

Kuwait Airways union stages sit-in to demand rights



MoH to announce increase in expat fees



'La La Land' waltzes to big victory at Golden Globes



Ronaldo wins FIFA's player of the year award



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ASSEMBLY PANEL SAYS DEPUTY SPEAKER'S ELECTION INCORRECT

MP ADASANI TO GRILL HOUSING MINISTER OVER VIOLATIONS



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KUWAIT EXPECTS BIG COMMITMENT TO OIL CUT DEAL

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Oil Minister Essam Al-Marzouq yesterday described as encouraging oil production reductions announced so far. Kuwait heads a committee to monitor crude output cuts. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries agreed in November to cut its production by 1.2 million barrels per day starting January to reduce a global supply glut that had kept prices painfully low.

A group of 14 non-OPEC producers, led by the world's top crude producer Russia, agreed in December to lower their output by another 600,000 bpd, making the total pledged cuts at 1.8 million bpd. "So far, all Gulf producers, Iraq and Russia have announced their commitment to the cuts," Marzouq told a news conference after talks with OPEC secretary general Mohammad Barkindo. "These commitments make up between 60 percent and 70 percent of the pledged cuts" from the beginning of January, said the minister. "We expect the compliance to the cuts to be big because of its impact on boosting prices."

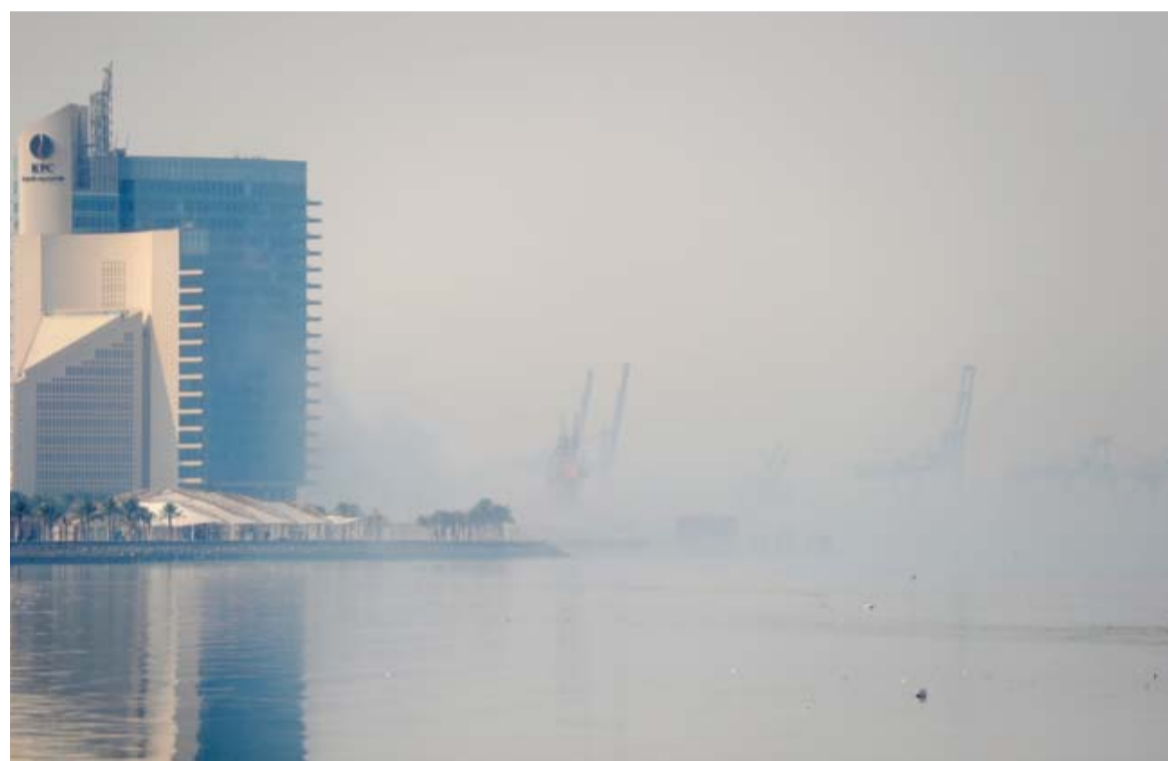
Kuwait heads the five-member Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee set up to monitor compliance with the pledged cuts. Marzouq said he discussed with Barkindo mechanisms to monitor the cuts by OPEC and non-OPEC members. The Kuwaiti minister said they discussed monitoring output of each member country and also the level of exports with the assistance of international companies.

Continued on Page 13



Essam Al-Marzouq

FOG SHUTS PORTS, FLIGHTS RE-ROUTED



KUWAIT: Shuwaikh Port is seen shrouded in fog early yesterday. Bad weather halted operations at Shuwaikh, Shuaiba and Doha ports, which were expected to resume activity once weather conditions and visibility improved. Also, 14 incoming flights were re-routed to airports in Dammam, Doha and Manama since 0400 local time until visibility was restored and flights resumed to Kuwait International Airport at 0700 local time. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's legal and legislative committee ruled yesterday that the election of deputy speaker Essa Al-Kandari was illegal and did not follow procedures specified in the constitution and the Assembly charter. The committee's decision was taken by three votes against two, with one abstention. Now the issue goes to the Assembly, which is expected to decide to refer the issue to the constitutional court for a mandatory decision.

On the first day of the new Assembly last month, Kandari was declared elected as deputy speaker after defeating his only competitor, Islamist opposition MP Jamaan Al-Harbash, by a single vote. But Kandari's win came after a second round of voting that many legal experts say was unnecessary and illegal. In the first round of voting, Harbash secured 32 votes against Kandari's 31, with one ballot empty. The election was judged by Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem as unconstitutional, since Harbash failed to get the simple majority of the 64 members present, which is 33.

But Harbash protested that according to a constitutional court ruling in 1996, the empty ballot should have been discarded from the total members present and the number should have become 63, which means that he had secured the simple majority needed (32 votes) and should have been declared the deputy speaker.

Ghanem however said that since the 1996 ruling, the Assembly charter had been amended and it stipulates that even the empty ballot should be counted as part of members present, and accordingly ruled that Harbash did not get the required simple majority of votes and ordered a revote, in which Kandari won by a single vote.

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TRUMP LASHES OUT AFTER STREEP REBUKE

NEW YORK: Donald Trump lashed out yesterday at screen legend Meryl Streep, accusing her of being an overrated "flunky" of Hillary Clinton after the actress berated him at the Golden Globes ceremony. In what has become an early morning custom for the notoriously thin-skinned president-elect, Trump took to Twitter to settle scores with the three-time Oscar winner. "Meryl Streep, one of the most overrated actresses in

Hollywood, doesn't know me but attacked last night at the Golden Globes," Trump wrote. "She is a Hillary flunky who lost big."

Streep berated Trump for his divisive rhetoric as she received a lifetime achievement award at the Golden Globes on Sunday in Los Angeles. The 67-year-old fought to control her emotions as she received a standing ovation during her

Continued on Page 13



BEVERLY HILLS, California: Meryl Streep accepts the Cecil B DeMille Award at the 74th Annual Golden Globe Awards at the Beverly Hilton Hotel on Sunday. — AP

US SHIP FIRED WARNING SHOTS AT IRANIAN BOATS TEHRAN TO DEVELOP MISSILES

WASHINGTON: A US Navy destroyer fired three warning shots at four Iranian fast-attack vessels after they closed in at a high rate of speed near the Strait of Hormuz, two US defense officials told Reuters yesterday. The incident, which occurred Sunday, comes as US President-elect Donald Trump prepares to take office on Jan 20. In September, Trump vowed that any Iranian vessels that harass the US Navy in the Gulf would be "shot out of the water".

The officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the USS Mahan established radio communication with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps boats but they did not respond to requests to slow down and continued asking the Mahan questions. The Navy destroyer fired warning flares and a US Navy helicopter also dropped a smoke float before the warning shots were fired. The Iranian vessels came within 800 m of the Mahan, which was escort-

ing two other US military ships, they said. The IRGC and Trump transition team were not immediately available for comment.

Meanwhile, Iranian lawmakers approved plans yesterday to expand military spending to five percent of the budget, including developing the country's long-range missile program which Trump has pledged to halt. The vote is a boost to Iran's military establishment - the regular army, the elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and defense ministry - which was allocated almost 2 percent of the 2015-16 budget.

But it could put the Islamic Republic on a collision course with the incoming Trump administration, and fuel criticism from other Western states which say Tehran's recent ballistic missile tests are inconsistent with a UN resolution on Iran.

Continued on Page 13

CHINESE ROBOT TURNS ON CHARM



SHANGHAI: Humanoid robot Jia Jia is seen following a presentation at a conference yesterday. — AFP

SHANGHAI: "Jia Jia" can hold a simple conversation and make specific facial expressions when asked, and her creator believes the eerily life-like robot heralds a future of cyborg labor in China. Billed as China's first human-like robot, Jia Jia was first trotted out last year by a team of engineers at the University of Science and Technology of China. Team leader Chen Xiaoping sounded like a proud father as he and his prototype appeared yesterday at an economic conference organized by banking giant UBS in Shanghai's futuristic financial center.

Chen predicted that perhaps within a decade artificially intelligent (AI) robots like Jia Jia will begin performing a range of menial tasks in Chinese restaurants, nursing homes, hospitals and households. "In 5-10 years there will be a lot of applications for robots in China," Chen said. With flowing black hair and dressed in a traditional Chinese dress, Jia Jia looks strikingly real. Yet her charm has its limits and simple questions frequently stump her.

Still, Chen said his team has made great progress over the past two years in developing her AI. She was able accurately to answer a query about the day's

Continued on Page 13

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News

in brief

UAE orders removal of 'Persian Gulf' from book

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates has ordered the removal from a textbook of the term "Persian Gulf" for the waterway that is the subject of a bitter naming dispute with Iran, a newspaper reported yesterday. The UAE education ministry stepped in after complaints that the book was using that name instead of "Arabian Gulf" that Arab countries use to describe the body of water, Emir Al-Youm said. The ministry said the fourth grade textbook, which featured a map with the name, had been on "trial and will be corrected in future prints", the daily reported. The authorities would distribute stickers to "cover the mistake", it added.

Police arrest 17 over Kardashian Paris heist

PARIS: French police arrested 17 people in raids yesterday over the armed robbery of US reality TV star Kim Kardashian in Paris last year based on DNA found at the crime scene, police sources said. Police swooped in the Paris region and the south of France following forensic work at the luxury residence in the capital where Kardashian was tied up and robbed of jewelry worth around nine million euros (\$9.5 million) in October. The oldest suspect being held is a 72-year-old man arrested after police broke open the gate of a pink-walled villa typical of the Provencal city of Grasse. The youngest is in his early 20s. Three women were among those arrested, including one aged 65 who was picked up in the southern Gard region, according to a source close to the probe.

Eight killed in attack on Sinai police post

CAIRO: An assault involving a car bomb against an Egyptian security checkpoint in the Sinai Peninsula killed seven policeman and a civilian yesterday, the interior ministry said. The ministry said assailants tried driving a vehicle packed with explosives into a checkpoint, but police fired on it, setting it off before it reached the post. The assailants also fired rocket propelled grenades at the checkpoint in the North Sinai city of El-Arish. Seven policemen and a civilian passerby were killed in the attack, the ministry said, adding that policemen who returned fire killed five militants. Eight people were also wounded in the attack, state newspaper Al-Ahram reported on its website.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah poses for a group picture with Amiri Diwan Advisor Dr Yousef Hamad Al-Ibrahim, Chief Executive Officer of Proteges organization Shamlan Al-Bahr, and members of the organization. —Amiri Diwan photos



AMIR ENCOURAGES ADVOCATES OF PROTEGES PROGRAM FOR YOUTH CARE

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Amiri Diwan Advisor Dr Yousef Hamad Al-Ibrahim, Chief Executive Officer of Proteges organization Shamlan Al-Bahr, and members of the organization which advocates training and sharpening skills of the youth. The organization holds seminars and training courses for the young citizens to study their talents and help them boost their skills, employing innovative methods.

His Highness the Amir, addressing the guests, re-affirmed that the State would put all available resources at the disposal of caring for the junior nationals. During the audience, attended by Deputy Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Bahr addressed His Highness with the term, 'Yoba' (Kuwaiti dialect for father), noting that His Highness had hosted a delegation from Proteges when it was founded seven years ago and since then, the program has produced batches of



Members of the Proteges hold pictures showing activities carried out by the organization.

highly skilled youth who earned international honoring and praise. Mohammad Al-Mnaikh recalled

that His Highness during the first meeting with the program members had encouraged them to press ahead



Members of the Proteges are pictured during the reception.

and let no obstacle stand in their face. "Proteges has developed into a leading organization tasked with

enhancing leadership skills among the youth," he said, noting that its members' number has grown from 25

to 150. "We are not present solely in Kuwait, for we have reached eight other states and have become linked up with five universities," said Mnaikh, who developed from a student in the program to a guide.

Mnaikh requested that His Highness furnish him and his colleagues with further support "so that we could double our performance." The program has paved the way for many young Kuwaitis to excel and turn into highly renowned leaders; namely Noura Al-Hajri and Bader Al-Tahous. Another activist mentioned that the organization distributed 35,000 books to those in need and refugees.

Reciprocating, His Highness the Amir said he was deeply touched for being addressed with the term 'Yoba.' "This is a grand overture ... it touched my heart deeply ... indeed you are all my children and I assure you that you won't stop halfway and we will manifest the goodness in ourselves by backing you," His Highness said. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Health Dr Jamal Al-Harbi, who was accompanied by Dr Muthana Al-Sartawi. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with OPEC's Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo, in the presence of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Minister of Oil, Electricity and Water Essam Al-Marzouq.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Amiri Diwan Advisor Dr Yousef Hamad Al-Ibrahim and members of the Kuwaiti Youth Sports Campaign.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of Kuwait Science Club (KSC) Ahmad Al-Manfouhi, Deputy Chairman Talal Al-Kharafi and other senior KSC officials.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr Hilal Al-Sayer.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with President of the National Security Bureau Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and shareholders of a global water resources company.

AMIR GIVES CREDIT TO PHYSICIAN BEHIND INNOVATIVE SURGERY

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Minister of Health Dr Jamal Al-Harbi, who was accompanied by Dr Muthana Al-Sartawi. Sartawi briefed His Highness the Amir on an innovative knee replacement surgery procedure that he had pioneered. His Highness the Amir extolled the medical achievement that he described as an honor for the country, adding that such accomplishments will help propel Kuwait to the upper echelons of the healthcare worldwide. The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Moreover, the Minister of Health said that the meeting with His Highness the Amir was called to give Sartawi the credit he deserves for conducting this intricate surgery that ensures maximum convenience for patients undergoing the procedure.

Meanwhile, Dr Sartawi noted that he was "honored to have met His Highness the Amir," attributing his success to "pecuniary support provided by Kuwait." He also added that this accomplishment will motivate him to attain further progress.

Sartawi later met with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, extolled the medical achievement that he described as an honor for the country, and wished the physician further success in the healthcare field.

In other news, His Highness the Amir received Minister of Oil,

Electricity and Water Essam Al-Marzouq at Bayan Palace, in presence of His Highness the Crown Prince. Minister Marzouq was accompanied by OPEC's Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo.

His Highness the Amir also received Chairman of Kuwait Science Club (KSC) Ahmad Al-Manfouhi, Deputy Chairman Talal Al-Kharafi and other senior KSC officials. His Highness the Amir heaped praise on KSC for its work to allow youth have the opportunity to hone their skills, wishing the club persistent success and prosperity.

Sports upbringing

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir received Amiri Diwan Advisor Dr Yousef Hamad Al-Ibrahim and members of the Kuwaiti Youth Sports Campaign which advocates youth sports upbringing, where Kuwait will have generations of athletes skilled in various games.

The Amir's guests briefed His Highness about objectives of the campaign which seeks to guide young citizens get engaged in positive and useful activities "and create a generation of junior Olympic-level athletes in various sports in coordination with relevant international sports academies." His Highness the Amir, during the audience, attended by Deputy Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, praised the campaigners for advo-

ating promotion of the sports culture in the Kuwaiti society and creating integrated athletic generations.

Member of the campaign Abdullah Al-Ugab indicated at a blueprint for upbringing integrated sports generations, in coordination with international organizations and academies, namely the Olympic University in Sochi, Russia, a Russian school for children's sports training and the Olympic Sports Academy in Colorado, the US. The campaign will be proclaimed in February, in tandem with the National Days' celebrations.

Another member, Abdullah Dehrab, said he and his colleagues had already prepared documentaries about Kuwaiti champions who made achievements in and outside the country, noting that a number of excellent Kuwaiti athletes are — unfairly — not quite popular. Some video clips about the national champions have been posted on the social media, drawing much appreciation and applause, he said, hoping that all athletes be honored at a celebration in Jaber Stadium, adding that he presented His Highness the Amir with an integrated study with respect of these matters.

Qais Al-Dabbous, also a member in the campaign, said the relevant media campaign had begun a month ago, with the posting of clips on the digital media providing brief information about top Kuwaiti champions, namely Jassem Yaacoub, Saad Al-Houti,

Ahmad Al-Taraboulsi and the famous female swimmer, Fay' Al-Sultan, as well as others.

Aid campaigns

Separately, His Highness the Crown Prince received Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, who offered to him an explanation over KRCS' aid campaigns for displaced people from the war-torn Syrian city of Aleppo. His Highness the Crown Prince urged for increased solidarity to cope with humanitarian challenges, as he lauded KRCS' aid provided to the needy all across the globe. His Highness also met with Kuwait's Ambassador to the United Kingdom Khaled Abdulaziz Al-Duwaisan. Furthermore, His Highness the Crown Prince President of the National Security Bureau (NSB) Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. The NSB Chairman was accompanied by shareholders of a global water resources company, who briefed His Highness the Crown Prince on the company's plans to diversify water resources in a bid to ensure water and food security. His Highness the Crown Prince extolled the company's efforts, wishing them continued success and prosperity. The meeting was attended by head of protocols at His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. —KUNA

ARAB PARLIAMENT CHIEF HAILS AMIR'S ROLE FOR PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS

CAIRO: Chairman of the Arab Parliament Dr Meshaal Al-Salmi yesterday lauded efforts of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the level of promoting human rights at the local and Arab levels.

Salmi was addressing the 12th session of the Arab Human Rights Committee, tasked with discussing the First National Report, presented by the State of Kuwait, in implementation of the Arab Human Rights Charter. He affirmed Kuwait's keenness on presenting its first report about the human rights' status in the Arab countries, noting the political leadership's great confidence in the Arab mechanisms in the realm of human rights and resolve to meet aspirations of the Kuwaiti people in this regard.

The State of Kuwait has substantiated its commitments to human rights by approving relevant treaties and accords and by presenting the regular reports according to schedules at Arab and international conventions and quarters.

The Kuwaiti constitution stipulates human rights' principles, justice, freedoms, protection of the family, motherhood and childhood, said Al-Salmi, adding that the latest successful parliamentary elections, held in November, signaled a clear evidence of the well-established democracy in the Kuwaiti society. He drew attention to recurring cases of human rights abuses in the Arab world, particularly in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Somalia.

Earlier, Arab League's Human Rights Committee Chairman Dr Hadi Al-Yami hailed the State of Kuwait's distinctive experience in the humanitarian domain, namely with respect of human rights. Yami lauded the rich Kuwaiti experience at this level in a statement, inaugurating the 12th session of an affiliate panel, Kuwait has succeeded in bolstering its humanitarian role through democracy, institutional performance by the government, the parliament and the judiciary, he said, also lauding role of the Kuwaiti press and media as well as the dynamic Kuwaiti people at such levels.

There is political will behind the Kuwaiti achievements, though "there is no ceiling for human rights," Yami added. He welcomed the participating Kuwaiti delegation, headed by the Permanent Delegate to the United Nations, Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghuneim, also expressing satisfaction at outcome of a visit, paid by the commission members to Kuwait, last May. The panel members, during the visit, examined the Kuwaiti efforts in bolstering and protecting human rights, he said, expressing gratitude to Kuwaiti societies for taking part in the session and presenting reports, in addition to the one put forward by the Government of Kuwait. The Arab committee's responsibilities are turning greater due to turbulent conditions in "our Arab homeland," he said, indicating that the dramatic events "undoubtedly affect human rights." —KUNA



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

CABINET DECIDES TO INCORPORATE PHILANTHROPY INTO SCHOOL CURRICULA

PANEL TO INVESTIGATE ANTI-CORRUPTION AUTHORITY

KUWAIT: At the behest of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Cabinet has decreed to introduce philanthropy and volunteerism to school curricula, given the merit of such virtues. In a statement issued after its weekly meeting yesterday, the Cabinet noted that philanthropy and volunteerism will be offered as an individual course that aims to instill in pupils these moral attributes. Moreover, the education system in the country will be propped up after this decision is implemented, the statement added.

In September 2014, the United Nations (UN) honored His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, christening him a 'Humanitarian

Leader' and Kuwait a 'Humanitarian Center', in appreciation of the country's steadfast humanitarian efforts.

Anti-Corruption Authority

Meanwhile, the Cabinet has agreed to form a committee to examine facts germane to a law dealing with the Anti-Corruption Authority, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr Falah Al-Azab said yesterday.

In a statement after the Cabinet's meeting, the Minister of Justice said that the committee is due to submit a report to the Cabinet upon completion of its work. According to clause number 9 of law number 2/2016 pertaining to the Anti-

Corruption Authority, "membership in the authority's security council is valid for four years and can only be renewed once. Moreover, any member of the security council will face suspension in case of negligence." If any position in the security council is vacant, "an interim replacement will be named immediately."

Fight against terror

The ministers examined a host of political issues at the Arab and international levels during the meeting. On that regard, Kuwait affirmed solidarity with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia asserting that it will continue to stand alongside Riyadh, putting all resources at the disposal of the fight against "the forces of evil and devia-

tion seeking to undermine security and stability in this brotherly country."

In a statement read after the meeting, the Cabinet lauded the Kingdom's firmness in facing and wiping off terrorism, noting that it has followed up on recent security incidents in the Kingdom and efforts of the authorities for safeguarding the country's security and stability. Saudi Minister of Interior announced two days ago that two terrorists were killed and a Saudi policeman was wounded in a shootout in Al-Yasameen district in the north of the capital, Riyadh. Riyadh declared that one of the two terrorists was a member of the so-called Islamic State who masterminded fabricating explosives, rigging and training suicide attackers. —KUNA



The late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the late Chairman of KRCS Barjas Al-Barjas attend the inauguration of the new KRCS building.



KRCS trucks sent to help Palestinians in Gaza.

KRCS BEACON IN KUWAIT'S CHARITABLE HISTORY

KUWAIT: A beacon in Kuwait's charitable history in the last 50 years, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) has been illustrating what the country's message is all about under the Humanitarian Leader; His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In December 1965, 18 philanthropists had set the society's charter, with its principles derived from global humanitarian values. On January 10, 1966, the Society was officially proclaimed, as it then joined the International Conference on the Red Cross and Red Crescent, embarking on its humanitarian mission around the world. —KUNA



KRCS distribution of humanitarian aid for victims in north Lebanon.



KRCS distribution of humanitarian aid in the Philippines.



KRCS distribution of humanitarian aid for displaced Syrians.



Trucks loaded with humanitarian aid for flood victims.



KRCS distribution of humanitarian aid in north Basra, Iraq.

In Brief

AMIR EXTENDS CONDOLENCES

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences yesterday to Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi, expressing his deepest sympathies over the victims of an attack on a security checkpoint in Sinai province. — KUNA



PARLIAMENT SPEAKER RECEIVES US ENVOY

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem received yesterday the US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman, on the occasion of the start of the US envoy's tenure. — KUNA



DIWAN MINISTER MEETS ENVOY

KUWAIT: Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received yesterday Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Bakhromjon Alov. The minister underscored the depth of ties with the Asian nation and keenness to bolster bilateral relations. — KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: This file photo shows a minaret and a 'Boom' ship's bow, located at the Radisson Blu Hotel on Blajat Street. A traditional Arabic sailing vessel, the Boom was the main dhow used for pearl diving and trade during the pre-oil era of Kuwait's history. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS SHOWCASE DESIGNS FOR JAZEERA AIRWAYS' NEW TERMINAL

KUWAIT: From locally inspired designs to avant-garde and ultra-modern designs, 30 students from Kuwait University's College of Architecture showcased 15 architectural designs for Jazeera Airways new terminal in an exhibit hosted by Jazeera Airways and attended by university faculty, senior executives from Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation and Jazeera Airways.

The student exhibit received a warm welcome from Jazeera Airways staff, and was toured by Kuwait University's Dean of College of Architecture Dr Omar Khattab, student project supervisor Dr Mohammad Al Jassar, and from Jazeera Airways, Chief Operating Officer and Accountable Manager Abdullah Al Hudaid, Vice President for Ground Operations Naser Al Obaid.

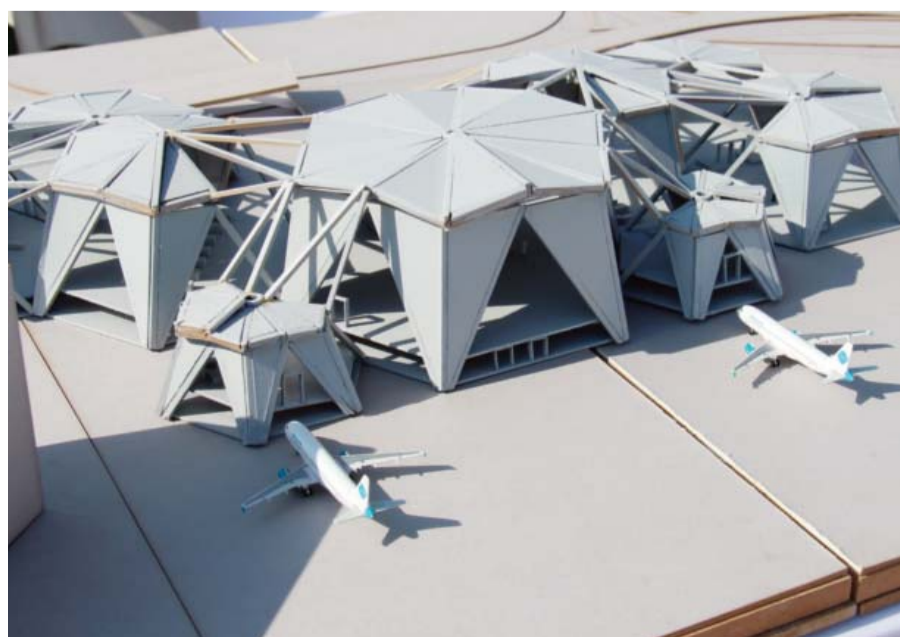
Following the tour, the airline awarded the top three designs as part of its support for initiatives taken by the students. The awarded students were:

- First place: Aisha Al Saraawy and Nouf Bin Nasser
- Second place: Mohammad Al Mansour and Yehya Adnan
- Third place: Husna Al Fozan and Haya Al Anjari

Chief Operating Officer and Accountable Manager Abdullah Al-Hudaid said, "The projects we saw today exceeded our expectations by all measures. We often see architecture students focusing on designing residential buildings in their university years, however, this exhibition reflected a move to infrastructure driven by their need to find solutions to the problems and challenges they are facing first hand. I thank the Dean of College of Architecture Dr Omar Khattab and the project's supervisor Dr Mohammad Al Jassar for taking this initiative and giving their students the new Jazeera Airways Terminal assignment and congratulations to the winners who we hope to become pioneers of the aviation infrastructure sector."

The students' projects were inspired by the airline's July announcement that it obtained the government's approval to build and operate a dedicated passenger terminal at Kuwait International Airport. Jazeera Airways plans to launch the terminal in 2018.

The airline's new terminal will feature state-of-the-art check-in facilities and features tasked to streamline the traveler's on-ground experience and make it hassle-free, both on departure and arrival. The terminal will provide a range of check-in options, including conventional check-in counters, self check-in bag drops, remote check-in, mobile check-in, and an electronic immigration pass. The terminal is part of the airline's 'Next Big Thing' series of value boosting projects and initiatives tasked with creating a better travel experience on ground and in the air.





KUWAIT: Members of Kuwait Airways' employees syndicate stage a sit-in outside KAC headquarters in Dajeej yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT AIRWAYS UNION STAGES SIT-IN TO DEMAND RIGHTS

PASSPORT STAMPING ADDS TO FISHERMEN'S WOES: UNION

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways' employees syndicate yesterday organized a sit-in outside KAC headquarters in Dajeej to demand the rights of pilots, engineers and other employees that it says have not been honored. MP Mohammed Al-Khodair took part in the demonstration and stressed that lawmakers will demand these rights as well. He noted that law number 6/2008 is very clear and the fact that it was not put into practice means the government is taking the parliament too lightly.

Kuwait Lawyers Society secretary Mohannad Talal Al-Sayer claimed Kuwait Airways and its subsidiary companies have been trying to shake out and get rid of Kuwaiti employees. He stressed the lawyers society fully supports Kuwait Airways employees and protection of their rights. Also speaking was the head of KAC retirees Ahmed Al-Randi, who said retired Kuwait Airways employees are stand-

ing side by side by those still in service. He added some retirees have also been deprived of some rights such as annual free tickets.

Fishermen union

Kuwait Fishermen Union held a seminar at its headquarters in Sharq, which was attended by Kuwait Coastguards' marine formations assistant director Col Tareq Al-Wazeq, the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources' marine control manager Marzouq Al-Habbi, the union's lawyer Saleh Al-Harran and a number of board members.

Chairman Thaher Al-Sowayyan reviewed the problems fishermen faced during the season that ended in the beginning of January and stressed that the decision to transfer fishermen to Um Al-Maradem Island had negatively affected them and caused considerable losses because of the extra 60 miles they had to sail, leaving them less time for fishing. Sowayyan added

that the decision to stamp fishermen's passports in and out and having to leave the passports with fishermen made many of them flee, leaving sponsors to suffer unbearable losses because many of their boats stopped operating. Had added that the stamping also used up passport pages and fishermen will have to pay KD 50 to issue new ones. "Half of Kuwait's fishing fleet will not work this coming season if the situation remains the same," he warned. Wazeq stressed that passports had to be stamped for security reasons and added that the fact that some fishermen absconded was a matter amongst fishermen themselves.

Comprehensive healthcare

MP Dr Mohammed Al-Howailah recently filed a proposal to fully equip all polyclinics in Kuwait to act as comprehensive healthcare centers with the aim of lessening pressure on public hospitals. He also suggested having some of those centers work 24/7.

KUWAIT TO HELP IRAQ REBUILD MOSUL: DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER

MP WANTS TO LIMIT EXPATS' RIGHT TO CHANGE EMPLOYERS

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said Kuwait and Iraq have already discussed holding a special conference to rebuild Mosul after liberating it from IS, as well as the possibility that a donors' conference be hosted in Kuwait for this purpose. "Iraqis have been requested to prepare a vision of the conference," Jarallah added, noting that the Iraqi side promised to come up with the vision and discuss it with Kuwait soon.

Jarallah said legal affairs managers at both foreign ministries will meet soon to discuss the details of demarking marine borders after mark 162. He also denied the presence of any problems or disputes concerning oilfields or other natural resources on the borders. Jarallah added that discussions also tackled navigation through Abdullah Creek and that both sides agreed to put a related agreement signed in 2014 into practice. "Signing an agreement to organize aviation between both countries will help launch commercial flights between Baghdad and Kuwait soon," he concluded.

Foreign workers

MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf said that at a time when oil producing counties are reorganizing labor markets to create new job opportunities, encourage the youth to join the private sector and reduce dependence on expatriate labor, the government in Kuwait keeps recruiting foreign workers. "This indicates the government and the concerned minister's failure and lack of vision to nationalize jobs and substitute expats with citizens," he stressed.

Hajraf also criticized what he called as allowing some foreign embassies' staff to interfere in the Public Authority for Manpower's decisions on behalf of their nationals and at the expense of employers. "The Minister of Social Affairs and Labor has been pre-



Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah



MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf

dicted on dealing with citizens and accuses them of trafficking in expats, as if they (expats) and their embassies are not responsible as well," he added, noting that the labor law needs real amendments to explain both sides' rights and obligations.

Hajraf called for putting an end to what he described as the chaos at the manpower authority at the expense of Kuwait's reputation. "Expats should not be allowed to transfer residency visas as long as employers respect the provisions in the contracts signed with them, namely those concerning labor, vocational and financial rights. This will help differentiate those who come to Kuwait to work and those who only come to make trouble and transfer visas as they wish," he said, pointing out that chaos in Kuwait's labor market encourages expats to purchase visas and do freelance jobs.

Moreover, Hajraf said that the labor law has many loopholes such as accepting grievances filed by expats working for people other than their sponsors and that this encourages many of them to abscond and get temporary visas to cancel the old one and shift sponsors, or even buy 'free' visas and start working on their own. "Expats have taken advantage of the weak laws and file more than one complaint without showing up for hearings, so that they can

finally be allowed to transfer visas," he explained.

Traffic jams

During a meeting of the government public services committee headed by Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Subaih and attended by Minister of Public Works (MPW) Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa, the finance ministry held MPW responsible for traffic jams in areas surrounding the ministries complex because of delays in adjusting the routes around the complex. At the same time, MPW promised to carry out short-term solutions within a month. Speaking during the meeting, the finance ministry's assistant undersecretary for public services Nabil Al-Abduljaleel stressed that the finance ministry had done its part over a year ago, while MPW did not.

'Positive' meeting

Well-informed sources at the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) said that ministry officials recently held a joint meeting with State Audit Bureau officials to discuss the remarks mentioned in a recent report. "The meeting was very positive," stressed the sources, noting that MEW promised to tackle the remarks and avoid violations and discuss them at the parliament on Jan 16.

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Crime

Report

€85,000 IN CASH STOLEN

KUWAIT: Criminal detectives are working on a case involving €85,000 in cash that were reportedly stolen from a moneychanger in Farwaniya. It is feared the two thieves may have left the country as soon as they committed the crime. Sources said two English-speaking men went to a money exchange shop in Farwaniya and asked for €82,000 in cash. The two told the cashier they wanted to count the money, then when they finished, they gave the cashier an ATM card, but there was no balance in the bank account. The two told him to keep the money aside until they go to the bank and find out what's wrong. When they did not return, the cashier opened the bag, only to be surprised the money was forged. When security tapes were reviewed, it was discovered that the thieves had swapped the real notes with forged ones. The two are thought to be Russian and Turkish.

Fight

A restaurant was the scene of a fight that included seven Bangladeshi workers on one side, while the other had various nationals including a Palestinian, Egyptian, Jordanian and some women. A source said the fight started because customers had doubts the food was expired. The Bangladeshi complained at Jabriya police station, while one of them was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) after suffering a brain hemorrhage. Meanwhile, a Kuwaiti man was admitted to the ICU after being stabbed during a fight at a camp. Detectives went to Adan Hospital to question the person who brought the injured there.

Armed robbery

Hawally and Jahra prosecutors asked detectives to look for three persons who robbed two Indians in Nugra and Doha. A security source said an Indian woman told Nugra police that she was robbed by a man with a knife, who took KD 100 and two mobiles in an elevator. Meanwhile, an Indian man told Waha police he was robbed of KD 70 and a mobile.

Enraged camel

A Bangladeshi man had to be taken to hospital and admitted to the ICU after an enraged camel bit him in the head. His sponsor said the camel became angry without provocation and attacked the shepherd. — Al-Anbaa



Ahmad Abdulmir Khan

NESTLE, TAMOR WA ASAL JOIN HORECA 2017

KUWAIT: Preparations for the Horeca Kuwait 2017 exhibition are steadily progressing, and the event is attracting more companies to take part, since it is an event which provides a golden opportunity to exchange expertise to meet the local market's needs and future expansion plans. In this regard, Nestle Professional announced its intention to join other companies specialized in hospitality, hotel equipment, catering, transportation, cooking gas and design, which have already signed up to take part in Horeca Kuwait 2017 exhibition.

Nestle Professional's CEO Samer Jarjourah said that his company provides top quality products and is highly capable of providing full support to food service operators. "Our company has ideal food and beverage solutions," he underscored, inviting guests to visit Nestle Professional's booth at the exhibition.

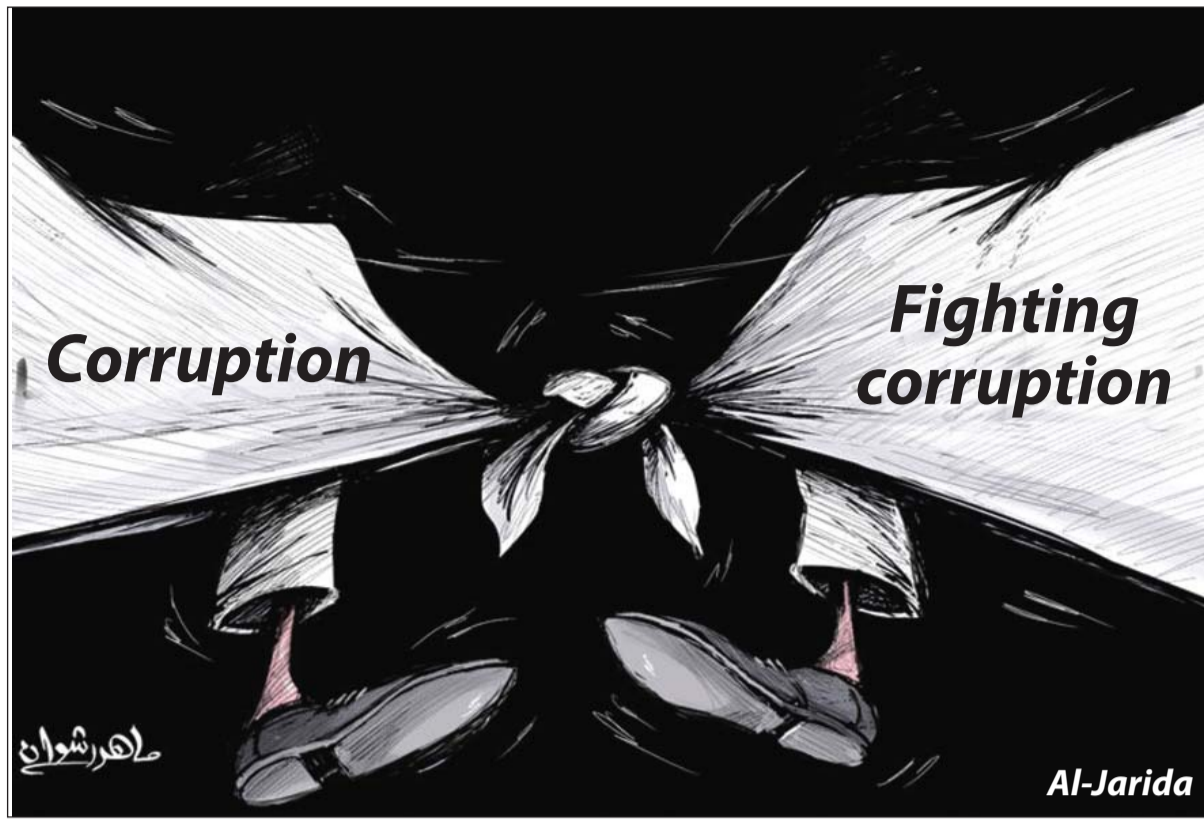
Meanwhile, Tamor Wa Asal (Dates and Honey) Center also announced plans to participate in the exhibition. "Such specialized events help us survey clients' demands and open new scopes for commercial agreements and deals with various companies," the center's director Ahmad Abdulmir Khan said, stressing the 'essential role' that Horeca Kuwait plays in this regard.

In addition, Khan stressed that Tamor Wa Asal provides top quality supplies of dates, including all varieties of top demand in Kuwait. It also supplies varieties of dates stuffed with chocolate, nuts and others, he added. Furthermore, he noted that the center provides sugar-free honey, in addition to other types of high quality honey that earned it quality and safety certificates presented by Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and other specialized organizations.

Horeca Kuwait 2017 has so far attracted over 80 companies due to display their products in the presence of a group of international experts and chefs and a large group of company and hotel owners. The exhibition is organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Company at Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref on January 16-18, 2017.



Samer Jarjourah



الجريدة

Al-Jarida

A FOUR-LEGGED BIRD

By Saad Al-Motesh

Let me confess to you that I have been afflicted with something I cannot get rid of, although I know what caused it. Maybe some of you can provide some advice to find a way out of it. To start with, thanks be to Almighty Allah, this it is a worldly matter. I have been afflicted with people always thinking I am writing about and referring to them in my articles or on social media networks. They believe they are my worst nightmares. Well, feeling like this, I will have to tell them - as someone responded in a similar situation - that "there is more than one bird in my trap!"

Therefore, to those who think and suspect that I am referring to them, they ought to know that I never pay attention to trivialities and 'small' people whom I

hardly notice. So, if they are spreading rumors that I mean them, they have to know that they are not up to such an honor and those I really refer to know themselves very well.

So, I do beg all those poor birds trying to gain fame and importance by tweeting very often, to rest assured. They are not on my nightmare list and have never even been dreams I seek to realize because mine are much bigger. They should know I would only mention them on entering and getting out of a place that requires a special prayer. May Allah save the true real birds so that we can enjoy listening to them and spare us from those thinking they are real birds, while they are four-legged! — Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Anbaa



Health Minister Dr. Jamal Al-Harbi



Dr. Mahmoud Abdulhadi



Dr. Khaled Al-Sahlawi

MINISTRY ANNOUNCES EXPAT HEALTH FEES INCREASE TODAY

ENERGY TARIFFS HIKE TO INCREASE PRIVATE SERVICES' FEES

KUWAIT: The new list for prices of health services offered to expatriates in Kuwait is set to be released today, a Ministry of Health official said on Sunday. The announcement will be made during a press conference to be attended by radiologists, lab technicians and other specialists from the ministry, said Dr. Mahmoud Abdulhadi, the Assistant Undersecretary for Legal Affairs. He was speaking during a ceremony to honor two doctors, which was also attended by Health Minister Dr. Jamal Al-Harbi and his top undersecretary Dr. Khaled Al-Sahlawi.

'Long overdue'

Dr. Harbi defended the upcoming increases by saying that they are 'long overdue' and reiterated that the fees will still be less by 20 compared to the private sector for certain lab tests, x-rays and other services. "The project to increase fees of health services offered to expatriates, including residents and visitors, come after a very long time in which the currently nominal fees have not been subjected to any revisions," the minister said. "Yet, those fees continue to be heavily costly for the state."

Asked about the expected high increase in fees of certain treatments and medications, Harbi noted that expats who cannot afford paying the new fees can seek alternatives such as private healthcare insurance. "Those medica-

tions are costly for the state, and everyone has to pay for treatment, especially people on visit visas," he affirmed.

Spending cut

The new step matches the government's general austerity measures that target reducing expenses and limit the effect of a projected budget deficit due to the decline in oil prices. "There are three million expats that the ministry provides treatment services for in exchange for small fees compared to the local and regional markets, something that adds an extra burden on the state," Dr. Sahlawi said.

The ministry also hopes that the recent fee raises would increase the number of people who seek treatment at private hospitals and clinics, and thus alleviating some of the pressure on the state's jam-packed public medical facilities. On that regard, Dr. Sahlawi noted that the Health Insurance Hospitals Company will start partial operation during the first quarter of this year by starting to offer services through a number of clinics, before going into full operation in 2020.

The shareholding company, also known as 'Daman', was established in recent years to build three hospitals and fifteen polyclinics that would provide full medical services for expatriates working in the private sector in Kuwait; whereas access to public hospitals would after that be restricted to Kuwaitis, domestic workers and

possibly expats working in the public sector.

Energy tariffs

In a related note, a senior physician at Kuwait's private sector warned that prices of medical services offered at private hospitals and clinics in Kuwait are bound to increase once the hike of electricity and water tariffs becomes effective on May. "[Increasing energy tariffs] requires reviewing the relationship between medical facilities and insurance companies since the contracts between them were signed according to the current rates," said Dr. Adel Ashkenani, Chairman of the Union of Owners of Private Medical Professions. He noted that keeping medical fees the same after energy rates increase would create a 'disturbance' in the private medical sector.

Dr. Ashkenani also rebuffed reports suggesting that the Health Ministry is working on releasing a unified list for fees of services presented in the private sector. "This is impossible because rents are not the same, costs differ from one clinic to another, and the prices of medical equipment vary depending on their quality and country of origin," he explained. The union will soon meet with Minister Dr. Harbi to discuss the effect of the energy tariffs' increase on fees of private medical services, he noted. — Translated from the Arabic press



KUWAIT: Interior Ministry's Undersecretary Lieutenant General Suleiman Al-Fahad yesterday honored Staff Sergeant Adel Ali from the Traffic General Department who was injured in line of duty while chasing and arresting a reckless driver. Lt Gen Fahad also met with members of Kuwait Fishermen Union to discuss their demands, the Interior Ministry said in a statement.



الجريدة

Al-Jarida

NEW YEAR OF HOPE

By Dr Nermin Al-Houti

The year 2016 witnessed many terrorist acts, leaving countless widows and orphans in their wake. It was a year when economy collapsed, parties and religions differed, while races and countries parted away. Twelve months that saw sadness, ignorance, poverty and death. But despite of all this, we still believe that love exists.

Most countries were affected with economic crises, and many of us lost people who are near and dear ones. We mourned over the killings and explosions in neighboring countries, and said goodbye to

Let us wish that our new year will be all about peace and love.

2016 with tears while some people even forgot how to smile. Although the losses were massive, we should start a new year with our hearts filled with love and happiness.

It is not a mathematical formula, but a philosophical principle: as long as human beings exist, love will prevail, so let us wish that our new year will be all about peace and love. This phrase alone contains the two words that mean everything to a human being. In a heart filled with love, there is no place for violence. So, let our first words in this new year be: Oh Allah, You are peace and peace is from You. God is love, and we love those who love You, the Owner of majesty and honor.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



Worst rain 'in 30 yrs' heaps misery on flood-hit Thai south

'MOMENT OF TRUTH' AS NEW CYPRUS PEACE TALKS BEGIN



TEHRAN: Hassan Khomeini (center), grandson of Iran's late founder of the Islamic Republic, sits with relatives around the coffin of former Iranian president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani during a mourning ceremony for Rafsanjani at Jamaran mosque on Sunday. Fatemeh and Mehdi, the children of Rafsanjani are seen at left. — AFP

IRAN MOURNS 'SHEIKH OF MODERATION'

TRIBUTES POUR IN FOR RAFSANJANI • THREE DAYS OF MOURNING BEGIN

TEHRAN: Iran began three days of mourning yesterday after the death of ex-president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a pillar of the Islamic revolution who became a leading counterweight to hardliners. Tributes poured in for the moderate cleric, including from President Hassan Rouhani, who was reportedly at Rafsanjani's bedside before he died of a heart attack aged 82. "Islam lost a valuable treasure, Iran an outstanding general, the Islamic revolution a courageous flag-bearer and the Islamic system a rare sage," Rouhani said.

Iran's political and religious leadership attended a memorial service at Hussainiya Jamaran, a religious hall in northern Tehran run by the family of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic republic. Rafsanjani, who after serving for two terms became a cautious reformist to offset the hardliners clustered around a successor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, will be buried Tuesday at Khomeini's mausoleum in southern Tehran.

The ISNA news agency said his death Sunday was a "great loss for the moderates," describing the ayatollah as "the sheikh of moderation". Rafsanjani was a key backer of Rouhani and supported Iran's landmark nuclear deal with world powers. Rouhani is expected to stand for a second four-year term in a May vote and has now lost a key supporter in the crucial run-up to the election.

Black banners
The front pages of yesterday's newspapers were dominated by the face of Rafsanjani, who served as president from 1989 to 1997, and black banners were raised on Tehran's streets. All music concerts and television comedy programs were called off as a sign of respect. At yesterday's memorial service, student Ali Tafreshi said he cried for three and half hours after he heard Rafsanjani had died. "This cannot be compensated. We have no one like him, as the supreme leader said. A pillar is missing from the revolution's building," he said.

Rafsanjani's youngest son Yaser, 46, thanked people mourning his father for their "loyalty and kindness". "I see scenes of affection that I cannot believe. People's prayers for our father console our hearts," he told state television. Rafsanjani was born on Aug 25, 1934 in southern Iran to the family of a wealthy pistachio farmer. He studied theology in the holy city of Qom before entering politics in 1963 after the shah's police arrested Khomeini.

A confidant of Khomeini, Rafsanjani was the speaker of parliament for two consecutive terms until Khomeini's death in 1989. Rafsanjani's presidency, a breathing space after the end of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, was marked by reconstruction, cautious reform and repairs to Iran's relations

with its Arab neighbors. But it was also marred by human rights violations, rampant inflation and difficult relations with Europe, not least with Britain after the "death sentence", or fatwa, handed down to writer Salman Rushdie by Khomeini.

'I can die in peace'
Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is expected to lead special Islamic prayers performed for the deceased during Tuesday's funeral service. State television yesterday looped old interviews by Rafsanjani and Khamenei, emphasizing the lasting bond between two stalwarts of the 1979 revolution. Rafsanjani was always a member of Iran's top clerical body, the Assembly of Experts, charged with appointing - and if required dismissing - the country's supreme leader. He chaired the influential committee for several years.

The ayatollah played an important role in the election of the reformist Mohammad Khatami, who succeeded him as president from 1997 to 2005. Rafsanjani suffered a big blow when he lost in the presidential vote's second round to hardline Ahmadinejad in 2005. But he rose again, this time more determined in helping the reformist and moderate camps defeat ultra-conservatives, under whom Iran's relations with the West plummeted.

In the run-up to the presidential elections in 2013, hand in hand with Khatami, the two figures played a key role in uniting and organizing people in favor of the moderate Rouhani, who could not have secured the office without reformist support. In an interview last year Rafsanjani recounted events

leading to the end of Ahmadinejad's reign. "I succeeded in partially changing the situation under the worst circumstances. People won in 2013, as bravely as they started the revolution," he told the reformist Shargh daily. "I can die in peace now, as people make their own choices." — AFP

ASSAD VOWS TO RETAKE AREA NEAR DAMASCUS

DAMASCUS: Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad has vowed to retake an area that supplies Damascus with water and rejected any negotiations on his departure at upcoming talks in Kazakhstan. Millions of people have been without water for weeks after fighting damaged key infrastructure in the Wadi Barada region outside Damascus that is the main water source for the capital. The government says former Al-Qaeda affiliate Fateh al-Sham Front, known previously as Al-Nusra Front, is present in Wadi Barada, and blames rebels there for cutting water to Damascus since Dec 22.

"The role of the Syrian Army is to liberate that area in order to prevent those terrorists from using that water in order to suffocate the capital," Assad told French media in an interview aired yesterday. Assad's forces have been battling rebels in Wadi Barada for weeks and the fighting has continued despite the start on Dec 30 of a nationwide ceasefire brokered by Russia and Turkey. Assad said the ceasefire was being "breached on a daily basis" and mainly around Damascus "because the terrorists occupy the main source of water" in Wadi Barada. He said "more than five million civilians have been deprived of water for the last three weeks" as a result of the fighting.

The United Nations says 5.5 million people in and around Damascus are without water. Assad said that Fateh al-Sham is "occupying" the Wadi Barada region, 15 km northwest of the capital. But rebels deny that the jihadists are in the area and say the water supply was severed after government strikes hit pumping facilities. Assad also insisted that the ceasefire does not include Fateh al-Sham or its formidable rival, the Islamic State group.

Assad said his government was ready to negotiate on "everything", but rejected any negotiations towards his departure from power at talks set to be held in late January in Kazakhstan's capital Astana. "My position is related to the constitution, and the constitution is very clear about the mechanism in which you can bring a president or get rid of a president," he said. "So, if they (the opposition) want to discuss this point, they have to discuss the constitution, and the constitution is not owned by the government or the president or by the opposition. It should be owned by the Syrian people, so you need a referendum," he said.

The Astana talks, organized by regime allies Russia and Iran and rebel backer Turkey, aim to pave the way towards an end to a nearly six-year war that has killed 310,000 people and displaced millions. — Agencies

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SYRIA REFUGEES TEST PALESTINIAN SOLIDARITY IN LEBANON

BEIRUT: When Palestinian Fuad Abu Khaled fled Syria's war in 2013, he sought refuge among his own, looking for solidarity among Palestinian refugees based in Lebanon's Shatila camp. But instead he found a community already struggling to get by and sometimes resentful of new arrivals who are testing the limited resources of the UN agency dedicated to helping Palestinian refugees. "Despite the fact he's Palestinian and I'm Palestinian, I'm Syrian and he's from Lebanon," said Abu Khaled, who fled the Yarmuk camp in Damascus with his family after fighting began there.

"He sees you as coming to take his place, exploit him, take his daily rations," he told AFP at the camp in southern Beirut notorious for violence in the past. Abu Khaled is one of at least 31,000 Palestinians who have taken refuge in Lebanon since Syria's conflict began in March 2011, part of a larger influx of some one million refugees from Syria. And Lebanon was already home to

about 450,000 Palestinian refugees, mostly the descendants of those who fled their homes when the state of Israel was created in 1948, or during subsequent conflicts.

Seated on a thin mattress in the one-bedroomed flat he shares with his wife and eight children, Abu Khaled said he simply couldn't make ends meet. Fighting in Syria destroyed the 52-year-old's grocery shop, and the aid he receives from the UN agency for Palestinian refugees UNRWA and other charity groups has proved insufficient. "I think if the situation continues like this the people could explode," he said.

'Not welcome any more'

In another part of the camp, Najah Awad sits in a modest room where she has lived with her three children since fleeing Yarmuk in 2013. In the beginning "they welcomed us. But not anymore," she said. "Now they see us as taking their jobs, taking their livelihoods." UNRWA Syria's direc-

tor Matthias Schmale acknowledged the struggles faced by Palestinian refugees from Syria, as well as those in Lebanon hosting them. "The longer this displacement from Syria lasts and the more pressures grow on UNRWA and indeed the host population of Palestine refugees from Lebanon, I think we cannot rule out tensions," he said in English.

But he stressed Palestinian refugees in Lebanon had displayed impressive generosity under difficult circumstances, sharing resources and in some cases even hosting Syrian Palestinians. "It takes a lot of solidarity if you yourself live below the poverty line," he told AFP. Some five million Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza are registered to receive help from UNRWA, which was created after Israel's creation.

The organisation is frequently underfunded, but has come under new pressure with the conflict in Syria, where some 410,000 Palestinians now depend

entirely on UNRWA handouts. In response, the agency launched a \$410 million (390 million euro) emergency funding appeal on Monday. For Palestinians in Lebanon, including those coming from Syria, the hardships are exacerbated by tight restrictions on their ability to work.

Surviving on half needs

Abu Khaled is breeding canaries, hoping to sell the noisy chicks squeaking in a cage in his living room for up to \$30 each. His wife is still recovering from a hernia operation. While UNRWA paid half the hospital bill, he struggled to raise the rest of the money. Some 90 percent of Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon live under the poverty line, a 2016 study by UNRWA and the American University in Beirut found. Nine percent cannot meet even their basic food requirements. Najwa Hazeneh, a Palestinian from Yarmuk who works with charities in the camp, said some families

have only 50 percent of their needs. "They might cover that by going into debt, and usually they go without lots of things. Some people go without medical treatment. The mother becomes the doctor of the family. Sometimes they go without certain foods."

Abu Khaled said he knew people struggling to meet their most basic needs. "It's a catastrophe for those forced to flee. A family in a good situation gets two meals a day. An average one gets one. I know some that get none," he said. Despite the hardships, Mohammed Abu Ali of Fatah al-Intifada, one of several Palestinian armed factions that control Shatila camp, said Lebanese Palestinians were committed to helping their brethren. "We share everything. We can't have them being in the dark while we have electricity, or them not having water while we do," he said, sitting in military fatigues under a Palestinian flag at his office. "We hope UNRWA sees that they need to help us both." — AFP

ERDOGAN SEES BETTER TIES WITH US UNDER TRUMP

TURKEY SAYS EU 'INCOMPLETE' WITHOUT IT

ANKARA: Turkey yesterday urged the European Union to revive stalled negotiations on Ankara joining the bloc, saying without it Europe was "incomplete" and calling for visa-free travel for its citizens immediately. "The EU is still a strategic choice for our country," President said Recep Tayyip Erdogan, while insisting Ankara would not blindly accept the EU's "inconsistent policies and double standards towards our country". Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said he wanted more chapters in the accession talks to be opened "by lifting artificial obstacles to our EU membership".

A "chapter" is a specific area of negotiation,

ranging on issues from human rights to economic cooperation. Cavusoglu did not specify which chapters he meant. He also said Turkey expects "visa liberalisation for Turkish citizens to be provided immediately", a reference to EU commitments on visa-free travel for nearly 80 million Turkish citizens made in March under an EU-Ankara deal to curb migrants entering Europe.

Progress on visa-free travel has been held up by EU demands - rejected outright - that Erdogan amend Turkey's draconian anti-terror laws to ensure they do not breach human rights. Erdogan threatened in December to cancel the migrant deal, which has dramatically reduced

the numbers crossing into Europe via Greece. The accession talks stalled after a failed coup in July by a rogue Turkish military faction was followed with a crackdown that saw mass arrests of not only officers but also journalists, activists, academics and others.

'Progress'

"We've played an important role in Europe's past and will do so in the future," Cavusoglu said, adding: "A Europe without Turkey is incomplete." Relations between the EU and the NATO member state have soured in the past year over human rights and freedom of speech issues. US-Turkey relations were also strained in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt, with Ankara accusing the Pennsylvania-based Islamic preacher Fethullah Gulen of being the mastermind behind the putsch.

But Erdogan and Cavusoglu said they were convinced relations would improve under incoming US president Donald Trump. "I believe dialogue with Trump will be stepped-up on both sides, with progress on regional issues," the president told an ambassadors meeting. For his part, Cavusoglu said he thought the US would "not continue to make the same mistakes it has previously made". He repeated a demand for the United States to extradite Gulen and his top followers to Turkey - request that has been made repeatedly since the thwarted July 15 coup.

He also called on the US to halt support for the Syrian Kurdish Peoples' Protection Units (YPG), which Turkey see as linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Washington considers the YPG as an ally in the fight against the so-called Islamic State (IS) jihadist group in Syria. "Turkey and the US are two strategic partners, with potential (and) power to create positive effects in a wide geographical region," Cavusoglu said. — AFP



ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan delivers a speech during the launch of the 9th Ambassadors Conference at the Presidential Complex yesterday. — AFP



ANKARA: Riot police detain a protester as dozens of demonstrators gathered yesterday in front of Turkey's parliament to protest proposed amendments to the country's constitution that would hand sweeping executive powers to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's largely ceremonial presidency. — AP

TURKEY BEGINS DEBATE ON NEW ERDOGAN PRESIDENTIAL POWERS

ISTANBUL: Turkey's parliament yesterday began debating a controversial new draft constitution aimed at expanding the powers of the presidency under Recep Tayyip Erdogan, which is expected to be put to a referendum by the spring. The new constitution, which would replace the basic law drawn up after Turkey's 1980 military coup, seeks to establish for the first time a presidential system for ruling the modern republic created from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire.

Critics have claimed the move is part of a power grab by Erdogan - Turkey's premier from 2003-2014 and then president - for one-man rule in the wake of the failed coup in July. But Erdogan and the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) say the presidential system would bring Turkey into line with countries such as France and the United States and is needed for efficient government. The debates on the 18-article new constitution began after the draft was agreed by a parliamentary commission. The two readings are expected to last 13-15 days.

A small group of protesters rallied outside the parliament building in Ankara ahead of the debate, but police broke up the gathering using pepper spray on the demonstrators. The AKP needs more than 330 votes - a three fifths majority - for the bill to be submitted to a referendum for voters' approval. However, the Nov 2015 election left the AKP short of a super majority in parliament and it is relying on the support of the opposition right-wing Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), the fourth largest in the legislature.

Once approved by parliament, a referendum is expected to take place within 60 days, indicating a date in late March or early April. Pro-government newspapers have predicted a thumping victory for the ruling party although other commentators have been more cautious.

'Dictatorship or stability?'

The new constitution is opposed by the

biggest opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), whose deputy chairman Bulent Tezcan said it would restore powers "to the palace" taken away from the Ottoman Sultan a century ago. "It will be the dissolution of all that our republic has achieved," he said, criticising the draft as paving the way for "one man dictatorship". But AKP lawmaker Halil Firat, who helped draw up the proposed new constitution, said it would make clear the roles of government and president. "Stability will be achieved. Decision-making will be quick."

Under the proposed new constitution, the president would not have to sever links with a political party, as is the case now even though Erdogan co-founded the AKP. It is also expected to lead to the creation of the posts of vice presidents and the abolition of the office of prime minister. There would no longer be a formal cabinet but there will be ministers. The president will have the power to appoint and fire ministers.

The draft law says the president would be elected for a five-year term and serve for a maximum of two mandates. If Erdogan's existing time as president is not counted, it would mean in theory he could stay in office until 2029, with the next elections due in 2019. Parliamentary elections would be held every five years - not four as at present - and on the same day as presidential polls. Both elections would be scheduled to take place on Nov 3, 2019.

Along with a slew of terror attacks, the political uncertainty has been one of the factors pressuring the Turkish lira which has lost 18 percent in value against the dollar over the last three months. Analysts at Renaissance Capital said almost all decisions in Ankara had been seen through the prism of Erdogan's dream of creating the executive presidency and a victory could allow much-needed stability. "This is why Erdogan ultimately achieving his objective of an executive presidency is potentially the difference between a very strong 2017 for Turkish assets and a very weak one," they said. — AFP

NEW YEMEN OFFENSIVE UNDERWAY

DUBAI: Yemeni pro-government forces have launched a major offensive to push Shiite rebels from coastal areas, in a move analysts say aims to end a military stalemate and jumpstart political talks. But the forces loyal to President resident Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi - who are backed by a Saudi-led military coalition - are facing divisions within their ranks that are hampering their efforts.

Supported by coalition air and sea support, loyalist forces launched operation "Golden Spear" on Saturday in Yemen's western Dhubab district, about 30 km north of the strategic Bab al-Mandab Strait. The goal is to drive Houthis rebels from all of Yemen's Red Sea coast, which stretches some 450 km. Battles have raged since the launch of the offensive, with at least 68 fighters, including 55 rebels, killed so far, according to local military sources. The rebels, backed by Shiite power Iran, seized control of large parts of Yemen including the capital Sanaa in 2014. Fearing a rise in influence in its southern neighbor for regional rival Tehran, Saudi Arabia launched the intervention the follow-

ing March. But despite thousands of air strikes and the sending of coalition troops to support Hadi's forces, the loyalists have been unable to dislodge the rebels from key positions including in Sanaa. UN-backed peace talks have repeatedly broken down, despite the more than 7,000 people killed in the conflict and an escalating humanitarian crisis.

'Change on the ground' needed

The latest offensive "is important to reignite the political process," Yemen's Foreign Minister Abdel Malek al-Mekhlafi told AFP. "The Houthis will not accept dialogue" unless they are forced into talks by a "change on the ground", he said. In 2015 coalition-backed government forces managed to recapture five southern provinces, but their advance has stalled. The rebels - and their allies of renegade troops loyal to ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh - continue to control Sanaa, their heartland around the city of Saada and other northern provinces, and most of the southwestern Taiz province. — AFP



Smoke billows in the distance as Yemeni pro-government forces patrol during clashes against Shiite rebels in Yemen's western Dhubab district, about 30 km north of the strategic Bab al-Mandab Strait yesterday. — AFP



JERUSALEM: Palestinian boys look at a poster of 28-year-old Palestinian Fadi Al-Qunbar at his family home in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Jabal Mukaber yesterday, a day after he killed four Israeli soldiers in a truck-ramming attack before being shot. — AFP

ISRAEL BURIES SOLDIERS KILLED IN ATTACK

JERUSALEM: Hundreds of Israelis attended funerals yesterday for four soldiers killed when a Palestinian rammed a truck into troops visiting a popular tourist site in a stark reminder of tensions despite a recent lull in violence. Sunday's attack, which also saw the driver shot dead, came after months of relative calm and led Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to spark debate by suggesting it was inspired by the Islamic State group.

Police arrested nine people and removed a memorial tent set up in the Palestinian's east Jerusalem neighbourhood, located near the site of the incident. Five of the nine arrested were relatives of the attacker, 28-year-old Fadi Al-Qunbar, police said. His cousin said he was religious like other members of the family, but dismissed Netanyahu's statement that Qunbar was an IS supporter.

"There was nothing in his life saying he was ISIS," Mohammad Al-Qunbar, 43, said as he sat near what was left of the tent in the Jabal Mukaber neighbourhood. "He never contacted ISIS and he doesn't know ISIS," he said, using an alternative acronym for the jihadist group. He added: "We were shocked, for sure. We never expected anything like this from Fadi. But what happened has happened and we only say there is no might and power but that of God." Israeli ministers decided Sunday to take a series of actions, including demolishing Qunbar's home and withholding his body, local media reported. They also decided to hold without charge under a policy known as administrative

detention those who publicly support IS, according to an Israeli official.

'Supported' IS?

Netanyahu's assertion that Qunbar "according to all indications supported" IS, without providing details of what led to the conclusion, sparked debate yesterday. In making the statement, Netanyahu argued, as he has repeatedly in the past, that Israel faces the same "terrorist" attacks that have hit countries such as Germany and France. However, the incident in many ways fit the pattern of a wave of Palestinian lone-wolf assaults that began in October 2015, though seemingly with the intent to cause more casualties than usual.

A heavier truck was used - a flat-bed model with a crane in the rear - and an entire group of soldiers were targeted. Israeli security officials have said that IS influence among Palestinians is limited. A poll released in December found that only five percent of Palestinians believe that IS represents true Islam. Sunday's attack occurred after hundreds of soldiers arrived at the site as part of a tour on the history of Jerusalem.

The location overlooks holy sites such as the Dome of the Rock and provides one of the most spectacular views of the city. A video shared online showed a truck 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. Visitors, including soldiers, are seen running for cover. Soldiers opened fire, as well as at least one civilian. It was not clear whether the attack was planned or spontaneous. The military identified the victims as three women - Yael Yekutieli, 20; Shir Hajaj, 22; and Shira Zur, 20 - and one man, Erez Orbach, 20.

'Candle for you'

Later at the scene, soldiers could be seen distraught over the incident as rescue workers provided psychological support. Israeli media published the last message Hajaj's mother sent to her by phone. "My dear, my life, talk to me, please," it said. Around 1,000 people, including fellow soldiers, attended Hajaj's funeral yesterday at Mount Herzl military cemetery in Jerusalem. Her casket was draped in an Israeli flag.

Family members cried out in grief when her coffin was lowered into the ground. "You think that you will be on the front page of the papers for a prize or an invention," one of her sisters said. "But instead in the papers today there was a memorial candle for you." A wave of Palestinian knife, gun and car-ramming attacks erupted in Oct 2015, but the violence had greatly subsided in recent months. The last time an Israeli was killed in an attack was Oct 9, 2016. Since Oct 2015, 247 Palestinians, 40 Israelis, two Americans, a Jordanian, an Eritrean and a Sudanese have been killed, according to an AFP count. — AFP

US WEST GIRDS FOR FLOODS, EAST COAST IN DEEP FREEZE

COLUMBIA, South Carolina: As the East Coast waits to thaw out from a weekend icy mess, another storm is bringing rain and the potential of the worst flooding in more than a decade to the West coast. At least four deaths have been blamed on the East Coast storm, which dropped more than a foot of snow in southern New England, caused a former governor to fall on his icy driveway in Mississippi and caused schools in North Carolina to cancel classes yesterday. Out West, forecasters are warning of heavy rains in northern California and Nevada through the middle of the week along with an ice storm in Oregon.

In the East, the worst, lingering problems were expected in North Carolina where up to 10 inches of snow and sleet fell in places Saturday. The deep freeze followed. Forecasters predict temperatures won't get above freezing in much of the state before today afternoon, a big problem in a place where officials depend on usually mild weather to melt away the ice and snow on less traveled routes. One person died in Montgomery County when a car slid off icy Interstate 73/74 into a tree Sunday morning, Gov Roy Cooper said.

The other three deaths related to the storm occurred in Virginia, Georgia and Kentucky, and officials said they were the result of cars traveling on roads made slick by ice. Other traffic deaths were being investigated to determine if weather played a factor. Early yesterday, low temperatures in North Carolina ranged from zero in Reidsville and Roxboro near the Virginia state line to 29 degrees at Cape Hatteras. The National Weather Service had winter weather advisories in effect for 75 of North Carolina's 100 counties until late yesterday morning. Driving conditions were

dangerous across because of leftover snow and ice and cold temperatures.

There was one happy ending. Two hikers missing for more than a day in the frigid North Carolina mountains without food and water and only a small fire for warmth were rescued from waist-high snow. A helicopter using a tool that can detect heat found the hikers about 5 p.m. Saturday in the Shining Rock Wilderness area about 25 miles southwest of Asheville. Cooper said rescuers got to the men about two hours later, just in time to save them.

School systems across North Carolina went ahead early Sunday and canceled yesterday's classes in part because of icy roads, but also because of bitter cold temperatures making it dangerous for children without proper clothes to wait for buses and difficult to keep buildings warm. Many schools and government offices were closed yesterday. North Carolina State University also canceled classes.

When the thaw does come later in the week, it will be quick. Highs in the South are forecast in the 70s on Friday. In the West, forecasters said flooding from the storm moving onshore and a second predicted bout of heavy rain today could cause flooding in northern California and Nevada similar to problems in 2005 and 2006 that sent 5 feet of water into warehouses in Sparks, Nevada, and hazardous waste barrels floating away.

The icy weather also prompted an increase in emergency room visits from falls. In Mississippi, a family spokesman said 93-year-old former Gov. William Winter was expected to recover and was in fair condition after suffering a concussion when he fell on the steep, icy driveway of his Jackson home. — AP



MEXICO CITY: A man wearing a Batman costume rides his decked-out bicycle along Reforma Avenue on Sunday. This main avenue is closed to traffic every Sunday, and open only to bicycles and pedestrians. — AP

MEXICO ARRESTS AMERICAN IN US DIPLOMAT'S SHOOTING

SUSPECT IS OF INDIAN ORIGIN

GUADALAJARA, Mexico: The suspect in the shooting of a US consular official in Mexico's western city of Guadalajara is an American who will be deported back to his country, officials said Sunday. Hours after authorities announced the suspect's arrest, the attorney general's office and the foreign ministry issued a joint statement saying he would face justice in the United States for the "sordid and cowardly" shooting.

The official was shot on Friday in a brazen attack by a man wearing a black wig and a blue nurse uniform outside a shopping center's garage in Mexico's second biggest city. Officials have not indicated the possible motive nor revealed the identities of the victim or the suspect. The suspect was arrested by Mexican authorities in "close collaboration" with the FBI and the US embassy, the joint statement said, without providing more details about the day or circumstances of the capture.

The victim, who was hospitalized, was in stable condition, it said. A US government official told AFP the victim was a vice consul at the consulate in Guadalajara. Mexican authorities said he handled interviews of visa applicants. An official at the Jalisco state prosecutor's office told AFP on condition of anonymity that the suspect is 31 years old and of Indian origin. The FBI had offered \$20,000 for information about the shooter's identity.

US embassy urges caution

The US consulate in Guadalajara posted surveillance camera footage showing the official, dressed in shorts and a sleeveless shirt, paying a parking ticket at an automated machine. The gunman is then seen following him. Another security camera shows the gunman later standing outside the garage. When the official's black car stops at the exit, the shooter raises his gun and opens fire.

A bullet hole is seen on the windshield and the official opens his door before the footage ends. Jalisco's state attorney general, Eduardo Almaguer, described the shooting as a "direct attack" on Saturday. US Secretary of State John Kerry thanked the Mexican government for the "swift and decisive arrest of a suspect in the heinous attack against our Foreign Service Officer colleague".

"The safety and security of US citizens and our diplomatic staff overseas are among our highest priorities," Kerry said in a statement, wishing the official a "speedy recovery".

Friday's shooting prompted the US embassy to issue a security message on Saturday urging US citizens in Guadalajara to "restrict their movements outside their homes and places of work to those truly essential". "They should also take care not to fall into predictable pat-

terns for those movements that are essential," the message continued. "They should vary the times and routes of their movements." Guadalajara and the rest of the state have been hit by violence perpetrated by the powerful Jalisco New Generation drug cartel in recent years.

Previous attacks

US officials have faced attacks in Mexico in the past. In 2010, a consular official, her husband and the spouse of another consular official were killed in the northern city of Ciudad Juarez, which was mired in an ultra-violent drug war at the time. An alleged leader of the Barrio Azteca gang was extradited to the United States, where he was sentenced to life in prison for ordering the murder.

A year later, gunmen from the Zetas drug cartel opened fire on a vehicle of two US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents in the northern state of San Luis Potosi, killing one of the officers. In 2012, two US officials - widely reported to be CIA agents - and a Mexican marine were wounded when they were shot at by federal police officers as they drove south of Mexico City. Fourteen officers were charged with using excessive force, with officials citing a case of mistaken identity. — AFP



CARRBORO, North Carolina: A city worker removes snow from a crosswalk as a winter storm blankets the area on Jan 7, 2017. — AP

RUSSIA 'TIRED' OF US CLAIMS

KREMLIN SLAMS 'AMATEURISH' HACKING REPORT

MOSCOW: The Kremlin yesterday branded a hacking report by US intelligence baseless and amateurish, saying Moscow is growing tired of denying claims the Russian government meddled in the US election. "These are baseless allegations substantiated with nothing, done on a rather amateurish, emotional level that is hardly worthy of professional work of truly world-class security services," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists.

US intelligence agencies on Friday released a report saying that Russian President Vladimir Putin personally ordered a campaign of hacking and media manipulation to upend the campaign of Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. The Kremlin's

comments were the first official reaction by Moscow to the public report, which was half the length of the classified version presented to President Barack Obama and President-elect Donald Trump. "We still don't know what data is really being used by those who present such unfounded accusations," Peskov said, insisting the Kremlin was "categorically denying any implication" it was responsible for the alleged hacking.

'Full on witch hunt'

"We are growing rather tired of these accusations. It is becoming a full-on witch hunt," Peskov said, echoing Trump's claim ahead of Friday's briefing by spy chiefs that the hacking

revelations were a "political witch hunt" aimed at discrediting him. Peskov added that "witch hunts" by US politicians are usually followed by "more sober specialists, more sober approaches which seek dialogue rather than emotional fits."

The declassified US intel report contained largely open-source information to show that Russian state media followed a pro-Trump line and said there was "high confidence" in intelligence from multiple sources that Putin ordered the campaign to tilt the vote, without revealing those sources. In December, the White House said the GRU Russian military intelligence orchestrated a hack, helped by the Federal Security Service and various third parties, though without saying exactly how the alleged hack was perpetrated.

Trump did not reject the report's findings that Russia-ordered hacking occurred, but denied that it swayed the election outcome and blamed "gross negligence by the Democratic National Committee" for lax cyber security. His incoming chief of staff Reince Priebus told Fox News Sunday that "he's not denying entities in Russia are behind these particular hackings." President Barack Obama, who has received the same briefing, said Sunday that he underestimated the impact of Russian hacking and that "this is something that Putin has been doing for quite some time in Europe". — AFP



MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin listens during a meeting at the Kremlin yesterday. — AP

ABBAS WRITES TO TRUMP OPPOSING EMBASSY MOVE

RAMALLAH: Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas has written to US President-elect Donald Trump urging him not to move the American embassy to Jerusalem, official Palestinian media said yesterday. The Palestinian news agency Wafa did not say when the letter was sent but said it aimed to explain the "risks" of moving the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Abbas warned the move would have a "distasteful impact on the peace process, on the two-state solution and on the stability and security of the entire region," Wafa said.

Trump has said he plans to relocate the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in a controversial move bitterly opposed by Palestinians as a unilateral action while the status of the city remains contested. Israel supports the move and has encouraged previous presidents to take similar steps to no avail. Abbas also sent letters to other world powers including Russia, China and the European Union, calling on them to "spare no effort" to prevent the United States from

making the move, Wafa said. The Palestinians regard Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state, while Israel proclaims the entire city as its undivided capital. The United States and most UN member states do not recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and the city's status is one of the thorniest issues of the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Trump spokeswoman Kellyanne Conway last month told a US radio channel moving the embassy was a "very big priority" for the president-elect.

Trump has also nominated David Friedman, a supporter of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, as his ambassador to the Jewish state. In a Trump transition team statement last month, Friedman said he wanted to work for peace and looked forward to "doing this from the US embassy in Israel's eternal capital, Jerusalem". Israel captured east Jerusalem in the Six-Day War of 1967 and subsequently annexed it in a move never recognized by the international community. — AFP

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EUROPE COLD SNAP KILLS DOZENS, FUELS TRAVEL CHAOS

WARSAW: A cold snap gripping Europe has killed more than 30 people in recent days, left thousands of travellers stranded in snow-covered Turkey and brought fresh misery for migrants and the homeless. The double-digit sub-zero temperatures hit Poland particularly hard, with the mercury plummeting below minus 20 degrees Celsius (minus 4 Fahrenheit) in some regions.

Sunday was the country's worst 24 hours so far for cold-related deaths. "Yesterday, 10 people died of cold," Poland's centre for national security (RCB) said yesterday in a statement, adding to the same number of fatalities over the preceding two days combined.

The number of hypothermia victims has reached 65 since November 1, the centre added, and local authorities issued smog alerts across Poland amid a deep freeze yesterday. Greece and Italy have also seen fierce cold weather over the past week and in both countries several migrants died of hypothermia.

Istanbul paralyzed

Heavy snowfall in Turkey's main city Istanbul paralysed traffic for a third straight day while the Bosphorus Strait,

one of the world's busiest shipping bottlenecks, was shut due to poor visibility.

Ferry services between the European and Asian sides of the city were scrapped and schools across the city closed. Flagship carrier Turkish Airlines said 314 flights were cancelled on Sunday.

With the CEO Bilal Eksi telling angry passengers that snow had caused a lack of take-off and landing slots at Ataturk airport. Some international flights were expected to resume after 6:00pm (1500 GMT) Monday, but all domestic flights to and from the airport had been scrapped. On a normal day, it can handle more than 1,500 landings and take-offs.

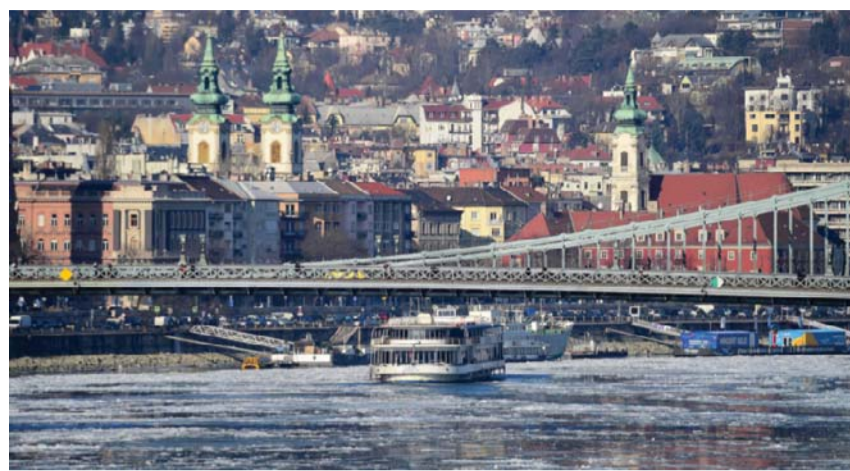
Eksi earlier said over 600 flights were cancelled on Sunday and more than 10,000 travellers unable to reach Istanbul had been put up in hotels worldwide. In the Czech Republic, six people died during the weekend, very probably of hypothermia, four of them freezing to death in Prague, media reports said. A 68-year-old homeless man was found frozen to death in the Macedonian capital Skopje while in Serbia, the southeastern town of Sjenica saw the mercury plunge to -33 degrees Celsius.

'Nobody is helping us'

Traffic on the Danube and Sava rivers was halted in Serbia. Scores of migrants in the capital Belgrade took shelter in a warehouse near the railway station, spurning shelters provided by the government for fear they would be deported back to their countries. "It's very difficult, especially at night," said Niamat, a 13-year-old Afghan. The temperature overnight was -15 degrees Celsius.

"I have been waiting here for three months and I do not know when I will be able to continue my journey," said the young migrant, who is travelling alone. Ismail, aged 16, added: "Nobody is helping us, it's very cold and I'm worried how we will endure this." Schools were closed across cities in central Siberia yesterday but classes resumed in Moscow where the temperature rose by seven degrees to -20 degrees Celsius. The Russian capital recorded its coldest Orthodox Christmas Night for 120 years at the weekend, according to media reports.

Two people died of hypothermia in Moscow between December 31 and January 9, Russian news agencies reported. Greece, with more than 60,000 mainly Syrian refugees on its ter-



BUDAPEST: Ice floats over the Danube river in Budapest yesterday. Last night, a cold wave across central Europe caused a drastical temperature drop of around 20 to 28 Celsius degrees below 0. —AFP

ritory, has moved many migrants to pre-fabricated houses and heated tents.

At the Moria refugee camp on the island of Lesbos more than 2,500 people are living in tents, without hot water or heating, including women, children and the handicapped, said Apostolos Veizis from the charity Doctors Without

Borders. He said there were more than 300 people in a similar situation on the island of Samos. In Italy, the cold snap claimed two more lives: an 82-year-old man who died in a house without heating near the southern city of Brindisi and a 78-year-old man in a village in northern Sicily. —AFP



TURKISH CYPRIOT leader Mustafa Akinci (center) is welcomed by Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva Michael Moller (left) and Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Cyprus Espen Barth Eide (right) upon his arrival for UN-sponsored Cyprus peace talks Yesterday. —AFP

CYPRUS LEADERS SEEK DEAL IN 'HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY'

'MOMENT OF TRUTH'

GENEVA: The leaders of both sides of ethnically divided Cyprus began new unification talks yesterday but sought to temper hopes of a swift breakthrough, though its UN envoy said a deal to resolve one of Europe's most enduring conflicts was within reach.

Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci and Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades launched a week of consultations in Geneva to tackle dozens of disagreements stemming from the 1974 division of the Mediterranean island. The talks will focus initially on how to handle property disputes stretching back more than 40 years. But with several past reconciliation efforts having failed, both leaders have been careful this week to cool expectations of a quick fix, and the United Nations special envoy for Cyprus also stressed yesterday that the talks were open-ended. "We are now in the final moment. We are now really in the moment of truth. This is actually where will find out if this can be solved," said Espen Barth Eide, a Norwegian diplomat appointed to the UN envoy's job in 2014.

"I'm not saying on a specific date. Because it's open-ended," told a news briefing, urging islanders estranged for decades to "seize the moment". The talks are scheduled to broaden on Thursday to include Britain, Greece and Turkey, the guarantor powers of Cyprus under a convoluted treaty foisted upon the former colony when it became independent from Britain in 1960. Their concerns will include security, and specifically the role Turkey and its 30,000 troops stationed in northern Cyprus will play in any reunification of the country as a two-state federation. The rival sides are poles apart on that issue.

EXPECTATIONS TEMPERED

Asked on arrival at the United Nations in Geneva if he was optimistic, Anastasiades said: "Ask me when we are finished."

Akinci was equally circumspect, saying on Sunday: "We are not pessimistic, but I see no need for exaggerated expectations that everything will just happen. We are expecting a difficult week." New UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who is expected to attend the conference on Thursday, has described the talks as an "historic opportunity" for a breakthrough.

But the issues are difficult. Power-sharing, redrawing territorial boundaries, and security issues in a future reunited homeland have all frustrated past negotiations.

Property rights are also a sensitive issue for thousands of internally displaced people who were driven from their homes in periods of conflict before, during and after Turkey invaded the island's north after a brief Greek-inspired coup in 1974. A combination of restitution, compensa-

tion and exchange were being discussed yesterday, with International Monetary Fund and World Bank officials included in the talks, though it was unclear how any deal might be paid for.

MOMENTUM

Despite the expressed caution, mediators are keen to press on while both communities are led by political moderates. Both Anastasiades and Akinci are from Limassol, a port city on Cyprus's southern coast. Akinci belongs to a dying generation of Turkish Cypriots who speaks almost fluent Cypriot Greek.

Dozens of issues remaining after 18 months of talks in Cyprus need to be resolved in the next two days before the sides submit maps outlining their proposals for the future boundaries of the island's two constituent states.

"It's not easy to make these final agreements... It is also possible because I don't know any

issue in these negotiations that really cannot be solved if sufficient will is available," Eide said.

Any agreement must be put to separate referendums in the two communities, with diplomats anticipating a vote around June. A previous peace blueprint put to referendum in 2004 was accepted by Turkish Cypriots but rejected by Greek Cypriots.

Analysts see the talks as a unique opportunity to settle a conflict which has brought NATO members Greece and Turkey to the brink of war and which is an obstacle to Turkey's ambitions of joining the European Union. "If this time it fails between these two pro-solution leaders ... then a huge motivation will be lost," said academic Ahmet Sozen, who has followed the on-off peace talks for years. "The two leaders have reached a lot of convergences beyond any other set of negotiations in the past. That's for sure. And it would be a sin to waste this." —Reuters

N IRELAND'S MCGUINNESS QUILTS IN MOVE TO TRIGGER ELECTION

BELFAST: Northern Ireland Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness resigned yesterday over his power-sharing partner's handling of a controversial energy scheme, a move likely to collapse the region's government and trigger an election.

The surprise resignation comes weeks before the British government is due to trigger the process of leaving the European Union, a decision that has divided Northern Ireland, which has Britain's only land border with the EU. McGuinness's Irish nationalist Sinn Fein party had urged pro-British First Minister Arlene Foster of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) to step aside over a botched scheme that could cost the province hundreds of millions of pounds.

"The First Minister has refused to stand aside. Therefore it is with deep regret and reluctance that I am tendering my resignation as deputy First Minister," McGuinness said in a statement. "Sinn Fein will not tolerate the arrogance of Arlene Foster and the DUP. We now need an election to allow the people to make their own judgement."

McGuinness, who has recently taken a break from some of his duties because of an undisclosed illness, told the BBC that he would say at a later date whether or not he would be well enough to run as a candidate in any election. McGuinness said Sinn Fein would not nominate anyone to fill the vacan-

cy, meaning the power-sharing government will collapse at the latest once the seven days allowed for this elapse. It would then be up to London's Northern Ireland secretary to propose a date for the election.

GROWING TENSION

Sinn Fein says Foster failed to close down the green energy scheme, which aimed to encourage businesses to burn wood pellets rather than fossil fuels, when it became clear that it was open to abuse. The scheme gave businesses 1.60 pounds for every pound spent. Foster says she closed it down as soon as the potential abuse was recognized.

Tensions have been growing in recent months in the power-sharing government, created after a 1998 peace deal that ended three decades of violence between pro-British unionists and Irish nationalists who wanted to join the Republic of Ireland, and allowed border checkpoints to be dismantled. Unlike Foster's DUP, Sinn Fein campaigned against Britain leaving the EU, and McGuinness has called for a referendum on Northern Ireland joining the Republic of Ireland to avoid an exit, which could see border checks reinstated. Overall, 52 percent of the United Kingdom voted in favour of leaving the EU in June's referendum, but 56 percent of those voting in Northern Ireland backed remaining. —Reuters

IVORY COAST PM RESIGNS, DISSOLVES GOVERNMENT

ABIDJAN: Ivory Coast Prime Minister Daniel Kablan Duncan resigned and dissolved the government yesterday, a move that had been expected following elections last month but which was delayed two days by an army mutiny.

Duncan had been expected to stand down on Saturday, but held off after dissident soldiers took over army bases in cities across the West African country on Friday demanding bonus payments. It took 48 hours to reach the deal to quell the revolt in an army that is made up of government troops and former rebels and riven with divisions. "I have tendered my resignation and that of the government," he said after a meeting with President Alassane Ouattara.

Ouattara kept hold of his majority in the Dec. 18 parliamentary polls. But legislative elections are usually followed by a change of government as a matter of procedure.

The resignations pave the way for the

implementation of measures contained in a new constitution. Ivory Coast is French-speaking West Africa's largest and most prosperous economy, as well as the world's leading grower of cocoa. In 2011 it emerged from a spate of short wars and a protracted crisis lasting nearly a decade to retake its place as the economic engine of the region.

Ouattara signed a new constitution that had been approved by referendum into law in November, casting it as the way to ensure peace is maintained in Ivory Coast.

It modifies clauses in the old constitution that lay behind the conflict, especially concerning nationality requirements for presidential candidates. Though largely resolved, the aftermath of the conflict has left the government hostage to an ill-disciplined and factionalised military, and Ouattara's inability to reign it in threatens to undermine its economic success. —Reuters

MERKEL: NO 'CHERRY PICKING' FOR BRITAIN IN BREXIT TALKS

BERLIN: The European Union must consider limiting Britain's access to its market if London fails to accept the bloc's 'four freedoms' in Brexit negotiations, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said yesterday. Merkel's remarks add to pressure on British Prime Minister Theresa May, who has been criticized for hinting at a "hard Brexit" - in which border controls are prioritized over market access - and had to clarify her comments. The most controversial of the 'freedoms' in Britain is freedom of movement within the EU. "One cannot lead these (Brexit) negotiations based in the form of 'cherry picking,'" Merkel said in a speech before members of the German Civil Service Association in the city of Cologne.

"This would have fatal consequences for the remaining 27 EU states," added Merkel. "Britain is, for sure, an important partner with whom one would want to have good relations even after an exit from the EU." But it was important, said the chancellor, "that on the other hand, we are clear that, for example, access to the single market is only

possible under the condition of adherence to the four basic principles. Otherwise one has to negotiate limits (of access)."

May said yesterday that a clean break with the EU's single market is not inevitable, clarifying comments that had pushed down the pound on the possibility of a hard Brexit.

She had said during an interview at the weekend that Britain would not be able to keep "bits" of its membership of the bloc. May has repeatedly said she will not reveal her strategy before triggering Article 50 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty to start some of the most complicated negotiations since World War Two. She has largely stuck to the script that she wants Britain to regain control over immigration, restore its sovereignty and also to get the best possible trading relations with the EU.

The single market emerged from the 1992 Maastricht Treaty on European integration. This enshrines the EU's "four freedoms" - of movement of goods, capital, people, and services. —Reuters

5 SUICIDE BOMBERS DIE, KILL 3 IN NIGERIA ATTACK

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria: Five suicide bombers trying to infiltrate Nigeria's northeastern city of Maiduguri have died in explosions that killed at least three civilians, police said yesterday, blaming Boko Haram Islamic extremists. Sunday night's blasts occurred more than 10 kilometers (6 miles) apart on the city's eastern outskirts, deputy superintendent Victor Isuku said.

Three men strapped into explosive vests and firing assault rifles approached a military checkpoint at about 8:20 pm, he said. One exploded, killing all three and a civilian self-defense fighter. Two hours later, two female bombers blew up, killing themselves and two unidentified people. Soldiers and civilians fighting alongside them have stopped many suicide bombers before they can reach heavily

populated targets in recent months.

Nigeria's army yesterday warned against a new terror tactic, saying two women suicide bombers recently knocked on the doors of homes 200 meters (yards) apart in Maiduguri's Kalari neighborhood, near one of Sunday's explosions. It said the bombers detonated when the doors were opened by a young girl and a man, killing both civilians and themselves. "The general public is hereby advised to be cautious and wary of strange persons knocking at their doors," said the statement. The suicide bombings and attacks on remote military outposts and villages continue despite President Muhammadu Buhari's announcement last month that Boko Haram has been crushed since the military destroyed their last Sambisa Forest stronghold. —AP



COLOGNE: A history teacher teaches Muslim females German history in a classroom of the "Muslim education center Cologne" in Cologne, western Germany, yesterday. —AFP

22,000 ROHINGYA FLED TO BANGLADESH IN ONE WEEK: UN

YANGON: At least 65,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar—a third of them over the past week—since the army launched a crackdown in the north of Rakhine state, the UN said yesterday. The figure marks a sharp escalation in the numbers fleeing a military campaign which rights groups say has been marred by abuses so severe they could amount to crimes against humanity.

They also come the same day the UN's human rights envoy for Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, began a 12-day visit to probe violence in the country's borderlands that will take her to the army-controlled area. "Over the past week, 22,000 new arrivals were reported to have crossed the border from Rakhine state," the UN's relief agency said in its weekly report.

"As of 5 January, an estimated 65,000 people are residing in registered camps, makeshift settlements and host communities in Cox's Bazaar" in southern Bangladesh, said the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The exodus of Rohingya from northern Rakhine began after Myanmar's army launched clearance operations while searching for insurgents behind deadly raids on police border posts three months ago.

Escapees from the persecuted Muslim minority in Bangladesh have given harrowing accounts of security forces committing mass rape, murder and arson.

The stories have cast a pall over the young government of Aung San Suu Kyi, with mainly Muslim Malaysia being especially critical. Myanmar's government has said the claims of abuse are fabricat-

ed and launched a special commission to investigate the allegations.

Last week it presented its interim report denying accusations of "genocide and religious persecution" and saying there was insufficient evidence that troops had been committing rape. That judgement came days after a video emerged showing police beating Rohingya civilians, something the government said was an isolated incident after the officers were arrested.

Yesterday the UN's Lee began her own probe with a visit to Kachin state, where thousands have been displaced by fighting between ethnic rebels and the army. Lee, who has faced threats and demonstrations on previous visits over her comments on Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingya, is due to visit Rakhine before leaving on January 20.

"The events of the last few months have shown that the international community must remain vigilant in monitoring the human rights situation," in Myanmar, Lee, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, said in the statement. Suu Kyi, a former political prisoner and champion of democracy in the then military-ruled Myanmar, came to power in April after a landslide election win, installing her confidant, Htin Kyaw, as president.

However, increasing violence in border regions has raised questions about Suu Kyi's commitment to human rights and ability to rein in the military, which retains a major political role.

The government has restricted aid to northern Rakhine State, where most people are Rohingya Muslims denied citizenship in Myanmar, and prevented

independent journalists from visiting. Muslim-majority Malaysia and Indonesia, which has the world's biggest Muslim population, have raised concern over the Rakhine crisis, which security officials believe is attracting the attention of international militant groups.

Lee will also investigate the impact on civilians of intensified fighting between the army and rebels in Kachin and Shan states, which she said "is causing some disquiet regarding the direction that the new government is taking in its first year of administration".

Aye Win, UN spokesman in Myanmar, said Lee had arrived in Myanmar late on Sunday and was due to fly to the Kachin State capital of Myitkyina yesterday. Presidential spokesman Zaw Htay said the government would provide Lee with security to visit conflict areas. —Agencies

News

in brief

Three Indians killed in attack on Kashmir camp

SRINAGAR: Three civilian workers were killed yesterday when unidentified militants attacked a military road construction camp in Indian-administered Kashmir, the army said. A spokesman said the army had launched a search for the attackers, who fled after firing at the General Reserve Engineering Force camp near the international border with Pakistan while the workers were sleeping. The area has been relatively calm in recent weeks following an upsurge in cross-border firing after a deadly attack on an Indian army base in September that New Delhi blamed on militants from Pakistan. "Terrorists fired at the camp at 1:30am and killed three casual laborers. A search operation is launched to nab the attackers," army spokesman Manish Mehta said.

Relatives say anti-Taliban Pakistani activist is missing

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani university professor, poet and rights activist who has been critical of the Taliban and also of the government's efforts against militants, has been missing since last week, his family said yesterday. Salman Haider disappeared on Friday, his brother Faraz Haider said. He said Salman's wife got a text message on her phone to go and collect his car from a roadside on Islamabad's outskirts. Pakistan's ministry of interior yesterday ordered police to step up efforts to find the missing activist. No militant group has so far claimed that it abducted the activist and no government department or intelligence agency has said it detained or arrested him. Local media have reported that a number of other activists like Salman Haider - who ran popular social media accounts known for liberal and leftist views - have also gone missing. These social media accounts - some of which are no longer accessible - often highlight what they describe as Pakistan's dual policy of fighting some militants but supporting others.

Chinese police kill 3 'rioters' in Xinjiang

BEIJING: Chinese police shot dead three "rioters" in the restive Xinjiang region after they resisted arrest, state media reported yesterday, in the second such incident in less than a fortnight. The shooting happened Sunday following a manhunt for three suspected members of a "violent terror group" linked to a 2015 attack in Pishan county, according to the regional government's official Tianshan website. No details were given about the attack two years ago. The killing came less than two weeks after three "rioters" were shot dead for allegedly attacking a Communist Party office in Xinjiang. China tends to reserve the "terror" or "terrorist" label for attacks involving the mostly Muslim Uighur ethnic minority. The far-western region is the homeland of the Uighurs—many of whom complain of discrimination and controls on their culture and religion—and is often hit by deadly unrest.

INDIA WOMEN PLAN PROTESTS AGAINST MASS MOLESTATION

POLITICIANS 'BLAME' WOMEN FOR BENGALURU RAPE

MUMBAI: Women's groups in India are planning nationwide rallies on Jan 21 to protest the alleged mass molestation in the city of Bengaluru on New Year's eve, and subsequent comments by politicians blaming the women for the crime.

The India protests, publicized under the hashtag #IWillGoOut on social media, are meant to coincide with the "Million Women March" in Washington on Jan 21, the day after Donald Trump's inauguration as president of the United States.

Several women said they were groped and assaulted by a mob on a crowded central street of the technology hub Bengaluru on Dec 31, despite the presence of a large number of policemen. The state home minister later told television networks "such incidents do happen", while another politician blamed women for following "western culture", dressing inappropriately and staying out late.

"That something like this could happen in a city like

Bengaluru, in a crowded public space, is shocking. It could have happened to any of us," said ElsaMarie D'Silva, founder of Safe City, an online project that collects reports of harassment and maps areas unsafe for women.

"To see these reactions from authorities who are meant to protect us is even more distressing." The attacks, reminiscent of those blamed on migrants in German cities last year, have shocked women across India, since Bengaluru - home to young technology professionals - is regarded as safer for women than New Delhi, which has among the nation's highest reports of rape and other crimes.

The politicians' comments echo those made after previous incidents of violence against women, including the fatal gang rape of a young woman on a bus in New Delhi in December 2012. That incident sparked nationwide protests and led to stricter rape legislation. It also led to a campaign by women's groups called 'Why Loiter?' that encouraged women to walk the streets of their cities at night, to defy

men who said women should not be out at night following the Delhi rape.

More than 34,000 rapes were reported in India in 2015, according to the National Crime Record Bureau. More assaults go unreported because women fear being stigmatized. The "Million Women March" in Washington is in response to Trump's attitude toward women, and fears that his presidency could set back or destroy many women's rights. Similarly, activists hope the marches in at least a dozen cities in India will draw attention to women's rights and the patriarchal mindset that blames women and questions their right to be out, said D'Silva, who is organizing the event in Mumbai.

"We don't talk enough about violence against women in this country, nor are we doing enough to prevent it," she said. "We must keep up the pressure on our institutions to ensure our safety, and keep pushing for a change in attitudes and behavior towards women." — Reuters



BENGALURU: French Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development Jean-Marc Ayrault (centre) waits on a platform with his delegation before taking a metro train ride in Bengaluru yesterday. French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault began a four-day visit to India with a meeting on January 8 with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to bolster the "strategic partnership" between the two countries. — AFP

MYANMAR WARNS ITS WORKERS IN MALAYSIA AFTER 5 HACKED TO DEATH

YANGON/KUALA LUMPUR: Myanmar said yesterday it had sent out safety instructions to its workers in Malaysia after attackers hacked five of them to death with swords, weeks after it barred workers from going there, partly because of security fears.

Tension between the Southeast Asian neighbors has risen in recent months over the fate of Myanmar's stateless Rohingya Muslim minority, with Malaysia accusing Myanmar of genocide over its treatment of them. Myanmar rejects reports of abuses by its security forces against the Rohingyas in the course of a crackdown launched after attackers killed nine Myanmar policemen in border posts near the Bangladesh border on Oct. 9.

On Thursday, four masked men wielding swords attacked Myanmar workers after they had left a factory in the Serdang district on the outskirts of the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur. Five were killed and two wounded. Malaysian police said seven Myanmar men had been detained shortly after the attack and they did not see any "religious motivations" behind it. They gave no more details.

Mostly Buddhist Myanmar stopped its workers going to Malaysia in December, after Najib Razak, prime minister of the predominantly Muslim country, described Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingyas as "genocide" and called for foreign intervention.

Labour-short Malaysia hosts about

147,000 Myanmar workers, according to Myanmar data. The spokesman for the Myanmar president's office, Zaw Htay, said safety instructions had been issued to Myanmar workers in Malaysia and illegal Myanmar workers there were urged to contact the embassy, state media quoted him as saying. Myanmar was working with Malaysian authorities to investigate the attack and the ban on workers going to Malaysia would remain in force, he said.

Nyunt Win, deputy director general at Myanmar's Labour, Immigration and Population Ministry, said security worries had been one reason for the ban on workers going to Malaysia.

"There are several reasons for the ban on Myanmar migrant workers going to Malaysia, including security concerns and the fact that they are trying to stir up political troubles against Myanmar," Nyunt Win said. He did not elaborate. Last week, Malaysia's top counter-terrorism official told Reuters in an interview that Myanmar faced a growing danger of attacks by foreign supporters of Islamic State recruited from Southeast Asian networks in support of the Rohingyas. Malaysian authorities detained a suspected IS follower planning to go to Myanmar to carry out attacks, the head of the Malaysian police counter-terrorism division, Ayob Khan Mydin Pitchay, said, adding that Myanmar targets outside Myanmar were also at risk. — Reuters

PAKISTANI GROUPS NOTE DROP IN VIOLENCE, CREDIT MILITARY

ISLAMABAD: Two Pakistani research groups have noted that the country saw a significant drop in militant violence last year, crediting the military for the decrease in attacks. The two Islamabad-based groups say that large-scale military operations in the lawless tribal regions bordering Afghanistan, in the chaotic port city of Karachi and the sparsely populated Baluchistan province are behind the drop. But for the trend to continue, they say, authorities need to disband sectarian and anti-Indian extremists based in the populous Punjab province.

The findings, which are based on the groups' records, were released last week and on Sunday. One of the groups, the Center for Research and Security Studies, said there was a 45 percent drop in violence-related deaths in 2016, compared to the previous

year. The Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, which tallies violent incidents, registered a 28 percent drop in attacks in 2016, compared to 2015.

Still, both organizations tempered the findings by warning that the trend could be halted unless militant groups are disbanded and called for improving relations with neighboring India and Afghanistan. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif echoed some of those sentiments last week, when he told a writers' conference that Pakistan needs to create an effective narrative that promotes tolerance. "We are forgetting how to speak of mutual love, integrity, compassion and empathy," he said. His government introduced legislation in 2016 outlawing hate speech and denying clerics from rival Islamic sects the right to use their loudspeakers at their mosques. However, Sharif's government has

not succeeded in disbanding outlawed sectarian groups that re-emerge later under a different name. Also, lawmakers from his own Pakistan Muslim League have been seen on campaign platforms with members of the outlawed Sunni extremist group Sipah-e-Sahabah, which has links to the banned Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, another violent Sunni extremist group that has been blamed for several attacks last year, particularly in southwestern Baluchistan. "A government that is going into an election next year doesn't want to lose votes," said Imtiaz Gul, executive director of the Center for Research and Security Studies, which authored one of the reports. "The banned outfits have madrassas that still operate, they have sympathies and influence."

Sectarian violence

A mostly Sunni Muslim country, Pakistan has for years been convulsed by brutal sectarian violence that has killed thousands. Most of the victims have been minority Shiite Muslims.

Asadullah Khan, an analyst with Pakistan's Institute of Strategic Studies says that "it isn't enough to ban" militant groups, which then surface under a new name. "We have to get rid of them altogether," Khan said. Prominent on the militant landscape dotting Pakistan are also the Afghan Taleban, Pakistan's own Taleban group and its splinters, as well as the feared Haqqani network. Then there are several anti-Indian groups, labelled terrorists by the United States and India - such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, which was banned but remerged as Jamaat-ud-Daawa and Jaish-e-Mohammed. Pakistan has fought three wars with archrival India, most often over the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir. Pakistan's reluctance to abandon militant groups altogether is inextricably linked to its perceived security concerns, said Marvin Weinbaum of the Middle East Institute in Washington "They remain viewed as valued proxies in a Pakistani strategic security calculus focused on Kashmir and the perceived threats posed by an India-aligned Afghanistan," said Weinbaum. — AP



LAHORE: Hafiz Saeed (third left), the leader of Pakistan's anti-Indian group Lashkar-e-Taiba, that was banned but resurrected as the Jamaat-ud-Daawa, prays for Indian Kashmiris with others during an anti-Indian rally in Lahore. — AP



KABUL: An elderly Afghan vendor waits for customers as he drinks his tea, at a roadside stand, in Kabul yesterday. — AP

CHINESE ROBOT TURNS ON CHARM

Continued from Page 1

weather, hold basic conversations and recognize the gender of her questioners. "You are a handsome man," she complimented one, but when asked later if she has a boyfriend, replied, "I prefer to stay single."

Rapid advancements are being made in artificial intelligence and such products stole the limelight at last week's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. A range of products were unveiled that can respond to voice commands to play music at home and follow other remote-control orders - or even think on their feet by accessing and "learning" from the Internet cloud.

One company, Hanson Robotics, unveiled its life-like "Professor Einstein", which has realistic facial expressions

and can engage in informative conversations such as lessons in math and science. Jia Jia is not quite there yet, but Chen sees a bright future for her kind in China. He said growing prosperity was causing many young Chinese to eschew jobs like waitressing, while an ageing population would require more hands on deck in hospitals and nursing homes - even if they aren't human hands.

Chen showed a video of a less life-like, but more functional, robot making and serving tea to team members at his university lab in the eastern province of Anhui. Chen, however, dismissed sci-fi fears of future robots getting too smart for our own good. "As long as this is done in a step-by-step and controlled manner, I don't think there will be a big impact on society. It won't harm human beings," he said. — AFP

US SHIP FIRED WARNING SHOTS AT IRANIAN...

Continued from Page 1

The resolution, adopted last year as part of the deal to curb Iran's nuclear activities, calls on Iran to refrain from work on ballistic missiles designed to deliver nuclear weapons. Tehran says it has not carried out any work on missiles specifically designed to carry such payloads.

Tasnim news agency said 173 lawmakers voted in favor of an article in Iran's five-year development plan that "requires government to increase Iran's defense capabilities as a regional power and preserve the country's national security and interests by allocating at least five percent of annual budget" to military affairs.

Only 10 lawmakers voted against the plan, which includes developing long range missiles, armed drones and cyber-war capabilities.

The Obama administration says Iran's ballistic missile tests have not violated the nuclear agreement with Tehran, but Trump, who criticized the accord as "the worst deal ever negotiated", has said he would stop Iran's missile program. "Those ballistic missiles, with a range of 1,250 miles, were designed to intimidate not only Israel ... but also intended to frighten Europe and someday maybe hit even the United States," he told the American Israel Public Affairs Committee AIPAC in March. "We're not going to let that happen."

The increase in military spending is part of a growth plan for 2016-2021 first announced in July 2015 by the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Khamenei supported last year's nuclear deal with world powers that

curbed Iran's nuclear program in return for lifting of international sanctions. However, he has since called for Iran to avoid further rapprochement with the West, and maintain its military strength.

Iran has test-fired several ballistic missiles since the nuclear deal and the US Treasury has imposed new sanctions on entities and individuals linked to the program. Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said last year that the missile launches were "not consistent with the constructive spirit" of the nuclear deal, but did not say whether they actually violated the UN resolution.

The United States, Britain, France and Germany wrote to Ban in March about the missile tests, which they said were "inconsistent with" and "in defiance of" the council resolution. Most UN sanctions on Iran were lifted after the deal but Iran is still subject to a five-year UN arms embargo - unless approved in advance by the UN Security Council. Although the embargo is not technically part of the nuclear agreement, the UN resolution enshrining the deal requires the UN Secretary-General to highlight any violations.

In a report submitted to the Security Council before he was succeeded by Antonio Guterres on Jan 1, Ban expressed concern that Iran may have violated the embargo by supplying weapons and missiles to Hezbollah. The Lebanese Shiite organization is one of several groups backed in the Middle East by mainly Shiite Iran in its regional rivalry with Sunni Muslim Gulf Arab states, a competition for influence that is played out in conflicts or power struggles in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen. — Agencies



A Palestinian rides his horse along the shore of the Mediterranean Sea as the sun sets during cold, stormy weather in Gaza City yesterday. — AP

KUWAIT EXPECTS BIG COMMITMENT TO OIL CUT...

Continued from Page 1

Barkindo described as historic the agreement between

the 24 OPEC and non-OPEC producers. Marzouq said the committee would meet in Vienna on Jan 21 and 22 to finalize the monitoring mechanisms. — AFP

ASSEMBLY PANEL SAYS DEPUTY SPEAKER'S...

Continued from Page 1

Kandari later said that the decision of the committee is not the final word on the issue, which will be decided by the constitutional court. Member of the panel MP Khaled Al-Shatti also said that the decision was politically-motivated and the final say on the issue will be by the constitutional court.

Also, the legal committee approved nine proposals to amend the nationality law of 1959. The amendments basically prevent the government from revoking the citizenship of any Kuwaiti without a final court verdict. The amendments were proposed by opposition MPs angry after the government revoked two years ago the citizenship of several opposition figures and members of their families. The committee also approved a draft law calling to abolish the DNA testing law that was passed virtually without debate by the previous pro-government Assembly.

In another development, opposition MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said yesterday that he plans to file to grill State Minister for Housing Yasser Abul next week over alleged violations in a large number of housing projects. Adasani accused the minister of not doing enough to

speed up housing projects, saying that the ministry had KD 4 billion at its disposal but spent only 16 percent of it on some of the 45 projects underway. He also charged that the minister is responsible for the bad selection of contractors and failing to monitor them, resulting in slow and incompetent implementation and accidents.

Meanwhile, Minister of Information and Youth Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said yesterday Kuwait has extended all cooperation with the International Olympic Committee within the framework of the constitution and the law with regards to lifting the suspension on Kuwaiti sports. He said after attending a meeting of the Assembly's sports and youth committee that the IOC is responsible to listen to the wishes of the Kuwaiti government and people to lift the suspension temporarily until the laws have been amended.

But MP Hamdan Al-Azemi called on the minister to resign immediately after the Kuwaiti football team was banned from taking part in the qualifying rounds of the Asia Cup on Jan 11. The lawmaker accused the minister and the government of ignoring the issue of lifting the suspension and being engaged in settling political and personal scores.

TRUMP LASHES OUT AFTER STREEP REBUKE

Continued from Page 1

acceptance speech for the Cecil B DeMille Award, handed out by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association. "You and all of us in this room, really, belong to the most vilified segments in American society right now. Think about it. Hollywood, foreigners and the press," she said to her peers with a laugh, referencing Trump's campaign that frequently disparaged immigrants and what he called biased media.

The US entertainment industry broadly supported Trump's Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton, with many stars publicly endorsing her White House run. Streep trashed the incoming president for an infamous campaign speech during which he did a decidedly unflattering impression of disabled New York Times reporter Serge Kovalski. "It was that moment when the person asking to sit in the most respected seat in our country imitated a disabled reporter - someone he outranked in privilege, power and the capacity to fight back. It kind of broke my heart when I saw it," she said.

"I still can't get it out of my head because it wasn't in a movie. It was real life. And this instinct to humiliate, when it's modeled by someone in the public platform, by someone powerful, it filters down into everybody's life, because it kind of gives permission for other people to do the same thing. Disrespect invites disrespect. Violence incites violence," she said. "When the powerful use their position to bully others, we all lose."

Trump has denied mocking Kovalski and again defended himself yesterday against Streep's accusation. "For the 100th time, I never 'mocked' a disabled reporter (would never do that) but simply showed him 'groveling' when he totally changed a 16 year old story that he had written in order to make me look bad," Trump said in a series of tweets. "Just more very dishonest media!" he added. Trump also told the New York Times in a brief telephone interview that he had not seen Streep's speech but was "not surprised" to be criticized by "liberal movie people."

Streep spoke out with less than two weeks to go until Trump's inauguration. "Hollywood is crawling with outsiders

and foreigners. If you kick 'em all out, you'll have nothing to watch but football and mixed martial arts, which are not the arts," she said, holding back tears. She urged the "principled press to hold power to account, to call them on the carpet for every outrage," to cheers from the floor.

Streep, considered among the best actresses of her generation, was presented with the DeMille award to mark a career which has seen her win eight Golden Globes and collect 29 nominations. She was nominated for best actress in a musical or comedy film at the glitzy ceremony at the Beverly Hilton Hotel for her performance in Stephen Frears's "Florence Foster Jenkins" but lost out to Emma Stone.

The speech by Streep, who had a primetime speaking slot at last year's Democratic National Convention praising Clinton's "grit and grace", quickly became the most-talked about moment of the Golden Globes. Global digital marketing company Amobee said it sparked some 627,000 Tweets in four hours. Not all the responses were complimentary. "This Meryl Streep speech is why Trump won. And if people in Hollywood don't start recognizing why and how - you will help him get re-elected," Meghan McCain, daughter of Republican Senator John McCain, wrote on Twitter.

"Why do you guys think we care what your political views are. Stick to what you do best and why we follow your account. For the acting and fashion. #enoughalready," wrote Debweb142 on the Instagram page of "Sex and the City" star Sarah Jessica Parker who had praised Streep. Shonda Rhimes, creator of hit TV shows "Scandal" and "Grey's Anatomy", was among Streep's supporters. "How DARE Meryl exercise her right to free speech like that's a thing we are allowed to do here in Ameri-wait...hmm," Rhimes tweeted.

But Trump aide Kellyanne Conway said yesterday that Streep was misusing her platform. "I'm concerned that somebody with a platform like Meryl Streep is also, I think, inciting people's worst instincts when she won't get up there and say, 'I didn't like it, but let's try to support him and see where we can find some common ground with him,'" Conway said on the "Fox & Friends" TV program yesterday. — Agencies

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Focus

SIX MONTHS IN,
BREXIT SHADOW
LOOMS OVER MAY

British Prime Minister Theresa May was hailed as a steadying influence when she took over a country deeply divided by the EU referendum, but six months later she is facing widespread criticism for her apparent Brexit indecision. The Conservative leader's refusal to outline a detailed strategy for negotiating Britain's future ties with the European Union has only deepened suspicions among politicians of all stripes that she does not have a grand plan.

However, the British public still appear to have faith in their leader, who remains well ahead of the opposition Labour party in the polls. May, the daughter of an Anglican vicar, entered Downing Street on July 13, promising stability after a tumultuous few weeks following Britain's shock vote to end its four-decade membership of the EU. The 60-year-old former interior minister, who kept a low profile on the Remain side of the referendum campaign, appeared to be a strong and sensible choice to lead the country.

But her tendency towards micromanagement and a perceived pettiness, demonstrated by the barring of a rebel MP who criticized her leather trousers, have prompted concerns. "I never really saw very much imagination, or flexibility, or instinct, or vision, which I think is what you need in a prime minister," Liberal Democrat lawmaker Nick Clegg, the former deputy prime minister, told AFP. May's talk of standing up for ordinary people also took a hit when she backtracked on plans to rein in excessive executive pay, although she used a speech Monday to renew her promise. Outlining her vision of a "shared society", she said there was an opportunity after Brexit to address inequality and injustice and "build a more united country".

Theresa May

A similar reluctance to spell out her Brexit proposals has frustrated MPs on both sides, and her repeated insistence that "Brexit means Brexit", which she presented initially as a promise to fulfill the referendum vote, has for many become a hollow mantra. May insisted on Sunday that she wants to tackle immigration and take "control over our borders", but has also said she would like access to the single market - two things that European leaders have said are incompatible.

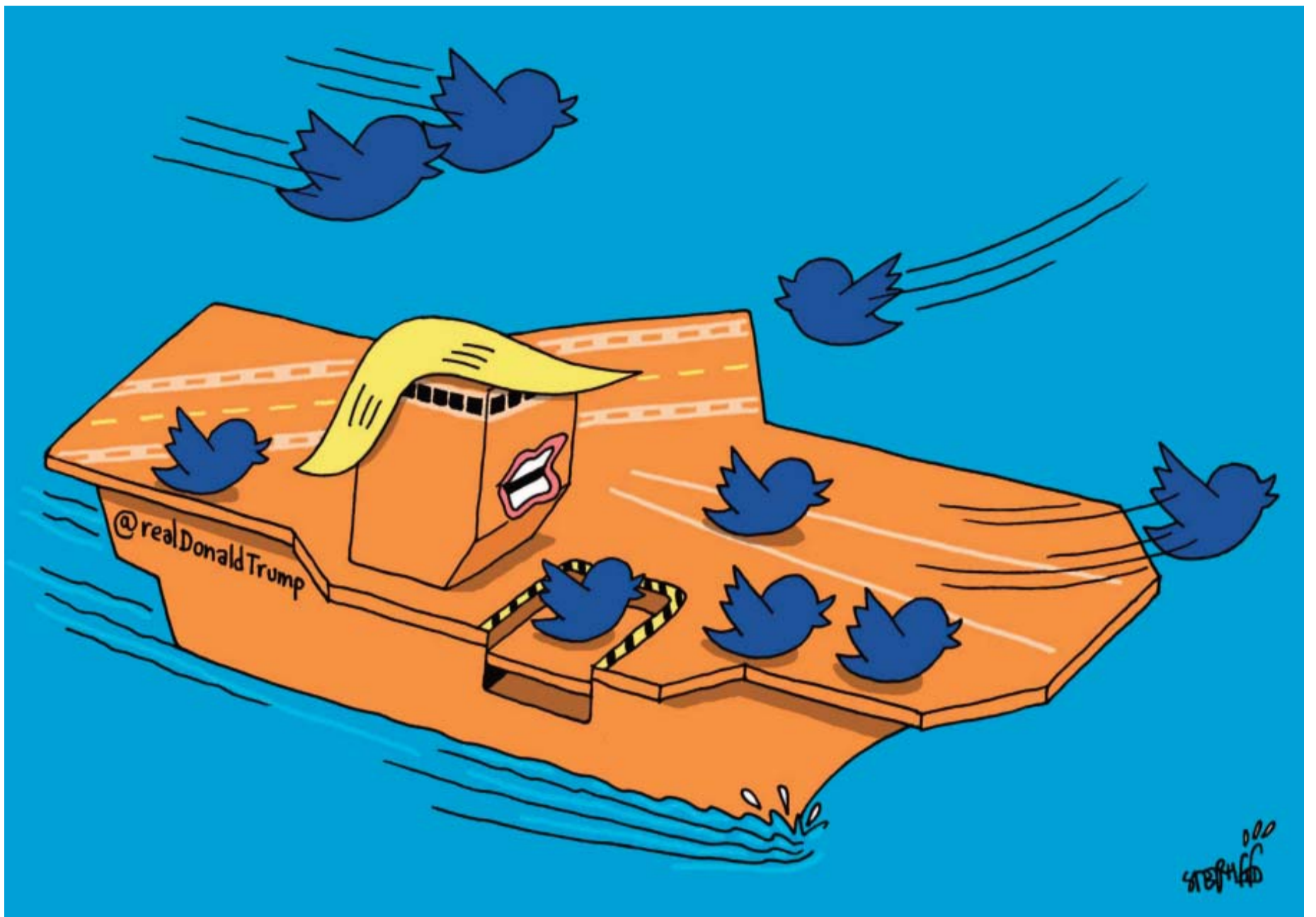
Her refusal to share her strategy with parliament has led to a distracting legal battle at the Supreme Court, which is due to pronounce later this month on whether Downing Street or MPs have the final say on triggering the divorce. The Economist this week dubbed her "Theresa Maybe" on its front page, carrying a damning assessment of her record, and barely a day goes by when she is not criticised in newspapers on the left and the right.

However, columnist Peter Osborne from the pro-Brexit Daily Mail, said the Economist article was a "crude hatchet job" motivated by a wider desire among "powerful interests at the heart of the British Establishment... to threaten stopping Brexit". The public are also largely immune to the pundits' complaints. According to Matt Singh, a polling specialist, May has succeeded in locking in a solid lead for her Conservatives - aided by the disarray in the opposition Labour party. "When she took over, she provided reassurance, stability. She has done well," Pawel Swidlicki, an independent expert on Europe, told AFP. But he added: "She has a clear vision of where she wants to end up, not how to get there."

Difficult equations

The unexpected resignation last week of Ivan Rogers, Britain's ambassador to the EU, laid bare the concerns over May's strategy, making clear that even he did not know what the government's negotiating objectives were. A European diplomat speaking on condition of anonymity noted that May is facing some "difficult equations". "She must find a balance between the desire to control the access of EU workers into Britain and the necessity of preserving Britain's economic interests", while also taking into account her party and the public's concerns, he said. She is not helped by the lack of preparation for Brexit by her predecessor David Cameron, who had refused to acknowledge it as a possible outcome and resigned after a referendum vote last year to leave the EU. —AFP

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OBAMA, TRUMP CAP TEMPESTUOUS TRANSITION

After vowing a smooth transition, President Barack Obama and Donald Trump are presiding over one of the most tumultuous transfers of power in US history. Assassinations notwithstanding, American presidential transitions have generally been peaceful affairs. But that doesn't mean they have been smooth. Andrew Johnson was effectively barred from attending Ulysses Grant's swearing in. Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt did not speak to each other on inauguration day.

Bill Clinton's staff removed the "W" keys from dozens of White House keyboards before George W Bush moved in. But few transitions have been as tempestuous as Obama's passing of the baton to Trump. When the pair met in the Oval Office a few days after Trump's shock November victory, the tone was cordial enough. Hailing an "excellent conversation," Obama said "it is important for all of us, regardless of party and regardless of political preferences, to now come together, work together, to deal with the many challenges that we face."

Quite a show of unity for two men who are as different as two politicians can be: Obama, a 55-year-old former law lecturer, is as systematic as Trump, a 70-year-old reality TV mogul, is impulsive. But Obama's ear-

ly strategy of flattering his way into Trump's good graces has melted away with each incendiary tweet. In the span of a few weeks, the president-elect has picked fights with Mexico, China, Toyota, Lockheed Martin, the media, Arnold Schwarzenegger and the cast of "Hamilton".

He has also taken aim at Obama personally. "Doing my best to disregard the many inflammatory President O statements and roadblocks. Thought it was going to be a smooth transition - NOT!" Trump tweeted in late December. Trump infuriated the White House by offering a running commentary on Obama's final weeks, criticizing his decision not to veto a UN resolution on Israeli settlements and the transfer of prisoners out of Guantanamo Bay prison.

"Trump has incinerated the 'one president at a time' rule. His behavior during the transition has been just as erratic as we've come to expect on most matters" said Larry Sabato, head of the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia. The president-elect "has been acting as though he was co-president-or maybe already president. It's a total break with tradition," said Sabato.

Red tide

But it is the scandal over Russian involvement in the election that has put

Obama and Trump most sharply at odds. The White House imposed sanctions on Moscow and released a steady drip of evidence that the Kremlin tried to put its hand on the electoral scale, culminating in an intelligence report that was shocking in its bluntness. "We assess Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election," the joint CIA, NSA and FBI report read. "We also assess Putin and the Russian Government aspired to help President-elect Trump's election chances."

Fearing that assessment will forever put an asterisk by his historic victory, Trump has lashed out at US intelligence and appeared to side with Russia in a way that is unthinkable for the White House. Team Obama's comments about Trump have become increasingly pointed. In a farewell address, Michelle Obama urged young Americans not to fear the future but fight for it. "You cannot take your freedom for granted," she said. "You have to do your part to protect and preserve those freedoms. Don't be afraid. Be focused, be determined, be empowered," she said. "Lead by example, with hope, never fear."

In an interview with his former aide David Axelrod, President Obama himself went as far as suggesting that he could

have beaten Trump in the election were he allowed to run for a third term - a remark the president knew would smart. "The outgoing administration has made life more than usually difficult for the incoming administration," said David Clinton an expert in presidential transitions at Baylor University.

Obama may be right. His approval rating is around 55 percent according to Gallup, putting him in the league of Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan as they departed. Trump's approval rating is 43 percent, according to the Real Clear Politics average, notably low for someone who just won an election. But that will be of little comfort to Obama with his signature policies - from curbing emissions to the nuclear deal with Iran - in such grave danger. "Most of Obama's legacy is dead and gone, or will be in the coming weeks and years," said Sabato.

In a last-ditch bid, Obama has jumped back into the political fray with a series of interviews and speeches aimed at stopping Trump from rolling back landmark health care reforms. Today in Chicago, he will deliver a farewell address that is set to focus as much on the future as on the last eight years. The message for Trump is unlikely to be subtle. —AFP

DON'T EXPECT PROTECTIONISM FROM GERMANY

Germany is reviewing its powers to block foreign acquisitions after a spate of Chinese takeovers, but the government's commitment to free trade beats its concerns about hemorrhaging strategic technologies and will limit any changes. A more hostile German tone towards Chinese takeovers set in last year when Berlin actively, though unsuccessfully, sought to line up a European offer to counter a Chinese bid for industrial robot maker Kuka.

Chancellor Angela Merkel had held up Kuka as an example of a cutting-edge German industrial company, telling workers on a visit to its Augsburg headquarters in 2015: "We can be proud that in Germany companies like Kuka, for example, are at home." The takeover of Kuka by Chinese home appliance maker Midea hurt that pride. As a result, Berlin is reviewing its legal means of blocking foreign takeovers, while also pushing for European measures to safeguard key technologies.

The government review is being led by Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel, whose centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) are the junior partner in Merkel's ruling coalition with her conservative bloc. She is ultimately likely to rein him in. "If they change something, I don't think it will be fundamental," said Mikko Huotari at the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS) in Berlin. "Nothing is going to happen if the chancellor does not push this."

Merkel is deeply committed to free trade, adopting the motto "Shaping an Interconnected World" for Germany's G20 presidency this year, with which she is aiming to resist U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's protectionist instincts. Even during the Kuka takeover, Merkel stressed that Germany is generally open towards investments from China, though in return she said it expects that China opens up and offers the same investment conditions.

Since making those comments last June, Merkel has largely stayed out of the Chinese investment issue, leaving Gabriel to lead the review and ruffle feathers during a trip to Beijing in November, when he clashed with China's trade minister. "We didn't mince our words - on either side," Gabriel told reporters after meeting the minister, when he pressed his concerns about Chinese companies buying German businesses while restricting German firms' access to Chinese markets.

Hitting the brakes

Gabriel's bluster is having a tangible impact: Chinese interest in a takeover of German lighting group Osram Licht AG has cooled amid signs of mounting political opposition here, two people familiar with the matter said. There is also greater scrutiny of M&A deals in China, where the authorities have begun checking some outbound investment projects as part of a crackdown on illegal cross-border currency deals due to concerns over increased pressure on China's foreign exchange reserves and external payments.

These checks will make it harder for Chinese firms to

justify takeovers of German targets unless there is a clear strategic fit, investment bankers say. "Both sides are stepping on the brakes a little," said Berthold Fuerst, Deutsche Bank's Germany co-head of corporate finance. Chinese firms withdrew four M&A deals in Germany last year, three of which had a combined value of \$579 million, Thomson Reuters data shows. Data on the value of the fourth was not available.

In total, Chinese firms spent nearly \$10 billion on 56 M&A deals here last year, Thomson Reuters data shows. Berlin is worried about losing strategic technologies, and trade unions are worried about jobs. While the German government reviews how it handles Chinese takeovers, investment bankers expect China-related deals here to cool off for a while. "Chinese corporate buyers can be expected to operate under the radar for a while and also work on deal alternatives, such as the acquisition of minority stakes," said Barclays' Germany chief Alexander Doll.

Behind the bluster...tinkering

Embarking on his review of government powers to block foreign takeovers, Gabriel said last June: "One cannot sacrifice German companies and German jobs on the altar of open markets." Germany's tool for restricting or blocking foreign takeovers is its Foreign Trade and Payments Act, or Außenwirtschaftsgesetz. Yet Germany's deep commitment to global free trade, from which it prospers, means major change is unlikely. German officials speak of an "adjustment" of the rules on foreign takeovers, rather than a "tightening".

At present, the law only gives Berlin scope to intervene with "restrictions or obligations" in the event that an acquisition "endangers the public order or security of the Federal Republic of Germany". It says such restrictions or obligations "can particularly be imposed" on military equipment, and with companies that produce IT technology products with "security functions to process classified state material".

If the government were to interpret these criteria too widely, it would likely run up against resistance from the courts. Berlin has generally been "hands off" about foreign acquisitions here. Of 338 government audits of foreign investments since 2008, only one has been initiated by the ministry. The others were all at the request of the foreign buyers, who wanted compliance clearance. One recent example of government intervention came in 2014, when Berlin imposed restrictions on BlackBerry's acquisition of encryption technology firm Secusmart, only approving the deal after BlackBerry gave assurances confidential information would not be passed on to foreign spy agencies.

Berlin has yet to nix a Chinese takeover, though China's Fujian Grand Chip Investment Fund dropped its bid for German chip equipment maker Aixtron last month after the United States blocked the deal on security grounds. Government sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the economy ministry could present proposals to change the rules on screening foreign takeovers before

September's federal election but it was unclear if these would be enacted by then.

Huotari at MERICS said Berlin could tighten the rules a bit: "What they might do is change the thresholds of when they look at things, and maybe add dual use goods to the lists of critical technologies." Achieving a higher degree of scrutiny at EU level will also be difficult as France and Germany are the main countries concerned about hemorrhaging technological know-how to China. Other countries - eager for investment - have fewer concerns. Asked about how concerned China is about the extra attention Chinese acquisitions in Germany are now getting from Berlin, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said business deals between China and Germany were a "win-win".

Business resistance

For many German businesses, China remains crucial. German automakers continue to enjoy success in the world's largest car market. Data published by Volkswagen late last year showed Chinese demand will drive sales growth of its core brand in the coming months. But while the Chinese buy up firms with strategic technologies abroad, foreign auto brands are only allowed to manufacture cars in China through joint ventures with local partners, and typically are limited to two partners.

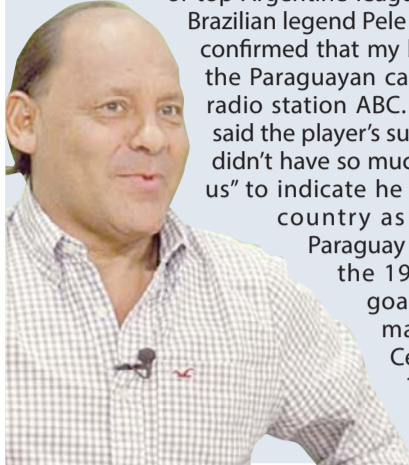
Furthermore, Beijing's China 2025 plan calls for a progressive increase in domestic components in sectors such as advanced information technology and robotics. This means Germany's export exposure to China, for years a source of economic strength, is turning into a risk for some sectors where the Chinese are becoming dominant. In recent years, Chinese companies have already unseated their German peers as the world's biggest suppliers of solar cells.

Rather than a partner, German officials see China as a country with interests that it is seeking to promote - by acquiring know-how in technology and high-end engineering. "I have never sensed this so strongly before: China does not want any friends, nor partners, for China all that counts is their own interests," one German delegate said during Gabriel's November trip to China. Yet German business leaders are largely reluctant for their government to impede Chinese takeovers and acquisitions here. Many need the investment and find the Chinese reliable partners.

Putzmeister, a German maker of pumps for concrete, has seen its workers' jobs secured and its sales rise nearly a third since Chinese competitor Sany bought it in 2012. "The experience with investors from China is consistently good," said Thilo Brodtmann, chief of Germany's VDMA engineering industry association. With industry in her ear, Merkel has asked her advisers to brief her on Chinese takeovers even as Gabriel leads his review. She is unlikely to stymie the investment inflow. One government source said: "We mustn't throw the baby out with the bathwater." —Reuters

PARAGUAY HERO CABANAS DEAD

ASUNCION: Paraguay football hero Roberto Cabanas has died after suffering a heart attack yesterday aged 55, his brother said. The striker was a hero of top Argentine league side Boca Juniors and played alongside Brazilian legend Pele for the New York Cosmos in the 1980s. "It is confirmed that my brother has died. He had a heart attack" in the Paraguayan capital Asuncion, Valerio Cabanas told local radio station ABC. With his voice breaking, Valerio Cabanas said the player's sudden death took the family by surprise. "He didn't have so much as a headache. He didn't say anything to us" to indicate he was unwell, he said. Known in his home country as "The Panther," Cabanas played in the Paraguay side that won the Copa America in 1979. At the 1986 World Cup in Mexico he scored two goals against Belgium in a key group stages match. He started out with Asuncion club Cerro Porteno before moving at the age of 19 to the Cosmos, where he lined up alongside Pele and Franz Beckenbauer. —AFP



JUNAID TO REPLACE RETURNING IRFAN FOR AUSTRALIA ODIS

KARACHI: Pakistan were forced yesterday to add Junaid Khan to their squad for a five-match one-day series in Australia, after Mohammad Irfan returned home because his mother died. The 27-year-old Junaid was not named in the initial squad of 15 announced on December 30. "Following Irfan's return to Pakistan due to his mother's death, the chief selector Inzamam ul Haq after consulting the team management has named fast bowler Junaid as Irfan's replacement," said a release by the Pakistan Cricket Board. This is the second addition to the one-day squad after spinning all-rounder Mohammad Hafeez was added as the 16th member on Saturday. Junaid has not played for Pakistan since May 2015. He has 78 wickets in 52 one-day internationals and recently took 20 wickets in 14 matches in the Bangladesh Premier League, a Twenty20 competition. — AFP

BARCELONA PULLS MESSI FROM FIFA AWARDS CEREMONY

ZURICH: Lionel Messi will not attend the FIFA awards ceremony later, when Cristiano Ronaldo is expected to be named the world's best player for 2016. Barcelona says it decided Messi would skip the event in Zurich and be "prioritizing preparations" for a match tomorrow. Messi's teammates, including Neymar, who could be named in a World XI voted for by players, will also not travel. Ronaldo is favored to win his fourth FIFA player award after helping Portugal and Real Madrid become European champions last year. Messi has five FIFA best player awards and has been runner-up in all other years since 2007. Barcelona hosts Athletic Bilbao tomorrow in the Copa del Rey. The defending champions lost the first leg 2-1 in Bilbao. —AP



MUSTAFA KARAM AND SONS SHOOTING TOURNAMENT CONCLUDES

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Shooting Sport Club shooters dominated competitions of Mustafa Karam and Sons tournament which concluded on Saturday night at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Complex, in the presence of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations President Eng Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi, Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Obaid Al-Osaimi, Mustafa Karam company representative Ahmad Mustafa Karam, KSSC Assistant Secretary Eng Mohammad Al-Ghurab, Treasurer Essa Butaiban, Assistant treasurer Adnan Al-Ibrahim, and Board Member Dr Nedal Al-Asem.

Obaid Al-Osaimi in his speech thanked the sponsor for their support adding that officials supported Kuwaiti shooting activities for a long time, and backed outstanding shooters of the national team. Al-Osaimi said 90 shooters participated in the tournament which witnessed very strong competition and results were close as shooters were keen on winning the cup.

Meanwhile KSSC Chairman Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi was pleased for the success of the tournament and the positive results made by participants. He said the board of directors looks forward to have a broad base of promising shooters to participate in various future events.

Results of the tournament were as follows:

Skeet Men: Saud Habeeb, Mansour Al-Rahidi, Nasser Al-Daihani

Trap Men: Saad Al-Hubaida, Khalid Al-Mudhaf, Abdelrahman Al-Faihan

Double Trap Men: Ahmad Al-Afasi, Fahad Al-Mutairi, Saad Lafi

Trap Women: Sarah Al-Hawal, Shahad Al-Hawal, Asmaa Al-Qatami

Skeet Women: Sheikha Al-Rashidi

Iman Al-Shamma, Munira Al-Subaiti

Skeet Juniors: Nasser Al-Mutairi, Ahmad Al-Awad, Hamad Al-Khalidi

Trap Juniors: Fares Al-Mutairi, Bader Al-Adwani, Yousuf Al-Rashidi.



ZAIN CONGRATULATES JET SKI CHAMPION YOUSEF AL ABDULRAZZAQ

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, congratulated Kuwaiti Jet Ski champion Yousef Al Abdulrazaq, who recently achieved the World Championship title for the year 2016 during the fifth and final round of the World Jet Ski Championship held at Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

Zain expressed its pride in Al Abdulrazaq's latest achievement, which the Kuwaiti champion attained for the third consecutive year as part of the UIM World Championship. Al Abdulrazaq competed against professionals from across the globe, and achieved the first place titles in Runabout GP1 and Ski Ladies categories. Zain's support to the Kuwaiti Champion Yousef Al Abdulrazaq during the past 10 years comes in line with the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards Kuwaiti sports and athletes. Al Abdulrazaq achieved this prestigious title for the third consecutive year for

the first time, and continues to raise the Kuwaiti flag high by achieving many internationally renowned titles year after year.

Zain's role not only concentrates on economic and business activities, but also extends to contribute significantly in various areas within the Kuwaiti society, including sports. The company has endless confidence in the competencies of Kuwaiti athletes and their capabilities in excelling in different fields, on both regional and international levels.

It is worth noting that Al Abdulrazaq represented Kuwait throughout the past years in several local and international competitions, winning a number of prominent titles, which encouraged Zain to continue supporting him. Al Abdulrazaq attained the World Championship title in several professional categories seven different times. Through his most recent achievement, Al Abdulrazaq have maintained his lead in eight different titles across the years.



THOMAS HOLDS ON TO BEAT MATSUYAMA AT KAPALUA

KAPALUA: Justin Thomas knew he was playing well enough to start the year with a victory in the SBS Tournament of Champions. He just didn't expect to have to play so many good shots in the end to win.

Even on Maui, life can move pretty fast. Thomas had a five-shot lead with five holes to play when he holed a 10-foot birdie putt on the 13th hole. Three holes later, he stood on the edge of the 16th green and watched Hideki Matsuyama stand over a 10-foot birdie putt that would have tied him for the lead.

Asked if there was ever a time in his golfing life that he feared blowing a tournament, Thomas replied, "Today count?" The thought didn't linger. He told his caddy, Jimmy Johnson, as they walked to the 17th tee that he would have gladly taken a one-shot lead with two holes to play before the tournament started. Thomas then hit an 8-iron from 214 yards so pure that he stopped to admire it as it settled 3 feet away for birdie, and he closed by smashing a 369-yard drive - his 10th tee shot of at least 350 yards for the week - that set up a simple two-putt birdie for a 4-under 69.

He wound up with a three-shot victory over Matsuyama that made him sweat a little more than he imagined Sunday at Kapalua. He won for the third time in his third season on the PGA Tour, and they all have one thread.

"I apparently have to fly at least 12 hours to get a win on the PGA Tour," Thomas said. His other two victories were in Malaysia each of the last two years at the CIMB Classic. The one difference at Kapalua was that his parents were there to see it for the first time. Mike Thomas is the longtime head pro at Harmony Landing outside Louisville, Kentucky, and still his coach.

His mother, Jani, was in tears. No surprise there. "I definitely made them stress a little bit more than probably they would have liked," Thomas said. "But yeah, I love having them there." The first PGA Tour of the new year didn't feel much differently from the old year.

Matsuyama had won three straight tournaments - and four of his last five - coming into Kapalua. Thomas was the only player who had beaten him dating to his Oct. 16 victory in the Japan Open. The 24-year-old from Japan appeared to have taken himself out of contention with two soft bogeys on the front and losing ground early on the front nine. But players who are on a winning streak find a way to get in the mix, and Matsuyama was no exception. It started with his eagle on the 14th to get within three shots. Matsuyama could have done a little more to squeeze Thomas.

Thomas avoided one big mistake on the ninth hole when he snap-hooked a tee shot into the native grass. Not only did a TV spotter locate the ball, it was sitting high enough above the roots to hack it out into the fairway, and he escaped with par.

He wasn't so fortunate on the 15th when he hit a fat hook with a 4-iron into the hazard, left his wedge short of the green and made double bogey. And he missed the 10-footer on 16 that would have tied it.

And on the 17th, after Thomas stuffed the 8-iron into 3 feet, Matsuyama went after a 30-foot putt knowing he had to make it to stay in the game. It ran 8 feet by the hole, he missed that one to take bogey and the game was over.

"Justin had a little trouble at 15 and then I was really in it," Matsuyama said. "But my putter let me down there at 16, 17 and 18."

Thomas, who finished at 22-under 270, moved to No. 12 in the world. Defending cham-



KAPALUA: Justin Thomas holds the champions trophy after the final round of the Tournament of Champions golf event, Sunday, at Kapalua Plantation Course in Kapalua, Hawaii. — AP

pion Jordan Spieth got through a round without a big number and closed with a 65 to tie for third with Ryan Moore and Pat Perez. It also enabled him to stay at No. 5 by a fraction over Matsuyama.

Spieth and Thomas first met 10 years ago on the junior circuit and have been close friends ever since. Spieth and Jimmy Walker were by the 18th to congratulate Thomas, and Spieth told

him, "Go sign your card."

"I think it's potentially floodgates opening," Spieth said of Thomas' victory. "The guy hits it forever. He's got a really, really nifty short game. He manages the course well. He's playing the golf course the way it should be played, and honestly, he's taking advantage of the easier holes. "It's awesome to see," Spieth said. "He's going to be tough to beat next week, too." —AP

RORY MCILROY STILL RESENTS OLYMPICS FOR FORCING HIS HAND

NEW YORK: World number two Rory McIlroy has said he still resents the Olympic Games for forcing him to choose between Britain and Ireland and revealed that Tiger Woods sends him texts in the early hours.

The Northern Irishman, who agonised for years before opting to represent Ireland, ultimately withdrew from last year's Rio de Janeiro Games after citing health fears over the Zika virus.

The four times major winner told Ireland's Independent newspaper in an interview that it was a choice he had never wanted to make.

"When it (golf's return to the Olympics for the first time since 1904) was announced in 2009 or whatever, all of a sudden it put me in a position where I had to question who I am. Who am I? Where am I from? Where do my loyalties lie?" he said.

"Who am I going to play for? Who do I not want to piss off the most? I started to resent it. And I do. I resent the Olympic Games because of the position it put me in..."

McIlroy sent gold medal winner Justin Rose a text after the Briton's success in Rio offering congratulations and saying he was happy for him. Rose replied by saying the

other players wanted to know whether McIlroy felt he had missed out. "I said: 'Justin, if I had been on the podium (listening) to the Irish national anthem as that flag went up, or the British national anthem as that flag went up, I would have felt uncomfortable either way,'" recalled McIlroy.

"I don't know the words to either anthem; I don't feel a connection to either flag; I don't want it to be about flags; I've tried to stay away from that." While Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, which takes part in the Olympics as Britain, its athletes are eligible to compete for Ireland.

McIlroy described former world number one Woods, who makes his official comeback after a long injury layoff later this month, as "an intriguing character."

"He's thoughtful. He's smart...he reads stuff and educates himself on everything. But he struggles to sleep, which I think is an effect of overtraining," he said.

"He'd be texting me at four o'clock in the morning: 'Up lifting. What are you doing?'"

"Erica (Stoll, McIlroy's fiancée) actually got pissed off with it. He was texting me in the middle of the night and I was like, 'Tiger is in the gym.'" —Reuters

'NO REGRETS' FOR MORGAN AS HE RESUMES CAPTAINCY

MUMBAI: England's Eoin Morgan insisted yesterday he had no regrets over his controversial decision to skip last year's tour of Bangladesh, ahead of his return to the one-day captaincy in India this week. Morgan, skipper of England's Twenty20 and 50-over sides, came in for criticism for opting out of the Bangladesh series over security concerns, with several commentators saying his decision had damaged his authority.

But speaking to journalists in Mumbai, where England play two warm-

up matches this week before their first ODI against India on Sunday, Morgan said he was comfortable with the decision and it was now time to move on.

"I don't regret that at all. It was a decision I'm very comfortable with," Morgan said. "It was a decision I considered all consequences (to) when I did. Sitting here or sitting at home I would have been very comfortable with it."

Jos Buttler stepped up to the captaincy when England played three ODIs in Bangladesh in October, with Morgan

opting out of the tour in the wake of a deadly attack on a cafe in Dhaka which was popular with foreigners. Former England skipper Nasser Hussain said Morgan had "let England down" by staying at home. Another ex-captain Michael Vaughan wrote in the Daily Telegraph that players would not forget how their leader "went missing at a difficult time". Morgan, who has recently been playing T20 cricket with the Sydney Thunder franchise in Australia's Big Bash League, denied it had felt weird

to link up with his international teammates again. "No, not at all, I was extremely excited. I think a major part of that was getting some cricket under my belt in the run-in to the series, which I've managed to do," said Morgan.

"I'm really excited about the upcoming series and the next five, six months, which is going to be a big part in our lead towards the World Cup" being staged in England in 2019.

After the Bangladesh tour, England were hammered 4-0 by India in a five-

match Test series under the captaincy of Alastair Cook. But England's short-form cricket has shown a big improvement since they crashed out of the 2015 ODI World Cup. They were the beaten finalists in last year's World T20 tournament in India. Senior batsman Joe Root is expected to be back in the side for the first ODI in Pune after staying back for the birth of his child, although Morgan indicated that he could be rested at some stage. After the three ODIs, the two teams will play three T20 internationals. —AFP

AUSTRALIA WITHDRAW O'KEEFE FROM BIG BASH

SYDNEY: Steve O'Keefe's hopes of joining the Australian slow-bowling attack in the four-Test series in India from next month have been boosted after the left-arm spinner was withdrawn from the remainder of the Big Bash League to prepare for the tour.

The 32-year-old returned home injured after playing his third test in Sri Lanka last July and was only recalled to the national team for last week's final test of the home summer against Pakistan.

O'Keefe had been named in the Sydney Sixers squad to make his return to BBL action in yesterday's match against the Melbourne Renegades at the SCG before Cricket Australia pulled him out. He will now focus on the five-day format and will be part of a group of players travelling to Dubai for a training camp ahead of the India tour.

"Post the Sri Lanka tour last year we have been in talks with Cricket New South Wales and Steve on the best way for him to prepare for the ... tour of India," CA team performance boss Pat Howard said.

"After his recent injuries, which have caused him to miss Sheffield Shield matches this season, he has had a lot less red ball match practice than other players that are

likely to tour India and it is important he gets as much bowling in the format he is going to play.

"His focus will now be on grade and futures league cricket before likely being one of the first players to depart for Dubai in late January," O'Keefe was impressive on his Australia return, posting match figures of four for 103 during the hosts' third test win against Pakistan at the SCG and will be expected to partner off-spinner Nathan Lyon in India. Leg-spinner Adam Zampa believes he has done enough to stake a claim for selection in the test squad, citing his experience of playing the Indian Premier League and last year's World Twenty20 in the South Asian country.

"I've performed well in the World T20 and the IPL and I think I've really earned the respect of some of the Indian players over there as well," Zampa, who plays the shorter formats for Australia, said.

"To have my experience over there I think it would lead me in good stead towards playing in India." Australia have not won a test series in India since 2004 and were blanked on their previous trip to the subcontinent's spin-friendly conditions in Sri Lanka last year. —Reuters

INDIA BAT MAKERS SAY THERE'S NO STOPPING FOR BIG HITTERS

MEERUT: As factory worker Jitender Singh carves another slab of thick willow, he insists that proposals to limit the size of cricket bats won't tame the big hitters.

"I don't think the thickness matters. It's more about the balance of the bat and the talent of the batsman," said Singh.

He has made bats for many leading players including South Africa's AB de Villiers, who holds the record for the fastest hundred in a one-day international-off just 31 balls. "We can provide a thick or thin blade but it's the batsman who knows best how to use it," he added at the factory of BDM, one of India's leading cricket gear suppliers, in Meerut in India's northern state of Uttar Pradesh. The World Cricket committee of the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), who are the guardians of the game's rules and regulations, recommended last month that limitations be placed on the thickness of bats.

They believe bigger weapons have made it too easy to smash fours and sixes. "(The) balance of the game has tilted too far in the batsman's favour. The time has come to limit the sizes of bat edges and depths," the committee said. It suggested a maximum thickness of 40 millimetres at the edge of the bat rising to 67mm at the spine during its two-day meeting in India's Mumbai. Thirty years ago a batsman's weapon of choice averaged 30mm to 32mm thick at the edge but today's bigger bats are a chunky 45mm to 50mm.

BAT EVOLUTION

The only current size restrictions are on length and width. They state that the overall length of the bat shall not be more than 38 inches (96.5 centimetres) and the width of the bat shall not exceed 4.25 inches (10.8 centimetres) at its widest part.

The proliferation of the high-octane Twenty20 format in which matches are won primarily on the number of boundaries struck has fuelled the rush to bigger bats. However some claim that modern batsmen are simply bigger, stronger and more athletic and would be hitting more boundaries anyway. Jatin Sareen, managing director of SS Sports, also in India's bat-making hub of Meerut, agrees with Singh

that limiting a bat's size won't make any difference. "I don't agree (with the MCC proposal). Nor will it give any benefit to the game. Bats will have the same power as they have (now)," he told AFP. The cricket bat has evolved significantly down the years from the original paddle-like shape to the popular scooped-back variety to today's familiar boat-shaped bat.

Rakesh Mahajan, co-owner of BDM, insists that through the changes the constant has remained the batsman's skill.

SKILL FACTOR

"English and Australian players didn't use boat-shaped bats. Now everybody is using them," he said.

"Skill remains the same, you see. It's still the batsman's talent that gets him runs and not the thickness of the bat."

Cricketers have long experimented with different weapons. Back in 1979 Australia's Dennis Lillee controversially came out to bat in a Test with an aluminium bat which was subsequently banned. Countryman Matthew Hayden wielded a "mongoose" in the 2010 IPL which had a long handle and short blade, while West Indian Andre Russell is using a unique black bat in Australia's Big Bash League.

Stories of India great Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi in the 1960s picking up whatever bat was nearest before walking out to the crease are legendary. But 50 years on, cricketers are involved in every aspect of the manufacture of their bats.

"They come down to the factory to discuss their needs and demands," said Sareen. If the MCC main committee agrees to limit the thickness of bats then the regulations will become part of the laws of the game from October next year. Former India fast bowler Chetan Sharma doesn't expect the game to shift suddenly away from the batsmen.

"You can't bring back days of WG Grace-like (thin) bats. If those bats came back then bowlers would have an advantage," he told AFP.

"If a batsman has class, he will score a boundary. As a fast bowler I don't see much delight in this. For a spinner maybe the sixes and fours may reduce." — AFP



COLOMBUS: Columbus Blue Jackets' Sam Gagner, top, celebrates their goal against Philadelphia Flyers' Steve Mason during the overtime period of an NHL hockey game Sunday, in Columbus, Ohio. The Blue Jackets beat the Flyers 2-1 in overtime. — AP

MINNESOTA BEAT ANAHEIM, BLUE JACKETS DOWN FLYERS

ANAHEIM: Matt Dumba and Jared Spurgeon scored early in the second period as the Minnesota Wild beat the Ducks 2-1 Sunday in coach Bruce Boudreau's triumphant return to Anaheim. Boudreau was fired by the Ducks after their first-round playoff exit last year despite leading Anaheim to the past four consecutive Pacific Division titles and Game 7 of the 2015 Western Conference finals. The veteran coach has turned his new team into an early-season Stanley Cup contender with 14 wins in its last 16 games. Devan Dubnyk made 23 saves for the Wild, while Ryan Kesler scored and John Gibson stopped 34 shots for the Ducks, whose three-game winning streak ended.

BLUE JACKETS 2, FLYERS 1, OT

Nick Foligno scored 2:33 into overtime to lift Columbus to victory. The Flyers' Brayden Schenn had tied it with 17 seconds left to send the game into the extra period. Foligno then lifted a shot over Philadelphia goalie Steve Mason's shoulder to get the win for the Blue Jackets, their first since a 16-game winning streak ended with two straight losses. David Savard also scored for Columbus and Sergei Bobrovsky had 25 saves. The win kept Columbus atop the division with a three-point lead over Pittsburgh and the New York Rangers.

BLACKHAWKS 5, PREDATORS 2

Ryan Hartman scored off a goalmouth scramble in the third period and tacked on two empty-netters to help Chicago beat banged-up Nashville. Artemi Panarin and Niklas Hjalmarsson also scored for the Blackhawks while Patrick Kane added three assists, running his team-best total to 32 in 43 games, and Corey Crawford made 25 saves. Hartman was credited with his eighth of the season when Richard Panik's shot created a scrum in front of the net and the referees ruled the puck crossed the line before the goal was dislodged. It looked as if the puck might have gone off Hartman's left hand while he battled Nashville defenseman Yannick Weber for position. Nashville pulled Pekka Rinne for an extra attacker with 1:39 left and Hartman added two more goals for his first career hat trick. The big night for the rookie moved him into fifth on the team with 10 goals.

HURRICANES 4, BRUINS 3, OT

Sebastian Aho's second goal of the game, 1:34 into overtime, lifted Carolina past Boston. Derek Ryan and Jay McClement also scored for the Hurricanes and Camm Ward finished with 32 saves. Carolina won two of the three meetings between the teams, with all three going beyond regulation. Tim Schaller, David Backes and Brad Marchand scored for Boston and Zane McIntyre stopped 26 shots in his first career appearance against Carolina.

PENGUINS 6, LIGHTNING 2

Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 28 shots in his fifth straight win, leading Pittsburgh past Tampa Bay. Connor Sheary had a goal and an assist and Eric Fehr, Chris Kunitz, Scott Wilson, Phil Kessel and Kris Letang also scored for the Penguins. Sidney Crosby and Matt Cullen each had two assists. Jonathan Drouin and Vladislav Namestnikov scored for the Lightning and

Andrei Vasilevskiy made 31 saves in his third start in four days. Drouin put the Lightning up 1-0 at 2:19 of the second period before the Penguins scored the next four goals to take control of the game.

SENATORS 5, OILERS 3

Mark Stone had a goal and two assists and Mike Condon stopped 35 shots as Ottawa beat Edmonton. Zack Smith, Mike Hoffman and Kyle Turris each added a goal and an assist while

Tom Pyatt also scored for the Senators, who ended their four-game losing streak. Patrick Maroon had two goals and Leon Draisaitl also scored for the Oilers. Connor McDavid had two assists and Jonas Gustavsson made 13 saves. Edmonton entered the third period trailing 4-3 and desperately pressed for the tying goal but Condon shut the door. The Oilers outshot the Senators 17-3 in the period and 29-8 over the final 40 minutes. Turris scored into an empty net to seal the win. —AP

WIESE SWAPS SOUTH AFRICA FOR SUSSEX

LONDON: South African all-rounder David Wiese has followed the lead of countrymen Kyle Abbott and Rilee Rossouw after English county Sussex announced his arrival on a three-year contract yesterday. Abbott and Rossouw effectively ended their international careers by signing for Hampshire last week and Wiese has followed suit. The 31-year-old, who had two spells at Sussex last season, has played six one-day internationals and 20 Twenty20s for South Africa. "I am very excited to be joining Sussex on a long-term deal," Wiese said in a Sussex press release.

"I thoroughly enjoyed my stint with the

club last year and it made my decision so much easier when offered to return. Sussex is an extremely ambitious club and I look forward to being part of their future. "I would like to thank Cricket South Africa for giving me the opportunity of fulfilling my lifelong dream of representing my country in the sport I love." Sussex head coach Mark Davis said: "We are thrilled to have David joining us at Sussex Cricket.

"He is an extremely accomplished all-round cricketer who is effective in all formats and will bring great experience and skill to our group." — AFP



MEERUT: In this photograph taken on December 14, 2016, an Indian craftsman works on unfinished cricket bats in a factory in Meerut, some 70kms north-east of New Delhi. As Indian factory worker Jitender Singh carves out another big-hitting slab of thick willow he insists MCC proposals to limit the size of cricket bats won't tame Twenty20 marauders. — AFP



MUMBAI: Indian cricket team members warm up during a training session in Mumbai, India, yesterday. England and India are scheduled to play three one-day internationals beginning January 15 followed by three Twenty20 matches. — AP

CHELSEA PONDER APPEAL AFTER TERRY FA CUP RED

LONDON: Chelsea manager Antonio Conte said his club may appeal against the red card shown to John Terry during the Premier League leaders' 4-1 FA Cup defeat of Peterborough United. Terry, who was making his first appearance in two months, was dismissed in the 67th minute at Stamford Bridge on Sunday after a clumsy last-man challenge on Peterborough striker Lee Angol.

But Conte believes the 36-year-old centre-back, who is out of contract at the end of the season, was hard done by and questioned the decision of referee Kevin Friend. "I think it wasn't right, this decision from the referee," said the Chelsea manager.

"He didn't take the opponent and also the second reason was because behind John there was Branislav Ivanovic to cover John. It's a pity when

this happens, because the red card is not good. You have to respect the referee's decision, but in this case maybe we will do an appeal for this situation.

"The situation is very clear and I think John didn't deserve this." Terry was sidelined with injury at the start of November and has been a spectator during Chelsea's surge to the top of the Premier League table on the back of a 13-game winning run.

The former England defender's future remains uncertain beyond the end of the season, but Conte said it was too early to discuss the possibility of a new deal. "I think that now we are in January," he said. "First of all this type of decision, it's important to make this decision together (with) the club and not alone."

"I'm pleased for John, because he's showing me great commitment when I

ask him to play, when he doesn't play, because he's helping me a lot in the changing room.

"He's showing me to be a good player, but above all a good man. Now it's important to continue in this way, because we have to play the second half of the season, the FA Cup. We have a lot of commitments."

BATSHUAYI 'IMPROVING'

Chelsea were leading through goals from Pedro Rodriguez, Michy Batshuayi and Willian before Terry's dismissal. Tom Nichols replied for third-tier Peterborough, but Pedro wrapped up the win with his second goal.

Conte welcomed the return of centre-back Kurt Zouma following an 11-month absence with a knee injury and also explained why he has recalled

Nathan Ake from a loan spell at Bournemouth.

"There were many good things, but the most important was the return of Zouma after 11 months. It was fantastic for him," Conte said. "I recalled Ake because I think he is showing to be ready to stay in the Chelsea squad. Chelsea is his home."

"He is showing that he deserves to stay in a great team like Chelsea. He gives me an important option because we are playing with three central defenders."

"He can play on the left or in the middle, and we must see in training if he can play at wing-back. We wanted to bring him back because he gives me a good solution." Conte refused to comment on reports he wants to swap Batshuayi for Swansea City striker Fernando Llorente,

but said the young Belgium international had impressed him.

"Michy played a good game," Conte said. "During the game he always stayed into the idea, into the philosophy, into our idea of football. He showed me great commitment and great work-rate."

"Also he scored. For a forward it's always important to score for his confidence. He's a young player, he's working a lot, is improving. Now it's important for him to continue in this way and to give me the opportunity to have another solution in our squad." Peterborough manager Grant McCann said: "It was a good learning curve for our boys."

"We could have come here and defended deeper and tried to frustrate them. But I thought we may as well come here and give it a go. I thought we did that." —AFP



ZURICH: FIFA president Gianni Infantino (C) poses with football player legends for a group picture after a FIFA Football Legends football game ahead of The Best FIFA Football Awards 2016 yesterday at the FIFA's headquarters in Zurich. — AFP



TURIN: Juventus' Gonzalo Higuain scores his side's third goal during a Serie A soccer match between Juventus and Bologna at Juventus Stadium in Turin, Italy, Sunday. — AP

HIGUAIN DOUBLE AS JUVE MOVE FOUR CLEAR OF ROMA

MILAN: Gonzalo Higuain hit a brace either side of Paulo Dybala's first-half spot-kick as Juventus moved four points clear of Roma on Sunday with a comfortable 3-0 win over Bologna in Turin. In their first competitive match since losing the Italian Super Cup to AC Milan in Doha days before Christmas, Juventus were without Gianluigi Buffon, Leonardo Bonucci, Dani Alves and Patrice Evra for the visit of Roberto Donadoni's men.

But Bologna's last win over Juve came in February 2011, and their hopes of launching any kind of challenge suffered a setback on seven minutes when Miralem Pjanic found Higuain with a searching pass that the Argentinian smashed on the volley past the hands of Antonio Mirante. Dybala doubled Juve's lead minutes before half-time by firing low into the bottom corner after Stefano Lichteneister's perfectly-weighted cutback on 55 minutes after a great counter-attacking move that left Bologna in disarray. Higuain's 12th goal of the season moved him to within two of league-leading compatriot Mauro Icardi of Inter Milan, but the Argentine moved from Napoli in the summer to win titles and is edging closer every week. "I'm happy for the result because Roma had got to within a point and although we have a game in hand, it was important to win this one," Higuain told Mediaset.

The champions have a game in hand following the postponement of their league fixture against Crotona due to end-of-year Super Cup commitments and coach Massimiliano Allegri told Sky Sport: "It was important to put a bit of distance between us and the rest."

"It's a great championship this season and it could go right down to the wire. Roma are only four points behind us and a few other teams are not far behind. Our number one priority is to win the title, and it won't be easy after five in a row."

Allegri will be watching Roma, Napoli, Lazio and AC Milan particularly closely after this weekend after all four rivals chalked up wins. Only one goal behind league leader Icardi, Roma striker Edin Dzeko hit a series

of blanks as the Giallorossi laboured to a 1-0 win at Genoa where Armando Izzo's disastrous first-half own goal secured the points. Roma coach Luciano Spalletti refused to criticise Dzeko, telling Rai Sport: "He had a great game because he never once made it easy for the opposition defence. He put himself about, especially at the end of the game to make sure we got the result we wanted."

Napoli, 2-1 winners over Sampdoria on Saturday when Lorenzo Tonelli grabbed a last-gasp winner on his debut for the southerners, held on to third. Deservedly so, said Napoli coach Maurizio Sarri: "I think we deserved to win this game: we had nine shots on goal compared to their three and 25 shots compared to their seven," said Sarri. Lazio remain in fourth, only a point behind Napoli, after Ciro Immobile made up for Lucas Biglia's penalty miss at the Stadio Olimpico by striking in the final minute to secure a 1-0 win over dogged Crotona. At the San Siro Carlos Bacca ended his 98-day goal drought with an 88th minute winner against Cagliari that saw AC Milan up to fifth to close within nine points off the summit.

Atalanta's stunning season continued with a 4-1 away win at Chievo where Alejandro Gomez notably hit a first-half brace to send the Bergamo side up to sixth at just seven points behind Juve. Earlier, Ivan Perisic scored twice including a late winner as Inter Milan began the New Year with a 2-1 comeback win at Udinese. — AFP

Live Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

ENGLISH LEAGUE CUP
Manchester United v Hull City 23:00
beIN SPORTS

SPAIN COPA DEL REY
Atletico de Madrid v Las Palmas 23:15
beIN SPORTS 3 HD

ITALIAN CUP
SSC Napoli v Spezia Calcio 23:00
beIN SPORTS

MESSI TO THE RESCUE, BUT BARCA LOSE GROUND ON REAL

MADRID: Barcelona's poor start to 2017 continued as they lost further ground on Real Madrid at the top of La Liga despite a sensational last minute Lionel Messi free-kick salvaging a 1-1 draw at Villarreal on Sunday.

The Spanish champions lost their opening game of the year at Athletic Bilbao in the Copa del Rey on Thursday and now trail Real by five points having also played a game more.

Italian forward Nicola Sansone looked to have handed Villarreal a first win over Barca since 2008, but Messi's late intervention denied the hosts on the day they announced a sponsorship deal to rename El Madrigal the Ceramic Stadium. A draw leaves Villarreal still in fifth, a point adrift of Atletico Madrid in the final Champions League place.

"It can't be a positive analysis of the game because we needed the three points and I think we did enough to deserve the three points," Barca boss Luis Enrique told Spanish TV station Movistar.

However, Enrique insisted Barca remain very much in the title hunt despite their chances now depending on a Madrid collapse in the second half of the season.

"There is still half the season to go and I am sure we will have the chance to fight for the league," he added.

"The only chance we will have to fight for the title, though, is by getting back to winning soon. To keep playing like this but with a different result." Barca dominated possession throughout, but struggled to create clear-cut chances against the tightest defence in La Liga.

Indeed it was the hosts who enjoyed the best opportunity of the opening half when former Barca midfielder Jonathan dos Santos blasted over when unmarked at the back post from a flowing counter-attack. Messi came close in unusual fashion as his thumping header from a corner was tipped over by Sergio Asenjo before Luis Suarez's fiercely hit drive was also too close to the Villarreal keeper.

Another Villarreal counter-attack caught the Spanish champions cold at the start of the second-half as Alexandre Pato's perfectly weighted pass picked out Sansone and his effort back across goal nestled in the far corner. Barca had a fine chance to immediately respond when a quickly taken Messi free-kick freed Neymar inside the area, but again the Brazilian's effort lacked the power or accuracy to unduly trouble Asenjo. The visitors had huge claims for a penalty waved away when Villarreal captain Bruno deflected Messi's effort over with an outstretched hand and seconds later Messi smashed the inside the post with a fine effort from the edge of the box.

The controversial penalty calls were evened up as referee Ignacio Iglesias Villanueva was also unmoved when Sansone's shot struck Javier Mascherano's hand inside the Barca box.

And Messi finally broke Villarreal's resistance as he was fouled on the edge of the area and stepped up to arrow a free-kick perfectly into the top corner. Villarreal ended with 10 men as Jaume Costa saw a second yellow card deep into stoppage time, but there was barely time to restart the game before blow for full-time and arguably brought the curtain down on Barca's title defence. Elsewhere, Celta Vigo moved into the top half of the table as Iago Aspas moved level with Cristiano Ronaldo on 11 La Liga goals



VILLARREAL: FC Barcelona's Lionel Messi, center, celebrates after scoring with teammate Arda Dura, right, during the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Villarreal and Barcelona at the Ceramica stadium in Villarreal, Spain, Sunday. — AP

for the season in a 3-1 win over Malaga. Athletic Bilbao remain seventh after being held 0-0 in a Basque derby at home to Alaves. And Real Betis moved nine points clear of the relegation zone thanks to a 2-0 win over fellow strugglers Leganes. — AFP

MAN UNITED, LIVERPOOL EYE LEAGUE CUP FINAL SHOWDOWN

LONDON: Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho has pledged to bring out the heavy artillery for today's League Cup semi-final first leg at home to Premier League basement club Hull City. United cruised into the FA Cup fourth round on Saturday after registering an eighth consecutive win by crushing second-tier Reading 4-0 at Old Trafford. They face a showdown with fellow League Cup semi-finalists Liverpool in the league at the weekend, but with a day out at Wembley only 180 minutes away, Mourinho does not want to take any chances.

"We play against Liverpool, a big match for us, but we want to be in the final," he said.

"So we are going to face this Hull match with everything we have, all the power we have, as we know it's two legs, but the second leg is away. If we can do something in the first leg that gives us the advantage, we will try to do that."

Mourinho made a number of changes for the visit of former United defender Jaap Stam's Reading and has revealed he will restore several first-team regulars for the visit of Hull.

"I play with the players that didn't play (against Reading)," said Mourinho, who won three League Cups over his two spells as Chelsea manager. "I played with fresh players and I don't want to say anything about first-choice or second-choice, but we played with fresh players, the players who didn't play against West Ham."

"In the next match against Hull City we are going to play again with fresh players. So it's easy to know our team-Zlatan (Ibrahimovic), (Paul) Pogba, (Ander) Herrera, (Antonio) Valencia." Wayne Rooney equalled Bobby Charlton's United scoring record by netting his 249th goal for the club against Reading, but he is likely to drop to the bench against Hull.

Centre-back Marcos Rojo is a doubt after being withdrawn against Reading with a muscular problem. With Eric Bailly having departed for the Africa Cup of Nations with Ivory Coast, it could leave Phil Jones and Chris Smalling as United's only fit senior centre-backs.

FORTE FOCUS

Marco Silva made a winning start to life as Hull head coach with a 2-0 victory over Swansea City in the FA Cup on Saturday and he will relish the prospect of tackling fellow Portuguese Mourinho. "It is a fantastic moment for the club that we play Manchester United in a semi-final," Silva said.

The carrot of a potential final appearance against arch rivals United is sure to motivate Liverpool when they travel to Southampton on Wednesday for the first leg of their semi-final. Having fielded Liverpool's youngest ever team in their 0-0 FA Cup draw at home to fourth-tier Plymouth Argyle on Sunday, manager Jurgen Klopp is also expected to revert to a full-strength team. — AFP

Sports

India bat makers
say there's no
stopping big hitters



Cibulkova wins,
Wozniacki dumps
Puig in Sydney



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ZURICH: Real Madrid and Portugal's forward and winner of The Best FIFA Men's Player of 2016 Award Cristiano Ronaldo stands on stage with Houston Dash and US midfielder and winner of The Best FIFA Women's Player of 2016 Carli Lloyd following The Best FIFA Football Awards 2016 ceremony, yesterday in Zurich. — AFP

RONALDO, RANIERI SCOOP TOP FIFA AWARDS

ZURICH: Cristiano Ronaldo claimed FIFA's inaugural best player of the year award yesterday, the latest prize for the Real Madrid and Portugal star after a glittering 2016 for club and country.

Leicester City's Claudio Ranieri received the best men's coach award following his side's fairytale Premier League triumph.

But the night again belonged to the 31-year-old Ronaldo, who edged out long-time nemesis Lionel Messi for the trophy as well as France's Antoine Griezmann, the top player at this summer's European championship.

Ronaldo had already won the Ballon d'Or after his

third Champions League title, thanks in major part to his 16 goals in 12 games, as well as triumphing with Portugal at Euro 2016 — the country's first major prize.

"2016 was the best year of my career," Ronaldo said after being handed the prize from FIFA President Gianni Infantino. "It was a year that was magnificent at a personal level and at a sports level," he added on the stage in Zurich.

Ranieri, 65, who saw off Real boss Zinedine Zidane and Portugal manager Fernando Santos, said the best coach honour was "incredible" after receiving the prize from Argentine football legend Diego Maradona.

Under Ranieri's leadership, Leicester pulled off one of

the greatest shocks in English football history by defying title odds of 5,000-1 to lift the Premier League trophy last season.

Having miraculously avoided relegation the previous season, the Foxes rode that wave of momentum all the way to the title. US midfielder Carli Lloyd scooped the best women's player of 2016, the two-time Olympic gold medalist adding to her 2015 FIFA Women's World Player of the Year accolade. The American finished ahead of Brazilian star Marta and Germany's Melanie Behringer. Spain's La Liga accounted for nine of the 11 players in the FIFPro team of the year with Ronaldo and Messi headlining a star-studded line-up.

Ronaldo was joined by Real team-mates Sergio Ramos, Marcelo, Toni Kroos and Luka Modric while the side comprised four Barcelona players with Gerard Pique, Andres Iniesta and Luis Suarez joining Messi.

Bayern Munich goalkeeper Manuel Neuer named to the FIFPro World 11 for the fourth year running — was the only player selected without links to Spain's top two clubs. Juventus defender Dani Alves was included for a sixth time having helped Barca to a league and cup double before leaving the Camp Nou for Italy last June.

World football's governing body has launched the new award series after ending its six-year collaboration with France Football magazine for the Ballon d'Or. — AFP

MARADONA BACKS 48-TEAM W CUP

ZURICH: Diego Maradona yesterday backed controversial plans to expand the World Cup to 48 teams, a day before world football's powerful governing council faces a key decision on the issue. "It sounds like a fantastic idea to me," the 56-year-old, who inspired Argentina to World Cup glory in 1986, told reporters at FIFA's Zurich headquarters.

"This will give more possibilities to countries that have never reached that level of competition." FIFA president Gianni Infantino, who took charge of the scandal-tainted world body last year, has made expanding the World Cup from the current 32 teams the centrepiece of his administration.

But his plans have faced criticism including warnings that it will dilute the quality at football's showcase event. "The quality will not fall," said Maradona, dripping with sweat after rumbling his way through a mini tournament of former football greats and current executives.

Infantino has been courting support from the game's most powerful figures ahead of today's meeting.

Among those playing on the

snow-lined pitch Monday was UEFA boss Aleksander Ceferin, who has voiced scepticism towards expansion, and CONCACAF chief Victor Montagliani, who is open to a bigger tournament. Former French international David Trezeguet said more World Cup berths could give "possibilities to countries and especially players who have never experienced this beautiful competition", while acknowledging that details still needed to be worked out.

Among the major concerns from critics is that a longer tournament would increase pressure on an already strained club schedule. The influential European Clubs Association, led by German great Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, has come out against an enlarged World Cup, citing football's overloaded calendar.

Infantino says that money should not drive any decision, but a confidential FIFA report seen by AFP projects that a 48-team tournament would bring a cash boost of \$640 million (605 million euros) above projected revenues for next year's finals in Russia.

The influential council will review five proposals today: leav-



ZURICH: Gianni Infantino, left, FIFA President, and Diego Armando Maradona, a former Argentine footballer, pose for a photo on the green carpet while arriving for the The Best FIFA Football Awards 2016 ceremony in Zurich, Switzerland, yesterday. — AP

ing the World Cup unchanged at 32 teams, two proposals for a 40-team competition and two 48-team scenarios.

Infantino is said to be backing a 48-team option with 16 groups

of three, which would come into effect for the 2026 competition. Any decision made today will have to be approved by FIFA's full 211 members at the body's next congress. — AFP

FA CUP LUSTRE FADES AS TOP TEAMS SHROUD THEIR STARS

LONDON: Heavy squad rotation and dwindling attendances over the third-round weekend suggested the FA Cup, once the jewel in the crown of English football, is locked in a downward spiral. The FA Cup is the game's oldest knockout competition, dating back 146 years, and boasts a history rich with famous upsets and unforgettable finals. But it is increasingly seen as an inconvenience for the big teams, for whom Champions League qualification is all-important, while financial concerns mean league position is the top priority for many smaller clubs. "The FA Cup is a great competition, but there are other priorities now," said Cardiff City manager Neil Warnock, whose side lost 2-1 to second-tier rivals Fulham.

"A club like ours cannot afford to go down." The FA Cup final was once the only match shown live on British television and the tournament's third round — when top-flight teams enter the competition — has produced some memorable shocks.

But in recent times the glamour clubs have made their priorities clear by fielding weakened teams in order to keep their leading players fresh for more important challenges ahead.

The Premier League's leading scorers, Diego Costa, Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Alexis Sanchez, did not see even a second of action in the FA Cup at the weekend.

Premier League leaders Chelsea, FA Cup holders Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur each made nine changes to their teams and although they all progressed, other top-tier sides came unstuck.

Bournemouth — now of the Premier

League, but who stunned Manchester United as Third Division underdogs in 1984 — lost 3-0 at third-tier Millwall after manager Eddie Howe changed his entire starting XI. Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp, meanwhile, selected the club's youngest ever team — with an average age of 21 years and 296 days — and saw them taken to a replay by fourth-tier Plymouth Argyle.

Football Association chief executive Martin Glenn defended the big sides' right to make changes, saying bleeding young players was "not a bad thing".

'DEVASTATED'

The sense of disinterest was reflected in the attendances, which were largely down on the average crowds for league games. Just 17,632 fans turned up to watch Sunderland draw 0-0 against top-flight rivals Burnley at the Stadium of Light, which habitually hosts crowds of close to 42,000. And only 5,199 people watched Cardiff (average attendance 16,414) lose to Fulham in a match that kicked off at the inconvenient hour of 11:30 GMT. It was a different story for the competition's minnows, however, showing the FA Cup continues to hold special meaning for those sides closer to the base of the English football pyramid than the top.

Non-league Sutton United, who pulled off a famous upset against Coventry City in 1989, saw their attendance leap from an average of 1,518 to 5,200 for their 0-0 draw at home to third-tier AFC Wimbledon. It was a similar story for their National League (fifth-tier) rivals Barrow, who lost 2-0 to Rochdale. — AFP

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Trump praises Ford, Fiat Chrysler for US investments
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NBK holds training course for journalists

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QATAR AIRWAYS UNVEILS BIGGEST TRAVEL FESTIVAL

Page 23



DETROIT: Attendees look at the Volkswagen lineup of cars and SUVs during the 2017 North American International Auto Show in Detroit yesterday. — AFP (See Also Pages 23, 25)

CHEVY BOLT GETS TOP CAR AWARD

PACIFICA TOP UTILITY VEHICLE AT DETROIT AUTO SHOW

DETROIT: The Chevy Bolt has been named top car in North America, an important milestone for a car General Motors hopes will finally get Americans hooked on electric vehicles.

The Honda Ridgeline grabbed the honor for top truck. Utility vehicles were honored separately for the first time, with the Pacifica minivan from Fiat Chrysler snagging that award. The honors were announced yesterday morning at Detroit's Cobo Center as the North American International Auto Show's press preview days kicked into high gear.

The Bolt beat out the Genesis G90 and Volvo S90 for the car award. The electric car from Chevrolet went on sale late last year. It gets more than 200 miles per battery charge, which is more than the average American drives in a day. The Bolt also sells for around \$30,000 when a federal tax credit is included. Electric vehicles have failed to catch on with most American consumers, but General Motors hopes the improved range and

price help shift opinions. Mark Reuss, GM's head of global product development, described the Bolt as a "moon shot."

"We didn't have all the answers when we started the program - in terms of how far we were going to get range-wise, how light are we going to get the car and ... sell price," he said. "We hit on all cylinders on this, so to speak, even though there's not any in the car." The Ridgeline scored the truck award over Ford F-Series Super Duty and the Nissan Titan. Pacifica got the nod for the utility award over the Jaguar F-Pace and Mazda X-9.

Timothy Kuniskis, Fiat Chrysler's car chief, said he's "amazingly proud" that a minivan scored the utility honor. The award recognizes the automaker's commitment to the foundation it established for the family hauler while reinventing it some three decades later, he said.

"This is really all-new from the ground up," Kuniskis said of the Pacifica, a sleeker, swept-back

minivan that hit showrooms last spring as a replacement for the Town and Country and Dodge Grand Caravan. Among its firsts: hands-free sliding doors that open when the driver sticks a foot under them. "We love minivans - we sold a quarter-million minivans this last year that just ended," he added. "Our designers just did an amazing job of taking something that has to be very functional and making it look very beautiful at the same time."

About 60 automotive journalists serve as judges for North American Car, Truck and Utility Vehicle of the Year awards. Eligible vehicles must be new or substantially changed.

Organizers accept no advertising, though automakers try to capitalize on the marketing value of the awards, in their 24th year. The awards program launched in 1993, and patterned itself after the European Car of the Year. Organizers accept no advertising, though carmakers try to capitalize on the marketing value of the honors. — AP



DETROIT: General Motors Executive Chief Engineer Autonomous & Electrified Vehicles Pam Fletcher, left, and Bolt Chief Engineer Josh Tavel stand next to a Chevy Bolt after being named top car in the North America at the North American International Auto show yesterday. — AP

DUBAI LOANS LOOM FOR AIRPORT EXPANSION AND EXPO 2020

DUBAI: Dubai is finalizing loans to fund the expansion of Al-Maktoum International Airport and the building of its Expo 2020 exhibition centre, sources told Reuters yesterday.

The government is due to get commitments from banks over the next two weeks for a \$3 billion loan to back the \$35 billion airport project, while the exhibition centre is estimated to require total financing of around \$7 billion, they said. The \$3 billion loan for the airport expansion is split between a \$2 billion conventional tranche and a \$1 billion-equivalent, local-currency Islamic tranche, the sources added.

Banks participating in the transaction, coordinated by HSBC, can commit funding across the two tranches, said one of the sources, adding that the loan will have a seven-year maturity.

Dubai's department of finance was not immediately available for comment on the loan plan. It represents the first financing phase for the expansion of the Al Maktoum airport, which will take 12 years to complete, the sources said. Once expanded, the new airport will be the world's largest passenger and cargo hub, with the capacity to handle more than 220 million passengers and 12 million tons of cargo per year, the government said in a statement. The Expo Dubai site, located near Al Maktoum airport, will be financed by a combination of commercial bank debt and debt guaranteed - or directly provided - by export credit agencies. The commercial part of the financing could range between \$2 and \$3 billion, the sources said. HSBC is coordinating the export credit agency-backed financing of the project. A spokesman for Expo 2020 declined to comment.

The fundraising exercise for Expo 2020 is not expected to see major progress until February at the earliest as the government is prioritizing the financing of Al Maktoum airport.

Expo Dubai will be the first World Expo hosted in the Middle East. Between October 2020 and April 2021, it is expected to host 25 million visitors, according to the Expo 2020 website. — Reuters

EGYPT CORRECTS, SAUDI INDEX EXTENDS LOSSES

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Egypt's main stock index corrected yesterday as local traders booked profits and Gulf markets diverged with United Arab Emirates markets outperforming as traders focused on financial shares while a retreat in oil prices weighed on Saudi Arabian petrochemical producers.

Cairo's main index fell 0.9 percent, snapping four straight sessions of gains. Local institutions were net sellers of Egyptian shares by a large margin, while foreign funds were net buyers, bourse data showed. Many analysts believe this is a normal correction, not uncommon after a market has climbed 45 percent since the floatation of the currency on Nov. 3 last year.

Arab Cotton Ginning was the worst performer on the EGX30, dropping 4.0 percent. El Sewedy Electric lost 2.0 percent. Yesterday it announced that a subsidiary had won a bid for an engineering and construction project with the state owned electricity company. The value and start date of the project was not disclosed. Analysts at Cairo's Naem Brokerage believe this project will have little impact on the valuation of Sewedy because they have already factored new projects valued at 6 billion Egyptian pounds for 2017.

Riyadh's index lost a further 0.8 percent, taking its losses since the start of the year to 1.8 percent. Oil-derivative producers weighed on market performance as Brent crude futures retreated to around \$56 a barrel. Rabigh Refining and Petrochemical fell 2.1 percent.

But Jarir Marketing added 0.2 percent after the electronics and bookstore retailer reported a 3.5 percent increase in fourth-quarter net profit on Monday as sales of electronic goods rose. Net

profit came in at 215.3 million riyals (\$57.4 million) in line with the 203.0 million riyals forecast by analysts.

Analysts at Al Rajhi Capital said in a note that the strong revenue growth implies that same store sales growth is the best in seven quarters. "Jarir's Q4 revenue growth at 17.7 percent year-on-year was much ahead of our flattish estimate, driven by higher sales of electronics, mainly smartphones according to the company's announcement. iPhone 7 sales in the Kingdom commenced in Q4 and is likely to have played a major role in driving smartphone sales."

UAE BEATS

Dubai's index closed 0.8 percent to 3,721 points in a second session of heavy trade, breaking above technical resistance at the mid-December peak of 3,659 points, facing next resistance at the October 2015 peak of 3,740 points. The top gainers were smaller companies in finance and insurance; Ajman Bank jumped 7.8 percent.

Some traders have been speculating there may be consolidation in the finance industry following the merger of National Bank of Abu Dhabi (NBAD) and First Gulf Bank, which is set to complete this year. Shares in NBAD climbed 2.4 percent, helping the Abu Dhabi index finish 0.6 percent higher. Another lender which traders expect to merge in the coming year, Union National Bank added 2.4 percent. Qatar's index, however, lost 0.2 percent as investors cashed out of some of the recent gains. Islamic bank Masraf Al-Rayhan fell 1.5 percent. — Reuters

OBAMA GOVT DEFENDS CHINA TRADE POLICY

WASHINGTON: In its final report before handing the reins over to President-elect Donald Trump, the Obama administration defended its handling of China trade disputes and its success in obliging Beijing to open its market further.

The US Trade Representative said in its annual report to Congress that continued dialogue with China over trade disputes, backed up by formal complaints in the World Trade Organization when necessary, have yielded results for US companies, although "significant trade distortions" remain.

China is now the second largest market for US goods exports, expanding 505 percent since joining the WTO in 2001, to \$116 billion as of 2015, the report said. Services exports reached \$48 billion in 2015, an increase of 802 percent since 2001. Since China joined the WTO, the United States has filed 20 WTO dispute cases against China, more than twice as many as any other WTO member.

Trump has taken a hardline with China, threatening to immediately impose 45 percent import tariffs on Chinese goods once he takes office, saying the world's second biggest economy has stifled the US through currency manipulation and illegal subsidies. That antagonism has raised fears among US businesses that their exports to China will be threatened, especially since Beijing

has signaled it will retaliate.

Strong support across America's industrial "Rust Belt," and frustration over lost jobs blamed on globalization, helped carry Trump to victory in the November election.

But the Obama administration has repeatedly touted engagement and enforcement as tools it has used successfully with China to prompt it to open its markets. However, the USTR acknowledges that more progress is needed, saying the current leadership in Beijing has not followed through on pledges to open the economy further.

"Many of the problems that arise in the US-China trade and investment relationship can be traced to the Chinese government's interventionist policies," the USTR said. Those practices, and the large role of state-owned enterprises in China's economy, "continue to generate significant trade distortions that inevitably give rise to trade frictions." The USTR said "if China is going to deal successfully with its increasing economic challenges at home, it must allow greater scope for market forces to operate, which requires altering the role of the state in planning the economy."

Major concerns remain about China's protection of intellectual property rights, the country's support for state-owned companies, subsidies, and lack of market access for agricultural goods, among others. — AFP

TRUMP PRAISES FORD, FIAT CHRYSLER FOR US INVESTMENTS

DETROIT: President-elect Donald Trump praised Ford Motor Co and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV yesterday for announcing new investments in the United States after he made US auto production a key part of his campaign. Ford announced last week it would abandon plans to build a \$1.6 billion plant in Mexico and would invest \$700 million in a Michigan plant over four years, while Fiat Chrysler said Sunday it will invest \$1 billion and add 2,000 jobs at plants in Ohio and Michigan to build new SUVs and pickup trucks.

Both companies have said they made the decision for business reasons and not because of pressure from Trump, but praised the president-elect for seeking to improve the climate for businesses to operate in the United States. Fiat Chrysler chief executive Sergio Marchionne said at the Detroit auto

show on Monday that the decision had been in the works for a long time and was "coincidental" to Trump's tweet last week criticizing the company. "We didn't twist ourselves into a pretzel (to make this decision)... It wasn't a preemptive strike against a tweet," Marchionne said during a roundtable discussion.

Marchionne was asked about tariffs that Trump has threatened to impose on vehicles imported to the United States from Mexico and elsewhere and he said that Fiat Chrysler will live with any new rules. However, he added that it was "quite possible" that heavy tariffs on Mexican imports could force the company to close Mexican plants.

Trump, a real estate developer who takes office on Jan. 20, has repeatedly singled out companies in the auto sector and other industries for not doing more to keep jobs in the United States.

Trump, a Republican, also criticized Toyota Motor Corp last week for shifting production of its Corolla from Canada to Mexico. The company has said there is no impact on US employment as a result of the change. "It's finally happening - Fiat Chrysler just announced plans to invest \$1BILLION in Michigan and Ohio plants, adding 2000 jobs," Trump said in a tweet yesterday. In a follow up tweet, he added: "Ford said last week that it will expand in Michigan and US instead of building a BILLION dollar plant in Mexico. Thank you Ford & Fiat Chrysler."

Ford announced on Monday it will build the Bronco SUV and Ranger pickup at its Wayne assembly plant but will shift production of its Ford Focus car. Because of low demand, it will shift the Focus to an existing Mexican factory, rather than to a new factory as was announced in April. —Reuters



DETROIT: Ford Motor Co Executive Chairman Bill Ford (left) listens as President and Chief Executive Mark Fields speaks at the North American International Auto show yesterday. —AP



BEIJING: People walk past a McDonald's fast food restaurant in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

MCDONALD'S SELLS CHINA OPERATIONS FOR \$2.08BN

BEIJING: US fast-food giant McDonald's will sell a controlling stake in its China and Hong Kong business for up to \$2.08 billion to a consortium including state-owned Citic and the Carlyle Group, it was announced yesterday. The deal is part of an international turnaround plan by the Golden Arches as it struggles with sluggish growth at home.

Citic Limited, Citic Capital Holdings, Carlyle Group and McDonald's will form a company that will act as a franchisee for the chain's business in mainland China and Hong Kong for 20 years, the companies said in a joint statement. Citic is a vast Chinese state-owned conglomerate with interests in businesses ranging from energy and manufacturing to real estate.

It said in a statement to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange that the purchase would deepen its exposure to China's consumer sector, "which is poised to be the main driver of China's economy for decades to come". The burger chain last year announced plans to sell its over 2,600 restaurants in China and Hong

Kong, after sales took a hit as tensions in the South China Sea dented US companies' earnings in the country.

Its China business also suffered a blow in 2014 after a food safety scandal involving one of its meat suppliers. The deal gives McDonald's partners "who have an unmatched understanding of the local markets and bring enhanced capabilities", CEO Steve Easterbrook said in the statement.

Citic and Citic Capital will have a stake of 52 percent, Carlyle will take 28 percent and McDonald's will retain 20 percent of the new company.

It will focus on growth in China's smaller regional cities and plans to open more than 1,500 restaurants in the mainland and Hong Kong over the next five years. "Citic and Carlyle's resources will allow McDonald's to expand rapidly and refurbish old restaurants, which is expensive to do," Ben Cavender of China Market Research Group told Bloomberg News. —AFP

QATAR AIRWAYS UNVEILS BIGGEST TRAVEL FESTIVAL EVER FOR 2017

COMPANION FARES, KIDS FLY FREE AND OTHER FANTASTIC DEALS

DOHA: Qatar Airways' popular Travel Festival is back and has been significantly enhanced for 2017, inviting world travellers to take advantage of a number of exceptional deals across the airline's global network. Extraordinary deals can be found on the World's Best Business Class and Economy Class, along with special companion fares, discounts on group bookings and a kids fly free offer on sale between 9 and 16 January 2017.

The Qatar Airways Travel Festival online Treasure Hunt will also once again offer Qatar Airways' millions of social media followers the opportunity of searching for a zero fare Golden Ticket to one of the airline's exciting global destinations, with clues being released via the airline's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages throughout the sale period.

Qatar Airways passengers can choose from even more exciting places to explore starting in 2017 with the launch of new services to Auckland, New Zealand; Canberra, Australia; Dublin, Ireland; Las Vegas in the United States, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Santiago, Chile; to name a few. Offers available throughout the Travel Festival are applicable on Economy and Business Class return airfares, with a travel period between 11 January and 15 December 2017 to the more than 150 destinations worldwide, including the Middle East, Europe, East Asia, Asia Pacific, and Africa.

Passengers can explore London from KWD 135 per person, chase an endless summer in Europe with flights to Barcelona from KWD 129 per person, or experience culture

like no other in the Far East with flights to Bangkok from KWD 107 per person. Travellers can avail the exceptional promotion offers by booking at qatarairways.com or by contacting their nearest Qatar Airways sales agent.

For the first time since starting the travel festival, Qatar Airways has partnered with leading global financial services company, Visa, providing eligible card holders with discounts of up to 15 per cent extra on flight

New Year is the perfect time to start thinking about travel plans for the year ahead and the travel festival allows travellers to take advantage of a number of fantastic deals and promotions across our entire network at exceptional prices.

Free upgrades

"Our guests also have the opportunity to enjoy free upgrades to our Business Class or can benefit from further discounts on group book-

ings - our travel festival is designed to encourage our valued guests to go places together and create memories with those who they cherish the most."

The airline's Privilege Club members also have the opportunity to earn double Qmiles on bookings made throughout the promotion period, while travellers can also win a number of exciting prizes including upgrades to the World's Best Business Class, Silver and Gold Privilege Club memberships, up to 100,000 Qmiles, access to Al Maha Lounges, Qatar Duty Free vouchers as well as vouchers to The Airport Hotel's wellness spa inside Hamad International Airport. Guests can also take advantage of fantastic deals on hotels and accommodation packages in partnership with Qatar Airways Holidays.

The Qatar Airways Travel Festival provides the perfect opportunity for travellers to treat their nearest and dearest to award-winning service when they go places together, with the airline receiving a number of accolades in 2016. Qatar Airways was named Skytrax's Best Staff Service in the Middle East, World's Best Business Class 2016 and Best Business Class Airline Lounge as well as Best Business Class from Business Traveller Awards. The airline recently announced a number of new enhancements to its cabin to elevate the passenger experience, including new BRICS and Castello Monte Vebiano Vecchio amenity kits for Business Class passengers, and refreshed Hasbro children's entertainment kits for the airline's youngest travellers.



Passengers taking advantage of the Qatar Airways Travel Festival are encouraged to turn two holidays into one by planning a stopover in Doha, with a new transit visa scheme offering visitors a free transit visa for up to 96 hours on your way to or from your final destination. Combine a quick visit to Doha, with its historic sites and five-star shopping and resorts, with a dream holiday - only available to Qatar Airways passengers.

ings - our travel festival is designed to encourage our valued guests to go places together and create memories with those who they cherish the most."

The airline's Privilege Club members also have the opportunity to earn double Qmiles on bookings made throughout the promotion period, while travellers can also win a number of exciting prizes including upgrades to the World's Best Business Class, Silver and Gold

GLASSPOINT SOLAR TECHNOLOGY FACILITATES PROMISING ALLIANCE

KUWAIT: The days of easy oil extraction have long since passed with an estimated 13bn barrels of heavy crude oil to be found in Kuwait's oil fields. Central to the government's oil strategy Project Kuwait, heavy oil reserves will be key to achieving the objective of increasing oil production capacity to 4m barrels per day (bpd) by 2020. Crude oil is and will remain the backbone of Kuwait's economy for the foreseeable future. The leading method of producing heavy oil is steam flooding, a type of thermal Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) where heat is used to facilitate production of the viscous oil. In Kuwait, planned steam flooding projects will burn large volumes of imported natural gas or other costly fuels to produce steam, which will compromise export revenues and other gas dependent industries. Furthermore, using these fuels in the oil production process contributes heavily to carbon emissions and further increases energy consumption.

At the same time, the country is making significant investments in growing its renewable energy portfolio. His Highness

spectrum. However, to realize both The Amir's vision and the goals of Project Kuwait, the government must look to cutting edge technology and new initiatives in the conventional sector. The new investment trend of converging renewable energy with conventional oil production is coming of age in many regions around the world and is now a mandatory move for Kuwait to secure its future in both oil and renewable sectors. This idea of converging conventional and renewables may seem out of reach, but one local company has brought this capability to Kuwait.

Founded in 2009, GlassPoint is a leading supplier of solar energy solutions to the oil and gas industry worldwide. The company

created a novel concept to reduce the cost of solar thermal energy needed by heavy oilfields, by bringing the solar collectors inside a commercial greenhouse. GlassPoint's solar EOR technology uses the sun's energy to generate steam, reducing a field's EOR gas consumption by up to 80 percent.

Industry veteran Hussain Shehab is at the helm of GlassPoint Kuwait and helped the company establish a local presence back in 2014. "Using solar at large scale in the oilfield gives Kuwait's oil producers an economical and emissions-free alternative to traditional steam flooding and empowers them to contribute to His Highness The Amir's vision for renewable energy," Shehab says.

Low costs

"GlassPoint's technology uses large mirrors to concentrate sunlight and boil water directly into steam. Our mirrors are enclosed in commercial greenhouses, helping us reduce materials and keep costs low. This means a lot to producers especially in the current economic climate," added Shehab. GlassPoint's innovation of bringing the collectors inside the greenhouse eliminates wind load and protects from sand and other harsh desert conditions. It also enables the use of ultra-light weight, thin mirrors or reflectors, which are suspended from the roof of the greenhouse using a fraction of the raw materials compared to outdoor solar thermal systems. This has a flow-on effect on cost reduction from ship-

ping and installation costs, to using smaller, off-the-shelf motors and drive systems that move the mirrors to track the sun. GlassPoint's technology was designed specifically for the oil and gas industry and has been proven to work on oil fields in the US and here in the Middle East.

The Sultanate of Oman's largest oil producer Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), Royal Dutch Shell and the State General Reserve Fund of Oman have all backed GlassPoint and its solar oilfield technology. A 7MWth pilot project has been fully operational on PDO's Amal oilfields situated in the Omani desert since 2013. The pilot was delivered safely, on time and on budget, and exceeded all performance targets even during severe sandstorms.

Following the success of the pilot, GlassPoint was awarded the commercial-scale project Miraah in 2015 by PDO. Currently under construction, Miraah will be one of the world's largest solar plants delivering over one gigawatt of peak thermal energy, generating 6,000 tonnes of steam per day. Once complete, Miraah will save one of Oman's oil fields 5.6 trillion British Thermal Units (BTUs) of natural gas annually. This same amount of gas could be used to provide residential electricity to 209,000 people. The project is also expected to reduce carbon emissions by over 300,000 tons annually, which is equivalent to taking 63,000 cars permanently off the roads. The benefits Miraah will bring to Oman and its economy seem a natural fit for Kuwait's oil industry and to achieving renewable targets.

"As we've proven in Oman, solar steam is a viable alternative to natural gas for EOR. This is especially relevant to Kuwait because meeting Kuwait's goals for heavy oil production will require burning more natural gas than Kuwait currently burns for power generation and is in contradiction to The Amir's vision for a renewable energy future," Shehab says. Given the ambitious goals set out to diversify the nation's energy mix, ensure energy security, and protect the environment, there is no better time to start than the present for Kuwait to look at alternative oil extraction methods like what GlassPoint offers.



Hussain Shehab

The Amir of Kuwait has outlined his vision of achieving 10 percent of energy capacity through renewables by 2020 and 15 percent by 2030. Renewable energy investments and conventional oil production have always been seen at two competing and opposing ends of the energy



WORLD STOCKS MIXED AFTER US DATA BACK FED OUTLOOK

HONG KONG: World stock markets were mixed yesterday while the dollar regained some strength after a US job report showed strong wage gains, giving more ammunition to US policymakers planning further rate rises.

US stock indexes edged mostly lower in trading yesterday, led by declines in energy companies. Oil and gas companies fell the most as the price of crude oil headed lower.

KEEPING SCORE: The Dow Jones industrial average fell 52 points, or 0.3 percent, to 19,910 as of 10:18 a.m. Eastern Time. The Standard & Poor's 500 index slid 5 points, or 0.3 percent, to 2,271.

The Nasdaq composite index rose 2 points, or 0.1 percent, to 5,523.

OIL WOES: Rig operator Transocean slumped 4.4 percent and Southwestern Energy fell 4 percent as the price of oil headed lower.

DISSAPPOINTING RESULTS: Acuity Brands slumped 16 percent after the lighting maker reported quarterly results that fell well short of what analysts were expecting.

STRONG QUARTER: Electronic payment processing company Global Payments climbed 6.8 percent after it reported better-than-anticipated quarterly results.

quarterly results. The stock added \$5.08 to \$79.53. SOLD: Surgical Care Affiliates surged 15.9 percent after the surgical care center operator agreed to be acquired by UnitedHealth for \$2.3 billion in cash and stocks.

PHARMA DEAL: Merrimack Pharmaceuticals jumped 12.5 percent on news the drugmaker is selling its first approved drug, a pancreatic cancer treatment called Onivyde, to French drugmaker Ipsen in a deal worth at least \$575 million.

Merrimack gained 45 cents to \$4.05. PET PLAY: VCA vaulted 28.1 percent after the pet health care company agreed to be acquired by food and drinks company Mars Inc. for around \$7.7 billion.

BONDS: Bond prices rose. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to 2.37 percent from 2.42 percent late Friday.

same can be seen in most Asian markets," said Jingyi Pan, market strategist at IG in Singapore. "With improving indicators in the US and across Asia, we could see a second set of gains ... in this data-filled week."

WEEK AHEAD: Potential market-moving events this week include the release of China inflation and Japanese consumer confidence figures today.

CHINA OUTFLOWS: Official data showed that China's foreign exchange reserves contracted in December for the sixth straight month, falling by \$41 billion to just over \$3 trillion according to the People's Bank of China.

ANALYST VIEW: "US markets have closed off the first week of the year with a steady set of gains across sectors and the

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Table with 6 columns: Index, Change, Closing, Last Closing, High, Low. Rows include Price index, Weighted Index, KSX 15, and Volume.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include MARIN, IKARUS, IPG, NAPESCO, ENERGVH, GPI, ABAR, Oil & Gas.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include KFOUC, BPCC, ALKOUT, ALQURAIN, Basic Materials, KCEM, REFRI, CABLE, SHIP, PCEM, PAPER, MRC, AGICO, GGMCO, HCC, KBMMC, NICBM, EQUIPMENT, NCCI, GYPSUM, SALBOOKH, ALGLTY, EDU, CLEANING, KGL, KPC, HUMANSOFT, NAFAS, SAFWAN, GFC, MAYADEEN, CGC, MTCC, UPAC, ALAFQ, MUBARRAD, LOGISTICS, SCEM, GCEM, DIC, FCEM, RKWC, SPEC, Industrials.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include SOKOUK, KRE, URC, NRE, SRE, TAM, AREC, MASSALEH, ARABREC, ERESCO, MABANEE, INJAZZAT, INVESTORS, IRC, ALTIJARIA, SANAM, AAYANRE, ADAAR, ALAQARIA, MAZAYA, ADNC, THEMAR, TUJARA, TAAMEER, ARKAN, ARGAN, ABYAAR, MUNSHAAT, FIRSDUBAI, KBT, REAM, MENA, ALMUDON, MARAKEZ, REMAL, AWJ, Real Estate.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include KINV, FACIL, IFA, NINV, KPROJ, COAST, SECH, SCG, ARZAN, MARKAZ, KMEFIC, ALAMAM, ALOLA, ALMAL, GH, AAYAN, BAYANINV, OSOUL, KFIC, KAMCO, NIH, UNICAP, MADAR, ALDEERA, ALSALAM, EKTTITAB, ALMADINA, NOOR, TAMINV, EXCH, TAIBA, KSHC, ASIYA, GNAHC, AMWAL, ALMUTIAZ, MANAZEL, NIND, BIHC, SENERGY, AGHC, KPCC, TAHSILAT, JEERANH, EKHOLDING, GFH, INOVEST, Financial Services.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include KSH, NSH, PAPCO, CATT, DANAH, POLUT, FOOD, Consumer Goods, MHC, ATC, YIACO, Health Care, KGIN, KHOT, SULTAN, CABLTV, EYAS, IFAHR, OULAFUEL, MUNTAZAHAT, JAZEERA, SOOR, FUTURKID, ALRAI, ZIMAH, Mezzan, Consumer Services, ZAIN, QOREDOO, HITSTELEC, VIVA, Telecommunications.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include NBK, GBK, CBK, ABK, ALMUTAHED, KIB, BURG, KFIN, BOUBYAN, AUB, ITHMR, WARBABANK, Banks, KINS, GINS, AINS, WINS, KUWAITRE, FTI, WETHAQ, BKIKWT, Insurance.

Table with 7 columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Rows include ASC, OSOS, HAYATCOMM, Technology, SANAD, AFAQ, ALSHAMEL, EFFECT, AJWAN, MASAKEN, DALQAN, ALEID, MIDAN, FLEX, THURAYA, AMAR, Parallel Market.



NEW YORK: Executives and guests of Pampa Energia, an Argentine electric company, photograph their colleagues during the opening bell of the New York Stock Exchange yesterday.

LONDON STOCK MARKET HITS RECORD HIGH ON SLUMPING POUND

LONDON: The London stock market reached another record high yesterday as the pound slumped to the lowest level in three months on Brexit concerns.

London's benchmark FTSE 100 index reached an intra-day high of 7,239.26 points in morning deals, extending a record run higher that began ahead of the new year.

The pound tumbled yesterday after British Prime Minister Theresa May insisted at the weekend that Britain would have control over its borders after Brexit, suggesting she would be prepared to quit Europe's trading zone to achieve it.

The pound dropped one cent against the dollar to \$1.21 after May signaled in an interview with Sky News over the weekend that the UK is likely to leave the bloc's single market in goods and services.

The British government is interested in limiting immigration while retaining access to the EU market for its companies. But the EU says Britain cannot pick and choose what parts of EU membership it keeps.

Some traders read May's comments in the interview to suggest she was prepared to pull Britain from the single market and have it trade with the EU as if it were any other country outside Europe, without any form of privileged status.

May denied setting Britain on the road to a "hard Brexit." "I don't accept the terms hard and soft Brexit," she said. "What we're doing is going to get (an) ambitious, good, best-possible

deal for Britain."The pound has dropped almost a fifth against the dollar since the June 23 vote.

"Sterling is on the back foot yesterday after Theresa May's comments were taken as a sign the UK government would prioritize immigration controls over single market access," said Neil Wilson, senior market analyst at ETX Capital trading group.

Elsewhere yesterday, Asian stock markets climbed after a strong pre-weekend lead from New York where two of the three main indices closed at record highs.

Investors were looking ahead to a speech by Federal Reserve boss Janet Yellen on Friday, which would be pored over for clues about the bank's outlook for its next interest rate hike.

Investors were looking ahead to a speech by Federal Reserve boss Janet Yellen on Friday, which would be pored over for clues about the bank's outlook for its next interest rate hike.

MARS TO BUY PET HEALTHCARE PROVIDER VCA FOR \$7.7BN

LONDON: Mars Inc is buying pet hospital operator VCA Inc for \$7.7 billion in a deal that will tighten the Whiskas and Pedigree pet food maker's grip on the pet care market.

The deal will help privately held Mars, better known for candies such as M&M's and Snickers, add about 800 pet hospitals to its network of more than 900 clinics, which includes the 61-year-old Banfield pet hospital chain.

The biggest pet food company in the world it held a quarter of the global pet food market as of 2015 - followed by Nestle SA, the maker of the Purina cat and dog food brand. Mars has been diversifying its business as calorie-conscious consumers increasingly shun chocolates and candies, a trend that has weighed on the \$183 billion global confectionery market.

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

DETROIT AUTO SHOW



DETROIT: President and CEO of Honda North America John Mendel stands next to the Honda Ridgeline after winning the truck of the year at the North American International Auto show yesterday in Detroit. —AP



DETROIT: Lincoln shows off the Navigator concept at the North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) yesterday in Detroit, Michigan. —AFP

GERMAN AUTO INDUSTRY PLEADS FOR FREE TRADE

DETROIT: Germany's auto industry yesterday argued for freer trade within North America and between the United States and Europe, as global auto brands gathered to showcase their wares in Detroit.

The plea at the opening of the annual Detroit auto show comes as auto makers brace for continued confrontation with US President-elect Donald Trump, who has threatened to slap import tariffs on several major manufacturers for selling Mexican-made cars on the US market. At a news conference at the start of the show, Matthias Wissmann, head of German auto federation VDA, underscored that member companies, which include BMW, Volkswagen and Daimler, had quadrupled production in the US since 2009, producing 850,000 vehicles in the United States in 2016.

"That is a clear commitment to the US as an industrial location," said Wissmann, reiterating the VDA's favorable stance on free-trade. "For us, the question of how Washington will value globalization in the future is particularly important," he added, pointing to the North American Free Trade Agreement, which links Mexico, Canada and the United States.

"It would certainly also be smart not to call the absence of import duties within NAFTA into question." VDA members produced 425,000 units in Mexico in 2016, according to Wissmann.

Wissmann also said only 41 percent of US production by German automakers remained



DETROIT: Audi of America displays the R8 V10 at the North American International Auto Show (NAIAS) yesterday. —AFP

in the United States, as the majority is for export. "That means that just over half of the jobs that the German manufacturers have created here in their US plants depend on exports," said Wissmann, who put the number

of US workers employed by German auto makers and parts suppliers at 110,000.

Wissmann also noted that the proposed trade pact with the European Union, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership



DETROIT: Audi of America displays their cars. —AFP

or TTIP, would allow US-built cars duty free into the EU market. Near-term prospects for the adoption of the TTIP appear slim to nil, with talks at a standstill and Trump showing no sign of changing his antipathy to such trade

deals. "We assume that the new administration will aim to strengthen US industry," Wissmann said. "We hope that the new president will be open to this trade-policy interest of his domestic industrial base." —AFP

AIRBUS MAY POST 8% RISE IN 2016 DELIVERIES

PARIS: Airbus is set to post an 8 percent rise in deliveries for 2016, beating expectations, after a sprint to the finish line that narrowed the gap with arch-rival Boeing, according to industry experts and records of aircraft movements. The European planemaker was forced to sharply accelerate deliveries in December to meet its target after production problems earlier in the year.

It delivered over 100 jets last month, a Reuters analysis of flight-tracking data supplied by FlightRadar24, unofficial airport data and plane-watcher reports suggests, lifting its 2016 tally well above 680 including 60 of the delayed A320neo. One industry expert estimated the total as high as 688, well above the company's informal target of more than 670.

Airbus remains in second place behind Boeing, but its upward trajectory contrasts with the 2 percent drop in 2016 deliveries reported by its US nemesis last week, to 748 planes.

The higher-than-expected Airbus performance, up from 635 in 2015, is also the latest evidence that planemakers are boosting deliveries to whittle down record order backlogs and hoard cash as they face warnings of slowing demand later this decade. Boeing temporarily slowed output last year for industrial reasons but, like Airbus, plans further output increases.

An Airbus spokesman declined to comment. The European planemaker is keeping operational data tightly under wraps ahead of its annual news conference on Wednesday.

Airbus's December deliveries would set a monthly record for the company, beating the previous peak by more than a quarter. The gap between Christmas and New Year, traditionally a groggy period for European industry, saw a record burst of activity at Airbus plants in France and Germany and included one of its busiest ever days with eight jets flying away on Dec. 29.

"I was amazed," said a veteran of such operations. Aiming to stay ahead of Boeing in the race for new orders, rather than deliveries where it lags, Airbus may book for December at least part of a recent order for 100 jets from Iran and tie up loose ends including completing a deal with India's GoAir. It may also announce a significant order from Saudi carrier flynas.

Airbus needs to announce at least 259 orders for December to beat Boeing's 2016 total of 668. With outspoken sales chief John Leahy expected to retire in the second half of this year, Airbus is looking to end 2016 with a flourish, though analysts say prices could suffer due to weakening global economies.

CASH GENERATION

Airbus delivered at least 70 A320-family narrow-body jets in December, according to the sources and data, also a record. These included at least 17 of the new A320neo, whose ramp-up had been disrupted by delays in receiving new fuel-saving engines from Pratt & Whitney. That brought 2016 deliveries of narrow-body jets - the most cash-generating models - to over 540. It also delivered more than 140 wide-bodies. Airbus expected to deliver more than 670 aircraft in 2016, unofficially revised up from 650 in October. It is accelerating deliveries of the existing A320 to keep cash pouring in from airlines while it adopts a more conservative timeframe for the switchover to the A320neo.

Narrow-body deliveries generate cash for other developments and are increasingly vital as demand for larger wide-body aircraft suffers from a looming capacity glut. Experts say the delays in A320neo deliveries have masked some pressure on demand for those models too, caused by low oil prices that can make earlier versions just as attractive. On its other main profit-driver, Airbus delivered over 62 long-haul A330s in 2016, according to the estimates.

But it was forced to step up customer financing to maintain that pace as major customer Turkey faced turmoil after a failed coup and as European states withheld export credits in a row over Airbus payments to sales agents. Airbus itself provided the financing for all seven new Turkish Airlines A330s in 2016, industry sources say.

Despite separate delays due to shortages of cabin equipment, Airbus unexpectedly hit a target for at least 50 deliveries of the newer A350 after 16 in December, sources said last week. That includes one or two jets paid for but not yet in operation.

The rush to get planes away extended to the mammoth A380 as Airbus delivered seven in December, including three in two days to dominant customer Emirates. That brought the annual total to 28, up one from the previous year and enough to keep Europe's troubled superjumbo project at breakeven in 2016. However, it plans to cut A380 output from next year after demand sagged for the world's largest four-engined jets.

The program took another blow in late December when Dubai-based Emirates, under pressure from the impact of low oil prices on Gulf economies, delayed some 2017 deliveries. That could put the iconic double-decker plane back into loss in 2017, marring celebrations for its 10 years in service. —Reuters

MERCEDES CLAIMS LUXURY POLE POSITION OVER BMW

GERMAN FIRM SELLS 2.1 MILLION VEHICLES WORLDWIDE IN 2016

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: German carmaker Mercedes-Benz yesterday said it had overtaken homegrown rival BMW to deliver the most luxury vehicles of any manufacturer in 2016.

The Stuttgart-based firm sold almost 2.1 million vehicles worldwide, marking growth of 11.3 percent compared with 2015, parent company Daimler said in a statement. It was the first time Mercedes sold more than two million vehicles in a year, allowing it to reclaim the top spot it lost to its Munich rival in 2005.

"Extraordinary growth, especially in China and Europe, has placed us at the top in the luxury segment," Daimler CEO Dieter Zetsche said. Mercedes had achieved its best year ever by sales for the sixth time in a row, he added. China was a powerful growth market, with Mercedes boosting sales there by 26.6 percent over the year.

While the group also saw double-digit sales growth in Europe, adding 12.4 percent, US business shrank slightly by 0.8 percent. Daimler also reported best-ever sales for its Smart compact car, which added 21 percent compared with 2015 to hit 144,500 vehicles sold worldwide.

BMW is set to release its figures for the full year 2016 later yesterday. But data issued in December showed that in the first 11 months of the year, the Munich-based manufacturer sold just over 1.8 million vehicles — 5.6 percent higher than in 2015, but well short of Mercedes' full-year total.

Meanwhile, Volkswagen's luxury brand Audi reported yesterday that it had sold 1.87 million vehicles in 2016, up 3.8 percent on the previous year but likely relegating it to third place.

The Ingolstadt-based firm suffered "strong headwinds from many important markets," board member Dietmar Voggenreiter acknowledged. Some Audi cars were among the Volkswagen vehicles affected by the "dieselgate" scandal, which saw the auto giant admit to building devices designed to cheat regulatory emissions tests into 11 million vehicles worldwide. —AFP



DETROIT: Media examine the 2018 Lexus LS Sedan at its reveal at the 2017 North American International Auto Show yesterday. —AFP

GOOGLE, CAMRY AND THE SHADOW OF TRUMP

DETROIT: Fresh off a record year for US auto sales, carmakers meet in Detroit next week to show buyers what's coming next - and ponder their own future under a Trump administration.

More than 40 new vehicles will debut at the North American International Auto Show, which is one of the largest shows in the US After record sales of 17.55 million in 2016, US sales of new cars and trucks are expected to cool off a little this year, but demand remains strong.

Even if they can count on US buyers, automakers aren't sure what to make of President-elect Donald Trump. Trump has criticized Ford, General Motors and Toyota for making vehicles in Mexico and exporting them to the US. He is threatening a 35-percent border tax, which could throw the industry into disarray. But automakers are also hopeful that Trump will lower corporate taxes and loosen fuel economy standards and other regulations.

"It is the year of unknowns," said Michelle Krebs, a senior analyst with the car-buying site Autotrader.com. Here's what to look for at the Detroit show, which is open to the public from Jan. 14-22.

BIG DEBUTS: New versions of some important products will debut at the show. Toyota will show off the new Camry sedan, which has been the best-selling car in the US

since 2002, and Honda will pull the wraps off the new Odyssey minivan. Americans are increasingly favoring SUVs over cars, and automakers are scrambling to meet that demand. GM will have new versions of its popular GMC Terrain and Chevrolet Traverse SUVs. Nissan will show a smaller version of its Rogue SUV, while Volkswagen will have a stretched version of its Tiguan. Even Chinese automaker GAC Group, which doesn't yet sell vehicles in the US, will be showing off an SUV. As usual, there will be some surprises. Kia is teasing a high-performance sports car and Ford - which shocked the show with its GT last year - is mum on its plans.

MOBILITY BUZZ: Seismic changes are coming to the auto industry in the form of car-sharing and self-driving vehicles. Carmakers are trying to get on board. For the first time, a convention dedicated to mobility will run during the auto show press days. Dubbed Automobili-D, the event will feature booths from more than 100 tech startups, auto suppliers and carmakers with innovations like car seats that can sense when you're drowsy and software that can navigate the car in stop-and-go traffic. Waymo - Google's self-driving car project - will kick off the event by showing its new autonomous minivan developed with Fiat Chrysler. —AP



NBK HOLDS TRAINING COURSE FOR ECONOMICS JOURNALISTS

KUWAIT: NBK Personal Banking Services Deputy General Manager Mohammed Al-Othman said that local banks are capable of facing credit declines especially in personal loans with the help of special packages that could attract new clients, focus on mega projects and geographical expansion in various markets.

Speaking to trainees attending NBK's training course organized for economics reporters in various audio-visual media,

Al-Othman said that NBK was keen on implementing the regulations and guidelines issued by the central bank regarding personal loans.

He also discussed the new regulations issued in this regard. The training course was launched on October 22 and is scheduled to last till April.

Al-Othman said NBK launched special services for people with special needs by providing special ATM machines with

vocal instructions. He also noted that some employees received special training on using sign language and printing forms with Braille language and ATM cards with clients' photos.

Al-Othman said NBK operates the largest network of branches in Kuwait with 68 branches and 270 ATM machines, over 1600 employees and over a million clients. "Some clients are the fourth generation of our clients", he pointed out.

INVESTOR-DEMAND PROMPTS TOP REAL ESTATE GROUP ACQUISITIONS IN TURKEY

AL-QADDOUMI SEES OPPORTUNITIES IN TURKEY PROPERTY MARKET

KUWAIT: As a part of its policy to frequently visit and follow up the projects marketed by the Group and to ensure that such projects have been or are executed according to the agreed standards, Waleed Al-Qaddoumi, Managing Director of Top Real Estate Group and Mohamed Farghaly, the Group's Executive manager have recently visited the projects located in the Turkish Republic, which are promoted by the Group.

The visit covered the regions of Istanbul, Bodrum and Kusadasi. Al-Qaddoumi expressed his full satisfaction with the progress of the projects under construction, which will be delivered on time. The visit also included a meeting with a number of the Company's clients who took over their residential apartments in several projects, notably Terrace Tema and Terrace Mix, which were executed by

Inanlar Real Estate Development Company. On the other hand, the customers expressed their satisfaction with the projects quality and variety of services offered therein with utmost happiness to have a property in Turkey.

Al-Qaddoumi stated that Inanlar projects have significantly attracted customers from Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia where Top Real Estate Group managed to market and sell the largest proportion in these projects due to its great confidence in the developer who executes the projects according to the highest engineering standards. Their projects offer high quality and commitment to high-end distinctive finishing in those projects. Al-Qaddoumi added: Furthermore, confidence in the Turkish real estate market is a critical factor, which enabled the Group to market the largest number of units despite negative events

that took place during 2016 in Turkey or other regions of the world. Such events had impact on the performance of various sectors including real estate industry, which witnessed slowdown and decline in sales in the majority of world countries including Turkey. Al-Qaddoumi added that the events that took place in Turkey such as failed coup attempt, terrorist acts in several areas or the decline of the Turkish currency etc., did not hinder the economic and urban activity in the country, and did not limit the demand for acquisition of property in Turkey. Confidence in Turkey's economic and political potential and its ability to overcome adversity and hardships enhanced the continuing attraction of different segments of investors, particularly in the real estate sector.

Al-Qaddoumi added that the Group is currently doing highly suc-

cessful business with Inanlar Company over the past five years and continues to promote the Company's projects in Kuwait, Qatar and a number of Arab countries. There comes on the top of such projects the Terrace Lotus Project located in Beylikduzu, Istanbul. He added that the project offers unique prime location on E-65 Highway, which provides easy transportation where it is possible to access the main education, health and shopping centers within few minutes. He pointed out that the project is located just 10 minute drive from Ataturk Airport, 3 minutes from TIM Highway, 6 minutes from Edo Naval Bus Station and 15 minutes from the Marmara. The distance will also be only minutes from the new underground station, which is set to be completed in 2019.

Al-Qaddoumi added that Terrace Lotus apartments, which are located in the most expensive and most beautiful sites in the area, have different sizes ranging from 90 to 240 square meters. The project comprises 40 floor at height of 150 meters. The project has 149 residential units and 44 retail shops in the shopping mall. Apartment spaces vary from 1, 2, 3 or 4 bedrooms with prices starting from TL 567 thousand. The advance payment is 20% and the progress payment is 20% while the remaining amount will be paid in 40 monthly installments. The project is set to be completed by Q4 in 2017 with estimates and projections that there will be an increase of 40% in the property value upon completion of the project implementation.

On the other hand, Al-Qaddoumi said that the Group would offer a limited number of units in the Terrace Mix and Terrace Tema projects, which are ready for immediate occupation with payment facilities up to 24 months. Al-Qaddoumi stated that the acquisition in Turkey remains a demand by investors seeking to utilize the promising opportunities offered by the real estate market, particularly at the present period as the Turkish Lira have been declining against the Kuwaiti Dinar, which constitutes a great benefit for the buyers.



DETROIT: Fiat Chrysler representative Tim Kuniskis addresses the media after the Pacifica minivan from Fiat Chrysler won utility vehicle of the year at the North American International Auto show yesterday. —AP

FIAT CHRYSLER ANNOUNCES CREATION OF 2,000 US JOBS

WASHINGTON: Fiat Chrysler on Sunday announced it was creating 2,000 jobs in the United States, coming as President-elect Donald Trump has been publicly scolding automakers for investing in Mexico. The American-Italian firm will invest \$1 billion by 2020 in two of its factories in the Midwestern states of Michigan and Ohio, where the new jobs will be based, the company said in a statement coming on the eve of the Detroit auto show.

The Warren Truck Assembly Plant in Michigan will produce the Jeep Wagoneer and Grand Wagoneer, as well as the Ram heavy duty truck which is currently produced in Mexico, the company said.

The Toledo Assembly Complex in Ohio will build a new Jeep pickup truck. "FCA US is further demonstrating its commitment to strengthening its US manufacturing base," it said, adding that it has created 25,000 jobs in the country since 2009.

Trump, who campaigned on promises of creating industrial jobs in the American heartland, took to Twitter this past week to blast automakers with operations or plans to build plants in Mexico. He slammed General Motors for making some of its Chevy Cruze models south of the border, and Toyota, which is building a new plant there.

Today, US automaker Ford announced it was scrapping construction of a \$1.6 billion plant in Mexico to instead invest in the United States and create 700 jobs, citing a "vote of confidence" in the economic agen-

da of the incoming president. Fiat Chrysler so far has escaped Trump's Twitter wrath, but it's due to start importing Jeep Compass models from Mexico as soon as this month.

The company was rebuilt in 2009 after its predecessor the Chrysler Group went bankrupt and required a federal bailout to stay in business. It has three manufacturing sites in Mexico—in Toluca, Ramos Arizpe and Saltillo—where it produces pickups as well as the Fiat Fremont and the Fiat 500.

Other auto groups have preemptively said they will be flexible in the new era of American politics.

"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.

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

Mexico's relatively low wages, its proximity to the US market and the free trade deals the country has with 46 countries make it attractive to foreign investors.

The main pact is the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that Mexico enacted with the United States and Canada in 1994. During the campaign Trump relentlessly attacked NAFTA, promising to renegotiate or withdraw from the agreement all together. —AFP



Serdar Inan, Inanlar owner explains to Al-Qaddoumi the stages of construction in the Terrace Lotus Project in the presence of Farghaly and Gulson.



GULF BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF AL-DANAH DAILY DRAWS

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its Al-Danah daily draws on 8 January 2017 announcing the names of its winners for the week of 2 January - 5 January 2017. The Al-Danah daily draws include draws each and every working day for two prizes of KD 1,000 per winner.

The winners are:
(Monday 2/1): Ibrahim Ahmad Ibrahim Al-Rashed, Abdulredha Abdullah Ali Ashkanani
(Tuesday 3/1): Khalid Fahad Abdullah Al-Raqem, Abdullah Jaseem Mohammed Al-Durea
(Wednesday 4/1): Khalifa Mohammed Ibrahim Al-Baloushi, Ahmad Hussain Ahmad Bahrouh
(Thursday 5/1): Waleed Hamad Mohammed Al-Sumait, Fahad Nasser Fahad Al-Mutawa

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah 2017 draw lineup includes daily draws (2 winners per working day each receive KD1000). Al-Danah's 1st Quarterly draw for the prize of KD200,000 will be held on 30 March, the 2nd quarterly draw for the prize of KD250,000 will be held on 29 June and the 3rd quarterly draw for the prize of KD500,000 will be held on 28 September.

The final Al-Danah draw for KD1 million will be held on 11 January, 2018 whereby the Al-Danah millionaire will be announced.

Five reasons why the Al-Danah account is the best:

- 1) Kuwait's single biggest yearly cash prize of KD 1 million
- 2) Kuwait's biggest quarterly cash prizes, up to KD500,000
- 3) Two winners of KD1,000 every working day
- 4) The most chances to win
- 5) Only Bank that transfers your chances to win from year to year

Only Al-Danah makes millionaires. Al-Danah also offers a number of unique services including: the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card which helps account holders deposit their money at their convenience; as well as the Al-Danah calculator to help customers calculate their chances of becoming an Al-Danah winner.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the draw within two days. To take part in the Al-Danah 2017 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must have an Al-Danah account containing at least KD 200; customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's 56 branches, transfer on line, or call the Customer Contact Center on 1805805 for assistance and guidance.

2ND VW EMPLOYEE ARRESTED OVER EMISSIONS SCHEME

DETROIT: The Volkswagen executive who once was in charge of complying with US emissions regulations has been arrested in connection with the company's emissions-cheating scandal, a person briefed on the matter said yesterday.

Oliver Schmidt, who was general manager of the engineering and environmental office for VW of America, was arrested during the weekend in the federal criminal investigation, said the person, who didn't want to be identified because they are not authorized to speak on the case.

Schmidt is the second VW employee to be arrested as the probe led by the US Attorney's Office in Detroit continues. The New York Times reported that he's expected to be arraigned Monday on a conspiracy charge in a federal courtroom in Detroit.

Schmidt's bio for a 2012 auto industry conference said Schmidt was responsible for ensuring that vehicles built for sale within the US and Canada comply with "past, present and future air quality and fuel economy government standards in both countries." It says he served as the company's direct factory and government agency contact for emissions regulations.

Volkswagen has admitted that it programmed diesel-powered vehicles to turn pollution controls on during tests and turn them off in real-world driving. The scandal has cost VW sales and has tarnished its brand worldwide. A lawsuit filed last year by the New York state attorney general said that Schmidt "played an important role" in concealing the deception from regulators.

Volkswagen said in a statement yesterday that it is cooperating with the Justice Department in the probe. "It would not be appropriate to comment on any ongoing investigations or to discuss personnel matters," the statement said. A message was left Monday for a Justice Department spokeswoman in Detroit. Peter Carr, a Justice spokesman in Washington, did not immediately return an email seeking comment. Herbert Diess, a member of Volkswagen AG's board of management, appeared in Detroit Sunday evening to

introduce a new version of VW's Tiguan SUV ahead of the North American International Auto Show. He wouldn't comment when asked if some Volkswagen executives refused to come to the auto show for fear of being arrested.

"I'm here, at least," he said. Asked about the Justice Department investigation, Diess also wouldn't comment, but said he hopes it's resolved "as soon as possible."

The company has agreed to either repair the cars or buy them back as part of a \$15 billion settlement approved by a federal judge in October. Volkswagen agreed to pay owners of 2-liter diesels up to \$10,000 depending on the age of their cars. In October, VW engineer James Robert Liang, of Newbury Park, California, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to defraud the government and agreed to cooperate with investigations in the U.S. and Germany. Liang was the first person to enter a plea in the wide-ranging case, and authorities were expected to use him to go after higher-ranking VW officials.

A grand jury indictment against Liang detailed a 10-year conspiracy by Volkswagen employees in the US and Germany to repeatedly dupe US regulators by using sophisticated emissions software. The indictment detailed e-mails between Liang and co-workers that initially admitted to cheating in an almost cavalier manner but then turned desperate after the deception was uncovered.

Tests commissioned by the nonprofit International Council on Clean Transportation in 2014 found that certain Volkswagen models with diesel engines emitted more than the allowable limit of pollutants. More than a year later, Volkswagen admitted to installing the software on about 500,000 2-liter diesel engines in VW and Audi models in the US. Later the company said some 3-liter diesels also cheated.

The Environmental Protection Agency found that the 2-liter cars emitted up to 40 times the legal limit for nitrogen oxide, which can cause human respiratory problems. —AP

VENEZUELA BOOSTS MINIMUM WAGE BY 50%

CARACAS: Embattled President Nicolas Maduro on Sunday raised the minimum wage by 50 percent in Venezuela, a country with astronomical inflation. Maduro said he was raising the minimum wage to 40 bolivars, about 60 dollars at the highest official exchange rate, or \$12 on the black market.

"To get the year started, I have decided to raise the minimum wage," the president said on his weekly show on state television. The wage comes with an additional food bonus of about 93 dollars, which did not change. Venezuela grapples with the world's highest inflation rate—set to hit 475 percent this year, according to the International Monetary Fund.

As the Latin American country flounders through a devastating economic crisis, inflation has gutted the value of the bolivar.

Venezuela has been rocked by low prices for its key export, oil. Now in its third year of a deep recession, it is facing severe shortages of food, medicine and basic household goods.

Maduro blames the crisis on a "capitalist conspiracy" backed by the United States. His opponents say it was caused by the failure of 18 years of leftist policies under Maduro and Chavez.

Nearly 80 percent of Venezuelans disapprove of Maduro's leadership, according to a recent survey by polling firm Datanalysis. —AFP

CANON CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY OF MIRAISHA SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME IN AFRICA

DUBAI: Canon Europe, leader in imaging, celebrates a significant milestone for one of its core sustainability programmes, Miraisha, as it reaches its two-year anniversary. The programme, which is run closely with Canon Central & North Africa, has trained over 2,500 participants since its inception in 2014, aims to promote job opportunities in Africa by offering workshops to photographers, videographers, film-makers and print business owners.

Miraisha, which means future livelihood - 'Mirai' being future in Japanese and 'Maisha' being livelihood in Swahili - provides people with the skills to develop their careers in professional photography or print by utilising Canon's core expertise in imaging and its network of professionals. Initiatives range from fashion and street photography classes to filmmaking workshops and print training for SMEs.

Stuart Poore, Director of Sustainability at Canon Europe commented, "The Miraisha programme truly embodies our corporate philosophy of Kyosei: living and working together for the common good. In just two years, it has already achieved impressive results and had a major impact on the lives and businesses of participants - more than 140 photographers have received work with a paid commission and more than 20 have received awards and recognition



for their work. Print shop owners have also benefited, for example, one has won a contract from a large African Bank, citing the training from Canon being a winning factor for them. We are absolutely dedicated to the Miraisha programme and look forward to carrying out many more seminars, workshops, training and mentorships in the future."

A summary of key initiatives from the programme so far include:

- Ghanaian Professional Print Excellence Training
- Canon is currently working with local business partner, MFI Ghana, and not-for-profit organisation, Invest in Africa, to

deliver training to 22 local Professional Printers in the Accra region. The training focuses on improving the entrepreneurial, business management and technical skills of employees, helping local SMEs meet the print demands of multinational companies active in Ghana, who may otherwise have looked outside of the area.

- Photography workshops with Canon Master, Gary Knight - the world renowned photojournalist has run a number of workshops in Kenya and Nigeria, to not only train, teach and mentor, but build and bring together a community of photographers in Africa.



Among the 57 participants who have taken part in the workshops, many have had stories published in magazines and newspapers including, Vogue Italia online and The Standard (Kenya). One student won the Discovery Award at the Rencontres d'Arles 2016 for her project, 'Stranger in a Familiar Land'.

- Film and Photography Excellence Programme in partnership with Kenyatta University-Canon will work closely with Kenyatta University as part of a three-year partnership, delivering practical and theoretical training to students through a structured photography and film programme. Students are able to experi-

ence hands-on time with the latest equipment during the intensive training sessions.

- Film and Photography Excellence Programme in partnership with NAFTI - Canon and the National Film and TV Institute, Ghana (NAFTI), agreed to a three-year partnership, with the goal of creating new and rewarding careers for creative young professionals. Isaac Yeboah, a student who took part in a recent workshop said, "It pays to stay abreast with leading standards and champions, especially in a fast changing field such as photography - this workshop was perfect for just that!"

ORGANIZATIONS UNABLE TO DISTINGUISH AN ATTACK FROM NORMAL CUSTOMER ACTIVITY

DUBAI: A survey conducted by Kaspersky Lab and B2B International has uncovered that banks and payment organizations are finding it difficult to manage online financial fraud in today's connected and complex technological landscape. Over a third (38%) of organizations admit that it is increasingly hard to tell whether a transaction is fraudulent or genuine. The explosive growth of e-payments, combined with new technological developments and shifting business needs, has forced companies to enhance the effectiveness of their business processes in recent years. In many cases, this has been achieved by implementing e-flow systems for interacting with suppliers and clients etc. E-payments of all types have become so ubiquitous today that it is absolutely impossible for businesses to completely avoid electronic transactions of any kind. As companies become increasingly immersed in digital environments, ensuring business continuity and protecting themselves against cyber threats will be crucial. As the number of online transactions increases, so does the level of online fraud, with 50% of financial services organizations surveyed believing online financial fraud is increasing. It is clear that financial institutions need to make every effort to protect their business and customers from cybercriminals.

The survey showed that 41% of businesses have implemented an in-house cyber security solution and 45% rely on a third-party solution from their bank, to mitigate the risks. Still, 46% of companies have either only partially implemented a solution against financial fraud, or have not implemented one at all. Among financial organizations, only 57% have a dedicated anti-fraud security solution.

According to these findings, about half of the organizations operating in the electronic payments landscape use non-specialist solutions, which, according to statistics, are unreliable against fraud, and show a high percentage of false positives. The incorrect use of security systems can also lead to transactions being blocked. It should also be noted that the deviation of payments may lead to a loss of customers and, ultimately, profits. This is therefore a critical issue for every business. Fraud itself is not only a problem, financial institutions need to reduce the number of false alarms in their systems, to provide the best customer service possible.

"Considering the aggressive competition in today's fierce financial services market and the extreme disruption from non-traditional providers, a trusted relationship between customers and their financial institutions is a decisive factor for the long-term prosperity of any company. The interdependence of the digital relationships between all financial services market players also means that if any organization in the value chain experiences a digital service issue (whether due to fraud, breach, cyber-attack, etc.), the damage can quickly spread to the other organizations in that digital financial service value chain. As the already high volume of customer demand for online transactions continues to increase, all companies (its customer facing digital platforms, infrastructure, data, and employees) should be secure, convenient, and prepared. It's crucial, therefore, to use specialized fraud prevention solutions that will provide customers with the most convenient and safest service possible," comments Ross Hogan, Kaspersky Lab Global Head of Fraud Prevention.



LAS VEGAS: The Sound Soother from Project Nursery, offering preloaded lullabies and nature sounds and Bluetooth streaming capability, is on display at the 2017 Consumer Electronic Show (CES) on Sunday. — AFP

TECH MOVES INTO NURSERY

LAS VEGAS: As technology caters to an ever-younger crowd, developers are creating new tools for infants and their parents, and even aiming at the yet-to-be born. The Consumer Electronics Show, which concluded Sunday, had a "baby tech" zone which included an array of gadgetry for new parents and those expecting to be. California startup Hatch Baby showed its changing table that automatically weighs the baby and keeps track of diaper changes to help monitor infant health.

The company also showcased its home ultrasound device that allows expectant parents to see the baby in utero and share images over social networks. Another exhibitor, Bloomlife, will rent a sensor which attaches to the mother's belly to monitor contractions. Bloomlife's Angela Sylcott said some expectant mothers use the device in the final weeks of pregnancy to know when to go to the hospital, but that it can also be useful for "moms who have a history of preterm labor or a medical condition."

Technology is also looking to shake up the breast pump industry. Naya Health's smart pump, said founder Jeff Alvarez, was developed when his wife was having trouble producing milk. "We knew there was an opportunity," he said. It can help working mothers, for example, produce a supply of milk in advance of a business trip, he noted. Alvarez said the device helps a woman relax, enabling her to produce more, and monitors production via a mobile application. A "wearable" pump developed by start-up Willow puts the pump directly in the bra, with wireless controls.

Engineer Shannon Kozin said the device is "mobile and completely hands free," allowing women to go about their normal lives while they are producing milk and avoid bathroom breaks. "It brings dignity and humanity" to the process, she said. The zone also showed a variety of sensors that parents can use to monitor a baby's vital signs.

Happiest Baby, founded by the author of early childhood books Harvey Karp, produces its Snoo bed which is equipped with microphones so that parents can hear the baby's crying and offering calming noises to help lull the infant back to sleep. The bed is "one little attempt to give parents a bit more sleep," Karp said. — AFP

MICROSOFT'S NEW CLOUD TRAININGS AND CERTIFICATIONS TO BRIDGE SKILLS GAP

KUWAIT: In its efforts of fueling digital transformation in the region, Microsoft has launched Azure Skills - Cloud related trainings and certification offers for IT Professionals across the Country. With the aim of increasing adoption for new Cloud technologies, the Azure Skills program will help participants advance their technical acumen on Cloud; driving true digital transformation and contributing to the country's innovation, economic competitiveness, and smart initiatives.

IDC forecasts that by 2020, more than one in three IT positions will be cloud related. Moreover, the research reveals that the availability and skill level of Cloud professionals have a direct impact on businesses. While IT employment worldwide will grow about 4% every year from 2015 to 2020, all of that growth will occur in cloud-related positions. Azure training and certification offers are a high-value, simple, and customizable way to increase the technical skills of individuals and enterprise IT teams, and help participants to earn valuable Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) status to advance their careers and clearly stand out.

IT professionals signing up for the courses will have access to a broad range of technical resources and trainings at different levels - from free Massively Open Online Courses (MOOC) in a self-paced interactive environment, to full certification offerings. Those opting for a free training will have access to Microsoft's online catalogue of new Azure fundamentals and technical trainings, added each month. Digital certificates of completion for each course will be given upon successful achievement. IT Professionals choosing more advanced options will be required to take Azure certification exams of their choice, including practice tests, to gain Microsoft Certified Professional status. Microsoft will also provide special courses for participants to get the best of multi-cloud platforms and advance their careers.

"Industries are facing a bold new world with the amazing technological developments in the cloud, giving rise to unprecedented challenges and opportunities." Said Samer Abu Ltaif, Regional General Manager, Microsoft Gulf. "Emerging technologies in the fields of hybrid cloud, mobility, data analytics and machine intelligence are changing nearly every aspect of the IT landscape, making it imperative for organizations to identify and fill the skills gap. Microsoft



Samer Abu Ltaif

trainings and certifications will enable IT Professionals to address these technological challenges and develop skills crucial for embarking on this massive transformation."

Over 80% of enterprise IT organizations will commit to hybrid cloud architectures encompassing multiple public cloud services, by the end of 2017. These adoptions will change and reprioritize skills required, and IT organizations will need to design and orchestrate a full stack of services to support new applications. Azure and hybrid cloud related trainings will enable organizations to plan, build, and operate cloud services to reduce management complexity and lower operating costs; ultimately reducing risk, increasing compliance, and delivering better business value.

"Acquiring cloud skills has become a critical component in organisational success. Our Azure Skills courses and certifications will enable IT experts to reimagine their firm's IT infrastructure, preparing them for a competitive digital future" added Abu Ltaif.

IDC also reported that investment in digital transformation initiatives will reach \$2.2 trillion by 2019. With more than 80% of Microsoft customers having already deployed or embraced the cloud, the surging cloud momentum is real and will continue to rise. Microsoft cloud is a growing collection of integrated services - analytics, computing, database, mobile, networking, storage, web apps and more - for moving faster, achieving more, and saving costs. Adding Azure skills to an organization's toolbox will enable it to become more nimble and successful in a digital economy, meeting customer needs on any cloud platform.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2017 CES

LAS VEGAS: Here are some key highlights of the 2017 International Consumer Electronics Show, which concluded Sunday:

ALEXA EVERYWHERE

Amazon's virtual assistant Alexa was the surprise star of the show, with dozens of new products and services integrating the voice-accessed machine smarts into appliances, TVs, speakers, lamps, cars and more. Analysts said the gains for Alexa could help unify a fragmented market for connected devices, and bring artificial intelligence to more people, from young to old.

ROBOTS WITH CHARACTER

Robots showed off new skills and "personality." Hanson Robotics unveiled its life-like "Professor Einstein," which has realistic facial expressions and can engage in informative conversations such as lessons in math and science. Other robots acquired intelligence from the internet cloud, giving them the ability to chat person-style and tend to monitoring homes or other tasks. A robot from Taiwan played chess-moving pieces against human opponents-to showcase how able it was at making sense of what it "sees."

CARS GET MORE AUTONOMY (AND FASTER)

The secretive electric car startup Faraday Future, backed by a Chinese billion, showed its first production car, the FF91, aimed at taking on Tesla. The company showed how fast it can accelerate-getting to 60 mph (100 kph) in 2.39 seconds-and began taking pre-orders for 2018. The other major car-makers were not idling, instead showcasing moves toward autonomous driving, electric power, and better connections-including integrating with smart home systems.

THINNER, SMARTER TVS

LG Electronics showed off a "wallpaper" thin television, while rivals Sony and Samsung unveiled technology for more realistic displays. A push was on to entice people with 4K ultra-high screens. Sales of televisions globally have been slipping, a seeming result of viewers turning to smartphones, tablets, and computers for video, according to the US Consumer Technology Association trade group behind CES. Those who do buy televisions, however, are expected to prefer high-definition models.

SMARTPHONES NOT DISAPPEARING

CES featured a surprising number of smartphone launches, including one from Taiwan's Asus that can use Google's Project Tango 3D technology and virtual and augmented reality. This came as the industry prepared to mark the 10th anniversary of the launch of the iPhone on January 9 and with some participants noting that much of the industry revolves around the smartphone.

New mid-range handsets were unveiled by South Korea's LG, China's ZTE and Huawei, which also revealed its ambition for a greater share of the US market by launch-



LAS VEGAS: A robot developed by Taiwan engineers moves chess pieces on a board against an opponent, at the 2017 Consumer Electronic Show (CES).—AFP

ing its flagship large-screen handset.

VIRTUAL REALITY

While not appearing ready for prime time, virtual reality sought its stride at the show. Show floor space devoted to virtual reality abounded with companies diving into the market with headsets, content, or tools for better creating or delivering immersive experiences. Taiwan-based HTC announced initiatives aimed at getting developers to create more VR experiences and unveiled plans for arcades in public venues so more people could give it a try. Vive is up against PlayStation VR and Facebook-owned Oculus Rift. Each company has been wooing software developers and refining its hardware to better entice users.—AFP

STATE GOP WARY AS REPUBLICANS PUSH REPEAL OF HEALTH LAW

'I THINK THEY TALK A LOT ABOUT REPEAL. I HAVEN'T HEARD A LOT ABOUT REPLACE'

ATLANTA: Congressional Republicans' drive to repeal the 2010 health care law has financial and political repercussions for GOP leaders in the states and gives Democrats potential openings as they struggle to reclaim power lost during President Barack Obama's tenure. Some Republican governors, in particular, are wary about what their Washington colleagues might do with Obama's signature law, exposing a fissure in a party that has consolidated control in the nation's capital and dozens of statehouses around the country in accompaniment with President-elect Donald Trump's victory in November.

"I think they talk a lot about repeal. I haven't heard a lot about replace," Ohio's GOP Gov. John Kasich said last week in Cleveland, as he warned against making fast, sweeping changes. "The fact of the matter is we have a lot more people covered." He asked "what happens to these people" in the event of a full repeal. Democrats, meanwhile, bemoan the possibility of stripping insurance from some 20 million Americans who lacked it before the law was passed in 2010. But they also see a political opportunity after six years of being blamed by Republicans - and often by voters - for every insurance premium or deductible increase, coverage denial or long wait for a specialist.

"You bought it, you own it," said pollster

Paul Maslin of Wisconsin, who has worked for federal and state Democratic campaigns around the country. Montana Gov Steve Bullock, a Democrat who embraced the Affordable Care Act in a GOP-leaning state, said the repeal attempts offer another chance to explain the complex law - something even Obama has said he didn't do as well as he could. "It's easy in Washington to say what you're going to do and not do," Bullock said. "Outside Washington, this is about communities and people's lives, and from that perspective, I think good policy also happens to be good politics."

Trump, House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and others have yet to offer details beyond their promise "to repeal and replace Obamacare." The law's main features are insurance exchanges where middle-income consumers buy private policies. Many get premium subsidies financed by taxes on the most generous insurance policies. Secondly, the law expanded eligibility for Medicaid, the government insurance program for the poorest and many disabled Americans. Among the regulatory changes were requiring insurers to cover more healthcare services; preventing insurers from denying coverage because of pre-existing health conditions and limiting lifetime caps on coverage.

Changes to the law could quickly impact

states' Medicaid budgets, the financial standing of public and private hospitals, and the estimated 20 million Americans who have gained health insurance under the law. Ripple effects would reach health-care providers from pharmacies to physical therapists. State elected officials in both major parties focus on practical effects, but acknowledge that voters' reaction will help shape the midterm elections that will serve as the first electoral barometers of the Trump era.

Democrats have high hopes in governor's races: 38 seats will be on the ballot in the next two years, with Republicans defending 27, and 16 open by term limits or retirements. Several of those open-seat elections will occur in presidential battleground states like Ohio and Michigan, where Republican governors largely embraced the Affordable Care Act. The cycle also will give Democrats a shot at winning back some of the 900-plus state legislative seats they lost since Obama was elected, perhaps rolling back supermajorities the GOP now enjoys in many state capitals.

Joe Schiavoni, a Democratic state senator in Ohio, already is eyeing the 2018 governor's race. Kasich is term-limited, and Schiavoni said it's likely the Republicans vying to succeed him will be pushed by a conservative primary electorate to abandon the outgoing governor's health care positions.

Meanwhile, Schiavoni says, he's traveling the state focusing on the law's benefits for newly insured patients.

"If we rip up this law, all that goes by the wayside," he said, framing the law as a net positive for the economy. At the federal level, Democrats face a tough path back to a Senate majority, because their caucus must defend 25 seats, including 10 in states Trump won; in the House, Democrats still face district boundaries that favor Republicans nationally. Yet the party hopes health care is important enough to drive a wave election if the GOP inflames the electorate, a reverse of what occurred in 2010 when Republicans rode anger about the law to the House majority.

Bullock and other Democrats say the GOP boxed itself in by promising a full repeal even as many Republicans, including Trump, embrace those more popular - but expensive - provisions. The law, Bullock said, "is not a buffet line." Iowa Gov Terry Branstad, another Republican who accepted Medicaid expansion and is now Trump's choice for ambassador to China, is counting on Vice President-elect Mike Pence's experience as Indiana governor to help ease the way. "That is kind of reassuring to us that we're going to be able to make a transition," he said. Still, he added: "They also have the responsibility to replace it with something that is affordable and sustainable." —AP

COUNTING CROUTONS: RESTAURANTS TALLY ITEMS FOR CALORIE RULES

NEW YORK: How might a bread basket for the table be counted under America's new calorie posting rules? What about seasonal items, croutons for salads, or pizza that's cut into squares? Restaurant and grocery chains scrambling to post calorie counts on their menus by spring have peppered the Food and Drug Administration with queries that offer a window - often complex, occasionally comic - into the ingredient riddles they are trying to solve. One example: If a piz-

ket and convenience store chains to start posting calories for their prepared foods.

Whether President-elect Donald Trump and the new Congress try to make any changes to the regulation - passed as part of the health care overhaul - isn't yet known. The restaurant industry association favors a national standard over a patchwork of local laws, though grocery and convenience store groups are hoping for a delay in enforcement and more

A: Calorie counts aren't required for items that are on menus for less than 60 days a year. And in general, restaurants don't have to cite the calories for items that aren't listed on menus. So a basket of dinner rolls or the chips and salsa placed on a table as a courtesy would also be exempt, as would any "secret menu" items that have become trendy at places such as Starbucks.

Q: A circular pizza is divided into a "party-cut" grid, rather than

disadvantage," she said.

Q: How should calories be listed for customizable dishes? For instance, a fast-food salad that can come with grilled or fried chicken, a packet of croutons and various dressing options.

A: Giving a range could be OK, with the upper end including the most caloric options (yes, including the croutons). But even as they comply with the regulations, some restaurant operators question how useful a wide span would be. "The value is kind of lost to the consumer, if you're telling the consumer the range could be 400 to 1,200 calories," Annica Kreider, a representative for Mellow Mushroom, an Atlanta-based pizza chain, said in a phone interview. She was among those who emailed with the FDA.

Q: For grocery stores, how should serving sizes be determined at hot food bars where people serve themselves?

A: The FDA said utensils such as ladles that can scoop a consistent amount each time can be considered a serving size. With utensils such as tongs, the serving size has to be by weight or a common household measure, such as a half cup. Those serving sizes and corresponding calorie counts would have to be listed near the food, such as on the sneeze guard glass or on a sign.

Q: What happens at self-serve drink stations?

A: The calorie counts don't have to be right on the drink nozzles, but should be visible by dispenser. What's listed should be for filled cups, without ice. The idea is to disclose the maximize number of calories people might guzzle. For fountain drinks filled behind the counter, restaurants can list the calorie count for a cup with ice - as long as the restaurant always puts a standard amount of ice in the cups.

Q: Do calorie counts need to be listed on coupons? "The issue of coupons has been a source of some confusion and uncertainty," a regulatory lawyer wrote.

A: Nope. Coupons are generally considered marketing materials that do not require calorie information. —AP



NEW YORK: In this file photo, items on the breakfast menu, including the calories, are posted at a McDonald's restaurant in New York. —AP

za chain gets pepperoni from multiple suppliers, which calorie count should be used? The FDA's advice: Whichever is fattiest.

"You would not be penalized for over-declaring calories versus under-declaring," the agency responded last March, according to the correspondence obtained through a public records request. Some cities and states already require restaurant chains to divulge calorie counts. But the federal regulation, set to take effect in May for eateries with 20 or more locations, would make the information more widely available. What's more, it requires supermar-

ket flexibility in how they can disclose the calorie counts. For now, the topics addressed by the FDA help illustrate what diners can expect to see on their menus.

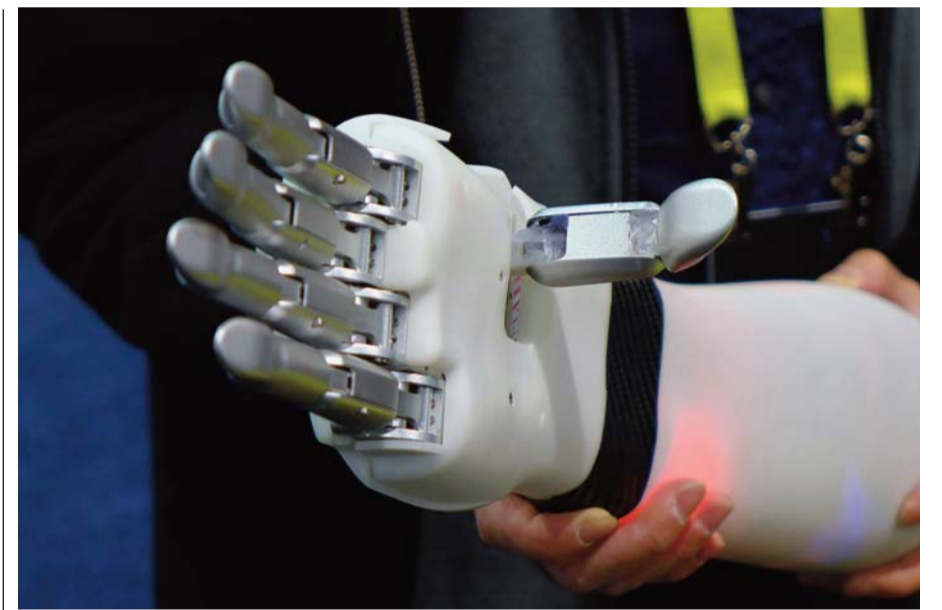
Q: How should the calorie counts be determined?

A: The FDA says food sellers need to use a "reasonable basis for determining the calorie information." Lab analysis is one option, but businesses could also get the information from databases, cookbooks, recipes, manufacturers, nutrition labels, or a combination of those options.

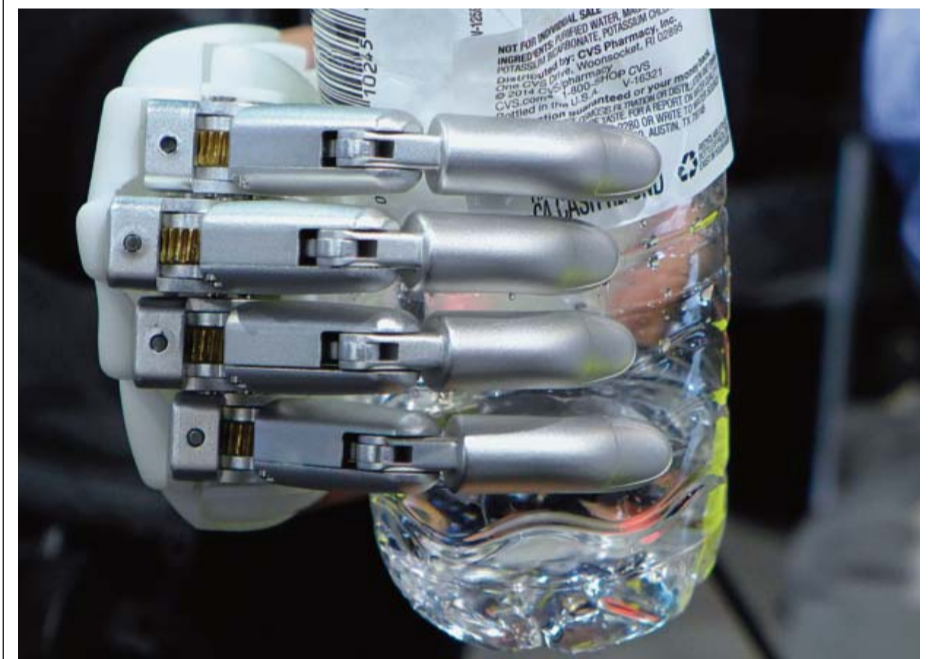
Q: What about that bread basket? Or seasonal menus?

traditional slices. Can the chain provide an average calorie count, even though the pieces are different sizes?

A: Initially, the FDA told a Chicago-based pizza chain it would need to declare calories for the entire pizza, if the pieces weren't uniform. But Marla Topliff, president of Rosati's Pizza, said the agency subsequently agreed to allow the chain to post calories for an average piece in a party-cut pie. Topliff said having to list calories for an entire pie would be unfair to party-cut pies, if traditionally cut pies were listed per slice. "You could see where they would be a



LAS VEGAS, Nevada: The "prosthetic hand" from BrainRobotics, controlled by signals sent from the residual muscles on an amputee's limb, a process that involves some machine learning technology, is displayed at the 2017 Consumer Electronic Show (CES) in Las Vegas. —AFP photos



LAS VEGAS, Nevada: The "prosthetic hand" from BrainRobotics, controlled by signals sent from the residual muscles on an amputee's limb, a process that involves some machine learning technology, holds a bottle for display.

EMERGING TECH AIMS TO IMPROVE LIFE FOR HANDICAPPED

LAS VEGAS: Emerging technology is giving new hope for the handicapped, and harnessing brainwaves for the physically disabled and helping the visually impaired with "artificial vision" are just the start. Many systems showcased at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas are aimed at improving quality of life for people with disabilities. BrainRobotics, a Massachusetts-based startup, showed its prosthesis that can be controlled by residual muscle strength of an amputee with better efficiency than similar devices, according to developers.

Bicheng Han, a doctoral candidate at Harvard University who founded the group, said the goal is to "provide low cost functional prosthetics" at a cost of around \$3,000, or far less than the tens of thousands of dollars for similar devices. Robotics engineer Kacper Puczydowski said the hand, which could hit the market next year, is "the most natural to use" and gets its ability by analyzing muscle function and using a classification algorithm for specific hand functions, such as grasping objects or pointing fingers. "An average user, with at least 50 percent of their residual muscle, should be able to be trained in under a month, within their home," he said. Over time the group wants to use technology from its sister company BrainCo to harness brain waves for improved function. BrainCo already markets a headband which helps identify patterns of brain waves to help improve focus and treat children with learning disabilities.

Artificial vision

Several technologies are also being developed for the visually-impaired. Israeli

startup Orcam showed its device called MyEye, which can be attached to arms of eyeglasses and is being marketed by French eyewear giant Essilor. The device aims to give greater independence to those with trouble seeing: it has a tiny camera and whispers into a user's ear, and has the ability to read texts and identify people and objects on supermarket shelves. The company was founded by Amnon Shashua and Ziv Aviram, who are also the co-founders of auto tech firm Mobileye, which is developing systems for accident avoidance and self-driving vehicles.

Danish-based manufacturer Oticon showed its new hearing aid, which works with objects in a connected home. Using wireless Bluetooth connectivity, it can alert users to a doorbell or smoke detector or let the wearer know when coffee is ready. South Korean group Hyundai meanwhile showed its exoskeleton, known as H-MEX, that can offer mobility to the handicapped.

It can allow a paraplegic to stand and even walk up stairs, according to engineer Jung Kyungmo. The exoskeleton covers the entire spine and back of the legs, attaching at the waist, thighs and knees. The company has no plans for a consumer version but is working with hospitals and researchers. French-based startup Japet introduced its Atlas exoskeleton, or brace, which takes pressure off the vertebral column for people with chronic back pain, according to co-founder Damien Bratic.

The brace uses small motors and analytics that can help in rehabilitation. Bratic said the device could be available in 2017 or 2018 and that the company hopes to develop similar devices for cervical support and for muscle disabilities. —AFP

STUDY LINKS ANTACIDS IN PREGNANCY TO ASTHMA IN KIDS

PARIS: Children of women who take heartburn medicine during pregnancy are a third more likely to develop asthma, according to a study published yesterday. However, it remains unclear whether the medication itself, or some other factor, is responsible for that increased risk, researchers reported in the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology.

"This association does not prove that the medicines caused asthma in these children," said Aziz Sheikh, co-director of the Asthma UK Centre for Applied Research at the University of Edinburgh and co-author of the study.

"Further research is needed to better understand this link." Heartburn-discomfort caused by acid passing from the stomach up into the oesophagus-occurs frequently during pregnancy due to hormonal

changes and pressure on the stomach from the expanding womb. Certain drugs can block this acid reflux, and have long been thought not to affect the development of the baby.

Previous research had inconclusively pointed to an increased risk of allergies in offspring due to an impact on the immune system. To dig deeper, scientists from Edinburgh and Finland reviewed eight previous studies involving more than 1.3 million children, drawing on healthcare registries and prescription databases. They found that children born of mothers taking antacids were at least a third more likely to have visited a doctor for asthma symptoms.

Asthma is a chronic lung disease that inflames and narrows the airways. It frequently starts in childhood. Symptoms include wheezing, shortness of breath and

coughing. More than 330 million people worldwide suffer from asthma, with an especially high incidence in low- and middle-income countries, according to The Global Asthma Report 2014. Experts commenting on the study did not challenge the link between the heartburn drugs and asthma in kids, but cautioned against jumping to conclusions.

"It may be that the heartburn in itself may be the most important association rather than the drugs used to treat it," said Jean Golding, an emeritus professor of paediatric epidemiology at the University of Bristol. Obesity in the expecting mother could also play a key role, said Seif Shaheen, a respiratory epidemiologist at Queen Mary University of London, noting that few of the studies took this factor into account. —AFP

STUDIES FIND WORRYING OVER - AND UNDERUSE OF MEDICINE WORLDWIDE

LONDON: Up to 70 percent of hysterectomies in the United States, a quarter of knee replacements in Spain and more than half the antibiotics prescribed in China are inappropriate, overused healthcare, researchers said yesterday. Experts who carried out a series of studies across the world found that medicine and healthcare are routinely both over- and underused, causing avoidable harm and suffering and wasting precious resources. The studies, commissioned by The Lancet journal and conducted by 27 international specialists, also found rates of Caesarian section deliveries are soaring - often in women who do not need them - while the simple use of steroids to prevent premature births has lagged for 40 years.

"A common tragedy in both wealthy and poor countries is the use of expensive and sometimes ineffective technology while low-cost effective interventions are neglected," the experts wrote in a statement about their findings. The World Health Organization estimates that 6.2 million excess C-sections are performed each year - 50 percent of them in Brazil and China alone. Vikas Saini, one of the lead authors of the study series and president of the US Low Institute in Boston, said factors driving the global failure to the right level of care include "greed, competing interests

and poor information", which he said combine to create "an ecosystem of poor healthcare delivery."

Co-lead researcher Shannon Brownlee added: "Patients and citizens need to understand what's at stake here if their health systems fail to address these twin problems. In the US, we are wasting billions of dollars that should be devoted to improving the nation's health." The study series analysed the scope, causes and consequences of underuse and overuse of healthcare around the world. It found that both can occur in the same country, the same organization or health facility, and even afflict the same patient.

The researchers noted that a study in China found 57 percent of patients received inappropriate antibiotics; that inappropriate hysterectomies in the United States range from 16 to 70 percent; and inappropriate total knee replacement rates were 26 percent in Spain and 34 percent in the United States. Rates of inappropriate hysterectomies were 20 percent in Taiwan and 13 percent in Switzerland, they found. Underuse leaves patients "vulnerable to avoidable disease and suffering" the researchers said, while overuse causes avoidable harms from tests or treatments at the same time as wasting resources better spent on much-needed services. —Reuters

RUSSIAN ZOO CULLS ALL ITS BIRDS OVER AVIAN FLU

MOSCOW: A Russian zoo has euthanized its entire bird population after an outbreak of avian flu, local authorities said yesterday. The zoo in the city of Voronezh, some 450 kilometers (280 miles) south of Moscow, was home to species including parrots, eagles, hawks and owls. But it took the drastic step to put down its remaining 141 birds after 35 died from avian flu earlier this month, local authorities said in a statement carried by Russian news agencies. The Voronezh zoo itself declined to comment when contacted by AFP yesterday.

A number of European countries have recently taken measures to curb the outbreak of a virulent strain of bird flu sweeping the continent. Authorities in

southwest France last week began a cull of hundreds of thousands of ducks used to produce foie gras, a controversial delicacy made from the livers of ducks and geese after force-feeding. The strain of the H5N8 virus has been detected in 17 European countries, according to World Organization for Animal Health-including Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, Hungary and Sweden.

The H5N1 strain of bird flu has killed more than 420 people, mainly in southeast Asia, since first appearing in 2003. Another strain of bird flu, H7N9, has claimed more than 200 lives since emerging in 2013, according to World Health Organization figures. There was no word on which bird flu strain had hit the Russian zoo. —AFP

CHINA'S GUANGZHOU TO HALT POULTRY TRADE FOR THREE DAYS DURING JAN-MARCH

BEIJING: The Southern Chinese city of Guangzhou will suspend the trade of live and slaughtered poultry for three-day periods during January to March, the government said, to prevent the spread of avian flu to humans. The ban, effective from 16th to 18th of each of those months, will exclude frozen poultry products, according to a statement on the website of Guangzhou government. Neighboring South Korea and Japan are battling outbreaks of bird flu that have forced farmers to cull millions of birds and raised concerns about the risks of it spreading to neighboring countries.

Under the ban, poultry wholesale markets and poultry trading at agricultural products fairs will remain closed, while live and slaughtered poultry cannot be stored

in the markets. The local government issued the ban to reduce the chances of human bird flu infection, as right now "it is the peak season for outbreaks," said the official statement. Human bird flu infection cases have been reported in several provinces this winter, including Guangdong, Jiangsu, and Fujian.

Three cities in eastern China's Jiangsu province suspended live poultry trading after neighboring provinces reported human bird flu cases. Local governments in Fujian and Anhui provinces have also restricted poultry trade. China's Ministry of Agriculture said earlier that the recent outbreaks of bird flu have been handled in a "timely and effective" manner without spreading and have not affected chicken products or prices. —Reuters

CUP OF NOSTALGIA AT TIMELESS CHINESE TEAHOUSE

'NOTHING HAS CHANGED SINCE THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION'

CHENGDU, China: At 4:00 am the kettles crackle on a charcoal stove as regulars crowd inside an ancient Chinese temple turned teahouse, a relic in a country being overrun by Starbucks cafes. Wearing a cap and a blue vest, Li Qiang gets up in the middle of the night, as he does every day, to light the fire and prepare portions of tea in tiny cups that can be purchased for a modest two yuan (29 US cents) each. Outside the Guanyin Pavilion teahouse, named for the goddess the temple was once dedicated to, elderly men chat as they wait for the 300-year-old building's large wooden doors to open.

Inside, decorations from past eras are visible in the shadows: religious frescoes and motifs on high beams, dating from before it was converted just over a century ago. Lower down, decaying paintings on wooden panels depict Communist China's founder Mao Zedong surrounded by solar rays, or slogans glorifying socialism and hoping for the Great Helmsman's longevity. "Nothing has changed since the Cultural Revolution," says Li. The 50-seat teahouse in Chengdu, capital of the southwestern province of Sichuan, and the way of life it represents are a throwback to the past in a society that is becoming increasingly frenetic and internationalized by its status as the world's second-largest economy.

Unlike upmarket teahouses in the city centre, the state-owned establishment does not offer rare and expensive teas at premium prices. Instead customers sit on bamboo chairs in small groups, under the pale glow of naked light bulbs suspended from the high ceiling. "Nowhere else in Chengdu will you find a similar tea house," says customer Ning Shucheng, who is in his 80s. "There are none. They have been ruined or completely demolished."

'Second family'

Teahouses were once emblematic of Chinese urban culture but are now struggling to revitalize their public image in the face of ever-expanding foreign or foreign-inspired coffee chains. "Here we are all local people, faithful," laughs another customer, a 73-year-old named Zhang. Pouring boiling water into thermos bottles decorated with flowers, Li greeted everyone. "For them this is a second home, it's like being in a family," he explains, especially for those whose own children live far from Chengdu. Li was around 30 when he was appointed manager more than two decades ago, but has been careful not to change anything during his tenure.

He muses: "What's the point? This is a place that breathes humanity, the lives of the regulars. This is not profitable, admittedly, but how could I give it up? Some regulars walk 10 kilometers every morning to come here." Across the street, an umbrella repairer opens his stall, while a butcher can be heard chopping meat in the distance. Under a lean-to, a hunchbacked hairdresser plugs in his hair clippers.

The teahouse offers customers a place to socialize and escape a materialistic and individualistic society they struggle to fit into, according to Tian Zaipo, a comparatively young client at 50. "In today's world people are getting further and further apart," he says. "It's so good to see your friends here." But he acknowledges that a new generation of Chinese beverage drinkers preferred coffeeshops-US chain Starbucks had only 400 outlets in the country in 2011, but within five years had almost six times as many, and was aiming to double that. "The young people do not come anymore," said Tian.

Barbarian invasion

But there is one new group of visitors to the Guanyin Pavilion-the establishment and its clientele have become renowned as a picturesque subject among China's army of amateur photog-



CHENGDU, SICHUAN, China: This picture shows an elderly man looking on at a hundred years old teahouse in Chengdu, southwest China's Sichuan province. —AFP photos



CHENGDU, SICHUAN, China: Li Qiang, a hundred years old teahouse owner, counting his money in his teahouse in Chengdu.



CHENGDU, SICHUAN, China: A group of men chatting in a teahouse in Chengdu, southwest China's Sichuan province.

raphers, a crucial market for camera manufacturers such as Canon and Nikon. Soon after the mid-morning arrival of an ear cleaner-a traditional but declining Sichuanese service to scrub out ear canals for 20 yuan-a dozen camera-wielding shutterbugs piled in. Without hesitation, request or consent, they proceeded to rearrange the crock-

ery, and sometimes even the customers themselves, to improve their compositions. The teahouse is renowned for its timelessness, but manager Li resents its resulting popularity. The photographers never buy a cup of tea, he said-and for his part, he does not let them sit down. "It's even worse at the weekend," he grimaces.—AFP

CLINIC PAGE



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Ghada Al-Kandari

CAP HOSTS GHADA AL-KANDARI'S GALLERY

The Contemporary Art Platform (CAP) is pleased to announce the opening night of 'UNTIL' exhibition by Ghada Al-Kandari taking place on Wednesday the 11th of January 2017.

About the exhibition

"Two years ago I constructed my first origami polyhedron," Kandari said. "I was unaware that this one object would be instrumental in shaping many paintings and stories to come. And many, many polyhedra to follow. But

such is the pattern that plays itself out in my life as an artist: creations are influenced by both the banal and the important in life, not imitating art but mirroring it."

"As I prepared for this exhibition, the mood of my work kept shifting from purpose to purpose. Until love, until peace, until I'm settled in a place I want to be. Always waiting for the big Until," she said.

About the artist

Ghadah Al-Kandari is a Kuwaiti artist born in Delhi in 1969.

In 1992 she received a BA in Mass Communications from the American University in Cairo. But it was a six-week painting course at the School of Visual Arts that "shaped my current painting style, which was also influenced early on by both classical painters: Cezanne, Matisse, Schiele, Modigliani and Klimt, and comic books: Mad Magazine, Archie and Asterix."

Her body of work ranges from large-scale acrylic paintings, primarily figurative, exploring the wide spectrum of human emotion and familial complexities, to smaller intimate pen and ink surreal drawings detached and focused

on everyday happenings. The artist had numerous solo exhibitions in Kuwait, and has participated in several group exhibitions locally and internationally, including the Arab Culture in Diaspora exhibition in Kuwait, Femmes Artistes Du Koweit at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris (2006), Approaches to Figurative Practices at the Third Line Gallery, Dubai (2007), and JAMM Contemporary Art Auction in Kuwait (2010). Since 2009, Ghadah Al-Kandari uses her blog 'prettygreenbullet' as a platform to display her work on a daily basis.



EYES WIDE OPEN: 7TH EDITION OF SPLASH CALENDAR

When do we really stop to experience what we feel? Those fleeting moments, which we miss in our day to day humdrum of life. The Splash Calendar 2017 calendar attempts to capture the raw emotions one feels incorporating the core elements of nature. The thought provoking calendar was unveiled by Reem Acra the Lebanese fashion designer.

Renuka Jagtiani, Vice-Chairperson, Landmark Group and Raza Beig, CEO-Splash and ICONIC and Director, Landmark Group at a glittering party at Vii Lounge, Dubai.

This year the calendar is special. Splash opened the model castings for its customers who are aspiring models giving them an opportunity to be involved with a brand they love and

are loyal to for years. Twelve of our customers graced the calendar this year shot by the Tejal Patni, celebrated photographer and an integral part of the calendar every year. The styling of the calendar for the first time was envisioned and designed by the in-house team who has created the masterpieces.

Each image invites you to experience a world

of dreams. Those small magical moments that we experience like a ray of light, a whiff of air, a ripple in the ocean that sometimes transcends you to a realm where every imagination is possible, every dream a reality and every reality a dream. It is in this bliss that we see the power, the power of being, the power in small things.

"The 2017 calendar is powered with emo-

tions and reflects on the hurricane of sentiments we feel weaved into the fashion route that Splash knows so well. It is also a very unique calendar where we have on board 12 of our customers carefully chosen to experience this journey of the brand that they have loved for years," said Raza Beig, CEO-Splash and ICONIC and Director, Landmark Group.



CBK SHOWCASES ITS 2016 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ACTIVITIES

Last year was yet another outstanding one for the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in terms of its social responsibility program. It was full of activities that demonstrated CBK's commitment to its social responsibility towards all segments of society and non-governmental organizations.

And in recognition for its efforts in the social responsibility domain, CBK was as a 'Leading Company in Social Responsibility' in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states in 2016. The honoring came at the sidelines of the 33rd GCC Social Affairs and Labor Ministers' meeting held in Riyadh. During the event, the 'Hawwen Alaihom' (make it easier for them) campaign was chosen as a leading social responsibility project.

'Hawwen Alaihom' is an innovative campaign that was launched five years ago with the aim of lending a helping hand to outdoor laborers

including construction and cleaning workers who are working in harsh weather conditions. CBK workers presented gifts to workers on special occasions during the campaign, including iftar and suhour meals during the Holy Month of Ramadan. In addition, CBK provided full support to various social, cultural, educational, sports and environmental activities organized by all of Kuwait's six governorates.

Moreover, CBK's Public Relations and Media Department organized its 'Ya Zein Torathna' (our beautiful heritage) cultural campaign for the fifth year in a row to highlight Kuwait's traditions and heritage. The campaign included activities such as launching the 'Tijari Neighborhood' pavilion that was set up in many shopping malls, and where heritage was introduced to visitors. In addition, wonderful cultural events were held at the Shaheed Park, including an event that highlight-



ed old Kuwaiti professions and old songs. CBK also contributed in decorating and illuminating its headquarters with pictures selected from its calendar during the National and



Liberation days. The bank also visited social care houses as well as the Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC) during the National Day anniversaries. Furthermore, bank workers visited the

Kuwait Down Syndrome Society and Al-Babtain Center for Burns and Plastic Surgery to celebrate 'girgean' with children.

As part of its voluntary activities, CBK organized a blood donation campaign for its employees in various positions, and issued its annual calendar highlighting Kuwait's heritage. And out of its keenness to stay in touch with clients through all media platforms, the bank launched a TV commercial during Ramadan. Furthermore, it organized several health and awareness campaigns to promote its banking services and promotional offers.

Realizing the significance of modern social media networks, CBK launched a WhatsApp service and its own accounts on various social media networks. It also issued a special booklet that includes all the social responsibility activities organized in 2016.

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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	ASSASSIN'S CREED 9:00 PM 11:30 PM	PASSENGERS THE FOUNDER 7:15 PM THE FOUNDER 9:45 PM THE FOUNDER 12:15 AM
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	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-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
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	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-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
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-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-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
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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	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-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 ASSASSIN'S CREED 12:45 AM
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Flight Schedule

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Tuesday 10/1/2017				Departure Flights on Tuesday 10/1/2017			
Airlines	Fit	Route	Time	Airlines	Fit	Route	Time
MSC	405	Sohag	00:05	MSC	611	Cairo	14:00
KAC	776	Riyadh	00:20	FDB	076	Dubai	14:05
KLM	411	Amsterdam/Dammam	00:20	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:10
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40	JZR	324	Al Najaf	14:25
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	BON	102	Sarajevo	14:55
MSC	411	Asyut	01:00	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
QTR	1086	Doha	01:15	KAC	561	Amman	15:00
KAC	102	London	01:25	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	785	Jeddah	15:15
DLH	635	Doha	01:55	PAL	669	Dubai/Manila	15:20
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
AXB	395	Kozhikode	02:00	KAC	513	Tehran	15:25
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:05	QTR	1079	Doha	15:40
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	777	Riyadh	16:00
KKK	6506	Istanbul	02:55	KAC	745	Dammam	16:00
FDB	069	Dubai	03:05	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
RJA	644	Amman	03:05	KAC	357	Kochi	16:20
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:30
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
KAC	358	Kochi	03:30	JZR	240	Amman	17:15
KAC	206	Islamabad	03:45	FDB	052	Dubai	17:25
KAC	1544	Cairo	03:55	KAC	615	Bahrain	17:35
LMU	5510	Cairo	04:00	KAC	343	Chennai	17:40
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
THY	6376	Istanbul	05:05	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
JZR	529	Asyut	05:15	JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	RJA	641	Amman	17:55
KAC	354	BLR	05:20	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
KAC	344	Chennai	05:35	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:45	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55	KAC	205	Islamabad	18:25
KAC	384	Delhi	06:05	CLX	7785	Luxembourg	18:30
KAC	364	Colombo	06:05	JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	06:25	NIA	252	Alexandria	18:55
BAW	157	London	06:40	FDB	064	Dubai	19:05
PAL	668	Manila/Dubai	07:00	JZR	124	Bahrain	19:15
FDB	5061	Dubai	07:15	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
KAC	302	Mumbai	08:20	QTR	1081	Doha	19:50
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
KAC	382	Delhi	08:45	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC	361	Colombo	20:35
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	KAC	1543	Cairo	21:00
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	MSR	607	Luxor	21:05
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	OMA	648	Muscat	21:10
AVV	651	Asyut	10:10	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	21:30
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	QTR	1089	Doha	21:35
IRA	675	Lar	10:40	DLH	634	Doha	21:35
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	FDB	5054	Dubai	21:50
MSC	403	Asyut	11:15	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	JAI	571	Mumbai	21:55
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	KAC	351	Kochi	22:00
QTR	8511	Doha	12:00	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:10
MSC	401	Alexandria	12:30	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:15
JZR	561	Sohag	12:40	KAC	413	Bangkok	22:15
FDB	075	Dubai	12:50	KAC	203	Lahore	22:15
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
KAC	680	Dubai	12:55	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:10	KAC	301	Mumbai	22:45
BON	101	Sarajevo	13:30	KAC	381	Delhi	22:45
KAC	564	Amman	13:40	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
				ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
				NIA	152	Cairo	23:10
				QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
				KLM	415	Dammam/Amsterdam	23:20
				PIA	240	Sialkot	23:35



Twenty-year-old Japanese female tour guides, dressed in traditional kimonos, wash their hands during a purification ceremony to celebrate their Coming-of-Age at Meiji shrine in Tokyo. — AFP photos



20-year-old men and women draped in traditional kimonos are celebrated by Mickey Mouse (second right) and Minnie Mouse (second left) during their 'Coming-of-Age Day' ceremony.



20-year-old men and women draped in traditional kimonos are celebrated by Disney characters during their 'Coming-of-Age Day' ceremony.

Hair today, hungover tomorrow as young Japanese come of age



Draped in traditional kimonos, 20-year-old women gather for their "Coming-of-Age Day" ceremony.



Draped in traditional kimonos, 20-year-old women gather for their "Coming-of-Age" ceremony.

Draped in dazzling kimonos, thousands of expensively made-up young Japanese women marked their entry into adulthood yesterday—with many planning a night on the booze to celebrate. Formal "Coming of Age" ceremonies, which began as a rite of ancient samurai families, were held nationwide for Japan's 20-year-olds, reminding them of their responsibilities after becoming old enough to legally drink and smoke. As they fidgeted with mobile phones and stifled yawns during the speeches, the contrast in financial outlay between the sexes was obvious, with most males opting for the kind of plain business suit they will wear as future "salarymen".

"I'm happy I can finally drink alcohol and go clubbing," college student Rumiko Matsumoto told AFP while getting a \$100 manicure in Tokyo's trendy Shibuya district ahead of the ceremony. "When my nails are dry, I have to get my eyelash extensions done, do my hair and get fitted for my kimono. "I'm very nervous," she added. "It's a special day, the first step towards being an adult. "My parents told me I have to take responsibility for my own actions now. But first I want to celebrate by going drinking."

As more than four thousand gathered at Tokyo's Toshima-en amusement park yesterday, the fog of hairspray used to fix exquisitely coiffured perms hung in the cold air as young women queued for a rollercoaster ride. Some women make appointments a year in advance to have their hair and make-up done and beauty salons often stay open all night to meet the rush for styling. Many pay over \$10,000 for their glittery kimonos, with beauty treatments such as elaborate nail decorations often costing hundreds of dollars more.

'Yikes, I'm an adult'

"I did think 'yikes, I'm an adult' when I turned 20," said sales assistant Reiko Nakamura as a beautician fussed over her synthetic lashes. "I have to think about my future so it's a little scary," she added, admiring her dagger-sharp Hello Kitty nails. "For now I just want to enjoy a night out drinking with friends I haven't seen since primary school." Celebrated on the second Monday of the year from snow-swept northern Japan to the subtropical south, Coming of Age Day includes those who turned 20 over the previous year or will do so before March 31 this year.

The age a young person entered adulthood was

set at 20 for both genders in 1876. Crowds of kimono-clad ladies and suited young men offered prayers at Tokyo's Meiji Shrine over the holiday weekend, while thousands more flocked to Tokyo Disneyland and posed for photos with Mickey and Minnie Mouse. In Japan's disaster-hit northwest, however, ceremonies were tinged with sadness as young people remembered classmates who perished in the 2011 tsunami.

There were an estimated 1.21 million new adults as of January 1 — a decrease of some 50,000 from last year and half the 1970 peak of 2.46 million, according to government figures, mirroring the country's shrinking population. Japan's annual birth rate recently dipped below one million for the first time in over 100 years, reflecting its rapidly ageing society. But a population crisis was the last thing on Riki Hayashi's mind after a ceremony in Tokyo. "The speeches went on for ages," he said. "We will all be getting drunk tonight." — AFP



20-year-old women draped in traditional kimonos and men clad in business suits gather for their "Coming-of-Age Day" ceremony.



Draped in traditional kimono, a 20-year-old woman gather for her "Coming-of-Age Day" ceremony.



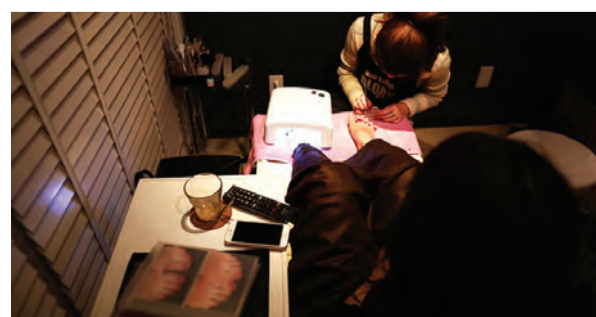
In this photo, a twenty-year-old Japanese woman gets manicure at a nail salon in Tokyo to prepare for "Coming of Age Day" ceremonies.



20-year-old women draped in traditional kimonos and men clad in business suits are celebrated by Mickey Mouse (right) during their "Coming-of-Age Day" ceremony.



A twenty-year-old Japanese woman gets manicure at a nail salon in Tokyo.



A twenty-year-old Japanese woman gets Pedicure at a nail salon in Tokyo.



A twenty-year-old Japanese female tour guide, dressed in traditional kimono, washes her hand during a purification ceremony to celebrate her Coming-of-Age at Meiji shrine in Tokyo.



Sofia Vergara



Priyanka Chopra



Emma Stone



Felicity Jones



Zoe Saldana

Lots of pink - and women in tuxes - on Globes red carpet

Hollywood's A-listers basked in the afternoon sun as they strode up the red carpet in Los Angeles for Sunday's Golden Globes ceremony. Here are a few key takeaways from the first major fashion parade of Tinseltown's awards season:

Pretty in pink

Pink was definitely one of the colors of the night. Emma Stone, who took home the best actress in a comedy/musical for the whimsical "La La Land," donned a sleeveless pale pink Valentino gown with glittering silver star accents. On her arm? Her brother. Two young actresses went for pink Gucci: "Rogue One" star Felicity Jones looked lovely in a pastel gown with black and silver detailing, while Zoe Saldana chose a ruffled two-tone frock with a sweet bow at the waist.

Angela Bassett, a star of FX's anthology series "American Horror Story," opted for a form-fitting rose Christian Siriano gown with tiny straps and a fluttering ruffled neckline. And Lily Collins-nominated for her work on Warren Beatty's "Rules Don't Apply"-looked like a princess in a lacy sweeping Zuhair Murad gown with cap sleeves.

Ladies wear the pants too

A few of Hollywood's top stars showed that the red carpet is about more than gowns. Evan Rachel Wood, a best actress nominee in the television drama category for HBO's sci-fi western "Westworld," rocked a tuxedo from Altuzarra, saying she wanted young girls to know that dresses were not "a requirement." Octavia Spencer, up for a best supporting actress award for her work on "Hidden Figures," the story of three black women mathematicians who helped NASA launch some of its first space missions, was elegant in a Laura Basci tux.

"I was actually pretty good at math. Once I got to calculus, I just stopped," Spencer said with a laugh about her own studies. "American Crime" nominee Felicity Huffman, who sported a sleeveless Georges Chakra jumpsuit with a gold and silver bodice and white trousers, said she wore it in honor of Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton.

Pops of color

Beyond the timeless chic of black and white ensembles, bright colors cropped up on the Globes red carpet. Viola Davis, a winner for best supporting actress in a film for her work on "Fences," shone in a one-shoulder sparkling canary yellow Michael Kors gown. A very pregnant Natalie Portman, a best actress in a drama nominee for her portrayal of Jackie Kennedy in "Jackie," was glowing in a yellow Prada gown with an Empire waist and jeweled details on the cuffs. Sleek hair and dangling diamond chandelier earrings-key choices by Hollywood's A list on Sunday-completed the look, which was reminiscent of the former first lady's aesthetic.

"It was a great opportunity and challenge to get to play



Natalie Portman



Viola Davis



Lily Collins



Jessica Chastain, left, and Reese Witherspoon



Octavia Spencer



Evan Rachel



Kristen Bell



Felicity Huffman



Angela Bassett

her," she told E! network on the red carpet. Jessica Chastain, nominated in the same category as Portman for gun lobby drama "Miss Sloane," opted for a sky blue Prada gown with floral accents and a plunging neckline-filled with a diamond necklace.

Plunging necklines

Actresses such as Chastain showing a bit of décolletage is nothing new, but plenty of sternums were on display Sunday night. Kristen Bell, a star of NBC comedy "The Good Place," rocked a sparkling-and very low-cut-black Jenny Packham gown. Gal Gadot, the Israeli former beauty queen who will soon star in "Wonder Woman," made her baby bump sexy in a sleek black and silver Mugler gown with spaghetti straps, a deep v-neckline and a daring front slit. And Mandy Moore, a nominee for the new NBC fami-

ly drama "This Is Us," looked glam in a navy Naeem Khan gown with a sheer cape overlay that plunged open to her waist.

And a few misses

Two stars who often make best-dressed lists were a bit off their game. Nicole Kidman, nominated for her work on "Lion," earned mixed reviews for her barely-there silvery sequined and embroidered Alexander McQueen gown with bare shoulders and draped sleeves ending in long frilly cuffs. "Manchester by the Sea" star Michelle Williams also didn't earn unanimous praise for her lacy off-the-shoulder confection from Louis Vuitton, accessorized with a black ribbon choker tied in a bow and a peroxide blonde pixie haircut. — AFP



Michelle Williams



Mandy Moore



Gal Gadot



Nicole Kidman



Hailee Steinfeld



Kendall Jenner, left, and Kylie Jenner



Naomi Campbell



Heidi Klum

Gwendoline Christie



Naomie Harris



Lisa Rinna



Julianne Hough



Trace Lysette



Brie Larson



Goldie Hawn



Kelly Preston



Elsa Pataky, left, and Chris Hemsworth

AWARDS



(From left) The cast and crew of "Moonlight," winners of Best Motion Picture - Drama, pose in the press room during the 74th Annual Golden Globe Awards at The Beverly Hilton Hotel. — AP/AFP photos



This image released by NBC shows Adele Romanski, foreground center, with the cast and crew of 'Moonlight,' accepting the award for best motion picture drama.



The cast and crew of 'La La Land' poses in the press room with the award for best motion picture - musical or comedy.



Casey Affleck poses in the press room with the award for best performance by an actor in a motion picture - drama for "Manchester by the Sea".



Isabelle Huppert accepting the award for best actress in a motion picture for her role in "Elle".



Damien Chazelle poses in the press room with the award for best screenplay - motion picture for "La La Land".

'La La Land' waltzes off with big win at Golden Globes



Actors Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone, winners of the Best Performance by an Actor/Actress in a Motion Picture Comedy or Musical for 'La La Land,' pose in the press room.



Aaron Taylor-Johnson with his award for best supporting actor in a motion picture for his role in "Nocturnal Animals".



Emma Stone poses with her award for best actress in a musical or comedy for her role in 'La La Land'.

Whimsical modern-day musical "La La Land" pirouetted its way into major Oscars contention Sunday as it swept the board at the Golden Globes, the glitziest party of the showbiz year. Damien Chazelle's nostalgic tribute to the Golden Age of Hollywood musicals picked up all seven of the statuettes for which it was nominated-giving the film momentum as it launches its campaign for next month's Academy Awards.

Its success struck an optimistic note during a three-hour ceremony marked by impassioned political speeches voicing anxiety over Donald Trump's election following a campaign which stirred simmering racial tensions. "This is a film for dreamers," said Emma Stone, who took home the prize for best actress in a musical/comedy for her role as aspiring actress Mia. "I think that hope and creativity are two of the most important things in the world. And that's what this movie is about." Her co-star Ryan Gosling-who plays jazz pianist Sebastian-won best actor honors, while Chazelle took home prizes for best director and screenplay.

"La La Land" had earned awards for best original score and best song for "City of Stars" shortly after the glitzy ceremony began-setting the tone for a record-breaking night. Prior to Sunday, the record for the most Globes was shared by the 1975 release "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and the 1978 movie "Midnight Express," with six wins apiece. Gosling joked about breaking up his statuette to share with Stone and Chazelle, before getting serious with a heartfelt tribute to his partner, the actress Eva Mendes. "I would like to try to thank one person properly and say while I was singing and dancing and playing piano and having one of the best experiences I've ever had on a film, my lady was raising our daughter, pregnant with our second, and trying to help her brother fight his battle with cancer," he said.

'I love you'

Kenneth Lonergan's unflinching "Manchester by the Sea" earned a Globe for Casey Affleck as best actor in a drama, but the film lost out to Barry Jenkins's coming-of-age movie "Moonlight" for best drama. But that coveted prize was the only one for "Moonlight," a disappointing haul considering it had six nominations, including for the director and cast members Naomie Harris and Mahershala Ali. There was also a shock in the best actress in a drama category, where Natalie Portman was expected to pick up the award for her intense turn as Jackie Kennedy in "Jackie." Instead, the award went to Isabelle Huppert for French rape-revenge tale "Elle," which also captured best foreign language film over the heavily favored German-Austrian dramedy "Toni Erdmann."

"It was wonderful to work with you-you are wonderful. I love you, I love you, I love you," "Elle" director Paul Verhoeven told Huppert. Viola Davis picked up best supporting actress in a film for "Fences," the screen adaptation of August Wilson's play.

'Extraordinary women'

On the television side, FX true crime anthology "The People vs O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story" took home prizes for best limited series or TV movie, and best actress for Sarah Paulson for her portrayal of prosecutor Marcia Clark. But AMC crime drama "The Night Manager" swept up three acting prizes for Tom Hiddleston, Hugh Laurie and



This image shows Ryan Gosling with the award for best actor in a motion picture musical or comedy for "La La Land".

Olivia Colman. Netflix newcomer "The Crown," a saga about Britain's royal family, picked up statuettes for best drama series and best actress for Claire Foy, who stars as a young Queen Elizabeth II. The 32-year-old British actress said she wanted to thank some "extraordinary women" including the queen, who she praised for her more than 60 years on the throne.

"I think the world could do with a few more women at the center of it, if you ask me," she said. Actor Donald Glover-who is due to star in the next "Star Wars" spin-off film-picked up the best comedy television series award for "Atlanta," which he created, and later won a best actor statuette.

'Outsiders and foreigners'

The US presidential election was on the minds of those at the Beverly Hilton, with many winners giving acceptance speeches calling for tolerance and unity. Screen legend Meryl Streep took Trump to task in an emotional speech as she accepted a lifetime achievement award. "Hollywood is crawling with outsiders and foreigners," she told the president-elect. "If you kick 'em all out, you'll have nothing to watch but football and mixed martial arts, which are not the arts." Without naming Trump, she described his unflattering impression of a disabled reporter as heartbreaking.

"Disrespect invites disrespect. Violence incites violence," she said. Host Jimmy Fallon also cracked several Trump gags. "This is the Golden Globes, one of the few places left where America still honors the popular vote," Fallon said in his opening monologue. For the first time, the arrival of Hollywood's A-listers on the red carpet took a top moment for fashion lovers-was live-streamed on Twitter. One trend quickly identified was the preponderance of beards of the guests, with a picture of "Breaking Bad" villain Bryan Cranston in full facial hair sparking the Twitter hashtag #breakingbeard. — AFP



This image released by NBC shows the cast and crew of 'La La Land' winner of the award for best motion picture musical or comedy.

AWARDS



This image released by NBC shows Damien Chazelle, winner of the best director for "La La Land."



This image shows Justin Hurwitz, from left, Justin Paul and Benj Pasek, winners of the best original song for 'La La Land.'



This image shows director Paul Verhoeven accepting the award for best foreign film for "Elle."



This image shows Viola Davis with the award for best supporting actress in a motion picture for 'Fences.'



The cast and crew of 'Atlanta' poses in the press room with the award for best television series - musical or comedy.



Justin Hurwitz poses in the press room with the award for best original song for motion picture for "City Of Stars" and best original score - motion picture for "La La Land."



This image shows Peter Morgan, from left, Stephen Daldry and the cast and crew of "The Crown," winner of the best drama TV series.

Winners

Motion Pictures

- Motion Picture, Drama:** "Moonlight"
- Motion Picture, Musical or Comedy:** "La La Land"
- Actor, Motion Picture, Drama:** Casey Affleck, "Manchester by the Sea"
- Actress, Motion Picture, Drama:** Isabelle Huppert, "Elle"
- Director, Motion Picture:** Damien Chazelle, "La La Land"
- Actor, Motion Picture, Musical or Comedy:** Ryan Gosling, "La La Land"
- Actress, Motion Picture, Musical or Comedy:** Emma Stone, "La La Land"
- Supporting Actor, Motion Picture:** Aaron Taylor-Johnson, "Nocturnal Animals"
- Supporting Actress, Motion Picture:** Viola Davis, "Fences"
- Foreign Language Film:** "Elle"
- Animated Film:** "Zootopia"
- Screenplay, Motion Picture:** Damien Chazelle, "La La Land"
- Original Score, Motion Picture:** Justin Hurwitz, "La La Land"
- Original Song, Motion Picture:** "City of Stars," "La La Land"

Television

- TV Series, Drama:** "The Crown"
- Actor, TV Series, Drama:** Billy Bob Thornton, "Goliath"
- Actress, TV Series, Drama:** Claire Foy, "The Crown"
- TV Series, Musical or Comedy:** "Atlanta"
- Actor, TV Series, Musical or Comedy:** Donald Glover, "Atlanta"
- Actress, TV Series, Musical or Comedy:** Tracee Ellis Ross, "black-ish"
- Limited Series or TV Movie:** "The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story"
- Actor, Limited Series or TV Movie:** Tom Hiddleston, "The Night Manager"
- Actress, Limited Series or TV Movie:** Sarah Paulson, "The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story"
- Supporting Actor, Series or TV Movie:** Hugh Laurie, "The Night Manager"
- Supporting Actress, Series or TV Movie:** Olivia Colman, "The Night Manager"
- Cecil B. DeMille Award:** Meryl Streep. — AP



This image shows Nina Jacobson, foreground center, with the cast and crew of "The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story," winner of the award for best limited series or motion picture made for TV.



Hugh Laurie poses in the press room with the award for best performance by an actor in a supporting role in a series, limited series or motion picture made for television for 'The Night Manager.'



Donald Glover poses in the press room with the award for best performance by an actor in a television series - musical or comedy for 'Atlanta.'



This image shows Tracee Ellis Ross with award for best actress in a TV series musical or comedy for 'black-ish.'



Meryl Streep poses in the press room with the Cecil B. DeMille award.



Writer Stephen Glover (left) and actor/writer Donald Glover, winners of Best Series - Musical or Comedy for 'Atlanta,' attend the 18th Annual Post-Golden Globes Party.



Sarah Paulson poses in the press room with the award for best performance by an actress in a limited series or a motion picture made for television for "The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story".



This image shows Claire Foy with the award for best actress in a TV series drama for "The Crown".



Billy Bob Thornton, winner of the award for best actor in a television drama for "Goliath".



This image shows presenter Sofia Vergara.



This image shows presenter Michael Keaton.



This image shows Tom Hiddleston with the award for best actor in a limited series or TV movie for 'The Night Manager.'



This image shows presenters Kristen Bell, left, and Cuba Gooding Jr.



This image shows presenters Kristen Wiig, left, and Steve Carell.



This image shows Amy Schumer, left, and Goldie Hawn.

Lifestyle

TUESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2017

'La La Land' waltzes off with big win at Golden Globes

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(From left) Sistine Stallone, Scarlet Stallone and Sophia Stallone arrive at the 74th annual Golden Globe Awards at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP



IN DAMASCUS, AN OLD SOLUTION TO WATER SHORTAGES: THE HAMMAM

Anwar Al-Ades hasn't bathed properly in two weeks because of water shortages in Syria's capital Damascus, but all that is about to change at the city's oldest bathhouse. The elegant Al-Malik Al-Zahir hammam dates back to 985 AD but is experiencing unprecedented demand since fighting cut water supplies to the capital, leaving millions facing shortages. "I haven't bathed since the water to Damascus was cut off," 34-year-old Ades told AFP as he changed into a towel.

"Since then, the priority for the water we do get has been washing up and drinking. Bathing has become a secondary thing, particularly since it's winter." Most of capital's water supply comes from the rebel-held Wadi Barada region, some 15 kilometers northwest of Damascus. Fighting has raged in the area for weeks, damaging key water infrastructure, and continued despite the start of a nationwide truce on December 30.

That has left up to 5.5 million people in Damascus and its suburbs facing water shortages, the United Nations says. But the crisis has proved something of a boon for Al-Malik Al-Zahir, one of many traditional bathhouses in Damascus, which has its own private water supply from a well. Hammams have a long history in the Middle East and Turkey, but in recent years Damascenes have tended to visit them only on special occasions, with just a dozen or so customers visiting Al-Malik Al-Zahir each day before the water crisis.

Clientele has doubled

"I haven't been to the hammam for 12 years, since my wedding day," said Habib Issa, a 32-year-old hairdresser, relaxing in the reception area. "I have a contingency plan for electricity and fuel shortages, but it never crossed my mind to make one for water," he said. "At this rate, we'll need a plan for when there's no air left in the city!" Like many bathhouses, Al-Malik Al-Zahir is divided into three key sections, with its heart the central steam room. Inside, a central platform is ringed with little booths, each equipped with taps supplying plentiful hot and cold water, as well as bowls and soap. Next is the



area set aside for massages and scrubdowns by hammam staff, and when the process is complete, customers proceed to the reception area. The large room is laid out like a courtyard, with an ornate central fountain featuring delicate inlaid tile in the shape of a flower. The floors are covered with zigzag patterns in white and sand coloured tile, while stained glass windows color entering light a deep blue or red.

Customers waiting their turn, and those relaxing after a good scrub, lounge on cushioned chairs on an elevated platform that runs around the edge of the room. Staff deliver tea, water pipes, snacks and dessert as clients unwind under the watchful eye of owner Bassam Kebbab, whose phone rings constantly.

"The number of customers has almost doubled, and the reason they're coming these days is different, now it's a necessity whereas before it was just for leisure," he told AFP. "We try not to turn any customers away, and we ask people not to linger too long so we can meet the needs of the greatest number of people who want to bathe," he said.

Waiting for water to return

As he moves through the different parts of the hammam, eager customers call incessantly and he books appointments for coming days, apologizing to disappointed clients hoping to come the same day. "I've already cancelled a booking from merchants who wanted to book the whole hammam, extended working hours until past midnight, and bought more soap and equipment to meet increased needs," he said. But he hasn't increased his prices, still charging an entrance fee of just 1,200 Syrian pounds (around \$2.40), with massages and scrubs costing a little more. "When I walk around and hear people speaking, they're all talking about one were," Kebbab said.

Abdullah Al-Abdullah, 46, was relaxing after his bath in the reception, getting ready to eat the lentil dish known as mujadara, a traditional post-hammam favorite. "At home, I have shortages of electricity, heat and water. When the power is on, there's no water, and when the water comes, there's no electricity," he told AFP. "So I had to come to the hammam to find water, electricity and warmth in one place," he said. Despite his relative youth, he sports a head of completely grey hair, a testament to the hardships of nearly six years of war, he said.

Syria's conflict began in March 2011 with anti-government protests and has evolved into a complex civil war that has killed over 310,000 people and displaced more than half the country's population. "Half my hair went grey in the first year of the war, the other half in the following years," said Abdullah, an electrician. "I've lost so many of the basics of life but my family and I just can't stand losing water." — AFP

Syrian men visit the Al-Malik Al-Zahir Hammam in the capital Damascus on January 7, 2017 as an ongoing water crisis continues due to the fighting between government forces and rebel fighters. — AFP photos

