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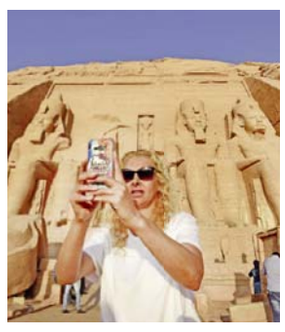

Guardiola's dark mood chimes with City form 19

Sheikh Salman meets sports panel, ready to face grilling

MP proposes amnesty law for political prisoners

Min 11°
Max 22°
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By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's sports and youth panel yesterday discussed with Information and Youth Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah steps taken by the government to lift international sanctions against Kuwaiti sports. Head of the committee MP Saadoun Hammad said the minister said the government will today send to the National Assembly a new draft law for sports that is compatible with the Olympic Charter. He said that sports specialists have been invited to another meeting tomorrow to assess the situation and decide the next course of action.

Rapporteur of the panel MP Ahmad Al-Fadhl said that the letter of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to Sheikh Salman has changed the course of discussions in the meeting. In a letter dated Dec 31, the IOC rejected a request by the Kuwaiti government to lift the suspension temporarily to allow Kuwaiti teams to take part in international competitions until sports legislations are changed. The IOC demanded that Kuwait should amend sports legislations to comply with the Olympic Charter, reinstate the Kuwait Olympic Committee and federations that were dissolved by the government and withdraw all court cases against international sports bodies for the IOC to reconsider the suspension. The minister told reporters after the meeting that he listened to comments of the committee members to the IOC letter and its demands, adding

Continued on Page 13

Across Mideast, goodbyes to Istanbul dead

BEIRUT: Funerals were being held across the Middle East yesterday for victims of the Istanbul nightclub shooting, many of them young party-goers whose lives were cut tragically short by the attack.

A total of 39 people were killed in the assault claimed by the Islamic State group, most of them foreigners and many nationals of Arab countries. From Lebanon, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, Tunisia, Morocco and Libya, the victims had travelled to Istanbul to spend New Year's Eve at the exclusive Reina club on the shores of the Bosphorus. Their bodies have now been flying home, many arriving at airports draped in their national flags, to be met by grieving relatives. In Lebanon, there has been widespread shock and mourning over the deaths of the three Lebanese killed. Rita Shami was a 26-year-old student. Elias Wardini, also 26, was a personal trainer.

Haykal Musallem was a 36-year-old physical trainer with the Tadamon Zouk basketball team whose wife managed to survive the attack. The bodies of the three were flown home on Monday along with some of the Lebanese wounded and greeted by Prime Minister Saad Hariri. "Terrorism has no religion, it targets us all, it targets people who love life," he said at Beirut airport.

Continued on Page 13

BEIRUT: The relatives of Lebanese victim Elias Wardini, who was killed in an attack on the Reina nightclub on New Year's eve in Istanbul, carry his coffin during his funeral yesterday. — AFP

FLAT ROCK, Michigan: Ford President and CEO Mark Fields addresses the Flat Rock Assembly yesterday. — AP

Ford axes Mexico plant as Trump targets GM

WASHINGTON: Ford scuttled a plan to build a new factory in Mexico yesterday following criticism from Donald Trump, and just hours after the president-elect attacked General Motors for importing Mexican-made cars into the US. Following months of criticism from Trump for its investments in Mexico, Ford said it was spiking a plan to build a new $1.6 billion plant in San Luis Potosi, and would instead invest $700 million over the next four years to expand its Flat Rock Assembly Plant in Michigan to build electric and self-driving vehicles.

Ford chief executive Mark Fields said the second-biggest US automaker was hopeful Trump's policies will boost the US manufacturing environment. "It's literally a vote of confidence around some of the pro-growth policies that he has been outlining and that's why we're making this decision to invest here in the US and our plant here in Michigan," Fields told CNN. Earlier, GM became the latest multinational to end up in Trump's line of fire - via Twitter as usual - with the president-elect threatening to impose and tariff on GM's imports of a small number of Mexican-made Chevy Cruze cars to the US.

Trump took to Twitter again to crow about the Ford reversal. He posted a Fox News story with Ford's logo touting the announcement. In a second Twitter message, Trump said: Instead of driving jobs and wealth away, AMERICA will become the world's great magnet for INNOVATION & JOB CREATION." Ford said yesterday's moves would result in the additional of 700 new US jobs during the next four years. Ford said it would continue to develop its next generation Ford Focus at an existing plant in Hermosillo, Mexico.

"This will make way for two new iconic products at Michigan Assembly Plant in Wayne, Michigan, where Focus is manufactured today - safeguarding approximately 3,500 US jobs," Ford said. — AFP **(See Page 21)**

Jockeys compete in a race for purebred Arab horses during the Liwa 2017 Moreeb Dune Festival yesterday in the Liwa desert, some 250 km west of the Gulf emirate of Abu Dhabi. The festival, which attracts participants from around the Gulf region, includes a variety of races (cars, bikes, falcons, camels and horses) or other activities aimed at promoting the country's folklore. — AFP (See Pages 38 & 39)

News in brief

NRIs can exchange old banknotes till June 30

KUWAIT: The Indian Embassy in Kuwait said in a press release yesterday that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has offered some relief to non-resident Indians (NRIs) for exchanging old currency notes. All NRIs who were abroad from Nov 9, 2016 to Dec 30, 2016 can avail of this facility till June 30, 2017. The limit for NRIs is 25,000 rupees per person. Indians living abroad can avail of this facility on submission of ID proof like the Aadhaar card or permanent account number (PAN). No representations for depositing old notes on behalf of any third party will be accepted. This facility is available at RBI branches in Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata and Nagpur, the statement added.

Dubai arrests Indian businessman for fraud

DUBAI: The Indian owner of a Dubai-based foreign exchange trading firm who had promised to double investors' money has been arrested in the emirate for suspected fraud, a newspaper reported yesterday. Sydney Lemos, 36, from Goa, had been arrested on Dec 21, The National reported, saying he was behind the failed investment scheme worth 50 million dirhams ($13.6 million). His firm, Exential Group, was closed by Dubai authorities in July, the daily said, adding that clients lost millions of dirhams when the group failed to pay out after promising the 100-percent return on their investments. The National said investors were trying to recover their funds through a local law firm that is working together with UK-based investigation company Carlton Huxley. Exential said in February that delays in processing investors' funds were due to anti-money laundering and compliance investigations in Australia, according to the report.

Prison, flogging for workers over unrest

RIYADH: Dozens of foreign workers have been sentenced to flogging and jail for unrest during protests over unpaid wages by Saudi Binladin Group several months ago, reports said yesterday. Al-Watan newspaper and Arab News did not give the nationalities of the 49 workers, and foreign embassy staff contacted by AFP could not immediately provide details. Al-Watan, which has followed the Binladin case since early last year, said an unidentified number were sentenced to four months' jail and 300 lashes for destroying public property and inciting unrest. Others were jailed for 45 days by the court in Makkah. Construction sector workers, chiefly at the Binladin Group and another firm Saudi Oger, were left waiting for salaries after a collapse in oil revenues left the kingdom unable to pay private firms it had contracted. Arab News reported in May that "unpaid workers" had torched several Binladin Group buses in Makkah. Authorities confirmed at the time that seven buses were burned but did not give the cause.

Golf club shows Trump pitfalls

DUBAI: The decorative clock bearing the name of America's incoming 45th president has yet to start at the Trump International Golf Club in Dubai, but the developers behind the project already are counting the money they've made.

The 18-hole course is likely to be the first Trump-connected property to open after his Jan 20 inauguration as president, joining his organization's projects stretching from Bali to Panama. It also encapsulates the host of worries of possible conflicts of interest circulating around a president who is very different from America's past leaders. While the Oval Office has always been home to the wealthy, Donald Trump represents the first franchise president.

Could foreign governments pressure or please Trump through his international businesses? Should projects bearing his name receive additional security? And how close should his ties remain to business executives operating in areas with far different opinions about human rights and justice? "There has never been anything remotely like this - not even close," said Robert W Gordon, a legal historian and ethics expert who teaches at Stanford University. "Trump himself tends to treat his businesses and his public policy as sort of extensions of himself. He seems to be completely unembarrassed about scrambling up and conflating his business enterprise and the actions and policies of the US government."

The Trump International Golf Club in Dubai - the sheikhdom in the United Arab Emirates home to a futuristic skyline crowned by the world's tallest building - is due to open in February and be managed by Trump Organization employees. The course sits along a road that begins near the sail-shaped Burj Al-Arab luxury hotel and passes by a mall with its own artificial ski slope. The luxury continues onto the par-71 Trump course, designed by American golf architect Gil Hanse, where wrinkled fairways lead to putting greens made smooth with silica sand brushed in between micro-blades of grass.

Continued on Page 13

DUBAI: In this Dec 20, 2016 photo, a flag flies on a green lined with villas at the Trump International Golf Club. — AP

Syrian star dreaming of Hollywood ending

LOS ANGELES: This photo taken on Dec 23, 2016 shows Syrian actor Jay Abdo as he poses in Hollywood. — AFP

LOS ANGELES: It's an all-too-familiar Hollywood story: The out-of-work actor eking out an existence in cheap housing, earning minimum wage delivering pizzas, desperate for his big break. But for Jay Abdo - one of the Arab world's biggest stars before the conflict in Syria made him just another anonymous refugee on the mean streets of Los Angeles - it has been particularly tough. Just a few years ago, the 54-year-old actor could not walk the streets in any Middle Eastern country without being mobbed by fans or dine out without being offered free meals.

A household name and a veteran of 43 movies and more than 1,000 TV episodes, Abdo was admired not just for his acting skills but his willingness to speak his mind in public. "I had a pretty beautiful life," he told AFP. "People loved me, on screen and on talk shows when I spoke to people and expressed

Continued on Page 13

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a memento from stakeholders who are planning to fund a new joint stock water resources company, in a ceremony attended by Chief of the National Security Apparatus Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.— Amiri Diwan photos

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society Dr Helal Al-Sayer.

Amir meets National Security, KRCS chiefs

Sayer briefs Amir on relief campaign

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Chief of the National Security Apparatus Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and stakeholders who are planning to fund a new joint stock water resources company. During the meeting, His Highness the Amir was briefed on the would-be company, its plans and projects for providing internationally-selected water sources seeking to achieve food and water security. His Highness the Amir lauded the effort, and the company's strategy for offering alternative plans to diversify sources of water around the globe, wishing them success.

His Highness the Amir also received Chairman of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr Helal Musaed Al-Sayer. Sayer briefed His Highness the Amir on the details of the KRCS's campaign to help the displaced Syrians from Aleppo, and Kuwaitis' humanitarian support in this regard.

His Highness the Amir commended the effective humanitarian role played by the KRCS to alleviate the sufferings of the refugees and afflicted people around the globe, saying that it has always been a major trait of the Kuwaiti people. The two meetings were attended by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.—KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with representatives of the administrative bodies at the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS).

Crown Prince meets NUKS representatives

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday representatives of the administrative bodies at the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS).

During his meeting with the NUKS representatives at Kuwait University, USA, UK, Canada, France and neighboring countries, Australia, as well as Egypt, His Highness the Crown Prince urged the students to exert more efforts in their academic careers to serve their country.

His Highness also called them to be good representatives to their country in all international forums, stressing the political leadership will not hesitate in providing the amenities that will help them continue their education. The meeting was attended by Undersecretary of His Highness the Crown Prince Diwan for Local Affairs, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel. — KUNA

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel.

AAW joins Horeca as golden sponsor

KUWAIT: Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Commercial Company (AAW) announced plans to participate in the 2017 Horeca Kuwait exhibition as a golden sponsor, joining more than 80 participating companies in the event which takes place on January 18-19, 2017 at the Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref.

In this regard, AAW's CEO Ali Faisal Al-Mutawa said that Horeca plays a major role in gathering regional companies and clients together under one roof, adding that that it opens new channels for businesses in the hospitality and food sectors. "Taking part in such exhibitions help encourage development projects and the youth to start their own businesses, thus ultimately helping diversify national income sources," he explained. Further, Mutawa added that AAW has over 80 years of experience and excellence as a leading retail and distribution company. He added that it invests in seven various retail sectors and represent over 100 international brands it introduces to local markets. Mutawa also indicated that AAW runs the largest and most complicated distribution operations in Kuwait with a storage capacity of over 250,000 square meters to deliver over 200 products to consumers on daily basis. "We take pride in supplying products that can be found in every single supermarket and home in Kuwait. We represent some of the world's most prominent and successful retail brands, and we have been the exclusive distributor of Procter and Gamble products and Roche Pharmaceuticals since 1965," he added.

Ali Al-Mutawa

Makram Khater

Moreover, Mutawa said that AAW has a legacy of almost 100 years as it was established in 1918 by Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa, starting with practicing modest commercial activities and importing consumer products such as rice, sugar, tea and fabrics from neighboring countries including Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran.

Separately, Al-Babtain Group also announced its intention to take part in the exhibition. On that regard, General Manager Makram Khater announced a special offer that the group is making exclusively during the exhibition on the Renault Dokker. The vehicle will be available for customers during the exhibition at an exclusive price of KD 2,999, in addition to other privileges including a five year (or up to 200,000 kilometers of mileage) warranty, free registration and free insurance.

The 2017 Horeca Kuwait exhibition; the sixth edition of the event that joins companies specialized in hospitality, food industry, hotel equipment, tourism and transport, is organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Company, and takes place under the patronage of Minister of Information and State Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: A large number of people have so far registered for competitions to be held as part of the 2017 GCC Heritage Festival, which kicks off on January 15th at the Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village. The activities include a falcon hunting tournament, horse and camel races, a competition for pigeon breeders, in addition to 'beauty contests' for camel and sheep breeds. —KUNA

Zoo celebrates New Year with newborn giraffe, Arabian oryx

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Kuwait Zoo welcomed a new member yesterday with the birth of a baby giraffe. This is not the first time that a giraffe was born at the zoo, yet it is still considered a special event. "We do not know if the baby giraffe is male or female yet, as we were not able to get very close to it," a staff member at the Zoo told the Kuwait Times. "We have to give it a chance to walk. Also, we want to avoid upsetting the mother, which would happen if we came too close to her baby. We are happy with this delivery, and the zoo plans to keep the baby giraffe."

The new born giraffe was in fact the second baby animal to be born in Kuwait Zoo in the new year. Earlier yesterday, a female Arabian oryx gave birth to a baby; the first ever to be born in Kuwait. This is important because the Arabian oryx is considered an endangered species, according to the zookeeper. "This is the first time to have an oryx born in our zoo. It is a rare and endangered species, whose original habitat is the Arab Peninsula. They are trying to increase the animal's numbers in the UAE. We feel lucky to have the newborn oryx," he added.

Tabtabaei proposes 40-year minimum retirement age for Kuwaiti women

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei yesterday filed a number of proposals to amend the condition of decree number 23/2013 pertaining the minimum age of Kuwaiti women eligible for social aid and allowances, asking to reduce it from 55 to 40. Tabtabaei also proposed giving top officials (ministers, MPs undersecretaries and their assistants) dispatched on state missions only economy class flight tickets in order to help cut expenses.

In addition, Tabtabaei proposed building branches of Kuwait University, the basic studies college and the faculty of commercial studies in Ahmadi and Jahra and a Quran memorization center in Kaifan. Moreover, Tabtabaei filed an inquiry with the minister of state for Cabinet affairs concerning the measures followed by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) on nominating employees to certain leading positions.

Fake degrees

In an attempt to fight fake degrees MPs Khalil Abul, Abdulwahab Al-Babtain, Oudah Al-Rowaei, Adnan Abdulsamad and Omar Al-Tabtabaei yesterday proposed incriminating those impersonating as others and those unlawfully using professional or scientific titles by fraud or forgery such as fake doctors, claiming to belong to the ruling family or impersonating as members of the military. The proposal suggested punishing such culprits with three years in prison and/or a KD 5,000 fine. It also suggested harsher penalties in case of repeating the same crime of five years in prison and/or a KD 15,000 fine.

Farmers' union

Chairman of Kuwait Farmers Union's five-member committee Hadi Hajed Al-Watri said he had sent letters on Dec 4, 2016 to His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Subaih concerning the Public Manpower Authority's rejection of the committee formed by the union's general assembly consensus. Watri added that the committee chairman and members officially requested a meeting with both officials to explain what he described as the unjustified interference of the manpower authority, which undermines the union's efforts in achieving food security. He explained that five veteran farmers were nominated by the general assembly to run the union's errands until a new board of directors is elected next month, but the manpower authority had broken its promises to grant them accreditation so that they could run urgent matters of over 3,000 farmers.

MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei

Citybus announces fare revision for 2017

KUWAIT: Citybus provided Kuwait Times with the following statement yesterday in response to an article published in yesterday's issue under the headline 'Commuters face bus fare increase':

Citybus, part of City Group Company; a Kuwaiti shareholding company, has revised its fares as follows:

Single journey fares have increased by 50 fils and bus passes have been restructured with downward price revisions offering regular commuters significant discounts and very affordable commute options.

Despite rising operating costs, Citybus had managed to absorb this effect without passing it on to customers by not increasing fares for the last four years - the last fare increase was in June 2012. However, to ensure that we continue to provide our customers a vast network of routes operating at high frequencies with over 100 transfer points between intersecting routes, we had to revise our fares. In 2016, we made an investment of KD 2.5 million in new, efficient and environmentally friendly vehicles, with a further commitment to introduce more new vehicles in 2017.

Citybus is committed to improving the public transport landscape in Kuwait, easing congestion, improving road safety and leveraging new technology to make travel simpler and more convenient. In 2017 many new initiatives will be introduced to further enhance our customers' travel experience. We will continue our commitment to provide our customers the best service levels at very affordable prices.

Citybus Management Team

Filipina hit and run victim still alive

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A Filipino woman who was struck in a hit and run accident in Kuwait City yesterday remains in a coma. The woman, widely reported to have died on social media, has undergone a series of operations and remains in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Amiri Hospital.

According to Philippine Embassy's Assistant to Nationals Unit, the woman is being monitored by her physician Dr Ahmed Sammy. "We visited her at Amiri Hsopital today. She is in the ICU and is still unconscious. We will continue to monitor her condition and we hope and pray for her recovery," the embassy official said.

Emelyn Acabo, 38, from Bacolod Negros Occidental, Philippines, was on the sidewalk when the accident happened and heard the crash. She rushed through the crowd and took several photos and videos which she eventually posted on social media. "Yes, I saw her lying on the ground so I took some videos and posted it on my Facebook account," she admitted.

"I was scared but at the same time thinking about her family. It was a sad day to see such an accident. It was only the second day of the year and if you are a Filipino I am sure you know we are still in the celebratory mood for the New Year, and it was frustrating to witness the gravity of such an accident. I heard the crash's sound although I did not personally see the vehicle hit her," she said. "The ambulance came late. I don't know the exact time but I was praying hard for the ambulance to come soon so she would survive," Acabo recalled.

The accident was widely discussed among the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) community in Kuwait. Azhna Pananggulon, 38, from General Santos City, hoped that the victim would be okay. "Thank God that she is alive; although some social media post [said] she had already died," she said. "The problem here in the Middle East is that we cannot touch [the victim] any accident of such nature. We are not allowed; if you do, you will be in trouble, so the more you care (for others) the more you will be in trouble. All you can do is wait for an ambulance, but what if the ambulance arrived after two hours, the victim could die," she said.

KUWAIT: A picture taken from social media allegedly showing a crowd surrounding the victim moments after the accident.

Kuwait, Egypt sign 'extradition' agreement

Kuwait's Minister of Justice Faleh Al-Azb

CAIRO: Kuwait's Minister of Justice Faleh Al-Azb and his Egyptian counterpart Mohammad Hossam Abdel-Rahim signed yesterday an agreement to bolster judicial and legal ties. According to a statement by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Justice yesterday, Minister Al-Azb - who is also Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs - met with other Egyptian legal officials during his visit to the fellow Arab country.

The meetings touched on topics pertaining to how to handle criminal cases, detention, as well as measures to extradite criminals. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Farwaniya Fire Station responded to an emergency call made yesterday to report a fire in a Khaitan restaurant. The building was evacuated due to thick smoke. The flames were tackled and kept from spreading to other parts of the building. No injuries were reported. Meanwhile, an investigation was opened to determine the cause of the fire. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun

Environment-friendly fishing gear ahead of shrimping season

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Director of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) Faisal Al-Hasawi said PAAAFR would soon issue a decision conditioning the use of environment-friendly fishing gear and expected that the decision will be issued by September with the beginning of the shrimping season. Hasawi added that some of the currently used fishing methods were already banned in restricted waters, ie 45 percent of Kuwait's national waters.

Dissolution

Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Subaih is expected to issue a ministerial decision dissolving Sharq Co-op Society's board of directors for lack of quorum after six of its nine members resigned including the chairman and the treasurer.

Priorities

Chairman of the parliamentary priorities committee Thamer Al-Suwait said the committee discussed priorities for the coming period and that the government postponed filing in its priorities' agenda until after filing its work program. Suwait added that a meeting would be held on Jan 18 with the government to discuss the priorities.

KUWAIT: MPW's Assistant Undersecretary of the Roads Department Ahmad Al-Hassan (right) speaks with officials during his inspection tour of the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Causeway (SJSC) Project. — KUNA

MPW to sign 18 contracts for road development

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Public Works (MPW) announced yesterday plans to sign 18 contracts for development of the roads system in the country, in addition to signing eight consultative contracts in the coming months.

These contracts are part of the ministry's development plan, which includes 75 projects all aimed at enhancing the roads system, Engineer Ahmad Al-Hassan, Assistant Undersecretary of the Roads Department at the Public Works Ministry, told reporters. Al-Hassan made his remarks on the sidelines of his inspection tour of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Causeway (SJSC) Project (Doha Link).

Implementing such projects poses a significant challenge to the ministry's roads department, which aims at improving roads' efficiency, facilitating traffic, increasing achievement ratios, and accelerating the implementation process, he said. So far, 50 percent has been achieved in SJSC, Hassan said, noting that works on this project are active in accordance with contractual timeframes.

Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway is one of the important projects that are being currently implemented by the public works ministry, the official affirmed, pointing out the project's significance in reducing traffic jams, completing the roads system via linking Doha area, near Kuwait Entertainment City, with Shuwaikh area. Hassan also noted that the total cost for the project is estimated at KD 165.7 million with an implementation period of 1,462 days, adding that the project is expected to be fully completed by 2018. — KUNA

In Brief

Airport's terminal

KUWAIT: MP Shuwaib Al-Muwaizri sent questions to Minister of Public Works Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa inquiring about the names of consultancy offices hired to supervised the new airport terminal's project, their qualifications, the evaluation process for bids offered for the project's tender and quotations submitted.

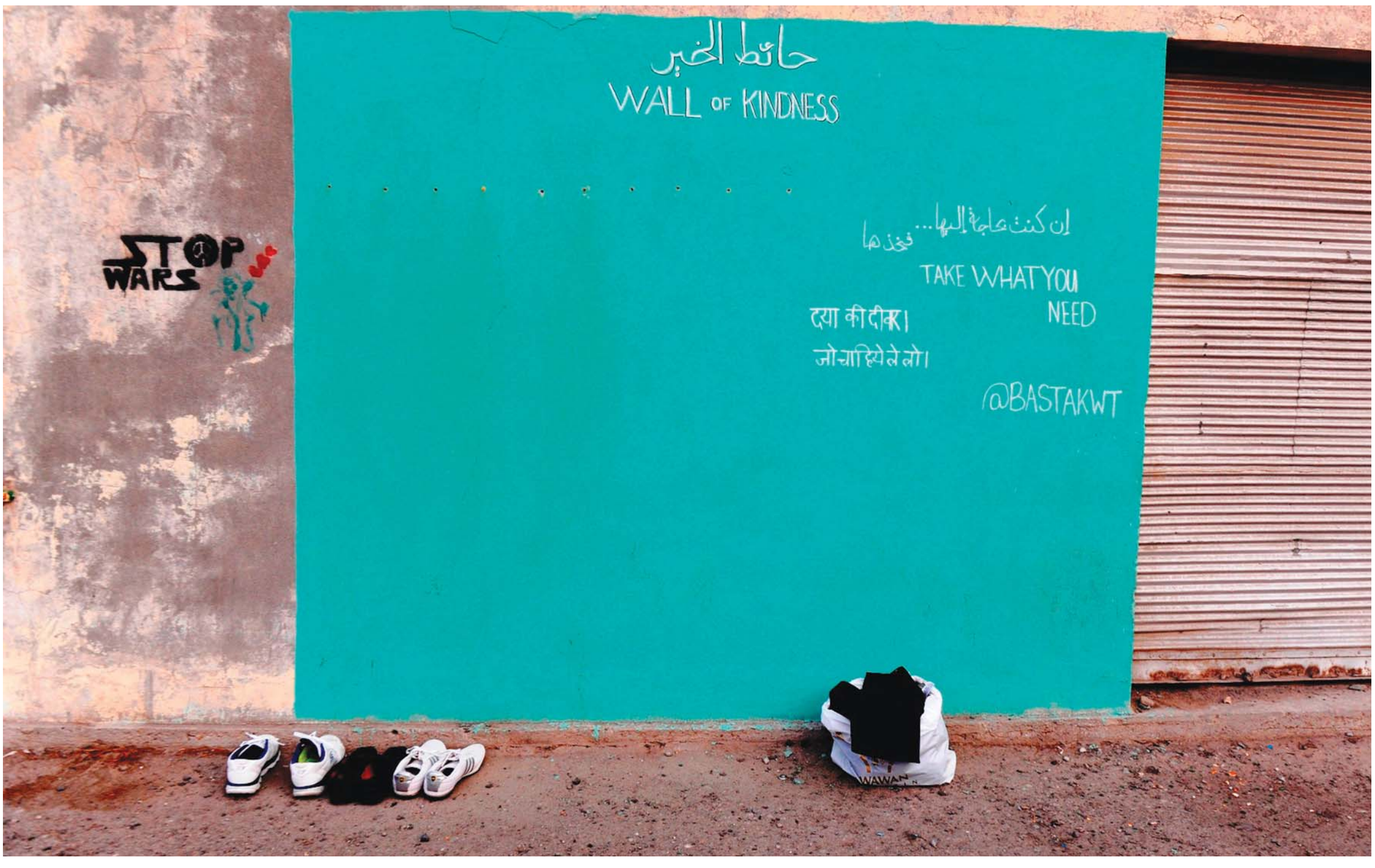
PAAET colleges

KUWAIT: MP Mohammad Al-Huwailah submitted a proposal yesterday to establish colleges, institutes and training centers affiliated to the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) in the Ahmadi and Jahra governorates in order to serve students living there and who currently have to travel long distances for the nearest campuses.

Workers' tests

KUWAIT: MP Dr Humoud Al-Khudhair sent questions yesterday to Minister of Health Dr Jamal Al-Harbi regarding a contract to rent a building in Ahmadi to use for expatriate workers' testing, and other questions to Minister of Public Works Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa about the contract signed to develop the Wafra Road.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A wall painted with graffiti that reads 'Wall of Kindness,' indicating a charity initiative launched in Kuwait. People can leave items near the wall where underprivileged people can later choose and take whatever they need from them. — KUNA photo

Private museums help preserve societies' legacies: Info Minister

Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah

KUWAIT: Alongside its public likes, private museums have a role in preserving societies' legacies, said Information Minister Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. A country's folklore is its mirror; reflecting people's lifestyle and culture in the past, Sheikh Salman, also Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Chairman of the National Council for Culture (NCCAL), Arts and Letters, said in a press statement after visiting Hamed Abdullah Al-Fuzai's museum in Hiteen area on Monday.

Such heritage needs to be protected in light of modern technology so that the current generation would have an opportunity to appreciate its merit, the minister noted. He pointed out that according to the new NCCAL charter, any person or juridical entity is allowed to curate a private museum after acquiring needed permits. — KUNA

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Envoy submits credentials to Mauritius President

PORT LOUIS: Kuwaiti Ambassador in Mauritius Bader Al-Houti has presented his credentials as ambassador extraordinary plenipotentiary to Mauritius. The Kuwaiti Embassy said in a press release that the Kuwaiti ambassador had conveyed during a meeting with President of Meritorious Ameenah Gurib-Fakim the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to her, wishing her good health and more progress to her country.

During the meeting, Houti voiced willingness to promote and develop relations between both countries in various fields. He also stressed the significant role of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) in helping all friendly countries, pointing to His Highness the Amir's five-year $1 billion concessionary loans to African countries. — KUNA

PORT LOUIS: Kuwait's Ambassador to Mauritius Bader Al-Houti submits his credentials to President of Mauritius Ameenah Gurib-Fakim. — KUNA

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's Criminal Investigations Department hosted an orientation meeting yesterday for newly appointed detectives, attended by its director Major General Dr Fahad Al-Dousari and other ministry officials.

Mohammad Al-Faris

National program essential to improve education: Minister

KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Mohammad Al-Faris said that a newly adopted national program to develop education will be an essential step towards the betterment of education system in the country. The program is considered vital in building a better educational system, he told the press yesterday on the fringes of a meeting aimed at putting a plan to implement the program.

Taking educators' input on this program is essential in building a better understanding to what is needed to improve the quality of education in the country, he added. Any development that will occur within this program should be highlighted on the media in order to observe its impact, he said. As part of the program, educators will be trained constantly in order to improve the deliverance of their subjects to students, he noted. A committee in charge of implementing this program will hold weekly meetings to follow up on its progress. — KUNA

Required
For A Construction Company

S.No	Position	EXP
1	Construction superintendent-	15 yrs
2	QC Manager	10 yrs
3	RMS Manager	10 yrs
4	HSE Manager	10 yrs
5	Sr. MEP Engineer	15 yrs.
6	Planning Engineer	10 yrs
7	Sr. Quantity Surveyor	10 yrs
8	Civil Engineer	8 yrs
9	Civil Engineer - PEB	12 yrs
10	Site Engineer - MEP	10 yrs
11	Safety Officer	7 yrs
12	Land Surveyors	12yrs
13	Document Controller	7 yrs
14	Supervisor(Civil)	12 yrs
15	Store Keeper	
16	Drivers	

Email: sendyourcv2017@gmail.com

KFSD, EQUATE continue 'Stay Safe' desert campaign

For 3rd consecutive year

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Safety Directorate (KFSD) and EQUATE Petrochemical Company, a global producer of petrochemicals, continued Stay Safe in the desert campaign for the third consecutive year to ensure overall safety and security of desert campers.

KFSD Director of Public Relations and Media Colonel Khalil Al-Amir said, "After the success witnessed during the past two years, we continue Stay Safe in the desert campaign with EQUATE. Figures for camping season noted a significant decrease in camping accidents when compared with previous years, which shows the positive tangible impact of this campaign when it comes to awareness about fires caused by heating sources, such as kerosene, coal and cooking oil. In addition, I urge parents to alert their children about heat sources and safe riding of motor bikes, which witness an increase in accidents during this season. Without any doubt, the safety of desert campers is a joint effort that requires community awareness about dealing with different hazards."

EQUATE Environment, Health and Safety Leader Mohammad Al-Shamary said, "The word partnership is best expression of overall ties between KFSD and EQUATE. Together, we have applied Å'Partners in Success' through overall collaboration in a number of initiatives, such as Firemen Day, international training courses, Safety at Every Home Campaign (Safe) and the desert safety campaign. The current campaign addresses general safety guidelines, safe locations for camping, observing safety when setting up tents and sitting or sleeping in them, the importance of having a fire extinguisher and calling 112 in case of emergency. These and other applicable recommendations to address all aspects of environment, health and safety are strategic objectives for EQUATE to ensure overall sustainability."

The campaign's activities were attended by a number of officials and attendees from KFSD and EQUATE who conducted visits to a number of camps. The visits included sharing advice for safe camping, handing-out safety booklets and distributing fire extinguishers.

Throughout the years, EQUATE has received local and international recognition for its role in safety fields, such as the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) CEO Award and the awards of the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) in several sectors.

KFH social role serves development

Yousef Al-Ruwaieh

KUWAIT: Executive Manager Group Public Relations and Media at Kuwait Finance House (KFH), Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh stated that KFH has offered over 100 social initiatives and contributions in the year 2016 that affirms the strategic and development goal of the bank's businesses and activities, indicating KFH continued assuming its corporate social responsibility by focusing on the fields of health, education, sport, youth, people with special needs, and people with outstanding achievements in inventions, science, cultures and other fields.

Ruwaieh added in a press release that KFH has forged strategic partnerships with many institutions to support several activities in the health and medical field for its significant role in the life of individuals and society. KFH pays great attention to this vital field as it represents a main pillar for comprehensive development. KFH participated in the cancer and diabetes awareness campaigns. It organized a number of initiatives for blood donation. Moreover, the bank sponsored scientific and medical forums and conferences to raise the awareness of some widespread diseases. KFH has been honored and recognized by several official bodies such as the Ministry of Health, Dasman Diabetes Institute in addition to numerous hospitals and medical institutions.

Ruwaieh continued: "KFH prioritized the youth and is the leading supporter for them at all levels. KFH sponsored the students and youth specialized clubs at the University of Kuwait and other private universities. The bank sponsored the graduation projects for the students of Engineering and Petroleum College. It organized many lectures and seminars for university students, not to mention hosted international lecturers to participate in job fairs and different students" activities. KFH patronized the NUKS in different countries. Also, KFH Group CEO Mazin Saad Al-Nahedh participated in the latest conference for the NUKS held in the USA emanating from the bank's endeavors to support the youth and appreciate students and the educational process.

He stressed the importance of environment noting that KFH pays great attention towards keeping the environment clean and healthy in collaboration with concerned official authorities and bodies such as the Kuwait Environment Foundation, and Kuwait Diving Team. KFH uniquely sponsored a pioneering environmental project Umnia for Plastic bottles recycling. It participated in many other environmental activities and events such as cleaning the beaches, planting of greenery and so forth.

The bank launched a number of charitable projects, of which were feeding fasting people, serving worshippers during Qiyam prayer in the Grand Mosque. KFH also continued its strategic partnership with the Youth Empowerment Symposium dedicated for empowering the youth and granting them the opportunity to benefit from global leaders' expertise and success stories. With regard to the philanthropic and volunteerism field, he added that KFH has a long track record of contributions such as sponsoring the activities of Red Crescent Society and offering winter clothes for cleaning workers.

Crime Report

Man beats up 'home-wrecker'

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti man beat his Egyptian neighbor and accused her of destroying his family. The woman went to Abu Halifa police station and lodged a complaint against him. The man said she caused a problem between him and his wife, adding that this was not the first time she had done so. He said when he asked the neighbor not to visit them, she insulted and provoked him, so he beat her. Investigations are continuing.

Man uses 'charming' voice to lure victims

The electronic crimes department arrested a Gulf blackmailer who made victims believe he was a girl and lured more than 150 men. He made phone recordings and got compromising photos of them. He then revealed the truth and asked victims to pay up or be exposed. Although the suspect confessed to trapping more than 150 persons, only 30 came forward and complained, including married men and adolescents. The suspect appeared at the public prosecution and was ordered remanded in jail.

Man beaten over KD 10

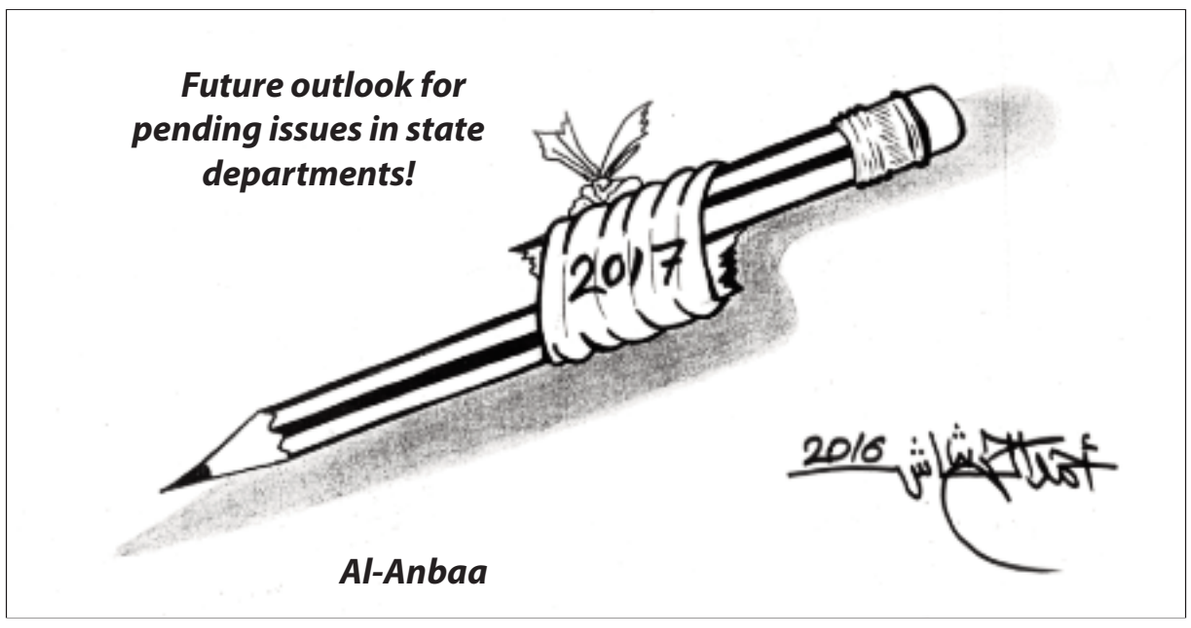
A Bangladeshi man beat his compatriot, breaking his thumb and causing other injuries. He told police he did so because the victim stole KD 10 from him. The suspect was arrested and the case was sent to the public prosecution for further legal action.

'inebriated' campers fight

An argument over a card game ended up in a fight that required police's intervention to break it up. The incident took place in a Subbiya camp where a fight was reported between two Kuwaitis. Police broke up the fight and discovered that the two men were in an abnormal condition. Both were taken to the police station, where they were remanded pending further legal procedures.

Home robbery in Saad Al-Abdullah

Criminal evidence men went to the house of a Gulf national in Saad Al-Abdullah to collect evidence that may lead to identifying thieves who stole KD 25,000, a plasma TV, tablet, smartphone, perfumes and watches. The suspects broke open the front door, the room door and the cupboard where the safe was located. — Translated by Kuwait Times



Al-Jarida

The disappointing protest

By Ali Al-Bedah

Those who recently demonstrated outside the Russian embassy should also hold similar demonstrations outside many other embassies, including those of the United States, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon, GCC states in addition to the Syrian embassy itself whose government is killing its own people and destroying its own cities. Russia is no longer the communist Soviet Union that used to be criticized by Islamic movements and parties with the excuse of 'being atheist'. The Russian state is as capitalist as any other capitalist state. It shares and competes with the US on resources and in killing.

What is currently happening is mainly to protect major interests of Russia, the US and other states that have ambitions in Syrian and Iraqi oil and wealth, in addition to the main motive of fragmenting the Arab nations and dividing them so that Israel can be the only power in the Middle East. The easiest and cheapest way for major power to achieve their goals is to spread sectarian strife, since it is the gateway for foreign interference with a motive to divide Arab countries. It is also the reason why they are fueling an endless Arabs-Iranian war while we, all the Middle Eastern people and governments including those of Iran and Turkey, have been stupid, ignorant, and fanatic enough to fall in this trap.

The Syrian revolution would have ended like that of the Egyptian revolution, and if the Muslim Brotherhood tried to take advantage, they would have met the same destiny in Syria as they did in Egypt - at least that way the Syrian people would have remained unharmed. What these religious parties and those behind them did to Syria is a crime. They opened a path for new colonization eager to take control of Syrian resources. Syria is divided because of disagreements among those who have ambitions in Syria so that they can recollect the billions that were spent and eventually, Israel will cheer and rejoice and will get ready to strike other countries.

GCC states need no more wars because their blood is already being sucked and they encumber their underground oil to please others through reducing the prices, purchasing and stacking weapons, and rebuilding what Israel, or others, destroyed. GCC states need to face themselves, respect their people and stop being shaky and intimidated by blackmailers or get carried away in wrong directions without any vision. What happened could have been avoided if we had free will, if we acted rationally and rejected intimidating attempts that frightened us. I repeat, it is still possible to protect the region from explosion if we have control over our decisions and invite all regional countries to an open dialogue in which each side reasonably and fairly listens to the other for a greater good of the countries.

We need negotiating minds to propose fair solutions to all the issues, namely that of sectarianism. The solution does not need magic or magicians; it only needs well-aware and faithful people capable of realizing the peoples' needs and are willing to respect their beliefs and use all regional resources for the good of the region's economy and the welfare and prosperity of its people. —*Translated by Kuwait Times*

Al-Jarida

42 years

By Ali Mahmoud Khajah

Today, I am once more writing about a topic I have already tackled on more than one occasion. This is because there is a new parliament and a new Cabinet in office, and I'm hoping that my idea gets approved. What made me rewrite on this topic is the court verdict against Abdulhameed Dashti, whom I believe is one of the worst parliamentarians in Kuwait's history. The total verdicts passed against Dashti in expression cases add up to 42 years, and he still has to face more cases filed against him that might add up his total imprisonment time to half a century or more.

I am talking about a charge used against many people in the past, which might be still used today and tomorrow unless such charges are decisively faced and a legislation is passed to stop them - the charge of 'harming relations with friendly countries'! 'Harming relations with friendly countries' has become a weapon used willingly or in reaction to friendly and brotherly countries' dissatisfaction with opinions expressed in Kuwait or by Kuwaiti citizens against them. It is used against them, which is very much unlike Kuwait and Kuwaitis.

Kuwaitis have grown up to express their opinions on various topics, at least regional ones, freely. That was clear in the public protest organized outside the embassy of Russia, which is a friendly country according to Kuwaiti diplomatic norms that consider that Kuwait has only one non-friendly country - the Zionist entity. So the excuse of harming relations with friendly countries and turning that into a punishable crime can send the thousands who took part in that demonstration to prison if Russia files a complaint with the Kuwaiti government and expresses dissatisfaction about the demonstration.

Not having a public reaction and rejection of such charges, even if this means passing new legislations to protect freedom of expression that does not consider it an official attitude that would harm relations, this charge would remain a threat to everybody, because if we accept it as a penalty against people with whom we disagree, we will have to accept it when used with people with whom we share ideologies, and this has happened and will happen. The same charge was used against Saleh Al-Mulla, Mubarak Al-Duwailah, Hamad Al-Naki, Musallam Al-Barrak, Abdulhameed Dashti and others who are doing time in prison because they did not like the policies of a friendly or brotherly country.

The normal and logical 'harm to relations with friendly countries' should be done by a state official; a minister, ambassador, diplomat or a PM who verbally or actually does so. Opinions expressed by the 'public' (writers, thinkers or MPs) should be treated differently!

— *Translated by Kuwait Times*

Labor minister talks demographic imbalance, expat workers, new ministry in in-depth interview

'We need 15 years at least to reach a balance in the demographic structure'

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and State Minister for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Subaih returned in the new Cabinet stronger and with a more decisive stand towards all issues she is responsible for. She was threatened with grillings and she welcomed them; she was faced with protests and sit-ins but continued her march, until her foes and supporters admitted her political ability and her ministerial skills. So her return to the government was recognition of her work.

Some people were waiting for her departure, but when her name appeared in the new formation, talk about confronting and attacking her resumed because of her decisions to restructure the ministry, opening the issue of social aid, amending the elderly law, retiring several senior officials over "failures" and finally dealing with the issue of disabled aid violations. Al-Rai daily held the following interview with the minister earlier in the week:

Economic strategy

Al-Rai: We know the nature of the social affairs and labor ministry, but everyone is asking about the economic affairs ministry and what is the purpose of it? And what does it include?

Hind Al-Subaih: The economic affairs ministry will prepare the state's economic strategy, and one of its pillars is the secretariat general of planning that prepares the development plan and the government work program. The economic affairs ministry will be involved in more details away from the development plan, and its decisions will be crucial because the development plan is crucial. The new ministry will be concerned with many issues and it should be a reference for all decisions and have an opinion in legislations.

The ministry of economic affairs will oversee diversification of sources of income, privatization, spending, price control, attracting foreign investors and private and public sectors partnership in a way that does not make employment depend on the public sector. The aim of the economic affairs ministry is to set the cost of each decision or legislation law and its economic feasibility. The economic committee now includes the finance ministry, oil and energy ministry, economic affairs ministry and commerce ministry, and it is chaired by the finance minister because he is also the deputy premier.

Al-Rai: Does not this increase your burdens and responsibilities?

Subaih: It is an endorsement and trust. The repeated trust of His Highness the Prime Minister in itself is a burden and a motivation for more achievements, and I must now move from the achievement stage into the innovation one.

I also depend in my work on delegation of duties and follow-up, and not by centralization of powers. I met, after the government's formation, with officials from the social affairs ministry, public authority for manpower, public authority for the disabled and the planning secretariat general. I asked for the work plan of each sector and delegated duties for all. I also told everyone to comply with the law and apply it to all, and that I will follow and evaluate work every month. At the end of the quarter of the first year, those who do not complete what is asked of them should resign without any excuses, as the work environment is provided with all requirements for achievement.

Expat workers

Al-Rai: In 2013, the social affairs ministry announced its intention to reduce expat workers by 100,000 annually. Did you succeed in this?

Subaih: This is not true. I think this matter was brought up before I became minister.

Al-Rai: What happened with the issue of correcting the demographic imbalance? Have you made any progress, or is it still under study? Are there any intentions to reduce the number of certain communities that have grown so much, with some reaching almost a million?

Subaih: No one can speak about the population structure without having studied the nature of the population structure and the needs of the marketplace and plans of the state and development projects, and is aware of data and statistics about the nature of the population structure and all lingering issues.

As for what is being put forth as opinions of MPs' or state officials to resolve the demographic imbalance, I say whoever has an actual solution based on a study is welcome in my office to express his opinion and proposal, and we will implement it if possible. We are not against expat labor in general, rather our problem is with those without degrees and who are untrained and unqualified, in addition to human traffickers who harmed Kuwait domestically and distorted its image abroad. There are many projects that need one person only, but the employer brings in 10 persons, and there are many jobs that can rely on technology such as guarding, cleaning and others.

We need 15 years at least to reach a balance in the demographic structure, and achieve a population ratio in which expats' population would not exceed 60 percent of the total population, or even drop to 40 percent. About progress in the demographic structure issue, we are waiting for several decisions by the Cabinet because the issue is related to the interior ministry and labor authority, and we will move the labor need estimation from all authorities and parties to the labor authority only. We will also increase fines on residency violators from KD 2 to KD 4 per day. We are now working in more than one direction at the same time, as we are working on a quota for each nationality. We will also place new rules for family visas to limit any harm to the population structure and stop the residency of unskilled (marginal) labor.

Quota for each nationality

Al-Rai: What are the most notable steps to reduce the number of expats and adjust the demographic structure?

Subaih: This is not in our calculations - we will place a quota for reach nationality and we will reduce or stop unskilled labor. But we do not have any intention to target a certain nationality.

Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Subaih

Al-Rai: How can you balance plans of adjusting population structure with development projects that need more expat labor?

Subaih: There is a balance of course, and development projects are in mind as well as their labor needs. We have placed strict rules for bringing in labor for those projects, besides getting rid of unskilled workers in Kuwait.

Rai: How successful were you in fighting visa traders?

Subaih: I was able to limit visa trade by 60 percent. I cannot say I eradicated it, but I limited it in cooperation with various state agencies.

Al-Rai: Expats are complaining that the government's austerity measures and adjustment of the population structure that target them personally are a form of discrimination. What is your opinion?

Subaih: Expenses in Kuwait are still the least among Gulf countries.

Al-Rai: How do you view the status of the marketplace in Kuwait?

Subaih: The labor market needs organization in all facets, be it Kuwaiti or non-Kuwaiti, females and males, married and unmarried, qualified and non-qualified, and various nationalities. Firstly, national labor is minimal in the private sector, and needs to increase to adjust chapter one (salaries) of the budget, in addition to identifying professions that only expat workers work in, but in which Kuwaitis can work too. History stands witness to this. In the past, banks and communications companies used to rely on expats, and now rely on national labor with great success.

The issue needs change in the youth culture and direction. The population structure needs adjustment as far as the number of citizens and expats are concerned, and the nature of expat labor. Bringing in expat labor will be subject to tests in their countries before hiring them. The decision will be applicable in the coming days and the start will be with Egypt and India, as there are agreements with the two countries through non-profit international organizations to guarantee that no fees or commission will be imposed on workers.

National manpower

Al-Rai: Is it true that the Kuwaiti does not work?

Subaih: I cannot say this because I am a Kuwaiti to start with, and all those I know work. I do not accept such people in areas that are under my management, but I would like to tell you that "the human being is as you raise him". The employee is under the shadow of his senior, like a child is in his family. If he is raised with the values of commitment and perseverance, he will grow up with those values. If the family accustoms him to a spoiled life, he will live and die spoiled.

I worked 30 years as an employee in various government departments, and after I became minister, I found that many employees in my departmentss do not work. But with direction and encouragement, they become very active. My opinion is that Kuwaiti workers are qualified and have enough intelligence, and all they lack are incentives and examples. With this I mean starting with the minister to the head of the department.

Al-Rai: Does the Kuwaiti woman work more than the Kuwaiti man?

Subaih: The Kuwaiti woman is more accurate and organized than men if she is qualified. This is a heavenly gift to all women.

Al-Rai: Qatar abolished the kafala (sponsorship) system. Will Kuwait go along that path?

Subaih: As for Qatar's abolition of the kafala system, this is not true, as I personally contacted them and made sure of this. In Kuwait, we are working with the interior ministry to apply the scrapping of the sponsor ship system gradually, starting with some professions such as doctors and engineers and those at their level. We are also studying making the state a sponsor, like with the domestic help company.

Development plan

Al-Rai: Are you satisfied with the achievement percentage as far as the development plan is concerned?

Subaih: No, I am not satisfied, because we cannot jump higher than what we reached, and the reason is officials' laxity. When I took over as minister, the National Assembly had six laws that only needed a decision and follow-up. I ordered the completion of the laws and they were completed on time. We plan very well, but all we lack is the will to execute. Kuwait needs rehabilitation of people so that we reach quality in planning, in addition to execution and follow-up.

Al-Rai: Why then is there much talk about the absence of actual development and that everything is only "ink on paper"?

Subaih: Achievements appear without the need to talk about them, and this is the decisive answer and deterrent to all those who are talking. Achievements are very clear, starting with the roads network, the hospitals that are being opened every day, housing development and new cities, and achievement is reflected in capital spending that has exceeded 70 percent.

I do not blame those who do not trust achievement, because precedents are not encouraging, as some citizens are looking at what happened with the Jaber Stadium which took more than 10 years to build. But I say with full confidence that wheels of work are moving, and we are still yet to achieve our desired goals.

Al-Rai: What are the total expenses of the development plan so far from its allocated amount?

Subaih: KD 1.172 billion was spent out of KD 2.974 billion by Dec 31, 2016, nearly 40 percent of the allocated budget.

Al-Rai: Did the drop in oil prices and austerity measures affect plans?

Subaih: Capital spending was not affected at all. The effects were on incentives and the second chapter (products and services).

Kuwait Times 55 Anniversary

International

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Germany plans huge security overhaul

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Indian minister lays blame on western dress for sex attacks

Page 12

GOP primed to dismantle Obama's policies

'We have a lot to do - and a lot to undo'

WASHINGTON: Members of the 115th Congress will be sworn in, setting off an aggressive campaign by Republicans who control the House and Senate to dismantle eight years of President Barack Obama's Democratic policies. The first and biggest target is Obama's health care law, which Republicans have long sought to gut and blamed as a primary cause for a lackluster economic recovery. But decades-old programs that millions of Americans rely on every day, such as Social Security and Medicare, also will be in the crosshairs as congressional Republicans seek to shrink both the size of the federal budget and the bureaucracy in Washington. "We have a lot to do - and a lot to undo," House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said in a letter to fellow Republicans.

There were signs of Republican-on-Republican drama even before the new Congress officially opened. House Republicans on Monday night voted to defy their leaders and gut the chamber's independent ethics panel created in 2008 to probe charges of lawmaker misconduct after several corruption scandals sent members to prison.

Lawmakers would have the final say on their colleagues under the change approved 199-74 over arguments from House Speaker Paul Ryan, McCarthy, and other GOP leaders. Some members said they have felt unfairly targeted by the independent panel, and Kellyanne Conway, a top adviser to President-elect Donald Trump, said yesterday on ABC that there had been "overzealousness" under the old system. Others complained that the move would clear a path to corruption.

WASHINGTON: In this Nov 10, 2016 file photo, President-elect Donald Trump and House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wis, pose for photographers after a meeting in the Speaker's office on Capitol Hill. — AP

Conservative agenda

Democrats will try to block the far-reaching conservative agenda by swaying public opinion and using the power they have in the Senate to filibuster legislation. But that strategy has its political limitations. Twenty-three Senate Democrats are up for re-election in 2018, including 10 from states won by President-elect Donald Trump, and they could break ranks and side with the GOP.

"What we will always do is hold the president-elect and his Republican colleagues in Congress accountable," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said in prepared remarks yesterday. "We will be a caucus that works to make sure the president-elect keeps his commitment to truly make America great, in its finest sense and tradition."

Obama plans a rare trip to Capitol Hill on Wednesday to meet with congressional Democrats and discuss strategy for saving the health care law. Vice President-elect Mike Pence will meet with Republicans. The first week of the new Congress will be a preview of the hectic pace planned by Republicans.

The GOP's proposal to change the ethics process is part of a rules package to be voted on and that also would give GOP leaders the tools to punish lawmakers if there is a repeat of the Democratic sit-in last summer over gun control. Votes also are expected on resolutions to denounce the United Nations for condemning the construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. Republicans blasted the Obama administration for refusing to veto the decision. Ryan, R-Wis., pledged "to reverse the damage done by this administration, and rebuild our alliance with Israel."

James Clapper, the director of national intelligence, is scheduled to testify Thursday before the Senate Armed Services Committee on an intelligence community assessment that Russia interfered in the U.S. election by hacking into Democratic email accounts. Allegations of Russian meddling in the U.S. political process will be examined by individual congressional committees, but Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has rejected a bipartisan call for a special, high-profile select panel to investigate.

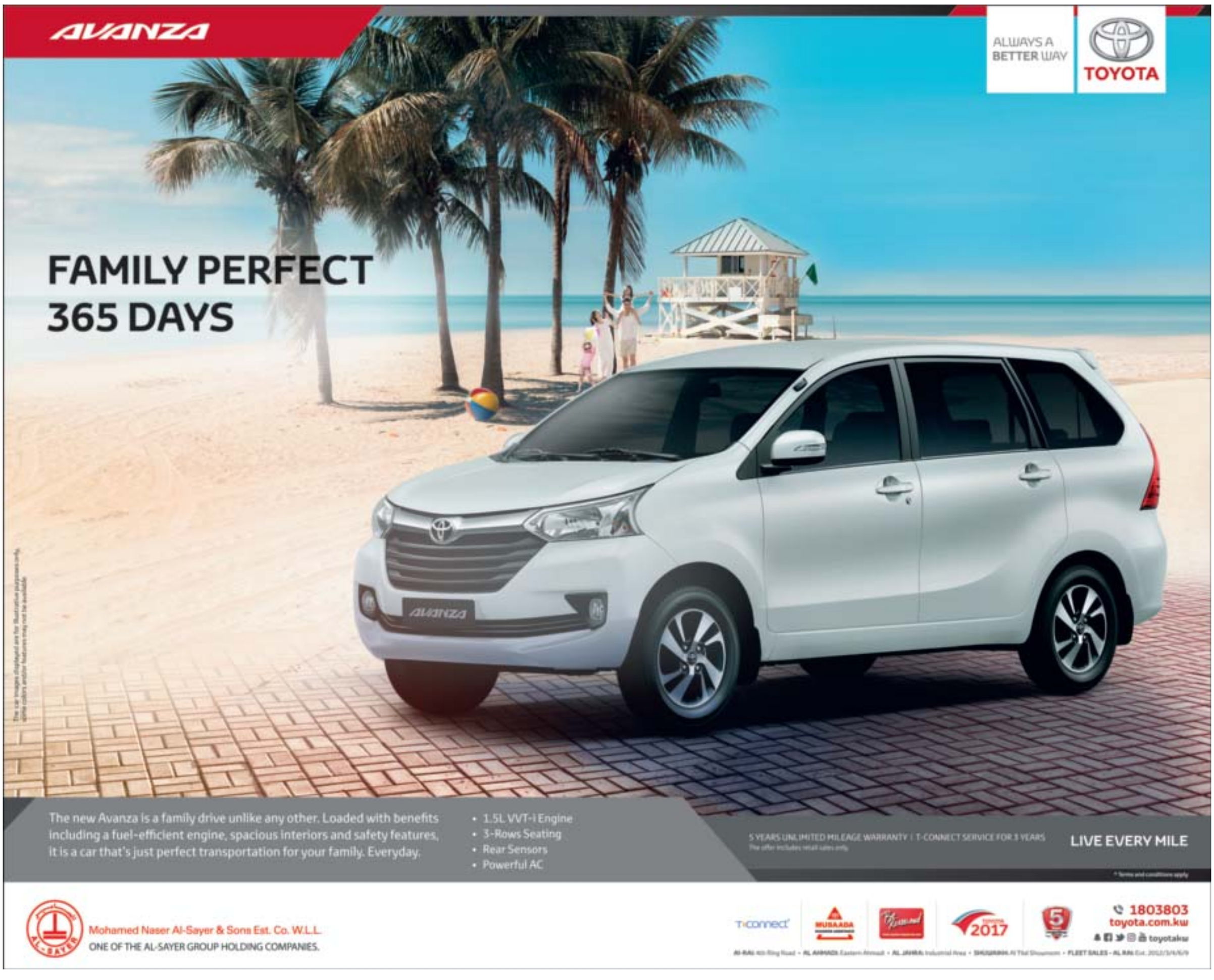
Obama last week slapped Russia with sweeping penalties over the hacking allegations, yet Trump has not publicly accepted the conclusion Moscow was behind the election year intrusions. Incoming White House press secretary Sean Spicer said Monday on Fox News Channel's "Fox & Friends" that "there doesn't seem to be conclusive evidence" that the Russians were responsible.

Scuttle rules

The House is slated to vote Friday to certify Trump's victory in the presidential election over Democrat Hillary Clinton. She is the fifth presidential candidate to win the popular vote and lose the Electoral College. She received nearly 2.9 million more votes than Trump, according to an Associated Press analysis, giving her the largest popular vote margin of any losing presidential candidate and bringing renewed calls to abolish the Electoral College.

Other must-do items on the GOP's agenda are an overhaul of the US tax code. Conservatives also want to scuttle rules on the environment and undo financial regulations created in the aftermath of the 2008 economic meltdown, arguing they are too onerous for businesses to thrive.

The Senate plans to begin repealing Obama's health care law, with consideration of a procedural measure that will shield the initiative from Democratic filibusters. — AP



Residents escape Mosul's besieged west

HASSAN SHAM: They wait for nightfall before attempting the perilous escape across bombed-out bridges and front lines between Islamic State militants and Iraqi forces. Some cross the Tigris River by boat, after the US-led coalition bombed the five bridges connecting the city's two halves to restrict Islamic State movements. Others scale what remains of the bridges using a rope.

Most of the 116,000 civilians who have fled Mosul since Iraqi forces launched their campaign to recapture Islamic State's biggest stronghold came from the eastern half of the city, where government troops have gradually gained ground. But as the biggest battle in Iraq since 2003 enters its 12th week, a growing number of people are escaping from the besieged west bank of the Tigris, a half of the city that is still fully under the militants' control.

"Only the lucky ones get out," said Jamal, who crossed the river using a rope to climb over the remnants of one bridge and is now at a camp for civilians displaced from Mosul with his wife and three children. "If they opened a route for a quarter of an hour, not a single person would remain on the western side."

Although there is no fighting yet in the west, food is scarcer than ever since government-backed Shi'ite militias advanced through desert terrain southwest of Mosul in November, sealing Islamic State's only access route to the city. Civilians who fled the west in recent days said the militants had announced they would soon distribute food and break the siege in an attempt to placate their increasingly desperate subjects and convince them to stay.

'Have to execute the whole of Mosul'

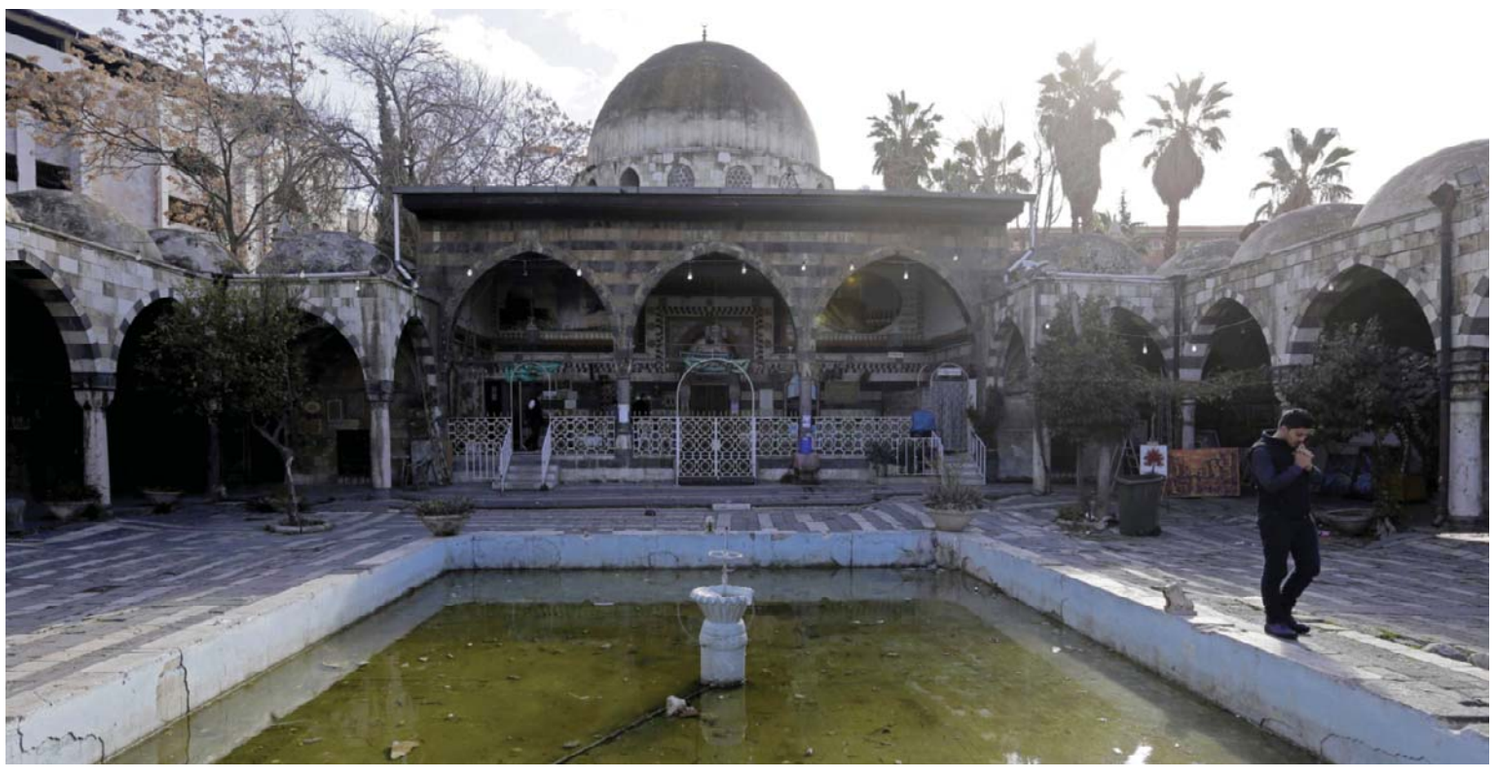
In the run-up to the campaign, aid agencies were preparing for a mass exodus from Mosul. So far most of the city's residents-numbering as many as 1.5 million-either have chosen to stay or have been unable to escape. That has worked in Islamic State's favor, slowing the progress of Iraqi forces seeking to avoid civilian casualties.

Twenty year old Abu Mohsen, whose was ferried across the Tigris by his friend, a fisherman, said when the operation began, most people in the west had planned to wait it out. But as advances slowed last month, their calculations were changing. "When the operations stopped people said the army will not reach us. They said it will take a year or two," he said.

Iraqi forces renewed their push to retake the city last week, making progress in several eastern districts. Until recently, the militants punished anyone caught fleeing their self-styled caliphate with execution, but recent arrivals at the camp said the sheer volume of people trying to escape had forced them to lessen the penalty. "They would have to execute the whole of Mosul, so they started to flog people and send them back home instead," said 22 year old Abu Abd, who crossed the river three days ago when Islamic State militants were distracted.

Some of the bridges can still be crossed on foot, but Islamic State forbids passage to those they suspect of fleeing to the government side, especially those with women and children. Most of the boats crossing the Tigris are controlled by Islamic State. Those who make it across the river must then find a way through the frontline between the militants and Iraqi forces, who are fighting street to street.

"When we saw the army it was as though we were dreaming. We couldn't believe our own eyes," said Abu Abdullah, who fled from the 17 Tomuz neighborhood in the west. The camp is safer, but brings a new kind of hardship. The displaced are not allowed out for security reasons and have no work. For some, it proves too much. Camp workers and displaced people said a displaced man had cut his own throat in a bathroom cubicle on Sunday. — Reuters



DAMASCUS: A general view shows artisan workshops in a historic Ottoman building with a fountain in the courtyard filled with dirty water in the capital. — AFP

Continuous fighting puts peace negotiations at risk

Rebels accuse Assad regime of breaking ceasefire

BEIRUT: A dozen Syrian rebel factions have suspended talks on new peace negotiations, accusing President Bashar Al-Assad's regime of violating a four-day-old ceasefire with attacks near Damascus that continued yesterday. The decision threatens the process sponsored by regime ally Russia and rebel backer Turkey, which began with a truce and is meant to lead to negotiations in the Kazakh capital Astana this month.

The ceasefire has brought quiet to large parts of the country but has been undermined by sporadic violence, particularly fighting in the Wadi Barada region north of Damascus that supplies the capital's water. Government forces backed by fighters from Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah have continued to press a two-week-old offensive in Wadi Barada despite the ceasefire which began December 30.

A dozen rebel groups announced in a statement late Monday the "freezing of all discussion linked to the Astana negotiations." The rebels said they had adhered to the ceasefire, but accused the regime of "major and frequent violations, notably in the (rebel) regions of Wadi Barada and Eastern Ghouta", near Damascus. "If things don't return to how they were before, the accord will be considered null and void," the statement added. It was signed by a dozen groups, including the Army of Islam, Faylaq al-Sham, and the Sultan Murad Brigade, which is close to Turkey.

'Critical phase'

The fighting in Wadi Barada continued yesterday, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor said. It said government forces were attacking with helicopters and artillery fire after advancing on Monday to the outskirts of the Ain Al-Fijeh spring, the main water source in the area.

Syria's government accuses rebels in Wadi Barada of deliberately targeting infrastructure there, causing fuel to poison the water supply and then cutting the flow to Damascus altogether. Rebels say government strikes caused the damage, which has left four million people in Damascus without water since December 22. The regime says forces in Wadi Barada include former Al-Qaeda affiliate Fateh al-Sham Front, although opposition fighters deny the group is present.

Fateh Al-Sham, along with the Islamic State (IS) group, is excluded from the truce. Syrian state media has been conspicuously quiet on the fighting in the area, but Damascus governor Alaa Ibrahim told the Al-Watan daily that the army was progressing. "Military operations are under way, and God willing there will be happy news soon," he told the newspaper, which is close to the government.

Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman warned the truce was in a "critical phase" and faced "collapse" if sponsors Russia and Turkey did not intervene to save it. The monitor reported violations elsewhere in the country yesterday, including air strikes on the town of Khan Sheikhun in Idlib province that killed a pregnant woman and wounded three other civilians. The group also reported rebel fire on two villages in the central Hama province.

Spillover in Turkey

The ceasefire and planned talks are the latest effort to negotiate an end to Syria's conflict, which has killed more than 310,000 people since it began with anti-government protests in March 2011. Despite backing opposite sides in the conflict, Ankara and Moscow have worked closely of late on the war, jointly brokering a deal that allowed civilians and rebels to leave Aleppo city before it was retaken by the government last month.

The process has also received the blessing of the UN Security Council, despite offering a competing track to UN-sponsored negotiations set to resume in Geneva in February. Russia and Turkey, which are organizing the talks along with regime ally Iran, say they are meant to supplement the UN-backed process, not replace it. Both Russia and Turkey have launched their own military action in Syria, with Moscow intervening in support of the government in September 2015, and Ankara starting a campaign against IS and Kurdish militants in August 2016.

The conflict has spilled into Turkey, with a string of deadly attacks claimed by or blamed on IS or Kurdish groups. On Monday, IS claimed responsibility for a New Year's night attack on an Istanbul nightclub that killed 39 people. Turkey's Hurriyet daily reported yesterday that the attacker, who remains at large, had fought for IS in Syria. — AP

Women's rights face a daunting new year

NEW YORK: Women's rights face enormous challenges worldwide in 2017 with campaigners expecting fights to keep health clinics open, to save programs preventing unwanted pregnancies and to enforce laws protecting women from violence. Globally, women's rights are in the crosshairs of rising isolationism and right-wing politics in Western Europe and the United States, where President-elect Donald Trump has promised to unravel an array of beneficial policies.

"There are major challenges facing women's rights coming up, not the least of which is a global cultural understanding ... that women are in essence second-class citizens," said Tarah Demant of Amnesty International USA. "This is a global phenomenon," said Demant, senior director of Amnesty's identity and discrimination unit. "We are really worried." Here are some of the biggest challenges to women's rights in 2017:

Global access to abortion and contraception

A threat to abortion access is the likely reinstatement of the so-called global gag rule under the Trump administration. First imposed under former President Ronald Reagan, the rule prohibits groups getting US aid abroad from providing abortions or counseling patients about abortions, even if their funds for those activities come from other sources.

The rule was lifted by President Barack Obama in 2009 but can be reinstated with the stroke of a pen. Under the gag rule, many groups turned down US aid, leaving them short of money for health services from cancer screenings to flu shots, advocates say. The United States also could pull funding from the United Nations Population Fund, which provides access to reproductive health services but does not fund or support abortion.

Keeping women's organizations operating

Women's groups work around the world on such issues as divorce rights, gender wage gaps and child marriage, often operating in hostile environments on shoestring budgets. Several countries have enacted laws pressuring such groups by making them register as foreign agents if they get funding from international donors, said Janet Walsh, acting director of women's rights division at Human Rights Watch. At the same time, funding from US government sources is likely to shrink, she said. "I'm afraid for those who take a stand for women's rights, that their security and their ability to register and operate as organizations will be undercut," she said.

Russia flags war games with US ally Philippines

MANILA: The Russian Navy said yesterday it was planning to hold war games with the Philippines, as two of its ships made a rare stop in Manila following Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte's pivot from the United States. Rear Admiral Eduard Mikhailov, the deputy commander of the Russian Navy's Pacific fleet, said the joint military exercises would focus on maritime piracy and terrorism, which he described as the region's two top security concerns.

"We're very sure that in the future we'll get such exercises with you, maybe just the manoeuvreing or maybe use some combat systems and so on," Mikhailov told reporters beside the docked Russian destroyer Admiral Tributs. Mikhailov also raised the prospect of joint exercises with China and Malaysia in the South China Sea, where competing territorial claims have been a major source of tension and potential conflict for decades.

"We really hope that in a few years, the military exercises for example in your region, in the South China Sea, will (involve) for example, not only Russia-Philippines, but Russia, Philippines, China and maybe Malaysia together." The visit was only the third ever by Russian military vessels to the Philippines, according to the Filipino Navy's Commodore Francisco Cabudao, who led the welcoming ceremony for the Russian ships.

The Philippines, a former American colony, had for decades been one of the United States' most important and loyal allies in Asia. The two are bound by a mutual defense pact. But Duterte, a self-described socialist, has during his six months in power sought to dramatically shift his nation's foreign and military alliances towards China and Russia. — AFP

Iran HR activist ends 71-day hunger strike

DUBAI: An imprisoned Iranian human rights activist ended a 71-day hunger strike yesterday as his detained wife won a temporary release from prison, a day after his case sparked a rare unauthorized protest in Tehran. Arash Sadeghi was to be taken to a hospital, his lawyer Amir Raisian said, while Amnesty International said he would be fed intravenously. His wife, Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee, was temporarily freed for several days in a decision that can be extended, the semi-official ISNA news agency reported.

The sudden decision comes after a dayslong social media campaign and the march Monday toward Evin prison by dozens of Iranians. Such protests have been rare in Iran after violence that followed the country's disputed 2009 presidential election. Reformist lawmaker Bahram Parsai said earlier that he and other legislators met with court officials to discuss Sadeghi's case, signaling the growing concern officials had over the campaign.

"It was supposed to solve the case resorting to prudence, in a way that would not be misused by enemies," Parsai said, according to the semi-official ILNA news agency. "We do not want such cases to turn into a problem for the system," he said, apparently referring to Western criticism of Iran's human rights record.

Sadeghi is serving a 15-year sentence over charges including "spreading propaganda against the system" and "insulting the founder of the Islamic Republic," according to Amnesty. The London-based advocacy group has said Sadeghi's charges stem in part from his communication with them. Sadeghi's hunger strike began Oct 24 after authorities arrested his wife to make her serve a six-year sentence over an unpublished fictional story found in her home about a woman burning a Quran in anger over another woman being stoned to death for adultery.

Crackdown on expression

"The release of Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee today comes as a welcome relief but is long overdue," Amnesty researcher Nassim Papayianni said in a statement. "Neither she nor her husband, Arash Sadeghi, should have ever been forced to spend a single minute behind bars." Dual nationals, artists, poets, journalists, fashion models and activists have been arrested in a crackdown on expression led by hard-liners who oppose President Hassan Rouhani's more moderate policies and efforts to promote greater openness to the outside world. The arrests accelerated with Iran's nuclear deal with world powers.

Other prisoners are believed to be on hunger strikes as well. Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe , a British-Iranian woman sentenced to five years in prison over charges she planned to topple Iran's government while on vacation with her young daughter, ended a five-day hunger strike after being put back into general population following weeks of solitary confinement, said her husband, Richard Ratcliffe. She is scheduled to appear at an appeals court hearing Wednesday, he said.

Nizar Zakka , a US permanent resident from Lebanon sentenced to 10 years in prison and a $4.2 million fine, began a hunger strike Dec 8, Washington-based lawyer Jason Poblete said. As of a week ago, Zakka was still on it, he said. "The Iranians have cut off our communications with Nizar because, it appears, they are upset with the media coverage of his hunger strike," Poblete said. — AP

UN: At least 6,878 civilians killed in 2016 Iraq violence

BAGHDAD: Violence claimed the lives of at least 6,878 civilian Iraqis last year, the United Nations said on Monday, as the Iraqi government struggles to maintain security nationwide and to dislodge Islamic State group militants from areas under their control.

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, known as UNAMI, said its numbers "have to be considered as the absolute minimum" as it has not been able to verify casualties among civilians in conflict areas, and of those who lost their lives due to "secondary effects of violence ... due to exposure to the elements, lack of water, food, medicines and health care."

UNAMI said in a statement that 12,388 other civilians were wounded in 2016. It added that last year figures didn't include casualties among civilians in Iraq's western Anbar province for the months of May, July, August and December. According to UNAMI figures, at least 7,515 civilians were killed in 2015.

The monthly UN casualty report for December 2016 showed that a total of 386 civilians were killed and another 1,066 were wounded. The worst affected area was the northern province of Ninevah, where government forces are fighting to retake the IS-held city of Mosul, with 208 civilians killed and 511 injured. The capital, Baghdad, came next with 109 civilians killed and 523 injured.

Innocent civilians

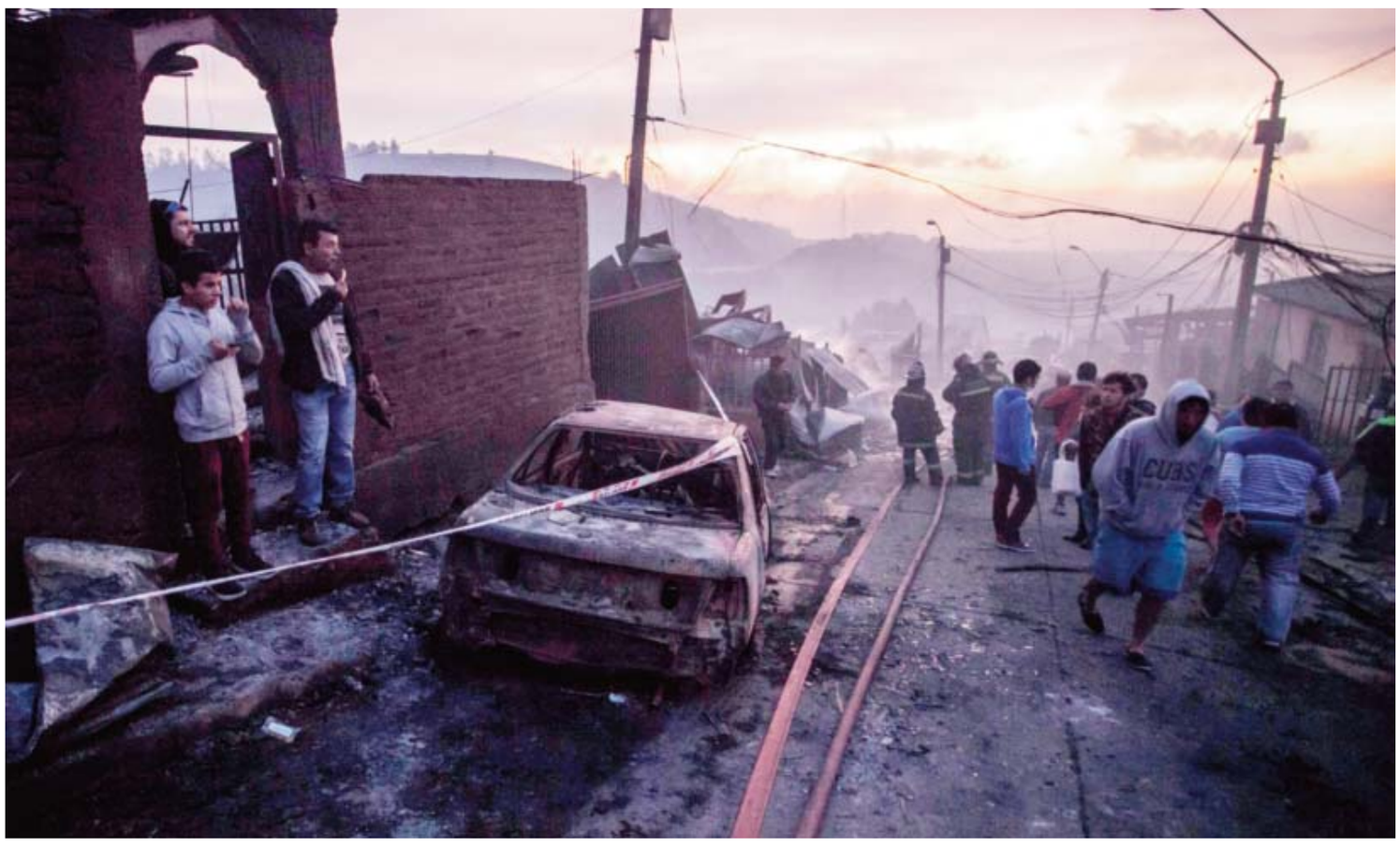
IS, known locally by the Arabic acronym Daesh, has claimed responsibility for a string of bombings in Baghdad that have killed more than 50 people in the last week alone. The deadliest IS attack was in July when a massive suicide bombing in a bustling market area in central Baghdad killed almost 300 people, the bloodiest single attack in the capital in 13 years of war.

"This is, no doubt, an attempt by Daesh to divert attention from their losses in Mosul and, unfortunately, it is the innocent civilians who are paying the price," Jan Kubis, the special representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, said in the statement. The group was also behind Monday's suicide bombing in a commercial area in eastern Baghdad, which killed 41 people and wounding 64 others. Several other attacks, including one carried out by five suicide bombers against two police stations in the city of Samarra north of Baghdad, killed at least 27 people and wounded 89.

Backed by the US-led international coalition, Iraqi government troops and paramilitary forces launched the campaign in mid-October to dislodge IS from Mosul - Iraq's second-largest city and the last major IS urban bastion in the country.

Unlike other reports, last month's report didn't include casualties among security forces. The UN came under criticism from the Iraqi military last month after reporting that nearly 2,000 members of the Iraqi forces had been killed in November. The Iraqi government has not publicized the casualty figures for government troops and paramilitary forces fighting in Mosul and elsewhere in northern Iraq. — AP

MOSUL: Soldiers of Iraq's elite counterterrorism forces help an elderly woman as she and her family flee fighting between Iraqi security forces against Islamic State militants. — AP



VALPARAISO: People work to extinguish the flames at a house in Valparaiso, Chile, on January 2, 2017 as the fire threatens to reach the city's port. Authorities have declared a red alert in the area. — AFP

Huge wildfire burns homes in Valparaiso

VALPARAISO, Chile: A wildfire ravaged woods and burned 100 homes in the hilly Chilean port city of Valparaiso on Monday, forcing authorities to evacuate hundreds of people. At least 19 people were reported hurt after the fire broke out on the outskirts of the historic city, the government said.

Television pictures showed thick grey smoke filling the streets in the Laguna Verde district, where the blaze struck, and flames devouring green hillsides. Hundreds of firefighters along with water-dumping airplanes and helicopters were battling the blaze, officials said. "Emergency protocols have been activated," President Michelle Bachelet said on Twitter.

The flames had "damaged 100 homes in an area where there are 500," deputy interior minister Mahmud Aleuy told a news conference late Monday. He said 19 people were hurt, mostly by breathing in smoke, but there were no fatalities. The flames destroyed 50 hectares of woodland, the National Emergencies Office said in a statement. Fanned by strong winds in hot summer weather, the fire broke out in the hilly region that makes Valparaiso a picturesque tourist destination.

'Jewel of the pacific'

Some 200 people were evacuated from their homes as a precaution, the agency added. "The fire was coming from the other side of the hill, down below. We never thought it would spread so far," said Rosa Gallardo, a woman who lost her home in the fire. "It was hopeless. The smoke was suffocating. It stung my eyes. So we had to evacuate," said Pablo Luna Flores, another resident who lost his home.

Electricity providers said they had cut power to nearly 48,000 customers also as a precaution. The authorities issued a maximum red alert. Located 120 kilometers northwest of the capital Santiago, Valparaiso is home to Chile's national Congress. Laguna Verde lies on the southern outskirts of Valparaiso, a sprawling city built on 40 hills with stunning sea views.

Dubbed the "jewel of the Pacific," the picturesque colonial city is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Thousands of tourists come every year to stroll its narrow cobbled streets and ride cable cars up the steep hills. Wildfires killed 15 people in 2014 and destroyed thousands of homes in the area, particularly in the city's poorer neighborhoods. The wooden structures with their tin roofs, perched on tinder-dry hillsides, were quickly engulfed in that fire.

More blazes in March 2015 killed one woman and forced thousands of people from their homes. The city is home to 270,000 people overall, many living in brightly colored houses on the hillsides. In its heyday from the mid-19th century to the early 20th, Valparaiso became famous as a stopover point for ships steaming down to the continent's southern tip and on to the Atlantic. The opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 prompted a spectacular drop in traffic to Valparaiso and an end to the port's glory days. It now relies heavily on tourism, and living standards are lower than the average in Chile. — AFP

Brazil prison riot leaders to be transferred, says minister

MANAUS: The instigators of a horrific prison riot in Brazil that left 56 inmates dead-many of them decapitated-will be transferred to higher security federal prisons, the justice minister said yesterday. As soon as these ringleaders are identified, at the request of the Manaus state government they will be transferred, said the minister, Alexandre de Moraes.

The riot broke out Sunday afternoon and lasted through the night at a prison on the outskirts of Manaus, the capital of Amazonas state, state public security secretary Sergio Fontes said. Bloodied and burned bodies were seen stacked in a concrete prison yard and piled in carts. A total of 184 inmates escaped, and so far 40 have been caught, Moraes said.

The fighting ranks among the most deadly of numerous prison riots across Latin America in the past decade. Fontes called it the biggest massacre ever committed at a prison in the state. Outside, heavily armed police hunted for inmates who escaped through a series of tunnels discovered at the Anisio Jobim penitentiary complex.

Decapitations

Police finally restored order at the prison on Monday 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," he told a news 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.

The PCC's base is in Sao Paulo, some 2,700 kilometers (1,650 miles) 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." It was the latest eruption of horrific violence to hit Brazil's underfunded and overcrowded prisons.

In October, deadly riots broke out at three 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, the authorities said. In 1992, a riot in Sao Paulo's Carandiru prison left 111 people dead.

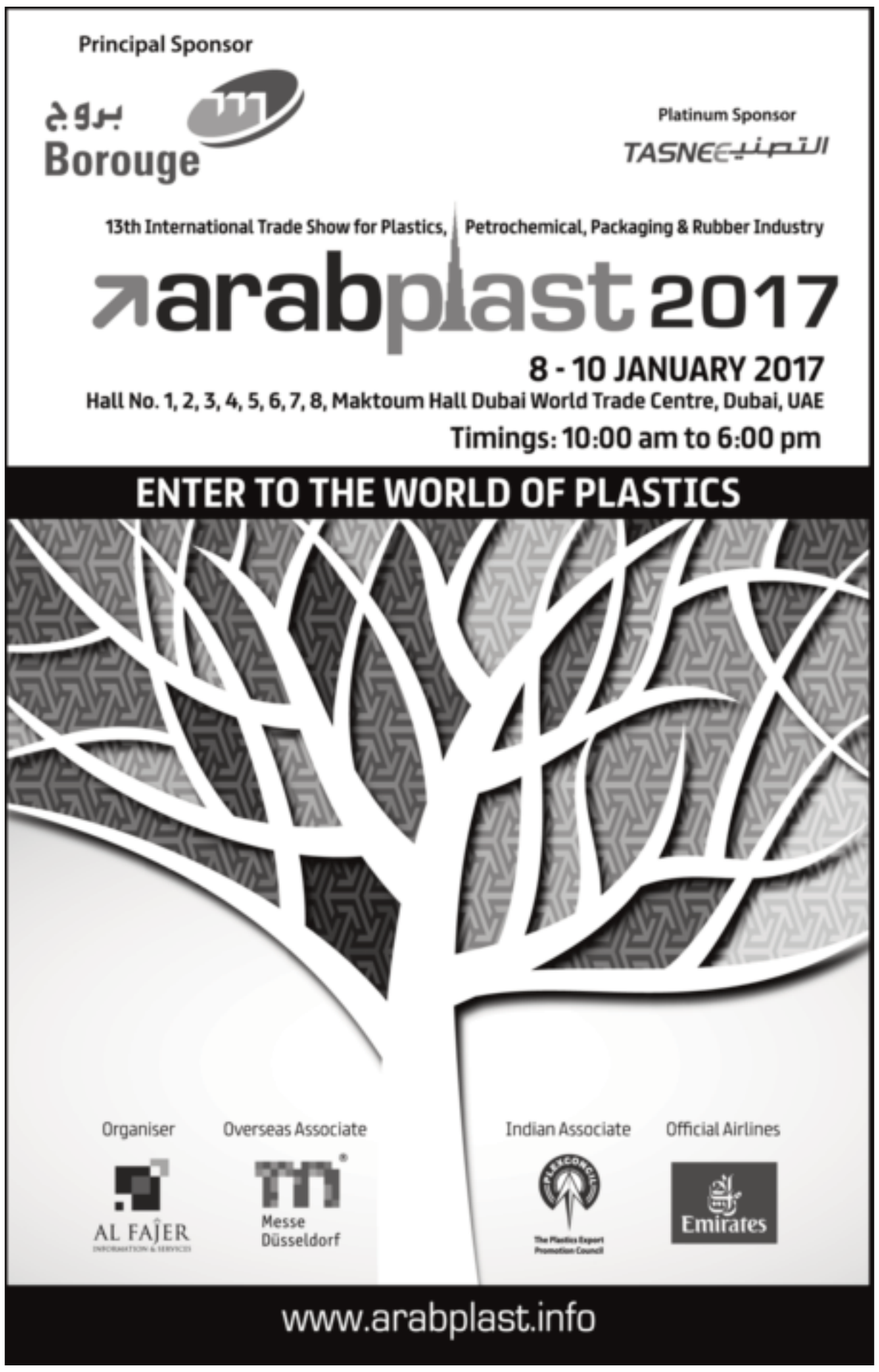
Brazil's prisons are often controlled by drug gangs, whose turf wars on the outside are also fought out among inmates. "There is a silent war of drug trafficking, and the state needs to intervene," Fontes said. "What did we see in this case? One faction fighting another because each wants more money.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

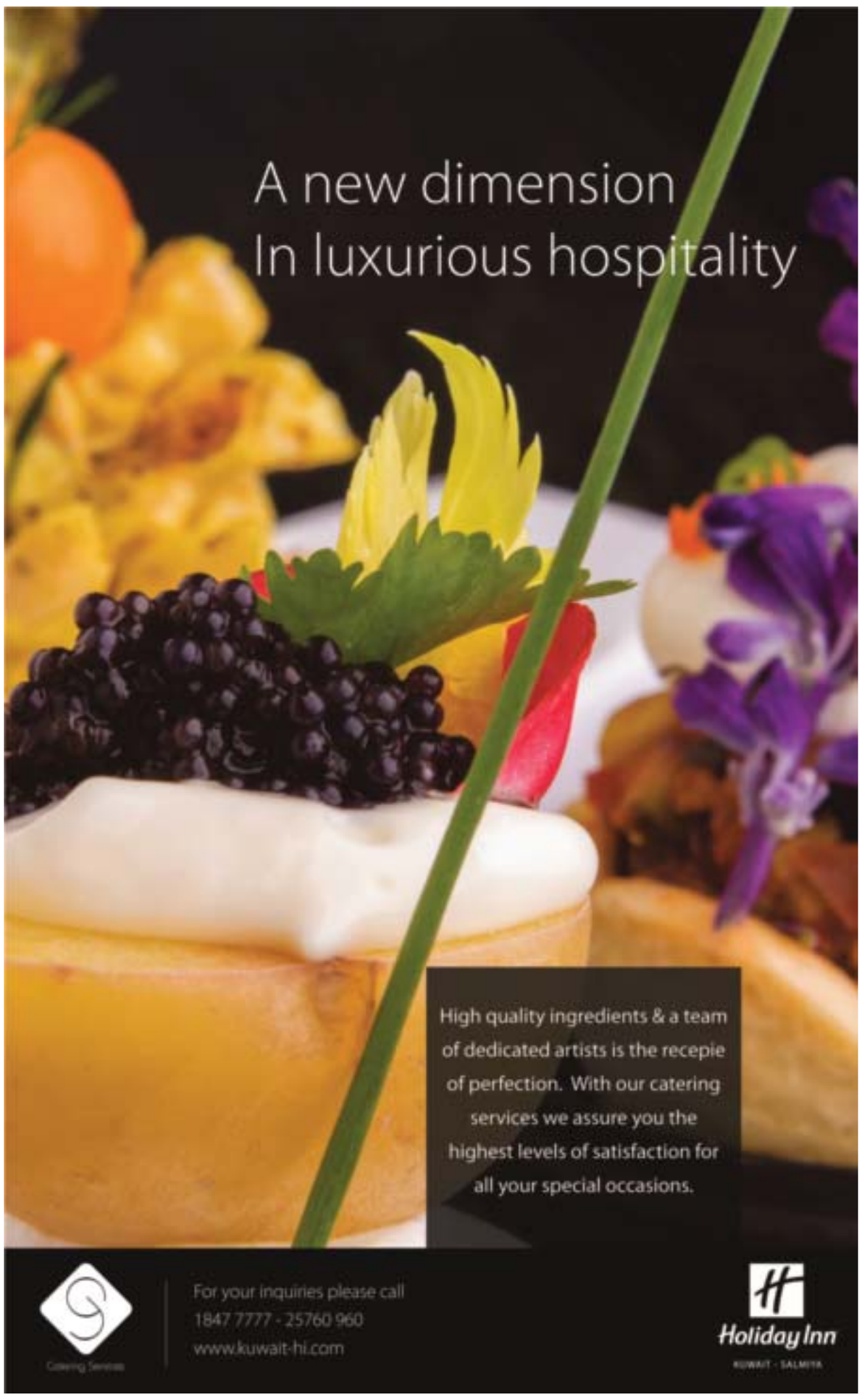
Trump names Lighthizer as top trade representative

NEW YORK: President-elect Donald Trump announced yesterday he will nominate lawyer Robert Lighthizer as US trade representative, picking an experienced trade official who has questioned the conservative movement's commitment to free trade. Lighthizer, who served as deputy USTR under President Ronald Reagan, would play a key role in Trump's trade agenda. The president-elect has vigorously opposed the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership pact, but has said he would ink one-on-one trade deals with individual countries. Trump has also signaled a tough stance on trade with China, including levying a hefty tariff on Chinese imports.

"Ambassador Lighthizer is going to do an outstanding job representing the United States as we fight for good trade deals that put the American worker first," Trump said Tuesday in a statement announcing his pick. "He has extensive experience striking agreements that protect some of the most important sectors of our economy, and has repeatedly fought in the private sector to prevent bad deals from hurting Americans. He will do an amazing job helping turn around the failed trade policies which have robbed so many Americans of prosperity."

Lighthizer, who played a senior role during Bob Dole's 1996 campaign, has more recently worked on trade issues as a lawyer, representing manufacturing, agricultural and high-tech companies, according to his law firm biography. Lighthizer's bio also states that he focused on "market-opening trade actions on behalf of US companies seeking access to foreign markets." — AP





Six die in India bakery fire, calls for labor law change

MUMBAI: Six migrant workers who had been locked inside a bakery by their employer in western India suffocated to death in a fire, triggering calls for decades-old labor laws to be implemented to crack down on worker exploitation and abuse. A short circuit caused a fire in a bakery in Pune in western Maharashtra state last Friday when the workers were asleep on the mezzanine floor where they also baked cakes and cookies.

They were unable to escape as the bakery owner had locked the shutter door from outside to prevent theft. When firemen broke into the bakery, they found the workers' bodies on the mezzanine floor. The workers died of suffocation and burns, officials said. "When such cases occur, the law enforcement agencies look at the more obvious crime and ignore other sections" of the law, said Chandan Kumar, a core group member on bonded labor with the National Human Rights Commission.

The employer was arrested and charged with culpable homicide not amounting to murder, keeping the workers locked up, constructing an illegal mezzanine where the workers lived and worked, and operating the bakery without government approval. Activists say the employer should also have been charged with violating labor laws.

More than 90 percent of India's workforce - an estimated 400 million people - are in informal employment. This includes laborers on farms and construction sites, as well as in shops, hotels and restaurants. Many work in conditions that violate Indian laws enacted decades ago to protect labor rights. One law that is not enforced requires migrant workers' data to be recorded in their home state and their destination of employment, said Umi Daniel, South Asia regional head of the non-governmental organization Aide et Action International.

"It is important to record this data as it would not only enumerate migrant workers from each state, but also identify where they are working and help in better regulation of their work conditions," Daniel told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. In the Pune bakery fire, neither the employer nor the government had home addresses of the six workers who had migrated from northern Uttar Pradesh state.

Police inspector Varsharani Patil said their relatives working in bakeries nearby helped contact their families back home. Officials said bonded labor laws were not applicable in the case because the workers chose to live in the bakery to save money. Experts called for improved understanding of bonded labor. "Any person working on nominal wages is forced labor , and that is bonded labor ," said Nirmal Gorana who heads a national campaign to end bonded labor .

Experts say an Indian law to protect minimum wage and ensure compensation to families in the event of a worker's death on the job also is not implemented. "We are not remotely close to implementing this law. There is no mechanism to cater to the informal sector," said Kumar, of the National Human Rights Commission. India is home to an estimated 16 million of the world's 36 million slaves, according to the Walk Free Foundation, an Australia-based human rights group. — Reuters

Germany plans huge security overhaul after Berlin attack

Seeking quicker expulsions of illegal migrants

BERLIN: Germany's interior minister yesterday outlined plans for a security services overhaul, seeking greater federal powers on domestic intelligence and quicker expulsions of illegal migrants following the Berlin truck attack. Thomas de Maiziere also called for giving federal police wider oversight across the country's 16 states, and for a new national crisis management centre to be set up.

"We don't have federal jurisdiction to deal with national catastrophes. The jurisdiction for the fight against international terrorism is fragmented," he wrote in a guest column for the daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. "The federal police's scope of action is restricted to railway stations, airports and border controls," he wrote, stressing that "it is time" to reexamine Germany's security set-up.

Policing and domestic intelligence services in Germany are currently decentralized and controlled by the country's 16 states. The plans for a sweeping reform come after a series of embarrassing security failures, with the December 19 attack training a spotlight on the gaps. After Tunisian suspect Anis Amri allegedly rammed a truck into a crowded Christmas market, killing 12, it swiftly emerged that the asylum seeker had slipped through the net of security services.

Amri, 24, who was days later shot dead by Italian police, had been under surveillance since March, but German police dropped their watch in September thinking he was a small-time drug dealer. The failed asylum seeker should also have been deported months ago but Tunisia did not provide the necessary paperwork until after the attack.

BERLIN: In this file photo taken on December 19, 2016 shows German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere during a press conference with his new French counterpart on December 19, 2016. — AFP

Deportation centers

De Maiziere also said federal detention centers should be set up to hold rejected asylum seekers and illegal immigrants in the period leading up to their expulsion. In order to close security gaps, federal police must be given wider powers, the minister said.

"The current remit of the federal police is too limited," he said. "We need a set of common rules and better coordination, for instance in checking dangerous individuals." The federal government should also take charge of domestic intelligence services, he said, noting that trouble-makers do not seek to disrupt only one state but the country as a whole.

But de Maiziere's suggestions quickly drew criticism, including from Ralf Jaeger, the interior minister of Germany's most populous state North Rhine-Westphalia, who opposes removing state control over domestic intelligence services. The Social Democratic Party's parliamentary chief Thomas Oppermann also accused de Maiziere of heading down a radical path with the security overhaul. The Islamophobic and rightwing Populist Party AfD meanwhile claimed credit for the planned measures, saying it had been seeking such reforms for months.

Security failings

De Maiziere is a close ally of Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is running for a fourth term in a general election expected in September. Her government came under fire in the wake of the December 19 attack for its liberal border policy, which has allowed in more than one million asylum seekers since 2015, and for allowing Amri to slip through the net despite documented security concerns.

The December attack was only one of several cases last year that exposed security failings in Germany. In October, police botched an attempt to arrest a Syrian bomb plot suspect. The man was finally caught after a nationwide manhunt, thanks to Syrian asylum seekers who detained him but was later found hanged in his cell. And in November, Germany's domestic spy service unmasked a Spanish-born agent in its own ranks as a suspected Islamist. Media reports said he was also a former gay porn actor. — AFP

PARIS: Former French Prime Minister and left-wing candidate Manuel Valls delivers his speech during a campaign press conference. — AP

French left-wing candidates take risky stance: Pro-Europe

PARIS: Two men hoping to clinch the left-wing nomination for France's presidential race are pursuing a risky strategy: They want to save the much-maligned European Union. Manuel Valls and Vincent Peillon laid out their platforms Tuesday, pleading for unity and tolerance in the face of far-right candidate Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration, anti-EU campaign.

Valls and Peillon are among seven candidates in the leftist primary Jan. 22 and 29, seeking a nomination that looks like a poisoned chalice. Polls suggest the mainstream left's candidate in France's April-May election may not even make it past the first round of voting amid mass disappointment with Socialist Francois Hollande's presidency.

Both men sought Tuesday to distance themselves from the Socialists' troubles - and to revive support for the EU. That may prove a hard sell in the wake of Britain's vote to leave the EU and amid frustration across the continent with a union seen as elitist and bogged down in bureaucracy. Valls, a Spanish-born former prime minister, called himself "profoundly European" and said the solution to disillusionment with the EU is to "refound" and defend it, notably with higher taxes on imports from outside Europe's single market. He called for a suspension in EU enlargement and tougher external borders, saying, "European civilization ... should start and end somewhere."

After two years marred by deadly extremist attacks, Valls also said he would create 1,000 more police and gendarme jobs every year. Peillon, a European Parliament member and former education minister, listed Europe as No 2 of six broad campaign strategies. He called for a Europe-wide minimum wage and tax policies, and an unspecified new "financial instrument" to help Europe pay for migration policy.

"The year 2017 puts us before a clear choice: dismantle Europe, or rebuild it," his campaign manifesto says. "And if Europe comes undone, France will come undone too." Le Pen, who wants to reinstate French borders and hold a referendum on leaving the EU, praised Russia on BFM television Tuesday for defending its national interests and said France should do the same.

Polls suggest Le Pen may face conservative candidate Francois Fillon in the presidential runoff. Fillon, a former prime minister, wants a more modest and "realistic" EU and calls in his campaign platform for "a sovereign France in a Europe respectful of nations." — AP

MAPUTO: This file photo taken on November 8, 2012 shows fighters of the former Mozambican rebel movement "Renamo" receiving military training in Gorongosa's mountains, Mozambique. — AFP

Mozambique rebel leader announces 2-month truce

MAPUTO: Rebels in Mozambique announced yesterday a two-month extension to a truce with the government, raising hopes for peace after a spike in violence last year that claimed scores of lives. The country's president said the truce by Afonso Dhlakama, leader of Renamo, which is both an armed insurgent group and an elected opposition party, showed that the two sides were beginning to rebuild confidence in each other.

Worsening clashes between the Frelimo government and Renamo had revived the spectre of Mozambique's civil war that ended more than 20 years ago. But Dhlakama told reporters: "There have been some minor incidents, but the seven-day truce went well, so I announce the extension of the truce for 60 days, until March 4.""The truce is intended to build an atmosphere conducive to advancing talks in Maputo in peace and tranquility for both sides." Dhlakama, who lives in hiding in the Gorongosa mountains in central Mozambique, said Renamo forces would not attack government troops or positions. Last year saw a sharp escalation in violence, and more than 15,000 people have been forced to flee to government-run camps, relatives' homes or across the border to Malawi and Zimbabwe.

The truce announcement came after tentative moves towards a peace process were suspended indefinitely last year due to setbacks including the killing of a Renamo negotiator. President Filipe Nyusi said on Monday the truce was "productive", according to the private STV television channel. Trust "is being created," he said, adding that government forces did not launch offensive attacks on Renamo.

Rebels weakened?

One diplomatic source told AFP that Dhlakama was weakened and had been forced into a truce to try to revive the chance of peace talks, which could be held under international mediation coordinated by the European Union. "Dhlakama was cornered and it seems that this is the solution he found to save international mediation," the source said.

The rebel leader announced the truce after a series of telephone calls with the president. The fighting has often focused on Mozambique's main roads, with Renamo attacking government convoys and civilian vehicles, and soldiers accused of ruthlessly targeting suspected rebels in nearby villagers. Many displaced people say that government soldiers often treat local villagers in the central region as rebel sympathizers.

The death toll is unknown but scores of people are reported to have been killed in 2016, with both the Frelimo and Renamo parties also suffering assassinations of local politicians by so-called "death squads". Despite the truce, one Renamo official was gunned down outside his house in Nampula city last week.

Mozambique is still recovering from its bloody 1976-1992 civil war when one million people died during years of sporadic fighting between Frelimo and Renamo. Tensions have resurfaced since 2013, with Renamo fighters again taking up arms against Frelimo, accusing the ruling party of enriching itself at the expense of the southern African country.

Authorities say 3,100 people now live in government camps after fleeing the conflict, and several thousand more have escaped the conflict zone to stay with relatives elsewhere. Another 8,600 people have been forced into neighboring Malawi and Zimbabwe, according to the UN refugee agency. Renamo refused to accept the results of 2014 elections when it was beaten once more by the ruling Frelimo party-in power since the former Portuguese colony's independence 40 years ago. — AFP

Myanmar police arrest three over local reporter murder

YANGON: Myanmar police yesterday said they had arrested three people over the murder of a local journalist known for his investigations into illegal logging and brothels. Eleven Media reporter Soe Moe Tun's battered body was found last month on the side of a road in Monywa, northwest of Mandalay. Myanmar ended official censorship in 2012 after the military junta ceded power, but journalists still face intimidation for investigating controversial topics.

At least four reporters have been killed with impunity in Myanmar since 1999, according to the New York-based Committee for the Protection of Journalists. Local media sources said Soe Moe Tun had reported on the mining industry, illegal logging and the growth of karaoke lounges fronting for brothels before his death. Thein Swe Myint, an officer from Monywa police station, said authorities had arrested three suspects after questioning some 40 people over the murder.

"First we arrested two people from a local KTV (karaoke) operator and we have arrested another one who used to be a logging truck driver," he told AFP. Saigang region, where Soe Moe Tun worked, is a hub for mining and logging of Myanmar's prized teak wood. Much of the timber is smuggled out of the country to India in a vast illegal trade thought to be worth billions of dollars.

Advocacy groups say journalists covering the industry are increasingly facing intimidation for their work. At least 10 reporters covering environmental issues have been killed in South and Southeast Asia since 2010, according to Reporters Without Borders. Several months ago local Myanmar reporter Tin Zaw Oo was forced to move after his family was threatened by illegal loggers, said Myanmar Journalists' Network. Soe Moe Tun's wife, Khin Cho Lett, said she hoped his killers would be brought to justice. "My husband was killed very cruelly," she said. "I am waiting for the truth." — AFP

Gunman in Switzerland flees after injuring police

GENEVA: Swiss police said yesterday they had located but not yet detained a "dangerous" gunman who fled after injuring two officers carrying out a house search. Police stressed the incident had no link to terrorism. A 33-year-old man opened fire as police were conducting a house search in the town of Rehtobel, regional police in the canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden said in a statement.

The police officers had suffered unspecified injuries and were taken to hospital for treatment, the statement said. A local woman told the Blick daily she saw "two people lying on the ground".

She said numerous police vehicles were at the scene and said police had closed off the main highway. An initial police statement warned that he was likely armed and considered "dangerous". In a follow-up statement, police said they had located the shooter, but a spokesman told a local radio station they had yet to arrest the man.

Usually tranquil Switzerland is relatively unaccustomed to gun-related crimes. This is despite having one of the highest rates of gun ownership in the world, since citizens are allowed to keep their army-issue weapons at home outside periods of mandatory military service.

The law allows any citizen aged over 18 to possess arms under certain conditions and there are an estimated two million weapons in private hands among Switzerland's population of about eight million. — AFP

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Indian minister lays blame on western dress for sex attacks

BANGALORE: An Indian minister faced a severe backlash yesterday after he criticized women for dressing "like westerners" at a New Year's eve celebration where a mob allegedly carried out a series of sex assaults. Although police have yet to charge anyone in connection with the violence on Saturday night in Bangalore, local media have carried testimony and photos of victims cowering from their attackers or fleeing for safety.

Police say they are now trawling through CCTV footage to see if they can identify any of the attackers. But a minister with responsibility for policing in the southern state of Karnataka, whose largest city is Bangalore, said the "unfortunate" attacks were a consequence of women wearing western clothing. "A large number of youngsters gathered-youngsters who are almost like westerners," Karnataka's Home Minister G Parameshwara told The Times Now television network, speaking in English. "They try to copy westerners not only in mindset, but even the dressing, so some disturbance, some girls are harassed, these kind of things do happen."

Parameshwara, who later claimed to have been misquoted, was widely condemned for his televised comments, with the central government's junior home minister Kiren Rijiju describing them as "irresponsible". "We can't allow the shameful act of #MassMolestation go unpunished," he said on Twitter, adding that women's safety is a "must in a civilized society".

Lalitha Kumaramangalam, who heads India's National Commission for Women, said Parameshwara should resign over his comments. "I want to ask this minister: are Indian men so pathetic and weak that when they see a woman in western clothes on a day of revelry, they get out of control? "When will the Indian men learn to respect women? The minister should apologize to the women of the country and resign," Kumaramangalam told the Press Trust of India news agency.

India has been shamed by shocking levels of sexual assault against women, which came into sharp focus in December 2012 when a student was gang-raped on a bus in New Delhi and later died of her injuries, leading to the official cancellation of that year's New Year celebrations. Some of the country's most senior politicians have been accused of casual misogyny, with the leader of one political party widely condemned for brushing off the December 2012 attack by saying "boys will be boys".

The attacks in Bangalore have drawn comparison with last year's mass sexual assaults at New Year's celebrations in the German city of Cologne, where police were also accused of losing control. Senior Bangalore police officer Malini Krishnamoorthy told AFP no complaint had yet been filed and officers were scanning hours' worth of CCTV footage. "We have appealed to the public to come forward if they have evidence in any form," the officer added. — AFP

HERAT: Afghan Shiites hold posters and chant slogans during a demonstration. — AFP

Hundreds of Afghan Shiites protest at targeted attacks

Growing sectarian attacks by Islamic State

HERAT: Around 2,000 Shiite Muslims in western Afghanistan staged a protest yesterday against growing sectarian attacks by Islamic State, as the government warned that the group had expanded its foothold into 11 provinces.

Chanting "Death to the enemies of Afghanistan!" and "Death to Daesh!" the Arabic acronym for IS, the protesters in the city of Herat marched on the governor's office, carrying pictures of Shiites killed in recent attacks. "Daesh attacks on our mosques are increasing everyday. They want to create a rift between Shiites and Sunnis," Qurban Ali, a 40-year-old demonstrator, told AFP. "This is a dangerous trend and we want the government to protect us."

The rise of IS has raised the specter of sectarian discord in Afghanistan, something that the Sunni-majority country has largely been spared despite decades of war. Until a few months ago IS was largely confined to the eastern province of Nangarhar bordering Pakistan, where it is notorious for brutality including beheadings despite a US-backed offensive against the group. But the government this week said the group was steadily expanding into other provinces.

Sectarian divisions

"Our initial information shows Daesh is behind the recent attacks in Herat. They are expanding and are always looking for new geographical areas," Najeebullah Mani, head of counter-terrorism at the interior ministry, told reporters in Herat. "They are present in at least 11 (of Afghanistan's 34 provinces). Their main goal is to create sectarian divisions between Shiites and Sunnis." Herat, which borders Shiite-dominated Iran, has recently witnessed a surge in attacks on the minority group's mosques.

A prayer leader was killed and five others wounded in one such attack on Sunday. The group did not officially claim responsibility for the assault. "We will not allow Daesh to make Afghanistan another Syria," said 30-year-old Jawad, another protester. "The government must come up with a plan to protect Shiites."

Last year Afghanistan witnessed a wave of attacks on Shiites claimed by IS, which considers Shiite Muslims apostates. At least 14 Shiites were killed in October in a powerful blast at a mosque in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif, hours after gunmen targeted Shiite worshippers in a shrine in Kabul and killed 18 people. In July the IS militants targeted members of Kabul's Shiite community in a suicide bombing that killed more than 80 people and wounded 130.

Taleban ambush

Afghan officials say a Taleban ambush in the northeastern Badakhshan province has killed at least four police. Deputy Provincial Police Chief Mohammed Nabi Bayhan says the attack took place late Monday and that security forces have launched a clearing operation in the area. Ahmad Bashir Musamum, a provincial council member, confirmed the attack and said seven police were killed.

Taleban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement Tuesday. Elsewhere in Afghanistan, Sanatullah Timor, a spokesman for the governor of Takhar province, said a Taliban fighter was killed Monday while planting a mine. The Taliban has been at war with Afghanistan's US-backed government since 2001. — Agencies

5 questions on China, North Korea relations

BEIJING: US president-elect Donald Trump has repeatedly called out China for doing too little to help stop North Korea's nuclear program, and on Monday he took to Twitter again to blast Beijing. "China has been taking out massive amounts of money & wealth from the US in totally one-sided trade, but won't help with North Korea," he tweeted. "Nice!" His comments come a day after North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un appeared to try to put pressure on Trump by announcing his country is in the "final stages" of developing an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

"North Korea just stated that it is in the final stages of developing a nuclear weapon capable of reaching parts of the US," Trump also tweeted. "It won't happen!" But what leverage does the incoming American president really have over the hermetic nation? And what could Beijing do to stop it? Here are five questions on the China-North Korea relationship.

Why is North obsessed with nuclear weapons?

Pyongyang is still technically at war with the US after the Korean War of 1950-53 ended in an armistice rather than a peace treaty. The North Korean leadership has built its claim to domestic legitimacy on military might and says a credible nuclear deterrent is critical to the nation's survival, arguing it is under constant threat from an aggressive United States. Although it has regularly threatened neighboring South Korea, its main priority is developing an effective strike threat against the US mainland.

How does China fit in?

China is North Korea's only ally, its main diplomatic protector, and its economic lifeline. The two countries' Communist parties are linked by ideology, sympathy, and decades of history, with Chinese forces' intervention decisive in saving the North from being overrun during the Korean War. Beijing sent vast numbers of soldiers to the peninsula, with Western historians estimating 400,000 died, and Chinese sources settling on a figure of about 180,000. Mao Zedong described the neighbors as being as close as "lips and teeth". Beijing's nightmare scenario is that if the Pyongyang regime collapses, millions of hungry North Koreans might flood over its border-and the US-allied South would take over, meaning American troops could be stationed right on the Chinese border.

Are Beijing-Pyongyang ties weakening?

Beijing regularly says it "firmly opposes" the North's nuclear tests and calls for denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. Following Trump's remarks, on Tuesday a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman again declared it would "stay committed to denuclearisation" on the peninsula. "We hope that relevant parties would refrain from words and deeds that will lead to the escalation of tension," Geng Shuang told reporters. China sees Kim Jong-un's energetic pursuit of a nuclear program as a source of instability, and consistently calls for the revival of six-party talks to find a solution. But it has resisted targeting the country's fragile economy for fear of provoking an implosion. Even so its patience with Kim is running thin and he has not visited China since taking power-a possible sign of the Chinese Communist Party rulers' displeasure with the young leader.

Could Beijing stop Pyongyang?

It is not clear whether China could rein in the North even if it wanted to. Beijing has ensured that past UN Security Council resolutions on sanctions against Pyongyang have included humanitarian exemptions, and has continued to purchase huge amounts of North Korean coal — $101 million worth in October alone-a crucial source of foreign exchange for Pyongyang. But the latest resolution, passed in December, had no such clause and Beijing announced it would suspend purchases of coal from the North-for three weeks to December 31.

What leverage does the US have?

Not much-it has been unable to influence China's North Korea policy for years. Washington has long pursued a policy of "strategic patience"-essentially a refusal to engage in any significant dialogue unless Pyongyang made some tangible commitment to denuclearisation. And impeachment of South Korea's President Park Geun-Hye-a hardliner on Pyongyang-could result in a more pro-engagement leader taking office, undermining Washington's efforts to pressure the North. Trump has suggested that the US' longstanding One-China policy could be upended if Beijing does not do more to pressure Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons program. — AFP

JAKARTA: Jakarta Gov Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama gestures to visitors inside a courtroom during his trial. — AP

Jakarta governor lambasts hardliner at blasphemy trial

JAKARTA: Jakarta's Christian governor yesterday shouted at an Islamic hardliner testifying against him in dramatic scenes at his blasphemy trial, seen as a test of religious tolerance in the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation. Hundreds of supporters and opponents of Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama rowdily traded insults as they rallied outside the hearing in the Indonesian capital, with thousands of police deployed to prevent clashes.

The first Christian to govern the capital in more than 50 years, Purnama is on trial accused of blasphemy over remarks he made about the Quran while campaigning ahead of February elections for the Jakarta governorship. Hundreds of thousands of conservative Muslims have protested against the leader, known by his nickname Ahok, in recent months in the largest demonstrations in Indonesia in years, but he denies insulting Islam and his supporters say the case is politically motivated.

Purnama, who faces up to five years in jail if found guilty, went on trial last month for blasphemy and at the latest hearing yesterday members of hardline group the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) — which has spearheaded the protest movement-testified against him. "I reported the suspect (to the police) because he insulted the Quran," Muhsin Alattas, head of the FPI's Jakarta branch, told the hearing. But as the witness was questioned, Purnama-known for his short temper-began to shout at him.

"Who has given FPI the authority to speak on behalf of all Muslims?... many Muslims don't like FPI," he said. "Just ask the FPI," the witness responded during the hearing, which was taking place in an auditorium at the agriculture ministry after being moved from a Jakarta court for security reasons. In his comments in September, Purnama accused his opponents of using a Koranic verse, which suggests Muslims should not choose non-Muslims as leaders, in order to trick people into voting against him. The case, which is expected to take several more weeks, has sparked concerns about growing intolerance in Indonesia where a reputation for pluralism has been eroded by a surge in attacks on minorities. —AFP

Thousands evacuated as floods hit Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR: Emergency services in Malaysia deployed boats and trucks yesterday as thousands of villagers were stranded after four days of heavy rain caused flooding in east coast states, officials said. Floods in Terengganu and Kelantan states forced authorities to shut down dozens of schools and roads to villages have been cut off.

The east coast regularly experiences tropical storms and heavy showers during the monsoon. In the last two days in oil-rich Terengganu over a thousand people have been evacuated from their homes, and rescue officials predict the numbers will rise. Che Adam Abdul Rahman, civil department force chief in Terengganu, told AFP that 700 rescue officers have been deployed in the state to carry out search and rescue operations. Many of the rural roads are impassable, he said.

"We have now deployed boats and trucks to evacuate the villagers to relief centers, and with continuous rain we expect the number of flood evacuees to rise," Che Adam warned. In neighboring Kelantan, which experienced massive floods and large destruction of homes and public infrastructure in December 2014, at least 4,906 people have been displaced by flooding.

Zainuddin Hussin, Kelantan state civil department force chief, said some 1,300 personnel with 30 boats and 23 vehicles are involved in rescue activities. "It is raining heavily and the water level at the Golok river has passed the danger level. Some schools in the state have been closed and many rural roads are closed to traffic," he said. The Golok river, which lies on the border between Malaysia and Thailand, has flooded the busy Kelantan town of Rantau Panjang, news reports said. Schools in Malaysia were scheduled to reopen on Tuesday after a month-long break. —AFP

Korea president shuns impeachment hearing

SEOUL: South Korea's Constitutional Court yesterday held its first full hearing on whether to confirm the impeachment of President Park Geun-Hye but she stayed away from the session. The nine-judge court must decide whether to affirm parliament's vote on December 9 to impeach Park over a corruption scandal which has brought hundreds of thousands of protesters onto the streets every week.

Yesterday's hearing, which followed three preparatory court sessions last month, lasted only nine minutes. The court last week ruled that Park was not required to appear for questioning. "We will do our best to conduct a fair and thorough review of the case," said Judge Park Han-Chul. Regardless of whether Park shows up when the hearing resumes Thursday, the case will go ahead.

Her lawyers said she was unlikely to attend future hearings. Park has been suspended from executive duties and the country is being temporarily led by Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-Ahn. The Constitutional Court has up to six months to decide whether to confirm Park's impeachment. If it does, a presidential election must be held within two months.

Park is accused of colluding with close friend Choi Soon-Sil to coerce big companies into handing over nearly $70 million to dubious foundations which Choi controlled and allegedly plundered.

Choi-dubbed South Korea's "Rasputin" due to her influence over the president-is now on trial for coercion and abuse of power and her daughter has been detained in Denmark as the scandal spreads. Park has repeatedly denied the corruption allegations in sometimes tearful televised addresses, while apologizing for lapses. She allegedly ordered aides to leak state documents to Choi, who has no official title or security clearance, and let her meddle in state affairs including the appointment of top officials.

Offer rejected

On Sunday the scandal enmeshed Chung Yoo-Ra, Choi's 20-year-old daughter, who was arrested in Denmark for overstaying her visa. Seoul prosecutors said yesterday they would seek Chung's formal extradition even if she wants to return home voluntarily. A court in the northern Danish town of Aalborg ruled Monday that Chung would be detained for four weeks pending a decision on extradition. —AFP

SEOUL: Nine judges of South Korea's Constitutional Court sit during the first hearing arguments for South Korean President Park Geun-hye's impeachment trial at the Constitutional Court. — AP

Fog surrounds a small church not far from the small Bavarian village of Apfeltrach near Landsberg, southern Germany, during a cold winter morning with temperatures of minus five degrees yesterday. — AFP

Syrian star dreaming of Hollywood...

Continued from Page 1

my culture and points of view." Known in Syria by his real first name, Jihad, Abdo is best known for his role in "Bab Al-Hara" ("The Neighborhood Gate"), one of the biggest soap operas in history, with up to 50 million viewers per episode.

His path to Hollywood started in 2011 as tensions in Syria were escalating in the wake of the Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. His wife, painter and human rights lawyer Fadia Afashe, was a senior official in Syria's department of culture, and found herself having to flee Bashar Al-Assad's brutal regime after being caught meeting opposition activists during a trip to France. She went to study public policy at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, intending to return to Syria after graduating.

But Abdo himself was beginning to become a major annoyance to Assad's crumbling regime after turning down numerous invitations to back the president at rallies and TV talk shows. Matters came to a head when he gave an interview to the Los Angeles Times during a trip to Beirut in which he accused Syria's secret service of torture and corruption. Strangers threatened him on his return to Syria, his car windows were smashed and he faced repeated demands to apologize to Assad on television.

Having seen friends arrested or disappear - some are still missing - he uprooted in Oct 2011, leaving behind almost all his wealth and property, to join his wife in Minneapolis. The couple applied for asylum and drove for three days to Los Angeles with everything they owned so Abdo could find work.

"I met so many people who were shocked that my name was Jihad," he says, explaining why he became Jay. "They didn't know it was Christian and I was named after a Christian lawyer in Damascus - a very good friend to my family."

Even with a more palatable name, more than 100 failed auditions followed as the couple lived a desperate existence on just $3 a day. It took more than a year to find work with a florist and delivering pizzas for Domino's, earning up to $300 a week. Abdo's break finally came when he landed a part alongside Nicole Kidman and James Franco in "Queen of the Desert", Werner Herzog's biopic of the British archeologist Gertrude Bell, due for release in spring. "All my scenes were with Nicole," Abdo says. "I can't praise her enough. She's very sweet, extremely professional, a very good hearted woman - very smart and sharp. Above all, she supported me from the first minute."

Herzog has since described in interviews finally grasping how famous his Syrian hire was when they visited a souk in Marrakesh during filming in Morocco. "Everyone wanted a photo with him. The merchants in the souk gave us everything for half price," the filmmaker told The Wall Street Journal. In a sign that Tinseltown really does like its happy endings, the actor's career is finally back on track.

He has a part in the Amazon television series "The Patriot" and "Bon Voyage", a short film he made with Swiss director Marc Raymond Wilkins, has just been shortlisted for an Oscar. Last year, he appeared alongside Tom Hanks in "A Hologram for the King", a comedy about a failed corporate salesman trying to do business in Saudi Arabia. Devastated by the worsening plight of the Syrian people in the five years since he escaped the Assad regime, Abdo is unsure whether he'll ever return. But he believes he couldn't be in a better place. "From the beginning, Hollywood wasn't my objective," he said. "I didn't plan to come here. It's destiny that brought me." — AFP

Across Mideast, goodbyes to Istanbul dead

Continued from Page 1

Yesterday, Wardini's body was carried through the streets of Ashrafiyeh, the largely Christian district of Beirut, to the sounds of traditional darbuka drums and trumpets. At the district's Notre Dame church, his open casket was lifted over the heads of friends and family, beneath giant portraits reading "The Angel of Ashrafiyeh" and "The Groom of Ashrafiyeh". As is tradition in Lebanon for the death of young unmarried people, the funeral ceremony included the trappings of a wedding, with the church decorated in white flowers. His two older sisters collapsed several times during the ceremony, one them shouting at the body: "Get up! Why don't you answer me?"

The night before a minute of silence had been observed for the three victims during a basketball match between Tadamon, where Musallem worked, and Beirut club La Sagesse, Wardini's favourite team. Portraits of the three victims hung over the stands.

Arab Israeli Lian Nasser was only 18 and on her first trip away from her family when she was killed in the attack. Yesterday in her small predominantly Muslim hometown of Tira north of Tel Aviv, most of the shops and restaurants were closed before her funeral, with a few thousand people gathering to pay their respects. Several hundred women, many in tears, poured into the family home before the coffin was taken to a mosque prior to being buried. "She was kind, loveable and clever," her uncle Rani told AFP at the funeral. "It's so hard to understand. A few days ago we could hold her and now she is gone." In front of the plain wooden coffin, Abdul Rahman Kashoa, a local imam, gave a sermon about the distortion of Islam. "There can never be a justification for this," he told AFP afterwards. Arab Israelis, the overwhelming majority of them Muslim, account for about 17.5 percent of Israel's population. Funerals were also to be held later Tuesday for two Tunisian victims of the attack, husband and wife Mohamed Azzabi and Senda Nakaa who left behind a five-month-old daughter. Nakaa was also a French citizen, and French ambassador Olivier Poivre d'Arvor was on hand when their bodies arrived at Tunis airport on Monday. "I am thinking of her family, of her parents, of little five-month-old Chirine who is now an orphan," he said. "France will treat her as a ward of the nation."

Details were also emerging about some Saudi victims of the attacks. Riyadh's consulate in Istanbul has confirmed that Saudis were among the victims, without saying how many. Saudi media reports have reported seven killed and 13 wounded. The Saudi Gazette yesterday reported that among the victims were Saudi twins Mohammed and Ahmed Saud Al-Fadl, 24, who died together in the attack. They had just graduated from university, said the newspaper, which ran a picture of the brothers wearing matching shirts and identical glasses. It identified another of the Saudi victims as 24-year-old Lubna Ghaznawi, who was at the club with two girlfriends.

Funerals were also held in Jordan Tuesday for two men killed in the attack, Nawras Assaf and Mohammad Al-Sarraf, as members of the Jordanian parliament held a moment of silence for the victims. In Morocco, the bodies of two victims were due to arrive yesterday afternoon. Three Iraqis, a Kuwaiti man and a Libyan were also among those killed, along with 11 Turks and other victims from India, Germany, Russia, Canada and Belgium. — AFP

Golf club shows Trump pitfalls

Continued from Page 1

It is set inside Akoya, a massive housing development of 2,600 villas and 7,000 apartments developed by Dubai-based luxury real estate DAMAC Properties. Another Trump-managed golf course is planned for another even larger DAMAC project under development further down the road. Billionaire Hussain Sajwani, who founded DAMAC Properties in 2002, met Trump some 10 years ago and the two men had hit it off over their real estate experiences, said Niall McLoughlin, a senior vice president for communications and marketing at the firm.

"When we approached them in 2013 about the golf course, he of course knew who DAMAC was," McLoughlin told AP on a recent trip to the golf course. "They subsequently cemented the family relationship as well. ... A lot of our dealings have been with Eric, a lot of our dealings have been with Ivanka. They have traveled here - and Donald Jr." Sajwani and his family also attended a New Year's Eve party at Trump's Mar-a-Lago club in Florida.

Trump received between $1 million to $5 million from DAMAC, according to a Federal Election Committee report submitted in May. It's unclear how much the contract will be worth once the golf course opens and starts operating. McLoughlin declined to offer specific figures. It is the first Trump venture in the Arab world. His first proposed project in Dubai, a 62-story tower with state-backed developer Nakheel, became a victim of the sheikhdom's 2009 financial crisis.

By 2014, Trump knocked a golf ball down the fairway of what would become the golf course at Akoya. Sajwani called Trump a "great man" during the tour, and DAMAC later designed some 100 Trump-branded villas at the property, selling from 5 million dirhams ($1.3 million) to over 15 million dirhams ($4 million). With Trump set to be sworn in as president, security analysts have suggested properties bearing his name could be targets. His campaign pledge calling for a "total and complete shutdown" of Muslims entering the US, followed by his proposal to conduct "extreme vetting" of immigrants, also sparked regional anger. The Trump logos on the golf course even came down for a short time.

Still, the United Arab Emirates, a staunch US ally in the war against the Islamic State group and host to some 5,000 American military personnel, remains a peaceful corner of the Middle East. "Dubai is one of the safest cities in the world," McLoughlin said. "Dubai has proved itself to be safe. We have no extra concerns about this golf course." Dubai police did not respond to a request for comment about security at the property.

Financial matters raise other questions. DAMAC, a private company, purchased the property for Akoya from Dubai's government in 2012 for around $350 million. Dubai's government ultimately answers to the emirate's hereditary ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, who also is the UAE's vice president and prime minister. All services to the property - electricity, water, roads - come at the discretion of the government. The club's bar will need government approvals to serve alcohol, not to mention other regulatory issues.

That could raise concerns about the so-called "emoluments clause" of the US constitution, which bars public officials from accepting gifts or payments from foreign governments and companies controlled by them without the consent of Congress. Any negotiations involving the Trump brand at the least could create the appearance of impropriety, legal experts warn. "He has so many properties that his business interests become an obvious target for both bribes and threats," said Gordon, the Stanford law professor. "The dangers really come in two directions: One is that foreign powers will try to use Trump's interests as a way of bribing him into public policies in a way that are friendly to them or use them put pressure on him." Trump has said he will step away from managing his business empire while in office, but has offered few details other than to say his executives "will run it with my children". Erik Jensen, a law professor emeritus at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, said that alone could pose problems. "Turning over control to the kids just doesn't do it. They clearly are going to be having holiday meals together, talking on the telephone," Jensen said. "There's going to be a lot of contact there."

Even putting assets in a blind trust, like other presidents have, likely wouldn't work since, for example, he would know the trust holds a golf course in Dubai. "You can put it in the trust, but the adjective 'blind' wouldn't apply in that situation," Jensen said. Also, DAMAC's Sajwani has had dealings with the US government. He credits some of his fortune to contracting work his companies did in supplying US forces during the 1991 Gulf War that expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Over the past decade, his companies have been awarded at least $1 million in contracting work, according to US government records reviewed by the AP.

McLoughlin did not respond to a query regarding whether DAMAC would continue to seek US government contracts. DAMAC stock traded after the election at near a yearlong low of 2.02 dirhams (55 cents) a share, in part due to the company announcing an 11.7 percent fall in third-quarter profits as Dubai's housing market has slowed in 2016. Stock then rebounded, reaching 2.53 dirhams (69 cents) just before New Year's Eve, as the company began handing over properties at Akoya.

Sajwani's business dealings have drawn international scrutiny in the past. After Egypt's 2011 Arab Spring protests, a local court sentenced him to five years in prison and a $40.5 million fine over a 2006 land deal. Egypt and DAMAC later reached an undisclosed settlement in international arbitration and Sajwani never served prison time.

DAMAC, which competes against largely state-backed developers in Dubai, focuses on flashy projects, like offering homes built around luxury Bugatti sports cars. But when it comes to building the projects, it like other companies relies heavily on subcontractors who largely employ low-paid laborers from Asian countries like India and Pakistan.

There have been no formal complaints by workers alleging the Trump golf course or the larger DAMAC project mistreats laborers. However, that alone shouldn't be taken as a sign that everything is fine, said James Lynch, who focuses on Gulf labor issues for Amnesty International.

The Emirati government and local businesses remain sensitive about their image in regards to the millions of workers employed in the country, something Lynch knows all too well as he was barred from entering the UAE in 2015 to discuss laborers' rights. "Under international standards, construction companies in the Gulf are not only responsible for how they treat their direct employees," Lynch said. "They have a responsibility to put in place measures to ensure that their subcontractors do not abuse the rights of people working for them."

The Trump Organization and his transition team did not respond to AP requests for comment. McLoughlin of DAMAC did not respond to a request for comment regarding labor issues. For now, workers manicure the golf course's empty greens. Others put the finishing touches on a clubhouse that will feature a bar, a water-pipe tobacco lounge and restaurants for those paying the course's dues, which start at around $10,000 a year.

While DAMAC's contract with Trump allows them to use his image in advertising the course, McLoughlin said the company would be "tasteful" in its promotions. However, he said at least some of Trump's children likely would be on hand for the opening of the course. "It's their baby," McLoughlin said. — AP

Sheikh Salman meets sports panel...

Continued from Page 1

that he explained that the government emphasizes basic principles of respecting the constitution and the law, Kuwait's sovereignty and cooperation to achieve the country's interests. He said that the IOC has demanded the withdrawal of cases against sports bodies and that the government is considering the matter. He said the cases relate to demands for compensation for illegally depriving Kuwait and its athletes from taking part in international events including the Rio Olympics.

Sheikh Salman also said he is prepared to face a grilling threatened by opposition lawmaker Waleed Al-Tabtabaei, who said that if the minister fails to lift the suspension by Jan 11, he will file to grill him.

Meanwhile, MP Majed Al-Mutairi yesterday submitted a draft law stipulating a general amnesty for all political prisoners or detainees who were jailed or are being prosecuted for expressing political opinions. The bill applies to all freedom of expression cases but excludes cases that are related to terrorism. But it also states that if the pardoned people repeat the same crime within five years, they have to serve the sentence from the start.

Opposition MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said yesterday that he plans to submit a draft law soon calling to scrap all price hikes approved on electricity and water, adding that although the increase doesn't include Kuwaitis' homes, it will impact them negatively. He said that in some sectors, power charges were increased by 1,200 percent and affected companies will seek to recoup the loss by raising the cost of their services and products. He also called on the government to stop squandering public funds before raising the prices of essential commodities and services.

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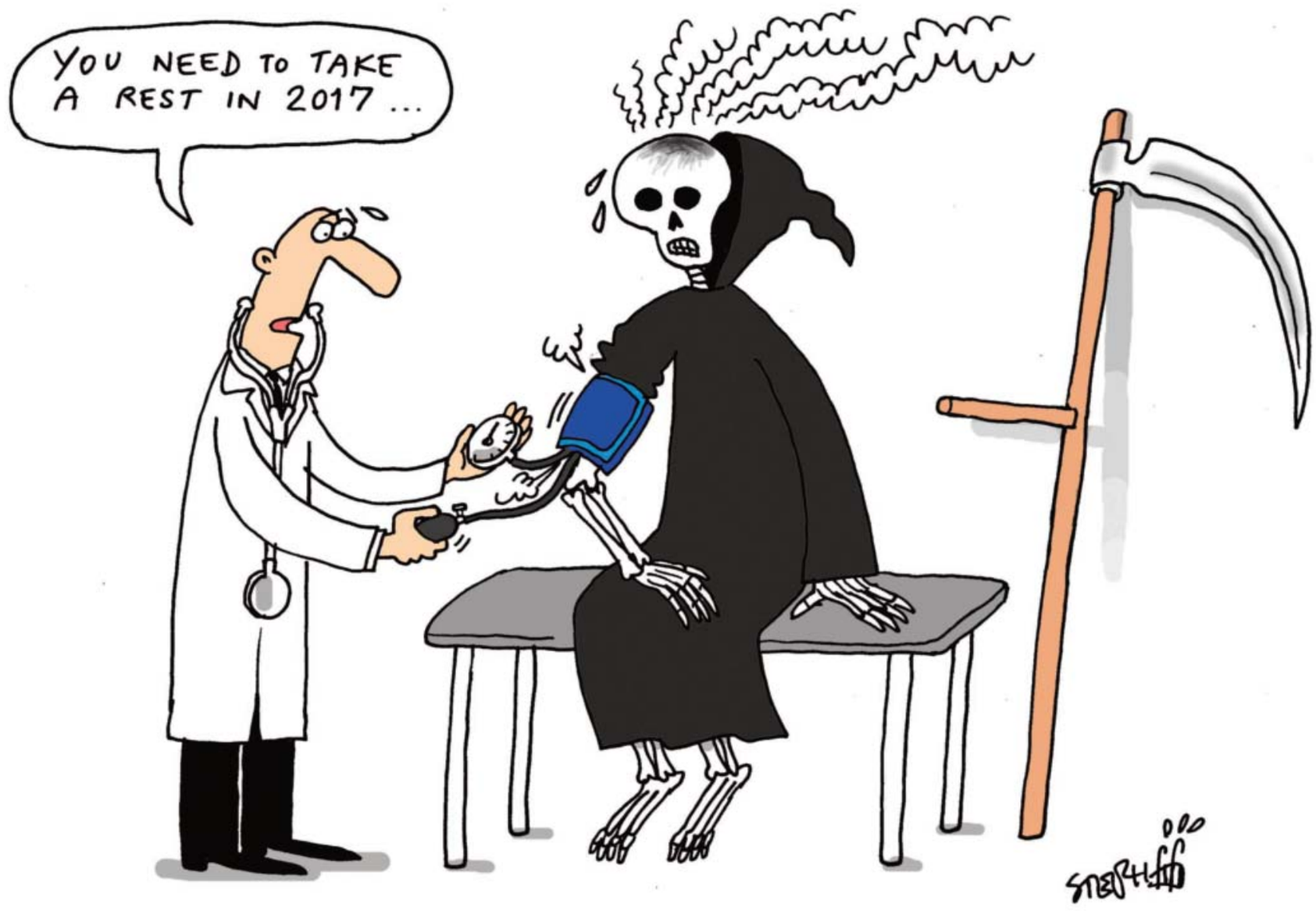

Focus

Migrants fret about Trump remittance halt

In central Mexico's Mezquital Valley, new pick-up trucks bounce along unpaved roads and US-style houses are springing up alongside cornfields. But people are afraid that remittances from family members abroad, a primary source of funding for such purchases, may soon dry up. During the holiday season, even as money and gifts have flowed into the area from relatives working in the United States, residents have fretted about what a Trump presidency will mean for them and family members working in the United States.

During his presidential campaign, Donald Trump said he would stop allowing wire transfers of money out of the United States from Mexican nationals unless Mexico agreed to fund a border wall. Migrants in the United States are expected to have sent a record $27 billion in remittances into Mexico in 2016, according to BBVA Bancomer, an increase of more than $2 billion over 2015.

Remittances jumped nearly 25 percent to almost $2.4 billion in November from a year earlier, the biggest annual increase for any month since March 2006, Mexican central bank data released on Monday showed. Monica Arroyo, who lives in a village outside Ixmiquilpan, the Mezquital Valley's largest town, said she depends on the $200 a month her daughter, an undocumented restaurant worker in Clearwater, Florida, sends home. "If they return our migrants, there'll be more poverty, because up there they have work and help maintain us," she said. "Here there is no work."

In recent months, Trump has not elaborated on his threat to block money transfers, and a 10-point immigration plan on his transition website makes no mention of the subject. But the possibility is affecting migrants' remittance decisions. Members of the Trump transition team did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Remittances have become a huge prop for the Mexican economy, compared to the $18.5 billion in revenue from oil exports in 2015 or nearly $340 billion in manufactured goods, according to the national statistics agency.

Mixed Responses

In Florida, Arroyo's daughter, who asked to be identified only by her last name, Hernandez, said she and her husband decided against sending holiday presents to Mexico this Christmas out of fear they will need money if they lose their jobs or be deported after Trump takes office. "My husband and I are living with this fear there's going to come a moment where all of a sudden we're going to have to go," Hernandez said, speaking in the living room of her Florida apartment as her three US-born children played by a Christmas tree.

Other Mezquital Valley migrants in Florida say they are sending more money than usual this holiday season in case they are unable to do so once Trump takes office. One migrant, an auto mechanic who asked to be identified only by his first name, Salomon, because he does not have papers, said his wife recently panicked and sent their entire nest egg back to Mexico, thinking it would be safer there. "She told me 'if something happens to us, maybe we can still keep the little we have,'" he said in an interview in Clearwater.

In 2015, the area around Ixmiquilpan, home to about 94,000 people, received about $100 million in remittances from abroad, according to data from Mexico's central bank, more than 10 times the municipal government's annual budget. Maria de la Luz Pioquinto, an immigrant from Ixmiquilpan who runs a money transfer business in Clearwater, said her Mexican customers doubled their average transfers right after the Nov 8 election but are now waiting to see what happens. "They are worried about still having work, and they are worried about providing for their families back home," she said.

Dollar fever

Leonardo Rodriguez was one of the first migrants from the Mezquital Valley to the Gulf Coast of Florida, ending up in Clearwater in 1987 after making a wrong turn trying to get to Disney World. He said he understands why young people have continued to go north. "Why would you study if, when you get out, there is no work? Instead they decide to go to another country." Rodriguez now lives in the United States legally and owns three restaurants. He works with local officials in Mexico to help channel remittances into projects in Ixmiquilpan, including a roof over a village school yard.

Michael Clemens, who studies remittances and migration at the Center for Global Development, says that "for countless towns like Ixmiquilpan, remittances are an economic lifeline." The money sent back usually gets reinvested locally, he said, "in better schooling for kids, better care for the elderly, and better housing". Blocking the funds, he said, would mean "that more people close to the edge fall over the edge." — Reuters

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Trump's leadership chops to be tested

After so much winning, Donald Trump and his team are walking into the White House with a swagger. But the realities of life at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue are about to bite. Forget the thrilling roar of Air Force One, or the world-destroying power of the nuclear codes. Seen from inside the White House gates, the presidency is more like a beat-up megaphone than a font of boundless power. If a president is lucky, only a third of Americans will hate him. World events and vested interests will yank him hither and thither and politics will bind every move.

Congress can look more like a playground full of toddlers screaming and biting their way to the top of the slide, than allies fighting in common cause. Trump enters the Oval Office with a 48 percent disapproval rating and a world that looks more complex and dangerous than it has in decades. He leads a Republican Party riven by ideological disputes. All that would be daunting enough. But, as one former White House official recalled, the hardest thing for a new president can be closer to home - deciding how to decide.

'Decision points'

Every day the commander-in-chief and roughly 470 White House staff make countless choices that shape the administration. Even the most mundane can have lasting consequences: will a legislator be irked without an invite to a bill signing? Will "POTUS" go home after visiting Egypt or stop off in Israel on the way? Facing monumental decisions, Dwight Eisenhower - the last non-politician to take the Oval Office - liked to see a ferocious battle of ideas played out in front of him before coming down either way.

Ronald Reagan disliked witnessing rows, instead delegating decisions and leaving aides to scramble for access and influence one-by-one. "It's hard to tell what to expect from Trump because he's had so little policy experience and he's obviously got a mercurial personality," said Fred Greenstein, professor emeritus at Princeton University and author of "The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Barack Obama."

During the transition, Trump has often made decisions on impulse, catching even his most senior advisers off guard. He has reversed decisions on top-level appointments and rolled out sensitive policy reforms - like an overhaul of veterans' healthcare - on the fly (sometimes before considering legislative hurdles). Trump's inner circle saw some tweets percolating for days before being unleashed on an unsuspecting world. But some 140-character-missives were a surprise even to them.

Trust the process

Trump, a CEO-turned-commander in chief, has turned to a disparate group of family members, generals, billionaires and establishment Republicans - few of whom have any White House experience - to help him run the United States. Such a variety of views can be constructive. Abraham Lincoln famously gathered a "team of rivals" that guided America through the Civil War. Reagan's team of rivals settled on a division of labor. "He had this very interesting triumvirate of people: (Edwin) Meese, who was sort of the ideologue; Jim Baker, who was the practical politician and the establishment Republican, and Mike Deaver, who was a PR man and was very close to Nancy. They didn't so much argue as handle different facets of Reagan's leadership," said Greenstein.

But rivalries can also split the house asunder. The West Wing is small, but it can produce discontent, envy and ambition in doses worthy of Shakespeare. Turf wars between George H W Bush's chief of staff John Sununu and budget director Richard Darman fueled damaging leaks and a battle over taxes that helped make him a one-term president. At the core of George W Bush's inner circle were two veterans of Gerald Ford's administration, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, who turned influence into an art form.

"The process of moving paper in and out of the Oval Office, who gets involved in the meetings, who does the president listen to, who gets a chance to talk to him before he makes a decision, is absolutely critical," Cheney said before he was elected vice president. "It has to be managed in such a way that it has integrity." In office, Cheney often hung around after others had laid out their arguments. "Who spoke to the president last?" became a crucial question that would ultimately help nudge Bush into the Iraq war.

One former White House official said it was too difficult to predict how Trump's White House will manage the process: "I don't know that they know yet." Could Trump's daughter Ivanka sit in on cabinet and other top meetings like President Jimmy Carter's wife Rosalynn, or wield policy influence like Eleanor Roosevelt or Hillary Clinton? Will Trump delegate policy to mainstream Republicans like chief of staff-designate Reince Priebus and Mike Pence, making the latter the most powerful vice president since Cheney?

Could aide Kellyanne Conway, Ivanka's husband Jared Kushner or hard-right ideologue Steve Bannon be the last person in the room? Will retired Marine Corps generals tapped to run the Pentagon and the Department of Homeland Security - and their comrade, the sitting chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford - come together in a powerful cabal? Trump will have to choose wisely if he wants to avoid chaos and walk around the White House with the same swagger he has coming in. — AFP

Graft probe tests Bibi's hold on power

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces a graft probe some believe could force him from office, but the four-term premier has overcome legal troubles in the past and remains a towering figure in Israeli politics. Police questioned Netanyahu for some three hours at his official residence in Jerusalem on Monday night over tens of thousands of dollars in gifts allegedly given to him by wealthy supporters. While an inquiry has been ongoing for months, it has now been elevated to a criminal probe and news of his questioning shook the Israeli political scene, setting off speculation over whether it will lead to his downfall.

Netanyahu himself bluntly told his opponents on Monday not to begin any "celebrations" yet, pledging as he has previously that "there will be nothing because there is nothing". But some analysts argued that the threat seemed more substantial than in previous cases. "The last couple of times that he was in this situation, he tried to say, 'You go after my wife, you go after my personal life, it's an illegal way to try to reverse democratic elections,'" Gayil Talshir, a political science professor at Jerusalem's Hebrew University, told AFP. "I guess this will be the strategy this time also, but it looks more serious."

Much remains unknown about the investigation being overseen by Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit. He has confirmed that Netanyahu is suspected of receiving "gifts from businessmen," but has provided few other details.

Wealthy supporters

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. Netanyahu has also acknowledged receiving money from French tycoon Arnaud Mimran, who was sentenced to eight years in prison in France over a scam involving the trade of carbon emissions permits and 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. The allegations have put the right-wing premier's opponents - both from within his party and elsewhere - on alert for signs of his support among the public weakening.

Recent polls have suggested 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. Many analysts say that can be attributed to voters not seeing a viable alternative to the 67-year-old's leadership, but warn that could change quickly once a campaign is under way.

Lessons from Olmert

There is a recent example to draw lessons from, with Netanyahu's predecessor Ehud Olmert forced to resign while dogged by corruption allegations and now serving 27 months in prison. "With Ehud Olmert, there was a moment in which his otherwise substantial following abandoned him because they increasingly became convinced that the allegations were solid," Amotz Asa-El, a former Jerusalem Post executive editor and currently a columnist for the paper, told AFP. "I don't see this now with Prime Minister Netanyahu," he added, though cautioned that further revelations could change that.

Netanyahu and his family have overcome legal troubles in earlier years - and involving similar accusations. In 2000, prosecutors decided there was insufficient evidence to indict Netanyahu and his wife Sara following an investigation. The probe then looked at whether they unlawfully kept gifts presented to Netanyahu during his first term as prime minister from 1996 and 1999. It also investigated whether they had promised a Jerusalem contractor he would be paid out of the public purse for work done on their private home.

On Monday night, while Mandelblit confirmed Netanyahu was being investigated over the alleged gifts, he at the same time listed a series of other accusations that investigators had looked into and decided to drop. Sara Netanyahu has however again come under scrutiny in recent months. In December, police questioned her for several hours over allegations that the couple used public funds to cover personal spending, Israeli media reported.

Netanyahu has served as premier for a total of nearly 11 years, fast approaching revered founding father David Ben-Gurion's 13, and shown himself to be a shrewd politician. But if damaging details emerge from the probe, his considerable survival skills could be put to the test. Such details could "puncture his public persona and portray him as a desperate and thus pathetic seeker of perks," Chemi Shalev of Israeli newspaper Haaretz wrote. "When that happens, Netanyahu could enter into a political death spiral and the smell of new elections will be in the air." — AFP

Martin Fourcade slams Russian 'masquerade'

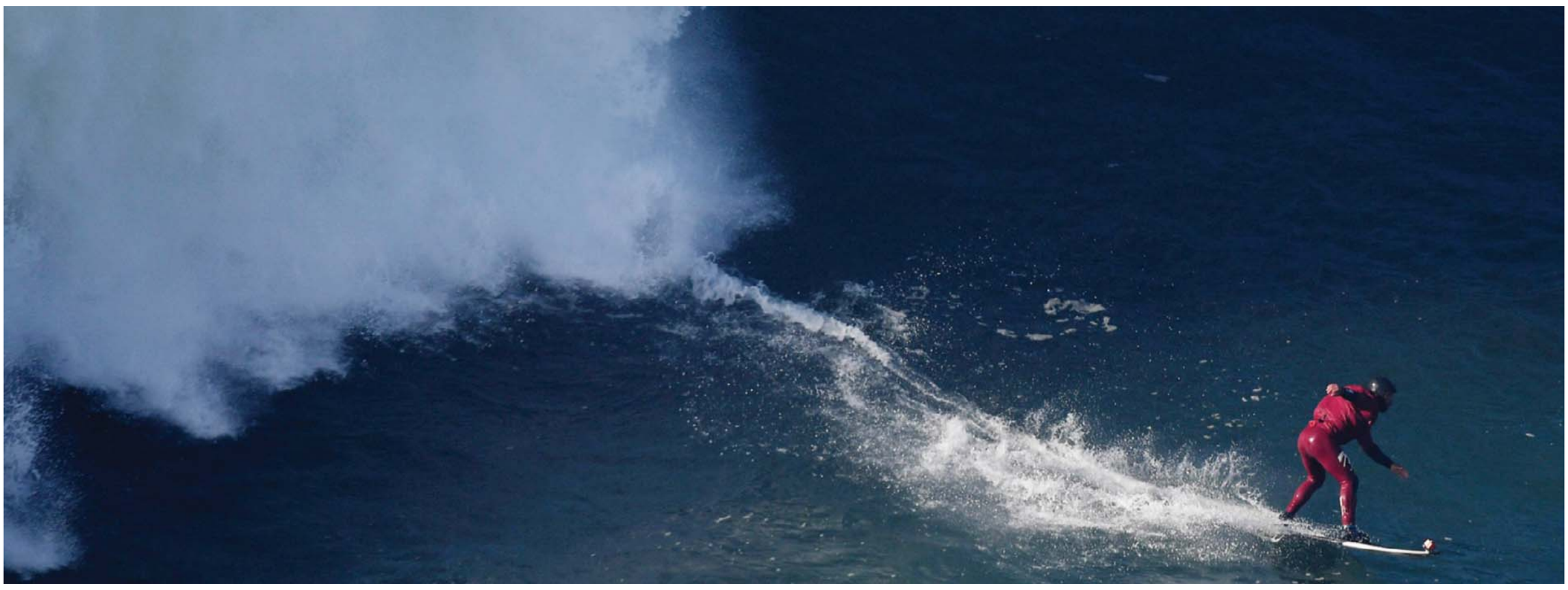
PARIS: France's double Olympic champion Martin Fourcade has dubbed as a "masquerade" the response by Russia and the International Biathlon federation (IBU)to the McLaren report revelations on doping involving Russian biathletes. Russia has withdrawn from holding a biathlon World Cup event in Tyumen in March, while the IBU has suspended two of the 31 Russian biathletes detailed in the report and launched an investigation to shed further light on the 29 others listed. "Cancelling the World Cup in Tyumen is a masquerade of the fight against doping," Fourcade said. Before the IBU and Russian decisions, Fourcade had raised the possibility of a boycott of World Cup races in the event of any clemency shown to Russia. The Frenchman warned yesterday, however, that he would not become a martyr for the cause, saying a meeting with other biathletes was scheduled for the sidelines of the World Cup event in Oberhof, Germany, from Thursday.—AFP

Costa praises Conte for Chelsea turnaround

LONDON: Chelsea striker Diego Costa has credited manager Antonio Conte for the side's record-equalling run of 13 consecutive victories that has propelled them to the top of the Premier League table. Chelsea, who finished 10th in the league last season, are five points clear at the top and Costa believes the change in the fortunes of the club is down to the Italian manager's close relationship with the squad. "The manager has come, he's applied his ideas, and things are going well," the 28-year-old striker told the British media. "The truth is the manager is good with the players, every time making more jokes with the players. "That's good for us, to have a manager who is not just a boss, but like a person we can talk with, someone whose support we can count on in difficult moments." Costa, who is the league's top scorer with 14 goals this season, said he was close to leaving the London club for Atletico Madrid before the start of the season. "I had the possibility to go to Atletico because of a few things - the family, the life I have there - but not because of Chelsea," he said. — Reuters

Napoli sign striker Pavoletti from Genoa

NAPOLI: Napoli have completed the signing of striker Leonardo Pavoletti from Genoa, the Serie A club has said. No financial details of the transfer were released but local media reports said Napoli paid 18 million euros ($18.75 million) to sign Pavoletti from Genoa. The 28-year-old Italian, who joined Genoa in 2015, initially on loan from Sassuolo before making his transfer permanent, has scored three goals in nine appearances in Serie A this season. Napoli will hope Pavoletti will help fill the void left by the absence of striker Arkadiusz Milik, who sustained a cruciate ligament injury after just seven games this campaign. Napoli, third in the standings, are seven points behind league leaders and reigning champions Juventus, host 13th-placed Sampdoria on Saturday. — Reuters



NAZARE: Brazilian big wave surfer Marcelo Luna rides a wave off Prada do Norte in Nazare on December 17, 2016. Saved by surfing when he was a drug addicted teenager from the suburbs of Sao Paulo, Brazil, Marcelo Luna crossed the Atlantic in his thirties to meet another major challenge: To tame the giant waves of Nazare. — AFP

NAZARE: Brazilian big wave surfer Marcelo Luna (R) holds onto the slege towed by a jetski during a surf session off Prada do Norte in Nazare. — AFP

NAZARE: Marcelo Luna signs a surf board about to be hung on a wall of the Sao Miguel Arcanjo Fort in Nazare. The wall honors the big wave surfers daring to challenge the waves off Praia do Norte. — AFP

NAZARE: Big wave surfers Brazilian Marcelo Luna (L) and Chilean Rafael Tapia get ready for a surf session off Prada do Norte in Nazare. — AFP

Marcelo Luna - from troubled youth to giant waves

NAZARE: Marcelo Luna has travelled a long way from his drug-riddled teenage years in Brazil, unable to swim, to carve out a career surfing some of the biggest waves in the world. The call of the ocean helped save Luna from drugs in the tough working-class Sao Paulo neighbourhood where he grew up and he now rides the monstrous waves at Praia do Norte in the Portuguese coastal town of Nazare. "When I saw pictures of these waves for the first time I discovered my reason for being, as if I'd just met the love of my life," Luna said.

Three years after that awakening, the slightly built Luna has embraced Nazare-and it him-going as far as having a picture of a huge wave breaking at the foot of the local lighthouse tattooed on his forearm.

"I've chosen to launch my career in Nazare because a surfer capable of facing up to the sea here can do it no matter where in the world," said the 32-year-old, who sold his real-estate business and car to finance himself in the absence of a sponsor.

Luna's childhood was a tough one and he grew up without his father, a violent alcoholic who abandoned the family. "I struggled to manage all that," Luna said. "Then I rebelled and I started drinking and smoking at the age of nine. By the time I was 11 I'd started taking drugs." His descent into troubled times took a significant upswing when he was 16 and a friend took him to the beach, pushing him around lying on a surfboard. Luna couldn't even swim.

"I thought I was going to die, but on that day I decided that surfing would be part of my life. It's surfing which freed me from drugs, which changed my way of seeing things and interacting with others."

EXTREME

Taking on waves 15 metres high in Nazare from his second season, "Marcelinho" found his place at the heart of a community of extreme surfers who come together in Portugal in autumn and winter every year.

Like the others, he dreams of beating the world record for the highest wave ever surfed (American Garrett McNamara at Praia do Norte in November 2011 at a staggering 23.77m).

But Luna also wants to "become a surfer renowned for being able to influence peoples' lives in a positive way".

Marked by his troubled childhood, Luna has launched a drugs and delinquency prevention project for children and teenagers to whom he tells his story, presented as an example of "tenacity in the face of adversity".

Standing in front of three classes of a high school in Nazare, Luna lists the different jobs he's done to "make up for lost time" and ultimately be able to devote his time entirely to surfing, which demands hardcore training and costly equipment.

"It's very important for these youngsters to hear his story," said maths teacher Nelia Mendes. "Meeting someone who has never given up on his dreams despite all his problems opens up new horizons for them."

Several Nazare locals have reacted to the Brazilian's atypical background by taking him in during the season and guiding him by radio from the clifftops when the huge waves hit.

Nazare mayor Walter Chicharro typified the way that people in the area have embraced Luna: "Marcelo is a great little man because he has not only the courage to attack these enormous waves, but also to tell his story to bring something to the community that welcomes him." —AFP

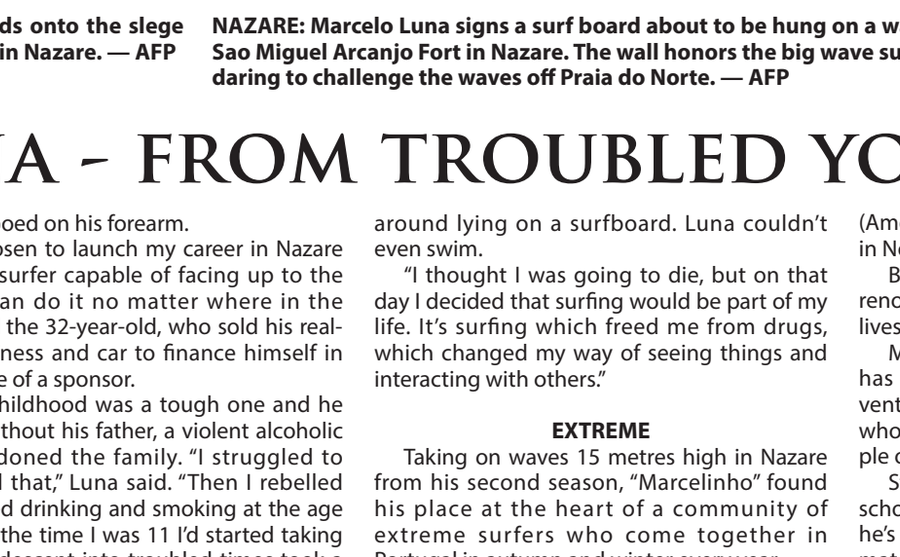
Wiggins signs up for ski jump TV show

LONDON: Newly retired Olympic cycling champion Bradley Wiggins will swap the velodrome for the ski jump ramp in British television show The Jump, the programme makers announced yesterday. Wiggins, 36, follows in the footsteps of fellow British sporting greats Steve Redgrave (rowing), Beth Tweddle (gymnastics) and Rebecca Adlington (swimming), all of whom pulled out of the show through injury. But the five-time Olympic champion, who became Britain's first Tour de France champion in 2012, is a seasoned skier and says he is looking forward to the challenge of learning how to ski jump.

"Skiing is a big passion of mine. It was a mix of that and the other committed names this year that made me want to sign up," Wiggins said in a press release.

"Major retiring Olympians such as Sir Steve Redgrave have also trod this path. I see this as a sporting challenge and want to go out there and win it. Just don't call me a celebrity."

Other participants in the programme include former England footballer Robbie Fowler, ex-England rugby captain Jason Robinson and Olympic gymnast Louis Smith. — AFP



Rio Haryanto

Pertamina drops sponsorship for F1 driver Rio Haryanto

JAKARTA: Indonesian driver Rio Haryanto has suffered a major setback in his bid to return to Formula One this season after state-owned energy company Pertamina announced it was ending its sponsorship.

"This year there will not be a continuation of participation by Pertamina in F1," spokeswoman Wianda Pusponegoro said in a statement yesterday, noting that Pertamina could not meet a sponsorship deadline. "Of course we regret this very much, but we have already made maximal efforts for Rio and Indonesia," she said.

Haryanto, the first Indonesian to race in Formula One and only Asian driver on the grid last season, said in a text message that he had "not yet confirmed" his position and hoped to reach a decision as soon as possible. "We are still working on a plan to keep Rio in Formula One," Haryanto's manager, Piers Hunnisett, told Reuters. "People in the Formula One world felt he did a good job and he deserves to be there," Hunnisett said, adding that it would be a "great shame" if Haryanto missed out on a seat in 2017. The only likely vacancies still open are the two Manor seats and there is lingering uncertainty about that team's future ownership. Swiss-based Sauber, who like Manor expect their drivers to bring financial backing, are expected to sign German driver Pascal Wehrlein, who is backed by Mercedes, alongside Sweden's Marcus Ericsson. "Obviously, we were hoping to move into a team like Sauber - that was the plan but things are going to slow down a little bit," said Hunnisett.

Haryanto started 12 races for Manor in 2016, alongside Wehrlein, before being replaced by French rookie Esteban Ocon after the German Grand Prix in July. Ocon has since moved on to Force India. Pertamina have been Haryanto's constant backers in the costly sport, and Hunnisett said last month that while he was looking for other non-government backers he was confident that Pertamina would continue to sponsor Haryanto. The oil and gas company's chief executive Dwi Soetjipto told a news conference last February that they were contributing five million euros ($5.6 million) to help secure Haryanto's 2016 seat at Manor. —Reuters

Serena-inspired Australian teen makes WTA history

BRISBANE: Australian teenager Destanee Aiava created a slice of history yesterday when she became the first player born in the 2000s to win a main draw match on the WTA Tour.

The 16-year-old Aiava beat fellow qualifier Bethanie Mattek-Sands of the US 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the first round of the Brisbane International in a rain-delayed match. After play was halted Monday night with Aiava leading 3-0 and 40-15 in the third set, the young Australian overcame nerves and a Mattek-Sands fightback to move into a second round clash against veteran Russian Svetlana Kuznetsova. Aiava will create further history at the Australian Open later this month when she becomes the first player born in the 2000s to play in the main draw of a Grand Slam tournament. Born in Australia to rugby-loving Samoan parents who knew nothing of tennis, Aiava began playing the sport at the age of five after watching Serena Williams in the Australian Open.

"I think it was just her vibe," she said of Serena. "Like, I couldn't feel it from the other side of the TV, but it was just, like, her energy, and that kind of drew me to the sport." Aiava's powerful physique has drawn comparisons with Serena, and the teenager admitted that she has based her game on the American superstar. "Not so much a girl's game-more a guy's game," she said. "More variety." Aiava said that nerves had got the better of her at the start of the match, played on Showcourt One in front of full stands.

"I was pretty nervous playing in front of that many people. I have never played in front of such a big crowd before," she said. "I think the first set of the match I started off pretty bad. "I think coming out, onto the court, I need to work on not being so tight and feeling the pressure. "But as the match progressed, I felt a little bit more relaxed." —AFP

AUCKLAND: United States' Serena Williams serves during her first round match against Pauline Parmentier of France at the ASB Classic tennis tournament in Auckland, New Zealand, yesterday. Williams won in straight sets 6-3, 6-4. — AP

Serena shakes out rust to advance in Auckland

AUCKLAND: World number two Serena Williams shook out any cobwebs from four months away from tennis with a 6-3 6-4 victory over France's Pauline Parmentier in the first round of the Auckland Classic yesterday. The 35-year-old had not played a competitive match since she lost to Karolina Pliskova in the semi-finals of the US Open last September, withdrawing from all tennis to deal with a persistent shoulder injury. The American, who had participated in a charity doubles match with sister Venus against All Blacks siblings Julian and Ardie Savea before the tournament started, was appearing for the first time in Auckland and persistent rain on Monday postponed her first round match until Tuesday.

She struggled with the wind and had some rusty moments in the second set when the Frenchwoman broke in the fourth game and held three break points in the sixth. The top seed was able to overcome them, however, and won the match with her eighth ace. "It was my first match back in several months and I played a really good player," Williams said courtside after she wrapped up victory in 75 minutes to set up a second round clash against qualifier Jamie Loeb or Madison Brengle.

"The wind was really getting to me. Every day I have practised here there was no wind but today it was so windy. So it was fun. Actually, it wasn't fun, it was interesting." She conceded she was feeling rusty and would be selective about her schedule in the new season. "I don't see myself playing a full, full schedule. But who knows? I'm going to take it tourney by tourney."

Injury kept her out of much of the second half in 2016 even though she still triumphed in Wimbledon to equal Steffi Graf's open era record of 22 grand slam titles and her target this year was to surpass that.

"Unfortunately I have the highest of goals usually, so obviously that involves winning grand slams," she said. Another former world number one, Caroline Wozniacki, dropped just one game in a ruthless 6-1 6-0 dismantling of Nicole Gibbs in their first round match. "It's the first match of the year for me so it's always tough," Wozniacki said. "(But) today everything was going in, even with the wind I managed to keep control of the ball and the points. "I was pleased, especially with how I was serving." — Reuters

Americans sock it to Spain in Hopman Cup

PERTH: The United States pairing of Coco Vandeweghe and Jack Sock edged closer to the final of the mixed teams Hopman Cup with a 3-0 win over Spain in Perth yesterday. Both teams had won their first round robin matches and the victory means the USA only needs to beat Australia tomorrow to be certain of advancing to Saturday's final. The United States has already won the tournament a record six times. Vandeweghe continued her encouraging start to the year with a 6-2, 6-4 win over Lara Arruabarrena in the women's singles, before Sock secured the tie for the Americans with a three-set victory over Feliciano Lopez.

The Americans made it a clean sweep in the dead mixed doubles rubber. Vandeweghe, ranked 36th, opened her year with a win over Lucie Hradecka and raised her game against the 65th-ranked Arruabarrena. Her serving was impressive with eight aces and the 25-year-old believed it was a more polished performance than in the opening match.

"I think I did different things better today, I felt a little bit better moving," she said. "I thought my serve was all over the place, but it was good when it counted. "I was a bit on and off with it and hopefully I can tighten it up a bit. "There are still things to work on and things to improve."

The 23rd-ranked Sock was made to work overtime by the cagey Lopez, who is just five places lower at 28. The American blew an early break in the first set and dropped it 6-3 to fall behind, but steadied to win in three sets in stifling heat which appeared to trouble both players.

Sock gained a crucial break in the fourth game of the final set, after a lengthy game on the Lopez serve. The Spaniard had a break point in the seventh game, but couldn't convert and it took Sock 98 minutes to win 6-3, 2-6, 6-3.

"There are definitely things to improve on," Sock said. "I didn't think I served as well in the first match, but I dictated points on my forehand." The dead mixed doubles was played in the Fast Four format and the Americans prevailed in a third set tiebreak, 4-3 (5-3), 3-4 (2-5), 4-3 (5/2). —AFP

PERTH: Coco Vandeweghe of the US hits a return against Lara Arruabarrena of Spain during their fifth session women's singles match on day three of the Hopman Cup tennis tournament in Perth yesterday. — AFP

Nadal continues comeback with first win in Brisbane

BRISBANE: Rafael Nadal was in need of some sleep, so he didn't waste much time against Alexandr Dolgopolov yesterday.

The 14-time major champion, playing his opening match at the Brisbane International a day after arriving in Australia following a win in an exhibition tournament in Abu Dhabi, beat the Ukrainian 6-3, 6-3 after getting on court at almost 10:30 p.m. local time.

Returning from a wrist injury which curtailed the end of his 2016 season, Nadal said he's determined to use every match as preparation for a shot at the title in the season-opening Grand Slam event in Melbourne.

The 30-year-old Spaniard dropped serve in the third game but recovered to win the last five games of the first set against the 2012 finalist. In all, he converted all four of his break points and fended off three of the four he faced.

"A little bit of jet lag. It's tough, these kinds of things at the beginning," said Nadal, who added that he was still sleeping in the early afternoon and felt "destroyed" after the travel. "There wasn't a lot of time to adapt."

He only made nine unforced errors, and his most glaring miss of the night was when whiffed at a ball as he tried to hit it into the crowd to celebrate his win. In a post-match news conference, he apologized after stifling a yawn, but said he still preferred the late start to help him overcome the jetlag.

Nadal has changed his preparation for the Australian Open, arriving two weeks ahead of time to fine tune his game in a bid to make amends for a shocking first-round exit last year. He will next play Mischa Zverev, who opened with a 6-3, 6-3 win over teenage Australian qualifier Alex De Minaur, and has a potential quarter-final match against defending champion and top-seeded Milos Raonic.

ELITE WTA EVENT

Also, sixth-seeded Lucas Pouille lost the first five games before rebounding for a 7-6 (6), 7-6 (4) win over Gilles Simon, while Viktor Troicki beat Japanese qualifier Yoshihito Nishioka 6-4, 7-5 and Diego Schwartzman had a 6-2, 6-4 win over Sam Querrey.

In the women's draw, Garbine Muguruza, Karolina Pliskova and Elina Svitolina, who all had career-highlight victories over Serena Williams last season, are already through to the quarterfinals. Destanee Aiava, a 16-year-old high school senior who was inspired to take up tennis when she was 5 after watching Williams on TV, also made a mark.

Aiava became the first player born in the 2000s to win a main draw match in an elite WTA event when she beat Bethanie Mattek-Sands 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 in a first-round match that spanned two days. She already has a wild-card entry to the Australian Open but, before then, will face two-time major winner Svetlana Kuznetsova in the second round in Brisbane.

The third-seeded Pliskova, who beat Williams in the US Open semifinals last year before losing the final to Angelique Kerber, defeated American qualifier Asia Muhammad 6-1, 6-4 to secure the first spot in the quarterfinals.

Svitolina, seeded sixth and the only woman to beat both Williams and Kerber when in 2016, advanced with a 7-5, 2-6, 7-5 win over Shelby Rogers. The fourth-seeded Muguruza wasted a match point and saved one before clinching a 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (7) win over Daria Kasatkina in a three-hour night match. Both players had eight service breaks and Muguruza, who beat Williams in the French Open final last year to claim her first Grand Slam title, dropped her opening serve in all three sets.

Her next match will be against either Kuznetsova or Aiava, who was born on May 10, 2000, was No. 386 in the latest rankings and is very new to the tour.

"Pretty crazy," Aiava said of her first trip to the locker rooms in the main draw. "I walk in, and there is people I have watched on TV before and it's, like, 'Oh!'" Her mother, Rosie, has been her coach since she showed interest in the game. She keeps the teenager grounded.

After her milestone win, Aiava said her mother just said "good job" and took her back onto the practice courts for 20 minutes to work on her serve. —AP

BRISBANE: Rafael Nadal of Spain serves against Alexandr Dolgopolov of Ukraine in the men's round one at the Brisbane International tennis tournament in Brisbane yesterday. —AFP

BRISBANE: Garbine Muguruza of Spain hits a return against Daria Kasatkina of Russia in their women's second round match at the Brisbane International tennis tournament in Brisbane yesterday. — AFP

Muguruza survives big scare in Brisbane

BRISBANE: French Open champion Garbine Muguruza saved a match point before seeing off Russia's Daria Kasatkina in the second round of the Brisbane International yesterday.

The 23-year-old Spaniard won 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (9/7) over the 19-year-old Kasatkina, who served for the match at 5-4 in the third set, only to be broken by the fourth-seeded Muguruza.

Muguruza then kept her nerve in the tiebreak, holding on to win in just under three hours. It was her second three-set win in as many days after she edged Australian Samantha Stosur on Monday.

"Obviously I'm tired," Muguruza said. "I would prefer to play a one-hour match and to be super good. But I think those tough matches are going to help me to win confidence.

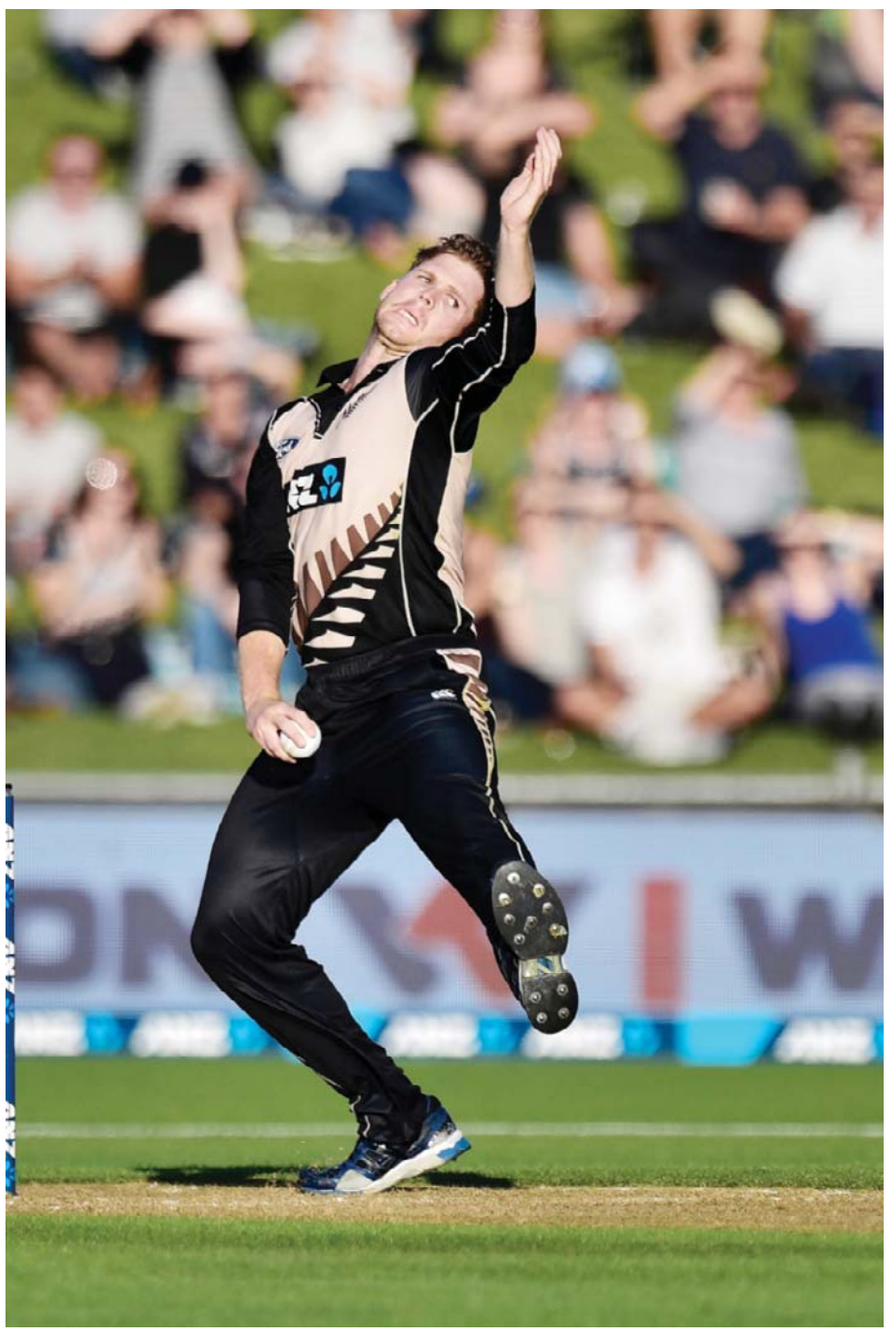
"It's very helpful. I mean, to start the year playing these kind of matches gives me, I don't know, a good feeling. "I think it was a battle, literally," she added.

"I think we both played very good during the whole match. We could see in the tiebreak there is, like, nobody knew who was going to win the match until the end." Third seed Czech Karolina Pliskova earlier continued her impressive form when she stormed past US qualifier Asia Muhammad 6-1, 6-4.

However, sixth seed Elina Svitolina was pushed hard by American Shelby Rogers before winning in three sets 7-5, 2-6, 7-5.

France's Alize Cornet stormed into the quarter-finals when she demolished Christina McHale in straight sets 6-2, 6-1. After outlasting Elene Vesnina in the first round in a 2 hour 37 minute marathon in temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius (104 F), Cornet took full advantage of the much cooler conditions Tuesday and raced through the match in just 81 minutes. "I'm very happy with the way I played today-it was a really good-quality match," Cornet said.

"I didn't make a lot of unforced errors and I hit a lot of winners. "I was applying the right tactics, so it was great to play this way." Cornet will play either second seed Dominika Cibulkova or China's Zhang Shuai in the quarter-finals. "It will definitely be a tough battle but when I see the way I play today it gives me a lot of confidence for the rest of the tournament." —AFP



NAPIER: New Zealand's Lockie Ferguson bowls during the first Twenty20 international cricket match between New Zealand and Bangladesh at McLean Park in Napier yesterday. — AFP

New Zealand beat Bangladesh by 6 wkts

NAPIER: Fast bowler Lockie Ferguson took two wickets with the first two balls of his Twenty20 debut and went on to claim 3-32 as New Zealand beat Bangladesh by six wickets yesterday in the first of three internationals.

Ferguson is only the second bowler after Australia's Michael Kasprowicz to take two wickets with his first two deliveries in a Twenty20 international: Kasprowicz achieved the feat in the first-ever Twenty20 international between New Zealand and Australia in 2005.

New Zealand included three new caps in its lineup for yesterday's first international at McLean Park and all three delivered as New Zealand extended the dominance over Bangladesh it established in a sweep of their recent three-match one-day series.

Ben Wheeler supported Ferguson with 2-22 as New Zealand held Bangladesh to 141-8 as it batted first after winning the toss. Captain Kane Williamson then anchored the New Zealand inings with an unbeaten 73 from 55 balls - his highest score in Twenty20 internationals - and Colin de Grandhomme hit 41 not out from 22 balls as New Zealand surpassed Bangladesh's total with two overs to spare. New Zealand looked under pressure at times, especially at 61-4 after 10 overs when Williamson ran out Tom Bruce (7) on debut and when the home team's innings had begun to lose momentum.

But de Grandhomme was the ideal man to come to the crease at that point. He brought the powerhitting which was the necessary counterpoint to Williamson's anchor role and he struck three sixes and three fours in an innings of only 22 balls.

De Grandhomme hit a four and six off the last two balls bowled by Rubel Hossain to clinch the win and give New Zealand a 1-0 lead in the series which concludes with two matches at Mount Maunganui on Friday and Sunday.

"It would have been nice to do it with a wee bit more efficiency," Williamson said. "We lost wickets at key times so it was important to stick there and try to take the game a little bit deeper.

"Colin was outstanding at the end to take us across the line but the credit today would certainly have to belong to the bowling attack. In that front six they were able to take early wickets and that set the tone for the match and that gave us a heads up going into that second innings."

Ferguson, who made his one-day international debut for New Zealand earlier this season, made his mark in his T20 debut when he dismissed Sabbir Rahman and Soumya Sarkar with the first two balls of his opening over.

He was lucky to claim his maiden wicket with a rank full toss on off stump which Sabbir slashed to midwicket but his second wicket was more conventional as Sarkar edged a full delivery to Corey Anderson at gully.

Tom Bruce made his mark on debut when he took a catch to dismiss Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal for 11 off his Central Districts teammate and fellow debutant Ben Wheeler. Wheeler produced an outstanding debut pefromance to remove Iqbal and Bangladesh captain Masrafe Mortaza (1) to finish with 2-22. Ferguson returned to bowl Mahmdullah for 52, just as the veteran batsman threatened to steer Bangladesh to a competitive total. Mahmdullah scored only four runs in three innings in the one day itnernational series but recovered his best form on Tuesday with a half century from 45 balls.

New Zealand faltered early in its run chase as it slumped to 4-62, losing Neil Broom for 6, Colin Munro without scoring, Corey Anderon for 13 and Bruce for 7. But Williamson gave the innings an anchor and de Grandhomme blasted New Zealand home with 12 balls to spare.

"I think we were 15 to 20 runs short and we lost too many wickets early on," Masrafe said. "I think again with the ball we started well but couldn't go through. "The target was to get some early wickets, which we did, but Williamson batted really well, as did de Grandhomme." — AP

SCOREBOARD

NAPIER, New Zealand: Complete scoreboard in the first Twenty20 between New Zealand and Bangladesh at McLean Park in Napier on yesterday.

Tamim Iqbal c Bruce b Wheeler	11
Imrul Kayes c Ronchi b Henry	0
Sabbir Rahman c Henry b Ferguson	16
Shakib Al Hasan c Santner b de Grandhomme	14
Soumya Sarkar c Anderson b Ferguson	0
Mahmudullah b Ferguson	52
Mosaddek Hosain c Anderson b Santner	20
Mashrafe Mortaza c de Grandhomme b Wheeler	1
Nurul Hasan not out	7
Rubel Hossain not out	2
Extras (w18)	18
Total (eight wickets; 20 overs)	141

Fall of wickets: 1-5 (Imrul), 2-28 (Tamim), 3-30 (Sabbir), 4-30 (Soumya), 5-67 (Shakib), 6-99 (Mosaddek), 7-114 (Mashrafe), 8-138 (Mahmudullah)

Did not bat: Mustafizur Rahman

Bowling: Wheeler 4-0-22-2 (4w), Henry 4-0-44-1 (3w), Ferguson 4-0-32-3 (4w), de Grandhomme 4-0-23-1 (2w), Santner 4-0-20-1 (1w).

New Zealand

N.Broom c Shakib Al Hasan b Rubel Hossain	6
K. Williamson not out	73
C. Munro c Nurul Hasan b Mustafizure Rahman	0
C. Anderson c Tamim Iqbal b Shakib Al Hasan	13
T. Bruce run out (Soumya Sarkar/Mashrafe Mortaza	7
C. de Grandhomme not out	41
Extras (lb1, w1, nb1)	3
Total (four wickets; 18 overs)	143

Fall of wickets: 1-22 (Broom), 2-28 (Munro, 3-46 (Anderson), 4-62 (Bruce)

Did not bat: L. Ronchi, M. Santner, B. Wheeler, M. Henry, L. Ferguson

Bowling: Shakib 4-0-30-1, Mashrafe 3-0-22-0, Rubel 4-0-43-1 (1nb), Mustafizur 4-0-21-1 (1w), Mosaddek 2-0-9-0, Soumya 1-0-17-0.

Result: New Zealand won by six wickets

Confident Australia build on Warner's record ton

First batsman to achieve feat in Australia

SYDNEY: David Warner's spectacular century in the opening session gave Australia the perfect start to the third test against Pakistan yesterday and the hosts reached tea on 224 for two despite his departure for 113.

The left-hander, playing on his home ground just a few hundred metres from where he was born, reached the hundred mark from 78 balls in 118 minutes to become only the fifth batsman to notch up a century before lunch on the first day of a test.

He was unable to add to his tally of 17 fours before being caught behind off Wahab Riaz soon after the break, however, and Usman Khawaja followed for 13 in similar fashion half an hour before tea.

That left opener Matt Renshaw, who had stuck to his more circumspect game while Warner lit up the SCG in the morning, inching towards his maiden century on 83 not out and set to resume for the final session with Steve Smith (12 not out).

Australia are already assured of victory in the series after wins in the day/night Brisbane test and Boxing Day contest in Melbourne gave them an unassailable 2-0 lead.

Skipper Smith won the toss and chose to bat with Warner setting the tone for his innings by hitting Mohammad Amir for four off the second ball he faced.

As pugnacious as ever, Warner barely hit a false note and did not let up until he had run three runs, albeit helped by a misfield, to secure his 18th test century.

The 30-year-old emitted a roar of delight before his traditional celebratory leap into the air, despite being unaware he had joined some select company. No batsman had ever hit a century in the opening session of a test match in Australia and only compatriots Victor Trumper, Charles Macartney and Don Bradman as well as Pakistan's Majid Khan had done it elsewhere.

"It's a honour and privilege to be amongst the greats of the game," Warner said.

"It wasn't something in the back of my mind to go out and score a 100 in a session. It was about going out there with intent and batting positive."

Warner also bettered his own record for the fastest test century at the SCG, having taken 82 balls to reach the milestone against West Indies here last year. Pakistan had made two changes to their line-up from the Melbourne test, handing opener Sharjeel Khan his debut and recalling seamer Imran Khan.

Khan was smashed for 44 runs in his first seven-over spell but should have had a wicket in his second dig when Khawaja, on three, hit the ball towards Babar Azam in the gully but the fielder was unable to hold on to it. — Reuters

SYDNEY: Australia's David Warner jumps in the air to celebrate making 100 runs against Pakistan during their cricket Test match in Sydney, Australia, yesterday.— AP

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the first day in the third and final Test between Australia and Pakistan on yesterday in Sydney, Australia.

Australia 1st innings

M. Renshaw not out	167
D. Warner c S. Ahmed b Riaz	113
U. Khawaja c S. Ahmed b Riaz	13
S. Smith c S. Ahmed b Shah	24
P. Handscomb not out	40
Extras (b-2 lb-1 nb-4 w-1)	8
Total (for 3 wickets, 88 overs)	365

Fall of wickets: 1-151 D. Warner, 2-203 U. Khawaja, 3-244 S. Smith

To bat: H. Cartwright, M. Wade, M. Starc, S. O'Keefe, J. Hazlewood, N. Lyon

Bowling: M. Amir 16-1-58-0; I. Khan 17-3-81-0(nb-2); W. Riaz 19-4-63-2(nb-2 w-1); Y. Shah 30-2-132-1; Az. Ali 4-0-16-0; A. Shafiq 2-0-12-0.

Rabada, Philander dismantle S Lanka

CAPE TOWN: Kagiso Rabada and Vernon Philander took four wickets each as South Africa bowled out Sri Lanka for 110 and took total control on the second day of the second Test at Newlands yesterday.

South Africa built on a first innings lead of 282 and reached 35 for no wicket by the close, an overall lead of 317 runs. With three days remaining, Sri Lanka faced a seemingly impossible task if they were to prevent the hosts from securing a series-clinching win.

Rabada took four for 37 and Philander four for 27. The Sri Lankan batting crumbled after Rabada broke a stubborn opening partnership.

Kaushal Silva and Dimuth Karunaratne defied South Africa's new ball attack for 73 minutes, putting on 31 runs before Rabada made the breakthrough in the 16th over when Silva was forced on to the back foot by a lifting delivery which he played on to his stumps.

Sri Lanka lost a second wicket shortly before tea when Kusal Mendis, who had earlier slog-swept left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj for six, tried to repeat the shot and top-edged a simple catch to JP Duminy at short cover.

The innings went into an irreversible slide three balls after tea when Dimuth Karunaratne, who had made a patient 24, square-cut Rabada and Temba Bavuma dived to take a sharp, low catch at backward point.

Rabada and Maharaj reduced the Lankans to 78 for six. Upul Tharanga and Rangana Herath put on 22 for the seventh wicket before Philander wrapped up the innings by taking the final four wickets at a personal cost of five runs in 12 balls.

Maharaj, bowling into a strong south-easterly wind, took two for 32 while the two fast bowlers took seven of their combined eight wickets with the wind at their backs.

Both Rabada and Philander reached personal milestones. Rabada took his 50th wicket in his 13th Test, while Philander achieved 150 wickets in 39 Tests.

Earlier Quinton de Kock made his third Test century and fast bowler Lahiru Kumara took six wickets as South Africa were bowled out for 392 in their first innings.

Kumara, 19, who had not taken more than two wickets in an innings in his previous two Test matches and three other first-class games, finished with six for 122.

De Kock took his score from 68 to 101, made off 124 balls with 11 fours, before edging Kumara to wicketkeeper Dinesh Chandimal.

Seven South Africans were caught behind, three by Mendis when Chandimal was suffering from a fever on the first day and four by Chandimal yesterday. The combined wicket-keeping haul was one more than the Sri Lankan Test record and equal to the world record. —AFP

SCOREBOARD

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

South Africa 1st innings (Overnight: 297-6)

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 c Chandimal b Kumara	101
K. Abbott c Chandimal b Herath	16
V. Philander c Chandimal b Kumara	20
K. Maharaj not out	32
K. Rabada c Chandimal b Kumara	8
Extras (lb-3 nb-1 w-5)	9
Total (all out, 116 overs)	392

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, 7-303 K. Abbott, 8-336 Q. de Kock, 9-376 V. Philander, 10-392 K. Rabada.

Bowling: S. Lakmal 27-4-93-2; N. Pradeep 15.4-3-46-0; A. Mathews 17-3-41-0(w-1); L. Kumara 25-1-122-6(nb-1 w-4); R. Herath 23.2-4-57-2; D. de Silva 8-0-30-0.

Sri Lanka 1st innings

D. Karunaratne c Bavuma b Rabada	24
K. Silva b Rabada	11
K. Mendis c Duminy b Maharaj	11
D. de Silva lbw b Maharaj	16
A. Mathews c du Plessis b Rabada	2
D. Chandimal c de Kock b Rabada	4
U. Tharanga not out	26
R. Herath lbw b Philander	1
S. Lakmal c Amla b Philander	0
L. Kumara b Philander	4
N. Pradeep c du Plessis b Philander	0
Extras (lb-5 nb-1 w-5)	11
Total (all out, 43 overs)	110

Fall of wickets: 1-31 K. Silva, 2-56 K. Mendis, 3-56 D. Karunaratne, 4-60 A. Mathews, 5-78 D. de Silva, 6-78 D. Chandimal, 7-100 R. Herath, 8-100 S. Lakmal, 9-110 L. Kumara, 10-110 N. Pradeep.

Bowling: V. Philander 12-4-27-4(nb-1); K. Abbott 8-3-9-0; K. Rabada 12-2-37-4(w-1); K. Maharaj 11-1-32-2.

South Africa 2nd innings

S. Cook not out	15
D. Elgar not out	19
Extras (w-1)	1
Total (for no loss, 11 overs)	35

Fall of wickets:

To bat: H. Amla, J. Duminy, F. du Plessis, T. Bavuma, Q. de Kock, V. Philander, K. Maharaj, K. Abbott, K. Rabada

Bowling: S. Lakmal 5-1-16-0; N. Pradeep 2-0-5-0; L. Kumara 4-0-14-0(w-1).

Ton-up Renshaw states case for India tour

SYDNEY: Australia's rookie opening batsman Matt Renshaw made a huge statement to selectors for next month's India series with a resolute maiden Test century against Pakistan yesterday. The Yorkshire-born 20-year-old watched his opening batting partner David Warner blast a 78-ball century in the first session of the third Test in Sydney before he blossomed into his maiden Test century.

Renshaw has the chance today's second day to further add to his tally and make an undeniable case for inclusion in the challenging four-Test series in India next month.

Former Test captain Michael Clarke said during the match commentary on the Nine Network: "There's been talk that Australia aren't going to take him to India, that Shaun Marsh will open in place of him. I think it'd be a terrible move."

The negative chatter didn't seem to have fazed Renshaw, who said: "I felt pretty good coming in. I didn't really know that I was going to miss out on India so it didn't really come into my head too much.

"You go into every game and try to do as well as you can, but I probably wasn't expecting to be this score tonight. "It should be a good experience if I'm selected (for India), but we've got a Test match to win and I've got to keep batting tomorrow morning. I'm trying to concentrate on that at the moment."

Renshaw had to cope with the unique situation of farming the strike to the rampant Warner, who became only the fifth player to score a century before lunch in Test history. "That's probably the first time I've been booed and cheered for blocking a ball in the same over," Renshaw said. "He (Warner) told me to not change my game and just keep batting and try to get to lunch. I just tried to run as fast as I could when he was on 99." He added: "I knew I was running to the danger end, so I just tried to put the burners on and try and get there."— AFP

Shiffrin misses WCup record, Velez Zuzulova wins race

ZAGREB: Mikaela Shiffrin's seven-race winning streak in women's World Cup slaloms came to end yesterday, leaving the American one short of the record for most consecutive victories in the discipline.

Shiffrin's rare early exit in the first run allowed Veronika Velez Zuzulova to claim her fifth career win. The Slovak had ended runner-up to Shiffrin in the previous three slaloms. With a win Tuesday, Shiffrin would have matched the best mark of eight straight victories set by Swiss great Vreni Schneider in 1988-89 and Croatian skier Janica Kostelic in 2000-01. But the Olympic and two-time world champion was quick to consider the positives.

"I was never thinking about the streak in the beginning until people started talking about it," Shiffrin said shortly after straddling a gate about 25 seconds into her first run. "To be honest it is a bit of a relief because nobody is going to talk about it anymore."

Never showing much interest in chasing records, Shiffrin still felt sorry about her early exit - though not for herself.

"It's huge for US ski racing to have somebody who has something like a big streak going on. People start to gain interest," Shiffrin said. "But for me, I am not doing this for those records. I am doing this for myself. I try to find peace in my own heart. I am on my way there."

It was the first time in more than four years that Shiffrin failed to finish a slalom race. Her previous DNF came in Semmering, Austria, in December 2012, one week after she had earned her first of 26 career victories.

In total, Shiffrin had won the previous 12 slaloms she competed in, but missed five races because of a knee injury last season. "It is what it is. Sometimes you don't ski exactly the way you want to," Shiffrin said. "I was trying to go forward but I got a little bit tentative in some sections and straddled." Velez Zuzulova held on to her first-run lead and beat Petra Vlhova by 0.24 seconds for a Slovak 1-2 finish. Sarka Strachova of the Czech Republic was 0.52 seconds behind in third.

"It was a fight from start to finish. It was my big dream to win this crown. Finally it happened," Velez Zuzulova said after winning the "Snow Queen Trophy." Velez Zuzulova closed the gap on Shiffrin in the slalom standings after five of this season's nine races to just 10 points.

However, the result didn't affect Shiffrin's lead in the overall World Cup standings because her closest competitor, defending champion Lara Gut, usually sits out slaloms. Shiffrin still leads the Swiss skier by 215 points.

Many of the top slalom skiers struggled on the Sljeme hill. Three of the top-seven ranked starters failed to complete their runs as Wendy Holdener of Switzerland and Nina Loeseth of Norway skied out.

Shiffrin, who won the race the last two times it was held in 2013 and 2015, was 0.07 seconds off Velez Zuzulova's leading time when the mishap occurred. "Straddling is always your own mistake," the American said. "Maybe something about the surface, a little bump here and there caught your edge. But in general, I feel like if I am skiing well, there is absolutely no reason I would have straddled. I only have myself to blame. Even with bumpy snow or a little bit of weird sunlight, it is my fault."

With Shiffrin out, Resi Stiegler became the top American finisher in seventh for her best World Cup result since placing second in a slalom in Ofterschwang, Germany, five years ago. Also, American teammate Megan McJames finished 20th to earn her first career points in the discipline. The women's World Cup continues with a giant slalom and another slalom in Maribor, Slovenia, this weekend. — AP

ZAGREB: From left, second placed Petra Vlhova, from Slovakia, fellow-countrywoman Veronika Velez Zuzulova, the winner, and third placed Sarka Strachova, of the Czech Republic, celebrate after an alpine ski, women's World Cup slalom in Zagreb, Croatia, yesterday. — AP

ST. LOUIS: Artem Anisimov #15 of the Chicago Blackhawks handles the puck as Colton Parayko #55 of the St Louis Blues defends during the third period of the 2017 Bridgestone NHL Winter Classic at Busch Stadium on Monday in St Louis, Missouri. —AFP

Blues beat Blackhawks, Devils defeat Bruins

ST LOUIS: The Blues and Blackhawks took to the outdoors Monday, with Vladimir Tarasenko scoring twice in the third period and Jake Allen stopping 22 shots to lead St. Louis to a 4-1 victory over Chicago in the Winter Classic at Busch Stadium. The Blues went ahead 2-1 when Tarasenko made a backhand pass that hit the skate of Blackhawks defenseman Niklas Hjalmarsson and slipped by Corey Crawford at 12:05 of the third. Tarasenko then scored on a wrist shot over Crawford's shoulder at 13:58, giving him 18 goals this season. Michal Kempny scored for Chicago, and Crawford had 31 saves. It was 46 degrees Fahrenheit (7.7 degrees Celsius) when play began before a sellout crowd of 46,556, the sixth largest for a Winter Classic. It was the 21st regular-season outdoor NHL game.

DEVILS 3, BRUINS 0

PA Parenteau scored his fifth goal in eight games and Cory Schneider made 22 saves, leading slumping New Jersey to the victory. Sergey Kalinin added an insurance goal early in the third period and set up Taylor Hall's empty-netter as the Devils won for only the third time in 13 games (3-9-1). Tuukka Rask had 23 saves for the Bruins, who lost to New Jersey for only the second time in eight games (6-2).

CANUCKS 3, AVALANCHE 2

Sven Baertschi scored twice, including the tiebreaking goal on a power play with less than four minutes to go, and Ryan Miller made 24 saves for his 350th career victory to lead Vancouver. Bo Horvat also scored to help the Canucks win four straight for the first time since opening the season 4-0-0. Henrik Sedin added two assists, while Daniel Sedin picked up an assist on the winning goal for the 600th of his career. The Canucks improved to 6-2-1 over their last nine. The 36-year-old Miller joined John Vanbiesbrouck (374) and Tom Barrasso (369) as the only US-born goalies to reach 350 wins. Mikko Rantanen and Tyson Barrie scored, and Calvin Pickard stopped 21 shots as the Avalanche lost their fourth straight ninth in their last 10. — AP

NHL results/standings

Vancouver 3, Colorado 2; New Jersey 3, Boston 0; St. Louis 4, Chicago 1.

	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS
Western Conference						
Central Division						
Chicago	23	12	5	109	98	51
Minnesota	23	9	4	113	76	50
St. Louis	20	13	5	108	111	45
Dallas	16	15	7	97	113	39
Nashville	16	14	6	102	100	38
Winnipeg	17	19	3	103	117	37
Colorado	12	24	1	76	125	25
Pacific Division						
San Jose	23	13	1	94	80	47
Anaheim	19	12	8	107	109	46
Edmonton	19	12	7	110	101	45
Calgary	20	17	2	105	111	42
Los Angeles	18	15	4	92	91	40
Vancouver	18	18	3	97	116	39
Arizona	11	21	5	82	121	27
Eastern Conference						
Atlantic Division						
Montreal	22	9	6	113	86	50
Ottawa	20	13	4	94	98	44
Boston	20	16	4	95	97	44
Tampa Bay	19	15	4	109	105	42
Toronto	17	12	7	108	103	41
Florida	16	14	8	92	104	40
Detroit	16	16	5	93	107	37
Buffalo	13	15	8	78	101	34
Metropolitan Division						
Columbus	26	5	4	123	73	56
Pittsburgh	25	8	5	133	107	55
NY Rangers	26	12	1	135	97	53
Washington	22	9	5	99	78	49
Philadelphia	20	14	5	116	120	45
Carolina	16	13	7	94	98	39
New Jersey	15	16	7	89	114	37
NY Islanders	15	15	6	104	113	36

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

Bengals' Pacman Jones jailed over confrontation

CINCINNATI: Bengals cornerback Adam "Pacman" Jones was jailed early yesterday, and faced assault, disorderly conduct and other charges including that he spit on a nurse after being arrested in Cincinnati's downtown entertainment district.

Court records show Jones, who has a history of trouble with the law during his NFL career, is accused of pushing and poking someone in the eye, then struggling with officers by head-butting, kicking and refusing to get into the police car. He then allegedly spit on a nurse's hand while being booked into the Hamilton County jail just after midnight.

He was due for a first court appearance yesterday on misdemeanor charges of assault, disorderly conduct and obstructing official business, and a felony count of harassment with a bodily substance. No attorney was listed for him in court records.

Bengals spokesman Jack Brennan said the club is aware of the incident, but by policy, doesn't comment on unresolved legal matters.

Jones, who played for the Bengals in Sunday's season-ending home victory over Baltimore, has repeatedly had legal issues since making his NFL debut with Tennessee after going to college at West Virginia University. The Atlanta native was acquitted in 2013 on an assault charge in Hamilton County after a woman accused him of punching her in a nightclub. Earlier that year, he paid a fine for disorderly conduct after police accused him of making offensive comments at a traffic stop. He also pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct in January 2012 after an arrest at a Cincinnati bar. Earlier, Jones pleaded an equivalent of no contest to misdemeanor conspiracy to commit disorderly conduct in a 2007 Las Vegas strip club melee.

The Titans made Jones the sixth overall pick in the 2005 draft, and he started 28 games in his first two seasons. But arrests and suspensions nearly scuttled his career before the Bengals signed him in 2010 and he became a regular starting defensive back and punt returner. — AP

Adam Jones

Seahawks enter the playoffs with a whimper, not a roar

RENTON: For the fifth straight season, the Seattle Seahawks have won 10 games and are headed to the playoffs, the longest such streaks in franchise history.

So why does this division title and playoff appearance feel so underwhelming? It's because unlike the previous four playoff appearances when the Seahawks were rolling headed into the playoffs, this time Seattle is limping into the NFC wild-card game against Detroit on Saturday night. The latest example came in Sunday's regular-season finale against San Francisco when Seattle slogged its way to a 25-23 victory that again raised more questions than provided answers about what to expect when the playoffs arrive. But even with the lackluster performance the latter half of the season, Seattle coach Pete Carroll believes the Seahawks have the pieces for a playoff run.

"I think we've got great leadership. We've got a lot of young guys and we're bringing them with us," Carroll said during his radio show on Monday morning. "It's a great challenge, a great exercise in putting it together."

Seattle is playing on wild-card weekend for the second straight year after squandering its chance at a bye with a home loss to Arizona in Week 16. Facing the lowly 49ers was supposed to be Seattle's opportunity to get itself pointed in the right direction headed into the playoffs. And while the win can't be discredited, the fashion in which it happened failed to provide much confidence. Seattle fell behind 14-3, needed a huge turnover to get back into the game in the first half and nearly watched the 49ers rally in the fourth quarter before running out the clock with Russell Wilson, Doug Baldwin and a chunk of Seattle's starters sitting on the bench as Carroll tried to protect key players.

"When coach made the decision, I was for it and I saw that some other guys weren't playing, too," Wilson said after the win. "He just made those decisions. We knew that we were going to have a home game and so that was kind of our focus trying to get some rest, trying to get ready, allowing nothing crazy to happen." While Wilson had another solid day, throwing for 258 yards and a touchdown, the biggest concern was Seattle's inability to run the ball against the worst defense in the NFL. San Francisco was giving up more than 170 yards per game on the ground, yet the Seahawks managed only 87 yards on 25 carries. Take away runs of 26 and 17 yards by rookie Alex Collins in the second half and the Seahawks averaged just 1.9 yards per carry. In the final three games of the regular season, Seattle averaged 79 yards per game rushing and just 2.9 yards per carry.

"We're not pleased with it. It's not anywhere near where we want it to be," Carroll said. For all the issues that have surfaced late in the season for Seattle, the Seahawks may have drawn the best possible matchup to open the postseason. Detroit lost its final three games of the regular season, was worse than Seattle at running the ball and doesn't have a defense most would consider on the same level as the Seahawks. Then again, Seattle was supposed to blow out the 49ers to head into the playoffs on the rise. —AP

CALIFORNIA: Seattle Seahawks running back Thomas Rawls (34) celebrates with fullback Marcel Reece (44) after scoring a touchdown during the first half of an NFL football game against the San Francisco 49ers in Santa Clara, California.— AP

Klopp frustrated after Liverpool drop points

SUNDERLAND: Jurgen Klopp, the manager who has brightened the Premier League with his quick wit and off-beat remarks, displayed his dark side after Liverpool dropped two precious points at Sunderland.

The 2-2 draw against a team struggling in the relegation zone was undoubtedly a setback for Liverpool because teams with title aspirations win at places like the Stadium of Light, as leaders Chelsea did just a fortnight ago.

But goals from Daniel Sturridge and Sadio Mane proved insufficient as Liverpool twice squandered leads by conceding two penalties, converted with his customary coolness by Jermain Defoe.

Klopp did not like what he witnessed and did not hide his emotions. "Sorry about my mood," he said at the end of his assessment of Monday's draw, which left Liverpool second, five points behind leaders Chelsea.

While criticism of referees is normally the first port of call for managers seeking excuses for disappointing results such as this, Klopp has rarely taken that easy route.

This time though he blamed Anthony Taylor for awarding the free-kick that was handled by Mane to give Sunderland their second penalty and he confronted the referee on the pitch afterwards.

"It is hard to accept. If you see it again, there was no contact," the normally affable German said. "I saw it in the game and the fourth official saw it.

"It's not the worst mistake in the world and I don't want to say it is, but it's hard."

Such comments are unlike Klopp and suggest he may be feeling some of the pressure involved in chasing a team with Chelsea's recent impeccable record.

A more valid excuse would have been the fixture list that left Liverpool facing three games in seven days while Chelsea's three come in the space of 10 days.

However, Klopp said: "I am the wrong person to ask. I have absolutely no influence on the fixtures. It is like it is and somebody decided like this, so there is nothing to say about this."

POINT PLEASES MOYES

Liverpool did not look weary for the opening 25 minutes as they took the lead and could have added further goals before the first equaliser.

But Klopp's team appeared off the pace after the interval and failed to hang on to the lead given to them by Mane.

The manager said: "I thought we started really well and then we lost concentration, which is not usual for us, but has happened before. "It could be because of the fixtures, I'm not sure. Usually I would say we could have done better, but I am not sure if we could have done better.

"I don't know exactly if we could have done better because I was not in the shooting boots."

The mood of Sunderland manager David Moyes was very different, although this point did not lift them out of the bottom three.

"I honestly thought the players raised the supporters by the way they got up to Liverpool, how they put them under pressure, how they pressed them," said Moyes.

"Maybe if I was a German manager, you might praise that. If I'd been German you might praise me for doing something different. "I thought we did well. We stuck at it as much as we could and tried to make it hard for them."— AFP

LONDON: Manchester United's Spanish midfielder Juan Mata (C) scores the opening goal past West Ham United's Irish goalkeeper Darren Randolph during the English Premier League football match.— AFP

Bilic fury at red card hammer blow

LONDON: West Ham manager Slaven Bilic insisted he would appeal the red card handed to midfielder Sofiane Feghouli in a controversial defeat at home against Manchester United.

Bilic felt his team were doubly wronged when Algerian Feghouli was harshly sent off for a 50-50 challenge with United's Phil Jones just 15 minutes into a 2-0 defeat against Jose Mourinho's side on Monday - which also featured a goal from Zlatan Ibrahimovic which looked suspiciously offside after Juan Mata had opened the scoring.

"Of course the sending off had a major impact on the game," said the Croatian coach whose side played 75 minutes with ten men.

"I was very surprised by it. I wouldn't even be happy with yellow because they both went in for the ball. Then I saw the replay and it was proof I'm right. "The more times I see it, it was the other way around - it was Jones who made the more dangerous tackle. Definitely not a red card. "We will appeal of course and I'm expecting at least to win the appeal. I will be extremely gutted if we have to lose him for three games. But I don't blame the referee personally. I can be angry during the game but I know it's not deliberate." Bilic, however, refused to call for video technology to prevent similar mistakes occurring in future. "I don't want to call for replays. Goal-line technology is brilliant, but the others I'm not sure - I'm still a little bit old fashioned even though I'm on the wrong side of it this time.

"But it's frustrating when your whole season, your job, could depend on one or two decisions - because the second goal is clearly offside too."

Bilic, whose West Ham team finished seventh in the Premier League last season but are only seven points clear of the relegation zone this time, now faces a battle to hang on to star names, not least France international Dimitri Payet. He insisted: "We said it at the start of the season, that we are moving up and moving forward. We want to keep our best players and he is definitely our best player."

SIX STRAIGHT WINS

Meanwhile, Jose Mourinho is refusing to talk up a title bid even though his team have won six league games in a row and face Liverpool next at Old Trafford.

The result at the London Stadium leaves his team level on points with fifth-placed Tottenham, who play Chelsea at White Hart Lane today, and only one point behind Arsenal, who are at Bournemouth.

"I think we can win the next match," Mourinho said when asked about United's ambitions. "I prefer to be pragmatic this way. And after tomorrow Chelsea against Tottenham, one team loses or both drop two points. So we go step by step, we try to win our matches."

It was only the arrival of Mata at half-time and Marcus Rashford later which secured three points on a night when Dean's performance was the main focus of attention.

"I think we deserved to win but I have to be honest it was not a very good performance," admitted Mourinho. "It is very difficult to play football in those circumstances, two games in 48 hours." Next up for United is an FA Cup third round tie against Reading at the weekend followed by the first leg of an EFL Cup semi-final against Hull City - two opportunities for silverware in Mourinho's first season.

But the Premier League clash against Liverpool on January 15 could provide a better barometer of their ambition. — AFP

Live — Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Tottenham v Chelsea	**23:00**
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	

SPAIN COPA DEL REY

Alcorcon v Cordoba	**21:00**
beIN SPORTS	
Real Sociedad v Villarreal	**21:00**
beIN SPORTS	
Real Madrid v Sevilla	**23:15**
beIN SPORTS 3 HD	

MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Spanish manager Pep Guardiola kicks the ball back onto the pitch during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Burnley. —AFP

Guardiola's dark mood chimes with City form

LONDON: Coaching great Pep Guardiola's hint that Manchester City may be his last job has raised eyebrows and suggests the club's erratic form is getting to the poker-faced Spaniard. The 45-year-old told NBC his career was "arriving at the end" ahead of City's 2-1 win over Burnley on Monday and followed up those comments with a moody exchange with the BBC-where he constantly rubbed his nose as if he had developed a nervous tic.

The Burnley win left City seven points off Premier League leaders Chelsea, who can go 10 points clear if they beat Spurs on Wednesday. It all looked very different when City made an electrifying start to the season under Guardiola, winning their first 10 games including getting the better of his old rival Jose Mourinho in the Manchester derby. However, since then their form has slipped considerably with City at one point going six games without a win-Guardiola's worst run as a manager. Question marks over the wisdom of signing goalkeeper Claudio Bravo and his callous dispensing of fans' favourite and England number one Joe Hart have been backed up by some nervy displays by the Chilean goalkeeper. Bravo has not been helped by a creaking defence which was brutally exposed by out of form champions Leicester in a 4-2 defeat in December which led to Guardiola's bizarre claim he didn't do tackling after his side failed to make a single tackle in 35 minutes. With it the mask of serenity surrounding Guardiola has slipped as well leading to his suggesting to NBC the City job could be his last.

THE END

"I will be at Manchester for the next three seasons, maybe more," said Guardiola.

"I will not be on the bench until I am 60 or 65 years old. I feel the process of my goodbye has already started.

"I am arriving at the end of my coaching career, of this I am sure." Mourinho may wear his heart on his sleeve but Guardiola seems self-contained and almost cold in his press conferences, only once letting the mask slip when his Portuguese rival had provoked him one too many times when they were at Barcelona and Real Madrid.

Guardiola arrived at City with much fanfare as is only right with a man who whilst at Barcelona delivered 14 trophies in his four years at the helm. However, his spell at Bayern Munich-replacing German Jupp Heynckes who had swept the domestic double and the Champions League-yielded three Bundesliga crowns but failed to land the Champions League. "If my work is judged on whether I win the Champions League or not, I have failed," he said after his final hopes of winning European football's most prestigious trophy with Bayern Munich had disappeared last season, going out in the semi-finals to Atletico Madrid.

"I need to accept that. If people think I have failed, I have to accept that. If you think that I have failed, you have to write it." It is way too early to write off his City sojourn but the club's Abu Dhabi owners will be praying their dream capture as a coach does not turn into a nightmare.

For the moment the omens do not look good. Told in a remarkably tetchy interview with the BBC following the win over Burnley he did not look too happy, Guardiola forced a smile and said in a tone dripping with sarcasm: "More than you believe. I'm so happy, believe me. Happy New Year." —AFP

Avenging Spurs out to halt Chelsea juggernaut

LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur will have revenge in mind when they tackle record-chasing Premier League leaders Chelsea beneath the White Hart Lane floodlights today.

Chelsea came from behind to win 2-1 when the teams last met in November, but it is last May's 2-2 draw between the London rivals, which ended Spurs' title hopes, that will be uppermost in the hosts' thoughts. With Chelsea seeking to pull eight points clear at the summit and pursuing a 14th straight win-an unprecedented feat within a single English top-flight season-the boot is now on the other foot.

"Maybe we will feel how Leicester felt last season, when all the teams were with them and against us," said Spurs manager Mauricio Pochettino, citing the team who pipped his side to glory last season. "Maybe now we are Leicester."

Tottenham's 2-1 defeat at Stamford Bridge in November completed a run of one win in 10 matches in all competitions that suggested they would struggle to repeat last season's exploits.

But since then Pochettino's side have rediscovered their rhythm, winning five of their last six league games and scoring 18 goals in the process. They welcome Chelsea to north London 10 points behind the leaders, but seeking a fifth successive league victory.

Sunday's 4-1 win at Watford, which followed a 4-1 success at Southampton, briefly took Spurs into the top four, only for Manchester City to supplant them by beating Burnley on Monday.

Dele Alli is the Premier League's form midfielder, having scored five goals in his last three games, and he will not be satisfied with anything but victory against Chelsea.

"We're in good form and we've got good confidence," the England midfielder told Spurs club website after the New Year's Day victory at Vicarage Road. "It's a good atmosphere in the changing room. This is an important win for us and for our mentality going into the next match because it's a massive game for us and it's important that we win it."

KLOPP MISCHIEF BACKFIRES

Jurgen Klopp, manager of second-place Liverpool, has been doing his utmost to rattle Chelsea by claiming it must be "annoying" that they have not been able to shake the Merseyside team off. But his words came back to haunt him after Liverpool's 2-2 draw at Sunderland on Monday left Chelsea five points clear. Antonio Conte's side have not failed to win since their 3-0 loss at Arsenal on September 24.

They racked up win number 13 by overcoming Stoke City 4-2 on New Year's Eve, equalling Arsenal's 2002 record for the most consecutive wins within the same Premier League campaign.

Victory at Spurs will equal Arsenal's overall record of 14 successive wins — set over two seasons in 2002 — and leave them one win from claiming the record outright.

With history beckoning, Chelsea's players are doing their level best to treat the game like any other. "It's not like all week we've been saying, 'We want this record, we want this record,'" centre-back Gary Cahill told Chelsea TV. "We've just kept going. And I think that's the right mentality to have. Being aware of the record and wanting to achieve them, there's nothing wrong with that. For sure I want to achieve it.

"Every player wants to be a part of records-I'm not shy about saying that-but it's not something we speak about. We just have to keep focused on the job that we're doing."

Although spared from the 48-hour turnarounds imposed on some of their rivals by the fixture schedulers, both Pochettino and his Chelsea counterpart Conte could elect to rotate their starting XIs.

Pedro Rodriguez returns from suspension for Chelsea and will hope to recover his place from Willian, while Cesc Fabregas's position is under threat from the more defensively minded Nemanja Matic.

Spurs will welcome back first-choice defenders Kyle Walker and Jan Vertonghen, both of whom missed the trip to Watford through suspension.—AFP

BARCELONA: Barcelona's Brazilian forward Neymar (2L) vies with Barcelona's defender Gerard Pique (R) and Barcelona's Portuguese midfielder Andre Gomes (L) during a training session at the Mini stadium in Barcelona yesterday. — AFP

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Confident Australia build on Warner's record century 17

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NEW YORK: Orlando Magic's Aaron Gordon (00) drives past New York Knicks' Carmelo Anthony (7) during the first half of an NBA basket ball game Monday, in New York. The Magic won 115-103. — AP

BULLS, BUCKS, CAVALIERS NBA WINNERS

CHICAGO: Jimmy Butler scored 52 points and outdueled Kemba Walker, carrying the Chicago Bulls to a 118-111 victory over the Charlotte Hornets on Monday night. Butler was a point shy of his career high, which he achieved on Jan. 14, 2016 at Philadelphia. He scored 20 points in the first half and 17 in the game's final four minutes. Butler also had 12 rebounds and six assists while shooting 21 of 22 from the free-throw line. He has scored at least 25 points in four straight games, and his performance Monday surpassed his previous season high of 40 points, which he tallied Wednesday against Brooklyn. Walker boosted his All-Star candidacy with 34 points and a season-high 11 rebounds. Walker, who scored 37 points against Cleveland on Saturday, tallied consecutive 30-point games for the first time since March 7-9, 2016.

MAGIC 115, KNICKS 103

Jodie Meeks scored a season-high 23 points while Serge Ibaka and Aaron Gordon each had 22 as Orlando rolled over New York, which lost its fifth straight game. Nikola Vucevic had 14 points and 13 rebounds and fellow reserve Elfrid Payton added 13 points and 14 assists for the Magic, who were routed in their previous two games but totally turned things around against a Knicks team that played without Kristaps Porzingis or much defensive intensity. Carmelo Anthony scored 19 points for the Knicks, who have dropped eight of 10 to fall to 16-18.

BUCKS 98, THUNDER 94

Greek forward Giannis Antetokounmpo had 26 points and 10 rebounds and rookie Malcolm Brogdon hit two free throws with 8.8 seconds left, lifting Milwaukee over Oklahoma City. With Milwaukee leading 96-94, Oklahoma City's Russell Westbrook drove the lane, but Tony Snell deflected the ball off the Thunder guard's leg and the ball went out of bounds. The referees initially signaled the ball went off Snell, but after a video review, they reversed the call and gave Milwaukee possession. Brogdon then was fouled and made both free throws to seal the victory. Westbrook led Oklahoma City with 30 points and six assists but made only 3 of 17 shots in the second half. Antetokounmpo had five assists, including when he drove the lane and passed to John Henson for a layup, giving Milwaukee a 96-94 lead with 54 seconds to go.

CLIPPERS 109, SUNS 98

J.J. Redick scored 22 points to help Los Angeles beat Phoenix, opening the new year by snapping a six-game skid. Jamal Crawford added 18 points and DeAndre Jordan had 20 rebounds for the Clippers, who remain without Blake Griffin and Chris Paul. Griffin has missed nine games while recovering from right knee surgery, while Paul has missed six with a sore left hamstring. Los Angeles improved to 3-9 without both of them in the lineup since Paul was acquired before the 2011-12 season. T.J. Warren led the Suns with 24 points and former Clipper Eric Bledsoe added 22.

CAVALIERS 90, PELICANS 82

LeBron James scored 26 points as short-handed Cleveland rallied for a win over New Orleans. Cavaliers guard Kyrie Irving missed his second straight game because of tightness in his right hamstring. Cleveland dressed only 10 players thanks to a rash of recent injuries. After Buddy Hield hit two free throws to pull the Pelicans to 84-82 with 2:56 remaining, James scored six straight points and blocked a shot over a 1:47 stretch to seal the Cavaliers' eighth win in nine games. Cleveland's Kevin Love had 12 points and 11 rebounds despite playing only 24 minutes. Channing Frye added 14 points for the defending NBA champions, who have won 13 of 15. Anthony Davis scored 20 points with 17 rebounds for the Pelicans, whose four-game winning streak came to an end.

WARRIORS 127, NUGGETS 119

Draymond Green's putback with 28.9 seconds left gave him the final rebound for his second triple-double of the season, and he finished with 15 points, 13 assists and 10 boards to lead Golden State past Denver. Klay Thompson had 25 points to lead six Warriors in double figures, while Stephen Curry scored 22 points in Golden State's eighth straight home victory. Kevin Durant scored 21 points, Zaza Pachulia reached double digits for the third time with 11 points and nine rebounds, while Ian Clark came off the bench to score 12 points. The Warriors reached 30 assists for the third straight game and NBA-best 24th time total.

JAZZ 101, NETS 89

Gordon Hayward scored 30 points, Rudy Gobert had 15 points and 16 rebounds and Utah pulled away in the final quarter to beat Brooklyn. Rodney Hood and Shelvin Mack also scored 15 points each for the Jazz. Trevor Booker led the Nets with 17 points and 15 rebounds. Brook Lopez scored 14 points. The game was tied 70-70 after three quarters, but Utah's Joe Ingles and Raul Neto opened the fourth with consecutive buckets and the Jazz never trailed again. They extended their lead to 89-78 on Hood's layup with 6:11 left, but the Nets pulled to 91-86 on Lopez's dunk with 3:11 remaining. Utah countered with a 9-1 run and took a game-high 13 point lead on Mack's jumper with 1:09 left.

ROCKETS 101, WIZARDS 91

Eric Gordon scored 31 points and James Harden had 23 points, 10 assists and 10 rebounds to lead Houston over Washington. Harden's ninth triple-double of the season was a rocky encore to his brilliant New Year's Eve performance where he had 53 points, 17 assists and 16 rebounds against the Knicks and became the first player in NBA history with a 50-15-15 game. Harden committed six turnovers and was just 2 for 11 on 3-pointers after going 9 for 16 against New York. John Wall had 18 points and 11 assists for Washington, which snapped a three-game winning streak and failed to move over .500. The Wizards haven't had a winning record since starting 6 -5 last season. — AP

NBA results/standings

LA Clippers 109, Phoenix 98; Golden State 127, Denver 119; Chicago 118, Charlotte 111; Houston 101, Washington 91; Utah 101, Brooklyn 89; Orlando 115, NY Knicks 103; Milwaukee 98, Oklahoma City 94; Cleveland 90, New Orleans 82.

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division	W	L	PCT	GB
Toronto	23	10	.697	-
Boston	20	14	.588	3.5
NY Knicks	16	18	.471	7.5
Philadelphia	8	24	.250	14.5
Brooklyn	8	25	.242	15
Central Division				
Cleveland	26	7	.788	-
Milwaukee	17	16	.515	9
Indiana	17	18	.486	10
Chicago	17	18	.486	10
Detroit	16	20	.444	11.5
Southeast Division				
Charlotte	19	16	.543	-
Atlanta	18	16	.529	0.5
Washington	16	17	.485	2
Orlando	16	20	.444	3.5
Miami	10	25	.286	9

Western Conference

Northwest Division				
Utah	22	13	.629	-
Oklahoma City	21	14	.600	1
Portland	15	21	.417	7.5
Denver	14	20	.412	7.5
Minnesota	11	23	.324	10.5
Pacific Division				
Golden State	30	5	.857	-
LA Clippers	23	14	.622	8
Sacramento	14	19	.424	15
LA Lakers	12	25	.324	19
Phoenix	10	25	.286	20
Southwest Division				
San Antonio	27	7	.794	-
Houston	27	9	.750	1
Memphis	22	14	.611	6
New Orleans	14	22	.389	14
Dallas	10	24	.294	17

GERMAN INTERNATIONAL DRAXLER SIGNS FOR PSG

PARIS: German international Julian Draxler has joined Paris Saint Germain from Wolfsburg on a four-year deal, the French club said yesterday.

The 23-year-old attacking midfielder has signed a contract for a reported 36 to 40 million euros ($37.5 million - $42 million) that will keep him at the top French club until the end of June 2021. Draxler, part of Germany's 2014 World Cup-winning side, said he was proud to join the current French champions, ending an acrimonious spell at his German club.

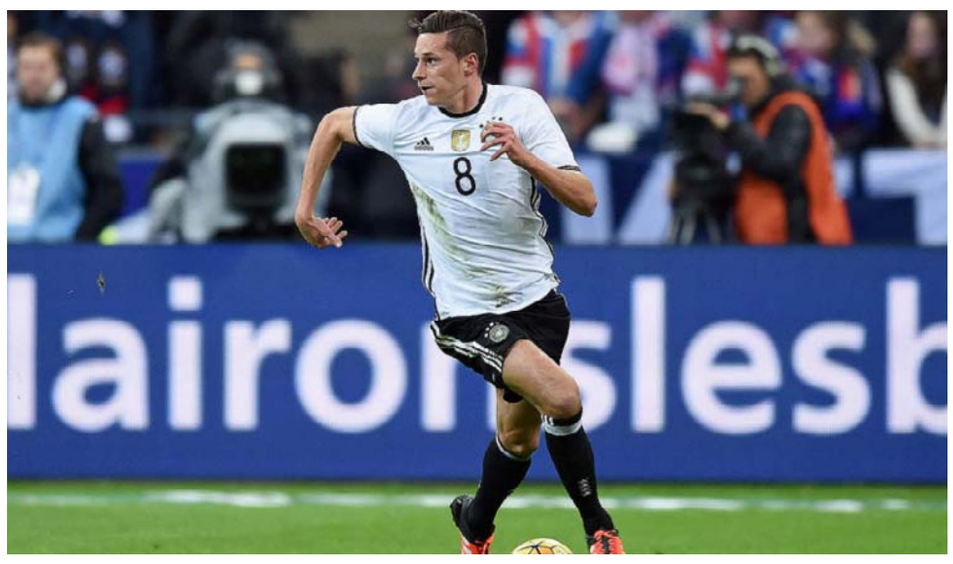
"I will be discovering a new country, a new championship and am very proud to embark on this new stage as part of a club that has become a reference in Europe and has recruited many very great players in recent years," Draxler said in a club statement.

Draxler was unsettled at Wolfsburg and ruffled feathers last year when he announced publicly that he wanted to leave, prompting coach Valerien Ismael to say the player was causing 'confusion' in the team.

Draxler is PSG's first purchase in the January transfer window as the club seeks to strengthen its squad after a disappointing start to the season and ahead of a their Champions League second round clash with Barcelona on February 14 and March 8.

Draxler made his Bundesliga debut at 17 for Schalke 04 and went on to become the youngest ever goalscorer for the national side, against Kazakhstan in June 2013, and the youngest player to captain Germany the following year against Poland in a World Cup warmup game, aged 20.

More recently his career has been dogged by controversy. He has upset fans, teammates and officials at Wolfburg, with his drive to quit the club lying 13th in the Bundesliga while critics say his performance on the field has fallen short of his stellar reputation. Last month former German international Lothar Matthaus chimed in with a warning to clubs interested in the precociously talent player that he had "never proved at the highest level that he was capable of making the difference". — AFP



WOLFSBURG: This file photo taken on March 8, 2016 at the Volkswagen arena in Wolfsburg shows Wolfsburg's midfielder Julian Draxler controlling the ball during the second-leg round of 16 UEFA Champions league football match between VfL Wolfsburg and KAA Gent. — AFP

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BUSINESS

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Big Oil in strong position as Trump tackles tax reform
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GCC fixed income market to witness robust growth
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ALARGAN wins two real estate awards in Oman
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Kuwait inflation remains at 3.4%

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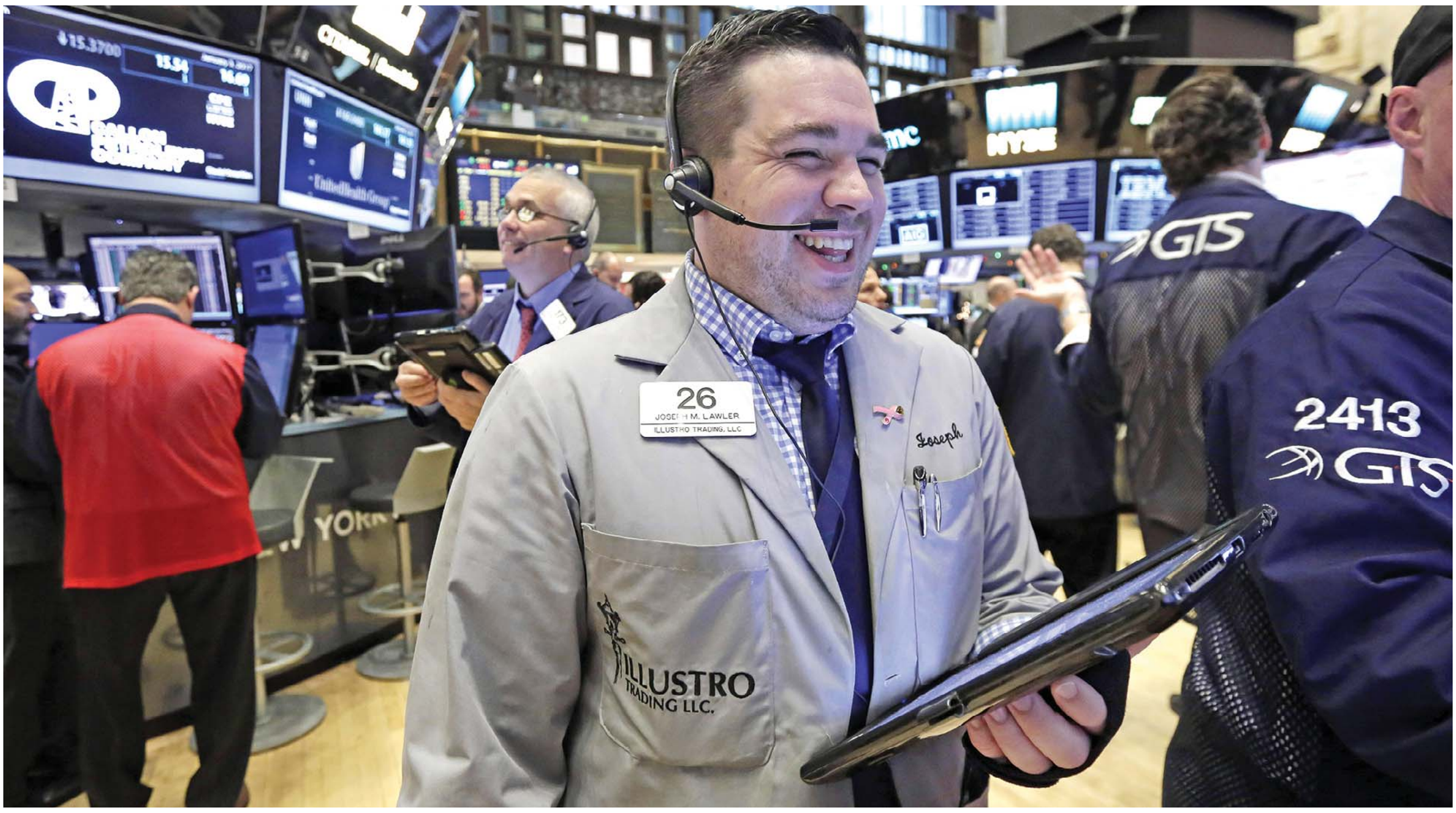


NEW YORK: Trader Joseph Lawler works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange yesterday. The stock market opened the year on a strong note, led by big gains in banks and energy companies. — AP **(See Page 24)**

Markets ring in 2017 with sharp gains

US, British manufacturing activities hit new high

LONDON: World stock markets mostly rose yesterday with London reaching a new high early into its first session of 2017 and Wall Street resuming its push towards the 20,000 level. US stock indexes were jumping at the start of the first trading day of 2017. Energy companies were climbing with the price of oil, while banks were advancing thanks to a bump in interest rates. Those two sectors were the best-performing parts of the market in 2016.

Oil prices also powered ahead, while the dollar strengthened against its major peers. "The New Year has started with a bang, at least in the case of the dollar, stocks and crude oil," said Fawad Razaqzada, an analyst at Forex.com.

London's FTSE 100 reached a historic peak at 7,205.21 points in morning trade, extending a record run seen in the final week of 2016, before easing back from its highs. "2017 has kicked off in fine style for the FTSE 100, which broke to a new record high at the open," said Joshua Mahony, market analyst at IG trading group.

The FTSE remained in positive territory in mid-afternoon after a survey showed UK manufacturing hitting a 30-month high in December. The Markit/CIPS manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) climbed to 56.1 in December after easing to 53.6 in November.

It "provides further evidence that the sector's post-referendum weakness will prove short-lived", said Capital Economics analyst Ruth Gregory. Since Britain's vote in favour of Brexit, London's FTSE 100 blue-chip index has soared thanks in large part to a weaker pound, even as the economy appears to have shrugged off the impact of the country's impending divorce from the European Union.

LONDON: A trader points to a trading screen displaying record high for the FTSE 100, at ETX Capital in central London yesterday. — AFP

One of the main reasons why the FTSE 100 has hit a series of highs over the past few months relates to the near 20 percent fall in the value of the pound across an array of currencies since June's "Brexit" decision. On the eve of the vote, the pound was trading as high as $1.50. Now it's around $1.23. A weaker pound can help exporters win business abroad and paradoxically boosts the earnings of many companies listed on the FTSE 100 that make the bulk of their revenue in other currencies. They include oil giants BP and Shell, mining firms Anglo American and BHP Billiton, and Europe's largest bank, HSBC. U.S. manufacturing activity expanded in December at the strongest pace of 2016, as new orders and production jumped in a positive sign for economic growth.

The Institute for Supply Management said yesterday that its manufacturing index came in at 54.7 last month, up from 53.2 in November and the highest reading of 2016. Any reading over 50 signals growth.

US factories are steadily rebounding from a rough patch hit in late 2015 and early 2016. A prior decline in energy prices caused cutbacks in orders for equipment and pipelines, while a stronger dollar and slower economic growth abroad hurt exports. The ISM manufacturing index has topped 50 for nine of the last 10 months. New orders registered a reading of 60.2 and production improved to 60.3, evidence of greater demand for factory goods. The employment reading was a weaker but still expanding 53.1. Of the 18 industries tracked by the report, 11 reported growth in December, including machinery, primary metals and petroleum and coal products.

UK manufacturing

British manufacturing growth climbed to a two-and-a-half-year high last month, fuelled by new orders from both home and abroad and adding to signs the economy ended 2016 strongly, a survey showed yesterday. The Markit/CIPS UK Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) rose to 56.1, the strongest reading since June 2014, from 53.6 in November. That exceeded all forecasts in a Reuters poll, which pointed to a decline to 53.1. Britain's economy has fared much better than many economists predicted in the aftermath of June's vote to leave the European Union, with consumer spending strong and companies continuing to perform well. The manufacturing PMI showed domestic and export order books grew, but so did cost pressures facing factories - something that will increasingly feed into consumer prices next year.

Survey compiler IHS Markit said the survey was consistent with manufacturing output rising at a quarterly pace of around 1.5 percent. "The boost to competitiveness from the weak exchange rate has undoubtedly been a key driver of the recent turnaround, while the domestic market has remained a strong contributor to new business wins," said Rob Dobson, senior economist at IHS Markit.

Dobson added that higher costs were the flip side of the pound's fall since June's Brexit vote, which has left it down around 10 percent on a trade-weighted basis. "Of the companies citing a cause of higher costs, 75 percent linked the increase to the exchange rate," Dobson said.

A separate survey of financial officers last week showed business morale has recovered completely its plunge after the Brexit vote. However, companies are reluctant to spend more because of uncertainty about the economic outlook. IHS Markit said investment and intermediate goods manufacturers performed particularly well in December, which could augur well for investment more broadly.

Manufacturers hired staff at the fastest rate since October 2015. Britain's economy looks on track to expand by more than 2 percent this year - faster than almost all other big advanced economies except perhaps the United States. Economists polled by Reuters expect Britain's growth rate to more than halve in 2017 to 1.1 percent. — Agencies

Dubai, Qatar top two performers

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Stock markets in the Middle East gained yesterday, with those most exposed to international funds outperforming as global equities and crude oil prices firmed on their first full-scale trading day of 2017. Cairo's main index closed 1.1 percent higher with gainers outnumbering losers 25 to two. Foreign traders were net buyers, exchange data showed, a trend which has been consistent since the float of the Egyptian pound two months ago.

Telecommunications firms performed well with Global Telecom jumping 5.8 percent and Telecom Egypt adding 3.8 percent. Qatar's main index climbed 1.6 percent with Commercial Bank, the top performer, adding 3.5 percent. Some investors tend to rotate into Qatari stocks in the early part of the year to capture high annual dividend yields.

Dubai's index finished 1.8 percent higher with most trade focused on small and mid-sized shares. Builder Drake & Scull, the most heavily traded stock, jumped 4.6 percent. Emaar Properties, a favorite of foreign funds, rose 2.9 percent. The positive mood spilled into neighboring Abu Dhabi, where the index rose 1.2 percent in modest trading volume. Union National Bank rose 4.7 percent and Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank climbed 4.4 percent.

"We expect to see a lot of speculative trade around banks that may announce merger plans in 2017," said a Dubai-based analyst. Last November UNB and ADCB denied media reports that they were considering a merger, but analysts continue to believe a tie-up is possible. Earlier in 2016, First Gulf Bank and National Bank of Abu Dhabi said they would merge in the first quarter of this year.

In Saudi Arabia, the index traded lower for most of the session but closed 0.1 percent higher with buying momentum building in the final hour of trade as Brent oil climbed to an 18-month high of $58.37 a barrel. Petrochemical shares were mixed with Saudi Basic Industries adding 0.8 percent but Yanbu National Petrochemicals falling 0.9 percent. The insurance sector, a favourite of local short-term speculators, gained 1.5 percent.

BANK SECTOR

In 2016 regional banks had a tough year as net income was hit by difficulty obtaining deposits in an environment of low oil prices, rising bad loan provisions and a struggling construction sector. But the last quarter of 2016 could show small improvements in some banks' earnings, especially Saudi ones.

"In the fourth quarter of 2016 declining interbank rates will stabilise funding costs and support Saudi bank net interest margins (NIM), in contrast to United Arab Emirates banks which are likely to witness NIM pressure on rising competition. We expect to see provisioning charges continue to rise for Qatari banks, from their construction sector exposure," said SICO Bahrain.

Saudi heavyweight Al-Rajhi Bank, which closed flat yesterday, is expected to witness year-on-year earnings growth of 3.8 percent for the fourth quarter, said analysts at Aljazira Capital; QNB Financial estimated a rise of 14.8 percent. — Reuters

Trump attacks GM over Chevy Cruze production

DETROIT/WASHINGTON: US President-elect Donald Trump yesterday blasted General Motors Co and threatened to impose a "big border tax" for making some Chevrolet Cruze cars in Mexico, which the US carmaker defended as part of a strategy to serve global customers, not sell them in the United States. "General Motors is sending Mexican made model of Chevy Cruze to US car dealers-tax free across border. Make in USA or pay big border tax!" Trump said in a post on Twitter.

GM said it makes its Cruze sedan in the United States and that all of those sold in the United States are made in a plant in Lordstown, Ohio. "GM builds the Chevrolet Cruze hatchback for global markets in Mexico, with a small number sold in the US." it said in a statement posed on its website without giving numbers.

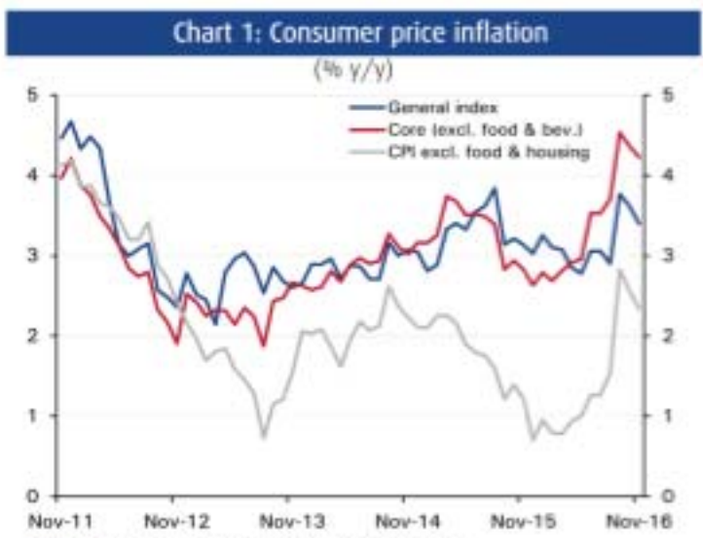
Shares of GM rose 1 percent to $35.19 after falling about 1 percent following Trump's tweet before the market opened. Last month. Trump announced the formation of a council to advise him on job creation, a group comprised of leaders from a variety of major US corporations including GM Chief Executive Officer Mary Barra. GM said in 2015 it would build its next-generation Chevrolet Cruze compact in Mexico as automakers look to expand in the Latin American nation to take advantage of low labor costs and free trade agreements.

GM said in 2015 it would invest $350 million to produce the Cruze at its plant in Coahuila as part of the $5 billion investment in its Mexican plants announced in 2014. GM said earlier this year it would import some Cruze cars from Mexico. According to Automotive News, GM began producing the Cruze in Mexico last year, making 52,631 cars there. In comparison, it built 319,536 of them in the United States. Previous versions of the Cruze sold in Mexico were made in a GM South Korea plant, it reported.

The shift is part of a larger trend among Detroit's Big Three automakers to produce more small cars for the North American market in Mexico in an effort to lower labor costs, while using higher-paid US workers to build more profitable trucks, sport utility vehicles and luxury cars. In November, GM said it planned in early 2017 to lay off 2,000 employees at two US auto plants, including the one in Lordstown. US small car sales have been hurt by lagging consumer demand and low gas prices. GM's US Cruze sales are down 18 percent through November. Representatives for the United Auto Workers union could not be reached immediately for a response to Trump's tweet.

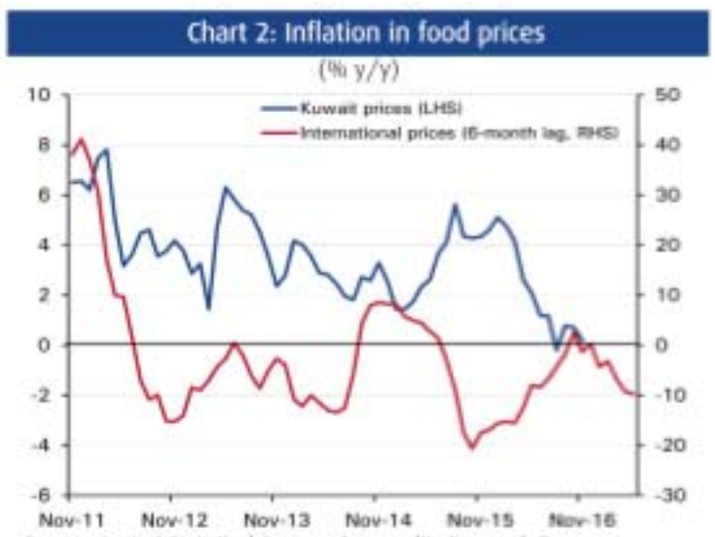
Trump's comments are the latest in a string of Tweets targeted at companies over jobs, imports and costs before he takes office on Jan. 20, including United Technologies Corp's Carrier unit and US defense companies. The Republican, who will succeed Democratic President Barack Obama, campaigned with tough rhetoric on trade and promises to protect American workers and called out several companies by name, including GM rival Ford Motor Co. — Reuters

Chart 1: Consumer price inflation



Source: Central Statistical Bureau, NBK estimates

Chart 2: Inflation in food prices



Source: Central Statistical Bureau, Commodity Research Bureau

Table: Consumer price inflation

	Year-on-year		Annual average	
	Oct-16	Nov-16	2014	2015
Food & beverages	0.7	0.2	2.9	3.4
Tobacco & cigarettes	0.5	0.2	7.8	6.0
Clothing & footwear	-0.9	-1.1	2.2	-0.9
Housing services*	7.4	7.4	4.4	6.0
Furnishings & household maintenance	2.1	2.1	4.8	3.4
Healthcare	2.1	1.9	-0.6	1.7
Transportation	10.4	10.0	1.5	0.5
Communication	0.4	0.2	-0.8	0.4
Recreation & culture	0.2	0.2	0.9	-0.2
Education	2.7	2.7	4.7	4.4
Restaurants & hotels	2.8	2.9	3.1	5.7
Other goods & services	1.5	0.9	-0.7	1.9
Core**	**4.4**	**4.2**	**2.9**	**3.2**
Durable goods	1.4	0.8	0.3	1.1
Semi-durable goods	0.1	-0.1	2.7	0.2
Non-durable goods	3.6	3.3	2.2	2.6
Services	4.8	4.9	4.0	4.9
Services ex-housing	0.9	1.1	3.4	3.3
General index	**3.6**	**3.4**	**2.9**	**3.3**

Source: Central Statistical Bureau, NBK estimates

Kuwait inflation remains at 3.4%; components steady

NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

KUWAIT: Inflation in consumer prices eased for the second consecutive month in November. Headline inflation came in at 3.4 percent year-on-year (y/y), versus the 3.6 percent reading in October, as inflation in most components slowed or remained broadly steady. Core inflation, which excludes food prices, also subsided but remained at a multi-year high of 4.2 percent y/y.

Inflation in 2016 is expected to average around 3.4 percent. Price growth was mostly unchanged from the 2015 pace as the effects of higher fuel prices were largely offset by downward price pressures from housing, food and other imported goods. In 2017, inflation is projected to climb to 4 percent as the government introduces higher electricity and water tariffs from May 2017.

Inflation in the transportation sector appears to be holding steady for the time being. Inflation in this segment jumped to around 10 percent y/y in September and has remained steady around that mark in October and November. The jump stemmed from the 50-60 percent hike in fuel prices that month, which pushed transport service costs (taxi fares in particular) higher. We may see some upward pressures in this segment in the short to medium-term as transport services readjust their prices to factor in the fuel price increases. Inflation excluding fuel prices remained broadly stable at around 3 percent. Also note that car prices fell on the month and were down 1.8 percent y/y.

Food prices ease

Inflation in local food prices maintained its weakness in November. At 0.2 percent y/y, inflation in this segment has been weak as global food prices receded further into deflationary territory. According to the Commodity Research Bureau, international prices of commodity foods fell by 9.7 percent y/y during the same period.

Inflation in housing services has eased markedly amid a cooling real estate market. After trending upwards for almost a year, housing inflation, which is comprised primarily of housing rents and is updated quarterly, steadied, at a still high, 7.4 percent y/y in September. However, the 3Q16 increase was a mere 0.1 percent, its weakest pace in over three years. We expect the momentum in housing inflation to continue to ease in the near-to-medium term.

Inflation in the retail sector continued to be weighed down by softer consumer demand and a stronger dinar. This was reflected in the furnishings & household maintenance, clothing & footwear and other goods & services segments. Inflation in the furnishings & household segment was unchanged at 2.1 percent y/y in November, while clothing & footwear price inflation fell at a faster pace of 1.1 percent y/y. Inflation in the 'other goods & services' category, which is mostly comprised of imported goods, such as personal care products and jewelry, receded for the second straight month in November, to 0.9 percent y/y.

Both inflation in services and services ex-housing ticked up slightly in November, on the back of a marginal pick up in restaurants & hotels inflation. Inflation in services came in at 4.9 percent y/y and after trending lower for the bulk of 2015 and 2016 inflation in services ex-housing rose from 0.9 percent y/y in October to 1.1 percent y/y in November.

Oil hits 18-month highs as markets eye output cuts

LONDON: Oil prices hit 18-month highs yesterday, the first trading day of 2017, buoyed by hopes that a deal between OPEC and other big oil exporters to cut production, which kicked in on Sunday, will drain a global supply glut. Benchmark Brent crude jumped more than 2 percent to a high of $58.37, up $1.55 a barrel and its highest since July 2015. By 1230 GMT, Brent had eased to $58.07, up $1.25.

US light crude oil hit an 18-month high of $55.24, up $1.52 a barrel, also its highest since July 2015, before slipping to around $54.95. Oil futures exchanges were closed on Monday for New Year public holidays. Jan. 1 marked the official start of a deal agreed by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other exporters such as Russia to reduce output by almost 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd).

"First signals suggest the OPEC and non-OPEC production cuts are raising hopes that the global oil oversupply will diminish," said Hans van Cleef, senior energy economist at ABN AMRO Bank N.V. in Amsterdam. Ric Spooner, chief market analyst at CMC Markets, agreed:

"Markets will be looking for anecdotal evidence for production cuts," he said. "The most likely scenario is OPEC and non-OPEC member countries will be committed to the deal, especially in early stages." Investors will be watching OPEC very closely to see whether the group's members keep their promises to reduce production:

"If 2016 was the year of words, 2017 must be the year of actions," said Tamas Varga, senior oil analyst at London brokerage PVM Oil Associates. Libya, one of two OPEC countries exempt from the output cuts, has increased its production to 685,000 bpd, from around 600,000 bpd in December, an official at the National Oil Corporation said on Sunday. — Reuters

Oman seeks banks' proposals for dual-tenor bond issue

DUBAI: The government of Oman has approached banks for an international bond issue with tranches of five and 10 years as the country plugs a budget deficit caused by lower oil prices, banking sources familiar with the situation said yesterday. The sultanate has asked international lenders to submit proposals for a US dollar debt transaction likely to be around $1 billion or more. Banks are expected to submit their proposals by the end of this week, said the sources.

One source said the government was keeping an open mind on whether the issue would be in the form of conventional bonds or sukuk. Oman's undersecretary of finance Nasser Al-Jashmi told Reuters: "As part of executing our funding plan, we have recently issued a request for proposals to a number of banks to act as issue managers.

"We expect to receive the proposals shortly and will finalize our selection process by end-January to start working on potential issuance later during the year." He added: "Our external funding plan includes issuance of both conventional bonds and sukuk, as well as a term loan from the bank market."

The new bond deal will most likely involve banks that arranged debt issues for Oman last year, the banking sources said. That suggests banks such as Citi, National Bank of Abu Dhabi and Natixis are likely candidates as lead banks. Oman's budget deficit is forecast to be 3 billion rials ($7.8 billion) in 2017, according to the sultanate's budget plan, published this week. — Reuters

DFM planning to allow short-selling

DUBAI: Dubai Financial Market (DFM) , the Gulf's only listed stock exchange, said yesterday that it planned to introduce covered short-selling, a move that could increase trading liquidity. "DFM is planning implementation of regulated short-selling on a selected list of eligible securities in accordance with international recommendations under local market conditions in the coming months, subject to regulatory approvals of its rules," it said in a statement to Reuters.

The exchange has completed consultations on the operating model and is now working on technical enhancements of its planned short-selling system, it said. Covered short-selling involves investors borrowing shares and selling them in the hope of repurchasing them later at a lower price.

Regulators in the Gulf have until now shied away from the practice because of concern that it could destabilize markets, but some countries including Saudi Arabia and Qatar have said they plan to introduce it. Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange Chief Executive Abdullah Al-Blooshi said last week that the bourse would introduce covered short-selling in the first quarter of 2017. — Reuters

BEIJING: An investor uses his laptop at a securities company in Beijing Yesterday.—AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.615
Indian Rupees	4.510
Pakistani Rupees	2.934
Srilankan Rupees	2.053
Nepali Rupees	2.823
Singapore Dollar	212.790
Hongkong Dollar	39.563
Bangladesh Taka	3.893
Philippine Peso	6.173
Thai Baht	8.601
Malaysian Ringgit	223.230
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.881
Qatari Riyal	84.334
ani Riyal	797.427
Bahraini Dinar	815.330
UAE Dirham	83.599
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.250
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	16.073
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.232
Tunisian Dinar	133.590
Jordanian Dinar	432.400
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.046
Syrian Lira	2.188
Morocco Dirham	30.839
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	306.850
Euro	323.270
Sterling Pound	379.270
Canadian dollar	229.680
Turkish lira	87.300
Swiss Franc	302.020
Australian Dollar	222.200
US Dollar Buying	305.650
GOLD	
20 Gram	238.24
10 Gram	122.04
5 Gram	57.97

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	0.370534	0.380534
Czech Korune	0.003880	0.015880
Danish Krone	0.039176	0.044176
Euro	0. 316060	0.325060
Norwegian Krone	0.031461	0.036661
Romanian Leu	0.070788	0.070786
Slovakia	0.009213	0.019213
Swedish Krona	0.029599	0.034599
Swiss Franc	0.293706	0.304706
Turkish Lira	0.083197	0.093497
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.213530	0.225530
New Zealand Dollar	0.207387	0.216887
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.223283	0.232283
Georgina Lari	0.138592	0.138592
US Dollars	0.302750	0.307150
US Dollars Mint	0.303250	0.307150
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003572	0.004156
Chinese Yuan	0.042582	0.046082
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037471	0.040221
Indian Rupee	0.002784	0.005518
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002529	0.002709
Kenyan Shilling	0.002985	0.002985
Korean Won	0.000245	0.000260
Malaysian Ringgit	0.064490	0.070490
Nepalese Rupee	0.002940	0.003110
Pakistan Rupee	0.002617	0.002907
Philippine Peso	0.006068	0.006368
Sierra Leone	0.000053	0.000059
Singapore Dollar	0.206634	0.216634
South African Rand	0.016339	0.024839
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001648	0.002228
Taiwan	0.009390	0.009570
Thai Baht	0.008233	0.008783
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.807354	0.815854
Egyptian Pound	0.013255	0.022508
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000181	0.000241
Jordanian Dinar	0.427743	0.436743
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000153	0.000253
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020226	0.044228
Nigerian Naira	0.000372	0.001007
Omani Riyal	0.790592	0.796272
Qatar Riyal	0.083473	0.084923
Saudi Riyal	0.080740	0.082040
Syrian Pound	0.001302	0.001522
Tunisian Dinar	0.129276	0.137278
Turkish Lira	0.083197	0.093497
UAE Dirhams	0.082120	0.083820
Yemeni Riyal	0.000998	0.001078

Few selling yuan for dollars as China resets quota

BEIJING/SHANGHAI: China's authorities have sounded the alarm in recent weeks over the risk of capital outflows from the economy, but there was little evidence at Beijing and Shanghai banks yesterday that Chinese individuals were rushing to lock in 2017 quotas to buy foreign exchange.

Only a trickle of people at banks were seen selling yuan for dollars on the first business day of the new year, when buyers in theory could have made use of their quotas. Under China's capital controls, individuals are permitted to buy up to $50,000 in foreign exchange a year, and data shows January is typically a standout month for onshore foreign currency deposits.

The yuan shed nearly 7 percent against the dollar last year, its poorest showing since 1994, as policymakers struggled to contain capital outflows and preserve foreign exchange reserves in the face of a slowing economy and resurgent dollar.

Authorities have tightened monitoring of foreign exchange transactions out of concern over capital outflows. China's currency regulator this week began requiring Chinese individuals who want to buy foreign currencies to specify the purpose of the purchase and provide additional information, and said it would monitor transactions more closely and frequently as well as punish rule-breakers. At major bank branches in two of China's biggest cities, there were no queues on Tuesday, and the few individuals who changed money reported doing so with relative ease.

SMOOTH AND QUICK

"The whole process of changing money was pretty smooth and quick," said an office worker surnamed Xu, who withdrew $500 from an ICBC branch in Beijing yesterday for a coming vacation in the United States. Several other customers at banks in the two cities reported similar ease when changing amounts of money well below the quota. However, it is unclear how much foreign currency exchange was being conducted online yesterday. Central bank data shows onshore foreign exchange deposits rose by almost 32 percent in the first 11 months of 2016, propelled in part by the yuan's fall to eight-year lows. Aside from the rising forex deposits, there has been little indication of growing unease among ordinary Chinese - although the authorities were taking no chances, repeating a mantra that the economy is improving and there is no basis for depreciation of the yuan in the long term.

Chinese workers loading steel pipes at a port in Lianyungang, east China's Jiangsu province. China's manufacturing activity expanded at its quickest pace in nearly four years in December, an independent research firm said yesterday. — AFP

Yang Zhao, chief China economist at Nomura in Hong Kong, said there wasn't any widespread panic about the falling yuan, so he had not expected a surge in demand.

In recent months, analysts have noted that the yuan was not alone in falling against the dollar, with most other emerging market currencies also suffering, which has helped keep sentiment around the yuan from souring too much. Zhao said restrictions on use of foreign exchange limited anyone's options and so acted as a disincentive anyhow. "You can't buy real estate. You can't purchase anything. Basically you can only park that FX in your deposit account onshore with interest rates that are very low," he said. — Reuters

MANILA: Officials blow horns and ring the opening bell during a ceremony to start the first day of trading of the new year at the Philippine Stock Exchange in Manila yesterday. — AFP

Big Oil in strong position as Trump tackles tax reform

Change could fuel gasoline prices, undermine economic growth

WASHINGTON: Big Oil could be in a unique position to protect its interests against a Republican proposal to tax imports, given that President-elect Donald Trump's cabinet is studded with oil champions sensitive to the risk of higher gasoline prices.

Trump's emerging leadership includes Exxon Mobil Corp Chief Executive Officer Rex Tillerson as secretary of state, former Texas Governor Rick Perry as energy secretary and Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt as Environmental Protection Agency administrator. Trump himself has made no secret of his support for the energy sector. And in Congress, both Republicans and Democrats have close industry ties, including House tax panel chairman Kevin Brady, a Texas Republican whose district takes in the northern Houston suburbs.

House Republicans want to adopt a sweeping tax reform that would sharply reduce tax rates for corporations and end the taxation of US corporate overseas profits. But a provision known as border adjustability is stirring up controversy. Though intended to boost US manufacturing by exempting export revenues from tax, the provision worries some industries because it would also tax imports.

Because US oil refiners import about half the crude oil they use to make gasoline, diesel and other products, analysts say the change could lead to higher gasoline prices and potentially undermine economic growth. Integrated oil companies such as Exxon, Chevron Corp , BP Plc, Royal Dutch Shell Plc and ConocoPhillips could also be hit, depending on whether they are net importers.

But the industry's allies would likely move to soften any rough edges, analysts say. "I don't see this mix of leadership figures in the House, Senate and the White House, doing something that has the effect of raising gasoline prices," said Peter Cohn, an energy analyst with Height Securities, a Washington-based investment firm.

The danger is that a move to protect the oil refiners could open the door to assistance for other industries, including retailers and automakers, which would also face higher costs if no longer able to deduct the cost of imports from their taxable income. Such a knock-on effect could prevent border adjustability from raising an expected $1 trillion in revenues to help pay for lower tax rates over the next decade.

"We hope that raising these concerns early in the process will allow members of Congress to consider the issues carefully," Chet Thompson, president of the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers trade group, said in a statement. Brady said earlier this month that his committee was sensitive to the impact on specific businesses and "listening very closely to how we can make sure we smooth that out."

Moreover, some economists dismiss industry worries about higher import costs, saying the dollar's value would rise in response to such sweeping tax changes and ultimately reduce the cost of imports. Currency markets would adjust to higher oil prices by lowering the dollar value of crude, they predict. "This argument by the oil industry is, frankly, all wrong," said Douglas Holtz-Eakin, former director of the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, who now heads the American Action Forum think tank. "Refiners are going to be basically held harmless. They'll have a lower dollar price of oil. Net cost is the same. And they go about their business. I'm unsympathetic," he added.

Height Securities' Cohn said Trump and his advisers could look for ways to soften any blow to refiners and their customers: "Trump doesn't want to have refineries closing on his watch." Oil already benefits from several tax code provisions in place for decades that would be eliminated under the House Republican plan. But they stand to gain more than they will lose. For instance, an existing tax deduction for domestic production lets oil producers shave down their corporate tax rate to 32 percent from the top headline rate of 35 percent. Under the congressional Republicans' plan, the corporate rate would be cut to 20 percent; under Trump's plan, to 15 percent. Similarly, companies that now write off intangible drilling costs or get a tax allowance for asset depletion would be able to immediately expense capital investments. Then there is a tax credit oil companies claim for fees from foreign countries. Congressional Republicans would eliminate foreign taxes altogether, while Trump would maintain taxation at a substantially lower rate. — Reuters

Palestinians face deep budget cuts

RAMALLAH, West Bank: Foreign financial support to the Palestinian budget is running at about half the forecast level, the Palestinian prime minister told local media yesterday, meaning deep cuts will have to be made to the budget this year. At its cabinet meeting, the government said it expected to run a budget deficit of 4.12 billion shekels in 2017 ($1.06 billion), approaching 15 percent of gross domestic product.

"We had expected to get $1.2 billion in (external) support and offers but we have only received $640 million so far," Prime Minister Rami Al-Hamdallah told Al-Quds newspaper. Saudi Arabia has in the past been a reliable supporter of the Palestinians, as have the United Arab Emirates and Turkey, but it has cut back its contributions sharply in recent months.

Normally Saudi pays about $20 million a month into the budget, but it stopped making regular contributions last April, in part to apply pressure on President Mahmoud Abbas to implement political changes. The European Union and the United States have also reduced direct budget support, preferring instead to fund development programs that target specific areas.

The cabinet statement said the total shortfall in foreign funding was forecast to be $765 million in 2017, which will put pressure on government departments to cut costs. "Such a decline compels us to adopt an austerity policy in all fields," the statement said. More than half of all spending — 55 percent-goes on salaries and wages for the Palestinian Authority's 156,000 state employees, from teachers and doctors to police and public security staff, according to the finance ministry's 2016 budget. While the economy in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza grew by about 1.5 percent in 2015, the last full figures available, unemployment continued to rise, standing at 27.4 percent overall - 18.7 percent in the West Bank and 42.7 percent in Gaza, the ministry said. — Reuters

LSE agrees to sell clearing business to Euronext

LONDON: London Stock Exchange Group has agreed to sell its French clearing business to Euronext for 510 million euros ($534 million), as it seeks to win regulatory approval for its proposed merger with Deutsche Boerse.

The European Commission has expressed antitrust concerns about the $28 billion merger and the impact on the clearing of derivatives contracts in particular. The Commission, in a document on the issue, has not made clear if the sale of the French clearing business, LCH Clearnet SA, would be enough to dispel its concerns, two sources told Reuters. One person directly involved in the merger process said he did not believe the sale alone would address the Commission's concerns.

"I have doubts that this is enough," he said. He suggested that LSE might also opt to sell Borsa Italiana, operator of the Milan stock exchange, to help address antitrust concerns, although a second source familiar with the process said that a sale of Borsa Italiana was not being discussed at the moment. An LSE spokeswoman said the company could not comment beyond its statement on the sale yesterday. Deutsche Boerse representatives declined to comment. LSE Group and LCH Group Limited said in a joint statement that they had agreed on the terms of Euronext's all-cash offer, after announcing last month that they were in exclusive talks with Euronext on a sale. LSE and Deutsche Boerse plan to formally submit the Clearnet SA sale as a remedy to the European Commission's concerns in the next few days sources told Reuters. A major hurdle to LSE's merger with Deutsche Boerse is how antitrust regulators define the derivatives market. Deutsche Boerse is hoping that the European Commission will treat over-the-counter (OTC) derivatives contracts and on-exchange traded derivatives as two separate markets, sticking to a market definition the Commission confirmed back in 2012.

Deutsche Boerse's Eurex is mainly active in exchange-traded derivatives, while the LSE's LCH. Clearnet is active in the OTC business. But Deutsche Boerse has acknowledged that the European Commission may change its mind, prompting the merger partners to make concessions such as selling LCH Clearnet SA to avoid the LSE-Deutsche Boerse combination being regarded as a dominant player.

"It seems the market definition is changing," Deutsche Boerse Chief Financial Officer Gregor Pottmeyer said about the European Commission's anti-trust deliberations in November. For pan-European exchange operator Euronext, buying Clearnet will give it control of a platform for which it provides much of the revenue and will make it less reliant on a competitor's clearing services.

Lucrative business

Clearing is becoming a much more lucrative business as global reforms introduced after the 2007-09 financial crisis mean banks must clear the bulk of their derivatives trades to make them safer and more transparent. "If the DB-LSE-merger is completed, then Euronext will be strengthened at the core of the euro zone capital market with this transaction," Euronext CEO Stephane Boujnah told CNBC, adding that Euronext is also considering other takeovers. "The reason why we are confident we can capture those opportunities is because we have significant firing power in our balance sheet, in particular because of our extremely low level of debt.", Boujnah said. Euronext said it expected the deal to add to its earnings in double digits from the first full year, before costs pegged at 40 million euros. It forecast cost savings of 13 million euros before taxes. Euronext shares were up 2.6 percent at 1006 GMT at 40 euros yesterday, while LSE Group and Deutsche Boerse shares were virtually flat at 2,901 pence and 79.41 euros respectively. The Commission is due to decide on the merger on March 13, after extending its review deadline for the second time. It stated its objections to the merger in December, but outlined fewer concerns than in its first letter sent to both exchange operators in September. — Reuters

Singapore dodges technical recession

SINGAPORE: Singapore's trade-driven economy grew 1.8 percent last year, the slowest pace since the global financial crisis in 2009, after dodging a technical recession in the fourth quarter, official data showed yesterday.

Analysts warned growth in 2017 could even be more subdued if rising protectionism crimps global trade and further rises in US interest rates put more pressure on the local economy. "Singapore has comfortably dodged a technical recession in Q4 2016, but we expect the local economy to remain in 'slow-mo'," said Weiwen Ng, Southeast Asia economist at banking group ANZ.

"The prospects of a more protectionist trade policy poses headwinds to Singapore's economy who is still wedded to the old export-led growth model," Ng said in a note. There have been concerns among Asia's export-driven economies about rising protectionism in the West, where globalization and free-trade deals have been blamed for sending jobs abroad and opening the floodgates to immigrants.

Donald Trump, who will be sworn in as US president on January 20, has vowed to tear up the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a major trade deal negotiated by outgoing President Barack Obama.

Singapore is a key member of the 12-nation TPP which contains market-opening provisions that go well beyond cutting tariffs. Singapore's trade ministry said yesterday that the city-state's economy expanded 9.1 percent quarter-on-quarter in the three months to December, reversing a 1.9 percent contraction the previous quarter. A technical recession refers to two straight quarters of quarter-on-quarter contractions. Last year's growth is below the 2.0 expansion in 2015. — AP

Gold slips as strong dollar piles pressure

LONDON: Gold fell yesterday as the dollar's buoyant start to the new year kept up the pressure on prices after the metal posted its biggest quarterly loss in more than three years. The themes of late 2016 appeared to be persisting in the wider markets in the new year, with stock markets bouncing, while the dollar posted its biggest rise in two weeks.

Spot gold was down 0.3 percent at $1,148.30 an ounce at 1030 GMT, while US gold futures for February delivery were down $2.80 an ounce at $1,148.90. Gold fell sharply in the wake of Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election in November, sliding more than 12 percent in the fourth quarter. Trump's victory boosted the dollar and sparked a sharp rally in bond yields, lifting the opportunity cost of holding non-yielding gold and blunting investors' appetite for the metal.

"The market has carried the theme of higher dollar, yield and stocks into 2017 — a formidable challenge to gold," Saxo Bank's head of research Ole Hansen said. There were however some potential positives for gold, he added. "We have plenty of event risks is month, with Donald Trump (taking office) on January 20 being the biggest," he said. "With exposure cut dramatically, we may see the selling pressure from long liquidation fade, as most of the those adjustments would have been carried out before year-end." Hedge funds and money managers slashed their net long positions in COMEX gold to a near 11-month low and trimmed bullish bets in silver contracts in the week to Dec. 27.

A strong start to 2016 meant gold still managed to end last year with its first annual gain since 2012, of 8.5 percent. Indications from the Federal Reserve that it would press ahead with further interest rate hikes this year after only their second rise in a decade last month are buoying the US currency, and therefore pressuring gold.

"Further to the Fed's interest rate hike in December, along with a bullish view of the US economy and the prospects for three more interest rate hikes in 2017, gold will remain weak," Sun Global Investments said in a note yesterday. — Reuters

Dollar, stocks firm as 2017 trading starts in earnest

LONDON: Upbeat data from China helped lift global markets as 2017 trading started in earnest yesterday, with the dollar notching its biggest gain in three weeks, oil on a tear and European stocks setting a one-year high. Base metal prices and bond yields also advanced, as the better-than-expected factory growth in China dovetailed with higher inflation data in Europe to give investors a solid start to the new year.

Much of Europe had been open on Monday but it was the first day back for its biggest stock market, Britain's FTSE 100 , and it wasted no time in hitting a new record high of 7,196 points with a 0.7 gain. Germany's DAX and France's CAC 40 climbed too and among individual stock movers, Italian banks were back amongst the top risers, with newly-merged Banco BPM up 4.6 percent on its second day of trading.

Commodity-linked stocks jumped 1.3 percent as oil and metals prices cheered the China data that had showed output from the country's giant manufacturing sector reaching a near six-year high. It bolstered the 'reflation' theme that dominated the latter stages of 2016 and helped get currency and bond markets back in their pre-break rhythm after a mixed recent run.

The US dollar racked up its biggest rise in almost three weeks against a basket of the world's other major currencies to leave it just 1 percent off December's 14-year high. Benchmark European government bond yields also tacked 5-8 basis points higher as the first inflation readings out Germany and in France pointed to a higher euro zone figure which is due today. Long-term inflation expectations in the euro zone, measured by the five-year, five-year forward rate, are near their highest levels in more than a year and close to the ECB's near 2 percent target, as the central bank prepares to pare back the pace of its money-printing scheme.

"Until just a few weeks ago, the general consensus was that upside inflation risks were very limited however... the inflation rate scheduled to be published today is likely to reveal a significant uplift," said DZ Bank strategist Birgit Figge.

China changes

In commodities, oil prices jumped over 2 percent in Europe as the China data fed into a market that is being buoyed by hopes a deal including OPEC and non-OPEC producer countries will drain the recent global supply glut. Oil was the world's best-performing major asset class in 2016, with a gain of around 50 percent and global benchmark Brent was up 2.7 percent at $58.31 by 0945 GMT as US crude topped $55 a barrel. "Markets will be looking for anecdotal evidence for production cuts," Ric Spooner, chief market analyst at CMC Markets said.

"The most likely scenario is OPEC and non-OPEC member countries will be committed to the deal, especially in early stages." Overnight in Asia, MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares rose 0.6 percent as most regional markets reopened after the New Year holiday although Japan's Nikkei was still closed.

Australian shares were the best performers in the region, closing up 1.2 percent. Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 0.7 percent while in China, both the CSI 300 index and the Shanghai Composite climbed 1 percent. China was Asia's worst performing major stock market in 2016 with a 11.3 percent loss in its worst year in five. "A year ago, the Chinese markets kept everyone on their toes," said Jingyi Pan, market strategist at IG in Singapore, said following the China data referring to market turmoil that engulfed global investors last January.

"I don't think that we will see a repeat given that the global economy has a better foothold compared to a year ago," Pan said. The positive Chinese news also lifted the Australian dollar, which added 0.6 percent to $0.7230, while gold sagged, with the precious metal dropping 0.3 percent to $1,148 an ounce. Back in Europe, the pick-ups in Germany and French inflation came on the heels of data on Monday showing manufacturers ramped up activity at the fastest pace in more than five years in December.

The positive numbers failed to shake the euro out of its doldrums, however, with the common currency slipping 0.3 percent to $1.0426. Investors were also keeping an eye on the Chinese yuan after the central bank nearly doubled the number of foreign currencies in a basket used to set the renminbi's value. Starting on Jan. 1, the number of currencies in the CFETS basket increased to 24 from 13, with new entrants including the Korean won, the South African rand and the Mexican peso. The country's foreign exchange regulator also said it would step up scrutiny of individuals' foreign currency purchases and strengthen punishment for illegal outflows, although the $50,000 annual individual quota will remain unchanged. The renminbi posted its biggest annual loss since 1994 last year, with the dollar up almost 7 percent versus the Chinese currency. In its first fix since the changes, the Chinese central bank set the official yuan midpoint at 6.9498 per dollar yesterday, compared with the previous close of 6.9467. — Reuters

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

جلوبل Global

Tuesday 03 January 2017

Index		Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price index	▼	-0.32	5,775.03	5,775.35	5,783.01	5,758.78
Weighted Index	▲	1.88	382.20	380.32	382.40	380.16
KSX 15	▲	7.61	893.36	885.75	894.22	885.13

Volume	188,294,522
Value (KWD)	20,753,633
Number of Trades	4,128

Security	High	Low	Trades Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last		Change
MARIN	67	64	12645	809	2	67	▼	-1.0
IKARUS	41.5	41.0	175,015	7,251	6	41.0	▼	-0.5
IPG	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	365	—	0.0
NAPESCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	820	—	0.0
ENERGYH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	42.5	—	0.0
GPI	45.0	42.0	11,929,989	525,179	202	45.0	▲	1.5
ABAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	100	—	0.0
Oil & Gas			**12,117,649**	**533,239**	**210**	**786.75**	▲	**1.78**
KFOUC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	182	—	0.0
BPCC	495	490	111,709	54,987	10	495	▼	-5.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	660	—	0.0
ALQURAIN	230	228	53,402	12,198	10	230	▲	2.0
Basic Materials			**165,111**	**67,185**	**20**	**1004.81**	▲	**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	375	172,500	65,325	10	380	—	0.0
SHIP	178	170	671,296	118,315	29	178	▲	10.0
PCEM	910	900	5,500	4,975	2	910	—	0.0
PAPER	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	295	—	0.0
MRC	60	60	5,000	300	1	60	—	0.0
ACICO	270	270	50,000	13,500	4	270	▼	-5.0
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
NICBM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	210	—	0.0
EQUIPMENT	61	56	7,225,792	435,264	188	61	▲	5.0
NCCI	42.5	42.5	20	1	1	42.5	▼	-2.5
GYPSUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	95	—	0.0
SALBOOKH	66	62	102,000	6,371	13	66	—	0.0
AGLTY	640	620	985,195	620,391	24	630	—	0.0
EDU	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	206	—	0.0
CLEANING	46.5	44.5	2,181,078	98,311	60	45.5	▼	-1.0
KGL	65	61	1,043,900	64,876	55	61	▼	-3.0
KCPC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	172	—	0.0
HUMANSOFT	2,720	2,680	1,517,512	4,097,873	295	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	34.5	30.0	2	0	2	34.5	▲	2.0
MAYADEEN	27.0	26.5	666,377	17,659	20	27.0	—	0.0
CGC	560	560	20,000	11,200	2	560	▼	-40.0
MTCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	56	—	0.0
UPAC	730	700	33,491	24,006	12	700	▼	-20.0
ALAFCO	244	238	201,575	48,141	7	244	—	0.0
MUBARRAD	60	58	901,000	53,390	21	59	—	0.0
LOGISTICS	73	72	468,397	33,772	12	73	—	0.0
SCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	86	—	0.0
GCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	74	—	0.0
QIC	79	79	61,096	4,827	2	79	▲	4.0
FCEM	79	79	112,500	8,888	2	79	▼	-1.0
RKWC	92	90	129,520	11,669	4	92	▼	-1.0
SPEC	80	80	21,500	1,720	3	80	—	0.0
Industrials			**16,575,251**	**5,740,772**	**769**	**1341.41**	▼	**-10.02**
KSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	136	—	0.0
NSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	64	—	0.0
PAPCO	95	95	4,999	475	1	95	—	0.0
CATTL	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	214	—	0.0
DANAH	88	86	952,202	81,921	38	86	▼	-1.0
POULT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	196	—	0.0
FOOD	2,620	2,600	102,025	266,906	10	2,620	▲	20.0
Consumer Goods			**1,059,226**	**349,302**	**49**	**1125.60**	▲	**0.54**
MHC	260	260	5,000	1,300	1	260	▲	10
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	920	—	0
YIACO	340	330	218,830	72,284	15	330	▼	-25
Health Care			**223,830**	**73,584**	**16**	**1238.28**	▼	**-2.57**
KCIN	1,240	1,160	3,350	3,903	6	1,180	▼	-60
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	265	—	0
SULTAN	57	57	124,073	7,072	5	57	—	0
CABLETV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	50	—	0
EYAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	385	—	0
IFAHR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	192	—	0
OULAFUEL	118	116	8,719	1,019	7	116	▼	-2
MUNTAZAHAT	83	81	1,969,198	161,300	65	81	▼	-1
JAZEERA	750	750	47	35	1	750	—	0
SOOR	116	114	50,133	5,786	9	114	▼	-2
FUTUREKID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	106	—	0
ALRAI	136	136	222	30	1	136	▼	-4
ZIMAH	43.0	42.0	519,777	21,973	25	42.0	▼	-1
Mezzan	930	930	152,575	141,895	11	930	—	0
Consumer Services			**2,828,094**	**343,013**	**130**	**917.60**	▼	**-9.86**
ZAIN	420	415	5,122,282	2,127,260	80	415	▲	5
OOREDOO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,140	—	0
HITSTELEC	43.0	42.0	6,274,841	265,115	104	42.0	▼	-1
VIVA	920	910	22,726	20,697	22	910	▼	-10
Telecommunications			**11,419,849**	**2,413,071**	**206**	**626.68**	▼	**-4.23**
NBK	660	640	2,401,031	1,560,171	33	660	▲	20
GBK	238	238	1,130,000	268,940	22	238	—	0
CBK	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	410	—	0
ABK	300	295	272,807	80,483	8	300	—	0
ALMUTAHED	410	410	970	398	1	410	—	0
KIB	206	206	351,000	72,306	8	206	▲	2
BURG	305	305	347,233	105,906	15	305	—	0
KFIN	550	540	1,157,537	633,660	37	550	—	0
BOUBYAN	400	395	54,728	21,667	13	395	—	0
AUB	194	192	704,278	135,994	17	192	▼	-2
ITHMR	41.5	39.0	23,379,978	942,004	286	41.0	▲	2
WARBABANK	222	220	1,356,457	301,132	79	222	—	0
Banks			**31,156,019**	**4,122,661**	**519**	**843.80**	▲	**4.19**
KINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	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	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	104	—	0.0
KUWAITRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	180	—	0.0
FTI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	49.0	—	0.0
WETHAQ	30.5	30.0	35,260	1,058	5	30.5	▼	-0.5
BKIKWT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	355	—	0.0
Insurance			**35,260**	**1,058**	**5**	**994.62**	▼	**-1.92**
SOKOUK	36.0	35.0	1665010	59,089	48	36.0	▲	0.5
KRE	65	62	6,120,474	386,641	91	64	▲	2.0
URC	94	94	80,000	7,520	2	94	▼	-2.0
NRE	108	102	3,172,912	334,998	63	106	▲	2.0
SRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	355	—	0.0
TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	470	—	0.0
AREEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	190	—	0.0
MASSALEH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	40.0	—	0.0
ARABREC	30.5	30.5	702,353	21,422	17	30.5	▼	-0.5
ERESCO	40.5	38.0	8,567,823	341,020	127	40.5	▲	2.5
MABANEE	860	850	56,649	48,718	7	860	▲	10.0
INJAZZAT	76	75	160,000	12,010	4	76	▲	1.0
INVESTORS	23.0	22.0	4,050,397	91,071	50	23.0	▲	0.5
IRC	27.5	27.0	31,500	851	3	27.5	—	0.0
ALTIJARIA	80	79	1,132,665	89,545	13	80	—	0.0
SANAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	31.5	—	0.0
AAYANRE	64	64	256,864	16,439	7	64	—	0.0
AQAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	69	—	0.0
ALAQARIA	23.5	23.0	114,250	2,681	6	23.5	—	0.0
MAZAYA	110	108	55,730	6,060	8	110	—	0.0
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	22.5	21.5	4,422,600	97,645	57	21.5	—	0.0
ARKAN	90	90	40,000	3,600	4	90	—	0.0
ARGAN	176	172	107,680	18,932	9	176	▲	10.0
ABYAAR	23.0	22.5	358,000	8,058	5	23.0	—	0.0
MUNSHAAT	56	55	1,121,905	62,243	42	55	▼	-2.0
FIRSTDUBAI	68	64	4,411,258	294,230	99	68	▲	3.0
KBT	42.0	41.0	2,389,768	98,291	55	41.5	—	0.0
REAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	196	—	0.0
MENA	20.5	20.0	355,000	7,207	12	20.5	—	0.0
ALMUDON	41.0	39.5	5,986,159	240,713	121	40.5	▲	0.5
MARAKEZ	30.0	29.5	3,000	89	2	30.0	▲	1.0
REMAL	69	67	557,800	37,430	38	67	—	0.0
AWJ	65	65	156,625	10,181	12	65	▲	1.0
Real Estate			**46,076,422**	**2,296,683**	**902**	**881.28**	▲	**6.27**
KINV	85	82	134,560	11,264	20	85	—	0.0
FACIL	158	156	130,000	20,480	4	158	▲	2.0
IFA	32.5	31.5	1,549,698	49,105	27	32.0	▲	0.5
NINV	96	95	1,270,367	121,433	41	96	—	0.0
KPROJ	510	500	180,500	90,600	8	500	▼	-10.0
COAST	39.5	38.5	2,223,998	86,470	56	39.0	▲	0.5
SECH	44.5	43.5	1,335,593	58,771	34	44.0	▼	-0.5
SGC	90	90	50	5	1	90	▲	1.0
ARZAN	32.0	32.0	172,000	5,504	5	32.0	▲	0.5
MARKAZ	93	91	21,100	1,932	3	92	▼	-1.0
KMEFIC	23.5	21.0	405,540	8,874	13	22.5	▼	-1.0
ALAMAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	49.0	—	0.0
ALOLA	48.0	46.5	1,520,669	71,582	43	48.0	▲	1.5
ALMAL	20.5	19.5	5,027,005	99,460	62	19.5	▼	-0.5
GIH	30.5	29.5	1,914,742	57,029	44	29.5	▼	-0.5
AAYAN	33.5	32.5	2,528,780	84,502	50	33.5	▲	0.5
BAYANINV	34.0	33.0	109,048	3,654	8	33.5	—	0.0
OSOUL	60	60	12,217	733	2	60	—	0.0
KFIC	40.5	38.0	79,500	3,088	13	40.5	▲	2.5
KAMCO	99	91	33,746	3,107	7	94	▼	-2.0
NIH	65	63	504,675	32,165	25	64	—	0.0
UNICAP	51	48.5	7,805,557	388,985	137	50	▲	1.5
MADAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	12.5	—	0.0
ALDEERA	32.0	32.0	20,000	640	1	32.0	—	0.0
ALSALAM	49.0	48.0	1,100,584	53,223	29	48.5	—	0.0
EKTTITAB	38.0	37.0	335,900	12,492	14	38.0	▲	1.0
ALMADINA	42.5	41.0	3,411,102	141,800	74	42.0	▼	-0.5
NOOR	47.0	47.0	400	19	1	47.0	▲	0.5
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	29.5	86,005	2,537	5	30.0	—	0.0
ASIYA	32.0	30.5	22,185	677	5	32.0	—	0.0
GNAHC	36.0	36.0	170,000	6,120	4	36.0	—	0.0
AMWAL	24.5	24.0	5,500	132	2	24.5	—	0.0
ALIMTIAZ	114	110	25,008,481	2,801,178	295	114	▲	8.0
MANAZEL	29.5	28.5	1,099,400	31,593	26	29.0	▼	-0.5
NIND	124	124	398,000	49,352	14	124	—	0.0
BIIHC	25.5	25.0	1,545,200	38,630	12	25.0	▲	0.5
SENERGY	34.0	34.0	16,582	564	1	34.0	—	0.0
AGHC	68	65	2,984,847	196,662	87	67	▲	2.0
KPPC	43.5	43.0	155,620	6,696	9	43.0	▼	-0.5
TAHSSILAT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	43.0	—	0.0
JEERANH	49.0	46.5	10,100	470	2	49.0	—	0.0
EKHOLDING	178	178	5,000	890	1	178	▲	2.0
GFH	166	162	609,950	99,855	30	166	—	0.0
INOVEST	80	79	181,400	14,359	13	80	▲	2.0
Financial Services			**64,125,601**	**4,656,633**	**1,228**	**605.94**	▲	**4.26**
Investment Instruments			**0**	**0**	**0**	**1081.97**	—	**0.00**
ASC	242	242	5,000	1,210	1	242	▼	-2.0
OSOS	130	128	2,500	321	3	128	▼	-2.0
HAYATCOMM	51	48.5	394,660	19,474	22	50	▼	-2.0
Technology			**402,160**	**21,005**	**26**	**601.26**	▼	**-10.31**
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	38.0	38.0	69,861	2,655	2	38.0	▼	-2.0
AJWAN	57	57	1,184,663	67,526	17	57	▲	5.0
MASAKEN	78	71	855,526	65,247	29	78	▲	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	158	—	0.0
AMAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	49.5	—	0.0
Parallel Market			**2,110,050**	**135,427**	**48**	**1135.58**	▲	**22.18**

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

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report

الوطني NBK

At 02:00 PM Previous Day

Global Stock Indices

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change		Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %
Dow Jones	19,819.78	19,762.60	-57.18	▼	-0.29	13.42
NASDAQ	5,432.09	5,383.12	-48.97	▼	-0.90	8.97
S&P 500	2,249.26	2,238.83	-10.43	▼	-0.46	9.57
Financial Times	7,142.83	7,164.88	22.05	▲	0.31	0.31
DAX	11,598.33	11,601.52	3.19	▲	0.03	1.05
CAC 40	4,882.38	4,904.77	22.39	▲	0.46	0.87
Swiss	8,219.87	8,290.89	71.02	▲	0.86	0.86
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	22,000.56	22,150.40	149.84	▲	0.68	0.68
Straits Times	2,880.76	2,898.97	18.21	▲	0.63	0.63

MENA Stock Indices

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change		Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %
Kuwait	5,775.35	5,775.03	-0.32	▼	-0.01	0.47
Saudi Arabia	7,247.34	7,231.73	-15.61	▼	-0.22	0.51
Dubai	3,538.68	3,602.32	63.64	▲	1.80	0.22
Abu Dhabi	4,533.87	4,590.31	56.44	▲	1.24	-0.27
Bahrain	1,219.82	1,211.13	-8.69	▼	-0.71	-0.05
Qatar	10,428.72	10,599.95	171.23	▲	1.64	-0.08
Oman	5,700.21	5,732.66	32.45	▲	0.57	-1.43
Lebanon	1,212.73	1,205.45	-7.28	▼	-0.60	0.00
Jordan	2,176.45	2,172.99	-3.46	▼	-0.16	0.28
Egypt	12,290.61	12,429.07	138.46	▲	1.13	-0.44
Morocco	11,564.72	11,564.29	-0.43	▼	0.00	-0.68
Tunisia	5,495.99	5,488.89	-7.10	▼	-0.13	0.13

Global Currencies Exchange Rate

Currency	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	US Dollar	Euro	Sterling Pound	Swiss Franc	Japanese Yen	Australian Dollar
Kuwait Dinar		12.1444	3.2515	3.1276	2.6480	3.3455	384.56	4.5147
Saudi Riyal	0.08234		0.2677	0.2575	0.2180	0.2755	31.67	0.3718
US Dollar	0.30755	3.7350		0.9619	0.8144	1.0289	118.27	1.3885
Euro	0.31973	3.8829	1.0396		0.8471	1.0699	122.95	1.4447
Sterling Pound	0.37764	4.5862	1.2279	1.1805		1.2634	145.23	1.7049
Swiss Franc	0.29891	3.6301	0.9719	0.9347	0.7915		114.96	1.3495
Japanese Yen	0.00260	0.0316	0.0085	0.0081	0.0069	0.0087		0.0117
Australian Dollar	0.22150	2.6899	0.7202	0.6922	0.5865	0.7410	85.18	

MENA Currencies Exchange Rate

Currency	US Dollar	Kuwaiti Dollar	Saudi Riyal	Bahraini Dinar	Qatari Riyal	Omani Riyal	Emirates Dirham	Egyptian Pound
US Dollar		0.30755	3.7350	0.3741	3.6260	0.3832	3.6574	18.4900
Kuwaiti Dinar	3.2515		12.1444	1.2162	11.7900	1.2458	11.8921	60.1203
Saudi Riyal	0.2677	0.08234		0.1001	0.9708	0.1026	0.9792	4.9505
Bahraini Dinar	2.6734	0.82222	9.9853		9.6939	1.0243	9.7778	49.4319
Qatari Riyal	0.2758	0.08482	1.0301	0.1032		0.1057	1.0087	5.0993
Omani Riyal	2.6099	0.80269	9.7481	0.9762	9.4637		9.5456	48.2579
Emirates Dirham	0.2734	0.08409	1.0212	0.1023	0.9914	0.1048		5.0555
Egyptian Pound	0.0541	0.01663	0.2020	0.0202	0.1961	0.0207	0.1978	

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	1.57	1.65	1.63	1.65	1.70
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	1.23	1.99	2.51	3.13
Europe	-0.80	-0.54	0.25	1.01
United Kingdom	0.13	0.57	1.33	1.97

Commodities

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change		Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %
Kuwait Oil	53.27	53.73	0.46	▲	0.86	0.11
Brent	54.91	56.11	1.20	▲	2.19	0.46
West Texas	53.80	53.70	-0.10	▼	-0.19	0.09
Gold	1151.65	1147.01	-4.64	▼	-0.40	-0.02
Silver	15.93	15.92	-0.01	▼	-0.08	-0.03

Source: National Bank of Kuwait

GCC fixed income market set to witness robust growth in 2017

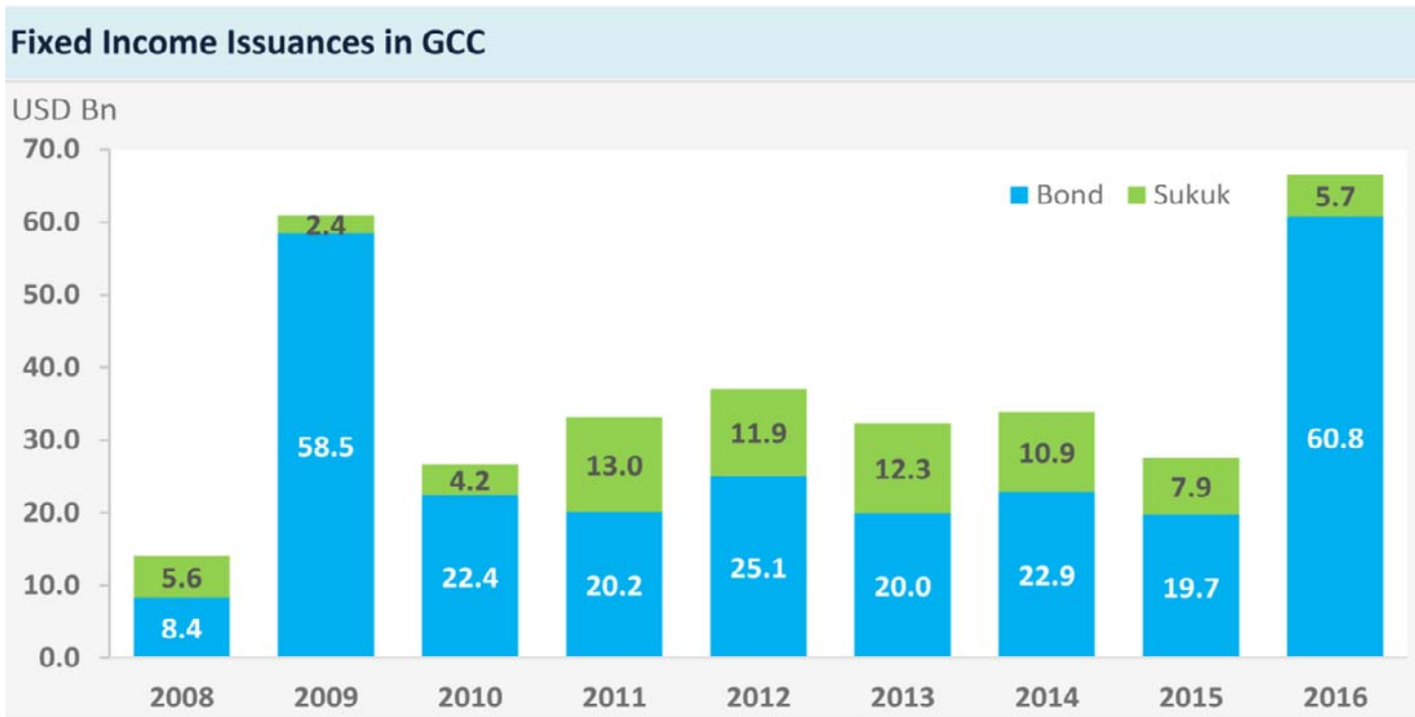
KAMCO MARKET REPORT

KUWAIT: The decline in oil prices over the past two years pushed MENA oil exporters to pursue policies that would have otherwise been thought unachievable. There was an urgent need to raise capital to fund the expected budget deficits in the near term as the surpluses accumulated over the past decade or more could support future deficits for only a limited period of time. On the positive side, most of the MENA oil exporters have adequate credit quality enabling them to comfortably raise debt in the international market. This is particularly the case with the GCC countries with almost all of the economies continuing to boast investment grade ratings despite several downgrades by rating agencies over the past 18 months.

As a result, the GCC fixed income market is expected to continue to grow during 2017, although the pace of growth is not expected to be as strong as the sudden jump seen during 2016. The key drivers to the increase in fixed income issuances in the GCC during 2016, which more than doubled to $ 66.5 billion, was primarily the sovereign bond issuances by Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar. On the other hand, issuances during 2015 witnessed a marginal decline from the previous year as the investment cycle was more on a wait-and-watch mode in relation to the recovery in oil prices.

Moreover, in terms of instrument type, bonds dominated the market during 2016 while sukuk issuance took a backseat, although globally sukuk issuance was slightly higher than last year. Sukuk issuance for the MENA region declined for the third consecutive year by 25 percent in 2016, slightly lower than the 27 percent decline during 2015. On the other hand, bond issuance jumped from $ 42 billion in 2015 to $ 75.8 billion during 2016, a surge of more than 80 percent. The decline in sukuk issuance in 2016 came primarily as banking liquidity came under under pressure due to the decline in oil deposits and this could have affected the demand for sharia-compliant instruments from Islamic banks and funds. As a result, sovereigns had to rely on international investors to raise funds. Moreover, the demand from international investors were especially higher, as they seek better yields and safer investments, as expected from GCC sovereigns.

On the international front, high yield bond issuance declined for the fourth consecutive year primarily due to the decline in M&A transactions which is one of the key drivers for bond issuance. Nevertheless, we believe that the prospects for the fixed income market are brighter in 2017 owing to expectations of higher economic growth rate across key markets of US and Europe, in addition to a revival expected in the investment cycle that has was crippled for a few years now.



US & MENA rate hikes

The rate hikes announced by GCC countries as a response to the 25 bps rate hike in US Fed funds rate in December-16 could push up cost of bank debt in the GCC.

However, the response from GCC central banks was more targeted at maintaining the currency peg with the greenback. Saudi Arabia's move to keep the repo rate unchanged was likely to ensure that liquidity in the banking sector was still comfortable, and to mitigate interbank lending rates from steeply rising, in our view. The Central Bank of Kuwait also guided that the move to hike rates in response to the Fed's rate hike was to ensure the continued competitiveness and attractiveness of the national currency as a store of domestic savings. Borrowing costs for Kuwait are likely to rise by about 11 percent, according to our calculations. However, even as overnight interbank rates rose, the 3-month interbank rates exhibited mixed trends as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar rates rose, while the rate in the UAE declined from 1.4029 percent to 1.3336 percent, as banks would have likely released funds on softer terms. Though some central banks have kept the lending rates unchanged in response to the rate hike in the US in order to keep the liquidity in their economies comfortable, future rate hikes would eventually reflect on in interbank rates and eventually lead to higher borrowing costs in the region.

Fed Fund Rate vs Kuwait discount Rate

The trend in the global sukuk index and the MENA fixed income indices highlight the divergent trends in these markets and clearly reflects the weakness in sukuk issuances during 2016. As sovereigns preferred bonds over sukuk during 2016, the index growth aptly reflected the increase in demand for conventional bonds, both in the MENA region as well as internationally.

MENA bond issuances in 2016 almost doubled from the previous year primarily on the back of new sovereign issues by GCC countries that were aimed at plugging the budget deficit. Saudi Arabia's first international bond issuance valued at $ 17.5 billion in October-16 was the biggest recorded emerging market bond, far outpacing the previous record of Qatar's $ 9 billion sovereign bonds issued in May-16. Moreover, although the total bond issuance by Saudi Arabia during 2016 was almost equal to bonds issued by UAE, there was stark difference between the composition of the instruments. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the government was the sole borrower, however, for the UAE, it was corporate borrowers. There were also speculations that Kuwait would raise funds through a debt issuance in late 2016.

However, the significant size of Saudi Arabia's bond made Kuwait and other regional economies take a pause to see the market reception of this jumbo offering. Moreover, after the successful issuance by the Kingdom that even saw an increase in total size ($ 15 billion targeted vs. $ 17.5 billion actually raised), Saudi Arabia has indicated further bond issuances in the near term and the Kingdom has a target debt-to-GDP ratio of 30 percent by 2020 as compared to 13.2 percent for 2016, based on preliminary data.

In terms of sector split, government still accounts for the bulk of total bond offering in the MENA region accounting for 69 percent of the total yearly issuances as against 64 percent for 2015. Banking sector contribution witnessed a steep decline from 22 percent in 2015 to 15 percent in 2016,although the size of the total offering increased by 36 percent to $ 11.7 billion. Moreover, majority of the issuances by banks in the region were primarily to meet the capital requirement for the Basel III. For 2017, we expect another wave of bond issuance by regional banks that are still to meet the requirements of the new standard.

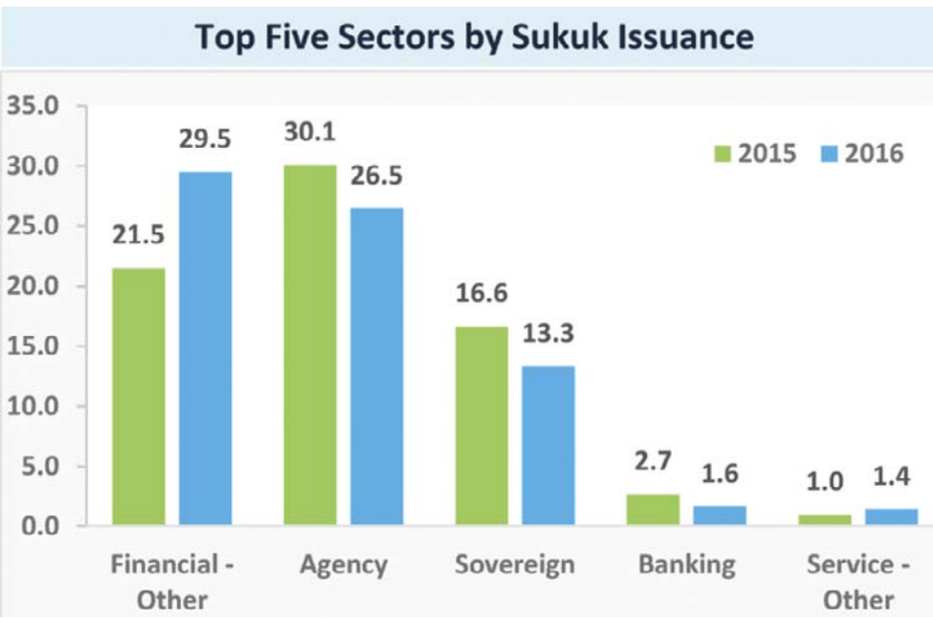
Prospects for MENA bond issuances in 2017 appears bright based on further funding requirement in the region by both sovereigns and corporates as well as rising interest rates that would make bank lending costlier. Moreover, as the economic growth is estimated to pick up, spending by corporates on M&A and capital projects is expected to also grow that would have a direct impact on fixed income issuances. On the downside, banks continue to be well-funded with strong balance sheet, especially in the GCC region. More, customer deposits remain significant and a relatively cheap source of funds for banks. Issuances to meet regulatory capital requirements is expected to be the key driver for banks to tap the bond market.

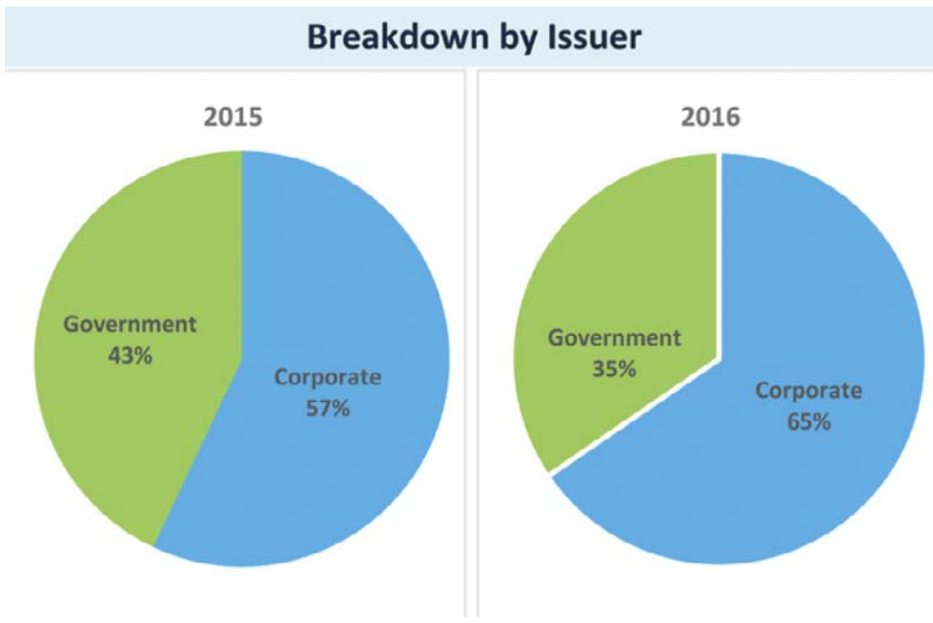
Sukuk issuance

Global sukuk issuance increased marginally by 2.2 percent in 2016 to reach $ 77.1 billion as compared to $ 75.4 billion during 2015. This increase was much smaller than the 5.5 percent growth seen in 2015. The deceleration in growth was primarily due to the fall in sukuk issuance by Malaysia ($ 28.2 billion in 2016 as compared to $ 34.4 billion in 2015), in addition to the GCC countries that recorded a decline of $ 2.2 billion in 2016. Nevertheless, Malaysia continued to dominate the market accounting for 38 percent of total global sukuk issuances in 2016 (47 percent during 2015) followed by Indonesia at 27 percent (25 percent in 2015) and Cayman Islands at 12 percent (10 percent in 2015). Moreover, despite the significant push by GCC countries to promote sukuk, the overall region accounted for a miniscule portion of the global sukuk market accounting for 7 percent in 2016, lower than a 10 percent share during 2015.

In terms of issuer breakdown, corporates dominated the sukuk market during 2016 with an even higher share of the total pie during the year. Total sukuk issuance by corporates increased by $ 7.4 billion during 2016 to reach 50.4 billion or 65 percent of total amount issued in 2016 as against 57 percent in 2015. On the other hand, sovereign issuances declined by $ 5.8 billion or 17.8 percent during 2016 to reach $ 26.6 billion due to a shift in preference favoring conventional bonds as against sukuks. One of the reasons for the shift in aforementioned preference was that the governments, especially in the GCC, were in a hurry to raise additional funds to meet funding requirements, and going for a sukuk would have taken additional time due to its complexities as well as time to educate investors about its benefits. The total number of sukuk issuances declined for the third consecutive year after peaking in 2013 to reach 377 in 2016 as compared to 391 issuances in 2015. Malaysia continued to remain the biggest contributor in terms of number of sukuk issuances recording 276 in 2016 as compared to 308 in 2015 as both government and corporates issuances declined. On the other hand, the number of sukuks by Indonesia increased to 37 in 2016 as compared to 30 issuances during 2015. In terms of sector split, financial services sector accounted for the highest number of issuances, recording 208 sukuks in 2016 (including 12 issuances by banks) as compared to 218 sukuks in 2015.

The outlook for sukuk issuance in 2017 remains positive as GCC economies are expected to return to issuing sukuks to fund their deficits and tap the increasing demand Islamic investors in the region. Moreover, with stabilizing oil prices and austerity measures in place, GCC governments will have the time to standardize policies for Islamic instruments and tap the unfulfilled global demand.





COLOMBO: Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena (left) unveils a plaque marking the ground breaking ceremony of a motor car assembly plant as Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe (right) looks on in the north western region of Kuliyapitiya yesterday. — AFP

ANZ offloads Shanghai bank stake

SYDNEY: ANZ Bank yesterday agreed to sell its stake in Shanghai Rural Commercial Bank for Aus$1.84 billion ($1.32 billion) as it continues to offload Asian assets as part of a restructure.

The Australia and New Zealand Banking Group said Chinese shipping giant COSCO and Shanghai Sino-Poland Enterprise would each take 10 percent of its 20 percent holding. The move is part of the bank simplifying its business, having announced the sale in October of its retail and wealth management arms in five Asian countries to Singapore's DBS. "As we have previously stated, the sale reflects our strategy to simplify our business and improve capital efficiency," said ANZ deputy chief executive Graham Hodges. "The sale will also allow us to focus our resources on our institutional banking business in Asia."

All of Australia's big banks are battling higher funding costs, lower interest margins and rising bad-debt charges, with ANZ aiming to not only have a simpler business but become better capitalized. In announcing the sale of its retail and wealth management arms in Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan and Indonesia, ANZ said it would allow it to better focus on corporate and institutional clients in Asia. The sale of its Shanghai Rural Commercial Bank stake is subject to regulatory approvals, with ANZ's share price up 1.55 percent at Aus$30.88 at midday. — AFP

Strong German inflation positive news for ECB

German inflation hits highest level since July 2013

BERLIN: German inflation rose more than expected in December, hitting the highest level in more than three years, preliminary data showed yesterday, a welcome sign for the European Central Bank that price pressures in Europe's biggest economy are pushing up. Conversely, the surprisingly strong surge in consumer prices may put a damper on Germans' appetite for shopping as higher inflation means consumers have less real income to spend. German consumer prices, harmonized to compare with other European countries (HICP), rose by 1.7 percent on the year after an increase of 0.7 percent in November, the Federal Statistics Office said. The reading, close to the ECB's inflation target of near 2 percent, was the highest inflation rate since July 2013 and stronger than a Reuters consensus forecast of 1.3 percent.

On a non-harmonized basis, annual inflation also picked up to 1.7 percent but from 0.8 percent in November. A breakdown of the non-harmonized data showed rising energy prices and higher food costs were the strongest drivers behind the overall increase.

"These are really strong inflation figures," DZ Bank economist Michael Holstein said, adding that negative base effects of past oil price drops were now fading out.

Therefore, German inflation is likely to reach the ECB's target of nearly 2 percent in the coming months, he said. A strong recovery in German inflation would give conservatives like Bundesbank President and ECB rate-setter Jens Weidmann more scope to argue for winding down the ECB's bond-buying program more quickly.

The ECB has been pouring money into the eurozone economy in an attempt to boost inflation from a near-deflationary level, so yesterday's strong data is likely to intensify calls from fiscal conservatives on the bank to start reversing its policy.

The data means that the wider eurozone figure, due today, will probably come in stronger than expected as well. Economists polled by Reuters predict the euro zone HICP inflation figure will rise to 1.0 percent from 0.6 percent in November. Capital Economics analyst Jennifer McKeown said she now expected a sharper increase to around 1.2 percent.

Still, price pressures elsewhere in the eurozone remain more muted than in Germany, she added, pointing to French annual HICP inflation only creeping up to 0.8 percent in December after 0.7 percent in November. "Accordingly... we doubt that this will lead the ECB to reconsider its policy support," McKeown said.

GERMAN ANGST

While rising prices may be good news for the ECB from a pan-euro zone perspective, they do not necessarily bode well for the German economy. It has been relying on private consumption, a booming construction sector and government spending for growth.

"Indeed, a temporary energy-related rise in inflation this year will dent real incomes growth, which is a key reason why we expect the economic recovery to slow," McKeown said. The German government expects the economy to have grown by 1.8 percent in 2016 and predicts growth to slow to 1.4 percent this year, mainly due to fewer workdays and weaker exports. Still, economists expect Germany's labour market to remain robust in 2017. The Federal Labour Office said on Tuesday that unemployment fell more than expected in December, keeping the jobless rate at a record low.

"The strong increase in employment that has been going on for a long time slowed since the summer months, but demand for new workers remains at a high level," said Frank-Juergen Weise, head of the Federal Labour Office. The seasonally adjusted jobless total fell by 17,000 to 2.638 million, the Labour Office said. That was more than three-fold the 5,000 forecast in a Reuters poll.

The adjusted unemployment rate remained at 6.0 percent, the lowest level since German reunification in 1990. In 2016 as a whole, a record 43.4 million people were employed in Germany - 1 percent more than in 2015 and the tenth consecutive year that the workforce expanded."Job creation should continue this year," said Joerg Zeuner of KfW bank. "The expected rise in unemployment due to immigrants has so far not materialized."

More than one million migrants, mainly refugees from the Middle East and Africa, arrived in Germany over the last two years. The government is investing billions on integrating them. — Reuters

ALARGAN wins two real estate awards in Oman

KUWAIT: Adding to its line of achievements in quality development in the region, ALARGAN International Real Estate Company received two new recognitions in Oman, awarded to both its associate ALARGAN TOWELL Investment Company and its subsidiary Telal Al-Qurm Real Estate Company for the development of Al-Waha and Telal Al-Qurm developments, respectively.

ALARGAN TOWELL Investment was awarded the "Affordable Housing Project of the Year" for 2016 by the Oman Real Estate Association for the Al-Waha project, a mixed-use development located west of Barka in Oman, and comprising residential units, community facilities and services, as well as mosques, a school, parks, and green landscapes. The project covers 683,859 square meters. The first phase of the project is completed, seeing great sales in its residential units. The second phase of the development was launched recently.

On the other hand, Telal Al-Qurm Real Estate received the "Affordable Luxury Living of the Year" award by Signature magazine's "The Luxury 100" list for its Telal Al-Qurm community development. "The Luxury 100" is a prominent recognition, marking Oman and the region's only list of iconic luxury products of the year. Telal Al-Qurm is a residential and commercial district consisting of 164,900 square meters of land located on the edge of the highly-in-demand Qurm area of Muscat. The company had recently revealed the demo townhouse as part of the fourth component of the development.

Khaled Al-Meshaan, CEO and Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of ALARGAN International Real Estate Company, said: "We are very proud of the achievements that our teams continue to make in Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain. Our developments are recognized for the quality living, affordability and sustainability features that add value for the benefit of our society as we follow our motto 'Life ... As You Love It', through which we develop real estate solutions to enhance our customers' enjoyment of life.

"As an internationally-recognized developer with a focus on developing middle income level residential housing, we have a responsibility to develop buildings that support an economically and socially viable urban environment. We are developing residential and community projects to last, in an aim that they remain an integral part of the larger urban development process in the countries where we operate."

ALARGAN has received several awards over the past two years, most prominently the "Best International Retail Developer" award presented by London's "International Property Awards" for ALARGAN's mixed-use development in Bahrain, the ARGAN Village.

ALARGAN International Real Estate Company is a leading real estate company based in Kuwait and focused on the development of affordable and middle income housing in the GCC. The company strives to integrate its motto, 'Life... As You Love It', across its projects by creating "live, work, play and savor" environments that present a unique lifestyle experience. The company also endeavors to pass on its sustainability values to the community by including green and energy efficient initiatives in its projects.

Cadillac Alghanim earns No 1 position in satisfaction score

KUWAIT: Yusuf A Alghanim & Sons Automotive, the exclusive distributor of Cadillac vehicles in Kuwait, adds another entry to its growing record of achievements by acquiring par excellent customer satisfaction at their service center. The feat underscores Cadillac Alghanim's commitment to offering the highest quality of service and customer engagement, beginning from offering thorough and detailed reports on required vehicle services to completing maintenance services on time. The technicians at Cadillac Alghanim owe their record-shattering accolade to the service center's satisfied customers and promise to exceed their expectations on every visit.

One of the ways that Cadillac Alghanim expresses its appreciation to customers is by offering the best service facility that exclusively caters to all their needs and desires. Indeed, by elevating its customer relations and car sales and services to new levels, the Yusuf A Alghanim & Sons Service Facility aims to offer a completely satisfying experience from the moment customers step in until the day they drive off to a thrilling destination. Performed by professionally trained service technicians, customers can expect a professional, detailed checkup that includes a thorough inspection on all aspects related to car safety such as wipers, brakes, engine and oil at no additional cost. Once the checkup has been completed, customers will receive a comprehensive report detailing the condition of the car as well as the required maintenance and pricing that complements the customer-friendly service contracts that offer a variety of flexible payment options and plans as well as plenty of service benefits all year-long.

Bassel Al-Hulail, the service center's manager, remarked about the company's vision that has driven the center to excellence in performance, "We greet each and every customer who enters our service center warmly before we even get to talking about their car and its needs. The cornerstone of our work is focusing on providing unparalleled service and the utmost to our customers so as to provide them with what they need, want and expect. After a customer's car has been serviced, we create a service program that is customized according to the customer's needs. The service program is developed by our highly skilled team of professionals and experienced technicians that provide high standard and quality results with one main thing in mind: satisfying customer needs and wants that make a Cadillac experience better, safer and more luxurious than ever.

It is worth mentioning that Yusuf Ahmed Alghanim & Sons Automotive is committed to a professional work and ethic standard under the slogan "I Care" that aims to lead a culture of care through four main pillars that are proactive communication, answering every question a customer has, representing the Cadillac brand as a symbol of quality and going beyond customer expectations by providing superior quality. The pillars have been applied to all service center staff members, from employees at the welcome desk to service managers and technicians.

The Yusuf A Alghanim & Sons Service Facility in Shuwaikh is considered the biggest and most advanced automotive service center in the world with 73,000 square meter of built up area servicing 1,000 vehicles every day. Throughout the facility, advanced technology is harnessed to provide customers high-quality and efficient service including a team of highly trained technicians whose goal is to provide necessary advice and support as well as reliable and cost-effective operation of customers' vehicles. The facility also includes a state-of-the-art paint and body shop that provides factory finish gloss of superb quality. Supported by body-and-paint specialists and modern equipment, the shop offers a variety of services that includes paint-less dent removal, custom paint and customization, sunroof installations, upholstery repairs and replacement and many more.

Premium Care Program

Yusuf Ahmed Alghanim & Sons Automotive's showcases the company's commitment to enhance customers' unique Cadillac experience by offering customers peace of mind with a comprehensive insurance program. In addition, all Cadillac owners will enjoy service and maintenance for four years or 100,000 km, warranty for 4 years or 100,000 km, 24-hour roadside assistance anywhere in the Middle East for four years (unlimited miles) plus courtesy transportation and a replacement vehicle upon availability.

Global equities rally as UK Europe remain buoyant

NBK Capital Monthly Global Markets Commentary

KUWAIT: Global equities performed well in December with Europe and UK leading the group. European equities rallied this month, up 5.7 percent as measured by the Stoxx Europe 600, despite the referendum in Italy that witnessed PM Matteo Renzi resign. Further supporting the rally was the positive sentiment surrounding the ECB's extension of its QE program until the end of 2017. Commodities are mixed for the month with Gold down 2.2 percent and oil up 12.6 percent in anticipation of the upcoming production cuts in January by both OPEC and non-OPEC producers.

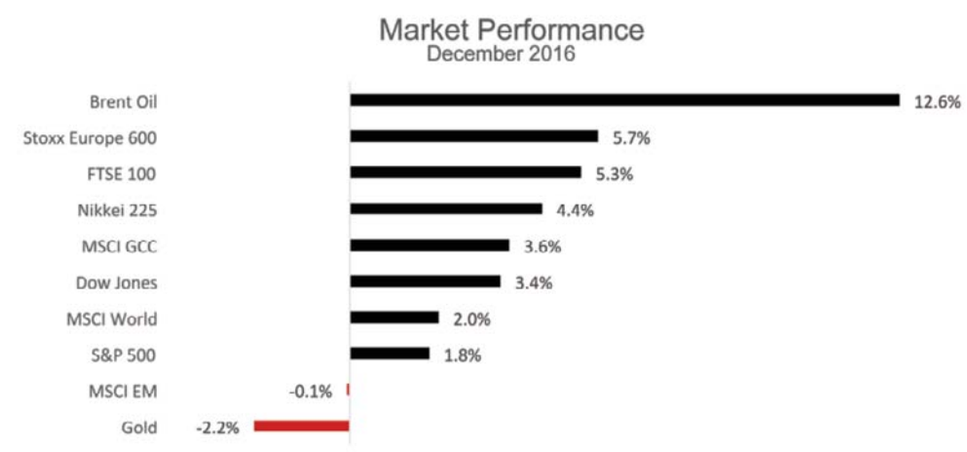
As the Fed raised interest rates for the first time this year by 0.25 percent, this signals strength in the US economy, as they move close to their 2 percent inflation target and improving unemployment. The consumer price index went up to 1.7 percent YoY.

The December preliminary Markit Manufacturing PMI increased to 54.2, slightly up from November's 54.1 reading. Consumer confidence rose to 113.7 in December, the highest level seen since August 2011. Durable goods order dropped to -4.6 percent in November although supported by defense and core capital goods orders. US housing appears to have taken a fall as housing starts dropped further than expected to 1.09 million in November compared to 1.323 million in October. Existing home sales surprisingly improved by 0.7 percent to 5.61 million, along with new homes sales, which went up to 0.592 million in November.

NBK·CAPITAL

US equities reported gains of 1.8 percent this month, as measured by the S&P 500, as the market awaits the upcoming tax cuts and infrastructure spending by the Trump administration.

UK inflation went up to 1.2 percent in November. Unemployment remains at 4.8 percent in December, maintaining its lowest level in 11 years. Consumer confidence improved to -7 in December from -8 last month; however retail sales are down to 5.9 percent YoY in November from 7.4 percent in October.



UK equities rallied in December posting gains of 5.3 percent, as measured by the FTSE 100, after last month's drop of 2.5 percent. This may be attributed to the phenomenon known as the "Santa Rally" in which share prices rise significantly during the last month of year. The FTSE 100 has been performing surprising well since the Brexit result. However, that could change once Article 50 is triggered next year.

The Eurozone Markit Manufacturing PMI continues its upward trend, reporting a 54.9 reading for the month of December up from 54.1 in November. The preliminary service PMI however has dropped in December to 53.1 compared to 54.1 in November. Consumer confidence in December continues to improve, although still negative, at -5.1. Despite recent events, Europe remains resilient as the upcoming year brings along new challenges with upcoming political elections.

Japan posted a trade surplus for the third consecutive month, although significantly lower at JPY 152 billion compared to JPY 496 billion in October. Imports and exports both fell by -8.8 percent and -0.4 percent, respectively. Imports are expected to remain low as the yen continues to depreciate. The Bank of Japan has chosen to keep its short-term interest rate and 10-year government bond yield unchanged. The preliminary Nikkei Manufacturing PMI for December is up at 51.9 compared to 51.3 in the previous month. Japan's CPI continues its upward trend, up to 0.5 percent in November. The unemployment rate has also improved slightly to 3.1 percent in November while Real GDP was down to 0.3 percent QoQ in Q3. Japanese equities continue their positive performance up 4.4 percent in December, as measured by the Nikkei 225 Index.

Chinese imports and exports both recovered from last month's fall, reporting figures of 13.0 percent and 5.9 percent respectively. The CPI also showed signs of improvement at 2.3 percent in November up 0.2 percent from last month. The Caixin Manufacturing PMI improved to 51.9 in December compared to 50.9 in November. Emerging markets ended the month almost flat at -0.1 percent, an improvement from last month while Chinese equities, as measured by the Shanghai Stock Exchange Composite Index, generated a loss of 4.5 percent.

On the other hand, the GCC equity market ended the month positive, up 3.7 percent, driven mainly by the rise in oil prices and Saudi's equity market performance, which was up 3 percent for the month. In addition, a potential merger between three Qatari banks has driven the Qatar Exchange Index up 6.6 percent while Abu Dhabi and Dubai equities continued to post gains of 5.5 percent and 5.1 percent, respectively.

UAE, Tatarstan seek to deepen economic ties

ABU DHABI: Engineer Sultan bin Saeed Al-Mansoori, Minister of Economy, recently met with Tatarstan President Rustam Minnikhanov to discuss ways to reinforce their bilateral economic and trade relations and opportunities for mutually beneficial investments. The meeting, which was held at Burj Al-Arab Hotel in Dubai, was attended by Abdullah Bin Ahmed Al-Saleh, the Ministry of Economy's Undersecretary for Foreign Trade and Industry, and Russian Ambassador to the UAE Alexander A Ivanov.

Both parties tackled various ways to enhance their economic and trade cooperation, reinforce access to investment opportunities in various sectors, and promote common development interests in tourism, agriculture, real estate, industry and petrochemical sectors. During the discussions, the UAE Minister also accepted the invitation to attend the Kazan International Economic Summit between states of the Russian Federation and member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Al-Mansoori underscored joint opportunities in tourism, petrochemical, manufacturing, infrastructure, real estate, and agriculture, saying these sectors are the country's top priorities to ensure food security at the local and regional levels.

The Minister reiterated the importance of economic delegations to participate in economic events organized by the two sides, noting that these forums have a direct impact on enhancing communication channels between their respective business communities. Such a move will promote exceptional incentives and facilities, discuss investment opportunities, and enhance joint efforts to improve economic relations and cooperation and increase the size of trade volume. For his part, President Minnikhanov said that his country is keen on strengthening the foundations of economic and trade cooperation with the UAE and create broader partnerships between the public and private sectors to serve common interests.

The President of Tatarstan invited the UAE Minister to attend the Kazan International Economic Summit. Al-Mansoori accepted the invitation, saying the event is an ideal opportunity to discuss various aspects of cooperation between the states of the Russian Federation and OIC member countries. They also discussed ways to expand their economic cooperation and integration, including optimizing available capacities and capabilities.

Gulf Bank unveils 'Catch the Cash' competition at Al-Danah draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank's highly anticipated Al-Danah millionaire draw is tomorrow! Not only one million Kuwaiti dinar awaits you but also a flying cash box will offer six lucky attendees, or more, the chance to win cash instantly at the event! Mark your calendars this for this Thursday, 5 January 2017, and join Gulf Bank at The Avenues Mall.

Gulf Bank is happy to announce that, in addition to all the prizes and activities that have been announced, the Bank is giving the audience a chance to win up to KD 3,000 cash with the exciting "Catch the Cash" game. Step inside the flying cash box and try to catch as many flying notes as you can in 10 seconds. You can then exchange those notes for real cash, on spot!

The money box competition is open to all, but you must be present at the event in the Avenues in order to be selected to participate. Two participants will be selected every half hour starting from 7pm. Participation is free of charge; participants need to just register at the registration desk close to the stage at Grand Avenue and names will be selected randomly. Registration for "Catch the Cash" competition will be from 2pm to the start of the event at 7pm.

This year's draw event includes the draws for the Salary, red, and Al-Danah millionaire. The event kicks off with kids' activities from 5pm until 7pm, prior to official start of the draw at 7pm. Kids and families will get the chance to enjoy face painting, henna, balloons, mascots and much more. The event will feature special appearances from the popular Kuwaiti actor/comedian "Weld AlDeera, Khaled Al-Agrooga," the notable radio host Khaled Al-Ansari, and the talented musician Mohammad Al-Sarraf!

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.

Stay tuned for more updates and get ready to participate and to join Gulf Bank tomorrow at the Avenues!

VIVA participates in 'CES 2017' in Las Vegas

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, announced its participation in The International Consumer Electronics Show "CES 2017", held from 5-8 January in Las Vegas, NV. For 50 years, CES has been the launch pad for new innovation and technology that has changed the world. Held in Las Vegas every year, it is the world's gathering place for all who thrive on the business of consumer technologies and where next-generation innovations are introduced to the marketplace.

On this occasion, Abdulrazzaq Bader Al-Essa, Corporate Communications Director at VIVA commented: "VIVA the only Telecom Company from Kuwait to attend this event, that marks CES's 50th anniversary, proves its continuous commitment to the customers to share with them the latest in the technology arena worldwide." He added: "All the event's activities will be covered through VIVA's social media platforms, Snapchat and Instagram (@vivatelecom)."

CES 2017 promises to live up to the Las Vegas expo's reputation as the place to see what's next in tech, whether eye-popping TVs, futuristic cars, shiny mobile devices, mind-boggling virtual reality , robots and amazing cameras.

The International Consumer Electronics Show (International CES) showcases more than 3,800 big international companies, including manufacturers, developers and suppliers of consumer technology hardware, content, technology delivery systems and more; a conference program with more than 300 conference sessions and more than 165K attendees from 150 countries.

VIVA is the fastest-growing telecom operator in Kuwait. Launched in December 2008, VIVA makes things possible for its customers by transforming communication, information and entertainment experiences. The company has rapidly established an unrivalled position in the market through its customer centric approach. VIVA's quest is to be the mobile brand of choice in Kuwait by being transparent, engaging, energetic and fulfilling. VIVA continues to take a considerable share of the market by offering an innovative range of best value products, services and content propositions; a state of the art, nationwide network and world-class service. VIVA offers internet speeds of more than 100 Mbps, due to the implementation of the most advanced fourth generation (4G LTE) network in Kuwait resulting in superior coverage, performance and reliability.

PARIS: Richard Bonneville (left), director of Holight, a small and medium size business specialized in the manufacturing of lighting '100% made in France", checks a spotlight with a worker in Ogeu-les-Bains, on December 13, 2016. Holight won a tender to equip the RATP, France's Autonomous Operator of Parisian Transport with LED energy-saving light bulbs. —AFP

Kaspersky Lab to release RannohDecryptor tool

New tool can decrypt files infected by CryptXXX ransomware

DUBAI: After releasing decryption tools for two variants of CryptXXX ransomware in April and May 2016, Kaspersky Lab is releasing a new decryptor for files that have been locked with the latest version of the malware. This malicious program was capable of infecting thousands of PCs around the world since April 2016, and it was impossible to fully decrypt the files affected by it. But not anymore. The free RannohDecryptor tool by Kaspersky Lab can decrypt most files with .crypt, .cryp1 and .crypz extensions.

CryptXXX is one of the most actively distributed and dangerous families of ransomware: for a long time criminals used the Angler and Neutrino exploit kits to infect victims with this malware. These two kits were considered among the most effective in terms of successfully infecting targets.

Since April 2016, Kaspersky Lab products have registered attacks by CryptXXX against at least 80,000 users around the world. More than half of them located in only six countries: the US, Russia, Germany, Japan, India and Canada. But these are only users that were protected by Kaspersky Lab's detection technologies. Unfortunately the total number of attacked users is much higher. The actual figure is not known, but Kaspersky Lab experts estimate that there may be several hundred thousand infected users. "Our regular advice to the victims of different ransomware families is the following: even if there is currently no decryption tool available for the version of malware that encrypted your files, please don't pay the ransom to criminals. Save the corrupt files and be patient - the probability of a decryption tool emerging in the near future is high. We consider the case of CryptXXX v.3 as proof of this advice. Multiple security specialists around the world are continuously working hard to be able to help victims of ransomware. Sooner or later the solution to the vast majority of ransomware will be found," - said Anton Ivanov, security expert at Kaspersky Lab.

The decryption tool can be downloaded from Kaspersky Lab's website and from Nomoreransom.org - the website of the not-for-profit initiative launched this year by the National High Tech Crime Unit of the Netherlands' police, Europol's European Cybercrime Centre and two cyber security companies, Kaspersky Lab and Intel Security, with the goal of helping victims of ransomware to retrieve their encrypted data without having to pay the criminals. The global fight against ransomware continues to gather pace with more than 30 new partners from both the public and private sector joining the No More Ransom project. "Our data shows that, over the last year, attacks on businesses increased threefold, which represents a change from an attack every 2 minutes to one every 40 seconds. For individuals the rate of increase went from every 20 seconds to every 10 seconds.

This was matched by a surge in new types of ransomware. Too many people still believed they had no alternative but to pay up, even though many that paid the ransom never got their files back - including one in five businesses. And this project provides an alternative - to unlock your files without paying the ransom," said Jornt van der Wiel, Security Researcher at the Global Research and Analysis Team at Kaspersky Lab.

Kaspersky Lab is one of the world's fastest-growing cybersecurity companies and the largest that is privately owned. The company is ranked among the world's top four vendors of security solutions for endpoint users (IDC, 2014). Since 1997 Kaspersky Lab has been an innovator in cybersecurity and provides effective digital security solutions and threat intelligence for large enterprises, SMBs and consumers.

Kaspersky Lab is an international company, operating in almost 200 countries and territories across the globe, providing protection for over 400 million users worldwide.

Huawei P9/P9 Plus cross 10 million shipments

KUWAIT: Ahead of the keynote address by Richard Yu, CEO of Huawei Consumer Business Group (CBG) at CES 2017, CBG yesterday announced that the company has shipped more than 10 million Huawei P9/P9 Plus smartphones globally, making it the company's first flagship series to top the 10 million mark.

Despite a sluggish global smartphone market in 2016, the Huawei P9 and P9 Plus devices have achieved impressive results in the premium segment; a major breakthrough that proves Huawei's investment in international markets is paying off. The dual-lens Huawei P9/P9 Plus devices were release in Kuwait in an event held early May. The P9/P9 Plus are Huawei's first flagship smartphones to be developed in collaboration with legendary German camera brand Leica. This extensive partnership has already set a new benchmark for advanced smartphone camera technology and delivered outstanding photography experiences to consumers.

Since launching, the Huawei P9 and P9 Plus have become an instant hit in the global smartphone market. Global shipments of the P9 exceeded 2.6 million within six weeks of their release. Eight months since its release, the Huawei P9 has sustained its popularity, winning recognition from both experts and consumers for its camera experience, industrial design and overall performance. In addition to winning major awards including European Consumer Smartphone 2016-17 from EISA and Best Personal Computing Device at CES Asia, the Huawei P9 has also received positive reviews from hundreds of key international publications, making it a top choice for consumers looking for the best camera phone.

Thanks to the huge popularity of the P9 and P9 Plus, as well as the strong sales performance of the Mate 8 and Mate 9 devices, Huawei is making significant progress in the global high-end smartphone market. In the third quarter of 2016, Huawei shipped 33.59 million smartphones, up 23 percent from the previous year, with mid-to-high-end devices accounting for about 44 percent of the shipment. Huawei's market share is now above 15 percent in 30 countries and above 20 percent in 20 countries; it also made substantial breakthroughs in key markets such as the UK, France and Germany. According to 2016 half year financial results, Huawei CBG sales were close to 77.4 billion RMB in the first half of year, up 41 percent from the same period in 2015; the growth rate in markets outside of China was 1.6 times that of the Greater China region.

Global awareness of the Huawei brand has continued to grow along with Huawei's outstanding market performance. In 2016, Huawei was ranked No. 72 in Interbrand's "Top 100" most valuable global brands list, 16 spots up from 2015. Huawei was again listed as one of the top 100 most valuable brands by Brand Z, at No.50 this year, up from No.70 in 2015. Additionally, in November, Huawei was named "Best Consumer Electronics Brand" in "Best Brands 2016 - the Chinese brand ranking" based on GfK's consumer survey.

SAN FRANCISCO: This photo provided by SoftBank Robotics America demonstrates a shopping experience with SoftBank Robotics' humanoid robot called Pepper, waving at right. The robot can greet shoppers and has the potential to send messages geared to people's age and gender through facial recognition. —AP

UI spring semester discusses how technology has changed our lives

IOWA CITY: In an age when even toasters can connect with the internet, when people get their news from Facebook and babies have Instagram accounts, our lives are increasingly digital.

Exploring what that means and how rapidly changing technology impacts the way we live is the focus of the University of Iowa's 2017 theme semester, "Our Lives Online." This will be the third theme semester the UI has hosted through the Provost's Office of Outreach and Engagement. The theme semesters bring together faculty, students and community partners to examine one topic throughout the semester in classes, lectures and activities, many of which are open to the public. This year, that includes bringing two speakers to campus who have used the internet as a catalyst for activism.

On Feb. 6, #BlackLivesMatter co-creator Patrisse Cullors will visit campus to discuss her work. On Jan. 18, writer and activist Luvvie Ajayi will present a lecture on her use of comedy, activism and technology as part of Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Week. Linda Snetselaar, associate provost for outreach and engagement, said student ambassadors, who work with the theme semester's planning committee, suggested the speakers.

"We want to do as much as we can with being sure we include diversity and a variety of speakers who will resonate with community partners but also with our students on campus," she said. "One of the things we have done is involved student ambassadors, and they have a variety of ideas in terms of who might be valuable."

The theme semester kicks off Jan. 17 with WorldCanvass, a panel discussion hosted by the UI's International Programs. Seven panelists from the campus and the wider community will talk about social media, access, the power of influence, and new and rapidly changing technologies during the event, which is being filmed for viewing later online or as a podcast.

With such a broad topic, there are endless ways to think about the semester's themes, said Joan Kjaer, director of communications and relations at the UI's International Programs. — AP

New wood technology may offer hope for struggling timber mills

RIDDLE, Ore.: John Redfield watches with pride as his son moves a laser-guided precision saw the size of a semi-truck wheel into place over a massive panel of wood. Redfield's fingers are scarred from a lifetime of cutting wood and now, after decades of decline in the logging business, he has new hope that his son, too, can make a career shaping the timber felled in southern Oregon's forests.

That's because Redfield and his son work at DR Johnson Lumber Co, one of two US timber mills making a new wood product that's the buzz of the construction industry. It's called cross-laminated timber, or CLT, and it's made like it sounds: rafts of 2-by-4 beams aligned in perpendicular layers, then glued - or laminated - together like a giant sandwich.

The resulting panels are lighter and less energy-intensive than concrete and steel and much faster to assemble on-site than regular timber, proponents say. Because the grain in each layer is at a right angle to the one below and above it, there's a counter-tension built into the panels that supporters say makes them strong enough to build even the tallest skyscrapers. "We believe that two to five years out, down the road, we could be seeing this grow from just 20 percent of our business to potentially 60 percent of our business," said Redfield, DR Johnson's chief operating officer. "We're seeing some major growth factors."

From Maine to Arkansas to the Pacific Northwest, the material is sparking interest among architects, engineers and researchers. Many say it could infuse struggling forest communities like Riddle with new economic growth while reducing the carbon footprint of urban construction with a renewable building material. Visually blemished wood that currently goes to waste can be used in the middle layers of a CLT panel without sacrificing strength or look. Supporters say it could bring sawmills back online while improving forest health through thinning dense stands and making use of low-value wood and local tree species. Trees as small as 5 inches in diameter at the top and those damaged by pests and wildfire are prime candidates.

But challenges remain before CLT becomes as common in the United States as it is in Europe and Canada, and not all builders are sold.

US building codes generally place height limits on all-wood buildings for safety reasons, though a special committee of the International Code Council is investigating potential changes to address the use of CLT in such structures. And research is still underway on critical questions of how these buildings withstand fire and earthquakes in high-seismic regions. Building codes in Oregon allow cutting-edge designs using new technology like CLT in some cases, but only after rigorous testing and an intensive approval process.

Cost-prohibitive

That can make such projects cost-prohibitive, said Peter Dusicka, an engineering professor at Portland State University who's been researching the strength of CLT panels. "The early adopters are looking at it and seeing it as a good opportunity," but before CLT can take off, there will have to be more examples to get people excited and more mills producing it, said Thomas DeLuca, professor and director of University of Washington's School of Environmental and Forest Sciences. SmartLam in Montana is the other company producing CLT panels.

This spring, cross-laminated timber will get its ultimate test in the United States when a Portland architectural firm breaks ground on a 12-story wood building in the city's trendy Pearl District. It would be the tallest all-wood building in the world constructed in a seismic zone and the tallest all-wood building in North America. An all-wood building in Norway is taller, but is not in a seismic zone. — AP

In this Dec 15, 2016 file photo, North Dakota Gov Doug Burgum (right) speaks in Bismarck, ND. When Burgum delivered his first extensive remarks on the contentious Dakota Access oil pipeline, he resorted to a Facebook account. Facebook spared Burgum from having to answer questions from reporters and allowed him to convey his thoughts unfiltered and unchallenged by the press. — AP

How Amazon Echo listens and stores

NEW YORK: Can Amazon's Echo speaker really be a witness to a murder? Authorities investigating the death of an Arkansas man found floating face-up in a hot tub believe that Amazon might have some evidence, given how Echo listens for commands and questions and communicates with Amazon's servers to respond. Details are scant. Here's what's known:

HOW ECHO WORKS

Echo is designed to be the hub of the smart home . The software that powers it, Alexa, is constantly listening for commands such as a request to turn on the lights or play music, or questions such as what the weather's like. Though it's possible to do many of these tasks using a smartphone app, issuing a voice command keeps your hands free.

IS IT SNOOPING?

No, according to Amazon. Although Alexa is always listening, Amazon says Alexa ignores what's said until you trigger it with the "wake word" Alexa (you can change the wake word to Amazon or Echo). Only then does the Echo pass on the command or question to Amazon's servers for processing. A blue light on the Echo comes on to let you know that's happening. You could argue that because Alexa is always listening, that's snooping. But it would be the same as talking to a tape recorder. What you say is private unless you give that tape recorder to someone else. If you're paranoid, the Echo has a mute button to disable the microphones entirely. Or just unplug it.

WHAT AMAZON KNOWS

Commands and questions preceded by the wake word do go to Amazon. Those voice snippets and transcripts, along with Alexa's responses, are stored on Amazon's servers. You can delete any or all such recordings through Amazon's Alexa app, though you lose some of the personalization that comes from Alexa knowing your past requests.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH THE ARKANSAS CASE?

Police believe Victor Collins was strangled and drowned in the home of a friend, James Andrew Bates, who has been charged with murder. An Echo was found in the kitchen. It's not known what Amazon has on its servers. It's unlikely that anyone asked Alexa directly on how to commit murder, but the device might have picked up background chatter or noise when fielding a routine request to play a song. It's also possible that the Echo itself has stored snippets of conversations prior to identifying a wake word. The snippet might have been stored temporarily as the device analyzes whether it's a wake word.

Any such snippet likely would have been overwritten already, though, as Alexa continues to listen for the wake word. Benton County Prosecuting Attorney Nathan Smith has said that he has no idea if the device recorded anything related to the death, but authorities want to check everything as part of their investigation.

All voice assistants - including Google's Assistant, Apple's Siri and Microsoft's Cortana - communicate with company servers to process requests. They differ in what they do from there, though. — AP

Scissors pulled from Vietnam man's stomach 18 years after surgery

HANOI: A Vietnamese man has had scissors removed from his abdomen which were left behind during surgery 18 years ago, after reporting a stomachache that was nearly two decades in the making. Ma Van Nhat, now 54, underwent surgery in 1998 after a car accident and only recently discovered that doctors had left an unwelcome gift behind when they closed him up. Doctors discovered the 15-centimetre (six-inch) scissors near his colon after a recent ultrasound. He had a three-hour operation at the weekend to remove the scissors, according to Ngo Trung Thang, deputy head of general affairs at Gang Thep Thai Nguyen hospital, 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of Hanoi.

"He is recovering well," Thang told AFP yesterday. Nhat had spent nearly two decades "eating, drinking and having a pretty normal life", according to Suc Khoe va Doi Song news site, the official mouthpiece of Vietnam's health ministry. The ultrasound that discovered the scissors only came about after Nhat reported stomach pains. Officials said they were searching for the doctors who performed surgery in Bac Kan province in 1998, but have not yet tracked down any culprits. — AFP

THAI NGUYEN, Vietnam : This picture shows a pair of scissors which was removed from a patient's abdomen after being left behind during a surgery 18 years ago, at a clinic in the northern Vietnamese city of Thai Nguyen. —AFP

VANCOUVER, British Columbia : An ambulance delivers a patient to a mobile emergency facility in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. — AFP photos

Canada faces deadly fentanyl overdose crisis

'There's not a single person down here that's chosen to be a junkie'

VANCOUVER: Sirens scream non-stop through the urban heart of Vancouver, as responders race toward drug addicts overdosing-and dying in such numbers that the city's morgues are full. This wealthy Pacific coast city is the bleak epicenter of an opioid epidemic that has claimed thousands of lives in Canada, while next door in the United States, drug overdoses are now the leading cause of accidental death. "There's not a single person down here that's chosen to be a junkie," said Martin Steward, a self-admitted drug user who manages a treatment facility in Vancouver's gritty Downtown Eastside neighborhood where the crisis is concentrated.

"Something happened in their lives: emotional, mental, physical, that brought them to where they are." On the neighborhood's Hastings Street, blocks that were once bustling with people are now emptier. "There are less and less of the people I know here," said Mary Mootrey, who has lived in the area for 25 years, pointing to a few milling around. "They've all overdosed." Authorities in British Columbia predict that 2016 will break all records for provincial deaths from opioid overdoses, including 128 in November alone.

Officials had first declared an emergency in the spring, as cheap synthetic fentanyl replaced expensive heroin and soon became mixed into most street drugs. A pill sells for as little as Can$2 (US$1.50), said the 59-year-old Mootrey. "I wish they'd all go into treatment," she said of the many addicts in her neighborhood. But treatment facilities are full, with long waits to get a spot. "There's always been a problem here," said Steward, who manages a facility run by the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users.

"But now the morgue's full, they look at it and say, we better do something." The 44-year-old has personal experience with addiction: a cocaine user by age 12, he eventually found himself living on the streets in Montreal. Steward said he now uses cocaine and heroin, taking care to buy only from a known dealer and never injecting alone, in case he overdoses.

Skid Row

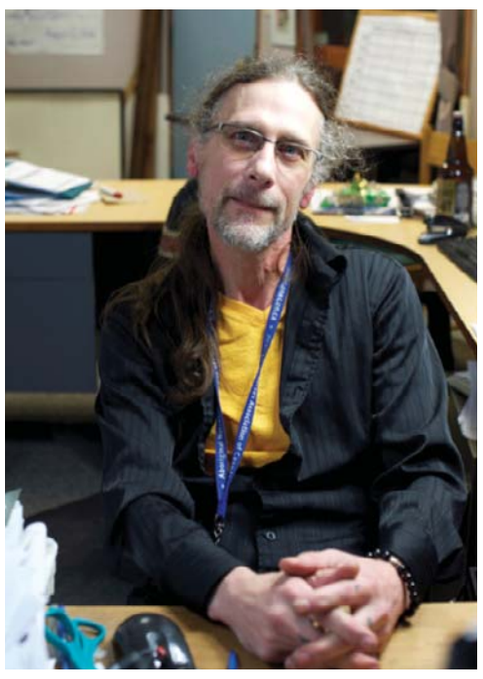
For decades, the Downtown Eastside, or DTES, was where men broken by Canada's resource booms ended up in cheap hotels, each with a pub on the ground floor. Over time, they were joined by drug addicts from across Canada, and the mentally ill left homeless when British Columbia closed mental health institutions without providing community housing as promised. "A lot of people here are under care, and targeted by drug dealers," said Neil Arao, manager of Insite, North America's only supervised injection site, located in the DTES.

He estimated at least 1,200 locals are both mentally ill and addicted to drugs, though there are no accurate numbers. Proposed solutions range from decriminalizing hard drugs to prescribing heroin to adding rehabilitation facilities. Long term, experts and advocates agree, the solution is to reduce the numbers of drug users by solving issues that begin, for most, in childhood. That's a challenge compounded by British Columbia's child poverty rate of about 20 percent, one of the highest in North America.

'Like a trap'

The acute poverty and despair in the DTES is a shocking sight in the heart of Vancouver, an otherwise bustling and wealthy metropolis where average home prices are nearly Can$1 million, according to the Canadian Real Estate Association. It is "like a trap," said Arao. "It's hard to escape it." The numbers are stark. The Insite supervised injection center serves about 700 drug users a day, Arao said. In the past, one or two overdosed each day but in recent weeks it's up to 15 per day.

The emergency room at St Paul's hospital has handled more than 6,000 overdose patients so far this year, said physician Nadia Fairbairn. "Vancouver is right in the middle of the crisis," she said. In December, officials launched a mobile overdose clinic in the Downtown Eastside, staffed by emergency and addiction physicians. Agencies have also set up rooms, and even tents in alleys, staffed by trained volunteers equipped with some 18,000 kits distributed by the government. Each contains injectable naloxone, which quickly counters the effect of most opioids.



VANCOUVER, British Columbia : Martin Steward, shift manager and a heroin user, at the office of the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users.

Most policy experts agree there is little prospect for stopping the supply of cheap synthetic opioids. Authorities say most are shipped from China, and mixed in Canada with other drugs or pressed into pills. Synthetic opioids are also available on the internet, with sites advertising discreet mail order shipments. Asked to describe the situation, Arao said to call it a "crisis" implies there will be an end. "I'm wondering if this is now our normal," he said. —AFP

VANCOUVER, British Columbia : An ambulance delivers a patient to a mobile emergency facility in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

VANCOUVER, British Columbia : Martin Steward, shift manager and a heroin user himself, illustrates how to draw heroin or fentanyl into a clean syringe at the office of the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU).

Life-extending capacity of new cancer drugs varies widely

NEW YORK: Drugs recently approved around the world to fight cancer increased patients' overall survival, but benefits vary depending on the drug, a new study shows. Researchers looked at the 62 cancer drugs approved in the US and Europe between 2003 and 2013 and found they extended survival by an average of about 3.5 months. But nearly a third of the drugs lacked evidence to suggest they increased survival when compared to alternative treatments.

"Our results point to the notion that new cancer treatments may not always provide patients with greater clinical benefits, or lower risks, over existing treatments," wrote senior researcher Dr Elias Mossialos, of the London School of Economics and Political Science, in an email to Reuters Health. The risk-benefit ratio of new drugs is especially important if people are concerned, for example, about whether the cost of a drug would make it difficult for a person to complete the treatment regimen.

Writing in JAMA Oncology, Mossialos and colleagues point to growing questions about the value of new cancer medicines. While the drugs' high costs may be a barrier to access, they note, some people argue the high prices are justified if the treatments offer large benefits. A lack of solid data on new drugs' benefits and risks makes it difficult to evaluating their value. For the 62 medicines they wanted to study, the researchers found data from England, France and Australia evaluating 53 drugs. Nearly 80 percent were tied to improvements in survival, quality of life or safety. The drugs increased survival - with or without recurrence - by about 3.5 months on average, compared to other treatments available in 2003.

Thyroid cancer

Twenty-three drugs were individually tied to an increase in survival of three months or more. Six drugs extended survival by less than three months. Eight drugs increased survival by an unknown amount. And for 16 of the approved drugs, there was no evidence to suggest they were better than alternative treatments at extending survival. The researchers point out in an email that overall survival benefits differed by the type of drug. For example, drugs for thyroid cancer were tied to no increase in overall survival, while drugs to treat breast cancer were linked to an average increase of about 8.5 months. Twenty-two of the drugs were tied to an improved quality of life, but 24 were linked to worse patient safety, which include side effects and whether a person could tolerate the treatment.

The researchers write in their email that they extending the study to look at newer drugs. They are also working to link their evidence with the cost of individual medicines. Mossialos said the study should remind people of the importance of the relationship between doctors and patients. He said, "Patients should work with their physicians to consider all available evidence that exists in support of individual treatments, and use this alongside any inputs from their clinician to identify the treatment that would best correspond with their own medical and personal circumstances." —Reuters

Baby dies after taking product to treat Vitamin D deficiency

PARIS: A 10-day-old French baby died on Dec 21 after getting a dose of a product used to treat Vitamin D deficiencies, said a French medical safety watchdog body late on Monday. The French body said it had not yet established the links between the death of the child - who suffered a cardio-respiratory attack - and the ingestion of the 'Uvesterol D' product, developed by the Crinex laboratory. "Investigations are under way to establish the precise cause of death and to see if it could be linked to Uvesterol D," said the French medical safety watchdog in a statement. — Reuters

Chinese official sentenced 10 years in vaccine scandal

BEIJING: A former official of China's Food and Drug Administration has been jailed for taking bribes from vaccine manufacturers, reports said yesterday, in a case with echoes of a major scandal that rocked the Asian country last year. Yin Hongzhang, the former deputy director of the administration's drug testing center, received a 10-year sentence and was fined 500,000 yuan for taking bribes to help vaccine manufacturers gain approval for their drugs, China's Legal Evening News newspaper said.

His wife and son earlier received prison sentences for participating in the scheme and accepting property and bribes worth 3.56 million yuan ($510,000), including ivory products worth 180,000 yuan, it said. Yin was taken into custody in April 2015 and charged with taking payouts in relation to four biotech firms' efforts to obtain government permits for a variety of vaccines, including for SARS and avian flu. The sentence follows the March revelation of a massive vaccine scandal that enraged the Chinese public.

That case involved the improper storage, transport and sale of tens of millions of dollars' worth of vaccines-many of them expired. No one was believed to have been harmed, but the story still provoked outrage in a country where families, who were long limited to one child by government policy, fiercely protect their offspring. Public fury erupted after a report revealed that information about the case had been suppressed by authorities, who had arrested two key suspects nearly a year earlier.

From 2010, the pair, a mother and daughter from Shandong province in eastern China, sold 25 different kinds of expired or improperly stored vaccines worth more than 570 million yuan ($88 million), the official Xinhua news agency reported at the time. — AFP

Woman bitten by snake at Aussie zoo

SYDNEY: A young woman was bitten by a wild green snake at an Australian zoo, paramedics said yesterday, a year after a keeper was attacked by a tiger at the same popular tourist attraction. The woman, in her mid-20s, was treated by paramedics at Australia Zoo, which was founded by the family of the late "Crocodile Hunter" star Steve Irwin, and taken to hospital where she was in a stable condition, a spokesman for Queensland Ambulance Service said.

"This afternoon a guest accidentally stood on a wild snake in our Wetlands area," Australia Zoo, on Queensland state's Sunshine Coast, said in a Facebook post. "The snake was identified as a green tree snake, which are a common occurrence in the Wetlands, as it is the perfect environment for their favorite food, frogs." The zoo added that the reptile was not venomous and it was the first time a guest had been bitten by a snake there. "Happy to report guest and snake are both just fine," Irwin's wife Terri added on Twitter.

The Green Tree Snake is found in coastal and sub-coastal regions in northern and eastern Australia. It is arboreal and grows to about two meters (6.5 feet). In January last year, an Australia Zoo keeper received wounds on his forehead and wrist as well as scratches to his body after being attacked by a male Sumatran tiger. Last month, a 77-year-old man died a week after being bitten in his Queensland home by a coastal taipan, the world's third-most venomous snake. Despite Australia being home to 20 of the world's 25 most venomous snakes, deaths from bites are rare. —AFP

SpaceX ready to launch again

WASHINGTON: SpaceX says it has determined the cause of a launchpad explosion that destroyed a satellite in September and is ready to start launches again as early as Sunday. An unmanned SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket exploded September 1 in Cape Canaveral, destroying a satellite that Facebook planned to use to beam high-speed internet to Africa. That marked a setback for the California-based private space firm and its founder Elon Musk, who wants to revolutionize the launch industry by making rocket components reusable.

In a statement Monday, SpaceX said it had traced the problem to a pressure vessel in the second-stage liquid oxygen tank. It said it will change the way it fuels for now, and in the future will redesign its pressure vessels. SpaceX said it hopes to launch 10 Iridium NEXT communications satellites from a base in California on Sunday.

The Federal Aviation Administration has to approve the conclusions of the SpaceX investigation of the September failure. That accident-the second of its kind since SpaceX was founded in 2002 — came just over a year after a Falcon 9 rocket failed after liftoff on June 28, 2015, destroying a Dragon cargo capsule bound for the International Space Station. Before that, SpaceX had logged 18 successful launches of the Falcon 9 — including six of 12 planned supply missions to the ISS carried out as part of a $1.6 billion contract with NASA.

It carried out another eight successful launches since June 2015, including in August of last year when a Falcon 9 successfully placed a Japanese communications satellite in orbit, and then landed intact on a floating drone ship. Before then the firm lost several rockets as it attempted to land them upright on an ocean platform at the end of a flight-a crucial part of its strategy for reusable spacecraft. — AFP

Diet res-illusions: Tips from the pros on how to lose weight

We make 'em, we break 'em. New Year's diet resolutions fall like needles on Christmas trees as January goes on. Genes can work against us. Metabolism, too. But a food behavior researcher has tested a bunch of little ways to tip the scale toward success.

His advice: Put it on autopilot. Make small changes in the kitchen, at the grocery store and in restaurants to help you make good choices without thinking.

"As much as we all want to believe that we're master and commander of all our food decisions, that's just not true for most of us," said the researcher, Brian Wansink. "We're influenced by the things around us - the size of the plate, the things people are doing ... the lighting." He heads the Cornell University Food and Brand Lab, has written books on taking control of food choices, and has had government and industry funding.

Some tips are gimmicks, and some may not work as well for you as they did in tests. But they "make a lot of sense" and many are backed by other studies, said one independent expert, Dr William Yancy, a weight specialist at Duke University's diet and fitness center. To start: Make goals that are SMART - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound, Yancy said. Instead of resolving to eat better, plan how to do it, such as having chips once or twice a week instead of every day. Rather than vague vows to get in shape, resolve to walk half an hour every day after dinner.

Other tips from Wansink and research to support them:

In the kitchen

Redo the pantry to put healthy stuff in front. You're three time more likely to eat the first food you see than the fifth one. Tidy your kitchen before eating. Women asked to wait in a messy kitchen ate twice as many cookies as women in the same kitchen did when it was organized and quiet. Redo the fridge. Even though it shortens shelf life, move fruits and vegetables out of crisper drawers and put them at eye level. Keep good foods in clear bags or containers and less healthy things like leftover pizza in aluminum foil. In one study, people who put fruits and vegetables on the top shelf ate nearly three times more of them than they did the week before.

Keep no food out except a fruit bowl. Researchers photographed 210 kitchens to see whether countertop food reflects the weight of women in each home. Those who left breakfast cereal out weighed 20 pounds more than neighbors who didn't; those with soft drinks out weighed 24 to 26 pounds more. Those with a fruit bowl weighed 13 pounds less.

At the table

Beware the glassware. Use narrower glasses, pour drink when the glass is on the table rather than in your hand, and use a glass that doesn't match the color of your drink. A study found that people poured 12 percent more drink when using a wide glass, 12 percent more when holding the glass, and 9 percent more when pouring white drink color into a clear glass versus a colored or opaque one. Pour any glass only half full - this cuts the average pour by 18 percent.

Use smaller plates and pay attention to color. Big plates make portions look small. In one study, people given larger bowls took 16 percent more cereal than those given smaller bowls, yet thought they ate less. People also take more food if it matches the color of their plate. But they eat less when the tablecloth or placemat matches the plate; It makes the food stand out more.

Keep the TV off and eat at a table. A study of dinner habits of 190 parents and 148 children found that the higher the parents' body mass index (a ratio of height and weight), the more likely they were to eat with the TV on. Eating at a table was linked to lower BMI.

Try small portions of "bad" foods. Eat a bite or two, then distract yourself for 15 minutes to see if you feel satisfied. A study gave people different portions of chocolate, apple pie and potato chips and had them rate hunger and craving before and 15 minutes after eating. Bigger portion folks ate 103 calories more, but didn't feel more satisfied than those given less.

At the grocery store

Divide your shopping cart in half. Use a partition, purse or coat for a visual cue to fill at least half of your cart with fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods. In two studies, half of shoppers were given divided carts and told to put healthier items in front. They spent more on produce than those given regular shopping carts.

Be careful when buying in bulk . A study found that people who bought big containers of chips, juice boxes, cookies, crackers and granola bars ate half of it within the first week - twice as fast as they normally would. Tip: Repackage into single-serve bags or containers, or store it out of reach, such as the basement. Eat an apple first. People given a sample of an apple at the store increased spending on fruits and vegetables versus those given no sample or a cookie. A healthy snack may prime people to buy better foods, not the fast, processed foods they gravitate to when shopping hungry.

Circle every island in the produce section. In a study of 1,200 shoppers, every minute spent in the produce section meant $1.80 more in fruit and vegetable sales.

At a restaurant

Let the light shine. Researchers checked sales receipts of patrons at four casual chain restaurants. Those in brighter rooms were more likely to order healthier fish, vegetables or white meat rather than fried food or dessert. Diners in dim rooms ordered 39 percent more calories. Sit near a window. Researchers analyzed 330 diners' receipts after they left. The closer they were to a window, the fewer foods and alcoholic drinks they ordered. —AP

SAN AGUSTIN DE GUADALIX, Spain : This file photo shows Hunter, Emilio de la Cruz training with his bow in the outskirts of San Agustin de Guadalix near Madrid. — AFP

Archers to the rescue in Madrid as boars trespass

SAN AGUSTIN DEL GUADALIX, Spain: It's a scene straight out of mediaeval times set in modern-day Madrid: An archer dressed in camouflage gear, stationed in a tree at night, waiting for the kill. For five years, the authorities in the region have resorted to this unusual technique to cull wild boars encroaching on towns, relying on 55 volunteer bow hunters to eliminate pigs that take too much of a liking to urban life. "The bow is a silent weapon and people who use it act in a silent way too, so we don't disturb the environment or people," explains Emilio de la Cruz, a 45-year-old business owner and keen hunter who volunteers for this form of population control.

The method is just one used to try and curb the proliferation of wild boar going further and further into populated areas, causing agricultural damage and road accidents. From an estimated 25,000 to 35,000 five years ago, the number of boars in Madrid has risen to around 30,000 to 40,000, environmental authorities say.

Contested method

But the method is not without its controversy, with environmentalists arguing that the animal can suffer an agonizing death if the archer takes a bad shot. In some countries such as Britain, bow hunting is banned altogether. De la Cruz maintains that he and his hunting companions are all experienced, trained to shoot the arrow through the boar's vital organs in a quick, clean kill. Standing at a training ground in the rolling hills outside Madrid, a boar-shaped target in the background, he says the archers go out 100 to 150 times a year at the request of city or town halls in the region.

In five years, they have killed 201 boars and close to 60 wild goats that have proliferated in La Pedriza, a mountain range near the Spanish capital popular with hikers and climbers. When asked to intervene, the hunters first study the zone to analyze the boars' movements, set up shop in trees or other elevated places at night, wait sometimes for hours-and take aim. They hunt in parks, golf courses or any area close to a town or city where boars have been spotted roaming free, giving the odd late-night jogger a shock.

Lack of predators

The problem of wild boars running riot in populated zones affects countries the world over, in large part due to rampant urbanization that has gobbled up their habitat. As an example, a wild boar in Hong Kong led police on a chase last month after it wandered onto the apron of the international airport. "They've grown used to the presence of people, to eating in rubbish bins and some people even give them food," says Felipe Ruza, deputy head of environmental conservation for the Madrid region.

"This causes problems because they invade gardens, cause traffic accidents and they can even attack people if there is a sow with her piglets." According to the Guardia Civil police force, 146 traffic accidents were caused by boars in the Madrid region in 2016, none of them fatal.

Theo Oberhuber, head of nature conservation at environmental group Ecologists in Action, adds that a lack of predators such as wolves is also to blame. "In Madrid, the wolf is now protected but it was once wiped out in the Madrid region due to the use of poison, traps," he says. "Now wolves are coming back, but there aren't that many."

The best way?

While not commonplace, resorting to archers as a population control method is not exclusive to Spain. Eric de Lavenne, head of the French Bow Hunters' Federation, says archers have been used in several parts of France. "The La Fleche Airport in the Sarthe (region) regularly calls on bow hunters to control the number of boars near the airport," he says as an example. Another method used in Madrid is capturing boars alive in traps in areas where bow hunting cannot take place.

There are no statistics indicating whether either technique is successful, but de la Cruz says he has noted a difference. "Where at first we had to kill animals, now with our mere presence or the presence of other people, animals don't come anymore. That is our success," he says. Oberhuber, though, is skeptical. He points to yet another technique that is being trialled in the northeastern region of Catalonia and involves putting contraceptives in boars' food to reduce their capacity to reproduce. "This could be an unaggressive method that doesn't cause death and progressively reduces the number of boars," he says. —AFP

Winter Word Search

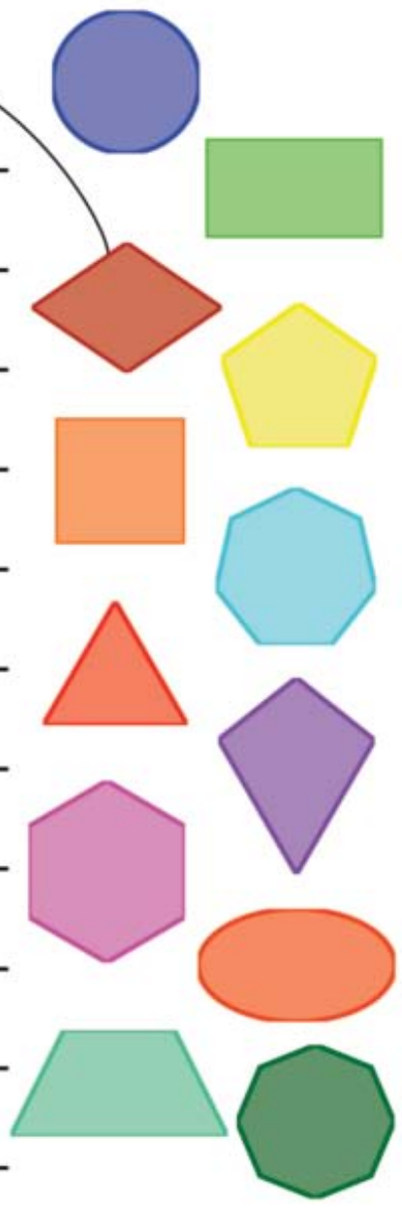
k	e	t	r	h	j	o	g	y	z	r	l	c	j	j	b	k
l	t	l	b	d	f	v	p	j	b	w	l	t	t	s	o	y
p	t	a	g	c	r	e	a	n	a	i	k	k	n	t	o	l
r	a	a	m	m	o	m	u	o	a	i	f	o	n	s	t	e
d	k	q	x	r	s	a	n	b	t	m	w	s	k	c	s	j
n	e	h	r	u	t	y	t	i	v	f	w	h	o	a	c	o
t	s	l	e	d	g	e	t	i	l	p	e	o	b	r	n	b
w	p	q	a	m	x	e	p	a	m	s	z	h	n	f	u	z
h	i	g	n	f	f	q	k	i	h	u	m	w	a	s	t	d
e	c	n	v	h	x	e	e	c	a	s	g	j	s	n	o	w
m	c	g	t	y	u	f	v	i	w	h	e	z	v	a	n	e
w	r	o	r	e	l	x	b	c	l	e	z	v	i	f	y	p
a	q	n	f	u	r	e	h	l	s	h	l	w	o	y	p	r
c	t	q	s	e	j	r	o	e	x	x	f	u	u	l	b	p
h	d	g	b	p	n	d	l	o	c	h	i	l	l	y	g	b
a	m	i	t	t	e	n	s	c	z	y	s	w	v	n	g	k
t	g	q	l	d	n	h	w	l	r	b	y	y	g	l	f	z

boots chilly coat cold
frost gloves hat icicle
mittens scarf sledge snow
snowflake snowman winter

2D Shape Word Scramble

Unscramble the 2D shape words and join them to the pictures on the right. We've done the first one for you!

shubmor *rhombus*
iccler _____
peghanot _____
cantleger _____
iket _____
quares _____
zapimute _____
pantgone _____
lova _____
catgoon _____
irlegtan _____
exnoagh _____



Sport Alphabet Challenge

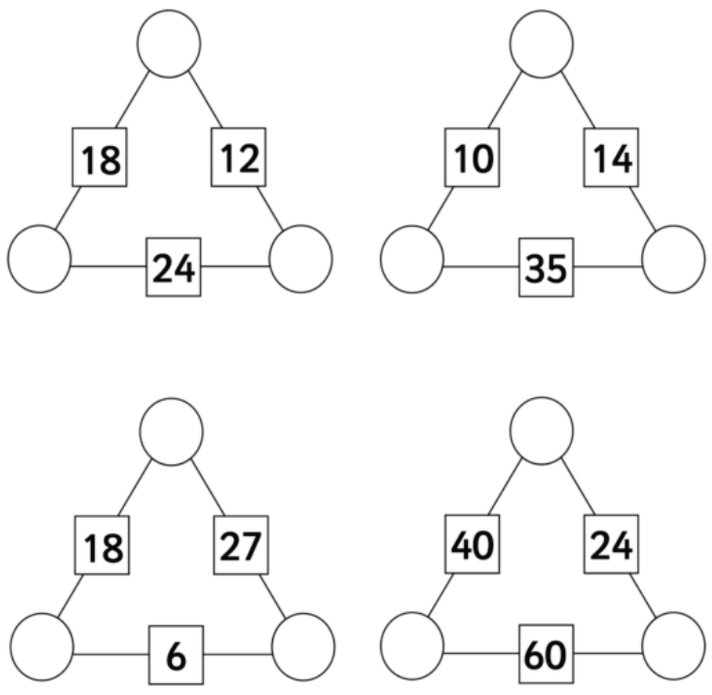
Can you come up with a sports themed word for each letter of the alphabet?

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

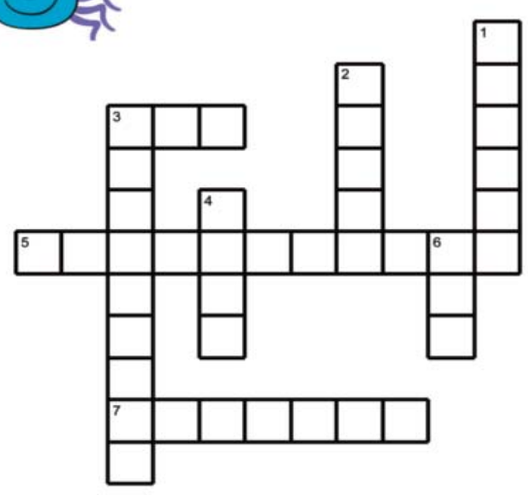
Multiplication Arithmagons

The number in each square is equal to the product of the numbers in the circles on either side.

Fill in the missing numbers.



Minibeast Crossword

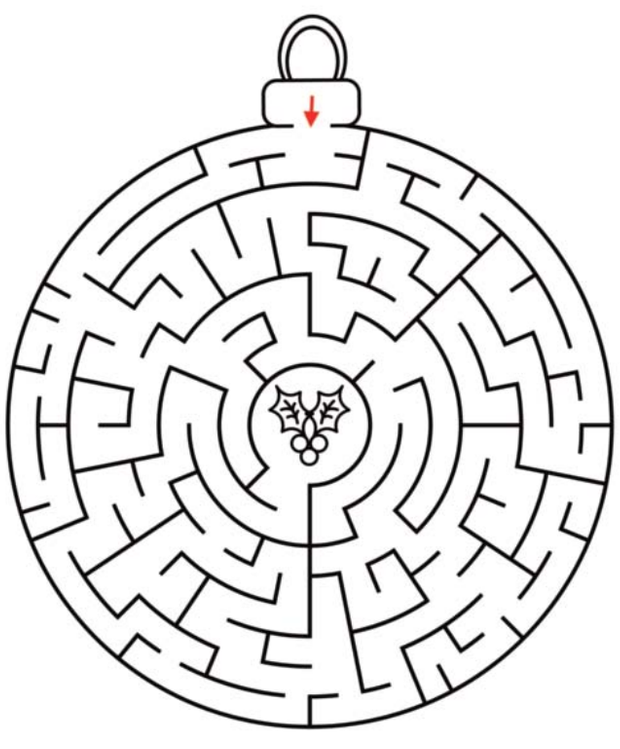


Across
3. I make honey.
5. I'm a baby butterfly.
7. I'm red and spotty.

Down
1. I spin webs.
2. I carry my home on my back.
3. I come out of a chrysalis.
4. A tadpole turns into me.
6. I live in a hill.

Christmas Decoration Maze

Can you find a way to the holly in the middle of this Christmas decoration? Start at the red arrow.



Sudoku 6x6 Puzzles - Sheet 5

Every row, column and mini-grid must contain the numbers 1 through 6. Don't guess - use logic!

	3	4	2	5	
	5			3	
	6			4	
	2	3	4	1	

	3			4	
		6	1		
2					6
4					3
		5	2		
	2			5	

4					6
	3			2	
		1	6		
		6	5		
	2			6	
5					3

McDonald's celebrates McChicken with #WhoIsMissing

McDonald's Kuwait is celebrating its beloved McChicken with a fun, exciting and creative new campaign. McDonald's will also be introducing two new McChicken flavors, Peri-Peri McChicken & Dijon Mustard McChicken for a limited time starting December 29th and until stocks last.

Sherif Coutry, Marketing Director at McDonald's Kuwait said: "These new bold flavors represent McDonald's ongoing commitment to catering to the unique preferences of our loyal customers, offering them creative new menu options and innovative variations of our beloved classics. We also wanted to celebrate our original McChicken, which is one the most in demand items on our menu, with an exciting and engaging new campaign."

During this celebration, customers will be invited to share a photo of their favorite moments with friends and family, tagging them and showing #WhoIsMissing. With a new theme every week, 3 participants will get the chance to have their special moments recreated, with a McDonald's meal to make it more perfect.

Coutry further added: "We are always missing a friend, neighbor, colleague or a family member we want to share our special moments with. So we are asking our customers to share their favorite moments with us and tell us who is missing, in a creative and funny way, so that we can help them relive those moments with a unique McDonald's flavor."

It serves to note that McDonald's is committed to serving the very best ingredients in the quick-service restaurant sector, and will never compromise on food quality. All products served at McDonald's restaurants in the Middle East are Halal certified, inspected and approved by local authorities and Halal officers at the countries of export and customs officials at the port of entry. All meat used in McDonald's restaurants can be traced back to a trusted supplier that shares the company's dedication to the highest quality standards.

Joyalukkas Exchange
YOUR FAVOURITE MONEY EXCHANGE

Joyalukkas exchange opens 5 more branches globally

Joyalukkas Exchange, part of the Joyalukkas Group, is a fast-growing remittance and foreign exchange company making its mark in quality service, best rates and reliability across the UAE, Kuwait, Oman and India. As part of its aggressive expansion plans, the Exchange House has recently opened 5 new branches, 2 in Kuwait and 3 in Oman.

"We have defined our strategic directives with timelines to expand vertically and horizontally by adding new branches at the most strategic locations in GCC markets and by introducing innovative products which bring great convenience to customers at very affordable rates," says Antony Jos, Director, Joyalukkas Exchange. "Technological innovation, global strategic partnerships with industry leading players and 360-degree compliance programs will be the critical drivers in achieving our strategic goals. As a global brand having leadership presence in jewelry, shopping malls, property development, fashion & silks and charter flight services, we have aggressive plans to reach out to new markets to explore the potential of remittance, foreign exchange and payment solutions."

In keeping with its positioning as the 'people's favorite money exchange', Joyalukkas Exchange offers a variety of innovative and convenient financial products, combined with superior service to help keep customers connected to their loved ones wherever they are. Services such as Money Drop, which gives customers the opportunity to drop off and pick up cash from any Joyalukkas Exchange branch at their convenience, have helped make money transfers across the GCC easy and worry-free for thousands of expatriates in the region.

Customer convenience is a top priority at Joyalukkas Exchange, and innovations such as Remit Pass, where individuals can make payments and send remittance around the world without physically visiting a branch, have proven very popular. Customers also benefit from a wide range of affordable money transfer, forex and payment solutions, and enjoy amazing rewards and gifts with every transaction through the Joyalukkas Exchange Rewards program. Joyalukkas Exchange is expanding its network exponentially in 2017, with plans already underway to open at least 20 branches and enter new markets such as Qatar and Bahrain.

Food

The secret to a better baked pasta? Don't cook your pasta

By Sara Moulton

If there's anything more comforting than boiled pasta in a sauce, it's got to be baked pasta in a sauce. The baking adds a crispy crust that is such a delicious contrast to the tender goodness of the dish.

The challenge is to how to get the pasta to turn out just right. Most baked pasta recipes instruct you to boil the noodles until cooked halfway before baking them. This allows the pasta to finish cooking in the oven as it bathes in the sauce. But this method has challenges. If you boil the noodles more than halfway, they'll be overcooked by the time you pull the finished dish out of the oven. I find it hard to get the pre-cooking time right.

And precooking the pasta, even halfway, takes work and dirties a large pot and colander. Then again, if you don't precook the pasta and instead add it dry to the sauce for baking, it will take much longer to become tender in the oven, even as it absorbs all the liquid in the sauce. Dry pasta needs to hydrate.

So what's a home cook to do? Use my simple no-cook method of precooking the pasta. Just soak the pasta in warm salted water before adding it to the other ingredients and sliding the mixture into the oven. Presoaking is a way to begin hydrating the pasta and washing away some of its starch, even as the salt in the water pre-seasons the pasta.

Yes, you'll dirty a bowl, but given that that's the same vessel in which you'll combine all the dish's ingredients, it's the only bowl you'll need. The soak requires 45 minutes, but it's hands-off time, freeing you up to prep the rest of the ingredients in the meantime. Then it takes no time at all to assemble the dish and pop it into the oven. Just 20 or so minutes later you can collect your reward: deeply-flavored baked pasta, creamy on the bottom and crispy on top. The perfect wintry entree. Add a salad and some crusty bread and be happy.

BAKED PENNE WITH PROSCIUTTO AND FONTINA

Ingredients

Start to finish: 1 hour 15 minutes (20 minutes active)
Servings: 6
1 pound penne pasta
Salt
Butter, for coating the baking pan
2 teaspoons minced garlic
1 cup heavy cream
2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
1 cup crushed tomatoes
1 to 2 teaspoons red pepper flakes, to taste (optional)
1 1/2 ounces finely grated Parmesan cheese
4 ounces coarsely grated fontina cheese
4 ounces thinly sliced prosciutto, chopped

Preparation

In a large bowl, combine the pasta with enough lukewarm, well salted water to cover. Let stand for 45 minutes. Heat the oven to 450 F. Lightly butter a shallow baking dish (12-cup capacity with 2 to 2 1/2-inch sides). Drain the pasta and set aside. In the same bowl, combine all remaining ingredients, stirring well. Add the pasta, toss to combine, then season with a pinch of salt. Transfer the mixture to the prepared baking dish, pressing it down evenly. Bake on the oven's middle shelf until bubbly and browned, 20 to 22 minutes.

Nutrition information per serving

590 calories; 240 calories from fat (41 percent of total calories); 27 g fat (15 g saturated; 0.5 g trans fats); 100 mg cholesterol; 1060 mg sodium; 63 g carbohydrate; 3 g fiber; 5 g sugar; 24 g protein.

STEAMED CHEESE AND MUSHROOM BEEF SLIDERS

Ingredients

Start to finish: 50 minutes
Makes 12 sliders
3 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
1/2 cup finely chopped yellow onion
3 ounces mushrooms (white, cremini or shiitake), finely chopped
Salt
2 tablespoons finely chopped pitted green olives
2 tablespoons finely chopped, drained, canned green chilies
3 ounces sliced sharp cheddar cheese, broken into 12 equal pieces
1 1/2 pounds ground beef, shaped into 12 sliders, each about 3/4 inch thick
Ground black pepper
1/3 cup water
12 slider buns

Preparation

In a large (at least 12-inch) skillet over medium, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil. Add the onion and cook until golden, about 8 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the onion to a bowl. Add another tablespoon of the oil to the pan, the mushrooms and a hefty pinch of salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the liquid the mushrooms give off has evaporated, about 5 minutes. Transfer the mushrooms to the bowl with the onion. Reserve the skillet. Add the olives and chilies to the mushroom mixture and stir well. Set aside.

Return the skillet to high heat. Add the remaining tablespoon of oil and wait until it is almost smoking. Meanwhile, season the sliders on one side with salt and pepper. When the oil is hot, add the sliders, seasoned side down (it will be a little crowded in the pan), and cook them until they are just browned on the first side, about 2 minutes. Sprinkle the top side of each with salt and pepper, turn the sliders over and cook for another 2 minutes.

While the sliders are browning, top each slider with a heaping teaspoon of the mushroom mixture, dividing all of the mixture among the sliders, then place a piece of cheese on top of each. Quickly pour water into the pan, all around the sliders, cover the pan and steam for 2 minutes. Turn off the heat and let the sliders sit in the pan for another minute to let the cheese melt completely. Spoon some of the liquid in the skillet onto the tops and bottoms of the buns, transfer the sliders to the buns and serve right away. — AP

OSN MOVIES ACTION

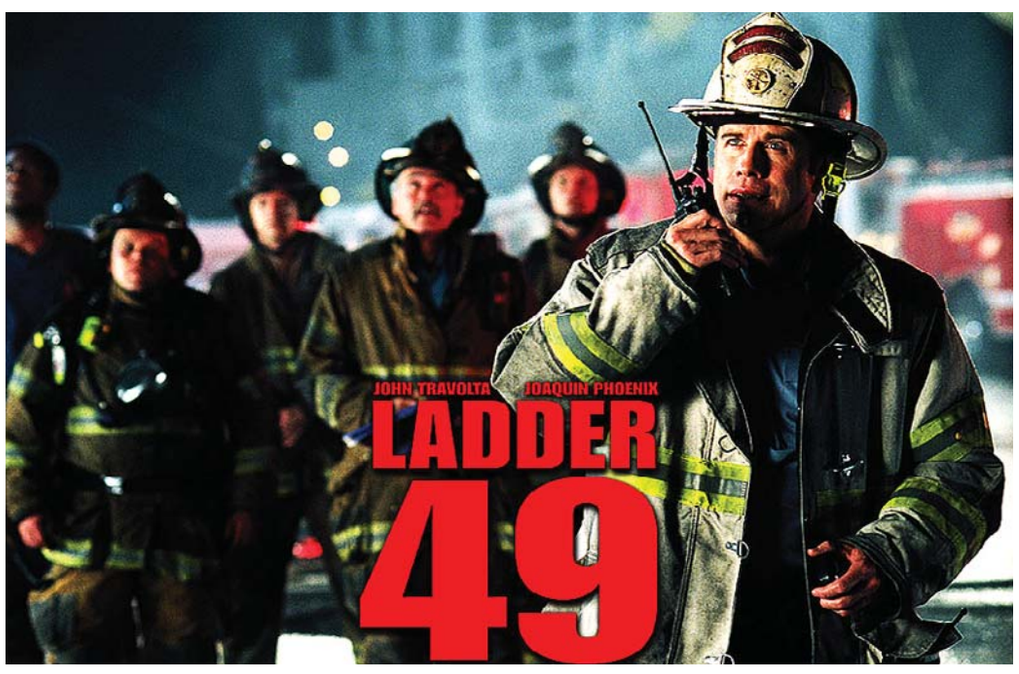
01:00 I Am Soldier
03:00 The Borderlands
04:45 Hidalgo
07:00 Avengers: Age Of Ultron
09:45 Justice League vs. Bizarro League
11:00 Ladder 49
13:00 The Last Survivors
15:00 Avengers: Age Of Ultron
17:30 Last Action Hero
19:45 Cradle 2 The Grave
21:45 Sherlock Holmes

ANIMAL PLANET HD

00:00 Lone Star Law
00:55 Gator Boys
01:50 Big Fish Man
02:45 Bondi Vet
03:10 Bondi Vet
03:40 Lone Star Law
04:35 Tanked
05:25 Tigers Attack
06:15 Gator Boys
07:02 Big Fish Man
07:49 Lone Star Law
08:36 Night
09:00 Night
09:25 Groomer Has It
10:15 Lone Star Law
11:10 Mutant Planet
12:05 Tanked
13:00 Groomer Has It
13:55 Bondi Vet
14:20 Bondi Vet
14:50 Lone Star Law
15:45 Gator Boys
16:40 Mutant Planet
17:35 Tanked
18:30 Big Fish Man
19:25 Hunt For The Russian Tiger
20:20 The Pool Master
21:15 Tanked
22:10 Hunt For The Russian Tiger
23:05 Mutant Planet

BBC FIRST

00:20 Silent Witness
01:15 Doctors
01:45 Doctors
02:15 Sherlock
03:45 Doctors
04:15 Silent Witness
05:10 Eastenders



LADDER 49 ON OSN MOVIES ACTION

06:10 Father Brown
07:00 Doctors
07:30 Doctors
08:00 Doctors
08:35 Holby City
09:35 Call The Midwife
10:30 Eastenders
11:30 Doctors
12:00 Doctors
12:30 Death In Paradise
13:25 Call The Midwife
14:15 Eastenders
15:15 Doctors
15:45 Doctors
16:15 Death In Paradise
17:10 Call The Midwife
18:05 Doctor Who
19:00 Doctors
19:30 Eastenders
20:05 Death In Paradise
21:00 Poldark
22:00 Poldark
22:55 Orphan Black
23:40 Silent Witness

COMEDY CENTRAL

00:05 Tosh.0
00:30 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
01:00 Key And Peele
01:25 South Park
01:50 South Park
02:15 Tosh.0
02:40 Inside Amy Schumer
03:05 South Park
03:30 South Park
04:00 Workaholics
04:25 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
05:15 Key And Peele
05:40 Impractical Jokers
06:05 Ridiculousness
06:30 Life Or Debt
07:20 Urban Tarzan
07:50 Urban Tarzan
08:15 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
09:05 Impractical Jokers
09:30 Ridiculousness
09:55 Tosh.0
10:20 Key And Peele
10:45 Workaholics
11:10 The It Crowd
11:35 Ridiculousness
12:00 Life Or Debt
12:50 Brotherhood
13:15 Workaholics
13:40 The It Crowd
14:05 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
14:55 Ridiculousness
15:20 Life Or Debt
16:10 Brotherhood
16:35 Ridiculousness
17:00 Impractical Jokers
17:30 Workaholics
17:55 Tosh.0
18:25 Workaholics
18:50 Lip Sync Battle: All Stars Live
19:39 The It Crowd
20:03 Life Or Debt
20:50 Brotherhood
21:13 Impractical Jokers
21:37 Ridiculousness
22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
22:30 The Meltdown With Jonah And Kumail
22:54 Key And Peele
23:18 Another Period
23:42 Another Period

Discovery Family

Discovery Family HD
00:15 Destroyed In Seconds
00:40 Beyond Survival With Les Stroud
01:30 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
02:20 Lost & Found With Mike & Jesse
03:10 Guinness World Records Smashed UK
04:00 Destroyed In Seconds
04:25 Destroyed In Seconds
04:50 Beyond Survival With Les Stroud
05:40 How It's Made
06:05 How It's Made
06:30 Storm Chasers
07:20 Mythbusters
08:00 Do You Know?
08:15 Kenny The Shark
08:35 Adventure 8: Zoo Games
09:00 K9 Cops
09:45 How It's Made
10:05 How It's Made
10:30 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
11:20 Mythbusters
12:10 Storm Chasers
13:00 K9 Cops
13:50 Beyond Survival With Les Stroud
14:40 How It's Made
15:05 How It's Made
15:30 Storm Chasers
16:15 Mythbusters
17:00 Kenny The Shark
17:20 Adventure 8: Zoo Games
17:45 Do You Know?
18:00 Dogs: The Untold Story
18:50 Finding Bigfoot
19:40 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
20:30 How It's Made
20:55 How It's Made
21:20 Mythbusters
22:10 Dogs: The Untold Story
23:00 Finding Bigfoot
23:50 Destroyed In Seconds

Disney Channel HD

00:00 Binny And The Ghost
00:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:10 Hank Zipzer
01:35 Binny And The Ghost
02:00 Violetta
02:45 The Hive
02:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:40 Hank Zipzer
04:05 Binny And The Ghost
04:30 Violetta
05:15 The Hive
05:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
05:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:10 Hank Zipzer
06:35 Binny And The Ghost
07:00 Violetta
07:45 The Hive
07:50 Mouk
08:00 Dog With A Blog
08:25 Dog With A Blog
08:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
08:55 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
09:20 Elena Of Avalor
09:45 Star Darlings
09:50 Liv And Maddie
10:15 Jessie
10:40 Jessie
11:05 Jessie
11:30 The Suite Life Movie
13:00 The 7D
13:10 Austin & Ally
13:35 Austin & Ally
14:00 Liv And Maddie
14:25 Liv And Maddie
14:50 Shake It Up
15:15 Shake It Up
15:40 Dog With A Blog
16:05 Dog With A Blog
16:30 Good Luck Charlie
16:55 Good Luck Charlie
17:20 Girl Meets World
17:45 Girl Meets World
18:10 Elena Of Avalor
18:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
19:00 The Next Step
19:25 Descendants Wicked World
19:30 Liv And Maddie
19:55 Star Darlings
20:00 Bunk'd
20:25 Disney Mickey Mouse
20:30 Austin & Ally
20:55 Descendants Wicked World
21:00 Backstage
21:25 Tsum Tsum Shorts
21:30 Elena Of Avalor
21:55 Best Friends Whenever
22:20 Jessie
22:45 Jessie
23:10 Jessie
23:35 H2O: Just Add Water

Disney Junior

00:00 Doc McStuffins
00:30 Doc McStuffins
00:55 PJ Masks
01:20 Henry Hugglemonster
01:35 The Hive
01:45 Loopdidoo
02:00 Henry Hugglemonster
02:15 Calimero
02:30 Art Attack
02:50 Zou
03:05 Loopdidoo
03:20 Henry Hugglemonster
03:35 Calimero
03:50 Zou
04:05 Art Attack
04:30 The Hive
04:40 Loopdidoo
04:55 Henry Hugglemonster
05:10 Art Attack
05:35 Loopdidoo
05:50 Calimero
06:05 Art Attack
06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
06:45 Zou
07:00 Art Attack
07:30 Henry Hugglemonster
07:45 Loopdidoo
08:00 Zou
08:15 Calimero
08:30 Loopdidoo
08:45 Henry Hugglemonster
09:00 Minnie's Bow-Toons
09:05 PJ Masks
09:15 Goldie & Bear
09:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
09:45 Miles From Tomorrow
09:55 Sofia The First
10:20 Doc McStuffins
10:35 Goldie & Bear
10:50 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
11:00 PJ Masks
11:15 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
11:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
11:35 Sofia The First
12:00 Sofia The First
12:30 Doc McStuffins
12:55 Doc McStuffins
13:20 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
13:50 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
14:15 Gummi Bears
14:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
15:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
15:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
16:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
16:30 Little Mermaid
16:55 Unbungalievable
17:00 Miles From Tomorrow
17:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
17:55 The Lion Guard
18:20 Goldie & Bear
18:50 PJ Masks
19:15 Sofia The First
19:40 Doc McStuffins
20:05 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
20:30 Little Mermaid
21:00 Doc McStuffins
21:30 Doc McStuffins
22:00 Unbungalievable
22:05 Goldie & Bear
22:35 Miles From Tomorrow
23:00 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
23:25 Gummi Bears
23:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons

Discovery Channel HD

00:30 Fat N' Furious: Rolling Thunder
01:20 Wheeler Dealers
02:10 Still Alive
03:00 Kings Of The Wild
03:50 Venom Hunters
04:40 Fat N' Furious: Rolling Thunder
05:30 The Liquidator
06:00 How Do They Do It?
06:30 How Do They Do It?
07:00 Deadliest Catch
07:50 Wheeler Dealers
08:40 Fat N' Furious: Rolling Thunder
09:30 The Weapon Hunter
10:20 The Liquidator
10:45 How Do They Do It?
11:10 How Do They Do It?
11:35 Survive That!
12:25 Kings Of The Wild
13:15 Venom Hunters
14:05 How Do They Do It?
14:30 Storage Hunters UK
14:55 The Liquidator
15:20 Alaska: The Last Frontier
16:10 The Weapon Hunter
17:00 Deadliest Catch
17:50 Fat N' Furious: Rolling Thunder
18:40 Wheeler Dealers
19:30 How Do They Do It?
19:55 How Do They Do It?
20:20 The Weapon Hunter
21:10 Storage Hunters UK
21:35 The Liquidator
22:00 Blue Collar Backers
22:50 Mega Shippers
23:40 Impossible Engineering

Disney XD

00:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA
07:00 Supa Strikas
07:25 Supa Strikas
07:50 Counterfeit Cat
08:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
08:15 K.C. Undercover
08:40 Atomic Puppet
09:10 Lab Rats
09:35 Danger Mouse
10:00 K.C Undercover: Tightrope Of Doom
10:50 Kirby Buckets
11:20 Kirby Buckets
11:45 Gravity Falls
12:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
12:35 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
13:00 Counterfeit Cat
13:30 K.C. Undercover
13:55 K.C. Undercover
14:20 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
14:45 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
15:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
15:15 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
15:40 Counterfeit Cat
15:50 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
16:05 K.C. Undercover
16:30 Atomic Puppet
16:55 Lab Rats
17:25 Danger Mouse
17:50 Future-Worm!
18:15 Lab Rats: Bionic Action Hero
19:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
19:10 Supa Strikas
19:35 Supa Strikas
20:00 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
20:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
20:55 K.C. Undercover
21:20 Counterfeit Cat
21:45 Mighty Med
22:10 Pickle And Peanut
22:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
22:45 Guardians Of The Galaxy
23:10 Ultimate Spider-Man
23:35 Boyster

E! HD

00:00 E! News
00:15 Mariah's World
01:05 Mariah's World
01:55 Mariah's World
02:50 EJ NYC
03:50 EJ NYC
04:45 EJ NYC
05:40 WAGs
06:30 Celebrity Style Story
07:00 Kourtney & Khloe Take Miami
07:25 Kourtney & Khloe Take Miami
07:55 E! News
08:10 Kourtney & Khloe Take Miami
08:40 Kourtney & Khloe Take Miami
09:10 The E! True Hollywood Story
10:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
11:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
11:35 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
12:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
13:00 E! News
13:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
13:40 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
14:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
14:35 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:30 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
16:00 E! News
16:15 Rob & Chyna
17:15 Mariah's World
18:10 Mariah's World
19:05 Mariah's World
20:00 E! News
21:00 Botched
22:00 Botched
22:30 Botched
23:00 Hollywood & Football

food network

00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
00:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:00 Man Fire Food
01:30 Man Fire Food
02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
02:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
03:00 Man Fire Food
03:30 Man Fire Food
04:00 Chopped
05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
06:00 Barefoot Contessa
06:30 Barefoot Contessa
07:00 The Kitchen
08:00 The Pioneer Woman
08:30 The Pioneer Woman
09:00 Siba's Table
09:30 Siba's Table
10:00 Anna Olson: Bake
10:30 Anna Olson: Bake
11:00 The Kitchen
12:00 The Pioneer Woman
12:30 The Pioneer Woman
13:00 Siba's Table
13:30 Siba's Table
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 Chopped
16:00 The Kitchen
17:00 Anna Olson: Bake
17:30 Anna Olson: Bake
18:00 Chopped
19:00 Iron Chef America
20:00 Chopped
21:00 Chopped South Africa
22:00 Kitchen Casino
23:00 Iron Chef America

ITV HD CHOICE

00:15 Coronation Street
00:40 Coronation Street
01:10 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
02:00 Emmerdale
02:30 Coronation Street
03:00 Coronation Street
03:30 Alphabetical
04:25 Murdoch Mysteries
05:20 Murdoch Mysteries
06:15 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
07:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
08:05 Alphabetical
09:00 Murdoch Mysteries
10:00 Murdoch Mysteries
11:00 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
12:00 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
12:50 Alphabetical
13:45 Emmerdale
14:15 Coronation Street
14:45 Coronation Street
15:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
16:10 Alphabetical
17:00 Jericho
17:55 Royal Stories
18:25 Royal Stories
18:50 Black Work
19:45 Emmerdale
20:15 Coronation Street
20:45 Coronation Street
21:10 Alphabetical
22:00 Jericho
22:55 Royal Stories
23:25 Royal Stories
23:50 Emmerdale

H2 HD

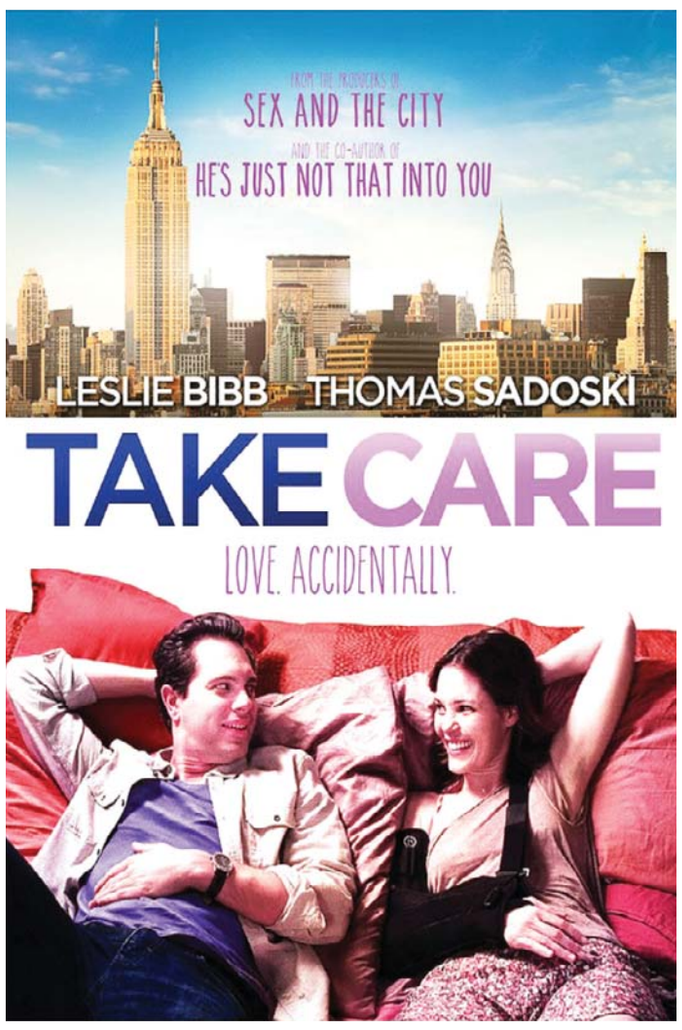
00:00 In Search Of Aliens
01:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
02:00 How The States Got Their Shape
03:00 Ancient Impossible
04:00 America's Book Of Secrets
04:50 Ancient Aliens
05:40 In Search Of Aliens
06:30 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
07:20 How The States Got Their Shape
08:10 The Universe
09:00 Ancient Impossible
10:00 America's Book Of Secrets
11:00 Ancient Aliens
12:00 In Search Of Aliens
13:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
14:00 How The States Got Their Shape
15:00 Ancient Impossible
16:00 America's Book Of Secrets
17:00 Ancient Aliens
18:00 In Search Of Aliens
19:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
20:00 How The States Got Their Shape
21:00 Ancient Impossible
22:00 America's Book Of Secrets
23:00 Ancient Aliens

History HD

00:30 American Pickers
01:20 Time Team
02:10 Mountain Men
03:00 Ozzy & Jack's World Detour
03:50 Storage Wars
04:15 American Pickers
05:05 Pawn Stars
05:30 Pawn Stars
06:00 Mountain Men
07:00 Swamp People
07:50 Ax Men
08:40 Counting Cars
09:05 Counting Cars
09:30 Storage Wars Texas
09:55 Car Hunters
10:20 Car Hunters
10:45 Car Hunters
11:10 Car Hunters
11:35 Counting Cars: Best Of
12:00 Leepu And Pitbull
12:50 Leepu And Pitbull
13:40 Leepu And Pitbull
14:30 Leepu And Pitbull
15:20 Leepu And Pitbull
16:10 Leepu And Pitbull
17:00 Leepu And Pitbull
17:50 Leepu And Pitbull
18:40 Mountain Men
19:30 Swamp People: Swamp Christmas
20:20 Ax Men
21:10 American Pickers
22:00 Counting Cars
22:25 Car Hunters
22:50 Fifth Gear
23:40 American Restoration

NAT GEO people HD

00:20 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
00:45 Street Food Around The World
01:10 Street Food Around The World
01:35 Wineroads
02:00 Fish Of The Day
02:25 Fish Of The Day
02:50 Places We Go
03:15 My Restaurant In India
03:40 My Restaurant In India
04:05 Valentine Warner Eats Scandinavia
04:30 Rustic Adventure Argentina
04:55 A Is For Apple
05:20 A Is For Apple
05:45 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
06:10 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita



TAKE CARE ON OSN MOVIES COMEDY HD

06:35 Gok's Chinese Takeaway
07:25 Tripping Out With Alie & Georgia
07:50 Fish Of The Day
08:15 Fish Of The Day
08:40 Places We Go
09:05 My Restaurant In India
09:30 My Restaurant In India
09:55 Valentine Warner Eats Scandinavia
10:20 Rustic Adventure Argentina
10:45 A Is For Apple
11:10 A Is For Apple
11:35 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
12:00 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
12:25 Gok's Chinese Takeaway
13:15 Tripping Out With Alie & Georgia
13:40 Fish Of The Day
14:05 Fish Of The Day
14:35 Places We Go
15:00 My Restaurant In India
15:30 My Restaurant In India
15:55 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
16:50 A Is For Apple
17:20 A Is For Apple
17:45 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
18:15 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
18:40 Eat: The Story Of Food
19:35 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
20:05 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
21:00 A Is For Apple
21:25 A Is For Apple
21:50 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
22:15 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
22:40 Eat: The Story Of Food
23:30 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
23:55 Fish Of The Day

National Geographic Channel HD

Nat Geo HD
00:20 Access 360 World Heritage
01:10 Years Of Living Dangerously
02:00 Continent 7: Antarctica
03:00 Air Crash Investigation
03:55 Live Free Or Die
04:50 Years Of Living Dangerously
05:45 Eat: The Story Of Food
06:40 Paranatural
07:35 Do Or Die
08:00 Do Or Die
08:30 Make Me A Dino
09:25 Seconds From Disaster
10:20 Eat: The Story Of Food
11:15 Desperate Hours
11:40 Desperate Hours
12:10 Years Of Living Dangerously
13:05 Mars
14:00 Seconds From Disaster
15:00 When Crocs Ate Dinosaurs
16:00 Do Or Die
16:30 Do Or Die
17:00 Desperate Hours
17:30 Desperate Hours
18:00 Years Of Living Dangerously
19:00 Hubble's Amazing Journey
20:00 Startalk
21:00 Desperate Hours
21:25 Desperate Hours
21:50 Years Of Living Dangerously
22:40 Hubble's Amazing Journey
23:30 Startalk

NAT GEO WILD HD

00:30 Catching Giants
01:20 Black Mamba: Kiss Of Death
02:10 Savage Kingdom
03:00 Venom Island
03:50 Animals Gone Wild
04:45 Animal Fight Club
05:40 Savage Kingdom
06:35 Venom Island
07:30 Animals Gone Wild
08:25 Animal Fight Club
09:20 Savage Kingdom
10:15 Night Stalkers
11:10 World's Deadliest
12:05 Turkey's Harsh Paradise
13:00 Humpbacks: Cracking The Code
13:55 Blood Rivals: Lion vs. Buffalo
14:50 Animals Gone Wild
15:45 Animal Fight Club
16:40 Savage Kingdom
17:35 Secret Life Of Predators
18:30 Man V. Monster
19:25 Predator Patrol
20:20 Animal Fight Club
21:10 Savage Kingdom
22:00 Secret Life Of Predators
22:50 Man V. Monster
23:40 Predator Patrol

OSN MOVIES DRAMA

00:00 Cold In July
02:00 The Returned
04:00 Jappeloup
06:15 Oliver's Deal
08:00 Rosewater
10:00 The Yellow Handkerchief
11:45 Jappeloup
14:00 Oliver's Deal
16:00 Love Under The Stars
18:00 The Yellow Handkerchief
20:00 Extracted
22:00 Falsely Accused

OSN FIRST HD COMEDY

00:00 The Detour
00:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers
01:30 Happy Endings
02:00 Happy Endings
02:30 Bordertown
03:00 Bordertown
03:30 The Detour
04:00 New Girl
04:30 Baby Daddy
05:00 Angie Tribeca
05:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
06:30 Breaking In
07:00 Til Death
07:30 Living With Fran
08:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
09:00 Angie Tribeca
09:30 Breaking In
10:00 New Girl
10:30 Telenovela
11:00 Telenovela
11:30 Living With Fran
12:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
13:00 Til Death
13:30 Angie Tribeca
14:00 Breaking In
14:30 Living With Fran
15:00 Baby Daddy
15:30 Telenovela
16:00 Telenovela
16:30 Happy Endings
17:00 Happy Endings
17:30 Til Death
18:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
19:00 New Girl
19:30 Baby Daddy
20:00 Telenovela
20:30 Telenovela
21:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
22:00 Happy Endings
22:30 Happy Endings
23:00 Silicon Valley
23:30 Silicon Valley OSN Movies Family

OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY

00:00 Open Season: Scared Silly
02:00 Ghost Squad
04:00 Houba! On The Trail Of Marsupilami
06:00 Black Beauty
08:00 Pirates Who Don't Do Anything
10:00 Open Season: Scared Silly
12:00 Black Beauty
14:00 Curious George
16:00 It Takes Two
18:00 Oz The Great And Powerful
20:15 My Girl
22:15 Doctor Proctor's Fart Powder

OSN MOVIES HD

00:15 Straight Outta Compton
02:45 Paranormal Activity: The Ghost Dimension
04:30 Hello Carter
06:00 The Dressmaker
08:00 Madoff Part 1
09:30 Madoff Part 2
11:00 Ride
12:45 Kindergarten Cop 2
14:30 The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel
16:30 The Song
18:30 Barbershop: The Next Cut
20:30 Breaking The Bank
22:15 The Transporter: Refueled

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

01:00 All The Wrong Reasons
03:00 Blue Streak
05:00 Overboard
07:00 Coneheads
09:00 The Bad News Bears (2005)
11:00 Overboard
13:00 Dickie Roberts: Former Child Star
15:00 Take Care
17:00 The Bad News Bears (2005)
19:00 Confessions Of A Shopaholic
21:00 Burying The Ex
23:00 Forgetting Sarah Marshall

OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL

00:00 American Sniper
02:15 Young Ones
04:00 Atlas Shrugged Part 2: The Strike
06:00 The Last Tycoon
08:30 Searching For Bobby Fischer
10:30 Young Ones
12:30 Arlington Road
15:00 War Horse
18:00 Searching For Bobby Fischer

THE SONG ON OSN MOVIES HD

CLASSIFIEDS

Kuwait Times
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4, 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

360°- 3

COLLATERAL BEAUTY	12:00 PM
LAF WA DAWARAN	2:15 PM
PASSENGERS	4:30 PM
PASSENGERS	7:00 PM
PASSENGERS	9:30 PM
PASSENGERS	12:05 AM

AL-KOUT.1

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

AL-KOUT.2

WITHIN	12:45 PM
MOANA	2:45 PM
MOANA	5:00 PM
MOANA	7:30 PM
WITHIN	9:45 PM
WITHIN	11:45 PM

AL-KOUT.3

THE MONSTER	11:30 AM
MOANA	1:30 PM
SING	4:00 PM
SING	6:15 PM
THE MONSTER	8:30 PM
THE MONSTER	10:30 PM
THE MONSTER	12:30 AM

AL-KOUT.4

ESHTEBAK	1:30 PM
LA LA LAND	3:30 PM
LA LA LAND	6:00 PM
ESHTEBAK	8:45 PM
ESHTEBAK	10:45 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	12:45 AM

BAIRAQ-1

MOANA	11:30 AM
MOANA	1:45 PM
MOANA	4:15 PM
MOANA -3D	6:45 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	9:15 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED -3D	11:45 PM

BAIRAQ-2

SING	12:45 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	3:00 PM
SING	5:30 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED	7:45 PM
THU+TUE+WED	

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) 3-1-2017**

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**

REQUIRED
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2- Supervisors
3- Foremans
For portacabin
• Experience minimum 3 years
• Have kuwaiti licence driving
Please send your CV: positechq8@mail.com
Fax: 24817837

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr:	05:18
Shorook	06:43
Duhr:	11:52
Asr:	14:43
Maghrib:	17:02
Isha:	18:24

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Copy Editor/ Proofreader
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• Available to start immediately
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Send CV & salary requirements to
local@kuwaittimes.net
ABSOLUTELY NO PHONE CALLS
Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted

Flight Schedule

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

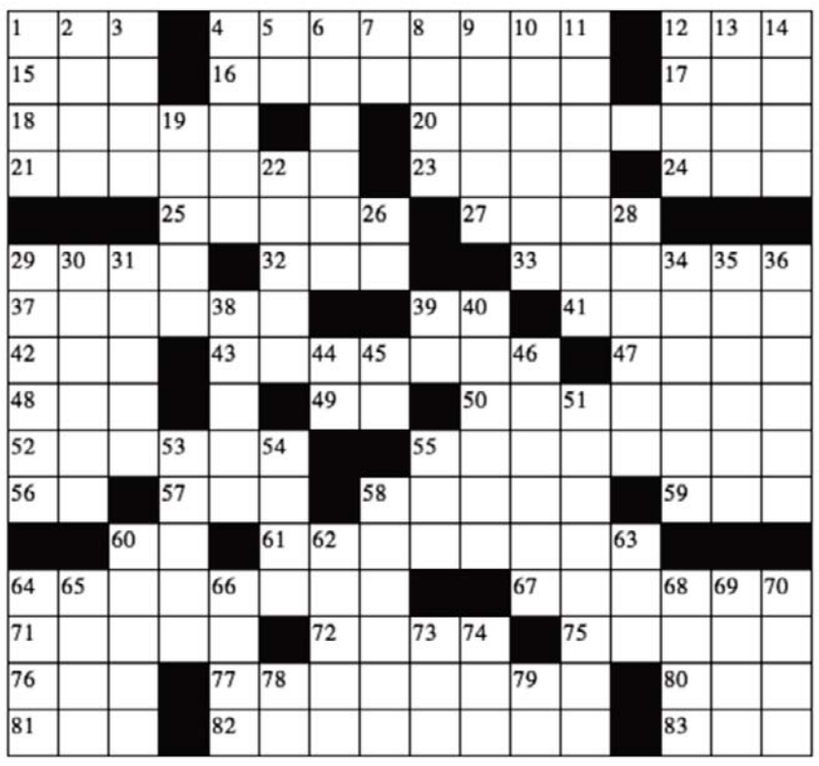
Arrival Flights on Wednesday 4/1/2017

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05
FDB	072	Dubai	00:40
JAI	573	Mumbai	00:50
MEA	411	Beirut	01:15
FDK	804	Damascus	01:55
KAC	417	Manila	02:00
THY	773	Istanbul	02:25
KAC	285	Dhaka	02:25
DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:55
ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
MSC	406	Sohag	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
MSR	613	Cairo	04:10
ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:10
MEA	409	Beirut	04:10
QTR	1077	Doha	04:40
KAC	103	London	04:45
RJA	645	Amman	05:15
CEB	0019	Manila	05:20
QTR	1087	Doha	05:50
JZR	560	Sohag	06:05
FDB	070	Dubai	06:30
UAE	874	Dubai	06:50
THY	771	Istanbul	06:50
KAC	153	Istanbul	06:50
JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
KAC	171	Frankfurt	07:05
GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
KAC	541	Cairo	07:15
KAC	773	Riyadh	07:30
FDB	5062	Dubai	07:55
KAC	563	Amman	08:00
BAW	156	London	08:40
FDB	054	Dubai	08:55
KAC	117	New York	09:00
KAC	743	Dammam	09:00
JZR	534	Cairo	09:15
KAC	513	Tehran	09:30
KAC	101	London	09:35
ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
UAE	856	Dubai	09:55
JZR	482	Istanbul	10:00
KAC	501	Beirut	10:00
KAC	671	Dubai	10:05
ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10
KAC	161	Geneva	10:10
KAC	613	Bahrain	10:10
KAC	787	Jeddah	10:15
JZR	356	Mashhad	10:25
FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
QTR	1071	Doha	10:40
IRC	6522	Lamerd	11:00
MSC	416	Sohag	11:15
GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
IRA	664	Shiraz	11:40
JZR	776	Jeddah	12:05
KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	12:05
AXB	890	Mangalore	12:10
IRM	1189	Mashhad	12:30
IRC	527	Mashhad	12:40
MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
IAW	158	Al Najaf	13:00
JZR	786	Riyadh	13:10
KAC	511	Mashhad	13:15
JZR	176	Dubai	13:45
AAG	145	Baghdad	14:00
MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
FDB	076	Dubai	14:05
UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
CLX	792	Hanoi	14:30
KAC	693	Muscat	14:30
KNE	382	Taif	14:50
KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
KAC	561	Amman	15:00
FDB	060	Dubai	15:05
KAC	785	Jeddah	15:15
GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
IRC	6512	ABD	15:30
QTR	1079	Doha	15:40
SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
KNE	684	Madinah	16:00
KAC	777	Riyadh	16:00
KAC	619	Doha	16:00
JZR	554	Alexandria	16:10
ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
ABY	128	Sharjah	16:30
OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
MSR	576	Sharm el-Sheikh	16:50
SAW	706	Damascus	16:55
SVA	505	Madinah	17:00
JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
JZR	240	Amman	17:15
FDB	052	Dubai	17:25
QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
KAC	363	Colombo	17:40
UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
RJA	641	Amman	17:55
KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
KAC	353	BLR	18:15
SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	205	Islamabad	18:25
JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
FDB	064	Dubai	19:05
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
KNE	232	Riyadh	20:55
KAC	545	Cairo	21:00
OMA	648	Muscat	21:10
KAC	345	Ahmedabad	21:30
QTR	1089	Doha	21:35
DLH	634	Doha	21:35
MSR	619	Alexandria	21:45
DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
FDB	5054	Dubai	21:50
JAI	571	Mumbai	21:55
KAC	351	Kochi	22:00
KAC	203	Lahore	22:15
KAC	413	Bangkok	22:15
ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:15
MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
JZR	528	Asyut	22:25
ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
KAC	301	Mumbai	22:45
KAC	381	Delhi	22:45
JZR	502	Luxor	22:55
UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
QTR	1083	Doha	23:20

Departure Flights on Wednesday 4/1/2017

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MEA	410	Beirut	00:15
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40
KAC	102	London	00:55
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55
FDK	803	Damascus	01:00
QTR	1086	Doha	01:15
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50
DLH	635	Doha	01:55
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:05
MSC	405	Sohag	02:30
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55
KAC	344	Chennai	05:35
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:45
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	06:25
BAW	157	London	06:40
KAC	204	Lahore	07:15
FDB	5061	Dubai	07:15
FDB	053	Dubai	07:45
KAC	302	Mumbai	08:20
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40
KAC	382	Delhi	08:45
KAC	362	Colombo	09:05
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05
KAC	352	Kochi	09:10
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40
IRC	6511	ABD	09:55
MSC	415	Sohag	10:15
IRA	665	Shiraz	10:40
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40
KAC	774	Riyadh	11:05
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10
IRM	1188	Mashhad	11:15
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30
IRC	526	Mashhad	11:40
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00
KAC	744	Dammam	12:10
JZR	561	Sohag	12:40
FDB	075	Dubai	12:50
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00
CLX	792	Luxembourg	13:15
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:30
KAC	564	Amman	13:40
KAC	514	Tehran	13:55
KNE	231	Riyadh	13:55
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:15
FDB	059	Dubai	14:20
KAC	414	Bangkok	14:35
GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40
IRC	6521	Lamerd	14:40
KAC	542	Cairo	14:45
KAC	672	Dubai	14:50
KNE	529	Jeddah	14:55
KNE	683	Madinah	15:05
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
MSR	575	Sharm el-Sheikh	15:50
KAC	154	Istanbul	15:55
SAW	705	Damascus	16:00
SVA	504	Madinah	16:00
JZR	535	Cairo	16:10
QTR	1072	Doha	16:10
KAC	788	Jeddah	16:20
FDB	051	Dubai	16:25
JZR	787	Riyadh	16:25
JZR	357	Mashhad	16:25
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
UAE	875	Dubai	18:00
FDB	063	Dubai	18:10
JZR	177	Dubai	18:20
KAC	502	Beirut	18:20
MSR	620	Cairo	18:30
JZR	483	Istanbul	18:40
QTR	1080	Doha	18:50
KAC	512	Mashhad	19:20
ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30
KAC	778	Riyadh	19:35
KAC	674	Dubai	19:45
FDB	057	Dubai	19:50
KAC	620	Doha	19:50
KAC	104	London	19:50
KNE	381	Taif	19:55
KAC	694	Muscat	20:00
OMA	647	Muscat	20:10
QTR	1088	Doha	20:35
KAC	562	Amman	20:40
DLH	634	Frankfurt	20:45
MSR	606	Luxor	20:45
FDB	5053	Dubai	20:50
JAI	572	Mumbai	20:55
KAC	172	Frankfurt	21:15
KAC	786	Jeddah	21:15
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20
MEA	402	Beirut	21:20
ALK	229	Colombo	21:25
UAE	859	Dubai	21:40
GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45
QTR	1082	Doha	22:00
JZR	125	Bahrain	22:05
ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15
AIC	975	Chennai/Goa	22:25
JZR	241	Amman	22:45
JZR	185	Dubai	23:15
JZR	555	Alexandria	23:20
MEA	406	Beirut	23:30
PIA	239	Sialkot	23:40
FDB	071	Dubai	23:45
JAI	574	Mumbai	23:50
KAC	162	Geneva	23:55
BBC	043	Dhaka	23:55

CROSSWORD 1480



ACROSS

1. (computer science) A computer that is running software that allows users to leave messages and access information of general interest.
4. An alcoholic drink taken at bedtime.
12. Tag the base runner to get him out.
15. Any high mountain.
16. A quotation at the beginning of some piece of writing.
17. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
18. Of or relating to Saudi Arabia or its people.
20. Something used to beautify.
21. Preaching the gospel of Christ in the manner of the early church.
23. A relative position or degree of value in a graded group.
24. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
25. The longest river of Asia.
27. Slanting diagonally across the grain of a fabric.
29. The basic unit of money in Botswana.
32. An enclosed space.
33. Cosmopolitan herbs especially southern hemisphere.
37. (Jewish cookery) A loaf of white bread containing eggs and leavened with yeast.
41. German philosopher whose three stage process of dialectical reasoning was adopted by Karl Marx (1770-1831).
42. A Turkish unit of weight equal to about 2.75 pounds.
43. Submersible vessel for one or two persons.
47. Very fertile.
48. A woolen cap of Scottish origin.
49. Date used in reckoning dates before the supposed year Christ was born.
50. A place where the wicked are punished after death.
52. An authoritative person who divines the future.
56. A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.
57. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
59. Used of a single unit or thing.
61. A woman's shoe with a very high thick sole.
64. A Shinto god of war.
67. Relatively small gnawing animals having a single pair of constantly growing incisor teeth specialized for gnawing.
71. Having awns i.e. bristle- or hair-like appendages on the flowering parts of some cereals and grasses.
72. East Indian cereal grass whose seed yield a somewhat bitter flour, a staple in the Orient.
75. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
76. Towards the side away from the wind.
77. Turn away from by persuasion.
80. Lacking in light.
81. A doctor's degree in education.
82. A great raja.
83. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.

DOWN

1. Derive or receive pleasure from.
2. (Scottish) Bluish-black or gray-blue.
3. A verbalization that encourages you to attempt something.
4. The sound made by a horse.
5. The sciences concerned with gathering and manipulating and storing and retrieving and classifying recorded information.
6. A Spanish female Gypsy.
7. A heavy silvery toxic univalent and bivalent metallic element.
8. A slow pace of running.
9. A member of an American Indian peoples of NE South America and the Lesser Antilles.
10. Of or relating to apnea.
11. The title of the ancient Egyptian kings.
12. Period extending from Dec. 24 to Jan. 6.
13. An inflammatory disease involving the sebaceous glands of the skin.
14. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
19. Of or belonging to or suitable for a duke.
22. A Bantu language.
26. 1,000,000,000 periods per second.
28. (electronics) Designating sound transmission from two sources through two channels.
30. Medium-sized tree-dwelling monkey of the Amazon basin.
31. Wild or domesticated South American cud-chewing animal related to camels but smaller and lacking a hump.
34. A landlocked republic in eastern Africa.
35. English rock star and guitarist and songwriter who with Paul McCartney wrote most of the music for the Beatles (1940-1980).
36. A non-aromatic saturated hydrocarbon with the general formula CnH(2n+2).
38. A leisurely walk (usually in some public place).
39. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
40. United States film actor (born in Hungary) noted for portraying monsters (1884-1956).
44. A soft gray ductile metallic element used in alloys.
45. Being nine more than ninety.
46. Be owned by.
51. Genus of tropical American timber trees.
53. A hidden storage space (for money or provisions or weapons).
54. Electronic warfare undertaken to insure effective friendly use of the electromagnetic spectrum in spite of the enemy's use of electronic warfare.
55. Liveliness and energy.
58. Ruffed grouse.
60. (of complexion) Blemished by imperfections of the skin.
62. Unpleasantly stern.
63. Experiencing or showing sorrow or unhappiness.
65. Inspired by a feeling of fearful wonderment or reverence.
66. Severe diabetes mellitus with an early onset.
68. Gully or streambed in North Africa and the Middle East that remains dry except during rainy season.
69. A town in north central Oklahoma.
70. Avatar of Vishnu.
73. A group of Niger-Congo languages spoken primarily in southeastern Mali and northern Ghana.
74. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
78. A state in midwestern United States.
79. A person who announces and plays popular recorded music.

Yesterday's Solution

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

STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)

Ambition takes center stage now. Achievements that win you reward and recognition are yours for the making-but you must make them happen-you cannot simply wait around and expect them to appear full-blown. You could develop a knack for being in the right place at the right time, and you may find that you have friends in high places. Adjust to changing plans. You may be leading a class at a local school or teaching at a nearby young people's association on outdoor survival techniques. You are in for some positive changing energy, so hop on the boat and get underway. Poetry and art may be enjoyable. Movies, books and all forms of escape could prove very pleasant this evening. Relationships with children present opportunities for laughter.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Take advantage of the energies that are around you now because any business begun and controlled by you will get a real head start all the way through late may. The satisfaction of a job well done is one of your greatest incentives now. There could be some problems if someone on the outside interferes with your plans. Allow outside interruptions to roll off your back as if you were a duck. You are happy to do favors for others. Good luck repays you for your hard work. Coming to grips with the past or getting in touch with the mystical and the spiritual are things that give a sense of satisfaction and completeness. Finish up old chores this evening and do not be too fussy if someone else makes a mess-just hand the messy person a broom.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This is a busy day. Pace yourself and take breaks when you can-you will be pleased with your efforts. Keep the positive state of mind and you will pass it on to others. Your intuition may save you from harsh thinking. Figuring things out, spotting the underlying problem and figuring out how to separate the difficulty are the things that take on special significance. An attitude perturbation may be needed. You have an awareness of time slipping away so there is some stress to complete tasks. You will be pleased at the result of the hard work done by you and your co-workers by the end of this day. This is one of your best days for love. Shared interests with a loved one will bring a harmonious end to a frustrating day. A lovely dessert is in the making.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

This is another great day, full of energy and high aspirations. You have lots of imagination and hope. Make it a point to sprinkle a little laughter into the day. Don't be afraid to spread out the responsibilities if you find yourself with more than your fair share. If you are not working today, now through the end of this month are excellent times to gain employment-or move up the corporate ladder. Most likely you will be working at a forward speed. Putting work before home causes home to disappear, careful. After the workday is over you make it a point to put more effort and attention into your home. Some social and romantic attitudes are yours now. Accept social invitations that will help you to network. Be careful of excessive expenses.

Leo (July 23-August 22)

You will begin to see new friends come into your life now and you may notice that they improve in quality as well. Together you will make dreams come true. You are charming today and enjoy wearing some of your clothing or jewelry that you received during the holidays. You appreciate rational viewpoints and will pay attention to the chatter around you if it means that you can add something important and make a positive difference. Involvement with idealistic groups enhances your sense of purpose. Instead of trying to tend to lots of details this afternoon, just concentrate on the most important issues-the rest of the problems will soon be solved. Lovers, children and other people or things dear to your heart are emphasized at this time.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Sometimes, when trying to get your message across to someone or to a group, circumstances can create frustrated feelings rather than clear understandings-this may be one of those days. Communicating what you want to say may need to be thought through very carefully before speaking. Through your example, you teach others to come from the truth and not their anger. You are in a practical mood to complete a particular project and you work well with the flow of energies today. There will be tasks now that require real discipline and you are the one that will follow through with a particular project. There is a new passion for details, a need to do just the right thing at just the right time. You will find communication easier this evening.

Libra (September 23-October 22)

Just because you have a little extra cash today does not mean you can go out and charge a new expensive item. Caution with extravagant spending . . . It is the awareness for the day. You will be able to enjoy a group of your co-worker friends in some fun activity during the noon break. Perhaps you will be involved in sports or a group get-together. Whatever the case, you will enjoy a few shared interests. Your management and directional abilities will be in high focus when you discuss and decide who will be responsible for specific tasks that make the afternoon assignment run smoothly. You enjoy organizing fast moving projects with cooperative, inspired people. You could find that you are appreciated or valued for your ability to express empathy.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may soon want to go outside of your work to apply for programs such as life insurance, health insurance or investment plans. There is some relief at this time with regard to your finances. Your attention on a few travel plans is aimed in the right direction. There are also educational opportunities that you will want to take advantage of now. If you need to diet, today and tomorrow are the days for fun activities that encourage dieting-especially with a friend. If you do not need to diet, consider a more nutritious lunch to help relieve or cut back on the stress lately. You may find yourself enjoying a long conversation, writing a letter or making a special phone call this evening. Parenting is less of a challenge than usual this evening.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Thoughts, ideas and local travel are slowed until the end of march. Power struggles could be intense with group issues at this time. Find an advisor and you will be more convincing. You may lock horns on an issue and the only way to see any positive results may be to stop insisting. Go on about your business and after this person gives the subject some thought, he or she just might surprise you. Inventions and quality ideas are possible when you communicate and agree to disagree. The satisfaction of a job well done is one of your greatest incentives. You will experience a sense of support and harmony by the end of the day that makes this a pleasant time. There is an opportunity to show your appreciation to an older person.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Other than planning a fishing or camping trip for this next weekend you might consider a garden as well. The garden may have to stay in your mind until it is planting time but this is such a good time to put your ideas on paper. As ideas come to you during your workday, you can draw or jot down the area size and the items you think you might want for your garden. If you only have enough room for a potted garden, this can also be planned ahead. You may decide a miniature fruit tree would be fun. At the noon break, you might ask your co-workers for gardening suggestions or ideas of places to fish. If you are not planning an escape this evening, the energies are right to join up with your peers or family in a fun celebration of life.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Your creative side is working today in designing future goals and changing or bringing a focus into some of your plans. The decisions that you make at this time will have some long-lasting effects-think about your next move carefully! Others give you recognition for your hard work. The energies of the universe are working in favor of an attitude change that affords outward thinking. Spread your wings and try new skills. Be encouraged to discard your limited ideas of your personal capabilities-you could be limiting your own success. Be wise when it comes to nutrition. Weather permitting, a short trip to the country may be enjoyed by the whole family or with a loved one this afternoon. It just might be the perfect time for a romantic getaway.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This is a lucky day. You receive good news about money and if you decide to do any traveling this weekend-you have picked the right time for traveling. You will probably volunteer some time to help a young person this morning. If you are single, communication with your sweetheart improves. A friend's birthday gift deserves your attention this afternoon. Once you decide what gift you want to give, you can spend quite a lot of time shopping. If you are traveling, you will find several discount places. These stores often have good prices, but better yet-they will many times have just what you want hidden back in some corner. You have the time and the patience for research today. You love looking for a great buy.

WORD SEARCH

Capital Cities of Europe

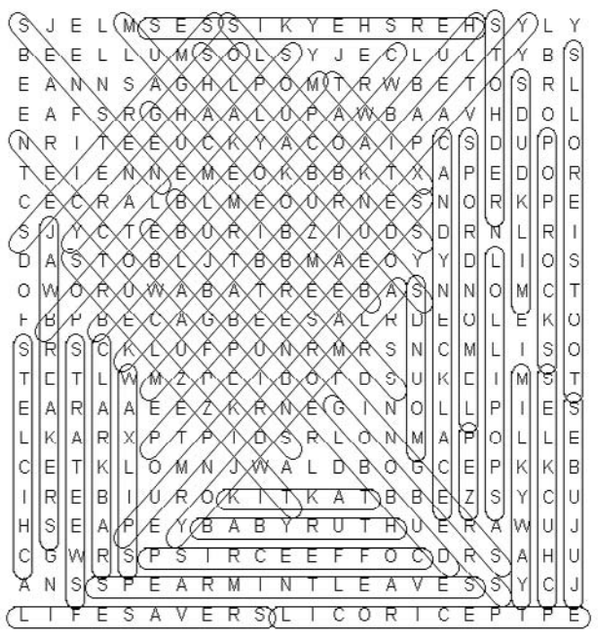
Find and circle all of the European capital cities that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.

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

AMSTERDAM (Netherlands)
ANDORRA LA VELLA (Andorra)
ANKARA (Turkey)
ATHENS (Greece)
BAKU (Azerbaijan)
BELFAST (Northern Ireland)
BELGRADE (Serbia/Montenegro)
BERLIN (Germany)
BERN (Switzerland)
BRATISLAVA (Slovakia)
BRUSSELS (Belgium)
BUCHAREST (Romania)
BUDAPEST (Hungary)
CARDIFF (Wales)
CHISINAU (Moldova)
COPENHAGEN (Denmark)
DUBLIN (Ireland)
EDINBURGH (Scotland)
HELSINKI (Finland)
KIEV (Ukraine)
LISBON (Portugal)
LJUBLJANA (Slovenia)
LONDON (England)
LUXEMBOURG (Luxembourg)
MADRID (Spain)
MINSK (Belarus)
MONACO (Monaco)
MOSCOW (Russian Federation)
NICOSIA (Cyprus)
OSLO (Norway)
PARIS (France)
PRAGUE (Czech Republic)
REYKJAVIK (Iceland)
RIGA (Latvia)
ROME (Italy)
SAN MARINO (San Marino)
SARAJEVO (Bosnia-Herzegovina)
SKOPJE (Macedonia)
SOFIA (Bulgaria)
STOCKHOLM (Sweden)
TALLINN (Estonia)
TBILISI (Georgia)
TIRANE (Albania)
VADUZ (Liechtenstein)
VALLETTA (Malta)
VATICAN CITY (Vatican City)
VIENNA (Austria)
VILNIUS (Lithuania)
WARSAW (Poland)
YEREVAN (Armenia)
ZAGREB (Croatia)

Yesterday Solution

Candy



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

Hidden sentence: JELLY BELLY JELLY BEANS WERE A FAVORITE CANDY OF PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

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: Tuesday 03/01/2017 Valid From 7 AM To 7 PM

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

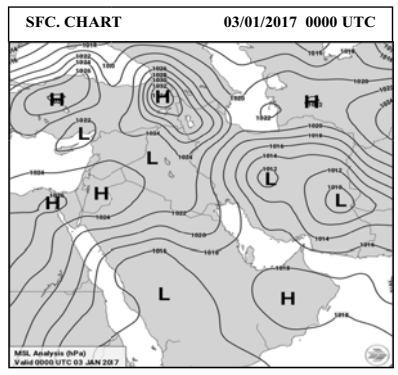
BY DAY: Mostly sunny with moderate freshening at times north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times specially over coastal areas north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	22 °C	13 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	12 °C
ABDALY	21 °C	09 °C
BUBYAN	22 °C	12 °C
JAHRA	22 °C	12 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	20 °C	12 °C
SALMIYAH	21 °C	13 °C
AHMADI	20 °C	14 °C
NUWAISIB	22 °C	12 °C
WAFRA	21 °C	11 °C
SALMY	19 °C	08 °C

SFC. CHART 03/01/2017 0000 UTC



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures MAX.	Temperatures MIN.	Wind Direction	Wind Speed
Wednesday	01/04	Mostly sunny	22 °C	11 °C	NW	12 - 35 km/h
Thursday	01/05	Sunny+chance for dust over open areas	21 °C	11 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h
Friday	01/06	Partly cloudy	22 °C	10 °C	NW	22 - 42 km/h
Saturday	01/07	Mostly sunny	24 °C	11 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 26 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:18
Sunrise	06:43
Zuhr	11:52
Asr	14:43
Sunset	17:02
Isha	18:24

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	23 °C
MIN. Temp.	11 °C
MAX. RH	73 %
MIN. RH	35 %
MAX. Wind	N 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP.0 2017/01/03 02:39 UTC V1.00 T2.4 ق.ت.خ.ج/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

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Dev Patel, left, and Nicole Kidman arrive at the 28th annual Palm Springs International Film Festival Awards Gala on Monday in Palm Springs, Calif. — AP/AFP photos

Nicole Kidman accepts the International Star Award for 'Lion'.

Tom Hanks poses backstage with the Icon Award.

Gosling pays tribute to Reynolds at Palm Springs Gala: 'Her Work Is an Inspiration'

Tom Hanks, right, winner of the Icon Award, poses backstage with presenter Laura Linney.

Damien Chazelle accepts the Vanguard Award for "La La Land".

Ryan Gosling accepts the Vanguard Award for "La La Land".

Host Mary Hart speaks on stage.

The Palm Springs Convention Center was atwitter Monday evening as movie stars, Hollywood moguls and cinema aficionados filed inside for the start of the 28th annual Palm Springs International Film Festival opening night gala, which kicks off the buzzy 12-day desert-area fest, regarded as the unofficial harbinger of Oscar season. Glitz and glamour filled the decked-out, floral-filled room, with stars honored for their performances in 2016 films favored for serious Academy Awards contention. Famed "Entertainment Tonight" alum Mary Hart hosted the event, with PSIFF chairman of the board Harold Matzner on hand to extend a warm welcome to guests, who dined on a delectable three-course meal that included a chopped vegetable salad martini, sherry demi-glace short ribs forestiere, and a dessert aptly named "At the Movies" on the menu: vanilla panna cotta over crushed sugar cookie, topped with crunchy Milk Dud chocolate mousse, caramel corn and movie candies.

"Loving" director Jeff Nichols and actor Joel Edgerton presented Ruth Negga with the Rising Star award for her lead role in Nichols' historical drama, chronicling the landmark 1967 Supreme Court case that made interracial marriage legal in the United States. Edgerton praised Negga's "perfect" performance, describing her as "truth where the 't' is silent." In turn, Negga called Edgerton "the most excellent partner in this endeavor." Janelle Monae expressed similar love and admiration for Breakthrough Performance award recipient Mahershala Ali, Monae's fellow cast member in both "Moonlight" and "Hidden Figures."

Acceptance speech

"Mahershala humanized his character in a way that we have not seen before onscreen," said Monae of Ali's role in "Moonlight." Ali, who toiled for over two decades as a relative unknown in films such as "The Place Beyond the Pines" and television's "Treme" and "House of Cards," thanked his father, himself an actor, for teaching him the value of "hunger, patience, persistence ... and introducing me to the arts and the inherent struggle." It was an "emotional" night for "Lion" actress and International Star Award recipient Nicole Kidman, who last attended the gala 12 years ago, and waxed nostalgic about having taken as her date her "papa who was alive then." She shared words of wisdom from her "Eyes Wide Shut" director, the late Stanley Kubrick, who told Kidman, "You are a character actress. You must find characters to play."

"I took his advice," said Kidman, "and I want to find characters-that is my drive, to find the great character roles." Related Exclusive Portraits From Palm Springs Film Festival Awards Gala Other highlights of the night included the acceptance speech of "Jackie" star and Desert Palm Achievement Award (Actress) recipient Natalie Portman, who relayed a moving, poignant story about her near penniless grandmother emigrating from Eastern Europe to Palestine before Israel gained statehood in 1948 and she was forced to share one dress with her roommate; Sir Ben Kingsley feting Casey Affleck with the Desert Palm Achievement Award (Actor) for his devastating turn as an alcoholic janitor in "Manchester by the Sea," a movie, said Affleck, "about showing up for the people we love"; and Spotlight Award honoree Andrew Garfield ("Hacksaw Ridge"), who publicly thanked Icon Award honoree Tom Hanks for being his primary inspiration in becoming an actor.

Female achievements

"There's a man in the room responsible for me becoming an actor and he doesn't know it," gushed Garfield. "I can't express in words what your work in 'Big' and 'Joe Versus the Volcano' did for me. I bow very deeply to you." Later in the evening, "Hidden Figures" producer Pharrell Williams cued the audience to "make some noise for the female achievements" and "Arrival" star Amy Adams, honored with the Chairman's Award, called director Denis Villeneuve "a visionary, a compassionate and generous director who elevates everyone around him."

While accepting the Career Achievement Award, "20th Century Women" star Annette Bening declared, "acting is the work of intimacy." Given that collective closeness, it was only fitting that Ryan Gosling, who accepted the Vanguard Award for "La La Land" alongside director Damien Chazelle and composer Justin Hurwitz, took a moment to acknowledge the recent passing of Debbie Reynolds, crediting her performance in "Singin' in the Rain" as a major artistic influence in the creation of Chazelle's 2017 nod to old Hollywood musicals. "I wish I could have said this in person but I'd like to thank Debbie Reynolds," said Gosling. "Her work is an inspiration." Upon accepting the Icon Award, Hanks was quick to quip about the gala's lengthy running time. "It's been a long night for any 501c," joked the "Sully" star, who went on to thank the producers, directors, costume designers, and screenwriters with whom he's worked over the span of his Oscar-winning career, before personally thanking Garfield, "who finally saw to it that Palm Springs International Film Fest shows some love for 'Joe Versus the Volcano.'"— Reuters

Damien Chazelle, from left, Justin Hurwitz, Ryan Gosling , and Fred Berger arrive at the 28th annual Palm Springs International Film Festival Awards.

Natalie Portman accepts the Desert Palm Achievement Actress Award for "Jackie".

Casey Affleck accepts the Desert Palm Achievement Actor Award for 'Manchester by the Sea'.

Amy Adams accepts the Chairman's Award for 'Arrival'.

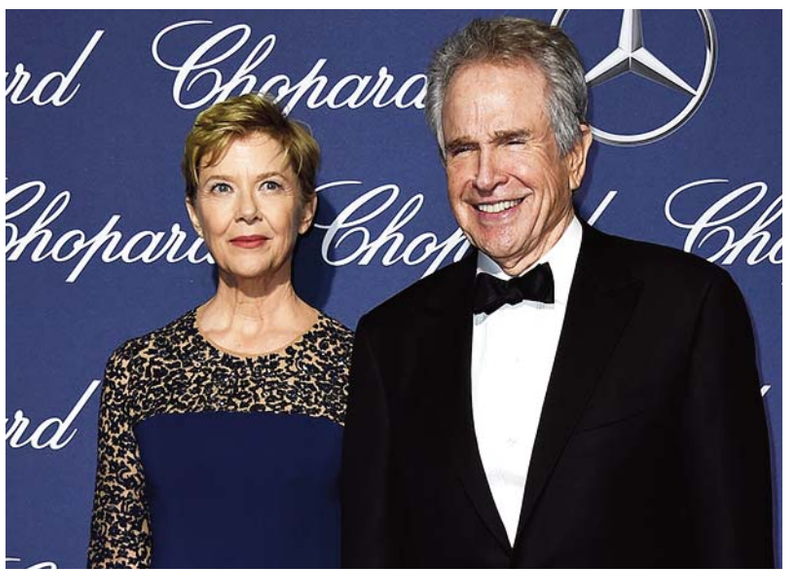
Annette Bening accepts the Career Achievement Award.

Mahershala Ali accepts the award for Breakthrough Performance for 'Moonlight'.

AWARDS

The cast of "Hidden Figures" pose backstage with the Ensemble Performance Award.

Benjamin Millepied, second from left, and Natalie Portman.


Annette Bening, left, and Warren Beatty.

Laura Dern, left, presents the Spotlight Award to Andrew Garfield for 'Hacksaw Ridge'.

Jane Lynch presents the Vanguard Award.

Pharrell Williams presents the award for Ensemble Performance to the cast of "Hidden Figures".

Ben Kingsley presents the Desert Palm Achievement Actor Award to Casey Affleck for "Manchester by the Sea".

Actress Suzanne Somers

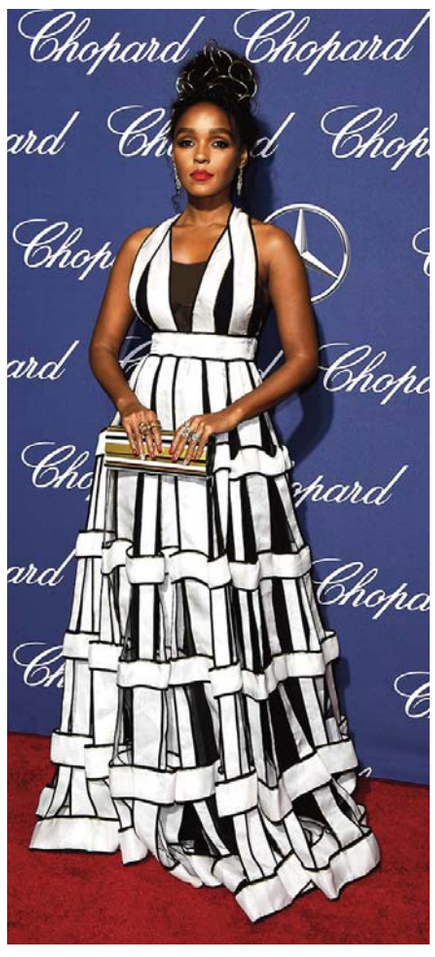
Ruth Negga accepts the award for Rising Star for "Loving."

Actress Laura Dern (right) and Jaya Harper.

Mike Mills presents the Career Achievement Award to Annette Bening for '20th Century Women'.

Jim Parsons

Actress Matilda Del Toro


Janelle Monae

Octavia Spencer, center, accepts the award for Ensemble Performance for 'Hidden Figures'.

FEATURE

An Emirati man trains a falcon in the Liwa desert, some 250 kilometers west of the Gulf emirate of Abu Dhabi, during the Liwa 2017 Moreeb Dune Festival. The festival, which attracts participants from around the Gulf region, includes a variety of races (cars, bikes, falcons, camels and horses) or other activities aimed at promoting the country's folklore. — AFP photos

Liwa 2017 Moreeb Dune Festival

Emirati falcon trainers gather in the Liwa desert.

Rykan Al-Qubaisi an Emirati falcon trainer sits with a falcon in the Liwa desert.

An Emirati man trains a falcon in the Liwa desert.

An Emirati man walks in the Liwa desert.

An Emirati from the Qubaisi tribe trains falcons in the Liwa desert.

Emiratis drive through the Liwa desert, some 250 kilometers west of the Gulf emirate of Abu Dhabi, during the Liwa 2017 Moreeb Dune Festival.

Men walk their camels across the Liwa desert.

An Emirati falconer trains his bird.

A falcon flies past a device measuring its speed.

An Emirati from the Qubaisi tribe sits next to a fire after training his falcon.

A falcon is being trained by a falconer.

An Emirati falconer trains his bird.

Emirati falconers are seen training their birds.

Facebook sleuths bring home India's stolen idols

By day, Arvind Venkatraman works as a software engineer in India's tech hub Chennai. But in his spare time, he is an international art detective whose efforts have helped bring back some of his country's most valuable antiquities. Venkatraman is part of a group of art enthusiasts known as the India Pride Project (IPP) who are using Facebook and other social media to identify religious artefacts stolen from temples around the country and secure their return. Art theft is big business all over India. But the richest pickings are in Venkatraman's home state of Tamil Nadu, where centuries-old religious artefacts with huge potential sale values in the West lie largely unprotected in out-of-the-way rural temples.

Two years ago, the IPP claimed a significant victory when the National Gallery of Australia returned a $5 million bronze statue of the Hindu god Shiva that had been stolen from a Tamil Nadu temple. At first Venkatraman says the gallery, which is now suing the Manhattan dealership that sold it the statue, was reluctant to entertain the idea that its purchase was stolen. So the IPP organised a social media campaign using images comparing the stolen idol with the one on display at the museum. "Initially typically there is a denial," he told AFP in Chennai. "Whether it's Australia, Europe, Singapore or the US, initially there will be resistance from the museum curators... because they've spent a lot of money and they wouldn't want to let go of an object."

The idol is among those allegedly trafficked by Subhash Kapoor, a former Manhattan art dealer who was the subject of a massive US federal investigation known as Operation Hidden Idol. Kapoor was arrested in Germany in 2012 and is now on trial in India, accused of conspiring in the theft, trafficking and sale of religious idols. He denies all charges. Many of the antiquities he dealt in dated back to the 11th and 12th centuries, when the Chola dynasty presided over a flourishing of Hindu art in Tamil Nadu.

'Easy prey'

"This operation went on for many years," said Prateep V Philip, who heads Tamil Nadu's Idol Wing-India's only police team dedicated to tackling art theft. "He (Kapoor) was himself not on the scene, but he was the mastermind." Philip said Kapoor won over the international art world by donating millions of dollars' worth of pieces to museums in the United States. He ran his own freight company in India, allegedly concealing priceless antiques among modern replicas.

In this photograph Additional Director General of Police, Economic Offence Wing Prateep.V. Philip (left) and Inspector General of Police - Idol Wing A.G. Pon Manickavel speak during an interview in Chennai. — AFP photos

In this photograph India temple priests carry a diety of Hindu god Parthasarathy in a procession on a street in Chennai.

"Whenever a theft took place in the past, sometimes people were not even aware," said Philip, describing the thousands of small shrines that dot the state as "easy prey". "It would be a derelict temple only visited at certain times of the year. So when a theft took place it was discovered long after." This means much of India's stolen sacred art is never even registered as missing, allowing it to be bought and sold on the international market.

Solving the puzzle

Donna Yates, who lectures in antiquities trafficking at the University of Glasgow, said she was "absolutely flabbergasted" when it emerged the Australian gallery's statue was stolen. "If you'd asked me in 2011 (before Kapoor's arrest) whether this kind of thing was still possible, I'd have said no. I believed the due diligence of museums had vastly improved," she said in a phone interview. Since the arrest, Washington has returned hundreds of artefacts recovered under Operation Hidden Idol to India.

But idols are still disappearing. This year, Philip's team arrested an art dealer in Chennai after recovering hundreds of metal and stone statues of Hindu gods from a warehouse. Yates believes the grassroots work of the IPP in documenting cases of theft and bringing them to public attention is crucial-and unmatched anywhere in the world. "The amount that they've been able to do with zero resources is amazing. It has happened nowhere else," she said.

The volunteers, who are all passionate about Indian art, go through old catalogues from auction houses, using any blemishes or imperfections to match lots with idols stolen from temples. Founded by two Singapore-based art enthusiasts, it now includes activists from all over the world. The work is unpaid, but Venkatraman says it is all worth it when an idol is returned to the temple it belongs in. "When finally the idol is restituted, the temple comes alive," he said. "It's a kind of cycle... Once that cycle is complete it's like saying, ok, the puzzle is finally solved." — AFP

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Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2017

Gosling pays tribute to Reynolds at Palm Springs Gala: 'Her work is an inspiration'

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Liwa Moreeb Dune Festival

An Emirati from the Qubaisi tribe trains falcons in the Liwa desert, some 250 kilometers west of the Gulf emirate of Abu Dhabi, during the Liwa 2017 Moreeb Dune Festival. The festival, which attracts participants from around the Gulf region, includes a variety of races (cars, bikes, falcons, camels and horses) or other activities aimed at promoting the country's folklore. — AFP (See Page 38 & 39)

With tourists scarce, Egypt struggles to maintain heritage

Lights shine on the pyramids during New Year's Day celebrations on the outskirts of Cairo, Egypt. — AFP photos

This file photo shows a general view showing the bank of the Nile River in Aswan, 900 kilometers south of the capital Cairo.

With a shaky economy following years of unrest and a huge drop in tourists, Egypt is struggling to preserve its fabled archaeological heritage. From Alexandria on the Mediterranean to the Great Pyramid of Giza-the last of the Seven Wonders of the World-and Aswan to the south, the North African country is home to impressive ancient monuments. For years, the sites were able to rely on a steady stream of ticket sales to finance their upkeep. But since Egypt's 2011 revolution, the number of tourists visiting the country has dwindled, leaving authorities scrambling to make up for lost revenues.

"Since January 2011, our revenues have fallen sharply, which had a strong effect on the state of Egyptian monuments," Antiquities Minister Khaled el-Enany told AFP. From more than 15 million in 2010, the number of tourists visiting Egypt dropped to 6.3 million in 2015. Years of political tumult after the 2011 uprising that unseated strongman Hosni Mubarak and a jihadist insurgency following the army's 2013 overthrow of his Islamist successor Mohamed Morsi have discouraged many from visiting.

Revenue from entrance tickets to historical sites dropped to about $38 million in 2015, from about $220 million in 2010. "It's catastrophic," said Fayza Haikal, an Egyptologist and professor at the American University of Cairo. Zahi Hawass, an archeologist and former antiquities minister, said the country's heritage has suffered as a result. "With the lack of funding, you cannot restore anything. Look at the Cairo museum. It's dark," he said, referring to the famed Egyptian Museum in the capital's Tahrir Square.

'Antiquities deteriorating'

"And you cannot ask the government to support you because the economy is not that good. And antiquities are deteriorating everywhere," he said. Administering the country's antiquities takes about 38,000 employees, including on-site workers, technicians, Egyptologists and inspectors, the ministry says. The government has relied on foreign handouts since Morsi's overthrow, and finally decided to float the pound last year as part of an economic reform program connected to a loan from the International Monetary Fund. An important part of an economic revival would include the return of tourism, a main hard currency earner for Egypt.

This file photo shows a general view showing a traditional building on the bank of the Nile River in Aswan, 900 kilometers south of the capital Cairo.

Until then, Enany is trying to limit the damage. "I try to do extra activities to increase revenue," he said. For example, the Egyptian Museum, home to the golden mask of Tutankhamun and mummies of pharaohs, now stays open into the night, he said. Annual passes are also available to encourage Egyptians to visit the sites. Patrons and archaeological missions still contribute to the preservation of Egypt's ancient heritage, but the funds cannot cover everything.

"Priority is given to restoration," said Haikal. "But there are excavations that have been stopped due to lack of funding." The excavations "have waited for 5,000 years and can wait," she said, but important restoration work has also been delayed. "At the very least we identify what needs restoration, and we do the minimum to keep them in a proper state."

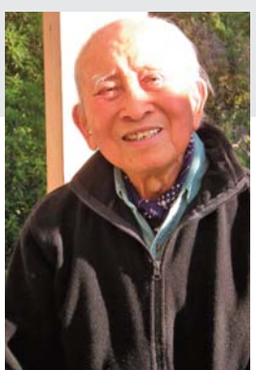
Enany is also pushing for granting public access to more sites, as was done with the recently opened tombs of Nefertari and Seti I in Luxor. The Malawi museum in the southern province of Minya has also been reopened, after a mob looted it during the bloody unrest following Morsi's overthrow. The Grand Egyptian Museum near the Giza pyramids should also be opened, at least partially, in 2018. On some projects, the ministry can get special funds, such as for recent work done on the synagogue of Alexandria and the Abu Mena church, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Hawass, who advises Enany, says the minister needs more support and also for authorities to think beyond Egypt by undertaking exhibitions abroad. "Why leave Tutankhamun in the Cairo museum, in a dark area. No one sees it," he said. "Tutankhamun can bring money!" — AFP

Legendary US cartoon artist **Tyrus Wong** dies, aged 106

Legendary animation artist Tyrus Wong, whose evocative sketches were used to create Disney's groundbreaking "Bambi" cartoon, has died at the age of 106, the company said. "Tyrus Wong had a gift for evoking incredible feeling in his art with simple, gestural composition," said a statement released by the company, where he spent a brief few years before decamping to nearby rival Warner Brothers.

"Though Tyrus worked at The Walt Disney Studios only three years, between 1938 and 1941, his influence on the artistic composition of the animated feature Bambi cannot be overstated," Disney said. "Born in Canton, China in 1910, Wong and his father immigrated to America leaving behind his mother and sister, whom they never saw again," according to an homage on Disney's website. As a young child, Wong's father nurtured his love of art by having him practice calligraphy and painting. Wong later attended the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles (now the Otis College of Art and Design) on a full scholarship.

He took a position at Disney in 1938, an "inbetweener," working on the visual continuity of animations and drawing hundreds of sketches of Mickey Mouse. When he heard that the studio was in pre-production on the feature film "Bambi," he painted several pictures of a deer in a forest. The sketches captured the attention of Walt Disney and became the template for the film's visual style, according to the Disney website, which said Wong's work influences films to this day, inspiring and leading contemporary animators. After his stint at Disney, Wong worked for the next 26 years as a concept and story artist at Warner Brothers, until he retired in 1968. — AFP



Tyrus Wong