



**Info Minister:
Kuwait backs
freedom of
expression**



**Obama admits
underestimating
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revolution
blazes on as
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**Kuwait Times
infographic:
NBA Power
Rankings**



150 FILS
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EFFORTS CONTINUE IN BID TO LIFT FREEZE ON SPORTS

MP TO DEMAND PROBE IN DEPORTATION OF OPPOSITION ACTIVIST



Min 09°
Max 24°
High Tide 08:58 & 20:33
Low Tide 02:41 & 13:44

TRUCK ATTACK KILLS 4 ISRAELI SOLDIERS

JERUSALEM: A Palestinian rammed a truck into a group of Israeli soldiers visiting a popular tourist spot in Jerusalem yesterday, killing four and wounding 17 others, authorities said. The driver was also killed at the location overlooking holy sites such as the Dome of the Rock and providing one of the most spectacular views of Jerusalem. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu alleged the attacker "supported" the Islamic State group, though he provided no details on what led to the finding.

Chaos broke out at the scene when the truck ploughed through the crowd, with hundreds of soldiers having arrived there as part of a tour for troops about the history of Jerusalem. "A lone terrorist drove his truck into a group of soldiers standing on the side of the road," police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld told reporters at the scene. "They got off the bus, and as they were getting off the bus and getting organized, he took advantage."

After claims from some that soldiers were slow to react, Israel's military distributed a video of one of its troops saying he shot after realizing it was not an accident. "An investigation is underway but this

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JERUSALEM: The covered bodies of Israeli soldiers lie on the ground as security forces and emergency personnel gather at the site of a vehicle-ramming attack yesterday. — AFP

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Two key developments happened yesterday in continued efforts to secure a temporary lifting of international suspension on Kuwaiti sports. Head of the National Assembly's sports and youth committee MP Saadoun Hammad sent two letters to the International Olympic Committee and football's controlling body FIFA, asking them to lift the suspension on Kuwaiti sports for six months until new legislation are approved by the Assembly.

Hammad sent the letters although a number of MPs said the move will have no effect on the international sports organizations because previous similar attempts had failed. IOC, FIFA and several international sports federations suspended Kuwaiti sports from international competitions in October last year over government interference. The suspension deprived Kuwait from participating in the 2016 Rio Olympics and barred the national football team from taking part in the qualifying rounds for the 2018 World Cup in Moscow.

In his letters, Hammad said the Assembly and the government are cooperating to introduce the necessary amendments to the sports laws to become compatible with international sports charters. He appealed to both bodies to cooperate with Kuwait by lifting the suspension and promised that IOC will be invited to take part in the making of the law. Meanwhile, member of the committee and opposition MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei said yesterday

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TEHRAN: In this Dec 21, 2015 file photo, former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani waves to journalists as he registers his candidacy for the elections of the Experts Assembly. — AP

FORMER IRANIAN LEADER RAFSANJANI DIES AT 82

AMIR SENDS CONDOLENCES

TEHRAN: Former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a wily political survivor and multimillionaire mogul who remained among the ruling elite despite moderate views, died yesterday, state TV reported. He was 82. Iranian media reported he suffered a heart attack and was hospitalized north of Tehran, where doctors performed CPR in vain for nearly

an hour and a half before declaring him dead. State television broke into programming to announce his death, the female newscaster's voice quivering as she read the news. She said Rafsanjani, "after a life full of restless efforts in the path of Islam and revolution, had departed for lofty heaven".

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MOROCCO CABBIES SABOTAGE UBER APP

SAUDI EMBRACE OF RIDE-HAILING APPS DRIVING CHANGE

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia hopes its plan to bring a further 1.3 million women into the workforce by 2030 will be given a lift from ride-hailing apps Uber and Dubai-based rival Careem. The cars, which the government says should only be driven by Saudi men, offer women, who are banned from driving in the conservative Muslim country, an alternative to being driven to work by chauffeurs, male relatives or the shabby taxi system. Ride-hailing apps have come under intense scrutiny from governments and regulators across the globe as they disrupt traditional taxi businesses.

But Saudi Arabia courted Uber and Careem, offering state investments, to support its Vision 2030 economic reform plan. With a budget squeezed by lower oil prices, the plan aims to draw workers away from government jobs by creating 450,000 private sector positions by 2020. Uber and Careem say they will create up to 200,000 jobs for Saudi men in the next two years. By offering women a way to get to work, it should also help meet the plan's goal of increasing the female workforce by five percentage points in the next five years to 28 percent.

"This is the next best thing to women being able to drive, because you are in control of your time, no more wasteful waiting around," said Marwa Afandi, a 36-year-old marketing executive. With the workforces of Uber and Careem easily expected to overtake the 65,000 nationals employed by state oil giant Saudi Aramco, the kingdom has invested in both companies. Saudi's sovereign wealth fund put \$3.5 billion into Uber in June 2016 while

Continued on Page 13



CASABLANCA: Moroccan taxi drivers check the Uber app as they wait for customers on Jan 6, 2017. — AFP

CASABLANCA: As their smartphone screens lit up with ride requests last month, Uber drivers in the Moroccan city of Casablanca must have thought that business was booming. Instead, they found themselves surrounded by irate local taxi drivers, who forced them from their vehicles and handed them over to the police, the latest in a string of protests in the kingdom against the controversial travel app. "After the tramway, illegal drivers and now Uber, they are trying to kill us off," said Abdelouahed, who works for a small local taxi firm.

Uber launched in Morocco's economic hub in 2015 but was banned by local authorities after just one month. It has recently found itself the target of increas-

ingly brash protests organised by owners of Casablanca's famous tomato red cabs. "When you open Uber on your phone, you see drivers swarming around you like a virus," said Nordine, a fifty-something driver sat on the hood of his taxi. "And like a virus, you need radical solutions. Trap them."

In one protest last month, dozens of taxi drivers posed as would-be passengers, flooding the app with requests before forcing the Uber drivers from their vehicles, much to the bemusement of onlookers. The management of taxis in Morocco normally falls to local government. The transport ministry has so far kept quiet as to why Uber continues to operate in the streets of Casablanca.

Continued on Page 13

IRAQ FORCES IN MOSUL PUNCH TO TIGRIS



MOSUL: An Iraqi special forces Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) member shoots at a drone flown by Islamic State militants in the Rifaq neighborhood yesterday. — AFP

ARBIL: Iraqi forces battling militants in Mosul reached the Tigris River that divides the city yesterday, a key step and a first since the launch of a huge operation in mid-October. The Islamic State group was on the back foot in Mosul after a week of significant gains for Iraqi forces but pressed a deadly campaign of bombings in Baghdad, where two more attacks killed 20 people. Elite Counter-Terrorism Forces (CTS) took control of the eastern end of the southernmost bridge in Mosul, a morale-booster in a 12-week-old operation that has encountered many difficulties.

CTS forces "reached the Tigris River from the eastern (side) of the fourth bridge," Sabah al-Noman told AFP. The news was also confirmed by Iraqi army Staff Lieutenant General Abdulamir Yarallah. Tens of thousands of Iraqi forces launched an offensive on Oct 17 to retake Mosul, the last major urban centre in Iraq

still controlled by the group that seized around a third of the country in 2014.

Several areas around the city, Iraq's second largest, were swiftly reconquered, but the elite forces that pushed into the streets of Mosul itself have faced stiffer than expected resistance. In late December, the federal advance inside the city had slowed to a crawl but a fresh coordination effort between CTS and other forces gave fresh impetus to the operation. Iraqi forces, backed by increased support from the US-led coalition that has carried out the bulk of air strikes against IS and deployed military advisers on the ground, made rapid progress in the first week of 2017.

Their push to the banks of the Tigris River yesterday marks a symbolic and tactical victory for the Iraqi forces but they have much work left to do to take full control of Mosul's eastern side.

Continued on Page 13

EGYPTIANS THROW PARTIES TO SAVE IN 'MONEY POOLS'



MINUFIYAH, Egypt: An Egyptian man blows a fireball during a wedding in this Nile Delta province on May 16, 2016. — AFP (See Page 40)



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a copy of the Public Authority for Youth's strategy in Braille text. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a copy of the Public Authority for Youth's strategy in Braille text.

AMIR RECEIVES PAY'S PLAN IN BRAILLE

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was given yesterday a copy of the Public Authority for Youth's (PAY) strategy in Braille text. After receiving Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, PAY Director General Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi and Hanan Al-Mutairi, His Highness the Amir praised the remarkable work as an effort to cater to the needs of the blind. Moreover, the meeting was also attended by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

In a statement, Hanan Al-Mutairi noted that she was honored to have met His Highness the Amir, adding that PAY's plan was issued in Braille text in order to give the blind a chance to get acquainted with PAY's goals and objectives. She also underscored that she was looking forward to be an "integral part" of PAY's projects "as active members of society."

PAY officials later presented similar copies of the strategy to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the

Crown Prince heaped praise on Mutairi for her admirable efforts to help facilitate the reading process for the blind, wishing her continued success.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Premier, as well as First Deputy Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince met with Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh and Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of condolences yesterday to Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa over the passing away of former president Mario Soares. His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister and Speaker Ghanem sent similar cables. —KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives a copy of the Public Authority for Youth's strategy in Braille text.

CONDOLENCES

Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief
Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan,
management and staff

convey their deepest condolences to

**Kamal Salman Koukash
And Hussam Koukash**

on the sad demise of
their brother

Bassam Koukash

May Allah Almighty bestow His mercy on him



KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society's Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer participates in an activity oriented to Syrian refugees in Turkey. — KUNA

KUWAIT BOOSTS AID FOR DISPLACED SYRIAN CHILDREN

ANKARA: Kuwaiti humanitarian organizations are exerting great efforts to rescue children of displaced families in Aleppo northern Syria and those seeking refuge in Turkey. Children are the most affected category in the ongoing war, especially in such low winter temperatures. Displaced Syrians are living in severe conditions lacking the basic needs of life including water, electricity, medicine and food.

There are many tragic stories that tell the suffering of Syrians in the past six years, one is of a family of six girls who lost their father in an air raid two years ago. The mother, Aisha Al-Owaily, 44, is receiving treatment for extreme tension and fatigue due to the tragedies her family had suffered. Owaily said in an interview she also lost one of her daughters at the age of 23 and her two grandsons. She added that her other daughters and grandsons were all injured in the ongoing war.

Meanwhile, head of the Syria office at Al-Rahma International Waleed Al-Suwailem said the organization is running projects for education, mental support and entertainment for Syrian children. Rahma is strongly focusing on the mental health of children who witnessed the horrors of war and death, he said,

adding that the organization has sent a specialized team of psychiatrists to carry out this duty. Moreover, it is also funding several schools in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, said Suwailem.

In the meantime, head of public relations and media department at Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Khaled Al-Zaid, said humanitarian organizations pay less attention to those displaced inside Syria, as they provide further aid and shelter to those outside. He noted that despite

the bad conditions in refugee camps outside Syria, they are still far better than those inside, which lack many basic needs of survival.

The red crescents of Kuwait, Qatar, and Turkey are providing food and blankets to displaced Syrians, he said, however, more work need to be done in cooperation with international bodies. Zaid also noted that KRCS is executing many projects to provide proper education and medical services for Syrian refugees in neighboring countries. — KUNA





President of the Union of Arab Media Women Asmaa' Habashi addresses the audience.



KUWAIT: Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Homoud Al-Sabah delivers his speech. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

MEDIA STRATEGY NECESSARY TO COMBAT CULTURAL INVASION: INFORMATION MINISTER

SHEIKH SALMAN REITERATES KUWAIT'S SUPPORT FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Kuwait supports freedom of opinion and expression and will fight violence in all its forms through a media strategy involving both public and private media organizations, a senior government official said yesterday. This strategy is needed because of the cultural and artistic invasion that affected the Arab world's television and social media, which have content of entrenched violence among young people, said Minister of Information Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Homoud Al-Sabah. "This is a real challenge that needs to stop, as it has become a security burden before being a social problem," he added.

Sheikh Salman, also Minister of State for Youth Affairs, made his statements during a conference that kicked off yesterday at Crowne Plaza Hotel under the theme 'Media and Violence.' He attended the event on behalf of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The event is the first of its kind to be organized by the Union of Arab Media Women.

Noble mission

Sheikh Salman pointed out that the media's



Vice President of the Union of Arab Media Women in Kuwait Raba'a Hussein Makki speaks during the event.

role is not limited to presenting news and entertainment, but also has a noble mission, which is to serve the community by providing educational and intellectual awareness to enrich the human mind to participate in construction and development. "Its mission is also to face all shapes and

forms of corruption, which is achieved with the development of civilization and societal stability that we cannot find in a place where violence or ideology is adopted within a society of tolerance, brotherhood and peace." He said that His Highness the Prime Minister hopes that the conference will come out with recommendations that would support the message of confronting the ideology of violence and extremism.

Vice President of the Union of Arab Media Women in Kuwait Raba'a Hussein Makki said Kuwait always supports any Arab action that enhances the nation, strengthens ties and boosts prosperity and development. "Everyone believes that the media has become very influential. There are a lot of people who use the media to broadcast dangerous and toxic political, social and religious views and ideas that are suspicious and distorted. Some media aim to promote and strengthen community ties, while others do not," she said.

Dream come true

President of the Union of Arab Media Women Asmaa' Habashi said the union is a dream come true and has become a presence in the Arab media arena by marking various events and occasions such as celebrating Arab women on Women's Day and honoring women elite who are outstanding in various fields. She added that the union has held training sessions for affiliates in partnership with development institutions and media events for many festivals, including the Arab Women's Festival and the Arab Fashion Capital.

She noted that this conference is the result of what Arab communities are witnessing in political instability, which is the reason for the increase in the frequency and level of violence suffered by society as a whole. Women suffer more being the weakest link. "As media presenters, we must face violence against Arab women by evaluating media content that promote sexual violence, killing and kidnapping," she said.



A number of female media personalities are honored during the conference.

KUWAITI FM MEETS WITH SAUDI MINISTER

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met yesterday with visiting Saudi Minister of State for Arabian Gulf Affairs at the Foreign Ministry Thamer Al-Sabhan.

The meeting was also attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's Office Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser

Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar.

In other news, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled received a message from Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Salaheddine Mezouar. The message deals with means of cementing the solid and historical relations between the two states at various levels. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Saudi Minister of State for Arabian Gulf Affairs at the Foreign Ministry Thamer Al-Sabhan. — KUNA

CORRECTION

KUWAIT: In a news report published in last Saturday's issue titled 'Gulf Bank sets Guinness Record for Cash Award', Gulf Bank's General Manager of Human Resources

Salma Al-Hajaj was mistakenly referred to as 'Public Relations Officer'. We apologize for any inconveniences that this error might have caused.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّسِيبُ الْمُسْتَرْجِعِي دِيَارِي الْبَيْتِ مِنْ صَيْبَةِ فَارِجِي فِي عِيَادِي وَدَارِجِي جَنِّي
صَدِّقَ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ

Condolences

The Board of Directors of Zain Group, Executive Management and all employees of the company convey their sincere condolences and sympathy to

Asaad Ahmed Al Banwan

Chairman of the Board

On the demise of his uncle

Hamad Mohammed AlMarei

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

WORKERS UNION RESPONDS TO KAC STATEMENT; SIT-IN STILL UNDERWAY

SEVERAL MPs TO JOIN PROTEST

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways' labor union issued a statement yesterday confirming plans to stage a sit-in today despite a statement from the company a few days ago urging them to call off their protest. The union is protesting what it describes as violation of the rights of some Kuwaiti pilots who say that they have lost their benefits following the carrier's privatization procedures. Kuwait Airways Company (KAC) denied in a statement last Thursday any wrongdoings in terms of the workers' transfer procedures, but the union responded yesterday and accused KAC management of lack of transparency, and sending contradictory messages on whether the carrier has fully been privatized or remains under the state's control.

Several MPs are expected to join the sit-in that is reportedly going to take place outside Kuwait Airway's building. The workers claim that KAC has violated their rights by canceling some of the privileges they enjoy as public service employees while the carrier is still yet to become fully privatized. They also argue that forcing them to sign papers by which they become eligible to transfer to other state departments is illegal.

Following closely

Meanwhile, Secretary General of Petroleum and Petrochemical Industry Workers Union Hazim Al-Enezi said his union is following closely happenings at Kuwait Airways in the form of arguments

and undermining the rights of national labor and marginalizing the union's role and ignoring its demands. "KAC should not take this role lightly, especially since aviation is among the sensitive and vital sectors that must be the focus of state officials to safeguard the national economy and daily aviation operations," he said.

Enezi said the union's announcement to hold a sit-in at the KAC headquarters came after exhausting all available means for the union and workers in receiving their incentives and rights, which they did not demand until after they were sure that they deserve them. Enezi said the KAC management must accept the union's demands by forming a special committee to negotiate with the union's management and reduce tensions.

He said the random employment policy behind closed doors based on influence and high salaries is unfair towards nationally qualified workers from within KAC, who are more efficient in leading their sector due to their experience in this field. Employment from outside will make bad things worse and take the aviation sector into uncharted territory and deteriorating service, and restoring Kuwait aviation to what it was before. He said taking a lead in development, dominance and international competition only comes with the choice of the right person in the right place. Enezi said his union supports demands of KAC workers and expresses hope that KAC understands workers' demands and its serious attempts to resolve and contain the problem.

Pollution allowances

In other news, the Union of Workers at the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) asked the Civil Service Commission to approve risk and pollution allowance for all workers at electric power stations, who are working under pressure and in high magnetic fields, in addition to pollution, incendiary chemicals and a nitrogen stock that is dangerous to lives and safety of workers at all stations. Secretary General of MEW's Union Nawaf Buyabes said the Civil Service Commission (CSC) did not do justice to a large number of workers at the power stations when it approved risk allowances for certain departments and rejected it for others, although the nature of work is the same for all. Buyabes said the work being done by workers at power stations is a great one and deserves more than just allowances that took a long time to approve although they are as low as KD 30-35.

Power restored

The appeals court ruled to restore power to a violating house after MEW cut electricity to the building, then refused to restore it. Lawyer Nasser Al-Ajmi filed a complaint on behalf of his client, because power supply cannot be interrupted without a court ruling.

Housing projects

Director of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) Bader Al-Wuqayan asked for allocating the site adjacent to West Abdullah Al-Mubarak project to the PAHW. He said that there is an area that is

adjacent to the project that can be used to increase the number of housing lots. In other news, Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh asked Kuwait Municipality to send the time schedule for the start and end of infrastructure works for blocks 3 and 4 in Khaitan. Saleh said the finance ministry wrote to the municipality on Sept 27, 2016, but did not receive an answer so far. Assistant Undersecretary for State Property Affairs Adel Al-Manae wrote to the municipality director about developing and upgrading infrastructure for state lots that are to be sold in a public auction.

Construction violations

Municipality Director General Mohammad Al-Manfouhi issued a circular stating that the new municipality law 33/2016 is now active and tackles violations in construction, and stipulates severe punishments for engineering offices, engineers or supervisors who build without a license. It includes a minimum fine of KD 5,000 and a maximum fine of KD 10,000, revoking the engineering office's license and deporting non-Kuwaiti violators administratively.

Financial hub

Kuwait Municipality will put forward five development projects to contribute to making Kuwait a financial and commercial hub. These projects are the solid waste factory, a culture center in Egaila, Abdullah Al-Ahmad Street, Jahra seafont and Khuwaisat project, all according to the public-private-partnership (PPP) system.



ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION VIOLATIONS REMOVED

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality's public relations department said two real estate owners removed violations after receiving warnings about illegal constructions which included building a service floor and a suspended floor that were not in agreement with the construction plans. The irregularities were discovered during a recent cam-

paign in Salmiya that saw the issuance of six citations related to additional constructions at buildings.

Liquor possession

Police patrols arrested an Asian man with possession of 56 bottles suspected of containing liquor. The suspect, an Indian, was sent with the bottles to concerned authorities.

Meeting

A coordination meeting was held at the office of the comprehensive court president Adel Buresli along with Director General of the Investigations Department Maj Gen Dr Fahd Al-Dousary, deputy director generals and heads of the prosecution. The meeting resulted in simplifying procedures for misdemeanors and traffic accidents.



KUWAITI PROJECTS AUTHORITY RECEIVES TENDERS FOR MANAGING SUBSCRIPTION

KUWAIT: The Public-Private Partnership Projects Authority declared yesterday it received five tenders from local banks and financial companies to manage public subscription of the First North Al-Zour Company shares. The authority said in a statement that the stocks, picked up for the public subscription, amounts to 50 percent of the company's capital, at a nominal value of 100 fils per share.

The bidding companies are the National Investment Company, Kamco Investment Company, the International House, the Kuwaiti Financial Center and the Kuwaiti Company for Financing and Investment. The tendering was conducted accord-

ing to the Law 39/2010, stipulating terms for establishing Kuwaiti shareholding companies, to be tasked with building hydroelectric stations, and its amendments, incorporating call among citizens for subscribing. A consultancy commission will be in charge of examining bidders' qualifications and eligibility of citizens who would buy the stakes.

The first phase of the project for producing electricity and desalinating water is run by a consortium. The station's commercial operation began on November 26. It has a capacity of minimum 1,500 MW and produces no less than 102 and no more than 107 imperial gallons of desalinated water. —KUNA



KUWAIT: EPA Chairman Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and Director of a Fraunhofer branch Dr Andreas Horning sign the deal. —KUNA

EPA SIGNS WASTE DISPOSAL DEAL WITH GERMAN FIRM

KUWAIT: The Environment Public Authority has signed a contract for a project to form a comprehensive database on waste management in the country, in collaboration with Germany's Fraunhofer Institute for Environmental, Safety and Energy Technology (UMSICHT).

In a statement to the press after signing the deal yesterday, EPA Chairman and Director General Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said that the project comprises efforts to abide by environmental protection laws, which entail constant inspection to ensure environmental conservation.

Moreover, he added that Kuwait can no longer withstand waste piles as a result of scarce land, noting that around a million tons of waste is produced annually, with 88 percent of it being non-recyclable. On the environment protection laws, the EPA Chairman said the laws have been enacted to help draw a roadmap on how to better deal with mounting waste.

Meanwhile, Director of a Fraunhofer branch Dr Andreas Horning described the project as a creative and ambitious one, noting that part of the project includes continuous online inspection of waste management.

He also touted Fraunhofer as a leading research-based organization that is well-versed in waste management as the EPA stands to gain from such expertise. Horning foreboded that with similar waste disposal projects, there will be a palpable amelioration in environmental conditions in the country, which will help bring EPA's strategy of waste management to fruition. —KUNA



KUWAIT: The International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) hosted a charity bazar yesterday at its building for carpets made by Syrian refugees in refugee camps. Returns of the bazar, which was organized in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration, will go for Syrian refugees. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Legalese

RESIGNATION

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

I know the employment law is a recurring topic for me to write about and for my readers, but I still get a concerning amount of queries and even more employment cases at court. It is very disappointing to see foreign employees not being treated well and being taken advantage of, when they have not done anything wrong. There are amazing employers out there that treat their employees with love and respect as if they are family. I do not want to make anyone fearful, but I want to write about preventive measures that you can take to avoid such issues in the future.

'Not resigning properly'

Question: I have resigned but I am now being sued for not resigning properly and I do not understand the situation. I clearly remember giving in my resignation. What can I do?

Fajer: Before I can answer your question on what you can do now, I want to talk about what you could have done when you were giving in your resignation. Always make sure of the following:

1. Your resignation needs to be signed by both parties.
2. It needs to be stamped.
3. There should be proof of receipt.
4. Do not resign because of pressure - instead, ask for a termination.

You are not being sued for not resigning properly, but probably for not terminating your contract legally, as maybe your contract got renewed. Let me give an example of a client I had last week. He resigned, but he did not do it properly, so his employer turned around and said - you have not resigned and therefore you owe us money till the end of your contract because your contract renewed automatically.

Now if you are being sued because your resignation letter was not drafted properly, this means your employer knows that your termination letter will not hold up in court. Unfortunately and fortunately, companies have a lot more power and are more aware of the legal situations, and have experience in court. Of course, there are many companies out there that do treat their employees with respect and are fair. But it is better that you are aware of your situation, and I suggest regardless of how your employer treats you, always protect yourself.

Now if you are being sued, or more correctly, there is a legal complaint against you at the shuoon (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor), you need to hire a lawyer. I know lawyers can be expensive, but it is better to do it the right way. Talk to your lawyer about your financial situation and even more importantly what you would like to get out of.

The consequences

Question: It is a shame that I am being sued when I did not do anything wrong, and I cannot leave the country. I do not understand what are the consequences.

Fajer: It depends on what evidence they have against you, even if it is not genuine. For example, if you do not have proof that you resigned - let us say you resigned via a text message or an email that is no longer there or you do not have access to, or a termination letter that is not signed, then unfortunately, your employer has leverage against you. They can block you from traveling, they can ask you to pay amounts (I have spoken about this) and they can make sure you do not get transferred to any other employer in Kuwait.

I know as a lawyer I am always discussing worst-case scenarios and not entirely positive things, but I want you all to know that there are a lot of nice people out there who commit acts of kindness. Please do your research before taking any steps.

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



An artist's rendition of the Silk City project.

GOVT, PARLIAMENT AGREE TO SET UP SILK CITY BILL TEAM

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah said yesterday he agreed with the parliamentary financial and economic committee to set up a joint technical team to look into a draft law on the Silk City

Authority. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah made the remark to reporters following a relevant parliamentary meeting, saying that the meeting aimed at presenting the government's role in the bill. He added that the parliamentary

committee had voiced concerns over the new authority's power and competence as per the bill. The minister noted that the government would pursue meetings with the parliamentary committee over the draft law in the coming months. — KUNA

BOEING SPONSORS KU'S LEADING ENGINEERING DESIGN EVENT

KUWAIT: Boeing Company is sponsoring the 31st engineering design exhibition of the graduates of the College

of Engineering and Petroleum, Kuwait University (KU), due on 18-19 January, KU said yesterday. This is part of the partnership between Boeing and KU, the statement added.

Boeing seeks to boost efficiencies, scientific and technological progress worldwide, including Kuwait, through developing human resources and establishing strong partnerships and technology transfer, the statement said. It quoted the president of Boeing Middle East, North Africa and Turkey Bernie Dunn, who said that the company seeks to fulfill such expectations through creating solid partnerships in

Kuwait, and the region at large, through a series of programs for promoting human resources and transferring knowledge and technology.

Meanwhile, head of the College's engineering training department Dr Ali Hajja said that Boeing always supports scientific knowledge of young graduates through various programs, and helps them keep close contact with latest relevant techniques through meetings with the company's senior officials and experts. Up to 320 students, males and females, are taking part in the exhibition through 80 projects. — KUNA



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Crime

Report

'LEVEL ONE' SECURITY THREAT AT DETECTIVES DEPARTMENT

KUWAIT: Security was increased around the Criminal Detectives General Department, and special security arrangements were made at its offices in all governorates after the alert level was raised to level one after receiving intelligence about terrorist threats against the criminal security sector. Security sources said the interior ministry raised its alert to grade one as a precautionary measure. The source said the measures impose tight security around places mentioned in the intelligence reports, adding that among such measures are making sure about identities of citizens and expats being questioned by detectives and at police stations. The source said detectives are keeping a close eye on any unusual movements around criminal detectives' offices and are carrying loaded weapons as a precautionary measure.

Mysterious fall

Criminal detectives are working on solving the mystery of the death of a female citizen who fell from the 10th floor of a building in Fintas, leaving some belongings and clothes behind. Detectives who went to the roof found the citizen's civil ID, which revealed she was in her 40s. The building's haris (janitor) said he had never seen the woman before, nor did any of the residents. Detectives who started an investigation believe the woman may have been on the roof of the building for a long time.

Suicide

An Egyptian man aged 52 hanged himself to death at a bachelors' residence in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. His body was found by a roommate, and was recovered by the coroner. Detectives are investigating the case.

Search for thief son

A female citizen discovered that gold jewelry worth KD 6,000 were missing from the safe. When she questioned the maid, she accused the son of her sponsor of the theft, claiming she saw him do it. The citizen went to Ardhiya police station and lodged a complaint against her son, who ignored her calls. Detectives are looking for him. - Translated from the Arabic press

HOSPITALS PRIVATE ROOM FEES TO INCREASE TOO

KUWAIT: The health ministry plans to increase charges for private rooms at hospitals and specialized centers. A high-ranking source said the increase will be 200 percent for citizens and expats - at KD 3 for citizens and KD 15 for expats per day, as the current fees are KD 1 for citizens and KD 15 for expats. Increase for bedoons (stateless) will be the same as Kuwaitis. - Al-Anbaa



الجريدة

Al-Jarida

ABUL QA'QA', A TOURIST GUIDE

By Salah Al-Sayer

Years ago, several Europeans working in oil companies were kidnapped in Yemen. Such kidnappings often take place after receiving the tribes' approval in order to blackmail foreign companies drilling for oil in that place. I sarcastically wrote about the 'Terrorism Tourism' before, saying that one can travel for various reasons such as religion, health or touristic adventures by visiting tribes-controlled regions to get kidnapped.

A few days ago, a joke was circulated about a young man named Abul Qa'qa' who was affected by the extremist ideas. He texted his friend saying that he was going to join the Mujahideen and invited him to go along. "Next time brother. I have just returned from Bangkok," his friend replied. This clearly means that taking part in terrorist operations is a sort of recreation, fun or tourism for some young people. Tunisian national

Anees Al-Ammari, known as 'Berlin Cutthroat', had reportedly consumed liquor and toured three European countries before committing his bloody crime, as if it was listed on his touristic activities' agenda.

Terrorism is committed to steam out one's inner anger

Family members of the 'Berlin Cutthroat' told the press that he had been feeling down, stressed out, nervous, angry and disappointed; all aspects that had a direct relation to the crime. Terrorism is committed to steam out one's inner anger. Quoting a car racing enthusiast talking about the reason why he loved such a dangerous sport, he said that "it is a way to steam out my anger and make me happy while I try to control the rebellious monster inside of me." Another girl who loves thrilling games in amusement parks said that it alters her mode and makes it better, and that it helps her get rid of negative energy.

—Translated by Kuwait Times

الجريدة

Al-Jarida

'NEGATIVE PHENOMENA'

By Iqbal Al-Ahmad

It is true that we are disappointed by those who voted for the creation of the negative phenomena committee in the National Assembly; a panel created by those who we can call 'MPs of gloom', and others we had a lot of faith in. I am not blaming those who were happy with this proposal, but I blame those in whom we placed our hope, and do you know why? Not because they voted for the committee, but because they voted without inquiring about the meaning of negative phenomena, so that they can convince us that this committee's goal is to 'serve' and 'help' as the interior minister proclaimed.

Dos negative phenomena include women who are not covering their hair?

Is negative phenomena a bribe, corruption or wasta? I believe that those topics will for sure be ignored because the committee was not formed to deal with such issues. Or is it about having a Christmas tree and congratulating Christians, since such practice is considered a sin in the view of the committee's creators?

Dos negative phenomena include women who are not covering their hair? Or is it the youth going astray due to the administration's failure in finding jobs for them? Does the rise in drug use's rates classify under this category too? When male and female university students sit in the same hall together, is that considered a negative phenomenon? I am sure this resembles a priority for the committee's creators, whereas their list of priorities probably does not include the problem of placing the wrong person in an important place.

Cracked streets, flying gravel, waste, water pollution and spread of corruption; are those included in their list of priorities? I salute the new youth MPs at the Assembly, including Ahmad Al-Fadhil, Rakan Al-Nisf, Youssef Al-Fadhala and Khaled Al-Shatti, who insisted to reject this dishonorable committee. But it seems that the ministers voting in favor of the committee proved that the government itself is a negative phenomenon.

—Translated by Kuwait Times



EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS, TRANSFORMATIONAL GROWTH RECORDED BY KUWAIT AIRWAYS IN 2016

KUWAIT: As Kuwait Airways, the official national carrier of the State of Kuwait, enters its 64th year of operations - the oldest single-state national carrier in the GCC region - the pioneering spirit of the airline saw a resurgence in 2016, with its iconic Bluebird emblem certainly appearing to soar once more.

The year 2016 witnessed a number of key achievements followed by rapid growth for the airline, signaling a commitment from both the management and stakeholders to position Kuwait's official national carrier in line with global and regional developments in the aviation sector.

The catalyst for this change was the culmination of the development and introduction of Kuwait Airways' five-year "Transformation Strategy". Officially announced on 3rd September 2016, the planning stages for this strategy had been set in motion when Rasha Al-Roumi, Chairperson and CEO, was appointed - along with a new senior management team - in 2014.

The new strategy has seen a radical change in the carrier's goals, across all its operational, commercial and service areas. The primary aim, according to airline sources, is to introduce a new business model and corporatized "culture of excellence" that will allow the airline to compete within the regional aviation industry. A consequence and by-product of such actions, is also the restoring of a sense of domestic and international pride, in Kuwait's official national carrier.

So, how has Kuwait Airways gone about addressing its core challenges and looked to set itself out on this journey of change, in 2016? Well, first it should be understood that the changes being seen at Kuwait Airways have been looked at from a comprehensive

review of all its business activities, flight schedules, staffing requirements and training, product and service offerings, business and subsidiary partner relations, as well as stakeholder engagement - among many other operational areas.

"The Transformation Strategy is a holistic approach to addressing key challenges that have been faced by the airline and is a detailed roadmap identifying the key milestones and goals we need to achieve over the next five years, in what is a very competitive market," says Roumi.

New Livery

Launched in October 2016, the airline's reveal of a new livery and branded identity was, perhaps, one of the biggest external signals that a sea-change of activity was happening at Kuwait Airways. According to Roumi, however, the livery is not just a "cosmetic change", but rather: "One of the first steps on a journey of transformation."

That said, the fresh, dynamic look of the new livery does indicate a statement of intent by the airline, but how is this outward change being reflected within the structure of the organization?

Winter Schedule

At the end of October 2016 and for the first time in Kuwait Airways' history, the airline introduced a major overhaul of its flight scheduling, resulting in a number of immediate operational and customer-relevant changes that have already borne fruit.

With the introduction of better flight timings, across its whole network of 36 destinations, the official national carrier also turned all-but-one of its routes into direct, non-stop

flights - thereby reducing flight and connection times for its passengers. This was most positively received by passengers on Kuwait Airways' Paris, Rome, Bangkok and Manila routes. In terms of operations, the Winter Schedule also saw an average 15 percent increase on flight frequencies across its network. This has, in turn, been another factor in increasing passenger numbers and increasing market share, from the airline's home market.

Strategic partnerships

With the new international airport still several years away, Kuwait Airways has been working closely with Kuwait International Airport to manage the increase in its passenger numbers and to offer better services and convenience to all its customers.

To this end, Kuwait Airways now has dedicated gates allocated just for Kuwait Airways, which are suitable for the new fleet of wide-bodied aircraft. Much like other national carriers operating from their main domestic hub, there will also be a Kuwait Airways Terminal that will be exclusively for Kuwait Airways passengers and aircraft.

In further support of an enhanced passenger experience, Kuwait Airways also announced, in Q4 2016, that it has signed an agreement with Amadeus to overhaul its booking and reservations, with the soon to be introduced PPS (Pre-flight Planning System).

The introduction of Amadeus' Performance Insight Suite technology will be the first of its kind to be used by an airline, in the Middle East. The cut-over from the legacy system to the new PPS is expected in Q2 2017.

With this new technology, Kuwait Airways will be able to track the number of bookings it has from Kuwait City to any of its destinations

and then understand how many passengers on a particular route were booked through travel agencies located in that city or country. Tactical insights of this type will, therefore, allow Kuwait Airways to compare booking and sales against their target or historical performance.

New Fleet

With a stated aim of having the youngest commercial airline fleet, by 2021, Kuwait Airways welcomed the first of 10 Boeing 777-300ER aircraft into its fleet, on 9th December 2016. The first of a total of 35 new aircraft on order, Kuwait Airways' new look fleet will also consist of 10 Airbus A350 and 15 Airbus A320neo.

The second of the extended-range "triple-sevens" arrived on 1st January 2017, with all 10 due to be in service by the end of Q3 2017.

The new fleet will initially serve existing long-haul destinations such as London, New York, Paris and Bangkok. The acquisition of these 13,360km (max.) range aircraft will also offer Kuwait Airways the option, in the future, of opening up new and profitable routes to destinations worldwide - via non-stop flights.

In profit by 2019

Announced in December 2016, Roumi has indicated that, on its current trajectory, Kuwait Airways Company (KAC) would reach profitability in 2019. This is attributed to a "financial methodology" that is now in place to reduce costs and raise the company's revenue.

This is yet another positive signal to both stakeholders and would-be investors, in terms of the airline's ongoing privatization process. The successful implementation of the airline's migration to a corporate and privatized structure will also be a clear benchmark for other

Kuwaiti companies, further inviting investor confidence in the State of Kuwait as a whole - not just for the airline.

Gains, Increases and Consolidation So, what are the positive indicators being seen that are supporting Kuwait Airways' resurgence, in 2016? First and foremost, an airline survives by attracting and sustaining its passenger numbers. This was done in spectacular style by Kuwait Airways, in 2016, with an increase of 26.1 percent in passengers handled, over the previous year. This is well above IATA's average growth figures, for the Middle East region, which stands at five percent, for the same period.

In terms of domestic market share, there was also another significant rise. With figures for 2015 showing that 23 percent of passengers travelling through Kuwait International Airport flew Kuwait Airways; by the end of 2016 this had risen by 11 percent to a total of 32 percent.

In terms of regions served by the airline's network, Kuwait Airways also saw a five percent increase in market share to the Far East and Europe, respectively, and a 20 percent increase to North America.

Of course, there are a number of factors driving this success and among them are the flight frequency increases and new routes added to the network. This is reinforced by the airline's focus on destinations that achieve profitability throughout the year and strengthen the revenue and profit rate for each internationally-based Kuwait Airways station.

Since the start of the Winter Schedule to the end of 2016, Kuwait Airways has also seen a 12 percent increase to its OTPs (On-Time Performance); taking it up into the higher echelons of aviation industry standards.



French FM to bolster 'strategic partnership' with India visit

PORTUGAL'S DEMOCRACY FOUNDER MARIO SOARES DIES AGED 92

SUICIDE ATTACKS KILL 20 IN EASTERN BAGHDAD

SERIES OF ATTACKS KILL MORE THAN 80 IN A WEEK

BAGHDAD: Suicide bombs at two marketplaces in Baghdad, one of them claimed by Islamic State, killed at least 20 people yesterday, police and medics said, the latest in a spate of militant attacks in the Iraqi capital that have left dozens dead. In the first blast, the attacker drove an explosives-rigged car into a large vegetable market in the mainly Shi'ite district of Jamila, and detonated it after security forces opened fire to try to stop the vehicle, police sources said.

A suicide bomber wearing an explosive vest blew himself up a few hours later at a market in the mostly Shi'ite Baladiyat district. The first blast killed 13, and the second blast killed seven people. More than 50 were wounded. Islamic State claimed carrying out the first attack in an online statement, saying the bomber had targeted "a gathering of Shi'ites" in Jamila. A series of attacks in Baghdad and other Iraqi cities have killed more than 80 people in just over a week.

Several have been claimed by the Sunni extremist Islamic State, which is coming under increasing pressure from a US-backed offensive in Mosul, its last major stronghold in Iraq. Iraqi forces advanced to within several hundred meters of the Tigris river than runs through Mosul on Saturday, as their operation against the militants gathers pace. Islamic State is likely to resort to bomb attacks and similar tactics elsewhere in Iraq as it is driven out of its Mosul stronghold.

Iraqi forces have pushed IS out of much of the territory it once held, but this bombing and the many others that have preceded it highlight the danger the jihadists can pose to civilians even as they lose ground. "A soldier at the gate of Jamila market opened fire on a suicide car bomb after noticing a suspect vehicle but the terrorist blew up his car," interior ministry spokesman Saad Maan said.

Operation recapture

A police colonel and a hospital official said at least 12 people were killed and 39 wounded. Maan said the soldier who opened fire on the attacker was among the wounded. Jamila is the main wholesale vegetable market in Baghdad and lies in Sadr City, a vast,

mostly Shiite neighborhood in the northeast of the capital which has been repeatedly targeted. IS issued an online statement claiming the attack, using a nom de guerre indicating the bomber was Iraqi and saying that he targeted members of Iraq's Shiite Muslim majority, whom the jihadists consider heretics.

IS claimed an attack on January 2 — also in Sadr City — when a suicide bomber blew up a vehicle packed with explosives among a crowd of day laborers waiting for work, killing 35 people. The jihadists overran large areas north and west of Baghdad in a swift 2014 offensive that swept through security forces unprepared for the assault. The number of bombings in the capital declined following the June 2014 offensive, apparently because the jihadists were occupied with holding territory they seized and later defending against Iraqi attacks.

Federal forces and units from Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region have since pushed IS back in a series of battles over a period of more than two years. On October 17, Iraqi forces launched a massive operation to recapture Mosul, now the country's last city in which IS holds significant ground. Iraqi forces punched into the city from the east, retook a series of neighborhoods, and are now approaching the Tigris River, which divides the city into its eastern and western sides. The western side, which is the smaller but more densely populated of the two, remains entirely under IS control.

Iraqi forces have also launched an operation to recapture IS-held towns near the Syrian border in Anbar province that along with Mosul and the northern town of Tal Afar are among the last populated areas under jihadist control. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said in late December that three months were needed to eliminate IS in the country. But even if the jihadists no longer openly hold territory, they can still strike at Iraqi civilians and security forces using bombings and hit-and-run attacks. —Agencies



IRAQ: Citizens inspect the scene after a car bomb explosion at a crowded outdoor market in the Iraqi capital's eastern district of Sadr City, Iraq, yesterday. —AP

OBAMA ADMITS UNDERESTIMATING IMPACT OF RUSSIAN HACKING

WASHINGTON: President Barack Obama yesterday admitted that he "underestimated" the impact misinformation and hacking can have on democracies, a remark that follows an intelligence report on Russian meddling in the US presidential election. In an interview on ABC's "This Week," Obama also warned his Republican successor Donald Trump, who takes office in less than two weeks, about the difference between governing and campaigning, saying the president-elect won't be able to run his presidency "the way you would manage a family business."

The interview, which was taped Friday, took place the same day that US intelligence agencies released an unprecedented report saying Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a campaign of hacking, leaking, and media manipulation

aimed at undermining the presidential campaign of Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton and boosting Trump. Although Obama said he was not taken in by Russian hostility to the United States, "I think that I underestimated the degree to which, in this new information age, it is possible for misinformation for cyber hacking and so forth to have an impact on our open societies, our open systems, to insinuate themselves into our democratic practices in ways that I think are accelerating."

Obama ordered the intelligence report, released to the public Friday, partly "to make sure that we understand this is something that Putin has been doing for quite some time in Europe, initially in the former satellite states where there are a lot of Russian speakers, but increasingly in Western democracies." "We have to pay attention," he said of upcoming elections in European ally nations, warning of possible interference. Russia initially aimed its unprecedented cyber campaign at damaging a potential Clinton presidency, and then turned to supporting Trump after a victory by the real estate billionaire appeared possible, the report from the Director of National Intelligence said.

Trump, who met the country's leading intelligence agency chiefs to hear the full report, has accepted the possibility of Moscow's involvement in hacking

US targets, including the Democratic National Committee, but rejected the conclusion that Russia interfered in the election. He has also ridiculed US intelligence agencies over their findings and promised he would establish closer ties to Moscow. Obama urged him "to develop a strong relationship with the intelligence community."

"If we're not vigilant foreign countries can have an impact on the political debate in the United States in ways that might not have been true 10, 20, 30 years ago in part because of the way news is transmitted and in part because so many people are skeptical of mainstream news organizations," he said. "In that kind of environment, where there's so much skepticism about information that's coming in, we're going to have to spend a lot more time thinking about how do we protect our democratic process." Obama also emphasized focusing "a lot more" on cyber security.

'Cordial' talks with Trump

Obama described his talks with the incoming president as "cordial." "He has been open to suggestions," he added, describing Trump as "very engaging and gregarious." "I've enjoyed the conversations that we've had. He is somebody who I think is not lacking in confidence," which is "probably a prerequisite for the job."

However, Obama believes Trump "has not spent a lot of time sweating the details" of policies, something he said could be "both a strength and a weakness." "If it gives him fresh eyes, then that can be valuable. But it also requires you knowing what you don't know and putting in place people who do have the kinds of experience and background and knowledge that can inform good decision making," he said.

Obama also weighed in on Trump's constant use of Twitter. "Clearly this worked for him, and it gives him a direct connection to a lot of the people that voted for him," he said. But when Trump becomes president, he cautioned, "there are world capitals and financial markets and people all around the world who take really seriously what he says, and in a way that's just not true before you're actually sworn in as president." —AFP

ISRAEL ARRESTS AFTER PROTESTS AGAINST SOLDIER'S CONVICTION

JERUSALEM: Israeli police made seven arrests overnight following an unruly protest against the manslaughter conviction of a soldier for shooting dead a wounded Palestinian assailant, police said yesterday. Those detained are accused of public order offences during a demonstration outside the Jerusalem residence of President Reuven Rivlin following a reconciliation rally in Tel Aviv. An eighth person was arrested on charges of seeking to disrupt Saturday's rally in the commercial capital.

Another was detained on suspicion of taking part in a hate campaign against armed forces chief of staff Lieutenant General Gadi Eisenkot, who ordered the prosecution of Sergeant Elor Azaria that angered many on the Israeli right.

"During the night dozens of demonstrators arrived opposite the president's residence where they wanted to carry out an illegal protest in support of the soldier Elor Azaria," a police statement said. "Some of them blocked the road and refused to obey police instructions. Seven demonstrators were arrested for breach of public order."

Since a military court found Azaria guilty on Wednesday, there has been a wave of public protest and threats against officials involved in the prosecution of the 20-year-old French-Israeli infantryman. After the verdict was read out, protesters scuffled with police outside military headquarters in Tel Aviv. Radio and television channels broadcast recordings of the demonstrators chanting that the chief

staff should beware unless he wanted to share the fate of prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated by a Jewish extremist in 1995.

"Gadi, Gadi be careful, Rabin is looking for a friend," they shouted. Saturday's unity rally, convened after a moving Facebook appeal by reserve Captain Ziv Shilon, was held in Tel Aviv's Rabin Square. Azaria's conviction has deeply divided Israeli public opinion between those who believe he was wrongly tried and those who say the conviction was the right and proper consequence of his actions. Right-wing politicians including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have already called for Azaria to be pardoned, even though he has yet to be sentenced and his lawyers say he may appeal. He

faces up to 20 years in prison. Public radio said about 1,500 people gathered in Rabin Square following the appeal by Shilon, who was seriously wounded in 2012 by a Palestinian roadside bomb as he patrolled Israel's border with Gaza.

Unity rally marred

Shilon said he was appalled at the wave of hate unleashed in the wake of the verdict against Azaria, caught on video delivering a shot to the head of a Palestinian attacker as he lay wounded on the ground. But even the attempt at reconciliation was marred by a small but vocal group of Azaria supporters who screamed abuse at other participants they perceived as being insufficiently sympathetic. "You are the cancer of the country," they were heard

shouting in radio reports. "You have no right to exist."

Earlier in the week, police arrested two people in connection with online death threats against a military judge and other officials. Another two, both minors, were arrested on suspicion of daubing graffiti, including calls to kill Arabs and police officers. Israel's military has assigned bodyguards to all three judges who convicted Azaria. "I feel that our people are divided, hurting, hating, disappointed, desperate," Shilon posted on Thursday. "I who did not cry at moments that were so hard that I would not wish them on anyone today I just cried," he said. "I cried for the hands I left behind in Gaza and I asked myself, perhaps for the first time, was it worth fighting for a people that hates itself?"—AFP

IRAN'S ROUHANI CLASHES WITH JUDICIARY IN RUN-UP TO VOTE

TEHRAN: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani has clashed with the country's powerful and conservative judiciary, in a rare public row as tensions rise ahead of this year's presidential election. The moderate Rouhani, who is expected to stand for a second four-year term in the May vote, has targeted the judiciary in a series of public statements over the case of a billionaire businessman on death row for corruption.

Judiciary chief Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani has hit back with accusations of his own, and yesterday supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei made reference to the dispute. In a speech to thousands of people in the religious city of Qom, Khamenei alluded to "recent arguments" among powerful figures, adding: "This will be resolved with the help of God." Rouhani launched the first salvo in a speech late last month referring to the case of Babak Zanjani, sentenced to death for fraud and other financial crimes in March after a lengthy trial that saw him convicted of fraudulently pocketing \$2.8 billion.

Zanjani was arrested in 2013, three months after Rouhani took office pledging a crackdown on corruption. He rose to prominence after sanctions were imposed on Iran over its nuclear programme, boasting in media interviews of finding ways around banking restrictions to ensure Tehran continued to receive money for international oil sales.

Hunt for lost millions

In his speech, Rouhani appeared to suggest that the judiciary had not done enough against others potentially involved in the case or to recover funds embezzled by Zanjani. "How is it possible that a single man can pocket \$3 billion? Who has helped him? Who are his accomplices?" Rouhani asked. The death sentence against Zanjani was "very well," Rouhani said, "but what becomes of the money?"

Last week Larijani hit back, defending the judiciary's handling of the case and criticizing the government for not doing enough to help track down missing funds.

"It should not be implied that the judiciary has done little on this case," Larijani said, insisting it was working "to recover the misappropriated money." "The case remains open... we have summoned former ministers and the former director of the central bank," he said.

Larijani, brother of the moderately con-

servative parliament speaker Ali Larijani, said the government and foreign ministry were "not doing their duty of tracing the money taken abroad by Zanjani."

Iranian authorities have so far only been able to recover about \$600 million of the embezzled money from the seizure of Zanjani's assets in Iran. Larijani called on the foreign ministry to demand information on the funds from the governments of Malaysia, Turkey, Tajikistan and China. The ministry replied that it had given its "full cooperation" to the judiciary. Larijani also revealed claims made by Zanjani during his questioning that he had paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to presidential candidates in 2013.

Campaign funds probe

The judiciary chief provided no names but said it would begin to investigate the alleged payments. That claim appeared to raise the stakes in the dispute and prompted Rouhani to urge the judiciary disclose its own financial dealings. "The government is ready to shed light on its accounts and expects the judiciary to do the same," Rouhani said Tuesday on Twitter, in an apparent reference to recent criticism of judiciary bank accounts managed directly by its chief.

"The judiciary accounts are transparent and anyone can view them," judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejeie said in response to the tweet, demanding Rouhani "take action" for transparency. "They need to tell the public how much Mr. Rouhani spent on the (2013 presidential) campaign and where they money came from," Mohseni Ejeie said. Some critics have accused Rouhani of attacking the judiciary to appeal to his moderate base and divert attention from a lack of immediate economic results from the nuclear deal.

The 2015 agreement between Tehran and six world powers, which saw sanctions lifted in exchange for curbs on Iran's nuclear program, is expected to be a centerpiece of Rouhani's re-election campaign. In his speech yesterday, Khamenei appeared to urge the two sides to overcome their differences.

"The existence of an independent and courageous judiciary must be appreciated by everyone," he said. "What defeats the enemy in its objectives is to have a strong judiciary and a government that is both brave and can plan accurately."—AFP

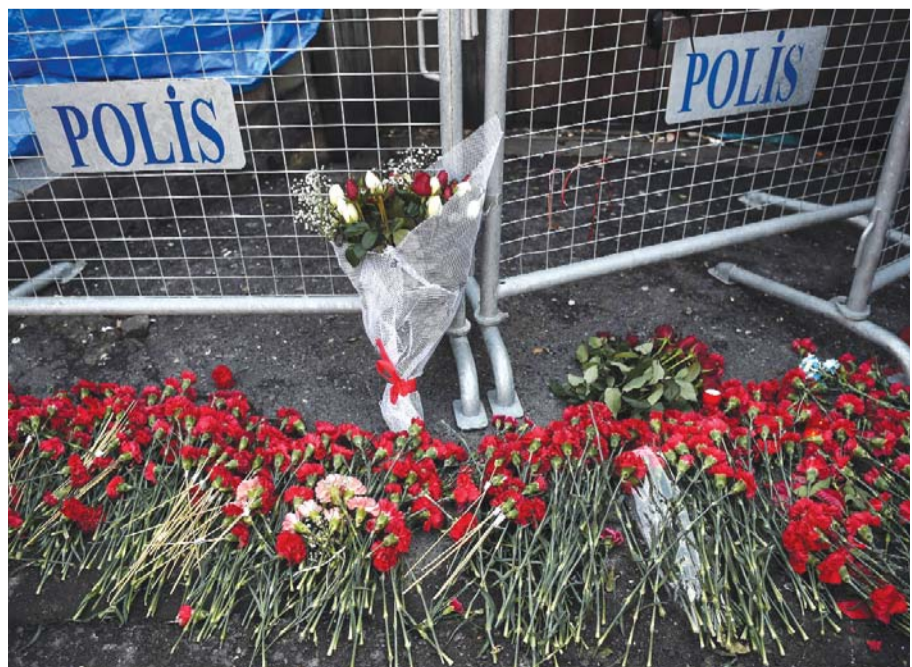
ISTANBUL NIGHTCLUB ATTACKER IDENTIFIED AS UZBEK JIHADIST

ISTANBUL: The attacker who shot dead 39 people on New Year's night at an Istanbul nightclub has been identified as an Uzbek jihadist who belongs to the extremist Islamic State (IS) group, Turkish press reports said. There had been confusion over the identity of the attacker who remains on the run with reports initially suggesting a Kyrgyz national and then a Uighur from China. But intelligence services and anti-terror police in Istanbul have now identified the man as a 34-year-old Uzbek who is part of a Central Asian IS cell, the Hurriyet daily and other Turkish newspapers reported.

It said he has the code name of Ebu Muhammed Horasani within the IS extremist group. There was no official confirmation of the report. The killer slipped into the night after killing 27 foreigners and 12 Turkish nationals at the Reina nightclub in Istanbul just 75 minutes into 2017. Despite

an intense manhunt, he remains on the run, with some reports saying that he is still believed to be in Istanbul. Turkish police had last week released images of the alleged killer, including a chilling silent video he purportedly took in central Istanbul with a selfie stick.

Uzbekistan clamped down on militant Islam after the fall of the Soviet Union under the secular rule of its long-standing leader Islam Karimov who died in 2016. IS militants from Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, as well as from Russia's Muslim regions of Dagestan and Chechnya are believed to have played a key role in the triple suicide bombings and gun attack at Istanbul's main airport in June. The IS extremist group claimed the Istanbul nightclub attack, the first time it has ever clearly claimed a major attack in the country despite being blamed for several strikes including the airport bombings.—AFP



ISTANBUL: This file photo shows flowers laid in front of the Reina nightclub, in Istanbul, one day after a gunman killed 39 people, including many foreigners, in a rampage at an up market nightclub in Istanbul where revelers were celebrating the New Year. — AFP



BOUAKE: A picture taken yesterday shows the market of Bouake where calm has returned as Ivory Coast's mutinous soldiers withdrew after the president announced a deal on their demands for bonuses, pay rises, housing and faster promotion. — AFP

I COAST SOLDIERS END MUTINY AFTER DEAL

'NO FIRING SINCE SATURDAY NIGHT'

BOUAKE, Ivory Coast: Ivory Coast soldiers yesterday ended a two-day mutiny in the second city Bouake and other key areas after reaching a deal on their demands for pay rises, housing and faster promotion. "There has been no firing since Saturday night," a local journalist in Bouake said. "Traffic has resumed this morning and the shops have reopened." One of the leaders of the mutiny in the world's top cocoa producer said he was "happy with the turn of events" after soldiers returned to their barracks. "All we are asking is for the president to be attentive to the living conditions of soldiers," he said on condition of anonymity.

The west African country was rocked by two days of unrest after soldiers seized control of Bouake's streets early Friday, firing rocket launchers and terrifying residents, in a mutiny that spread to other cities including the economic capital Abidjan. In Abidjan—a bustling seaport that is home to the presidency and parliament—national television reported that shots had been fired at the Akouedo barracks in the east of the city on Saturday. The soldiers had detained Defence Minister Alain Richard Donwahi for two hours on Saturday in a tense standoff over their demands, firing Kalashnikovs and heavy weapons around the home of a senior local official where Donwahi was meeting with the soldiers' representatives.

Yesterday, Abidjan's central Plateau area where several government offices and leading businesses are located, was calm. "Life is back to

normal," a resident said. The same was true for the northern city of Korhogo and Man in the west. A Man resident, who identified himself as Jean, said: "The soldiers have returned to their barracks." President Alassane Ouattara announced on Saturday evening that an agreement had been reached. In a brief televised address he said it took into account "the demands relating to bonuses and improving the living conditions of soldiers." "Having given my agreement, I ask all soldiers to go back to their barracks to allow decisions to be carried out calmly," he added, without giving details of the accord.

'Many problems to resolve'

Donwahi, who returned to Abidjan on Saturday night, said all bonus arrears would be paid. "We are aware that there are many problems to resolve... I can assure you that we will keep our commitments but they too should keep theirs," he said. Bouake, which is home to 1.5 million people, was the capital of a rebellion which erupted in 2002 in a failed attempt to oust then president Laurent Gbagbo. Twelve years later, a similar dispute over pay by rebel-turned-soldiers erupted in Bouake which spread to Abidjan and briefly brought the country to a standstill.

The government had then agreed to a deal that provided amnesty for the mutineers and a financial settlement. A Bouake resident said on Sunday he had had enough. "We no longer want

this situation in Bouake," said Adama Coulibaly, a teacher. "We are tired of these actions of the soldiers. I can't wait for President Ouattara to find a definitive solution to their problems." Added computer scientist Seraphin Kouadio: "We no longer want the sound of boots in Bouake."

Politically motivated?

Some analysts said the mutiny could be a pressure tactic on Ouattara and politically motivated. "One of the things to ascertain is whether there has been a political manipulation. We are waiting for the nomination of the vice president and the prime minister... are the former rebel leaders behind this?" one said. "At present everybody is thinking about Guillaume Soro," the expert said, referring to one of the leaders of the 2002 rebellion which sliced the former French colony into the rebel-held north and the government-controlled south and triggered years of unrest.

Rebel forces had then backed Ouattara, the current president who took office in April 2011 after a bloody post-electoral showdown with Gbagbo that left 3,000 people dead. But some soldiers denied that they had been manipulated, arguing that it was "a family matter." "You can equip the army but if the men are not motivated it won't serve any purpose," said one, adding that Ouattara was the troops' "spiritual father." A retired soldier said the problem was that senior officers earned disproportionately high salaries.—AFP

68 KILLED IN BATTLES NEAR YEMEN'S STRATEGIC STRAIT

ADEN: At least 68 fighters have been killed in two days of fierce battles between Yemeni forces and Shiite Huthi rebels near the strategic Bab al-Mandab strait, military officials said yesterday. Government forces launched on Saturday an assault to recapture the coastal Dhubab district, just 30 kilometers north of Bab al-Mandab which links the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Since then at least 55 Huthis have been killed in fighting and 72 others wounded, military and medical sources said.

Clashes since Saturday have also killed 13 loyalist forces, including an army general, Brigadier-General Abdul Aziz al-Majidi, a loyalist commander, said. Landmines planted by the rebels have slowed down the advance of government forces, military officials said. The

government and its allies in a Saudi-led coalition recaptured Bab al-Mandab strait in October 2015, pushing the Iran-backed rebels further north. But the rebels still control nearly all of Yemen's Red Sea coast to the north, posing what the coalition says is a threat to international shipping.

In September and October, two US warships and a United Arab Emirates vessel contracted to the coalition were targeted by missile fire from rebel-held territory. Pro-government troops seized Dhubab in early October 2015, but the rebels managed to recapture the area in February. The Yemeni conflict has killed more than 7,000 people since the coalition's military intervention began in March 2015, according to the United Nations.—AFP

IS SUSPECT SAYS TUNISIAN JOURNALISTS ARE DEAD

TRIPOLI: A suspected jihadist held in eastern Libya told a local television channel late Saturday that two Tunisian journalists who went missing in 2014 were killed by the Islamic State group. IS had claimed in January 2015 to have executed blogger Sofiene Chourabi and photographer Nadhir Ktari but later the same year the Tunisian government said it had evidence the pair were still alive.

The prisoner, identified as Libyan Abderrazek Nassef Abderrazek Ali, told the Al-Hadath Al-Libya channel that he had witnessed the pair being executed in a forest outside the eastern town of Derna, which was then under IS control. He said the two journalists had been captured at an IS roadblock between the towns of Ajdabiya and Lbraq and then taken to Derna. He said an IS court had ordered them killed on the basis of testimony from Tunisian jihadists.

Some 3,000 Tunisians have joined the ranks of jihadist groups fighting in Libya, as well as in Syria and Iraq, according to Tunisian officials. The United Nations puts the figure at 5,000. Al-Hadath Al-Libya is close to eastern Libya's military strongman Marshal Khalifa Haftar. The channel said that the suspect, who was shown shaven-headed and wearing an orange jumpsuit, was being held by Haftar's forces.—AFP

OBAMA DERIDES 'RECKLESS' PLAN TO REPEAL NOW, REPLACE LATER

WASHINGTON: President Barack Obama derided as "reckless" on Friday a Republican plan to repeal his health care law now and replace it later, predicting that the replacement may never come. In an opinion piece in the New England Journal of Medicine, Obama sought to dispel the notion that Republicans could fulfill their campaign promises to gut the Affordable Care Act immediately without risking devastating consequences for consumers. Calling that approach "irresponsible," Obama urged Republicans to do the work now to develop an alternative. "Given that Republicans have yet to craft a replacement plan, and that unforeseen

events might overtake their planned agenda, there might never be a second vote on a plan to replace the ACA if it is repealed," Obama wrote.

"And if a second vote does not happen, tens of millions of Americans will be harmed." In his final days in office, Obama has been ramping up a public push to pressure Republicans over their plans to undermine "Obamacare," his signature legislative achievement. He traveled Wednesday to Capitol Hill to strategize with Democratic lawmakers, and on Friday he will answer questions on health care during a live-streamed interview at Blair House, the government guest house across from the White

House. Although Democrats are largely resigned to the likelihood the GOP will succeed in repealing the law, they are seeking to exploit divisions among Republicans who for years have been unable to unite behind an alternative. President-elect Donald Trump's team has said repeal is the first order of business, and leaders in Congress hope to deliver a bill voiding much of the law to Trump by late February. Yet with no replacement ready to go, they've been discussing a repeal that wouldn't take effect for 18 months or longer, giving them time to devise a new plan.

Although House Speaker Paul Ryan said this

week that lawmakers will vote on a replacement this year as well, it's unclear how Republicans could move that quickly to replace a law that took more than a year to craft - especially given GOP disagreements about how to pay for popular parts of the law they hope to preserve.

But Obama said the uncertainty of a repeal with no replacement could lead insurance companies to bail on the health care marketplaces during the phase-out years, leaving millions without insurance. He said it would set up a "cliff" with harmful consequences if lawmakers fail to approve a replacement in time. —AP

FLORIDA SHOOTING SUSPECT COULD FACE DEATH PENALTY

MIAMI: US authorities have charged the Iraq war vet accused of shooting five people dead and wounding six at a Florida airport with federal crimes that could carry the death penalty. The Justice Department on Saturday charged Esteban Santiago, 26, with firearms offenses and carrying out an act of violence when he opened fire at the busy Fort Lauderdale airport. Santiago, who had earlier shown signs of "erratic behavior," arrived Friday on a flight from Alaska. At baggage claim he retrieved a 9mm semi-automatic handgun and ammunition that he had declared and stowed inside his checked luggage, then allegedly loaded the weapon in a bathroom and opened fire in the crowded baggage claim area of Terminal 2.

Once his ammunition was exhausted Santiago lay on the floor with his arms and legs spread out and peacefully surrendered when a sheriff deputy approached him, witnesses quoted in US media said. The hail of bullets sent thousands scrambling for safety and shut down the airport, a major gateway to the Caribbean and Latin America, for about 16 hours. If convicted of the charges Santiago could face the death penalty or life in prison, US Attorney Wifredo Ferrer said in a statement.

"Santiago started shooting, aiming at his victims' heads until he was out of ammunition," Ferrer said. FBI special agent George Piro said agents were looking into the motives for the attack, including "continuing to look at the terrorism angle." Piro said Santiago appeared to be acting alone and that "every indication" is that he followed rules in flying with the weapon. Santiago is scheduled to make an initial court appearance today.

'Erratic'

A former member of the Puerto Rico and Alaska National Guard, Santiago served in Iraq from April 2010 to February 2011. He ended his service in August. On November 7, Santiago walked into the FBI's office in Anchorage, Alaska and complained that his mind was being controlled by national intelligence agencies, which were forcing him to watch Islamic State jihadist videos,

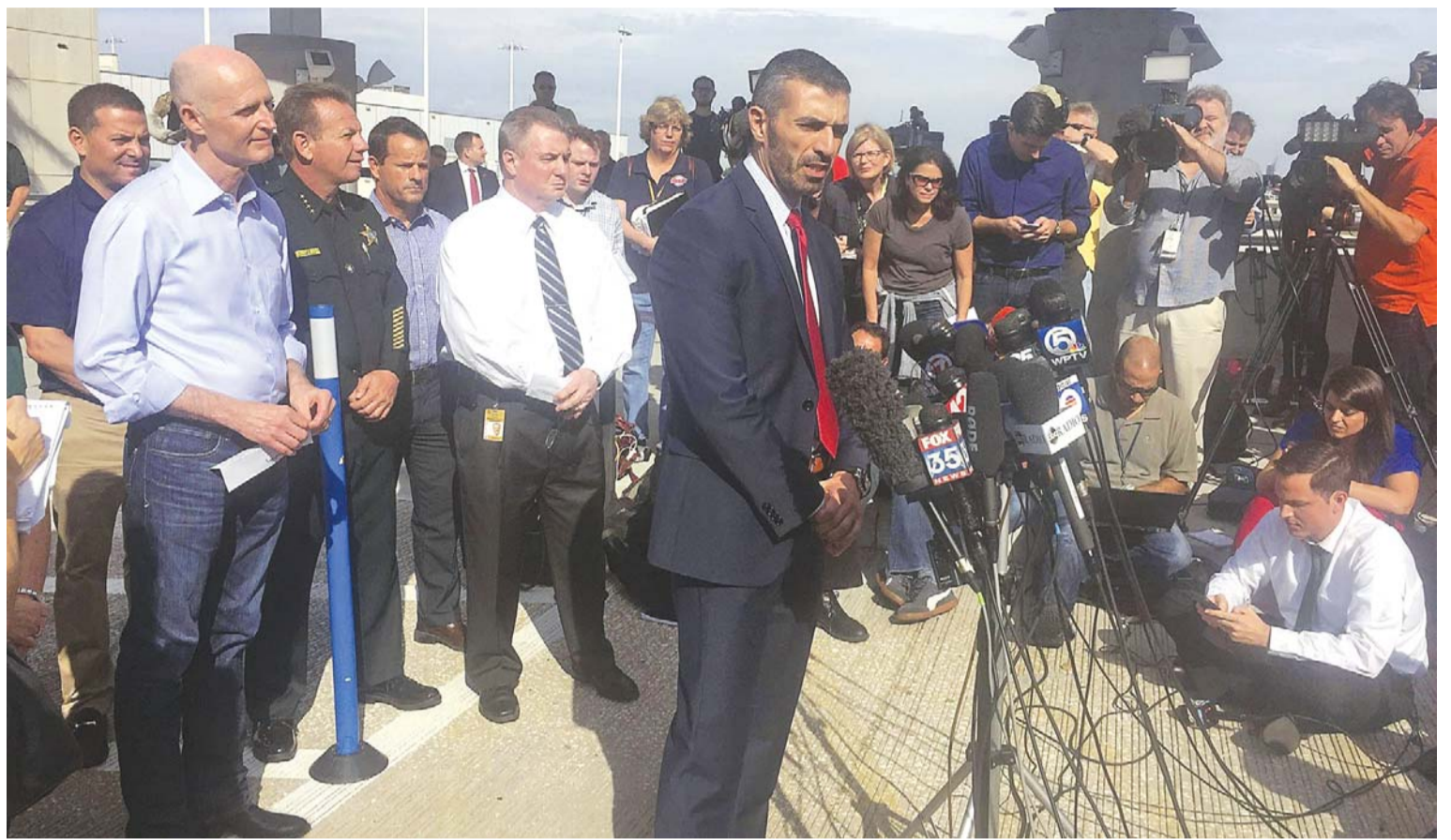
authorities said. This "erratic behavior" led agents to contact local police, who took him for a mental health evaluation, Piro said. Anchorage police chief Christopher Tolley said Santiago came to the FBI office with a loaded magazine, but left his gun and newborn child in his car.

Police took Santiago's weapon for safekeeping at the time, but he was able to reclaim it on Dec 8. Tolley said it was unclear if that gun was used in the airport rampage. Santiago's brother, Bryan, criticized the way authorities handled his case. "They had him hospitalized for four days and they let him go. How are you going to let someone leave a psychological center after four days when he said he hears voices that the CIA is telling him to join certain groups?" Bryan Santiago told CNN, in a Spanish-language interview the network translated into English.

"Not everyone has the same reaction when they return from war. Some are better, and some, not so much." Authorities have not identified any victims, but three named in media reports were all getting ready to set off on cruises. They included British-born 84-year-old grandmother Olga Woltering, who was going on a family cruise with her 90-year-old husband, the Sun Sentinel reported. Terry Andres, 62, was going on vacation with his wife of nearly four decades, Ann, the Palm Beach Post reported. Other victims included Michael and Kari Oehme, a couple in their 50s. Michael was killed while his wife was wounded in the shoulder, the Miami Herald reported.

Checking weapons

The shooting renewed anxieties about security at US airports. The Transportation Security Administration—the agency responsible for airport security—lets passengers travel with unloaded firearms and ammunition as checked baggage. Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, who represents the Florida district that includes the airport, said the rules need to be reexamined. The incident should prompt a review of "whether or not you should be allowed to check a firearm at all—as well as how passengers should be able to retrieve checked weapons after landing," she told CNN. —AFP



FORT LAUDERDALE, Florida: George Piro, special agent in charge of the FBI's Miami Division, speaks during a news conference at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport Terminal on Saturday. — AP

FBI AGENT WHO INTERROGATED SADDAM LEADS AIRPORT CASE

LEBANESE-AMERICAN PIRO FLUENT IN ARABIC, ASSYRIAN

FORT LAUDERDALE, Florida: The FBI agent who interrogated Saddam Hussein alone for months after the former Iraqi leader's capture is now leading the investigation into the Florida airport shooting rampage blamed on an Iraq war veteran. George Piro, special agent in charge of the FBI's Miami field office, was Saddam's sole interrogator beginning in Jan 2004. In previous interviews, Piro has said Saddam did not know his true identity - the Iraqi leader called him "Mr George" - and that he posed as a high-level envoy who answered directly to then-President George W Bush.

Now Piro, a native of Beirut, Lebanon, fluent in Arabic and Assyrian, is in charge of the FBI investigation into the shooting at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport that left five people dead and six wounded. Federal prosecutors have charged Esteban Santiago, 26, with airport violence and firearms offenses that could bring the death penalty if he is convicted.

In announcing the charges filed Saturday, Piro said his thoughts are with the victims and their families. "I want to ensure these families that law enforcement is working tirelessly in order to ensure justice is served," he said. Piro, an FBI agent since 1999, moved with his family from Lebanon to California's San Joaquin Valley as a teenager. After high school he enlisted in the Air Force, then became a police officer for a decade

in Ceres, California, followed by a job as an investigator in the local prosecutor's office.

Once he joined the FBI in Phoenix, Piro was one of only a handful of Arabic-speaking agents - a group that suddenly was in great demand after the Sept 11, 2001 terror attacks and the subsequent US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2003, Piro was promoted to the FBI's Counterterrorism Division at headquarters in Washington, leading to his work as Saddam's interrogator. In later interviews, including a 2008 appearance on CBS's "60 Minutes" program, Piro said he met daily with Saddam in a windowless room and worked to gain his trust by becoming his only provider of necessities and such things as paper for Saddam to write poetry.

Eventually, Piro said Saddam confirmed that Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction prior to the US invasion but might seek them in future to deter Iran and other threats. Saddam also denied any links to Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, Piro has said. Saddam also liked to brag about how he escaped US airstrikes and capture, according to Piro. "What he wanted to really illustrate is... how he was able to outsmart us," Piro told "60 Minutes". "He got rid of his normal vehicles. He got rid of the protective detail that he traveled with, really just to change his signature." Saddam was later tried and executed by hanging in Dec 2006.

Interrogator

Santiago, the airport shooting suspect, also served in Iraq in 2010 with the Puerto Rico National Guard as part of an engineering battalion, guard officials said. Santiago later served in the Army Reserves and Alaska National Guard. After Iraq, Piro moved on to top FBI counterterrorism jobs in Washington, including a White House position involving high-value detainee interrogation that works with various intelligence agencies.

Since taking the top Miami FBI job, Piro has overseen work in more domestic areas such as healthcare fraud, identity theft and tax fraud, Ponzi schemes and mortgage fraud - all areas where South Florida is among the nation's leaders. Bank robberies, violent street gangs, public corruption and smuggling of humans and drugs round out much of the work for the Miami office's roughly 1,000 agents and employees.

Since Friday's shooting, Piro has been careful to say no evidence linking Santiago to terrorism has been found but such connections have also not been ruled out. "It's way too early in the investigation. We're looking over all of his social media, things like that. It's giving us a picture of the individual, but it's way too early for us to rule out anything," Piro said Saturday. "We're pursuing all angles on what prompted him to carry out this horrific attack." — AP



FLORIDA: Law enforcement vehicles are parked outside of terminal 2 at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.—AP

WORK TOGETHER FOR CHANGE, SAYS OBAMA IN FAREWELL PREVIEW

WASHINGTON: President Barack Obama on Saturday spoke about the importance of ordinary people working together for change in a preview of the farewell address he will deliver in Chicago next week. Many departing US presidents have given farewell addresses as they leave office, a tradition dating to the first US president, George Washington, in 1796. "The running thread through my career has been the notion that when ordinary people get involved, get engaged, and come together in collective effort, things change for the better," Obama said in his weekly radio address.

"That's the belief at the heart of this precious American experiment in self-government. It's what gives work and purpose to each new generation." Obama urged listeners to "remember that America is a story told over a longer time horizon, in fits and starts, punctuated at times by hardship, but ultimately written by generations of citizens who've somehow worked together, without fanfare, to form a more perfect union." He then highlighted some of the accomplishments during his presidency, which include sweeping improvements to health care coverage, bringing home troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, reaching a nuclear deal with Iran, and bringing "the world together around a climate agreement."

Nevertheless "our work is and will always be unfinished. That's the imperative of citizenship - the idea that with hard work, people who love their country can change it." The Hawaii-born Obama said he chose to deliver Tuesday's farewell address in Chicago "not only because it's my hometown - where I met my wife and we started a family - but also because it's really where my career in public service began." The White House said it was the first time a president returns to his hometown to deliver such a speech. Democrat Obama hands the presidency over to Republican Donald Trump in Washington on January 20. —AFP

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FRENCH MILITARY TO BOOST DEFENSE AGAINST CYBER ATTACKS

PARIS: France is no less vulnerable than the United States to cyber attacks from foreign countries and the French military will boost its resources to defend against them, the French defense minister said yesterday. In an interview with French weekly Le Journal du Dimanche Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said there is a real risk of cyber attacks on French civil infrastructure such as water, electricity, telecommunications and transport, as well as against French democracy and the media. US intelligence agencies said in a report released on Friday that Russian President Vladimir Putin had directed a cyber campaign to help Republican Donald Trump's electoral chances by discrediting

Democrat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential campaign.

Asked whether France was immune from such attacks, Le Drian said "No, of course not, we should not be naïve." France will hold presidential elections in April-May and leading conservative challenger Francois Fillon has said he wants to improve relations with Russia and has been praised by Putin. Far-right candidate Marine Le Pen also favors closer relations with Russia. French-Russian relations have been strained by Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea in 2014 and over Russia's role in the war in Syria. Outgoing socialist French President Francois Hollande has cancelled the sale

of warships to Russia, and played a key role in imposing sanctions on Russia over Crimea.

Le Drian said that if the US election had indeed been manipulated, it would be an unbearable interference, as targeting a country's electoral means attacking its democratic foundations and its sovereignty. "Our services have discussed the subject, if only to learn lessons for the future," said Le Drian, who also referred to a cyber attack on French TV station TV5Monde in 2015. In April 2015, hackers knocked the station off the air. French judicial sources told Reuters later that Russian hackers linked to the Kremlin could have been behind the attack.

Le Drian said the number of cyber attacks against his ministry doubled every year and that in 2016 about 24,000 external attacks had been blocked by security, including attempts at disrupting France's drone systems.

France should not only be able to defend itself against cyber attacks but should also be able to strike itself when necessary, Le Drian said. He said the French army's number of "digital soldiers" would be doubled to 2,600 by 2019, with support of an additional 600 cyber experts. Le Drian said that in case of a cyber attack, the country could respond in kind as well as with conventional weapons. —Reuters



LISBON: A big portrait of the historic socialist leader and former Portuguese President Mario Soares is displayed on a facade of the Portuguese Socialist party headquarters in Lisbon yesterday one day after his death. —AFP

PORTUGAL'S DEMOCRACY FOUNDER MARIO SOARES DIES AGED 92

'RARE LEADER TO HAVE REAL STATURE IN EUROPE AND THE WORLD'

LISBON: Portugal's former president Mario Soares, widely seen as the father of the country's modern-day democracy, died Saturday aged 92 a fortnight after being admitted to hospital. The founder of Portugal's Socialist party, Soares spent decades in politics and spearheaded the country's entry into the European Union. He was president from 1986 to 1996 after serving as foreign minister and prime minister, and later became a European lawmaker.

Portugal declared three days of national mourning from Monday and his state funeral will be held Tuesday, the presidential office said. "We have lost today someone who has so many times been the face and the voice of our freedom, for which he fought all his life," said the country's current prime minister and fellow Socialist Antonio Costa. Soares had been admitted to hospital in Lisbon on Dec 13, and although his condition initially showed signs of some improvement, he later fell into a deep coma from which he never recovered.

The hospital did not reveal the precise cause of Soares's death, but relatives say he never fully overcame a spate of illnesses in 2013. His health further deteriorated after his wife's death in July 2015. The new United Nations secretary-general, ex-Portuguese premier Antonio Guterres, hailed Soares as "one of the rare political leaders who had real stature in both Europe and the world." Former Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff said that Soares was "adored by the people and respected by his adversaries."

'Fighter for freedom'

Born in Lisbon on December 7, 1924, Mario Alberto Nobre Lopes Soares was raised in a family opposed to the dictatorship of Antonio Oliveira Salazar. His father Joao Soares, a defrocked priest, struggled against the regime for decades, suffering long periods of imprisonment and exile. Reassuringly portly, Mario Soares was both a charmer and a humanist known for being spontaneous and warm. A self-defined agnostic, Soares said he believed in "humanity and its improvement", and described himself as being driven by "a great desire to live and by immense curiosity".

"I am a poor man who has been fortunate to have taken stands and to have been right," he told the "I" newspaper in February 2015. His biggest achievement as premier was negotiating Portugal's entry in 1986 into the European Economic Community, the precursor to the European Union. Several politicians, including Costa and President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, had visited Soares in hospital in recent weeks and news of his death brought emotional tributes from all political sides.

"He was a fighter for freedom," said conservative leader Rebelo de Sousa, adding that Portugal must fight for "the immortality of his legacy." "It is a sad day for all Portuguese," added the head of the centre-right opposition Pedro Passos Coelho. There was also sorrow on the streets of Lisbon on Saturday. "His death saddens me. Even in his old age, he was someone who said what he thought," said Paula

Cabecadas, a 60-year-old bookseller. "For me he was like a dinosaur: this huge figure from the past who will be hard to match in the future," said 22-year-old student Miguel Pinto.

Critic of austerity

On the international stage, Soares was also seen as a political giant, "a great European" and the "decisive figure for Portuguese democracy," said Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy. Soares was "the symbol and the artisan of resistance to the dictatorship and the transition of his country to democracy," said European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker. French President Francois Hollande said Portugal's democracy had lost "one of its heroes; Europe, one of its great leaders, and France, a faithful friend." European Parliament head Martin Schulz described Soares as "more than historical figure: he's an inspiration. He advanced freedom, equality and dignity."

While Soares retired from public life for several months after a crushing presidential election defeat in 2006, he appeared regularly in the media to comment on current affairs. He emerged as a fierce critic of the steep spending cuts Portugal was forced to implement under a 78-billion-euro bailout deal reached in 2011 with the EU and IMF to avert bankruptcy. Soares accused big European nations at the time of being guided by "savage capitalism." He made a final public appearance in July, when he attended a ceremony held in his honor by the ruling Socialist-led government. Visibly frail, he did not make a speech. —AFP

GERMANY'S GROWING ISLAMIST SCENE POSES GREATER CHALLENGES

BERLIN: Germany's domestic security chief warned yesterday that the country's radical Islamist scene is not only growing, but becoming more decentralized, posing greater challenges to surveillance operations. In an interview with national news agency DPA, Hans-Georg Maassen also defended security officials under fire after it emerged that Berlin truck attack suspect Anis Amri had slipped through their net, saying they had done everything they could.

Overall, the number of Salafists-or fundamentalist Sunni Muslims-in Germany has risen to more than 9,700, sharply up from 3,800 people in 2011, said Maassen. "It's of great concern to us that this scene is not only growing, but it is also very diversified. There is not just one, two, three or four people who have a say," he warned. "Rather, there are many people who dominate this Salafist scene. And all these people have to be watched." While in the past, there were a few people who wielded influence, today, there are many small clusters formed by individuals.

"So you can no longer talk about a Salafist scene as a whole, but you have to

deal with many hotspots. That makes things more difficult for us, because we can no longer just watch a few people. We have to monitor many groups," he said. In a defense of security officials under pressure for failing to stop Amri, Maassen said that although officers had watched the Tunisian over a long period of time, they found no evidence to arrest him. "I believe that the security forces, in particular the police, have done everything in their power to assess the danger posed by Amri. But it is also clear that we live under the rule of law, and the legal framework must be respected," he said.

Amri, 24, who was shot dead by Italian police days after ramming a truck into a crowded Christmas market, had been under surveillance since March. But German police dropped their watch in September thinking he was a small-time drug dealer. Public anger also mounted as the rejected asylum seeker and known radical Islamist should have been deported long ago. In the wake of the attack, Chancellor Angela Merkel admitted that "the Amri case raises questions" and ordered a sweeping review of Germany's security apparatus. —AFP

SEYCHELLES' FIRST PRESIDENT MANCHAM DIES

VICTORIA, Seychelles: Seychelles' founding president James Mancham, who spent only a year in office before being ousted in a coup, died yesterday aged 77, his nephew and staff said. The former politician and lawyer, who spent his years in retirement writing several books and promoting his island nation, was found dead at home. "This morning his wife told us that Mancham was not moving and we did the necessary to get him transported to hospital," one of his security guards Philippe Figaro said.

"Doctors confirmed he was dead," said the former president's nephew Derick Pothin. Mancham, who initially opposed the Indian Ocean archipelago's breakaway from British rule, won the country's first election by a small margin in 1976. A year later he was overthrown in a bloodless coup by his prime minister, France-Albert Rene, while he was attending a Commonwealth conference in London. Rene set up a one-party socialist state.

In 1981 South African mercenaries led by notorious British soldier-for-hire in Africa Colonel "Mad Mike" Hoare planned a coup to return the pro-Western Mancham to power. The group entered the country disguised as a beer-drinking tourist party called "The Ancient Order of Froth-Blowers." However their plan came undone when an airport inspector found a weapon in their luggage and a gunfight broke out. The men then hijacked an Air India flight and forced the pilot to take them to Durban in South Africa to escape.

South Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission later



SEYCHELLES: This picture shows then Seychelles' Prime Minister James Mancham speaking in Paris after receiving the Legion d'Honneur. —AFP

found the apartheid government-keen to do away with leftist powers on the continent-had been involved in planning the attack. After his ouster, Mancham fled into exile until 1993, when multi-party democracy was restored in the islands. Mancham again vied for the presidency in 1998 but lost to Rene. The Seychelles comprise some 115 islands scattered off the east coast of Africa, whose white sandy beaches and turquoise waters have made it a magnet for wealthy foreigners, some of whom also enjoy the country's reputation as a tax haven. —AFP

ISRAEL APOLOGIZES OVER THREATS TO TAKE DOWN UK MINISTER

LONDON: The Israeli embassy in London sought to head off a diplomatic storm yesterday, apologizing after one of its staff was caught on camera threatening to "take down" a British government minister. The Mail yesterday's newspaper posted the footage showing the embassy employee telling an undercover reporter from Al-Jazeera that "I want to take down... the Deputy Foreign Minister" (Alan Duncan) — a long-time critic of Israel, and Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson's second-in-command. Duncan was "doing a lot of problems," he added.

The embassy issued an immediate apology, saying it "rejects the remarks concerning Minister Duncan, which are completely unacceptable." "The comments were made by a junior embassy employee who is not an Israeli diplomat, and who will be ending his term of employment with the embassy shortly," it added. Ambassador Mark Regev apologized personally to Duncan on Friday, according to the embassy. Britain's Foreign Office confirmed they had received an apology, and that it now considered "the matter closed".

The footage was recorded at a restaurant opposite the Israeli embassy in Kensington, west London, during a meeting attended by Maria Strizzolo, senior aide to Conservative Education Minister Robert Halfon. Strizzolo spoke of her influence in helping Halfon become a minister, prompting the embassy staffer to ask her "can you do the opposite stuff as well?" However, Strizzolo said Duncan would be "impossible to rebuff" due to having powerful "friends", but then suggested "a little scandal, maybe?" The embassy employee also called foreign office chief Johnson an "idiot" and mocked "crazy" opposition Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn and his "weirdo" supporters. —AFP

HISTORIC CYPRUS PEACE IN BALANCE AT GENEVA TALKS

NICOSIA: Rival Cypriot leaders resume UN-brokered peace talks in Geneva today billed as a historic opportunity to end a decades-long conflict on the divided island, but the outcome is far from certain. Both Turkish- and Greek-speaking sides concede all key issues remain unre-

solved but the UN is pulling out all the stops to get a deal over the line. "It is a real possibility that 2017 will be the year when the Cypriots, themselves, freely decide to turn the page of history," United Nations envoy Espen Barth Eide said in his New Year's message.



CYPRUS: A handout picture released by the Presidency of the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (KKTCB), shows Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci (C-L) and his spouse walk down the red carpet at Ercan Airport in the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. —AFP

But some experts believe that Geneva is a disaster waiting to happen because Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders are still worlds apart on the most crucial sticking points such as property, territorial adjustments and security. "I will be surprised if there is a comprehensive agreement given the difficulties," Andreas Theophanous, head of the Cyprus Centre for European and International Affairs, said.

Cyprus has been divided since 1974, when Turkish troops invaded the island in response to an Athens-inspired coup seeking union with Greece. It has always been agreed that some of the territory currently controlled by the Turkish Cypriots will be ceded to Greek Cypriot control in any peace deal. Turkish Cypriots made up just 18 percent of the island's population in 1974, but they currently control more than a third of its territory. Just how much and which land they should give up has hampered four decades of peace talks.

'Real opportunity'

Years of inter-community violence, which culminated with the Turkish invasion and subsequent declaration of a republic on Cyprus' northern third, saw thousands from both sides flee their homes-and they remain displaced to this day. The territory issue is so vital because

both Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci will have to sell any final agreement to their respective sides via twin popular votes.

They remain far apart on how many Greek Cypriots should be able to return to homes they fled in 1974, with Akinci determined to minimize the number of Turkish Cypriots who would be displaced for a second time. And a summit planned for January 12 in Geneva of Cyprus' so-called guarantor powers-Greece, Turkey and former colonial master Britain-will not go ahead unless the leaders agree on final territory swaps.

"I expect neither a success nor a failure but the beginning of a series of final round talks under the participation of the guarantor powers with 'observers' invited from the EU and Security Council," Hubert Faustmann, professor of history and political science at the University of Nicosia, said. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and British Prime Minister Theresa May on Saturday agreed in a phone call that the Geneva talks were a "real opportunity" to end Cyprus' division. But there are also differences over post-solution security arrangements with Anastasiades wanting the tens of thousands of Turkish troops on the island to leave but Akinci insistent on a Turkish military presence. —AFP

PHILIPPINE POLICE RAID ISLAMIC CENTRE BEFORE CATHOLIC EVENT

MANILA: Philippine police raided an Islamic centre in Manila and briefly detained scores of people as part of heightened security before a major Catholic festival, a spokeswoman said yesterday. Two men were arrested for illegal drugs during the raid on the Islamic Center in the heart of Manila on Saturday, as authorities warned of possible attacks by Islamic militants when the Feast of the Black Nazarene reaches its peak today.

"This is part of security preparations for the Feast of the Black Nazarene," Chief Inspector Marissa Bruno, spokeswoman for the Manila police, said. She said 82 other people at the centre had been taken to a police station but were released soon afterwards when it was found they had no warrants outstanding.

Bruno denied that police had targeted the Islamic Center, which includes a mosque, saying that other parts of the

city had also been subjected to police operations. Authorities have been on alert for possible attacks by Islamic militants to disrupt the Black Nazarene event, which is expected to attract millions of Filipinos. The annual festival sees huge numbers of barefoot devotees crowding to touch a life-size and dark-skinned statue of Jesus that is reputed to have healing powers. Two people were killed and hundreds injured during the crush of humanity at

last year's event. Security forces have said there is no report of a "direct threat" to the festival this year but they are wary that Muslim extremists may seek revenge for the killing of a pro-Islamic State militant leader last week.

Mohammad Jaafar Maguid, alias "Tokboy", founder and leader of the Ansarul Khilafa Philippines (AKP), was killed by security forces on Thursday. His group is known to be a supporter of the IS

group and has been blamed for various bombings and attacks. Investigators are still looking into whether the AKP was involved in a bombing in the southern city of Davao in September which killed 15 people gathered in a popular park. Local Muslim extremists have previously launched attacks on Christian targets, playing on longstanding tensions between the country's Christian majority and the Muslim minority.—AFP

N KOREA SAYS CAN TEST-LAUNCH ICBM AT ANY TIME, ANY PLACE

SEOUL: North Korea said yesterday it can test launch an intercontinental ballistic missile at any time from any location set by leader Kim Jong Un, saying the United States' hostile policy was to blame for its arms development. Kim said on Jan 1 that his nuclear-capable country was close to test-launching an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). "The ICBM will be launched anytime and anywhere determined by the supreme headquarters of the DPRK," an unnamed Foreign Ministry spokesman was quoted as saying by the official KCNA news agency, using the acronym for the country's name.

The North is formally known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The United States said on Thursday that North Korea had demonstrated a "qualitative" improvement in its nuclear and missile capabilities after an unprecedented level of tests last year.

Experts have said that while North Korea may be close to testing an ICBM, it would likely take years to perfect the weapon. Once fully developed, a North Korean ICBM could threaten the continental United States, which is around 9,000 km (5,500 miles) from the North.

ICBMs have a minimum range of about 5,500 km (3,400 miles), but some are designed to travel 10,000 km (6,200 miles) or further.

US President-elect Donald Trump responded on Monday to Kim's comments on an ICBM test by declaring in a tweet that "It won't happen!" A US State Department spokesman said last week that the United States does not believe that North Korea is capable of mounting a nuclear warhead on a ballistic missile. North Korea has been under UN sanctions since 2006 over its nuclear and ballistic missile tests. The sanctions were tightened last month after Pyongyang conducted its fifth and largest nuclear test on Sept 9.

"The US is wholly to blame for pushing the DPRK to have developed ICBM as it has desperately resorted to anachronistic policy hostile toward the DPRK for decades to encroach upon its sovereignty and vital rights," KCNA quoted the spokesman as saying. "Anyone who wants to deal with the DPRK would be well advised to secure a new way of thinking after having clear understanding of it," the spokesman said, according to KCNA.—Reuters



SEOUL: This picture shows an injured Buddhist monk who set himself on fire being carried into an ambulance in Seoul.—AFP

S KOREAN MONK SETS HIMSELF ON FIRE AT ANTI-PRESIDENT RALLY

'MONK URGED AUTHORITIES TO ARREST THE PRESIDENT FOR TREASON'

SEOUL: A South Korean Buddhist monk is in critical condition after setting himself on fire during a mass protest against the impeached President Park Geun-Hye, officials said yesterday. The monk, in his 60s and whose name was not released, set himself alight late Saturday night in central Seoul where hundreds of thousands returned to the streets for the eleventh week to demand Park's ouster. He left a note urging authorities to arrest the scandal-hit president for committing "treason", the Yonhap news agency reported.

Park was impeached by parliament last month over an influence-peddling scandal that sparked a storm of public fury and nationwide protests, and the Constitutional Court now has

to decide whether to confirm the impeachment. The monk also slammed Park as a "traitor" for forging a deal with Japan to settle compensation for women forced into sexual slavery for Japanese troops during the World War II, according to Yonhap. Critics say the 2015 deal did not go far enough in holding Japan responsible for wartime abuses.

Tensions between the two countries spiked on Friday when Tokyo recalled its ambassador over a statue of a "comfort woman." The monk suffered third-degree burns across his body and remains unconscious, according to police and staff at Seoul National University Hospital where he is being treated.

Self-immolation is not unheard of as a means

of protest in the South, and was particularly common during the pro-democracy movement of the 1980s and early 90s when a number of activists set themselves on fire during public demonstrations.

Park is accused of colluding with her secret confidante, Choi Soon-Sil, to coerce top local firms to "donate" tens of millions of dollars to non-profit foundations which Choi then used as her personal ATMs.

The president is also accused of letting Choi, the daughter of a shady religious figure who was also close to Park for decades, meddle in state affairs including nomination of top officials. Both Park and Choi—who is currently on trial—have denied any wrongdoing.—AFP

NINE THINGS OBAMA WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR

WASHINGTON: As Barack Obama prepares to leave office on January 20, here are nine things his presidency may be remembered for:

Making history

If historians were to write only one thing about Barack Hussein Obama, they would likely note that — 143 years after slavery was abolished—a young Illinois senator became the first black president of the United States. Obama, just 47 at his 2009 inauguration, harnessed magisterial oratory to rally a diverse electoral coalition behind a message of "hope and change." In office, Obama sometimes struggled to turn that poetry into the prose of governance. Racial tensions—underscored by police shootings of unarmed black men and conspiracy theories about his birthplace—persisted. But the very fact of his election confirmed monumental changes in American society.

Too big to fail

Obama's first term in office was dominated by economic freefall. A real estate crisis spawned a financial meltdown that torpedoed Wall Street banks and lenders, and was metastasizing into an economic crisis of global proportions. Outgoing president George W. Bush and the Federal Reserve had kicked off the government's first panicked efforts at containment, but Obama faced down ideological opposition to large fiscal stimulus, extending government spending by \$831 billion and providing ballast to the economy. As he leaves office, the political and social aftershocks of that financial cataclysm are still being felt, but the economy has added jobs for 75 straight months.

'Justice has been done'

"Tonight, I can report to the American people and to the world that the United States has conducted an operation that killed Osama bin Laden." With those words on May 2, 2011, Obama exorcised the anger and frustration of millions of Americans—that the most powerful country on earth could not hold the man accountable for the 9/11 attacks. The risky special forces operation was also illustrative of Obama's controversial drone-and-raid approach to counterterrorism. As he leaves office, Al-Qaeda offshoots and affiliates remain potent, but their leadership in Afghanistan and Pakistan has been decimated.

Legislative toil

"It's one of the few regrets of my presidency—that the rancor and suspicion between the parties has gotten worse instead of better," Obama said in his final State of the Union address. From the moment Obama was elected, Republicans in Congress vowed to oppose him tooth and nail. Efforts to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay and enact gun controls—even after the massacre of young students at Sandy Hook, the emotional nadir of his presidency—would fall victim to partisan rancor.

A deal with a half-life

For more than two decades, the United States had rolled out sanctions and covert actions to prevent arch foe Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Obama tried a different tack, engaging in secret talks with the Islamic Republic. That gambit ultimately yielded a deal that saw Iran halt its sprint toward a

nuclear weapon, in return for substantial sanctions relief and a dollop of international legitimacy. The pact would strain US relations with Iran's enemies Israel and Saudi Arabia, but prevented a nuclear arms race in the Middle East and defused tensions between Iran and the United States that have simmered since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

No turnabout on Syria

No international crisis tested Obama's foreign policy or his high bar for US military intervention like Syria. Even when Bashar al-Assad defied Obama's red line on chemical weapons use and killed countless thousands of civilians—along with Russian and Iranian forces—the man who came to office on an anti-war ticket rejected calls to step in. Syria will likely be in crisis for years to come. Critics will long argue about whether Obama's policy was sensible and to what degree his decision damaged America's reputation, allowed the Islamic State group to grow, fueled an immigration flow that destabilized Europe and allowed Russia and Iran to extend influence in the region.

Change the climate

After the climate skepticism of Bush, Obama's eight years in office resulted in a tidal wave of environmental legislation, protecting marine ecosystems, curbing carbon emissions and boosting renewable energy. In a bid to engrain environmentalism into America's body politic, Obama hiked Alaskan glaciers, snorkeled at Midway Island and rushed through ratification of the Paris Climate Accord. But Obama's environmental agenda is likely to come under sustained assault from his successor, putting the durability of that legacy into question.

A very big deal

Democrats had tried and failed for decades to provide Americans with universal health care. Obama wasn't quite able to do that but he extended insurance coverage to tens of millions of citizens who previously had none. Republicans decried the "Obamacare" plan as socialism incarnate, at one point claiming it would even create "death panels." But they failed to stop it from passing. They may yet have a crack at repealing it under Donald Trump's watch.

Meet the neighbors

Obama's trip to Cuba may be remembered in the same way as Richard Nixon's visit to China, but in truth it was the capstone of a much broader effort to improve US relations with Latin America. Resurgent left wing populists in the region had rekindled past memories of "yanqui imperialism"—US-led coups, death squads and heavy-handed intervention. Barely 100 days after Obama took office, he told regional leaders at a Summit of the Americas that the United States had changed. The approach was to deny leaders like Hugo Chavez any excuses for sideshow anti-Americanism. He shook Chavez's hand, met Nicaraguan firebrand Daniel Ortega and visited the tomb of a popular Salvadoran priest killed by US-linked death squads. Obama alluded to "mistakes" in a coup that installed dictator Augusto Pinochet in Chile, released documents about involvement in Argentina's dirty war and, of course, visited Havana.—AFP



FLORIDA: In this file photo, actor and model Fabio, right, talks with Sean Spicer, President-elect Donald Trump's choice for White House press secretary, at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida.



CLEVELAND: In this file photo, actor Scott Baio gives two thumbs up after addressing the delegates during the opening day of the Republican National Convention in Cleveland.—AP Photos

TRUMP CELEB CREW AWAITS HIS TURN IN SPOTLIGHT, AND THEIR OWN

WASHINGTON: Fabio, the golden-haired model who graced the cover of hundreds of romance novels, was wrapping up Thanksgiving dinner at Donald Trump's South Florida club when the president-elect began making the rounds to greet his guests. Fabio, who goes by his first name only, said he hit it off with the newly elected Republican, who asked the brawny model how he stays in shape. On a second visit to the Mar-a-Lago club around New Year's, Fabio huddled with incoming White House press secretary Sean Spicer and offered his assistance on veterans' issues. "I want to help," said Fabio, who plans to be in Washington for Trump's Jan 20 inauguration.

Fabio's embrace of Trump puts him in an exclusive and eclectic club: celebrities who not only support the president-elect, but are willing to do so publicly. The entertainment industry's liberal bent, combined with election-season outrage over Trump's controversial comments on women and minorities, left Trump persona non grata with many A-listers, particularly those who have rolled in President Barack Obama's circles. While most modern presidents have had a celebrity clique, Obama's crowd has been especially glitzy. Beyoncé performed at both of his inaugurations. Ellen DeGeneres and John Legend hobnobbed at his 55th birthday party.

A slew of famous faces attended the president and first lady Michelle Obama's farewell bash Friday night at the White House, and some

shared social media posts about partying with the Obamas well into the morning. Trump, a celebrity in his own right from his days as a New York tabloid fixture and reality television host, has attracted a motlier crew. Actors Scott Baio and Antonio Sabato Jr. spoke at the Republican National Convention and former Indiana University basketball coach Bob Knight appeared with Trump on the campaign trail. Actor Stephen Baldwin was among Trump's earliest celebrity endorsers, despite having been twice fired from Trump's reality show "Celebrity Apprentice."

"Let's just say, when he fired me the second time, it was between me or Gary Busey, so I was a little pissed off for a couple of weeks," joked Baldwin, who starred in 1995's "The Usual Suspects" and 1996's "Bio-Dome." Baldwin took the role of celebrity endorser seriously. Before doing interviews during the election, he said he would contact the campaign and see if there were any talking points he should emphasize. Baldwin, whose older brother Alec plays a snarling Trump on "Saturday Night Live," also stays in touch with the president-elect's son Eric, who attends the same Manhattan cigar club.

'A' list celebrities

Always image conscious, Trump has bristled at the notion that the entertainment industry's elite has rejected him. In December, he tweeted that "so-called 'A' list celebrities" were all seeking

tickets to his inauguration, yet few headline-making stars have been announced for the events surrounding his Jan. 20 swearing in. "They've tried to hire some of the top people in the business and nobody's interested," Hollywood publicist Howard Bragman said. "Everybody's told them no." One celebrity who has said yes? Wayne Newton, the popular Las Vegas entertainer and "Danke Schoen" singer.

Newton, who has performed for seven presidents, said he's discussed the inauguration performance with Trump, though he's not certain exactly what his role will be yet. Newton said he was disappointed that many in the Hollywood establishment are giving the inauguration a cold shoulder. "I certainly agree with their right to do and handle that in any way they choose to, but they have no idea, truly, what they're missing," Newton said. "When they look back on this at some point in time in their life, they're going to realize that they missed a truly important and magnificent moment in American history." Trump was a frequent target of celebrities throughout the campaign, particularly after the release of a video tape in which he was heard making predatory comments about women.

Hollywood kept piling on after Trump won the election, with some stars appearing in a television advertisement to encourage members of the Electoral College to switch their votes to Democrat Hillary Clinton.—AP

US TO SEND 300 MARINES TO HELMAND PROVINCE

KABUL: About 300 US Marines will be sent to Afghanistan's Helmand province to assist Afghan security forces battling Taliban insurgents in intelligence and logistics matters, the unit's commander said over the weekend. The deployment to Helmand will be the Marines' first to the southern province since they left in 2014 as the US declared an end to its combat mission. Since then, Afghan security forces, still backed by Washington in the form of air strikes and hundreds of advisors, have struggled to contain the Taliban advance in Helmand.

Brigadier General Roger Turner told reporters on a conference call that the deployment would be part of a regular rotation to replace a US Army unit already training and advising Afghan troops in the province. And although the 300 Marines would mostly be experienced and senior officers who will work on intelligence, logistics, and administration, Turner said they were braced for a dangerous mission. "We're viewing this as a high-risk mission...We're not in any way viewing this as a noncombat mission, or something to take lightly."

Tens of thousands of Marines fought fierce battles against the Taliban in Helmand over five years. Nearly 1,000 coalition troops have been killed there since the US-led military intervention in 2001, more than in any other province. In the last two years the Taliban have captured areas that were the site of some of the deadliest battles for the Marines, including Sangin, Marjah and Nowzad, and for much of 2016 they have threatened to take the provincial capital Lashkar Gah.

In a statement posted online, Taliban officials

ridiculed the Marines' deployment as one of the "final failed efforts" by outgoing US President Barack Obama to stem the violence in Afghanistan. In recent months the US military has also announced rotations of roughly 3,000 Army soldiers to Afghanistan, where about 8,400 American troops conduct both advising missions, as well as "counter terrorism" operations against groups like Islamic State and al Qaeda. A small number of Marines are already in Afghanistan, including around 60 who help to secure the huge air base at Bagram. —Reuters



BANGALORE, India: French Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development Jean-Marc Ayrault (L), speaks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2017 event in Bangalore yesterday. —AFP

FRENCH FM TO BOLSTER 'STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP' WITH INDIA VISIT

'STRESS STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AND MOVE IT INTO A HIGHER GEAR'

NEW DELHI: French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault began a four-day visit to India with a meeting yesterday with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to bolster the "strategic partnership" between the two countries. Ayrault held talks for 45 minutes with the Hindu nationalist leader in the southern hi-tech hub of Bangalore, where he will stay until today evening. "The number one objective (of this trip) is to stress the strategic partnership and move it into a higher gear," the minister said. The visit is part of a series of meetings

between Indian and French leaders. President Francois Hollande has visited India twice during his five-year term, in 2013 and 2016. Modi, who took office in 2014, has twice visited France. Ayrault and Modi discussed in particular collaboration in the defense sector, a few months after the sale of 36 French Rafale fighters to India for about eight billion Euros (\$8.4 billion). Asked about the possibility of future arms deals with India, which has become the world's largest weapons importer as it tries to modernize its arsenal,

the minister said Modi was "ready to examine everything".

India "is a huge country, which has a very important need to ensure its security against all the challenges it faces", said Ayrault. The minister will tomorrow visit the western state of Gujarat, where Modi was chief minister for over a decade, accompanied by a delegation of about 100 representatives of French companies. Annual trade between France and India is worth some eight billion Euros, a figure that has grown markedly since 2000. — AFP

SOUTH AFRICA'S ZUMA ADMITS MISTAKES AS ANC SET FOR CHANGE

SOWETO, South Africa: South African President Jacob Zuma yesterday denounced corruption within the ruling ANC party and admitted that mistakes had cost the party at the ballot box after a year of damaging scandals. Zuma is set to step down as leader of the African National Congress (ANC) in December, before he completes the maximum two terms in office as national president in 2019. He and other senior ANC figures have been embroiled in a series of graft allegations, as South Africa has struggled with a slowing economy, high unemployment and regular violent protests. In August, the ANC—which came to power in 1994 under Nelson Mandela after the end of apartheid—recorded its worst-ever election results at local polls.

"The ANC has heard the message that the people delivered in August. We accept that we have made mistakes," Zuma, 74, said in a speech marking the ANC's 105th anniversary. "When leaders and members of the ANC are corrupt and steal they are betraying the values of the ANC, the people and our country. We will not allow this." Among Zuma's possible successors are his ex-wife, African Union chief Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa and ANC treasurer-general Zweli Mkhize. On Saturday, the ANC's influential women's league pledged its support for Dlamini-Zuma. "The ANC will elect a new national leadership towards the end of the year," Zuma said.

"Too often, comrades fight for leadership

positions as they see leadership as the route to material and personal gain." As attacks on his presidency grew last year, Zuma survived an attempt by ANC rivals to oust him in November, shrugging off criticism of his conduct by the official anti-graft watchdog and the Constitutional Court. The watchdog probe uncovered evidence of possible criminal activity in his relationship with the Guptas, a business family accused of wielding undue political influence.

Zuma, who took power in 2009, retains strong loyalty among many rank-and-file ANC party members, as well as its lawmakers. He struck a humble note at the ANC celebrations in a sports stadium in Soweto, a hotbed of the struggle that ended white-majority rule more than 20 years ago. "The people have told us that we are too busy fighting each other and we do not pay sufficient attention to their needs," he said. "The ANC must unite so that we are able to unite the people against our common enemies—unemployment, poverty and inequality." Zuma gave a shortened version of his published speech as heavy rain lashed the venue. — AFP



DURBAN: This file photo shows Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma addressing the State of the Continent Media Briefing for the last time as the Chair of the AU Commission to conclude her four-year tenure, in Durban, South Africa. — AFP

FORMER PAKISTAN ARMY CHIEF TO HEAD SAUDI-LED MILITARY ALLIANCE

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's recently retired army chief Raheel Sharif has been appointed to lead a new Saudi-military alliance to fight terrorism, Pakistani media have reported. Government officials in Saudi Arabia could not be reached on Sunday to confirm the appointment to head the coalition, the founding of which Saudi Arabia's Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced at a sudden midnight press conference in December 2015.

Pakistani Defense Minister Khawaja Asif said in an appearance on Pakistan's Geo News channel on Friday that Sharif's appointment had been finalized a few days earlier. A statement carried by Saudi state news agency SPA in December 2015 said the new coalition would have 34 members, though more have joined since then. It also

said the coalition would be based in Riyadh to "coordinate and support military operations" against terrorism. Little has been heard of it since then.

The states it listed as joining the new coalition included Egypt, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Malaysia, Pakistan and several African nations. It did not include Shi'ite Muslim Iran and its allies Syria and Iraq, leading to speculation that it could become a potential Sunni bloc against Iran, a rival of Sunni Saudi Arabia for influence across the Arab world. Tehran and Riyadh are ranged on opposite sides in proxy conflicts in Syria and Yemen. General Sharif retired last November, the first Pakistani army chief in more than 20 years not to seek an extension to his term like some previous military leaders. — Reuters

FOUR LEFTIST SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISTS VANISH IN PAKISTAN

ISLAMABAD: At least four Pakistani activists known on social media for their secular leftist views have gone missing this week, relatives and NGO workers said yesterday, as analysts voiced rights concerns. Two of the men—Waqas Goraya and Asim Saeed—disappeared on January 4, according to a cyber security NGO, while Salman Haider vanished Friday and Ahmed Raza Naseer Saturday, relatives said. The interior ministry has said it will investigate the disappearance of Haider, a Dawn newspaper blogger known for his outspoken views on enforced disappearances in the southwestern province of Balochistan, but made no reference to the others.

All four were active on social media groups promoting leftist, secular views, often against the military or conservative state. Pakistan is routinely ranked among the world's most dangerous for journalists, and reporting critical of the military is considered a major red flag, with journalists at times detained, beaten and even killed. "The state has controlled TV and now they're focusing on digital spaces," said

Raza Rumi, a writer and analyst who left Pakistan in 2014 after he was attacked by gunmen who shot his driver dead.

A security source denied intelligence services were involved in the disappearances. Naseer, who suffers from polio, was taken from his family's shop in central Punjab province, his brother Tahir said yesterday. Hours after Haider was due home Friday evening, his wife received a text message from his phone saying he was leaving his car on the Islamabad expressway, his brother Faizan said. Police later found the car and registered a missing persons report. Faizan said his brother had not received any specific threats.

Waqas Goraya, who is usually a resident of the Netherlands, was picked up on Jan 4, as was Asim Saeed, said Shahzad Ahmed, head of cyber security NGO Bytes for All. "None of these activists have been brought to any court of law or levelled with any charges. Their status disappearance is very worrying not only for the families, but also for netizens and larger social media users in the country," Ahma d said. — AFP

BUDDHIST HARDLINERS STOP MYANMAR MUSLIM CEREMONY

YANGON: Hardline Buddhist nationalists stopped a Muslim religious ceremony in Yangon yesterday, witnesses and organizers said, as Islamophobic tensions boil over amid a bloody military campaign against Rohingya in northern Rakhine state. Dozens of people, led by a handful of maroon-robed monks, marched to the YMCA in Myanmar's commercial capital to shut down a service marking the Prophet Mohammed's birthday. "We have celebrated this festival for my whole life. Now this seems like an attack on freedom of religion," Kyaw Nyein, secretary of the Ulama Islam organisation, said FP.

"The monks tried to stop the ceremony without saying what we had done wrong... Why aren't authorities taking action?" Witnesses, who asked not to be named, said the monks barged into the ceremony shortly after it started demanding it be shut down. Police were called, but did not intervene to stop the hardliners. Tin Maung Win, vice president of the festival organizing committee, said Buddhist nationalists were trying to stir up political dissent against the NLD government led by Aung San Suu Kyi.

He said the religious extremists supported the military-backed USDP party and see the new elected government, which took power last year after win-

ning the first free election in some 50 years, as being too soft on Muslims. "We held the festival here for seven years without any violence, but today it happened. This is because of political interests," he said. Long-simmering Islamophobic sentiment has been on the rise in Myanmar since deadly communal violence erupted between Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims in western Rakhine state in 2012.

In recent years Buddhist hardliners have sought to restrict Muslim worship, destroying mosques and trying to ban ceremonies such as the ritual slaughter of cattle during the festival of Eid al-Adha. Tensions have boiled over since attacks on police posts along the Bangladesh border in October, which the government has blamed on Rohingya insurgents led by foreign fighters and backed by Middle Eastern money.

Until the recent fighting, the Rohingya had generally eschewed political violence despite decades of persecution. Dozens have died in the ensuing military crackdown, sending some 50,000 Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh telling stories of rape, murder and arson at the hands of Myanmar security forces that activists say could amount to crimes against humanity. — AFP

INDIA RIGHTS PANEL SAYS POLICE RAPED TRIBAL WOMEN IN MAOIST STRONGHOLD

NEW DELHI: India's rights watchdog said more than a dozen tribal women were raped and sexually assaulted by police in restive Chhattisgarh state, with the victims' lawyer slamming authorities over delays in arresting the accused yesterday. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) said at least 16 women were "victims of rape, sexual and physical assault" after it concluded an investigation into reports that police attacked several villages in Bijapur district during an operation against Maoist rebels in October 2015.

"Prima-facie, human rights of the victims have been grossly violated by the security personnel of the Government of Chhattisgarh for which the State Government is vicariously liable," the government panel said in a statement on Saturday. The NHRC said it was in the process of recording the testimonies of

20 more victims who were sexually assaulted during the incident. Several media reports at that time said police officers had raped or sexually assaulted at least 40 women in five villages and destroyed and looted homes during the anti-Maoist operation.

The reports said 11 women were gang raped, including a 14-year-old girl and a pregnant woman. Police filed an initial complaint and launched an investigation over the allegations but no arrests have been made yet. Kishore Narayan, who is representing 14 victims, said that the panel has backed their claims and accused the police of deliberately shielding the culprits. "The victims gave the names of the policemen involved in the barbarity but nothing has happened. They carried a sham investigation and are trying to obfuscate the case,"

Narayan said. He said they have filed a petition in the Chhattisgarh High Court demanding an investigation by a special police team from outside the state.

Activists often accuse Indian security forces of committing gross human rights violations including extra-judicial killings, arson and sexual assault in the conflict torn region. India is fighting thousands of armed Maoists rebels in the so-called "Red Corridor" which passes through swathes of resource-rich areas of central and eastern India and is mostly inhabited by underprivileged tribes. The guerrillas-inspired by Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong say they are fighting the Indian government for land, jobs and other rights for poor tribal groups, with thousands of lives lost in the the decades-old insurgency. — AFP

SAUDI EMBRACE OF RIDE-HAILING APPS...

Continued from Page 1

state-controlled Saudi Telecom Co announced on Dec 18 it bought 10 percent of Careem for \$100 million. "The percentage of Careem captains who are Saudi has jumped from effectively zero to 60 percent in the last 12 months, and we aim to employ 70,000 Saudis by end 2017," said Abdulla Elyas, co-founder of Careem. Women already account for around 80 percent of Uber and Careem's passengers, the companies say. "In a country where they (women) cannot get behind the wheel we are offering both the women and the government a win-win solution," said Zeid Hreish, Uber's general manager in Saudi.

A personal driver offers the most cache for middle- and upper-class women. But as these cost as much as 3,000 riyals (\$800) a month, around 20 percent of the average monthly household income, women are always looking for cheaper options. Some wealthier Saudi women have never used the country's existing taxi system because it is not seen as acceptable for them to travel in the older vehicles that are often provided.

Uber and Careem offer an alternative because they require their drivers to use cars that are less than three years old. Uber works with car financing companies in Saudi Arabia to get deals to help its drivers buy newer cars. The use of the app for booking a car also allows a passenger to select a particular driver and some believe that the use of smart phone technology brings a better class of driver. There is little difference in price between a journey with Uber or Careem and a local taxi company but the industry does not feel threatened because it caters to a different market - road-side taxi hailers are usually lower

income men and do not own smartphones. "We have very little overlapping demand with Careem and Uber," said an assistant manager at a Jeddah-based limousine company, who wished not to be named. Careem is however, developing a subsidized rides program for low-income working Saudi women with the Ministry of Labor.

The high female engagement with such apps also reflects how social attitudes are evolving in the conservative kingdom. Traditional social norms dictate local women cannot interact with men to which they are not related. However, the ride-hailing scenario has jumped ahead of such restrictions, aided by a zero tolerance policy for driver complaints operated by Uber and Careem. "I am comfortable in the car with the driver because we are getting a professional service from a company where the driver will be held accountable for any complaints made against him," said Alia Shayef, a 42-year-old banker living in Jeddah.

But some riders and drivers remain uneasy about the mixing of genders. An 18 year old university student in Riyadh said that since more Saudis became Uber and Careem drivers her father has forbidden her to use those apps. A Careem driver also admitted he does not take any female riders to avoid cultural clashes and any risk of complaint. The proliferation of ride-sharing services has also done little to take away the yearning for women to drive. Some are concerned that it has made it even less likely that the government will ever allow women to get behind a steering wheel. In June when Uber announced the Saudi wealth fund had invested in its business some Saudi women took to Twitter to unveil their disapproval with the hashtag "Saudi women announce Uber boycott," trending within hours of the news. — Reuters

MOROCCO CABBIES SABOTAGE UBER APP

Continued from Page 1

"Our position hasn't changed," a senior official from Casablanca's local administration told AFP. "We see (Uber) as an unauthorized and illegal company." Local media said recently that as many as 30 separate protests against app drivers had been held, ranging from threats, car chases and even ambushes such as the one in December.

Uber Morocco director general Meryem Belqiz insisted these were "isolated" incidents. "There were no injuries. It was more harassment," she told AFP, admitting however that Uber drivers had been "shaken" by some protests. There are now more than 250 taxis working for Uber in Casablanca, Belqiz said, and the app has enjoyed 15,000 unique users in the last three months. Business has boomed for Uber since it launched in San Francisco in 2011. But the smartphone app has faced stiff resistance from traditional taxi drivers the world over, as

well as bans in some places over safety concerns and questions over legal issues, including taxes. Uber says it is not a transport company like taxi firms, and that it simply connects drivers with passengers. While many drivers have been tempted by Uber's model, many more operators of Casablanca's estimated 18,000 taxis continue to denounce the app's "unfair competition", while passengers still heavily rely instead on local ride startups such as Careem and chauffeur.ma.

The recent opening of a new tram line in the city has also siphoned off some of the local drivers' traditional clientele. "The tram has already eaten up an important part of our market, and things are getting worse with Uber, which operates without constraint," said Abdelouahed. Belqiz insists that Uber and local taxis can operate side-by-side, but admits her firm's legal status "needs clarifying". "With every important change you meet resistance, but with time people get used to new modes of consumption," she said. — AFP

TRUCK ATTACK KILLS 4 ISRAELI SOLDIERS

Continued from Page 1

attack lasted several seconds and once the soldiers understood that it was an attack, they fired in the direction of the vehicle," army spokesman Moti Almouza said in a statement. Multiple bullet holes could be seen in the windshield of the truck.

Israel's military said four soldiers were killed and 17 wounded. Medics reported that three of the dead were women, while all four were in their 20s. Video said to be of the incident being shared online shows a flatbed truck with a crane in the rear drive through a group of soldiers standing next to a bus. The driver then pulls off to the side and tries to reverse back towards where the soldiers were hit before the truck eventually comes to a stop.

The video showed visitors, including soldiers, running for cover as the incident began. Bodies were later covered in sheets. "I heard my soldiers screaming and shouting," said one of the tour guides, Lea Schreiber. "I saw a truck that went on the side of the road. Soldiers starting shooting... There were orders and screaming everywhere. They told them to hide behind the wall because there was fear of another attack." Netanyahu later visited the scene. "We know the identity of the assailant, who according to all indications supported IS," he said in a statement released by his office.

Fawzi Barhum, a spokesman for Islamist movement Hamas which runs the Gaza Strip, calling the attack "heroic and brave". Palestinian security officials said the driver was a Palestinian in his late 20s from the east Jerusalem neighborhood of Jabal Mukaber, located close to the scene.

Palestinian media named him as Fadi Al-Qanbar, a father of four. Rosenfeld said it was not yet clear if the attack had been planned earlier or was spontaneous.

It occurred in what was formerly designated a no-man's land between mainly Palestinian east and Israeli-dominated west Jerusalem, near UN headquarters at a spot that leads to a promenade with picturesque views. Israeli settlements in east Jerusalem and Palestinian neighborhoods are located nearby. The European Union condemned the attack, as did the UN envoy for the Middle East peace process, Nickolay Mladenov. "It is reprehensible that some choose to glorify such acts which undermine the possibility of a peaceful future for both Palestinians and Israelis," he said. "There is nothing heroic in such actions." Many analysts say Palestinian frustration with the Israeli occupation and settlement-building in the West Bank, comatose peace efforts and their own fractured leadership have helped feed the unrest. Israel says incitement by Palestinian leaders and media is a leading cause.

The status of Jerusalem is one of the most difficult issues in the conflict. The Palestinians see east Jerusalem, which Israel occupied in 1967 and later annexed, as the capital of their future state. Israel views the whole city as its capital. US President-elect Donald Trump recently stirred fresh controversy over Jerusalem's status by vowing to break with years of precedent and move the US embassy there from Tel Aviv. Last week, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas warned doing so would cross a "red line" and could jeopardize peace prospects. — Agencies

FORMER IRANIAN LEADER RAFSANJANI DIES...

Continued from Page 1

Residents said a crowd gathered outside Shohadaa Hospital where Rafsanjani was taken, despite police warnings, blocking Tehran's Valiasr Avenue. His body was later transferred to Jamaran hospital. In a sign of mourning, state television channels carried a black banner on a corner of screen. His funeral will be held in Tehran tomorrow, his relative and aide Hossein Marashi was quoted as saying by Fars news agency. Mehdi, the imprisoned son of Rafsanjani who is in jail on corruption charges, attended the hospital to say goodbye to the body of his father. He was escorted out by police.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah expressed condolences to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani yesterday on the death of Rafsanjani. The Amir, in a cable to Rouhani, prayed to Allah the Almighty to bestow blessings upon the deceased. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

Rafsanjani's mix of sly wit and reputation for cunning moves - both in politics and business - earned him a host of nicknames such as Akbar Shah, or Great King, during a life that touched every major event in Iranian affairs since before the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

His presence - whether directly or through back channels - was felt in many forms. He was a steady leader in the turbulent years following the overthrow of the US-backed shah, a veteran warrior in the country's internal political battles and a covert go-between in intrigue such as the Iran-Contra arms deals in the 1980s.

He also was handed an unexpected political resurgence in his later years. The surprise presidential election in 2013 of Rafsanjani's political soul mate, Rouhani, gave the former president an insider role in reform-minded efforts that included Rouhani's push for direct nuclear talks with Washington.

Rouhani's victory was also another example of Rafsanjani's remarkable political luck. Rafsanjani was blocked from the ballot by Iran's election overseers - presumably worried about boosting his already wide-ranging influence. But, in the end, many moderates turned to Rouhani as an indirect vote for Rafsanjani. It came after years of dwindling influence. Another presidential comeback bid was snuffed out by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's surprise victory in 2005 elections.

Rafsanjani was born on Aug 25, 1934 in the village of Nough in southern Iran into a wealthy family. He studied theology in the holy city of Qom before entering politics in 1963 after the shah's police arrested the founder of the Islamic republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. A confidant

of Khomeini, Rafsanjani was the speaker of parliament for two consecutive terms until Khomeini's death in 1989, and went on to serve as president from 1989 to 1997 during a period of significant changes in Iran. At the time, the country was struggling to rebuild its economy after a devastating 1980-88 war with Iraq, while also cautiously allowing some wider freedoms, as seen in Iran's highly regarded film and media industry.

He also oversaw key developments in Iran's nuclear program by negotiating deals with Russia to build an energy-producing reactor in Bushehr, which finally went into service in 2011 after long delays. Behind the scenes, he directed the secret purchase of technology and equipment from Pakistan and elsewhere. Rafsanjani managed to remain within the ruling theocracy after leaving office, but any dreams of taking on a higher-profile elder statesman role collapsed with Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election in 2009 and the intense crackdown that followed. Rafsanjani's harsh criticism of Ahmadinejad branded him as a dissenter in the eyes of many conservatives.

In a sign of his waning powers, Rafsanjani's stance cost him his position as one of the Friday prayer leaders at Tehran University, a highly influential position that often is the forum for significant policy statements. But some analysts believe that Rafsanjani was kept within the ruling fold as a potential mediator with America and its allies in the standoff over Iran's nuclear program. His past stature as a trusted Khomeini ally also offered him political protection. Rafsanjani was a top commander in the war with Iraq and played a key role in convincing Khomeini to accept a cease-fire as it became clear that extending the stalemate could pose a crippling drain on Iran's economy.

Nearly 25 years later, Rafsanjani tried to revive his credentials among a new generation of reformers by recounting proposals he made to Khomeini in the late 1980s to consider outreach to the United States, still seen by hardliners as the "Great Satan". His image, however, also had darker undertones. He was named by prosecutors in Argentina among Iranian officials suspected of links to a 1994 bombing of a Jewish center in Buenos Aires that left 85 people dead. Some Iranian reformers accused him of involvement in the slaying of liberals and dissidents during his presidency - charges that were never pursued by Iranian authorities.

"The title of Islamic Republic is not just a formality," he said in 2009 in the chaos after Ahmadinejad's re-election. "Rest assured, if one of those two aspects is damaged we will lose our revolution. If it loses its Islamic aspect, we will go astray. If it loses its republican aspect, (the Islamic Republic) will not be realized. Based on the reasons that I have offered, without people and their vote there would be no Islamic system." — Agencies

EFFORTS CONTINUE IN BID TO LIFT FREEZE...

Continued from Page 1

he handed Information and Youth Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, an initiative he thinks could lead to lifting the suspension. Under the initiative, the government pledges to IOC to amend the sports legislation to be compatible with the international sports charter and to withdraw all cases against international sports organizations.

The government will also pledge to withdraw decisions dissolving local sports federations until courts have ruled in lawsuits filed by the government against them, the lawmaker said. Subaei said the legal office of the Public Authority for Sports has advised it against continuing the cases against international sports bodies, warning that Kuwait could end up paying \$1 billion each to IOC and FIFA if Kuwait loses those cases. The lawmaker said that this is the last proposal to be submitted to the minister and the prime minister regarding efforts to lift the suspension, adding that "we will not remain silent any longer". He said that they will have a firm position on this matter next week and "we will take all the procedures

guaranteed under the constitution after consulting with other MPs," a reference to preparations underway to grill the information minister or even the prime minister. Reports quoted opposition MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei as saying last week that he was contemplating grilling the prime minister over the sports dilemma.

In another sensitive development, opposition MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf said yesterday that he plans to submit a request to the Assembly tomorrow to launch a probe into why the government deported opposition activist Saad Al-Ajmi. Ajmi was deported to Saudi Arabia two years ago, months after the government revoked his citizenship as part of a crackdown on the opposition.

Hajraf said he will also submit a motion to debate the government's policy on revoking citizenships, adding that the government has remained uncooperative with the new Assembly. The government had revoked the citizenship of several opposition leaders and activists and their family members and some relatives in 2014 over a variety of reasons. These cases are being looked by courts.

IRAQ FORCES IN MOSUL PUNCH TO TIGRIS

Continued on Page 13

Having eyes on the river should further complicate IS' already reduced ability to resupply the eastern front with fighters and weapons from the west bank, which it still firmly controls. Commanders had predicted when the operation, Iraq's largest in years, was launched nearly three months ago that the eastern side of the city would be easier to retake. But diehard fighters, estimated at around 5,000 to 7,000 before the start of the offensive, fought back with sniper fire, booby-traps and a seemingly endless supply of suicide car bombs. The continued presence in the city of hundreds of thousands of civilians - either forced to

stay by IS or reluctant to leave their homes for crowded and cold displacement camps - has impeded the federal advance. Baghdad and partnering aid organizations had predicted an exodus of civilians in the first weeks of the operation but the flux of fleeing Mosul residents was more limited than expected.

According to the United Nations, more than 135,000 people have been displaced since the start of the operation to retake Mosul, a significant proportion of them from outlying areas. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi had promised that his forces would rid Iraq of IS by the end of 2016 but later said that eliminating the jihadists would take several more months. — AFP



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Focus

TRUMP CONTINUES HIS SCORE-SETTLING, TRASH-TALKING WAYS

As a candidate one of the ways Donald Trump shocked America was by locking horns nastily with anybody who got in his way. He once mocked a journalist with a disability. He argued for a couple of days with the Pakistani-born parents of an Army captain who was killed in Iraq. Now, Trump is days away from being sworn in as president and little has changed: He dwells on minutiae far removed from things presidential and spends a lot of time settling scores.

Before breakfast on Friday, Trump took aim at Arnold Schwarzenegger, the new host of "Celebrity Apprentice", because the reality TV show's ratings are lower than when Trump was its star until 2015. "Wow, the ratings are in and Arnold Schwarzenegger got 'swamped' (or destroyed) by comparison to the ratings machine, DJT," Trump wrote on Twitter, his main conduit for communicating. "But who cares, he supported Kasich & Hillary," he added in a second tweet, referring to a former rival in the Republican primaries and to Hillary Clinton, whom he defeated in the November election.

The ratings plunge - 21 percent compared to the first episode of the 14th season of the show, Trump's last - was not news until Trump decided it should be. And in blasting Schwarzenegger along the way, Trump effectively attacked a show in which he himself is still executive producer, at the risk of sapping revenue of which he is a beneficiary.

The Republican billionaire has attacked the New York Times and Vanity Fair magazine, arguing wrongly that their circulations were down. He has also fired away, among others, at the comedy show "Saturday Night Live", in which actor Alec Baldwin lampoons him, and CNN. The list goes on. Trump seems tireless. "People said that after he got elected he would act more presidential, that he would change as he assumes the role of the office," said Daniel Kreiss, associate professor at the University of North Carolina School of Media and Journalism. "And yet here we are months into the transition and Trump hasn't changed one bit," Kreiss added. "I have no reason to suspect that it will change."

His sawed-off-shotgun approach to expressing his opinion may have a downside in what Americans think of Trump, said David Lewis, a professor of political science at Vanderbilt University. "The fact that the president-elect gives opinions about subjects that have very little to do with politics, that can affect their opinions of him," Lewis argued. "I think there's a real danger here of him sort of being overexposed in ways that get fatiguing and make people less receptive to his approach domestically," he added. Politicians generally are very careful about how and how often they say things publicly so as to protect the impact of their message, Lewis said.

Personal

Before Trump, Barack Obama was without a doubt the first president of the social media area. Since 2007 he has tweeted more than 15,000 times - an average of more than four a day. But Obama has a team of professionals do this, and it is rare for him to tweet himself, said Kreiss. What is more, Trump's tone in his tweets could not be more different from Obama's. It is often aggressive, angry and personal.

Exclamation points and capital letters abound. His acidic wording regularly goes far, far beyond what is traditional for US politicians. Trump regularly dismisses the US media as being "dishonest". Just this week he derided the Senate's top Democrat, Chuck Schumer, as a "clown". This came just weeks after he praised Schumer as being "much smarter" than his predecessor, Harry Reid. Trump complained of fraud before and after the election, when there was no evidence of this.

"It just doesn't seem in his nature to really think harder what it is he's putting out there and why," said Kreiss. He said you can see this also in Trump's seemingly cavalier approach toward possible conflicts of interest between his business empire and his job as president. "In nearly every single measure, Trump is undermining democratic norms and democratic institutions here in the United States," said Kreiss.

For this reason, he said, some of Trump's tweets are more worrisome than the ones that have zero to do with being president. Trump's filter-free way of speaking, especially on social media, was popular with voters but there is a lot more at stake when the whole world is listening, as will be the case from now on. "The risks of loose talk are particularly high in foreign policy and the president-elect doesn't seem to mind taking those risks," said Lewis. — AFP

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NAVY, TRUMP EYE BIGGEST FLEET EXPANSION

With President-elect Donald Trump demanding more ships, the Navy is proposing the biggest shipbuilding boom since the end of the Cold War to meet threats from a resurgent Russia and saber-rattling China. The Navy's 355-ship proposal released last month is even larger than what the Republican Trump had promoted on the campaign trail, providing a potential boost to shipyards that have struggled because budget caps that have limited money funding for ships.

At Maine's Bath Iron Works, workers worried about the future want to build more ships but wonder where the billions of dollars will come from. "Whether Congress and the government can actually fund it, is a whole other ball game," said Rich Nolan, president of the shipyard's largest union. Boosting shipbuilding to meet the Navy's 355-ship goal could require an additional \$5 billion to \$5.5 billion in annual spending in the Navy's 30-year projection, according to an estimate by naval analyst Ronald O'Rourke at the Congressional Research Service.

The Navy's revised Force Structure Assessment calls for adding another 47 ships including an aircraft carrier built in Virginia, 16 large surface warships built in Maine and Mississippi, and 18 attack submarines built in Connecticut, Rhode Island and Virginia. It also calls for more amphibious assault ships, expeditionary transfer docks and support ships.

In addition to being good for national security, a larger fleet would be better for both the sailors, who'd enjoy shorter deployments, and for the ships, which would have more down time for maintenance, said Matthew Paxton, president of the Shipbuilders Council of America, which represents most of the major Navy shipbuilders. "Russia and China are going to continue to build up their navies," he said. "The complexities aren't going to get any easier. The Navy, more than any of the services, is our forward presence. We're going to need this Navy."

Many defense analysts agree that military capabilities have been degraded in recent years, especially when it comes to warships, aircraft and tanks. The key is finding a way to increase Navy shipbuilding to achieve defense and economic gains "in a fiscally responsible way that does not pass the bill along to our children," said independent Sen Angus King of Maine, a member of the Armed Services Committee. Even when Trump takes office, no one envisions a return to the heady days during the Cold War when

workers were wiring, welding, grinding, pounding and plumbing ships at a furious pace to meet President Ronald Reagan's audacious goal of a 600-ship Navy. The Navy currently has 274 deployable battle force ships, far short of its old goal of 308 ships. Lawrence J Korb, a retired naval officer and former assistant defense secretary under Reagan, said the Navy's request isn't realistic unless the Trump administration is willing to take the budget "to levels we've never seen." "You never have enough money to buy a perfect defense. You have to make trade-offs," said Korb, senior fellow at the Center for American Progress.

But investors apparently are betting on more ships.

General Dynamics, which owns Bath Iron Works, Connecticut-based Electric Boat and California-based NASSCO, and Huntington Ingalls, which owns major shipyards in Virginia and in Mississippi, have both seen stock prices creep upward since the election. "To the generic military shipbuilder, it's a bull market right now," said Ronald Epstein, an analyst at Bank of America's Merrill Lynch division.

In Bath, the 6,000 shipbuilders aren't going to count their eggs before they hatch. "A lot of people are hopeful that it'll happen," Nolan said. "But they're taking a wait-and-see approach. They've heard it before and then seen it not come to fruition." — AP



In this Jan 3, 2017 photo, a shipyard worker walks to his car at the end of the workday at Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine. — AP

ASSANGE: BOLD PUBLISHER OR RUSSIAN DUPE?

Accusations that Russia interfered with the US presidential election by leaking hacked documents via WikiLeaks have put a fresh spotlight on the crusading website's founder Julian Assange. A report from the US Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) released Friday accuses Russian President Vladimir Putin of ordering the operation in which computer hackers stole Democratic Party files and fed them to WikiLeaks. The website published the internal documents and emails over the weeks ahead of the Nov 8 election, embarrassing Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton's campaign and arguably contributing to her defeat - which US intelligence said was Putin's goal.

Assange, who has made a trade out of publishing purloined secrets of governments and powerful organizations and individuals, has repeatedly insisted that WikiLeaks did not receive the Democratic files from the Russian government, adding that the group publishes anything significant that it receives. "Nothing in today's declassified ODNI report alters our conclusion that WikiLeaks's US election related source are not state parties," the group said in a Twitter statement late Friday.

Earlier in the week, Assange told Fox News the focus on WikiLeaks's source for the information was a smokescreen for what it contained, and its impact on Clinton's campaign. "WikiLeaks published true information... The American public read that information, true information, and said, 'we don't like these people.' And then voted accordingly."

But Assange did not rule out that people acting on behalf of Moscow had handed over the documents. The US intelligence report says Russian military intelligence relayed the material to WikiLeaks via unnamed intermediaries. "Moscow most likely chose WikiLeaks because of its self-proclaimed reputation for authenticity," it said.

Journalist, 'publisher'

Assange calls himself a journalist and publisher who is doing nothing illegal. Since he took refuge in Ecuador's London embassy four years ago to avoid possible extradition to the United States for espionage - by Sweden,

where he faces sexual assault charges, or by Britain - he has also called himself a "political prisoner". But since the organization stunned the world in 2010 by publishing hundreds of thousands of internal diplomatic communications from the US State Department leaked to it by a former US military intelligence analyst, Washington has regarded him as a dangerous menace and maintained the threat of prosecuting him, though no charges have been filed.

In 2010, US Vice President Joe Biden likened Assange to a "high-tech terrorist". And US politicians this week roundly blasted him as irresponsible and an enemy of the country. In its first decade, WikiLeaks has clearly welcomed secret documents on nearly any matter. The first document it published in December 2006 involved Somalia, and the next year it helped expose corruption by Kenyan leader Daniel Arap Moi.

Since then releases have targeted Peru's oil industry, the Scientology group, the Syrian government, and Swiss and Icelandic banks. But they pale in volume and impact to its disclosures of US-related documents on Guantanamo, the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, the Obama administration's trade treaty talks, and the Democratic Party files. While he did not reply to AFP questions, in recent interviews Assange insisted the group does not have an anti-US bias.

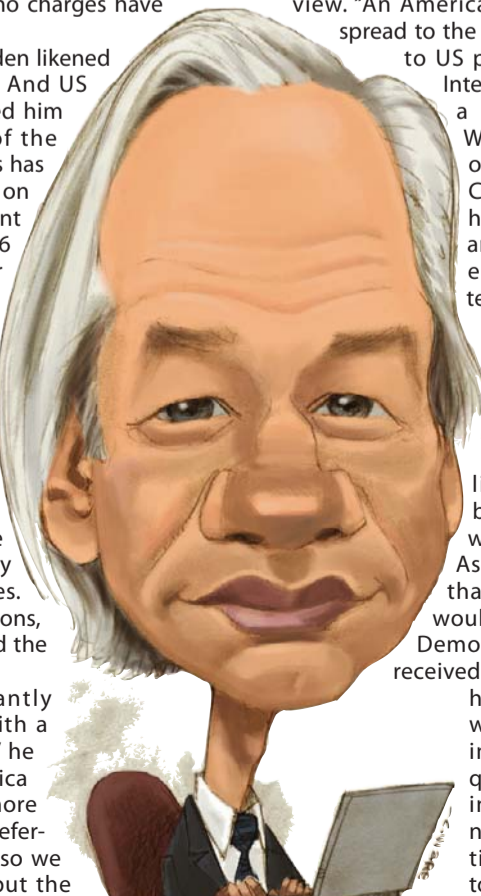
"WikiLeaks is a predominantly English-speaking organization with a website predominantly in English," he told Italian newspaper La Repubblica last month. "We have published more than 800,000 documents about or referencing Russia and President Putin, so we do have quite a bit of coverage, but the

majority of our publications come from Western sources, though not always."

Clinton obsession

But Assange has shown an extraordinary fixation on US power and Clinton. "The US is in the business of managing an extended empire," he told Der Spiegel in a 2015 interview. "An American mindset is being fostered and spread to the rest of the world," he said, pointing to US power in business, trade and the Internet. In February 2016 he authored a strong attack on Clinton on WikiLeaks' website. "I have had years of experience in dealing with Hillary Clinton and have read thousands of her cables. Hillary lacks judgment and will push the United States into endless, stupid wars which spread terrorism."

And in an interview with Russia's RT television on the eve of the election - which he still expected Clinton would win - he described her as "someone who is eaten alive by their ambitions, tormented literally to the point where they become sick as a result of going on with their ambitions". Nevertheless, Assange has accurately pointed out that mainstream journalistic outlets would themselves have published the Democratic Party documents, had they received them. "In the end, I think that we have an obligation to report what we can about important people and important events. There's just no question that the email exchanges inside the Democratic Party were newsworthy," Dean Baquet, executive editor of The New York Times, told the paper last month. — AFP



KOEMAN DEMANDS TRANSFER ACTION

LONDON: Everton manager Ronald Koeman has urged the club's board to recognise the extent of his rebuilding job by backing him in the transfer market after Saturday's FA Cup exit at home to Leicester City. Everton let slip a one-goal lead at Goodison Park with Nigerian striker Ahmed Musa's second-half brace enough to condemn the Merseyside club to a 2-1 third round defeat and the likelihood of another season without silverware. "I know what we need to change and if everyone opens their eyes maybe we will get further on our improvement as a team," Koeman told British media. "Because that's really what we need and that's all about what happens this month." Everton have been linked with Manchester United duo Memphis Depay and Morgan Schneiderlin, and Koeman, who will be without injured winger Yannick Bolasie for up to a year, has made it clear to his employers where the team needs to strengthen. "I have that in mind and the board knows because we spoke together about what we need. That's the job of (director of football) Steve Walsh and it's my job," the Dutchman added when asked about signing new players in the January window. —Reuters



SILVA WANTS HULL FANS BACK AFTER WINNING START

LONDON: Marco Silva began his Hull City managerial career with an FA Cup victory on Saturday but the Portuguese was left hoping that their missing fans would be back to support his bid to ensure the Tigers avoid Premier League relegation. In a debut match for the League's newest managers, who both have their work cut out to save their teams from the drop, Silva came out on top over Swansea City's Paul Clement with the 2-0 win, courtesy of late goals from Abel Hernandez and Josh Tymon. Yet even if achieving this third round win was an ideal start for Silva, the sight of a sparsely populated Hull City Stadium with many fans having boycotted the game in continuing protest against the club's owners certainly was not. An official attendance of only 6,608 was recorded with only a couple of hundred fans from Wales also having made the trip to watch the tie between the league's two bottom clubs, leaving Silva sounding disconcerted. "It's important for me that our fans believe in the team because we need help," said Silva, whose appointment in place of the sacked Mike Phelan has not impressed supporters. — Reuters

HAZLEWOOD RESTED FOR OPENING PAKISTAN ODI

SYDNEY: Australia pacesman Josh Hazlewood will be rested for Friday's one-day international series opener against Pakistan at Brisbane to manage the fast bowler's workload, coach Darren Lehmann said yesterday. The 26-year-old Hazlewood and pace spearhead Mitchell Starc played all six tests in the home summer and were expected to be rested for some of the matches in the five-match series ahead of a four-test tour of India starting next month. "He's not injured but we have decided to give him a week to freshen up at home and he will link up with the ODI squad in Melbourne ahead of the second match of the series," Lehmann said in a statement. "Although, if one of our other fast bowlers picks up an injury in the run-up to Friday's first game at the Gabba then he could be called up to slot in." Pace bowler Billy Stanlake, who stands 2.04 metres tall and has been in fine form in the Big Bash League (BBL) for the Adelaide Strikers, is likely to make his debut if Australia opt to play three pacesmen at the Gabba. — Reuters



KUWAIT WINTER SPORTS CLUB OPENS ICE HOCKEY SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Winter Sports Club opened the Kuwait Ice Hockey School Saturday, to educate and train sprouts and juniors aged four to fourteen, in the presence of lovers of the game, in cooperation with and sponsorship from the "sports for all departments," at the Public Authority for Sports.

Club President Fuhaid Al-Ajmi spoke following the opening of the school at the Ice Skating Rink, saying that training at the school will be three days a week under the supervision of international trainers from Serbia who are specialized in this young age group. Al-Ajmi said the club aims to widen the base of Ice Hockey players, to be a provider of Kuwait national teams, and that

the club is now reassured about the future of this sport in Kuwait, particularly with the number of those who came to the school. Al-Ajmi appreciated the significant support of the Public Authority for Sports, which materialized in sponsoring this school, besides the training camps, as well as their participation in foreign tournaments. He said the club plans to hold a camp for school

students in the Czech Republic to polish their skills and prepare them for upcoming championships.

Meanwhile Director of the Sports for all Departments at PAS Hamid Al-Hazim said PAS under the leadership of Director General Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and his Deputy Sports Affairs Dr Humoud Fulaiteh, is keen to support Kuwaiti athletes

in various sports, specially specialized clubs which are characterized by being highly organized.

Al-Hazim commended the large number of those who enrolled in the school and showed great potential, and hoped the club succeeds in discovering talents in the sport which is now making notable achievements at the regional and continental levels.



KRISTOFFERSEN WINS ADELBODEN SLALOM

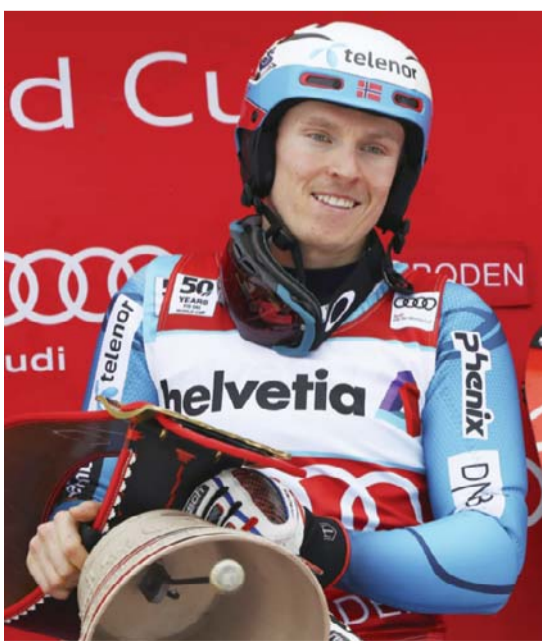
ADELBODEN: Norway's Henrik Kristoffersen, reigning world champion in the discipline, won yesterday's slalom at Adelboden, pushing Italian Manfred Moelgg into second spot.

Kristoffersen won both legs to win in 1min 54.87sec — 1.83sec clear of Moelgg and 2.19sec ahead of Austrian rival Marcel Hirscher.

The Norwegian also won on the difficult course last year, when he beat out Hirscher and Russia's Alexander Khoroshilov, who was fifth Sunday behind Germany's Felix Neureuther.

Kristoffersen enjoyed relatively mild race conditions which began to deteriorate thereafter, hitting the hopes of rivals including Hirscher as the fog descended to leave the latter with 1.6sec to make up on the second run.

The challenge proved too much, as it did for Frenchman Alexis Pinturault, winner of Saturday's giant slalom. Several competitors skied out in the opening run, including Italian Stefano Gross, winner in 2015 in Adelboden, Switzerland. —AFP



ADELBODEN: Norway's Henrik Kristoffersen, the winner, celebrates on podium after an alpine ski, men's World Cup slalom in Adelboden, Switzerland, yesterday. — AP

SHIFFRIN WINS WORLD CUP SLALOM DESPITE SKIING OVER BROKEN GATE

MARIBOR: Not even a broken gate rolling down the course could stop Olympic slalom champion Mikaela Shiffrin from returning to the top of the podium in her favorite discipline. The American won a women's World Cup race yesterday, five days after she had failed to finish a slalom run for the first time in four years.

In light snowfall, the American was leading the field by 0.19 seconds when a gate that she had just passed correctly broke and flew down the hill. Shiffrin skied over it but managed to stay on the course.

She fell 0.09 off the lead due to the incident, but accelerated in the bottom section to take the win, 0.19 seconds ahead of Wendy Holdener of Switzerland. Frida Hansdotter of Sweden came 0.31 behind in third. "I skied over it a couple of times. It just kept coming at me," Shiffrin said. "The gate was very solidly under my skis for a couple of turns. I felt it but it was OK. I was happy that I didn't totally lose my ski and fall over." It was the American's 27th career win, which puts her level with Phil Mahre in third place among American skiers with most World Cup wins, behind Bode Miller (33) and Lindsey Vonn (76). She also equaled Swedish standout Ingemar Stenmark's feat of 27 victories before turning 22. Only Annemarie Moser-Proell of Austria had more wins (41) at that age.

Shiffrin had her seven-race winning streak come to an end in Tuesday's race in Zagreb, where she straddled a gate early in her first run.

"It's always important to be able to change the mindset after something like in Zagreb," she said. "It's really easy to get worried about straddling, and then do it again, and again, and again. And then it becomes like a snowball effect and you can't get out of it." Shiffrin seemed free of doubts when she took the lead in the opening leg Sunday. In a clean run on the Radvanje course, she was 0.23 ahead of the competition at the final split time, but lost a few hundredths on the bottom section.

The two-time world champion held a 0.17-second lead over Holdener, with Hansdotter of Sweden 0.38 back in third. The top three held their positions in the final run. Veronika Velez Zuzulova, who won the race where Shiffrin went out, led the American by 0.08 seconds at the second split time of her first run before the Slovak straddled a gate and did not finish.

Velez Zuzulova has become Shiffrin's main rival for this season's slalom title, and now trails the two-world champion by 110 points with three races remaining. Even if beaten again by Shiffrin, her competitors feel they are closing in on Shiffrin, who won a slalom by more than three seconds last season. "Mikaela is always fast," Hansdotter

said. "But it's fun to see the other girls are coming closer." Runner-up Holdener, who missed out on becoming the first Swiss winner of a women's slalom in 15 years, added "It's good to know that she is not that far away. Every girl has some parts to improve, Mikaela as well. But it's good to know she is not one second in front or more." Despite winning again, Shiffrin said she was not completely satisfied with her racing this season. "I have not been skiing in the races like I can ski, not even close," she said. "And it's a bit disappointing, actually, even to come down and win. Right now, I am not happy with just winning, I want to ski well."

In one of her rare slalom starts, defend-

ing overall champion Lara Gut finished 4.27 behind Shiffrin and failed to qualify for the second run. The Swiss skier was preparing for a combined event next week, which includes a slalom run.

Shiffrin leads Gut by 305 points in the overall standings, but the American said the situation was likely to change with a lot of speed races coming up before next month's world championships. "There is four speed series coming so I expect that the lead will disappear quick," she said.

The women's World Cup travels to Austria for a night slalom in Flachau on Tuesday, followed by a downhill and a combined event in Altenmarkt-Zauchensee at the weekend. — AP



MARIBOR: From left, Switzerland's Wendy Holdener, second placed, Mikaela Shiffrin, the winner, of the United States, and Sweden's Frida Hansdotter, third placed, celebrate on podium after an alpine ski, women's World Cup slalom in Maribor, Slovenia, yesterday. — AP

LA ROCHELLE WIN BRUISING CLASH TO GO TOP IN FRANCE

PARIS: La Rochelle snatched pole position in the French Top 14 on Saturday with a bruising 22-8 win over an indisciplined Castres who gave up 20 penalties and finished the night a man short.

Victory allowed La Rochelle to move four points clear of Clermont who face Toulon later. After Brock James and Benjamin Urdapilleta had exchanged early penalties, it was Castres who scored the first try on a bitterly cold night. South Africa hooker Jody

Jenkeker barrelled over from short range for an 8-3 lead but Urdapilleta missed the extras. Zack Holmes cut the deficit for La Rochelle with a penalty as his team trailed 8-6 at the break.

Castres finished the opening period with Uruguayan skipper Rodrigo Capo Ortega in the sin bin for a dangerous tackle. No sooner had he returned early in the second half than scrum-half Rory Kockott was also yellow-carded for a similar offence.

Holmes kicked La Rochelle ahead and they never looked back with All Blacks World Cup winning flanker Victor Vito scoring a try after being set-up by veteran Springboks scrum-half Ricky Januarie.

Holmes slotted over the conversion for 16-8 before adding two further penalties for a comfortable win. Castres played the last 10 minutes a man short once again when replacement prop Yohan Montes was red-carded for appearing to aim a head butt at

Mohammed Boughanmi who was yellow carded for his role in the affray.

Montes had only been on the field for five minutes before he was sent packing. Earlier Saturday, Brive pushed Grenoble closer to relegation with a 23-22 win with the Top 14's top scorer Gaetan Germain kicking 18 of his side's points.

The match between Pau and Lyon, meanwhile, was postponed due to an icy pitch. On Friday, Montpellier scored three tries through Fijian winger Nemani

Nadolo, centre Vincent Martin and former Australian rugby league star Joe Tomane in a 31-26 win against faltering Bordeaux.

The win allowed Jake White's third-placed team to bury the shock 32-27 loss at Pau last week while Bordeaux have now lost for games in succession.

The only consolation for Bordeaux was Simon Hickey's last-gasp penalty allowing them to claim a defensive bonus point.—AFP

SEAHAWKS, TEXANS ADVANCE IN NFL PLAYOFF OPENERS

WASHINGTON: Russell Wilson tossed two touchdown passes to power Seattle over Detroit 26-6 while Brock Osweiler threw for one touchdown and ran for another as Houston beat Oakland 27-14 in Saturday's NFL playoff openers.

The Seahawks stretched their playoff win streak in Seattle to 10 games, third-best in NFL history, and booked a second-round National Conference matchup next Saturday in Atlanta.

"We're expecting a fight," said Seattle linebacker Bobby Wagner. They are rested. They are going to be hungry. But we're hungry too. We're going to come out and give them everything we've got."

The Lions suffered their NFL record ninth consecutive playoff defeat. Detroit has not won a playoff game in 25 seasons and has not won a road playoff game or an NFL title since 1957.

"We were just locked in," Wagner said. "We knew we were going to play well." Houston advanced to a second-round American Conference matchup next weekend at either New England or Kansas City.

"Overall, it was probably our best game of the year," Texans coach Bill O'Brien said. "I'm really proud of these players." Houston's fate depends upon the outcome of a later match between Pittsburgh-Miami playoff game.

"I don't care who we play. We are going to play at a high level," Texans defensive star Jadeveon Clowney said. "We are just going to keep fighting." The Green Bay Packers, entering the playoffs on a six-game win streak, host the New York Giants in Sunday's other playoff game, with the winner to visit Dallas a week later in the second-round.

'HARD-NOSED FOOTBALL'

At Seattle, Thomas Rawls carried 27 times for a team playoff record 161 rushing yards and a touchdown.

"I'm feeling so good. We worked so hard to get to this point," Rawls said. "It motivates us, playing tough hard-nosed Seahawks football. That's what we did."

The Seahawks, who have not lost a home playoff game since January 2005, opened the scoring on Wilson's 2-yard touchdown pass to Paul Richardson. Richardson made a one-handed touchdown reception while grabbing a defend-

er's face mask, but did not draw a penalty flag. Seattle's Steven Hauschka kicked a 43-yard field goal and Detroit's Matt Prater answered from 51 yards late in the second quarter to leave the Seahawks ahead 10-3 at half-time. Prater added a 53-yard field goal for the Lions but Hauschka answered from 27 yards early in the fourth quarter to give Seattle a 13-6 edge. On their next possession, the Seahawks drove 82 yards in eight plays capped by Rawls' 4-yard touchdown run, although Hauschka's missed conversion kick left Seattle ahead by only 19-6. Wilson lofted a final 13-yard touchdown pass to Doug Baldwin with 4:12 remaining to seal Detroit's fate.

'AN ULTIMATE TEAM VICTORY'

The Texans, 19-0 over three seasons when leading at half-time and 6-0 in this campaign, could become the first team to play a Super Bowl in their own home stadium. "This was truly an ultimate team victory, and I'm very proud of this football team," Osweiler said. "It means a lot."

The Raiders, in their first playoff game since the 2002 season, struggled behind rookie Connor Cook, who became the first quarterback to make his first NFL start in a playoff game after injuries to Derek Carr and Matt McGloin. The Texans, who hadn't won a playoff game in four years, had the fewest total season points of any playoff team since 2005, but their top-rated defensive unit was good enough to put them in the post-season. Houston's Nick Novak kicked a 50-yard field goal to open the scoring and Clowney picked off a Cook pass to set up a 4-yard touchdown run by Lamar Miller. "He has really stepped up and made a bunch of big plays for us," O'Brien said of Clowney. It has to continue."

Oakland answered on a 2-yard touchdown run by Latavius Murray but Novak's 38-yard field goal put Houston ahead 13-7.

Osweiler hit DeAndre Hopkins with a 2-yard touchdown pass with 80 seconds remaining in the second quarter to give the Texans a 20-7 half-time lead, then added a 1-yard touchdown run.

While the Raiders answered on Cook's 8-yard touchdown pass, interceptions by Houston's Corey Moore and A.J. Bouye snuffed out Oakland's final hope. "I'm proud of our guys," Raiders coach Jack Del Rio said. "We have a bright future." —AFP



MOUNT MAUNGANUI: New Zealand players celebrate winning the series after the 20/20 International cricket match between New Zealand and Bangladesh at Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui yesterday. — AFP

ANDERSON POWERS NEW ZEALAND TO T20 SWEEP

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: Corey Anderson bludgeoned 94 off just 41 balls as New Zealand beat Bangladesh by 27 runs in the third Twenty20 at Bay Oval yesterday to sweep the series. Anderson, who put on 124 runs for the fourth wicket with Kane Williamson (60), hit a New Zealand record 10 sixes in his batting blitz as New Zealand posted 194 for four.

Bangladesh in reply made 167 for six in their 20 overs. Tamim Iqbal and Soumya Sarkar launched Bangladesh's reply by reaching 44 in the fifth over when Tamim was dismissed for 24. Bangladesh were 89 for two after 10 overs, but with Soumya having fallen for 42, they could not sustain the run rate.

The tourists still had an outside chance of reaching their target at 120 for three after 14 overs when spinner Ish Sodhi produced a crucially tight over in which he took one for three, blowing out the required run rate to an improbable 14.44 per over.

New Zealand captain Williamson said the blustery conditions meant the win was not as easy as it appeared on the scoreboard.

POWER AND COREY

"Corey's knock was outstanding. It wasn't easy at times—you had to adjust to the wind but I don't think the wind mattered to Corey," he said. "He hit it to parts and hit it a long way and it was a good knock that set us up for victory."

New Zealand, sent into bat, were on the back foot early, slumping from 34 for nought to 41 for three in the space of 11 deliveries. That brought Anderson and Williamson together and after taking a few overs to settle in, with only 55 on the board at the halfway stage, they let fly in the second half of the innings which produced 139 runs. They also set a New Zealand fourth-wicket partnership record of 124, one more than the previous mark set by Colin Munro and Tom Bruce in the second game two days ago.

The big-hitting Anderson only faced 41 deliveries for the highest knock of his career while Williamson faced 57 balls for his seventh Twenty20 half-century.

Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Mortaza, who had the misfortune to see Williamson dropped off his bowling on 53 and 58, was unable to complete his fourth over because of injury, compounding his team's problems. Regular opener Imrul Kayes was also injured in the field. He dropped down the order during the Bangladesh innings and was not required to bat. Rubel Hossain was the pick of the Bangladesh bowlers with three for 31, including two wickets in one over when he removed Jimmy Neesham (15) and Munro, a century-maker two days ago, without scoring.

Sodhi took two for 22 and Trent Boult two for 48 for New Zealand. The defeat left Bangladesh winless after three 50-over matches and three Twenty20s, with two Tests remaining on their tour. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: Scoreboard in the third Twenty20 international between New Zealand and Bangladesh at Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui yesterday.

New Zealand		Bangladesh	
K. Williamson b Rubel Hossain	60	Soumya Sarkar c&b Sodhi	42
J. Neesham lbw Rubel Hossain	15	Sabbir Rahman b Williamson	18
C. Munro c Soumya Sarkar b Rubel Hossain	0	Shakib Al Hasan c Anderson b Boult	41
T. Bruce c Imrul Kayes b Mosaddek Hossain	5	Mahmudullah b Sodhi	18
C. Anderson not out	94	Mosaddek Hossain c de Grandhomme b Santner	12
C. de Grandhomme not out	4	Nurul Hasan not out	7
Extras (lb14, w2)	16	Rubel Hossain not out	1
Total (4 wks, 20 overs)	194	Extras (lb1, w3)	4
Fall of wickets: 1-34 (Neesham), 2-36 (Munro), 3-41 (Bruce), 4-165 (Williamson)		Total (six wickets; 20 overs)	167
Did not bat: M. Santner, T. Blundell, B. Wheeler, I. Sodhi, T. Boult		Fall of wickets: 1-44 (Tamim), 2-82 (Soumya), 3-97 (Sabbir), 4-122 (Mahmudullah), 5-150 (Mosaddek), 6-161 (Shakib)	
Bowling: Mashrafe 3.2-0-42-0, Taskin 4-0-37-0 (2w), Rubel 4-0-31-3, Shakib 4-0-22-0, Mosaddek 3.4-0-27-1, Soumya 1-0-21-0		Did not bat: Imrul Kayes, Mashrafe Mortaza, Taskin Ahmed	
Bangladesh		Bowling: Santner 4-0-37-1 (2w), Wheeler 4-0-29-0, Boult 4-0-48-2, Neesham 1-0-17-0, Sodhi 4-0-22-2 (1w), de Grandhomme 1-0-4-0, Williamson 2-0-9-1	
Tamim Iqbal c de Grandhomme b Boult	24	Result: New Zealand won by 27 runs.	



HOUSTON: Houston Texans cornerback Johnathan Joseph (24) breaks up a pass intended for Oakland Raiders wide receiver Amari Cooper (89) during the first half of an AFC Wild Card NFL game Saturday, in Houston. — AP

RISING STAR THOMAS LEADS TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS

LOS ANGELES: Justin Thomas is doing his best to avoid a repeat of his lacklustre start to 2016, shooting a six-under 67 Saturday to seize sole possession of the lead at the USPGA Tournament of Champions.

Thomas was at 18-under 201 after firing his third straight 67 heading into today's final round at the Plantation Course in Kapalua, Hawaii. The 23-year-old American had a two-shot lead over the hottest player in the game, Japan's Hideki Matsuyama (66), who is seeking his fifth win in his last six tournaments worldwide.

Asked what it is going to take to win, Thomas said, "I am not sure. That is the thing, you don't know what everyone else is going to do." So saying that, I just need to go out and keep doing what I am doing."

Second round co-leader Ryan Moore was tied for third at 14-under with fellow Americans Jimmy Walker and William McGirt. World number one Jason Day of Australia has his work cut out for him as the Australian was tied for 13th at 10-under following a three-under 70.

After getting off to a flat start last season, when he missed the cut at the Sony Open in Waialae, Hawaii, and the Career Builder Challenge in La Quinta, California, Thomas was mindful of being ready for 2017. "I am just looking for a chance to win," he said. "That is why we enter each tournament, or at least why I do. It is nice to be

able to put yourself in an opportunity in the first event of the year."

A rising star on the Tour, he posted six other top-10 finishes last season. He's got two USPGA titles to his credit, successfully defending his CIMB Classic title in Malaysia in October as the tour's 2016-17 season was getting underway.

In Saturday's third round, Thomas fashioned a string of three straight birdies beginning at the par-four third hole. He added an eagle on the par-four 14th and punctuated the round with a birdie at 18.

His only stumble came when he made bogey at the seventh. "I am not disappointed but I left a lot out there," Thomas said. "That is always a good thing because I can just go work on it and improve."

Matsuyama, who briefly held the lead in the second round, birdied all four par-fives on Saturday. His eight total birdies included five in a seven-hole stretch starting at the par-five ninth.

"Hideki is the hottest golfer in the world right now. I am glad he had some time off or I wouldn't like my chances going into tomorrow. But he is playing great so it is going to be a great test," said Thomas.

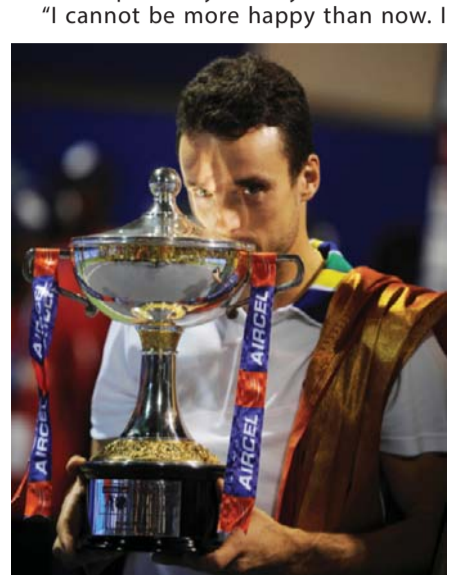
Defending champion Jordan Spieth, still fine tuning his game to start the year, fired a three-under 70 in a round that included a double bogey and an eagle on the front nine.—AFP



MOUNT MAUNGANUI: Rubel Hossain (L) and Nurul Hasan (R) of Bangladesh celebrate the wicket of New Zealand's James Neesham during the 20/20 International cricket match between New Zealand and Bangladesh at Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui yesterday. — AFP

BAUTISTA STIFLES AGGRESSIVE MEDVEDEV TO WIN CHENNAI OPEN

CHENNAI: World number 14 Roberto Bautista Agut outclassed the aggressive Daniil Medvedev 6-3 6-4 to win the Chennai Open title yesterday.



CHENNAI: Roberto Bautista Agut of Spain holds the trophy after beating Daniil Medvedev of Russia in the final men's singles match at Chennai Open Tennis Championship in Chennai yesterday. —AFP

played a great tournament," Bautista Agut, who won his fifth ATP tour title, said during the presentation ceremony. "I know it is very difficult to be a top-10 player but my goal is to be a better player every day."

The second-seeded Spaniard, who was happy to play out long rallies in order to win points, oozed confidence as he comfortably held serve.

He needed to break the 20-year-old Medvedev only once to clinch the opening set. The second set was a much more even contest with Medvedev threatening to turn the tide after edging out a thrilling 30-shot rally as Bautista Agut, a Chennai finalist in 2013, struggled to break the Russian's service. Bautista Agut, however, finally broke Medvedev shortly after the big-serving Russian received on-court treatment for a suspected hamstring problem, and wrapped up the match in an hour and 10 minutes.

"I just had some soreness on my muscles (today). You're never happy unless you have won a tournament but I am really happy I made it to the final," said world number 99 Medvedev, who was playing in his first ATP tour final.

"If someone asked me before the tournament 'Will I be happy reaching the final?', I would said yes." —Reuters

BEATEN MURRAY UPBEAT ABOUT AUSTRALIAN OPEN CHANCES

DOHA: Andy Murray dismissed the idea that his defeat by arch-rival Novak Djokovic in the Qatar Open will have any impact on his attempts to win the Australian Open for the first time. The world number one lost 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 to the Serb in an early season classic, the Briton's first defeat in 29 competitive matches. But Murray said it would mean little when he soon begins his latest attempt to win in Melbourne where he has agonisingly lost five finals. "I still think I have a chance of winning the Australian Open after tonight," he said after the defeat in Doha.

"I don't think that changes. It's disappointing to lose for sure. I have a chance to win the Australian Open still," Murray lost Melbourne finals in 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2016, four of those to Djokovic.

Despite defeat in Doha, Murray said he had gained plenty from the week-long tournament. "I think physically it was a good test to start the year, and I did good here," he said. "My body feels all right just now, so that's positive. "Still think there are things I can do better. You know, I wasn't that clinical on break points this week, which maybe that comes with playing a

few more matches."

Djokovic, who has won the Australian Open five times in the last six years, said Doha had provided perfect preparation for Melbourne. "Best scenario I could ask for beginning of the season," he told reporters. "Playing five matches in this tournament and then three hours against the number one of the world, biggest rival, and winning in a thrilling marathon match is something that definitely can serve as a positive incentive for what's coming up in Australia."

The world number two also said that he expects further battles with Murray, possibly in the final in Melbourne.

"I hope we are going to play against each other. We make each other work hard and improve and continuously work on our games and ourselves. We strive to get better, both of us."

With six titles already, if Djokovic manages to win again in Melbourne this year he will go down in history as the player who has won the most Australian Opens.

A seventh victory would pull him one clear of Roy Emerson, who also won six titles but in the amateur era. The Australian Open begins on January 16. —AFP



SUNRISE: Goaltender James Reimer #34 looks towards the blue line as Michael Matheson #19 of the Florida Panthers checks Patrice Bergeron #37 of the Boston Bruins in front of the net at the BB&T Center on Saturday in Sunrise, Florida. The Bruins defeated the Panthers 4-0. — AFP

FLYERS SNAP 5-GAME LOSING STREAK WITH 4-2 WIN OVER TAMPA BAY

PHILADELPHIA: Jakub Voracek set up his team's first two goals, and the Philadelphia Flyers kept the pedal to the metal from there en route to a 4-2 win over the Tampa Bay Lightning, snapping a five-game losing streak. Rookie Travis Konecny, who has been mired in a prolonged slump, scored just his second goal in the past 23 games to start a barrage of four goals in the second period for the Flyers (24-15-5), sending Tampa Bay to a third straight defeat.

BRUINS 4, PANTHERS 0

Brad Marchand scored twice and Tuukka Rask stopped 25 shots as Boston improved to 4-0-0 versus the Panthers this season- all with Rask in goal. Backes, just off the injured list, scored his first goal since Dec. 27. He has three goals in three games against Florida this season.

KINGS 4, WILD 3 (OT)

Tanner Pearson scored 3:32 into overtime and Jeff Carter registered a goal and two assists as the Kings recorded a 4-3 victory over the Minnesota Wild. Pearson scored his 11th goal of the season and raised the Kings' record to 8-1 in the extra session. Minnesota (24-9-5) lost for the second time in three contests following a franchise-record 12 game winning streak.

SABRES 4, JETS 3

Brian Gionta scored midway through the third period to give the Buffalo Sabres to a 4-3 comeback win over the Winnipeg Jets. Gionta's goal capped a three-goal burst by the Sabres in the third after a sluggish start to the game.

RANGERS 5, BLUE JACKETS 4

Michael Grabner scored on a breakaway with 17 seconds remaining for his second goal of the game as the New York Rangers rallied from a two-goal third-period deficit to defeat the Columbus Blue Jackets 5-4. Columbus defenseman Seth Jones fanned on a pass at the New York blueline and the speedy Grabner pounced, lifting a backhand shot high over sprawling goaltender Curtis McElhinney. Grabner has a team-leading 18 goals.

CANADIENS 5, MAPLE LEAFS 3

Max Pacioretty, Artturi Lehkonen, Nikita Scherbak, Alexander Radulov and Michael McCarron scored as Montreal made it 3-for-3 over Toronto this season. Shea Weber and Jeff Petry added two assists each for the Canadiens, who extended their winning streak to three games. Carey Price stopped 33 shots in the Montreal net.

CAPITALS 1, SENATORS 0

T.J. Oshie scored early in the first period and was in the dressing room for the third as Washington won its fifth straight. Oshie took a hard hit on his left shoulder from the Senators' Dion Phaneuf but returned before the period was over. He did not, however, come out for the third period.

SHARKS 6, RED WINGS 3

Captain Joe Pavelski scored two goals to lead a San Jose offense that was the last team in the league this season to produce five goals in a game as the Sharks snapped a three-game losing streak. Twelve different San Jose players recorded points with five skaters enjoying two-point nights.

BLUES 4, STARS 3

Patrik Berglund scored with 1:54 left in the third period to snap a tie and lift St Louis to victory. Berglund redirected a shot by Kevin Shattenkirk past goalie Antti Niemi for the final goal. Paul Stastny collected two goals and an assist, Vladimir Tarasenko scored his 20th goal and Clutter Hutton had 25 saves for

the Blues, who improved to 12-5-2 in games following a loss this season.

FLAMES 3, CANUCKS 1

Goals by Alex Chiasson and Matt Stajan just over a minute apart in the first period sparked Calgary to a victory that stopped Vancouver's six-game win streak. Michael Frolík got an insurance goal for the Flames on a breakaway late in the third period. Chiasson and Stajan scored within 1:03 of each other and Calgary got a strong effort in goal from Chad Johnson, who made 27 stops.

OILERS 2, DEVILS 1 (OT)

Mark Letestu's power-play goal 3:59 into

overtime lifted Edmonton. Letestu's score came on a booming left-wing slap shot with New Jersey's Travis Zajac sitting in the penalty box after slashing the Oilers' Connor McDavid.

COYOTES 2, ISLANDERS 1 (SO)

Brendan Perlini scored the game-tying goal with 5:55 remaining and Anthony Duclair and Radim Vrbata scored in the shootout as Arizona ended a season-high nine-game losing streak one short of the franchise record. The Coyotes had not won since Dec. 15 in Toronto. Arizona backup Louis Domingue made 27 saves, including six in overtime to win for the first time since Nov. 8 against Colorado.—Reuters

NHL results/standings

San Jose 6, Detroit 3; Calgary 3, Vancouver 1; Arizona 2, NY Islanders 1 (SO); St. Louis 4, Dallas 3; Montreal 5, Toronto 3; Washington 1, Ottawa 0; Boston 4, Florida 0; Edmonton 2, New Jersey 1 (OT); NY Rangers 5, Columbus 4; Los Angeles 4, Minnesota 3 (OT); Buffalo 4, Winnipeg 3; Philadelphia 4, Tampa Bay 2.

Western Conference					Eastern Conference								
Central Division					Atlantic Division								
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS		
Chicago	25	12	5	115	102	55	Boston	21	17	4	102	101	46
Minnesota	24	9	5	121	84	53	Ottawa	20	14	4	94	99	44
St. Louis	21	14	5	114	118	47	Toronto	18	13	8	120	116	44
Nashville	17	15	7	110	105	41	Tampa Bay	19	18	4	116	121	42
Winnipeg	19	20	3	116	126	41	Florida	17	16	8	95	113	42
Dallas	16	16	8	103	121	40	Buffalo	15	15	9	89	109	39
Colorado	13	25	1	79	130	27	Detroit	17	18	5	100	115	39
Pacific Division					Metropolitan Division								
San Jose	24	14	2	105	90	50	Columbus	27	7	4	130	84	58
Anaheim	21	12	8	112	111	50	NY Rangers	28	13	1	146	107	57
Edmonton	21	13	7	117	108	49	Pittsburgh	25	8	5	133	107	55
Calgary	22	18	2	114	117	46	Washington	25	9	5	111	83	55
Los Angeles	20	16	4	98	99	44	Philadelphia	21	15	5	122	127	47
Vancouver	20	19	3	105	121	43	Carolina	17	15	7	100	105	41
Arizona	12	22	6	86	128	30	New Jersey	16	17	8	95	121	40
Eastern Conference					Atlantic Division								
Montreal	25	9	6	124	93	56	NY Islanders	15	15	8	106	117	38

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



SYDNEY: Eugenie Bouchard of Canada tries to keep cool during a break while playing China's Shuai Zhang during their women's singles match at the Sydney International tennis tournament in Sydney, Australia, yesterday. — AP

KUZNETSOVA OPENS SYDNEY TITLE DEFENCE WITH WIN

SYDNEY: Svetlana Kuznetsova opened the defence of her Sydney International title with a comfortable 6-1 6-4 victory over Irina-Camelia Begu yesterday as the Australian Open warm-up event suffered a pair of big-name withdrawals. The Russian fifth seed started strongly by winning 10 of the first 11 games and after her Romanian opponent rallied in the second set to tie it up at 4-4, Kuznetsova broke again in the ninth game and served out the victory in 77 minutes. "I started the year quite good with the feeling," the 31-year-old double grand slam winner told reporters. "Sometimes the results don't go together with whatever you feel. But I feel very good for the start of the year, and for me it's a very nice feeling."

"I never thought of defending my title or something like that. It's just another tournament—the title I have at home and no-one will take it away from me. This is another year and another opportunity to play."

Kuznetsova will next face the winner of the match between local favourite Sam Stosur and fellow Russian Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova.

Elsewhere, Canada's Eugenie Bouchard, a former Wimbledon finalist, also won her opening match with a 7-6(1) 6-2 first round win over China's Shuai Zhang.

However, fourth seed Karolina Pliskova, who will climb to world number five following her Brisbane title win on Saturday, will not be able to aim for back-to-back victories after she pulled out of the event with a left inner thigh injury. The Czech was joined on the sidelines by Ukraine's world number 14 Elina Svitolina, who withdrew citing a viral illness. "I've had constant headaches for the last two days and unfortunately in today's hot weather it got even worse when I was warming up and my body wasn't ready to compete," Svitolina, who was seeded seventh, said.

With the Australian Open tennis starting in a week's time in Melbourne, Frenchwoman Alize Cornet also decided against risking a sore back and pulled out of the Hobart International, which she won last year.

Cornet was the runner-up in Brisbane after going down 6-0 6-3 to Pliskova in the final. "I am very sad I am not being able to play the tournament at Hobart this year," she said in a video message on Twitter. "It was meaning a lot to me to come back here and defend my title but I have to be reasonable. "My back is not doing great and I have just one week to get ready for the Australian Open. I hope I can make it on time." — Reuters

MATTEK-SANDS DETHRONES MIRZA AS WORLD NUMBER ONE

LONDON: American Bethanie Mattek-Sands will rise to number one in the world when the WTA doubles rankings are released today.

Mattek-Sands sealed top spot after winning her 23rd WTA doubles title in Brisbane on Saturday with partner Sania Mirza. She ended her Indian partner's 91-week reign as world number one.

"Being number one is something that you dream of from the time you pick up a racket," Mattek-Sands, whose daring outfits and

knee-high socks mark her out from the crowd, told the WTA. "You're not given number one—you have to earn it and I feel really proud of myself for getting there." Mirza added: "I feel like I'm handing over the Miss World No 1 crown. Congratulations to her for becoming No 1. She has had an amazing year." Mattek-Sands has won three grand slam doubles titles all with Czech Lucie Safarova—the most recent coming at last year's US Open.—Reuters



Sania Mirza

BEN YEDDER LATEST CUT-PRICE SUCCESS FOR SEVILLA AND MONCHI

BARCELONA: Wissam Ben Yedder's hat-trick for Sevilla in Saturday's 4-0 win at Real Sociedad was the latest demonstration of the Andalusian club's ability to find players from under the radar and mould them into top talents.

Ben Yedder, a former France Under-21 international, came to Sevilla from Toulouse with the task of replacing Kevin Gameiro, who departed for Atletico Madrid in the close season for 32 million euros (\$33.69 million). Gameiro, who scored 67 goals in his three years with Sevilla, was another gem unearthed by the club's highly-respected sporting director Ramon Rodriguez Verdejo, better known as Monchi. France international Gameiro

had helped fire Sevilla to three successive Europa League triumphs, but Ben Yedder has upstaged his compatriot this season. The 26-year-old Ben Yedder has scored 15 goals in all competitions this term, compared to Gameiro's seven for Atletico. The Sevilla striker was utterly ruthless against Real Sociedad, scoring with three of his four shots and setting up the game's other goal for Pablo Sarabia. The win moved Sevilla provisionally above champions Barcelona into second in the standings, while the striker earned the praise of coach Jorge Sampaoli, who remarked: "Ben Yedder is starting to do what the team needs him to do and I'm delighted for him."

Ben Yedder signed for the triple

Europa League winners after hitting 17 league goals for Toulouse last season, making him the joint fourth top scorer in Ligue 1 behind Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Alexandre Lacazette and Edinson Cavani. Sevilla only paid 9 million euros for Ben Yedder, a relative bargain considering Chelsea spent 40 million euros to sign Michy Batshuayi, who had scored the same number of goals for Olympique de Marseille but has struggled at Stamford Bridge.

Ben Yedder and Gameiro are far from the only success stories for Monchi, a former reserve goalkeeper for Sevilla who has been the club's sporting director since 2000 and developed an unrivalled reputation for unearthing talent.

"Monchi is a phenomenon, a hard worker and I think he is one of the most important people at Sevilla. His signings have converted Sevilla into one of the top teams in Europe and Spain," says former team mate Davor Suker, the ex-Croatia striker who is now his country's FA president.

Among Monchi's top signings are Daniel Alves, who cost 200,000 euros and was sold to Barcelona for 36 million, Ivan Rakitic, a 2.5-million euro investment from Schalke who went to Barcelona for 25 million and Colombian striker Carlos Bacca, a 7-million euro signing from Club Brugge in 2013, who went to AC Milan two years later for 30 million euros. Monchi's proven eye for

talent have made him a target for Europe's biggest clubs, and he surprisingly offered his resignation from Sevilla last May amid reports of offers to join Paris St Germain and Manchester United. Sevilla refused, however, obliging him to see out the remainder of his contract with the club and allowing him to add to his legacy of astute signings by bringing in the likes of Samir Nasri, Franco Vazquez and Ben Yedder.

With the club in the last 16 of the Champions League and on course to take Atletico Madrid's place as the third force in Spain, holding onto their celebrated talent spotter may prove to be one of the smartest decisions the club has made.—Reuters



ZURICH: In this Friday, Feb. 26, 2016 file photo, newly elected FIFA president Gianni Infantino of Switzerland reacts during the extraordinary FIFA congress in Zurich, Germany. FIFA is about to make the World Cup a bigger and, it hopes, richer event even at the cost of lower quality soccer. — AP

DECISION TIME FOR WORLD CUP FORMAT

ZURICH: After much discussion, argument and counter-argument, FIFA will determine tomorrow whether president Gianni Infantino can force through his vision of an enlarged World Cup. Infantino's credibility will be on the line as the world body looks to revamp the four-yearly moneyspinner, potentially opening its door to 48 teams in 2026. That would stretch the action out to 80 matches as opposed to the 2014 format of 32 teams and 64 matches.

Several options stand before the 30-strong FIFA council: maintain the status quo; extend to 40 teams featuring either eight groups of five or 10 groups of four; or go for 48 teams. That format would involve either a 32-team playoff allowing 16 winners to join 16 already qualified nations, or Infantino's preferred option of 16 groups of three with the top two in each progressing to a round of 32.

The first World Cup in Uruguay featured just 13 countries, since when the tournament has evolved in a world of consumerism and on-demand global communication. For the 1982 finals in Spain, the event moved from 16 to 24 teams, then 32 for France '98.

INFANTINO OPTION

Infantino puts forward a raft of arguments to back a further leap to 48, not least that by giving more countries a piece of the finals cake, interest will rise in more viewer markets, generating more revenue. According to a confidential FIFA report seen by AFP, a 48-team tournament would bring a cash boost of \$640 million (605 million euros) over and above projected revenues for next year's finals in Russia. The report forecasts television rights also rising by \$505 million and marketing revenue by 370 million. And even if organisation costs would rise, the tournament could still function in a 12-stadium format, as per the 2018 model. Yet the FIFA forecasts are hard to

compare with a 2018 event whose own financial scope is somewhat clouded by the non-replacement, to date, of sponsors such as Sony and Emirates.

The Infantino option, which AFP brought to light in December, has drawn criticism and UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin has complained of lack of information on the project while pointedly adding that in his view the current system "works".

The European Clubs Association, presided by former German international Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, also voiced opposition to expansion, citing an already overloaded calendar.

Even so, Spanish daily Mundo Deportivo has since reported that figures including Real Madrid's powerful president Florentino Perez and Barcelona counterpart Josep Bartomeu are backing Infantino. "If the format he is proposing wins out it is certain that will be a good thing for the clubs and football in general," Perez told AFP in a recent interview.

One of the major facets within the proposed revamp is the attribution of extra berths for each confederation, a crucial point which will be discussed Tuesday in Zurich. Whereas the shareout for a 40-strong event is already known—Europe would gain one slot to 14, Africa two and Asia one—the putative 48-nation distribution still has to be agreed on.

Asia and Africa and "smaller" countries have much to gain from an enlarged format that much was shown by opening up the Euro 2016 to more finals participants—but undecided camps have to be won over. Among those who are convinced by the argument of radically extending the tournament are former Cameroon international and Barcelona star Samuel Eto'o.

"Do it for the poor, for those who don't always have the chance to play a World Cup," Eto'o recently appealed to Infantino. —AFP

DRAXLER ON TARGET AS PSG ROUT BASTIA 7-0

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain got their French Cup defence off to a dream start on Saturday with new recruit Julian Draxler scoring in a 7-0 rout of Ligue 1 rivals Bastia.

Unai Emery's side advance to the last 32 of a tournament in which they are the two-time defending champions ensuring their Corsican rivals remain winless at the Parc des Princes.

Making his competitive debut 23-year-old winger Draxler completed the rout scoring the final goal three minutes from the whistle. The German World Cup-winner completed his move this month from Wolfsburg for a reported fee of up to 42 million euros (\$45 million). "Draxler had a good match, it will be good for his confidence," said Emery. PSG captain Thiago Silva opened the goal fest with a header on 30 minutes with Adrien Rabiot firing in the second from 25 metres out just before the break. It was all one-way traffic in the second half with goals Christopher

Nkunku, Thiago Motta, Angel Di Maria and a Lucas penalty humiliating the visitors before Draxler struck.

Emery's side, who went into the winter break in third place in Ligue 1, five points behind leaders Nice, are looking to complete a clean sweep of the domestic trophies in France for a third season in succession. The Parisians were however hit when Brazilian captain Silva picked up a thigh injury in a challenge with goalkeeper Kevin Traff minutes before the break.

The 32-year-old was treated pitch side for several minutes before limping off.

Five other Ligue 1 sides also competing on Saturday advanced. Lille ended the adventure of minnows AS Excelsior—a sixth-tier side from the Indian Ocean island of Reunion — 4-1, as Guingamp beat Le Havre 2-1. Monaco on Friday advanced past second division AC Ajaccio 2-1, largely thanks to a goal from star forward Falcao. Marseille travel to Toulouse with Lyon hosting Montpellier. —AFP

ROMA, LAZIO SCRAPE HOME, INTER WIN AGAIN

MILAN: Second-placed AS Roma needed an unlucky own goal from Armando Izzo to beat Genoa 1-0 away in Serie A yesterday and neighbours Lazio survived a controversial disallowed goal before snatching a last minute win over lowly Crotone.

Ivan Perisic scored at the end of each half as Inter Milan came from behind to beat Udinese 2-1 and notch their fourth successive league win.

Roma's win took them onto 41 points, one behind leaders Juventus who were away to Bologna in the evening game and also have another game in hand. Lazio are fourth on 37, one behind Napoli who beat Sampdoria 2-1 on Saturday. Roma were missing striker Mohamed Salah as he had joined Egypt's squad for their African Nations Cup preparations while Genoa were playing their first game since selling key midfielder Tomas Rincon to Juventus.

Genoa goalkeeper Mattia Perin was injured early on as he made a brilliant save to deny Edin Dzeko and was replaced by Eugenio Lamanna.

Roma broke through when Izzo inadvertently turned a Bruno Peres cross into his own net from close range. Lazio made heavy weather of beating Serie A debutants Crotone who remained in the relegation zone on nine points.

Lucas Biglia blasted a first-half penalty against the crossbar for Lazio and Crotone thought they had taken the lead through Marcus Rohden in the 70th minute only to see the goal chalked off for a debatable offside decision. Immobile saw one effort brilliantly saved by Crotone goalkeeper Marco Festa before finally breaking the deadlock in the last minute after a fortuitous rebound sent the ball into his path.

Inter, who had not conceded a goal in their previous three outings, had an early let-off as goalkeeper Samir Handanovic sent a clearance straight to Jakub Jankto, who failed to take advantage. The Czech midfielder, however, made amends when his curling shot finished off a well-worked move to give midtable Udinese the lead after 17 minutes.

Udinese twice hit the post but Inter snatched an equaliser on the stroke of halftime when Perisic swept in Mauro Icardi's pass from 12



GENOA: Genoa's Argentinian forward Giovanni Pablo Simeone, left, Roma's Brazilian defender Juan Jesus vie for the ball during a Serie A soccer match between Genoa and Roma at Genoa's Luigi Ferraris Stadium, Italy, yesterday. — AP

metres. Inter had more control in the second half and the Croatia winger struck again three minutes from fulltime as he headed in Joao Mario's free kick at the far post.

Seventh-placed Inter have won five out of seven games and lost only one since coach

Stefano Pioli replaced Frank de Boer, who was sacked after less than three months in charge.

Alejandro Gomez scored twice in the first half to help Atalanta thump Chievo 4-1 away, taking them up to fifth, while Sassuolo and Torino played out a goalless draw. — Reuters

WENGER HAILS GIROUD AFTER NEW LATE SHOW

PRESTON: Arsene Wenger hailed the performance of stand-in Arsenal captain Olivier Giroud after his late goal sealed a 2-1 FA Cup third round win at Championship side Preston. The Gunners managed to complete a comeback victory to go with their remarkable 3-3 draw at Bournemouth earlier in the week, a game in which Giroud also scored a late, vital goal.

Wenger had also made his countryman captain for the trip to Deepdale and he explained: "He has scored many many goals recently. I think in the squad everybody contributes and it is not just 11. "At the moment he is in good form and in the last month he has scored goal after goal so I named him captain as I like to rotate it a bit.

"He went through a period where he was in discomfort as he didn't play and during this period, which was quite long, he kept his focus and worked so I thought he has shown leadership qualities, which is why I made him captain." There was also good news for another Arsenal forward, Danny Welbeck, who returned as a late substitute, his first competitive football in eight months after recovering from a knee ligament injury. "It is a great moment as he has been out for such a long time, just for him to get 15 minutes was great," said Wenger. "I had a hesitation but he thought he had 20 minutes in his legs and in the end he nearly scored so that is good." But the victory disguised a dreadful first half showing from Wenger's side who were fortunate to only trail to a Callum Robinson goal at the interval. An equaliser from Aaron Ramsey within a minute of the restart was the beginning of a vastly-improved second half showing from the Premier League side.

"Yes, I was angry," said Wenger of his half-time reaction. "We are top-level Premier League and we were dominated in the first half, Preston had chances and we were just not at the pace of the game that the game demanded. We didn't want to go home and be out of the cup.

'NOT AT THE RACES'

"I'll keep what I said quiet but we were not at the races in the first half and we were beaten everywhere. Not compact, we didn't win duels and were outplayed.

"But sometimes when you come out of Christmas and you think it's going to be a bit easier, it's difficult in the FA Cup. "You do not want to have that kind of performance but this team responds when they are in trouble. Maybe physically they struggled to get into the game but they want to do well. "Since the start of the season we have had many many comebacks and many goals in the final minutes." Ramsey's first goal of the season was another boost for Wenger. "We spoke about that many times, getting in dangerous situations," said the manager of Ramsey's superb strike for the equaliser. "One of his qualities is getting in dangerous situations and sometimes he felt he lost a bit of confidence to finish. But hopefully this goal will give him the confidence to get many more."—AFP

BEN DAVIES AND HEUNG-MIN SON SEND SPURS THROUGH

CARDIFF: Tottenham kept up the momentum from their win over Chelsea with a 2-0 victory against Aston Villa in the FA Cup third round.

Spurs took their time to swat off a dogged Villa side, but late goals from Ben Davies and Heung-Min Son broke the visitor's resistance. The result means Spurs have now won their last six matches in all competitions following a fruitful festive period. Aston Villa made four changes to their defeat at Cardiff, handing a debut to on-loan Manchester United goalkeeper Sam Johnstone. With Jonathan Kodjia away on African Cup of Nations duty, Gabriel Agbonlahor was handed a rare start and was tasked with leading the line on his own against the watertight Spurs back four. Gabriel Agbonlahor (left) and Toby Alderweireld battle for the ball.

Vincent Janssen was given a chance to impress from the start for Spurs but he looked a man shorn of confidence in the opening 45 minutes. The Dutchman has yet to score from open play since joining for £17m and James Chester dealt with his threat without breaking sweat.

Spurs dominated the ball but failed to test Johnstone, who was making his first senior start for over a year, with a single shot on target. Villa defended deep were

relatively comfortable in keeping the two Spurs full-backs - Davies and Kieran Trippier - quiet. Janssen's afternoon was cut short on 59 minutes when he replaced by Alli with Son moving through the middle. The switch sparked Spurs into life as Son sprinted in behind Baker on 61 minutes but his 20-yard effort was tipped over the crossbar by Johnstone.

Villa's best hope for a goal came from set-pieces and Chester nearly scrambled home from close range on 66 minutes but Cameron Carter-Vickers and then Alderweireld made last-ditch blocks.

It proved to be a big moment in the match as four minutes later Spurs were ahead. Substitute Georges-Kévin Nkoudou took just 90 seconds to have an impact as he curled a tasty cross in from the left flank, which found Davies, unusually, in the central striking role. Despite having never scored for the club, he skillfully flicked a header into the far corner.

The opening goal ended the game as a contest as Spurs found their attacking stride. Moussa Sissoko sprinted away down the left flank on 80 minutes and put the ball on a plate for Son, who swept the ball home from 12 yards to seal progression for Spurs.



LONDON: Aston Villa's James Chester, left, shoots but is blocked by Tottenham's Cameron Carter-Vickers during the English FA Cup third round match between Tottenham Hotspur and Aston Villa at White Hart Lane in London, yesterday. —AP

Sports

Shiffrin wins World Cup slalom despite skiing over broken gate



Decision time for World Cup format



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THUNDER BEAT NUGGETS, BULLS DOWN RAPTORS IN OT

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LONDON: Chelsea's John Terry, top, heads the ball under pressure from Peterborough United's Michael Bostwick, center, during the English FA Cup third round soccer match between Chelsea and Peterborough United at Stamford Bridge stadium in London, yesterday. —AP

TERRY OFF AS CHELSEA CRUISE IN FA CUP

LONDON: John Terry's dismissal took the gloss off Chelsea's comfortable 4-1 victory over third-tier Peterborough United yesterday, which took the Premier League leaders into the FA Cup fourth round. Two goals from Pedro Rodriguez and strikes from Michy Batshuayi and Willian ensured Antonio Conte's side avoided any chance of an embarrassing slip. But Terry's 67th-minute dismissal for fouling Lee Angol was a big blow for the 36-year-old, who was making his first appearance in two months after an injury lay-off and whose contract expires at the season's end.

Chelsea were leading 3-0 at the time and while Peterborough's Tom Nichols quickly reduced the deficit, Pedro's 75th-minute strike meant the hosts saw out the game comfortably.

Conte made nine changes to the line-up that started the 2-0 mid-week defeat by Tottenham Hotspur, the game that marked the end of the Blues' 13-game winning run.

The Italian took the opportunity to restore Terry to the side, while Kurt Zouma made his return after 11 months on the sidelines following a serious knee injury. Youngsters Ruben Loftus-Cheek and Nathaniel Chalobah were also handed rare starts, but it was one of the more familiar names on the team-sheet that calmed any early home nerves.

Pedro took his 18th-minute opportunity superbly, but before then Conte's side had survived an early scare. Peterborough started the game promisingly and while they had cause to be grateful that Gary Cahill's sixth-minute flick deflected off

the post to safety, they should have taken the lead two minutes later. A deep cross from Marcus Maddison was allowed to find its way to striker Angol, who was unmarked when he connected with a close-range volley that he directed wastefully at goalkeeper Asmir Begovic.

Peterborough manager Grant McCann had insisted his side had nothing to lose coming into the game and challenged his players to create a moment of history for the club.

PEDRO HITS BAR

Had they made more of that opportunity, or the one that presented itself when Ryan Tafazolli headed wide from a corner a few minutes later, Conte's side might have endured a more testing afternoon.

As it was, Chelsea made sure there would be no repeat of those early scares, taking control when Pedro pounced on the ball after Chalobah's shot had been pushed out by Luke McGee.

The Spain international cut inside one challenge and gave McGee no chance with a curled finish.

From that moment, there was little chance of an upset and Conte's side should have had the tie wrapped up before half-time.

McCann's side were fortunate to escape a strong penalty appeal when Tafazolli appeared to bring Batshuayi down inside the box and had an even greater let-off when Pedro struck the bar from six yards. Batshuayi drew a frustrated response from his manager when he failed to play in Willian, who had a clear run on goal, instead trying to fash-

ion his own shooting opportunity. But the Belgium striker made amends two minutes before half-time when he was set up by Loftus-Cheek's lay-off, striking home his side's second goal with a low, right-foot shot. The interval brought respite for the visitors, but when Loftus-Cheek fired wide moments after the restart, it was clear there would be no shift in the balance of the game. A third goal quickly came when Pedro collected Cesc Fabregas's pass wide on the left and picked out Willian's forward run. The Brazilian moved the ball onto his right foot and placed his shot beyond McGee from 20 yards out. Terry's clumsy last-man challenge on Angol was followed by Nichols' close-range effort, but Pedro wrapped things up with another well-executed finish. —AFP

DIMITROV STUNS NISHIKORI TO WIN BRISBANE FINAL

BRISBANE: Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov won his first title in over two years when he upset world number five Kei Nishikori in three sets to win the Brisbane International yesterday.

In an enthralling final between two evenly matched opponents, Dimitrov claimed the Roy Emerson Trophy 6-2, 2-6, 6-3, his fourth singles title on the ATP Tour. Dimitrov was ranked as high as eighth in the world in 2014 and was nicknamed "Baby Fed" because of his similar playing style to Swiss great Roger Federer.

Injury problems and poor form saw him slump during 2015 and the first half of 2016, when he plummeted to 40th in the world. But he recovered towards the end of last year and entered the season-opening tournament ranked 17.

The Brisbane win will see him climb to 15 when the rankings are released today. Dimitrov insisted he had not felt under pressure because of his rankings slide and said he knew he would eventually get the rewards for the hard work he was doing off court.

"I think that was kind of an emotional win for me, but at the same time, it wasn't unexpected," he said. "I think I have put in the work. I think I have learnt a lot. I have set myself quite high goals for the first six months, and one of them was actually to win a tournament," he added.

"And it happened during the first week of the year." The 25-year-old revealed later he had relaxed ahead of his matches with late-night visits to a Brisbane video game arcade. "Since I have been here, every night I've been going to the arcades for an hour and a half," he

laughed. "It's given me tremendous joy. You know, it's something so childish (but) every time I was going to bed, I was, like, 'Wow, that feels so good.' It's just something so small."

Despite Dimitrov's win over top seed Milos Raonic in the semi-finals, the 27-year-old Nishikori had not lost to the Bulgarian in three previous meetings and went into the final as firm favourite.

The Japanese star started well and had Dimitrov struggling to hold his opening service game. But from then on the Bulgarian dominated the first set, breaking Nishikori twice to take the opener in 36 minutes.

Dimitrov took that momentum into the second set and was comfortable on serve. But at 2-2 he faltered and was broken, with Nishikori seizing the initiative and winning four games in succession to level the match.

Nishikori took an injury break at the end of the second set to get treatment for a sore hip. This seemed to swing the momentum back to the Bulgarian, who immediately had the third seed under pressure.

But Nishikori held on and both men were untroubled on serve, until at 3-4 the Japanese player stumbled and gave Dimitrov a vital break. The Bulgarian stepped up and showed no nerves as he served out the match, claiming victory in one hour, 48 minutes when Nishikori sent a backhand long.

Nishikori said he was not sure how bad his injury was but it would not affect his Australian Open chances. "I felt it in the second set-it was still hurting during the second set," he said. —AFP



BRISBANE: Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria holds the trophy after winning the final match against Kei Nishikori of Japan at the Brisbane International tennis tournament in Brisbane, Australia, yesterday. — AP

PLYMOUTH HOLD LIVERPOOL YOUNGSTERS

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool face the prospect of a tricky FA Cup third-round replay against Plymouth Argyle after they were held to a 0-0 draw at Anfield yesterday.

The sides met for the first time in any competition since April 1962 and although the Premier League team dominated possession and had the majority of the chances, they were unable to find the net. Plymouth, who are second in fourth-tier League Two, will now host the seven-time winners at Home Park in south-west England later this month. It will add to a congested January for Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp, whose team also have a two-legged League Cup semi-final against Southampton to contend with.

After a hectic festive period, Klopp decided to rest many of his first-choice players as he made 10 changes from the 2-2 draw at Sunderland in the Premier League. He ended up naming the youngest team in Liverpool's history, with an average age of 21 years and 296 days, which included a first start for teenage striker Ben Woodburn.

The 17-year-old became Liverpool's youngest ever goalscorer in a League Cup victory over Leeds United in November.

He drew the first save out of Plymouth goalkeeper Luke McCormick with a low toe-poke from close range after clever play by Emre Can. Divock Origi had the ball in the net for the Reds moments later after he brought down a high ball, but the Belgium international was deemed to have fouled Plymouth defender Gary Miller. Liverpool controlled the play against a side 68 places below them in the English football pyramid, but the visitors

were organised and reached the break on level terms.

STURRIDGE SUMMONED

Plymouth, backed by 8,500 vocal fans who had made a near 600-mile (965-kilometre) round trip to Merseyside, finally managed a shot on target 10 minutes into the second half.

But Graham Carey's speculative free-kick was comfortably saved by Loris Karius. Liverpool midfielder Lucas Leiva, handed the armband by Klopp, brought a save from McCormick with an equally audacious effort from outside the box moments later. Anfield started to grow restless and Klopp responded shortly after the hour mark with the introduction of Daniel Sturridge for Can. The striker's first act was to whistle a low shot just the wrong side of the post following a Liverpool counter-attack. Shortly after he lifted a dangerous ball into the area, with Sheyi Ojo not quite able to apply the decisive touch. Klopp brought on Roberto Firmino and Adam Lallana with 15 minutes remaining in an attempt to inject some life into his side. Despite the fresh legs and six minutes of added time, the hosts failed to find a way past a stubborn Argyle defence.

Right at the death, Trent Alexander-Arnold's free-kick was flicked on by Origi and substitute Connor Smith almost nudged the ball into his own net, only for McCormick to gather. When referee Paul Tierney blew the final whistle, the Plymouth players went to applaud the away contingent, who celebrated as if they had secured victory, while Liverpool's players trudged off. —AFP

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WARREN: In this file photo, potential workers sit inside the Labor Ready temporary employment agency in the hope of getting a day job in Warren, Ohio.—AP

TRUMP HAS ECONOMIC GRACE PERIOD, DESPITE WOES

THE DILEMMA: HOW TO TURN HONEYMOON OF OPTIMISM INTO PRAGMATISM

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump has not yet taken office, but he is already boasting that his election has restored confidence in the American economy, boosted confidence and saved jobs. With a series of tweets, he has singled out several major companies and demanded they bring factories back to the United States to boost manufacturing and employment.

Several quickly complied. American carmaker Ford canceled construction of a plant in Mexico to instead invest in the United States and create 700 jobs, citing a "vote of confidence" in the economic agenda of the incoming president.

In December, it was the American manufacturer of air conditioners Carrier that backed off a planned transfer of 1,000 jobs to the Mexico, after a deal with Trump—and for \$7 million in tax cuts.

"You've been seeing what's been happening over the last couple of weeks. And we haven't gotten there yet. We haven't gotten there yet," declared Trump, who won the White House on the promise of bringing jobs and manufacturing back to the United States.

His election also created euphoria in US stock markets. The Dow Jones index has set multiple records since the November 8 election, coming close to the 20,000-point

milestone and proving wrong the many who predicted a market crash if Trump were elected.

"Before there was any chance that he would be elected, no one paid much attention to his program, which is what companies want: a lot of deregulation and tax cuts," analyst Aparna Mathur, of the conservative think tank American Enterprise Institute, told AFP.

'Thank you Donald!'

Several economic indicators also reflect this renewed sense of optimism. A December Philadelphia Fed survey showed the proportion of companies confident in the future doubled in one month, while household confidence reached its highest level in 15 years.

"Thank you Donald!" the president-elect said in a self-congratulatory tweet. His unprecedented strategy of tweeting his complaints against major companies—including General Motors, Ford and Toyota—and issuing threats if they don't invest in the United States, could prove to be worthwhile. "In a way, he's still continuing his campaign by reaching out to companies and giving the sense that he really cares about jobs," said Mathur, who nonetheless is convinced Trump will have to switch to a

more conventional approach once he is installed in the White House.

CEOs also seem to be getting the message. "We are pragmatic, we will adapt to any situation," said the chief of the Renault-Nissan alliance, Carlos Ghosn, speaking at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. Toyota chief Akio Toyoda said, "If you look over the long term, we are oriented in the same direction," according to a Wall Street Journal article published shortly before Trump launched his tweet against the company, again for building a plant in Mexico. But the optimism of the American business community is also explained by a political fact unrelated to Trump's personality: for the first time since 2010, the White House and both chambers of Congress will be under the control of one party.

Uncertainty

"There's a general sense that more things will be able to get done because the US government is now unified behind the Republican Party," Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's, told AFP. President Barack Obama, a Democrat, constantly clashed with the Republican-controlled Congress, causing repeated budget crises and preventing any reform of corporate taxation, stalemates for which each blamed the oth-

er. According to experts, however, it will take much more to convert this honeymoon of optimism into a durable phenomenon. And numerous questions remain. Trump has promised a vast infrastructure spending plan, but the details are fuzzy and could burden public finances. In December, the US Federal Reserve pointed to the "considerable uncertainty" about the program of the next administration.

Finally, the trade war that Trump threatened to wage against China and Mexico could change the mood of American multinationals that depend heavily on their overseas activities, especially as the dollar strengthens and makes their exports more expensive.

"We have to see what he has in mind exactly, and what he actually executes on," Zandi said. Jared Bernstein, former White House counselor under Obama, is more definitive, and predicts a tough road ahead if Trump implements his program of deregulation and tax cuts. "People without economic amnesia—and there aren't enough of them according to my humble opinion—will remember that it was a very large tax cut in tandem with financial market deregulation that got us in this mess in the first place," Bernstein told AFP, referring to the 2008 financial crisis.—AFP

IRAN CASHES IN ON OPEC DEAL, SELLS MILLIONS OF BARRELS OF OIL

LONDON: Iran has sold more than 13 million barrels of oil that it had long held on tankers at sea, capitalizing on an OPEC output cut deal from which it is exempted to regain market share and court new buyers, according to industry sources and data. In the past three months, Tehran has sold almost half the oil it had held in floating storage, which had tied up many of its tankers as it struggled to offload stocks in an oversupplied global market.

The amount of Iranian oil held at sea has dropped to 16.4 million barrels, from 29.6 million barrels at the beginning of October, according to Thomson Reuters Oil Flows data. Before that sharp drop, the level had barely changed in 2016; it was 29.7 million barrels at the start of last year, the data showed. Unsold oil is now tying up about 12 to 14 Iranian tankers, out of its fleet of about 60 vessels, compared with around 30 in the summer, according to two tanker-tracking sources. The oil sold in recent months has gone to buyers in Asia including China, India and South Korea and to European countries including Italy and France, according to the sources and data. It was unclear which companies bought the oil. Iran is also looking to use the opportunity to push into new markets in Europe, including Baltic and other central and eastern European countries, said separate oil industry sources, though it was not clear if any oil had been sold there. The state-run National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) could not be reached for comment. Tanker group NITC, which operates most of the country's fleet, could also not be reached.

Tehran scored a victory when it was exempted from the OPEC deal agreed in November to reduce production by 1.2 million barrels per day for six months, an accord aimed at addressing the global oversupply and bolstering low oil prices. The country successfully argued it should not limit its production which was slowly starting to recover after the lifting of international sanctions in January last year.

While the deal did not come into effect until the beginning of 2017, industry sources said Tehran had already been offering aggressive discounts, aiming to coax buyers globally into stocking up for winter in anticipation of the OPEC cut. Iran lacks enough land storage facilities for its oil and, to enable it to keep pumping crude, has relied on its tanker fleet to park excess stocks until it can find buyers. The tanker-tracking sources said it was unclear how much of the oil stored at sea was condensate, a very light grade of crude. In another sign of the rising activity, Iran's oil ministry news agency SHANA reported in late December that the number of tankers able to berth at major terminal Kharg Island had reached a record in 2016 of 10 vessels at the same time.—Reuters

IPHONE TURNS 10 AS SMARTPHONE RAGE GOES ON

LAS VEGAS: The smartphone continues to change the world a decade after the debut of the iPhone, even as Apple is under pressure to come up with a new wonder. The iPhone—introduced by late Apple co-founder Steve Jobs on January 9, 2007—set the stage for mobile computing and an entire industry revolving around it.

The handsets built on successful iPod digital music players and featured touch screens at a time when the smartphone market was ruled by BlackBerry devices with keypads. Jobs billed his smartphone approach as blending liberal arts, design and technology. What was not obvious at the time was how iPhone's focus on apps would send people rocketing along a path to tweeting, Snapping, Pokemon Go, live streaming video, and more.

"Apple gets credit for the apps that brought the mobile computing platform to your pocket," Gartner analyst Brian Blau told AFP at the Consumer Electronics Show that ends Sunday in Las Vegas.

"Today, it is hard to make a consumer electronics product without (internet) connectivity." Smartphones are even playing a big role in the virtual reality trend, with people using handsets as screens inserted into headsets for exploring fantasy realms. Apple does not attend CES. But its trend-

setting power is felt here from cars boasting "infotainment" systems that synch with iPhones, to smart-home networks controlled by mobile apps and rival smartphones mirroring iPhone features.

"The iPhone changed the world because mobile computing is now part of everyone's daily life," Blau said.

Altered landscape

The iPhone, in a way, was a seed around which the consumer electronics industry has crystallized, according to Maxwell Ramsey of mobile phone news website phoneArena.com. "It's pretty remarkable what it did," Maxwell said of the iPhone. "We are still riding that wave from 2007. No doubt about it." Putting the internet in people's pockets, and on tablet computers, has profoundly changed the way people watch films, get news, socialize and work. Insiders at the CES trade show cited the iPhone as the main impetus for the revolutionary shift to mobile computing lifestyles.

"It turned the industry on its head," Maxwell said at CES. "It figuratively destroyed a lot of companies, and changed the landscape." The iPhone powered Apple's money-making machine, but sales began to decline last year in the increasingly saturated and competitive smartphone

market. Apple chief executive Tim Cook and other top executives saw their compensation for 2016 cut because internal income targets were missed, according to a filing Friday with US regulators.

"The two financial measures used to

evaluate executive performance under our annual cash incentive program, net sales and operating income, declined from our record-breaking 2015 levels," Apple said in the filing. "These results were below the target performance goals."—AFP



LOS ANGELES: This file photo taken on 29 June 2007 at The Grove shopping center in Los Angeles, California shows John Mariano, 27, surrounded by onlookers and media. Apple celebrates today the 10th anniversary of the unveiling of the iPhone, the smartphone that revolutionized the technological world.—AFP



SURABAYA: This picture taken on Jan 6, 2017 shows Indonesian workers hand-rolling clove cigarettes at the PT Wismilak Inti Makmur factory. — AFP

GULF MARKETS RISE BUT SAUDI SLIDES

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Most Gulf stock markets rose yesterday on the back of firm oil prices and global equities, but profit-taking in sectors including petrochemicals pulled down Saudi Arabia.

Dubai's index rose 1.8 percent to 3,692 points in the heaviest trading volume in nearly a month, which more than doubled from Thursday's level. The index climbed above technical resistance at the mid-December peak of 3,659 points; a second straight close above that level would confirm a break, leaving the next chart barrier at the October 2015 peak of 3,740 points.

Seven of the 10 most heavily traded issues were low-priced stocks - below 1 dirham - which local retail investors tend to favour. Two of the 10 were insurance firms, with Dubai Islamic Insurance jumping 4.6 percent and Islamic Arab Insurance adding 3.4 percent. For the past couple of weeks, some traders have been speculating there may be mergers in the insurance industry following last year's news of a big Abu Dhabi banking merger.

Abu Dhabi's index climbed 0.7 percent with cement firms leading the gains. Gulf Cement jumped 12.9 percent in very thin trade. Qatar edged up 0.1 percent, supported by property firm United Development, up 0.9 percent. But Gulf Warehousing fell 1.2 percent despite recommending an annual cash dividend of 1.60 riyals per share, up slightly from 1.50 riyals in the previous year. It said net profit

climbed 11 percent last year.

Saudi Arabia's index fell 0.8 percent. A monthly Reuters poll of Middle East fund managers, conducted at the end of last month, found many believing Saudi stocks were fully valued after a strong rally in the past few months, and not intending to add to their portfolios in the next three months.

Petrochemical firm Saudi Kayan fell 1.1 percent and Nama Chemicals, which has lost about a third of its value this year after its accumulated losses reached over 75 percent of its capital, slid 8.1 percent.

However, builder Abdullah Abdul Mohsin al-Khodari and Sons rose 0.8 percent after saying it had secured a 69 million riyal (\$18.4 million) contract from the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture. The amount is small but Khodari, like other Saudi construction companies, suffered from a severe cut-back in state contract awards last year and the new contract may indicate money is flowing again.

In Egypt, the index climbed 0.5 percent although exchange data showed non-Arab investors turning net sellers of stocks, by a tiny margin, for the first time since the Egyptian pound was floated on Nov 3. Qalaa Holdings rose 3.6 percent after saying on Thursday that it was in talks with interested parties to divest its stake in Rift Valley Railways, one of its major overseas assets. — Reuters

SOLID CHRISTMAS FOR BRITISH SUPERMARKETS BEFORE 2017

LONDON: Britain's three quoted major supermarkets are expected to report this week that they enjoyed solid Christmas trading, though investor concern about a potential squeeze on consumer spending in 2017 means the focus is on their outlooks. Shares in market leader Tesco and Morrisons, the UK's fourth biggest grocer, soared 38 percent and 55 percent respectively in 2016, reflecting a recovery in trading. That coincided with a slowdown in sales growth at German discounters Aldi, which will update on Christmas on Jan 9, and Lidl as Britain's traditional supermarkets cut their prices, and continued problems at sector laggard Asda, the No. 3 player.

The share price of No. 2 Sainsbury's was held back by uncertainty over the merits of its £1.1 billion (\$1.36 billion) takeover of household goods retailer Argos. Robust growth in consumer spending has been one of the main factors sustaining Britain's economy since last June's vote to leave the European Union. However, retailers fear a reduction in spending as inflation begins to erode real earnings growth in 2017.

Sterling's devaluation since the Brexit vote - down 12 percent against other major currencies -

has also driven up supermarkets' import costs, as have commodity price increases. They also face further cost pressures from the national minimum wage, business rates and utilities. There are also signs that Asda, the British arm of Wal-Mart, will make life tougher for rivals in 2017.

Analysts say a new management team is starting to make an impact, putting more staff on the shop floor and generally improving store standards. While underlying sales slumped 5.8 percent in its third quarter, they anticipate a significant improvement when it reports fourth quarter results next month. Analysts expect Tesco (on Jan 12) to report UK like-for-like sales growth of 1.25 to 2 percent for its third quarter to Nov 26 and growth of 0.6 to 1.5 percent for the six weeks to Jan 7, building on four straight quarters of underlying growth.

Morrisons (on Jan 10) is expected to report underlying sales growth of 1.1 percent for the nine weeks to Jan. 1, according to an average of analysts' forecasts, a fifth consecutive quarter of growth. Sainsbury's (on Jan 11) could be perceived as the relative loser of the three, with analysts on average forecasting a like-for-

like sales fall of 0.8 percent for its third quarter to Jan 7, though it is still expected to report volume growth and underlying sales growth at Argos of 1.5 percent.

However, it is important to note that Sainsbury's, unlike Tesco and Morrisons, is not in turnaround mode and has not had to rebase its like-for-like sales performance. Updates due next week from a raft of other UK retailers, including Marks & Spencer, department stores John Lewis and Debenhams, Primark owner AB Foods and ASOS.L, will also shine a light on prospects for the sector.

Marks & Spencer will (on Jan 12) report on its third quarter to Dec 31. Analysts are on average forecasting like-for-like sales growth in its clothing and home division of 0.2 percent with underlying sales in its food business down 0.4 percent. Such an outcome in clothing would represent an improvement on the second quarter's 2.9 percent fall and provide some encouragement to investors that new boss Steve Rowe's turnaround plan has found some traction. Last week rival Next reported disappointing Christmas sales, cut its profit forecast and highlighted "exceptional" levels of uncertainty in the sector. — Reuters

EGYPT NAMES NEW HEAD OF AGRICULTURE QUARANTINE

CAIRO: Egypt, the world's largest wheat buyer, has appointed a new head to its agriculture quarantine agency, the body that last year threw the massive wheat buying program into disarray when it tightened import regulations on a common wheat fungus.

The new head is Najla Mousa Balabel, the Agriculture Ministry said in a statement yesterday. Balabel replaces Ibrahim Imbasy, who had been appointed to head the agency in March.

The ministry did not give a reason for the change. Imbasy had replaced Saad Moussa, who insisted that imported wheat should contain zero levels of the

ergot fungus against more internationally acceptable standards of 0.05 percent.

This led to decreased supplier participation in government held tenders and a stand-off of nearly a year between the quarantine agency and Egypt's state buyer, the General Authority for Supply Commodities (GASC). After a resolution to the ergot problem was reached and the 0.05 percent standard was adopted, a decree was issued in November giving another government body, the General Organization for Export and Import Control (GOEIC), the bulk of the responsibility for inspecting wheat and other agricultural products at ports. — AFP

EGYPT POUND STRENGTHENS AT BANKS AS DEMAND FROM IMPORTERS EASES

CAIRO: The Egyptian pound strengthened slightly at banks as demand for dollars by importers eased, bankers told Reuters yesterday. The dollar was being bought for around 18 pounds at most banks, down from around 19 last week. Banks were paying clients around 17.8 per dollar.

"The demand for dollar is less," said one banker. "Banks have reached a point where they don't need to keep raising prices to attract dollar inflows because there aren't as many dollar requests by clients for the time being," he said, adding that once demand picks up prices will start rising again.

Banks in Egypt had been raising the price to buy dollars from clients in order to attract inflows and cover requests from other clients seeking to buy dollars, but they say demand for dollars has eased over the past week.

Business activity in Egypt shrank for the 15th consecutive month in December, although at a slower pace than the previous month, as inflation caused purchase costs to rise at a near-

record pace and new orders to drop as the Egyptian pound weakened against the US dollar, a survey showed on Wednesday.

While banks are prioritizing imports of essential goods, private individuals are forced to buy dollars on the black market. Three traders on the black market said they were selling dollars at a range of 19.60-19.80 per dollar.

Egypt's central bank abandoned its currency peg of 8.8 pounds to the US dollar on Nov 3, hoping to unlock currency inflows and bring back foreign investors who were driven away after the 2011 uprising that ousted Hosni Mubarak.

Under the currency peg, dollar supplies were rationed by the central bank, forcing businesses to go to the black market for foreign currency. Bankers say it will take time for those dollars to be absorbed back into the banking system.

The currency peg drained foreign reserves, and analysts estimate the central bank is still around \$10-15 billion short of the stock it needs. — Reuters

IRAN TAKES OWNERSHIP OF FIRST JET UNDER SANCTIONS DEAL

PARIS/DUBAI: Airbus said yesterday Iran's state airline IranAir had accepted its first new jet, marking a key step in opening up trade under a nuclear sanctions deal between Iran and major powers.

The Airbus A321 jetliner has been painted in IranAir livery and is expected to be delivered later this week. "The technical acceptance has been done with formal delivery still to be done," a spokesman for the European planemaker said.

Iranian regulators said the aircraft had been placed on the country's aircraft register, indicating IranAir had taken ownership of the aircraft: the first of around 200 Western aircraft ordered since sanctions were lifted.

"The registration has been done, and the delivery should be by the end of the week," Reza Jafarzadeh, a spokesman for Iran's Civil Aviation Organization, told Reuters by telephone.

The 189-seat jet was assembled in Hamburg, Germany. From there, it is expected to be transferred to Airbus headquarters in Toulouse, France, for a formal handover on Wednesday. IranAir Chairman Farhad Parvareh told state news agency IRNA there would be an official ceremony to mark the arrival of the Airbus jetliner in Tehran later this week.

IranAir has ordered 100 passenger jets from Airbus and 80 from its U.S. rival Boeing under the nuclear deal, which called for the lifting of most international sanctions in exchange for curbs on Iran's nuclear activities.

Boeing also agreed last year to arrange the leasing of a further 29 aircraft. IranAir is also negotiating a final agreement with European turbo-prop maker ATR. The company, joint-owned by Airbus and Italy's Leonardo, has provisionally agreed to supply 20 of its 70-seat regional planes with options for a further 20. — Reuters

News

in brief

US dollar stable against KD at 0.305

KUWAIT: The exchange rate of the US dollar remained stable against the Kuwaiti dinar at 0.305, while the euro went up to reach KD 0.322, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) yesterday. The CBK also said that the pound sterling was down to KD 0.375, while the Swiss franc remained unchanged at KD 0.300. The Japanese yen stood firm at KD 0.002.

Iranian oil firm NIOC names global chief

DUBAI: State-run National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has named Saeid Khoshrou as its new director of international affairs, the Iranian oil ministry's news website SHANA said yesterday. Ali Kardor, NIOC's managing director, said in a decree that reducing transportation and maintenance costs, and diversification of markets and customers would be among the main goals of the international department under Khoshrou, SHANA reported. Khoshrou has worked more than 20 years in Iran's oil industry and held posts at NIOC's international department, including marketing deputy.

Egypt's GASC postpones tender for raw sugar

ABU DHABI: Egypt's state-owned buyer, the General Authority for Supply Commodities (GASC), said yesterday it had postponed a tender for 50,000 tons of raw sugar. GASC did not give a new deadline for offers and did not give a reason for the postponement. GASC was seeking the raw sugar for arrival by Feb. 28.

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.615
Indian Rupees	4.510
Pakistani Rupees	2.934
Sri Lankan 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
Yemeni Riyal/for 1000	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
Egyptian Pound	384.385
Sterling Pound	322.080
Euro	300.105
Swiss Frank	812.640
Bahrain Dinar	83.855
UAE Dirhams	85.080
Qatari Riyals	82.675
Saudi Riyals	433.540
Jordanian Dinar	16.830
Egyptian Pound	2.060
Sri Lankan Rupees	4.530
Indian Rupees	2.924
Pakistani Rupees	3.887
Bangladesh Taka	6.143
Philippines Pesto	168.345
Cyprus pound	3.600
Japanese Yen	2.435
Syrian Pound	3.825
Nepalese Rupees	69.340
Malaysian Ringgit	

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	31.240
Thai Bhat	9.535
Turkish Lira	87.725

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.369279	0.379279
Czech Korune	0.003802	0.015802
Danish Krone	0.038891	0.043891
Euro	0.313975	0.322975
Norwegian Krone	0.031398	0.036598
Romanian Leu	0.070497	0.070497
Slovakia	0.009229	0.019229
Swedish Krona	0.029450	0.034450
Swiss Franc	0.292152	0.303152
Turkish Lira	0.082529	0.092829

Australasia	BUY	SELL
Australian Dollar	0.213906	0.225908
New Zealand Dollar	0.205822	0.215322

America	BUY	SELL
Canadian Dollar	0.222898	0.231898
Georgina Lari	0.138751	0.138751
US Dollars	0.303100	0.307500
US Dollars Mint	0.303600	0.307500

Asia	BUY	SELL
Bangladesh Taka	0.003578	0.004160
Chinese Yuan	0.042632	0.046132
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037520	0.040270
Indian Rupee	0.002789	0.005523

Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002515	0.002695
Kenyan Shilling	0.002984	0.002984
Korean Won	0.000244	0.000259
Malaysian Ringgit	0.064568	0.070668
Nepalese Rupee	0.002944	0.003114
Pakistan Rupee	0.002620	0.002910
Philippine Peso	0.006083	0.006383
Sierra Leone	0.000053	0.000059
Singapore Dollar	0.206584	0.216584
South African Rand	0.016294	0.024794
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001651	0.002231
Taiwan	0.009393	0.009573
Thai Baht	0.008228	0.008778

Arab	BUY	SELL
Bahraini Dinar	0.808282	0.816782
Egyptian Pound	0.013279	0.022532
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000181	0.000241
Jordanian Dinar	0.428238	0.47238
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000153	0.000253
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020263	0.044263
Nigerian Naira	0.000407	0.001042
Omani Riyal	0.791501	0.797181
Qatar Riyal	0.083569	0.085019
Saudi Riyal	0.080833	0.082133
Syrian Pound	0.001303	0.001523
Tunisian Dinar	0.128697	0.136697
Turkish Lira	0.082529	0.092829
UAE Dirhams	0.082215	0.083915
Yemeni Riyal	0.000999	0.001079

US OIL INDUSTRY COMING BACK CAUTIOUSLY

NEW YORK: The US oil industry is feeling guarded optimism going into 2017 as it pivots from a brutal two-year slump prompted by crashing crude prices. As the new year kicks off, industry insiders describe a tentative recovery, with some low-cost drilling basins starting to pick up even while others remain depressed.

The downturn, among the worst since the 1973 Arab oil embargo, led to bankruptcies, layoffs of hundreds of thousands of workers and a significant pause on the American shale boom.

Energy producers have been cheered by the election of Republican Donald Trump, whose cabinet picks include oil industry allies like climate-change skeptic Scott Pruitt to head the Environmental Protection Agency and ExxonMobil chief executive Rex Tillerson as secretary of state.

"Operators are still being guarded with their money," said Jason McFarland, president of the International Association of Drilling Contractors in Houston. "But certainly we're seeing a loosening of the grip on investments as the price of oil rises."

OPEC cuts in question

Even more important, sentiment got a boost from the November 30 agreement by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

to cut production to address a supply glut that had threatened to push oil prices back to multi-year lows. After the OPEC deal, "it is meaningfully different in sentiment," said David Pursell, a managing director at the Houston energy investment bank Tudor, Pickering, Holt & Co. "Before November 30, this was like the Bataan Death March," he said, referring to the grim outlook in the industry.

Now, "People are cautiously optimistic, which is light years from where we were eight weeks ago."

US oil prices, which tumbled to close to \$25 a barrel a year ago, closed at \$53.99 a barrel on Friday. Part of the industry's hesitancy is due to skepticism about whether OPEC members and countries outside the cartel, such as Russia, will actually comply with the agreed production cuts. And if the cuts are implemented, there remains the question of what will happen if the agreement is not renewed after its six-month duration.

OPEC appears to be signaling that "high-cost producers should not take for granted that they will receive a free ride to higher production," the International Energy Agency said in a report last month. "These high-cost producers, who assume that the cuts at the very least guarantee a floor under prices, might think twice before taking the risk of sanctioning new investments."

US shale comeback?

Other unknowns that will affect the market include the path of US consumption in the expected fast-growth Trump era; whether Indian demand will stay high; and how the ever-evolving Chinese economy will affect its thirst for petroleum. Shale is another question mark. The US is expected to see capital investment recover more quickly than other countries that have long-term oil investment cycles.

The rise of American shale production, made possible by technological leaps in drilling and resource recovery, lifted US production to multi-decade highs in 2015 of about 9.6 million barrels per day (bpd), a remarkable 80 percent higher than in 2010. But that momentum came to a screeching halt amid the industry downturn, and US production fell back to 8.6 million bpd in September 2016.

Recent higher prices have seen that figure creep back up to 8.8 million bpd, according to data from the US Energy Information Administration. How fast the industry can recover is uncertain.

"We don't have much experience in terms of looking at projects like this in terms of their rapid recovery because we have never really been there

before," said Neil Atkinson, head of the oil market division at the IEA. "The question is how quickly can it respond if people believe higher prices are here to stay," he said about the prospects for increased production. "We don't yet know."

Early indications show a big jump in the rig count in the Permian Basin in West Texas compared with a year ago: the count currently stands at 267 rigs, up from 209 a year ago, according to figures from Baker Hughes.

Each new rig directly employs about 20 people and supports dozens of other workers in related services, IADC's McFarland said. But activity remains well below year-ago levels in the Eagle Ford Shale region, which crosses much of Texas, and in North Dakota, home to the Bakken Shale. Both were hot growth areas prior to the downturn.

The Permian is appealing because it is low-cost and close to pipelines and other key infrastructure, said Jesse Thompson, a business economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas based in Houston.

"You're hearing about some hiring," Thompson said. "We know the trend of the employment in the industry is turning, there are still some people getting laid off. There are still companies in financial distress. This is a transition period." —AFP

FOR 2017, MANY SEE HIGHER US MORTGAGE RATES, HOME PRICES

LOS ANGELES: Nate Lowenstein has been shopping for a home in Los Angeles, on and off, for more than a year. His search has been stymied by a stubbornly low roster of homes on the market and the hurdles that come with it: multiple competing bids and higher prices. "It's not a great market, from a buyer's perspective," said Lowenstein, a lawyer. "The one good thing is that interest rates were quite low."

As recently as last summer, homebuyers had ultra-low mortgage rates on their side. It was good news for any borrower, but especially for those in expensive housing markets like Los Angeles, Boston and Seattle.

That was then. While mortgage rates remain very low by historical standards, they've risen sharply over the past couple of months, with the average rate on a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage reaching 4.2 percent this past week. The rate got as high as 4.32 percent a week before that, its highest level since 2014 and well above the past year's average of 3.65 percent. Economists predict that mortgage rates will continue to climb this year, just one of the trends that suggest that 2017 will be a more challenging year for homebuyers.

"With higher mortgage rates, you're increasing the cost, challenging the budgets, challenging the ability to qualify and, as a result, likely reducing somewhat the pool of potential buyers," said Jonathan Smoke, chief economist for Realtor.com.

So far, the rate increases haven't begun to worry Lowenstein, who is in the market for a house with at least three bedrooms in LA's affluent west side. His budget: Between \$1.6 million and \$1.8 million.

"We're not priced out yet," Lowenstein said. "But if it goes up to 5 percent or 6 percent, at some point we would be."

Long-term mortgage rates tend to track the yield on the 10-year US Treasury note. The yield goes down when investors bid up bond prices, as they did following last summer's vote in Britain to exit the European Union. The move sent long-term mortgage rates tumbling as low as 3.41 percent.

The reverse happened after Election Day. Investors bet that a Republican-controlled White House and Congress will have a clear path to implement policies that will drive

inflation and interest rates higher. A sell-off in US bonds drove the yield on the 10-year Treasury note in mid-December to the highest level in more than two years, and mortgage rates have floated higher with the tide.

But will they continue to do so?

Smoke predicts mortgage rates will reach 4.5 percent in 2017. Other economists expect rates to remain above 4 percent but not to go beyond 5 percent this year. That range would mean mortgage rates that would be low compared with the past decade.

Average long-term mortgage rates were above 6 percent during the height of the last housing boom, and they hadn't hit 5 percent before 2008.

So someone looking to buy a home in the next few months doesn't need to panic, said Svenja Gudell, chief economist at Zillow, a real estate information company.

"My advice to buyers would be to not freak out and feel a sense of urgency," she said. "If you aren't able to buy a house at 4.5 percent, you probably weren't able to buy a house at 4 percent."

The stakes are a bit higher for buyers in expensive markets, where housing can eat up a much larger share of household income. If mortgage rates continue to climb, there are moves that would-be homebuyers can make to better offset some of the higher borrowing costs.

Consider lowering the interest rate by paying a fee to the lender up front, something known as buying down the interest rate. Or go with an adjustable-rate mortgage, which has a low fixed rate for a few years, typically five or 10, then adjusts to a higher rate.

Another move: Ask the seller to pay the buyer's closing costs. That can free up more cash for buyers to manage the higher borrowing costs. Higher mortgage rates could have one silver lining: As some buyers are priced out, sellers may have to be more flexible on prices. Over time, that could help stem home prices. Low inventory and strong demand helped increase prices in 2016 at the fastest pace in 10 years, according to an analysis by Zillow. The company predicts that U.S. prices will increase about 3 percent on average in 2017, down from a gain of about 6.5 percent last year. —AP



FAISALABAD: A Pakistani worker operates a machine at a textile factory in Faisalabad. — AFP

PAKISTAN'S TEXTILE INDUSTRY STRUGGLES TO BOUNCE BACK

COUNTRY SLOWLY EMERGES FROM POWER CRISIS

FAISALABAD, Pakistan: As Pakistan slowly emerges from a long-term power crisis, its once booming textile sector is scrambling to find its feet-but high energy costs and a decade lost to competitors mean recovery is far from assured.

Energy production was severely depressed for more than 10 years due to chronic under-investment, inefficiencies in the power network and an inability to collect sufficient revenue to cover costs. The result was crippling for manufacturers and in particular the textile sector, which employs 30 percent of the working population.

Pakistan is the world's fourth largest cotton producing country but interminable power and gas cuts have stopped exporters from producing their orders on time. Many have watched helplessly as their clients have instead turned to Vietnam or Bangladesh. A third of the production capacity of the sector has disappeared, thousands of factories have closed, and most of the others are running below full capacity, says Rehan Bharara, a former loom owner who now runs a public infrastructure project for the textile industry.

Half the time, "we had to run our factories on diesel generators, which was very expensive. We decided to close down rather than losing money every day," he said. Only those manufacturers which invested heavily in their own energy production survived. These include plants run by the Sadaqat company, which provides house

linen to major Western retailers such as Debenhams, Tesco and Target. Energy supply to huge printing, cutting and sewing departments is rotated according to need.

"We have three sources of electricity: the main and cheapest one is generation through gas, if we don't have gas, we go to Wapda (the public utility), if Wapda closes, we go to diesel generators," says chairman Mukhtar Ahmed.

"I have no choice. If I stop producing, we lose our customers." Smaller plants, notably the hundreds of thousands of cotton loom workshops, lack backup generators and are dependent on the public network.

No power, no wages

Each time the power cuts, work is interrupted. "We loom workers only get paid if there is power and looms are running. If there is no power, there are no wages," said Mohammad Rizwan, a 21-year-old weaver. The government has promised to end power cuts by 2018, and said industry would be prioritized. In the past few weeks, the biggest manufacturers in Faisalabad have been supplied without interruption.

"The key is that they give us 24 hours of electricity a day," said Wahid Raamay, chairman of the Council of Loom Owners in Faisalabad. Despite these important advancements, textiles are not yet out of danger. As the country's electricity supply has improved, natural gas imports

have gone up with the increased cost passed down to consumers.

Bharara estimates the cost of electricity has doubled over eight years, from six rupees per kilowatt-hour to 11. That's still much lower than 26 rupees per kilowatt hour for electricity produced by a diesel generator, but more than costs in competing countries.

"At this time we are struggling to give competitive power," admits Muhammad Salim Bhatti, general manager of the city's power distribution company. "Over time, we will become cheaper as new power plants will be more efficient," he hopes. "We'll be in a position to compete."

But the Asian Development Bank is less optimistic, citing the opaqueness of large-scale Chinese investment in the country's energy infrastructure. "The power due to be produced by Chinese-built power plants is expected to be expensive" it said, though it anticipates it will still be cheaper than the thermal plants they are set to replace.

In late December, Pakistan's fourth nuclear power plant went online, built with Chinese assistance as part of Islamabad's plans to produce 8,800 MW from atomic energy by 2030.

Total exports, meanwhile, 60 percent of which are made up by textiles, declined by 13 percent in the first nine months of this year compared to last, a sign that the industry's recovery is yet to begin. —AFP



CORAL GABLES: A house is for sale in Coral Gables, Fla. Economists predict mortgage rates will continue to climb next year, just one of the trends that suggest 2017 could be a more challenging year for homebuyers. —AP

MEXICANS PROTEST GASOLINE PRICE HIKES

MEXICO CITY: Mexicans angry over a spike in gasoline prices took to the streets of Mexico City on Saturday after days of protests spurred looting in hundreds of stores, resulting in over a thousand arrests in Latin America's second-largest economy. Mexico's government hiked gasoline costs by 14 to 20 percent earlier this month, fueling outrage among Mexicans already facing rising inflation and adding to a long list of headaches besetting President Enrique Pena Nieto. The hike is part of a gradual, year-long price liberalization the Pena Nieto administration has promised to implement this year. But the government's many efforts to justify the hike have fallen on deaf ears.

"No to the gasoline price hike, Pena out," protesters yelled as they marched from Mexico City's center to the Presidential residence. While there were no reports of violence in Mexico City on Saturday, the backlash has been far from peaceful.

Mexican authorities on Friday reported over 1,500 arrests since the protests began when price hikes kicked in on Jan 1. Mexican retail association ANTAD said on Friday that 423 stores were sacked, nearly half in the central state of Mexico, near the capital. Local media reported marches on Saturday in the Mexican states of Sonora, Chiapas, Guerrero, Jalisco, Tabasco and Puebla as well. — Reuters

DAMAC PROPERTIES EXPECTS TO MAINTAIN 25% DIVIDEND: CFO

DUBAI: Dubai's DAMAC Properties expects to maintain its 25 percent cash dividend policy for 2016 despite profit declines in the first three quarters, its group chief financial officer said yesterday.

The developer's board set a minimum 25 percent cash dividend target in 2014 for the following two years. The board followed the recommendation in 2015, however, is yet to announce a dividend for 2016. "There is no reason to speculate we will not adhere to this," Adil Taqi told Reuters at DAMAC's headquarters in Dubai, adding that it would be unlikely to be more than the target and would require regulatory approval.

Profit at DAMAC, which is building a \$6 billion golf complex with Donald Trump, fell 23 percent to 2.84 billion dirhams (\$773.23 million) in the nine months to September, according to Reuters calculations. Dubai's property market, where DAMAC's business is concentrated, has softened over the past two years as buyers

became more cautious amid weaker oil prices and cuts to regional government spending. The market is likely to move "sideways" in 2017 compared with 2016, when the company expects to reach around 7 billion dirhams in sales, Taqi said.

"I don't envisage huge growth." The majority of buyers in 2017 will continue to be from the Gulf Arab region, wider Middle East and India, sales to Chinese investors look set to grow through Western Europe "might not be so important" due to a weak pound, he added.

DAMAC expects Dubai's market to rebound in the "second or third quarter of 2019" in the lead up to the Expo 2020 world's fair the emirate is set to host. "I think this will be phenomenal for Dubai," Taqi said. He also said DAMAC was considering its options for refinancing debt maturing over the next two years, including a \$100 million sukuk in March, of which it has already paid off \$25 million, and \$650 million sukuk in 2019. — Reuters

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INVESTORS ALL EARS AS TRUMP SET TO BREAK SILENCE

LONDON: US and Chinese data and an expected news conference by US President-elect Donald Trump in the coming week may shed some light on the state of the world's two biggest economies - and the outlook for relations between them.

Trump, who takes office on Jan. 20, has said he will hold a news conference on Wednesday. It will be his first since winning the November election, although he has been outspoken on Twitter.

Investors will welcome any insights he may give on his policies regarding China as well as the domestic economy. "This occasion could be an opportunity for Trump to highlight key priorities, with markets especially alert to details regarding tax reform, infrastructure spending plans and his China trade stance," Standard Chartered said in a weekly note to investors.

Some analysts are concerned about the broad economic and political impacts of Trump's relations with the rest of the world. "Trump's plans for trade and foreign policy in particular are fraught with considerable threats to the real economy," Commerzbank currency strategist Thu Lan Nguyen wrote, suggesting a trade war with China or Mexico may do the US economy more harm than good.

On the US domestic front, expectations of heavy spending under Trump to create jobs in the Rust Belt states that swung the election may have helped lift consumer sentiment to multi-year highs and driven up Treasury yields in a burst of "Trumpflation."

One gauge of that sentiment will be US retail sales data for December due on Friday. They are expected to show a 0.7 percent rise from the previous month, according to a Reuters poll of economists. Another will be the University of Michigan consumer sentiment index, also out on Friday, which economists polled by Reuters expect to come in at 98.5, the highest reading since early 2004.

As 2017 progresses, some economists see US wage growth and tax cuts outweighing the impact of higher interest rates and oil prices to keep shoppers driving the economy forward.

"Higher interest rates and rising gasoline prices will be headwinds for the consumer sector, but solid labor income and the prospects for personal tax cuts will eventually support decent consumption growth," Credit Suisse said in a weekly report.


In a reflection of the prolonged weakness of China's yuan, data on Saturday showed Beijing's forex reserves dwindled to just above \$3 trillion in December - the lowest level in nearly six years. While the yuan has soared in recent days, helping a liquidity squeeze in Hong Kong, Reuters poll showed it is expected to slide at least 4 percent more this year, hurt by fiscal stimulus and faster interest rate hikes in the United States. "It remains to be seen whether tightening yuan liquidity conditions in Hong Kong and reports of capital controls being introduced will be sufficient to halt the slide" in the yuan, analysts at Investec said in a weekly note to clients.

Another fear for investors may be whether the prolonged slide of the yuan sets off a vicious cycle of more outflows, currency depreciation and rising inflation, on which China issues December data on Tuesday. Adding to China's problems, Trump has vowed repeatedly to label Beijing a currency manipulator, a move that would heighten tensions between the two major trading nations.

Brexit blues

The fall in sterling since Britain voted to leave the European Union has so far failed to boost British industrial production, a poor sign for overall economic growth in the last quarter of 2016.

Manufacturing and broader industrial output data due on Wednesday are expected to show a rebound in November from a sharp contraction in October, although the rise may not be enough to have a positive effect on fourth-quarter GDP data due out at the end of January. "We tend to the view that the manufacturing sector probably expanded only very modestly in Q4. However this is unlikely to be the case for industrial production, where a second successive quarterly decline appears virtually inevitable," Investec chief economist Philip Shaw said in a note. — Reuters



Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Sunday 08 January 2017

Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price index	▲ 65.30	5,896.49	5,831.19	5,897.77	5,829.77
Weighted Index	▲ 2.09	386.95	384.86	387.71	384.97
KSX 15	▲ 5.14	903.38	898.24	906.42	897.23

Volume	Value (KWD)	Number of Trades
401,064,514	30,005,891	6,883

Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
MARIN	66	65	28850	1,904	3	66	▲ 0.0
IKARUS	42.0	41.5	284,565	11,839	4	42.0	▲ 0.0
IPG	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	365	▲ 0.0
NAPESCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	820	▲ 0.0
ENERGYH	43.5	43.0	25,800	1,113	5	43.0	▼ -0.5
GPI	47.5	45.0	27,747,870	1,303,314	308	47.0	▲ 2.0
ABAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	100	▲ 0.0
Oil & Gas			28,087,085	1,318,271	320	798.99	▲ 5.78

Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
KFOUC	188	186	104,996	19,729	7	188	▲ 0.0
BPCC	500	495	928,228	462,677	46	500	▲ 0.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	660	▲ 0.0
ALQURAIN	230	228	151,179	34,721	17	230	▲ 2.0
Basic Materials			1,184,403	517,127	70	1012.46	▲ 2.70

Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
SOKOUK	37.5	36.0	12428104	459,506	160	37.5	▲ 1.0
KRF	68	66	4,055,350	270,130	47	68	▲ 3.0
URC	98	97	200,000	19,550	9	98	▲ 1.0
NRE	118	110	10,512,332	1,190,696	137	116	▲ 4.0
SRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	365	▲ 0.0
TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	470	▲ 0.0
AREFC	190	190	800	152	1	190	▲ 0.0
MASSALEH	41.0	41.0	6,090	250	3	41.0	▲ 0.0
ARABREC	35.0	33.5	8,278,182	285,514	121	35.0	▲ 2.0
ERESCO	42.5	41.0	5,301,087	220,915	91	42.0	▲ 0.5
MABANEE	870	850	146,654	126,126	15	860	▲ 10.0
INJAZZAT	78	77	260,315	19,515	6	77	▲ 0.0
INVESTORS	24.5	23.0	32,286,613	768,571	264	24.5	▲ 1.0
IRC	29.0	27.5	3,980,887	112,326	88	28.5	▲ 1.0
ALTJARIA	82	81	929,200	75,275	19	81	▲ 0.0
SANAM	32.0	28.5	147,903	4,549	5	32.0	▲ 1.0
AAYANRE	67	67	197,500	13,233	4	67	▲ 0.0
AQAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	69	▲ 0.0
ALAQARIA	24.5	24.5	2,500	61	1	24.5	▲ 0.5
MAZAYA	116	114	707,429	80,659	25	114	▲ 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
TUJARA	50	49.0	728,294	36,352	22	50	▼ -1.0
TAAMEER	22.5	22.0	1,234,000	27,529	31	22.5	▼ -0.0
ARKAN	89	89	30,650	2,728	3	89	▼ -1.0
ARGAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	176	▲ 0.0
ABYAAH	24.0	23.0	11,719,425	275,077	98	23.5	▲ 0.5
MUNSHAAT	58	54	8,236,557	463,457	145	56	▲ 2.0
FIRSTDUBAI	66	65	2,992,697	195,584	91	65	▼ -1.0
KBT	47.5	47.5	2,863,960	136,038	34	47.5	▲ 2.5
REMA	186	186	4,043	752	1	186	▼ -10.0
MENA	22.0	20.0	4,789,155	101,050	111	21.5	▲ 1.0
ALMUDON	44.0	42.5	7,045,830	304,536	150	43.0	▲ 1.0
MARAKEZ	31.5	31.5	1	0	1	31.5	▲ 1.5
REMAL	66	63	4,479,994	285,857	111	63	▼ -3.0
AWJ	77	73	3,711,575	278,184	47	77	▲ 10.0
Real Estate			127,265,137	5,755,082	1,842	905.49	▲ 5.25

Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
KINV	87	82	27,165	2,286	8	85	▲ 0.0
FACIL	158	158	45,000	7,110	4	158	▲ 0.0
IFA	34.0	32.5	9,092,367	303,785	119	34.0	▲ 2.0
NINV	102	97	6,134,276	608,307	157	100	▲ 3.0
KPROJ	510	500	182,373	92,387	10	510	▲ 10.0
COAST	41.5	40.0	6,538,500	346,443	111	41.5	▲ 2.0
SECH	49.0	47.5	19,229,438	926,270	222	48.5	▲ 1.5
SGC	90	85	50,050	4,255	2	85	▼ -5.0
ARZAN	34.5	33.0	954,342	32,322	19	34.0	▲ 0.5
MARKAZ	91	89	6,100	545	2	91	▲ 0.0
KMEFIC	26.0	24.0	69,401	1,671	5	26.0	▲ 1.5
ALAMAN	56	53	1,639,183	89,732	46	56	▲ 2.0
ALOLA	61	56	12,500,948	744,336	178	60	▲ 4.0
ALMAL	20.5	19.5	14,516,981	289,683	155	20.0	▲ 0.5
GIH	34.5	32.5	14,458,034	484,243	181	34.5	▲ 2.5
AAYAN	37.5	35.5	5,326,938	194,183	98	37.0	▲ 1.0
BAYANINV	38.0	35.5	4,226,834	155,913	73	38.0	▲ 2.5
OSOUL	60	57	257,163	14,899	7	59	▼ -1.0
KFIC	38.5	37.0	200,000	7,578	29	38.5	▲ 0.0
KAMCO	97	92	16,000	1,477	2	92	▼ -4.0
NIH	68	64	976,097	64,269	62	66	▼ -1.0
UNICAP	54	51	8,387,899	441,139	80	54	▲ 3.0
MADAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	12.5	▲ 0.0
ALDEERA	34.0	32.5	1,236,905	41,465	28	33.5	▲ 1.0
ALSALAM	52	49.5	9,810,200	501,538	168	51	▲ 1.5
EKTTITAB	41.5	40.0	2,134,933	86,456	58	41.0	▲ 1.0
ALMADINA	45.5	44.0	3,698,402	165,433	56	45.5	▲ 2.0
NOOR	51	47.0	4,814,856	227,088	157	51	▲ 3.0
TAMINV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	280	▲ 0.0
EXCH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,500	▲ 0.0
TAIBA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	75	▲ 0.0
KSHC	32.0	29.5	1,418,207	44,054	57	31.5	▲ 0.5
ASIYA	36.0	33.0	186,275	6,516	10	36.0	▲ 1.0
GNAHC	39.0	36.5	4,171,377	157,534	66	38.0	▲ 2.0
AMWAL	28.0	25.5	1,084,628	28,345	28	28.0	▲ 1.0
ALMUTIAZ	118	112	19,222,933	2,234,215	185	118	▲ 4.0
MANAZEL	30.5	29.0	4,591,335	136,113	91	28.5	▲ 0.0
NIND	128	126	1,411,172	178,011	40	126	▲ 0.0
BIHC	25.0	24.5	3,325,147	81,466	39	24.5	▲ 0.0
SENERGY	37.5	36.0	5,839,021	216,638	107	37.5	▲ 1.0
AGHC	66	63	798,110	50,975	20	65	▲ 2.0
KPPC	46.5	44.0	5,242,932	238,211	107	46.5	▲ 0.5
TAHSSILAT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	43.0	▲ 0.0
JEERANH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	48.5	▲ 0.0
EKHOLDING	190	190	2,707	514	1	190	▲ 6.0
GFH	164	162	253,443	41,117	10	164	▲ 0.0
INOVEST	80	76	150,532	11,523	7	80	▲ 2.0
Financial Services			176,029,014	9,260,035	2,783	630.44	▲ 12.97

Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
ASC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	250	▲ 0.0
OSOS	134	130	64,461	8,571	4	134	▲ 8.0
HAYATCOMM	62	62	265,000	16,430	9	62	▲ 5.0
Technology			329,461	25,001	13	644.17	▲ 30.39

Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
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	38.5	38.5	20,000	770	1	38.5	▲ 0.0
AJWAN	66	58	986,472	61,800	37	65	▲ 2.0
MASAKEN	88	82	459,891	38,588	50	87	▲ 2.0
DALQAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	350	▲ 0.0
ALCID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	90	▲ 0.0
MIDAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,220	▲ 0.0
FLEX							

CHINA FOREX FIREWORKS SPOOK MARKETS

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

KUWAIT: We take the opportunity to wish you a prosperous New Year 2017 full of health and happiness. Before we dive into our weekly coverage and markets expectations for 2017, we cannot but turn our attention to the latest events in Asia.

The beginning of the year saw major fireworks in the currency markets from China where the offshore Renminbi rallied almost 2.8 percent the most on record after reaching almost seven to the Dollar. Having weakened 6.20 percent last year, the PBoC intervened this week by moving to strengthen the fixing in the onshore currency by the most since 2005 or since the Renminbi was de-pegged from the US Dollar. The catalyst for that earlier surge appears to be the crack-down by the PBoC on capital outflows at the end of last year. In addition, we saw lending rates in Hong Kong surging in recent days to reach extreme levels of 61 percent Friday morning and the second highest level on record in a thin liquidity environment, which helped exacerbate the moves.

Back to the macro environment, the major events of the end of 2016 all leaned towards a strong US Dollar environment. Whether the Fed delivering the rate hike; the negative response from the Italian referendum and last but not least the potential new US policies, the stars were aligned for a strong USD going into the yearend and the beginning of 2017.

In parallel, the last meeting of the FOMC took interest rates up by 25 bps and the 'dot plot' projections for 2017 showed three further rate hikes in 2017 up from two hikes anticipated in September. The FOMC's statement also acknowledged the strengthening economic activity and mentioned that measures of inflation compensation have moved up considerably even if remain low. The median forecast for US 2017 GDP growth was revised up to 2.1 percent, from 2.0 percent, while the unemployment rate forecast was revised down a small amount to 4.5 percent, from 4.6 percent.

This week, minutes of that FOMC meeting indicated that the Committee "emphasized their considerable uncertainty about the timing, size, and composition of any future fiscal and other economic policy initiatives as well as about how those policies might affect aggregate demand and supply. The tone was generally upbeat, but it did not contain any more additional hawkish hints since the release of the three-2017 rate hike Fed Funds dot plot. The view of the Committee still looks for a gradual tightening path going forward, with risks being broadly balanced although almost all of the members acknowledged upside risks to their US macro outlook. About half of the FOMC members have used more expansionary fiscal assumptions since Trump was elected, which may be at risk of a reality-check adjustment. On the other hand, some members cited caveats like a strong USD for the Fed to keep embracing a cautious stance, although this is a warning the market has been used to hearing since the Fed

embarked on its tightening path. Yet, the dollar appreciation was viewed as a partial counterbalance to the upside fiscal policy risks, and the dollar was also mentioned as a factor limiting upside inflation risks. Overall, the discussion of the inflation outlook wasn't a major point as per the minutes.

Moving on, during the last few years, the relationship between foreign exchange rates and interest rate differentials between currencies has provided the most accurate expectations when it comes to currencies movements. After ending 2016 with a bang following the dramatic move higher in US real yields relative to those elsewhere, markets have entered the New Year questioning the large US Dollar move post Trump election. Indeed, unlike the big expectations going into the recent US presidential election, 2017 starts with a reality check where markets start to wonder whether the Trump administration is going to be constrained by the realities of what's happening domestically in Washington and geopolitically around the world.

In summary, despite all uncertainties, it is important to note that in the next ten days, we enter the honeymoon phase of the new president whereby historical standards, the new president is perceived to be good for business confidence and will be good for the economy through policies that aim to lower taxes, increase spending, and reduce regulation.

Back to the foreign exchange front, the Euro remains under pressure hovering close to the lows of 2016. The end of the 2016 saw the ECB confusing markets by announcing a €20 billion reduction in asset purchases to €60 billion a month from April 2017 though at the same time extending the program to December 2017. Despite tapering the program, the council was able to deliver a dovish tone to keep the pressure on the currency and broadened the pool of eligible public assets by lowering the minimum remaining maturity from two to one year.

Despite the political risks in Europe being on the rise, the latest inflation figures are likely to give the ECB potential ammunition to further taper their QE program later on in the second quarter if economic data continue to come on the strong side. For now, the year starts with interest rate differentials remain in favor of the US dollar, as we are likely to see a continuation of the same pressure build up.

2016 being the year of GBP weakness as the UK voted to leave the EU and the Bank of England launched a fresh QE purchase program, the first quarter of 2017 should see a continuation of a relatively low confidence as investors remain in a waiting mode even with an absence of negative news.

On the commodities front; after recent strong gains, gold prices retraced by the end of the week weighed down by mixed US jobs data. Moreover with US equity markets hitting record high this week in the wake of the jobs release, the broad-based shift to risk-on investments undercut gold's performance.

Operating under a cloud of uncertainty

This week's FOMC minutes reiterated Yellen's post-meeting statement last month where she said that the Fed is "operating under a cloud of uncertainty at the moment". The minutes also revealed a shift of the debates to the potential new administration policies. According to the minutes, "almost all" officials made mention of upside risks to their growth forecasts as a result of prospects for more expansionary fiscal policies while interestingly "about half" of the Fed officials incorporated fiscal policy into their forecasts.

Moreover, the minutes acknowledged that "participants emphasized their considerable uncertainty about the timing, size and composition of any future fiscal and other economic policy initiatives as well as about how those policies might affect aggregate demand and supply". Officials also acknowledged that this "made it more challenging to communicate to the public about the likely path of the federal funds rate". The minutes also acknowledged that the staff's forecasts for higher real GDP growth over the next few years "were substantially counterbalanced by the restraint from the higher assumed paths for longer-

term interest rates and the foreign exchange value of the dollar". On a different front, San Francisco Federal Reserve President John Williams said that "more fiscal stimulus will have a modest effect on economic growth over the next couple of years". Though Williams said he raised his predictions for fiscal stimulus under a Trump presidency, however his growth predictions remain lower than the major estimates. "My view, in terms of the demographic and productivity trends that we've been seeing for the last decade or so is that growth is likely to be 1.5 to 1.75 percent," Williams said.

December nonfarm payrolls rose 175,000, below expectations of 175,000, however the weakness was offset by gains in earnings. Average hourly earnings rose 0.4 percent against expectations of 0.3 percent

Nonfarm payroll

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and rebounding after the 0.1 percent drop in November. The year-on-year increase in average wages reached 2.9 percent, the highest since 2009. With Unemployment rate on the other hand rising to 4.7 percent from 4.6 percent, the current unemployment rate sits at the lower end of the Federal Reserve's 4.7 percent to 5.0 percent natural rate of unemployment. A continued decline in unemployment should persuade the FOMC that a gradual path of monetary tightening is still appropriate

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Reflation theme

With Eurozone Flash CPI climbing above 1 percent for the first time since 2013, the reflation theme is well and truly alive in Europe. Indeed, the latest data showed this week that estimate of headline CPI had risen more than expected in December after coming at +1.1 percent against expectations of 1.0 percent from +0.6 percent in November. The data put headline inflation at the highest level since September 2013 and encouragingly while higher energy prices led,

US data continue to support economy

US auto sales rose for a seventh straight year in 2016, exceeding the 2015 number. In December, sales rose at an annual rate of 18.4 million beyond economists' forecast for 17.7 million. The gain in December pushed the pace of sales last year up by 0.3 percent to a record 17.54 million cars and light trucks. Automakers sold 17.4

million vehicles in 2015. Sales last year were driven by lower gas prices, the high average vehicle age for cars on the road, easy credit, and incentives for buyers. Moreover, with interest rates on the rise the first time in almost 9 years, consumers rushed to take advantage of advantageous financing rates.

While this week's ADP data may have come in slightly disappointing, data out of the services sector was more upbeat. The services PMI was revised up at the final count to 53.9 in December from the earlier 53.4 flash reading. Meanwhile the ISM non-manufacturing print came in at 57.2 which, while unchanged versus November, was still better than the 56.8 expected. New orders component ticked up to 61.6 from 57.0. The remaining data was the latest weekly initial jobless reading which saw claims fall steeply to 235k from 263k.

Germany to the ECB: Time to End QE

The head of the German IFO Institute said in an interview this week that the ECB should end QE should the pick-up in inflation witnessed in Germany also be seen elsewhere in the Eurozone. In this case "there would then be no further justification for a continuation of purchases. The jump in inflation is a signal for the ECB to exit its expansive monetary policy" he said.

According to Bank of England Chief Economist Andy Haldane, UK consumers could cut on spending as inflation accelerates in 2017. "This year might be a somewhat more difficult year for the consumer," Haldane said this week. "We've had a hefty fall in the exchange rate, the effects of which on prices in the shops is beginning to trickle through. That will in turn produce something of a squeeze on the spending power of consumers, and may lead them to throttle back somewhat in their spending plans."

Since Britain's vote to leave the European Union in June, Households have kept up spending fueled by increased borrowing. That turned into stronger economic growth than many anticipated in the second half of 2016, though the BOE sees slower expansion this year.

For a while, the Sterling Pound has been trapped between valuation attractiveness and the Brexit uncertainty. Although the latest economic data remain supportive and real yields in the negative due to the high inflation resulting from the rapid depreciation of the currency, investors remain on the sideline when it comes to taking a view on the state of the currency.

The positive news is that 2016 has ended on an upbeat political stance allowing the Pound to recover after the parliament backed a motion calling on the government to set out its Brexit plan and activate Article 50 before the end of the first quarter of 2017. The vote marked the first time that MPs have endorsed May's Brexit timetable signaling an end to the clash between the government and the MPs.

Now that the overly negative sentiment has lost momentum, Sterling volatility has fallen but remains relatively high while Prime Minister May has shown recently a more resilient stance aimed to reduce the uncertain-

ty felt in the business community and could potentially signal a soft Brexit form the European Union. In summary, the latest events of 2016 whether on the European front with the Italian referendum or the political transition of the US presidency, have put the "Brexit" on the back burner for now. Regardless, UK business and political uncertainties remain high and aren't likely to dissipate in anticipation of a potential loss of EMU market access. In addition, Brexit negotiations are likely to take a long time to unfold, making it difficult for investors to turn positive on the currency.

Devaluation

According to the forecasting department at State Information Center (SIC), China's economic growth could slow to 6.5 percent this year from about 6.7 percent in 2016, while suggesting a one-off devaluation could help stabilize the yuan currency. Moreover, the momentum from new technology would continue to stimulate economic growth but could not stop the broader slowing trend. Industrial output could grow 5.9 percent this year, down from an estimated 6.1 percent in 2016, it said.

In parallel, authorities should increase the role of the market in formation of the yuan exchange rate, increase the currency's flexibility "and even conduct a one-off devaluation of the renminbi, and thereby maintain renminbi stability at a balanced level," it said.

China's last one-off currency devaluation in August 2015, shocked markets and was widely negatively viewed by the market. With the Yuan almost reaching the 7 level against the USD and capital outflows steadily eroding China's forex reserves, analysts "have discussed the possibility of a second devaluation, but there has been little indication that policymakers were considering such a move.

Kuroda confident

Japan's services sector expanded in December to a seasonally adjusted 52.3 in December from 51.8 in November. The index remained above the 50 threshold that separates expansion from contraction for the third consecutive month, and rose to its highest since January 2016. New business expanded at the fastest rate since July 2015. December was the fifth straight month in which new business increased.

Moreover, Japan Manufacturing PMI rose to 52.4 in December from 51.3 in November, recording the highest reading since December 2015. Bank of Japan Governor Kuroda reacted by saying the economy is at a critical point to end deflation and that he is more confident will make progress in 2017 on deflation. He added that the BoJ will continue its easing program.

Kuwait

Kuwait dinar at 0.30585
The USDKWD opened at 0.30585 yesterday morning.

GLOBAL OUTLOOK FOR 2017

By Hayder Tawfik

As we enter 2017, we can comfortably say that global economic growth picking up across the board. Reported acceleration in economic activity throughout most economies has been noticeable since November of last year. I believe that after years of underestimating the severity of the global growth slowdown, economists are now missing the strength of this noticeable rebound. The European Union could actually surprise most in that economic growth could increase sharply this year. The most recent Eurozone manufacturing activity was the highest since the start of 2014.

Around the world, consumer confidence continues to return, unemployment is at a seven-year low, and the slump in retail sales that we have seen in the eurozone is seems to be coming to an end. Globally, inflation is clearly picking up and based on recent producer price readings and the recent rise in oil and commodity prices, the underlying inflationary trend is solid. Base effects on commodities are likely to help headline prints beat forecasts and provide a proper inflation scare in the first half of the year. At least for the short term there will be a rebound in headlines inflation figures but let's not forget that structural disinflationary pressures from technology and demographics won't disappear.

US election, UK Brexit and the eurozone political risk have dominated 2016. Now investors are more alert to any new political risks. I think for 2017, too attention will be focused on the Eurozone as the French election campaign starts early in the year but with European economic growth picking up, investors most likely start discounting new political risks and focus on making money. During this year, European investment assets may see their risk-premium subside in anticipation of economic recovery and normalization of corporate profitability. As global economic growth picks up, the era of quantitative easing and low interest rates are drawing to a close. That could see the return of the macro themes such as relative growth trends and diverging economic policy. As central banks loosen their grip, market break-outs will have more freedom to trend and momentum players should also be happier. All these themes will be helped by the fact that banks globally are recovering and so liquidity, risk-appetite and monetary policy transmission will all improve.

Two clear investment themes for 2017 are at play one rising inflation and government-spending particular in the US under Donald Trump. These two themes are related. Most governments around the world will take comfort from the US new economic policy to start spending again. This is a great excuse for some at the same time it could easily give voters the comfort at least for

the time being. In all likelihood, nothing much will change in 2017. However, investor's fixation with inflation and Donald Trump's economic policies will push most equity indices to new highs throughout the year. President-elect Trump's promise to double US economic growth during his term in office will need to work with established institutions to pass any of his promised policies. Those policies will require uprooting deeply entrenched interests. Reversing free trade and restoring jobs will be a slow and maybe impossible task. Forcing change on complex global supply chains and business models may be more challenging still, especially if corporate America has any say in the matter.

How much politicians are allowed to reignite inflation with new economic policies might be misplaced in today's environment. The idea is that upcoming US tax cuts and new government spending on infrastructure, presumably financed by deficits, will soon reverse years of stagnation. This could be done in the US but can any other developed economies do a similar policy is open to question. President elect Donald Trump has promised such an agenda, and policy makers in Europe and Japan are watching closely. For reflation to take hold on the global economy, China and Japan the second and third biggest economies in the world need to do more to accelerate their economic growth. Japan, which remains mired in stagnation despite decades of such policies, shows just how hard the challenge is. A further problem is that global reflation argument depends on China's economy growing much stronger than the 6 percent to 7 percent Gross Domestic Products that has been growing in the past couple of years. China has been supporting weakening economic growth with unsustainable debt-fueled stimulus and managed currency devaluation. China needs to do more on structural reforms and less on debt fuelling its economy.

Reflating the global economy can in the short term be good for global equities but it is likely to worsen current-account imbalances, disrupt and distort capital flows and lead to foreign exchange volatility, while a stronger dollar and higher interest rates might disadvantage some US exporters. However, a strong US\$ can only be good for the overall US economy and the rest of the world. Some emerging economies should benefit from a stronger US economy and a stronger US dollar. In short, a rebound in global economic growth and inflation will prove at least in the short term good for investors. As long as a rebounding inflation is kept in check by central banks and policy makers, the financial markets will do well going forward. But if rising inflation leads to more sell off in global bonds then this might cause central banks to panic and aggressively tighten monetary policy. This is something could be bad for the global financial market.

Overall, the year has started well for the global financial market and this could continue for the time being. Equity investors should keep an eye for 2017-quarter one corporate result to find out if the year is progressing well and how corporate CEOs see the year ahead. @Rasameel

RECESSION FLATLINES LAGOS SWANK PROPERTY PROJECTS

LAGOS: With frozen cranes, deserted construction sites and empty buildings, Lagos is suffering a hangover from a construction binge as Nigeria wrestles to overcome a damaging recession. Look no further than Eko Atlantic, billed as the largest real estate project in Africa, where frenetic construction has slowed to a snail's pace.

Dubbed the "Dubai of Africa", the so-called city within a city is being built over 10 square kilometres (four square miles) on tonnes of sand dredged from the Atlantic Ocean off the coast. Just one year ago, it was a symbol of the promise of Lagos, when Nigeria was still the continent's number one economy. But today it is mostly an expanse of sand, interrupted by two lonely ultra-modern skyscrapers and a couple of roads lined with young palm trees. It's a humble start. In the long term, the island is expected to house nearly 500,000 people and see 300,000 others visit daily when it is finished in the next 15 to 20 years. "The business continues but there is no point in going too fast in the context of a general slowdown," said Pierre Edde, development director at South Energyx, a subsidiary of developers, the Chagoury group.

The first phase of the billion-dollar project is underway, with the construction of a dam to follow. Edde said some 80 percent of the plots for sale had already been bought but investors were still wary and "waiting for positive signals to get started" on building construction, he said.

Construction freeze

Falling global oil prices and repeated attacks on crude infrastructure in Nigeria's south severely hit the country's economy in 2016, hammering the naira currency against the dollar. Nigeria, which gets over 70 percent of its revenue from oil, is now suffering from a debilitating shortage of foreign exchange, hitting imports and overseas investment. "Perhaps the greatest constraint for businesses operating in Nigeria at the moment has been the inability to access foreign currency, notably for importation of



LAGOS: A car drives in front of modern skyscrapers under construction at Eko Atlantic City, Lagos. With frozen cranes, deserted construction sites and empty buildings, Lagos is suffering a hangover from a construction binge as Nigeria wrestles to overcome a damaging recession. —AFP

goods, and repatriation of profits," said Roddy Barclay, an analyst at the Africa Practice research firm, in a November report.

The extent of the construction freeze is difficult to assess in the absence of official figures. But Dapo Abe, who heads an engineering consulting firm in Lagos, estimated that some 60 percent of major construction projects—both public and private are currently shut down.

"No bank wants to lend money, rent revenues no longer make it possible to repay construction costs, and there is no return on investment," he added. Now the real estate market is left in an ironic situation: landlords of up-market office blocks and apartments are struggling to find occupants in the wealthy suburbs of Lagos.

Yet at the same time, there is not enough housing stock for the city's estimated 20 million-strong population. According to the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria, 16 million people currently need a house in Lagos.

Diminished 'appetite'

In the past, Nigeria's booming growth attracted real estate developers who scrambled to build high-rise condominiums and modern office blocks catered to the executive class in Lagos. Rich Nigerians and expatriates flocked to the neighborhoods of Victoria Island and Ikoyi—two islands of wealth separated from poorer Lagosians living on the mainland by an 11 km bridge. Yet today many of those buildings have "to rent" spray-painted in a red scrawl on the outside walls in a desperate bid to attract tenants. "Companies have reduced their activities and many expatriates have left," says Ade Kunle, a real estate agent. It's unclear when they—and the construction projects—will come back. "The Nigerian banking sector will remain under pressure in 2017 and as a result will look to limit higher risk lending such as that to construction projects," said Richard Marshall, an analyst at BMI Research, a market research firm. —AFP

FORD F-SERIES AMERICA'S BEST-SELLING TRUCK FOR 40 YEARS IN A ROW

DUBAI: Ford, America's truck leader, is celebrating a major milestone as F-Series now reigns as the top-selling truck in the country for 40 consecutive years and best-selling vehicle for 35 years.

Ford has now sold more than 26 million F-Series trucks since January 1977. Think of it like this: That many trucks could circle the globe more than three times, or, lined up bumper-to-bumper, would span 90,000-plus miles. Ford truck leadership was established with the sixth-generation of F-Series for the 1977 model year, a time when 8-track tapes, disco and bell bottoms were the rage. The company was riding a sales wave - based on an all-new F-150 light-duty pickup featuring an improved 351-series V8 engine, standard front disc brakes, and an extended SuperCab offering.

Yet continuous innovation is at the very core of F-Series' success and even with the momentum in 1977, Ford engineers were already at work on a clean-sheet design for an all-new lineup. That seventh-generation F-Series not only set sales records for trucks, but also by 1982 it had become the overall best-selling vehicle in America.

"The 1980 model was a breakthrough generation for Ford," said historian and author James Wagner. "It was all new - probably the greatest change in 40 years. It was fresh and had a strong emotional appeal with the twin I-beam front suspension. It seems from that point on, things really went Ford's way as far as trucks were concerned."

1997 marked the beginning of a split for F-Series into two distinct platforms - the 10th-generation F-150 was geared toward light-duty truck customers, while new F-250 and F-350 Super Duty brand trucks debuted in 1999 targeting heavy-duty commercial vehicle buyers.

Widening consumer needs

Early on, Ford identified changing consumer preferences among truck customers who were increasingly using their vehicle to do more than haul livestock and equipment; customers were also using their trucks for their family and lifestyle needs. Beginning with the King Ranch in 2001, Ford was now offering luxury edition pickups that provided a combination of capability, style and comfort. Furthermore, models like the Platinum and Limited series went further, featuring leather seating, rich wood trim, full power accessories and premium sound systems.

Ford also pioneered performance and specialty truck segments with the special-edition Harley-Davidson F-150 and SVT F-150 Lightning in 1993. By 2002, Ford was marking 25 years as best-selling truck in America and 20 years as best-selling vehicle overall.

"What's made the F-Series so successful is the Ford truck team's ability to anticipate the needs of our customers better than anyone else - how those needs change, what's most important, and what they need to move forward," said Todd Eckert, Ford truck group marketing manager. "Their insights help us design, engineer and build America's best-selling trucks."

For the 2004 model year, the 11th-generation F-150 received a top-down redesign. 2009 saw Ford charging ahead with some of the strongest visual cues ever for the 12th-generation F-Series. For the 2011 model year, the company was poised to combat skyrocketing energy costs with introduction of the all-new fuel-efficient 3.5-liter EcoBoost engine for F-150.

Toughest, smartest

On rare occasions, innovative companies forever change the game with the

introduction of a revolutionary product. Ford's all-new high-strength, military-grade aluminum-alloy body for the light-duty F-150 in 2015 was that breakthrough product. Then Ford applied the same lightweight material to make the all-new 2017 F-Series Super Duty even more capable than ever.

When paired with advanced powertrains, like Ford EcoBoost engines, the F-150 lineup offers the most hauling capability, and best-in-class gas mileage.

Customers and critics alike appreciate the continued innovation of Ford F-Series trucks, with the 2017 Super Duty winning the Motor Trend Truck of the Year award - the seventh time in 30 years Ford has taken home the honors.

F-Series innovations and milestones

* 1977: Ford begins F-Series truck leadership, selling 818,580 trucks for the model year

* 1979: Ford introduces the Built Ford Tough brand promise

* 1980: All-new seventh-generation F-Series features efficient gas and diesel V8 engines, new angular design, improved interior features; twin-traction-beam four-wheel-drive front suspension introduced

* 1984: F-150 replaces F-100 as base F-Series truck, adding improved safety features and new center console; optional CD player comes a year later

* 1987: Eighth-generation F-Series features a more aerodynamic design, available electronic fuel injection, redesigned interior including instrument panel, and rear antilock brakes

* 1998: Super Duty brand of medium-duty trucks debuts for commercial customers and aligns the popular F-150 line for light-duty customers

* 2001: Luxury King Ranch is an unprecedented success

* 2002: Ford, celebrating 25 years as



best-selling truck in America and 20 years as best-selling vehicle overall, introduces Ford-engineered, Ford-built 6.7-liter Power Stroke(r) turbo diesel engine

* 2008: Ford introduces all-new Class 3-leading F-450 pickup, once again raising the bar for maximum towing capacity

* 2011: Powerful, efficient EcoBoost engine technology introduced for F-150

* 2015: Ford shifts production away from steel to high-strength, military-grade, aluminum-alloy body for F-150;

introduces all-new technology, including 360-degree camera

* 2016: New Pro Trailer Backup Assist helps make backing up a trailer as easy as turning a knob; plus F-150 is only full-size pickup to earn a five-star rating from National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and a Top Safety Pick from Insurance Institute for Highway Safety

* 2017: Ford celebrates F-Series leadership, marking 40 years with the best-selling truck in America and the best-selling vehicle overall for 35 years.

JOYALUKKAS INAUGURATES NEW SHOWROOM IN CHROME PET

CHENNAI: Fresh from the success of opening two new showrooms in the USA, the world's favorite jeweller continues its expansion plans with a new showroom opening in Chromepet, Tamil Nadu. This is the first of several more openings planned by Joyalukkas for 2017.

The Joyalukkas Chromepet, Chennai, Tamil Nadu showroom was inaugurated on January 7,

2017 by film actor Prashanth in the presence of film actor Thiagarajan, Joy Alukkas (CMD, Joyalukkas Group), Dr Nalli Kuppaswamy (Nalli Silks), Aniyar George (KCCNA President), P D Jose (Executive Director, Joyalukkas), P D Francis (DGM-Retail, Joyalukkas) and Shaju KR (Regional Manager, Joyalukkas).

"We are overjoyed that our goals to expand rapidly across the

USA, India, the GCC and new destinations are underway as scheduled. This newly opened showroom in Chromepet is our nineteenth in Tamil Nadu and is just the perfect start to the Group's 2017," says Joy Alukkas, Joyalukkas Group Chairman & MD. "We have big plans to enhance the shopping experience customers enjoy at Joyalukkas and we intend to sur-

prise everyone with better offerings and even better service, starting here in Chromepet. We hope that the people of Tamil Nadu continue to support us with their patronage as they have through the years."

The showroom will feature the brand's signature bright and spacious interiors showcasing the jewellery collections' world-class craftsmanship, as well as the high quality of service Joyalukkas is known for in all its locations.

Joyalukkas Group is a multi-billion dollar global conglomerate with varied business interests. The group operates its various business operations across UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, Singapore, Malaysia, London, USA and India. The group businesses include jewellery, money exchange, fashion & textiles, luxury air charters, malls and realty. Joyalukkas employs over 8,000 professionals across the world, and is one of the most awarded and recognized jewellery retail chains in the world.



BURGAN BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF YAWMI ACCOUNT

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

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

1. Tariq Waleed Abdullah Mandani
2. Joud Mohammad Jawad Dashti
3. Rayan Noel Buist
4. Ali Faraj Abdullah Alkhudairi

In addition to the daily draw, Borgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, entitling one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account, will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

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

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

Established in 1977, Borgan Bank is the youngest commercial Bank and second largest by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors,

as well as having a growing retail, and private bank customer base. Borgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENAT region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Borgan Bank's brand has been created on a foundation of real



values - of trust, commitment, excellence and progression, to remind us of the high standards to which we aspire. 'People come first' is the foundation on which its products and services are developed.

The bank was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2008, making it the first bank in the GCC, and the only bank in Kuwait to receive such accreditation for the third consecutive year. The Bank also has to its credit the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twelve consecutive years.

Burgan Bank, a subsidiary of KIPCO (Kuwait Projects Company), is a strongly positioned regional Bank in the MENA region.

AUB ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF AL-HASSAD SAVING PROGRAM

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank held its weekly draw of Al-Hassad Islamic Saving program January 04 2017. This program offers the biggest prize amount to the largest number of winners. The prize program succeeded in becoming the first prize account in Kuwait compliant with the Islamic Sharia principles. The program has been developed to fulfil the needs of the Bank customers and increase their opportunities in winning sizeable and attractive prizes in addition to enjoying the latest banking advantages that Ahli United Bank provides.

On this occasion, the bank issued the following press release: Al Hassad Islamic Saving program offers the highest amounts of prizes which amount to KD 3.4 million per year. This Program also offers 26 weekly prizes, with the highest number of weekly winners. The Islamic Hassad Saving Account may be opened by the lowest amount to open an account, which is KD 100.

The winner of the weekly grand prize in the amount of KD 25,000 is: Salem A M Hamadah.

The winners of the KD 1,000 prize each: Abdulaziz Mohammad Al-Ajmi, Raed Mohammad Saud Al Shayji, Ronald Geniza Lumio, Waleed Mohammad Eissa, Najibah F Al Bather, Fahad Ali Ahmad, Humoud Mohammad Al Mehjan, Esam H A Ismail, Ali Zaid Al Sanea, Abdullah Ibrahim Al Failakawi, Saleh Salman Mohammad Al Failakawi, Saad Abdullateef Al Dosari, Ahmad Hazzaa Al Enezi, Thuraya Mostafa Al Hareeri, Musaed Dawood, Mohammad Khaled Al Othman, Yousef Ahmad Al-Mailam, Huda Abdulrahman Al Abdulraheem, Ahmed Mansoor Maki, Mohammed Al Tajer, Majeed Ali Yousef, Mohamed Aqeel Yusuf, Janet Paton Langley, GPIC, Khalil Abdulla Jasim. The prize program of "Al-Hassad Islamic Saving" from Ahli United Bank offers a weekly grand prize worth KD 25,000 in addition to 25 weekly prizes worth a total of KD 25,000 distributed to 25 prizes, KD 1,000 for each winner.

In addition, prizes of Al-Hassad Islamic saving program from Ahli United Bank offer 4 quarterly grand prizes announced in quarterly draws. Each is a "Salary for Life" prize which is worth KD 250,000.

In general, Ahli United Bank continues to offer innovative tools and means to meet the needs of its customers to match the Bank's long history of distinctive services which extend over 74 years during which the Bank managed to take the lead among local banks. For further information about "Al-Hassad Islamic Saving" account, customers may call at any Ahli United Bank branch, or call: "Hayakom" service at Tel: 181 2000.

CUSTOMERS CONTINUE TO WIN AT MALABAR GOLD & DIAMONDS FESTIVAL

KUWAIT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds' the prominent global jewellery retailer is currently running their 6th edition of 'Malabar Gold & Diamonds Festival' in Kuwait until 14th January, 2017. During this campaign, Malabar Gold & Diamonds showcases the latest collection of gold, diamond & precious gems jewellery in their outlets, to celebrate this festive period.

This much-awaited festival is one of the biggest jewellery events in GCC and the customers get unique opportunities to win a total of 300,000 gold coins. Presently, customers have already won over 180,000 gold coins during the campaign. Customers continue winning big across all the outlets of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Kuwait.

A true shopper's delight, Malabar Gold & Diamonds Festival will captivate the customers by exhibiting eye catching designs in gold, diamonds, platinum, and precious gems from different parts of the world to flaunt any occasion or event and are well priced too. The festival stands apart from the usual jewellery exhibitions and promotions and as the tag line indicates - 'Everyone Wins', i.e. every customer gets a chance to be a winner during this festival.

Customers can win a guaranteed gold coin or up to 100 gold coins instantly on purchase of gold jewellery worth KWD 200 via Scratch N Win coupons. With every diamond jewellery

purchase worth KWD 250, customers get a free 1 gram gold coin. Furthermore, customers can avail the zero deduction offer on 22K (GCC) old gold jewellery exchange as well. All the above-mentioned offers are valid until 14th Jan 2017.

To add more glitter to this season, they have also unveiled the latest collection of jewellery in gold, diamonds and precious gems to suit the tastes of their multicultural and multinational customers. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has incorporated these designs as a part of various brands presented at Malabar Gold & Diamonds' namely Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewellery, Era - Uncut Diamond Jewellery, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Divine - Indian Heritage Jewellery, Precia - Gem Jewellery and Starlet - Kids jewellery. The last five editions of 'Malabar Gold & Diamonds Festival' elicited tremendous response from the jewellery lovers. This time also the customers are excited to be a part of this much awaited festival to witness the rarest collection of jewellery from across the world and to avail fabulous offers. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has always been at the forefront in gold jewellery manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing and plans on being the 'most-preferred' jewellery retailer in the market in the coming years. The group strives to continue embarking on its journey by further expanding in the near future.



Amazing news from Al-Tijari...

Al-Najma account gives you the biggest daily prize in Kuwait!



AL TIJARI ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF AL-NAJMA ACCOUNT DRAW

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait held the Al Najma Account daily draw yesterday.

The draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry represented by Abdulaziz Ashkanani.

The winners of the Al Najma Daily Draw are:

Salim Ibdah Al Ajmi — KD 7000, Zeyad Abdullah Al-Kandri — KD 7000, Mariam Abdullah Qasem Redha — KD 7000, Mohammad Ali Raza Mohammad Amen — KD 7000.

Al Najma awards are now brighter and bigger than ever With the revamped Al Najma account, all your dreams will be turned to reality. On top of offering the highest daily prize in Kuwait for KD 7,000, now our Mega prize draws got bigger to reach KD 250,000.

The new prizes scheme for AlNajma account Daily draw to win KD 7000

Quarterly draws to win great prizes that would start from KD 100,000 to KD 250,000 1ST QUARTER — KD 100 000, 2ND QUARTER— KD 150 000, 3RD QUARTER— KD 200 000, 4TH QUARTER— KD 250 000.

With Al Najma you have more chances to win greater prizes

* Each KD 25 kept in your account gives you one chance to win

* Each KD 25 kept in your account for one week will give you a chance to enter the daily draw.

* Each KD 25 kept in your account for 3 months will give you chance to enter the quarterly draw.

Additional features

* ATM card

* Issue a credit card against your account

* Obtain all CBK banking services

You deserve to win! Open an account now with just KD 500 and you will enter all

HYBRID CLOUD: CLOUD'S TAKE-OFF TO INNOVATION

By Khaled Talaat

The debate between investing in public or private cloud systems may be coming to an end as businesses in Middle East realize there's a much easier model to digital transformation.

In a rapidly changing market where one third of the top 20 companies face disruption from digital competitors, businesses must constantly speed up innovation, deliver exceptional customer experience, and transform their business models. Eighty percent of businesses are leveraging cloud as a key ingredient to do just that. However, the questions about data security, integrity and where the actual data is held continue to be a barrier to adoption for many businesses in the Middle East region. As organizations in the Middle East are under constant pressure to increase productivity while reducing costs, the migration of business platforms and applications to the cloud is clearly a matter of when, not if.

What was not so obvious over the last 1-



2 years is just how big of a focus the cloud would become. While businesses had a choice between public cloud services-with a lower CAPEX but less direct control-and private cloud setups in which they had more secure and customizable services albeit with higher investment up front. CIOs in the Middle East also faced a dilemma when choosing a cloud environment that not only meets existing needs but one that will future-proof IT investments as their business needs continue to evolve.

Forward-thinking businesses are already looking at how cloud adoption will enhance innovation rather than just cost benefit alone. According to MarketsandMarkets, the hybrid cloud market in the MEA region is expected to experience huge growth in the coming five years due to improved application functionality and enhanced technologies. It is expected to grow from \$2.13 billion in 2016 to \$6.69 billion by 2021, at a CAGR of 25.8 percent from 2016 to 2021.

According to IBM, 85 percent of business leaders believe that hybrid cloud is accelerating digital transformation, with hybrid cloud growing faster than the public cloud. The hybrid model allows customers to integrate rather than migrate, extending current investments to extract value.

Reduced complexity

Enterprises large and small are now exploring several different cloud models as they assess current and future needs. Learning from the early days of cloud, many have found that building a private

cloud environment is a lot more difficult than just using one. The networking layer can be complex, businesses need to have a good amount of IT-knowhow to get the foundations right, and it can be time-consuming to maintain. However, it is ultimately your cloud, and that comes with all the benefits that a public model lacks; namely greater resource availability and heightened security functions. This remains a popular model in sectors like banking where there are strict regulations on information integrity and CIOs prefer to have complete control of the infrastructure.

Nevertheless, public cloud services have been a popular choice for many organizations in the Middle East and bring their own value to the table. A public model liberates organizations from complex and costly IT systems which require a high degree of cost, capability and management to run efficiently. Public cloud services also offer the benefit of on-demand scalability and computing power without the need for further infrastructure investments. You rent what you need and that is all.

Now neither of these models is perfect for every scenario. Thankfully, they no longer have to be. Today's hybrid model which combines the delivery of public and private cloud services-is gaining popularity in the Middle East by offering the dual benefits of both models with an added layer of security and control. It's a model that overcomes regulatory and compliance requirements that a public cloud does not provide, while still allowing organizations to keep their IT investments lean for mass-volume operations.

Seems simple enough, but the challenge in cloud's early days was that it was near impossible for businesses to easily integrate both systems. If you built a private cloud environment for certain operations, integrating it with another company's public cloud services-or even another offices private cloud-was next to impossible. That situation has changed however as both offerings have matured and new open platforms have come on line within the Middle East in particular. — Khaled Talaat is Branch Manager, IBM Kuwait.

AUTOMAKERS, SUPPLIERS TEAM UP TO SHARE COSTS OF SELF-DRIVING CARS

LAS VEGAS: Automotive suppliers and automakers are expanding alliances to develop self-driving car technology that can serve multiple automakers, as the race to put such vehicles on the road separates companies that can go it alone from those that need help sharing the financial and technical burdens. While some companies, such as Tesla Motors, General Motors and Ford Motor, are trying to develop proprietary driverless systems, a larger group of automakers appears to have decided it makes more sense to develop self-driving technology in collaboration with suppliers - as many other features such as anti-lock brakes or radar-enabled cruise control already are.

"What's going on in the industry right now is like a hyper version of musical chairs - and the music is still playing," said Gill Pratt, chief executive officer of Toyota Research Institute. "Everyone is changing partners." Several suppliers - notably Mobileye, Nvidia and Delphi Automotive - are among the more popular technology partners in the self-driving race, with multiple alliances around the globe.

"If you want to build a truly autonomous car, this is a task for more than one player," said Amnon Shashua, chief executive of Mobileye, an Israeli-based supplier of mapping and vision-based sensing systems. "The technological challenges are immense," Shashua told Reuters. "I would compare it to sending a man to the moon."

Partnerships

Mobileye supplies cameras, chips and software for driver assist systems - the building blocks for self-driving cars - to more than two dozen manufacturers around the globe. The company was an early supplier of vision systems to Tesla, but the two companies had an acrimonious and public breakup last summer after the driver of a Tesla Model S was killed while operating his vehicle using Tesla's Autopilot system.

Since the break with Tesla, Mobileye has secured two critical partnerships to develop self-driving systems: With German automaker BMW and US chipmaker Intel, and with longtime supplier Delphi.

The Delphi-Mobileye alliance involves a turn-key system that the partners plan to offer to smaller automakers that lack the resources to develop such systems on their own. It will be ready for production by 2019, said Jeff Owens,

Delphi's chief technology officer, with a projected wholesale cost of about \$8,000. The alliance with BMW and Intel is expected to draw additional vehicle manufacturers and suppliers, according to Elmar Frickenstein, BMW's senior vice president for automated driving.

"We would like to create a standard system for everybody to use by 2021," Frickenstein said. "That would share the costs and speed up the process of development and adoption."

Eventually, BMW and its partners could offer self-driving hardware and software sets or an entire driverless system on a non-exclusive basis to companies ranging from Uber to Google, Frickenstein said. A blueprint for collaboration is BMW's joint ownership with Daimler AG and Volkswagen AG's Audi of Here, the mapping company acquired in late 2015 from Nokia. Since then, both Intel and Mobileye have teamed with Here to pool and share data.

Chipmaker Nvidia also is ramping up its partnerships in self-driving technology and systems, this week announcing deals with Audi and Here, as well as German suppliers ZF and Bosch. "We're not looking to develop a proprietary system," said Dirk Hoheisel, the member of Bosch's board of management who oversees autonomous driving. "We want to work with others to develop a standard platform and open standards for self-driving systems, especially around data and mapping."

While pursuing similar partnerships with suppliers, Audi sees its role as a vehicle manufacturer evolving to that of a vehicle integrator. "There's not one supplier out there who can provide the whole solution - no one who knows everything, every part of what's needed to make an autonomous car," said Alejandro Vukotich, Audi's head of development for driver assistance systems.

Some key components of self-driving systems - cybersecurity, for instance - should remain the responsibility of vehicle manufacturers, said Guillaume Devauchelle, head of innovation and scientific development at French supplier Valeo.

But carmakers also will continue to rely on suppliers to provide specific self-driving technologies, he said. "There will be a mix because it's quite a complex system (with) sensing, data fusion, artificial intelligence, connectivity, man-machine interface and so on," Devauchelle said. "Those are big blocks." — Reuters



LAS VEGAS: Faraday Future's FF91 electric car on display at the 2017 Consumer Electronic Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada on Saturday. —AFP

THE CAR OF THE FUTURE: GETTING TO KNOW YOU

LATEST AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY ON DISPLAY AT CES

LAS VEGAS: The car of the future doesn't just want to drive you. It wants to know you. The automotive technology showcased at the Consumer Electronics Show over the past week was in part about self-driving vehicles, but also about personalizing the driving experience.

Artificial intelligence and facial recognition will allow vehicles to let you in (if it's your car), and adjust the seating, lighting, music or other elements of the environment for you, automatically.

"The idea is to be more than a machine, to be a partner, make you happy," said Toyota's Amanda McCoy, who explained some of the innovations of the Japanese automaker's concept-i vehicle at the Las Vegas tech show.

The manufacturers want the car to hold a conversation, help you make a shopping list and determine where and how you want to travel. In a demonstration, the Toyota vehicle started a conversation and suggested potential destinations for the driver. Its camera detected that the driver was in an upbeat mood and thus suggested "the happier route."

The concept car will also keep a driver alert to potential perils on the road, with sound and light signals. Moving to autonomous mode, it allows the seats to recline.

Swiss-based group Rinspeed



LAS VEGAS: Promotion hostesses Justina (left) and Ty (right) pose beside a Harley Davidson motorcycle equipped with Cerwin Vega soundsystem at the 2017 Consumer Electronic Show (CES) in Las Vegas on Saturday. —AFP

showed a prototype electric car called Oasis with a miniature garden inside. The vehicle with an "intelligent rolling chassis" can also operate in autonomous mode, converting its windshield into a screen for videoconferencing.

"The interior of the car in the future will be redefined entirely, to meet different needs," said Rinspeed chief executive Frank Rinderknecht.

Rinderknecht said the company has no plans to produce an entire

vehicle but use elements of the company's technology, which could be available in a few years.

Other technologies shown in Las Vegas could turn the car into a payments platform. Honda, for example, said it was working with Visa to allow motorists to pay directly from the vehicle for parking or refueling, for example. Several automakers at CES unveiled plans to move forward on autonomous driving technology. But they also showcased ways to

incorporate virtual and augmented reality, use voice systems and other technology to personalize the experience.

Digital assistant on board

One part of that experience is the "digital assistant" which is making inroads in connected homes. Ford announced it would incorporate voice-controlled Amazon's Alexa onboard while Renault-Nissan and BMW announced plans to use Microsoft Cortana.

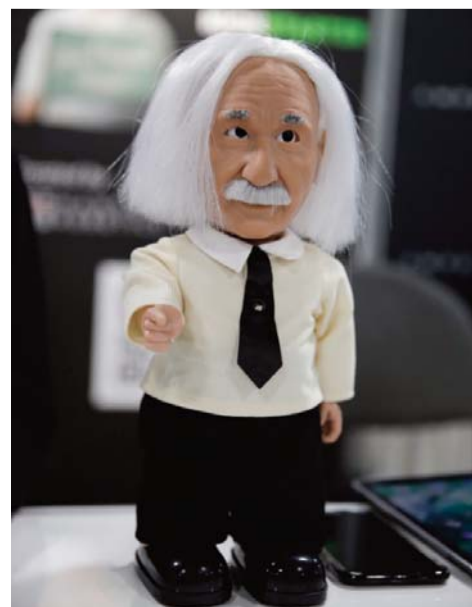
Hyundai is installing sensors in its seating which evaluate posture and in seatbelts to monitor respiration. This could allow an intelligent car to know if a driver is having a heart attack or falling asleep at the wheel. The South Korean giant is experimenting with a number of ways to deal with different scenarios: it may use blue lights or cold air to wake up a groggy driver, or change the environment to calm a stressful one. "If we can see the mood (of the driver), we can probably do something with this information and modify the environment," said Hyundai's David Mitropoulos-Rundus.

Even if a car is autonomous, Mitropoulos-Rundus said there will be times when a driver will need to assume control, and the automaker want a system to "re-engage him in emergency situation." — AFP

THE CHALLENGES OF ROBOTIC DELIVERY

LAS VEGAS: Many companies hope to use robots to deliver food to your hotel room, or packages and sundries to your home. But they still have plenty of issues to work out.

Like safety, for instance. "Now is the time for drone delivery," said Helen Greiner, the founder of CyPhy Works, a startup that's testing the use of drones with UPS to make commercial deliveries. But she noted that companies have to



LAS VEGAS: Educational robot Professor Einstein is on display at CES International in Las Vegas. —AP

CES GADGET SHOW

guard against accidents - like, say, drones dropping packages on people's heads, or falling out of the sky themselves.

The drones weigh 15 pounds, not counting the packages they carry, Greiner said at a robotics session at the CES gadget show Friday.

On the ground, businesses not only face safety concerns, but the need to educate consumers who might be shocked by having a robot show up at their front door.

Steve Cousins, CEO and founder of Savioke, is in the midst of deploying 50 robots to various hotels, which rent them for a monthly fee to deliver room service items. Preparing guests for the arrival of their mechanical assistants can be a challenge. Cousins told the story of one surprised hotel guest who slammed the door on a delivery robot - only to reopen it, camera in hand, to take a photo.

Educational robot

Professor Einstein, a miniature educational robot, looks eerily like the genius himself - complete with the crazy wiry hair. The company behind it, Hanson Robotics, says it's the first commercial robot with emotive features. It's one of dozens of robots on display at the CES tech show, which runs through Sunday in Las Vegas. One can mow your lawn; another folds your clothes.

Professor Einstein is expected to come out in March for about \$300. The robot stands more

than 14 inches tall and has soft skin. The company says it has 50 realistic expressions. It can stick his tongue out and move his eyes around to follow you. The robot interacts with an Android or Apple tablet - not a smartphone - to teach science, math and other subjects. It recognizes your voice and responds to your questions. It also can offer weather updates and recite facts about famous people.

Andy Rifkin, chief technology officer at Hanson, says the company's focus is to offer complex emotions. For those concerned about privacy, he says the robot's camera tracks your face but doesn't take photos.

Vibrating jeans

Tired of having to constantly check your cellphone for directions? French startup Spinali Design has created jeans that will vibrate on your right or left hip to let you know which direction you should head. A chip embedded into the waist is connected to an app. Just enter your destination ahead of time. Of course, a smartwatch can do that, too, but why get something that can do more? The technological capabilities of the jeans are limited to directions.

However, the company also has bikinis that will buzz when you're out in the sun too long and need to apply more sunscreen lotion. You enter information on your skin type and SPF level of your sunscreen into an app. The chip then monitors the sun rays.

Spinali says the chip should last four years even with constant use and will turn off automatically when wet to avoid damage. The jeans



LAS VEGAS: Models wear jeans from Spinali Designs at CES International on Friday in Las Vegas. The \$100 jeans will vibrate on your right or left hip to let you know which direction you should head. —AP

cost about \$100, and the bikinis about \$140.

The Echo

Amazon's smart speaker, the Echo, is getting a lot of attention at the CES tech show in Las Vegas this week. But it can't acknowledge your presence or tell one member of your household from another.

That's where Olly, billed by its makers as the first robot with personality, wants to come in. The gadget resembles a radial tire on a stand that tilts in your direction when it detects you. It can run your household via voice command,

looking up information or controlling the temperature (assuming you also have a smart thermostat). But Emotech, the company behind Olly, says it can do much more. For instance, it can supposedly adapt to the personalities of different people in your home, allowing it to pull off tricks like setting the perfect temperature when you come home from work or go to bed. And Emotech claims it can predict the type of music you like playing at night. Olly hasn't been released or priced yet, although Emotech co-founder Chelsea Chen estimates it will eventually cost in the range of \$600 to \$700. —AP

CHOKED BY SMOG, BEIJING CREATES NEW ENVIRONMENTAL POLICE



BEIJING, China: A child rides behind a man as they cross the road by bicycle in Beijing, China yesterday. —AP

BEIJING: Officials in Beijing have announced a new environmental police squad to root out illegal burning, the latest government response to the widespread public anger over China's persistent problems with smog.

Beijing's acting mayor, Cai Qi, said at a meeting Saturday that the force would target open-air barbecues, garbage incineration and the burning of wood and other biomass, according to the state-run Xinhua News Agency. Cai announced several other measures Saturday, including a target of cutting the use of coal by 30 percent in 2017 to shutting down 500 higher-polluting factories and upgrading 2,500 more. About 300,000 high-pollution vehicles will also be restricted from entering the city starting next month, he said.

Beijing and dozens of cities in China

spend many winter days under a thick, gray haze, with air pollution levels that routinely exceed World Health Organization guidelines. Beijing spent part of last week under an "orange alert," the second-highest level in China's four-tiered air alert system. More than 20 cities were on the highest "red alert." Smog is an acutely felt issue in China's cities, where a "red alert" can lead to the closure of schools and businesses, flight cancellations, and shutdowns of highways to keep cars off the roads. During a red alert in Beijing last month, authorities banned construction crews from spray-painting and even seized the charcoal grills from some restaurants.

But enforcement remains an issue. China's environmental ministry said during last week's red alert that its inspection teams found companies resuming production despite

a government ban. Many factories remain under severe pressure to meet production targets regardless of air pollution. Cai on Saturday blamed polluting activities like burning garbage or wood on "the result of lax supervision and weak law enforcement." But China's pollution is caused chiefly by its thousands of coal-burning factories and a surplus of older, inefficient vehicles. While it tries to answer the loud public calls to tamp down on pollution, China's Communist government is also grappling with an economic slowdown and the challenge of maintaining growth. China is also the world's largest producer and consumer of coal, and measures like capping production days or shutting down older coal mines run the risk of driving up energy prices and further slowing the economy. —AP



SAKARAH, Madagascar: Malagasy workers from an informal Sapphire mine seep soil through a strainer in the waters of a river looking for gems on the outskirts of Sakaraha, Madagascar. —AFP photos



SAKARAH, Madagascar: A malagasy Sapphire miner resurfaces from a hole in the ground during mining at an informal Sapphire mine.



SAKARAH, Madagascar: Malagasy workers from an informal Sapphire mine seep soil through a strainer in the waters of a river looking for gems.



SAKARAH, Madagascar: A malagasy Sapphire woman miner looks at a stone in a mining hole in the ground during mining at an informal Sapphire mine.

FORTUNE HUNTERS FLOCK TO MADAGASCAR'S SAPPHIRE MINES

'JUST DIGGING THE HOLE ITSELF TAKES TIME, ALMOST TWO WEEKS'

BETSINEFE, Madagascar: The dusty figure is lowered slowly into the ground like a bucket into a well, armed with just a crowbar, a shovel and an old, unreliable headlamp. In the surrounding countryside, bodies rise and sink from hundreds of holes just wide enough for a man. Children run between the rubble and the smell of cooking wafts from the makeshift shelters where women crouch over pots. Guards armed with hunting rifles stand by, turning the settlement of Betsinefe into a threatening scene.

In the world of Madagascan sapphire mining, there are few rules. Sapphires were first discovered in Madagascar in the late 1990s, and already the Indian Ocean island is one of the world's largest producers of the precious stones. Its 250-kilometre-long (155-mile) deposit is among the biggest in the world and has sparked a sapphire rush. Activity at this informal, though not entirely illegal, mine in the southwest of the country was suspended recently by authorities after scuffles broke out between villagers and would-be miners flocking in from the rest of the island.

Andry Razafindrakoto, a 19-year-old student from the nearest big town of Tulear, was one of the many hoping to make their fortune. "I came here to mine sapphires because it's difficult to

find work in other areas," he told AFP. When he sold his haul of stones for some four million ariary (\$1,200), he bought his own equipment and today manages a small team of nine miners.

'Sometimes we find nothing'

But success stories are rare. Like most of his fellow miners, Albert Soja does not earn wages for his countless, grueling trips underground. To make money, he must find and sell stones. "Of course it's scary, but when you want to succeed, you have to take risks," he said, a woollen beanie pulled tightly on his head despite the suffocating heat.

"Just digging the hole itself takes time, almost two weeks." "Sometimes we find nothing... it can take months to find something interesting." Without sapphires to sell, he depends on the mine "bosses"—gem shop owners, usually of Sri Lankan origin, in the neighboring town of Sakaraha—for a few handfuls of rice or manioc to survive. "The bosses pay for our food and materials, which helps us hold out. Without their help, we would starve," said Soja. "After that, we're obliged to sell them the stones we find."

Lucrative trade

Sitting behind his desk in his gem shop in Sakaraha, Sunil W.J.—as he calls himself—exam-

ined his latest buy of blue and pink and light yellow sapphires under a lamp. His two "bodyguards" toured the surrounding mines to collect the stones and pay for miners' food. The best finds are sent to Sri Lanka, to be polished, cut and sold, Sunil explained. Theoretically, the extraction of sapphires is regulated by Madagascar's mining code, which insists on permits and the redistribution of a share of the taxes to benefit local municipalities.

In practice, the industry is largely unregulated, but it is a lucrative trade, said Sunil. A stone that fetches \$300 in Sri Lanka costs him less than a tenth of the price to buy from a miner in Madagascar. On the question of taxes, Sunil was less certain of his figures, but said he paid a 10 percent export tax to authorities in the capital Antananarivo. "These small sapphire mines are beyond the control of the state, so there are no official statistics," Mines Minister Ying Vah Zafilahy told AFP, vowing industry reform to bring them under formal regulation. A local elected official in Sakaraha, who asked to remain anonymous, said the municipality was not receiving any taxes or income from the many mining operations underway. "Some days are better than others, but this business has a future," said Sunil, laughing. —AFP



CLEVELAND ZOO SAYS 32-YEAR-OLD GORILLA HAS DIED

CLEVELAND: One of the Cleveland zoo's two male western lowland gorillas died on Friday, zoo officials said. Cleveland Metroparks Zoo first announced the death of 32-year-old Bebac on its Facebook page. Zoo Executive Director Chris Kuhar called Bebac one of the zoo's iconic animals in an interview Saturday. Dozens of tributes along with photos of Bebac taken by zoo visitors were posted on Facebook. Bebac, pronounced BEE'-bak, and 29-year-old Mokolo, pronounced mo-KO'-lo, came to the Cleveland zoo in 1994 from Chicago's Lincoln Park

Zoo, where they both were born. The zoo's medical staff struggled to find a treatment to make Bebac well after his health began deteriorating a month ago, Kuhar said. Gorillas living in captivity have an average life expectancy of about 30 years. "It's been hard on the staff," Kuhar said. "It's like losing a family member." Bebac and Mokolo were diagnosed with heart conditions in 2008, a chronic problem for zoo gorillas, and put on medications used to treat high blood pressure in humans. The zoo reported in 2011 that the pair's health had improved

after being placed on high-fiber diets and made to forage for food, which is scattered inside their enclosure. As zoo staffers mourn, Mokolo appears to be affected as well, Kuhar said. "What we're seeing is Mokolo calling to figure out where Bebac went," Kuhar said. "We can tell he's agitated. I think there's an emotional response there." It's too soon to determine when or from where a companion for Mokolo might be found, he said. The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium's female gorilla named Colo turned 60 on Dec 22. She is the oldest living gorilla in the US. —AP

FAA GRANTS SPACE X LICENSE TO RESUME ROCKET LAUNCHES TODAY

Elon Musk's SpaceX rocket company has been cleared to resume flying following a launch pad explosion four months ago, the US Federal Aviation Administration said on Friday. The decision clears SpaceX to attempt to launch a Falcon 9 rocket carrying 10 Iridium Communications Inc satellites as early as today, a day later than originally planned. SpaceX, owned by Tesla Motors Inc Chief Executive Officer Musk, on Friday declined to comment about what caused the delay.

The FAA, which oversees commercial US space launches, oversaw SpaceX's investigation into why a Falcon 9 rocket burst into flames on a launch pad in Florida as it was being fueled for a routine, prelaunch test on Sept 1. The accident destroyed the \$62 million booster and a \$200 million Israeli communications satellite that had been partly leased by Facebook Inc to expand internet access in Africa. "The FAA has closed the investigation," the agency, which oversees com-

mercial US rocket launches, said in a statement. "SpaceX applied for a license to launch the Iridium NEXT satellites from Vandenberg Air Force Base. The FAA has granted a license for that purpose," the statement said. The launch will be SpaceX's first since August. The company has a backlog of more than 70 missions for NASA and commercial customers, worth more than \$10 billion. As a result of the accident investigation, SpaceX is changing the way it fuels its rockets to

prevent canisters of helium, located inside liquid oxygen tanks, from bursting. The company said the long-term solution will be to redesign the helium canisters, which are made of an aluminum liner and a carbon overwrap. The helium is needed to maintain oxygen tank pressure. The SpaceX rocket was briefly powered up on Thursday as part of a preflight engine test. "All systems are go for launch next week," Musk posted on Twitter. —Reuters



KOROLYOV, Russia: Galina Balashova, the artist who designed the first space habitation module for Soviet cosmonauts, shows drawings of her work in the city of Korolyov outside Moscow. —AFP

THE HIDDEN ARTIST OF THE SOVIET SPACE PROGRAM

KOROLYOV, Russia: When Galina Balashova designed her first space habitation module for Soviet cosmonauts, she drew a landscape on its interior wall, something that could remind them of home. An architect by training and an artist at heart, Balashova went on to spend three decades designing the interior of the Soyuz and other Soviet spaceships, making sure the crafts were not just metal carcasses stuffed with equipment, but also living spaces. Beginning in 1963 over just one weekend, she sketched the interior of the Soyuz craft at home after Sergei Korolyov, the father of the Soviet space program, asked that the ship be made habitable.

Engineers had fitted out the module with two giant boxes of instruments, but Korolyov had rejected the design and decided to get outside help. "They didn't understand what a living space is, they don't use spatial thinking but think in terms of instruments," said Balashova, now in her 80s. "Over the weekend, I thought of how to place the instruments, designing a sort of cupboard on one side and a sort of sofa on the other, where they could nap"—a ubiquitous setup in Soviet households.

After Korolyov approved her sketch, which included the landscape drawing on the wall, she also had to provide the actual watercolour painting that would go up into space. Since Korolyov had approved the design with a landscape drawing, the engineers "always asked for one" on subsequent modules. "Nine of (the paintings) went to space," laughed Balashova. Despite that, Balashova says she was not allowed to put her name under her work, complaining that her bosses took the credit.

'Floor and ceiling' in space

Balashova still lives in her tiny apartment in Korolyov, a town outside Moscow that is home to Russia's space mission control and named after the space travel visionary. Sitting in her living room, Balashova spreads out her watercolour space designs on the table, their airy pastels in odd contrast with the militaristic nature of the program during the space race era. "At first I want-

ed to create a space for microgravity that would not have a floor or ceiling," she said. But the futuristic vision was discarded for practical reasons.

"Humans train on Earth and they are used to the concepts of top and bottom." Cosmonaut Pyotr Klimuk, who travelled to space as part of the Soyuz and Salyut programs, agreed that it was important for colors and other elements of the Soyuz interior to create a "cosy" atmosphere. In the orbit module "certain elements were painted certain colors and special fabric was used," he said. "Delicate colors are better" and no matter the microgravity, the human eye "still believes there is a floor and ceiling," like on Earth, he said.

Colors were especially important in Balashova's work on the 1975 US-Soviet Apollo-Soyuz project, which would be seen by millions around the world and needed to fit in additional photo and video equipment. "My bosses wanted a red sofa but red showed up as black on film," she said. She struggled through four versions of the craft before finding a solution "when suddenly things were human-scale and there was harmony," she said. The resulting orbital module had a green sofa and velcro belts with which cosmonauts attached themselves, and even a folding table where they ate and signed the documents marking the symbolic joint flight. When visiting the module, American astronaut Vance Brand praised its "very convenient setup".

Treated 'like a servant'

Balashova still sits in a chair upholstered with the same green fabric she used to cover the Soyuz sofa. That too was a product of experimentation. Initial attempts to use velcro on the furniture led to cosmonauts "losing their jersey pants" on it, she giggled. Her flat is filled with books and watercolour portraits of family, with almost no sign that she influenced the look of generations of Soviet spaceships. She says her engineering bosses didn't value her work, looking down on her as an artist and a woman-one of the few working in the Soviet space industry and the only female in a creative position in Korolyov's team. —AFP

OBAMA HEALTH CARE LEGACY: COVERAGE, CONFLICT, AND QUESTIONS

'I REALLY DO CREDIT OBAMACARE WITH SAVING MY LIFE'

WASHINGTON: Although his signature law is in jeopardy, President Barack Obama's work reshaping health care in America is certain to endure in the broad public support for many of its underlying principles, along with conflicts over how to secure them. The belief that people with medical problems should be able to get health insurance is no longer challenged. The issue seems to be how to guarantee that. The idea that government should help those who can't afford their premiums has gained acceptance. The question is how much, and for what kind of coverage.

"The American people have now set new standards for access to health care based on the Affordable Care Act," former Surgeon General David Satcher says. "I don't believe it will ever be acceptable again to have 50 million people without access to health care." Obama's influence will continue in other ways, less visible and hardly divisive:

- 1- Medicare is shifting to paying for value,

and Medicaid for more than 50.

"If Medicare had been repealed, stories about Lyndon Johnson would have been different," said Robert Blendon, professor of health policy at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. "A legacy is whether you did something that was sustained." Johnson was the Democratic president who won approval of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965. Already, the Republican-led Congress, taking its lead from President-elect Donald Trump, has started the process of repealing and replacing the health law. "Approaches that partisan are difficult to sustain as lasting, permanent features of the health care system," said Mark McClellan, Medicare administrator under Republican President George W. Bush.

Kaiser Family Foundation

Obama also failed to deliver on early promises to cut premiums. From 2009-2016, the amount employees pay in premiums for workplace coverage rose by hundreds of dollars,

we continue," said Rezny. "He took health care off the House and Senate floor - out of theoretical talk by people who are guaranteed lifetime health care - and actually allowed the people to experience it and have it."

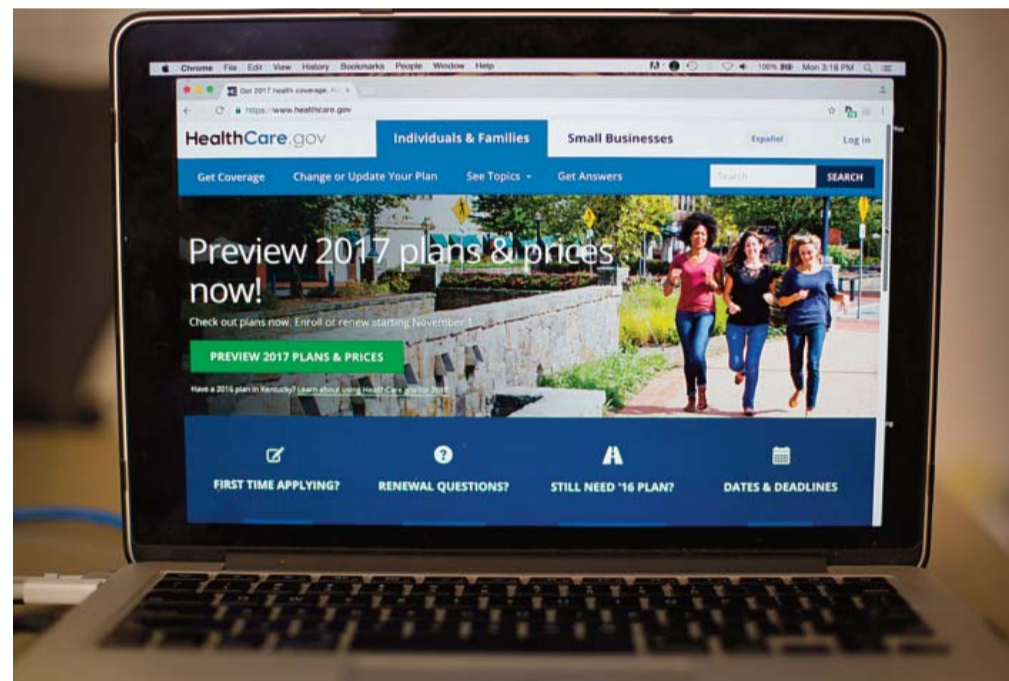
When the law passed, 48.6 million people were uninsured, according to the government. Through the first six months of last year, that dropped to 28.4 million. While employer coverage also grew as the economy strengthened, experts credit the ACA for most of the progress. The law provides subsidized private insurance along with a Medicaid expansion for low-income people. "It would have never been done without the focus and insistence of this president that we go big," said Kathleen Sebelius, Obama's first secretary of Health and Human Services. Obama set his sights high, but execution was a problem. When HealthCare.gov went live in 2013, the computer system quickly froze. It took a high-tech rescue effort to get things working for consumers.

The law's complexity also tripped people up. It uses the income tax system to subsidize premiums. Some HealthCare.gov customers saw their tax refunds reduced because they underestimated their incomes when applying for subsidies. Fines on those who remained uninsured hit people in their 30s trying to get traction in life. Officials in many states were alarmed by rising Medicaid spending. When Republicans won control of the House in 2010, Obama was effectively blocked from legislating fixes. The administration used regulations to try smooth out the law's rough edges, while successfully fighting off two Supreme Court cases that would have gutted it.

'Just nonsense'

In the face of problems, the White House ceaselessly talked up the benefits of the law. Among the controversial claims was that the law deserved much credit for a historic slowdown in national health care spending from 2009-2013. "Just nonsense," said Rick Foster, formerly Medicare's chief actuary, in charge of long-range estimates. "Far and away the biggest cause of the slowdown was the Great Recession. That is not to say that the Affordable Care Act didn't have some impact, but I think that was small compared to the effect of the recession and the weak recovery."

History shows that America's social programs got built in stages. Automatic cost-of-living increases weren't part of Social Security originally. Medicare didn't get a prescription benefit for nearly 40 years. Kris Case of Denver hopes that somehow, something like that can happen with Obama's overhaul. She works in customer relations for a technology company and buys coverage through the Colorado insurance marketplace. "Think of all the work that has gone into this imperfect thing," said Case, "and to just tear it down to make a point, rather than say it's flawed but we can fix it. "Just because you need to do the top floor doesn't mean you level the entire complex." —AP



not just volume.

2- The importance of prevention and frontline primary care is more widely recognized.

3- Doctors and hospitals have computerized their records systems, even if connectivity remains elusive.

The government has opened up massive files of health care billing data, enabling independent analysts to look for patterns of questionable spending. But conflict is part of Obama's legacy, too. He leaves the country deeply divided about the government's role in health care. Passed with no Republican votes, the 2010 health care law broke the pattern of major safety net programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, which had bipartisan backing. Social Security has stood for more than 80 years;

according to the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation. And the average deductible - the annual amount patients pay before insurance kicks in - went from \$533 to \$1,221, an increase of nearly 130 percent. The achievements and difficulties of the Obama years are reflected in people such as Karen Rezny. "I really do credit Obamacare with saving my life," said Rezny, a massage therapist from Austin, Texas.

The health care law, or ACA, enabled her to get better treatment for advanced breast cancer. She was uninsured when diagnosed. Before the law, insurers would have rejected her because of her medical condition. Even with a subsidized premium, Rezny said she still struggles with cost. "What I would hope is that we would look back and say (Obama) got the ball rolling, and then

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PRESS STATEMENT FROM THE EMBASSY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA IN KUWAIT

KIM JONG UN MAKES NEW YEAR ADDRESS FOR 2017

Respected Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un made a New Year address for 2017. In his address he sent New Year greetings to all Koreans and the progressive people of the world. 2016 was a year of revolutionary and auspicious event and great turn to be specially recorded in the history of the Workers' Party of Korea and the country, he said, referring to the achievements made last year.

Last year the Seventh Congress of the WPK was held significantly with splendor as a grand political festival thanks to the high revolutionary enthusiasm of all the party members, service personnel and people and amid deep concern of the world.

The Seventh Congress proudly reviewed the glorious history of the struggle of the WPK, which had led the revolutionary cause of Juche to victory under the wise guidance of President Kim Il Sung and leader Kim Jong Il, and unfolded a grand blueprint for accomplishing the socialist cause under the banner of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism.

National defense

An epoch-making turn was made in bolstering up the national defense capacity of Juche Korea and the DPRK soared as a nuclear and military power in the East that no formidable enemy dare encroach upon. The proud vic-

tory was achieved in the 70-day and 200-day campaigns to glorify the Seventh Congress of the Party.

Thanks to the heroic struggle of the Kim Il Sung-Kim Jong Il working class and all other people, the gigantic goals of the 70-day and 200-day campaigns put forward by the WPK were successfully hit and a new breakthrough made in the country's economic development.

The new spirit of era for building a powerful socialist country was created and trust in the Party and faith in socialism were more deeply cherished in the hearts of the people during the 70-day and 200-day campaigns.

Kim Jong Un underscored the need to achieve the drastic advance in implementing the decision of the Seventh Congress of the Party this year. We should concentrate all efforts on the implementation of the five-year strategy for national economic development.

This year's fighting goals should be hit without fail to open a bright prospect for the five-year strategy and put the overall economy of the country on a higher stage while consolidating the victory gained last year.

"Let us accelerate the victorious advance of socialism with the great spirit of self-reliance and self-development as the dynamic force!", this is a militant slogan we should uphold in the New Year's onward march. It is necessary

to actively wage the all-people charge for attaining the goal of five-year strategy by dint of the self-reliance and self-development.

Science and technology

In the field of science and technology it is imperative to solve scientific and technological problems arising in updating industrial establishments and putting the production on a normal footing there with a main emphasis on the local production of raw materials, fuel and equipment. Electricity, metal and chemical industrial fields should take the lead.

In the coal industry and railway transport fields, a priority should be given to meeting the need for coal and its transport to power plants and metal and chemical factories. It is important to quickly develop the machine industry.

A radical turn should be effected in light industry, agriculture and fisheries and thus a greater progress be made in improving the standard of people's living.

In the construction field, Ryomyong Street should be completed on the highest level and efforts be focused on the construction of important projects, and more educational and cultural facilities and dwelling houses be built wonderfully.

All sectors and units of the national economy should wage a vigorous drive to produce and economize as much as possible under the slogan of self-reliance and self-sufficiency and thus fulfill this year's plan on all indices. The whole country should turn out for the land management.

On all fronts of culture including education, public health, sports and literature and arts, a fresh revolutionary surge should be brought to step up the building of a highly civilized nation. The political and military position of socialism should be further cemented as an invincible fortress.

All the service personnel and people should share their thinking and breath with the Party and rally around it in thinking and purpose, morality and sense of obligation and work hard for the prosperity of the country.

We should resolutely smash the enemies' despicable and vicious moves to dampen the pure and ardent desire of the people for the Party and estrange the people from it. It is also important to bring about a great surge in bolstering up the military capabilities.

Victory or defeat in this year's drive for implementing the decision made at the 7th Congress of the Workers' Party Korea depends on the role to be played by the par-

ty organizations and working people's organizations, Kim Jong Un said, stressing the need for all the primary party organizations to embody the basic spirit of the First Conference of Chairpersons of the Party Primary Committees and make sure that the spirit of uninterrupted innovation and advance is fully displayed in the all-out charge this year.

The DPRK will defend the peace and security of the country with its force and make active contribution to defending the world peace and stability, he stressed. The WPK and the government of the DPRK will remain loyal to the ideas of foreign policy-independence, peace and friendship-and make joint efforts to expand the good-neighborly friendship and cooperation with countries advocating independence and realize the genuine international justice.

Kim Jong Un said that he would make devoted efforts to make sure that the days when our people sang the song "We Are the Happiest in the World" full of optimism about the future with deep trust in President Kim Il Sung and leader Kim Jong Il only will become a reality today, not just a past days of history, and solemnly pledged to become a faithful servant serving the people with pure and sincere dedication.



GULF BANK'S 'CATCH THE CASH' COMPETITION A BIG SUCCESS

AL-DANAH MILLIONAIRE DRAW SETS GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS



Gulf Bank's highly anticipated Al Danah Millionaire Draw not only was the largest draw event in Kuwait, but it has also set a new Guinness World Records Achievement for the "largest prize linked to a bank account" in the world through its KD 1 Million Al-Danah prize! Al-Danah Millionaire Draw took place on January 5, 2017 at the Avenues. At this year's event, Gulf Bank revealed its 'Catch the Cash' competition, another first-ever event in Kuwait. The competition was open to all, but you had to be present in order to participate. Participants were randomly selected to play the game throughout the draw event and it was enjoyed by players and attendees. Participation was free of charge; participants needed to just register at the registration desk next to the stage at Grand Avenues.

The game was simple, but fun and entertaining, contestants stepped inside the money box and tried to catch as many flying notes as they could in 10 seconds. Those notes were then counted on stage by hosts "Weld Al Deera" - Khaled Al Agrooga, Khaled Al Ansari, Gulf Bank team member Mohammad Al Sarraf, and Ministry of Commerce representative

Abdulaziz Ashkanani.

Then the notes were exchanged for real cash, on the spot. The winners were:

1. Yahya Meshal Al Shatti
2. Saoud Saad Hammad
3. Mohammad Jassim Jfaidra
4. Musaad Atshan
5. Asmaa Jawad Al Qallaf
6. Mohammed Khuraibit
7. Mohammed Hussain Sulaiman
8. Michelle Daniela Van Zyl
9. Rana Rasoul Anwar
10. Hani Adel Abdullah Eissawi
11. Mohammad Khair Qastantini

WHAT'S ON - SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

All photos submitted for What's On should be minimum 200dpi. Articles must be in plain text and should include name and phone numbers. Articles and photos that fail to meet these requirements will not be published.

Please send them to news@kuwaittimes.net



ZAIN CONTINUES COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP WITH QOUT MARKET

COMPETITIONS, PRIZES FOR VISITORS AT SHAHEED PARK

Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced the continuation of its Community Partnership with the new season of Qout Market; Kuwait's largest artisanal farmers gathering. The market, considered the first of its kind in Kuwait, held its second event last Saturday at the Circle of Peace - Shaheed Park. Zain's partnership with Qout Market comes in line with the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards the youth sector, as the company continuously works towards identifying initiatives that carry a clear objective of developing

youth talents. The community-based farmers market helps and supports local farmers and artisans to exchange thoughts and ideas while offering the opportunity for visitors to express their opinions towards the products available.

Zain participated in the market through its own booth, which welcomed visitors to participate in several exciting competitions that saw many winners of valuable prizes and smart devices. The company also held a competition on social media under the hashtag #zainQout as well as a draw for visitors with great prizes.

Qout Market has a proven record

of success, having attracted over 15,000 visitors in previous seasons. The market's selection of vendors includes a combination of fresh produced items as well as handmade items where people can stop by to enjoy on the spot.

Zain expressed its ongoing keenness in supporting events that uplift the talents of Kuwaiti youth to higher levels, by encouraging outstanding projects and ideas. Zain's support is aimed at investing in the creative abilities of young Kuwaiti entrepreneurs, preparing them to engage in the business world by encouraging them further and nurturing innovation within their businesses.



3,000 STUDENTS PARTICIPATED SO FAR IN 'COLOURS OF AUSTRALIA' ART COMPETITION

SPONSORED BY VIVA, ACK; HOSTED BY CROWNE PLAZA

Supported by the Australian Embassy, in cooperation with the Kuwait Times, is proud to launch the 'Colours of Australia' drawing competition for students in Kuwait. The competition has students in Kuwait learn more about different countries, cultures and civilizations, and to

identify communities in other parts of the world through arts. The theme for the Arts competition is 'Colours of Australia' to encourage students to express their knowledge of Australia by drawing an icon, a natural scene, or any other expression they would find suitable. The competi-

tion is still open for all schools who want to participate. The drawing competition is held from December 12, 2016 till January 26, 2017 for a period of forty six days, allowing participants from government, special needs, private schools and bilingual schools enough time to sub-

mit their work. "The loveliest eyes I ever seen, I see colours of Australia, colours everywhere. The colours of Australia, the beauty we all share; so let's hold hands and show care. I see with my little eyes; blond and black and red; straight and long, curly and short, different hair in different heads. I spy with my little eyes; peach and tan and brown, cheeks and nose, fingers and toes beautiful skin is all around. We are lucky to live in a colourful World with friendly boys and girls; we all look different but on the inside we have the same heart we were it with pride. I see colours, colours of Australia the beauty we all share; colours everywhere!

The contest is open to both boys and girls as follows: Elementary (6-9 years) Intermediate (11-13 years), Secondary (14 years and above), in addition schools of special needs. Valuable prizes, including phones and tablets, will be awarded to the top 10 entrants in each category. The competition is sponsored by Viva and the Australian College of Kuwait, with a presentation event to be hosted by Crowne Plaza Hotel 'Al-Thuraya City'. For any further information; you can call 24833199/24835617.



KOSEBASI HOSTS MEDIA DINNER AT CUBE MALL



Kosebasi, a popular Turkish restaurant located at the Cube Mall, hosted a dinner highlighting their new offerings and signature dishes to an elite group of media. Kosebasi was founded in 1995 and quickly became one of the most popular restaurants in Istanbul. Serving the authentic tastes of Eastern Mediterranean cuisine and Anatolian delicacies, Kosebasi is committed to offering not only a

cultural dining experience, but also to giving guests an introduction to traditional Anatolian lifestyle. The restaurant's award-winning menu features various mezzes, hand-ground and marinated cuts of barbecued meats, traditional Anatolian side dishes and regional breads. In addition to its signature crowd-pleasing dishes, Kosebasi has launched a delicious new menu for children, and a brand new traditional

breakfast platter. The new menu caters to Kosebasi's youngest customers, aiming to get children to enjoy the tastes and delicacies of Turkey, the menu embraces traditional Turkish flavors infused with a modern twist, which children 12 and under are sure to love. Secondly, the restaurant has recently launched their traditional Anatolian breakfast platter consisting of Turkish cheese served

with an array of delectable sides including butter, honey, jam, chocolate spread, tahini molasses dip, walnut dip and dry fruits, and accompanied by basket of warm Simit and Turkish bread and Turkish tea. Kosebasi is owned by Azadea Group, a premier lifestyle retail company that owns and operates more than 50 leading international franchise concepts in fashion and accessories,

food and beverage, home furnishings, sporting goods, multimedia and beauty and cosmetics across the Middle East and Africa spread across 13 countries overseeing more than 650 stores. Kosebasi is also located at Avenues Mall, Arabella and Tavern Mall in Jabriya. Azadea's restaurant brands in Kuwait include Kosebasi, PAUL Bakery and Restaurant and Columbus Café.



KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) celebrated the graduation of the sixteenth batch of students who underwent training programs at NBK Academy.

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 00:50 Gator Boys
- 01:45 Mutant Planet
- 02:40 Mutant Planet
- 03:35 Mutant Planet
- 04:25 Mutant Planet
- 05:15 Mutant Planet
- 06:02 Mutant Planet
- 06:49 Big Fish Man
- 07:36 Night
- 08:00 Night
- 08:25 America's Cutest Pets
- 09:15 Big Fish Man
- 10:10 Mutant Planet
- 11:05 Tanked
- 12:00 America's Cutest Pets
- 12:55 Gorilla School
- 13:20 Gorilla School
- 13:50 Big Fish Man
- 14:45 Gator Boys
- 15:40 Mutant Planet
- 16:35 Tanked
- 17:30 River Monsters
- 18:25 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
- 19:20 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
- 20:15 Tanked
- 21:10 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
- 22:05 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
- 23:00 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet

- 13:30 Storage Hunters UK
- 13:55 The Liquidator
- 14:20 Alaska: The Last Frontier
- 15:10 Big Giant Swords
- 16:00 Deadliest Catch
- 16:50 Fast N' Loud
- 17:40 Wheeler Dealers: Trading Up
- 18:30 How Do They Do It?
- 19:20 Big Giant Swords
- 20:10 Gold Rush (Season 7 Specials)
- 21:00 Gold Rush
- 21:50 Deadliest Catch
- 22:40 Sean Conway - Running Britain
- 23:30 Fast N' Loud

H2 HD

- 00:00 Blood And Glory: The Civil War In Color
- 01:00 Monster Quest
- 02:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 03:00 How 2 Win
- 03:50 In Search Of Aliens
- 04:40 Serial Killer Earth
- 05:30 Blood And Glory: The Civil War In Color
- 06:20 Serial Killer Earth
- 07:10 The Universe
- 08:00 Monster Quest
- 09:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 10:00 How 2 Win
- 11:00 In Search Of Aliens
- 12:00 Serial Killer Earth
- 13:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
- 14:00 Monster Quest
- 15:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 16:00 How 2 Win
- 17:00 In Search Of Aliens
- 18:00 Serial Killer Earth
- 19:00 How The States Got Their Shape
- 20:00 Ancient Impossible
- 21:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
- 22:00 Ancient Aliens
- 23:00 Monster Quest

crime & investigation network

- 00:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
- 01:00 The Haunting Of...
- 02:00 My Haunted House
- 03:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
- 04:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
- 05:00 The Haunting Of...
- 06:00 My Haunted House
- 07:00 The First 48
- 08:00 Evil Up Close
- 09:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
- 10:00 Homicide Hunter
- 11:00 Beyond Scared Straight
- 12:00 Evil Up Close
- 13:00 The First 48
- 14:00 Homicide Hunter
- 15:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
- 16:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
- 17:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
- 18:00 The First 48
- 19:00 Evil Up Close

ID INVESTIGATION DISCOVERY

- 00:40 Blood Relatives
- 01:30 Paranormal Lockdown
- 02:20 The Haunted
- 03:10 True Nightmares
- 04:00 Judgment Day: Prison Or Parole
- 04:48 Suspicion
- 08:00 I'd Kill For You
- 08:50 I Almost Got Away With It
- 09:40 Tabloid
- 10:30 Suspicion
- 11:20 Blood Relatives
- 12:10 I Am Homicide
- 13:00 I'd Kill For You
- 13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
- 14:40 Tabloid
- 15:30 Suspicion

Discovery Family

- 00:05 Destroyed In Seconds
- 00:30 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 01:20 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 02:10 Storm Chasers
- 03:50 Beyond Survival With Les Stroud
- 06:20 How It's Made
- 06:40 How It's Made
- 07:00 Do You Know?
- 07:15 Kenny The Shark
- 07:35 Adventure 8: Zoo Games
- 08:00 K9 Cops
- 08:45 How It's Made
- 09:05 How It's Made
- 09:30 Invent It Rich
- 10:20 Mythbusters
- 11:10 Storm Chasers
- 12:00 K9 Cops

Disney Channel HD

- 00:10 Hank Zipzer
- 00:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 01:00 Violetta
- 01:45 The Hive
- 01:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 02:40 Hank Zipzer
- 03:05 Binny And The Ghost
- 03:30 Violetta
- 04:15 The Hive
- 04:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 05:10 Hank Zipzer
- 05:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 06:00 Violetta
- 06:45 The Hive
- 06:50 Mouk
- 07:00 Dog With A Blog
- 07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
- 07:55 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 08:20 Elena Of Avalor
- 08:45 Star Darlings
- 08:50 Liv And Maddie
- 09:15 Jessie
- 10:30 Geek Charming
- 12:00 The 7D
- 12:10 Austin & Ally
- 13:00 Liv And Maddie
- 13:50 Shake It Up
- 14:15 Shake It Up
- 14:40 Dog With A Blog
- 15:30 Good Luck Charlie
- 16:20 Girl Meets World
- 17:10 Elena Of Avalor
- 17:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 18:00 The Next Step
- 18:25 Descendants Wicked World
- 18:30 Liv And Maddie
- 18:55 Star Darlings
- 19:00 Bunk'd
- 19:25 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 19:55 Descendants Wicked World
- 20:00 Backstage
- 20:25 Tsum Tsum Shorts
- 20:30 Elena Of Avalor
- 20:55 Best Friends Whenever
- 21:20 Jessie
- 21:45 Jessie
- 22:10 Jessie
- 22:35 H2O: Just Add Water
- 23:00 Binny And The Ghost
- 23:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 23:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

Disney Junior

- 00:20 Henry Hugglemonster
- 00:35 The Hive
- 00:45 Loopidoo
- 01:00 Henry Hugglemonster
- 01:15 Calimero
- 01:30 Art Attack
- 01:50 Zou
- 02:05 Loopidoo
- 02:20 Henry Hugglemonster
- 02:35 Calimero
- 02:50 Zou
- 03:05 Art Attack
- 03:30 The Hive
- 03:40 Loopidoo
- 03:55 Henry Hugglemonster
- 04:10 Art Attack
- 04:45 Gravity Falls
- 04:35 Loopidoo
- 04:50 Calimero
- 05:05 Art Attack
- 05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
- 05:45 Zou



BLUNT FORCE TRAUMA ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

- 22:25 Gummi Bears
- 22:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons
- 23:00 Sofia The First
- 23:30 Sofia The First
- 23:55 PJ Masks

- 07:40 Counting Cars
- 08:05 Counting Cars
- 08:30 Pawn Stars
- 08:55 Pawn Stars
- 09:20 Storage Wars
- 09:45 Storage Wars
- 10:10 American Pickers
- 11:00 Billion Dollar Wreck
- 11:50 Time Team
- 12:40 Swamp People
- 13:30 Ax Men
- 14:20 Mountain Men
- 15:10 Ice Road Truckers
- 16:00 Counting Cars
- 16:50 Pawn Stars
- 17:15 Pawn Stars
- 17:40 Storage Wars
- 18:05 Storage Wars
- 18:30 Pawn Stars
- 18:55 Storage Wars: Best Of
- 19:20 Ax Men
- 20:10 The Curse Of Oak Island
- 21:00 The Curse Of Oak Island
- 21:50 Hunting Hiller
- 22:40 Gold Hunters: Legend Of The Superstition...
- 23:30 American Pickers

- 20:00 The Wine Show
- 20:50 Gok's Chinese Takeaway
- 21:40 Fish Of The Day
- 22:05 The Food Files
- 22:55 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita

THE INVENTION OF LYING ON OSN MOVIES COMEDY HD

- 12:50 Ultimate Survival
- 13:40 How It's Made
- 14:05 How It's Made
- 14:30 Storm Chasers
- 15:15 Mythbusters
- 16:00 Kenny The Shark
- 16:20 Adventure 8: Zoo Games
- 16:45 Do You Know?
- 17:00 Don't Drive Here
- 17:50 David Baddiel On The Silk Road
- 18:40 Invent It Rich
- 19:30 How It's Made
- 19:55 How It's Made
- 20:20 Mythbusters
- 21:10 Don't Drive Here
- 22:00 David Baddiel On The Silk Road
- 22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
- 23:15 Destroyed In Seconds
- 23:40 Ultimate Survival

- 10:00 The Kitchen
- 11:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 12:00 Siba's Table
- 13:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 14:00 Chopped
- 15:00 The Kitchen
- 16:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 17:00 Chopped
- 18:00 Iron Chef America
- 19:00 Restaurant Stakeout
- 20:00 Mystery Diners
- 21:00 Restaurant Takeover

- 06:00 Art Attack
- 06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
- 06:45 Loopidoo
- 07:00 Zou
- 07:15 Calimero
- 07:30 Loopidoo
- 07:45 Henry Hugglemonster
- 08:00 Minnie's Bow-Toons
- 08:05 PJ Masks
- 08:15 Goldie & Bear
- 08:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 08:45 Miles From Tomorrow
- 08:55 Sofia The First
- 09:20 Doc McStuffins
- 09:35 Goldie & Bear
- 09:50 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 10:00 PJ Masks
- 10:15 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 10:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
- 10:35 Sofia The First
- 11:30 Doc McStuffins
- 12:20 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 13:15 Gummi Bears
- 13:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 14:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 15:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 15:30 Little Mermaid
- 15:55 Unsubuggaleable
- 16:00 Miles From Tomorrow
- 16:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 16:55 The Lion Guard
- 17:20 Goldie & Bear
- 17:50 PJ Masks
- 18:15 Sofia The First
- 18:40 Doc McStuffins
- 19:05 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 19:30 Little Mermaid
- 20:00 PJ Masks
- 20:30 PJ Masks
- 21:00 Unsubuggaleable
- 21:05 Goldie & Bear
- 21:35 Miles From Tomorrow
- 22:00 Sheriff Callie's Wild West

- 12:00 Counterfeit Cat
- 12:30 K.C. Undercover
- 13:20 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
- 13:45 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
- 14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 14:15 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
- 14:40 Counterfeit Cat
- 14:50 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 15:05 K.C. Undercover
- 15:30 Atomic Puppet
- 15:55 Lab Rats
- 16:50 Danger Mouse
- 17:15 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
- 18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 18:10 Supa Strikas
- 19:00 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
- 19:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 19:55 K.C. Undercover
- 20:20 Counterfeit Cat
- 20:45 Mighty Med
- 21:10 Pickle And Peanut
- 21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 21:45 Guardians Of The Galaxy
- 22:10 Ultimate Spider-Man
- 22:35 Boyster
- 23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA

- 00:20 Wheeler Dealers
- 01:10 Mega Trains
- 02:00 Life After: Chernobyl
- 02:50 Free Ride
- 03:40 Fast N' Loud
- 04:30 The Liquidator
- 05:00 How Do They Do It?
- 05:30 How Do They Do It?
- 06:00 Deadliest Catch
- 06:50 Wheeler Dealers
- 07:40 Fast N' Loud
- 08:30 Big Giant Swords
- 09:20 The Liquidator
- 09:45 How Do They Do It?
- 10:10 How Do They Do It?
- 10:35 Fast N' Loud
- 11:25 Misfit Garage
- 12:15 Street Outlaws
- 13:05 How Do They Do It?

- 00:15 Origins
- 00:40 Prototype This
- 01:30 The Gamechangers: Inventing The World
- 02:20 Powering The Future
- 03:10 Mythbusters
- 08:00 How Do They Do It?
- 08:26 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 09:14 Mythbusters
- 10:02 Powering The Future
- 10:50 How Do They Do It?
- 11:14 Food Factory
- 11:38 Mythbusters
- 13:14 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 14:02 How Do They Do It?
- 14:26 Food Factory
- 14:50 Powering The Future
- 15:38 Mythbusters
- 16:26 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 17:14 Mythbusters
- 18:02 Powering The Future
- 18:50 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 19:40 Mythbusters
- 20:30 American Titans
- 21:20 How Do They Do It?
- 21:45 Food Factory
- 22:10 Nextworld

- 00:20 Time Team
- 01:10 Pawn Stars
- 01:35 Storage Wars: Best Of
- 02:00 Storage Wars
- 02:25 Storage Wars
- 02:50 Storage Wars
- 03:15 American Pickers
- 04:05 Pawn Stars
- 04:30 Pawn Stars
- 05:00 Mountain Men
- 06:00 Swamp People
- 06:50 Ax Men

- 06:00 Supa Strikas
- 06:50 Counterfeit Cat
- 07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 07:15 K.C. Undercover
- 07:40 Atomic Puppet
- 08:10 Lab Rats
- 08:35 Danger Mouse
- 09:00 Kirby Buckets
- 09:50 Gravity Falls
- 11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 11:35 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything

NAT GEO people HD

- 00:10 The Wine Show
- 01:00 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
- 01:25 Rustic Adventures Italy
- 01:50 Rustic Adventures Italy
- 02:15 Home Strange Home
- 03:05 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
- 03:30 My Restaurant In India
- 03:55 The Wine Show
- 04:45 Gok's Chinese Takeaway
- 05:35 Fish Of The Day
- 06:00 The Food Files
- 06:25 The Food Files
- 06:50 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
- 07:15 Rustic Adventures Italy
- 07:40 Rustic Adventures Italy
- 08:05 Home Strange Home
- 08:55 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
- 09:20 My Restaurant In India
- 09:45 The Wine Show
- 10:35 Gok's Chinese Takeaway
- 11:25 Fish Of The Day
- 11:50 The Food Files
- 12:15 The Food Files
- 12:40 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
- 13:05 Rustic Adventures Italy
- 13:35 Rustic Adventures Italy
- 14:00 Home Strange Home
- 14:55 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
- 15:25 My Restaurant In India
- 15:50 The Wine Show
- 16:45 Gok's Chinese Takeaway
- 17:40 Fish Of The Day
- 18:10 The Food Files
- 18:35 The Food Files
- 19:05 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
- 19:30 My Restaurant In India

THE LAST 5 YEARS ON OSN MOVIES HD

- 02:55 Do Or Die
- 03:20 Do Or Die
- 03:50 Continent 7: Antarctica
- 04:45 Big, Bigger, Biggest
- 05:40 Megacities
- 06:35 Startalk
- 07:30 Hubble's Amazing Journey
- 08:25 Nazi Underworld
- 09:20 Big, Bigger, Biggest
- 10:15 The Border
- 11:10 Highway Thru Hell
- 12:05 Dirty Rotten Survival
- 13:00 Nazi Underworld
- 14:00 Killing Reagan
- 16:00 The Border
- 17:00 Highway Thru Hell
- 18:00 Dirty Rotten Survival
- 19:00 Continent 7: Antarctica
- 20:00 The Border
- 20:50 Highway Thru Hell
- 21:40 Dirty Rotten Survival
- 22:30 Continent 7: Antarctica
- 23:20 Megacities

OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

- 00:00 The Quick And The Dead
- 02:00 The Pack
- 04:00 Blunt Force Trauma
- 06:00 S.W.A.T.
- 08:00 Survivor
- 10:00 Six Days Seven Nights
- 12:00 Betrayed
- 14:00 S.W.A.T.
- 16:00 Survivor
- 17:45 Six Days Seven Nights
- 19:30 Divergent
- 22:00 As Above, So Below

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 00:00 Save Your Legs!
- 02:00 The Invention Of Lying
- 04:00 Lovesick
- 06:00 Accidental Love
- 08:00 How Do You Know
- 10:00 Lovesick
- 12:00 The Invention Of Lying
- 14:00 Passed Away
- 16:00 How Do You Know
- 18:00 Norbit
- 20:00 Growing Up And Other Lies
- 22:00 Neighbors

OSN FIRST HD

- 00:00 The Americans
- 01:00 The Catch
- 02:00 Bones
- 03:00 Mistresses
- 04:00 Royal Pains
- 05:00 Good Morning America - Weekend
- 06:00 Prison Break
- 07:00 The Amazing Race
- 08:00 Bones
- 09:00 Royal Pains
- 10:00 Prison Break
- 11:00 Unforgettable
- 12:00 Wicked City
- 13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 14:00 The Amazing Race
- 15:00 Live Good Morning America
- 17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 18:00 This Is Us
- 19:00 Wicked City
- 20:00 Criminal Minds
- 21:00 Bones
- 22:00 Tyrant

OSN FIRST HD COMEDY

- 00:00 Two And A Half Men
- 00:30 Happy Endings
- 01:00 Happy Endings
- 01:30 Girls
- 02:00 Girls
- 02:30 Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll
- 03:00 New Girl
- 03:30 Baby Daddy
- 04:00 Angie Tribeca
- 04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 05:30 Breaking In
- 06:00 Tilt Death
- 06:30 Living With Fran
- 07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 08:00 Angie Tribeca
- 08:30 Breaking In
- 09:00 New Girl
- 09:30 The Last Man On Earth
- 10:30 Living With Fran
- 11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 12:00 Tilt Death
- 12:30 Angie Tribeca
- 13:00 Breaking In
- 13:30 Living With Fran
- 14:00 Baby Daddy
- 14:30 The Last Man On Earth
- 15:30 Happy Endings
- 16:30 Tilt Death
- 17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 18:00 New Girl
- 18:30 Baby Daddy
- 19:00 Dr. Ken
- 20:00 Two And A Half Men
- 21:00 Happy Endings
- 22:00 You're The Worst
- 23:00 Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll
- 23:30 Two And A Half Men

OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL

- 01:15 Beyond The Edge
- 03:00 Hidden Agenda
- 05:00 Half Of A Yellow Sun
- 07:00 Escobar: Paradise Lost
- 09:00 WarGames
- 11:00 Beyond The Edge
- 12:45 The Rainmaker
- 15:00 Two Men In Town
- 17:00 WarGames
- 19:00 Trash
- 21:00 Lost River
- 22:45 Tusk

OSN MOVIES HD

- 01:00 Digging For Fire
- 03:00 Jackie & Ryan
- 05:00 Alex Of Venice
- 07:00 The Last 5 Years
- 09:00 Insuper
- 11:00 The Man From U.N.C.L.E.
- 13:00 Spooks: The Greater Good
- 15:00 The Rewrite
- 17:00 Suffragette
- 19:00 Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials
- 21:15 Star Wars: The Force Awakens
- 23:30 The Last Witch Hunter

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

- 01:00 Blue Elephant 2
- 02:45 Baby Geniuses And The Mystery Of The Crown Jewels
- 04:30 The Nutcracker Sweet
- 06:00 Jungle Book: Mowgli's Adventure
- 07:45 Ghatotkach - Master Of Magic
- 09:30 The Adventures Of Don Quixote
- 11:00 The Olsen Gang In Deep Trouble
- 12:45 Baby Geniuses And The Mystery Of The Crown Jewels
- 14:30 Miffy The Movie
- 16:00 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
- 18:00 The Adventures Of Don Quixote
- 20:00 Baby Geniuses And The Space Baby

OSN MOVIES HD DRAMA

- 01:00 Haunting In Hollow Creek
- 03:00 No God No Master
- 05:00 A Good Marriage
- 07:00 6 Ways To SUNDOWN
- 09:00 The Beat Beneath My Feet
- 11:00 No God No Master
- 13:00 A Teacher's Obsession
- 15:00 Abandoned
- 17:00 The Beat Beneath My Feet
- 19:00 Good People
- 21:00 The Disappearance Of Eleanor Rigby: Him
- 23:00 Jayne Mansfield's Car

OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY

- 01:00 Peter Pan Live!
- 03:15 Big Baby
- 05:00 American Girl: Grace Stirs Up Success
- 07:00 Capture The Flag
- 09:00 The Good Dinosaur
- 11:00 American Girl: Grace Stirs Up Success
- 13:00 Alone For Christmas
- 15:00 Inside Out
- 17:00 American Girl: Isabelle Dances Into The Spotlight
- 19:00 Hotel For Dogs
- 21:00 Clockstoppers
- 23:00 Inside Out

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constructions@future-services.net
 (or) Contact Mr. Saleem, Phone: 22420607 - 66188210

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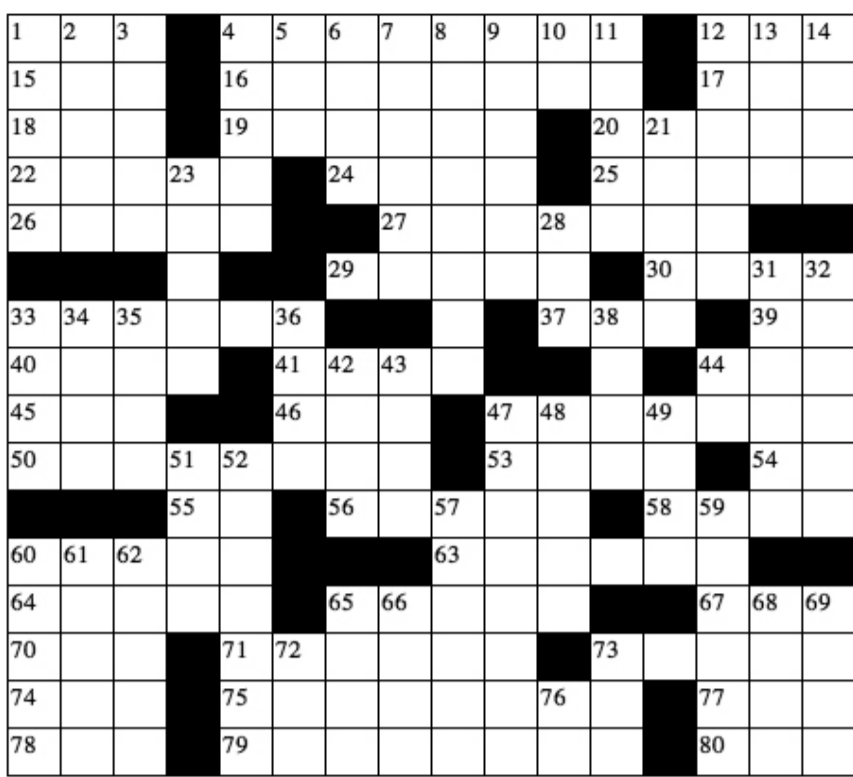
1. Ads must be on the original coupon.
2. Ads of personal nature will be accepted for **KD 3 for 3 days.**
3. Semi-commercial ads i.e. Baby-Sitting, Matrimonial, Tuition & Transport available will be accepted for **KD 5 for 3 days.**
4. Ads must not exceed 25 words.

Kuwait CINEMA

KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (05/01/2017 TO 11/01/2017)

SHARQIA-1 MOANA 1:00 PM MOANA 3:15 PM MOANA 5:30 PM MOANA 7:45 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 10:00 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 12:30 AM	THE GREAT WALL THE GREAT WALL 10:45 PM THE GREAT WALL 1:00 AM	ASSASSIN'S CREED 12:45 AM	MOANA MOANA 2:15 PM MOANA 4:30 PM MOANA 6:45 PM THE GREAT WALL 9:15 PM THE GREAT WALL 11:45 PM
SHARQIA-2 THE GREAT WALL 11:30 AM THE GREAT WALL 1:30 PM THE GREAT WALL 3:45 PM THE GREAT WALL 6:00 PM THE GREAT WALL 8:15 PM THE GREAT WALL 10:30 PM THE GREAT WALL 12:45 AM	MARINA-1 THE GREAT WALL 11:45 AM MOANA 2:00 PM MOANA 4:15 PM MOANA 6:45 PM THE GREAT WALL 9:00 PM THE GREAT WALL 11:15 PM	AVENUES-7 THE GREAT WALL 11:30 AM THE GREAT WALL 1:45 PM THE GREAT WALL 4:00 PM TAHT AL TARABEZA 6:15 PM ESHTEBAK 8:30 PM THE GREAT WALL 10:45 PM THE GREAT WALL 1:00 AM	AL-KOUT3 THE FOUNDER 12:30 PM FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 2:45 PM SING 5:00 PM THE FOUNDER 7:15 PM FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 9:45 PM THE FOUNDER 12:05 AM
SHARQIA-3 ASSASSIN'S CREED 12:45 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 3:30 PM DANGAL -Hindi 6:15 PM THE GREAT WALL 9:30 PM THE GREAT WALL 11:45 PM	MARINA-2 THE GREAT WALL 1:00 PM THE GREAT WALL 3:15 PM THE GREAT WALL 5:30 PM THE GREAT WALL 7:45 PM THE GREAT WALL 10:00 PM THE GREAT WALL 12:15 AM	AVENUES-8 SNOW WHITE'S NEW ADVENTURE 12:00 PM THE SNOW QUEEN 3 1:45 PM SNOW WHITE'S NEW ADVENTURE 4:00 PM SNOW WHITE'S NEW ADVENTURE 6:00 PM LA LA LAND 7:45 PM LEVEL UP 10:15 PM LEVEL UP 12:05 AM	AL-KOUT4 ASSASSIN'S CREED 1:00 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 3:30 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 6:00 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 8:30 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 11:00 PM
MUHALAB-1 DANGAL -Hindi 1:00 PM SNOW WHITE'S NEW ADVENTURE 2:30 PM FRI SNOW WHITE'S NEW ADVENTURE 4:30 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 6:30 PM DANGAL -Hindi 9:00 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 12:15 AM	MARINA-3 FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 12:30 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 2:45 PM FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 5:15 PM FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 8:00 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 10:15 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 12:45 AM	AVENUES-9 MOANA 11:30 AM MOANA 2:00 PM MOANA 4:30 PM MOANA 7:00 PM THE MONSTER 9:30 PM THE MONSTER 11:30 PM	BAIRAQ-1 THE GREAT WALL 12:15 PM THE GREAT WALL -3D 2:30 PM THE GREAT WALL 4:45 PM THE GREAT WALL -3D 7:00 PM THE GREAT WALL 9:15 PM THE GREAT WALL 11:30 PM
MUHALAB-2 SNOW WHITE'S NEW ADVENTURE 11:45 AM MOANA 1:45 PM MOANA 4:00 PM MOANA 6:15 PM THE GREAT WALL 8:30 PM THE GREAT WALL 10:45 PM THE GREAT WALL 1:00 AM	AVENUES-1 THE FOUNDER 11:45 AM PASSENGERS 2:15 PM THE FOUNDER 4:45 PM PASSENGERS 7:15 PM THE FOUNDER 9:45 PM THE FOUNDER 12:15 AM	AVENUES-10 FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 1:15 PM FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 1:30 PM FRI FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 3:45 PM MOANA 6:15 PM FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 8:45 PM FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 11:15 PM	BAIRAQ-2 FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 1:00 PM MOANA 3:15 PM MOANA 5:30 PM MOANA 7:45 PM FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 10:00 PM THE GREAT WALL 12:30 AM
MUHALAB-3 THE GREAT WALL 12:30 PM THE GREAT WALL 2:45 PM THE GREAT WALL 5:00 PM THE GREAT WALL 7:15 PM THE GREAT WALL 9:30 PM THE GREAT WALL 11:45 PM	AVENUES-2 THE GREAT WALL -3D- 4DX 1:00 PM THE GREAT WALL -3D- 4DX 3:15 PM MOANA -3D- 4DX 5:45 PM THE GREAT WALL -3D- 4DX 8:15 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED -3D- 4DX 10:30 PM THE GREAT WALL -3D- 4DX 1:00 AM	AVENUES-11 THE GREAT WALL-CINESCAPE 11- 2D 12:30 PM THE GREAT WALL-CINESCAPE 11- 3D 2:45 PM THE GREAT WALL-CINESCAPE 11- 2D 5:00 PM THE GREAT WALL-CINESCAPE 11- 3D 7:15 PM THE GREAT WALL-CINESCAPE 11- 2D 9:30 PM THE GREAT WALL-CINESCAPE 11- 2D 11:45 PM	BAIRAQ-3 SNOW WHITE'S NEW ADVENTURE 12:00 PM SING 2:15 PM SNOW WHITE'S NEW ADVENTURE 4:30 PM DANGAL -Hindi 6:30 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 9:45 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 12:15 AM
FANAR-1 SNOW WHITE'S NEW ADVENTURE 11:30 AM ASSASSIN'S CREED 1:45 PM SNOW WHITE'S NEW ADVENTURE 4:30 PM SNOW WHITE'S NEW ADVENTURE 6:30 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 9:00 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 11:30 PM	AVENUES-3 SING 1:30 PM SING 3:45 PM DANGAL -Hindi 6:00 PM DANGAL -Hindi 9:15 PM THE GREAT WALL 12:30 AM	360 00-1 ASSASSIN'S CREED 11:30 AM ASSASSIN'S CREED 1:45 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 4:15 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 6:45 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 9:15 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 11:45 PM	PLAZA DANGAL -Hindi 3:15 PM DANGAL -Hindi 6:30 PM NO THU-FRI SWARNA KADUVA -Malayalam 6:30 PM THU-FRI THE GREAT WALL 9:45 PM
FANAR-2 MOANA 12:00 PM MOANA 2:30 PM MOANA 5:00 PM MOANA 7:30 PM THE FOUNDER 10:00 PM THE FOUNDER 12:30 AM	AVENUES-4 DANGAL -Hindi 12:30 PM MOANA 1:30 PM FRI ASSASSIN'S CREED 3:45 PM DANGAL -Hindi 6:15 PM NO THU Special Show "ROGUE ONE A STAR WARS STORY" 6:30 PM THU ASSASSIN'S CREED 9:30 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 12:05 AM	360 00-2 FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 11:45 AM FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 2:15 PM FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 4:45 PM FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 7:15 PM FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS 9:45 PM ROGUE ONE A STAR WARS STORY 12:15 AM	LAILA MOANA 3:30 PM THE GREAT WALL 6:00 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 8:30 PM THE GREAT WALL 11:00 PM
FANAR-3 SING 11:45 AM DANGAL -Hindi 2:00 PM DANGAL -Hindi 5:15 PM DANGAL -Hindi 8:30 PM THE GREAT WALL 11:45 PM	AVENUES-5 THE GREAT WALL 1:15 PM THE GREAT WALL 3:30 PM THE GREAT WALL -3D 5:45 PM NO SUN Special Show "LA LA LAND" SUN 5:30 PM THE GREAT WALL 8:00 PM THE GREAT WALL 10:15 PM THE GREAT WALL 12:30 AM	360 00-3 PASSENGERS 1:00 PM PASSENGERS 3:30 PM LAF WA DAWARAN 6:00 PM PASSENGERS 8:15 PM PASSENGERS 10:45 PM PASSENGERS 1:00 AM	AJIAL1 DANGAL -Hindi 2:45 PM FRI-SAT DANGAL -Hindi 6:00 PM DANGAL -Hindi 9:15 PM
FANAR-4 THE GREAT WALL 11:30 AM THE GREAT WALL 1:45 PM THE GREAT WALL 4:00 PM THE GREAT WALL 6:15 PM THE GREAT WALL 8:30 PM	AVENUES-6 ASSASSIN'S CREED 12:00 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 2:30 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 5:00 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 7:30 PM ASSASSIN'S CREED 10:00 PM	AL-KOUT.1 THE GREAT WALL 1:15 PM THE GREAT WALL 3:30 PM THE GREAT WALL 5:45 PM THE GREAT WALL 8:00 PM THE GREAT WALL 10:15 PM THE GREAT WALL 12:30 AM	AJIAL2 SARDAR SAAB -Punjabi 3:15 PM SARDAR SAAB -Punjabi 6:15 PM SARDAR SAAB -Punjabi 9:30 PM

CROSSWORD 1485



ACROSS

1. A vehicle carrying many passengers.
4. Type genus of the Plataleidae.
12. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
15. A successful stroke in an athletic contest (especially in baseball).
16. Of or relating to Albania or its people or language or culture.
17. An angular shape characterized by sharp turns in alternating directions.
18. How long something has existed.
19. A peninsula in southwestern Europe.
20. Lower in esteem.
22. A Russian prison camp for political prisoners.
24. Young sheep.
25. Food mixtures either arranged on a plate or tossed and served with a moist dressing.
26. An edible seaweed with a mild flavor.
27. Scottish insurgent who led the resistance to Edward I.
29. Indigo bush.
30. A small restaurant where drinks and snacks are sold.
33. Arborescent cacti having very spiny cylindrical stem segments.
37. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
39. The local time at the 0 meridian passing through Greenwich, England.
40. An opening into or through something.
41. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
45. A lyric poem with complex stanza forms.
46. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
50. Presence of abnormally large amounts of uric acid in the urine.
53. Beyond what is natural.
54. An associate degree in nursing.
55. A colorless explosive liquid that is volatile and poisonous and foul-smelling.
56. Wild sheep of northern Africa.
58. Informal terms for money.
60. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
63. Conducive to peace.
64. (computer science) A system of worldwide electronic communication in which a computer user can compose a message at one terminal that is generated at the recipient's terminal when he logs in.
67. A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.
70. Feline mammal usually having thick soft fur and being unable to roar.
71. Submit or yield to another's wish or opinion.
74. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
75. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
77. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
78. 100 fen equal 1 yuan.
79. Low stinging nettle of Central and South America having velvety brownish-green toothed leaves and clusters of small green flowers.

DOWN

1. God of wealth and love.
2. A member of a Turkic people of Chinese Turkestan and neighboring areas (formerly of Mongolia and eastern Turkestan).
3. An ancient upright stone slab bearing markings.
4. United States baseball player.
5. A three-year law degree.
6. Norwegian mathematician (1802-1829).
7. National capital of Kiribati.
8. Taxonomic kingdom comprising all living or extinct animals.
9. At risk of or subject to experiencing something usually unpleasant.
10. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
11. Squash bugs.
12. Any of numerous ornamental shrubs grown for their showy flowers of various colors.
13. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for aviation and spaceflight.
14. Advanced in years.
21. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
23. A leisurely walk (usually in some public place).
28. The act of slowing down or falling behind.
31. Of or relating to fungi.
32. A colorless flammable gas used chiefly in welding and in organic synthesis.
34. A blind god.
35. Evergreen trees and shrubs having oily one-seeded fruits.
36. The sixth month of the civil year.
38. Colloquial British abbreviation.
42. The capital of Western Samoa.
43. A man who is the lover of a girl or young woman.
44. (Greek mythology) A maiden seduced by Zeus.
47. Italian violin maker and grandson of Andrea Guarneri (1687?-1745).
48. Having come or been brought to a conclusion.
49. (Norse mythology) Trickster.
51. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
52. Release from a clasp.
57. An ornamental jewelled headdress signifying sovereignty.
59. Any of various spiny trees or shrubs of the genus Acacia.
61. An iconic mental representation.
62. A switch made from the stems of the rattan palms.
65. The act of scanning.
66. A three-tone Chadic language.
68. A pouch in many birds and some lower animals that resembles a stomach for storage and preliminary maceration of food.
69. An official language of the Republic of South Africa.
72. An accountant certified by the state.
73. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
76. Being nine more than ninety.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You teach honesty every day with your own behavior. Continued interaction with neighbors over community concerns may create some round-table discussions or at least a group conversation over the fence. Open communication and an agreement to be watchful and communicative in helping to alert others to any changes or unusual happenings may be the beginning of a bimonthly neighborhood gathering. In order to keep everything simple but open, perhaps all could agree on a monthly date to give each other a call and rotate the responsibility by house number. Speaking of calls, answer the phone today; you may find that someone is looking to pay back a debt! If your creative project is not finished you might enjoy applying the final changes now.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

A friend may bend your ear today in hopes of finding some helpful answers. You have a kind heart and a willingness to listen; make sure you are inoculated against negative vibrations. An option here is to leave good thoughts. You will find yourself shopping or looking at real estate later today. Whether you want to sell or buy, you will want legal advice before making up your mind. It would not be wise to let yourself be talked into signing any papers until you get a second opinion. Your ability to communicate is at a high but your ability to act may seem blocked. Work on your tax papers this evening; you may uncover some important information for making positive changes to this year's income. Your attitude is one of cooperation.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may be working on a project, only to be interrupted time and time again. It may be better, just for today, to be available for others-your time will come. This would be a good time to insert a bit of laughter and to teach others a more lighthearted way of looking at their lives. Education, advertising and travel play a big part in today's activity and it is all positive. This afternoon you might get help in planting some flower bulbs for a spring show of colors around your home. You could find yourself taking an interest in more spiritual and mystical matters. The direction of your life could turn more to questions of religion and world unity. You and your mate may talk about ideas of where, how or what might come in the future of family life.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Finally, one of the old buddies from school days drops by to catch up on old times, so to speak. Showing off new homes and new areas of interest in the city to friends that have been away from home and visiting with friends creates a time of nostalgia. There is talk of plans and goals among friends. You have many friends and you will probably learn the most from the less aggressive of your acquaintances. One of your friends always converses in a very quiet and pleasant manner. Joy is the inevitable result of gentleness. Joy goes with gentleness as sure as grief attends attack. Joy is the song of thanks. Learning to have joy is creating a mindset of gratefulness. This is the beginning of an expansive, creative and even romantic phase.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may find yourself put to good use by your friends. Someone may suggest some form of entertainment after helping to put a piece of furniture together or painting a hallway, etc. All of this should go rather smoothly. While you are with your friends, you will find yourself giddy and feeling very relaxed among friends. Others may find you especially witty for now. You may decide to discuss with your friends some of the ideas you have about a move or a change in your living quarters-new color scheme, etc., not necessarily a new apartment or home. Others value you for your independence and unique qualities and talents-they may be asking you for advice. You and your friends may decide to go to a movie or a play this evening.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Do not make assumptions concerning your loved ones. Close relationships offer a lot of potential for growth and good fortune. A marriage or some other partnership can raise high hopes and give your spirits a boost. People close to you are optimistic and have good prospects for the future. Unconventional hobbies and other forms of self-expression that break from the norm play a bigger part in your day. A child or lover may be rebellious-or perhaps simply ahead of his or her time. Resist the urge to criticize. Realize that some of us have to dance to our own drummer. Romance and recreation take on an unusual character, out of step with ordinary expectations. High-tech gambles could pay off big-this may mean a private bet with a sibling.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

A friend or someone from your religious gathering may seek you out for advice and counsel. Your thinking is unique and you influence others with your ideas. Young people enjoy being with you and learning from you and the older people that are around you enjoy your positive energy. A child's project may gain your attention but you will need to limit yourself to observation; remember it is the child's project. Become involved in some household activity so you will be nearby to answer questions. This evening a social gathering is enjoyed. Everything conspires to reveal you at your most elegant, particularly in social situations. You demonstrate great understanding and sensitivity to the needs of others and communicate goodwill.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Organizing or planning ahead for some event always makes for a successful end result. Today the organizing or planning may involve some future travel event or family event. Optimism is important now. Loyalty, dependability and trustworthiness are in you and your mate's future. These positive aspects of your life will be with you for a long time-hopefully, forever. You and your mate may discuss further education. Further education can improve your working status and should soon be considered. You will be able to take a step up the corporate ladder or at the very least, increase your income potential. A night class together might be fun, especially one that both of you could be equal in understanding-no competition.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 18)

On this day, life seems to have slowed a bit-at least your own. Things cannot be forced today. This slower pace brings about a great opportunity to work some more on a project of yours-perhaps a hobby. Your humor is certainly in fine shape. As you join family or friends at a restaurant for the noon meal, you find yourself relaxed and full of good stories to tell. As you refresh others, you will find a renewed strength of your own. Through the twenty-first of the month, you could be more thoughtful than active-good for writing and planning. Pay attention to the amounts of food you eat; easy does it. This is a great time to reflect and understand your own situation. Emotions or the feelings of those around you may be very clear; it is a nice time.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Someone has left you in control this day and you are pleased to have the responsibility. You are industrious in how you pass the time. This could mean you are sitting with a child, animal or person and will have to make decisions that will create a safe environment. If you are not responsible for people or animals, it could be possessions that are in question and while the owner of the store or property is out, you will handle any activity that occurs. You can do it and may have a great satisfaction about yourself before the day is over. People are proud to have you on their side. Perhaps a profession in law or detective work would be profitable for you. Your special day is full of all sorts of blessings. Tonight you celebrate!



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

There could be new responsibilities at home, perhaps a few you had not planned. Young or elderly people may enjoy your company for a time today as you could be working on a creative project to help teach, entertain or divert their attention for a little while. You may, however, find yourself somewhat at odds with someone around you. There is a lot going on and you will want to focus on doing the best you can. At times, you may feel you are working against the flow of energies but it won't take you long to add your positive self to the pot in order to change things for the better. It is advisable to take a few breaks during the day in order to reenergize and catch your breath. By late this afternoon, you are ready to visit a bookstore or enjoy a movie.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may not feel like concentrating on a health program or exercise routine but very few of us can operate well without some good muscle tone. If you begin to work yourself into a routine of exercise now, as you get older the routine will come naturally. You will certainly help to assuage painful joints through exercise. The fun part is in finding something you can do with a group of people and if this is not going to the gym together, a bicycle tour or a run might be just the thing. You will find exercise will release stress. Any tension around you at this time is very disturbing and others will find you patiently using your sense of humor to diffuse tension. This evening you may be helping family members pack up to return home or to college after the holiday break.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Countries of Europe

Find and circle all of the Countries of Europe that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.

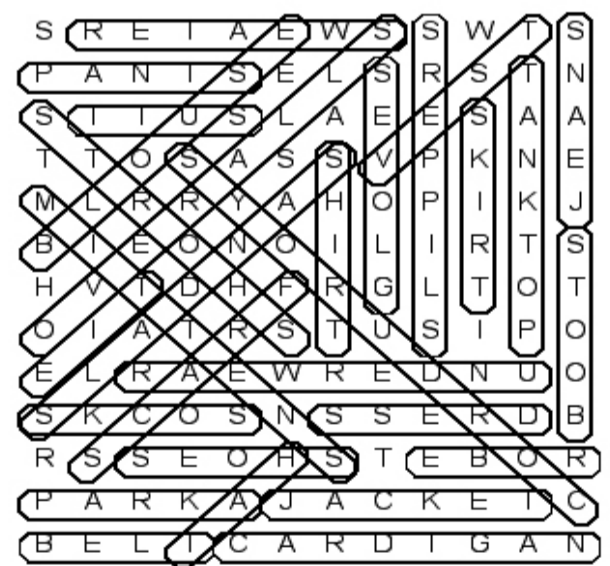
Note: IRELAND and NORTHERN IRELAND are separately hidden and do not overlap.



- | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| ALBANIA | ENGLAND | LITHUANIA | SAN MARINO |
| ANDORRA | ESTONIA | LUXEMBOURG | SCOTLAND |
| ARMENIA | FINLAND | MACEDONIA | SLOVAKIA |
| AUSTRIA | FRANCE | MALTA | SLOVENIA |
| AZERBAIDJAN | GERMANY | MOLDOVA | SPAIN |
| BELARUS | GREECE | MONACO | SWEDEN |
| BELGIUM | HUNGARY | NETHERLANDS | SWITZERLAND |
| BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA | ICELAND | NORTHERN IRELAND | TURKEY |
| BULGARIA | IRELAND | NORWAY | UKRAINE |
| CROATIA | ITALY | POLAND | SERBIA/MONTENEGRO |
| CYPRUS | LATVIA | PORTUGAL | VATICAN CITY |
| CZECH REPUBLIC | LIECHTENSTEIN | ROMANIA | WALES |
| DENMARK | | RUSSIAN FEDERATION | |

Yesterday's Solution

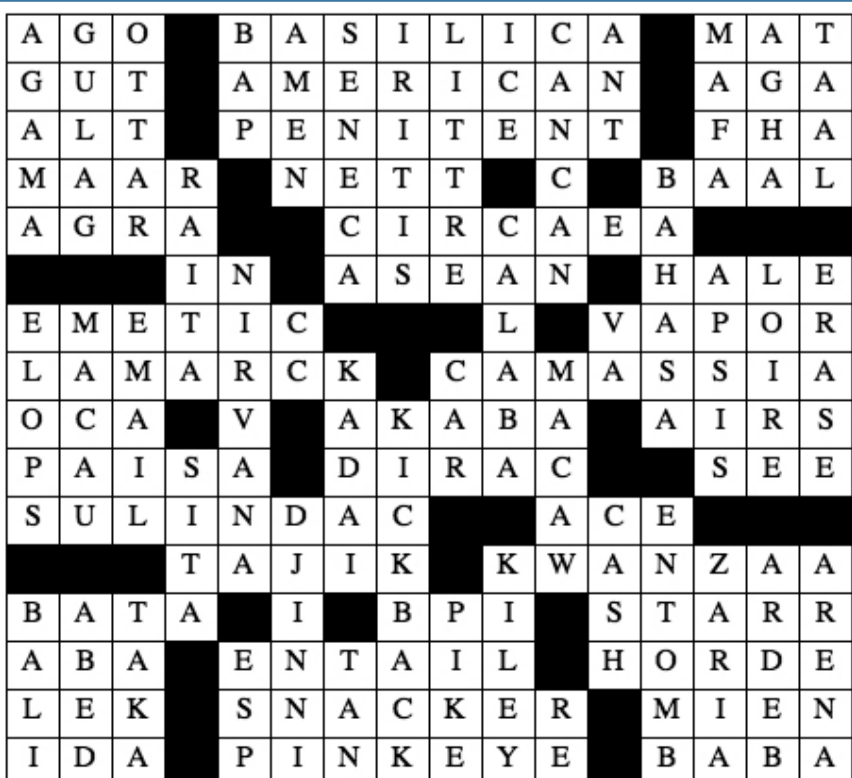
Clothing



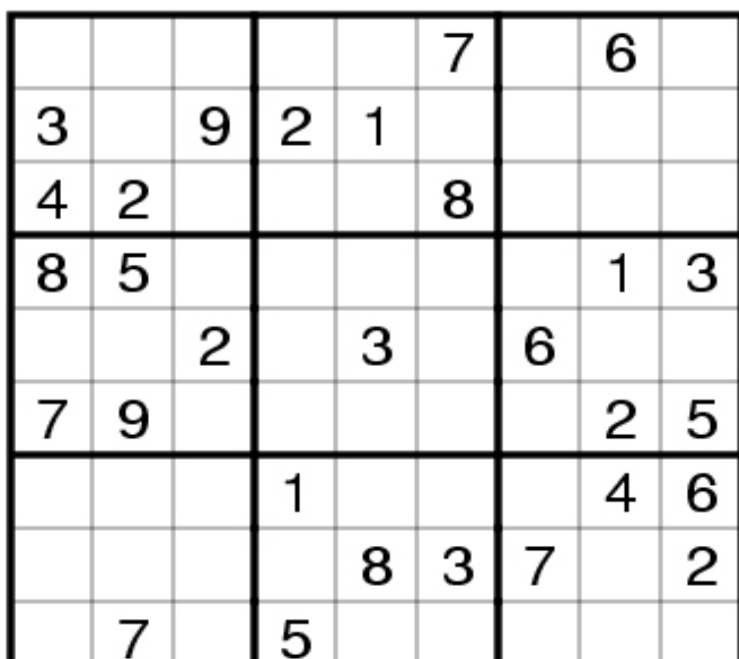
- | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| BELT | JACKET | SCARF | SWEATER |
| BLOUSE | JEANS | SHIRT | TANK TOP |
| BOOTS | MITTENS | SHOES | TIE |
| CARDIGAN | OVERALLS | SHORTS | UNDERWEAR |
| CORDUROY | PANTS | SKIRT | VEST |
| DRESS | PARKA | SLIPPERS | |
| GLOVES | ROBE | SOCKS | |
| HAT | SANDALS | SUIT | |

The hidden clothing item is: SWEATSHIRT

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadisiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaeel Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

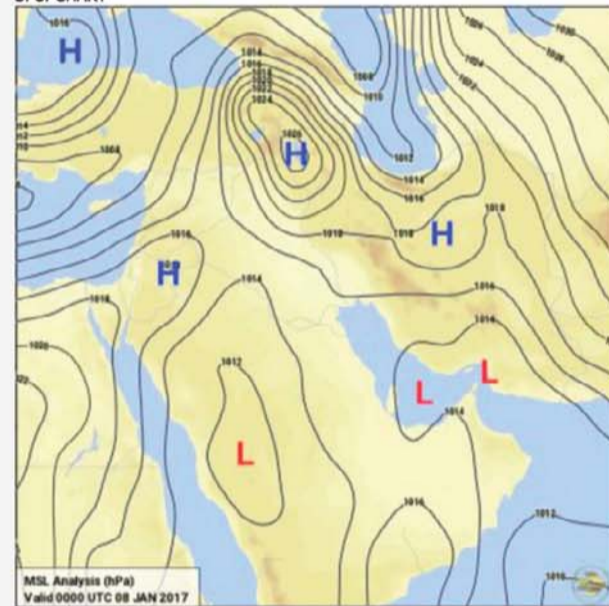
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 08/01/2017-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 23 °C

By Day : Sunny with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 20 km/h
By Night : Cold with light south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 20 km/h with a chance for mist forming at night

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Expected Weather	Visibility will improve gradually	sunny	sunny	sunny + scattered clouds
Min Temp °C	09	09	08	08
Max Temp °C	24	20	21	20
Wind Direction	variable	north westerly	north westerly	north westerly
Wind Speed km/h	06 - 20	20 - 38	15 - 40	15 - 40

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C	REC	Max °C
KUWAIT CITY	10		26
KUWAIT AIRPORT	07		23
ABDALY	07		22
BUBYAN	10		20
JAHRA	09		23
FALAKA ISLAND	09		21
SALMIYAH	13		19
AHMADI	14		19
JAL ALIYAH	09		21
QAROH ISLAND	16		20
UMM AL-MARADEM	16		20
NUWAISIB	08		22
WAFRA	06		22
MANAGISH	08		23
SALMY	06		22
MUTRIBA	08		23

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	21
Min Temp (°C)	05
Max Rel Hum (%)	67
Min Rel Hum (%)	23
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	14 SW
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

Sunrise	06:44
Sunset	17:06

Prayer Times

Fajr	05:20
Sunrise	06:44
Zuhr	11:55
Asr	14:47
Sunset	17:06
Isha	18:28

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
Antigua	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	Niger	00227
Cape Verde	00238	Nigeria	00234
Cayman Islands	001345	Niue	00683
Central African	00236	Norfolk Island	00672
Chad	00235	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
Chile	0056	North Korea	00850
China	0086	Norway	0047
Colombia	0057	Oman	00968
Comoros	00269	Pakistan	0092
Congo	00242	Palau	00680
Cook Islands	00682	Panama	00507
Costa Rica	00506	Papua New Guinea	00675
Croatia	00385	Paraguay	00595
Cuba	0053	Peru	0051
Cyprus	00357	Philippines	0063
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Poland	0048
Czech Republic	00420	Portugal	00351
Denmark	0045	Puerto Rico	001787
Diego Garcia	00246	Qatar	00974
Djibouti	00253	Romania	0040
Dominica	001767	Russian Federation	007
Dominican Republic	001809	Rwanda	00250
Ecuador	00593	Saint Helena	00290
Egypt	0020	Saint Kitts	001869
El Salvador	00503	Saint Lucia	001758
England (UK)	0044	Saint Pierre	00508
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Vincent	001784
Eritrea	00291	Samoa US	00684
Estonia	00372	Samoa West	00685
Ethiopia	00251	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. Abdallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabea	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	2455050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	2455050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhaezem	23926920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Rafea	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abdallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Plastic Surgeons	
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Family Doctor	
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Psychiatrists	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr. Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	
Dr. Adrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s. Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliyami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
General Surgeons	
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
Internists, Chest & Heart	
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr. Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Paediatricians	
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarouf	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gupje	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dentists	
Dr. Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdallateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist	
Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924
Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288
Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Internist, Chest & Heart	
DR. Mohammed Akkad	2455050 Ext 210
Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC Assistant Professor Of Medicine Head, Division of Cardiology Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital	25339667
Dr. Farida Al-Habib MD, PH.D, FACC	2611555-2622555
Inaya German Medical Center	Te: 2575077 Fax: 25723123

Psychologists /Psychotherapists	Soor Center Tel: 2290-1677 Fax: 2290 1688	info@soorcenter.com www.soorcenter.com	Kaizen center 25716707	Noor Clinic 23845955	William Schuilenberg, RPC 2290-1677 Zaina Al Zabin, M.Sc. 2290-1677
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Khloe Kardashian's incredible weight loss

Khloe Kardashian showed off her incredible weight loss in a new before-and-after picture. The 32-year-old reality TV star - who lost 40lbs after embracing exercise and changing her diet - took to Instagram to share a side-by-side comparison picture of herself, as she promoted her new show 'Revenge Body'. Khloe wrote: "If you were to ask me five years ago if I ever saw myself being completely in love with fitness and health. That I would be an inspiration to many others, that I would be the push that others needed to find their way. I would've laughed in your face. Me? The chubby one? No way! But now I can't see myself ever stopping! I am completely honored and taking my role seriously in helping motivate and teach people what I had to learn to better myself from the inside out. Becoming stronger mentally so I can't let the little things break me down. I see myself only getting better and better! "I can't believe how far I have come! I almost can't believe that was me! If you've lost your motivation don't beat yourself up about it, negative thoughts only turn into negative realities. By keeping positive about your body, your inner health, your mental sanity, your fitness and what you're trying to achieve, you're way more likely to succeed. My fitness journey was for myself and myself alone. On my terms and on my timeline! Cheers to us becoming better than we were yesterday! #RevengeBody (sic). Khloe turned to exercise after the breakdown of her marriage to Lamar Odom incredible transformation. And she is getting ready to launch a new show, 'Revenge Body', which will help people overcome traumatic times in their life and get their "revenge" by getting back to their best. She previously explained: "Revenge Body" is basically a show about taking people that not so much are seeking revenge in a harmful, malicious way, but revenge in the best way possible, which is a good body. "So people that have gone through really traumatic experiences in life, not all of them are breakups, some of them have lost a parent or something that's been really traumatic which has caused them to gain a lot of weight and they don't really know how to get control over their life again. So whatever that circumstance is I want them to get revenge on that incident."

Matt Goss had a crush on Victoria Beckham

The 48-year-old Bros star had a secret admirer in the former Spice Girls star when they were younger, and he has admitted he fancied the brunette beauty - who has four children - Brooklyn, 17, Romeo, 14, Cruz, 11, and five-year-old daughter Harper with her retired soccer star husband, David Beckham - but admits she was right to fall in love with the 41-year-old hunk. He said: "Victoria is such a lovely girl. I had a crush on her too, but I think she made the right choice. "David and I chatted about having tattoos in the same place!" Meanwhile, Matt has said he's struggle meeting new people because of his hectic work schedule. He told Closer magazine: "My job makes it quite difficult to meet someone because I'm so busy travelling for performances. "I'm lucky to have such an amazing life, so I do want to share that with a best friend. Someone I can make love to all over the world and just have a laugh with." Matt previously insisted he is very much single and was just having a bit of fun with pop beauty Rebecca Ferguson, 30, who he was linked to at the end of 2016. He told BANG Showbiz: "That just took a life of its own. I know Rebecca, we spoke today she's lovely. "But I'm single and the good thing is it's a nice feeling when you meet someone, especially as lovely Rebecca, and you talk, but that happens at our pace and not anyone else's."



Lohan wipes social media accounts



Lindsay Lohan has wiped most of her social media accounts clean. The 30-year-old actress is "in a period of renewal" and has chosen to wipe her accounts so that she can start 2017 off with a clean slate. She said: "I am so excited for this new chapter in my life!" And Lindsay's manager Scott Carlsen added to MailOnline: "Lindsay in a period of renewal, and is very excited for what the new year holds. "We are extremely happy here at team Lohan, thrilled to see everyone's reactions over the next year as we have some big projects lined up." Lindsay recently revealed that having part of her finger ripped off in a fishing accident in Turkey last year helped her to put her life into perspective and has been a huge factor in her decision to continue volunteering with refugees. She explained: "Losing half of my finger and getting it back was one of the best things that happened to me. "If that didn't happen to me, if I didn't lose a part of myself essentially - and I weirdly think about this when I meditate - I wouldn't have stayed in Turkey. I wouldn't have stayed there, and I wouldn't have understood what it feels like to lose a limb." The actress spent time working with Syrian refugees in Turkey last year and is planning to go back to the country to help those in need. She said "I am deciding now if I will head back to do more work in refugee camps in Turkey and Antep during or after the New Year. "The dates are not set. It depends on how Turkey feels after the recent terrorist attack in Istanbul. Not that any attack has or will ever stop me from helping those suffering, those who need our help the most."



Taylor Hill plans business career

Taylor Hill wants to move into the "actual business" of fashion one day. The 20-year-old model is making the most of the opportunities she has in the catwalk world during her current career to learn as much as she can and will definitely use her "education" in the industry in the future. She told Britain's Vogue magazine: "I'm really curious about the fashion business. "I mean, the actual business. As such as anything else, one of the amazing opportunities I have, doing this job, is that I get to see the industry from the inside. "I'm always paying attention, always making mental notes. "The more I see, the more I learn. I'll definitely use that education someday." Taylor recently admitted being a Victoria's Secret Angel is a "challenge" for her as she isn't what people would expect of the lingerie models. She said: "[I'm] more of a loser tomboy type. I'm very nerdy, I love to read-I'm not necessarily a girl's girl. "[Being an Angel] really challenges who I am as a person. I'm standing there in underwear, but I'm just [macho] like, 'Hey guys!' "Of the Angels, Taylor is most close to "weirdo" Behati Prinsloo. She said: "She's a weirdo. I love her. "She's just loud and clumsy and she laughs a lot. The first time we met, she was touching my face and being like, 'You're so cute! And I'm just like, 'I love you!'" Taylor is dating fellow model and actor Michael Stephen Shank and though their work regularly keeps them away from their New York apartment, she insists it doesn't matter. She said: "He comes back and forth from LA, but then I go off on location and stuff. But it's OK. Sometimes absence makes the heart grow fonder."

Ben Affleck would 'discourage' his children from becoming actors



The 'Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice' star - who has Violet, 11, Seraphina, eight, and Samuel, four, with his estranged wife Jennifer Garner - wouldn't like for his children to follow in his or Jennifer's footsteps. He said: "I wouldn't allow them to do it until they're 18, and once they were 18, they can do whatever they want to do, but I would discourage it." And the 44-year-old actor also opened up about his own journey to stardom. He shared to Extra TV: "Overnight, I went from somebody no one ever heard of, to somebody that gets recognized on the street and could get a table at a restaurant. I was 24-years-old and it was a confusing time. "I've got three kids now, and it's a whole long road later. I have a much better perspective on it all, although it still can be confusing and difficult to deal with. There's no map to it, you've just got to figure it out on your own." Meanwhile, Ben previously admitted he struggled with fame particularly in his 20s. He explained: "I'd always had a strong idea about my values and the direction I wanted to be headed in, then I ran into getting famous and it totally spun me around and I flailed around for a few years. When you're a young man in your 20s, part of that is making mistakes and learning from them. "I just made those in front of everybody, rather than privately. There's stuff I look back on and kind of cringe at but I always tried to treat other people well. My parents imbued that in me and the mistakes I made were mostly just of the embarrassing kind."



Ozzy 'took an overdose during wife's cancer battle'

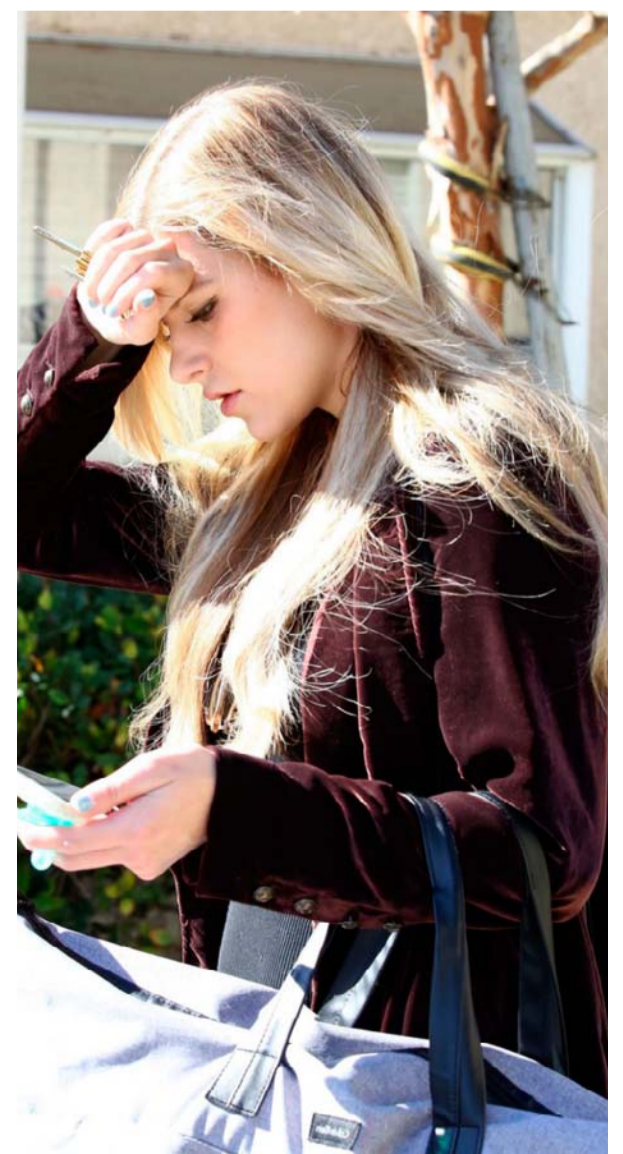
Ozzy Osbourne overdosed when his wife Sharon suffered a seizure during her cancer treatment. Sharon, 64, was diagnosed with colon cancer in 2002 and her and Ozzy's daughter Kelly claims in her upcoming book, 'There Is No Secret', that Ozzy, 68, struggled to cope when his wife had a seizure while battling the disease. In an excerpt from the tome, obtained by the New York Post's Page Six, Kelly wrote: "Dad was there in his boxers, and I watched him scoop his hands into a bowl of pills, swallow a handful of something, and then wash it down with vodka. "[Later in the ambulance] he leaned over to put his hand out to see if mum was breathing. Then he passed out with his hand over her mouth. "The EMTs tried to pull him off, and Dad, not knowing where he was or what he was doing, started to resist out of habit. They pulled over the ambulance and started to call the police. "Dad could not handle the thought of losing mum." Kelly, 32, also claimed that Robin Williams saved her mother's life because he convinced Sharon to

continue her chemotherapy. Kelly wrote: "He climbed into bed with her. "He stayed there all afternoon, and throughout the house, you could hear her cackling with laughter. Shortly after he left, she told us that she'd decided to go back and finish chemo. "Robin Williams helped save mum's life." Speaking previously about her parents, Kelly joked she is "sickened" by how much they love each other. She said: "They love each other so much. It's almost sickening. And if they make out in public one more time, I think I'm going to throw up. You should've seen them last night: They have this huge massive mansion house, and they're tucked in a little corner in the kitchen on the couch cuddling and watching TV. "I was like, 'I'm just gonna drop this off and leave you guys to it. I'll see you later!' It's really nice to watch. Everyone goes through hard times, but they're the definition of true love. To see them fall so deeply in love with each other all over again time and time again, it makes me realize how special my family is."

Briana Jungwirth has deleted her Instagram account

The Los Angeles-based stylist - who has 11-month-old son Freddie Reign with One Direction star Louis Tomlinson - had her account hacked last week and has now decided to leave Instagram due to "privacy concerns". Tweeting from her verified account, she wrote: "Taking a break from @Instagram due to obvious privacy concerns." She later deleted the tweet but her Instagram page has been removed from the photo-sharing site. Briana's decision to delete her account came after it was briefly taken over by a mystery hacker, who posted a short message through a series of screenshots. The hacker wrote: "I hacked her to show her she needs to be careful with her Instagram account. Believe it or not I'm actually helping her a lot now she knows that she can't just put her information anywhere." However, Briana managed to get back control of her account and fired back on Twitter later. She wrote: "You seriously have nothing better to do than hack an innocent mother's Instagram. You are sick." Despite having public Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat accounts, Briana has previously asked for privacy and hit out at her online detractors. Last year she posted a message on her accounts, which read: "To all those who feel the need to make disparaging, hateful and inappropriate comments concerning me and my son Freddie -

I am sincerely sorry that you all have chosen to focus your time and attention on my life and the life of my son. Surely you must have better things to do than pry into the personal life of a single mom and newborn child. I am a proud new mother that is extremely joyous about my child being in this world and have shared that joy with my friends and family on a daily basis - often times through social media. However, that does not give anyone the right, or the invitation to be nasty and disparaging toward me. So, please stop prying into the private and personal facts of my life and my son's life in order to weave stories and peak public interest. "The things that you discuss, and the sources that you rely on are extremely off base and unreliable. More importantly, every mature and experienced adult should know that there is always more to a story than what meets the eye - especially involving matters of the heart. I am confident that in the days and weeks to come, you all will find that your negativity and venomous attacks were little more than time wasted. In the meantime - I am hopeful that you all will respect my son's privacy and find it in your hearts to discontinue the overwhelmingly inappropriate comments about me, my family, and most importantly, my son Freddie. Thank you. (sic)."





Nicole Kidman: Keith Urban is the 'most beautiful' man

Nicole Kidman says her husband is the "most beautiful man she's ever met". The 49-year-old actress gushed about Keith Urban as she collected the Best Supporting Actress award at the 6th AACTA International Awards in Hollywood on Friday. In her acceptance speech, she said: "To the most beautiful man I've ever met, Keith Lionel Urban. He's got a gypsy heart, and travels the world where I go. 'We're going to Tasmania to make a film!' And he's like, 'OK...'"

Meanwhile, Nicole previously opened up about her relationship with Keith - with whom she shares daughters Sunday, eight, and Faith, six - and admitted she gets "anxious" when he doesn't answer his phone. Asked what her pet peeve is, she shared: "When people say they will do something and they don't. And I know it's terribly demanding, but I don't like it when my husband doesn't answer his phone. I have

to keep calling and calling, and I get anxious. Does that make me high-maintenance?" The couple have shared a lot of lovely memories together but one of the best ones for Nicole - who also has Isabella, 24, and Connor, 21, with her ex-husband Tom Cruise - was when they celebrated her 40th birthday together. She said: "When I turned 40, my husband, Keith, drove me up to the top of this small hill in Australia and sat me down. He had put together this huge fireworks display. It was just for the two of us! It was sexy." And Nicole still remembers the couple's first kiss, admitting it was a bit of a "weird" experience because it happened whilst they were watching horror movie 'The Shining'. She recalled: "This is crazy. We were playing hooky from school. I had my first kiss while watching 'The Shining'. Is that not weird? And we did a few things other than kiss too!

Lady Gaga is rehearsing for her Super Bowl half-time show

The 'Million Reasons' hitmaker is gearing up to perform in the coveted slot at the NRG Stadium in Houston, Texas on February 5. Captioning a picture of herself in the rehearsal studio, she wrote: "30 days till

#superbowl #halftime #gaga (sic)" Gaga revealed she would be headlining the half-time slot on social media back in September. She wrote on Twitter at the time: "It's not an illusion. The rumors are true. This year the SUPER BOWL goes GAGA! @nfl @FOXTV @pepsi #PERFECTILLUSION #GAGASUPERBOWL (sic)". And Gaga isn't new to performing at the football championship event after she kicked off proceedings by singing the national anthem in 2016. Speaking at the time, she said: "This is one of the highest honours of my career. I get a chance to sing for all the athletes - who have been working so hard their whole lives for this moment - the coaches, as well as the fans in the stands who are waiting for this moment. I think it marks what being an American is all about." The 30-year-old singer has been really busy promoting her latest album 'Joanne' and previously revealed it is about a "very tough woman". She explained: "I think I am lucky I have a great family. I have advice ingrained in me not to give up. I'm a tough girl. And that is actually what the album is about. I'm a very tough woman." Speaking specifically about her song 'Perfect Illusion', she added: "People feel pressured to live up to that perfect illusion in their real lives. This is about accepting that and letting go. I'm not saying not to use your phone, I'm not that crazy. I think social media is great. But there's also a lot of things that are on the internet that aren't reality... So this song is about raging against it and letting it go. It's about wanting people to re-establish that human connection."



Kate Hudson's birthday tribute to eldest son

Kate Hudson "couldn't be more in love" with who her son is as a person. The 'Deepwater Horizon' star penned a sweet tribute to her eldest son Ryder, who she shares with ex-husband Chris Robinson, as he turned 13 on Saturday. Captioning an old picture of the pair, she wrote: "Thirteen years... Today I reflect on how lucky I am to have spent my entire adult years being Ryder's mother. My dear Ryd man! Today you are 13! Hard to believe but I'm starting right at you and my goodness yes you are a teenager! I couldn't be more in love with who you are as a person and who you are growing into as a young man. "Smart, funny, joyful, tolerant, perceptive, empathetic, loving, you continue to maintain the beautiful attributes of your true nature and I will always be there as your touchstone to help nurture them or

rediscover them if they ever get cloudy. "But watching you independently keep these characteristics close and alive has been a wondrous journey in which I look forward to witnessing every waking hour. Happy Birthday baby!!! 13 is looking pretty awesome so far!!! I love you #RyderIsThirteen #HappyBirthday #ProudMama (sic)" Meanwhile, the 37-year-old actress - who also has five-year-old son Bingham with her ex-partner Matt Bellamy - previously insisted she is doing the best she can as a mother. She shared: "I don't try to sugarcoat things. I'll say, 'I'm doing the best I can.' I like cooking, I like presenting. I like it to be an experience and [my kids] help me with it, but if they want something after that, I'll be like, 'Look, I'm placing a meal out for you like a king. I can't do everything. I'm going to have to be the OK mom.'"

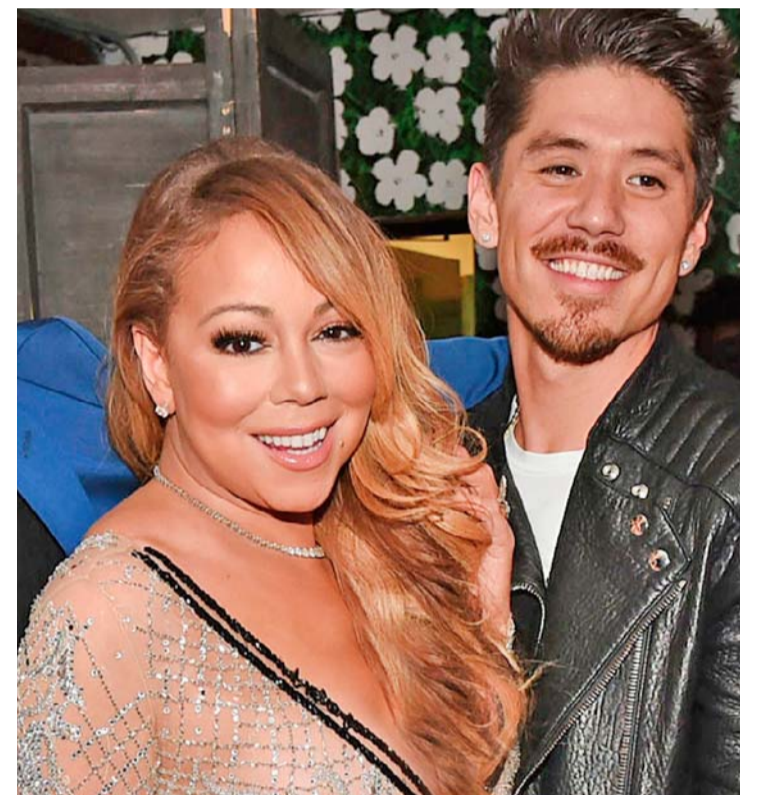


Pink wishes Hart a Happy anniversary with a sweet message



Pink thanked Carey Hart for "sticking around" as she marked the couple's anniversary. The 'Just Give Me A Reason' hitmaker took to social media to post a little message for her husband as they celebrated 11 years of marriage. Writing on her Instagram account alongside an old picture of the pair kissing, she wrote: "Yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum yum ... that's one for every year care bear. I really like you this week. #happyanniversarymylove I'm very lucky to be able to say that you're mine. Thanks for sticking around (sic)" The couple have had a great start to the year after they welcomed their second child, a little boy called Jameson Moon Hart, into the world at the end of December. Announcing the news on Instagram at the time, the singer wrote: "Jameson Moon Hart 12.26.16 ... I love my baby daddy. (sic)" Carey - who also has five-year-old daughter Willow with Pink - will no doubt be pleased by the baby's arrival as he previously admitted he would love to have a son. He said: "We got one princess, so hopefully we'll have a little guy coming. I don't want any competition for my daughter. I'm nervous for what it's going to be ... It's been a while since we've had a baby around the house. It's going to be really fun. "Willow is over the moon. She's been talking about how she wants a baby sister. She built a bicycle for him or her. So we're going to finish it up after No. 2 shows up. She tore the bike all apart and after No. 2 shows up, she's going to decide the colors that she wants to do for it. I told her, 'Look, he or she is not going to be able to use it for a while - but they'll be ready for it' ... Right now, she's very excited, until they start taking her toys and breaking her stuff, and then we'll see how it goes."

Bryan Tanaka's 'connection' with Mariah Carey



Bryan Tanaka felt he had a "connection" with Mariah Carey for months before they started dating. The 33-year-old dancer and choreographer confessed to his dancer pal G. Madison that he was "catching some hard feelings" for the 'Without You' hitmaker when she was still engaged to Australian billionaire James Packer. In a preview clip from Mariah's reality show Mariah's World, he said: "I can't believe I'm saying this right now. I'm catching some hard feelings [about] Miss Mariah. I don't know if I'm tripping, but it's been kind of going a little nuts lately man. I feel like our chemistry is not just professional, there's great chemistry professionally, but when we talk it feels like there's a connection that is more than what we've had for the past 10 years. [I wouldn't] cross that line [if it didn't] feel the way it does." G. Madison then tells Bryan that Mariah is in a "tough position" because of her engagement and

Bryan agrees, admitting it is "a complicated situation". He added: "That's where I'm tripping, like she's engaged so maybe I'm really just tripping." But G. Madison reassures his friend, telling him: "Or maybe you're spot on." Since the 46-year-old singer - who has five-year-old twins Moroccan and Monroe with her ex-husband Nick Cannon - split from James, she has started dating Bryan and the couple recently spent the holidays in Aspen, Colorado with Mariah's children. A source said recently: "They're in a proper relationship now. She's really into Bryan. He's with her 24/7. He's a nice guy but they weren't together when she broke up with James ... "He gets along really well with her twins, Moroccan and Monroe. She bought him lavish designer Christmas gifts from the Aspen boutiques. They walk around holding each other's hands and are always very affectionate. [They're] always smooching."

Zoe Saldana's twins are 'total gangsters'

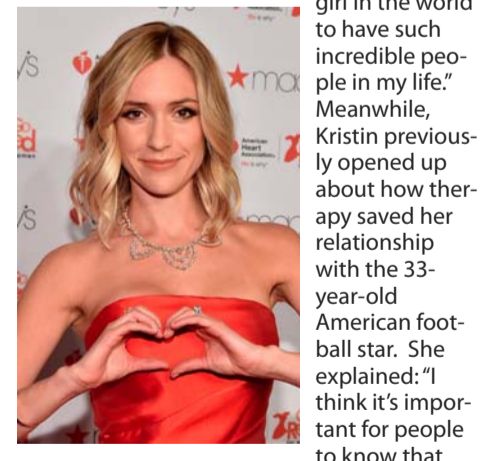
The 'Guardians of the Galaxy' star - who has two-year-old twins Cy and Bowie with her husband Marco Perego - has gushed about her active children but admitted that their fights are starting to become very "vicious". She explained: "They're totally gangsters. These kids are like up at night! One is more into talking in Spanish. The other is expressing himself more in English. One is like, 'No quiero! No quiero!' And the other is like, 'I don't wanna!'" "You're like, 'It's time to go to sleep,' and they're both yelling at you all these things ... And when they start fighting, they just look like two lads at a pub fighting over like the wrong girl too. It's like, 'Ugh!' It's just vicious. 'You guys are only two this is horrible.'" And the 38-year-old actress is keen for her children to experience different traditions and feels lucky she can celebrate new ones each year, particularly at Christmas, because they're still so young at the moment. She added to Entertainment Tonight: "Now that they're two is when we're starting to tell them. And they have an idea. Their approach is very musical, so it's through songs that you get them to understand who Santa Claus is. "But my husband [Marco Perego] and I have another year until they're three. I think we have this Christmas to decide what kind of Christmas we need to create and follow that tradition indefinitely for our family. Because we don't want to deprive each other's respective backgrounds too, how we celebrated Christmas as kids." Meanwhile, Zoe recently admitted it can be tough looking after twins. She shared:

"Everybody romanticises having twins - and we love it, we don't regret it - but let me just tell you, the part that sucks about having twins is that you're catering to two people that are growing up at once at the same age, going through the same things, with different tempers. Like, opposite tempers." — Bang Showbiz



Kristin Cavallari's surprise party

Kristin Cavallari's husband threw her a surprise party to mark her 30th birthday. The 'Hills' star gushed about her husband Jay Cutler - with whom she shares Camden, four, Jaxon, two, and Saylor, 13 months - as she posted a sweet picture of the pair kissing on social media. Captioning a picture of herself and Jay, she wrote: "This is the only somewhat decent picture I have from last night (and we're both clearly sober) but Jay really went all out for my 30th birthday. "He threw the most amazing surprise party and made me feel so special and loved and I will forever be grateful for this man, my family, and all my amazing friends. I am the luckiest



girl in the world to have such incredible people in my life." Meanwhile, Kristin previously opened up about how therapy saved her relationship with the 33-year-old American football star. She explained: "I think it's important for people to know that there's no such thing as a perfect relationship, you know? We work on it. It's true. We love each other and we want to make it work, but I 100 per cent credit our therapist for saving our relationship. We've come so far being in therapy both individually and together as a couple, that it's been incredibly beneficial. "We moved very quickly: We got engaged after eight months, and then we actually broke up about two and a half, three months later. Called off the engagement. And then we got back together, and when we got back together, I kind of went through a little phase where I didn't know if I wanted to get married. I think it was really more about my ego, I had one foot in and one foot out and that was ridiculous. And if we were gonna be together and really give it a shot, that wasn't fair. So, I decided to grow up, I guess."



Models present creations by Northern Irish designer JW Anderson during his catwalk show on the third day of the Autumn/Winter 2017 London Fashion Week Men's fashion event in London. —AP/AFP photos



London Fashion Week



Models present creations by US-based designer Ximon Lee.

Turkey's tourism takes big hit after extremist attacks



The once bustling Grand Bazaar in Istanbul is astonishingly quiet. The shops and restaurants in the city's trendy Istiklal Street are all but empty of foreign customers and the hotels in the upscale Nisantasi district are nearly deserted. Turkey's economy is suffering in the face of a string of extremist attacks - including the nightclub massacre of New Year's revelers, most of them foreigners - and uncertainty following the failed coup in July against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that saw more than 270 people killed.

Tourism, a key component of the economy as well as a substantial foreign currency earner, has taken a hit - not least because Russian visitors have stayed away in the wake of a diplomatic spat over Turkey's downing of a Russian warplane in November 2015. "2016 was a lost year for Turkish tourism," said Cetin Gurcun, secretary general of Turkey's travel agency association, TURSAB. "It is impossible for Turkey to give up on tourism, but the most important priority of the sector is security," Gurcun added. "The first thing a tourist looks for when choosing a destination is peace and safety. Only then do they research service quality and price."

Economic downturn

There was a time when tourism in Turkey was red hot, climbing from 10.5 million visitors in 2000 to 36.2 million people in 2015, making it the sixth-most visited destination in the world. The sector earned \$31.5 billion in 2015. But that all came to a halt last year, with a 30 percent drop in visitors, from 34.8 million in the January-November period in 2015 to a little over 24 million for the same period in 2016. Yasemin Pirincioğlu, general manager of the VIP Event travel agency, said that foreigners who had visited before were still returning. "But the people who are planning to come for the first time to Turkey, they're postponing their trips," she said.

Natalia Dubaltsava from war-ravaged eastern Ukraine is among those who come to Istanbul regularly. "We make trips here anyway," she said. "There is unrest in the world. It's a fact. People say the same about our city, Dnepropetrovsk. We are close to the front line, but it is calm there. Life is life. We decided to go anyway." Because of the economic downturn, the Turkish Lira hit a record low in the first week of 2017, trading around 3.60 per US dollar. Analysts expect it to weaken further in coming months.

While the weaker currency could have some beneficial economic effects - making it cheaper to visit or invest in Turkey and helping the country's exports - the drop makes the country poorer overall and less able to pay its debts. The security concerns are obvious in

the economic data. In the third quarter of last year, the drop in tourism was the main cause for a 7 percent year-on-year decrease in the sale of goods and services. Consumer spending and investment have also plummeted since the summer.

Istanbul, the country's most popular tourist destination for foreigners, has been the biggest target for extremists. Ten German tourists were killed in a suicide attack in the heart of Istanbul's historic district on January 12, 2016. Other attacks in Istanbul include one in the central Beyoglu neighborhood in March, as well as at the city's main airport in June, where dozens died.

Middle Eastern countries

Hundreds of people eager to wave goodbye to a tumultuous 2016 gathered at the popular Reina nightclub in Istanbul for New Year's celebrations only to become the first victims of 2017 when an Islamic State gunman stormed the premises and killed 39 people, mostly foreigners. One statistic stood out in the wake of the tragedy - most of the victims were from the Middle East.

"Before, there were a lot of customers from America and Europe," said the club co-owner, Mehmet Kocarslan said. "Once the Westerners decreased, Middle Easterners became a majority." "2016 was a very unfortunate year for Turkey," added Kocarslan, who said he was contemplating closing the club after the massacre. "There hasn't been a hardship our country didn't encounter." In the sprawling Grand Bazaar - officially the first ever roofed shopping mall when it was built in the 15th century - vendors stood in front of their jewelry,

clothing and souvenir shops, desperately looking for foreign customers. "Business is quite different than before," shop owner Muslim Besenk said. "There are bombs going off everywhere, why should tourists come? Only Arabs come. The rest cannot come and it's not certain that they will."

Basel Trablesei, a tourist from Lebanon, did not seem worried by the security in Istanbul despite the nightclub attack. "What happened here happens anywhere in the world, so this is something we can't avoid," he said. "I tell everyone to come to Istanbul." Pinar Kartal Timer, general manager of Istanbul's historic

Pera Palas hotel in the lively Beyoglu neighborhood, said the rise in tourists from the Middle East was because of Turkey's greater ties to the region.

"It's because already the strategy of the Turkish government has been to make a rapprochement with Middle Eastern countries," she said, referring to the conservative leadership that has shifted from its pro-Western policies.

Barcin Yinanc, a columnist at the English-language Daily News, said that all the strategic advantages Turkey offered in the mid-2000s have now turned against it. — AP



A tram is driven past as a Turkish police officer secures central Istanbul's Istiklal Avenue, the main shopping road of Istanbul.



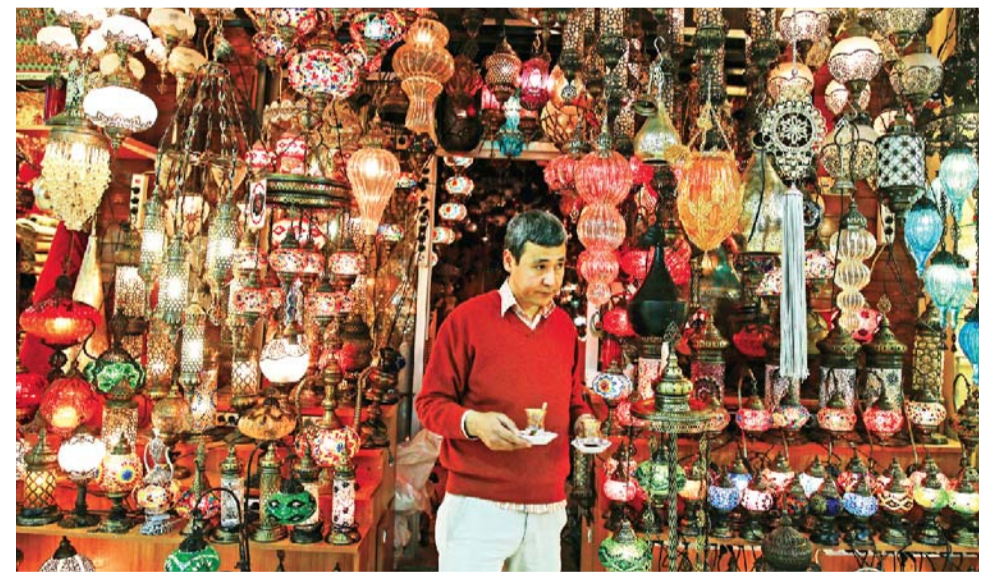
Turkish police officer patrols the area by the Byzantine-era Hagia Sophia, one of Istanbul's main tourist attractions in Istanbul.



Turkish flags decorate Istanbul's Grand Bazaar, one of Istanbul's main tourist attractions.



People walk at the Arasta Bazaar in the historic Sultanahmet district in Istanbul, one of the city's main tourist attractions.



A shop owner holds cups of tea outside his shop in Istanbul's Grand Bazaar, one of Istanbul's main tourist attractions.



A vendor waits for customers in Istanbul's Grand Bazaar, one of Istanbul's main tourist attractions.



A woman takes pictures on a boat crossing the Bosphorus in Istanbul.

Lifestyle

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Turkey's tourism takes big hit after extremist attacks

39



Shinto believers of the Teppozu Inari Shrine pray after bathing in cold water to purify their souls and bodies during a New Year event in Tokyo yesterday. Some 100 Shinto believers took part in the annual new year purification event. — AFP

Egyptians throw parties to save in 'money pools'

As belly dancers sway to the music of an Egyptian band playing at a young girl's birthday party, the guests count their cash to add to the pot. Microphone in hand, master of ceremonies Hassan El-Agami announces that one of the attendees has contributed 5,000 Egyptian pounds (260 euros, \$274), an unusually large amount. But the money in the pot is not for the young girl—it is for her father whose turn it is to collect the contents of a "money pool".

This cooperative savings system, also popular in other parts of the world such as Latin America, is helping Egyptians living in a period of deep economic hardship to find funding outside the banking system. "Each participant pays specific amounts at parties until their turn comes, and then he throws his party and collects his money," says Agami. Most participants put in between 250 and 2,500 Egyptian pounds per session, depending on their income.

They cannot borrow money from the pool but receive around the same amount as they put in. Unlike other money pools in Egypt, participants in the same one as the girl's father do not know each other. This is where Agami and other coordinators become essential, collecting and keeping track of each person's contribution, and fixing a schedule for future collections. Such parties are held each week in Egypt, usually on a Thursday evening, which marks the end of the workweek. One party can cost around 50,000 pounds to organize, yet the person throwing it could collect as much as 200,000 pounds from the pool, according to Agami.

'Help each other out'

A relative's wedding, a birthday party or even the celebration of a birth could become a meeting point for the participants. The idea is to throw as big a party as possible to attract a large crowd and more contributions. If participants in

the pool do not attend, an organizer will visit their home to collect the money instead. In the small town of Abou El-Gheit about 35 kilometers (22 miles) north of Cairo, the father of the young girl is too busy organizing and observing the party to stop and talk. Under a large colorful tent set up in farmland, lit up with bright white bulbs, about 500 attendees sit in a fog of smoke from hookah water pipes and cigarettes.

Most of the men wear long traditional garb,



A musician is showered with money as he performs during a wedding.



Egyptian master of ceremonies collects money at a wedding in the Egyptian Qalyubia governorate, north of Cairo.



A bride and groom are showered with money as they dance during a wedding.



staying until dawn, as several belly dancers perform in two-piece racy outfits despite cold weather. Magdy Ragab, in his 30s, was among those who came with his contribution. "I'll continue paying for a year or more until I throw my party," says Ragab, a butcher who may use the money to buy a pick-up truck, or to open a shop. Agami's assistants count the money, writing down the participants' names and the amount each of them paid. The attendees are presented with fruit wrapped in aluminum foil, cigarettes, hookah pipes, and bottles of beer.

Such parties have become more common in Egypt in the past few years as economic conditions deteriorate amid the political, security, and economic turmoil in the aftermath of the

January 2011 uprising. Some Egyptians fear they could lose their savings if banks go bankrupt, or do not even have bank accounts. Others do not qualify for loans. The instability in the Arab world's most populous nation has led to a dollar shortage, a slowdown in economic activity, ballooning inflation, and record price increases for basic goods and services.

It also led to shortages in medicine, baby milk, and other items such as sugar. In these conditions, money pools are one of the "grass-roots cooperative financing mechanisms," says economic analyst Wael Gamal. "When people don't trust banks or when borrowing costs are high, people opt for cooperative ways to help one another," says Gamal. — AFP



A bride and groom are showered with money as they dance during a wedding.



Egyptian men attend a wedding in the Egyptian Qalyubia governorate.