

Kuwait marks 11th death anniversary of 'Amir of Hearts'



US top court takes up suit over detention of Muslims



'Mr Dakar' Peterhansel wins 13th rallying title



Suarez, Messi keep Barca on Real Madrid's tail



CONSTRUCTION OF AIRPORT TERMINAL ON SCHEDULE

JABER CAUSEWAY TO BE COMPLETED BY 2018



Min 6°
Max 20°
High Tide 00:44 & 02:31
Low Tide 08:10 & 20:10

150 FILS
NO: 17111
40 PAGES

ABBAS WARNS AGAINST US EMBASSY MOVE

VATICAN: Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas warned yesterday that moving the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem would deal a huge blow to hopes for Middle East peace. Commenting as he opened a Palestinian embassy at the Vatican, Abbas added that anything which legitimized the "illegal Israeli annexation" of Jerusalem would "bury the hopes for a two-state solution, and fuel extremism in our region".

The Palestinian leader held a private meeting with Pope Francis before inaugurating the diplomatic mission, located in a building facing the Vatican that also houses the embassies of Peru and Burkina Faso. Speaking briefly to reporters, Abbas reiterated his opposition to the possible transfer of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem as President-elect Donald Trump had indicated he might do. "We cannot say anything yet because it has not happened, but if this does happen it will not help the peace process. I hope it will not happen," said Abbas, speaking in Arabic.

In a separate English-language statement, he hailed the Vatican's hosting of a Palestinian embassy. "We are very grateful about the role that the Holy See has played for a just and lasting peace in the Holy Land, and for having opened an embassy of Palestine in the Vatican for the first time," he said. But Abbas expressed concern about Trump's pledge during the election campaign to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move the American embassy there.

Such a step would be a historic break with US policy, and with most of the international community, over the

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VATICAN CITY: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas applauds after he inaugurated the new Palestinian diplomatic mission to the Holy See with Palestinian Ambassador Issa Kassissieh. — AFP

KUWAIT: Construction of a new terminal at the airport is proceeding according to schedule since work started in early December, Minister of Public Works Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa said yesterday. The minister, during an inspection tour at the site, indicated that more time might be needed to thrash out some problems such as the presence of civil and military installations at the location. "Such hurdles will be tackled through coordination with the relevant authorities," he said. A special supervision panel will be established, he said, indicating that more hurdles might emerge during the execution. However, the minister reaffirmed his keenness on completing the mega project on time.

Meanwhile, Ghalib Shlash, the ministry's undersecretary for construction projects, said the project is set to be executed in six years, according to the contract. Faisal Al-Ostath, the chief engineer of the project, said construction of the passenger terminal will make the facility one of the largest airports in the world. The KD 1.3 billion project was signed with Turkish construction company Limak on May 2, 2016.

Separately, the construction of the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Causeway is proceeding according to its preset timeframe and will be completed by 2018, an official at the Ministry of Public Works said yesterday.

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TWENTYNINE PALMS, California: In this Dec 7, 2016 photo, engineer Tyler Wagner displays batteries made to fit into a fuel container during an exhibition of green energy technology. — AP

US MILITARY SHIFTS AWAY FROM OIL, GOING GREEN

TWENTYNINE PALMS, California: At a sprawling desert base, a Marine recharged his radio's batteries simply by walking, while nearby fellow troops examined a rocket artillery system and a drone - both powered by the sun. Navy and Marine Corps brass, accompanied by green energy executives, showcased the energy-harnessing knee braces and other innovations at a renewable energy demonstration at Twentynine Palms Marine Corps base, one of many such events that have taken place at military bases across the country as part of the Defense Department's unprecedented shift away from fossil fuels under the Obama administration.

The Pentagon has invested millions over the past decade into everything from hybrid electric ships to wind turbines. While a growing number of military leaders have declared global warming a national security threat, the strategy clashes with President-elect Donald Trump's vow to end policies that "undermine" fossil fuel producers. Trump has a chosen a Cabinet with climate change skeptics, though his pick for defense secretary, retired Marine Gen James Mattis, has advocated green technology to curtail risky fuel-supply runs for troops in conflict zones.

It's not known if Mattis would support buying alternative fuels for ships and aircraft, among the military's biggest petroleum users. He didn't respond to requests seeking comment. Republican lawmakers have lashed out at many of the green initiatives for the Defense Department - one of the world's largest energy consumers - especially the Navy's Great Green Fleet that deployed ships run partly on biofuel amid falling oil prices.

Military leaders say alternative energy makes warriors more agile and effective on today's battlefields. At the recent demonstrations, a Marine wore knee braces with tiny generators that transformed the energy he produced from walking to recharge batteries. The technology allows troops to generate their own power for as long as three days. The event also featured a M777 howitzer and a drone that use solar power.

"To do something other than continue these programs would be a mistake," said Joe Bryan, the Navy's deputy assistant secretary for energy. "My expectation is that will be recognized no matter where people are on the political spectrum". Rising sea levels threaten Navy bases worldwide, and it would be "shortsighted" for the military not to address climate

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FORCES RETAKE MOSUL UNIVERSITY

SAUDI MUFTI WARNS OF 'DEPRAVITY' OF CINEMA, CONCERTS

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's highest-ranking cleric has warned of the "depravity" of cinemas and music concerts, saying they would corrupt morals if allowed in the ultraconservative kingdom. "We know that singing concerts and cinemas are a depravity," Grand Mufti Abdulaziz Al-Sheikh said in a television interview cited by Sabq news website late Friday. The head of the Saudi supreme council of clerics was responding to a question about the plans of the kingdom's General Authority for Entertainment to license concerts and study opening cinemas.

He warned that cinemas "might show movies that are libertine, lewd, immoral and atheist, because they rely on films imported to change our culture", according to Sabq. He said there is "no good" in singing concerts, insisting that music entertainment and opening cinemas represent a "call for mixing between sexes". "At the beginning they would assign areas for women, but then both men and women will end up in one area. This corrupts morals and destroys values," he said. However, "entertainment through cultural and scientific media is okay," he said, urging the authority "not to open doors for evil".

The head of the General Authority for Entertainment Amr Al-Madani stirred debate last week when he raised the possibility of opening cinemas and staging concerts this year.

The Saudi Gazette quoted Madani as saying Saudi singer Mohammed Abdo would perform in the Red Sea port city of Jeddah very soon. Up to now, singers have been limited to performing for private gatherings.

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ARBIL, Iraq: Iraqi forces yesterday retook Mosul's university from the Islamic State group, the latest key advance in efforts to recapture the eastern side of the city, officers said. "We can say that the university has been liberated," Maan Saadi, a major general in the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS), told AFP. The vast Mosul University campus, one of the biggest in Iraq, lies in the north of the city on the east bank of the Tigris River that splits Mosul in two. "We have done the hardest part... we may recapture the entirety of the eastern side in the next 10 days or so," Saadi said.

The top CTS commander, General Taleb Sheghati Al-Kenani, spoke to state-run Iraqiya TV from the university. Saadi estimated Iraqi forces had now recaptured 85 percent of the eastern side since the Oct 17 launch of a huge offensive to retake Mosul, the jihadists' main strong-

hold in the country. The initial phase of the offensive saw a variety of forces retake significant swathes of land in little time but the going has been tough inside the city itself.

After a lull in operations, the CTS and other forces stepped up their coordination and, with increased air and advisory support from a US-led coalition, launched a fresh push just before the New Year. Over the past two weeks, Iraqi forces have overrun several districts and reached the Tigris River. The destruction of all bridges over the river in air strikes has made it difficult for IS fighters in east Mosul to resupply or escape to the west bank, which they still fully control. The western side of Mosul, which is home to the old city and some of the jihadists' traditional bastions, was always tipped as likely to offer the most resistance. — AFP



MOSUL: Iraqi special forces advance inside Mosul University grounds, during fighting against Islamic State militants in the eastern side of Mosul yesterday — AP

'MOMMA' CHARGED WITH STEALING TEEN DAUGHTER

WALTERBORO, South Carolina: Neighbors knew them for years as a churchgoing mother and her polite teenage daughter before police swarmed Gloria Williams' home in this small, quiet South Carolina city. Williams, 51, was arrested on kidnapping charges. Then came the real shocker: Police identified the victim as the 18-year-old woman Williams had raised as her daughter. Investigators said DNA analysis proved she had been stolen as an infant from a hospital in Jacksonville, Florida. "She wasn't an abused child or a child who got in trouble," a stunned Joseph Jenkins said of the young woman who lived across the street. "But she

grew up with a lie for 18 years."

She grew up as Alexis Manigo, but has now learned she was born as Kamiyah Mobley. Jacksonville Sheriff Mike Williams described her Friday as being in good health but emotionally overwhelmed. Tessa Stephens, a cousin of Williams, said the young woman had much to think about. "She's probably going to have to take this day-by-day," Stephens told reporters outside Williams' home. Mobley got to spend a few emotional moments with Williams, who is also charged with interference with custody, after her arrest.

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Kamiyah Mobley



Gloria Williams

In Brief

AMIR OFFERS CONDOLENCES

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has addressed a cable of condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, on demise of Prince Mohammad Bin Faisal Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. Their Highnesses the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, respectively Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, sent cables of identical content to the Saudi Monarch. —KUNA



LIECHTENSTEIN LAUDS RELATIONS

GENEVA: Prince Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein and his Hereditary Prince Alois lauded bilateral tie with Kuwait and expressed desire to enhance them. This remark was made during an annual reception ceremony for diplomats that was held in Vaduz Castle. Kuwaiti envoy to Switzerland Bader Al-Taneeb relayed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Liechtenstein Prince and his heir. —KUNA



PARLIAMENT REFUTES RUMORS

KUWAIT: National Assembly Secretary General Allam Al-Kandari refuted rumors on social media on vote rigging by either having missing ballot boxes or misreporting of votes. He said that the parliament's secretariat had received and kept all ballot boxes, without having any of them missing. The boxes can be neither opened nor transported by anyone outside the judicial authority, he added, noting that the parliament secretariat's duty is to receive and keep these boxes in their original state as they arrive from ballot polls. —KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Light bulbs fixed on the outside wall of a historic building in Kuwait City. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KIJS INKS TRAINING PROTOCOL WITH ARAB FEDERATION FOR TRAINING



CAIRO: KIJS Chairman Sharian Al-Sharian and AFT Chairman Ahmad Khairi sign the protocol. —KUNA

CAIRO: Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies (KIJS) has hammered out a protocol with Arab Federation for Training (AFT), an affiliate to Arab League, to provide Kuwaiti legal cadres with special training on intellectual rights.

"The protocol is the first step for preparing to found a Kuwaiti entity specialized in intellectual rights," KIJS Chairman Sharian Al-Sharian said. Sharian, also vice chairman of the Kuwait Lawyers Association, added that the protocol would be a significant addition to the Gulf intellectual rights center. He noted that the protocol was signed in Cairo Friday at the conclusion of a training course organized by the KIJS and the Arab League-affiliated Regional Institute of Intellectual Rights.

The training course, themed expertise in intellectual rights, was attended by several Kuwaiti lawyers, legal experts and law faculty students at Kuwaiti university. Meanwhile, AFT Chairman Ahmad Khairi lauded cooperation between KIJS and AFT. He added that AFT is eager to develop relations with and is ready to offer all help to KIJS. —KUNA



RIYADH: Kuwaiti physician Dr Fawziya Al-Khandari (left) is honored during the 2nd Gulf Arrhythmia Congress (GAC). —KUNA

KUWAITI PHYSICIAN HONORED AT GULF ARRHYTHMIA MEETING

RIYADH: Kuwaiti physician Dr Fawziya Al-Khandari was honored for her great achievements in the fields of cardiovascular disease and arrhythmia at the 2nd Gulf Arrhythmia Congress (GAC). President of Saudi Heart Rhythm Society Dr Abdul Mohsen Almusaad said yesterday that Dr Al-Kandari is worthy of this honor for dedicating 15 years of her life to serving this field of medicine through

conducting research, implementing new diagnostic and treatment technologies; in addition to educating others. The 2nd Gulf Arrhythmia Congress (GAC) highlights the latest developments in the field of arrhythmia and cardiac electrophysiology. The meeting targets electrophysiologists and other professionals associated with the management of cardiac arrhythmias. —KUNA

HALA FEBRUARY 2017 TO OFFER VARIOUS ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES PRIZES WORTH \$2 MILLION

KUWAIT: Arrangements and preparations have been completed for the 18th 'Hala February' festival that will kick off early next month, said the Higher Organizing Committee yesterday. The annual month-long national festival is part of the efforts to stir tourism, shopping and the entire economic scene, committee member Walid Al-Saqa'bi said. Hala February 2017 will include a variety of events and activities, for all ages, including intellectual, literary, cultural, religious, entertainment and sports to promote Kuwait's civilized image, added Saqa'bi, who is also head of the festival's media committee.

Over the past sessions, the festival has come to constitute a landmark event for promoting tourism and economy, as well as shedding light on the aspects of renaissance

in Kuwait, consolidating the country's status on the regional and Arab tourist map, he said.

Focus on SMEs

Saqa'bi noted that the 2017 version will also focus on youth's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and initiatives. Four major private sector malls are taking part in the festival; one of the most successful shopping events in the Gulf, he noted.

The sector's participation in the Hala February is growing year after year, he said, expecting up to 10 million reward coupons to be offered over the month. Hala February 2017 will offer prizes worth \$2 million through a multitude of activities, including daily ones, cash and kinds' awards. Many of the prizes will be handed over to winners live on and by

Kuwait TV. Saqa'bi expected 20 percent increase in participation in the festival.

Heritage Festival

In other news, Director of Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village Saif Al-Shallahi affirmed yesterday that preparations have been underway for launching the Gulf Popular Heritage Festival 2017. The event kicks off today under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at the village, located west of Kuwait City.

Shallahi in a statement on eve of the major event affirmed that beauty contests would be held for horses, sheep and birds. The steering committee will organize contests for Kuwaitis and GCC citizens separately. The event will also feature horse races. —KUNA

KUWAITIS HEAVILY INVESTED IN DUBAI'S REAL ESTATE LAST YEAR

DUBAI: Some \$544 million in Kuwaiti money was invested in Dubai's real estate sector in 2016, said a report yesterday. A report by Dubai Land Department revealed that there were about 770 Kuwaiti investors in 2016, coming in third place GCC-wise behind their counterparts from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, who ranked first and second respectively. The report said that the total of GCC investments in Dubai's real estate sector came at \$9.5 billion.

The department noted that Indian investors, who amounted to 6,200, ranked first when it came to the total volume of money invested, with over \$5.7 billion, while British investors; about 3,300, came in second with around \$1.58 billion. Investments from China, Canada, Iran, Russia, the US, and France amounted to \$11.9 billion in 2016, said the report, which indicated that the collective number of investors from these countries was at 22,000 people. —KUNA

'UNIFYING MEDICINES PRICES IN GCC COUNTRIES NECESSARY'

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Health called yesterday for unifying prices of medical and pharmaceutical products in the six member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) for "securing safe medicines at competitive costs." The 30th meeting of the GCC committee for pricing pharmaceutical products, due in Kuwait on Monday, aims at coordinating among the member states at this level, said Dr Mahmoud Abdulhadi, the assistant undersecretary for legal affairs at the ministry.

In view of new international measures for registering pharmaceutical companies and their products, the GCC commission has mapped out pricing policies to set the rates of medical drugs ahead of registration. Moreover, previously-taken ministerial decisions

by the GCC countries can pave way for unifying the regulations related to the medicines drugs' pricing.

Separately, the head of the implant department at Hamed Al-Essa Center, affiliated to the health ministry, affirmed in a statement the significance of the third GCC conference for kidneys and organs implant, due in Kuwait on Thursday.

Kuwait, since launch of the kidney implant program in 1979, has developed into one of the leading regional countries in the field, he said. The conference, due to proceed till January 22nd, will involve participants from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Heads of international implant associations will also take part in the convention. —KUNA

Local spotlight

INAUSPICIOUS PREDICTIONS



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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With the advent of the new year, many websites such as Bloomberg and some books published pessimistic expectations about the most important events foreseen in 2017 politically and economically. I don't see these predictions as prophecies, but good indicators of current events.

The public labeled these predictions as inauspicious, but I think these are normal expectations over what is going on now, especially with regards to terrorism and international policies. The predictions are really worth reading, because as per Bloomberg, these are based on the vision of what will happen when things get worse, which to me is logical and sensible. For example, the new US policy will be convergent between Cuba and the United States, while the terrorist militia Islamic State will benefit from the situation to extend its influence and criminal activities into Afghanistan and all other countries of Central Asia.

I believe these prophecies are normal, including the highly anticipated one that the new US policy would not be the same as that of the Obama administration. According to Bloomberg, there is a possibility of the emergence of large protests in the United States, which will clearly mean an internal preoccupation with its own affairs. So, terrorists around the world will be active in the absence of a firm international policy to combat terrorism in the Middle East and the world. According to report, Russia will make real gains.

Some books were published in the Arab world that echoed Western expectations, including the increase in political chaos and calls to halt immigration, and even more countries voting to leave the European Union. Some sites had some disturbing expectations for the Middle East, especially those related to oil and gas. Hence, I don't see that reducing spending and austerity is needed in anticipation of a possible currency devaluation. Strengthening the political and economic union of the Gulf and security cautiousness internally in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are essential.

The countries that will survive are those that adopt diversifying sources of income away from oil. Some might say that fate and future are in Allah's hand, but these expectations are based on reality and what is happening in the world today. It is not logical to expect a quick end to religious extremism and everyday killings in the name of religion and doctrine. I see these expectations as lessons for everyone to be cautious.

KUWAIT FM ARRIVES IN PARIS FOR INT'L MIDEAST CONFERENCE

PARIS: Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah arrived in Paris yesterday to participate in an international conference on Middle East peace process. The conference, which starts today and hosts the international diplomatic Quartet and 70 countries and international organizations, mainly aims to revive the Middle East peace process.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's delegation includes Assistant Foreign Minister for the First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister's Office Affairs Sheikh Dr. Ambassador Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Kuwaiti Ambassador in Paris Sami Al-Suleiman and Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani. The Kuwaiti top diplomat was received at the airport by Ambassador Al-Sulaiman and Kuwaiti diplomats. —KUNA

KUWAIT MARKS 11TH ANNIVERSARY OF SHEIKH JABER'S PASSING 'AMIR OF HEARTS'

KUWAIT: After 11 years have passed since the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah passed away, Kuwaitis still recall the deeds and achievements of the 'Amir of Hearts' who spent his life serving his country. Sheikh Jaber, who passed away on January 15, 2006 after being at the helm for 28 years, was the 13th ruler of Kuwait, and the third Amir during the state's constitutional era that began with the signing of the constitution on November 11, 1962 by the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Since he took over the reign in 1977, the late Amir, known to the people as "Abu Mubarak", led Kuwait to development and progress on all levels, gaining the country significant political and economic weight on the world arena. He was so eager to establish balanced bilateral relations with the world. Though Abu Mubarak's years in office witnessed various hardships and major events, he managed through his wisdom and long political experience to overcome all crises, leading the country to safety.



The late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

Assassination attempt
Sheikh Jaber devoted most of his life to the nation and the Kuwaiti people, and survived a terrorist assassination attempt on May 25, 1985. After the incident, Sheikh Jaber addressed the people, saying that despite the attempt on his life, "Kuwait will remain" and that was the "most important fact." For him, youth was the "renewable current in a river called Kuwait" and a source of power that will never dry up.

Based on this view, Kuwait youth were given remarkable attention and care. In 1992, the Public Authority for Youth and Sports was founded and entrusted with caring for the affairs of the Kuwaiti young people and promoting their physical and mental capabilities.

By the same token, Kuwaiti women were offered full support. In 1999, the late Amir issued a decree giving women citizens' full

political support. Kuwait, though a small country, continued to develop within the political and economic spheres until it was hit by another tragedy in 1990. Sheikh Jaber's long experience, sagacity, and relentless efforts to liberate his nation with aid from the international community garnered Kuwait its freedom.

Following the liberation, Kuwait carried on with the march of development thanks to a sagacious ruler and the support of the Kuwaiti people to their leadership. On June 19, 1991, the late Amir established the Martyrs' Bureau at the Amiri Diwan, to care for the families of Kuwaitis who were martyred during the brutal invasion.

Gulf Cooperation Council

On the political level, Sheikh Jaber was keen on bolstering efforts amongst nations of the Gulf, and the Gulf Cooperation

Council (GCC) was born of his wish to consolidate cooperation amongst the Arab nations in the region. Through his belief that the GCC was a "beacon" of true solidarity amongst Arab nations, Sheikh Jaber always made it clear that developing the council's mechanism was paramount for the future of Gulf States.

In the 1996 GCC Doha Summit, he proposed the formation of a 30-member consultative council to provide the GCC leadership with proposals likely to promote the process of decision making. Under the late Amir, Islamic causes were always given priority on Kuwait's agenda.

Sheikh Jaber established the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) that was launched on December 31, 1961. He was chairman of board of directors of this first institution in the Middle East that offered financial support to development efforts not only in the Arab world but in many other developing countries as well.

Also, in the capacity of Kuwait's Presidency of the Organization of Islamic Summit (OIC) - later Organization of Islamic Cooperation - Sheikh Jaber addressed the 43rd session of the UN General Assembly in the following year, proposing measures to ease the pressures on developing and underdeveloped states through the formation of a just world economic system. He then proposed dropping debts due on poor countries.

In 1995, 'The Amir of Hearts' was chosen as the humanitarian personality of the year in a poll conducted by a London-based media institution, amongst five million Arabs, in recognition of his philanthropic initiatives and efforts around the globe.

Leading Kuwait to safety

The late Amir Sheikh Jaber managed to lead Kuwait to safety amid huge challenges thanks to his vision, sagacity and prudence, said Minister of Information and Minister of

State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. "Despite the high winds and enormous challenges that swept the Middle East over the past decades, Sheikh Jaber weathered the storm and led Kuwait to safety. His preoccupation was Kuwait and the Kuwaiti people, seeking a nation that enjoys safety, security, progress and prosperity," the minister said.

He lauded Sheikh Jaber's vision and wisdom at the face of external challenges and crises, keeping Kuwait away from regional and international conflict which brought the country distinctive worldwide reputation.

"The 'Amir of Hearts,' God rest his soul, adopted a policy of openness and established strong relations with most world countries, which helped realize the expectations of the Kuwaiti people, Sheikh Salman said. He highlighted the late Amir's exploits and achievements that were extended to each and every field, creating of Kuwait an effective and influential country worthy of the world's respect and appreciation.

The minister referred to Sheikh Jaber's initiatives and efforts in support of development in the Arab and Muslim countries, embodied in establishing the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) that was launched on December 31, 1961. The wise policy adopted by the late Amir, and the sincere efforts by His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah (God rest his soul) and the present His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who was then foreign minister, led to the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi brutal invasion of 1990.

He said that the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre (JACC), inaugurated in October 2016, was established in honor of Sheikh Jaber and in recognition of the message of civilization and the cultural and intellectual openness he believed in. —KUNA

HORECA KUWAIT 2017 KICKS OFF TOMORROW KUWAITIS SPEND OVER \$10 BILLION ANNUALLY ON TOURISM: HABIB

KUWAIT: Under auspices of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, the Horeca Kuwait 2017 exhibition opens tomorrow at the Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref with participation of over 80 companies specialized in hospitality, catering and hotel equipment. The three-day event is organized by the Leaders Group Company for Consulting and Development in collaboration with the Hospitality Services Company

Speaking on the occasion, the Information's Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Tourism Jassim Al-Habib hailed the exhibition as a "window to enhance the development of the tourism sector" in Kuwait. He added that Horeca is a specialized exhibition that effectively



Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah

contributes to encouraging small and medium enterprises (SMEs), adding that it plays a vital role in boosting the hospitality, catering and hotel equipment industries in Kuwait so that they



Jassim Al-Habib

can maintain their leading positions in the Middle East.

Acting as a main sponsor for the event, the Information Ministry's Tourism Department aims to support specialized exhibitions that



Nabila Al-Anjeri

encourage the private sector and help provide more job opportunities for the youth, Habib said. "Developing the tourism sector helps create around 90,000 job opportunities for young people till

2035, which would save billions of dinars," he added, noting that Kuwaitis spend over \$10 billion annually on tourism.

Meanwhile, Leaders Group's General Manager Nabila Al-Anjeri stressed that preparation for the exhibition were complete. "The exhibition is a good opportunity for ambitious young people who intend to start new restaurant and hotel-related projects," she indicated, that Horeca is a place where experts in the fields of hospitality, catering, hotel equipment, tourism, shipping and storage gather under one roof. Anjeri thanked all participants and sponsors, saying that their cooperation is the bases for Horeca's success, and continues to help the event assume a leading position in Kuwait, the Gulf region and the Middle East.



KUWAIT: This photo released by the Interior Ministry yesterday shows a tanker truck whose driver was arrested for improper waste disposal.

DRIVER FACES JAIL TIME FOR IMPROPER WASTE DISPOSAL

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Environment Police arrested an Arab tanker truck driver who discharged liquid waste in an open area in Wafra, in violation of article 29 of Kuwait's environment protection law. The man faces up to 10 years in prison if found guilty of harming the environment.



A heavily-damaged minibus is seen following an accident at the Jahra Road Friday night.

Accidents

A man was hospitalized following an accident reported at the Jahra Road Friday night. Firefighters had to cut the victim's car open and free him after he became trapped in his wrecked vehicle following a collision with a minibus. Paramedics then rushed the man to Jahra Hospital for treatment. In a similar accident, a female driver was taken to Jahra Hospital following an accident reported on a street located in front of the same hospital.

Traffic campaigns

Traffic police launched several inspection campaigns in various governorates in the period of Jan 8-14, 2017. Security sources said the campaigns resulted in filing 33,638 tickets, impounding 66 vehicles and bikes, arresting 72 motorists, referring 10 expats to deportation, locating two "wanted" vehicles and arresting two wanted people. The sources explained that 9,045 of the tickets were filed in the Capital governorate, 5,524 in Hawally, 4,111 in Ahmadi, 2,457 in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, 4,218 in Jahra and 5,761 in Farwaniya.

TENDER PROCESSED FOR 19,000 METERS

TO BE INSTALLED AHEAD OF TARIFFS INCREASE

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: A committee formed to study the bids made for a tender to supply electric meters (types A5/300, A-5/200 and A-3/125) recommended awarding the tender to bidders with the lowest bids after approval by the supreme tenders committee at the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW). The tender involves purchasing and supplying 19,000 meters to cover consumer needs in various sectors - be they commercial, investment or residential, MEW sources. The meters should be installed at apartment buildings and commercial facilities before May, when the new electricity tariffs become effective.

Power grids

The Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) is working on expanding interconnection to exchange power with North African and Turkish power grids, GCCIA's CEO Ahmed Ali Al-Ibrahim said. Ibrahim added that GCCIA also encourages members to commercially exchange power in 2017 and make better use of the project. Ibrahim stressed that GCCIA is working on increasing GCC investment opportunities in renewable energy such as solar and wind energy.

Companies closed

Assessment and follow-up director at the Public Authority for Manpower Sabah Al-Mutairi said 1,090 companies - including 90 fake ones - that were closed down according to code 71, had been referred for investigations for violating labor laws in 2016 and expected these companies to be referred to prosecution. Mutairi added that the committee includes elements from the manpower authority, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Kuwait Municipality and managed to arrest 1,238 peddlers and laborers who were deported

for violating labor laws. Mutairi added that a recent inspection campaign at Abdali and Wafra farms resulted in detecting violations in over 240 farms and that some of the farms had more laborers than needed.

Parliamentary committees

Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammed Al-Abdullah is scheduled to take part in the parliamentary financial committee's meeting today to discuss a bill on amending law number 15/1979 pertaining civil services and its leading positions. Parliamentary sources said that the government has no objections for passing the leading positions law, which had been demanded by lawmakers in several parliaments previously. The financial committee will also discuss reports about the 2014-2015 annual plan and Capital Market Authority's response to the remarks made in a report about its violations.

Meanwhile, the parliamentary interior and defense committee is scheduled to discuss withdrawal of citizenships in today's meeting as well as lawmakers' suggestions on amending the citizenship law, said informed sources, noting that the committee will also discuss proposals to amend the election law to cancel some of its conditions, but will reject them.

Bedoon teachers'

Minister of Education Mohammed Al-Fares discussed the bedoon teachers' issue with the ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Administrative Affairs Fahd Al-Ghais and the Civil Service Commission's (CSC) letter which bans granting these teachers any vacation time. Fares urged Ghais to contact CSC demanding more privileges for bedoon teachers including equal salaries as expats, changing their contracts and giving them equal vacations as their peers.

Teachers required

The Ministry of Education announced its need to locally hire teachers in 10 subjects including Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Maths, Geology, Arabic, English, French, Physical Education and Music for the academic year 2017-2018, said educational sources. The sources also noted that assistant undersecretary for public education Fatima Al-Kandari officially contacted undersecretary Haitham Al-Athari concerning the ministry's needs for teaching staff members for the coming school year. The sources expected the ministry to officially announce receiving applications by the end of the month and said that Gulf nationals, bedoons and those whose mothers are Kuwaitis and those married to Kuwaitis will be exempt from the experience condition.

Housing plots

The Public Authority for Housing Welfare announced that 2,932 applications had been filed to get plots in South Khaitan and South Saad Al-Abdullah and stressed that those who filed applications in the period of 1985-1998 will have better chances.

Municipal Council

Head of the structural plan follow-up committee at the Municipal Council Ali Al-Moussa expressed gratitude to Minister of Municipality Affairs Mohammed Al-Jabri for approving the decisions made at the Municipal Council's extraordinary meeting. "This proves that the meeting called for by six members was legal, which is the opposite of the what the legal department believes," he underlined, pointing out that article 15 of the municipal council law allowed holding extraordinary meetings held upon requests from the minister, the municipal council chairman and five of its members.

Special Report

HRW TO KUWAIT: FIX LAWS THAT VIOLATE PRIVACY, FREE SPEECH

Limited moves to protect domestic workers

BEIRUT: Kuwait's Amir directed parliament during 2016 to revise a law for mandatory DNA testing that infringes on people's privacy, but parliament has yet to act, Human Rights Watch said recently in releasing its World Report 2017. Kuwait strengthened some protections for migrant domestic workers but retained limitations on free speech.

In the 687-page World Report, its 27th edition, Human Rights Watch reviews human rights practices in more than 90 countries. In his introductory essay, Executive Director Kenneth Roth writes that a new generation of authoritarian populists seeks to overturn the concept of human rights protections, treating rights as an impediment to the majority will. For those who feel left behind by the global economy and increasingly fear violent crime, civil society groups, the media, and the public have key roles to play in reaffirming the values on which rights-respecting democracy has been built.

Positive steps

Kuwait took steps to improve migrant worker rights during 2016. It eased rules for transferring to a new employer for some migrant workers. It also passed implementing regulations for Law No. 68, of 2015, which gave domestic workers enforceable rights for the first time, and enacted a minimum wage for domestic workers. But protections for domestic workers are still weaker than for workers covered by the general labor law, and the domestic workers law and implementing regulations fail to set out clear enforcement mechanisms. The kafala (visa-sponsorship) system, which prohibits domestic workers from transferring jobs without their employer's consent, remains a major obstacle to domestic workers' rights.

Dozens of people were prosecuted during 2016 for violating rules against protected speech, including many cases initiated by private parties, Kuwaiti officials and activists reported. Rather than amending broadly written or overly vague laws to ensure adequate protections for speech and expression, Kuwait amended its election law to bar anyone convicted for "insulting" God, the prophets, or His Highness the Amir from running for office or voting in elections.

Bedoons

The government made no advances in addressing the citizenship claims of at least 105,702 Bedoon (stateless) residents, born in the country but not considered entitled to citizenship. Instead, a Comoros Island official told Gulf News that his government was open to Kuwaiti officials' suggestions that Kuwait may pay the Comoros Islands to grant the Bedoon a form of economic citizenship, potentially leaving them liable to legal deportation from Kuwait.

Responsive

"Kuwaiti officials' apparent willingness to amend the draconian DNA law shows they can be responsive to rights concerns," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "But the law should never have been passed, and parliament should amend it to comply with international standards to ensure people's privacy."



Events of 2016



KUWAIT: In this December 7, 2016 photo, migrant workers are seen crossing a street in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Human Rights Watch's World Report 2017: Kuwait

Kuwait took further steps to improve migrant worker rights in 2016, including enacting a minimum wage for domestic workers, easing employer transfer rules, and passing implementing regulations for a 2015 law that gave domestic workers enforceable rights for the first time.

Unlike many of its Gulf neighbors, Kuwait continued to allow Human Rights Watch access to the country and engaged in constructive dialogue with the organization on a range of human rights issues. Provisions in Kuwait's constitution, the national security law and other legislation continue to restrict free speech, and were again used in 2016 to prosecute dissidents and stifle political dissent.

His Highness the Amir also ordered authorities to amend a 2015 law, the first of its kind, that requires all individuals in Kuwait to provide DNA samples in violation of their right to privacy. Kuwait continued to exclude thousands of stateless people, known as Bedoon, from full citizenship despite their long-standing roots in Kuwaiti territory.

Migrant workers

Two-thirds of Kuwait's population is comprised of migrant workers. Kuwait continues to reform aspects of the kafala or sponsorship system, which ties a migrant worker's legal residence and valid immigration status to an employer.

Kuwait issued a new standard contract for migrant workers in 2015 and an administrative decision that allows some migrant workers to transfer their sponsorship to a new employer without their current employer's consent after three years of work in 2016. Previously, migrant workers required their contract to end and their employer's consent to change employers. These reforms do not extend to migrant domestic workers.

In 2015, the National Assembly passed a law that gave domestic workers the right to a weekly day off, 30 days of annual paid leave, a 12-hour working day with rest, and an end-of-service benefit of one month a year at the end of the contract, among other rights. In July, the Interior Ministry passed implementing regulations for the law, including clarifying that employers must pay overtime compensation. The same month, the ministry issued a decree that established a minimum wage for domestic workers of KD60 (\$200).

Protections in the domestic workers law are still weaker than those in the labor law, which provides for an eight-hour work day with one hour of rest after every five hours of work and detailed provisions for sick leave. The domestic worker law also falls short by failing to set out enforcement mechanisms, such as labor inspections of working conditions in households, which can be done with due regard to privacy.

Migrant workers remain vulnerable to abuse, forced labor, and deportation for minor infractions including traffic violations and "absconding" from an employer. Authorities deported 14,400 migrants in the first four months of 2016, according to local media.

During a September visit to Kuwait, the UN special rapporteur on trafficking welcomed Kuwait's establishment of a shelter for domestic workers, but urged the government to continue its reforms and abolish the kafala system.

Freedom of expression

Kuwaiti authorities have invoked several provisions in the constitution, penal code, Printing and Publication Law, Misuse of Telephone Communications and Bugging Devices Law, Public Gatherings Law, and National Unity Law to prosecute journalists, politicians and activists over the last few years for criticizing His Highness the Amir, the government, religion, and rulers of neighboring countries in blogs or on Twitter, Facebook, or other social media.

Dozens of prosecutions for protected speech are ongoing in Kuwaiti courts. Kuwaiti officials and activists reported that many, if not most, initial complaints in these cases are filed by individuals, underscoring the need to further amend broadly written or overly vague Kuwaiti laws to ensure adequate protections for speech and expression. Kuwaiti courts continued to issue deportation orders in some of these cases, including against members of the Bedoon population, although Kuwaiti officials reported these orders would not be implemented.

In June 2016, Kuwait amended the election law to bar from running or voting in elections all those convicted for "insulting" God, the prophets, or the His Highness the Amir. The law is likely to bar some opposition members of parliament from contesting or voting in future election rounds.

The Cybercrime Law, which includes far-reaching restrictions on internet-based speech, such as prison sentences and fines for insulting religion, religious

figures and His Highness the Amir, went into effect in 2016.

Treatment of minorities

At least 105,702 Bedoon residents of Kuwait remain stateless. After an initial registration period for citizenship ended in 1960, authorities shifted Bedoon citizenship claims to administrative committees that for decades have avoided resolving the claims. Authorities claim that many Bedoon are "illegal residents" who deliberately destroyed evidence of another nationality in order to receive benefits that Kuwait gives its citizens.

Members of the Bedoon community have taken to the streets to protest the government's failure to address their citizenship claims, despite government warnings that Bedoon should not gather in public. Article 12 of the 1979 Public Gatherings Law bars non-Kuwaitis from participating in public gatherings.

In 2016, a Comoros Island official told Gulf News that the Comoros Island was open to Kuwaiti officials' suggestions that Kuwait may pay the Comoros Islands to grant the Bedoon a form of economic citizenship, thus regularizing Bedoon as foreign nationals and rendering them liable to legal deportation from Kuwait—possibly violating their right to family life.

Terrorism

The 2015 DNA law, requiring all citizens, visitors and residents to provide DNA samples to the authorities, was introduced after the June 2015 suicide bombing of the Imam Sadiq Mosque, which killed 27 people and wounded 227. Authorities reported to local media that anyone failing to comply with the law would be subject to sanctions, including cancelling their passports and a possible travel ban. In July, the United Nations Human Rights Committee found the law imposed "unnecessary and disproportionate restrictions on the right to privacy." In 2016, His Highness the Amir directed the authorities to amend the law in line with constitutional standards.

Women's rights, sexual orientation, and gender identity

Kuwaiti personal status law, which applies to Sunni Muslims, the majority of Kuwaitis, discriminates against women. For instance, some women require a male guardian to conclude her marriage contract; women must apply to the courts for a divorce on limited grounds unlike men who can unilaterally divorce their wives; and women can lose custody of their children if they remarry someone outside the family. The rules that apply to Shia Muslims also discriminate against women.

Kuwait has no laws prohibiting domestic violence or marital rape. A 2015 law establishing family courts set up a center to deal with domestic violence cases, but requires the center to prioritize reconciliation over protection for domestic violence survivors. Article 153 of the Kuwaiti penal code stipulates that a man who finds his mother, wife, sister or daughter in the act of adultery and kills them is punished by either a small fine or no more than three years in prison. Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis, unlike Kuwaiti men, cannot pass citizenship to their children or spouses.

Adultery and extramarital intercourse are criminalized, and same-sex relations between men are punishable by up to seven years in prison. Transgender people can be arrested under a 2007 penal code provision that prohibits "imitating the opposite sex in any way."

Death penalty

Kuwait maintains the death penalty for non-violent offenses, including drug-related charges, and carried out five executions in 2013, the first time the country had applied the death penalty since 2007. In 2015 and 2016, courts sentenced at least nine people to death.

Trafficking in persons

In 2016, the United States classified Kuwait as a Tier 2 country in its annual Trafficking in Persons Report. After classifying Kuwait as a Tier 3 country for nine consecutive years, the report credits the improvement to the passing of the 2015 domestic workers law and an unprecedented number of convictions of traffickers under the 2013 anti-trafficking law. The report found that Kuwait continued to have a rampant forced labor problem and that victims of trafficking were still being arrested, detained, and deported.

In August 2016, the United Nations Committee against Torture expressed its concern at reports of prolonged arrest and torture by Kuwaiti police and security forces of protesters, members of minorities, and persons suspected of terrorist activities. The committee also urged Kuwait to reinstate its de facto moratorium on applying the death penalty.

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KUWAIT'S DOMESTIC LABOR LAW: ONE YEAR LATER

A REVIEW BY MIGRANT-RIGHTS.ORG

- Corporation to control price hikes and avoid human rights violations
- KD 13,000 in unpaid salaries for domestic workers claimed
- There are at least 661,414 domestic workers in Kuwait
- Bank guarantee required for employers to recruit a worker
- A plan to create residency cards that feature workers' and sponsors' information

KUWAIT: Over a year has passed since Kuwait's parliament approved a law on the recruitment and employment of domestic workers. The new law was widely celebrated by state officials and international organizations for its "slow progress" in protecting workers' rights and enhancing a "good image of Kuwait." However, Kuwaiti officials appear satisfied merely by the law's existence, so far failing to create a plan to monitor its enforcement, its progress, and its deficiencies.

Migrant-Rights.org reviewed both the problematic and promising provisions of the law throughout its various drafts and final implementation. Below, we revisit a few of these issues in light of recent developments. Overall, our analysis still holds - that even the law's few positives are effectively neutralized by the absence of any meaningful enforcement mechanisms.

Violations

This month, the first public corporation established by the law will come into force. The corporation was designed "in order to control price hikes and avoid human rights violations." Government agencies own 40 percent of the corporation, while 60 percent will be open to national shareholders (i.e. citizens via local cooperatives). The corporation's performance will be monitored by the Ministry of Interior (MoI), instead of an independent body or the labor ministry or even the parliament. Thus, the corporation is likely to be policed, but not quite governed on the basis of labor rights. Both the UAE and Bahrain are also considering centralizing domestic labor recruitment under state agencies - a move which perhaps highlights the Gulf's neoliberal approach to corporatizing the function of public agencies. The impact of the corporation on recruitment is something to be watched over the next year.

Last week, a MoI official stated that the Domestic Labor Department has helped reclaim KD 13,000 (\$42,500) in



Despite being passed over a year ago, a law that would grant greater rights to domestic workers in Kuwait is yet to be implemented. (Image credit: Matthijs de Bruijne via <http://gdr.cascoprojects.org>)

unpaid salaries for domestic workers since the new law came into force. The minimum wage for domestic workers, as set by the 2015 law, is KD 45 (\$150) per month. The amount reclaimed seems less impressive than the ministry depicts, considering that there are at least 661,414 domestic workers in Kuwait (including only those with valid visas). Moreover, the department has only referred 25 cases to court after failing to resolve disputes between employers and employees. The number of cases is very small but more detailed information pertaining to these cases could indicate some progress in workers' access to justice, but the MoI has only released statistics with little context.

Positive clauses

Migrant-Rights.org received a leaked

draft of the domestic labor law in June 2015. The official copy, available publicly later, had compromised a number of positive clauses in the initial draft. The most important of these was the bank guarantee required for employers to recruit a worker. The bank guarantee could have helped domestic workers like Vanessa, a 25-year old Malagasy migrant who was tortured and enslaved by her employer for three years before she managed to escape. Vanessa received support from local groups who publicized her case and connected her with a lawyer (who took almost half of her awarded compensation as a fee). However, she was forced to stay in a shelter for months until the case was resolved and suffered from PTSD. Kuwait's legal procedures make it very difficult for victims of abuse to nominate a power of attorney to fight on their behalf and return home, and the legal status of escaped or absconded workers means they are effectively imprisoned in the shelter. A bank guarantee could allow workers to obtain their own lawyers or to return home faster than the current bureaucracy allows.

Workers' passports

Another problematic article allows for the confiscation of workers' passports "with their consent." Though the confiscation of passports was finally declared illegal a few years ago - after years of the MoI actively encouraging sponsors to



MIGRANT-RIGHTS.ORG

their paperwork on their person, they don't provide them with the same mobility as a passport. Authorities now literally sanction the confiscation of identity documents, leaving workers at risk of being stranded and unable to return home for months. This pattern of legislation crafted to the ultimate benefit of securitizing and making migration management more efficient, rather than protecting workers' rights, is one that emerges repeatedly in Kuwait's migration policies.

Day off

Another major issue affecting the law's enforcement is the general opposition of employers to a worker's right to a weekly day off. Families are likely to consider their own day outside the home as a domestic worker's day off as well - even if she is required to be with them and often is still watching kids, or otherwise still working. It is a commonly held belief that a domestic worker is likely to use her day off to see a man, and from there can only come unwanted pregnancies or diseases. Whatever sexism exists in policing and violating women's bodies in society is experienced tenfold by domestic workers.

Herein lies the Kuwaiti government's difficult, essential - and thus far failed task - to work at multiple levels in both law and society to eradicate the practices and attitudes that oppress domestic workers. Current initiatives, overall, only reinforce workers' vulnerability.

— Migrant-Rights.org

Workers have no access to a phone nor a guarantee that they can spend their weekly day off outside the home; they are not informed of state and embassy contacts to reach out to in case of problems with the employer - such as exploitation, non-payments, harassment, and all other forms of violence that domestic workers are subjected to in the isolation of private homes.

Several origin countries have at one point called for prospective Gulf employers to provide a bank guarantee so that

their citizens have a financial security net in case they lose their jobs or are denied their salaries. However, these requests are strongly objected by Gulf governments, particularly when it obstructs the recruitment of domestic workers. When India enforced its own bank guarantee in 2014, Gulf officials threatened to halt visas for Indian workers. India refused to drop the requirement, though it only applies to female domestic workers (interestingly, most workers registered as domestic workers in Kuwait are actually males).

KUWAIT CENTRAL BANK OFFERS MASTER'S DEGREE SCHOLARSHIPS

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait Governor Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel said yesterday that the CBK would offer, for the third consecutive year, scholarships for Kuwaiti students to study abroad to get the Master's degree. Dr Hashel, also Chairman of the Institute of Banking Studies (IBS), said in a statement that the initiative, conducted in cooperation with Kuwaiti banks, aims at enabling students obtain scholarships for high-level studies in finance, economics, auditing and business administration at top-notch universities abroad. The initiative is part of ongoing cooperation between the CBK and the Kuwaiti banks and in line with social responsibilities, shouldered by the national banks in various spheres such as generating national cadres capable of contributing to the national development process.

A special panel comprising the CBK, Kuwaiti traditional and Islamic banks, has been set up to prepare for this program, he said, noting that the IBS has already begun following up on its implementation; as well as supervising it. The IBS, established in 1970 by an Amiri Decree as the "Banking Studies Center," was conferred the status of a Specialized Institute in 1982 by an amendment of the Amiri Decree. IBS functions under the CBK auspices. By virtue of the Amiri Decree, the IBS can offer education, training and English language programs and research to serve the developmental needs of the Kuwaiti banking and finance sector. Hashel added that application seekers can examine terms for qualification on a special website, explaining that graduates would not be compelled to serve in the CBK or the domestic banking sector. — KUNA



Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel

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The American University of Kuwait received its Institutional Accreditation from the Private Universities Council (PUC), Ministry of Higher Education in the State of Kuwait, and has a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation with Dartmouth College (Hanover, New Hampshire - USA).

Crime

Report

MINISTRY QUESTIONS GAY SEX VIDEO'S AUTHENTICITY

KUWAIT: Well-informed security sources strongly denied the authenticity of a video circulated on social media networks showing two males having sex inside a toilet. The sources also denied allegations that the two men were teachers in a Farwaniya school and stressed that the ministry's e-crime detectives will track down the account that posted the video to hold its owner legally accountable for defaming Kuwaiti schools.

Accidents

A 10-year-old child was seriously injured when she was run over by a speeding car in Saad Al-Abdullah. Security sources said the driver immediately drove the girl to the hospital, where she was admitted in the ICU. Meanwhile, a citizen was seriously injured after he lost control over his vehicle and it flipped over along Salmi highway, said security sources, noting that the man was medevacked to Sabah Hospital for treatment.

No injuries

A girl lost control over her vehicle and drove it through the glass facade of a popular shopping mall in Rai. No injuries were reported in the incident.

Drug possession

Detectives are looking for a suspect who fled in Adan, while his companion was arrested for possessing drugs, said security sources. Noting that their car was damaged, a police patrol asked the suspects to pull over. As soon as the driver stopped, his companion fled the scene. Separately, a Saudi man was arrested on arrival from a GCC state at Nuwaiseeb land border exit with 30 illicit pills. Meanwhile, a 26-year-old citizen wanted for damaging property was arrested in Fahaheel with 20 illicit pills. In other news, a citizen was arrested with drugs and a dagger along the coastal road, said security sources, noting that the suspect sped off on seeing a police patrol and was chased and forced to pull over. In another case, a bedoon was arrested along airport road for selling unlicensed sexual stimulants.

Bootlegger arrested

An Iranian man was stopped for driving his vehicle on the wrong side of the road and was found with 18 bottles of liquor. The suspect admitted that he traded in liquor and that he was on his way to make a delivery.

Store closed

Responding to a video posted on social media by a citizen about the presence of rats in a grocery store in Shuwaikh industrial area, municipality inspectors visited the store to verify the video, found the rats and closed the store. — Translated from the Arabic press



THE NEGATIVE PHENOMENA COMMITTEE

By Arwa Al-Waqian

Honestly speaking, I was very optimistic that the current parliament would tackle new crises such as protecting public liberties, but I was wrong, so I have completely changed my mind! The revival of the negative phenomena committee makes one feel that Kuwait has no real problems to the extent that transgender people and drugs are now on top of the parliamentary legislations committee's priorities and the consensus of the minister of interior that Kuwait has turned into a source of drugs, and that the committee would help end this.

All life experiences prove that suppression enhances deviation, and restrictions on liberties in Kuwait are a farce, starting with freedom of expression and personal freedoms. Both the state and the people's representatives wish to control those with gender disorders but do not seriously think about fighting corruption and bribery prevailing in government establishments.

MPs find Satanists a huge problem that calls for establishing a special committee, while they pray for those causing and committing terrorism, killings and blowing up people to be guided by Almighty to the right path, though all incidents worldwide confirm that terrorism stems from religious extremism and that Satanists have never been associated with a single act of terror. So, holding them accountable is up to Almighty Allah as long as they have not taken any lives.

This committee is mainly concerned with controlling personal choices and should be accordingly named. Let us learn our lesson from countries that allow alcohol and drugs such as Holland, for instance, to which more Arab tourists head to than any other foreigners because hashish is legal there. Holland closed down 19 prisons in 2013 because crime rates drastically fell. It will also close five more this year.

What is happening in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, which ban alcohol and drugs? According to 2012 statistics, four drug-related suspects are arrested, three cases are filed, at least one kilo of hashish and 4,000 illicit pills are seized daily. In 2013, the Saudi drug control director Maj Gen Abdullah Al-Jameel announced that drug trafficking in Saudi Arabia increased 1,000 percent. A while earlier, Saudi Arabia announced a 300 percent increase in addiction rates. Nowadays, unofficial figures show that there are 200,000 Saudi drug abusers.

Many addicts say they use drugs because of a lack of alcohol and its expensive prices. Some of them even manufacture or brew their own, using the worst materials that lead to hallucinations and eventually, to crime. So, with more authorities for the committee, addiction rates will hike and the people will feel so oppressed, that they will start making their own drugs and alcohol. Suppression leads to deviation, while freedom teaches people how to act responsibly.

THE LATE HISHAM AL-OTAIBI

By Khalid A Al-Tarrah

I last met the late Hisham Al-Otaibi (Abu Manaf) in my house over dinner in his honor, following a long treatment trip to London towards the end of summer 2016, and despite the fact that his trip was supposed to be for a routine medical checkup, his health situation got complicated and he traveled to his preferred French city - Nice. I was in constant contact with his wife (Um Manaf) and sometimes with him personally, until he recovered and returned home, and we had a limited gathering of friends as we meet in my house every now and then.

Following the news of his death, and since the first moments, sadness got mixed with the love of going through memories, which made me review my mobile phone, where I found reminders to my friends to come to my house in honor of the late Abu Manaf. This was the first time I sent such texts, because it used to be just for reminding of the meetings once a month for a number of those who share a common passion, so the conversation was full of enthusiasm, originality and variety of opinions.

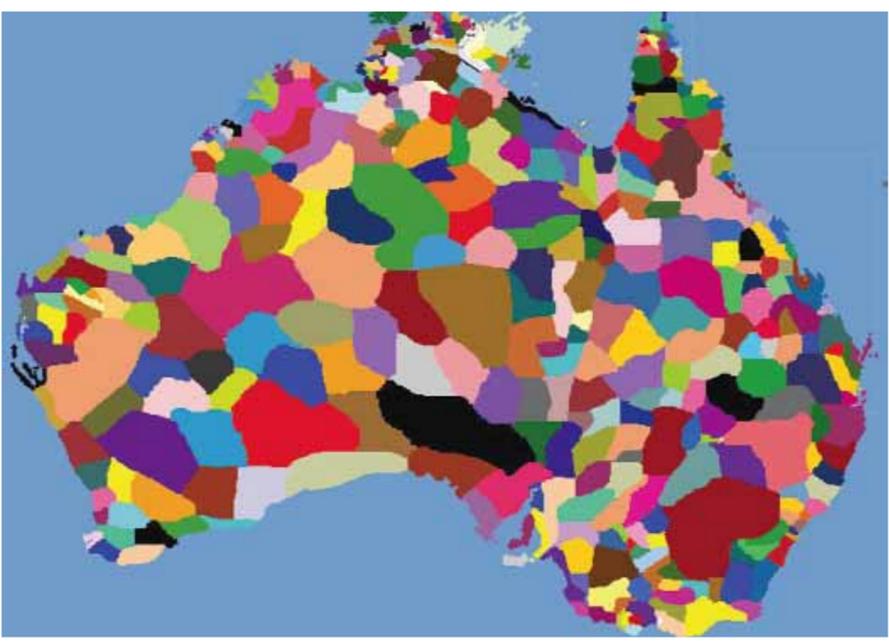
Abu Manaf was simple in his requirements, and answered all invitations except for Wednesday evening, as he was used to go to the cinema with Um Manaf. So it became known to all that Wednesday was cinema day for Abu Manaf, and should be excluded

from weekdays. The meetings with the late Abu Manaf, particularly that last dinner, was not void of his participation in analyzing the country's situation, particularly the economy, besides exchanging information about several matters.

The late Hisham was distinguished with excellent knowledge of lineage and Kuwait families, as there was not a name mentioned without Abu Manaf adding more details with a bright smile, which I see while I write these lines, and I do not think that it will disappear from the eyes of those who love him.

Hisham had two conditions - to serve dinner early because of the medicine that he had to take before meals, and the second condition was to make sure it was not spicy, so I was kept preparing his dish personally. Despite the failing health he appeared in while using a cane and a large drop in weight, Hisham was like he usually was - smiling, optimistic and longing to see all, and a man of will who fought disease for years. That evening, before all had left, one friend asked for a picture with the late Abu Manaf as if he knew that the dinner of that night will be the last with our friend and brother Hisham. He returned to Amiri Hospital at the start of Dec 2016, then died. Hisham left us, but his memory will remain in every place he visited.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



5,500 STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN 'COLOURS OF AUSTRALIA' ART COMPETITION

SPONSORED BY VIVA, ACK; HOSTED BY CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL

KUWAIT: Adnan Saad, Deputy General Manager of Kuwait Times and organizer of the 'Colours of Australia' student art competition, would like to thank all participants who took part in this year's edition, which is sponsored by the Australian Embassy. He said that he was very pleased to see the number of participating students and school increase compared to last year's competition. "We

reached 5,500 students representing more than 100 schools," he said. "The students submitted beautiful works that demonstrated amazing painting skills."

The theme for the 'Colours of Australia' arts competition is to encourage students to express their knowledge of Australia by drawing a landscape, a natural scene, or any other form of expression they

would find suitable. The competition is still open for all schools who want to participate.

All schools are requested to submit their paintings at Kuwait Times office on or before January 26, 2017. The competition is sponsored by VIVA and the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK), with a presentation event to be hosted by Crowne Plaza Hotel's 'Al-Thuraya City'.





History revised: China nationalism strengthens

TRUMP SLAMS CIVIL RIGHTS ICON

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NEW YORK: President-elect Donald Trump calls on a reporter during a news conference in the lobby of Trump Tower. —AP

US INTEL PANEL PLANS RUSSIA SPY PROBE

INVESTIGATION BACKED BY BOTH DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS

WASHINGTON: US senators have launched a probe into Russian spying, saying intelligence reports of Moscow's interference in the 2016 election and possible ties to American political parties "raise profound concerns." The investigation, backed by both Democrats and Republicans on the Senate Intelligence Committee, could trigger forced testimony by officials of both Barack Obama's outgoing administration and the incoming government of Donald Trump, who won the November 8 presidential vote.

US intelligence agencies allege that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a covert effort to interfere in the election to boost Trump and harm his opponent, Democrat Hillary Clinton. A report from the Director of National Intelligence released early this month says the Russians hacked Democratic Party computers and accounts to release files embarrassing to Clinton, and also conducted a campaign of media manipulation with the same aim. But the public version of the report was questioned for offering only weak evidence of its claims.

An unproven dossier compiled by a for-

mer British MI6 intelligence agent also alleged close ties between the Trump campaign and Russian government, and said Moscow had lurid video of Trump with prostitutes while in Russia.

British ex-spy's report

"It is critical to have a full understanding of the scope of Russian intelligence activities impacting the United States," the Senate panel said Friday. Trump, who will take office in one week, has repeatedly rejected suggestions that Moscow aided in his election victory. He has also compared US intelligence agencies to "Nazi Germany" for allegedly leaking to the media their analyses to undermine him.

The probe will review the intelligence community's assessments and also other assessments, "including any intelligence regarding links between Russia and individuals associated with political campaigns," the committee said. That suggested the former British spy's explosive report could also be reviewed. Vowing to "get it right," the panel said most of the work will be done out of public scrutiny to protect classified information.

In light of the hacking allegations, Trump's close ties with Russia, and especially President Vladimir Putin, have come under growing scrutiny. Trump, who sees an opportunity to cooperate with Moscow in fighting jihadist groups like Islamic State, has expressed admiration for Putin, and only reluctantly accepted US intelligence's conclusion that Russian hackers acting on Putin's authority interfered in the US elections.

Improper contact with Russian envoy?

The Washington Post reported that Trump's incoming national security advisor Michael Flynn telephoned Moscow's ambassador to Washington, Sergey Kislyak, several times the day before Obama unveiled punitive measures over Russia's alleged cyberattacks to influence the US election. Flynn receives a speaking fee from Russian government-funded Russia Today.

Trump's incoming press secretary, Sean Spicer, said Flynn in fact spoke with the envoy on Christmas Day, sending him a text to wish him a merry Christmas and happy New Year. "I look forward to touching base with you, and working with you, and I wish

you all the best," Spicer quoted Flynn as telling the ambassador, adding that the envoy responded with holiday greetings.

On December 28, the pair spoke by phone about "the logistics of setting up a call with the president of Russia and the president-elect after he was sworn in, and they exchanged logistical information on how to initiate and schedule that call," Spicer said. He added: "That was it. Plain and simple."

'Full report'

In an interview with the Wall Street Journal, Trump hinted he may scrap Obama's punitive measures altogether, and said he was prepared to meet with Putin after taking office January 20. Separately, he blasted the leak of the unsubstantiated report that Russia had gathered compromising personal and financial material on him as "totally made up facts by sleazebag political operatives."

He promised a "full report" on the hacking claims within 90 days. In the first round of hearings for Trump nominees that wrapped up Friday, a week before Obama hands the Manhattan billionaire the keys to

the White House, several of his cabinet picks publicly contradicted him. But the president-elect dismissed talk of ideological splits. "All of my Cabinet nominee (sic) are looking good and doing a great job," he said in an early morning tweet. "I want them to be themselves and express their own thoughts, not mine!" The 70-year-old Republican later elaborated, telling reporters at Trump Tower: "I could have said, 'Do this, say that.' I don't want that. I want them all to be themselves." "And I'm going to do the right thing, whatever it is. I may be right. And they may be right."

Over three days of feisty hearings this week, Trump's nominees warned of the threat posed by Russia, hailed NATO, repudiated torture, defended the US intelligence community and cautioned against withdrawing from the Iran nuclear treaty and the Paris climate accord. On virtually every controversial foreign policy stance that Trump took during the campaign, they hedged and backtracked and sought to assure senators that they shared the consensus that has shaped Western strategic thinking and institutions since World War II. —AFP

MLK'S SHIFT FROM A DREAMER TO RADICAL INSPIRES ACTIVISTS

PHILADELPHIA: For Abdul Aliy-Muhammad, the Martin Luther King Jr he learned about as a child was a man of love, peace and racial harmony, a gifted orator. It wasn't until Aliy-Muhammad became an activist that he came to know, and appreciate, the King who decried the Vietnam War as "unjust" and made a firm, insistent case for economic justice for black Americans. "There is a Martin Luther King that is important to the resistance movement that we don't hear about," said the 33-year-old co-founder of the Black and Brown Workers Collective in Philadelphia. "We always hear about love and forgiveness. ... There was also a King who was radical."

Younger black activists say they prefer the pointed, more forceful King to the Nobel Prize-winning pacifist who preached love over hate as he led nonviolent marches across the segregated South. They like the fact that the urgency in King's demand for equality in the years just before his assassination in 1968 is in keeping with the tenacious nature of today's Black Lives Matter rallying cry.

"Then as now, it was about promises not translating into substantive transformation," said Princeton University professor Imani Perry. "The questions young people are asking and the way they're challenging the status quo are important. If we don't have that kind of vision, we end the possibility for change before we even have the conversa-

tion. In that sense, they really are carrying the torch." Fifty years ago this month, King retreated to the Caribbean with his wife, Coretta, and a few friends to write his final book, "Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?" In the book, published in June 1967, King argued for racial equality for black Americans through the wholesale embrace of social and economic reform.

During the book's promotional tour, King spoke out against the Vietnam War and criticized US leaders for allowing slum conditions to persist in the cities. "Everyone is worrying about the long hot summer with its threat of riots. We had a long cold winter when little was done about the conditions that create riots," King said in June 1967. Today's young activists say King's harsher words resonate just as much as his methods of peaceful protest. "We do King a disservice when we try to tell a flat story of turning the other cheek," said 31-year-old Charlene Carruthers, national director of the Black Youth Project 100 in Chicago. "It was never simply that."

As Carruthers sees it, "agitation" was the core of King's work. "Their agitation shows up differently than how our agitation shows up today. However, I think King's work and the work we do are part of the larger tradition of black radical resistance." In an August 1967 speech to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, King pointed out disparities in unemployment, housing, education and infant mortality. —AP



WASHINGTON: In this Oct 10, 2015 file photo, a man wears a hoodie which reads, "Black Lives Matter" as he stands on the lawn of the Capitol building on Capitol Hill. —AP

AUSTRIA'S FAR-RIGHT CALLS FOR 'FASCISTIC ISLAM' BAN

SALZBURG: The head of Austria's far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) yesterday called for a law banning "fascistic Islam" and Muslim symbols, comparable to an existing law banning Nazi symbols, saying Islam could wipe out European society. Austria needs "a law which prohibits fascistic Islam", Heinz-Christian Strache told several thousand supporters at the party's new year meeting in Salzburg.

"Let us put an end to this policy of Islamisation... otherwise we Austrians, we Europeans will come to an abrupt end," Strache said, in an apparent reference to the course pursued by the coalition government. The junior coalition party ÖVP recently called for halving the number of asylum applications accepted this year to around 17,000.

Strache responded by saying: "We need zero and minus immigration." Any law against extreme elements of Islam should be similar to the law Austria introduced after WW2 banning the Nazi Party and Nazi symbols, a party spokesman said when asked for clarification. The Freedom Party's anti-Muslim message has been well-received by a large minority of Austria's electorate. Its presidential candidate Norbert Hofer was defeated in a run-off vote last month but gained 47 percent support.

The nation of 8.7 million people has received more than 130,000 claims for asylum from people fleeing war and poverty in countries such as Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq since last summer. About 600,000 Muslims, some of whom arrived during Europe's migration crisis, live in Austria. The party, which has long called for a ban on face veils, also called for changing the way refugees are taken care of. The state, not NGOs like the Catholic charity Caritas, should be in charge of their care to make sure money is spent efficiently, Hofer himself said at the same event yesterday. —Reuters

26 KILLED AS YEMENI FORCES PUSH HOUTHJI REBELS BACK

ADEN: At least 26 Yemeni fighters died in fresh clashes and an air strike as government forces advanced against Shiite Houthji rebels near a key shipping strait, medics and officials said yesterday. A week-long assault by government forces and their allies aims to expel the Iran-backed Houthis from Dhubab region, close to the Bab Al-Mandab strait linking the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.

Twelve bodies of Houthji insurgents were taken early Saturday to a hospital in rebel-held Hodeida, a medical official

said, adding that the facility received 23 others wounded. He said the casualties were from clashes on Friday night in Dhubab. An overnight air strike by a pro-government Arab coalition on a rebel assembly in Zaydiya, in Hodeida province, left another nine Houthji dead, a security official said.

The Red Sea port city of Hodeida lies some 200 kilometers north of Dhubab. A medical official at a hospital in the southern city of Aden said five pro-government fighters were killed in overnight clashes around Dhubab and

14 others wounded. Forces loyal to President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi and allied fighters from the Popular Resistance have entered the town of Dhubab and seized its local government headquarters.

Popular Resistance commander Abdelrahman Al-Muharami said the loyalists had also recaptured large parts of Al-Omeri military base in mountains overlooking the coast. "There are still some rebel pockets" in the base, he said. The government and its allies in the Saudi-led coalition recaptured Bab Al-

Mandab strait in October 2015, pushing the rebels further north. But the rebels still control nearly all of Yemen's Red Sea coast to the north, posing what the coalition says is a threat to international shipping.

Yemen's conflict has killed more than 7,400 people and wounded nearly 40,000 since it escalated with the coalition intervention in March 2015 after the Houthis seized large swathes of the country, according to the United Nations. In another bid to reassert government authority, Prime Minister

Ahmed bin Dagher said Saturday that his administration will start transferring salaries to state employees in rebel-held areas. Public sector employees in rebel-controlled areas have struggled since Hadi moved the central bank from Sanaa to the temporary capital of Aden in June, after accusing the insurgents of running down Yemen's foreign reserves. Dagher said government employees "across all provinces" will receive their salaries at post offices and exchange outlets, state news agency Saba reported. — AFP

DEADLY IS ASSAULT ON EAST SYRIA CITY LEAVES 30 DEAD

ONE OF ITS [IS] FIERCEST ASSAULTS YET

BEIRUT: The Islamic State group yesterday launched one of its fiercest assaults yet on the besieged Syrian city of Deir Ezzor, leaving more than 30 regime fighters and jihadists dead. The brutal attack on a day that saw many outbreaks of violence across Syria — came as the political opposition said it "supported" upcoming peace talks in the Kazakh capital Astana.

The negotiations will attempt to bring an end to the nearly six-year war by building on a fragile

200,000 people have lived under IS siege since early 2015. IS has sought to overrun the entire city, including the key nearby military airport. Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman said yesterday's attack was the "most violent" assault mounted by IS on the city in more than a year. "Daesh is amassing its forces to attack Deir Ezzor and breach government lines," a Syrian military source told AFP, using the Arabic acronym for IS. He said jihadists had aimed to cut the route

far failed, but Moscow and Ankara are hoping that the peace talks in Astana later this month will lead to a political solution.

After a two-day meeting in Riyadh, the High Negotiations Committee leading opposition body said it would extend its support to an anti-regime military delegation attending those negotiations. "Concerning the forthcoming meeting in Astana, the (High Negotiations) Committee stresses its support to the military delegation... and expresses hope that the meeting would reinforce the truce," the HNC said.

It said the meeting in Astana "paves the way for political talks" in Geneva in early February, hosted by the United Nations. Official invitations have yet to be issued for the Astana talks, but Turkey's foreign minister has said Washington will be asked to attend. The Washington Post reported late Friday that Russia had invited US President-elect Donald Trump's incoming administration to the meeting, bypassing President Barack Obama's team. The Astana talks are scheduled to begin just three days after Trump is inaugurated.

Violence in Idlib, Damascus

The ceasefire deal appeared increasingly strained yesterday, with outbreaks of violence in northwest Syria and near the capital. Fresh raids yesterday in the town of Maarat Masrin in the northwest province of Idlib killed eight people, most of them civilians, the Observatory said. A day earlier, three civilians including a child were killed in strikes on the nearby town of Orum al-Joz, Abdel Rahman said. Idlib province is controlled by a rebel alliance led by Fateh Al-Sham Front, which changed its name from Al-Nusra Front after breaking ties with Al-Qaeda last year. Like IS, Fateh al-Sham is excluded from the truce deal.

New clashes also broke out yesterday in Wadi Barada—the main source of water for Damascus. Water supplies from the area to around 5.5 million people in the capital and its outskirts have been cut since December 22 because of fighting. Rebels and government troops had reached a local agreement Friday so that water access could be restored, but the Observatory reported a resumption of violence yesterday. "Regime forces and (Lebanese movement) Hezbollah violated the agreement" by battering a town in Wadi Barada with rocket fire, Abdel Rahman told AFP. "They took advantage of the halt in military activities there to advance and flex their muscles," he said. — AFP

Astana 'paves way' to Geneva

Syria has been ravaged by violence since widespread protests in March 2011 calling for President Bashar Al-Assad's ouster. More than 310,000 people have been killed and over half the population has been forced to flee. Diplomatic efforts to end the conflict have thus

between the airport and the city, but that the government's counter-attack had stopped IS.



A Syrian refugee girl carries her younger brother at the refugee camp of Ritsona about 86 kilometers (53 miles) north of Athens yesterday. — AP

truce agreement. But IS is excluded from the deal, brokered by rebel backer Turkey and regime ally Russia. Unleashing a wave of suicide attacks, rockets, and tunnel bombs, IS killed at least 12 government forces and two civilians in Deir Ezzor yesterday, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The British-based monitoring group said 20 jihadists were killed in fierce air raids by Syrian and allied warplanes on the city, where around



IDLIB: This photo released on Wednesday, Jan 11, 2017 by the Edlib Media Center, an opposition activist media collective, which has been authenticated based on its contents and other AP reporting, shows a vehicle that was hit in an aerial attack in the northwestern Syrian province of Idlib. — AP

SURGE IN TARGETED KILLINGS OF AL-QAEDA OPERATIVES IN SYRIA

BEIRUT: The convoy of vehicles was driving on a dirt road in northwestern Syria when the aerial attack by the US-led coalition struck, turning the vehicles into balls of fire and the people inside into unrecognizable charred corpses. Among the eight dead was Khatat Al-Qahtani, a senior Al-Qaeda official from the Persian Gulf region with reported ties to Osama bin Laden, as well as a Syrian Al-Qaeda commander from the country's east and a militant belonging to the Turkistan Islamic Party, a faction of Chinese jihadis fighting in Syria.

The New Year's Day attack was the first in a wave of airstrikes that has targeted Al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria at an unprecedented rate, killing more than 50 militants allied with the international terror group since the beginning of the year.

In the throes of a brutal civil war now in its sixth year, Syria has one of the largest and most active concentrations of Al-Qaeda fighters in the world. The US-led coalition has been targeting the extremist group for years, hunting some of its most senior officials, including members of the so-called Khorasan group, which Washington describes as an internal branch of Al-Qaeda that plans attacks against Western interests.

Informer infiltration

It's not clear what is behind the recent surge in targeted killings. Analysts say that since Al-Qaeda began recruiting hundreds of fighters in Syria to expand its role in the country's civil war against President Bashar Assad's forces, informers might have infiltrated the group, which has also become more visible, setting up command centers and other outposts around northern Syria, making it easier to target.

"Had it not been for their agents they wouldn't have been able to do anything," a local Al-Qaeda commander told The Associated Press via text message from northern Syria. "They spray a product on top of the vehicle that cannot be seen with the naked eye but can be detected by the drone," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with the group's regulations.

The stepped-up attacks could also be linked to a cease-fire brokered by Russia and Turkey that went into effect on Dec 30, and excludes the Islamic State group and Syria's Al-Qaeda affiliate, known as the Fatah Al-Sham Front. Turkey and Russia back rival sides in the Syrian conflict and their new push to try to end the war includes talks between the Syrian government and the opposition to be held later this month in Kazakhstan.

The intensified attacks also come at a time when the Islamic State group, an Al-Qaeda rival, is under intense pressure and losing territory in Iraq and Syria. Iraqi forces are on the offensive in the northern city of Mosul, the main IS stronghold in Iraq, while U.S.-backed Kurdish-led fighters are march-

ing toward the Syrian city of Raqqa, IS's de facto capital.

'Verge of collapse'

"Daesh is on the verge of collapse and this is diverting the attention toward Al-Qaeda," said Dana Jalal, a Sweden-based expert on jihadi groups, referring to IS by its Arabic acronym. "The new Russian-Turkish alliance is also leading to fresh intelligence information." Jalal said Turkey is now sharing intelligence about the Al-Qaeda affiliate with Russia, as well as the US-led coalition. Turkey has been a main point for foreign fighters to cross into Syria and borders the country's northern Idlib province, where thousands of Fatah al-Sham fighters are based.

Reflecting the intensity of the attacks, the group distributed a list this week of suggested ways for its fighters to avoid being targeted by airstrikes, urging total "electronic silence," the use of camouflage and devices that disrupt the frequency used to control drones and only using buildings "with multiple exits." The Fatah Al-Sham statement was carried by the SITE Intelligence Group, a US group that monitors militant internet traffic.

The rise in attacks on Al-Qaeda fits in with the US government's contention that it is gaining traction against a range of militant groups, including Fatah al-Sham and IS in Syria and Iraq. The US has also stepped up attacks against IS militants in both countries, including a high-profile operation Sunday that targeted an IS force in the eastern Syrian province of Deir el-Zour.

In that attack, commandos flown in aboard four helicopters intercepted a vehicle carrying several IS militants, killing all of them and flying off with the bodies, Syrian opposition activists said. US Navy Capt Jeff Davis confirmed that a raid took place Sunday but did not provide details. There was no comment by the Pentagon on the surge in attacks this year, but the US has announced numerous successful strikes in recent months.

Senior figures

Charles Lister, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Middle East Institute, wrote in a Facebook post that Fatah Al-Sham's decision to operate more openly makes it vulnerable to air attacks and external infiltration. Since July 2015, US aircraft have killed some of Al-Qaeda's most senior figures in strikes in northern Syria, including Kuwait-born Mohsen Al-Fadli, Sanafi Al-Nasr of Saudi Arabia and Ahmed Salama Mabrouk of Egypt, who was killed in October. Rifai Ahmad Taha, an Egyptian militant with decades of experience with the terror network, was killed in a US strike in April. This month's attacks come as Fatah Al-Sham has been trying to improve its image and distance itself from Al-Qaeda. — AP

ON MOSUL FRONTLINES, IS LOCAL FIGHTERS DIRECT BATTLE STATE

MOSUL: As Iraqi government forces advanced towards his eastern Mosul neighborhood in November, a group of Islamic State militants stormed Abu Rami's home, put a gun to his head and told him and his family to get out immediately. The militants, including a local man whose name he knew, brought with them a bearded comrade clutching a sniper rifle whom Abu Rami suspects was Russian or Chechen. The foreigner took up position in a rooftop chicken coop.

When Abu Rami returned 11 days later, the fighting had ended and the militants had slipped away, but his two-storey house was destroyed by an air strike. His family is now distributed among relatives and friends across the city. "Destruction occurs in a few moments, but rebuilding takes time," he said outside the rubble of his home where men huddled around a well to collect water because pipes have been damaged.

The Mosul campaign, involving a 100,000-strong alliance of Iraqi government troops and militarized police, Kurdish security forces and mainly Shiite Muslim militiamen, is the most complex battle in Iraq since the US-led invasion in 2003. With nearly all of eastern Mosul under government control three months into the US-backed offensive, most residents have stayed in the city, complicating the task of the military which must fight among civilians in built-up areas against an enemy that has targeted non-combatants and hidden among them.

Residents told Reuters during a visit to the Muharibeen district on Friday how the battle played out for them, describing scenes likely repeated in one form or another across the city. The militants hung curtains across roadways to try to obscure the view of Iraqi army marksmen as they dashed from houses to pray in a tan-coloured mosque where they also posted a sniper in the minaret, Abu Rami said. They kept a car packed with explosives parked opposite his house for more than a week. When they deployed it to a main street, an army tank shelled it, destroying an adjacent building.

Division of labor

When it launched the offensive in October, the Iraqi government hoped to retake Mosul — Islamic State's last major stronghold in the country and the largest urban centre anywhere in its self-styled caliphate spanning neighboring Syria

— by the end of 2016. But Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi said in December it could now take another three months to drive the militants out.

Commanders have said the presence of up to 1.5 million residents and attempts to minimize destruction to homes and key infrastructure has slowed their troops' advance, though hundreds of civilians have already been killed and many areas heavily damaged. Abu Rami, a 54-year-old former government employee, described a division of labor among Islamic State militants at the frontlines: a group that plants explosives, one that has snipers and another that serves as local guides.

The snipers are usually Russians, Chechens or Afghans, he said. The Iraqis, many from Mosul and the nearby city of Tel Afar, ride around on motorcycles telling them where to take up positions. Abu Rami said he was surprised when the fair-skinned sniper who posted up in his house spoke to him in broken Arabic, saying: "For the sake of Allah, get out."

"They do not know the area so the motorcy-

cle guides the suicide car bomb (to its target) and tells the fighters, 'You go here, you go there. Go detonate here'," he said. US Army Lieutenant-General Steve Townsend, commander of the international coalition backing Iraqi forces, told Reuters last week that Islamic State's local leadership had proven effective without a hierarchical chain of command. But he said separate cells fighting in different neighborhoods appeared increasingly unable to coordinate across different areas it controlled inside the city.

Another US military official said fighters the coalition observes moving skillfully across Mosul's urban terrain usually turn out to be foreigners. According to another Muharibeen resident, who asked not to be named, Islamic State will shoot from a position for several minutes until the military identifies the location. The militants often escape to another house through holes previously knocked through outer walls. "Then there is bombardment to destroy the house, to destroy the sniper position," he said. "But the sniper will pop up again here or there." — Reuters



MOSUL: Iraqi Army soldiers load rockets into a multi-barrel rocket launcher during fight against Islamic State militants to regain control of Mosul University. — AP

TURKEY ARRESTS UIGHURS OVER NIGHTCLUB ATTACK

ISTANBUL: Turkey has arrested two Chinese nationals of Uighur origin in connection with a mass shooting in a nightclub in Istanbul on New Year's Eve claimed by the Islamic State group, media reports said. The suspects, named as Omar Asim and Abuliezi Abuduhamit, were arrested on charges of "being members of a terrorist organization", of "purchasing unlicensed firearms" and "being accomplices to the murder of 39 people", state-run Anadolu Agency cited a prosecutor as saying.

A witness in the central Anatolian city of Konya had reportedly seen Asim with the Reina nightclub attacker, the agency said late Friday. The gunman remains at large despite a massive manhunt. Officials said last week the attacker was likely a Turkic Uighur, with authorities reportedly looking into the possible existence of a cell, includ-

ing other jihadists from Central Asia. Uighurs are Turkic-speaking Muslims from the restive Xinjiang region of far-western China. The killer, reportedly known by the code name Ebu Muhammed Horasani, slipped into the night after mowing down 39 revelers at the Reina nightclub just 75 minutes into 2017. At least 35 people have been detained so far in connection with the attack, according to Anadolu.

Of the 39 killed in the glamorous nightclub on the shores of the Bosphorus, 27 were foreigners including citizens from Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Iraq and Morocco. The so-called Islamic State claimed the nightclub massacre, the first time it has ever clearly claimed a major attack in Turkey despite being blamed for several strikes including the Istanbul airport bombings. — AFP

HOLLIDAY SEES INAUGURAL GIG AS FOR 'THE PEOPLE,' NOT TRUMP

WASHINGTON: When Jennifer Holliday got invited to sing at next week's inaugural welcome concert, she says she took her cues from the Clintons and the Obamas in agreeing to perform. Holliday, who backed Hillary Clinton in the election, said she saw the Clintons' decision to attend Donald Trump's inaugural and the Obamas' support for a peaceful transition of power as a signal to "just get this done and then fight vigorously" over policy differences later. "I didn't see it as singing for Trump; I saw it as singing for the people on the mall," Holliday said in an interview Friday with The Associated Press.

Holliday, best known for her Tony-winning role in "Dreamgirls" on Broadway, faced an immediate and angry backlash to her decision from critics urging a boycott of her music, calling her an "Uncle Tom," saying her career was over and even suggesting she take her own life. "It just really made my heart drop to my feet," Holliday said. "How could I have this much hate spewing at me, and I haven't even done anything? I guess it's not like those old days when political views were your own and you had freedom of speech. ... We live in a different time now, and a decision to go and do something for America is not so clear-cut anymore."

Holliday will be performing Thursday at the "Make America Great Again! Welcome Celebration" at the Lincoln Memorial. Country star Toby Keith and actor Jon Voight also are in the lineup. Trump himself also will speak at the concert at the Lincoln Memorial, which organizers said "will serve as a tribute to one of our greatest attributes, the peaceful transition of partisan power."

Several prominent entertainers have declined to perform at Trump inaugural festivities. Holliday said she has sung for both Republican and Democratic presidents, and speculated that may be why Trump's team reached out to her. She joked that they couldn't get an "A-lister, so they went to the bottom of the list." The celebrity wattage for Trump's inaugural festivities doesn't rival that of Barack Obama's inaugurations, which attracted top names including Beyonce, Bruce Springsteen, U2, Alicia Keys, Kelly Clarkson, Eva Longoria and Jennifer Hudson, among others. But Trump has insisted that's how he wants it, saying the swearing-in festivities should be about the people, not the A-list. — AP

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Actress and singer Jennifer Holliday



WASHINGTON: Secretary of State-designate Rex Tillerson, center, accompanied by, from left, former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, former Georgia Sen San Nunn, Sen Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn of Texas, takes his seat on Capitol Hill. — AP

TRUMP TEAM DISAGREES AT TIMES WITH BOSS, WHO SAYS THAT'S OK

'I MAY BE RIGHT, THEY MAY BE RIGHT'

WASHINGTON: You can't really call them "yes men." Maybe we're meeting Donald Trump's "yes, but" men. Some of the incoming president's most important Cabinet choices are at odds with him on matters that were dear to his heart as a campaigner and central to his promises to supporters. Trump says he doesn't mind the disconnect. He wants his Cabinet members to be themselves, "say what you want to say," he told reporters Friday in New York. "I may be right, they may be right."

But despite that breezy dismissal, the differences laid bare in a week of confirmation hearings raise questions about whether Trump will roll over his Cabinet on immigration, Russia, national security and more, bend to his top advisers' stated convictions or watch them back-track from pronouncements that may be helping them win Senate approval.

It's a team of rivals, with this twist: The mercurial Trump can be a rival to himself. He proposed, then appeared to move away from, a plan to freeze the entry of Muslims into the US. His similarly provocative call for a big border wall with Mexico has gone through several incarnations. His crowd-rousing vow to prosecute Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton melted into a tribute to her public service when she conceded the election. On Friday, he tweeted anew she was "guilty as hell."

Trump's team isn't nearly as inflammatory or unorthodox. Several are more traditional Republicans who toed the line on established

GOP positions, even when they contradicted the boss. The result is Trump is assembling a potentially discordant amen chorus at the dawn of his presidency.

Russian hacking

Trump's nominees to run the CIA, State Department and Justice Department gave credence to U.S. intelligence assessments on Russian hacking that the president-elect ridiculed for weeks before he grudgingly accepted it Wednesday. Kansas Republican Rep Mike Pompeo, nominated as CIA director, said the report concluding that Russia interfered in the US election trying to help Trump win was "an analytical product that is sound." Rex Tillerson, nominated as secretary of state, told senators it's a "fair assumption" the hacking couldn't have happened without Russian President Vladimir Putin's approval.

Alabama Sen Jeff Sessions, chosen for attorney general, said "I have no reason to doubt" the report's conclusions. Trump has declared the focus on Russia and the election a "political witch hunt," while acknowledging this week that Russia was probably behind the hacking of Democrats during the campaign.

Russia and NATO

Trump's national security and diplomatic leaders have voiced sharp skepticism about the prospects for a warmer relationship with Moscow despite Trump's praise of Putin. "Russia is raising

grave concerns on several fronts," retired Gen. James Mattis, chosen to run the Pentagon, told senators. "I have very modest expectations for areas of cooperation with Mr. Putin, who he said is "trying to break the North Atlantic alliance."

Tillerson expressed unqualified support for NATO's "inviolable" Article 5, which requires the allies to come to the defense of any member that is invaded. This, after Trump in the campaign suggested the US might not defend its NATO allies if they came under attack if some did not contribute more money to the alliance.

Muslims

In the campaign, Trump proposed a temporary ban on foreign Muslims entering the US and at one point suggested requiring Muslims already in the country to register. The proposals then evolved into one that would halt immigration from countries linked to terrorism, though Trump never explicitly took a Muslim ban off the table, nor renounced the registry advocated by some who supported him.

Tillerson told senators: "I do not support a blanket-type rejection of any particular group of people." Retired Marine Gen John Kelly, nominated to lead the Homeland Security Department, also weighed in: "I don't agree with registering people based on ethnic or religion or anything like that." Nor should religion be a basis for criminal or counter terrorism investigations, he said. Sessions also repudiated "the idea that Muslims, as a religious group, should be denied admission to the United States."

Immigration

Tillerson dissociated himself from Trump's inflammatory description of Mexicans crossing illegally into the US as criminals and rapists. He contended he would "never characterize an entire population with any single term at all." Mexico is a "long-standing friend and neighbor of this country," he added, offering a diplomatic bow to a country that Trump says has been taking advantage of weak U.S. leadership.

For his part, Kelly stated that a border wall alone cannot be a cure-all for illegal crossings. "There has to be really a layered defense," Kelly said. "If you are to build a wall from the Pacific to the Gulf of Mexico, you'd still have to back that wall up with patrolling by human beings, by sensors, by observation devices." Although he's held out the wall as a "beautiful" solution to a porous border, Trump also has called for beefing up patrols.

Torture

"Torture works," Trump said in the campaign. "Only a stupid person would say it doesn't work." Torture doesn't work, Mattis told him after the election. Trump pronounced himself "surprised" and "impressed" by that assertion and suggested he would rethink his repeated vow to reinstate waterboarding and "worse" in interrogations of terror suspects. He said Mattis told him beer and cigarettes are more effective at getting people to talk. In the confirmation hearings, Sessions said current law "absolutely" bans waterboarding and other torture techniques, despite his own past support for such practices. Pompeo said that if Trump ordered the CIA to use waterboarding, he would "absolutely not" go along. — AP

PINK 'PUSSYHATS' FOR AFTER INAUGURATION

WASHINGTON: The National Mall in Washington DC could become a sea of bright pink the day after Donald Trump is inaugurated as US president if the vision of a pair of Los Angeles women is realized. For the last two months, Krista Suh and Jayna Zweiman have been calling on people around the world to make 1.17 million pink "pussyhats" for those attending the Women's March, a rally on Jan 21 organized with hopes bringing attention to civil and human rights issues. The name of the hats comes partly from president-elect Trump's comments in the infamous 2005 tape that came to light during his campaign, in which - discussing women - he said:

"Grab them by the p****. You can do anything." The project is meant to "create a sea of pink hats which is going to be a strong collective visual statement," Zweiman said. It is also meant to involve

"people across the country and the world who want to be a part of the march but can't physically be there and want to support the marchers," she said. The women have asked for help from volunteers around the world to sew, crochet or knit pink hats with ears by using simple patterns available on the project's website. Marchers can get a hat by contacting a maker through an online distribution system, through social media or at sites in Washington DC.

"So it's a distribution system that's very grass roots and our aim is to get a hat on every marcher's head who wants one," Zweiman said. "We're using the charge of the word to get people's attention and get people to pay attention to women's rights and we're also using the word as an opening to conversation and to deeper issues politically," Suh said. — Reuters

GOP LAWMAKER SAYS CAPITOL PIG PAINTING COMING DOWN

WASHINGTON: A GOP congressman reported Friday that a painting stirring controversy on Capitol Hill will be taken down Tuesday after the agency responsible for maintaining the Capitol complex determined it violated rules for a student arts competition. The painting depicts Ferguson, Missouri, with a pig in a police uniform aiming a gun at a protester. The painting was among hundreds completed by high school students that are featured in a tunnel leading to the Capitol.

Rep Dave Reichert, R-Wash, complained the painting violated rules for the competition, which state that works depicting subjects of contemporary political controversy or of a sensationalistic or gruesome nature are not allowed. Speaker Paul Ryan informed Reichert on Friday that the architect of the Capitol has determined the painting violated the rules and will come down, his office reported.

Reichert said in a written statement that the painting was a "slap in the face to the countless men and women who put their lives on the line everyday on behalf of our safety and freedom." The painting by David Pulphus won an annual arts competition in Democratic Rep William Lacy Clay's congressional district

last year. Clay and lawmakers supporting the painting's display said it hung for more than six months without controversy. They said things changed only after conservative media outlets began a campaign to have the artwork removed.

Then, Rep. Duncan Hunter of California took matters into his own hands and removed the painting without permission, returning it to Clay's office last Friday. Clay put it back up as members of the Congressional Black Caucus lent their support. Thus began a tit-for-tat in which Republican lawmakers kept taking the painting down and Clay kept putting it back up. Clay said removing the painting would be a violation of his constituent's First Amendment right to freedom of speech and expression.

Clay's office said the congressman was not available to comment on Reichert's announcement that the painting will be taken down. But just the day before he issued a statement saying Ryan and his Republican colleagues were attempting to suppress free speech "with their own brand of retroactive, vigilante censorship against my constituent." Clay has warned that the removal of the painting would most certainly result in litigation. — AP



WASHINGTON: A row of portable restrooms, with the name "Don's Johns" covered up, is seen on Capitol Hill. — AP

DON'S JOHNS A NAME NOT QUITE RIGHT FOR THIS INAUGURATION DAY

WASHINGTON: It's the great port-a-potty cover-up for President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration. Workers preparing for the inauguration Jan. 20 have taped over the name of the company - "Don's Johns" - that has long supplied portable restrooms for major outdoor events in the nation's capital. Virginia-based Don's Johns calls itself the Washington area's top provider of portable toilet rentals. But the name apparently strikes too close to home for organizers of the inauguration of Donald John Trump.

Workers have placed blue tape over the company name on dozens of portable restrooms installed near the Capitol for the inauguration. The company's name is clearly visible upon close inspection, but is blocked for a wide-angle view by a TV or still camera. Robert Weghorst, chief operating officer for Don's Johns, said he did not know the logos were covered up until The Associated Press reported on it Friday, lighting up his company switchboard and "blowing up" its social media accounts.

"We don't know why it's being done. We didn't tell someone to do it," he said in a telephone interview. "We're proud to have our name on the units." A spokesman for the Architect of the Capitol, which oversees the Capitol and its grounds, said the logos were being covered or removed to comply with Capitol grounds restrictions on advertising.

Staff determined that signs for Gene's Johns - a competitor that also is providing portable toilets for the inauguration - "can be easily peeled off," the spokesman said in an email. The Don's Johns logos cannot be removed easily "and are being covered with tape," the email said. Don's Johns has provided portable toilets for many major events in Washington, including the 2009 and 2013 inauguration ceremonies for President Barack Obama, Weghorst said. No logos were taped over during those events, he said. The Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies and the Presidential Inaugural Committee declined to comment. — AP

ANTI-TRUMP PROTESTS TO KICK OFF WITH CIVIL RIGHTS MARCH

WASHINGTON: A week of protests ahead of Donald Trump's inauguration as US president is set to kick off on Saturday with a civil rights march in Washington by activists angry over the Republican's comments on minority groups including Muslims and Mexicans. Civil rights leader the Reverend Al Sharpton plans to lead a march along the National Mall ending at the Martin Luther King Jr Memorial, about two miles from the steps of the US Capitol, where Trump will be sworn in as president on Jan. 20.

Trump won his first-ever campaign for elected office with an angry, populist platform that included promises to build a wall along the Mexican border and restrict immigration from Muslim countries, as well as promises to crack down on companies moving jobs out of the United States. His supporters admire Trump's experience in business, including as a real estate developer and reality television star, and view him as a brash problem-solver likely to break through political logjams.

Trump's controversial comments about immigrants and women, and his vow to repeal the sweeping healthcare reform law that was President Barack Obama's signature domestic policy achievement, has drawn the anger of many on the left, who plan a series

of protests. "The 2017 march will bring all people together to insist on change and accountability," Sharpton said. "Donald Trump and his administration need to hear our voice and our concerns."

Civil rights groups including Sharpton's National Action Network, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Council of La Raza, as well as Democratic lawmakers including US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand of New York plan to join the Saturday march. Organizers estimate Saturday's march will draw some 25,000 protesters. About 30 groups, almost all of them anti-Trump, have gotten permits to protest before, during and after the inauguration.

By far the biggest event will be the Women's March on Washington the day after the inauguration, which organizers say could draw 200,000 people. Thousands of demonstrators also have vowed to shut down the inauguration, including by closing off security checkpoints along the inaugural parade route. Washington police and the US Secret Service plan to have some 3,000 officers and an additional 5,000 National Guard troops on hand through the events, numbers they say will be sufficient to allow the inauguration and protests to go ahead peacefully. — Reuters

CUBA'S RAUL CASTRO MEETS WITH US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESIDENT

HAVANA: The head of the US Chamber of Commerce met with Cuban President Raul Castro and in separate meetings with members of Castro's economic cabinet on Friday, as they prepare for the advent of a more hostile Trump administration next week. The chamber has been urging the Cuban government to sign a number of agreements with major companies such as General Electric, negotiated over the last 18 months, before President-elect Donald Trump takes office on Jan 20.

A brief government statement said

chamber President Thomas Donohue and Castro discussed "issues of mutual interest." "The goal of the US business community has shifted from seeking more from Cuba to preserving what exists from the soon-to-be Trump administration," John Kavulich, president of the US-Cuba Trade and Economic Council, said.

"US companies need the Cuban government to quickly and substantially expand its purchases of products and services and permit a highly visible presence of companies," he said. Donohue

was accompanied by Maurice Greenberg, chairman and chief executive officer of CV Starr & Co Inc, a major US insurance company. The chamber has opposed the US trade embargo for decades and is a strong supporter of the normalization process begun by President Barack Obama.

That process has included the signing of 17 agreements between the two former Cold War foes and the use of executive orders to punch holes in the embargo, which can be lifted only by the US Congress, now controlled by

Republicans. Travel to the Communist-run Caribbean island from the United States has increased, with the start of direct flights and cruises and roaming agreements signed, but there have been no manufacturing or trade deals inked.

Cuba and the Obama administration have been scrambling to deepen and cement their detente, through bilateral agreements and commercial links, since Trump's election in November. Cuba agreed earlier this month to export charcoal to the United States, the first export

in half a century, and in December Google reached an agreement to place servers on the island to quicken access to its products.

Trump has said he will dismantle the still-fragile detente unless Cuba gives the United States a better deal, while providing no specifics. Trump is expected to review Cuba policy upon taking office and has named Jason Greenblatt, a Trump Organization executive and chief legal counsel, as negotiator for sensitive international issues, including Cuba. — Reuters

SUPREME COURT TAKES UP SUIT OVER 2001 MUSLIM DETENTION

DEPORTED AND TORTURED, MEN HOPE FOR JUSTICE

WASHINGTON: Ahmer Abbasi speaks softly as he describes the strip searches, the extra shoves, the curses that he endured in a federal jail in Brooklyn following the Sept 11 attacks. "I don't think I deserved it," Abbasi said during a telephone interview with The Associated Press from his home in Karachi, Pakistan.

Abbasi's quiet, matter-of-fact tone belies his determination, even after 15 years, to seek justice in American courts - provided the Supreme Court will let him. The justices on Wednesday are hearing an appeal from former Attorney General

money damages from them in their personal capacity," said Richard Samp, chief counsel at the Washington Legal Foundation and author of a brief from four former attorneys general.

Immigration violations

Abbasi was among more than 80 men who were picked up in the days and weeks following Sept 11 on immigration violations. Until then, he said he had been "living the American dream" since coming from Pakistan in 1993. He was living in Jersey City, New Jersey, across the river

the most restrictive conditions. He was strip-searched frequently and allowed out of his cell for no more than a couple of hours a day. He was deported in August 2002.

The Justice Department's inspector general produced two reports detailing problems with the detentions. The government settled an earlier suit involving five other men for \$1.2 million. Rachel Meeropol of the Center for Constitutional Rights will argue the Supreme Court case. Meeropol said the men she is representing were arrested without any evidence linking them to terrorism because they fit a profile in law enforcement's eyes. "They were a group of individuals who looked how they imagined the hijackers looked," Meeropol said.

Caught up in hysteria

A divided panel of the 2nd US Circuit Court of Appeals in New York said the men were detained "as if they were terrorists, in the most restrictive conditions of confinement available, simply because these individuals were, or appeared to be, Arab or Muslim." The appeals court said that the suit could go forward because "the suffering endured by those who were imprisoned merely because they were caught up in the hysteria of the days immediately following 9/11 is not without a remedy." The case stems from a class-action suit originally filed in 2002. It's the third time the court has intervened in lawsuits against Ashcroft and others from Muslims who were arrested in the US following the 2001 attacks. The justices have twice sided with Ashcroft.

The odds that the court will come out differently this time are long, especially because only six justices will take part. Justice Sonia Sotomayor was a member of the New York-based federal appeals court that heard an earlier version of the case and Justice Elena Kagan worked on the issue when she served in the Justice Department. One seat on the nine-member high court has been empty since Justice Antonin Scalia died in February.

Four justices - a majority of those taking part on Wednesday - voted to limit the ability to sue Ashcroft in the two earlier cases. Abbasi said he harbors no anger toward the United States. If anything, he misses his time there. His brother is an American citizen and his nephew recently graduated from Penn State. He said he tried to get a visa to attend the high court hearing. "I was denied for some reason," Abbasi said. So, too, were others who sought visas, Meeropol said. — AP



KARACHI: Ahmer Abbasi talks to the Associated Press. — AP

John Ashcroft, former FBI Director Robert Mueller and other former US officials that seeks to shut down the lawsuit that human rights lawyers have filed on behalf of Abbasi and others over their harsh treatment and prolonged detention.

"Somebody has to be accountable, somebody has to be responsible," said Abbasi, 42, who works in real estate in Pakistan. The former officials, including the top immigration enforcement officer and the warden and deputy warden at the New York City jail, say it should not be them. "Senior government officials should not be regularly second-guessed by lawsuits seeking

from Manhattan and driving a taxi in New York.

He acknowledges he remained in the United States after he should have left and that he entered into a fraudulent marriage so he could get a coveted "green card" that would allow him to stay in the US legally. He might never be caught except for the terrorist attacks and the aggressive response of officials who wanted to be sure there would be no follow-on strikes.

When he was arrested in late September 2001, Abbasi said he readily admitted he was in the country illegally and assumed he would be quickly deported. Instead, he was held for nearly 11 months, including more than four months in

TRUMP CRITICIZES CIVIL RIGHTS ICON

WASHINGTON: President-elect Donald Trump lashed out yesterday at a prominent civil rights icon and lawmaker who said he is skipping next week's inauguration ceremony because he sees the New York businessman's election as illegitimate. "Congressman John Lewis should spend more time on fixing and helping his district, which is in horrible shape and falling apart (not to mention crime infested) rather than falsely complaining about the election results," Trump said in a tweet. "All talk, talk, talk-no action or results. Sad!" he added.

Lewis, who represents a district in the southern state of Georgia that includes Atlanta and surrounding areas, on Friday became the most high-profile Democratic lawmaker to boycott Trump's inauguration. At least eight House Democrats have publicly stated they will not be attending Trump's swearing-in at the US Capitol next Friday, with several indicating their absence will be an act of political protest. "I don't see this president-elect as a legitimate president," Lewis told NBC's "Meet the Press" talk show in an interview that will air today. "I think the Russians participated in helping this man get elected. And they helped destroy the candidacy of Hillary Clinton," he said, adding that he will skip the presidential inauguration for the first time since becoming a member of Congress in 1987.

"You cannot be at home with something that you feel that is wrong." US intelligence organizations have accused Russia of cyberattacks on the Democratic National Committee and distributing hacked emails from senior Clinton aides in an effort to influence the US election. Lewis, 76, is known for his decades of work in the civil rights movement, and marched with Martin Luther King at the August 1963 rally in Washington at which King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech. Lewis took part in so-called Freedom Rides - challenges to segregated facilities at bus terminals in the South. On March 7, 1965, he led a march in Selma, Alabama that ended in an attack by state troopers on the protesters that later became known as "Bloody Sunday." — AFP



PERL: German chancellor Angela Merkel speaks at a news conference. — AP

MERKEL BACKS MULTILATERAL APPROACH AS TRUMP LOOMS

BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel is stressing as she awaits Donald Trump's inauguration that the world's problems need solving in cooperation, rather than by each country individually. Asked at a news conference yesterday about protectionist tendencies in the US, Merkel said she will seek a dialogue with the new president.

"I don't want to get ahead of that, but I am very much convinced that we as partners benefit more if we act together than if everyone solves problems for themselves, and that is a constant fundamental attitude on my part," she said. Underlining the importance of the Group of 20 industrial powers, which Germany chairs this year, she said that the international response to the financial crisis "was not a response based on isolation, but a response based on cooperation, on common rules for regulating financial markets, and I think that is the promising path."

'We'll wait for the inauguration'

Merkel has made clear that she's unhappy about the possible demise of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement as a result of Trump's desire to withdraw the United States. Trump has criticized Merkel's decision to allow large numbers of migrants into Germany. Merkel said there are contacts "at adviser level" with Trump's team, though there was no immediate word on any plans for a meeting beyond the summits of the Group of Seven and G-20 in

May and July respectively. Merkel will host the latter summit in the German city of Hamburg.

"We'll wait for the inauguration and then we will talk about this," she said at a news conference. Trump will be inaugurated on Friday. Merkel is seeking a fourth term in an election expected in September. Leaders of her conservative Christian Democratic Union met Friday and Saturday in Perl, in western Saarland state, to kick off the election year - which also features three state elections, the first in Saarland in March.

Merkel has said she expects her most difficult election yet, though she was confident Saturday that a simmering dispute with her allies in Bavaria, the Christian Social Union, won't get in the way of a joint conservative campaign.

The CSU has demanded for the past year an annual cap of 200,000 on the number of refugees Germany accepts, an idea Merkel rejects. Germany saw 890,000 asylum-seekers arrive in 2015 and 280,000 last year.

Merkel said leaders of her party agreed "that we can live with such a disagreement." She renewed her pledge of improved security following last month's deadly attack on a Berlin Christmas market. "We are making clear that every person has a right to security, and only those who are secure can live in freedom," she said. Germany's 16 states must have the same security standards, Merkel said, arguing that it's not sensible for regions to have different rules on matters such as video surveillance. — AP



CHICAGO: US Attorney Zachary T Fardon of the Northern District of Illinois speaks during a news conference accompanied by Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Vanita Gupta, left, Attorney General Loretta Lynch, and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel. — AP

CHICAGO POLICE VIOLATED CIVIL RIGHTS FOR YEARS, SAYS REPORT

CHICAGO: The Justice Department on Friday laid bare years of civil rights violations by Chicago police, blasting the nation's second-largest department for using excessive force that included shooting at people who did not pose a threat and using stun guns on others only because they refused to follow commands.

The report was issued after a yearlong investigation sparked by the 2014 death of a black teenager who was shot 16 times by a white officer. The federal investigation looked broadly at policing and concluded that officers were not sufficiently trained or supported and that many who were accused of misconduct were rarely investigated or disciplined.

The findings come just a week before a change in administration that could reorder priorities at the Justice Department. Under President Barack Obama, the government has conducted 25 civil rights investigations of police departments, including those in Cleveland, Baltimore and Seattle. President-elect Donald Trump's position on the federal review process is unclear. His nominee for attorney general has expressed reservations about the system, especially the reliance on courts to bring about changes.

Asked about the investigation's future, outgoing Attorney General Loretta Lynch said talks between Chicago and the government would go on regardless "of who is at the top of the Justice Department." The federal government's recommendations follow an especially bloody year on Chicago streets. The city logged 762 homicides in 2016, the highest tally in 20 years and more than the combined total of the two largest US cities - New York and Los Angeles.

Reputation for brutality

The Chicago department, with 12,000 officers, has long had a reputation for brutality, particularly in minority communities. The most notorious example was Jon Burge, commander of a detective unit on the South Side. Burge and his men beat, suffocated and used electric shock for decades starting in the 1970s to get black men to confess to crimes they did not commit.

Chicago officers endangered civilians, caused avoidable injuries and deaths and eroded community trust that is "the cornerstone of public safety," said Vanita Gupta, head of the Justice Department's civil rights division. The investigation began in December 2015 after the release of dashcam video showing the fatal shooting of 18-year-old Laquan McDonald, who was walking away from police holding a small folded knife. The video, which the city fought to keep secret, inspired large protests and cost the city's police commissioner his job.

Friday's report "confirms what civil rights lawyers have been saying for decades," said attorney Matt Topic, who helped lead the legal fight for the release of the McDonald footage. "It is momentous and pretty rewarding to see that finally confirmed by the US government." Investigators described a class for officers on the use of force that showed a video made 35 years ago - before key US Supreme Court rulings that affected police practices nationwide. When instructors spoke further on the topic, several recruits did not appear to be paying attention and at least one was sleeping, the report said.

Justice Department agents who questioned Chicago officers found that only 1 out of 6 who were in training or who just completed the police academy "came close to properly articulating the legal standard for use of force," the report said. Mayor Rahm Emanuel said the results of the investigation were "sobering" and pledged to make changes beyond those already adopted. Federal authorities and

city officials have signed an agreement that offers a broad outline for reform, including commitments to improved transparency, training and accountability for bad officers.

The report alluded to racial bias but did not center on it. A Department of Justice statement issued with the report said investigators "identified serious concerns about the prevalence of racially discriminatory conduct by some CPD officers and the degree to which that conduct is tolerated."

Black Lives Matter activists said they do not trust Emanuel to make real changes.

"I don't believe him any more than I believed him when he said that he never saw the Laquan McDonald video before the public saw it," said Arewa Karen Winters, who said she was the great-aunt of 16-year-old Pierre Lorry, who was fatally shot by police last year. Kofi Ademola said he was heartened by many of the government's conclusions. But with the Trump administration taking over, "we have no idea how this is going to play out."

Chicago has spent more than half a billion dollars to settle claims of police misconduct since 2004. But in half of those cases, police did not conduct disciplinary investigations, according to the federal report. Of 409 police shootings that happened over a five-year period, police found only two were unjustified. The Justice Department criticized the city for failing to investigate anonymous complaints or those submitted without a supporting affidavit and for having a "pervasive cover-up culture."

'Glacially slow'

Investigators said that witnesses and accused officers were frequently never interviewed, that evidence went uncollected and that witnesses were routinely coached by union lawyers. "The procedures surrounding investigations allow for ample opportunity for collusion among officers and are devoid of any rules prohibiting such coordination," the report said.

Misconduct investigations are "glacially slow," with discipline often "unpredictable and ineffective," said Gupta, who described how police used stun guns on people for no other reason than they did not obey officers' verbal commands. She also said officers do not get enough support to help them deal with the trauma of their jobs. Trump's pick for attorney general, Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, expressed concerns at his confirmation hearing this week about the process favored under Obama that relies on intense scrutiny by federal courts. He said he was concerned that such legal action risks smearing entire police departments and harming officer morale.

The head of Chicago's police union said the Justice Department hurried the investigation to release its findings before Trump takes office. Fraternal Order of Police President Dean Angelo questioned whether the investigation was compromised because of its timing.

The mayor said Friday that the city has already made some of the recommended changes, citing de-escalation training and stricter use-of-force policies. Emanuel also addressed the Justice Department's concern that officers do not have nearly enough supervision. He pointed to his decision to increase the number of lieutenants and other supervisors.

The McDonald video showed officer Jason Van Dyke shooting the teen even after he slumped to the ground. Not until the video was released more than a year later was Van Dyke charged with murder. He has pleaded not guilty. Police reports suggested a possible cover-up by other officers who were at the scene. — AP

THE AFRICAN LEADER REFUSING TO LEAVE

JOHANNESBURG: The tiny nation of Gambia has West Africa on the brink of a military intervention, and thousands are fleeing the country. Longtime President Yahya Jammeh is refusing to step down after losing elections. On Thursday, President-elect Adama Barrow intends to go through with his inauguration, with the support of the international community. Here's a look at the crisis.

I CONCEDE ... NO, I DON'T

At first, Jammeh stunned Gambians by conceding his election loss on live television. A week later, he announced he had changed his mind, saying "only Allah" could deny him victory. After taking

power more than 22 years ago in a bloodless coup, Jammeh has been accused of leading a government that detains, tortures and even kills opponents. He is no stranger to striking declarations: In late 2015, he abruptly announced Gambia to be an Islamic republic. In 2013, he decided to leave the Commonwealth.

A LEGAL CHALLENGE, BUT IS THERE A COURT?

Jammeh's ruling party is challenging the Dec. 1 election results, saying there were irregularities in the vote, but the country's Supreme Court says it could take months to act because it is short of judges. Jammeh has invited judges from Nigeria

and Sierra Leone to complete the court, but that is not expected to happen until May. It is not clear what will happen if Barrow is inaugurated next week and the court later decides in Jammeh's favor.

NEIGHBORS PREPARE TROOPS

An attempt on Friday by West African leaders to persuade Jammeh to change his mind and step down failed. Though diplomatic efforts continue, the Economic Community of West African States has a standby military force ready to enter Gambia if Jammeh doesn't cede power when his mandate ends on Thursday. If the use of force is necessary, ECOWAS will seek the endorsement of the UN

Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council to deploy the troops, the UN special representative for West Africa and the Sahel, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, said Friday. Gambia, a nation of 1.9 million people, is estimated to have an army of just 900 troops.

A CONTINENT SHIFTS AWAY

If Jammeh doesn't step down on Thursday, whether peacefully or not - he briefly sent troops to occupy the electoral commission office during the crisis - the African Union will cease to recognize him as Gambia's legitimate leader, the AU's Peace and Security Council said Friday. — AP

LAWMAKERS URGE MAY TO CLARIFY BREXIT INTENTIONS

LONDON: A committee of British lawmakers is urging Prime Minister Theresa May to clarify her intentions on Brexit - particularly whether she intends to keep Britain in the European Union's large single market. The House of Commons' Exiting the EU committee urged May to publish her plan soon and to give lawmakers a vote on whatever deal is concluded with the 28-nation EU. Their report was released yesterday, just days before May is to deliver her vision about Britain's post-EU future in a major speech.

"This is going to be a hugely complex task and the outcome will affect us all," committee chair Hilary Benn said. "The government needs to publish its Brexit plan by mid-February at the latest, including its position on membership of the single market and the customs union, so that it can be scrutinized by Parliament and the public."

Members of the committee also warned that the task of preparing for Brexit was placing a "strain" on departments across the British government and said more staff may be required. The committee is seeking a framework of the UK's future trading relationship with the EU as part of the Article 50 negotiations - arguing that trans-

sitional arrangements would be needed for trade to continue if a deal wasn't complete by 2019.

It acknowledged, though, that Britain's government may not be in a position to deliver this objective, since it would also depend on the other 27 members of the EU. "The UK's relationship with the EU is deep and complex, not least in terms of the legal rights of parties in both the UK and the EU-27," the report said. "It would be unsatisfactory and potentially damaging to both sides were the UK to leave the EU with no agreement having been reached."

The committee said it was important that financial service providers have confidence in the new arrangements and that the government should seek to ensure continued access to EU markets by way of continuing passporting rights. The principle of "passporting" allows any firm registered in one EU country to operate in any other member state without facing another layer of regulation. It allows EU exporters to ship their goods to any EU country free of tariffs. Losing that freedom is a particular concern for the many foreign firms in London who use the British capital not only as a financial hub but as an entry point into the EU. — AP



BANJUL: In this photo released by the Nigeria State House, Nigeria President Muhammadu Buhari, left, Liberia President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, second from left, Gambia President, Yahya Jammeh, centre, former Ghana President, John Dramani Mahama and an unidentified woman during a meeting. — AP

GAMBIAN CRISIS TO TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT SUMMIT

JAMMEH MADE CLEAR HE WILL NOT STAND ASIDE

BAMAKO: Gambian president-elect Adama Barrow was due to meet world leaders yesterday at a summit jointly hosted by France in Mali as the international community strives for an end to the Gambia's political crisis. Barrow flew to Bamako unexpectedly after holding crisis talks in Banjul with Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, Liberian leader Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Ghana's John Mahama.

The delegation of West African heavyweights also met with Gambian President Yahya Jammeh, who is refusing to cede power after disputing a December 1 election result that declared Barrow the winner. In a sign of Barrow's growing international clout, a French diplomatic source told AFP that President Francois Hollande "intends to meet" Barrow, while the former businessman was due to sit down with west African leaders to discuss his nation's future.

The Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS), a 15-nation bloc, has repeatedly called on Jammeh to respect the result of the vote that delivered Barrow to victory, and step down after 22 years in power. Jammeh has made clear he will not stand aside until the country's Supreme Court decides on his legal challenge seeking to annul the results of last month's polls, which he initially conceded losing.

The ruling is unlikely to happen before May.

There are just four days left of Jammeh's five-year term, but he warned the international community on Tuesday that "undue external interference" was unnecessary. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel, said Friday that ECOWAS would ask the Security Council to approve the deployment of troops to the Gambia if Jammeh refuses to cede power.

Security tops agenda

Heads of state from at least 30 nations were due in Bamako to also discuss the fight against jihad, governance challenges and Africa's role in the European migrant crisis. Many of the nations attending the gathering were once colonies of France, which in recent years has boosted its military involvement on the continent. Also present are Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe and Rwandan leader Paul Kagame, who have a particularly tense relationship with Paris.

In a bid to help crush the jihadist threat, France has trained more than 20,000 African soldiers every year since 2013, according to a French diplomatic source. By 2020 the number of French-trained troops is expected to reach 25,000 a year. The training drive aims to minimize the need for direct military interventions in African conflicts, such as those launched in Mali and the Central African Republic in 2013.

Counter-terror operation

However the situation in key nations such as Mali remains far from stable, where France continued military presence is not universally welcomed. Overshadowing the summit was an admission by the French defense ministry on Friday that French soldiers deployed to northern Mali had killed a child jihadist during a counter-terror operation in November.

According to the French-language magazine Jeune Afrique, the victim was buried in secret by the soldiers. Hollande said Friday that those battling jihad in Africa and the Middle East were like France part of "the same fight" against extremism, visiting French soldiers at a military base in the northern Malian city of Gao. "The terrorists who attack our land, who commit acts on our soil, are allied with those who are in the Levant, in Iraq and Syria, but here as well, in the Sahel," Hollande said.

Elsewhere, discussions were expected on the abuse of African constitutions. In recent years leaders like Kagame have altered their constitutions to remove term limits, to the dismay of democracy advocates on the continent. Another concern for the summit is unrest in Democratic Republic of Congo, where President Joseph Kabila's refusal to step down has sparked a political crisis. — AFP



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May, right, and New Zealand's Prime Minister Bill English speak during a press conference at 10 Downing Street. — AP

US MAN CHARGED IN SAUDI COLLEGE STUDENT'S DEATH

MADISON, Wisconsin: A Minnesota man with a string of domestic violence convictions was charged in the death of a Saudi Arabian college student stemming from a confrontation in northwestern Wisconsin last year, prosecutors said Friday. Cullen Osburn, 27, of Minneapolis, was charged with felony murder and

Dunn County District Attorney Andrea Nodolf told the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram newspaper that Osburn was arrested in Minnesota and would have to be extradited. No details of the arrest were given, and Nodolf's office told AP she wouldn't comment. The complaint is dated Nov 14 but wasn't filed until Thursday, suggesting Nodolf was waiting until Osburn was in custody. A message left with Menomonie police wasn't immediately returned. Alnahdi, from Buraydah, Saudi Arabia, was a business major at the UW campus in Menomonie. The university campus reportedly enrolls some 9,600 students, including a group of about 140 from Saudi Arabia.

According to the criminal complaint, police responding to a fight outside a Menomonie pizza restaurant during the early-morning hours of Oct 30 found Alnahdi unconscious and bleeding from his nose and mouth. He died the next day; an autopsy determined he had suffered a skull fracture. Osburn's brother, Deontre Hughes, told police he saw Alnahdi and another man pushing Osburn. He said that Osburn swung at Alnahdi after Alnahdi ripped Osburn's necklace off. Another witness, Nina Simonette, told police she saw a man talking to Alnahdi, who put his hands up in the air as if to say he didn't want a problem. The man then hit Alnahdi twice, she told police.

Detectives received a call from Osburn on Nov 2, two days after Alnahdi's death, the complaint said. Osburn said he was scared and wanted to cooperate with police but wanted an attorney with him. "The defendant was adamant that the altercation was not a result of anybody's race but did not want to say anything else without a lawyer," the complaint said. He called police on Nov 3 to say he would call them the following day to schedule an interview but never called back and detectives couldn't find him.

Osburn faces up to six years in prison on each charge, with more possible time due to convictions in Minnesota, including several for domestic abuse and violating no-contact orders going back to 2008. — AP



Cullen Osburn



Hussain Alnahdi

aggravated battery in the death of University of Wisconsin-Stout student Hussain Alnahdi, 24, in October. Authorities began speaking with Osburn soon after Alnahdi's death, but he disappeared after telling police the altercation wasn't based on race and promising to come in to talk to detectives, according to the criminal complaint. Online court records didn't list a defense attorney.

IVORY COAST ANNOUNCES DEAL TO END STANDOFF WITH SOLDIERS

BOUAKE: Ivory Coast announced a deal Friday night to end a standoff with soldiers who staged a mutiny last week, though the terms were not confirmed and it was unclear whether security would be fully restored in Africa's fastest-growing economy. The deal was reached after tense negotiations in Bouake, the country's second-largest city, between soldiers and a delegation led by the defense minister, said government spokesman Bruno Kone.

In the hours before the deal was announced, hundreds of soldiers converged on the house where the negotiations were taking place, and gunfire erupted at multiple military bases in Abidjan, the commercial capital. The mutineers' demands included unpaid bonuses, higher salaries, faster promotions and improved living conditions. The bonuses amounted to nearly \$20,000 each for more than 8,000 soldiers, according to several people who participated in the negotiations.

Officials would not confirm the terms of the deal, but one soldier, who insisted on anonymity, said the government had agreed to pay the bonuses in installments beginning with payments of over \$8,000 to each soldier on Monday. If accurate, the resolution could end up costing the government over \$150 million for the bonuses alone.

It is the second time the government has announced a deal to end the standoff. President Alassane Ouattara said a deal was reached Jan 7, one day after the mutiny began. But almost as soon as that first deal was announced, some soldiers in Bouake made clear they were dissatisfied with it, firing their weapons and temporarily holding the defense minister hostage.



BOUAKE: Presidential military personnel patrol on the street. — AFP

Decade of turmoil

Ouattara came to power in 2011 after a post-election crisis that claimed more than 3,000 lives. The crisis was triggered by former President Laurent Gbagbo's refusal to accept defeat and step down. It capped more than a decade of turmoil that began with the country's first coup in 1999. Ivory Coast has seen about 10 mutinies since 1990, with the most recent taking place in 2014.

Ouattara has criticized the soldiers' tactics during the latest crisis, and many Ivoirians expressed frustration with the renewed unrest. Before the talks began Friday, soldiers fired weapons to disperse a protest by civilians in

Bouake who were angry that the standoff had disrupted economic activity in the city, said Fanta Kourouma, a Bouake resident.

The security situation deteriorated quickly Friday evening, with soldiers assuming control of main roads in Bouake. Phone service to the city was severely impaired for several hours. In Abidjan, witnesses reported gunfire at military installations in the residential Cocody district and in the central Plateau district, where Camp Gallieni, the army headquarters, is located. A gendarmerie official in Plateau, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief the press, said he heard shots near the gendarmerie headquarters there. — AP

CHINA AIRCRAFT CARRIER CAPABILITIES TESTED

BEIJING: China's sole aircraft carrier has returned home following a far-ranging three-week training mission during which its combat capabilities were closely scrutinized and speculation soared over what future role the flat-top will play amid China's growing military ambitions. The Defense Ministry said the 60,000-ton Liaoning sailed in to the eastern port of Qingdao on Friday along with its battle group that includes destroyers, frigates, a supply ship and anti-submarine craft.

The ministry quoted the group's commander, Rear Adm. Chen Yueqi, as saying the drill simulated real combat as closely as possible and "achieved all targets set for it." China commissioned the carrier in 2012 and declared it combat ready in November, shortly after which it launched its first live-fire exercises. The cruise that began on Christmas Day took it through the Miyako Strait, south of Okinawa, Japan, and then the Bashi Channel separating Taiwan from the Philippines as it entered the disputed South China Sea that China claims virtually in its entirety.

Military muscle

It headed home through the Taiwan Strait in

what was seen by many as a threatening message to the island's independence-leaning President Tsai Ing-wen. Taiwan's Defense Ministry said it was closely monitoring the passage but that there was no cause for alarm. China and Taiwan split amid civil war in 1949 and Beijing has vowed never to renounce its threat to use force to recover what it considers lost territory.

Japanese and Taiwanese surveillance aircraft and ships closely monitored the Liaoning along its journey, seen by some as a sign of how China plans to use it to demonstrate its willingness to back up its territorial claims with military muscle. The Liaoning originated in 1990 as the unfinished Varyag for the now-defunct Soviet fleet. Purchased as a shell by China in 1998, it was towed from the Black Sea to the northeastern Chinese port of Dalian where it underwent an extensive overhaul of its hull, radar, electronics and other systems.

Designated first as an experimental and training platform, the Liaoning represents a new degree of sophistication in the Chinese armed forces that includes ballistic missile submarines and prototype stealth fighters. It's also considered a blueprint for

future Chinese carriers built using entirely domestic technology, at least one of which has been under construction since 2015. Yet, analysts point out major limitations in both the carrier's design and the Chinese navy's ability to utilize its full capabilities. Considerably smaller than the 100,000-ton U.S. Nimitz-class carriers, it can carry just 24 fixed-wing aircraft compared to 55 for the American flat-tops, according to a recent report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

'Ski jump'

While the Liaoning's J-15 multirole fighters - a Chinese version of the Russian Su-33 - are highly capable, they lack the low-observable stealth technology of fifth-generation fighters such as the US F-35C. CSIS also says the ship's Soviet steam turbine power plant was badly designed and poorly maintained, probably limiting it to a typical speed of around 20 knots. That is far slower than the Nimitz-class' 30 knots, meaning it would take longer to arrive at target and be less able to flee from threats.

Its aircraft are also launched from a "ski jump"

style deck rather than the powerful steam catapults that US carriers use, requiring China's jets to use more fuel for takeoff and limiting them to smaller payloads. The Liaoning's pilots and crew are also far less experienced than their American counterparts, although they benefit from lessons learned by the US and others in the decades since carriers entered operation, CSIS said. Other analysts point out that the Liaoning doesn't appear yet able to launch and recover aircraft at night, a crucial ingredient for combat effectiveness.

The CSIS study concludes that those shortcomings make the Liaoning unsuited for "sustained, high-intensity combat operations," at least for now. That will likely restrict it to humanitarian aid and disaster relief operations, training and diplomatic missions and cruises in the South China Sea asserting Beijing's territorial claims. Despite that, the Liaoning "represents an important step in advancing China's ability to project naval power," the study said. "Regardless of the Liaoning's future abilities, the ship commands a degree of political utility as a tool of naval diplomacy through various operations, regional and global." — AP

CRITICS MOCKED, HISTORY REVISED: CHINA NATIONALISM STRENGTHENS RETROGRADE STRAIN OF POPULIST NATIONALISM

BEIJING: Writer Lu Yong had merely wanted to show support for a professor who had taken flak online for criticizing Mao Zedong, the founder of the communist state who died more than four decades ago. Yet minutes after raising a sign to defend Deng Xiaochao's right to free speech, Lu found himself surrounded by a group of Mao supporters who grappled at his face. Other companions were punched and kicked.

Video taken hours later showed the Mao loyalists parading through the campus of eastern China's Jinan University with large banners while chanting "Down with Deng Xiaochao, down with traitors." Within days, Deng was forced to

totalitarianism." The Chinese president and party leader, Xi Jinping, is largely seen as setting the tone for the newly conformist attitude.

The son of a Mao confederate steeped in party lore, Xi set the tone shortly after taking power in 2012, with a major speech in which he said that the latter 30 years of Communist Party rule - a period of economic and political reform - should not be considered a repudiation of the first 30 years under Mao. More recently, authorities have warned against liberal Western values in the classroom, rounded up lawyers and civil society activists - along with corrupt officials - and promoted a cult of personality around Xi

been blamed for tens of millions of deaths through famine and political upheaval. Observers compare Deng's removal and similar incidents to the frenzied persecutions of the 1966-1976 Cultural Revolution, when street mobs and radical "Red Guards" unleashed by Mao harassed, humiliated, imprisoned and sometimes killed ideological opponents.

Lambast intellectuals

Mao supporters, largely retired workers and military veterans, increasingly gather to praise the former leader in public. Online, Maoist communities lambast public intellectuals or party members who criticize Mao - even in jest - with the apparent assent of the authorities. Song Yongyi, a Cultural Revolution historian based in California, said he was concerned about a "revived use of mass movements to suppress discourse and spread fear."

"These are the same tactics of using Red Guards to defend the government," Song said. Maoist blogger Lu Qi said pro-Mao actions have skyrocketed due to growing inequality and working-class frustration with capitalism. He praised Deng's ouster as democracy in action. "Deng Xiaochao's speech clearly violated political correctness," Lu said. "I believe everyone should bear responsibility for their own illegal speech." Another well-known Maoist blogger Zhang Hongliang praised the Jinan police for allowing the campus protest. "This is probably the first time in 20 or 30 years that anti-riot police or armed police were not deployed against leftist protests and demonstrations," Zhang wrote. "This is a sign that we've reached a turning point." Utopia, an online gathering place for Maoists and hard liners, this week celebrated the recent ousting of public figures for "anti-Mao, anti-Xi, anti-party" speech, among them Bi Fujian, a prominent TV host suspended by China Central Television after a video surfaced of him mocking Mao at a private event.

Following Deng's removal, online Maoists quickly moved on in search of other targets. Spotting social media posts from a television producer in support of Deng, they complained and he was swiftly suspended from his job. In Jinan, which suffered some of the worst convulsions of the Cultural Revolution, the Maoist community is making its presence felt. Supporters gather in public parks to spread Mao's teachings and denounce corruption - sometimes attacking critics like Lu, the writer who sought to defend the professor. "Even if Deng said something wrong, he should be held accountable according to the law, not be attacked this way, like during the Cultural Revolution," Lu said. "As a writer, I cannot watch the basic freedom of speech disappear." — AP



BEIJING: In this Thursday, Jan 12, 2017 photo, a woman carries a child past a portrait of late Chinese leader Mao Zedong displayed at a photo printing shop. — AP

retire and stripped of his Communist Party titles. State media justified his dismissal. Across China, a retrograde strain of populist nationalism is gaining strength as the ruling Communist Party intensifies its control over history and ideology. Those who question the party's interpretations find their careers and reputations threatened, while their persecutors receive tacit and sometimes outright support from the authorities.

'Working class anger'

"They are shutting down speech that's not aligned with the party," said Feng Chongyi, a China scholar at Sydney's University of Technology. "Populism and the manipulation of working class anger, combined with nationalism and xenophobia are the classic signs of Chinese

likened to that surrounding Mao.

Earlier this week, the Education Ministry ordered that textbooks move the start of China's war against Japanese invaders six years back to 1931, calling it a "14-year" war, apparently to broaden the scope of the struggle from which the party derives its legitimacy. Last year, a Beijing court found a writer guilty of libel after he challenged the veracity of a famous tale of Communist Party soldiers sacrificing themselves against the Japanese. Liberal editors of a respected history journal were ousted last year.

Deng initially attracted critics' ire in December when he mused online that millions of Chinese lives would have been saved had Mao died decades earlier - a view not unusual among intellectual circles. Mao's policies have



DHAKA: Bangladesh police escort alleged Islamist militant Jahangir Alam (C) in Dhaka yesterday, after his arrest in connection with an attack on the Holey Artisan Bakery last year. — AFP

BANGLADESH ARRESTS ANOTHER PLOTTER BEHIND CAFE SIEGE

DHAKA: Bangladesh police yesterday said they have arrested an Islamist extremist accused of being one of the "masterminds" of last year's deadly siege at a Dhaka cafe where 22 hostages were killed. A police spokesman said Jahangir Alam was detained Friday night by counter-terrorism forces in Elenga, a town some 120 kilometers north of the capital.

"He is one of the main masterminds of the Holey Artisan Bakery (cafe) attack," Yusuf Ali, an additional deputy commissioner of the Dhaka police force, told AFP. "He was a member of a new faction of Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and was directly involved in the murder of at least 22 religious minorities including Hindu priests and a Christian and foreigners (at the cafe)," he said.

Japanese and Italian diners were among the 18 foreigners shot and hacked to death in the attack on July 1 last year. The siege lasted for 10 hours until army commandos, using armored vehicles, stormed the compound. Sanwar Hossain, an additional deputy commissioner of the police's counter-terrorism and transnational crime unit, said Alam was a close associate of Tamim Chowdhury, a Bangladeshi Canadian who was named as the primary architect of the cafe siege.

Islamist crackdown

"(Alam) was notorious. He led around two dozen attacks on religious minorities outside the capital," he told AFP. Alam, 32, was present with Chowdhury at a Dhaka hideout where they planned and organized

the cafe attack, Hossain added. The arrest comes a week after police killed two Islamist extremists including another plotter of the cafe siege in a shootout in Dhaka. Chowdhury was killed during a raid outside the capital in August last year. The country's security forces launched a deadly crackdown against Islamist extremists following the attack, which badly undermined Bangladesh's reputation as a relatively moderate Muslim nation.

Since the siege, security forces have killed around 50 Islamist extremists, including most of the alleged leaders of Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh. However, the Islamic State (IS) organization also claimed responsibility for the cafe attack, posting images of the carnage as it happened and photos of the gunmen who had posed with the group's black flag. Bangladesh is reeling from a wave of attacks on foreigners, rights activists and members of religious minorities.

While many of those attacks have been claimed by IS or Al-Qaeda, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's secular government has blamed local militants, denying that international jihadists have gained a foothold in Bangladesh. Critics say Hasina's administration is in denial about the nature of the threat posed by Islamist extremists and accuse her of trying to exploit the attacks to demonize her domestic opponents. Last August US Secretary of State John Kerry said during a visit to Dhaka that there was evidence to link the extremists behind the recent spate of deadly attacks in Bangladesh to IS. — AFP

SOUTH KOREAN HOSTAGE RELEASED IN PHILIPPINES

JOLO: A South Korean captain and a Filipino crewman abducted by suspected Islamist militants off the southern Philippines were released yesterday, authorities said, ending a three-month ordeal where they endured beatings and hunger. The Philippine military said armed men identifying themselves as Abu Sayyaf militants kidnapped the pair from a South Korean cargo ship in October last year, the first such attack on a large merchant vessel.

Jesus Dureza, a senior aide to President Rodrigo Duterte, fetched the freed hostages in Sulu, a remote archipelago known as a militant hideout, and brought them to Davao, a city about 600 kilometres (370 miles) from Sulu. The two seafarers were beaten by their captors and forced to sleep in the jungle while eating dried fish and drinking unclean water, Dureza said. "We were almost hopeless but I am thankful we were able to come home safely," Filipino crewman Glenn Alindajao, 31, said in a news briefing.

South Korean captain Park Chung-Hung, 38, did not speak with reporters but like Alindajao, appeared weak and grew a beard while in captivity. The abduction on board the 11,400-tonne heavy load carrier Dong Bang Giant 2 occurred just off the southern entry of the Sibutu Passage, a 29-kilometre (18-mile) wide channel used by merchant shipping in transit between the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea.

The cargo ship was heading for South Korea from Australia. The freed captives were flown to the capital Manila yesterday afternoon to undergo debriefing and a medical examination. "They were physically maltreated without any provocation," Dureza told AFP. "They have been very stressed out. They were moved from one place to another, sometimes sleeping in forests, different



DAVAO CITY: Captain Chul Hong Park (L), a South Korean national, and 2nd officer Filipino Glenn Alindajao (2L), two hostages released in Jolo Sulu, arrive in Davao City with Philippine Peace Adviser Secretary Jesus Dureza (2nd R). — AFP

houses, eating just dried fish and drinking water from brooks." Dureza said the Muslim rebel group the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which is in peace talks with the government, helped in facilitating the hostages' release. The ship's owners also negotiated for their freedom, according to Dureza, adding that he was not aware if a ransom was paid to Abu Sayyaf, which does not normally free hostages without huge sums of money.

Armed security?

The Abu Sayyaf is a loose network of mili-

tants formed in the 1990s with seed money from Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network, and has earned millions of dollars from kidnappings-for-ransom. Abu Sayyaf militants beheaded two Canadian hostages last year after demands for millions of dollars were not met, and released a Norwegian man along with a number of Indonesian and Malaysian sailors after ransoms were believed to be paid.

This week the group released a video showing an elderly German sailor abducted at sea last year was alive. — AFP

JAPAN, AUSTRALIA AGREE TO STRENGTHEN DEFENSE TIES

SYDNEY: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met his Australian counterpart Malcolm Turnbull in Sydney yesterday where the pair agreed to deepen defense ties through joint military training and exercises. Abe's visit to Australia is the first since Turnbull became prime minister in late 2015, and comes amid heightened regional tension as China asserts its claims over disputed territory in the South China Sea.

"We have confirmed our commitment to the rule of law, free trade and open markets in our region," Turnbull told reporters at a joint press conference yesterday. Abe said the increasingly uncertain geopolitical landscape made the relationship between Japan and Australia more important than ever. "It is important to guard and increase the robustness of the free, open and rules-based international order," Abe said.

The two leaders announced the signing of an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), which will increase cooperation in combined exercises, training and peace-keeping operations. The agreement is expected to be finalized by the end of 2017. The announcement

comes nearly nine months after Australia chose a French bid over a Japanese design for a new fleet of submarines.

The loss of the \$40 billion contract was a major blow for Abe's ambitions to develop Japan's defence export capabilities as part of a more muscular security agenda. Japan, as well as Australia, is looking to protect its strategic and trade interests in Asia-Pacific, especially as China becomes increasingly assertive in the South China Sea. Both leaders also reaffirmed the importance of their respective security alliances with the United States yesterday.

China's recent naval exercises in the South China Sea and the building of islands there, with military assets, has unnerved its neighbors and risks a fallout with the United States. US president-elect Donald Trump's nominee for secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, has said China should be denied access to islands it has built in the South China Sea. China claims most of the resource-rich South China Sea through which about \$5 trillion in shipborne trade passes every year. Neighbors Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam also have claims. — Reuters



VATICAN CITY: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (left) exchanges gifts with Pope Francis during a private audience at the Vatican yesterday. —AFP

ABBAS WARNS AGAINST US EMBASSY MOVE

Continued from Page 1

status of Jerusalem, also claimed by the Palestinians as capital of their future state, an issue to be settled by negotiation. "Any attempts at legitimizing the illegal Israeli annexation of the city will destroy the prospects of any political process, bury the hopes for a two-state solution, and fuel extremism in our region, as well as worldwide," Abbas said. "In this moment, we extend our hand to President-elect Trump for his cooperation to make peace based on international law," he added.

Abbas met with Pope Francis for 20 minutes ahead of the embassy opening. Among the gifts exchanged, Abbas offered the pontiff a stone from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, according to Greg Burke, spokesman for the Holy See. A Vatican statement regard-

ing Israel and the Palestinians added: "Hope was expressed that direct negotiations between the parties may be resumed to bring an end to the violence that causes unacceptable suffering to civilian populations, and to find a just and lasting solution."

The private audience was the third meeting between Francis and Abbas. The pontiff visited Israel and the Palestinian Territories in 2014 and Abbas made a trip to the Vatican the following year for the canonization of two Palestinian nuns. Relations between the Vatican and the Palestinian Authority turned a new page in 2015 with the signing of an agreement to create a Palestinian embassy at the Vatican. The agreement - two years after the Vatican recognized Palestine as a state - provoked the ire of Israel, which was also angered when Francis called Abbas "an angel of peace" during their meeting in May 2015. — AFP

SAUDI MUFTI WARNS OF 'DEPRAVITY' OF CINEMA...

Continued from Page 1

Developing tourism and entertainment in the desert kingdom is one of the wide-ranging goals of Saudi Arabia Vision 2030 announced in April. The entertainment authority has lined up several events, but a show by American stand-up comedian and actor Mike Epps at

a university campus in western Saudi Arabia was cancelled last month. In addition to cinemas, the Muslim kingdom bans mixing in public and alcohol is prohibited. Women are not allowed to drive and must obtain permits from their male guardians for several essential activities, including work and travel. They must also cover from head to toe when in public. — Agencies

CONSTRUCTION OF AIRPORT TERMINAL...

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Assistant undersecretary for road engineering Ahmad Al-Hassan told the press that 71 percent of the Subiyah link has been completed - where the main causeway crosses Kuwait Bay linking the Shuwaikh Port area on the south side of the bay to the Subiyah new town area to the north. The causeway's total length is 36.14 km, and that the total cost of the project is KD 738.75 million. Hassan added 51 percent of the Doha link has also been completed, which crosses the south of Kuwait Bay linking Shuwaikh Port with Doha motorway.

The ministry of public works, the owner of the project, always conducts inspection visits to follow up on

the progression of the work plan, he pointed out. In cooperation with the Environment Public Authority, periodical reports are being written on any environmental impacts of the causeway - reports have been shown no negative effect on marine and land environment, Hassan said.

The Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Causeway is one of the largest infrastructure projects to be constructed in the GCC region. The causeway project provides new strategic highway routes to facilitate planned development to the north of Kuwait City. It reduces distance between Kuwait City and Subiyah from 104 km to 36 km, decreasing the journey time from 90 minutes to less than 30 minutes. — KUNA

US MILITARY SHIFTS AWAY FROM OIL, GOING...

Continued from Page 1

change, Bryan said. Trump's transition team did not respond to questions about whether it would end the strategy.

Republican lawmakers have said the Pentagon has propped up the alternative energy industry, investing in programs that are not sustainable. The Defense Department has been working toward generating 25 percent of its power from renewable sources by 2025. The Navy and Marine Corps set a goal to draw half of its power from renewable energy sources by 2020. GOP legislators have criticized the Obama administration for spending roughly \$120 billion on climate change initiatives while putting in motion \$1 trillion in defense cuts.

"I hope the new administration allows the US military to focus on the most important defense issues like fighting ISIS, defending from Iranian and North Korean belligerence, and guarding against aggression from China and Russia," Colorado Republican Rep Ken Buck said in a statement to The Associated Press. "Our military should use the most cost-efficient fuel sources, rather than burning money on green energy experiments."

The most contentious initiative has been the purchase of biofuel for ships. Critics say while ships may leave port with a biofuel mix, they still must rely on foreign oil in many places near battlefields and the plant-based fuel has become more expensive than traditional fuel. According to a 2015 report from the Government Accountability Office, Congress' research arm, the Pentagon paid \$58.6 million for 2 million

gallons of alternative fuel from 2007 to 2014, or about \$29 per gallon. At the same time, it spent \$107.2 billion for 32 billion gallons of petroleum, paying about \$3 per gallon.

Legislators passed a law in 2012 prohibiting the Pentagon from buying biofuels in bulk unless the price is competitive with that of petroleum. As a result, the Great Green Fleet's carrier strike group set sail in early 2016 using a mix of 90 percent petroleum and only 10 percent biofuels made from beef fat. The Navy originally aimed for the ratio to be 50-50. "The Obama administration found a way to make a market for biofuels within the DOD and they did that by saying it was critical to national defense, even though petroleum is not in short supply by any means," said Rachel Zissimos, a research assistant at the conservative Heritage Foundation. "The climate change agenda within the DOD was a way to impose these renewable energy mandates on the DOD. I think the climate change issues can be dropped very quickly."

Green energy supporters are banking on Mattis, Trump's defense secretary choice, who helped usher in the Pentagon's shift toward renewable energy by challenging the Defense Department to "unleash us from the tether of fuel" during the Iraq war. Zissimos said Mattis made the challenge when problems with maintaining fuel levels hindered the advance of US forces and troops were going on supply runs through enemy territory, causing casualties. She expects Trump's administration will support initiatives that help the military but not necessarily the planet - in contrast to Obama who was driven by combatting climate change. — AP

'MOMMA' CHARGED WITH STEALING TEEN...

Continued from Page 1

She cried "Momma" through the caged window of a security door after Williams waived extradition to Florida, according to WXJT-TV, which posted a video online

Meanwhile, the young woman's birth family cried "tears of joy" after a detective told them their baby had been found. Within hours Friday, they were able to reconnect over FaceTime. "She looks just like her daddy," her paternal grandmother, Velma Aiken of Jacksonville, told AP after they were able to see each other for the first time. "She act like she been talking to us all the time. She told us she'd be here soon to see us."

Mobley was only eight hours old when she was taken from her young mother by a woman posing as a nurse at University Medical Center. A massive search ensued, with helicopters circling the hospital and the city on high alert. Thousands of tips came in over the years, but she had disappeared. Some months ago, the young woman "had an inclination" that she may have been kidnapped, the sheriff said. Authorities didn't say why she suspected this.

The case broke thanks to a tip received by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, said Robert Lowery, a center vice president. He would not say from whom the tip came. But the center soon reached out to the cold case detectives at the sheriff's office, and Mobley provided a swab of her cheek for DNA analysis that proved the match, the sheriff said. "This was something brand new to all of us," said Stephens, Williams' cousin.

The center has tracked 308 infant abductions since 1983 by nonfamily members in the US Of those cases, 12 were still missing at the end of last month. That's now

one number smaller. The woman has been provided with counseling, the sheriff said. Meanwhile, Aiken is thrilled to know that they can speak with each other as much as they want. "I always prayed, 'Don't let me die before I see my grandbaby,'" said Aiken. "My prayer was answered."

The family never forgot the little girl ripped from her mother's arms that day in 1998. Her mother, Shanara Mobley, told the Florida Times-Union newspaper on the 10th anniversary of the kidnapping that on every one of Kamiyah's birthdays, she wrapped a piece of birthday cake in foil and stuck it in her freezer. "It's stressful to wake up every day, knowing that your child is out there and you have no way to reach her or talk to her," Mobley told the paper in 2008.

News moved quickly through the community of about 5,100 people early Friday after police cars swarmed Williams' home. Jenkins said he awoke to see officers searching the house and the shed around back. "At the fish market, the hairdresser, the gas station, they're all talking about it," said Ruben Boatwright, who said he's known Williams for about 15 years.

Lakeshia Jenkins, Joseph's wife, said Williams and the girl would often come over for cookouts in the yard, or join their family at a nearby water park. Kamiyah seemed to be well cared for, and "Ms Williams, she seemed like a normal person," Jenkins said. "She went to work, came back here and went to church every Sunday," she said. Williams also worked for the Department of Veterans Affairs' hospital in Charleston, volunteered in the area for Habitat for Humanity and lead the youth program at a Methodist church, she said. "She's very intelligent, smart as a whip," Boatwright said. "All I can say are good things about her." — AP

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CHINESE STATE MEDIA SLAMS TRUMP NOMINEE



LE PEN TARGETS POWER WITH AIDES, TWEETS

Every week, a small group of Marine Le Pen's aides brainstorm on how to achieve what many say is impossible: Change how most French people view her to get her elected president in May. The "Idea-Image" committee of Le Pen's far-right National Front (FN) consists of about 10 party officials and supporters. It held its first meeting in October as the party kicked off its presidential campaigning. The job of the group is to advise 48-year-old Le Pen and her top campaign officials on a wide range of issues from where to hold rallies and what issues to highlight, to campaign posters, speeches and online campaigns. While opinion polls predict the leader of the anti-immigration, anti-Europe FN will make it to the election's second round in May, they see her losing that run-off because a majority of voters still have a negative view of her. The Idea-Image panel's task is to help change public hearts and minds. "I'm just out of a meeting where we talked about our online viral campaigns and all the trips the candidate (Le Pen) will undertake, with one key theme per trip," said Sebastien Chenu, an FN regional councillor in northern France who jointly heads the committee with Le Pen's brother-in-law Philippe Olivier.

It was in one of those committee meetings that the idea of the #TheTrueFillon campaign was born, he said, referring to FN official and supporters spread a series of messages on Twitter attacking conservative candidate Francois Fillon just after he won his party's nomination in late November. "We had one campaign ready for (Fillon's losing opponent Alain) Juppe and one for Fillon, so we could push it out immediately," Chenu, who used to work in the communications departments of the government and state-owned TV station France 24, told Reuters in a phone interview.

The online anti-Fillon drive targeted his plans

to shrink the public workforce and questioned his credibility on immigration, calling him "the establishment's new star." Francois Fillon in power would bring a terrible economic and social decline for families and middle-class and working-class French," Le Pen's campaign director David Rachline said in a web video sent to supporters and posted on his Twitter feed.

A key objective of the FN's strategy is to soften Le Pen's image and boost her appeal beyond grassroots supporters of the FN. Since launching her campaign, she has spoken in a TV interview about her love of gardening, her cooking speciality - a traditional Brittany cake with caramelized apples - and her childhood, for example. Her blog, meanwhile, has showed pictures of the mother-of-three petting kittens and dogs, visiting farms and travelling abroad.

Isabelle Veyrat-Masson, a political communications expert at the CNRS research institute, characterized the strategy as being about the "de-demonization" of Le Pen. "She wants to show that she is a woman like any other ... that she has a heart." The FN views much of the mainstream media as set against it and sees the internet as a crucial campaigning battleground. Social media networks "are essential to talk directly to the people without a filter," Le Pen said last week. More Twitter campaigns like #TheTrueFillon one are also in the pipeline, Chenu said, without giving further details.

'Everything In-House'

All presidential candidates have communications teams, but the FN says its own is different because it has not hired any big communications or advertisement agency. "We do everything in-house. We don't have much money, it obliges us to be more creative," Chenu said, referring to the fact that with fewer elected officials than main-

stream parties, the FN receives less public funding. The FN says it is struggling to get loans to finance its campaign.

Le Pen, a trained lawyer who took over the FN's leadership from her father Jean-Marie in 2011, has sought to soften its image and rebrand it as a party that protects those who suffer from globalization. She has herself acknowledged the importance of the Idea-Image committee to her campaign. "They do the spadework on ideas and how to bring them about," she told reporters last week. "It's brainstorming, people who think about everything ... and then the directors of the campaign decide."

Those directors are Le Pen, Rachline and Florian Philippot, her deputy and the party's communications and strategy chief. Aside from Chenu and Olivier, members of the Idea-Image committee also include several other senior party officials. One is Philippe Vardon, a founder of the "Bloc Identitaire", an anti-Islam group that calls for the preservation of Europe's ethnic heritage, and now an FN councillor in southeast France.

Julien Odoul, an FN councillor in eastern France, and Philippe Murer, an economic adviser to Le Pen, are also on the panel. The committee also includes party supporters who work in the media or public relations, Chenu said, adding that they did not want their names to be published. They are volunteers and are not paid for their contributions, he said.

Rose Logo

The promotional paraphernalia for the campaign bears no reference to the FN or even the Le Pen family name but instead shows a blue rose, rather than the party's trademark flame motif, and simply the moniker "Marine". Le Pen herself came up with the idea of a blue rose as a campaign logo, which was then designed by an in-

house graphic artist, and her campaign slogan "In the name of the people", according to FN officials.

The logo, Le Pen says, is meant to symbolize that she wants to bring all French together - the rose being the symbol of the Socialists and the color blue associated with the political right in France. FN officials say a blue rose is also meant to symbolize making the impossible possible. While other parties in France have sometimes done away with their logos for presidential elections, it is rare to drop a candidate's family name.

Using only "Marine" highlights that she is the only woman among the top candidates, and aims at establishing a more direct link with voters, aides say. "For Marine Le Pen to make herself better known, as a woman, as a candidate, is certainly a key, because a presidential election is not only about a project but also about a person," Philippot told Reuters. However omitting her surname also serves to distance herself further from her father, who alienated swathes of the population and was convicted of inciting racial hatred. She kicked him out of the party in 2015.

While Jean-Marie Le Pen, a provocative former paratrooper, was content with attracting protest votes, his daughter targets power. Le Pen does, however, face a delicate balancing act if she is to win power - to attract mainstream support while keeping a grip on the FN's core voters. This was evident at a Paris Christmas market last month when she shook hands with Father Christmas, posed for pictures and said her Christmas wish was "for France to pick a leader who thinks of the people".

But just before the photo op, she offered a somewhat less festive message for immigrants. "If you come to our country, don't expect that you will be taken care of, treated and that your children will be educated for free," she said. "That's finished now, it's the end of playtime." —Reuters

IRAN REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS POSITION FOR POWER

Iran's Revolutionary Guards look set to entrench their power and shift the country to more hardline, isolationist policies for years to come following the death of influential powerbroker Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. Former president Rafsanjani long had a contentious relationship with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which is both the strongest military force in Iran and also has vast economic interests worth billions of dollars.

With a presidential election in May and a question mark over the health of Iran's most powerful figure, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, analysts say the Guards will soon have opportunities to tighten their grip on the levers of power. Rafsanjani, who died on Sunday aged 82, had criticized the Guards' expanding economic interests, which range from oil and gas to telecommunications and construction, their role in the crackdown on protests after disputed 2009 presidential elections and the country's missile programme which the Guards oversee.

Rafsanjani was a high-profile member of the Assembly of Experts that selects the Supreme Leader. Though he favored an easing of security restrictions on Iranians at home, opening up to the West politically and economically, he was a respected go-between who could balance the influence of hardliners. During mourning ceremonies this week, senior Revolutionary Guards commanders appeared on state TV to praise Rafsanjani, a companion of the Islamic Republic's founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and one of the pillars of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

But analysts say many are quietly celebrating the departure of one of their biggest domestic critics. "They're going to be very happy," said Ali Ansari, director of the Institute of Iranian Studies at the University of St Andrews. "They're shedding a lot of crocodile tears."

Absolutely Pivotal

With Rafsanjani out of the picture the Guards can play a crucial role in determining who becomes the next Supreme Leader by steering Assembly members toward a candidate more sympathetic to their interests, analysts say. "All of the candidates you hear about who could replace Khamenei are much more hardline and have more radical views," said Mehdi Khalaji, a former seminarer from Qom who is a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

The hardline camp in Iran has defined itself by a deep distrust of Western governments and rigid opposition to internal political reform, whereas Rafsanjani was the leading force behind moderate President Hassan Rouhani's election win. The 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and Western

powers was also anathema to hardliners and they have often used the deal, and the economic openings it offered Western companies, to criticize Rouhani's government.

The question of who could replace Khamenei, 77, was first raised in earnest when he was hospitalized in 2014. State TV showed Khamenei, who became the Islamic Republic's second Supreme Leader in 1989, in a hospital bed with a string of officials visiting. Analysts said this was done to help the public recognize that a change at the top was

inevitable. In the event of Khamenei's death, the Assembly of Experts' 88 members will hold a closed-door session to push for the candidate of their choice before a final vote is taken. Analysts expect the Revolutionary Guards to play a significant role. "They'll be absolutely pivotal," said Ansari.

Pieces in Place

The Revolutionary Guards first secured an economic foothold after the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s when Iran's clerical rulers allowed them to invest in leading Iranian industries. Their economic influence, authority and wealth grew after former guardsman Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became president in 2005 and has increased since, leading some analysts to say the next Supreme Leader is unlikely to wield the same power as Khamenei.

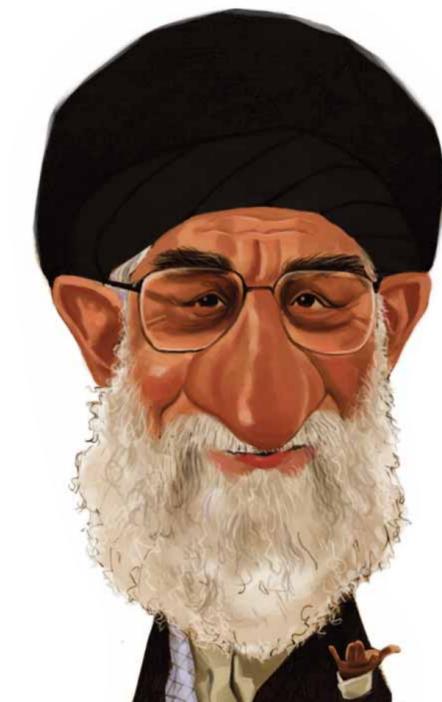
"They have been putting all the pieces in place for a very forceful show of force if Khamenei passes away," said Abbas Milani, director of the Iranian Studies programme at Stanford University. "They're seizing every day one more lever of intelligence power, financial power, police power. Clearly they're putting their forces in play," Milani said.

While there is no clear single candidate for the role of Supreme Leader, there are a handful of top contenders. One possible candidate is Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi, 68, a former head of the judiciary who is now deputy head of the Assembly of Experts. Shahroudi is favored by Khamenei, experts say, and, crucially, is thought to have the backing of the Revolutionary Guards.

Another candidate is Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larjani, the 55-year-old current head of the judiciary who has twice been appointed to the position by Khamenei. Larjani comes from a family of political heavyweights - one brother, Ali, is parliament speaker and another has served in government - but Sadeq is not regarded as a senior cleric and is unlikely to muster much support among the old guard.

A third possible candidate is Mohammad-Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi, a hardline stalwart who has tussled with reformists for years. Mesbah-Yazdi did not get enough votes to keep his seat in the Assembly last year and, at 82, his age will likely be an issue if he is being considered for the top position in the country.

Some analysts say, however, that given the increasing power of the Revolutionary Guards it is perhaps less significant who actually becomes the next Supreme Leader. "The individual is no longer important," said Khalaji at the Washington Institute. "When I get asked who's going to replace Khamenei, I say it's the Revolutionary Guards." —Reuters



Focus

BIG SECURITY RISKS
IN TRUMP FEUD
WITH SPY AGENCIES

An unprecedented pre-presidential inauguration feud between Donald Trump and intelligence agencies that soon will be under his command could harm US security if not quickly defused, current and former government officials said. They said morale at the CIA and other agencies was already sagging because of disputes with Trump over whether Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered interference in the US election and over leaks about an unsubstantiated dossier compiled by a private security firm suggesting Moscow had compromising information on Trump.

Unless addressed, the disputes could prompt the departure of personnel and lead those who remain to take fewer risks to counter security threats, the officials said. In the last few months, Trump has expressed his willingness to deal with Putin and denigrated the work of the intelligence agencies. This week, the President-elect accused agencies of leaking the dossier's information to the media, but Director of National Intelligence James Clapper said he did not believe intelligence officials were responsible for the leak.

"People shooting at (the CIA) is pretty common. But usually it's not the president," one former senior US official said. Trump's transition team did not reply to email messages seeking comment. "I think it's a recipe for disaster," said Daniel Benjamin, who served in senior White House and State Department counter-terrorism posts under Democratic presidents. Benjamin, now at Dartmouth College, said there was a "strong chance" people would leave and they have "tremendous value" to the private sector.

Complicating the situation just a week before Republican Trump is sworn in, two of his nominees for top security posts set a different tone at their Senate confirmation hearings, heaping praise on the men and women who work in the secret world of intelligence gathering. Republican congressman Mike Pompeo, nominee for Central Intelligence Agency director, said on Thursday that he has seen CIA personnel "walk through fire".

Separately, Trump's nominee for US defense secretary, James Mattis, told senators that he had a "very, very high degree of confidence" in US intelligence agencies. Mattis also put Russia at the top of a list of threats to US interests. A top official at one intelligence agency said a growing number of intelligence officers over the age of 50 and with at least 20 years of service, including at least five years overseas, have drafted and in many cases signed but not dated their resignation letters. "There is great anxiety here about the President-elect's apparent disdain for the work we do and the dangers we face," a second senior intelligence official, at another agency, said. He and others spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters and morale at their agencies.

Rancor

The latest round of rancor began with a CNN report that Trump had been briefed Jan 6 by intelligence and law enforcement chiefs on a two-page memo summarizing the unverified claims in the dossier. In blaming intelligence agencies for the leak, Trump wrote on Twitter: "One last shot at me. Are we living in Nazi Germany?" Spy chief Clapper called Trump before dinner on Wednesday to calm the waters. Trump and Clapper differed on what was said in the phone conversation.

On Friday, Trump appeared to again blame US spies for the leak. "Probably released by 'intelligence' even knowing there is no proof and never will be," he said on Twitter. US intelligence agency personnel "are kind of shell-shocked at being accused of being Nazis and intentionally leaking this stuff," the former senior official said. The 17 US intelligence agencies have combined budgets of more than \$70 billion and tens of thousands of employees. They are responsible for everything from warning of terrorist attacks to supporting American troops on the battlefield and analyzing the impacts of global trends such as climate change.

Several former US officials said the tensions with Trump were the worst they could recall since President George W Bush and the CIA traded blame in 2003 and 2004 over the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. But Douglas Wise, a former senior CIA official, said it will be harder for Trump to "beat up" on his own intelligence chiefs once they are in place instead of officials appointed by Democratic President Barack Obama. "I think things are going to change," Wise said.

Still, tensions seem likely to persist after Inauguration Day on Jan 20. Retired Lt Gen Michael Flynn, who will be Trump's national security adviser, led the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency until he was fired by Clapper. He has a longtime suspicion of the CIA, according to Wise and others who have worked with him. "What Pompeo said was somewhat reassuring, but it's not at all clear whether that matters, or whether Trump's apparent attitude and Flynn's bitterness toward us is what counts," the second senior intelligence official said. —Reuters

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WATFORD FANS HONOUR ENGLAND MANAGER TAYLOR

WATFORD: Watford fans paid a heartfelt tribute to their former manager Graham Taylor prior to yesterday's Premier League home game with Middlesbrough. Taylor, who also managed England from 1990 to 1993, died aged 72 on Thursday following a heart attack. He led Watford from the fourth tier to the top division during the first of his two spells as manager and there were emotional scenes at Vicarage Road as fans remembered him. Chants of "There's only one Graham Taylor!" rang out during a minute's applause in his memory, as images of him were displayed on the big screen, and fans could be seen wiping away tears. Supporters in the ground's Rookery End formed a mosaic in yellow, black and red—the club's colours—that formed Taylor's initials and a heart symbol. Fans laid flowers, scarves and club shirts outside the ground and a black-and-white photograph of Taylor adorned the front of the match-day program. —AFP



JAPAN'S NISHIKORI READY FOR BIG TITLES

MELBOURNE: Japanese star Kei Nishikori said he's become more mature and mentally stronger and he's now ready to convert his immense promise into Grand Slam success. The 27-year-old, the highest-ranked Asian men's singles player ever, has won 11 career titles but never a major championship, going closest at the 2014 US Open where he lost in the final to Marin Cilic. After making the second week of all four Grand Slams last year, with a semi-final appearance at Flushing Meadows the highlight, he is determined to go a step further this year. "It's been three years now maybe to be in the top 10," he said Saturday ahead of the Australian Open at Melbourne Park, where he has reached the quarter-finals three times. "Well, I got really mentally strong. I think I'm more consistent and much more mature in everything, you know, even off the court, on the court too. "Everything is getting better now." With a good off-season under his belt, he is fired up to keep improving and finally go the distance at a Grand Slam, with Russia's Andrey Kuznetsov his first round test next week. —AFP

LARA KNOCKS OUT FOREMAN TO RETAIN WELTERWEIGHT BELT

MIAMI: Erislandy Lara knocked out Yuri Foreman with a crushing left uppercut in the fourth round on Friday to retain his World Boxing Association super welterweight world title. Cuban southpaw Lara made good on his vow to make a statement against former champ Foreman, even though the knockdown he was credited with in round three looked more like a slip by the challenger. One round later, however, there was no doubt as his well-placed uppercut sent Foreman, a Belarus-born fighter based in the United States, reeling. Foreman eventually regained his feet but was disoriented and Lara won by knockout at 1:47 of the fourth. "I promised I would do it and I did it," said Lara, who improved to 24-2-2 with 14 wins inside the distance. The satisfied champion promptly called out the cream of the middleweight division-unbeaten champion Gennady Golovkin of Kazakhstan, and Mexico's former champ Canelo Alvarez. "I'm ready to fight the best in the world, Golovkin, Canelo," he said. "Whoever is willing to step in the ring with me, I'm willing to fight." Foreman fell to 34-3-0 with 10 knockouts. — AFP



BEATEN FINALISTS QATAR LOWER EXPECTATIONS IN 2017

PARIS: Surprise finalists in 2015, Qatar began their quest for the world handball crown with a disappointing defeat against Egypt, and have appropriately set their sights a little lower this year.

Even before Friday's 22-20 loss, Qatar's Spanish coach Valero Rivera, said the team's aim was to make the quarter-finals. "Qatar's goal at the World Cup is to finish in the top eight, and we will fight for it," said Valera.

But on the back of a poor start in Paris, a disappointing Olympics in Rio, a tough group and resurgent rivals, even that might seem tough. Their remarkable performance in the last world championships, held in Qatar, inspired awe and not a little controversy. They became the first non-European side to reach a world handball final, knocking out traditional powerhouses along the way such as Poland and Germany, before losing in the final to the French—a remarkable achievement for a nation ranked 20th in 2013. But the ascent of the tiny Gulf nation to the top table of world handball was undoubtedly resented in some quarters, with critics pointing to a hastily assembled international team of "mercenaries". Among Qatar's squad two years ago were players born in Montenegro, Serbia, Cuba, France, Spain, Syria, Egypt and Tunisia. Only a maximum of four players in the 17-man squad were born in Qatar.

And it did not go unnoticed by oppo-

nents. Austrian goalkeeper Thomas Bauer said after his team were defeated by the Qataris that it felt "like playing against a world selection team". Adding to the criticism it emerged during the championship that Qatar had also paid for Spanish fans to attend the championships and cheer the Gulf side to create some atmosphere in a sport not that well-known to locals.

This time round, although they are still reliant on naturalized players, Qatar no longer include players such as the Montenegrin Zarko Markovic or Spanish pivot Borja Fernandez. They will still rely heavily on experienced European players such as Bosnian Serb Danijel Saric in goal and Cuban Rafael Capote—who scored five against Egypt.

But do they have the strength in depth? Not according to Olivier Krumbholz, coach of the French women's team. "There are major players who are missing, but there are also major players who will be there," said Krumbholz. "From the moment we remove very good players, the ones who replace them are much worse," he said. "Qatar's squad is not as strong as the other major nations, and this could hamper them at this World Championship." Adding to the question marks, they have been drawn in Group D alongside Olympic champions Denmark. Even getting to the knockout stages may prove a task for Qatar. —AFP



RIO CUARTO: (from L to R) Peugeot's co-driver Jean Paul Cottret of France, team manager Bruno Famin and driver Stephane Peterhansel celebrate their victory at the end of the Stage 12 of the Dakar 2017 between Rio Cuarto and Buenos Aires, Argentina, yesterday. — AFP

UFC BOSS OFFERS MAYWEATHER, MCGREGOR \$25M EACH TO FIGHT

LOS ANGELES: The possibility of a duel between boxer Floyd Mayweather and mixed martial arts star Conor McGregor got another boost Friday as Ultimate Fighting Championship boss Dana White said he'd pay each \$25 million to meet.

White, president of the popular UFC mixed martial arts brand in which Ireland's McGregor stars, seemed to indicate in his comments on a Fox radio broadcast that the two would meet in a boxing ring, not the UFC octagon. In addition to \$25 million apiece, White said, each fighter would get a cut of pay-per-view proceeds.

"If they're going to box, Floyd looks at this as an easy boxing match for him," White said. "Conor McGregor is his money fight. Tell you what, Floyd, here's a real offer ... and I'm the guy who can make the offer ... we'll pay you \$25 million and Conor \$25 million."

White scoffed at Mayweather's claim this week that he'd offered McGregor \$15 million to climb into the ring with him.

Mayweather, who retired in 2015 with a

perfect 49-0 record, told ESPN's First Take program that a McGregor bout was the only thing that could tempt him to end his exile from the ring. Mayweather said he'd talked to McGregor's representatives. "They know what my number is. My number is a guaranteed \$100 million," he said, adding that he considered himself the "A-side" of the promotion. "To think that you're the 'A' side ... how are you the 'A' side?" White said. "He's claiming he's made offers. He hasn't made offers to anybody. I just made a real offer. Conor McGregor will fight anybody, anywhere, anytime, and there is a line of guys he'll fight who'll do more than 1 million pay-per-view buys." McGregor became the first man to simultaneously hold UFC titles in two weight divisions when he beat Eddie Alvarez in New York on November 12. At the end of November he was issued a boxing license in the state of California in a development that fueled speculation about a showdown between him and Mayweather. — AFP

PETERHANSEL WINS 13TH DAKAR TITLE, FIRST FOR SUNDERLAND

RIO CUARTO: France's Stephane Peterhansel won his 13th Dakar Rally title yesterday, declaring the latest win was the sweetest following an epic battle with French Peugeot teammate Sébastien Loeb.

The 51-year-old Peterhansel added the 2017 title to his previous six wins on four wheels and his six on two, the first coming in 1991 on the world's toughest rally. "This victory is particularly sweet because the competition was so high," said Peterhansel. "Battling Sébastien and finishing just a few minutes ahead, it's no mean feat." Sam Sunderland became the first Briton to win the motorbike section after the heartbreak of being forced to retire from two previous editions. The KTM rider secured victory after the 12th and final 64km special in Argentina in which he finished sixth. He took the title with a 32-minute advantage on nearest rival Matthias Walkner of Austria. "Unbelievable. When I crossed the line I felt all the emotion hit me," said the 27-year-old Dubai-based Sunderland.

"The weight on my shoulders of the race over the last week, leading the rally has been really heavy. It's the first Dakar I've ever finished and to finish first is an incredible feeling. I'm really lost for words," Peterhansel and nine-times world rally champion Loeb dominated the gruelling two-week car race winning eight stages between them with the former taking three and the later five. Peterhansel finished 5min 13sec ahead of Loeb in the overall standings with third-placed Cyril Despres at 33min 28sec handing Peugeot their first podium sweep since 1990, before the French car maker withdrew from the race to return in 2015.

Despres also won a stage for Peugeot who grabbed control from the second stage leaving rivals Toyota and Mini with no chance. The race turned into a two-horse battle between Peterhansel and 42-year-old Loeb, who was competing for the second time after finishing ninth in 2016. "It was high intensity. It's aged me," admitted Peterhansel, who first competed in 1988. "At the half-way point, there were four drivers capable of winning, and it finished with a duel with Sébastien. "The team armed us equally with perfect cars and above all didn't give us any race instructions.

"It was very fair play and sporting for us. It was the drivers and their co-pilots who made the difference."

'NOT JUST LUCK'

In a seesaw battle Peterhansel edged Loeb after he was rewarded for his sporting decision to stop and help seriously injured Slovenian motorbike rider Simon Marcic on Thursday.

Loeb had originally been declared the winner of the 10th stage in Argentina but organisers handed Peterhansel back 14min 13sec to put him back in pole position.

And Peterhansel said the final victory came down to his tactics the following day when he piled the pressure on Loeb who then suffered a puncture. "I knew that Sébastien was faster," he explained. "He needed to take three minutes from me and it wasn't going to be simple, he

had to race at 100 percent and from then he exposed himself to errors and that's what happened. So it's not just luck."

Loeb added: "We gave it everything, held nothing back. We had a beautiful race. Second this year, we'll have to do better next year." Qatari Nasser Al Attiyah-winner in 2011 and 2015 — was forced out in the fourth stage after badly damaging his Toyota with Spaniard Nani Roma and South Africa's Giniel de Villiers finishing fourth and fifth respectively for the Japanese manufacturer.

Sunderland meanwhile was celebrating his debut bike win after retiring in his previous attempts in 2012 and 2014 with mechanical problems. Sunderland took the race lead after the fifth stage, handing KTM their 16th win in a row. The 2016 winner, Toby Price of Australia, pulled out of this year's race during the fourth stage. The gruelling 9,000km rally had been plagued by torrential rain in Bolivia with stages six and nine cancelled and a further three shortened, cutting a third off the original course. — AFP

CHAMPIONS FRANCE CRUISE PAST JAPAN

PARIS: Defending champions France cruised to a 31-19 win over Japan for a second victory in two games at the world handball championship on Friday but their joy was tempered by injury to star player Luka Karabatic.

The pivot of the champions suffered a right foot injury and was replaced although an outclassed Japan were unable to build on his absence as France kept up their perfect record after an opening 31-16 win against Brazil on Wednesday. "The injury was the only negative thing in the match. Luka will have a scan on Saturday morning," said coach Didier Dinart.

Ludovic Fabregas, just 20 years old, took the chance to shine in Karabatic's absence with the Montpellier man scoring seven goals in a man of the match performance.

"I tried to do all I could in attack. We hope that Luka will be back with us soon because he is our team's major player," said Fabregas. The last time the two sides met an international tournament was at the 1997 worlds where France needed a goal on the buzzer to win 22-21. Since that time, Japan's progress has stalled and they are expected to use the

world championships as useful preparation for the 2020 Olympics which they will host.

Their problems were highlighted on Friday when from the end of the first period to the early stages of the second, they scored just once in 20 minutes. "France were better than us today. We played well for the first twenty minutes of the game, but I'm satisfied with the whole game," said Japan coach Antonio Carlos Ortega. "We wanted to try new things especially in defence, and they gave me satisfaction. We suffered more problems in the attack especially in the middle of the second half. My players were tired, it was our second game in two days and now they need to rest before the next game." European champions Germany began their campaign with a 27-23 win over Hungary thanks to 13 goals from Uwe Gensheimer and 14 saves by keeper Silvio Heinevetter.

Olympic champions Denmark, who beat France in the Rio final for the gold medal last summer, started with a 33-22 victory over Argentina. World player of the year Mikkel Hansen scored six goals from eight shots for the Danes. —AFP



NANTES: France's left wing Michael Guigou passes the ball during the 25th IHF Men's World Championship 2017 Group A handball match Japan vs France on Friday at the Parc des Expositions in Nantes. — AFP

ZAIN SPONSORS YOUNG KARTING RACER FAHAD AL KHALID

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced its sponsorship of young Karting racer Fahad Al Khalid during his professional season in 2017. Al Khalid is considered the youngest International Karting racer from Kuwait.

Zain's support of the young racer came in line with its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy, through which the company is keen on supporting national talents regardless of age. Fahad Al Khalid, who is only 11 years of age, achieved many titles both regionally and internationally.

Al Khalid is considered the only Kuwaiti racer who officially represents Kuwait in the sport of Karting internationally, having received a certified racing license from the International Commission of Karting (CIK-FIA). The racer cur-

rently competes in the Micro category of the Rotax Max Challenge for young racers, which takes place in Oman and UAE.

Zain wishes the young Kuwaiti racer all the best of luck during his upcoming participations. The company is proud to support local athletic talents, especially young ones, and remains committed to supporting and sponsoring different types of sports, emphasizing its dedication to the elevation of Kuwaiti youth and sports. It is worth noting that Fahad Al Khalid took part in several renowned competitions despite his young age, including his participation in the final round of the European Championship 2016, the Dubai and Al Ein competitions in the UAE 2015, as well as several local competitions in Kuwait in which he received many first-place titles.



Fahad Al Khalid

LINDSEY VONN'S WCUP COMEBACK DELAYED DUE TO SNOWFALL

ALTENMARKT-ZAUCHENSEE: Lindsey Vonn's return to World Cup skiing has been delayed for at least a day after snowfall forced the cancellation of downhill training and the race itself yesterday. Organizers moved the program to today, with the race set for an 1115 GMT start. A combined event, which was originally scheduled for that day, was canceled. Weather was forecast to improve overnight.

Vonn, a four-time overall champion,

and American teammate Julia Mancuso planned to make their World Cup comebacks this weekend after extensive injury layoffs. Yesterday's program was initially delayed for at least an hour as course workers were still busy moving fresh snow off the course at the scheduled start time for training, but conditions failed to improve. The snowfall would also have limited visibility for the skiers. To shorten the distance to be cleaned, the

start gate for the downhill had been lowered, which stripped the Kalberloch course of its trademark steep pitch from the initial start. "Unfortunately the weather is not helping us," Vonn said shortly before the race was called off for the day. "The snow is very soft. Hopefully the course workers can do something."

Ilka Stuhec, who won all three races so far this season to lead the downhill standings, said she "would love to

race." "But there is a limit when you shouldn't race anymore but stay healthy instead," the Slovenian said.

Bad weather also canceled training for the last two days, prompting organizers to reschedule the mandatory session two hours before the race. A downhill race cannot be held without prior training. It's the second straight season that the event has been affected by poor weather conditions. Last year, the downhill took place on a

shortened course in an unusual two-run format, which was won by Vonn.

If Sunday's program was canceled as well, the next opportunity to race for Vonn and Mancuso will be in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, where a downhill and a super-G are scheduled for next weekend.

There will be one more speed event ahead of next month's world championships, in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, on Jan. 28-29. —AP

CAPITALS ROUT BLACKHAWKS TO EXTEND WINNING STREAK

WASHINGTON: Jay Beagle scored twice to lead a balanced blowout for the Washington Capitals as they won their eighth consecutive game, beating the Chicago Blackhawks 6-0 on Friday night in a matchup of the NHL's hottest teams. Nicklas Backstrom, Brett Connolly, Tom Wilson and T.J. Oshie also scored for Washington, which snapped Chicago's winning streak at four. The Capitals have ended five different opposing win streaks of three games or more already in 2017 while playing their best hockey of the season. With the victory, they reached 61 points and passed the Columbus Blue Jackets for the most in the league. Braden Holtby stopped all 24 shots he faced and got the benefit of goaltender interference on Vinnie Hinostroza's would-be goal for his fifth shutout in the past 14 games. The Vezina Trophy winner is 9-2-2 with a 1.34 goals-against average and .950 save percentage over that time.

BLUE JACKETS 3, LIGHTNING 1

Joonas Korpisalo made 31 saves in his first game of the season, Nick Foligno had a go-ahead power-play goal in the third period and Columbus beat Tampa Bay. Columbus, 2-3 since ending a 16-game winning streak, also got goals from Josh Anderson and Boone Jenner. Korpisalo played in place of Sergei Bobrovsky, who also missed Tuesday's game at Carolina due to illness. Jonathan Drouin scored for the Lightning, who have lost five of six. Andrei Vasilevsky stopped 28 shots. Tampa Bay retired Martin St. Louis' No. 26 in a pregame ceremony. St. Louis was a key member of the Lightning's 2004 Stanley Cup championship team that was coached by current Columbus coach John Tortorella.

MAPLE LEAFS 4, RANGERS 2

William Nylander and James van Riemsdyk scored in the first period, Frederik Andersen stopped 34 shots and Toronto beat New York. Connor Brown and Connor Carrick also scored to help the Maple Leafs win for the seventh time in nine games (7-1-1). Toronto moved four points behind Philadelphia for the second wild card in the Eastern Conference. Tyler Bozak and Mitch Marner had two assists each. Chris Kreider and J.T. Miller scored for the Rangers, and Henrik Lundqvist finished with 23 saves. New York had won five of six overall, and four in row against Toronto. Toronto, which came in sixth in the league on the power play at 22 percent, were 2 for 4 and held the Rangers to 0 for 6.

HURRICANES 5, SABRES 2

Jeff Skinner had two goals and an assist, Brock McGinn also scored twice and Carolina beat Buffalo. Carolina swept its three-game series against Buffalo and won its third straight game overall. The Hurricanes are 14-4-1 at home, including

13-1-1 in the last 15 games in Raleigh. Skinner scored two goals early in the second period, the first one giving him his 300th NHL point. Carolina's Cam Ward stopped 36 shots while playing in his 600th NHL game, all with the Hurricanes. Buffalo's Anders Nilsson had 33 saves. Victor Rask scored Carolina's other goal. William Carrier and Brian Gionta scored for Buffalo.

DEVILS 2, FLAMES 1

Kyle Palmieri had a goal and an assist and New Jersey hung on to beat Calgary. New Jersey snapped a four-game skid after Palmieri scored 6:22 into the game and then assisted on Taylor Hall's goal with 1:29 left in the first period. Keith Kinkaid stopped 31 shots while filling in for Devils starter Cory Schneider. It was the ninth goal for Palmieri, who had a career-high 30 goals last season to lead New Jersey. The 25-year-old has five goals in his last 12 games. Sean Monahan scored in the second period and Chad Johnson made 34 saves for Calgary, which ended a four-game home winning streak.

ISLANDERS 5, PANTHERS 2

John Tavares scored three goals for his sixth career hat trick and New York snapped a three-game losing streak with a win over Florida. Nick Leddy had a goal and two assists, and Jason Chimera also scored for the Islanders. Thomas Greiss made 26 saves. Vincent Trocheck had a goal and an assist for the Panthers. Reilly Smith also scored for Florida, Keith Yandle added a pair of assists and Jaromir Jagr recorded his 1,138th NHL assist. Roberto Luongo stopped 37 shots. Tavares' second goal gave the Islanders a 4-2 lead at 7:50 of the third for his 500th NHL point. Tavares added an empty-net goal with 1:44 left for the hat trick.

COYOTES 4, JETS 3

Rookie Brendan Perlini scored twice, Oliver Ekman-Larsson and Radim Vrbata each had three assists and Arizona scored four first-period goals and held on for a win over Winnipeg. Perlini's fifth and sixth goals of the season came in the first, as did all three of Ekman-Larsson's and Vrbata's assists. Perlini had a hat trick Tuesday night in Tucson's 5-2 victory over Manitoba - Winnipeg's farm team - in the AHL. The Coyotes chased Jets starting goalie Connor Hellebuyck before the midway point of the period. The four goals were the most for Arizona in a period since scoring four second-period goals at Edmonton on Dec. 1, 2014. But Arizona had to hang on in the final seconds of the third period to win. Peter Holland and Jamie McGinn also had goals for the Coyotes, who have five points from their last three games. Shawn Matthias, Mark Stuart and Blake Wheeler scored for the Jets, who have lost three of four. — AP

NHL Results/Standings

Columbus 3, Tampa Bay 1; NY Islanders 5, Florida 2; Carolina 5, Buffalo 2; Toronto 4, NY Rangers 2; Washington 6, Chicago 0.

Western Conference													
Central Division					Pacific Division								
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	PTS				
Chicago	27	13	5	124	113	59	Boston	22	18	5	111	110	49
Minnesota	26	9	5	130	86	57	Ottawa	22	14	4	103	103	48
St. Louis	21	16	5	118	128	47	Toronto	19	13	8	124	118	46
Nashville	19	16	7	116	112	45	Florida	19	17	8	102	119	46
Dallas	18	17	8	114	129	44	Tampa Bay	20	20	4	123	132	44
Winnipeg	20	22	3	125	137	43	Buffalo	16	17	9	97	119	41
Colorado	13	26	1	80	134	27	Detroit	17	19	6	105	124	40
Eastern Conference													
Atlantic Division					Metropolitan Division								
Anaheim	23	13	8	119	114	54	Columbus	29	8	4	138	91	62
San Jose	25	15	2	112	96	52	Washington	28	9	5	126	86	61
Edmonton	22	15	7	126	120	51	Pittsburgh	26	10	5	142	118	57
Calgary	23	20	2	118	123	48	NY Rangers	28	14	1	148	111	57
Los Angeles	21	17	4	107	106	46	Philadelphia	22	16	6	129	137	50
Vancouver	20	19	5	110	128	45	Carolina	20	15	7	114	113	47
Arizona	13	22	6	90	131	32	New Jersey	17	18	9	99	128	43
Montreal	26	11	6	133	108	58	NY Islanders	16	16	8	112	121	40

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



WASHINGTON: Chicago Blackhawks goalie Corey Crawford (50) stops the puck against Washington Capitals right wing T.J. Oshie (77) during the first period of an NHL hockey game, Friday, in Washington. Also seen is Chicago Blackhawks defenseman Niklas Hjalmarrsson (4), of Sweden. — AP



HONOLULU: Jordan Spieth (L) of the United States and Justin Thomas of the United States shake hands after finishing on the 18th green during the second round of the Sony Open in Hawaii at Waialae Country Club on Friday in Honolulu, Hawaii. — AFP

THOMAS SETS RECORDS AND MOVES CLOSER TO WINNING

HONOLULU: Justin Thomas put his name in the PGA Tour record book two days in a row. The idea now is to get his name on the trophy. And with each record, that becomes a little easier at the Sony Open.

Thomas set the course record Thursday at Waialae Country Club with his 59, only the eighth sub-60 round in PGA Tour history. Even then, the 23-year-old from Kentucky was cognizant that the tournament still had three rounds remaining, and he only had a three-shot lead. He followed that with another burst of birdies around the turn and another eagle on his final hole, punching a 7-iron out of the light rough to run the ball up between two bunkers and onto the green about 8 feet below the cup. He made the eagle putt for a 64, setting the 36-hole scoring record on the PGA Tour at 123.

And now he has a five-shot lead. "He's not stopping, as we can see," said Jordan Spieth, who watched him for two rounds. Thomas also is not looking behind.

Following a great round with another one is not easy, and the task becomes even tougher when that great round is a 59. "I didn't know how I was going to feel," Thomas said. "I didn't feel too much today. I just felt like it was another round of golf and I need to try to build on my lead and see how low I could go today."

He didn't realize he had set the 36-hole record until the scoring official told him as Thomas was signing his card. He left Friday evening not even aware of another record he had set - best round after a 59.

Jim Furyk (with his record 58), David Duval and Stuart Appleby each hit golf's magic number in the final round. Of the four other times someone shot 59, the best anyone managed was Paul Goydos (2010 John Deere Classic) and Chip Beck (1991 Las Vegas Invitational), who each had a 68.

Thomas clipped them by four. Of more importance, of course, is that he stretched that lead to five shots over Gary Woodland. That matched the largest 36-hole lead in Sony Open history by Paul Azinger in 2000 and Brad Faxon in 2001. Both went on to win.

As for that 36-hole record, odds are in his favor. Three players had shared the record of 124, and all of them went on to win: Pat Perez opened with a 61-63 in the Bob Hope Classic in 2009. That was a 90-hole tournament, and he won by three shots over John Merrick.

David Toms shot 62-62 at Colonial in 2011, and he held on to win by one shot over Charlie Wi. Jason Day shot 61-63 at Conway Farms in the 2015 BMW Championship and won by six shots over Daniel Berger.

This is only his third season on the PGA Tour, though Thomas has been around long enough not to get too far away from his next shot. Sure, he thinks about winning when he knows he's playing well, like last week on Maui at the SBS Tournament of Champions. He was tied for the lead after 36 holes, went two clear of Hideki Matsuyama going into the final round and won by three.

"You don't really start thinking about it consistently until probably today if you're in it," he said. At stake is a chance to join Ernie Els as the only player to sweep Hawaii since 1999, when Kapalua became the starting point to a new year. Thomas now has gone 21 consecutive rounds at par or better, dating to a 75 in the first round of the Safeway Open last October. He has 10 consecutive rounds in the 60s (or better, considering his 59) for an average score of 66.4.

Spieth, meanwhile, will probably be happy to

get away from his best friend in golf. Spieth has been playing well over two days, and to watch them, his game has not been all that different from Thomas except for the length of some of the tee shots - and the putting.

He has had similar putts for birdie from about the same distance, and sometimes the same line. One guy keeps making them, and it's not

Spieth. "Just has a really cold putter this week," Spieth said. "I think it added to the frustration on the green, because the game is looking so easy to him. I felt like I was hitting the ball in the same location, I'm just being outdone on the green. That's something a little abnormal to me."

That made Thomas chuckle. "Now he knows how a lot of people feel," Thomas said. — AP

MCVAY BRINGS ENERGY, PASSION TO COACHING JOB WITH RAMS

THOUSAND OAKS: Although Sean McVay is the youngest head coach in modern NFL history, he sees himself as the end product of many decades of football knowledge passed down by Jon Gruden, Mike Shanahan and his other veteran coaching mentors.

The Los Angeles Rams are banking on this precocious 30-year-old to end a playoff drought that began when he was in high school. The Rams introduced McVay as the 23rd head coach in franchise history Friday. The former Washington offensive coordinator made no guarantees for a franchise with 13 straight non-winning seasons, but vowed to create a team built on character and hard work. "Becoming a head coach is something that you always dream of when you get into the coaching profession," said McVay, who entered the profession in 2008.

"But one of the things that you realize is that these opportunities never present themselves unless you're fortunate to be around great coaches and mentors to help guide you along the way." Still 11 days shy of his 31st birthday, McVay publicly accepted his first head coaching job at the Rams' training complex with self-effacing confidence and gratitude. He also had a few words of assurance for his mother, Cindy, who told him that his life will never be the same after becoming the face of LA's longest-tenured football team. "It's going to be a challenge, and it won't be easy," McVay said. "But I can't wait to go to work." McVay replaces Jeff Fisher, who capably shepherded the Rams' move from St. Louis to Los Angeles last year, but never managed a winning season in five years with the club. They haven't made the playoffs since the 2004 season, and Southern California hasn't seen a winning Rams team since 1989.

McVay's exceptional performances in interviews with the Rams persuaded owner Stan Kroenke and their brain trust to take a chance. "Anytime you get someone who's passionate about being the best every single day, you want to jump on board," general manager Les Snead said. "That's a special quality, and he's passionate about football. He's passionate about the process. We're very aligned in that way."

Snead participated in the Rams' coaching search while the team made no announcement about whether he would be retained, but he confirmed he is staying with the club. McVay's coaching staff also is taking shape: He confirmed that 69-year-old NFL veteran Wade Phillips will be his defensive coordinator, and the Rams are retaining longtime special teams coordinator John Fassel, who served as their interim coach for the last three games. McVay got his start right out of college at Miami (Ohio) as Gruden's assistant receivers coach with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, mostly running

errands and soaking up his boss' famed work ethic and intensity. McVay's grandfather, John, was a longtime NFL personnel executive with the San Francisco 49ers, who once employed Gruden's father, Jim, as a scout.

After one season, he went to work for Gruden's brother, Jay, with the UFL's Florida Tuskers. McVay then landed a job on Shanahan's staff with the Redskins, and he stayed on when Jay Gruden took over three years ago. McVay spoke to Shanahan by phone shortly after getting the job Thursday.

McVay will call plays for the Rams' offense, the NFL's worst for two straight seasons. On his first day on the job, he gave strong support to Jared Goff. The No. 1 pick in last year's draft took a beating in a winless debut season as Los Angeles' starter.

"This is a guy we believe in," McVay said.



Sean McVay

"We're encouraged and excited about developing him." Goff shared the enthusiasm after talking extensively with McVay earlier in the week. "Coming out of my meeting, I felt like it was a guy that I would love to play for, and hopefully play a long time for," Goff said. "I expect him to bring out the best in me."

INTERVIEWING

McVay initially thought he had never been to Los Angeles before this week, but then recalled he was in Thousand Oaks last summer to visit a sports academy.

He didn't immediately connect that trip to the far-flung LA suburbs to his new job in the same town - a demonstration of both his narrow focus on football and the spread-out nature of the metropolis where his Rams will be competing with the Los Angeles Chargers for attention and wins.

McVay got a taste of exactly what he's about to experience in the NFL and in Hollywood this week when he went to dinner with owner Stan Kroenke, Rams COO Kevin Demoff and Rams great Marshall Faulk at the famed Spago in Beverly Hills. Restaurateur Wolfgang Puck excitedly greeted the group with a request: "We need to find a coach!" — AP

SCRAP INTERNATIONAL T20S TO SAVE ONE-DAYERS: ARTHUR

SYDNEY: Cricket's shortest Twenty20 format should be restricted to domestic franchises to maintain the relevance of one-day internationals, Pakistan coach Mickey Arthur has said.

With the rise of the shorter and action-packed T20 format in recent years, the 50-over version of international cricket has suffered a dip in attendance. Arthur, the former South Africa and

Australia coach, was in the stands on Wednesday to watch the Perth Scorchers beat the Brisbane Heat by 27 runs in the Big Bash League, the popular, franchise-based domestic T20 league Down Under. "It was an amazing atmosphere - it's show business, that reminded me of going to basketball," said the 48-year-old. "It was brilliant. As pure cricket, (it was) okay." Critics have long raised questions

about the relevance of ODIs outside the International Cricket Council tournaments in the age of Twenty20.

Domestic Twenty20 leagues have mushroomed across the world and its slam-bang format has managed the catch the imagination of fans who have thronged to the stadiums to watch the matches, which last just about three hours. A crowd of close to 35,000

watched Wednesday's BBL clash at the Gabba while only 21,734 turned out to watch Australia's 92-run win in Friday night's 50-over series opener against Pakistan in Brisbane. Arthur feels a clear demarcation should be made with only the 50-over format being part of international fixtures outside the World Cup.

"I do think, though, that Twenty20 cricket should become franchise domi-

nated," Arthur said. "I've never been a massive advocate of international Twenty20 cricket except a World Cup every two or three years, because that gets the best players together. "Fifty-over cricket's got a definite role because of the World Cup, because of international rankings there's context. International cricket belongs in the 50-over and test cricket (formats) for me." —Reuters

LATHAM SCORES CENTURY AS NZ CHASE BANGLADESH'S INNINGS

WELLINGTON: Tom Latham scored his sixth test century as New Zealand made a steady 292 for three in reply to Bangladesh's mammoth first innings total when bad light stopped play with three overs remaining on the third day of the first Test yesterday.

Latham was on 119 not out with Henry Nicholls on 35. The visitors had declared their first innings closed at 595 for eight before lunch, shortly after Sabbir Rahman had brought up his second test half century. Sabbir was 54 not out when captain Mushfiqur Rahim brought his side's innings to a close about an hour into the day's play. Mushfiqur (159) and Shakib Al Hasan (217) had essentially batted New Zealand out of the test with a record partnership of 359 runs for the fifth wicket on Friday.

Bangladesh's total was their second highest in test cricket, having scored 638 against Sri Lanka at Galle in 2013. Mushfiqur, who is also the wicketkeeper, did not take the field on Saturday after being struck in the hands twice while batting, with Imrul Kayes taking the gloves

and Tamim Iqbal leading the side in his absence. Tamim produced something of a surprise with off-spinner Mehedi Hasan opening the bowling and while he got some drift in the blustery northerly wind and some turn from the Basin Reserve wicket he was unable to make an early breakthrough. Latham and Jeet Raval (27) put on 54 for the first wicket before Kamrul Islam had Raval caught by Imrul just before the lunch break.

Captain Kane Williamson looked keen to get his side scoring quickly in an effort to drive the game on after the break as he raced to his 25th half century, but fell shortly afterwards for 53 when he became Taskin Ahmed's first test wicket. Ross Taylor continued the counter-punching approach with six boundaries in his first 27 runs from 17 balls but he had slowed down when he became Kamrul's second wicket, holing out to square leg for 40 to leave New Zealand on 205 for three. Nicholls and Latham, who brought up his century with three runs off his hip, then safely negotiated the rest of the day. — Reuters



JOHANNESBURG: South Africa bowler Kagiso Rabada (C) celebrates as Sri Lanka batsman Angelo Mathews (R) is caught out during the third Test between South Africa and Sri Lanka yesterday at Wanderers Cricket Stadium in Johannesburg. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the third day in the first Test between New Zealand and Bangladesh yesterday in Wellington, New Zealand.

Bangladesh 1st innings (Overnight: 542-7)		New Zealand 1st innings	
T. Iqbal lbw b Boult	56	J. Raval c Kayes b Rabbi	27
I. Kayes c Boult b Southee	1	T. Latham not out	119
M. Haque c Watling b Southee	64	K. Williamson c Kayes b Ahmed	53
Mahmudullah c Watling b Wagner	26	R. Taylor c Mahmudullah b Rabbi	40
S. Al Hasan b Wagner	217	H. Nicholls not out	35
M. Rahim c Watling b Boult	159	Extras (b-1 lb-1 nb-1 w-15)	18
Sa. Rahman not out	54	Total (for 3 wickets, 77 overs)	292
M. Hasan c Southee b Wagner	0	Fall of wickets: 1-54 J. Raval, 2-131 K. Williamson, 3-205 R. Taylor	
T. Ahmed c Southee b Wagner	3	To bat: C. de Grandhomme, B. Watling, M. Santner, T. Southee, N. Wagner, T. Boult.	
K. Rabbi not out	6	Bowling: M. Hasan 26-4-82-0; S. Roy 16-4-46-0 (nb-1); T. Ahmed 15-2-79-1 (w-2); K. Rabbi 13-2-53-2 (w-1); S. Al Hasan 7-0-30-0.	
Extras (b-2 lb-6 nb-1)	9		
Total (for 8 wickets declared, 152 overs)	595		
Fall of wickets: 1-16 I. Kayes, 2-60 T. Iqbal, 3-145 Mahmudullah, 4-160 M. Haque, 5-519 M. Rahim, 6-536 S. Al Hasan, 7-542 M. Hasan, 8-566 T. Ahmed			
Did not bat: S. Roy			
Bowling: T. Boult 34-5-131-2; T. Southee 34-5-158-2; C. de Grandhomme 20-2-65-0; N. Wagner 44-8-			



WELLINGTON: New Zealand's Ross Taylor (C) bats during day three of the first international Test cricket match between New Zealand and Bangladesh at the Basin Reserve in Wellington yesterday. — AFP

WEST INDIES AXES PAKISTAN TOUR

KARACHI: Pakistan's hopes of hosting international cricket matches suffered another setback yesterday after the West

Indies refused to compete in a short two Twenty20 match series in the South Asia nation over security fears.

No major team has toured Pakistan since a militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore in March 2009. They play their "home" series in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) had proposed holding a two-match series in the spring after hosting the Pakistan Super League (PSL) in Lahore on March 9. However PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan said the potential tour had been axed. "The West Indies Board have conveyed to us verbally that the 'thing' is off," Khan told AFP.

"The West Indies players' union is not willing, so at the moment they have refused." Pakistan did host Zimbabwe for three Twenty20s and as many one-day internationals in May-June 2015. But that failed to convince the bigger teams to resume tours.

Cricketers in Pakistan are now hoping the successful staging of the PSL final in Lahore will encourage foreign teams to consider competing again in the country. "We are the confirmed hosts of the PSL final in Lahore, so once it's done it will create an opening plus former England cricket head Giles Clarke is visiting Pakistan from January 28 so he will also assess the situation," said Khan. "Foreign teams rely a great deal on the travel advisories from their embassies in Pakistan so once that changes and becomes positive only then we can expect to convince teams (to come)," said Khan. — AFP



PCB Chairman Shaharyar Khan

SUBLIME SOUTH AFRICA SMASH SRI LANKA TO SWEEP SERIES

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa took 16 Sri Lanka wickets in a little over two sessions to secure a ruthless victory by an innings and 118 runs in the third and final test at the Wanderers yesterday. After posting 426 in their first innings on Friday, South Africa bowled Sri Lanka out for 131 before lunch on day three, before dismissing the out-gunned sub-continent side again for 177 to complete a 3-0 series sweep.

All of the home seamers claimed wickets on a pitch that had plenty of steep bounce and more than enough lateral movement to leave the Sri Lanka batsmen flailing. Left-arm fast bowler Wayne Parnell, who took six wickets for 89 runs over the two innings, was perhaps the pick, while Kagiso Rabada (5-94) was unlucky not to pick up more with some hostile spells.

Debutant seamer Duanne Olivier (5-57) will be pleased with his return in helpful conditions, while Vernon Philander (4-63) also pitched in. "Once again it was a complete performance," South Africa captain Faf du Plessis said at the post-match presentation. "It started with the bat on a tough wicket and our bowlers were once again spectacular.

"We wanted to make sure we step up in this game and dominate and do so 3-0... right through the series Sri Lanka didn't have a session where they were controlling us. "Consistency in test cricket is very hard, so I am proud with how the boys played."

South Africa made short work of wrapping up the tourists' first innings after Sri Lanka resumed the day on 80 for four.

Rabada grabbed the key wicket of Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews (19) as wicketkeeper

Quinton de Kock produced a magnificent diving catch in front of first slip.

Olivier then claimed his first test wicket when Herath top-edged a vicious bouncer and the home side then tore through the tail. Du Plessis enforced the follow-on and Sri Lanka were quickly on the back foot again as Rabada accounted for opener Kaushal Silva for a first-ball duck. The impressive Olivier snapped up two more quick wickets, with Du Plessis leaping to an almost impossible height at second slip

to pluck the ball out of the air as Mathews was dismissed for 10. The game was up for Sri Lanka when Rabada rattled the stumps of opener Dimuth Karunaratne (50), who had a provided lone resistance. "Congratulations to South Africa, they outplayed us in every department," Mathews said. "We kept repeating the same mistakes. We knew we would not get slow, turning wickets in South Africa and that we would have to play really good cricket, but unfortunately we haven't." —Reuters

SCOREBOARD

South Africa 1st innings 426 (J. Duminy 155, H. Amla 134; N. Pradeep 4-78, L. Kumara 4-107)		Sri Lanka 1st innings (Overnight: 80-4)		
D. Karunaratne c de Kock b Philander	0	K. Silva c de Kock b Rabada	0	
K. Mendis c Duminy b Rabada	13	K. Mendis b Parnell	24	
D. de Silva c du Plessis b Olivier	41	D. de Silva c du Plessis b Olivier	12	
A. Mathews c du Plessis b Olivier	10	D. Chandimal c Amla b Philander	10	
D. Chandimal c de Kock b Rabada	19	U. Tharanga c Duminy b Parnell	26	
D. Chandimal c de Kock b Philander	5	R. Herath c Bavuma b Parnell	10	
U. Tharanga c Elgar b Olivier	24	S. Lakmal c Philander b Parnell	31	
R. Herath c Cook b Olivier	8	L. Kumara c Cook b Olivier	0	
S. Lakmal c Rabada b Parnell	4	N. Pradeep not out	0	
L. Kumara not out	1	Extras (lb-2 nb-1 w-1)	4	
N. Pradeep c& b Parnell	4	Total (all out, 42.3 overs)	177	
Extras (lb-2)	2	Fall of wickets: 1-0 D. Karunaratne, 2-47 K. Silva, 3-62 K. Mendis, 4-70 D. de Silva, 5-90 D. Chandimal, 6-100 A. Mathews, 7-108 R. Herath, 8-126 S. Lakmal, 9-126 U. Tharanga, 10-131 N. Pradeep.		
Total (all out, 45.4 overs)	131	Bowling: V. Philander 14-5-28-3; W. Parnell 10-4-2-38-2; D. Olivier 9-3-19-2; K. Rabada 12-3-44-3.		
Fall of wickets: 1-0 D. Karunaratne, 2-47 K. Silva, 3-62 K. Mendis, 4-70 D. de Silva, 5-90 D. Chandimal, 6-100 A. Mathews, 7-108 R. Herath, 8-126 S. Lakmal, 9-126 U. Tharanga, 10-131 N. Pradeep.				
Bowling: V. Philander 10-1-35-1; K. Rabada 12-3-50-2 (w-1); W. Parnell 10-3-1-51-4; D. Olivier 9-2-38-3 (nb-1); J. Duminy 1-0-1-0.				
Result: South Africa won by an innings and 118 runs				

KOHLI READY TO TACKLE 'FEARLESS' ENGLAND

PUNE: Indian captain Virat Kohli said his team had a battery of world-class bowlers to counter a "fearless" England batting attack in a three-match one-day series starting in Pune today. India demolished England 4-0 in a preceding five-Test series at home but Kohli said the English were a different side when it came to the shorter formats of the game.

Led by Eoin Morgan, the English ODI team enjoyed a successful 2016, winning 11 and losing just five of their 17 matches.

The visitors also showed their aggressive intent in a recent warm-up match against an India A side in Mumbai, successfully chasing a 305-run target with Sam Billings hitting a gutsy 93. "I have seen the warm-up games as well, they seem to be quite fearless," Kohli, 28, said at the pre-match press conference. "I think against a side like this you need to be more aggressive in terms of wanting to pick up wickets because if you think of bowling dot balls they feed on that.

"So we already have plans in place in terms of how to counter what they come up with... we have quality bowlers on our side, we have bowlers who can make a dent initially.

"We have world-class spinners as well so it's going to be interesting to see how hard they come at us initially... The English team especially in the shorter format looks very fearless."

The one-day series is Kohli's first assignment as full-time skipper after Mahendra Singh Dhoni quit as the ODI and T20 captain earlier this month. Kohli also said his side would use the England series to prepare for the

Champions Trophy in June.

"These three games we are necessarily taking them as knockout games in our own heads because we need to prepare for the Champions Trophy and we need to be in the right kind of mind frame because that tournament is like that, it is very competitive, it is very quick.

"These three games become all the more crucial because we don't have much time before the big tournament."

The second ODI will be played on January 19 in Cuttack with the last game on January 22 in Kolkata. The one-dayers will be followed by three Twenty20 matches. — AFP



PUNE: England Moeen Ali plays football during a training session at The MCA International Cricket Stadium in Pune yesterday. England will play the first One Day International cricket match against India today in Pune. — AFP

AUSTRALIA BRACED FOR KYRGIOS ROLLER-COASTER RIDE

MELBOURNE: With firebrand Nick Kyrgios Australia's top hope at the year's first grand slam, local fans may be set for a thrilling, if occasionally bumpy roller-coaster ride at Melbourne Park.

Kyrgios, a 21-year-old with a temper as prodigious as his talent, brings a 14th seeding and a growing esteem from higher-ranked tour rivals despite his explosive tantrums and long rap-sheet of on-court transgressions. His last major meltdown occurred at the Shanghai Masters in October, for which he was fined \$25,000 and suspended for eight weeks after clashing with fans, the chair umpire and walking off court in the middle of a point.

The outburst came just days after he

won the Japan Open, his third title in a year of impressive growth and improvement, histrionics aside.

Drama never seems far away far away from Kyrgios and his leadup to Melbourne has been blighted by a knee problem which saw him limp through the Hopman Cup in Perth.

He has been salving it with cortisone patches but insisted on Saturday that he would be fit enough for his first round match against Portugal's Gastao Elias.

"Yeah, it's feeling really good. I've done four or five treatments on it," Kyrgios, a quarter-finalist at the 2015 tournament, told reporters at Melbourne Park. "Got one more tomorrow. Yeah, it's feeling a lot better since I

last competed, which was in Perth. So I've had massive improvements in my knee."

Kyrgios's knee problems have added to fitness concerns about Australia's number two Bernard Tomic, another player with a record of poor conduct both on and off the court. Neither player has ever sounded enthused about reaching Andy Murray-like levels of fitness and Tomic, seeded 27th in Melbourne, has raised alarm bells over his weight, firstly for being too heavy and then for going on a crash diet.

STOSUR'S STRUGGLES

Tomic, who plays Brazil's Thomaz Bellucci in the first round, said he had

shed 4.5 kg in a week, having been too "fat" at the Brisbane International, where he lost his opener against Spain's David Ferrer. "There are some players not as fit as me inside the top 10, 15 in the world," the 24-year-old told reporters at Melbourne Park on Saturday, quickly wearying of the continued attention over his weight.

"Will fitness help them? I don't think so." Former US Open champion Samantha Stosur, as ever, remains Australia's top hope in the women's draw but has always suffered from crippling nerves in the spotlight of her home grand slam, where she has never surpassed the fourth round.

The 32-year-old, who meets Briton

Heather Watson in the first round, remains a formidable player on her day and turned back the clock with a run to the semi-finals at the French Open last year. But she is in the midst of a huge form slump, having not won a tour match since reaching the second round at the US Open. Australian women's number two Daria Gavrilova, who plays another Briton in Naomi Broady, may be better equipped to go deep, having fed off the crowd fervour on a run to the fourth round last year.

"I'm not really thinking about last year too much, but I know that it was pretty cool times and I had big crowds," the Russia-born 22nd seed told local media. "That's all I play for." — Reuters

IRVING, KORVER LEAD CAVALIERS PAST KINGS

SACRAMENTO: Kyrie Irving scored 26 points, Kyle Korver added 18 in his most productive game since joining Cleveland last week and the Cavaliers tuned up for a NBA Finals rematch by beating the Sacramento Kings 120-108 on Friday night. LeBron James had 16 points and 15 assists, Kevin Love added 15 points and 18 rebounds and Cleveland snapped a two-game losing streak before taking on Golden State on Monday in its first game at Oracle Arena since winning the NBA title there last June. DeMarcus Cousins had 26 points and a season-high 11 assists, and Rudy Gay scored 23 points for the Kings. They fell to 1-4 on their seven-game homestand.

TIMBERWOLVES 96, THUNDER 86

Karl-Anthony Towns had 29 points and 17 rebounds and Ricky Rubio added 14 points and 14 assists to help Minnesota beat Oklahoma City for its third straight victory. Andrew Wiggins scored 19 points and Brandon Rush had 11 for the Timberwolves. They have won three in a row for the first time all season. The improving Timberwolves defense held the Thunder to 38.8 percent shooting and scored 33 points off of 19 Oklahoma City turnovers. Russell Westbrook had 21 points, 12 assists and 11 rebounds for his 19th triple-double of the season. But he also had 10 turnovers in Oklahoma City's first loss in four games. Enes Kanter had 21 points and eight rebounds for the Thunder.

GRIZZLIES 110, ROCKETS 105

Tony Allen scored a season-high 22 points, Mike Conley added 17 and Memphis overcame a 15-point, third-quarter deficit to beat Houston. Memphis led by two late in the fourth quarter before scoring the next five points, capped by a 3-pointer by Troy Daniels, to make it 110-103 with 26 seconds left. A dunk by James Harden came next, but Houston missed two shots after that to allow the Grizzlies to hold on for their third victory in four games. Harden had 27 points and nine assists for the Rockets. They lost consecutive games for the first time this season.

76ERS 102, HORNETS 93

Joel Embiid scored 24 points, blocked three shots and led Philadelphia past Charlotte for its third straight victory. The Sixers have their first three-game winning streak since winning four straight in 2013-14. Led by Embiid, the 76ers have won five of six games overall to improve to 12-25. Dario Saric added 15 points for Philadelphia. Nicolas Batum scored 19 points for

Charlotte, and Kemba Walker had 17.

CELTICS 103, HAWKS 101

Isaiah Thomas hit a jumper with 2 seconds left and scored 28 points, Al Horford made a triumphant return and Boston snapped Atlanta's seven-game winning streak. Thomas had 13 points in the fourth quarter. The Celtics hit 17 3-pointers and got a season-high 26 points from reserve forward Kelly Olynyk. Horford, a fan favorite during his nine seasons in Atlanta, was booed many times throughout the night after leaving the team as a free agent last summer. He had 10 points, six rebounds and six assists. Paul Millsap and Tim Hardaway Jr. each had 23 points for Atlanta.

RAPTORS 132, NETS 113

DeMar DeRozan scored 28 points, Kyle Lowry added 20 and Toronto had its highest-scoring game of the season and handed Brooklyn its ninth straight loss. DeMarre Carroll had 18 points and 11 rebounds, and Jonas Valanciunas added 14 points and 10 rebounds to help the Raptors beat the Nets for the sixth consecutive time. Bojan Bogdanovic had 23 points for the Nets, last in the NBA at 8-31. They have lost 16 straight on the road and are 1-18 overall away from home.

MAGIC 115, TRAIL BLAZERS 109

Nikola Vucevic scored a season-high 30 points and Orlando beat Portland to snap a four-game losing streak. Vucevic went 13 of 18 from the floor and grabbed 10 rebounds. Elfrid Payton scored 19 points and hit a key 3-pointer with 1:17 remaining. Damian Lillard scored 34 points, and C.J. McCollum had 26 for Portland.

BUCKS 116, HEAT 108

Jabari Parker had 24 points and Giannis Antetokounmpo added 19 to help Milwaukee beat Miami. Antetokounmpo also had eight rebounds and six assists after being limited by illness throughout the week. Greg Monroe added 16 points and 11 rebounds. Goran Dragic and Hassan Whiteside each had 19 points for the Heat, and Luke Babbitt added a season-high 16. They have lost 10 of 11 games.

JAZZ 110, PISTONS 77

Rodney Hood was 7 of 8 from 3-point range and scored a season-high 27 points in Utah's victory over Detroit. The Jazz put the game away in the third quarter with a 28-9 run. George Hill added 22 points, and Gordon Hayward had 20. Tobias Harris had 13 points for Detroit. — AP



SYDNEY: Gilles Muller of Luxembourg holds up his trophy with his sons Lenny and Nils after beating Daniel Evans of Britain in the men's singles final match at the Sydney International tennis tournament in Sydney yesterday. — AFP

TEARS AS MULLER GRABS FIRST TITLE IN SYDNEY

SYDNEY: Luxembourg's Gilles Muller broke through for his first career ATP World Tour title with a straight sets win over Britain's Daniel Evans in the Sydney International final yesterday. Left-hander Muller, 33, one of the Tour's biggest servers, finished too strongly for the 67th-ranked Evans, winning 7-6 (7/5), 6-2 in 88 minutes. He finally claimed a title after 17 years on the circuit with his victory continuing his impressive record of consistency in Sydney after reaching the semi-finals in the past two years.

Muller at 34 was the highest-ranked player in the top 50 without a tournament title after losing in five finals, including two last season, both on grass in 's-Hertogenbosch and Newport.

Muller, who was handed his winner's trophy by Australian Grand Slam great Rod Laver,

became emotional and broke down in tears during his victory speech at the presentation ceremony. "What a night! I've waited a long time for this," he said. "It just means so much to me to win this tournament in front of my wife and boys." Muller later told reporters: "It means a lot. I was waiting a long time. I played my first final in 2004. We are in 2017 and I waited 13 years to win my first title. I'm just very happy."

"For the past two or three years, it was probably my biggest goal to win a title. I always dreamed of that, and I was so close last year. "So I was very scared and worried that I was going to be one of those players that maybe would never win a title."

"Everything that happened tonight was like in a movie. Rod Laver there, standing on centre

court with the trophy, my kids in the stands, I can't ask for more."

Evans saved two set points before the opening set went to a tiebreaker. Muller took the set with a forehand winner and a smash and then got a double-break to control the second set and cruise to victory. Evans, who knocked out the top seed Austria's Dominic Thiem in the quarter-finals, was bidding to become the first British singles champion in Sydney since Tim Henman in 1997.

"He served too good. Obviously the first-set tiebreak was a big one," Evans said. "It would have been tough for him to regain focus and go again if I'd won the first set, but I didn't. "He was good front runner. I couldn't get anywhere near his serve." — AFP

NBA results/standings

Milwaukee 116, Miami 108; Memphis 110, Houston 105; Minnesota 96, Oklahoma City 86; Boston 103, Atlanta 101; Toronto 132, Brooklyn 113; Philadelphia 102, Charlotte 93.

Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
Atlantic Division					Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Toronto	26	13	.667	-	Utah	25	16	.610	-
Boston	25	15	.625	1.5	Oklahoma City	24	17	.585	1
NY Knicks	18	22	.450	8.5	Portland	18	24	.429	7.5
Philadelphia	12	25	.324	13	Denver	15	23	.395	8.5
Brooklyn	8	31	.205	18	Minnesota	14	26	.350	10.5
Central Division					Pacific Division				
Cleveland	29	10	.744	-	Golden State	34	6	.850	-
Milwaukee	20	18	.526	8.5	LA Clippers	27	14	.659	7.5
Indiana	20	19	.513	9	Sacramento	16	23	.410	17.5
Chicago	19	21	.475	10.5	LA Lakers	15	28	.349	20.5
Detroit	18	24	.429	12.5	Phoenix	12	27	.308	21.5
Southeast Division					Southwest Division				
Atlanta	22	17	.564	-	San Antonio	31	8	.795	-
Charlotte	20	20	.500	2.5	Houston	31	11	.738	1.5
Washington	19	19	.500	2.5	Memphis	25	17	.595	7.5
Orlando	17	24	.415	6	New Orleans	16	24	.400	15.5
Miami	11	30	.268	12	Dallas	12	27	.308	19



SACRAMENTO: LeBron James #23 of the Cleveland Cavaliers dunks the ball against the Sacramento Kings at Golden 1 Center on Friday in Sacramento, California. —AFP

ANDY MURRAY CONFIDENT HE CAN BREAK AUSSIE DROUGHT

MELBOURNE: Andy Murray has become a father, gained the No. 1 ranking and received a knighthood since he left Melbourne Park 50 weeks ago after losing a fifth Australian Open final. Stress weighed him down at the season-opening Grand Slam in 2016, to the point where he thought about quitting the tournament to head back to Britain to be with his heavily pregnant wife. But even that would have presented problems, considering his father-in-law was in a Melbourne hospital after collapsing with an illness while watching a match at the Australian Open.

Clearly, he's in a better place this year as he seeks to end his Australian drought. "I obviously feel pretty confident after the way that last season finished," he said. "I do love it here. I love the conditions. I have played really well here over the years, and just haven't managed to get over the final hurdle."

"But, yeah, I think I'm in a decent position, for sure, to do it. I think I have a chance to win here. I'm playing well. Practice has been good. I feel healthy. I'll give it a good shot." Rumors circulated last year that Murray would go home before facing Djokovic, his Melbourne nemesis, in the final. As it was, he was on the first flight to Heathrow after losing in straight sets - his fourth Australian Open final defeat to Djokovic and fifth overall dating back to 2010. His wife, Kim Sears, gave birth to their first child, Sophia Olivia, the following week. He confirmed Saturday, two days before he opens the 2017 tournament against Ilya Marchenko of Ukraine, that he really had thought about leaving early. "It was a tough tournament, obviously the situation with Kim and the baby coming was tough," he said. "Then with what happened with Nigel during the event made it really kind of awkward because there was times ... it was like 'I want to home for the birth,' but then I'm not just going to leave while my father-in-law is also in hospital."

"It was tough, and certainly not a position I would want to put myself in again, or my wife, or any of my family really."

Murray had a stunning end to 2016 after reuniting with Ivan Lendl as coach in June, winning his second Wimbledon title, and adding his Olympic gold medal, and defending titles in Beijing, Shanghai, Vienna and Paris to end Djokovic's 122-week stint at No. 1. He then clinched the year-end No. 1 ranking by winning the ATP Finals, beating the players seeded second, third, fourth and fifth. He set a record for most time between gaining the No. 2 and No. 1 rankings - seven years, and 82 days. But he has set a lot of timely records for British tennis in the last three seasons and, in Queen Elizabeth II's New Year's honors list, he received a knighthood from the British monarch for reaching the pinnacle of the sport. Roger Federer was asked if he could remember what it was like back in 2004 when he first became No. 1, and how he'd explain it to Murray.

"It definitely feels different because everybody comes up to you and says, 'You're the best,'" said Federer, who spent a record 302 weeks at No. 1. "You start walking around a bit differently. Just feel more confident overall in your shots."

Murray said he hasn't really felt a difference yet, but it has only been eight weeks. Considering how hard it was to achieve the top spot, he's hoping it doesn't take twice the energy to hang on to it.

"It is a mindset thing, because I think it could be quite easy that once you get to No. 1 that you think, 'Well, actually, I just need to keep doing what I've been doing,'" he said. "The reality is that things obviously keep moving on, the game will get better, I'll obviously get older, the young guys will continue to improve, and also Novak and Roger and Stan (Wawrinka) and Rafa (Nadal) and all the guys at the top are still going to be wanting to get there. — AP



MELBOURNE: Andy Murray of Britain hits a return during a practice session ahead of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

AUBAMEYANG LEADS HOSTS GABON INTO CUP OF NATIONS OPENER

LIBREVILLE: Gabon lifts the curtain Saturday on the Africa Cup of Nations with the hosts, spearheaded by Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, playing minnows Guinea-Bissau in the opening match in Libreville.

The first match in Group A in the 16-team competition, preceded by the opening ceremony, was set to begin at 1600 GMT at the Stade de l'Amitie in the Gabonese capital. It was there that Zambia beat the Ivory Coast on penalties in the 2012 final.

The build-up to the tournament has been marked by political tension and protests are planned to coincide with the start of the event. Cameroon, four-time winners of the Cup of Nations but troubled by a raft of withdrawals of leading players, and Burkina Faso, the other teams in Group A, meet at the same venue at 1900 GMT.

Gabon are bidding to win the continental title for the first time, 60 years on from the inaugural Cup of Nations, and are pinning their hopes on French-born Borussia Dortmund striker Aubameyang.

"Pierre is one of the best players in the world. Gabon are lucky to have him," the Panthers' Spanish coach Jose Antonio Camacho said ahead of the opening match when asked about the importance of the 27-year-old, African player of the year in 2015.

"It will be difficult for Gabon to go far if Aubameyang is not at his best." Guinea-Bissau caused a sensation when they qualified for the finals for the first time but while the side known as the 'wild dogs' will be desperate to seize their opportunity on the international stage, they could also be forgiven for feeling rather rusty.

After all, Baciro Cande's team have

not played a competitive match in four months. "Guinea-Bissau have nothing to lose and everything to win. For us it is the opposite," said Camacho. Cameroon are one of the most successful teams in the history of the Cup of Nations but have arguably their weakest ever squad this year.

That is after several leading players, notably Liverpool defender Joel Matip and Schalke striker Eric Choupo-Moting, rejected call-ups from coach Hugo Broos to focus on their club careers.

"Times are changing. Before, certain players were happy to come and play for Cameroon," said the Belgian as he suggested moving the tournament to a different time of year.

"I think the Cup of Nations needs to be played at a different time of the year. It doesn't come around at a good time." Burkina Faso, the 2013 runners-up

coached by the Portuguese Paulo Duarte, will hope to take advantage of their opponents' troubled build-up.

BONUS ROW

Another side enduring a problematic build-up to the tournament are DR Congo, whose players refused to train on Friday because of a row over the payment of bonuses.

"It has been like this for years and years now. We prepare well for our matches and at the end there is always a problem with bonuses," declared Congolese captain Youssouf Mulumbu in a video posted on Twitter.

"Having said that, on January 16 we will fiercely defend our flag," he added ahead of the Leopards' opening game in Group C against Morocco in Oyem on Monday. Zimbabwe had initially refused to fly to Gabon due to a dispute over

bonuses which has now been resolved.

The build-up to this Cup of Nations has been played out to a backdrop of social and political tension in the central African country. President Ali Bongo's election win last year is disputed by supporters of rival candidate Jean Ping and an opposition demonstration was planned to take place in Libreville on Saturday, coinciding with the opening games. The Cup of Nations features 32 matches and runs until February 5, when the final will be played in Libreville. Games will also be played in Oyem, Port-Gentil and Franceville, where the Algeria of newly-crowned African player of the year Riyad Mahrez meet outsiders Zimbabwe and Tunisia take on Senegal in Group B today.

Reigning champions Ivory Coast begin their defence of the trophy against Togo in Group C tomorrow. —AFP

HERNANDEZ GIVES SILVA WINNING HULL START

 Hull City	3
 Bournemouth	1

KINGSTON UPON HULL: Abel Hernandez scored twice as Hull City came from behind to beat Bournemouth 3-1 yesterday and give Marco Silva victory in his first Premier League game as manager.

Bournemouth, 6-1 victors in the reverse fixture, took a third-minute lead thanks to Junior Stanislas's penalty, but hosts Hull stormed back through Hernandez's double and a Tyrone Mings own goal.

It was Hull's first win in 10 league games and saw them climb from the foot of the table to 18th place, leaving them below fourth-bottom Crystal Palace on goal difference. With successive league games against Chelsea, Manchester United, Liverpool and Arsenal to come, it was a timely win for Silva, who succeeded Mike Phelan as manager earlier this month.

Bournemouth, eliminated from the FA Cup by third-tier Millwall last weekend, dropped two places to 11th after conceding three goals for the seventh time in nine league games.

Hull's injury problems saw centre-back Harry Maguire aligned at right-back and he looked every inch the makeshift full-back as his clumsy challenge felled Ryan Fraser in the second minute at the KCOM Stadium.

Stanislas confidently dispatched the spot-kick for his first goal since his brace in October's reverse fixture. The visitors looked eager to press home their advantage, with Harry Arter flashing a shot wide and Benik Afobe forcing Hull goalkeeper Eldin Jakupovic to block after running onto Artur Boruc's long kick.

But in the 32nd minute Hull drew level from their first clear-cut opportunity of the match. Tom Huddlestone found Andy Robertson in space and the Scotland left-back's inviting cross was headed in at the back post by Hernandez, who had been without a league goal since August.

Hull finished the first half on top, forcing three corners in quick succession, and within five minutes of kick-off in the second half they were in front.

Robert Snodgrass picked out Hernandez wide on the right and the Uruguay international forced Mings back before curling in a low left-foot shot.

Bournemouth manager Eddie Howe

took immediate action, sending on Callum Wilson and Joshua King for Afobe and Fraser. But within minutes it was 3-1 as Huddlestone's shot struck the unwitting Mings and drifted into the net for an own goal.

Silva used the game's closing stages to hand debuts to new signings Evandro and Oumar Niasse, who replaced Snodgrass and match-winner Hernandez. — AFP

Live Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE	
Everton v Manchester City	16:30
beIN SPORTS	
Manchester United v Liverpool	19:00
beIN SPORTS	

SPANISH LEAGUE PRIMERA DIV	
Valencia v Espanyol	14:00
beIN SPORTS	
Vigo v Alaves	18:15
beIN SPORTS	
Granada v Osasuna	20:30
beIN SPORTS	
Sporting Gijon v Eibar	20:30
beIN SPORTS	
Sevilla v Real Madrid	22:45
beIN SPORTS	

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE SERIE A	
Cagliari v Genoa	14:30
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	
Lazio v Atalanta	17:00
beIN SPORTS 1 HD	
Napoli v Pescara	17:00
beIN SPORTS 5 HD	
Udinese v Roma	17:00
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	
Sampdoria v Empoli	17:00
beIN SPORTS 3 HD	
Sassuolo v Palermo	17:00
beIN SPORTS 9 HD	
Fiorentina v Juventus	22:45
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	

FRENCH LEAGUE 1ST DIV	
Nice v Metz	17:00
beIN SPORTS 6 HD	
Caen v Lyon	19:00
beIN SPORTS	
Marseille v Monaco	23:00
beIN SPORTS 6 HD	

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP	
Algeria v Zimbabwe	19:00
beIN SPORTS	
Tunisia v Senegal	22:00
beIN SPORTS	



SWANSEA: Arsenal's Welsh midfielder Aaron Ramsey (L) vies with Swansea City's Argentinian defender Federico Fernandez during the English Premier League football match between Swansea City and Arsenal at The Liberty Stadium in Swansea, south Wales yesterday. — AFP

SANCHEZ ROUNDS OFF ARSENAL ROMP OVER LIMP SWANSEA

 Swansea City	0
 Arsenal	4

SWANSEA: Alexis Sanchez's 14th goal of the season added the finishing touch to Arsenal's convincing 4-0 Premier League victory over relegation battlers Swansea yesterday elevating them to third.

The in-form France striker Olivier Giroud gave the visitors a first half lead before own goals from Jack Cork and Kyle Naughton and an opportunist strike from Chilean star Sanchez completed the job. The Gunners rose to third from fifth and head Liverpool on goal difference although they can go above Arsenal again if they draw or beat Manchester United today.

The crushing defeat and Hull's win over Bournemouth sees Swansea fall to the bottom of the table a point from safety. It was a chastening home bow for Swansea manager Paul Clement. The Englishman-lured from being Carlo Ancelotti's assistant at Bayern Munich to replace Bob Bradley-saw his side capitulate in a second half that was totally one-sided.

They put up more of a fight in the first-half and could have gone in front in the 10th minute when Petr Cech was called upon to push aside a firm strike from Naughton.

Three minutes later, Gyfi Sigurdsson was inches over with a shot from 20 yards after Wayne Routledge had opened up the Arsenal defence. It took Arsenal 27 minutes to muster any kind of chance. Even then, it was a shot from distance from Sanchez that Lukasz Fabianski saved comfortably at the foot of his near post.

Swansea, who responded well to the continual prompting of Clement from the touchline, got numbers around the ball and made life increasingly difficult for the visitors.

'MOST SUBLIME OF MOVES'

But then, just as Arsenal appeared to be heading towards an interval dressing down, they struck through Giroud, in the 37th minute.

The most sublime of moves involving Mesut Ozil, Giroud and Aaron Ramsey created the platform and when Ozil was denied with a tame header, from a Sanchez cross, Giroud pounced to convert from four yards.

Two minutes before the break, Swansea thought they had earned themselves a penalty when Ki Sung-yueng appeared to be tripped by Laurent Koscielny after Fernando Llorente's delightful touch had opened up the Arsenal defence. Referee Mike Jones marched up to Ki, booked the South Korean for what he felt was a dive and duly awarded Arsenal a free kick.

Arsenal began the second half at a decent pace and both Sanchez and Alex Iwobi had opportunities to score before Ramsey was

denied by a desperate save, with his feet, by Fabianski. The goal did come, however, when Iwobi's shot looped off Cork and into the back of Fabianski's net. Without any genuine threat at the opposite end, Swansea were never likely to find a way back into the game.

Routledge did have a shot saved by Cech, on the hour, but there was precious little else over

which to enthuse as Arsenal strolled to victory.

A third followed 13 minutes later-Naughton turning in Iwobi's cross-and soon afterwards it was four. Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain nipped in behind, in the 74th minute, and though Routledge got his foot on the winger's cross, the ball popped up to Sanchez who scored from eight yards. — AFP

SPURS MAINTAINED THEIR TITLE PUSH TO MOVE SECOND

 Tottenham	4
 West Brom	0

LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur strengthened their push for the Premier League title with a 4-0 stroll over West Bromwich Albion on a special yesterday for their hat-trick hero Harry Kane. Kane, who became a father for the first time last Sunday, celebrated with a treble-and it could have been more-as Spurs coasted to a surprisingly easy win, their seventh straight victory in all competitions, to move into second in the table.

Kane's crisply-finished goal after 12 minutes was the prelude to total Spurs domination and he came close to adding to his tally several times in the first half, with the excellent Ben Foster tipping one shot against the post. Gareth McAuley, on an ill-fated 200th West Brom appearance, inadvertently deflected Christian Eriksen's 26th minute shot past Foster before Kane struck with two

sharp volleys in the last 15 minutes.

His hat-trick goal came from a lovely Dele Alli assist, to take his season's tally to 15 in all competitions. The win against an unusually toothless Albion pushed Spurs above Liverpool though Chelsea, who still lead by four points, were playing at Leicester City later on Saturday and Liverpool visit Manchester United on Sunday.

Kane had missed Spurs' FA Cup win over Aston Villa last Sunday after a sleepless night while his girlfriend Kate was giving birth to their daughter Ivy. "It's amazing, the week's been a bit of a whirlwind for me," Kane told Sky Sports after the match.

He had already come close to scoring before producing the early breakthrough from Eriksen's threaded through ball and it was the signal for one-way traffic. Alli, who had scored seven goals in his previous four league games, was ruled fractionally offside when it appeared he had equalled the Spurs record of scoring in five successive Premier League matches. Foster was constantly in the action, thwarting Kane on several occasions but he could do nothing to stop Eriksen's shot that deflected off McAuley. — Reuters



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's Harry Kane, center, scores his hat-trick goal and his side's fourth goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Tottenham Hotspur and West Bromwich Albion at White Hart Lane stadium in London, yesterday. — AP

WATFORD HELD AFTER TAYLOR TRIBUTE

 Watford	0
 Middlesbrough	0

WATFORD: Watford fans paid an emotional tribute to Graham Taylor after the death of their former manager, but their team couldn't match that fitting send-off in a dull 0-0 draw with Middlesbrough yesterday. Taylor passed away on Thursday at the age of 72 after suffering a suspected heart attack and the club where he made his name did him proud with moving tributes before the Premier League clash at Vicarage Road.

Fans gathered outside the stadium to lay flowers, many in the club's yellow and red colours, alongside shirts, scarfs and other mementos in memory of the man who gave them so many unforgettable moments during his 15 years in charge.

A previously unglamorous club languishing in the fourth tier when Taylor arrived from Lincoln in 1977, Watford were utterly transformed as he led them to the top-flight in just five years.

It was a remarkable ride that produced Watford's only FA Cup final appearance in 1984, the club's first foray onto the European stage and an unlikely alliance with flamboyant pop star and Hornets owner Elton John.

Former England boss Taylor cemented

his legacy by returning to Watford to win successive promotions that led to a Premier League place in 1999 and the outpouring of emotion following his death underlined such how much he meant to his old club.

Before kick-off, Taylor's smiling face beamed down from big screens inside the stadium and the slogan 'There's only one Graham Taylor' was emblazoned on hoardings around the pitch, while fans held up a mosaic making the letters GT.

With Taylor's wife Rita and daughters Joanne and Karen in the stands, there was a minute's applause and Taylor's name was chanted long and loud throughout the emotional tribute. Watford manager Walter Mazzarri had called onto his players to pay their own respects to Taylor by beating Middlesbrough. They had an early chance to open the scoring when a fortunate deflection sent Etienne Capoue through on goal, but the midfielder took a heavy touch, giving Middlesbrough goalkeeper Victor Valdes time to race out and block his shot. Middlesbrough's Christian Stuani had the ball in the net moments later, only to see his effort correctly ruled out for offside.

Valdes made another good stop to keep out Abdoulaye Doucoure's powerful low strike from just inside the penalty area.

Neither team were at their best and Stuani could only loft his shot on the top of the net after a rare Middlesbrough raid in the closing stages of the first half.

There was more menace to both teams after the break and Middlesbrough's Fabio saw his stinging effort palmed away by Heurelho Gomes. — AFP

Sports

**Peterhansel wins
13th Dakar title,
first for
Sunderland**



**Tears as Gilles
Muller grabs first
title in Sydney**



SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2017

AUBAMEYANG LEADS HOSTS GABON INTO CUP OF NATIONS OPENER Page 19



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi (C) vies with Las Palmas' Croatian forward Marko Livaja (R) during the Spanish league football match FC Barcelona vs UD Las Palmas at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona yesterday. — AFP

SUAREZ, MESSI KEEP BARCA ON MADRID'S TAIL

BARCELONA: Luis Suarez scored twice and Lionel Messi continued his sensational form as Barcelona moved to within two points of La Liga leaders Real Madrid yesterday with a 5-0 rout of Las Palmas.

Madrid remain very much in pole position, though, with two games in hand, the first of which comes at third-placed Sevilla today. Suarez opened the scoring after just 14 minutes, but Barca had to wait until early in the second-half to double their lead when Messi scored for the seventh straight game.

And Barca turned their domination into further goals as Suarez's second, Arda Turan and Aleix Vidal's first goal for the club rounded off the scoring.

Victory eased a growing sense of unease around the Camp Nou this week with divisions between the squad and the club's board over ongoing talks to extend Messi's contract beyond 2018.

Suarez criticised Barca CEO's Oscar Grau's claims that the club must show financial "common sense" in negotiating the Argentine's new deal, that looks set to make him the world's highest paid player.

Meanwhile, on Friday, Pere Gratacos was sacked from his role as Barca's director of institutional relations with the Spanish football federation for claiming Messi "wouldn't be as good" without the help of his star teammates.

"I always say to Barca fans to be calm. I am personally handling Leo's renewal," said Barca president Josep Maria Bartomeu.

"I have spoken a bit with his team. We will speak when there is news to give. For now things simply have to run their course." As if giving Messi the chance to prove Gratacos wrong, Barca boss Luis Enrique surprisingly left out a number of star names with Neymar and

Andres Iniesta left on the bench and Gerard Pique out his squad altogether amidst a busy January of La Liga and Copa del Rey action.

TIDY FINISH

However, unlike on many outings this season, Barca's understudies rose to the occasion. Portuguese international Andre Gomes has been much-criticised since his 35 million euro (\$37 million) move from Valencia in July, but provided his first assist in a Barca shirt with a driven low cross that was swept home at the near post by Suarez.

"The club know what Leo wants," Suarez told Beln Sports Spain. "We are calm despite what has been said." Barca missed a host of chances to extend their lead before the break as Rafinha and Gomes fired off target with just Javi Varas in the Las Palmas goal to beat.

Varas then produced a stunning stop when one-on-one with Messi. However, the 'keeper was at fault when the second did finally arrive seven minutes into the second-half as he spilt Rafinha's cross into the path of Messi to tap into an empty net to score his 27th goal in just 24 appearances this season.

Suarez added his second of the afternoon with a tidy finish into the far corner just before the hour mark. Seconds later the Uruguayan should have sealed his hat-trick, but Turan slotted home the rebound after Varas denied Suarez as Barca struck three times in just six minutes.

Suarez was handed a break for the final 20 minutes as he was replaced by Paco Alcacer and the former Valencia captain teed up Vidal to slot home from just inside the area for the fifth 10 minutes from time. — AFP

NO COSTA, NO PROBLEM AS CHELSEA DOWN LEICESTER



LONDON: Marcos Alonso proved an unexpected replacement for the absent Diego Costa as Chelsea won 3-0 at Leicester City yesterday to consolidate their position atop the Premier League table. Costa, Chelsea's top scorer, was missing after reportedly rowing with coaching staff about his fitness, but Spanish wing-back Alonso's double helped Antonio Conte's side go seven points clear.

Tottenham Hotspur climbed into second place after Harry Kane claimed a hat-trick in a 4-0 stroll against West Bromwich Albion, with Arsenal moving up to third after winning by the same scoreline at Swansea City. Chelsea's 13-game winning run had been halted by a 2-0 defeat at Spurs on their previous league outing and preparations for the trip to Leicester were rocked by the Costa controversy.

Speaking before the game, Conte would only say that Costa, who is reportedly the subject of an eye-watering offer from China, had been unable to train due to "pain in his back". But the Brazil-born Spain international's absence was quickly forgotten as Eden Hazard teed up Alonso to sweep Chelsea ahead in the sixth minute at the King Power Stadium.

Alonso struck six minutes into the second half as



LEICESTER: Chelsea's Spanish midfielder Pedro celebrates in the arms of Chelsea's Brazilian midfielder Willian after scoring their third goal during the English Premier League football match between Leicester City and Chelsea at King Power Stadium in Leicester, central England yesterday. — AFP

well, with a deflected shot, before Pedro Rodriguez headed in after Willian had been denied by Kasper Schmeichel. It was Leicester's 10th defeat of the campaign and kept the champions in 15th place, five points above the relegation zone. "I think after Chelsea it was a big challenge to keep the momentum and show that we are mature enough to fight for big things and today was a very good example of that." — AFP

CARROLL GEM BOOSTS HAMMERS IN WAKE OF PAYET'S STORM



LONDON: A wonderful bicycle kick from Andy Carroll helped West Ham shrug off Dimitri Payet's refusal to play as they coasted to a welcome 3-0 win over Premier League strugglers Crystal Palace yesterday.

While Carroll's goal was the pick of the three it was Mickail Antoinio who ran the show creating all of the Hammers goals-bringing them their first win in four matches and ending a goal drought stretching back three games.

Sofiane Feghouli, with his first ever Premier League goal, and Manuel Lanzini—who has scored in all four matches he has played at Palace-made light of Payet's absence.

Such was the antipathy towards the France international that a steward guarded the photo of him outside the ground and the fans used colourful language to chant what they thought about him prior to the game. Palace's defeat leaves them deep in trouble with the gamble on bringing in Sam Allardyce—who was Hammers' manager for four years—to replace Alan Pardew yet to bear fruit with three defeats and a draw in four league games. Palace remain fourth from bottom but only above Hull because of a better goal difference.

Both sides had plenty of attacking intent from the get go but chances were at a premium with Carroll spurning the best one in the opening half hour.

Mark Noble did well down the right and delivered a superb cross but Carroll's half volley from close range went over the bar.

Palace replied in kind, French international midfielder Yohan Cabaye producing a moment of inspiration to try and break the deadlock conjuring up a delightful volley from outside the area-Darren Randolph though got down to save.

The visitors should have gone one up shortly after when Andros Townsend's freekick found former Hammer James Tomkins free in the box but he fluffed his shot completely.

Cabaye had another chance early in the second-half, striker Christian Benteke nodding the ball down but the Frenchman's volley flew over the bar.

MAGICAL TOUCH

The Hammers stormed back creating a few chances of their own-Pedro Obiang the instigator-Carroll going closer than his first effort as he took the ball down himself and his shot skimmed the bar.

The hosts' pressure deservedly paid off when Feghouli struck, although it owed a lot to a rush of blood to the head from Wales international goalkeeper Wayne Hennessey.

He charged from his line but Antonio won the race to the ball, rounded him, and passed it to Feghouli who slotted it home for his first Premier League goal.

Antonio was at the heart of the Hammers second as well as he teed up Carroll in the box and the striker produced a stunning bicycle kick to double the lead.

Antonio's magical touch was at it again minutes later releasing Lanzini and he raced on to beat Hennessey and end any hopes of a Palace comeback. — AFP



TRUMP'S WAR ON OFFSHORING JOBS EASIER SAID THAN DONE



KUWAIT: NIC board of directors and management members Hamad Ahmad Al-Ameeri, Chairman (second right), Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Mukhaizim, Chief Executive Officer (left), Noora Sulaiman Al-Fassam, Executive Vice President, Corporate Finance Sector (second left) and Ruba Omar Al-Khairi, Senior Vice President, Wealth Management Sector (right) during the press conference. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

NIC BEGINS COLLECTION PROCESS OF AMERICANA SHARES

MANDATORY ACQUISITION OFFER TO CLOSE ON FEBRUARY 13

KUWAIT: National Investments Company (NIC) began last Thursday receiving applications from shareholders wishing to tender for sale their shares in Kuwait Food Co (Americana). NIC saw a busy day with walk-ins from shareholders wishing to participate in the offer which closes on February 13, and a great number of telephone enquiries received from private and institutional investors from inside and outside of Kuwait expressing their interest in the deal.

To that end, National Investments Company held a press conference with the address of NIC's board of directors and management members, Hamad Ahmad Al-Ameeri, Chairman, Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Mukhaizim, Chief Executive Officer, Noora Sulaiman Al-Fassam, Executive Vice President, Corporate Finance Sector, and Ruba Omar Al-Khairi, Senior Vice President, Wealth Management Sector, who answered enquiries addressed to them by the members of the press.

In the course of the conference, NIC's executives highlighted the importance of this offer for the Kuwaiti stock market, and market liquidity in general after the process is complete. NIC has employed its resources, know-how and expertise seamlessly to be amply prepared to receive all shareholders with requisite information about the offer, including information accessible on their recently revamped website, and all requirements shareholders must meet in order to participate in the offer. The detailed information can be found on www.nic.com.kw, in addition to Americana's website and that of Boursa Kuwait.

On June 18, 2016, Adeptio and Al-Khair National for Stocks and Real Estate WLL entered into an implementation agreement for the sale (by public auction) of 268,496,544 shares held by Al-Khair in the share capital of Americana (approximately 66.79 percent) to Adeptio. The purchase price for this block trade, which was conducted on October 20, 2016, was KD 2.650 per share. That deal was a tremendous success and marked a new era for mega acquisitions in Kuwait.

Under Kuwaiti securities rules and Capital Markets Authority Executive Bylaws, Adeptio was then obliged to submit a mandatory acquisition offer to buy all 122,657,505 remaining shares from minority shareholders. The offer price for the mandatory acquisition offer also stands at KD 2.650.

Earlier this week, the board of Americana said the offer by Adeptio to buy out minority shareholders at the offer price was fair. Additionally, independent investment advisor, Consultia, concluded that the offer price was fair and Americana's board has endorsed the offer. Assuming all offer shares are acquired the total amount to be paid to minority shareholders will be KD 325,042,388.250.

NIC's role as the Acquisition Manager of the transaction demonstrates the firm's strong capabilities and expertise in managing and supporting acquisitions of this size and nature from start to finish. NIC's expertise may have to be put to use again in the near future as this deal signals yet another hint of optimism for Kuwaiti equities on the whole.



KUWAIT: NIC Chairman Hamad Ahmad Al-Ameeri (right) addresses the press conference.

EU BREXIT CHIEF SEES SPECIAL CARE FOR FINANCIAL SERVICE TIES

BRUSSELS: The European Union's Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier said yesterday that the EU will demand "special vigilance" before letting British financial firms access the bloc because of the large risk London could pose to the EU's financial stability. Responding to a report in the Guardian which said he had told EU lawmakers that he wanted a special deal to maintain EU firms' access to the City of London, Barnier tweeted: "When asked on equivalence I said: EU would need special vigilance on financial stability risk, not special deal to access the City."

An EU spokesman said the Guardian report did "not correctly reflect" Barnier's comments to a closed door meeting with members of the European Parliament last week.

EU officials said the point Barnier was making when asked about Brussels' willingness after Brexit to recognize British financial regulations as "equivalent" in rigour to those of the EU was that, as a lot of EU business was likely to still pass through the City, EU equivalence rules would have to be much more tightly drafted compared to those for smaller centres.

The Guardian quoted minutes prepared by parliamentary aides as saying Barnier told lawmakers: "Some very specific work has to be done in this area ... There will be a special/specific relationship. There will need to be work outside of the negotiation box ... in order to avoid financial instability."

EU officials said Barnier, a Frenchman

who ran EU financial services policy, was not speaking of a "special deal" to limit the impact of Brexit on financial services trade between Britain and the EU but rather emphasizing that Brussels would have to take special care not to ignore stability risks in London.

EQUIVALENCE

The officials said he responded to a question on equivalence by noting that the extent of EU rules governing relations with non-EU financial centres was proportional to the volume of EU business conducted in them and so to the risk of, say, a bank collapse in London destabilizing markets on the continent.

With, say, the United States, the EU has negotiated accords to recognize the "equivalence" of, for example, bank supervision standards to make it easier for European companies to use US banks and let US institutions sell services in the EU. The extent of such equivalence agreements has been a major concern for British-based banks wanting continued access to the EU market. Other EU governments have said they will welcome financial firms moving out of London and say Britain's economy and its big services sector must pay a price for Brexit so that it does not inspire voters in other countries to follow suit.

EU ministers and officials acknowledge that damage to London's global financial centre caused by Brexit will hurt not only Britain but the other 27 EU states. —Reuters

CHINESE LEADER MEETS DAVOS ELITE AS VOTERS REVOLT

PARIS: China's president will preach the advent of a new world order in Davos next week before the high priests of globalization, who are facing an uprising from voters against their orthodoxy of open markets and borders.

The annual conclave of the World Economic Forum in the Swiss Alps, grouping 3,000 delegates from the worlds of government, business, science and the arts, has created the caricature of "Davos Man", a rich, rootless globetrotter who worships with fellow disciples in the church of free trade.

But populists are singing from a radically different hymn sheet. Their hostility towards both unfettered trade and immigration has already yielded Britain's vote to leave the European Union and the rise of once-fringe parties across Europe, including in France and Germany.

The ultimate rebuke to "Davos Man" will come on Friday, the last day of the week-long forum, when Donald Trump is inaugurated as the 45th president of the United States.

And the consensus of a rules-based global order led by Washington is threatened by communist China's inexorable rise.

In that context, it is noteworthy that Xi Jinping will become the first Chinese president to attend the forum when he gives a keynote speech on Tuesday that is expected to extol Beijing's efforts to negotiate new types of regional trade deals shorn of US influence.

This year's Davos "may be the start of China's new role as a leader in promoting globalisation and a speedy recovery of the global economy", as Western countries turn to "isolationist self-centredness", commentator Sun Ding wrote for China's official Xinhua news service.

IHS Markit chief economist Nariman Behravesh stressed China is in no position yet to replace the United States as a global hegemon, but told AFP:



"In Davos, Xi will likely articulate China's vision for the world economic and political order."

• Don't blame us

Heading into the World Economic Forum's 47th edition, organisers reject the charge of complacency. Founder and executive chairman Klaus Schwab, 78, told

AFP that the discussions will aim to address "the root causes" of the widespread anxiety felt among Western voters.

But he insists that globalised trade alone is not to blame for the rise of identity politics, pointing to advances in technology that have rendered millions of workers' jobs obsolete along with fraying social bonds for the "emotional turmoil" afflicting so many.

The answer, Schwab said, lies not in retreating behind isolationist walls but in properly educating and training people to face up to what he calls the "Fourth Industrial Revolution".

One theme of Davos this year is how white-collar workers could be next in the firing line, after their factory brethren, given the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence.

If Xi is the star turn, Chinese business leaders will also be out in force in Davos. Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State John Kerry will be on hand from the outgoing US administration, along with new UN chief Antonio Guterres and ministers representing 70 countries.

Oscar-winning actors Matt Damon and Forest Whitaker will be present to promote development initiatives they are leading in poorer nations.

But in the short term, Friday's inauguration of Trump will be the elephant in the Alps as Davos debates where the property tycoon-newly buffeted by incendiary allegations linked to Russia intends to take his country.

If he is indeed bent on isolationism, "China is going to be there to try to fill the void", commented Luis Garicano, professor of economics and strategy at the London School of Economics.

But he also pointed to the fact that in some of his cabinet picks, such as secretary of state and defence, Trump is surrounded by strong figures with top-level backgrounds in business or the military who are used to working across borders.

"These people are pretty committed to the world order, one could say the Davos order. He would seem to stand alone in his rejection of 'Davos Man'."

The new US administration will be represented in Davos by Anthony Scaramucci, a flamboyant hedge-fund investor who is part of Trump's transition team. Scaramucci will be the object of wary curiosity from many in the Davos crowd. They no doubt share the view of Trump espoused by former Mexican president Vicente Fox that the Republican is a "false prophet" who bodes ill for the world, elites and poor alike. —AFP

SIGNS OF A PROGRESSIVE CORPORATE CULTURE

Bayt.com weekly report

Many companies are losing their best employees due to the bounding rules and repetitive atmosphere. Some employees feel that their career is not moving as much as they would like while others feel that their companies are not being supportive enough. The result is more and more employees leaving as soon as a new job opportunity comes along.

A progressive corporate culture is the answer to that dilemma. The culture developed at the company differentiates one workplace from another and can be the main factor for employee retention. When each employee is significant to the bigger picture and connected to each other and to their jobs in a stronger fashion they are more likely to appreciate their company and resist the temptation to leave. Still not sure what a progressive corporate culture entails? Bayt.com, the #1 Job Site in the Middle East, explains the main characteristics.

1. Targeting loyalty
Turnover rate is correlated with happiness and satisfaction in the workplace. When employees are engaged, motivated, and have an overall positive experience, they are less likely to leave. According to the Bayt.com poll, Employee Retention in the MENA Workplace, 44.7 percent of respondents cite fear of getting fired as the number one reason for quitting. Creating a stable environment eases their minds and encourages loyalty. Also, the reduced turnover rate proves much more productive for your company as it mitigates excessive recruitment and hiring costs. In order to garner employee loyalty, explain to your employees why it is worth staying at your company. Hire people based on the culture you've created and encourage your staff to take active part in it.

2. Opening communication channels
In a healthy workplace, transparency is

essential; employees are honest, share thoughts, discuss ideas and communicate openly. This is why all employees should be in the loop concerning any major changes, whether it's an improvement or an obstacle. Hiding information will only hurt the work environment, reflecting poorly on the results.

Opening communication channels will put the minds of the employees at ease and improve productivity. Integration of open-door policies, open conversations, and trust among employees are key aspects of a progressive corporate culture.

3. Improving teamwork
Healthy inter-team relationships mean better communication. A healthy team is capable of collaborating, brainstorming, sharing tasks, as well as work optimally. For 90 percent of professionals in MENA, teams constitute a large part of their job satisfaction, according

to the Bayt.com poll, Teams in the MENA Workplace. Such healthy relationships allow members to solve conflicts in a respectable manner, encourage relations outside of the work setting, minimize gossip and tackle any personal issues head on and respectfully.

4. Aligning employee goals
Every contribution makes a difference, and every employee has the right to know and understand where his or her job fits into the bigger picture of the company. Employees should be able to describe the values of the company, connect their own values and goals to them, and perform accordingly. Ideally, this should be done at the recruitment stage. When hiring new members, explaining company goals and mission is vital to see if the candidate's own goals overlap.

But even after hiring takes place, meet with your employees regularly to see how their

objectives have changed or developed and discuss new areas that help them meet their goals.

5. Trusting the employee
Respect and trust are the ultimate success factors for any relationship. An employee is motivated and driven to produce with pride when they feel respected and trusted. Trusting your team to make the right decisions for the company empowers the employees to do their best, strengthening their loyalty towards the company. Ideally, all the aforementioned elements work seamlessly together to enhance the efficiency and productivity of your workforce. Employees are more engaged and loyal when they uphold company standards and work well in teams. Moreover, when they feel trusted, they can build upon the trust even further. As a result, the need for supervision is no longer a priority, saving both parties time and energy to be invested in the work itself.

TRUMP'S WAR ON OFFSHORING JOBS EASIER SAID THAN DONE

US MAYBE EXPOSED TO TRADE RETALIATION

WASHINGTON: In his high-profile battle against offshoring US jobs, President-elect Donald Trump has threatened Mexico, China and multinational corporations with punitive tariffs and retaliation.

But to make good on such threats, Trump will have a narrow set of legal tools at his disposal and risks exposing the United States to retaliation. Swept into the White House in part on a promise of bringing jobs back to the United States, the president-elect this week reiterated his vow to slap a "major border tax" on companies that use cheap Mexican labor to export to the US market.

But can he really do this? The US Constitution gives Congress the authority to impose taxes and regulate foreign commerce but it grants the president the power to negotiate international trade pacts, which still are subject to approval by lawmakers. Over the 20th century, however, Congress significantly extended the president's authority in matters of trade.

Broad powers from Congress

"Current US laws give the president an enormous control over restricting trade," said Gary Hufbauer, a former senior Treasury Department official in charge of trade poli-

cy who is now at the Peterson Institute in Washington. Adopted in 1917, the Trading with the Enemy Act allows the president to suspend imports from countries during periods of conflict. President Franklin Roosevelt used the law in 1941 to freeze trade with Japan and some analysts say Trump could try to use it today, on the basis of continuing hostilities in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Other retaliatory measures could be on surer legal footing. The 1974 Trade Act allows the executive branch to impose duties on a country's imports if its trade practices are "unreasonable," or to suspend a treaty if it imposes an economic "burden" on the United States.

One of Trump's favorite targets, the North American Free Trade Agreement, which links the United States with Canada and Mexico, could be an inviting target under the Trade Act.

The law also allows the administration to slap surcharges on imports for a maximum of 150 days to correct a "disequilibrium" in the US balance of payments. The United States habitually runs a massive deficit with China, for example. Even if permissible under the law, such actions still could carry serious economic and political risks.

"It would set off a round of retaliation," said Cliff Burns, a

Washington attorney specializing in trade matters. And "countries would probably try to back that up by filing complaints at the WTO or a dispute under NAFTA."

A subtler tack

Imposing import duties on individual companies, as Trump has threatened against General Motors or Toyota, is a taller order. The Constitution guarantees equal protection under the law, which could prohibit such tailor-made sanctions. Burns said Trump could still invoke the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act, which would allow him to take temporary measures in cases of exceptional danger to the economy that would be less likely to become bogged down in the courts.

"When you try to challenge a presidential action taken under this law, the president normally says that's it's the exercise of his foreign policy power and the courts generally agree with that," Burns said. Trump could also opt for a subtler tack: imposing duties not on the business but on the specific parts it uses, in particular for the auto sector, Hufbauer said. "He could name the highly itemized kind of products that the company imports, such as cars chassis of a certain size or engines." —AFP

MOODY'S TO PAY \$864 MILLION TO SETTLE CLAIMS IT INFLATED RATINGS

NEW YORK: Moody's Corp has agreed to pay nearly \$864 million to settle federal and state claims it gave inflated ratings to risky mortgage investments in the years leading up to the financial crisis.

The deal announced Friday was struck among the New York-based rating agency, the Justice Department and the attorneys general for 21 states and the District of Columbia. It calls for \$437.5 million to go to the Justice Department and \$426.3 million to be divided among the states and the District of Columbia. Moody's - along with the other two major rating agencies, Standard & Poor's and Fitch - were widely criticized for giving low-risk ratings to the risky mortgage securities being sold ahead of the crisis, while they reaped lucrative fees. In the settlement, the world's second-largest credit ratings agency acknowledged that it didn't follow its own standards in rating the risk of securities backed by home mortgages and the collateralized debt obligations that relied on their health.

The system spread the risk of mortgage defaults to banks around the globe and led to a string of financial collapses in 2008 when people began defaulting on risky subprime loans.

That caused the housing market to implode in many areas and sparked the worst US recession since the Depression. Moody's acknowledged that it used a more lenient standard for certain financial products and didn't make public the differences from its published standards.

"Moody's failed to adhere to its own

credit rating standards and fell short on its pledge of transparency in the run-up to the Great Recession," Principal Deputy Associate Attorney General Bill Baer said in a statement. Under the settlement, Moody's agreed to a number of reforms designed to make sure its credit ratings are objective, including separating commercial and credit rating functions; ensure changes to its rating methods are independently reviewed, and ensuring that some employees aren't compensated based on Moody's own financial performance.

"The agreement acknowledges the considerable measures Moody's has put in place to strengthen and promote the integrity, independence and quality of its credit ratings," Moody's said in a statement. "As part of the resolution, Moody's has agreed to maintain, for the next five years, a number of existing compliance measures and to implement and maintain certain additional measures over the same period." The agreement comes two years after the world's largest ratings agency, Standard & Poor's, agreed to pay nearly \$1.4 billion to settle similar allegations by the Justice Department, 19 states and the District of Columbia.

With the District of Columbia, the states involved in the settlement announced Friday are Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Washington. —AP

BLACK LADY LIBERTY TO GRACE US COIN

WASHINGTON: The United States is set to issue a commemorative \$100 gold coin that depicts Lady Liberty—a national symbol generally portrayed as a white woman—as an African American for the first time.

The 24-karat gold piece will be released in honor of the United States Mint's 225th anniversary, one of a series of coins that will feature a racially diverse array of Lady Liberties.

The coins will "depict an allegorical Liberty in a variety of contemporary forms-including designs representing Asian-Americans, Hispanic-Americans and Indian-Americans among others," the Mint said in a statement released Thursday. The Mint said it is issuing the coins to "reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of the United States."

The new coin will be released on April 6 featuring the bust of a distinctly African-American Liberty, with a crown of gold stars. Underneath appear the words "In God we trust" and the dates 2017 and 1792, the year Congress created the Mint.

The coin's flip side features another potent US symbol, an eagle in flight. "Our founding fathers realized the critical need for our fledgling nation to have a respected monetary system, and over the last 225 years, the Mint has never failed in its mission," said

Rhett Jeppson, the Mint's principal deputy director.

In another move to diversify the mostly white male cast of statesmen featured on American currency, the onetime slave-turned-abolitionist Harriet Tubman was named as the new face of the \$20 banknote last April, the first time an African American was picked to feature on US currency.

An open poll of more than 600,000 people strongly favored Tubman, a hero to African Americans for her escape from slavery in Maryland in 1849 to help run the legendary Underground Railroad that enabled thousands of slaves to flee to freedom in the 19th century. — AFP



WASHINGTON: This undated handout image provided by the US Mint shows the design for the 2017 American Liberty 225th Anniversary Gold Coin. The coin is worth \$100. — AP



MAZAR-I-SHARIF: An Afghan shopkeeper sits and drinks tea in front of his carpet shop as he waits for customers in Mazar-i-Sharif. —AFP

News

in brief

Kuwait oil price up to \$51.16 pb

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went up 39 cents to reach \$51.16 per barrel (pb) on Friday after being at \$50.77 pb the day before, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. International markets also saw a hike in prices after demand was up in China and uncertainties growing over a comeback for American production, especially after the recent OPEC agreement.

Libya's oil production drops to 655,000 bpd

LONDON: Libya's oil production has dropped to 655,000 barrels a day due to difficulties including a lack of storage capacity and poor weather, the head of the National Oil Corporation said yesterday. NOC Chairman Mustafa Sanalla told Reuters production had been more than 700,000 bpd over the past week, but then "unfortunately decreased due to bad weather and short storage capacities, as well as some technical problems in some fields". A deputy leader of the UN-backed government in Tripoli had put production at 750,000 bpd on Friday. Libya's production has been rising after a two-year blockade on a western pipeline connected to Sharara field was lifted last month, but remains well below the 1.6 million bpd the OPEC member was producing before its 2011 uprising. A tanker that was loading the first shipment of Sharara crude from Zawiya terminal for more than two years on Friday had been postponed because of weather conditions.

Egypt's GASC draws 7 offers in wheat tender

CAIRO: Egypt's state buyer GASC received sales offers from seven suppliers in an international tender to purchase wheat yesterday, traders said. The lowest offer was \$187.50 a ton free on board for 60,000 tons of wheat sourced from Russia, they said. No purchase has yet been made and results were expected later, traders said. Egypt, the world's largest wheat importer, is seeking to buy an unspecified amount of wheat for shipment between Feb. 15-25, 2017. Egypt is streamlining its import procedures and establishing a registry of companies that will inspect grains purchases abroad, the Trade Ministry said on Friday. The move comes after an intergovernmental feud over import regulations for wheat effectively cut Egypt off from global markets last year. Participation at state tenders has started to return to normal levels since a decree on the new procedures was issued last November.

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.615
Indian Rupees	4.510
Pakistani Rupees	2.934
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.053
Nepali Rupees	2.823
Singapore Dollar	212.790
Hongkong Dollar	39.563
Bangladesh Taka	3.893
Philippine Peso	6.173
Thai Baht	8.601
Malaysian Ringgit	223.230

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.881
Qatari Riyal	84.334
ani Riyal	797.427
Bahraini Dinar	815.330
UAE Dirham	83.599

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.250
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	16.073
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.232
Tunisian Dinar	133.590
Jordanian Dinar	422.400
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.046
Syrian Lira	2.188
Morocco Dirham	30.839

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	306.850
Euro	323.270
Sterling Pound	379.270
Canadian dollar	229.680
Turkish lira	87.300

Swiss Franc	302.020
Australian Dollar	222.200
US Dollar Buying	305.650

GOLD

20 Gram	238.24
10 Gram	122.04
5 Gram	57.97

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

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

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	31.240
Thai Bhat	9.535
Turkish Lira	87.725

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.369279	0.379279
Czech Korune	0.003802	0.015802
Danish Krone	0.038891	0.043891
Euro	0.313975	0.322975
Norwegian Krone	0.031398	0.036598
Romanian Leu	0.070497	0.070497
Slovakia	0.009229	0.019229
Swedish Krona	0.029450	0.034450
Swiss Franc	0.292152	0.303152
Turkish Lira	0.082529	0.092829
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.213906	0.225908
New Zealand Dollar	0.205822	0.215322
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.222898	0.231898
Georgina Lari	0.138751	0.138751
US Dollars	0.303100	0.307500
US Dollars Mint	0.303600	0.307500
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003578	0.004160
Chinese Yuan	0.042632	0.046132
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037520	0.040270
Indian Rupee	0.002789	0.005523

Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002515	0.002695
Kenyan Shilling	0.002984	0.002984
Korean Won	0.000244	0.000259
Malaysian Ringgit	0.064568	0.070668
Nepalese Rupee	0.002944	0.003114
Pakistan Rupee	0.002620	0.002910
Philippine Peso	0.006083	0.006383
Sierra Leone	0.000053	0.000059
Singapore Dollar	0.206584	0.216584
South African Rand	0.016294	0.024794
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001651	0.002231
Taiwan	0.009393	0.009573
Thai Baht	0.008228	0.008778
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.808282	0.816782
Egyptian Pound	0.013279	0.022532
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000181	0.000241
Jordanian Dinar	0.428238	0.47238
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000153	0.000253
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020263	0.044263
Nigerian Naira	0.000407	0.001042
Omani Riyal	0.791501	0.797181
Qatar Riyal	0.083569	0.085019
Saudi Riyal	0.808833	0.821133
Syrian Pound	0.001303	0.001523
Tunisian Dinar	0.128697	0.136697
Turkish Lira	0.082529	0.092829
UAE Dirhams	0.082215	0.083915
Yemeni Riyal	0.000999	0.001079

EGYPT ECONOMY SLOWS AFTER CURRENCY FLOAT

NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

KUWAIT: Egypt's economy slowed considerably in 2016 when a currency shortage worsened and tourism failed to recover from a collapse amid heightened security concerns. But by the end of the year, the authorities were doing the right things to help push growth back towards its potential. The government took steps to restart much needed reform, including floating the currency, hiking fuel prices, and introducing a value-added tax (VAT), as it sought to clinch a \$12 billion IMF loan agreement. Once approved, the deal unlocked further funding and investment which, it is hoped, will propel the economy back towards healthy growth of 4-5 percent in the medium term.

The reforms being implemented are expected to see Egypt's fiscal and monetary policy tighten significantly in 2017. This will no doubt put pressure on growth, though we expect this pressure will be more than offset by an increase in foreign investment, exports and tourism. The large depreciation in the pound, following its floating, should boost the competitiveness of Egypt's exports and tourism sector. The cheaper pound will also encourage foreign investors to return, supported by the government's promise to implement much needed reforms and by large multilateral investors' pledges to increase FDI to the country.

Of course, whenever major reforms are promised there are risks that authorities will

Growth is expected to be steady at 2.5% in FY16/17 before it starts to improve again to 4% and 5% in FY17/18 and FY18/19

fail to deliver. Indeed, the authorities will be tempted to limit the tightening of fiscal and monetary policy to minimize the short-term economic and social pain, which could be severe. However, the massive fiscal and investment support currently pledged to Egypt by the IMF and others is largely conditional on the progress of reforms. Any slippage could hold up those funds, reduce growth and put renewed pressure on the pound; it would also hurt sentiment among private investors. It is thus critical that the government be seen to be moving decisively to reduce the sizeable fiscal deficit, even if the reduction is gradual. This would in turn reduce the need for domestic deficit financing and thus allow monetary policy to tighten and help stabilize the pound.

Economy slowed in 2016

Economic growth is expected to have slowed significantly during 2016 following a more modest slowdown in 2015. Real GDP growth slowed to 1.6 percent year-on-year (y/y) in 3Q16 (Chart 2), down from average growth of 3 percent the year before. All indications are growth has remained subdued since. The economy should improve gradually in 2017 following the floatation of the currency, which should help competitiveness and business sentiment. Growth in FY16/17 will still

Decision to float the pound should alleviate foreign currency shortage that crimped activity, but growth will depend on foreign investment

come in at a relatively weak 2.5 percent before accelerating to 4 percent and 5 percent in FY17/18 and FY18/19, respectively.

Growth had been deteriorating gradually since the middle of 2015 and into 2016. The Ministry of Planning's production index had been in decline for most of that period. In October 2016, the index was down by 4.9 percent y/y (Chart 5). The slump came mostly from a decline in tourism and the related transportation sector, as well as construction. We should expect production to start improving in 2017, after the liberalization of the exchange rate and the approval of the IMF loan agreement. The production index will also benefit from a basis effect as the Q415 collapse in tourism fades.

Markit's Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) has also reflected the weak growth, staying below 50 for over a year since late 2015 (Chart 3). The index averaged 46 during 2016, a level consistent with GDP growth below 2 percent. The December PMI figure remained depressed at 42.8, indicating activity had yet to benefit from the pound's free floatation and from the approval of the IMF loan agreement.

Tourism remained weak

Tourism has been a key source of slowdown over the last year. The tragic terrorist attack in October 2015 that downed a Russian plane shortly after takeoff in Sharm El-Sheikh had a devastating effect on the tourist industry. The attack came at a time when Egyptian tourism was struggling to recover from years of political instability and security threats. September 2016 data show that tourist numbers had yet

to recover. The number of visitors was off by 41 percent y/y, and the number of "nights stayed" was 45 percent lower y/y.

Currency float

In November, Egypt chose to float its currency, after a 6-year struggle to maintain a peg to the US dollar. Capital controls, in place in various forms since 2011, and more strictly since early 2013, were gradually scrapped, and the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) finally allowed banks to trade the currency freely starting 3 November. The Egyptian pound (EGP) has declined by over 50 percent against the dollar since, to settle at around 18.2 EGP/USD by early January; it was down by 57 percent in 2016.

Inflation jumped

The floating of the pound was followed by a 30-50 percent increase in controlled fuel prices. The move helped cushion the impact of the pound's depreciation on the budget; but it also added to the rise in consumer prices. Inflation was already on the rise in 2016, having accelerated to around 14 percent by October 2016. In November it jumped to 19.4 percent and is expected to remain at those levels through most of 2017, before cooling off in late 2017 and easing further in 2018.

The CBE also moved to hike policy rates in November, in an effort to quell inflation and support the newly floated pound. The CBE increased rates by 300 basis points (bps), raising the CBE deposit and lending rates to 14.75 percent and 15.75 percent, respectively. The central bank had already raised rates by 300

Fiscal deficit to narrow to 10% of GDP in FY16/17 and to 6-7.5% in FY16/17 and FY17/18 if fiscal reform stays the course

bps in three moves over the previous 12 months. The CBE is likely to maintain a tighter monetary policy in the months ahead just as the government moves ahead with the tighter fiscal stance promised in its reform agenda.

Tighter fiscal stance

Egypt's fiscal deficit remains relatively large and a key source of imbalance for the economy. In its effort to kick-start reforms and gain approval for the IMF loan agreement, the government pledged to bring the deficit under control. In this effort, the government fast tracked legislation for a value-added tax (VAT) in August 2016. Other efforts include reining

Table 1: Key economic indicators

		FY15/16	FY16/17f	FY17/18f	FY18/19f
Nominal GDP	EGP bn	2,708	3,147	3,612	4,094
Nominal GDP	USD bn	326	221	195	216
Real GDP growth	% y/y	2.3	2.5	4.0	5.0
Inflation	% y/y	14.0	18.0	10.0	8.0
Budget balance	% of GDP	-11.0	-10.0	-7.5	-6.0

Source: CBE, MOF, MOP, NBK estimates

in spending by controlling the wage bill and reducing government subsidies. These reforms should help reduce the deficit to around 10 percent of GDP in FY16/17 from around 12 percent the prior year (Chart 9). Further improvements in the deficit to around 8 percent and 6 percent of GDP are expected in FY17/18 and FY18/19, respectively.

In recent years, the government has largely resorted to domestic debt issuance to finance its deficit and most of this debt has been absorbed by banks. This has come at a cost of crowding-out lending to the private sector and of boosting money supply. Over the last six years, claims to the government have risen, from 25 percent of assets to 56 percent in August 2016. By contrast, lending to the private sector dipped below 25 percent of bank assets.

The pressure on domestic financing is likely to diminish in the medium term, as the government reduces the deficit and relies more on international funding. Some of the financing will come from over \$20 billion in funding pledged by various multilateral institutions and states. Debt markets will also play an important role, with Egypt planning to issue \$3-5 billion in international bonds in the near future.

The positive news of the IMF loan deal has helped ease Egypt's sovereign yields. Egypt's USD 2040 bond yielded 8.5 percent in mid-December. While the spread to the 20-year US Treasury bond was mostly unchanged at around 540 bps from just before the IMF deal's approval, this was well below spreads in excess of 600 bps seen prior to the approval of the IMF deal.

Current account deficit

The current account deteriorated further in 2016, with the deficit widening to \$9.7 billion during the first half of the year. The 12-month trailing deficit rose to 5.8 percent of GDP compared to 3.7 percent a year before. The deterioration was due largely to a collapse in tourism revenues, and declines in worker remittances and foreign grants. By contrast, the trade deficit narrowed by 13 percent thanks largely to a drop in imports. Foreign direct investment

(FDI) also continued to provide support, accounting for around 2.1 percent of GDP during the 12 months through 2Q16.

Foreign reserves saw a notable improvement towards the end of 2016 as Egypt agreed to an IMF-supported economic reform program and began implementation. The \$12 billion IMF loan agreement, which was approved in November, was supplemented by a number of additional bilateral and multilateral pledges. This has helped push reserves to \$23.1 billion by the end of November 2016, equivalent to 4.5 months of imports and the highest figure in over five years.

The decision to float the currency in early November should help relieve much of the pressure on reserves. With the CBE no longer supporting the EGP, the depletion of reserves should be reduced significantly. The currency has already fallen by more than 50 percent;

Double-digit inflation should ease in 2017 and further in 2018 as monetary policy tightens, helping stabilize the pound

tighter fiscal and monetary policy going forward should help stabilize the pound, as inflation is brought down and foreign investment returns to the country.

Equities market

The stock market outperformed the MENA region in 2016, especially after the decision to float the currency. The market first rallied in March following a devaluation; it rose strongly again after the pound fell by more than 50 percent in November 2016 in the wake of the currency's floating. The EGX30 index was up 76 percent during 2016; still, the market has not kept up with the drop in the currency, with the MSCI total return USD index off by 11 percent.

FORD REVEALS NEW F-150

BRONCO IS BACK; COMPANY PRESENTS VISION FOR CITY OF TOMORROW

DUBAI: Ford's expansion to an auto and mobility company gains momentum today, as the company unveils the new F-150 pickup, announces the return of the Ranger pickup in North America and Bronco globally, and presents its vision for the "City of Tomorrow."

Ford's news at the North American International Auto Show - including expansion of its Chariot ride-sharing service to eight cities - underscores the company's drive to strengthen its core automotive business while aggressively expanding in growing mobility services.

"This year, the expansion of our business as an auto and mobility company moves into even higher gear," said Mark Fields, president and CEO. "We're introducing even more new vehicles and technologies to make life better for millions of people in the near term, plus we're presenting a vision and partnering with cities to move more people even more efficiently in the future."

Today's news follows other announcements about Ford's business expansion:

Adding 13 new electrified vehicles and investing \$4.5 billion in the next five years, including a hybrid version of the F-150 and Mustang, two pursuit-rated hybrid police vehicles, a Transit Custom plug-in hybrid, a fully electric small SUV with an estimated range of at least 480 kilometres and a high-volume, fully autonomous SAE level 4-capable vehicle - with no steering wheel, accelerator or brake pedal - in commercial operation in 2021 in a ride-hailing or ride-sharing service.

• The debut of its next-generation Fusion Hybrid autonomous development vehicle, the next step in Ford's plan to deliver a fully autonomous vehicle in 2021.

• The creation of a City Solutions team to work with major global cities to help solve congestion issues and help people move more easily, today and in the future.

Ranger and Bronco Return

Ford is bringing back the Ranger midsize pickup truck to its North American vehicle lineup in 2019 and Bronco midsize SUV to its global vehicle portfolio in 2020. Both vehicles will be manufactured at Ford's Michigan Assembly Plant in Wayne, Michigan.

"We've heard our customers loud and clear. They want a new generation of vehicles that are incredibly capable yet fun to drive," said Joe Hinrichs, Ford's president of The Americas. "Ranger is for truck buyers who want an affordable, functional, rugged and maneuverable pickup that's Built Ford Tough. Bronco will be a no-compromise midsize 4x4 utility for thrill seekers who want to venture way beyond the city."

City of Tomorrow

Beyond vehicles, Ford is working with cities around the world to help address growing mobility challenges in urban environments, including gridlock and air pollution.

Ford's City Solutions team - the only one of its kind in the auto industry - is working with cities around the world to propose, pilot and develop mobility solutions. The team also is beginning to collaborate with Bloomberg Philanthropies and its global coalition of mayors.

"This is an issue that goes far beyond congestion. It is one that represents a massive challenge to mankind, one that affects our well-being and access to health care, clean drinking water, food, a safe place to live and even the ability to find work," said Bill Ford, executive chairman, Ford Motor Company. "By



New 2018 Ford F-150

solving the mobility challenge, we have the chance to create a better world for future generations. It's both an exciting opportunity and a big responsibility."

Ford today presented its vision for the "City of Tomorrow."

Ford's City of Tomorrow looks at how near-term mobility advancements - including autonomous and electric vehicles, ride-sharing and ride-hailing and connected vehicles - interact with urban infrastructure and create a transportation ecosystem.

For example, Ford is imagining a world in which reconfigurable roads fluidly respond to commuter needs and traffic flow. Bikes and drones provide last-kilometre solutions for both people and goods.

The Future: Near Term

Within the next five years, Ford expects autonomous vehicles will be introduced in cities around the world. This includes Ford's first fully autonomous vehicles in 2021.

At the same time, the company expects continued growth in electrified vehicles - with global EV industry offerings eventually outnumbering petrol-powered offering in the

next 15 years. Shared modes of transportation will continue to gain popularity, such as the Ford's Chariot app-based, crowd-sourced ride-sharing service, which is expanding globally.

Chariot, which currently operates in San Francisco and Austin, Texas, is growing its operations to eight cities this year, including at least one city outside of the US.

In Ford's vision of the near-term future, connected communications between vehicles and infrastructure also will grow:

• Vehicles will be capable of connecting with other vehicles and cities' transportation operating systems. Ford alone will equip 20 million cars globally with built-in modems in the next five years.

• As these vehicles and other connected vehicles are introduced into cities around the world, cities themselves will change. Large-scale innovations likely, including wireless charging and enhanced connectivity.

• These changes could give city transportation managers all-new operating systems, which allow them to manage multiple aspects of their city transportation system centrally, including traffic flow and vehicle emissions.



US WHOLESALE INFLATION SLOWS AS RETAIL SALES RISE

WASHINGTON: US retail sales rebounded in the final month of 2016, but driven almost entirely by autos, while wholesale inflation slowed slightly in the world's largest economy, the government reported on Friday. Consumers spent the most since April for light trucks and cars, the Commerce Department report showed, but spending on anything besides autos was nearly flat. The figures also pointed to a continuation of consumer trends in shopping, with online businesses seeing rising sales, while department stores moved fewer goods off the shelves. On a seasonally adjusted basis, sales in retail and food services rose 0.6 percent in December to \$469.1 billion, far faster than the 0.2 percent rise in November, but slightly below an analyst consensus forecast.

December sales were 4.1 percent higher than the same month in 2015,

and sales for the whole year, were up 3.3 percent over 2015. Motor vehicles and parts dealers saw the strongest monthly gains, with sales jumping 2.4 percent, the fastest monthly gain in eight months.

But excluding autos, retail sales grew at a far more tepid pace of 0.2 percent. Non-store retailers such as online marketplaces and mail-order vendors saw gains of 1.3 percent but department stores went in the opposite direction, falling 0.6 percent in December. Restaurants and bars also had a slump with business falling 0.8 percent, the biggest drop since January 2016. In a separate report, the National Retail Federation said holiday retail sales in November and December rose four percent over the same period in 2015 to \$658.3 billion, with "non-store" sales rising nearly 13 percent. — AFP



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The following tables summarize last week's performance of Boursa Kuwait

Description	Week 2	Week 1	Diff %
	12/01/2017	05/01/2017	
Working days	5	4	
AlShall index (38 Companies)	374.6	369.5	1.4%
Boursa Kuwait index (price)	6,107.7	5,831.2	4.7%
Value Trade (KD)	197,282,900	80,726,974	
Daily average (KD)	39,456,580	20,181,743	95.5%
Volume Trade (Shares)	2,755,320,551	885,556,523	
Daily average (Shares)	551,064,110	221,389,131	148.9%
Transactions	44,127	18,070	
Daily average (Transactions)	8,825	4,518	95.4%

ANTI-CORRUPTION AUTHORITY NEEDS MORE TEETH

AL-SHALL WEEKLY REPORT

KUWAIT: Between the first establishment of the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority on 19/11/2012 and the talk today about referring its Board of Trustees to retirement or to a probing committee, ie the option of killing it by the knockout blow or its defeat by points, as in wrestling, there are about four years and two months (50 months). During this period corruption peaked despite the numerous entities of fighting it such as the State Audit Bureau, Financial Controllers, the parliamentary Protection of Public Funds Committee and the private Protection of Public Funds Committee, which are supporting entities to the work of the Anti-corruption authority. Before November 2012, the government dismissed most of the Capital Markets Authority members and suspended its work for several precious years. After that, the Constitution Court revoked two National Assembly's because of governmental procedural errors. Before and after that, all development plans failed and all financial and economic reform policies despite the huge expenses of consulting that the government received.

Over and above what have been said, the government was responsible for the foregoing, however, everything else changed and it remained firm. The procedural error or choice error is its creation. Unless authority is associated with responsibility for accountability there is no hope for the stability or completion of any of these authorities and there is no use from advice or consulting. We are not in a position to defend the Anti-Corruption Authority neither are we in belligerency with it.

But after 50 months of its founding, it cost the public treasury a lot of funds. No achievements in confronting corruption. Nevertheless, the mechanism of transforming of its management has become so simple by the same government and what value do all similar institutions have? The basic principle is to maintain the prestige of such institutions, while the aim of criticizing it and from the highest authorities is only to put those institutions in the self-defense mode rather than being in an offensive mode to achieve its ends.

In France and Italy, a President and a Prime Minister were jailed; in South Korea and Brazil, two Presidents were dismissed; in Germany and Britain two Ministers of Defense were dismissed due to indirect accusations, all of them were accused with corruption. There are no watchdogs in all these countries or supervision institutions as in Kuwait. But they have good values systems and interchanging governance governments.

The reason for this severity in these states is not vengeance from a corrupt person but a real belief that responsibility begins from the top to be a lesson and example and that development and growth cannot be built on corrupt bases. Its remedy begins from the top of the administrative pyramid. While in Kuwait we overdraw building structures then we take off their teeth and claws while insist on keeping them as a form without content. And later on to be developed to load and cost and quotas in appointing its leaders and some big corruptors have a major stake therein.

During the prosperity of oil market, it was possible to conceal many sins like the lack of relationship between appointment and the need of work in the public sector or the lack of relationship between wages and productivity and like the exaggeration in the cost of bargaining political loyalty or allegiance, etc. That has become almost impossible in our present times and in the visible future. Corruption and waste are two devastating pests and the country's future may not stabilize unless they are confronted firmly. The

way that Anti-Corruption Authority is treated is a wrong pattern that will keep it paralyzed and will recur with similar entities. If there is hope about development and reform, the responsibility should be respected and kept alongside with the power. Reward and punishment should not exclude anyone. Hostility among the Authority's Board of Trustees is the outcome of corruption institution's superiority and the result of the abusive quota style of the government forming its board of trustees. If reform is the target, it should start with the government, the crises maker.

Local Real Estate Market

2016 ended with negative liquidity outcome. According to available data, released by the Ministry of Justice -Real Estate Registration and Authentication Department-, market liquidity dropped to KD 2499.2 million, ie -24.7 percent of 2015 liquidity which was in the amount of KD7133 million. Liquidity in the second half of the year scored KD 1121.7 million (KD 7.1131 million for the first half), this indicates a likely trend of continued drop in 2017 especially if the rise in the interest rate is sustained. The above graph shows the performance of the real estate market in the past 15 years. Its rise began in 2002-2003 and its liquidity then scored KD 8383 million.

Weakness indicators began to appear in 2004 and 2005 and liquidity scored KD 2231 million. Once again, liquidity began to improve in 2006 though it was a correction year in the regional capital markets and Kuwait Stock Exchange. It continued to rise until liquidity scored KD 4447 million in 2007. But it dropped again in 2008 and continued to retreat in 2009 which achieved the lowest level since 2002 without calculating the impact of inflation. It recovered in 2010 and continued until 2014 and liquidity scored its highest figure during the period 2002-2016. It began to decline in 2015 and liquidity scored KD 3318 million and continued in 2016 and scored KD 2499.2 million.

Private housing liquidity dropped in 2016 and scored for both contracts and agencies about KD 1022 million. Its relative contribution to liquidity formed 40.9 percent, less than 44.4 percent of its 2015 contribution. Drop percentage vis-a-vis 2015 scored -30.7 percent compared with 2015.

Likewise, trading of the investment housing dropped to about KD 861.9 million, which was coupled with a drop in its contribution to liquidity to 34.5 percent in 2016 (41 percent in 2015). Drop in the liquidity of investment housing scored -36.6 percent compared with 2015. Housing of both private and investment captured 75.3 percent of real estate market liquidity in 2016, leaving about 24.7 percent of liquidity to the commercial activity and warehouses.

Commercial activity rose and achieved KD 600.1 million, 31.8 percent rise. The contribution to total market liquidity increased to 24 percent in 2016, while its contribution to liquidity was 13.7 percent of market liquidity in 2015. This is logical because it was not affected by price inflation during oil market prosperity era.

Average value of one deal in the end of 2016 for private housing dropped to KD 332 thousand down from KD 352 thousand in 2015. Likewise, the average value of one deal of investment housing dropped sharply to about KD 644.6 thousand from KD 862.6 thousand. The average price of the commercial deal is KD 5.715 million up from KD 4.509 million in 2015. The general per deal average dropped in all real estate sector trading in 2016 by -2.1 percent. We note that the second half of 2016 witnessed drop in the market liquidity and liquidity may contain in dropping in the first half of 2017. Its liquidity will be affected negatively by the

Company Name	THU	THU	DIF %	CLOSE 2016	DIFF %
	12/01/2017	05/01/2017			
1 The National Bank Of Kuwait	368.7	368.7	0.0	362.9	1.6
2 The Gulf Bank	195.0	195.0	0.0	195.0	0.0
3 Commercial Bank Of Kuwait	362.5	358.2	1.2	349.7	3.7
4 Al-Ahli Bank Of Kuwait	196.4	196.4	0.0	196.4	0.0
5 Kuwait International Bank	220.9	212.6	3.9	214.7	2.9
6 Ahli United Bank	356.6	356.6	0.0	361.0	(1.2)
7 Burgan Bank	283.4	283.4	0.0	283.4	0.0
8 Kuwait Finance House	1270.0	1196.6	6.1	1172.1	8.4
Banking Sector	390.0	384.1	1.5	379.3	2.8
9 Commercial Facilities Co	119.8	114.0	5.1	112.6	6.4
10 International Financial Advisors	324.2	259.4	25.0	251.3	29.0
11 National Investments	133.4	122.1	9.3	119.5	11.6
12 Kuwait Investment Projects	1114.2	1114.2	0.0	1114.2	0.0
13 Coast Investment & Development	62.2	54.0	15.2	52.6	18.3
Investment Sector	324.0	313.5	3.3	311.7	3.9
14 Kuwait Insurance Company	63.9	61.7	3.6	61.7	3.6
15 Gulf Insurance Company	410.6	382.1	7.5	382.1	7.5
16 Al-Ahleia Insurance Company	170.9	170.9	0.0	170.9	0.0
17 Warba Insurance Company	83.6	83.6	0.0	83.6	0.0
Insurance Sector	151.0	145.0	4.1	145.0	4.1
18 Kuwait Real Estate Company	114.9	106.7	7.7	100.1	14.8
19 United Realty Company	197.8	197.8	0.0	191.7	3.2
20 National Real Estate Company	261.4	256.8	1.8	238.5	9.6
21 Salhiah Real Estate Company	1453.6	1473.8	(1.4)	1433.4	1.4
Real Estate Sector	207.3	205.1	1.1	195.8	5.9
22 The National Industries	119.7	112.6	6.3	109.0	9.8
23 Kuwait Cement Co	648.2	618.1	4.9	618.1	4.9
24 Refrigeration Industries Co	107.0	110.5	(3.2)	110.5	(3.2)
25 Gulf Cable & Electrical Industries	163.9	153.9	6.5	149.9	9.3
26 Contracting & Marine Services Co	33.6	40.3	(16.6)	39.1	(14.1)
Industrial Sector	182.8	174.7	4.6	172.4	6.0
27 Kuwait National Cinemas	728.2	740.7	(1.7)	778.4	(6.4)
28 Kuwait Hotels Company	145.8	145.8	0.0	145.8	0.0
29 The Public Warehousing Co	2561.4	2522.6	1.5	2406.1	6.5
30 Mobile Telecommunications Co - ZAIN	572.3	603.6	(5.2)	541.1	5.8
31 Safat Energy Co	12.2	11.8	3.4	11.1	9.9
Services Sector	862.0	874.3	(1.4)	822.1	4.9
32 Livestock Transport & Trading Co	181.7	178.3	1.9	178.3	1.9
33 Danah Aalsafat Foodstuff Company	90.0	88.0	2.3	89.0	1.1
34 Kuwait United Poultry Co	65.3	65.3	0.0	65.3	0.0
35 Kuwait Food Co	2561.9	2561.9	0.0	2561.9	0.0
Food Sector	888.1	887.1	0.1	887.2	0.1
36 Sharjah Cement Co	358.3	358.3	0.0	358.3	0.0
37 Gulf Cement Co	322.6	298.4	8.1	302.4	6.7
38 Umm Al-Qaiwain Cement Industries	588.6	588.6	0.0	551.8	6.7
Non Kuwaiti Companies	228.0	223.8	1.9	222.6	2.4
General Index	374.6	369.5	1.4	363.0	3.2

contracting monetary policy as we mentioned, but it may be supported by improved oil market conditions and cooling down geopolitical events.

Trading Features at Boursa Kuwait

Kuwait Clearing Company issued its report titled "Trading Volume According to Nationality" for the period of 01/01/2016 to 31/12/2016, which was published on Boursa Kuwait official website. The report indicated that individual investors are still the prevailing group though their share is declining; they captured 46 percent of total value of sold shares (48.9 percent for 2015) and 42.1 percent of total value of purchased shares (45.4 percent for 2015).

Individual investors sold shares worth KD 1.325 billion and purchased shares worth KD 1.213 billion with a net trading, more selling, by KD 111.692 million.

Corporations and companies sector captured 32.4 percent of total value of purchased shares (30 percent for 2015) and 26.2 percent of total value of sold shares (26.5 percent for 2015). The sector purchased shares worth KD 933.330 million while sold shares worth KD 754.078 million with a net trading, more purchasing, by KD 179.251 million.

The third contributor to market liquidity is the clients' accounts sector (portfolios), which captured 18.7 percent of total value of sold shares (15.6 percent for 2015) and 16.3 percent of total value of purchased shares (14.9 percent for 2015). The sector sold shares worth KD 538.107 million and purchased shares worth KD 469.305 million, with a net trading, selling, by KD 68.802 million.

The last contributor to liquidity is the investment funds sector which captured 9.2 percent of total value of purchased shares (9.8 percent for 2015) and 9.1 percent of total value of sold shares (9 percent for 2015). This sector purchased shares worth KD 264.544 million and sold shares worth KD 263.302 million, with a net trading, purchasing, by KD 1.242 million.

Boursa Kuwait continues to be a domestic bourse with Kuwaiti traders forming the biggest trading group and purchased shares worth KD 2.501 billion capturing 86.8 percent of total value of purchased shares, (84.9

percent for 2015), and sold shares worth KD 2.481 billion, capturing 86.1 percent of total value of sold shares (85.9 percent for 2015). As such, their net trading, purchasing, by KD 19.755 million. Other investors share, out of total value of sold shares scored 10.8 percent, (10.4 percent for 2015), worth KD 311.731 million and they purchased shares worth KD 268.843 million, or by 9.3 percent of total value of purchased shares (10.7 percent for 2015); thus, their net trading value, the only one selling, by KD 42.889 million.

GCC Investors' share, out of total value of purchased shares scored 3.8 percent (4.4 percent for 2015), worth KD 110.771 million, while their total value of sold shares scored 3 percent (3.7 percent for 2015), worth KD 87.638 million. Their net trading was, more purchasing, by KD 23.133 million.

Relative distribution among nationalities changed slightly from the previous period; 86.5 percent for Kuwaitis, 10.1 percent for traders from other nationalities, and 3.4 percent for GCC traders versus 85.4 percent for Kuwaitis, 10.6 percent for other nationalities and 4.1 percent for GCC traders, for 2015. This means Boursa Kuwait remained domestic though with more trading by foreign and investors from outside the GCC than from the GCC with trading prevalence to individuals.

Number of active accounts between the end of December 2015 and the end of December 2016 dropped by -39.6 percent, (dropped by -57.6 percent between the end of December 2014 and the end of December 2015). Number of active accounts in the end of December 2016 scored 15,603 or 4.2 percent of total accounts, versus 25,844 accounts in the end of December 2015, or 7.1 percent of total accounts.

Boursa Kuwait performance

The performance of world markets indices during 2016 mingled by 2016 performance for the (Morgan Stanley Capital International, the "MSCI") index. The world index rose by 2.4 percent in the end of the year versus a drop in the indicator itself in 2015 by -2.7 percent. The "MSCI" increased also for American market by 8.4 percent. The weight of the American market and its impact are quite extensive on the rest of other markets. The comprehensive index for the two Americas rose by 6.6 percent. But MSCI

index including Europe dropped by -8.5 percent. And if we exclude UK, the index itself dropped by -5.6 percent. The situation of Asia was similar to most European markets. MSCI index for Asia/the Pacific dropped by -2.1 percent compared with -4.3 percent drop for 2015. The Japanese index rose by 8.2 percent. Global markets index dropped to about -5.6 percent if we exclude the US market. This reflexes the weight of the US market in making the index as reference above.

When compared to 2015 year, 11 markets raised out of 16 markets, while the Boursa Kuwait index fell, according to AlShall index and occupied the 13th place, with a slight decrease of about -0.8 percent, (-17.6 percent and in the 16th place - the last- among these markets in the end of 2015). It should be noted that the average rise of all markets scored 4.7 percent in the end of 2016 compared with a rise by 0.6 percent, during 2015.

Graph indicates the performance of 12 selected financial markets in the Middle East where all markets achieved positive growth except for Boursa Kuwait which achieved the last position within 12 markets in the ME and achieved losses in its index according to AlShall index without adjusting the impact of currencies exchange rate against the US dollar. The un weighted rate of growth/loss scored 16 percent after declining by around -11.5 percent in 2015.

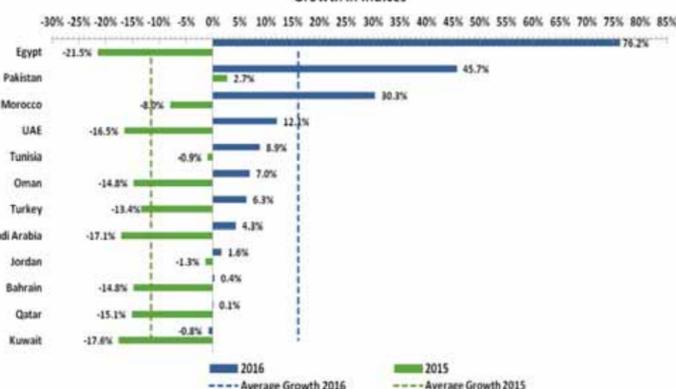
The Egyptian market came first throughout 2016 rising by about 76.2 percent without accounting the impact of the floating of the Egyptian pound. The Pakistani market came second by 45.7 percent rise, and then the Moroccan market which rose by about 30.3 percent.

Weekly Performance of Boursa Kuwait

The performance of Boursa Kuwait for the last week, was more active compared to the previous one, where all indexes showed an increase, the traded value index, the traded volume index, number of transactions index, and general index, AlShall Index (value weighted) closed at 374.6 points at the closing of last Thursday, showing an increase of about 5.1 points or about 1.4 percent compared with its level last week and it increased by 11.6 points or about 3.2 percent compared with the end of 2016.

Graph (3)

Middle East Markets Growth in Indices



CAMARO ZL1 TO MAKE FIRST APPEARANCE IN KUWAIT AT AUTO MOTO KUWAIT 2017

KUWAIT: Chevrolet Middle East and Chevrolet Alghanim Automotive held Kuwait's first debut of the 2017 Camaro ZL1 at Auto Moto Kuwait. The Camaro ZL1 is the most powerful Camaro in the model's fifty-year history and will go on sale in the first half of 2017.

"We're excited that people in Kuwait are some of the first in the region to see this amazing piece of machinery up close. The ZL1 is the track capable version of the award-winning sixth generation of the Camaro and can challenge the most advanced sports coupes in the world, on any measure," said Abdallah Madhoun, Regional Sales and Marketing Manager for Chevrolet, GM Middle East.

"The Camaro's technology, refinement, track capability and straight-line acceleration are on a whole new level," he said. Visitors to the Chevrolet stand will also have the opportunity to experience the Chevrolet vehicle line-up, including the all-new 2017 Chevrolet Malibu, new 2017 Chevrolet Trax, new 2017 Chevrolet Trailblazer Z71, and 2017 Chevrolet Tahoe and Silverado Midnight editions.

In addition, visitors will have the opportunity to stop by the Chevrolet stand to experience a Trailblazer virtual reality experience and to be able to go face-to-face with Q8Stig for a free gift.

The 2017 Chevrolet Camaro in more detail

Acceleration is delivered via a new supercharged 6.2L V-8 engine, with estimated 650hp. Its 0-100kph time is a mere 3.6 seconds, and it can complete the quarter mile in 11.4 seconds at a speed of 204 kph. It builds on the sixth generation Camaro's segment leadership as the fittest in the segment. The Camaro ZL1 is the first production car to use a new, advanced 10-speed automatic gearbox, which offers strong economy and performance benefits. It is also available as a six-speed manual.

Handling capability starts with the lightweight, stiff structure of the all-new sixth-Generation Camaro, married with Magnetic Ride suspension and an electronic limited-slip differential. Standard technologies include Driver Mode Selector, dual-mode exhaust and advanced connectivity features.

Designed for performance

Functionality defines the Camaro ZL1's form, with the exterior shaped during more than 100 hours of wind-tunnel testing and on-track validation to improve aerodynamics and cooling for track use. Accordingly, its exterior elements all play a part in managing airflow over, under and through the ZL1.

"The design supports the Camaro ZL1's exceptional performance and does so with compelling style," said John Mack, Camaro exterior design manager. "From every angle, the elements coalesce to give the car a purposeful, super aggressive attitude."

The lower grille opening, for example, offers greater airflow compared to the Camaro SS, and the upper grille incorporates a new version of the "flow-tie" open bowtie insignia. There's also a new hood, with a carbon fiber insert and heat extractor that pulls hot air from the engine compartment. Additional changes include a larger front splitter, unique rockers, a wing-style rear spoiler and wider front fenders - all tuned to improve aerodynamics for greater high-speed stability.

Inside, there are standard Recaro front seats, along with a suede flat-bottom steering wheel and shift knob. Chevrolet's Performance Data Recorder is available.

Fast with finesse

A cohesive suite of performance technologies tailors ZL1's performance for street and track. Features include an

updated Magnetic Ride suspension, Performance Traction Management, electronic limited-slip differential, Custom Launch Control and Driver Mode Selector. It also has a stronger power-to-weight ratio than its predecessor, weighing 200 pounds less, while offering approximately 60 more horsepower and 80 more pound-feet of torque.

The result is a one-of-a-kind driving experience.

developed exclusively for the Camaro to offer exceptional grip on the track

* Brembo brakes with six-piston monobloc front calipers - featuring the ZL1 logo - and massive, 15.35-inch (390 mm) two-piece front rotors.

Supercharged performance and new 10-speed automatic

Underhood, the ZL1 features a supercharged LT4 6.2L V-8 Small Block engine, with intake and exhaust systems tai-

of the new quick-shift 10-speed, with unique calibrations and hardware developed exclusively for the ZL1. By the end of 2018, GM will introduce the new 10-speed automatic in eight vehicle models.

Finally - and unlike some competitors - there's no need to purchase an optional package to make the ZL1 track ready. Track capability comes standard, with features including an impressive 11 heat exchangers for optimal powertrain cooling.



"Driving the Camaro ZL1 is best described as 'fast with finesse,'" said Reuss. "It is beautifully balanced, with perfect damping and isolation for optimal performance and driver confidence in virtually any situation - from the Pacific Coast Highway to Willow Springs to Pomona."

Additional chassis features include:

* Unique 20-inch forged aluminum wheels with 285/30ZR20 front and 305/30ZR20 rear tires
* Goodyear Eagle F1 Supercar tires with a compound and construction

lored for Camaro. It is rated at an estimated 650 horsepower and 650 lb-ft of torque (881 Nm).

The LT4 is backed by a standard six-speed manual transmission or all-new, available paddle-shift 10-speed automatic. The 10-speed automatic has 7.39 overall ratio for smaller steps between gears. It enables the LT4 engine to remain at optimal rpm levels during acceleration, particularly when exiting corners, for quicker laps and lightning-quick responses on both up- and downshifts.

This is the first Chevrolet application

Chevrolet Care

All customers who purchase a Chevrolet from Yusuf A. Alghanim & Sons will receive the benefits of the Chevrolet Care Program, which entails new levels of post-sale support and trust. The Chevrolet Care is an exceptional customer service that is based on four main pillars: competitive and transparent service costs (especially for four-wheel drive vehicles), scheduled service appointment booking with same day delivery, quality service by certified technicians and 3yr/100,000km warranty with 24x7 roadside assistance for 4 years.



HONG KONG: A woman walks past a gas refinery in the To Kwa Wan district of Hong Kong on Friday. —AFP

MAJOR US BANKS POST STRONG 2016 EARNINGS

NEW YORK: Wells Fargo reported lower fourth-quarter earnings Friday, underperforming two large rivals, following its bogus accounts scandal, but the firms were upbeat about the outlook.

The banks said they were hopeful higher interest rates and a potentially more favorable regulatory climate under President-elect Donald Trump could boost the industry.

Wells Fargo, which has been under pressure following revelations last fall that it opened some two million accounts without their customers' knowledge, said it refunded \$3.2 million in fees resulting from the fake accounts, up from the prior \$2.6 million.

Research also showed more than 175,000 customers who had unauthorized credit cards opened received a lower credit rating from a credit bureau, the bank said.

However, some of the data released by the bank suggested clients are beginning to move past the debacle. Total branch interactions in December rose 11 percent from November, although they were still down six percent from the year-ago period. Wells chief executive Tim Sloan said on an analyst conference call the bank welcomed signs of a possible "inflection point," although it was too soon to know. Net profit fell 4.2 percent to \$21.94 billion last year, including a drop of 5.4 percent in the fourth quarter alone due to a series of costly measures the bank implemented to regain consumer confidence.

Despite the woes over Wells Fargo accounts, the banking sector is viewed as having strong prospects, boosted by the recovering economy and booming financial market that followed the Trump's election. And with expected economic stimulus and tax cuts likely to bring interest rate increases from the Federal Reserve, banks are likely to see continued profitability this year. The Dow Jones US Banks Index has risen about 25 percent since November 8. Investors cheered the earnings reports, lifting shares of Wells Fargo 2.4 percent to \$55.80, Bank of

America 1.0 percent to \$23.17 and JPMorgan Chase 1.2 percent to \$87.28 in midday trading.

Dimon hopeful on Trump

JPMorgan Chase, the biggest US bank by assets, announced record profits for 2016, boosted by a "dynamic" US economy and a surge in brokerage activities. Annual net profit rose 1.2 percent to \$27.7 billion, including \$6.73 billion in the fourth quarter alone.

Executives with JPMorgan described US consumer activity as resilient and the US economy as generally solid. Total loans were \$894.8 billion, up seven percent from the year-ago period.

Chief executive Jamie Dimon said he was encouraged by Trump's selection of Rex Tillerson as secretary of state and Steven Mnuchin as secretary of treasury.

He also said he was hopeful the president-elect's broadsides against free trade were political rhetoric and would be followed up with more reasonable policies.

"I have some confidence he'll do the right thing for America," Dimon said on a conference call with reporters. "Give him some time." Bank of America said higher interest rates and an increase in consumer loans boosted earnings, but its business grew less than expected.

Net profit in 2016 jumped 13 percent year-on-year to \$16.2 billion, marked by a 46.8 jump in the fourth quarter. This resulted in adjusted earnings per share of \$1.50 for the year. While revenues from consumer loans increased as expected following the Federal Reserve interest rate hike in December, revenues from market activities were not as strong as hoped.

"If the recent rate hike occurred too late to boost fourth quarter results, we anticipate a higher profit growth in the first quarter of 2017," chief financial officer Paul Donofrio said in a press release. The Fed has suggested it could raise rates three times this year, given the Trump administration promises of massive tax cuts and large investments in infrastructure, which could fuel inflation. —AFP

KFH RE-LAUNCHES ITS WEBSITE USING LATEST TECHNOLOGY

KUWAIT: Group Chief Strategy Officer (GCSO) - Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Fahad Khalid Al-Mukhaizeem said that "KFH has launched its new website kfh.com after making significant updates and changes and inclusion of the highest standard specifications of global websites in form and subject. He expressed KFH's leading role as a global Islamic Bank providing services to customers and achieving harmony with the spirit of change and development which makes the website navigation an interesting opportunity to achieve comprehensive and integrated view of KFH group. KFH is linked through this website with other subsidiary banks. The website provides new modern electronic services and advantages.

Al-Mukhaizeem added in a press release: The website provides highly significant information to customers as it focuses on the advantages of services and products provided to customers' eg Murabaha, Ijara, Istisnaa, Tawarruq, Finance, cooperative and medical marketing, foreign exchange, agency investment deposits, corporate call

accounts and banking cards for various tiers of customers.

He indicated that the website provides also several distinguished services including the possibility to compare the advantages of banking cards and choose appropriate cards in addition to Zakat calculation method, supported gold calculation method underpinned by a chart showing gold price movement, trade finance calculation, long term investment plans calcula-



Fahad Khalid Al-Mukhaizeem

tor and foreign exchange.

He emphasized that in implementation of the transparency policy adopted by KFH the website shows all commissions and wages collected against the services provided to customers in addition to tables enabling them to know the salary deposit date by various ministries and government authorities. In addition, university students allowances are also shown. Also the website comprises information security guide, bank customers' protection guide, customer complaints form and information update form.

He reiterated that these services confirm the role which KFH plays in supporting various tiers of customers. Furthermore, blind people are able through this website to navigate the website with the assistance of their companions through voice reader facility "Text to Speech".

Al-Mukhaizeem added that: KFH has ensured that the website reflects a unique and distinguished content in a very attractive and elegant format. The website shows through several windows the bank's

progress, growth, activities, services, products and social role. It exhibits all banking products and services and forms a marketing tool.

He added that the new website comprises three main sections including retail banking services, private banking services and corporate banking services in addition to other fixed sections i.e. daily news, media messages, latest offers and locations of branches and ATM machines in both Arabic and English.

Al-Mukhaizeem indicated that the users and navigators of are able to make comparisons among various KFH products e.g. credit cards and prepaid cards to identify the features and advantages of each card. The website has the facility to enable navigators and users to view the webpage contents through their mobiles iPads in addition to the huge amount of information for shareholders relations including financial performance indicators, ratings, global awards collected by KFH, annual and sustainability reports and brief summary on subsidiaries and affiliates.

US STOCK INDEXES END MOSTLY HIGHER ON SOLID BANK EARNINGS

WALL STREET WEEKLY REPORT

NEW YORK: Banks led US stock indexes mostly higher Friday, propelling the Nasdaq composite index to its fourth record high this week. Investors welcomed quarterly earnings from JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America and Wells Fargo, all of which reported results that exceeded Wall Street's expectations. Financial stocks also benefited from an upward move in bond yields, which drives higher interest rates on loans.

Real estate stocks were the biggest laggard. Shares in energy companies also closed lower as crude oil prices declined. Mixed data on US retail sales weighed on department store stocks. Friday's crop of company earnings kicks off several weeks of corporate earnings reports, giving investors new insight into the health of Corporate America and the economy.

"We all thought financials would do well," said JJ Kinahan, TD Ameritrade's chief strategist. "Now how about the other areas of the economy?" The Dow Jones industrial average slipped 5.27 points, or 0.03 percent, to 19,885.73. The average had been up by 61 points earlier in the day. The Standard & Poor's 500 index gained 4.20 points, or 0.2 percent, to 2,274.64. The Nasdaq added 26.63 points, or 0.5 percent, to 5,574.12. The index has set a record-high close six times this year.

Small-company stocks rose more than the rest of the market. The Russell 2000 index jumped 10.98 points, or 0.8 percent, to 1,372.05. The major stock indexes headed higher early on in the day, as investors reacted to earnings reports from JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America and Wells Fargo. The three banking giants delivered quarterly results that

exceeded Wall Street's expectations, pushing their shares higher. JPMorgan added 46 cents, or 0.5 percent, to \$86.70. Bank of America rose 9 cents, or 0.4 percent, to \$23.01. Wells Fargo gained 81 cents, or 1.5 percent, to \$55.31.

Traders also reviewed the latest monthly snapshot of US retail sales, which showed that sales rose 0.6 percent overall in December, mainly due to a pickup in online shopping and sales of autos and gasoline.

"If you back out gasoline increasing and auto sales increasing, it's not an impressive number," Kinahan said. The retail sales report weighed down shares of several department store chains and clothing brands. By early afternoon, the market had begun to give up some of its gains.

PVH Corp, home to Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfger and other clothing brands, slid \$3.82, or 4.1 percent, to \$89.31. Nordstrom fell 83 cents, or 1.8 percent, to \$44.20. Gap shed 34 cents, or 1.4 percent, to \$23.66. Traders also had their eye on companies that issued outlooks for their upcoming earnings reports.

Pandora Media climbed 6.3 percent after the streaming music company issued a strong revenue forecast. The company also said it will cut about 7 percent of its jobs to reduce costs. The stock added 76 cents to \$12.765. HomeStreet fell 6 percent after the real estate lender forecast disappointing fourth-quarter results. It took in fewer mortgage applications as interest rates began rising. The stock slid \$1.85 to \$29.10.

GameStop tumbled 8.1 percent after the video game retailer said holiday revenue dropped because of discounts and weak sales of new "Call

of Duty" and "Titanfall" games. The stock shed \$1.99 to \$22.73.

Energy prices were mixed.

Benchmark crude oil fell 64 cents, or 1.2 percent, to close at \$52.37 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, which is used to price oil sold internationally, slid 56 cents, or 1 percent, to close at \$55.45 a barrel in London. The slide in crude prices helped pull down shares in energy sector stocks. Oilfield services company Baker Hughes slid \$1.50, or 2.4 percent, to \$60.92, while drilling services company Transocean lost 36 cents, or 2.3 percent, to \$15.48. Marathon Petroleum fell 87 cents, or 1.8 percent, to \$48.38.

In other energy trading, wholesale gasoline was little changed at \$1.61 a gallon, while heating oil slipped 2 cents to \$1.65 a gallon. Natural gas futures gained 3 cents, or 1 percent, to \$3.42 per 1,000 cubic feet. Major stock indexes in Europe closed higher.

Germany's DAX rose 0.9 percent, while France's CAC 40 gained 1.2 percent. Britain's FTSE 100 added 0.6 percent. Earlier in Asia, some markets finished lower on disappointing trade data from China. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index gained 0.5 percent. Japan's Nikkei 225 index rose 0.8 percent. South Korea's Kospi fell 0.5 percent, while Australia's S&P/ASX 200 slumped 0.8 percent. Bond prices fell. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note rose to 2.39 percent from 2.36 percent late Thursday. In currency trading, the dollar fell to 114.42 yen from 114.63 yen on Thursday. The euro strengthened to \$1.0646 from \$1.0626. The price of gold fell \$3.60 to \$1,196.20 an ounce. Silver slid 6 cents to \$16.77 an ounce. Copper rose 2 cents to \$2.69 a pound. —AP

HONDA ALGHANIM RETURNS TO AUTO MOTO 2017 WITH A BANG!

EXCLUSIVE OFFERS ON HONDA CARS AND MOTORCYCLES DURING AUTO MOTO



KUWAIT: Alghanim Motors, the exclusive distributor of Honda products in Kuwait, including cars, bikes, power products and marine engines, is proud to participate in Kuwait's most anticipated automotive event of the year: the Auto Moto 2017, which is taking place in 360 Mall, from January 12th until January 21st, 2017. Honda Alghanim brings thrilling surprises and limited-time benefits this year for all interested buyers at Auto Moto 2017, including exclusive discounts, valuable cashbacks, and accessory vouchers on Honda cars and motorbikes.

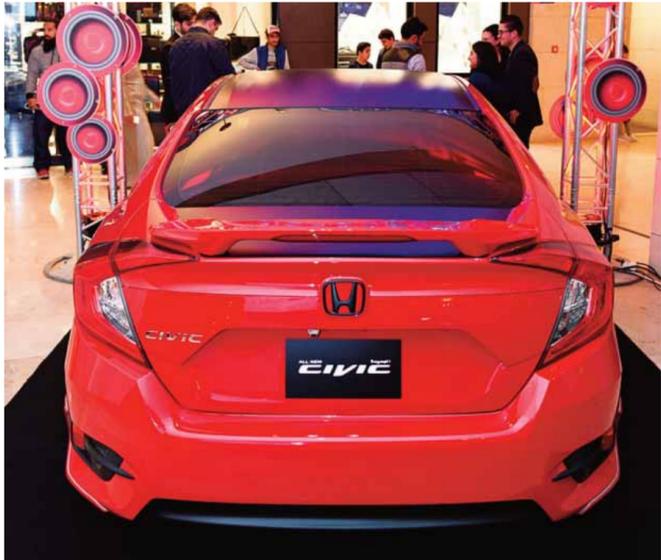
Leading the lineup is the brand-new 2017 Honda Civic, which sets an all-new standard in compact car style and performance, thanks to its sleek sporty lines and improved power-to-weight ratio. Also included is the modern family SUV, the Honda Pilot, boasting sporty exterior, spacious seating, advanced features and top-of-the-line-luxury. Also available is The CR-V, which delivers dynamic crossover performance and style with spacious seating and luxury amenities, making it the top of its class. Last but certainly not least is the 2017 Accord V6, which celebrates forty years of combining sophistication with style in a way that is distinctly Honda, from the inside out.

Honda fans can look forward not only to valuable cashbacks, which can reach up to KD 1,200, but also to free 3 years/60,000km service warranty on all Honda models available for purchase at Auto Moto 2017, thus ensuring them value and peace of mind, in addition to 30 percent discount vouchers on accessories.

Fans of speed and thrill, meanwhile, shouldn't miss the perfect opportunity to own the motorcycle of their dream as Honda Alghanim is offering amazing cashback offers, which can reach up to KD 1,500, and gift accessories valued up to KD 600, exclusively to those who purchase a Honda motorcycle at Auto Moto. The motorcycle lineup at Auto Moto includes Goldwing, Goldwing F6C, CBR1000RR, NC750X, CTX1300 and TRX680.

Honda Alghanim invites all Auto Moto visitors to check out its special booth area and to take advantage of the limited time promotions available exclusively at Auto Moto, from January 12th until January 21.

Taking place at the Auto Moto is also Honda Civic booth where customers can enter a one-of-a-kind Instagram competition for a chance to win a brand new 2017 Honda Civic. For more details, please follow the Honda Alghanim account on Instagram (@AlghanimHondaKW). Customers are encouraged to visit any of the



Honda showrooms for a chance to test drive the car and get full details from our sales representatives. Honda Alghanim showroom operates from 9 am until 10 pm everyday. Alghanim Motors, the exclusive distributor of Honda automobiles, motorcycles, power products, and marine products

in Kuwait, is committed to providing customers with flexible payment solutions and efficient and cost-effective services. The cars service center waiting lounge offers entertainment and comfort for customers, digital satellite TV, free wireless internet and relaxing massage chairs.

KIB MAKES ITS BRANCHES MORE ACCESSIBLE TO SPECIAL NEEDS CUSTOMERS

KUWAIT: In line with its commitment to making its banking services more accessible to every segment of the community, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) has redesigned six of its branches in order to accommodate the needs of customers with special needs, including those who are visually impaired and deaf. The introduction of special needs optimized branches comes as part of KIB's efforts to promote banking comprehensiveness across the country, in accordance with the regulations instituted by Central Bank of Kuwait and in line with the highest international industry standards. Through a comprehensive program of initiatives targeting the wide spectrum of Kuwait's society, KIB is committed to improving access to banking services and enhancing financial awareness and literacy.

The special needs friendly branches have all been equipped with ramps and lowered ATMs, to accommodate customers in wheelchairs and grant them easy access to the bank and its services. To serve customers who are visually impaired or deaf, the terms and conditions for KIB's products and services have been recorded as audio and printed in braille. Additionally, all six branches have been equipped with designated, quick-access parking areas. The newly revamped branches are located in Al-Zahraa, Al-Ahmadi, Fintas, Saad Al-Abdullah and Farwaniya, as well as the Bank's head office branch on Mubarak Al-Kabeer Street.

In order to make all its channels more accessible, KIB has also added a ReadSpeaker option to its website, which converts written content to speech for users with vision impairments.

"At KIB, we are dedicated to providing the best banking experience and the highest quality service to all our customers, across all segments of the population. We are also constantly working to enhance our current products and services, and introduce new innovative solutions, in order to cater to the needs of the different sections of the population," said Eugene Galligan, Acting General Manager of the Retail Banking Department at KIB. "Through these newly introduced facilities, we are looking to make our banking experience accessible and convenient for customers who require special support, both in our branches and through our online channels." "Our goal is to empower customer with special needs; providing them with all the necessary tools to enable them to conduct their own banking needs comfortably and with maximum levels of independence," added Galligan.



Eugene Galligan

LOTUS SHINES ON AT THIS YEAR'S AUTO MOTO

SPECTACULAR DISPLAY OF EVORA 400 AND EXIGE S COUPE



KUWAIT: In a new and exciting step catered for luxury sports car fans, Alghanim Motors, the exclusive distributor of Lotus vehicles in Kuwait, is proud to announce its participation at Auto Moto 2017, which will be taking place in 360 Mall, from January 12 until January 21, 2017. With Auto Moto being one of the biggest automotive events in Kuwait, where throngs of youth and media members descend to marvel at the latest offerings in automobiles, Lotus's participation offers an extraordinary opportunity to showcase its iconic lineup of luxury sports cars in a deserving display. Alghanim Motors invites visitors and customers alike to get more acquainted with Lotus's masterpiece duo, Evora 400 and Exige S Coupe.

Lotus (Evora 400)

Regarded as the fastest Lotus road car of the new millennium, the Lotus Evora 400 was created keeping Lotus's core values of high performance and exceptional handling in mind. An alluring and vibrant driver's car, the Evora proves to be a wonderfully sublime ride that consistently delivers an uncompromisingly dynamic experience on the road due to its

lightweight and aerodynamic construction that furthers its splendid agility. With the Evora 400, nothing is superfluous; it is designed to perform with no compromise, reflecting the true legendary Lotus racing heritage.

Lotus (Exige S Coupe)

In true Lotus fashion, the Lotus Exige traces its origins back to motorsport. The aggressive lines of the Exige underline its racing pedigree; its track-inspired aerodynamics is a testament to its excellent performance. Lotus' engineering and motorsport expertise have come together to deliver a sports car that performs exceptionally on the road and track while its lightweight chassis and remarkable supercharged engine provide a perfect balance of power and weight.

On this occasion, Alghanim Motors invites luxury sports car enthusiasts to visit its stand at Auto Moto, from January 12 until January 21, 2017, to witness Lotus's spectacular masterworks up-close and discover the true meaning of speed, luxury and power. To catch up on the latest updates about Lotus's offerings in Kuwait, customers can follow the handle @AlghanimLotusKW on social media.

MICROSOFT AND KIDZANIA ENCOURAGE CREATIVE LEARNING 'MICROSOFT INNOVATION WEEKEND'

KUWAIT: To encourage the use of technological skills for creative learning, problem solving and critical thinking, KidZania and Microsoft organized an event at KidZania, Avenues Mall here in Kuwait. Titled as 'Microsoft Innovation Weekend', the three-

day affair promoted creativity, logic and different skills for children while igniting their interest in future careers in Computer Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Open to children from different age groups, the

event comprised of two experience zones; Surface Art Wall, designed to spring digital creativity in young minds through the Surface Pro 4 Devices, and Kodu Cup Zone, for children to use their programming skills and learn how to code.

"The future of technology is heavily reliant on stirring innovation," said Charles Nahas, General Manager, Microsoft Kuwait. "Through our initiatives like Kodu Cup and versatile devices such as the Surface Pro 4; Microsoft aims to promote smart education, encouraging the Kuwaiti youth of today to utilize their imagination and creativity for technological advancements and drive prosperity within Kuwait."

Children unleashed their creativity in the Surface Art Wall zone where they made drawings using the Surface Pro 4. Being a pressure sensitive detachable tablet, the Surface Pro 4 mimics the traditional sketchpad that lets users draw with ease using various colours and brush strokes with the Surface Pen.

The Kodu Cup zone invited children to learn the basics of coding using the Kodu Game Lab technology. This software enables children to build video games for PC and XBOX through a simple programming language. Uncomplicated coding methods served to teach kids creativity, problem solving, storytelling as well as programming; honing their real-

world skills by encouraging them to develop analytical minds. The zone enabled children to become familiar with coding techniques through Kodu in a fun yet informative way. With no need for prior design or programming experience, the young ones were challenged to develop their own games from scratch, helping them take their first steps in coding using directional commands, creation of imaginary worlds, conditional loops, modelling and simulation - all with the aim of bringing forth bright minds that exemplify the power of innovation.

With such innovative programs, Microsoft is leading the way in sharing knowledge and devising methods to educate youth of Kuwait about the importance and role of information and communication technology (ICT) in a knowledge-based society, through which the young generation can learn using latest innovative devices, enhancing their core skills with smarter learning experiences.

"Innovation is the key to success, and our focus has always been on enabling people realize their full potential through technology. An important part of that commitment is to encourage young minds to innovate by enhancing their skills with engaging technologies, enabling them develop the necessary talent for the new digital world we live in," added Nahas.



NUMBER OF USERS ATTACKED BY FINANCIAL MALWARE INCREASED BY 22.49% IN Q4 2016

DUBAI: In the fourth quarter of 2016, the number of users that encountered malware capable of stealing money or valuable financial information reached 319,000, 22.49% more than in the same period in 2015. An increase in the number of attacks was spotted during the White Friday and the holiday period.

The holiday season is an attractive period of time, not only for retailers experiencing a high demand for their products and shoppers looking for great deals, but also for cybercriminals who don't hesitate to explore new opportunities to exploit people illegally, at a time of year when more users are spending money online than usual.

At end of 2016, Kaspersky Lab researchers conducted a retrospective look at the cyberthreats landscape during the holiday period (October, November and December) in the last three years. The main conclusion of their analysis was that criminals are trying to tie their malicious campaigns to specific holiday dates.

Analysis of the holiday period in 2016 showed that last year's season wasn't the exception. Kaspersky Lab protection technologies detected attacks against 22.49 percent more users than in the same period in 2015. This means that after a decrease in 2014, cybercriminals are again investing in developing malware capable of stealing financial data, such as credit card information and online banking credentials.

As the dynamics of attacks in November 2016 showed, the most attractive day of the fall-winter holidays for cybercriminals is Cyber Monday - a day dedicated to online sales and shopping worldwide. In November 2016, Kaspersky Lab protection technologies detected a clear spike in the number of users attacked, and on November 28th (Cyber Monday) there were twice as many users attacked than during the previous day.

When it comes to the White Friday and the holiday periods, the pattern is different, with the spikes in attack dynamics occurring one or two days prior to the actual holiday dates. These differences in malicious behavior can be explained by the different nature of the holidays. Unlike White Friday and the holiday period, Cyber Monday is all about online sales worldwide, thus criminals see more sense in focusing their malicious campaigns on this particular date.

To reach their goals, criminals used one of 30 families of banking trojans, consistently tracked by Kaspersky Lab. Five of these are the most widespread: Zbot, Nymaim, Shiotob, Gozi and Neurevt. These trojans are responsible for attacks against 92.35 percent of users in the holiday period.

"Data on the dynamics of attacks shows that financial malware operators tried to attach their activity to particular dates in 2016, and the holiday season's contribution to the number of financial malicious attacks during this time is clearly visible. Financial malware attacks are on the rise again and all their targets - from owners and clients of e-shops, to credit card holders and banks - should be aware of the dangers and take adequate steps to stay safe. As a holiday season follow-up protection measure, we advise shoppers who used their credit cards to buy presents and goods during last three months to keep an eye on their financial transaction information in the coming months. Typically, criminals don't start to withdraw money from stolen cards right after the theft. They often wait for several weeks or even months to prepare for cashing out first," said Oleg Kupreev, security expert at Kaspersky Lab.

Although the holiday season is over, Kaspersky Lab advises people to keep in mind several simple rules to stay safe when it comes to financial operations online:

- Do not click on any links received from unknown people, or on suspicious links sent by your friends on social networking sites or via e-mail. They can be malicious.

- Do not enter your credit card details on unfamiliar or suspicious sites, to avoid passing them into cybercriminal hands. If these websites are offering advantageous deals that look too good to be true, they most likely belong to criminals.

- Always double-check the webpage is genuine before entering any of your credentials or confidential information (at least take a look at the URL). Fake websites may look just like the real ones.

- Install a security solution on your device, with built-in technologies designed to prevent financial fraud. For example, the Safe Money technology in Kaspersky Lab's solutions creates a secure environment for financial transactions on all levels.



LAS VEGAS: The Navya Arma autonomous vehicle drives down a street in Las Vegas. The driverless electric shuttle has begun carrying passengers in a test program in a downtown Las Vegas entertainment district. — AP

DRIVERLESS ELECTRIC SHUTTLE TESTED IN DOWNTOWN VEGAS HIGH-AND LOW-ROLLERS CLIMBING ABOARD

LAS VEGAS: There's a new thrill on the streets of downtown Las Vegas, where high- and low-rollers alike are climbing aboard what officials call the first driverless electric shuttle operating on a public US street. The oval-shaped shuttle began running Tuesday as part of a 10-day pilot program, carrying up to 12 passengers for free along a short stretch of the Fremont Street East entertainment district.

The vehicle has a human attendant and computer monitor, but no steering wheel and no brake pedals. Passengers push a button at a marked stop to board it.

The shuttle uses GPS, electronic curb sensors and other technology, and doesn't require lane lines to make its way. "The ride was smooth. It's clean and quiet and seats comfortably," said Mayor Carolyn Goodman, who was among the first public officials to hop a ride on the vehicle developed by the French company Navya and dubbed Arma.

"I see a huge future for it once they get the technology synchronized," the mayor said on Friday. The vehicles have a range of about 90 miles for each electric charge and take about five to eight hours to recharge. The top speed of the shuttle is 25 mph, but it's running about 15 mph during the trial, Navya spokesman Martin Higgins said. Side streets have been blocked to make a dedicated lane for it to pass traffic signals during the trial.

Higgins called it "100 percent autonomous on a programmed route." "If a person or a dog were to run in front of it, it would stop," he said. Higgins said it's the company's first test of the shuttle on a public street in the US. A similar shuttle began testing in December at a simulated city environment at a University of Michigan research center.

The vehicle being used in public was shown earlier at the giant CES gadget show just off the Las Vegas Strip. Las Vegas city community devel-

opment chief Jorge Cervantes said plans call for installing transmitters at the Fremont Street intersections to communicate red-light and green-light status to the shuttle.

He said the city hopes to deploy several autonomous shuttle vehicles - by Navya or another company - later this year for a downtown loop with stops at shopping spots, restaurants, performance venues, museums, a hospital and City Hall.

At a cost estimated at \$10,000 a month, Cervantes said the vehicle could be cost-efficient compared with a single bus and driver costing perhaps \$1 million a year. He said partnerships with businesses near stops and advertising to passers-by and passengers might defray some of the cost and keep rider fares low or even free. The company said it has shuttles in use in France, Australia, Switzerland and other countries that have carried more than 100,000 passengers in more than a year of service. — AP

AUTO SHOW CONCEPTS: WILL YOU BUILD THEM OR FORGET THEM?

DETROIT: Car companies don't just show current models at auto shows. They also unveil prototypes that could be built in the future. These so-called concept cars help them gauge the public's reaction to new designs or technology. They can also amp up excitement about a company's future. These are some of the concept vehicles on display at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, which opens to the public yesterday. As show visitors check out these concepts

they should ask themselves: Would I build it or bag it?

VOLKSWAGEN I.D. BUZZ

The latest incarnation of VW's groovy, 1960s minibus is the I.D. Buzz. VW says I.D. stands for "identity" and "iconic design." The "buzz" refers to the whirring sound of the electric drive system, which can take the minivan up to 270 miles on a charge. The I.D. Buzz seats up to eight and lets the

driver's seat face the rear when the minivan is in self-driving mode. VW minibuses haven't been sold in the US since the 1970s, but the company has released several concepts over the years that take their styling cues from the beloved minibus. This one would fit neatly with VW's goal of selling 1 million electric vehicles annually by 2025.

INFINITI QX50

Infiniti hints at the future design of its midsize SUV with the QX50. Its flowing lines resemble other, newer members of the Infiniti family, like the smaller QX30. The concept has an advanced semi-autonomous driving system that can take over for the driver in some situations, like stop-and-go traffic. It also has a significantly more efficient engine. Infiniti is expected to build a model very close to the concept version that will go on sale next year.

LINCOLN NAVIGATOR

Automakers often load up concept vehicles with features that might not make it into production. Take the concept Lincoln Navigator. Giant gullwing doors in the rear and three steps that unfold to help occupants climb in aren't likely to be seen in dealer showroom. Still, the sleek, wagon-like shape gives a clue that the new Navigator will be a sharp departure from the current, truck-like one, which debuted in 1997. The 2018 Navigator is expected to go on sale later this year. — AP



DETROIT: The GAC Motors EnSpirit, an electronic hybrid conceptual car, is displayed at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. The EnSpirit concept is a small four-door SUV with a retractable cloth roof. Inside are light wood accents and a long center stack that features a little bonsai tree in the rear. The EnSpirit is a plug-in hybrid, and GAC says it can go around 60 miles in electric mode before the small gas engine kicks in. — AP

2 YEARS AFTER THE HACK, SONY CEO LYNTON EXITS FOR SNAP INC

LOS ANGELES: Two years after guiding the company through an unprecedented email hack, Sony Entertainment CEO Michael Lynton is leaving the company to become the chairman of the board for Snap Inc, the company behind Snapchat. Sony said Friday that Lynton, a 13-year Sony veteran who led both the music and entertainment group, will stay on for six months to ensure a smooth transition as Sony Corp. President and CEO Kazuo Hirai looks for a replacement.

In a statement, Lynton said he had been involved with Snapchat since its early days and is choosing to focus on that company given its recent growth.

Lynton started with Sony in 2004 as chairman and CEO of Sony Pictures Entertainment and in 2012 was named CEO of Sony Entertainment. Sony Pictures Entertainment and its various film divisions have been struggling of late at the box office with underwhelming performances from higher budget fare such as "Ghostbusters," "Inferno" and "Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk."

Lynton's highest-profile moments during his tenure came in the aftermath of the devastating November 2014 hack involving the leak of proprietary information, employee Social Security numbers and embarrassing emails from top executives such as Sony Pictures Entertainment co-

chair Amy Pascal. Five Sony-produced movies, including the unreleased "Annie," appeared on file-sharing websites. The hack hindered Sony's business operations, including the release of the James Franco and Seth Rogen film "The Interview," and led to the departure of Pascal only three months later.

"The whole series of events, not just for myself, but for everybody in the company, had so many twists and turns to it that every time you thought you were going down a path, every time people thought we got this in hand, the next thing you knew we'd have another threatening email come through two days later or another series of events," Lynton told The Associated Press at the time. — AP



Michael Lynton, chairman and CEO, Sony Pictures Entertainment

US WOMAN DIES OF INFECTION RESISTANT TO 26 ANTIBIOTICS

MIAMI: A US woman has died from an infection that was resistant to all 26 available antibiotics, health officials said this week, raising new concerns about the rise of dangerous superbugs. The woman, who was in her 70s, died in Nevada in September, and had recently been hospitalized in India with fractured leg bones, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported. The cause of death was sepsis, following infection from a rare bacteria known as carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE), which is resistant to all antibiotics available in the United States.

The specific strain of CRE, known as Klebsiella pneumoniae, was isolated from one of her wounds

in August. Tests were negative for the mcr-1 gene—a great concern to health experts because it makes bacteria resistant to the antibiotic of last resort, colistin. It was unclear how the woman's infection acquired resistance. Experts said she had been treated repeatedly in India during the last two years for a femur fracture and hip problems, most recently in June 2016.

Once the bacteria was identified in Nevada, the patient was isolated to prevent the infection from spreading in the hospital. Postmortem tests showed her infection might have responded to a treatment called fosfomycin, which is not approved in the United States. Paul Hoskisson, a researcher at the

University of Strathclyde, in Scotland, said that several European countries, including Britain, license fosfomycin for intravenous use in such cases.

"This is important because we are seeing increasing numbers of drug-resistant infections, and this is one of the first cases for Klebsiella where no drug options were open to the medical staff." Multi-drug-resistant Klebsiella pneumoniae has been described by the World Health Organization as "an urgent threat to human health." According to Nick Thomson, leader of the bacterial genomics and evolution group at the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute in England, this bacteria is likely to become more and more resistant. "The report high-

lights international travel and treatment overseas as a feature in the introduction of this pan-resistant isolate into the USA," he said.

"Since we live in such an interconnected society, this is important because this isolate represents a truly untreatable infection" which leaves health-care professionals with few options but to seek to prevent further transmission. Laura Piddock, a professor of microbiology at the University of Birmingham, said the case shows that doctors "need the flexibility to use antibiotics licensed for use in other countries and shown to be active in the laboratory against the patient's infecting bacterium." —AFP

CLIMATE CHANGE SHOWS IN SHRINKING ANTARCTIC SNOWS

'IT RAINS REGULARLY INSTEAD OF SNOWING'

CARLINI BASE, Antarctica: Vast icy rock peaks tower above Argentina's Carlini research base in Antarctica. But scientists who have worked here for decades say the glaciers are less icy than they once were. For international experts stationed at the base, the frozen southern continent is a good gauge of climate change. "When I used to come to Antarctica in the 1990s, it never used to rain," said Rodolfo Sanchez, director of the Argentine Antarctic Institute (IAA). "Now it rains regularly instead of snowing," he said during an Argentine government visit to King

George Island, off the tip of the western Antarctic peninsula.

Scientists monitoring conditions at the base say the average temperature here has increased by 2.5 degrees Celsius over the past century. "The glacier used to reach all the way to the shore," Sanchez says. "Now there is a 500-meter wide beach." Dark scars of rock are showing through what were once spotless sheets of white snow on the glaciers' flanks. "Antarctica is a thermometer that shows how the world is changing," said Adriana Gulisano, a physicist at

Argentina's National Antarctic Directorate. "There is no place where climate change is more in evidence."

Wildlife signs

Local wildlife also appears to reflect to the change. Scientists at the Carlini base say a pair of yellow-throated King penguins have swum up to mate nearby for the past three years. Although the theory is not confirmed, they suspect another sign of climate change. The species had previously been thought to be restricted to warmer spots on the Falkland Islands and the Argentine mainland.

Technician Luis Souza, 56, has divided his time since 1979 between Buenos Aires and the Carlini base, where he has studied migrating birds: cormorants, gulls and penguins. "There are more and more birds coming here every year," he said. More crucially, scientists say melting ice is disrupting the breeding of krill, a shrimp-like creature that serves as food for numerous species. "Less ice means fewer krill for the whales, penguins and seals," said Sanchez. "The whole food chain is affected."

Dinosaurs in ice

Various countries maintain bases in Antarctica, a shared space for scientific research under a 1959 international treaty. Former military bases have become laboratories for research into the planet's future. The Carlini base's red cabins nestle at the foot of a mountain range known as "The Three Brothers." Below the structures, the shore is strewn with black volcanic rocks. The population of scientists and military logistics personnel at the 13 Argentina bases in Antarctica can reach 1,000 at busy times.

Supplies are brought in by boat or helicopter. Garbage is stored and taken away by an icebreaker. Other kinds of experts are also busy in Antarctica, a continent roamed by dinosaurs 75 million years ago. "The signs are under the ice," said paleontologist Marcelo Reguero cryptically. He has been working in Antarctica since 1986.

Greenhouse gas flows south

Although Antarctica lies thousands of miles from any industrialized area, a recent study by Argentine and Italian scientists found that levels of harmful carbon dioxide gas are rising all the same. That is "due to the circulation of currents in the atmosphere" bringing the gas from emissions elsewhere all the way down to Antarctica. But closer to the South Pole in the heart of the white continent, the trend is the opposite, Gulisano said—average temperatures are getting colder. "Why?" she asked. "That is the million-dollar question. We are working on it." —AFP



ANTARCTICA: Scientists monitor conditions at the Carlini Base in Antarctica. —AFP photos

'MIRACLE ON THE HUDSON' LEGACY: 70,000 SLAIN BIRDS

NEW YORK: Birds took the blame for bringing down the jetliner that "Sully" Sullenberger landed on the Hudson River eight years ago this weekend. They have been paying for it with their lives ever since. An analysis of bird-killing programs at the New York City area's three major airports found that nearly 70,000 gulls, starlings, geese and other birds have been slaughtered, mostly by shooting and trapping, since the 2009 accident, and it is not clear whether those killings have made the skies safer.

Federal data show that in the years after bird-killing programs LaGuardia and Newark airports ramped up in response to the gutsy landing, the number of recorded bird strikes involving those airports actually went up. Combined, the two airports went from an average of 158 strikes per year in the five years before the accident to an average of 299 per year in the six years after it, though that could be due to more diligent reporting of such incidents.

At the seaside Kennedy Airport, which is on a major route for migrating birds and had a robust slaughter program even before the Flight 1549 crash, the number of reported strikes has ticked up, too, while the number of birds killed there has dropped slightly in some recent years. Advocates for the birds say officials should find other, more effective ways to protect aircraft. "There has to be a long-term solution that doesn't rely so extensively on killing birds and also keeps us safe in the sky," said Jeffrey Kramer, of the group GooseWatch NYC, suggesting better radar systems to detect problematic flocks.

Bird-slaughter campaigns

Officials involved in the bird-killing programs say they believe they've made flying safer, with their strongest argument that there hasn't been a major crash involving a bird strike in the New York area since the "Miracle on the Hudson." "We

do our best to reduce the risk as much as possible," said Laura Francoeur, the chief wildlife biologist at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which oversees the airports. "There's still a lot of random chance involved."

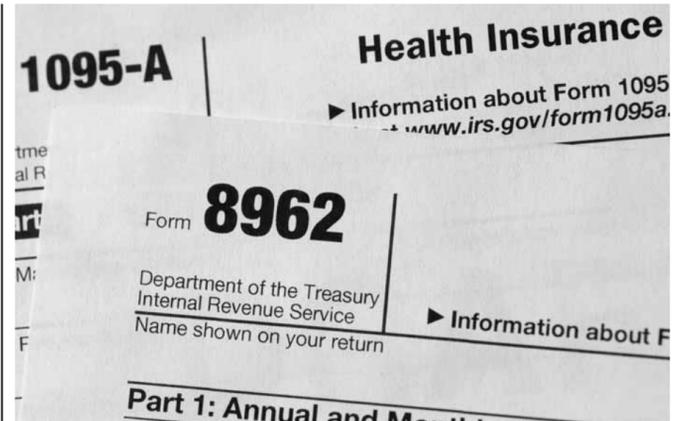
That was the case on Jan 15, 2009, when US Airways Flight 1549 took off from LaGuardia and almost immediately soared into a flock of big Canada geese. Two engines were knocked out. Sullenberger guided the powerless jet over the Hudson River and glided it safely down in the frigid water. All 155 people on board survived. Sullenberger became a national hero. Geese became public enemy Number 1. They were targeted around LaGuardia, JFK and Newark airports by wildlife officials with shotguns. In some cases, birds were rounded up in traps and killed.

But the Port Authority data of bird-slaughter campaigns around the three major New York City-area airports between 2009 and last October show thousands of smaller birds were also swept up. Of the 70,000 birds killed during that time, the most commonly slaughtered were seagulls, with 28,000 dead, followed by about 16,800 European starlings, nearly 6,000 brown-headed cowbirds and about 4,500 mourning doves. Canada geese come in a little further down the list, with about 1,830 dead.

While aircraft hit birds over New York on a daily basis, incidents resulting in damage to a plane remain relatively rare and usually involve larger bird varieties. Of the 249 birds that damaged an aircraft from 2004 to April of last year, 54 were seagulls, 12 were osprey, 11 were double-crested cormorants and 30 were geese, according to Federal Aviation Administration data. The species wasn't known in 69 instances.

Serious consequences

Close to 35,000 European starlings were slaughtered at the three airports during that time period, but only one was involved in a strike that actually damaged an aircraft. A starling, probably weighing less than 3 ounces, hit a JetBlue flight coming in for a landing at JFK on Sept 10, 2008, breaking a taxi light. The FAA recorded 138 other instances of European starlings being hit by planes over those dozen years without any harm to the aircraft. —AP



WASHINGTON: In this file photo, tax form 8962 is seen in Washington. —AP

IRS LETTERS WARN ABOUT HEALTH INSURANCE PENALTY

WASHINGTON: If you haven't signed up for health insurance, you may soon be getting a not-too-subtle nudge from the taxman. The IRS is sending personalized letters to millions of taxpayers who might be uninsured, reminding them that they could be on the hook for hundreds of dollars in fines under the federal health care law if they don't sign up soon through HealthCare.gov. It's an unusual role for a revenue-collection agency. Fines are one of the most unpopular parts of the 2010 health overhaul, and there's a high likelihood they'll get repealed by Republicans, even if other parts of "Obamacare" survive.

The administration is counting on IRS reminders to help sign up as many people as possible before open enrollment ends Jan 31. That's soon after officials hand off President Barack Obama's signature program to a Trump administration committed to "repeal and replace." Letters bearing the IRS logo will be sent to an estimated 7.5 million people who either claimed an exemption from the law's requirement that most Americans carry health insurance, or who paid a penalty for being uninsured during the 2015 tax year. The coverage requirement was included in the law as a way to get healthy people into the insurance pool, helping to keep premiums in check.

The penalty for this year could be \$2,085 or more, depending on family size and income, says one draft version of the IRS letter. Another draft takes a somewhat different approach, leaving a blank space for the IRS to provide an individualized estimate of what the particular uninsured taxpayer might owe. The drafts were obtained by The Associated Press. Although the administration has made no secret of the IRS role in open enrollment this year, officials have not responded to requests for copies of the actual letters. Republicans say the whole thing is a waste of money. The campaign will cost about \$4 million, say congressional aides.

"People receiving these letters have

already made up their minds about Obamacare when they applied for an exemption or paid a penalty," said House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady, R-Texas. "They don't want stock letters. They want better health care choices and lower costs." Supporters of the health care law say research has shown that many people who remain uninsured are still unaware that they can go to HealthCare.gov and qualify for government subsidies to help pay their premiums. Those subsidies were designed as tax credits, bringing the IRS into the picture.

The IRS letters make the pitch: "Most people who enroll in a plan through HealthCare.gov can find plans for \$75 a month or less after financial help," the letters say. "At HealthCare.gov, you can compare plans to find one that meets your needs and budget." While such low-cost plans are available, many people actually pay more, and the \$75 figure doesn't take into account deductibles and copayments. The average monthly premium last year for HealthCare.gov customers was \$106, after financial help, according to the government. The administration has not released a comparable premium estimate for this year.

Insurers raised their sticker prices significantly, but the law's subsidies should cushion the impact for most HealthCare gov customers. About 800,000 letters went out after Thanksgiving, and an additional 6.7 million are going out now, according to congressional aides. Last year about 6.5 million people paid fines for being uninsured, averaging \$470, according to recent IRS data. The amount is generally deducted from a taxpayer's anticipated refund. The fines started small in 2014, but are now fully phased in, starting at about \$700. The administration has a goal of signing up 13.8 million people for coverage this year and is looking for a strong finish to open enrollment season. Although the Affordable Care Act has reduced the nation's uninsured rate to a historic low, it remains politically divisive. —AP

US SCIENTISTS ACTIVATE 'KILL SWITCH' IN MICE

MIAMI: US scientists have ramped up predatory behavior in mice by stimulating a region of the brain known for its role in emotions like fear and pleasure, according to a study published Thursday. The experiment turned the lab mice into super-eating machines, vigorously attacking food, bottle caps, and sticks as prey, said the findings in the journal Cell. However, scientists cautioned that their goal was not to create an army of killer mice. Rather, it was to better understand how the brain works and perhaps one day improve the treatment of degenerative brain diseases that affect motion and coordination.

"A major issue for neuroscientists is how the brain figures out how to respond appropriately to objects in the world," lead author Ivan de Araujo, associate professor of psychiatry at the Yale University School of Medicine, said. "Predatory behavior is the perfect model. It is a great window into how the brain solves the problem of how we respond to external stimuli by moving our bodies in an appropriate way." Mice are omnivores, and will eat fruit, vegetables, insects and meat. They are natural hunters, even though they are more often thought of as prey for larger creatures like snakes, hawks and cats.

Researchers decided to see how mice's behavior would change if certain neurons were stimulated using a process called optogenetics, which is also being experimented with to restore muscle movement in people who have been paralyzed, and to treat those with epilepsy or Parkinson's disease. Using an implantable

brain device and a laser to activate certain neurons in the part of the brain known as the amygdala, researchers found two different pathways to changing a lab mouse's behavior—one that triggered the animal's pursuit of prey, and another that signaled it to bite and kill.

"We could make them more efficient hunters in the sense that they would spend less time to be able to capture live prey and subdue it and kill it," said Araujo. "Perhaps more strikingly, when we used a bug made of plastic that was moving around the cage, we could make the animals pursue an object that they would normally avoid," he added. "We triggered the behavior toward objects that were not live prey." The amygdala is an almond-sized region of the temporal lobe known for its role in emotions like fear and pleasure, as well as motivation and survival instincts.

Not killing machines

However, researchers also noted that when other mice were included in the experiments, they did not attack each other. "I wouldn't like people to think that this could be used for generating aggression," Araujo said. "In fact, I don't think this is actually possible. I think the behavior is very specific to looking for food. They showed no interest in attacking things that are as large as they, or other mice." The brain stimulation only worked under the control of lab technicians, and if any of the mice were to escape, they would likely soon become another animal's meal, he said. —AFP

FOSHAN CITY SAYS BIRD FLU 'GRIM', EXTENDS MARKET CLEANING PERIODS

BEIJING: Foshan, a city in China's Guangdong province, said it will extend the monthly cleaning periods for live poultry markets for the next three months to help control the spread of virulent bird flu, with authorities warning the situation is "grim". The move for the first three months of the year came as authorities in the city of more than 8 million people warned in a statement that all neighboring cities have reported human infections of the H7N9 strain of the virus.

State media Xinhua said it had registered its second case. Foshan usually shuts markets for one day each month for cleaning and sterilization in the first three months of each year when birds and people are most susceptible to the flu, but this year that will increase to three days, the Foshan Health and Family Planning Bureau said in a statement on its website. The monthly shutdowns, covering all live poultry markets in the city, will be effective

from the 16th to the 18th for the first three months of the year.

Guangzhou, the capital of the southern province, announced a similar move earlier this week. The province of Guangdong registered 14 cases of human infection in December out of a total of 106 across the country, according to government releases. China has culled over 175,000 birds following five outbreaks among poultry.

While markets and farmers typically ramp up sterilization and cleaning regimes during the winter, the issue has raised concerns this year as nearby countries South Korea and Japan battle particularly severe outbreaks. 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. — Reuters

SPACE X POISED TO LAUNCH FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE SEPT BLAST

MIAMI: SpaceX is poised to blast off a Falcon 9 rocket yesterday, marking its first return to flight since a costly and complicated launch pad explosion in September. The launch of 10 satellites for Iridium, a mobile and data communications company, is scheduled from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. The launch window is "instantaneous," meaning that any technical glitch or poor weather the current forecast is just 60 percent favorable would push the launch forward to the next opportunity on Sunday at 1749 GMT.

The stakes for SpaceX are high after a pair of accidents. September's blast destroyed a \$200 million satellite Facebook had planned to use to beam high-speed internet to Africa. Another explosion in June 2015 two minutes after liftoff obliterated a Dragon cargo ship packed with goods bound for

the astronauts at the International Space Station. The incidents cost SpaceX dearly, possibly pushing the privately owned company into the red, the Wall Street Journal reported this week.

"That June 2015 disaster, followed by months of launch delays, contributed to a quarter-billion dollar annual loss and a six percent drop in revenue, after two years of surging sales and small profits," the paper said after a review of internal financial documents from 2011 to 2015, forecasts for the next decade and interviews with former SpaceX employees. Three weeks after last September's accident, the company removed a long-standing phrase from its website saying it was "profitable and cash-flow positive."

That "suggested both profit and cash flow had moved into the red for 2016," the Journal said, not-

ing that it found an operating loss for every quarter in 2016 and negative cash flow of roughly \$15 million. SpaceX, headed by billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, declined to comment on the findings and is not obligated to release its financial figures because it is a private company, the report said. "The company is in a financially strong position and is well positioned for future growth," with \$1 billion in cash and no debt, SpaceX chief financial officer Bret Johnson was quoted as saying.

Problems fixed

The June 2015 accident in which the unmanned Dragon cargo ship exploded in a massive fireball two minutes after launch was caused by a faulty strut that allowed a helium tank to snap loose, SpaceX said. Last September's explosion, during a

test a day prior to a scheduled launch, was traced to a problem with a pressure vessel in the second-stage liquid oxygen tank. SpaceX said it will change the way it fuels for now and redesign its pressure vessels in the future.

Musk, who cofounded PayPal and also owns Tesla Motors, has lofty goals, including colonizing Mars and revolutionizing the launch industry by making rocket components reusable. Founded in 2002, SpaceX logged 18 successful launches of the Falcon 9 before the 2015 accident. The company has a \$1.6 billion contract with NASA to supply the International Space Station using its Dragon space capsule, which is the only cargo ship that can return to the Earth intact. SpaceX had hoped to resume Falcon 9 flights as early as November, then in mid-December, before pushing the date to January. —AFP

KILLER WHALES COULD HAVE SPACE OFF WASHINGTON COAST

SEATTLE: The federal government is considering whether it should set up an area off Washington's San Juan Island where endangered killer whales would be protected from motorboats and other disturbances. Most motorized vessels would be banned under a proposed whale protection zone sought by three conservation groups. Puget Sound orcas face multiple threats, including pollution, lack of prey and impacts from boats. The zone is a common-sense approach that can be implemented immediately, Orca Relief Citizens' Alliance, Center for Biological Diversity and Project Seawolf said in a petition filed with NOAA Fisheries.

The agency announced Thursday it is seeking input from industry, tribes, government agencies and others on the November petition before deciding whether to proceed. NOAA Fisheries said studies indicate that the whales forage less in the presence of boat traffic. The orcas rely heavily on underwater sounds to find food and communicate, and boat noise may disrupt that process. Killer whales can be found in many oceans, but this small distinct population can typically be found in Puget Sound from spring to fall. They use unique calls to communicate with one another and eat salmon rather than marine mammals.

Petition

The orcas were listed as endangered in 2005. NOAA Fisheries says they're among the species most at risk for extinction in the near future. With the loss of seven animals

in 2016, the population is down to 78. "We're looking at every option and every opportunity to address the threats to these whales," Barry Thom, administrator of NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region, said in a statement Thursday. NOAA Fisheries considered a similar no-go zone in 2011 but declined to move forward, citing strong opposition at the time.

"The petition presents an opportunity to revisit that idea and get input from the public on this type of protection for the whale," Lynne Barre, NOAA Fisheries recovery coordinator for the southern resident killer whales, said in a statement.

Jeff Friedman, US president of the Pacific Whale Watch Association, told KING-TV in Seattle that the primary challenge the whales face is lack of salmon. "This petition is a really big distraction for the real issues facing the southern resident killer whales," he told the Seattle station. In 2011, the agency adopted rules requiring boats to stay 200 yards from the whales and out of their path.

But the petitioners say those protections and voluntary measures haven't been sufficient to protect the whales. They're proposing a zone larger and wider than the one considered in 2011. They're also asking for an additional 1/4-mile buffer to give the whales "more quiet and rest" in their key habitat area and for the rules apply between April 1 to Sept 30. This story has been updated to correct in the first line that the zone would be off Washington's San Juan Island, not the coast. —AP



KENEMA: This file photo shows a girl suspected of being infected with the Ebola virus having her temperature checked at the government hospital in Kenema, Sierra Leone. —AFP

EBOLA'S LONG-TERM EFFECTS REVEALED

PARIS: People who survive Ebola may still battle debilitating health problems a year after being declared infection-free, according to an ongoing trial in Guinea which highlighted the need for patient follow up. Three-quarters of survivors had post-Ebola symptoms when they enrolled for the trial about a year, on average, after they were discharged from hospital, researchers reported yesterday. Eighteen percent experienced eye problems, including eight individuals who went blind, a team wrote in The Lancet Infectious Diseases.

Two percent — 19 people — were deaf. This is the largest and longest-running assessment of Ebola survivors to date. Nearly one in four participants, the study said, suffered joint and muscle pain, 35 percent had headaches, and 22 percent stomach pain when they enrolled. Seventeen percent had symptoms of depression. The study also confirmed previous observations that Ebola virus can remain in the semen of infected men for 18 months or longer, raising the specter of sexual transmission. The team recruited 802 Ebola survivors between the ages of one and 79 from four hospitals in Guinea between March 2015 and July 2016.

Together, the group represented 74 percent of Guinean survivors of the 2013-16 Ebola epidemic in west Africa — by far the worst outbreak in the disease's 40-year history. Some 11,300 people died in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, compared to a total of 1,700 worldwide in the preceding four decades. An estimated 17,000 survived the most recent outbreak. "The high number of survivors... has raised several new issues: long-term clinical complications, psychosocial consequences, risks of EVD (Ebola virus disease) reactivation and secondary transmission due to viral persistence in body fluids," the study authors wrote.

Sexual transmission?

They conducted routine analysis of blood, semen, breast milk, urine and saliva at regular intervals, as well as psychological examinations. Ten male survivor who gave semen samples tested positive for Ebola virus — one of them a full 18 months after falling ill, the team found. "Precisely how long the virus might linger in semen remains unknown," they wrote. Until semen is confirmed to be virus-free, follow-up "is clearly needed to reduce risk of sexual transmission from survivors."

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), sexual transmission of the Ebola virus from men to women is a "strong possibility," but as yet unproven. Urine tested positive for Ebola in two cases, and saliva in only one, said the researchers. No breast milk or vaginal fluid samples contained Ebola virus. There were more eye problems by the time patients enrolled in the trial than when they had left hospital, the team said, "implying that ophthalmological screening should continue long after discharge." Children retained fewer serious health problems than adults.

The study highlighted the scarcity of medical laboratories in the affected region to keep tabs on Ebola survivors' health and any potential for renewed virus spread. "Our results indicate that a close follow-up of convalescent patients might be warranted for at least 18 months after discharge... and perhaps even longer," said the team. In 2015, a study in Sierra Leone said nearly 80 percent of some 277 survivors experienced joint pain four months after their hospital discharge, 60 percent had vision problems and a quarter hearing difficulties. The Guinean trial aims to monitor patients for two years. —AFP



SEATTLE: In this file photo, a female orca leaps from the water while breaching in Puget Sound west of Seattle, as seen from a federal research vessel that has been tracking the whale. —AP

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Kuwait Times
248 33 199

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IISM BEGINS EDUCATIONAL READING WEEK

IISM's KG Children started their reading week with twist in the drill "A Phono Drill". Children brought their favorite story book from home and build a miniature library in their class room. They enjoyed sharing and reading these books with their friends. Students reading proficiency was judged by asking them to read a short 3 letter story and the best were awarded the of "Reading Super Star" by the School Director Malayil Moosakoya.

Even the dullest story comes alive when told in the sweetest voice of children. "Yes, they are the best story tellers". Keeping this natural talent of theirs in mind the finest story tellers were awarded a 'STAR' by our admirable teachers. Reading aloud is probably the single best activity for putting a child on the road to become a good reader and to ensure good start. Children should be able to crack the code of letters and sounds for this very purpose. Children dressed as alphabets marched to the "phenomic" sounds of alphabets.

The meticulously planned events of the "Reading Week" achieved its target under the guidance of our KG Head Nilofar Qazi and her team of KG teachers. Their efforts and team work were much appreciated by the School Director Malayil Moosa Koya, Principal FM Basheer Ahmed, Sr Vice Principal and the Vice Principals who gave their valuable time to be present at each and every event.



Leek, sausage and split-pea soup is easy to make ahead

This makes a ton of soup, and you can freeze it at will. It's the kind of soup that sells itself, hits the spot, and has so much flavor and such a high level of comfort-foodness that you instantly feel better about life while eating it. If that's overstating it, I'm sorry, but my family never can get enough of these bean-grain-sausage concoctions. You'll see that two different starches are called for: rice and Israeli couscous. There is no reason for this other than that I had a bit of couscous left, but not enough for the whole batch of soup. Also, I love soups with a bounce-up of textures in them. You could use all rice, or all couscous, or any other grain you want to play with from spelt to farro. Just look at the cooking times of the grain you want to use, and work backward to figure out when to add it.

There are lots of flavored chicken sausages on the market these days - I went with the basic Italian-seasoned versions, hot or sweet, but you could try any version that seems compatible with this simple soup. Also, know that soups thicken as they cool, so if you are planning to keep it for a day or two, you might find yourself needing to add some extra water or broth to loosen it up when you reheat it. This is also the

kind of soup that is perfect when made ahead; the flavors deepen over a day or two in the fridge.

LEEK, CHICKEN SAUSAGE AND SPLIT PEA SOUP

Ingredients

Serves 12 to 14
Start to finish: 1 hour 15 minutes
2 tablespoons olive oil
4 large leeks, white and light green parts, thinly sliced
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste



10 to 12 cups less-sodium chicken stock
1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
1 1/2 cups split peas
1 cup long-grain rice
1/2 cup Israeli couscous
12 to 16 ounces cooked chicken sausage, halved lengthwise and sliced
To garnish (optional):
Chopped fresh parsley
Toasted pumpkin seeds

Preparation

In a very large soup pot or Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the leeks, season with salt and pepper, and saute for about 8 minutes until they are wilted. Raise the heat to high, add 10 cups of the broth and the crushed tomatoes, and bring to a simmer. Add the split peas, return to a simmer, then lower the heat and simmer partially covered for 30 minutes. Add the rice and simmer another 10 minutes, then add the couscous and sausage and simmer for another 20 minutes until the grains and the peas are tender. Add all or part of the remaining 2 cups of broth if the soup seems too thick when you finish cooking it. Serve hot in bowls, with some parsley and/or pumpkin seeds on top. —AP

Food

FRESH LINGUINE WITH SHRIMP AND PEAS WILL WOW GUESTS

This is a dazzler of a pasta dish. When you combine fresh pasta with big shrimp you are quickly telling your guests that they are in for a treat. But it's not just the guests who will be happy. The whole dish comes together in about 20 minutes. Really! Truly! Adding some of the pasta's cooking water to the dish cuts the heaviness of the cream sauce, plus the bit of starch that stays in the cooking water helps bind the sauce to the pasta. Salt the sauce lightly, if at all, up to the point where you add the pasta cooking water, which will also be salted. Then taste and see if you need more seasoning.

Fresh linguine with shrimp and peas in a pink cream sauce

Start to finish:
Serves 6
INGREDIENTS:
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 cloves garlic, peeled and lightly crushed
2 pounds peeled and deveined extra-large shrimp
3 tablespoons tomato paste
1/2 cup dry white wine
1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
1/2 cup chopped fresh basil
1 cup frozen peas
1 cup heavy cream
Fresh ground pepper to taste
2 9-ounce packages fresh linguine
Chopped fresh parsley or basil to serve



Preparation

Bring a large stockpot of salted water to a boil. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a very large skillet over medium heat, and saute the garlic for 3 or 4 minutes just until it starts to lightly color. Remove the garlic cloves and toss them. Add the shrimp to the skillet and saute for about 3 minutes until they have started to turn pink but are not cooked through, then remove them with a slotted spoon to a plate and set aside.

Add the tomato paste and white wine to the skillet and stir until the tomato paste has dissolved into the wine. Add the parsley, basil, peas and cream and bring to a simmer. Season

with pepper. Return the partially cooked shrimp to the sauce and continue to simmer until the peas and shrimp have cooked through, about 2 minutes. While you are making the sauce, cook the pasta in the boiling water according to package directions, about 4 minutes. Remove 1/2 cup of the cooking water and stir it into the sauce, then drain the pasta. Taste the sauce and see if it needs more salt or pepper. Return the pasta to the pot, pour the sauce over it and toss to combine. Transfer to a serving bowl, sprinkle with additional parsley or basil if desired, and serve immediately.



BELGIAN DAYS IN KUWAIT 2017

Come join us to celebrate all things Belgium! Belgian Day is variety of events and activities organized by the Embassy of Belgium that takes place all over Kuwait's most happening hubs. Take a look at some of the

main events:
1) Concert of Belgian Electronic Band - Anzart Der Maschine on January 17th at 7pm in the Salmiya theatre.
2) Exhibition of Belgian Artist Frederik

Jassogne from the 23rd-25th of January at the Hamra Mall.
3) Belgian Culinary Days at Crowne Plaza Hotel with chef Jerone Vanandroye from the 25th of January to the 27th.

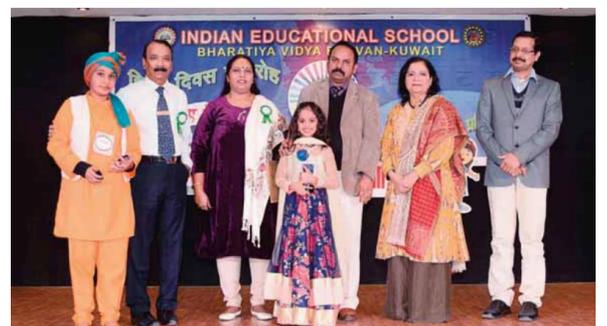


CATCH THEM YOUNG

The 2nd Inter School Quiz Competition "Catch Them Young" was conducted by FAIPS-DPS on January 5, 2017. 10 schools from Kuwait participated in the competition, out of which 6 schools entered the finale. ICSK Junior proudly made up to the finals and bagged the Third Prize.
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE PRIZE WINNERS!
Master Shaun Thomas - Class IV D
Miss Asha Janardhan - Class V C

GLOBAL EXHIBITION OF SERVICES (GES) FROM 17-20 APRIL 2017

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, Services Export Promotion Council and the Confederation of Indian Industry are organizing the 3rd edition of the Global Exhibition of Services (GES) from April 17-20 April 2017, at India Expo Centre and Mart, Greater Noida, India. The focus sectors for GES-2017 will be information technology and telecom, tourism and hospitality, media and entertainment, healthcare, logistics, environmental services, facility management, exhibition and event services, professional services, retail, education, banking and financial services, R&D skills, railways services, next generation cities, wellness and startups/SMEs, sports, infrastructure and services in manufacturing. More details about GES-2017, are available on Website: <http://www.gesdelhi.in>. All Kuwaiti companies with businesses in the above mentioned sectors are encouraged to participate in GES-2017 which will give them a chance to promote their business to Indian and global companies.



BHAVANS CELEBRATES HINDI DIWAS

Indian Educational School Kuwait celebrated Hindi Diwas to pay tribute to the national language of India that boasts about 600 million speakers across the globe. The program started with the Kuwait National Anthem followed by a verse from the Holy Quran and a prayer song by the school choir. Eminent writer Maimuna Ali Chongle along with the country resident head of LIC International Kuwait, Devesh Sharma were the chief guests of the day. The day was illuminated by the chief guests, the principal of Indian Educational School Kuwait T Premkumar, the principal of Smart Indian School, Kuwait Mahesh Iyer along with Suresh V Balakrishnan, the vice principal, the middle and the senior wings of IES and, Lalitha Premkumar,

the vice principal, the primary wing of IES. The lighting the lamp indeed invoked the divine blessings which eventually created an ambience and platform for an invocation dance by the students of IES.
Swarna Saini, the Head of the Department of Hindi, IES welcomed the gathering with a welcome note. Ujjvala of grade 9 recited a Hindi poem which officially opened up the stage for the Interschool Hindi Kavitha Contest, Storytelling Contest and Nukkad Natak (street play) Contest. Though the competition grew stiffer and tougher the celebration mood was kept aloft, as the children of IES sang and danced at regular intervals to enthral the audience.
After the competition, the winners were declared by Ms. Sundari

Bala, a senior member of the IES Hindi faculty, while the chief guests and principals gave away the prizes to the winners. The First place for Nukkad Natak Contest was bagged by DPS. The second and the third positions were bagged by Salmiya Indian Model School and the Learners Own Academy respectively. The winners of the Poetry Recitation Contest (Grade 3) are Priyal A Shah of Carmel School (1st place), Mariyam Y Chorghay of ICSK Amman (2nd place) and Ananthakrishnan Sairam of United Indian School (3rd place). The winners of the Poetry Recitation Contest (Grade 4) are Nakshatra Neeraj of IES (1st Place), Vera Ankur of ICSK Amman (2nd place) and Keerath Kaur Sethi of Carmel School Kuwait (3rd place).



OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

- 00:15 REC 2
- 02:00 Comedown
- 04:00 The Last Survivors
- 06:00 Ant-Man
- 08:00 Reign Of Assassins
- 10:00 The Mark: Redemption
- 11:45 Blackhat
- 14:00 Ant-Man
- 16:00 Surrogates
- 17:30 Dragon Blade
- 19:45 Sherlock Holmes
- 22:00 Derailed

OSN MOVIES HD DRAMA

- 01:15 Everything Will Be Fine
- 03:15 Stranded
- 05:00 Boychoir
- 07:00 Rosewater
- 09:00 Love Under The Stars
- 11:00 Everything Will Be Fine
- 13:00 A Kind Of Magic
- 15:00 The Silent Mountain
- 17:00 Love Under The Stars
- 19:00 Dark Was The Night
- 21:00 The Harvest
- 23:00 Match

OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY

- 01:00 Hotel Transylvania 2
- 02:45 Curious George
- 04:30 Minions
- 06:15 Paranorman
- 08:00 Curious George
- 09:45 The Incredible Adventures Of Professor Branestawm
- 11:00 Hotel Transylvania 2
- 13:00 One Christmas Eve
- 15:00 Step Dogs
- 17:00 Nancy Drew
- 19:00 Monsterville: The Cabinet Of Souls
- 21:00 Batman Unlimited: Animal Instincts
- 22:30 Step Dogs

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 00:45 Lila & Eve
- 02:30 Spotlight
- 04:45 The Intern
- 06:45 Bridge Of Spies
- 09:15 Spotlight
- 11:30 The Intern
- 13:30 Some Girls
- 15:00 The Longest Ride
- 17:15 Big Game
- 19:00 The Transporter: Refueled
- 20:45 Spectre
- 23:15 Get Hard

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 00:00 The Bronze
- 02:00 Blue Streak
- 04:00 Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey
- 06:00 Big Ass Spider!
- 08:00 Kicking And Screaming
- 10:00 Vampire Dog
- 12:00 Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey
- 14:00 Coneheads
- 16:00 Kicking And Screaming
- 18:00 National Security
- 20:00 The Brass Teapot
- 22:00 After The Ball

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL

- 01:30 The Hand That Rocks The Cradle
- 03:30 Hard Eight
- 05:30 Middle Of Nowhere
- 07:30 I Believe In Miracles
- 09:30 The Truth About Emanuel
- 11:30 Interstellar
- 14:30 Breathe In
- 16:30 I Believe In Miracles
- 18:30 The Fisher King
- 21:00 A Perfect Day
- 23:00 Maps To The Stars

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

- 01:15 Bamse And The City Of Thieves
- 02:45 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
- 04:15 When Marnie Was There
- 06:00 Harriet The Spy
- 07:45 Mamma Moo And Crow
- 09:15 Savva
- 11:00 Evolution Man
- 12:45 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
- 14:30 The Adventures Of Don Quixote
- 16:00 The Tale Of The Princess Kaguya
- 18:15 Savva

20:00 Cher Ami
21:45 The Adventures Of Don Quixote
23:15 The Tale Of The Princess Kaguya

OSN MOVIES HD PREMIERE

- 00:00 A Merry Christmas Miracle
- 02:00 With This Ring
- 04:00 The Bounty Hunter
- 06:00 The Song
- 08:00 The End Of The Tour
- 10:00 Murder, She Baked: A Chocolate Chip Cookie Mystery
- 12:00 The Good Lie
- 14:00 The Dorm
- 16:00 The End Of The Tour
- 18:00 Cut Bank
- 20:00 Extinction
- 22:00 Scouts Guide To The Zombie Apocalypse

OSN MOVIES HD

- 00:00 What Just Happened
- 01:45 Meet Bill
- 03:30 First Snow
- 05:15 August: Osage County
- 07:30 Man To Man
- 09:30 The One
- 11:00 You Kill Me
- 12:45 Real Steel
- 15:00 What Just Happened
- 16:45 Jersey Girl
- 18:30 Meet Bill
- 20:00 Sliding Doors
- 21:45 Little Fish
- 23:45 Carjacked

SUNDANCE CHANNEL

- 01:35 Mr. Kaplan
- 03:15 Bones Brigade: An Autobiography
- 05:05 Hollywood's Best Film Directors
- 05:35 Banksy Does New York
- 07:00 Cairo Drive
- 08:25 Amerikan Passport
- 09:50 Sensation: The Story Of The Who's Tommy
- 10:55 Letter's From The South
- 12:40 The Official Story
- 14:30 The Journey
- 16:10 Movie Talk
- 16:35 Cairo Drive
- 18:00 Amerikan Passport
- 19:30 Close Up With THR
- 20:30 Leave To Remain
- 22:00 Jack Irish
- 23:00 Rectify

OSN FIRST HD COMEDY

- 00:30 Happy Endings
- 01:00 Happy Endings
- 01:30 Saturday Night Live
- 03:00 2 Broke Girls
- 03:30 Life In Pieces
- 04:00 The Bill Engvall Show
- 04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 05:30 Trophy Wife
- 06:00 Til Death
- 06:30 Living With Fran
- 07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 08:00 The Bill Engvall Show
- 08:30 Trophy Wife
- 09:00 2 Broke Girls
- 09:30 Playing House
- 10:00 Playing House
- 10:30 Living With Fran
- 11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 12:00 Til Death
- 12:30 The Bill Engvall Show
- 13:00 Trophy Wife
- 13:30 Living With Fran
- 14:00 Life In Pieces
- 14:30 Playing House
- 15:00 Playing House
- 15:30 Happy Endings
- 16:00 Happy Endings
- 16:30 Til Death
- 17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 18:00 New Girl
- 18:30 Baby Daddy
- 19:00 The Last Man On Earth
- 19:30 The Mindy Project
- 20:00 Two And A Half Men
- 20:30 Two And A Half Men
- 21:00 Happy Endings
- 21:30 Happy Endings
- 22:00 Girls
- 22:30 Girls
- 23:00 Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll
- 23:30 Two And A Half Men

OSN FIRST HD

- 00:00 Bates Motel
- 01:00 Better Call Saul
- 02:00 Better Call Saul
- 03:00 Grimm
- 04:00 Royal Pains
- 05:00 Good Morning America - Weekend

06:00 Prison Break
07:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
08:00 Unforgettable
09:00 Heartbeat
10:00 Prison Break
11:00 Unforgettable
12:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
13:00 The Fosters
14:00 Heartbeat
15:00 Royal Pains
16:00 Live Good Morning America - Weekend
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
18:00 The Blacklist
19:00 The Fosters
20:00 This Is Us
21:00 How To Get Away With Murder
22:00 How To Get Away With Murder
23:00 Mistresses

OSN FIRST HD Home of HBO

- 00:00 Outsiders
- 01:00 Strike Back
- 02:00 Legends
- 03:00 House Of Saddam
- 04:00 Rome
- 05:00 Undeclared
- 07:00 Disappearing Acts
- 09:30 Shot In The Heart
- 11:00 Walkout
- 13:00 Grey Gardens
- 15:00 Cheaters
- 17:00 Walkout
- 19:00 Habla Texas
- 20:00 Banshee
- 21:00 Legends
- 22:00 Bright Lights: Debbie Reynolds & Carrier Fisher
- 23:15 Tsunami: The Aftermath (Part 2)

BBC FIRST

- 00:10 Eastenders
- 00:40 Poldark
- 01:35 Last Tango In Halifax
- 02:30 Sherlock
- 04:05 Doctors
- 04:35 Eastenders
- 05:05 Death In Paradise
- 06:00 Doctors
- 06:30 Eastenders
- 07:00 Holby City
- 07:55 Death In Paradise
- 08:50 Stella
- 09:35 The Musketeers
- 10:30 Doctors
- 11:00 Eastenders
- 11:30 Death In Paradise
- 12:25 Stella
- 13:20 The Musketeers
- 14:15 Doctors
- 14:45 Eastenders
- 15:15 Death In Paradise
- 16:10 Stella
- 17:05 The Musketeers
- 18:00 Doctors
- 18:30 Eastenders
- 19:05 Death In Paradise
- 20:00 New Blood
- 20:55 Luther
- 21:45 Ripper Street
- 22:40 Silent Witness
- 23:30 The Detectives

COMEDY CENTRAL

- 00:00 Tosh.0
- 00:25 Tosh.0
- 00:50 Tosh.0
- 01:15 Tosh.0
- 01:40 Another Period
- 02:05 Chappell's Show
- 02:30 Ugly Americans
- 03:00 The Daily Show - Global Edition
- 03:25 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
- 04:15 Key And Peele
- 04:40 Impractical Jokers
- 05:05 Ridiculousness
- 05:30 Framework
- 06:20 Hungry Investors
- 07:15 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
- 08:05 Impractical Jokers
- 08:30 Ridiculousness
- 08:55 Tosh.0
- 09:20 Key And Peele
- 09:45 Workaholics
- 10:10 The It Crowd
- 10:35 Ridiculousness
- 11:00 Framework
- 11:50 Lip Sync Battle
- 12:15 Workaholics
- 12:40 The It Crowd
- 13:05 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
- 13:55 Ridiculousness
- 14:20 Framework
- 15:10 The Jim Gaffigan Show
- 15:35 Ridiculousness
- 16:00 Impractical Jokers
- 16:30 Workaholics
- 16:55 Tosh.0
- 17:25 Workaholics
- 17:50 Catch A Contractor
- 18:39 The It Crowd
- 19:04 Framework
- 19:50 The Jim Gaffigan Show
- 20:13 Key And Peele
- 20:37 Ridiculousness
- 21:00 The Daily Show - Global Edition
- 21:30 The Half Hour
- 21:54 Jo Koy: Lights Out
- 22:42 The Meltdown With Jonah And Kumail
- 23:05 Tosh.0
- 23:30 The Daily Show - Global Edition

FOOD NETWORK

- 00:00 Restaurant Stakeout
- 01:00 Mystery Diners
- 02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 03:00 Man Fire Food
- 04:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 05:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
- 05:30 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
- 06:00 Chopped
- 07:00 Barefoot Contessa
- 08:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 09:00 Siba's Table
- 10:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 11:00 Man Fire Food
- 12:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 13:00 Chopped
- 14:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 15:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 16:00 Siba's Table
- 17:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 18:00 Man Fire Food
- 19:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 20:00 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
- 21:00 Private Chef
- 22:00 Chopped
- 23:00 Food Network Star

Syfy HD

- 00:30 Dark Matter
- 01:20 Stargate SG-1
- 02:10 Stargate SG-1
- 03:00 Stargate SG-1
- 03:45 Stargate SG-1
- 04:30 Stargate SG-1
- 05:15 Face Off
- 06:00 Stargate SG-1
- 06:45 Sanctuary
- 07:35 Warehouse 13
- 08:25 Smallville
- 09:15 12 Monkeys
- 10:05 Sanctuary
- 10:55 Stargate SG-1



SHERLOCK HOLMES ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

- 11:45 Warehouse 13
- 12:35 Smallville
- 13:25 Sanctuary
- 14:15 Street Fighter: Assassin's Fist
- 16:00 12 Monkeys
- 16:50 Smallville
- 17:40 Sanctuary
- 18:30 Stargate SG-1
- 19:20 Warehouse 13
- 20:10 Smallville
- 21:00 Face Off
- 21:50 Face Off
- 22:40 Time Lapse
- 22:00 Homicide Hunter
- 23:00 Diabolical Women
- 23:20 Croatia's Finest
- 23:45 Croatia's Finest

Discovery Family

- 00:05 The Carbonaro Effect
- 00:30 Invent It Rich
- 02:10 Storm Chasers
- 03:50 Ultimate Survival
- 06:20 How It's Made
- 06:40 How It's Made
- 07:25 Doki
- 07:50 Adventure 8: Zoo Games
- 08:15 Adventure 8: Zoo Games
- 08:40 How It's Made
- 12:50 Ultimate Survival
- 17:00 Invent It Rich
- 18:40 Dynam: Magician Impossible
- 19:30 Dogs: The Untold Story
- 20:20 Bahama Blue
- 21:10 When Turkeys Attack
- 22:00 What Happened Next?

DISCOVERY SCIENCE

- 00:40 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 04:48 How Do They Do It?
- 05:12 How Do They Do It?
- 05:36 How Do They Do It?
- 06:00 Food Factory
- 06:24 Food Factory
- 06:48 Food Factory
- 07:12 Food Factory
- 07:36 Food Factory
- 08:00 How Do They Do It?
- 08:26 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 12:26 Mythbusters
- 16:26 Food Factory
- 18:26 How Do They Do It?
- 20:30 Bad Universe
- 23:00 Nextworld
- 23:50 Origins

WORLD HD

- 00:00 The Secret Life Of The American Teenager
- 01:00 Private Practice
- 02:00 Grey's Anatomy
- 03:00 Grey's Anatomy
- 04:00 Fashion Star
- 05:00 House Of DVF
- 06:00 Married At First Sight
- 07:00 Cougar Town
- 07:30 Cougar Town
- 08:00 Castle
- 09:00 Castle
- 10:00 Grey's Anatomy
- 11:00 Grey's Anatomy
- 12:00 Fashion Star
- 13:00 House Of DVF
- 14:00 The Fashion Fund
- 15:00 Married At First Sight
- 16:00 Private Practice
- 17:00 Private Practice
- 18:00 The Bridge
- 19:00 The Listener
- 20:00 Three
- 21:00 Style By Jury
- 21:30 Style By Jury
- 22:00 Desperate Housewives
- 23:00 Grey's Anatomy

TLC HD

- 00:20 My 600lb Life
- 01:10 Extreme I Do's
- 02:00 Toddlers & Tiaras: Coach Wars
- 02:50 Suddenly Rich
- 03:25 Sister Wives
- 04:20 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 05:10 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 06:00 Super Soul Sunday
- 06:50 Toddlers & Tiaras: Coach Wars
- 07:40 Sister Wives
- 08:30 Little People, Big World
- 08:55 Little People, Big World
- 09:20 Kate Plus 8
- 10:10 Love At First Swipe
- 10:35 Cake Boss
- 11:00 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 11:25 Say Yes To The Dress
- 11:50 Super Soul Sunday
- 12:40 Belief
- 13:30 Fat Chance
- 14:20 Twirl Life
- 15:10 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 16:00 Little People, Big World
- 16:25 Little People, Big World
- 16:50 Kate Plus 8
- 17:15 Kate Plus 8
- 17:40 Love At First Swipe
- 18:05 Cake Boss
- 18:30 Ugly House To Lovely House
- 19:20 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 19:45 Say Yes To The Dress
- 20:10 Super Soul Sunday
- 21:00 Ugly House To Lovely House
- 21:50 Suddenly Rich
- 22:40 The Undateables
- 23:30 Ugly House To Lovely House

D HD

- 00:20 Wheels That Fail
- 00:45 The Island With Bear Grylls: USA
- 06:00 Deadliest Catch
- 06:50 Wheelers: Trading Up
- 07:40 Fast N' Loud
- 08:30 Big Giant Swords
- 09:20 The Liquidator
- 09:45 How Do They Do It?
- 10:10 How Do They Do It?
- 10:35 So You Think You'd Survive?
- 11:25 Marooned With Ed Stafford
- 12:15 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
- 13:05 How Do They Do It?
- 13:30 The Liquidator
- 13:55 The Liquidator
- 14:20 Alaska: The Last Frontier
- 15:10 Deadliest Catch
- 16:50 Fast N' Loud
- 17:40 Wheelers: Trading Up
- 18:30 How Do They Do It?
- 18:55 How Do They Do It?
- 19:20 What On Earth?
- 20:10 The Liquidator
- 20:35 The Liquidator
- 21:00 Mega Trains
- 21:50 Guy Martin's Last Of The Vulcans
- 22:40 Guy Martin: Wall Of Death
- 23:30 Fast N' Loud

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 00:50 Gator Boys
- 01:45 Running With Wolves
- 02:40 Wild Iberia
- 03:35 North America
- 04:25 Growing Up...Wolves
- 05:15 Living With Wolves
- 06:02 Penguins On A Plane: Great Animal Movies
- 06:49 River Monsters
- 07:36 Night
- 08:00 Night
- 08:25 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
- 09:15 Treehouse Masters
- 10:10 Wildest Islands Of Indonesia
- 11:05 Lone Star Law
- 12:00 Wild Animal Repo
- 12:55 Gorilla School
- 13:50 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
- 19:20 Treehouse Masters
- 20:15 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
- 21:10 Wildest Islands Of Indonesia
- 22:05 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
- 23:00 Treehouse Masters
- 23:55 Gator Boys

NAT GEO WILD HD

- 00:10 Fearless Chef
- 01:00 American Food Battle
- 01:25 Croatia's Finest
- 01:50 Croatia's Finest
- 02:15 Eat Street
- 02:40 Bangkok Airport
- 03:30 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
- 03:55 Cool Spaces
- 04:45 The Food Files
- 05:10 The Game Chef
- 05:35 The Game Chef
- 06:00 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 06:25 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 06:50 American Food Battle
- 07:15 Croatia's Finest
- 07:40 Croatia's Finest
- 08:05 Eat Street
- 08:30 Bangkok Airport
- 09:20 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
- 09:45 Cool Spaces
- 10:35 The Food Files
- 11:00 The Game Chef
- 11:25 The Game Chef
- 11:50 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 12:15 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 12:40 American Food Battle
- 13:05 Croatia's Finest
- 13:35 Croatia's Finest
- 14:00 Home Strange Home
- 14:55 The Best Job In The World
- 15:25 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
- 15:50 Cool Spaces
- 16:45 The Food Files
- 17:15 The Game Chef
- 17:40 The Game Chef
- 18:10 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 18:35 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 19:05 The Best Job In The World
- 19:30 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
- 20:00 Cool Spaces
- 20:50 The Food Files
- 21:15 The Game Chef
- 21:40 The Game Chef
- 22:05 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 22:30 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 22:55 American Food Battle

ci

- 00:00 Britain's Biggest Heists
- 01:00 Frenemies
- 01:30 Frenemies
- 02:00 I Was Possessed
- 03:00 Measuring Evil: Britain's Worst Killers
- 04:00 Britain's Biggest Heists
- 05:00 Frenemies
- 05:30 Frenemies
- 06:00 I Was Possessed
- 07:00 The First 48
- 08:00 The First 48
- 09:00 Crime Stories
- 10:00 It Takes A Killer
- 11:00 It Takes A Killer
- 11:30 It Takes A Killer
- 12:00 It Takes A Killer
- 12:30 It Takes A Killer
- 13:00 It Takes A Killer
- 13:30 It Takes A Killer
- 14:00 Britain's Biggest Heists
- 15:00 Holloway: Women Behind Bars
- 16:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
- 17:00 When Life Means Life
- 18:00 Monster In My Family
- 19:00 Homicide Hunter
- 20:00 Homicide Hunter
- 21:00 Homicide Hunter
- 00:10 Hank Zipzer
- 00:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 01:00 Violetta
- 01:45 The Hive
- 01:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 02:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 02:40 Hank Zipzer
- 03:05 Binny And The Ghost
- 03:30 Violetta
- 04:15 The Hive
- 04:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 04:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 05:10 Hank Zipzer
- 05:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 06:00 Violetta
- 06:45 The Hive
- 06:50 Mook
- 07:00 Jessie
- 07:25 Jessie
- 07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
- 07:55 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 08:20 Sunny Bunnies
- 08:25 Rolling To The Ronks
- 08:50 Frozen: Magic Of The Northern Lights
- 08:55 Jessie
- 09:20 Descendants Wicked World
- 09:25 Elena Of Avalor
- 09:50 Star Darlings
- 09:55 Girl Meets World
- 10:20 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 10:25 BizarroVark
- 10:50 Liv And Maddie
- 11:15 Stuck In The Middle
- 11:40 Disney's Aladdin
- 13:15 Descendants Wicked World
- 13:20 Gravity Falls
- 13:45 Gravity Falls
- 14:10 Gravity Falls
- 14:35 Gravity Falls
- 15:00 Gravity Falls
- 15:25 Jessie
- 15:50 Jessie
- 16:15 Disney Cookabout
- 16:40 Austin & Ally
- 17:05 Descendants Wicked World
- 17:10 Elena Of Avalor
- 17:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 18:00 Gravity Falls
- 18:25 Lemonade Mouth
- 20:00 Frozen: Magic Of The Northern Lights
- 20:05 Stuck In The Middle
- 20:30 Elena Of Avalor
- 20:55 Liv And Maddie
- 21:20 Best Friends Whenever
- 21:45 Austin & Ally
- 22:10 Mako Mermaids
- 22:35 Dog With A Blog
- 23:00 Binny And The Ghost
- 23:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 23:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

NAT GEO WILD HD

- 00:20 Dangerous Encounters
- 01:10 Hippo vs Croc
- 02:00 Natural Born Monsters
- 02:50 Man V. Monster
- 03:45 Giraffe: African Giant
- 04:40 Animal ER
- 05:35 Natural Born Monsters
- 06:30 Man V. Monster
- 07:25 Giraffe: African Giant
- 08:20 Animal ER
- 09:15 Freaks & Creeps
- 10:10 Grizzly Empire
- 11:05 Moody Beasts
- 12:00 Shark Alley
- 12:55 Natural Born Monsters
- 13:50 Man V. Monster
- 14:45 Animal ER
- 15:40 Last Devils
- 16:35 World's Weirdest Creepy Cures
- 17:30 Bear Nomad
- 18:25 Wild Swamplands
- 19:20 Animal ER
- 20:10 Last Devils
- 21:00 World's Weirdest Creepy Cures
- 21:50 Bear Nomad
- 22:40 Wild Swamplands
- 23:30 Shark Alley

D HD

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- 11:25 Marooned With Ed Stafford
- 12:15 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
- 13:05 How Do They Do It?
- 13:30 The Liquidator
- 13:55 The Liquidator
- 14:20 Alaska:

CROSSWORD 1491



ACROSS

1. Characteristic of a mob.
4. A member of the Samoyedic people living on the Taimyr peninsula in Siberia.
12. A flexible container with a single opening.
15. To make a mistake or be incorrect.
16. A sheer stiff muslin.
17. A benevolent aspect of Devi.
18. Tall arboreal yucca of southwestern United States.
20. Baseball player with the New York Yankees.
22. Any tree or shrub of the genus Inga having pinnate leaves and showy usually white flowers.
23. A person responsible for the editorial aspects of publication.
26. A city in northern India.
27. High quality grape brandy distilled in the Cognac district of France.
29. Give in, as to influence or pressure.
31. A city in northwestern Syria.
33. A soft cotton or worsted fabric with an open mesh.
37. Joint capital (with Riyadh) of Saudi Arabia.
40. A ruler of the Inca Empire (or a member of his family).
43. Back and sides of a hog salted and dried or smoked.
44. On or toward the lee.
45. (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
47. A game in which numbered balls are drawn and random and players cover the corresponding numbers on their cards.
48. A rechargeable battery with a nickel cathode and a cadmium anode.
50. At a great distance in time or space or degree.
51. Characteristic of or relating to winter.
52. A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
53. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
55. East Indian cereal grass whose seed yield a somewhat bitter flour, a staple in the Orient.
56. State capital and largest city of Georgia.
60. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
62. An acute inflammatory disease occurring in the intestines of premature infants.
63. Of or relating to or near the gluteus muscles.
64. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
66. A purplish dye obtained from orchil lichens.
69. Reflect light or colors like an opal.
74. A family of languages of the Fula people of west Africa in the sub-Saharan regions from Senegal to Chad.
76. Expected hopefully.
77. By bad luck.
78. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
81. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
82. Shattered or torn up or torn apart violently as by e.g. wind or lightning or explosive.
83. A town in southern Turkey.
84. (informal) Of very poor quality.

DOWN

1. (physics) Of or pertaining to a meson.
2. A university town in east central Maine on the Penobscot River north of Bangor.
3. Confederate general during the American Civil War who was defeated by Grant in the battle of Chattanooga (1817-1876).
4. The momentary present.
5. A republic in southeastern Europe on the southern part of the Balkan peninsula.
6. Advanced in years.
7. An extreme state of adversity.
8. An associate degree in nursing.
9. A state in north central United States.
10. A long plume (especially one of egret feathers) worn on a hat or a piece of jewelry in the shape of a plume.
11. (meaning literally 'born') Used to indicate the maiden or family name of a married woman.
12. Colloquial American term for a town.
13. An independent ruler or chieftain (especially in Africa or Arabia).
14. Mentally or physically infirm with age.
19. Hypothetical remedy for all ills or diseases.
21. Someone who makes and sells hats.
24. A brittle silver-white metalloid element that is related to selenium and sulfur.
25. Evergreen trees and shrubs having oily one-seeded fruits.
28. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
30. Tag the base runner to get him out.
32. French cabaret singer (1915-1963).
34. Someone who cuts and delivers ice.
35. Any age prior to the legal age.
36. Of or relating to or consisting of enol.
38. Intelligence derived from non-communications electromagnetic radiations from foreign sources (other than radioactive sources).
39. Of or like a cecum.
41. A less than average tide occurring at the first and third quarters of the moon.
42. Water buffalo of the Philippines.
46. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
49. Small common sandpiper that breeds in northern or arctic regions and winters in southern United States or Mediterranean regions.
54. A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
57. Struck with fear, dread, or consternation.
58. Eurasian perennial bulbous herbs.
59. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
61. West Indian tree having racemes of fragrant white flowers and yielding a durable timber and resinous juice.
65. Flower arrangement consisting of a circular band of foliage or flowers for ornamental purposes.
67. A principle or condition that customarily governs behavior.
68. Group of people related by blood or marriage.
70. Distant in either space or time.
71. A thrusting blow with a knife.
72. An important seaport on the Island of Cebu in the Philippines.
73. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
75. An insecticide that is also toxic to animals and humans.
79. Half the width of an em.
80. A state in midwestern United States.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Today you show the family how grateful you are to have them in your life. Try taking on the chores of a loved one today and then perhaps you could leave a poem or thoughtful note on your loved one's pillow. Lovers, children and other people or things dear to your heart are emphasized now. Taking chances can bring big rewards. Others may find you especially witty and eccentric. You may have insights or breakthroughs concerning your living situation or life circumstances. Others value you for your independence and unique qualities. You enjoy a special evening with your loved one and some of your friends. A gathering at a favorite dinner place may prove interesting. This evening is perfect for romance.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may have a hard time being clearheaded right now-someone may be frustrating. Being on a schedule today is difficult but may become more frustrating when someone demands your attention. Say that you appreciate an understanding of your time schedule and you will come back to the matter as soon as possible-make sure you keep your word. The rest of the morning is yours to complete your agenda. Learning and communicating, making new discoveries and solving problems are what you are learning well. Later today you may want to go back to the earlier interruption and help instruct, guide, listen or mend the rift that occurred. Healing comes from destroying the roots of a disturbance. Poetry and art may be possible this evening.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

All is well within the family circle and the members of your circle have plenty of thoughts about how they want to spend the day. There will be time this evening to catch up to each other and get up-to-date on where each person is putting energy. You are less concerned with your own needs and more interested in the welfare of an entire group. One or two of your friends want to join you today, as you do some type of volunteer service. This could be for people that are confined in hospitals, nursing homes, prisons or other institutions. This work is important to you as being important to the people that receive your tender care. This evening is the perfect time to refresh an existing relationship. You have charm and charisma to spare.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Nobody minds hard work when there is something to be gained. Today the message seems to be that you will soon be rewarded for all the effort you are putting into your many different interests. How we lead our life and the display of our attitude toward our life and the people in it, is where we see our growth. You are responsible and you show it when it comes to family matters today. Property and domestic matters need attention. With your awareness of a family matter, you will bring some new insight into the scene. This could involve the elderly. There is a chance to understand those around you and to have a special time with someone you love. There are plenty of good feelings and a sense of support and harmony that make this a happy time.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You must not worry about protecting your self-interests-it is not selfish! There are new opportunities available in all sorts of matters this day. This is a good time to be with your friends and participate in the activities you enjoy best. You have a positive attitude toward the future. You look forward to the good business contacts or meetings that you set up for yourself this next week. You may decide to teach or take a class in speaking or writing just for the feedback. You will learn lots of good things that will confirm your progress as well as help you with your goals. Computer technologies are fun and you may decide that you have waited long enough to update your equipment-today is the day. Resist distractions this evening and stay focused.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Any issues regarding work or health may best be understood now. Working with others and excelling in a particular project can make you feel accomplished and important. This may be some extra work that you are involved with, or... It could just be a regular day for you in the workplace. Your management and directional abilities are in top form. You know just what to do in difficult situations and can act without haste. Getting underneath a problem and finding the truth is what sets you apart from others. Unfortunately, this may place you in a position of demand-others will need your input on future projects. You will certainly have an opportunity to earn respect from many people today. Some financial difficulties are repaired.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Clearly, you are now ensconced in a routine. Sleep until a certain time; run with the dog; breakfast and conversation with friends or family; shower and dress; with chores behind you, you might dive into your favorite hobby or part-time job. You seem to have a clear understanding of where you are going and what you need to do to get there. Your and other people's emotions are very clear at this time. If you are single, love will seek you out today and tomorrow. Married lovers have an opportunity to become more romantic than usual. Affection and optimistic attitudes are just oozing from the atmosphere around you. A romantic vacation would be perfect at this time. A large financial gain is due to influence you now!



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Laughter is more fun with two. Romantic opportunities are pleasant today. You create warmth that is comforting. Married partners enjoy quality time with their partners. Elegance and family ties are the keys to emotional satisfaction. Harmony and beauty are deeply satisfying. You exemplify the feeling that our capacity to be happy and useful cannot truly be hampered by external conditions. Continue to seek happiness from within as you inspire others. If you are single, a new relationship has long-term potential. This is a good time to read a romantic book or take in a movie. Ideas and thoughts will have greater meaning. You appreciate the beauty and love in your life. You teach love and forgiveness through your example.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 19)

This is a great time to be with others. You may be sought after as just the person for a particular favor around the house. Light bulbs need replacing, trees or tulip bulbs need planting, a floor needs mopping and perhaps, if someone has a bad back, you might offer to help with some of his or her chores. Eventually, it is your turn to enjoy the out-of-doors. A bicycle ride or a trip to the neighborhood stores finds you communicating with friends. You may be surprised at the results of an audition with the community playhouse; you may become involved in the next musical, opera or play as an extra or even main member of the cast; you look forward to the fun. Your timing is perfect and the opportunity presents itself as therapeutic.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

The happy times for you are the positive results you see after you have taught someone and they begin to understand your teachings. You could not only teach in a school system but you could teach through media such as the television, radio, internet, etc. Of course, the fee you ask may be granted and will bring a smile to your face and help you with your own goals. When you help others, you find you grow spiritually, compassionately and intuitively. You are inspired to continue helping those who really want your services. You have futuristic goals and vision and are not afraid to gain more education or experience to further your teaching abilities. After a bit of celebration this afternoon, you may enjoy some relaxation time.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

It may be time now to follow through on some plans you may have made some time ago. Concentrate on completing these plans and do what you can to eliminate distractions or interruptions. Exchanging information takes on emotional significance. Being more involved with neighbors or siblings satisfies a deep emotional need. Communicating feelings accurately and trying not to be too emotional are important parts of your day. You may be able to enjoy the fruits of your efforts this afternoon. There is luck in your love life and, if you are working today, there are opportunities in your work life to improve, adapt, grow and achieve. The evening brings about wonderful opportunities to be with young people.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

There are some financial answers to your questions today. Do not make promises you cannot keep. You have a couple of days before you put a complete stop on those extra expenses. You have a strong sense of providing a secure financial foundation for your future. You could gain some extra income from a garage sale or call it a winter sale-in big letters. Frustrating situations that you cannot fix may, in a roundabout way, influence your personal spirit-stay focused. There may be domestic problems today but you are learning how to handle them successfully. These are to be expected if there has been a lack of communication. Make time for repair and you will see a healing. Predictive techniques such as astrology fascinate you this evening.

WORD SEARCH

Fantasy World 1

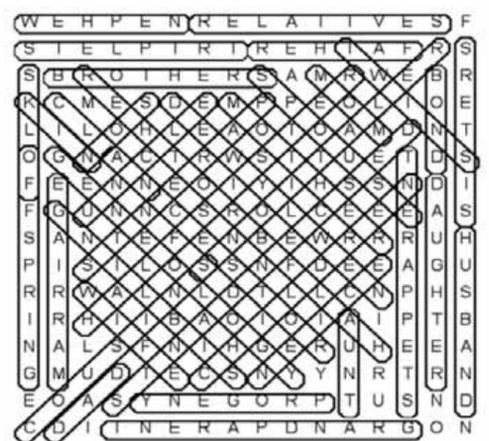
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 17 letters spell the name of a popular fantasy book series.



- | | | | |
|------------|--------|----------|---------|
| ALE | ELVES | LANCE | QUEST |
| BATTLE | FARM | MACE | SERVANT |
| CASTLE | FOREST | MAGIC | SPEARS |
| CENTAUR | GIANTS | MINSTREL | SPRITE |
| CHALICE | GNOMES | MOAT | STEW |
| CROSSBOW | GOLD | OGRE | TOWER |
| CROWN | GUARDS | PEASANT | WARLOCK |
| DAGGER | HERO | PEDDLER | WEAPONS |
| DRAWBRIDGE | HORSE | POISON | WINE |
| DUNGEON | INN | PRINCE | WITCH |

Yesterday Solution

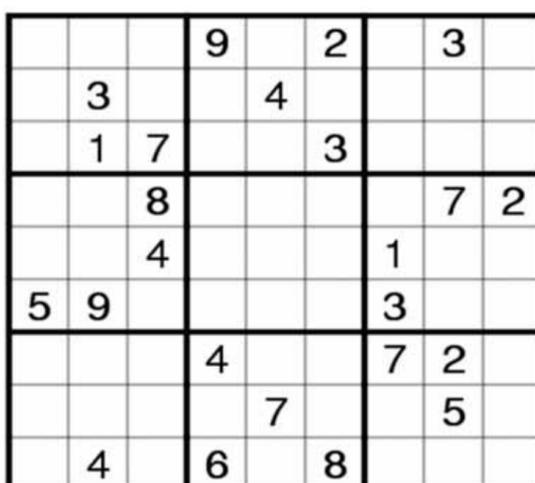
Family Ties



- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| ANCESTOR | FATHER | MOTHER | SISTERS |
| AUNT | FOLKS | NEICE | SON |
| BOND | GENEALOGY | NEPHEW | SPOUSE |
| BROTHERS | GRANDPARENT | NEWLYWED | STEPPARENT |
| CHILDREN | HALF BROTHER | OFFSPRING | TRIPLETS |
| CLAN | HALF SISTER | PARENTS | TWINS |
| COUSINS | HUSBAND | PROGENY | UNCLE |
| DAD | KIN | RELATIONS | WIFE |
| DAUGHTER | MARRIAGE | RELATIVES | |
| DESCENDANTS | MOM | SIBLING | |

The hidden message is: FAMILY REUNION

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaeel Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khalidiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khalidiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Lithuania	00370
Albania	00355	Luxembourg	00352
Algeria	00213	Macau	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antiga	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Azerbaijan	00994	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahamas	001242	Martinique	00596
Bahrain	00973	Mauritania	00222
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritius	00230
Barbados	001246	Mayotte	00269
Belarus	00375	Mexico	0052
Belgium	0032	Micronesia	00691
Belize	00501	Moldova	00373
Benin	00229	Monaco	00377
Bermuda	001441	Mongolia	00976
Bhutan	00975	Montserrat	001664
Bolivia	00591	Morocco	00212
Bosnia	00387	Mozambique	00258
Botswana	00267	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brazil	0055	Namibia	00264
Brunei	00673	Nepal	00977
Bulgaria	00359	Netherlands	0031
Burkina	00226	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Burundi	00257	New Caledonia	00687
Cambodia	00855	New Zealand	0064
Cameroon	00237	Nicaragua	00505
Canada	001	Niger	00227
Cape Verde	00238	Nigeria	00234
Cayman Islands	001345	Niue	00683
Central African	00236	Norfolk Island	00672
Chad	00235	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
Chile	0056	North Korea	00850
China	0086	Norway	0047
Colombia	0057	Oman	00968
Comoros	00269	Pakistan	0092
Congo	00242	Palau	00680
Cook Islands	00682	Panama	00507
Costa Rica	00506	Papua New Guinea	00675
Croatia	00385	Paraguay	00595
Cuba	0053	Peru	0051
Cyprus	00357	Philippines	0063
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Poland	0048
Czech Republic	00420	Portugal	00351
Denmark	0045	Puerto Rico	001787
Diego Garcia	00246	Qatar	00974
Djibouti	00253	Romania	0040
Dominica	001767	Russian Federation	007
Dominican Republic	001809	Rwanda	00250
Ecuador	00593	Saint Helena	00290
Egypt	0020	Saint Kitts	001869
El Salvador	00503	Saint Lucia	001758
England (UK)	0044	Saint Pierre	00508
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Vincent	001784
Eritrea	00291	Samoa US	00684
Estonia	00372	Samoa West	00685
Ethiopia	00251	San Marino	00378
Falkland Islands	00500	Sao Tome	00239
Faroe Islands	00298	Saudi Arabia	00966
Fiji	00679	Scotland (UK)	0044
Finland	00358	Senegal	00221
France	0033	Seychelles	00284
French Guiana	00594	Sierra Leone	00232
French Polynesia	00689	Singapore	0065
Gabon	00241	Slovakia	00421
Gambia	00220	Slovenia	00386
Georgia	00995	Solomon Islands	00677
Germany	0049	Somalia	00252
Ghana	00233	South Africa	0027
Gibraltar	00350	South Korea	0082
Greece	0030	Spain	0034
Greenland	00299	Sri Lanka	0094
Grenada	001473	Sudan	00249
Guadeloupe	00590	Suriname	00597
Guam	001671	Swaziland	00268
Guatemala	00502	Sweden	0046
Guinea	00224	Switzerland	0041
Guyana	00592	Syria	00963
Haiti	00509	Serbia	00381
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Taiwan	00886
Honduras	00504	Tanzania	00255
Hong Kong	00852	Thailand	0066
Hungary	0036	Togo	00228
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Tonga	00676
Iceland	00354	Tokelau	00690
India	0091	Trinidad	001868
Indian Ocean	00873	Tunisia	00216
Indonesia	0062	Turkey	0090
Iran	0098	Tuvalu	00688
Iraq	00964	Uganda	00256
Ireland	00353	Ukraine	00380
Italy	0039	United Arab Emirates	00976
Ivory Coast	00225	United Kingdom	0044
Jamaica	001876	Uruguay	00598
Japan	0081	USA	001
Jordan	00962	Uzbekistan	00998
Kazakhstan	007	Vanuatu	00678
Kenya	00254	Venezuela	00582
Kiribati	00686	Vietnam	0084
Kuwait	00965	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands US	001340
Laos	00856	Wales (UK)	0044
Latvia	00371	Yemen	00967
Lebanon	00961	Yugoslavia	00381
Liberia	00231	Zambia	00260
Libya	00218	Zimbabwe	00263
Lesotho	00266		

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



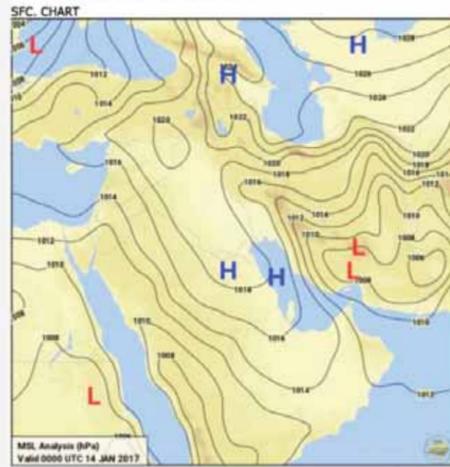
Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 14/01/2017-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 19 °C

By Day : Sunny with light to moderate freshening gradually at times over coastal areas north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear later on
By Night : Cold with light to moderate north westerly to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 32 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear



Four-Day Forecast

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Expected Weather	clouds to increase + scattered light rain later on	sunny + scattered clouds	sunny + scattered clouds	partly cloudy
Min Temp °C	05	08	07	06
Max Temp °C	19	19	20	19
Wind Direction	variable wind changing to south easterly	north westerly	north westerly	north westerly to light variable
Wind Speed km/h	08 - 30	15 - 38	12 - 35	08 - 30

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C	REC	Max °C
KUWAIT CITY	11		20
KUWAIT AIRPORT	04		19
ABDALY	05		20
BUBYAN	06		19
JAHRA	08		21
FAILAKA ISLAND	08		19
SALMIYAH	12		18
AHMADI	12		17
JAL ALIYAH	06		19
QAROH ISLAND	15		17
UMM AL-MARADEM	15		17
NUWAISIB	07		18
WAFRA	04		20
MANAGISH	05		19
SALMY	03		18
MUTRIBA	04		21

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	19
Min Temp (°C)	06
Max Rel Hum (%)	60
Min Rel Hum (%)	21
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	28 NW
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

Sunrise	06:44
Sunset	17:11

Prayer Times

Fajr	05:20
Sunrise	06:44
Zuhr	11:57
Asr	14:51
Sunset	17:11
Isha	18:32



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	
Dr. Abidallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223
Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)	
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	24555050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	24555050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhaezem	23926920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abidallah Al-Refae	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abidallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Plastic Surgeons	
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Family Doctor	
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Psychiatrists	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	
Dr Adrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s.Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliyami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
General Surgeons	
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
Internists, Chest & Heart	
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Paediatricians	
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarouf	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gupare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dentists	
Dr Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdallateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist	
Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288
Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Internist, Chest & Heart	
DR.Mohammes Akkad	24555050 Ext 210
Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC Assistant Professor Of Medicine Head, Division of Cardiology Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital	25339667
Dr. Farida Al-Habib MD, PH.D, FACC	2611555-2622555
Inaya German Medical Center	
Te: 2575077	
Fax: 25723123	



Johnny Depp is suing his former business managers

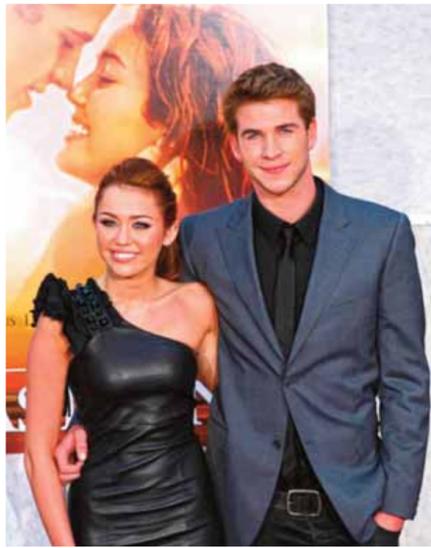
The 53-year-old actor filed a 52-page lawsuit in Los Angeles on Friday, in which he accused The Mandel Co, The Management Group, Joel L Mandel, Robert Mandel, First American Title Insurance Co and 15 other unnamed defendants of "gross misconduct" that resulted in him losing "tens of millions of dollars." Johnny - who is seeking a jury trial - claims self-dealing by TMG has forced him to sell off assets to pay for the losses he has sustained. The suit accuses TMG of paying itself more than \$28 million in contingency fees without a written agreement; failing to file or pay his taxes on time, resulting in more than \$5.6 million in fees and penalties on his

federal returns, and "loaning" nearly \$10 million to third parties without the actor's authorization. His lawyer, Matthew Kanny, said in the documents: "As a result of years of gross mismanagement and at times, outright fraud, Depp lost tens of millions of dollars and has been forced to dispose of significant assets to pay for TMG's self-dealing and gross misconduct. In essence, TMG treated Mr. Depp's income as their own, available to either TMG or third parties to draw upon as desired. TMG's gross mismanagement and fraud remained undetected as TMG borrowed millions of dollars to survive from movie-to-movie. It was only recently, when Depp terminated TMG and hired new business management and

accounting services, when Depp learned the gravity of his financial losses and some, but surely not all, of the underlying facts." The suit contains 11 complaints, including professional negligence, fraud, negligent misrepresentation and unjust enrichment. Attorney Michael Kump said: "For 30 years, Joel and Rob Mandel, and their company The Management Group, have been trusted business managers to some of the most successful individuals and companies in the entertainment business.

COURTENEY COX AGREED TO SPEND HER TIME IN LONDON

The 52-year-old actress is usually based in Los Angeles with 12-year-old daughter Coco - who she has with ex-husband David Arquette - but will now spend at last two weeks a month in the UK in order to be closer to Snow Patrol rocker Johnny McDaid, who has a recording studio in the capital. A source said: "Courtney says she can't stand being apart from Johnny so much and the long distance has been causing some tense rows. "While she can't move to the UK permanently because of Coco, she's vowed to compromise and spend much more time here. She's currently taking a work break and he's so busy with the studio, which makes it almost impossible for him to leave." It was Courtney's friend Jennifer Aniston who advised her pal - who got engaged to Johnny in 2014 but split briefly from him in 2015 - to make the move after experiencing herself the difficulties of a long-distance relationship with her own husband, actor Justin Theroux. The source explained to Closer magazine: "Courtney's friend Jennifer was the one who persuaded her to make more of an effort to be in the UK as she knows first-hand how hard it is, given her husband spends so much time away from their LA home filming in New York. "Jennifer urged Courtney to make more of an effort to save them from another split and she's realised it's time to show Johnny just how much she wants this to work."



Miley Cyrus penned a sweet message to Liam Hemsworth

The 'We Can't Stop' hit maker uploaded a silly selfie of the pair to mark the actor's 27th birthday. She wrote: "Happiest birthday EVER to my favorite being EVER EVER EVER! You have been my best friend since the day we met..... I am beyond lucky to share soooooo animals with you!!! I love you @liamhemsworth (sic)" And the 24-year-old singer is said to be incredibly "happy" with her engagement to Liam. A source said: "She is happy with how the relationship with Liam is going. She's adamant that she doesn't want to get divorced, so she wants to make sure when she eventually gets married it actually means forever. "She wants to do some more movies in 2017 and would love to work with Liam. It could be a romantic thing, a comedy or something that they play as characters who hate each other." And Miley is said to be in no rush to get married as she's worried she's not "marriage material". The couple began dating in 2009 when they met on the set of their movie 'The Last Song' before getting engaged three years later. However, things didn't go to plan and they split for a while. Rumours of a new romance began again in 2016 when they were spotted together. Meanwhile, Liam spent Christmas with Miley's family including her siblings Brandi, Trace, Noah and Braison as well as her mother Tish and father Billy. Uploading a picture of the festivities at the time, Brandi said: "Cyrus fam Christmas in full swing (sic)"



Bella Hadid is bitter about The Weeknd's new relationship

The 20-year-old model split from the 'Can't Feel My Face' hit maker two months ago, but she reportedly "isn't over" with him yet and is very hurt that the singer has been pictured kissing the 'Heart Wants What It Wants' star Selena Gomez this week. A source told E! News: "She is actually not over The Weeknd. She still loves him. "They are on fine terms, but she is bitter about the romance with Selena. She was not happy when all of that gossip went everywhere between The Weeknd and Selena. "It really hurt her seeing Selena be all up on her man. She still feels like they have a connection." The revelation comes a few days after Bella unfollowed Selena, 24, on Instagram following the publication of pictures of the former Disney star locking lips with The Weeknd - whose real name is Abel Tesfaye - outside Italian restaurant Giorgio Baldi in Santa Monica. It was previously claimed the new couple "don't really care" about their romance being public knowledge. A source said: "At first, Selena and Abel wanted to keep their relationship a secret. But they've decided they really don't care if everyone knows about them." And The Weeknd has reportedly had a crush on Selena for some time. The source added: "Abel though always had a thing for Selena. He thinks she is extremely talented and sexy. "They recently started talking before the holidays but she has been on his radar before. They are on the same level with expectations and think the other is really fun. They are taking things slow and getting to know each other."

Joe Jonas didn't think music could give him a career



The 'Cake By The Ocean' hit maker didn't believe he could have a job in the music industry as a young child and gets a great "joy" from being able to share his music with the world. He said: "I think music - specifically for myself - when I was younger, it was just a joy. I didn't think of it as a career. It was, 'Wow, this is really exciting! I get to do this all over the world!' "Now, as I get older, it's the same joy. I still get to travel the world and see amazing places. It's much better than anything else I could put my mind to." And the 27-year-old singer - who found fame as part of the Jonas Brothers with his siblings Kevin and Nick - believes the secret to success is just putting yourself out there and daring to fail. He added: "I think, honestly, it's just being able to dare to suck, as we learned early on with songwriting. "Being able to work out all the ideas and be collaborative, enjoy every moment - and practice and practice and practice. Do as many shows as you can, that's my advice." Joe has always been involved in the showbiz industry, starting his career by starring in theatre and on Broadway. He told The San Diego Union-Tribune: "I never had another job. It was theatre I worked in; I did 'Oliver' and La Bohème on Broadway. "So I've been able to have experiences on stage that weren't necessarily roles ... For example being able to be on stage and write your own music and perform it and go off script is what I prefer. But it was a good way to get started."

Khloe Kardashian's divorce gave her the tools to change her life



The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star - who filed for divorce from Lamar in 2013 - used the split to focus on her own health and wellbeing and is now passing those tips on to others with her show 'Revenge Body'. She said: "I went through a journey for a reason and I'm not the only person. Yes mine was from my divorce and it's not as dark as most people, but if I have this platform and if I learned all these tools I feel like, OK I want to give those tools to somebody else." And the 32-year-old television personality feels "honored" to be a role model but admits she never thought she would have been "going to rule the fitness world" three years ago. She added to E! News: "It's an honor that anybody looks up to me. [If you told me] I was going to rule the fitness world and help people from a healthy standpoint, I [would've said], 'What Kool-Aid are you drinking?'" Meanwhile, Khloe previously revealed she used the gym as a "stress reliever" after her split from Lamar. Speaking about 'Revenge Body', she said: "'Revenge Body' is inspired by my own personal journey. I was going through a difficult time going through my divorce and I started going to the gym as a place to clear my head and as a stress reliever, it was really the only place that I knew where to turn where no one would ask me a lot of questions. "As a byproduct I started losing all this weight, there were so many people via social media saying how I inspired them, from taking something negative and turning it into a positive."

Priyanka Chopra is home after being injured on the set of Quantico



According to TMZ, the 34-year-old actress suffered a concussion after she slipped and hit her head while filming a stunt. She was brought to hospital but doctors discharged her a few hours later. A representative for the star told the website: "Yes, we can confirm there was a minor accident ... and [she] will return to work after the weekend." Meanwhile, the Bollywood actress - who stars alongside Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson and Zac Efron in the new 'Baywatch' movie - recently insisted she has hasn't had to change to succeed in Hollywood. Priyanka shared: "I think the same thing that worked in Hindi films worked for me internationally. I am not afraid of being myself. "I think entertainment industry is full of too many wonderful, beautiful people and you can't (just) be someone else. You have to stand out. "You have to find your own uniqueness and that has to work for you. So those who want to be an actress, whether it is in America or in India, you have to find who you are and be comfortable with it." The winner of the Miss World 2000 pageant also revealed she takes inspiration from her friends and family, and their support has helped her through her career. Priyanka said: "I am always surrounded by people who love me. I have wonderful people in my life, encouraging me and pushing me forward; so I never felt that I am doing this alone. I feel support is the biggest strength a woman actually needs in this world. As soon as you have the support from people around you, you can achieve everything."



'La La Land' could become a live stage show

The critically acclaimed musical film starring Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling - which recently broke records by winning all seven of its Golden Globe nominations - could become the next hit stage show, according to Lionsgate Motion Picture Group co-president Erik Feig. Speaking to investors at the studio's Investors Day presentation, he said: "If we want to do a stage show, we can do a stage show. We haven't hit our full expansion." And the idea may not be completely off the wall as Feig pointed out how Lionsgate's Step Up franchise has inspired a live stage show in Dubai. Meanwhile, 'All Of Me' hit maker John Legend - who acted as one of the executive producers on the hit movie and played bandleader Keith in the film - insisted he wasn't keen on the idea of the film getting a follow-up sequel despite its success and popularity. He previously said: "I don't know if these things have sequels. I don't know if it's that kind of movie. But if it is and Damien wants me to do anything I'd love to work with him again on anything he's doing." But he did enjoy being a part of the film, adding: "He's a wonderful director and filmmaker and I'm glad that he asked me to be a part of the film." 'La La Land' has also racked up a number of other nominations including 11 nods at the British Academy Film (Bafta) Awards and five at the London Critics' Circle Film Awards whilst also taking home eight gongs at the Critics' Choice Awards 2016 in December.

Ed Sheeran

breaks Spotify records
with new music

Pop singer Ed Sheeran on Friday broke all-time records on Spotify as fans rushed to hear two songs from his upcoming album. The British singer-songwriter's "Shape of You" became the top song ever for a single week on the world's largest streaming website, with 52,359,013 listens through Thursday. "Shape of You" shattered the previous record for a single week set by Canadian rapper Drake's "One Dance" in May.

Sheeran's track also broke the record for streams in a first week set in 2015 by Adele with her ballad "Hello." Both "Shape of You" and Sheeran's other new track, "Castle on the Hill," topped previous feats for first-day streams when he released them on Jan. 6. "Shape of You," a minimalist dance tune about picking up a woman at a bar, and the rockier "Castle on the Hill" will both feature on Sheeran's upcoming third album, "Divide." The album, which like Sheeran's previous two albums is named after a mathematical symbol, will come out on March 3.

The 25-year-old singer and guitarist saw his career rise rapidly after initial struggles. He moved to Los Angeles in 2010 with little set plan, initially playing at open-microphone nights in bars and cafes. Within a few years Sheeran had landed a record deal and was taken under the wing of pop superstar Taylor Swift before he found global stardom with his ballad "Thinking Out Loud." He won Song of the Year at the Grammys in 2016 with "Thinking Out Loud," which broke an earlier Spotify record and remains the service's fifth most-streamed song ever. — AFP



This file photo shows singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran as he accepts the Grammy Award for Best Pop Solo Performance, for "Thinking Out Loud," onstage during the GRAMMY Pre-Telecast at The 58th Grammy Awards at Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

'Exorcist' author William Peter Blatty dead at 89

'He wrote the great horror novel of our time'

Novelist and filmmaker William Peter Blatty, a former Jesuit school valedictorian who conjured a tale of demonic possession and gave millions the fright of their lives with the best-selling novel and Oscar-winning movie "The Exorcist," has died. He was 89. Blatty died Thursday at a hospital in Bethesda, Maryland, where he lived, his widow, Julie Alicia Blatty, said. The cause of death was multiple myeloma, a form of blood cancer, she said. Inspired by an incident that unfolded in St. Louis and Washington, DC, that Blatty had read about while in college, "The Exorcist" was published in 1971, followed two years later by the film of the same name.

Blatty's story of a 12-year-old girl inhabited by a satanic force spent more than a year on The New York Times fiction best-seller list and eventually sold more than 10 million copies. It reached a far wider audience through the movie version, directed by William Friedkin, produced and written by Blatty and starring Linda Blair as the young, bedeviled Regan. "RIP William Peter Blatty, who wrote the great horror novel of our time," Stephen King tweeted Friday. "So long, Old Bill." Even those who thought they had seen everything had never seen anything like the R-rated "The Exorcist" and its assault of vomit, blood, rotting teeth, ghastly eyes and whirlwind head-spinning - courtesy of makeup and special effects maestro Dick Smith.

Fans didn't care that Vincent Canby of The New York Times found it a "chunk of elegant occultist claptrap," or that the set burned down during production. They stood for hours in freezing weather for the winter release and kept coming even as the movie, with its omnipresent soundtrack theme, Mike Oldfield's chilly, tingly "Tubular Bells," cast its own disturbing spell. From around the world came reports of fainting, puking, epileptic fits, audience members charging the screen and waving rosary beads, and, in England, a boy committing murder and blaming "The Exorcist." The Rev. Billy Graham would allege that the film's very celluloid was evil.

Super-natural story

"I was standing in the back of a theater in New York at the first public press screening of the film, too nervous to sit down," Blatty said in 2000. "And along came a woman who got up in about the fifth or sixth row. A young woman, who started walking up the aisle, slowly at first. She had her hand to her head. And then I could see her lips moving. She got close enough, and I could hear her murmuring, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." Named the scariest movie of all time by Entertainment Weekly, "The Exorcist" topped \$400 million worldwide at the box office, among the highest at the time for an R-rated picture.

Oscar voters also offered rare respect for a horror film: "The Exorcist" was nominated for 10 Academy Awards and received two, for best sound and Blatty's screenplay. Imitations, parodies and sequels were inevitable, whether the Leslie Nielsen spoof "Repossessed"; the four subsequent "Exorcist" movies (only one of which, "The Exorcist III," involved Blatty) or a stage version performed in 2012 at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles. "When I was writing the novel I thought of it as a super-natural detective story, and to this day I cannot recall having a conscious intention to terrifying anybody, which you may take, I suppose, as an admission of failure on an almost stupefying scale," Blatty told The Huffington Post in 2011.

Blatty returned to the "Exorcist" setting in "Legion,"



In this file photo released by Starpix, The Exorcist author William Peter Blatty, left, joins Linda Blair, who starred in the 1973 film and William Friedkin, the film's director, at a screening of the re-mastered film at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

which he adapted into "The Exorcist III." He also revised a novel from the 1960s, "Twinkle, Twinkle, 'Killer Kane'"; renamed it "The Ninth Configuration" and wrote and directed a 1980 film version that brought Blatty a Golden Globe for best screenplay. In 2011, he worked in a new scene for a reissue of the 1971 novel, originally acquired by Bantam Books for a reported \$250,000. More recently, Fox announced it would revive the story as a TV series, starring Geena Davis. Blatty was married four times and had eight children. "He was an absolutely wonderful, kind, generous, faith-filled man, and I was very blessed to be his wife," Julie Blatty said.

Financial desperation

The son of Lebanese immigrants, Blatty was born in New York City and remembered a childhood of unpaid bills and nonstop evasion of rent collectors. He was a scholarship student at the Jesuit high school Brooklyn Preparatory (future Penn State football coach Joe Paterno was a year behind) and graduated as class valedictorian. He received another scholarship to attend Georgetown University and earned a master's in English literature from George Washington University. As recounted in his memoir "I'll Tell Them I Remember You," he took many detours on his journey to the top.

He sold vacuum cleaners, drove a beer truck, served in the Air Force, was stationed in Beirut by the United States Information Agency, tried and failed to get stories pub-

lished in Collier's, and auditioned for a role in Cecil B. DeMille's Biblical epic "The Ten Commandments." He alleged that he was turned down because his eyes were blue. For much of the 1960s, he turned out screenplays, including for the Blake Edwards films "A Shot in the Dark" and "What Did You Do in the War, Daddy?" By the end of the decade, he was in a state of "financial desperation" and finally got around to a novel he had been thinking about for years.

He had remembered a Washington Post report from the late 1940s: A 14-year-old boy from Maryland was reportedly possessed, his condition defined by a visiting Duke University official as "the most impressive example of poltergeist phenomena I have ever come across." "Like so many Catholics, I've had so many little battles of wavering faith over the course of my life," Blatty, who would allege numerous mysterious events while working on the book, said. "And when I heard about this case and read the details, that seemed so compelling, I thought, 'My God, if someone were to investigate this and authenticate it, what a tremendous boost to faith it would be.' I thought, 'Someday I would like to see that happen. You know, I would like to do it.' —AP



Malabar Gold & Diamonds unveils its latest Collection of Everyday Diamonds

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the leading jewelry retailer is ready to win the hearts of diamond lovers with the 'Everyday Diamonds' collection showcasing a wide range of diamond jewelry at competitive prices. This campaign unveils a huge collection of high quality certified diamond jewelry ranging from KWD 55 onwards across all outlets in Kuwait.

The 'Everyday Diamonds' collection by Malabar Gold & Diamonds gives their customers an opportunity to choose from a variety of diamond jewelry at different price points, making it possible for every woman to own her favorite piece of diamond jewelry. Their huge collection of jewelry

studded with classic and exquisite diamonds ranges from lightweight every day wear to elegant party wear, providing the appropriate piece of jewelry for every occasion.

It is said that Diamonds are forever, and the best way to celebrate any occasion in one's life is with diamonds. At Malabar Gold & Diamonds, each piece of diamond comes with an IGI/GIA certification, which guarantees that the diamond jewelry purchased is good quality, correctly sourced and rightly manufactured. They also provide lifetime maintenance and cash buyback guarantee for the jewelry purchased from all their outlets.

Malabar group offers exquisite and beautiful jewelry as

a part of various brands presented at Malabar Gold & Diamonds namely Ethnic - Handcrafted Designer Jewelry, Era - Uncut Diamond Jewelry, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Divine - Indian Heritage jewelry, Precia - Gem Jewelry and Starlet - Kids Jewelry. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has always been at the forefront in gold jewelry manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing and plans on being the 'most-preferred' jewelry retailer in the market in the coming years. The group strives to continue embarking on its journey by further expanding in the near future.

Fadi Fawaz's family worried about his mental state

The 43-year-old fine art photographer discovered his famous partner dead in bed on Christmas Day and, despite claims that he and the 'Careless Whisper' hit maker had split several months before, Fadi's nephew Josh Fawaz insists the pair were "very much together and in love" and he is concerned that his uncle won't be able to cope with the tragedy. Josh said: "They were very much together and in love. Two days prior to George's death I was in the pub in London with my uncle and he called him to say he'll be home soon. "They were living together, they hadn't split. I'm worried about his mental state, to be honest. I don't know how he'll cope without George." After Fadi - who previously revealed he had slept in his car outside George's home the night the star passed away - failed to revive the singer, he called police and then made a heartbreaking call to Josh. Josh told Australia's Daily Telegraph newspaper: "I've never heard a grown man cry so much. Fadi called me saying 'what am I going to do without him?' "They spent almost every day together for six years. He was so upset, he had been crying at the house beside George and I believe he found him dead. "I'm the first person to know that he (Michael) passed away." "There was nothing but love in that relationship; he has been called a leech and all sorts, but he never took advantage or would do anything to hurt George."



FEATURES

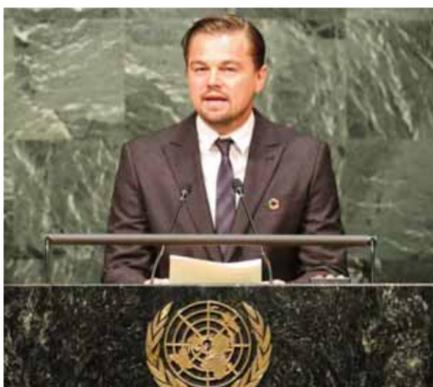
DJ David Guetta's Mumbai concert gets go-ahead

French DJ David Guetta will take the stage in Mumbai today, organizers said, a day after his fans were left deflated when authorities cancelled his show over logistics and security issues. The Grammy-award winning dance music producer was scheduled to perform in Mumbai on Friday as part of a four-city India tour. But police abruptly called off the concert, saying organizers had not complied with certain formalities and had not shared their security plan with officials.

The Mumbai-based promoter Sunburn confirmed the cancellation as fans started gathering outside the concert venue. But hours later Sunburn and police managed to iron out their differences, paving the way for today afternoon performance in Mumbai that will be followed by another show in New Delhi that evening, the organizers said late Friday. "David Guetta will be doing two shows on Sunday in two different cities. We are complying with all the

regulatory requirements as prescribed by the authorities," they said in a statement posted on Twitter.

"The existing Mumbai tickets will be valid for the show today," Guetta, best known for hits like "Titanium" and "When Love Takes Over", has a sizeable following in India with thousands expected to attend today's concerts. The 49-year-old musician was supposed to kick-off his India tour in the IT hub of Bangalore on Thursday but authorities cancelled the gig, saying it clashed with a local election and that security would be a problem. "(Bangalore) cancellation has been completely out of my control and I just feel very sorry for all the fans that were looking forward to attend," Guetta had said in a statement posted online. — AFP



LEONARDO DICAPRIO FOUNDATION BACKING UTAH NATIONAL MONUMENT

Leonardo DiCaprio's foundation is chipping in to support a new national monument in southern Utah that's been a flashpoint in the debate over public land use in the West, officials said Friday. His environmental group is one of several donating to create the \$1.5 million Bears Ears Community Engagement Fund, which is aimed at supporting local efforts to preserve natural resources and protect the park's trove of ancient archaeological sites from things like looting. The money could fund things like locating and putting up signs at more of the estimated 100,000 cliff dwellings and other archaeological sites tucked amid picturesque cliffs, plateaus and towering rock formations in the Bears Ears monument 300 miles south of Salt Lake City, said Michael Scott with the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The fund will also support efforts from the five American Indian tribes who will get a say in how the land is managed, a first for a national monument.

A coalition of American Indian tribes pushed the Obama administration to create the monument that protects the land from new mining and oil and gas development. DiCaprio sent out messages on his Facebook and Instagram accounts in May 2016 urging people to sign petitions in support. A representative for DiCaprio didn't immediately have comment on the donation Friday. President Barack Obama designated the 1.35-million-acre monument in the Four Corners region in December despite objections from Utah Republican leaders and rural residents who said it will add another layer of unnecessary federal control. It's a common argument in the battle over use of the American West's vast open spaces, and one that opponents of the monument hope has traction during Donald Trump's presidency. Opponents agree the area is worth preserving but argue the federal designation will go too far and bar people from camping, hiking or gathering wood. — AP



No digital Carrie Fisher planned for future Star Wars

The producers behind Star Wars say they will not digitally recreate the late Carrie Fisher's likeness in future episodes of the film franchise. In July, "Star Wars: Episode VIII" wrapped up shooting with Fisher reprising her role as the character initially known as Princess Leia she first performed in the first installment of the franchise released in 1977. Fisher, who died last month days after suffering from cardiac arrest, had been expected to have a role in Episode IX, expected to be released in 2019.

But Lucasfilm insisted that Episode VIII, due to be released at the end of the year, will be the last one featuring Fisher. "We want to assure our fans that Lucasfilm has no plans to digitally recreate Carrie Fisher's performance as Princess or General Leia Organa," the producers said in a statement on the massive franchise's

website. "Carrie Fisher was, is, and always will be a part of the Lucasfilm family. She was our princess, our general, and more importantly, our friend."

They added: "We are still hurting from her loss. We cherish her memory and legacy as Princess Leia, and will always strive to honor everything she gave to Star Wars." The most recent Star Wars film, last year's "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story," featured computer graphics technology to insert the likeness of British actor Peter Cushing, who died in 1994, for the character Grand Moff Tarkin, a character he first played in the original 1977 film. CGI was also used to recreate a younger Fisher as Princess Leia in an earlier period.—AFP



Holistic harmony at Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort

Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort, the highest five-star resort in the Middle East, recently opened its doors in Oman to offer untouched tranquillity for those looking to unwind, restore and reconnect. Clinging to the edge of a dramatic gorge in the spectacular setting of the secluded Al Hajar mountain range, the restorative powers of nature are harnessed in a calming environment, delivering pampered serenity in a sanctuary of wellness. Rooted in the beautiful Kingdom of Thailand, the essence of Anantara's wellness philosophy stems from ancient Sanskrit origins.

At Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort, this philosophy is expressed in perfect harmony with the Middle East's rich cultural traditions, resulting in a radiant sense of wellbeing. Incorporating Balance, Anantara's innovative wellness concept, the resort offers total flexibility with a variety of health, wellbeing and healing elements, along with the freedom to relax and indulge at the luxurious spa. Guests are invited to book private consultations and treatments with the expert team, take healthy cooking classes and incorporate juicing into their diet, or work out in the privacy and convenience of their room with Anantara's gym kit service.

The Anantara Spa features holistic therapies, combining a healing touch and pure active botanicals to restore vitality, balance and spirit to the mind and body. Guests are enveloped by a sense of peace as they relax under the soothing touch of trained therapists in one of the five beautifully appointed suites. Post treatment, spa-goers continue the blissful experiences, reclining beside the indoor swimming pool or in the Jacuzzi, in the separate women's and men's hydro-facilities, or at the outdoor relaxation areas which offer a high level of privacy. A range of healing massages, stimulating scrubs, radiant facials and replenishing wraps use indigenous ingredients harvested from nearby pomegranate trees, rose terraces and frankincense plantations.

Locally inspired treatments include the 'Revitalising Pomegranate Journey' which utilises the nourishing and regenerating properties of fresh pomegranates blended with salt in a revitalising body scrub, complemented with an Arabian massage and a milk and oriental spice foot cleansing ritual. Guests can embark on a journey to inner peace at the traditional hammam. Enhanced by the luxurious setting, the experience leaves guests feeling refreshed and renewed, as it has done since ancient times. A tradition that has evolved over thousands of years, spa visitors can enjoy an exhilarating salt scrub before relaxing with a puri-

fyng body wrap and cleansing with an olive foam soaping, all surrounded by heated marble.

Meanwhile, the Himalayan Salt Room combines ancient reverence for salt from the Himalayas with advanced modern therapy, allowing guests to experience how salt-filled air rejuvenates naturally and powerfully to draw out toxins, deep cleansing the skin and purifying the body. A fitness centre and tennis court helps guests to keep fit and achieve their personal targets even whilst on holiday. State-of-the-art equipment includes a freedom-climber - the first outside of the US its revolutionary rotating surface creates a realistic climbing experience in a safe, low-level environment.

Meanwhile, a range of group exercise classes include

aerobics, boot camp and aqua aerobics to help tone and energise the body, complemented by holistic exercise such as mountaintop yoga to de-stress the mind and body. Inspirational and bespoke experiences such as trail walking, summit biking and sky running, an extreme form of altitude running, make the most of the surrounding mountains cape.

Guests can boost their wellbeing further with Anantara's Balance Wellness Programme, which includes three-day De-stress and Relax, Detox and Weight Loss or Peaking Fitness packages. Freshly blended juices packed with natural goodness are available alongside wellness cuisine that offers delicious and nutritional options. Specialist cookery classes using local produce and techniques allow

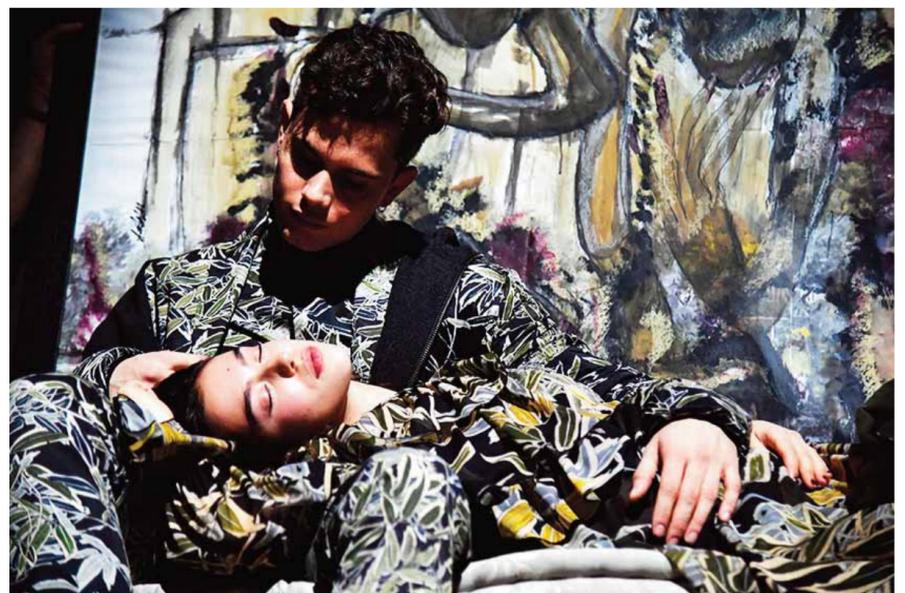
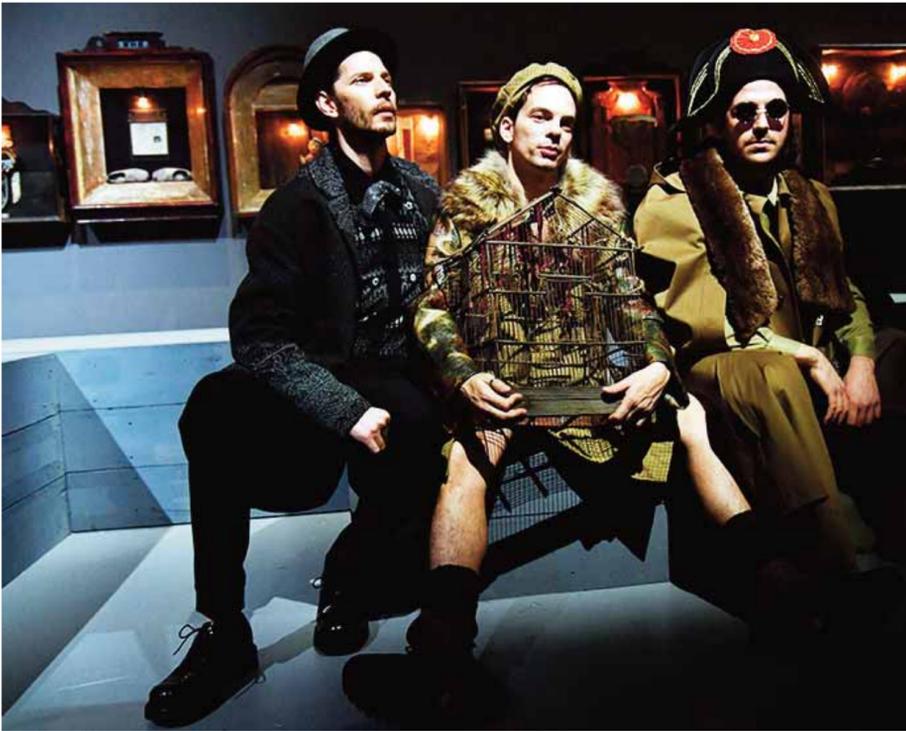
guests to incorporate healthier eating habits in their own kitchens.

Before 31 March 2017, guests can book the Spa Essence package from 2,090 AED. The package includes the following: Two nights' accommodation in a room or villa. Daily buffet breakfast served at Al Maisan for two people. One 60-minute massage of guests' choice, for two people during the stay. 10 percent savings on a la carte spa treatments. Upgrade to the next room category (subject to availability upon arrival) To reserve a superior stay full of indigenous experiences, visit <http://www.anantara.com/al-jabal-al-akhdar/>





Men's Fall-Winter Fashion Week 2017-2018



Models present the creations for fashion house Antonio Marras during the Men's Fall-Winter 2017-2018 fashion week yesterday in Milan. — AFP photos

Lifestyle

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2017

'Exorcist' author William Peter Blatty dead at 89

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Timber frame houses at Frankfurt, Germany's Roemerberg square are reflected in water. — AP

Play seeks to exorcise Austrian truck tragedy horrors

The gruesome discovery of 71 dead migrants in the summer of 2015 in an abandoned truck on a motorway near the Austrian town of Parndorf still haunts locals.

But a new play about the tragedy—"71 or the Curse of the Prime Number" attempts to help people deal with the trauma a year and a half later. "The intention was to perceive this drama through art and to raise some aspects that neither journalists nor politicians have raised so far," the play's director Peter Wagner said.

"I think we must mourn the things that weighed on us, and this play has the potential... to make us experience again something that shocked us," Wagner said.

"It allows us in some way to detach ourselves from the problem, to observe it from a different point of view." The discovery of the truck in August 2015 on the A4 motorway coming in from Hungary, at the height of a massive influx of migrants into Europe, was indeed horrific. When police opened up the poultry refrigerator lorry left on the hard shoulder of the busy road, they were confronted with an atrocious sight and an awful smell.

'A living documentary'

The stench of human decay emanated from the cargo container where bodies of migrants lay piled on top of each other, crammed into a small rectangular space. Among them was a baby girl, not even a year old. Investigations would later reveal that the victims—all from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan—had been dead for two days. The men, women and children had suffocated shortly after smugglers had picked them

up in Hungary, a key transit country on the so-called Balkan migrant trail during 2015.

The driver had long since fled. An Afghan and seven Bulgarians were later arrested and are due to go on trial in Hungary later this year. They face life imprisonment. Wagner's play features a truck-size screen playing black-and-white interviews from 15 people who experienced the tragedy including police, a young volunteer and the local mayor. In the two-hour performance, this is interwoven with actors performing from 21 texts written by local authors as well as dancing and music composed by Ferry Janoska.

"We know the documentaries from TV... But here it is a living documentary! I found that awesome," actress Tania Golden said. "I have a great admiration for Peter Wagner, because he does theatre for the region, for people here, not for people who go to the theatre and who are used to intellectualizing issues." The play premiered in a school in Parndorf on Jan 5 and then moved to the state capital Eisenstadt. Further performances are planned in nearby Oberwart and Grosswarasdorf. — AFP

'71 or the Curse of the Prime Number'



This file photo shows a refrigerant truck towed along a highway near Neusiedl am See, Austria. — AFP