that. But I'm just casually looking, I'm not in a rush. It would be nice to have somewhere with space for sure!"

Conrad is expecting her first child with husband Tell

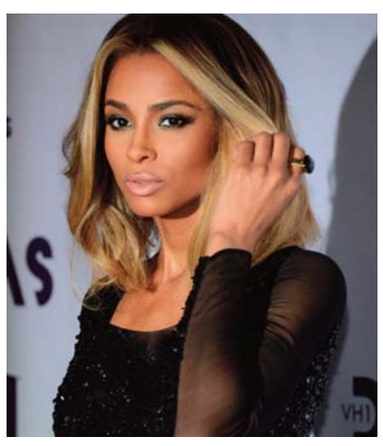
Lauren Conrad is expecting her first child with her husband William Tell. The 'Hills' star - who married the singer in 2014 - shared the exciting news on Instagram with a picture of the happy couple's first sonogram. Alongside the photo, she wrote: "Happy New Year! I have a feeling 2017 is going to be the best year yet... (sic)". Lauren, 30, previously revealed she would love to add two children to her brood. Asked how many kids she'd like, she previously said : "Maybe two. That way we aren't outnumbered." The reality TV beauty previously opened up about married life and said that she loves the fact she has a life partner who she can go on many adventures with. She said: "My favorite thing about being married is knowing that I have a partner in life that I get to do so many wonderful things with. Dreaming of the things we will do 20 years from now is so fun." Meanwhile, Lauren - who was previously linked to her 'Hills' co-star Brody Jenner - admits that the hardest aspect of married life is not being selfish and learning to meet each other halfway. She spilled: "You always want to be considerate of each other. "It's not just about you anymore." The 'Laguna Beach' star met William years before they were married and a little bit of serendipity led to their eventual coupledom. At the time, she wrote: "I met my husband when I was 16 and sitting onstage at one of his concerts. Ten years later we were set up on a blind date."

Britney Spears celebrated New Year with Sam Asghari

Britney Spears celebrated the start of the New Year with her rumored boyfriend Sam Asghari. The 35-year-old pop megastar took to Instagram on Sunday to share a photo of herself cuddled up to the hunk - who starred with her in her music video for 'Slumber Party' - as they celebrated the start of 2017 together. The caption for the photo simply read: "Happy New Year" For the 'Toxic' hitmaker and Sam first sparked romance rumors in November when they were spotted heading out for a dinner date together. Taking to his Instagram at the time, Sam posted a picture of himself and the blonde beauty looking cozy at a dinner table, captioned with a series of sushi based emojis which suggested the pair enjoyed a Japanese themed meal together. Fans of the 'Toxic' hitmaker quickly began to comment on the possibility of a budding romance between the pair, and Sam later deleted the picture from his account. Previously, Sam spoke out about how he was "shy" when he was younger, but has learned to be confident in himself as that's what he believes women like. He said: "[I was] a very shy person growing up. "I've learned that there's nothing a woman likes more than a confident man, not too cocky, just a very humble gentleman. No girl I know likes cocky." And Sam's humble nature may prove to be a hit with the 'Make Me' singer - who has two sons Sean, 11, and Jayden, 10, with former husband Kevin Federline - as she previously claimed she was tired of men playing "mind games". She said: "A lot of men are about games. It's just the mind game with guys, the calling back and texting, it's just too much, it's silly. Actually, I'm not looking for men right now, I'm really happy with myself. I'm not looking for anything, I'm fine with the way I am. "I like someone that's just nice overall, just a nice guy really is groundbreaking in this world."

Ciara has shared a picture of her growing baby bump

The 31-year-old singer is expecting her first child with American football star Russell Wilson, and has taken to Instagram to share a photo of herself featuring her growing belly. The selfie - taken as the star watched her husband, who is a quarterback for the Seattle Seahawks, play in a football match - was captioned: "1st Selfie Of The #NewYear #GoHawks (sic)" The news comes after the 'Dance Like We're Making Love' hitmaker - who already has son Future, two, with ex-fiance Future - revealed she knows whether she's expecting a boy or a girl, but she doesn't want to tell anyone. She said: "I do know [if it's a boy or a girl]. I'm not telling, not yet, but I'm very excited." Asked if they've chosen a name, she added: "We've already done that actually." And the 'Goodies' singer and Russell, 27, aren't the only ones excited about the new addition to their family as little Future "can't wait" to be a big brother. She said: "He rubs my belly and he says, 'Hi baby. I love you, baby,' ... and then he puts my shirt down and says, 'Bye, bye baby.' So, that's his own thing. "He sees a baby walking, smaller than him and walking-it doesn't matter, it's a baby. So, he goes, 'baby' and he looks at me and he goes, 'Mama, baby' - and he tries to pull my sweatshirt up." And Ciara - who suffered with nausea in the early stages of her pregnancy - is thankful to be feeling "really good" now. She said previously: "I'm feeling really good, the first few months were a bit tough for me. "Well, not tough, but a bit more like, I didn't throw up last time and this time I haven't thrown up but I've had that in between feeling where I don't wanna throw up, I can't throw up but I'm not normal and that's even more torture. "I'm like can we find the rhythm here? What do I eat, what do I drink? "I'm now in that place where I'm not feeling that feeling and I'm not that tired so it's good."



Pamela Anderson wants to move to Europe

The former 'Baywatch' star - who has sons Brandon, 20, and Dylan, 18, with ex-husband Tommy Lee - has more friends in the UK and France than in California, where she currently resides, so is planning to relocate. She said: "I'm looking for an apartment to rent in London or in Paris. I have more friends there than in LA. "I'd like to end up somewhere in Europe. Dancing on chequered tables or on a boat sailing around the world..." But the blonde beauty - who is a passionate animal rights campaigner - is also keen to spend a stint in Africa. She said: "I'm at a crossroads. I have big dreams. "There are so many places to see. "I've never been to Africa and I want to help elephants and rhinos so I could see myself living there." The 49-year-old actress owns a number of properties in the US and her native Canada, and is "fortunate" not to have to rely on acting for her income for the rest of her life. She told Britain's HELLO! Magazine: "I'm fortunate to have set up my life where my properties can work for me. "I'm building a place for my parents and am renting my grandmother's property." Pamela now wants to urge people to take climate change seriously and seek alternative forms of energy. She said: "I'm trying to convince everyone to switch to green energy. "I've given up waiting for governments - especially in America - to take climate change seriously. "As individuals, it's one of the most powerful choices we can make."

Sam Bailey would never give up her career for her kids

The 'Climb' singer - who has children Tommy, Brooke, and Miley with her husband Craig Pearson - admits it can be hard on her family when her work takes her away for long periods of time, but if they complain she just reminds them of how much better their quality of life is now than in her former career as a prison guard. She said: "I cancel a lot of things because I feel my children are the most important thing and I am in control of that element of it but if my kids ever said to me, 'We don't want you to do it anymore.' I will remind them of the life they had before. "In my old job working in a prison, I saw them less than I do now because I was working in a prison so they can't come into the cell with me but with this, I could have had my kids down with me while I did a gig. "I have to remind them as well that in my old job I didn't earn enough money so that we could go on nice holidays like we do now. So it's almost reminding them that you've got to work if you want something in life. You've got to make sacrifices and this is a big sacrifice for them." Sam shot to fame when she won 'The X Factor' in 2013 and she made her mentor Sharon Osbourne two-year-old Miley's Godmother. And the two women have remained close because of their bond over the youngster. She said: "I send pictures over to her of Miley whenever she's feeling down, I send a picture. I've sent her flowers and she's sent Miley some stuff over. She's always in my thoughts. She's always in the public eye and she's a tough cookie is our old Sharon."

GOSSIP

Pitt 'broken' after spending Christmas without his children

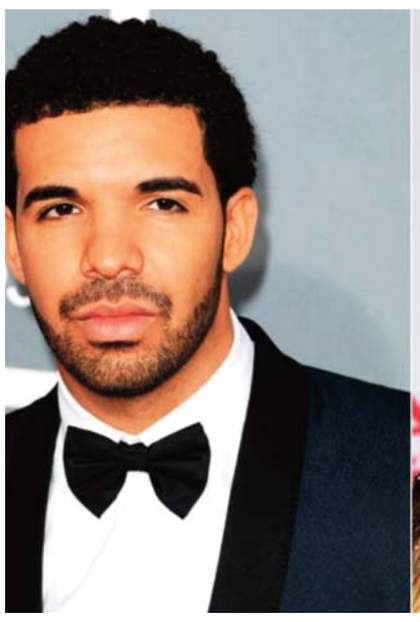
Brad Pitt reportedly felt "broken" after spending Christmas without his family. The 53-year-old actor was forced to spend his holiday alone after his wife Angelina Jolie filed for divorce late last year and started a bitter custody battle over their six children - Maddox, 15, Pax, 12, Zahara, 11, Shiloh, 10, and eight-year-old twins Knox and Vivienne -which most recently resulted in a request made by the 'Fury' actor to see more of kids being rejected. A source told the Mail on Sunday newspaper: "He desperately misses having his kids with him for Christmas and New Year. "He's broken down in tears so many times - he's not ashamed to cry anymore. Brad is like a broken man." The news comes after Brad slammed his estranged wife, 41, in court documents filed in December that claim Angelina compromised the privacy of their brood and alleges the 'Maleficent' actress "appears to be determined to ignore even agreed upon standards relating to the children's best interest and she is attempting to clear the way to put in the public eye any allegations she can, without regard to the impact on the minor children." The documents went on to claim the actress - who filed for divorce from Brad in September after he allegedly had a row with Maddox on a private jet - "exposed the children by making public the names of their therapists and other mental health professionals." He added the 'By the Sea' star has "no self-regulating mechanism" to prevent sensitive information from being released to the public, citing the re-release and filing of documents that contain private information as evidence. His filing noted: "Although she had already made them public, she did it again."

Beckham and Mel C had a 'Spice Girls' reunion on New Year's Eve

Victoria Beckham and Mel C staged a mini Spice Girls reunion on New Year's Eve. The 42-year-old fashion designer - better known as Posh Spice when in the group - and the 'Version of Me' hitmaker, also 42, performed their classic hit '2 Become 1' at the bash held at five-star luxury resort Amilla Fushi in the Maldives, despite rejecting the chance to be involved in a proper reunion with their band mates, Mel B, Emma Bunton and Geri Horner. Sharing a photo of the pair on stage, Mel wrote on Instagram: "Candle lit and soul forever ... A wonderful start to 2017 xxx (sic)" Victoria and her retired soccer star husband David Beckham - who have kids Brooklyn, 17, Romeo, 14, Cruz, 11, and five-year-old daughter Harper - enlisted the services of Mel C to provide the entertainment at their getaway with pals Gordon and Tana Ramsay. A source previously said: "Victoria has been the instigator for the whole trip. "She's sorted all the accommodation for both families and ensured Mel is there to perform." Mel and Victoria are said to have grown closer in recent months after both turned down the chance to reform the Spice Girls. The added: "They've always been great pals, but have got closer over the past few months due to their shared stance on the Spice Girls comeback. "There was no way Mel was going to turn down the invite as the gig will be something special." However, it wasn't hard work for Mel as she was joined by her boyfriend Joe Marshall for the celebrations in between performances. Victoria turned down a Spice Girls reunion to concentrate on her fashion label and Mel later admitted she didn't want to re-join the band as a fourpiece. She said: "I know there are people that want to see it. But there were various reasons ... but the one thing that I couldn't get away from was that, we did reunite as a five piece [for the Olympics] and it was so incredible, and for me we are like a jigsaw puzzle and if there's a piece missing it's not complete. We're not a band of interchangeable parts. So for me, it didn't feel right."

Lopez spends New Year's Eve with Drake at his Las Vegas show

Jennifer Lopez saw in the New Year with Drake at his show in Las Vegas. The 'On The Floor' hitmaker and the 'One Dance' rapper have added further fuel to the fire that they are dating by attending the concert together on Saturday night and having dinner with friends beforehand. A source told Us Weekly: "Jennifer watched and had the best time at Drake's show. "The pair had dinner first at Hakkasan Restaurant with a large group." It comes after the pair - who have yet to publicly confirm they are dating - didn't hide their love as they enjoyed each other's company at Winter Wonderland Prom in Las Vegas, United States on December 29. In a series of short video clips uploaded to social media, Jennifer was seen dancing intimately with the 30-year-old hip-hop star whilst another video shows them locking lips. Later in the evening, the couple were also named Prom King and Queen. Meanwhile, sources previously claimed that Jennifer was "very smitten" with the 'Hotline Bling' musician. They shared: "Jen is looking forward with excitement to the new year. She keeps hanging out with Drake, and he has visited her house. She has nothing but nice things to say about Drake. "They do work on music together [but are] clearly enjoying each other on another level too. Jen loves the attention and she seems very happy to be spending time with him. Drake is very charming. He treats Jen with lots of respect. She seems very smitten." However, while the Latin beauty is "having fun" with Drake, she could still reconcile with her ex-boyfriend Casper Smart. Other sources say the 47-year-old singer is enjoying her time with her new beau, she hasn't ruled out the idea of rekindling her romance with the actor. The source said: "She's having fun. "I think she and Casper will get back together. He's a great guy and she's knows it. They just need a break right now."



CHYNA WEARS HER ENGAGEMENT RING, CELEBRATES NEW YEAR'S EVE WITH KARDASHIAN

Blac Chyna donned her engagement ring to celebrate the New Year with Rob Kardashian. The 28-year-old model had removed the flashy ring from her finger after the pair split shortly before Christmas, but after reports that the couple reconciled in time for the holidays, the brunette beauty slipped the diamond jewel back on as she welcomed in the start of 2017. In a series of videos posted to Snapchat over the weekend, Chyna can be seen with her fiancÈ Rob, 29, sitting at a table as they count down to the new year. One video taken from Snapchat and posted on Blac Chyna's Instagram - which featured the pair sat together as they both donned the special 2017 filter - was captioned: "Happy New Years 2017 from @robkardashian and I! (sic)" The news of the pair's reconciled romance comes after it was reported that Chyna - who shares one-month-old daughter Dream with the sock entrepreneur - was "not invited" to spend Christmas with the Kardashian clan, as the rest of the famous family were tired of her and Rob constantly fighting. A source said at the time: "Rob's family is over Chyna. She is not invited to Kris' holiday party. "Rob's family is trying to distance themselves from Chyna. They can't stand the toxic relationship. They very much care about baby Dream though. It's just come to the point when they think Rob is better off without being in a relationship with Chyna." A second source, however, later claimed that Chyna had nothing to "apologize" for, and was standing her ground on the feud with the 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' stars. They said: "Chyna thinks Rob and his family have a lot of nerve if they think she needs to apologize for anything that she's done in this relationship. "What should she be sorry for? Getting Rob out of his cave and bringing him into the light? Giving him a daughter? Helping him lose weight? Getting him a reality show? "Rob's the one who admitted to having issues, and has since gotten from Chyna. She's so proud of their shared accomplishments, and thinks her behaviour and attitude are completely fine. She's not changing or apologizing."

TOM FLETCHER WANTS TO WRITE ANOTHER CHILDREN'S NOVEL

The McFly singer has previously worked with bandmate Dougie Poynter on two kids' books, 'The Dinosaur That Pooped Christmas' and 'The Dinosaur That Pooped A Planet', and in October released his first novel for youngsters, 'The Christmasaurus', and enjoyed the experience so much, he wants to pen another. He explained: "I love writing, I've been writing kids' books for the last four years but this is my first novel and I loved it, it was really enjoyable, it's completely different to writing with the band and songs which is very collaborative. I'd love to write another one after." And the 31-year-old songwriter isn't the only member of the family who has got stuck in to writing novels and his wife Giovanna Fletcher - whom he married in 2013 and with whom he has three-year-old Buzz and 10-month-old Buddy - also has her own stash of books she's written. The brunette beauty is currently penning her next non-fiction story and has admitted it can be tough in the evenings because both she and Tom go off to their separate corners of the room to write. She exclusively told BANG Showbiz: "It's a big juggling act actually. Once the boys are in bed, I can utilize that time properly but there are times where you're like there's a lot going on and you have to step back a bit but it's all fun, it's something we enjoy doing so we're really lucky that we call those things our jobs. "In the evening, we just kind of go into our separate corners to write. Sometimes we might come back together to watch 'New Girl'. We do have date nights where we dedicate times just for us."

Michelle Williams backs daughter's ambitions

Michelle Williams would support her daughter if she wanted to act. The 'Manchester By the Sea' actress - who has 11-year-old Matilda with late ex-partner Heath Ledger - will back her offspring in whatever she wants to do with her life, but would prefer her to finish her education before making any big decisions about the future. Asked how she'd feel if Matilda wanted to act, she said: "I'd advise against skipping school, but whatever brings out Matilda is what I'm here to support. "So whatever she wants is fine by me." Michelle began her own career when she was 12 years old and was legally emancipated from her parents as a teenager, a decision she admits was partly driven by the fact she didn't want to go to school. But the 36-year-old star wouldn't recommend her actions to other people. She told Total Film magazine: "I've always been incredibly independent and stubborn and willful. "But it wasn't so much about being driven from a career standpoint. I really just didn't want to go to high school anymore. I wanted to get out. I wasn't happy. "And I wanted to be by myself, and I wanted to be on my own, and this seemed like the way to do it. "It wasn't so much I had a burning ambition, like some sort of clear trajectory. I just didn't want to be in high school. Like most kids feel" But I had this weird escape hatch. "I wouldn't advise it for other people. I feel like it should come with a little warning attached to it, which is, 'Don't try this at home.' I just feel so lucky."

ZARA LARSSON'S SECRET FAN

Zara Larsson's father secretly watches all of her performances online. The 'Lush Life' hitmaker has revealed her dad Anders pretends to be a "low-key fan" of her whilst her mother Agnetha is happy to "gossip about everything" with her. She said: "Mum talks about my career all the time. I love gossiping with her about everything. "Dad is a more low-key fan. He doesn't say much but when I borrow his tablet or computer and go into YouTube you can see that he's been watching all my videos." The 19-year-old singer has had a great year but says the highlight was winning Best New Artist at the MTV Europe Music Awards as she managed to beat DNCE, The Chainsmokers and Lukas Graham to the crown. She gushed to BBC Newsbeat: "That was a huge deal for me, especially as you can only win that once. I felt that was a receipt for all the hard work I've put in." Meanwhile, Zara previously revealed she wants to join forces with Charli XCX for a "girl power" duet. She exclusively told BANG Showbiz: "I would love to. I think she is amazing. I love her sound and she is a great person as well. Of all the collaborations I've been doing, they've all been with guys. So I would love to do something girl power." And Zara has insisted her new album will be out in January 2017 after it was originally slated for a February 2016 release. She added: "It's coming in January. I have been pushing it for literally a year. It was supposed to come out February 2016 and I was like, it's coming out summer, it's coming out after summer, it's coming out in the fall, and then in the winter. "It's a little mixed. It's pop but there are some rhythmic songs, some dance songs, some ballads. I think that everyone will like at least one song."

Gordon sits in a chair at J Gordon Designs in Chicago. — AP photos

Karen Gordon, left, works on the hair of a client at J. Gordon Designs in Chicago.

Karen Gordon sits in a chair at J Gordon Designs in Chicago.

Illinois law enlists hairstylists to prevent domestic abuse

An Illinois law that takes effect Sunday aims to take advantage of the trusted relationship between hairstylists and their clients to prevent domestic violence. Stylists, barbers, cosmetologists, estheticians, hair braiders and nail technicians in Illinois will receive an hour of mandated abuse-prevention training as part of the licensing process. The law does not require them to report any violence, and it shelters them from any liability. Instead, the training provides beauty professionals with information about local help and resources they can share with clients. The Illinois measure appears to be the first of its kind in the country, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Hairstylists are well situated to notice signs of abuse, said Vi Nelson, spokeswoman for the industry group Cosmetologists Chicago. Abusers "tend to try to find places where it could be an accident or it's not as visible," Nelson said. "They may hit them in the back of the head, and there's a bruise or a bump. The hairdresser is touching you and can see things that cannot be visible to the casual observer." Clients and stylists often develop yearslong relationships, said Karen Gordon, who owns J. Gordon Designs salon in Chicago.

"We get very close with our clients, even so far to say we love our clients," she said. "You know people through life's ups and downs. When people come into a safe environment like a beauty salon, they tend to open up." State Sen. Bill Cunningham supported the measure, in part, because his wife is a former hairstylist whose customers frequently shared incidents of domestic violence. She "had a difficult time dealing with these issues when they came up. She wasn't sure what to tell her clients," said Cunningham, a Democrat.

That's why the new law was written to connect victims with services, not to have beauty professionals act as therapists, he said. "The main goal is to get victims of domestic violence professional help if they want it," he said. "It could be as simple as providing their client with a phone number. In maybe more extreme cases it could be putting their client in touch with a shelter." The domestic violence prevention nonprofit Chicago Says No More said the mandate was needed because past training efforts never caught on. The group's founder, Kristie Paskvan, said beauty professionals are an ideal source to provide help because they can be more objective than family and friends. "They're listening and then they can say 'Hey, if you're interested, here's some information,'" Paskvan said.

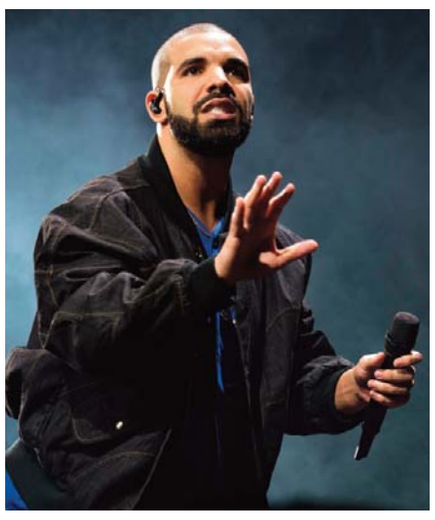
State Rep. Fran Hurley of Chicago, who supported the legislation, said she knows of one Chicago-area salon owner who puts business cards for a local anti-domestic violence group in her beauty shop's bathroom. "You'd be amazed at how many times she has to replace them," said Hurley, also a Democrat. "She refills them all the time." Cosmetologists Chicago helped write the measure so that it did not require beauty professionals to become involved or report violence unless they choose. Once that was clarified, Nelson said, the professional response was "overwhelmingly positive." The first training sessions will be offered in March at an industry trade show in Chicago. Gordon has been in the beauty industry for 38 years and said she thinks she would have used the training if it were offered earlier in her career. "I wish I'd had the tools," she said. "I wish I'd had the resources."— AP

DRAKE HAS BEEN CROWNED GQ MAGAZINE'S BEST-DRESSED MAN FOR 2016

The 'One Dance' rapper - who is reportedly dating Jennifer Lopez - has topped the list of 50 celebrity males beating 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them' star Eddie Redmayne, 34 - who came in second place and won last year - to the top of the leader board. On selecting the 30-year-old hip-hop star, the magazine stated: "He's proving that it's possible to look cool in an outfit that, in a cheaper guise, might otherwise never leave the sofa." 'Girl on the Train' star Luke Evans was awarded third place and following shortly behind is martial arts star Conor McGregor, 28.

Elsewhere, several British celebrities were listed including 'Late Late Show' host James Corden, 38, Tom Hiddleston, 35, radio presenter Nick Grimshaw, 32, and 'Sherlock' star Benedict Cumberbatch, 40. And 'Suicide Squad' actor Jared Leto also made it into the top 10, along with 'Money Monster's Jack O 'Connell. Meanwhile, Lukas Graham frontman Lukas Forchhammer has been named worst-dressed star.And Orlando Bloom - who is in a relationship with 'Roar' singer Katy Perry - has topped the best undressed category. The list was comprised by staff at the leading publication along with industry professionals from the world of fashion and showbiz, such as Sir Elton John, To Ford, Sir Paul Smith, Dame Vivienne Westwood, Giorgio Armani and Sarah Burton.

GQ's Top 10 Best-Dressed Men of 2016 are as follows [with the full list in the February issue of the magazine]:



In this file photo, Drake performs onstage in Toronto. — AP

1. Drake
2. Eddie Redmayne
3. Luke Evans
4. Conor McGregor
5. Tom Hiddleston
6. Nick Grimshaw
7. James Corden
8. Benedict Cumberbatch
9. Jared Leto
10. Jack O'Connell — Bang Showbiz

Riders take part in the New Year's Eve inaugural ride on the new Second Avenue Subway December 31, 2016 in New York. — AFP

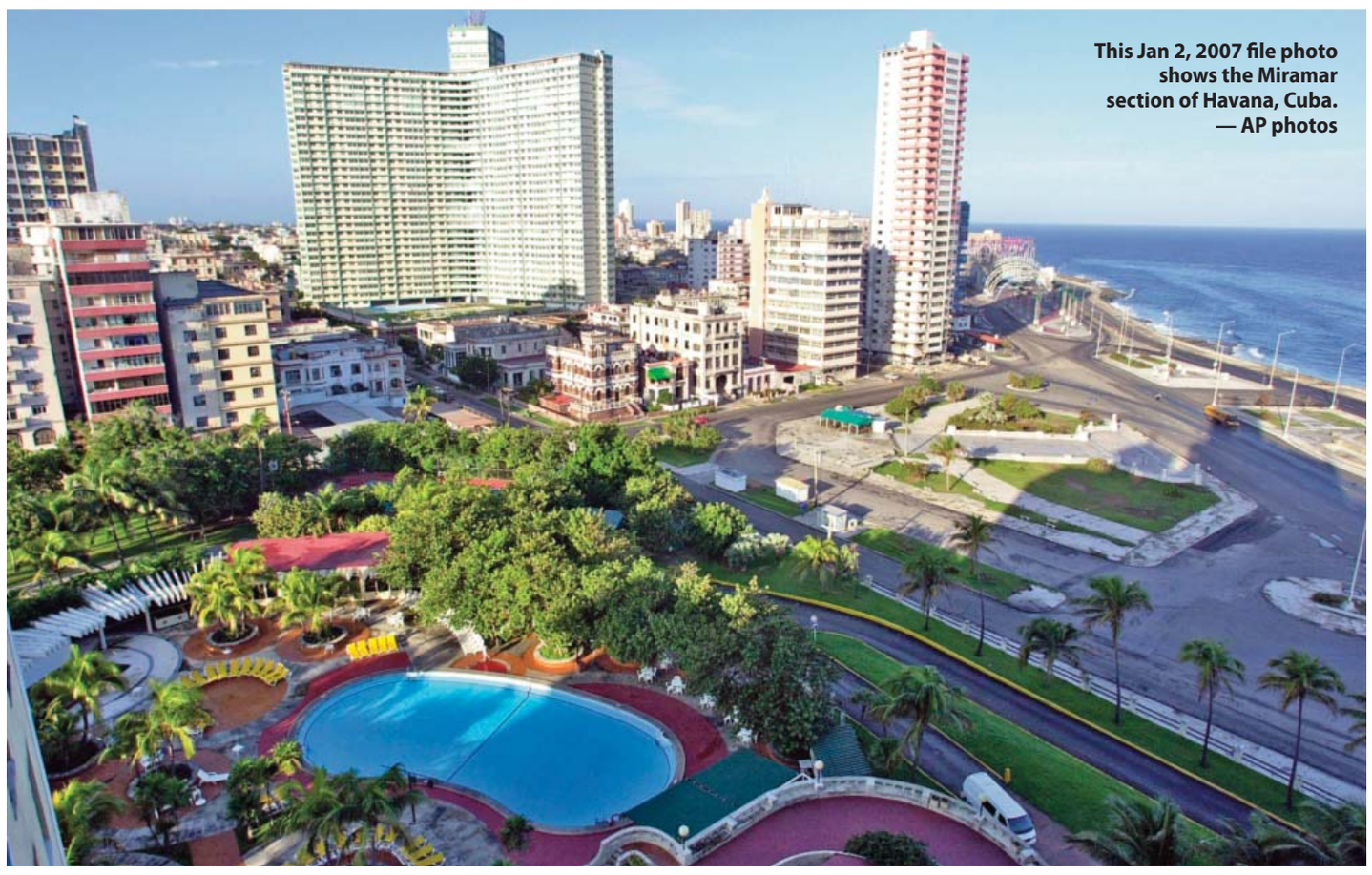
New York finds a lotta love for new train line stops

Sure, they can be brusque at times. But New Yorkers' hearts nearly melted Sunday when they got a load of the biggest subway line expansion in 50 years. "It's beautiful, it's clean, it's bright. And so far, nobody has seen any rats on the tracks!" quipped Jay Lerman, a skin doctor. "When they talked about it in the 50s they talked about $500 million. Now, it's 60 years on and $4 billion later. But it's here!" said the neighborhood resident, referring to the $4.4 billion pricetag.

Mayor Bill de Blasio and Governor Andrew Cuomo were there for the opening late Saturday of three new stations that extend the Second Avenue subway train from 63rd to 96th Streets up to the posh Upper East Side. At midday Sunday, the smartphone-wielding general public rushed in to get a look. And it was a sight to behold, in a city with an older system known for its share of darkness and rodents in the track beds. "We have been talking about the opening of the stations the way we were talking about the coming of the Messiah-whichever comes first!" laughed retired attorney Ken Klein.

"It has been a difficult 2016 for New Yorkers and it's a nice start to 2017," he said referring to the election of President-elect Donald Trump, a New Yorker. For Tyler Robbins, "it looks like Paris!" "They did a beautiful job," raved the young father who was bringing his 10-month-old on the train for the first time. He said he previously had avoided the subway due to not enough elevators and filth. Angel Aviles, a comic book artist, was also impressed, after construction jolted his apartment for ages.

"Now the rumble will be from the trains. And it's more comforting than a dynamite sound!" he said. "It's nice to see that New York is starting to catch up" with European cities, Aviles added. The walls of the stations have mosaics including some designed by artists Chuck Close and Brazil's Vik Muniz. The extension is just a big start: the line is set to be extended up to Harlem for another $6 billion. New York authorities hope it will speed commute times and reduce overcrowding. — AFP



This Jan 2, 2007 file photo shows the Miramar section of Havana, Cuba. — AP photos

Starwood begins managing hotel run by military in Cuba

American hospitality giant Starwood began managing a hotel owned by the Cuban military, opening one of the biggest holes in the US trade embargo on Cuba since Presidents Barack Obama and Raul Castro declared detente in Dec 2014. The facade of the 186-room Quinta Avenida hotel in Havana's upscale Miramar neighborhood has been emblazoned with the logo of Starwood's Four Points by Sheraton business travel brand and travelers can now book rooms through Starwood's website.

The Obama administration permitted the deal with a special Treasury Department license and Starwood announced it on the eve of President Obama's March visit to Cuba. The stated intention of Obama's normalization of relations with Cuba is creating more freedom for ordinary Cubans to operate independently of their single-party government, which maintains control of the most aspects of the centrally planned economy.

Allowing a high-profile US corporation to work hand-in-hand with the Cuban military shows both the Obama and Castro governments' eagerness to build as many economic ties as possible before the president leaves office, said Robert Muse, a Washington-based expert on US law on Cuba. "It certainly goes further and faster than anyone contemplated," Muse said. "The Cuban government proved that it can quickly and decisively deal with the US hospitality sector. No reason they can't do it again and again and again."

State Department spokesman Mark Toner said Starwood's presence would benefit US-Cuban normalization by providing US visitors with a safe, well-managed place to stay. He also said that by contributing to Cuba's tourism sector it would increase people-to-people exchanges between Americans and Cubans. Toner said the US expected a "steady increase" in similar US business, which helps develop professional know-how on the island. The hotel is being gradually refurbished and equipped with new beds, linens and other amenities. The 180-member Cuban staff has been re-trained by a team of 15-20 Starwood managers from other countries over the last few weeks and will be permanently supervised by about five Starwood managers under the terms of the contract.

Wet smell

Starwood officials said they were investing millions in the rehabilitation of the hotel. They declined to provide a more specific figure. Visitors to Cuba frequently and bitterly complain about the poor quality of the infrastructure and service in government-run hotels, and online reviews of the pre-Starwood Quinta Avenida offered a sampling of the challenges the company faces. Though interspersed with some praise, comments ranged from "hallways with dirty carpets full of dust and a wet smell" to "crickets and cockroaches in some parts of the hotels show that they weren't cleaning much."

A Gaviota representative declined to comment Tuesday but Pablo Casal, the hotel's general manager, said he was pleased with the quality of the hotel staff. "What we're finding is a willingness to understand what we expect and apply it," he said. "We're working very hard, above all, to provide the service that our guests expect." In the midst of a boom in tourism to Cuba, the hotel is running at about 80 percent occupancy. Casal said he hoped to complete the renovation by the end of the year. In the meantime, reservations will come with a disclaimer that the hotel is undergoing rehabilitation. — AP

A vintage car passes in front of the Four Points by Sheraton hotel in Havana, Cuba.

Guests walk in the lobby of the Four Points by Sheraton La Habana Hotel.

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Lifestyle

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Illinois law enlists hairstylists to prevent domestic abuse

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Cathlyn Jones, of Austin, Texas, sinks into her billowing gown as she performs the "Texas Dip" curtsy.

Elizabeth Carl, left, helps Brindley Mize, put on her gloves.

In this photo, Wendy Yu, lower right, joins with other debutantes for a group photo at the International Debutante Ball in New York. — AP photos

Debutantes make their bows to society at NY gala

Dozens of debutantes from around the world made their bows to society at the end of 2016. The families of the 46 women who gathered Thursday night at The Pierre hotel on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue had paid about $20,000 for a table and a chance to dine and waltz through an evening filled with air kisses and haute couture. This year's International Debutante Ball featured young women from countries including Canada, China, England, France, Scotland and the United States.

Chairwoman Margaret Hedberg said the gala is no longer "a marriage mart." "The girls today are savvy about networking, and their parents want to celebrate their coming of age," Hedberg said. "We have had daughters of presidents - Eisenhower, Nixon and Bush. We've invited Ivanka Trump, who decided not to attend. And I would like to invite the Obama daughters, now that the president is leaving office." The 2016 group included Caroline Jones, the granddaughter of Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones; Lady Louisa Murray, daughter of the Earl of Mansfield, whose home is Scone Palace in Perth, Scotland; and Wendy Yu, of London, the director of an investment firm and daughter of a Chinese billionaire.

"The perception of the debutante ball is quite antiquated," said debutante Kittsie Klaes, from Houston, who is a film major at the University of St Andrews in Scotland and plans on becoming a screenwriter in Hollywood. "Now it really is an opportunity for young ladies to show what they've accomplished and what they hope to become." Here's a gallery of images from the International Debutante Ball. — AP

Elizabeth Carl, of Houston, does the "Texas Dip" curtsy for an audience in the Pierre hotel's ballroom.

Brindley Mize, of Houston, dances with her father, Christopher Mize, at the International Debutante Ball.

Claire Chlebowski, center, of Houston, receives her bouquet of roses at the start of the International Debutante Ball.

Kittsie Klaes, left, of Houston, dances with her escort at the International Debutante Ball in New York.

Debutantes tired of standing and waiting for a receiving line to form, drop to their knees to pull off their high heels.

Debutantes and their escorts line up before a waltz begins at the International Debutante Ball in New York.