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MPs LEAD PROTEST AT RUSSIAN EMBASSY

Kuwait urges Security Council to act

Emergency meetings called over Aleppo

By Abubakar A. Ibrahim
Arab Times Staff and Agencies

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: The State of Kuwait on Wednesday called on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to shoulder "its historic responsibility and stop the blood

shedding" in the embattled Syrian city of Aleppo.

The State of Kuwait, which has followed up "with deep concern and pain, the tragic conditions experienced by our Syrian brethren in Aleppo, has called on the international community, namely the Security Council, to shoulder its historic responsibility and halt the blood-letting, protect the civilians and dispatch humanitarian aid into the city,"

said an official source at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a statement.

Kuwait calls on the international community to respond to the exerted efforts by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Turkey and hold the extraordinary and emergency session of the UN General Assembly to discuss the situation in Syria, the official source added.

Kuwait, in line with its Arab
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Photo by Mahmoud Jadeed
One of the organizers addressing protesters during a rally outside the Russian embassy in Kuwait to condemn Moscow's support of the Syrian regime besieging rebel-held Aleppo.

Group calls for end to kafala system

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14, (AFP): A Kuwaiti rights group Wednesday called on the Gulf state to abolish its "kafala" system for foreign workers which has long been criticised as a form of bonded labour or even slavery.

In its 2016 annual report, the Kuwait Association for the Fundamentals of Human Rights called for "abolishing the current kafala system and replacing it with rules according to international standards".

Qatar on Tuesday became the first of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to end kafala, which prevents workers from moving to a new job before their contracts end without their boss's consent, resulting in a wide range of abuses.

Around 25 million foreigners live and work in the energy-rich GCC states, making up half of the population.

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Photo by Mahmoud Jadeed
Kuwaiti protesters during a demonstration outside the Russian embassy to condemn Moscow's support of the Syrian regime besieging rebel-held Aleppo. Carrying banners saying 'stop crimes' and 'save Aleppo' around two thousand demonstrators marched on the diplomatic compound.

Other Voices

Responsible financial reform in safekeeping of the unknown

By Ali Ahmed Al-Baghli
Former Minister of Oil

In my opinion, the November election did not produce members who have responsible financial agenda. Majority of the candidates won votes through manipulation of the populace mood by vowing that their income will not be touched regardless of its size.

This phenomenon has been common for the people of Kuwait since the discovery of oil and luxury became a norm in the country, followed by the fraudulent naturalization of people being uncovered day after day.

All of these people are brought together financially in Kuwait based on the principle: "Are you full?" And they reply, "Are there more?" This is supported by some members of the National Assembly who presumably erred when they stood in favor of the recent rationalization and financial reform measures which led to the fuel price hike.

It is unfortunate that the government — both the one which resigned and the new one — does

not encourage rationalization and financial reforms because it looks at returns from the fuel price hike estimated at KD150 million on one hand, and on the other hand, it spends hundreds of millions on loans and grants for foreign countries which is a controversial issue.

Many of the countries that were lucky to acquire loan or grant from Kuwait stood against the latter at a time it needed their support during the catastrophe which befell this country — when Saddam Hussein and Iraq's military forces occupied Kuwait in August 1990 and wiped it out of the political map.

The positions taken by such countries and some organizations baffled Kuwait up to a point they were named 'countries against ...' in addition to government spending on funds and organizations invented by some in a bid to please relatives and friends. This is where millions of dinars are spent without returns or benefits.

Add to this the bonuses and allowances given to government employees and its foreign advisors, among many other examples which indicate inability of the government, represented by the finance minister, to propose and execute financial reforms.

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NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday a phone call from Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz who inquired about his health condition after he caught a cold.
His Highness the Amir thanked King Salman for his phone call which reflected the solid relationship between the two countries and people.
His Highness the Amir wished Saudi Arabia and the Saudi people enjoyed everlasting prosperity under the leadership of King Salman.
His Highness the Amir also received Tuesday a phone call from Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, who inquired about his health condition after he caught a cold.
His Highness the Amir
Continued on Page 37

UN warns on reprisals

Evacuation of Aleppo at risk amid clashes

ALEPPO, Syria, Dec 14, (Agencies): Shelling and air strikes sent terrified residents running through the streets of Aleppo on Wednesday as a deal to evacuate rebel districts of the city was in danger of falling apart.

The agreement reached Tuesday was meant to pave the way for thousands of civilians and rebel fighters to evacuate Syria's second city, scene of some of the worst fighting in more than five years of war.

But cold and hungry civilians who had gathered before dawn to evacuate were instead plunged back into a familiar nightmare.

"Bombing is ongoing, no one can move. Everyone is hiding and terrified," activist Mohammad al-Khatib told AFP from inside the city.

"The wounded and dead are lying in the street. No one dares to try and retrieve the bodies."

The evacuation, agreed under a deal brokered by Russia and Turkey, had been due to begin at 5:00 am (0300 GMT) but was delayed, with buses parked outside rebel-held areas left waiting.

Following several hours of quiet, fighting then erupted anew in the ravaged city, with Syria's regime, the rebels and their foreign allies trading accusations of blame.

As booms of air strikes and artillery fire rang out, an AFP correspondent in rebel areas saw panicked civilians running in the streets to find shelter, some hiding in the doorframes of damaged buildings.

The correspondent saw several wounded civilians, as well as a regime tank turning its cannon towards opposition-held districts and opening fire.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported "very intense clashes on every front line" and said at least two people had been killed in rebel areas.

State television said rebel rocket fire on government-controlled areas had

also resumed, killing at least seven people.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he would speak with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin later in bid to rescue the deal.

"The situation on the ground is very fragile and complicated," he said.

Moscow, a staunch ally of President Bashar al-Assad, said Damascus resumed its assault on Aleppo after rebels violated the ceasefire.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow expected rebel resistance in the city to end in the next "two to three days".

Rebels and a source close to the regime told AFP that the evacuation had been suspended after objections from the Syrian government.

The source said Damascus objected to the number of people leaving, claiming rebels had sought to raise it from 2,000 to 10,000.

But Yasser al-Youssef, a political official from the Nureddin al-Zinki rebel group, said the regime and its ally Iran were trying to add "new conditions" to the agreement.

"They want to link this deal to other issues, including the areas of Fuua and Kafraya," he added, referring to two government-held Shiite-majority villages in northwestern Syria that are under rebel siege.

Turkey too accused Assad's regime and its supporters of blocking the deal.

French President Francois Hollande joined Washington's call for international observers to be sent in to oversee the evacuation.

Hollande said those trapped by the fighting should "be evacuated in a dignified and safe manner, under the supervision of international observers and in the presence of humanitarian organisations."

Before the fighting resumed, crowds of civilians could be seen gathered in

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Techies vow no Trump aid to track Muslims

WASHINGTON, Dec 14, (RTRS): More than 100 employees of technology companies including Alphabet Inc's Google, Twitter Inc and Salesforce pledged on Tuesday to not help US President-elect Donald Trump's administration build a data registry to track people based on their religion or assist in mass deportations.

Drawing comparisons to the Holocaust and the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, the employees signed an open letter at neveragain.tech

rebuking ideas floated by Trump during the campaign trail. The protest comes a day before several technology company executives are due to meet with the real-estate developer in New York City.

"We are choosing to stand in solidarity with Muslim Americans, immigrants, and all people whose lives and livelihoods are threatened by the incoming administration's proposed data collection policies", reads the letter,

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Kuwaiti youths' combating of radical ideologies 'amazing'

US Embassy organizes 'Tech-Camp' workshop



Sheikh Thamer while receiving US official.

KUNA photo

Security chief, US official discuss issues of common interest

National Security Bureau chief Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Al-Sabah met with the head of a delegation from the Center for American Progress Ambassador John Craig on Wednesday, where the two officials discussed is-

...sues of mutual concern. During the meeting, strategies to enhance bilateral ties were discussed, in addition to regional and international developments, a statement by the bureau noted. (KUNA)

Sheikha Hessa 'commends' Kuwaiti women as self-made

MARRAKECH, Dec 14, (KUNA): Chairperson of Kuwait Businesswomen Committee Sheikha Hessa Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said Tuesday the Kuwaiti women have always been self-made and shoulder their responsibilities at present as they used to do in the past.

"In the past Kuwaiti mothers used to be independent in taking care of their children when the father goes fishing or pearling or dies. So, it's no wonder nowadays that they assert themselves economically and assume high posts in the public or political life on equal footing with men," Sheikha Hessa, also Chairperson of Council of Arab Businesswomen, pointed out.

She made the remarks in an interview with KUNA on the sidelines of the Arab businesswomen forum being held here on December 12-16.

Sheikha Hessa noted that she engaged in business and public life affairs since was young thanks to the encouragement and support she received from her father.

"His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah continues backing up the woman empowerment initiatives. The Kuwaiti political leadership spare no effort in supporting the businesswomen financially or through training and rehabilitation programs.

"There are numerous successful women who took up high managerial posts in state institutions and public life as well as diplomacy and politics as is the case in the parliament," she went on.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14, (KUNA): Kuwaiti youths' creativity in combating radicalization and extremism via social media and other technological means is "amazing" and highly appreciated, said Nicole Chulick, Deputy Coordinator for Products in the Bureau of International Information Programs at the US State Department.

Following a workshop organized by the American Embassy under the title (Tech-Camp) late Tuesday, Chulick told KUNA that it was very encouraging from the Kuwaiti government to take part in such an event which reflected keenness in countering terrorism and false information on social media.

Tech-Camp, the first event of its kind to be held in the Gulf region, is helping in dispelling wrong ideas about the Muslim world, said Chulick who affirmed that the youth here, with their homegrown ideas, produced creative methods that were amazingly refuting terrorist ideologies.

The participants from most ministries have proven that they were capable of producing effective measures to counter negative messages on social media via spreading awareness on the vital issue through personal accounts and other applications, Chulick affirmed.

Important

"Kuwait has an important leading role in helping to host such an event like Tech-Camp," she said.

Participants from the private sector also showed great interest in combating terrorism through social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat, she added Kuwait's keenness on being part of the global fight against terrorism is very important, said the US diplomat, adding that this threat was becoming part of an international issue that needed to be addressed promptly.

"If we are going to combat online radicalization in our communities, we need to involve the full support from your communities. We need every voice," said Chulick, adding "I have said in the Tech-Champ workshop that we as individuals should be responsible in what we say in public and on social networks... To check the content of what we receive and what we watch... It is our responsibility first, we should start with ourselves then spread these ideas to other individuals." She emphasized "The United States has an obligation to continue its fight against terrorism on social media and by continuing more Tech-Camps and workshop in many regions to spread more awareness."

"I believe that the problem of using social network in promoting violence and terrorism is an ongoing problem and we have an obligation to fight such radical movements that are spreading rapidly around the world." In her closing statements, Chulick encouraged Kuwaiti youth to continue posting information and updates on their activities, stay engaged, and carry on collaborating with one another, affirming that "All young people have a vital role. They are the most credible voice to confront false narratives aiming to target their peers and their communities."

mp profile getting to know you

Voting Record

Khalaf Dumaitheer Al-Enezi
(Tribal)
Second Constituency

KHALAF DUMAITHEER AL-ENEZI was born in 1946 and holds a Teaching Diploma. He was a member of the National Council in 1990 and was elected member of the National Assembly in 1981, 1985, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2003, 2006, 2008 and 2009, in addition to the one annulled in December 2012.

In the July 2013 election, Al-Enezi won eighth place in his constituency with 1,637 votes and in the 2016 elections he secured seventh place with 1,942 votes.

In the previous Parliament, Al-Enezi did not join any committee after he lost in the deputy speaker election, while in the current Parliament he was elected chairman of the Finance and Economic Affairs Committee.

Throughout his legislative career, Al-Enezi served in several committees such as the Legal and Legislative, Budgets and Final Accounts, Public Funds Protection, and Finance and Economic Affairs.

He contested the February 2012 election but he lost as he ended on the 14th spot in his constituency, considering only the top 10 are declared winners to represent a constituency.

He is affiliated to Al-Enzi Tribe and he always sides with the government in addition to rejecting grilling motions against ministers.

In December 2011, the Public Prosecution questioned him due to his purported involvement in the multimillion deposit scandal in which many pro-government lawmakers were implicated.

Commenting on the formation of the current government, Al-Enezi joined his colleagues Mohammad Al-Jabri and Saad Al-Khanfour in commending current members of the Cabinet, asserting HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah made good a choice. They pointed out Oil Minister Mustapha Al-Shamali is an example of a statesman and Finance Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdulaziz is a real specialist. They voiced optimism on the performance of the new Cabinet as its members are efficient and experienced in their fields.

With cancellation of loan interests as the main item in his election platform, Al-Enezi announced his plan to spearhead a campaign to write-off interests on consumer loans of citizens and demand for re-scheduling of debts over 20 years.

He was also quoted as saying that since 1992, the consecutive parliaments failed to realize the aspirations of Kuwaitis due to lack of understanding of the real sense of democracy. "The previous parliaments were dissolved due to the attitude of some MPs who seek to create problems, foment discords and aggravate conflicts between the legislative and executive authorities. Indecent and insulting remarks do not help democracy," he added.

Describing the National Assembly speaker as the "safety valve of democracy in Kuwait," Al-Enezi pointed out the speaker enjoys support of all segments of the society, thus, he can handle tough issues easily.

He warned that failure to tackle the unemployment issue in the nick of time could harm society because it might prompt some people to commit crimes.

Among the bills he supported were women's political rights, State budget, Municipality, establishment of an Islamic body to develop and regulate the private sector, direct foreign investment, banning eavesdropping and segregation in private universities.

Statement

On the fuel price increase and the need to grant financial support to citizens, Al-Enezi said he trusts the ability of Kuwaiti authorities to find an appropriate solution. He admitted he doesn't know details of the expected solution, "but we want to emphasize that there is flexibility on the part of the government with more than 70 percent sign of a breakthrough."

He also underscored the importance of treating citizens fairly, adding they should not bear the consequences of the government's way of dealing with the current economic situation.

After filing his nomination papers for the December 2012 election, he spoke passionately about the people's right to choose new parliamentarians and that they will always be loyal to the ruling family.

He claimed the opposition forces are misleading the public by raising doubt on the government's ability, just to serve foreign agendas and personal interests. "Kuwaitis will not accept a ruler other than Al-Sabah. Most members of the Majority Bloc have good intentions for Kuwait, but three or four of them are trying to put the country on the stage of repression and arrests which are basically the ambitions



Al-Enezi

- Electricity and Water Tariffs (2016), approved
- Financial Controllers-auditors (2016), approved
- Domestic Workers and Domestic Workers Recruitment (2015), approved
- Consumer Protection (2015), approved
- Anti-Corruption (2015), approved
- Cyber Crime (2015), approved
- Surveillance Camera (2015), approved
- Military Service-conscription (2015), approved
- Granting Citizenship to 4,000 Bedouins Bill (2013), approved
- Anti-Money Laundering & Financing Terrorism Bill (2013), absent
- Writing-off Loan Interests of Citizens Bill (2013), approved
- Unemployment Insurance Bill (2013), approved
- Small and Medium Enterprises Bill (2013), approved
- One-Vote Decree Bill (2013), absent
- National Unity Decree Bill (2013), absent
- Amendment Decree of the Sports Law (2013), absent
- Anti-Corruption and Financial Disclosure Decree (2013), absent
- Annual Plan for 2011/2012, (2013), absent
- Foreign Agreements (2013), absent
- Amendment of Housing Care Law (2013), absent
- Privatization of Kuwait Airways Corporation Law (2013), absent
- Electronic Transaction Law (2012), approved
- Final Accounts for 1999/2000 and 2010/2011 (2013), approved
- Telecommunications and Information Technology Authority (2013), approved
- Amendment of Companies Law (2013), absent
- Amendment of Cooperative Societies Law (2013), approved
- Settlement Decree with Iraqi Airways (2013), absent
- Postponement of former prime minister's grilling by Ahmed Al-Saadoun and Abdulrahman Al-Anjari (2011), approved
- Referral of Adel Al-Sarawi and Marzouq Al-Ghanim's grilling request against former Development Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Fahd Al-Sabah to the Legal Committee (2011), approved
- Removal of former prime minister's grilling by Ahmed Al-Saadoun and Abdulrahman Al-Anjari from the agenda (2011), approved
- No-confidence motion against the former premier by Waleed Al-Tabtabaei, Mohammed Hayef and Mubarak Al-Walaan (2011), rejected
- Re-voting on Teacher and Student Bonuses Law (2011), approved
- Holy Qura'an Authority (2011), approved
- State budget (2011), approved
- No-confidence motion against former Information Minister Sheikh Ahmed Al-Abdullah by Ali Al-Deqbasi (2010), rejected
- No-confidence motion against the former premier by Faisal Al-Mislem (2010), rejected
- No-confidence against the former prime minister by Musallam Al-Barak, Saleh Al-Mulla, Jamaan Al-Harbash (2010), rejected
- Re-vamping of KPC (2010), approved
- Loan Interest Removal Law (2010), approved
- Proposal to re-vote on Loan Interest Removal Law (2010), approved
- Loan Defaulters Fund (2010), rejected
- Development Plan (2010), abstained
- Privatization (2010), rejected
- Transfer of Investigations Department from the Interior Ministry to the Public Prosecution (2010), abstained
- No-confidence motion against former Interior Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Khaled Al-Sabah by Musallam Al-Barak (2009), rejected
- Private Sector Labor Law (2009), approved
- Bill on granting women full political rights (2006), approved
- KNPC budget 2005/2006 (2006), approved
- KNPC's closing accounts 1999/2004 (2004), approved
- Draft on developing sports sector (2004), approved
- Kuwait Airways budget 2005/2006 (2006), abstained
- Kuwait Airways closing accounts 1997-2004 (2004), abstained
- Draft to waive KD2,000 overdue electricity and water bills (2003), approved
- Draft to develop and construct public warehouses and border points (2003), approved
- State budget (2003), approved
- Municipality Law (2003), approved
- Draft on establishing an Islamic body to develop and regulate the private sector (2003), approved
- No-confidence vote on Deputy Premier and State Minister for Cabinet and National Assembly Affairs Mohammed Daifallah Sharar (2003), rejected
- Amendment of Social Security Law to grant allowance to Kuwaiti employees with hazardous jobs (2003), abstained
- Direct Foreign Investment Law (2003), approved
- Temporary suspension of Army Conscription Law until amendments are finalized (2003), approved
- Amendment of Traffic Law for stiffer penalties (2003), abstained
- Draft to grant political rights to women (2003), rejected
- No-confidence vote on former Minister of Electricity, Water and Housing Affairs Dr Adel Al Subih (2003), rejected

of the Muslim Brotherhood. They want to snatch the prerogatives of HH the Amir," he stated.

On the deposits scandal in which he was implicated, he asserted the charges laid out by the opposition were merely for political gains, not criminal. He was acquitted by the court.

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Chulick

'Competition motivates learners of Japanese language in Kuwait'



Above: Some photos from the 10th Japanese Speech Contest.

Photos by Bassam Abu Shanab

Deanship of Community Service & Continuing Education at KU holds 10th Japanese Speech Contest

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: The Deanship of Community Service and Continuing Education at Kuwait University organized the 10th Japanese Speech Contest under the patronage of the Vice-President of Kuwait University for Support Services Dr Jassim Ramadan Al-Kandari in cooperation with the Japanese Embassy in Kuwait.

Takashi Ashiki and Chairman of the Japanese Society in Kuwait Jutaro Ito were present at the venue along with the Director of Continuing Learning, Training and Societal Development Fatima Bahman. HE Ambassador Takashi Ashiki expressed appreciation for the efforts exerted by the organizers of the contest, which is regarded as one of the cultural activities that the embassy has been organizing since 2007 with

the cooperation of Kuwait University represented by the Deanship of Community Service and Continuing Education. He affirmed that the speech contest aims at creating a suitable atmosphere for cultural exchange among the people of both nations. The ambassador said the competition has motivated learners of the Japanese language in Kuwait to compete and showcase their skills

by delivering a speech in the Japanese language concerning topics of their choice. He wished for more participation in the future contests. Meanwhile, Fatima Bahman expressed her delight over the fruitful cooperation between the deanship and the Japanese Embassy. She congratulated the winners of the contest and commended their skills in the Japanese language, add-

ing that this has led the deanship to hold a series of Japanese language courses of various levels. The results of the contests were announced by the judges of the contests comprising of HE the Ambassador Takashi Ashiki, Chairman of the Japanese Society in Kuwait Jutaro Ito and a student in Japan Fatima Fakhrdin. The winners were — Latifa Hadi, Khaled Al Bahri, and Mishar Hamad.

The contest aimed at improving the speaking and presentation skills of non-Japanese learners of the Japanese language and to give them an opportunity to demonstrate their ability. Most participants were Kuwaitis who have learnt Japanese in various manners. The event was also a good occasion to encourage Kuwaitis to the Japanese language. The event was open for the public.

Meet held in light of Amir's guidelines

Kuwait govt officials & NGOs ponder avenues for 'reforms'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14, (KUNA): Officials and members of the government economic affairs commission held a meeting on Wednesday with NGOs' representatives discussing possible steps to boost reforms at the national level and re-activate these associations' role in this respect. The commission, headed by Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh, has opted to specialize its first meeting for such a debate, reflecting the government keenness on placing economic issues on top of the task priorities, according to a committee statement. The meeting was held in light of guidelines by His Highness the Amir for greater efforts to push economic and



Al-Saleh

financial reforms forward, and in implementation of His Highness the Prime Minister's instructions. Such an approach is necessary for alleviating the State budget burden, trimming expenditure, improving the business environment, the labor market, privatizing many sectors and services and creating jobs. The meeting included representatives of the Graduates Society of Kuwait, Kuwait Bar Association, Kuwait Accountants and Auditors Association (KAAA), Kuwait Engineers Society, Kuwait Economic Society as well as specialists from government departments. The Government Commission also includes Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Dr Hind Al-Sebeeh, Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State for Utilities Yasser Abul, Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudan, Minister of Oil, Electricity and Water Issam Al-Marzouq.

News in Brief

MoH to rebuild trust: Health Minister Dr Jamal Al-Harbi confirmed Wednesday the ministry's determination toward reform and elimination of corruption in the Kuwaiti health sector to rebuild the public trust in the country's healthcare services. Al-Harbi made his remarks to reporters on the sidelines of a ceremony to receive well-wishers of his new ministerial post, reiterating his keenness to exert all efforts to reduce crowd congestion at hospitals and attain justice and equal opportunities for all. He also mentioned his meeting with the council of undersecretaries, during which they reviewed measures of rebuilding trust in Kuwait's health care and ways to reduce the need to re-open emergency clinics at hospitals, adding that among the number of solutions proposed during the meeting was building two mini-hospitals in each health area. (KUNA)

Kuwait hands out 1,500 heaters: Kuwait's Consul-General in Irbil announced Wednesday that around

1,500 heaters were handed out to the internally displaced persons of Mosul and residents of Khazir camp in eastern Mosul. This is the second time in less than a week that heaters have been distributed to internally displaced Iraqis, Consul-General Dr. Omar Al-Kandari told KUNA, reiterating Kuwait's keenness on providing various aid to the displaced Iraqis, particularly the new ones who are desperate for heating sources in light of current cold and freezing weather. These humanitarian aid are part of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's humanitarian initiatives as the Humanitarian Leader to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people, Al-Kandari noted. He also affirmed Kuwait's continuation to secure and meet the needs of displaced Iraqis, and support them through all means in order to protect them from the cold weather, pointing out the consulate's plan to provide winter necessities for over 50,000 displaced persons. (KUNA)

Awqaf minister says keen on maintaining moderation

Youth initiative launched by Kuwaiti envoy to Italy hailed

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14, (KUNA): Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri has affirmed his keenness on maintaining moderation and "combating extremism and thoughts of annihilation." Minister Al-Jabri, the sole legislator in the recently formed new cabinet, made the assertion during a ceremony marking his assumption of the senior post.

The newly-assigned minister affirmed his keenness on maintaining "moderation, his resolve to fight radicalism and destructive thoughts; because our religion is a religion of moderation," indicating that scholars in the country are supportive of this approach. The State of Kuwait has repeatedly affirmed that it advocates Islam as a religion of moderation and peaceful co-existence among diverse communities. Kuwait hosts communities from various nations of diverse faiths, with freedom to practice their beliefs. On his call to pray for the people of Aleppo, the minister replied, "this is the least we can offer to our stricken brothers in Aleppo" praying to His Almighty to relieve them of their hardships. The State of Kuwait has urged the Security Council to shoulder



KUNA photo President of University of Rome 'Tor Vergata' Prof Giuseppe Novelli and Kuwait's Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Sabah flanked by a group of GCC student delegation and GCC youth commission.

its responsibilities towards the tragic conditions in Aleppo and called for an irregular Arab meeting to look into the plight of the war-battered residents of the Syrian city. A Gulf student delegation has visited the University of Rome Tor Vergata, on the second day of a journey to Italy, as part of the "Youth Ambassadors of the Gulf" initiative. The 70-member delegation, led by the GCC Youth Commission Khaled Issa, was accompanied during the Tuesday visit by Kuwait's Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. They toured some of the university facilities, colleges and scientific centers. The GCC youth also met with President of University of Rome Tor Vergata professor Giuseppe

Novelli and a host of the professors. Novelli said such youth initiatives within the university and scientific framework, offered the best means for cultural communication among people. **Briefed** He briefed the delegation on the special nature of the university, and its keenness on promoting scientific and research cooperation, working within the framework of a network of 18 European universities, besides two American ones. Novelli noted that they are keen on boosting cooperation with the Gulf universities and scientific and research centers. Meanwhile, the GCC youth visited Gulf patients receiving treatment at the institute of

Mediterranean blood diseases at the Tor Vergata International Medical School. Talking to KUNA, professor Novelli lauded the youth initiative launched by the Kuwaiti envoy Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for promoting these bilateral ties. He said that the Rome Tor Vergata has concluded a host of agreements with universities in the Gulf, as part of an approach that includes opening departments for studying the Arabic language and Islamic culture. On his part, the Kuwaiti Ambassador Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled highly appreciated the Italian university and its keenness to act as a gate for further communication with youth of the Gulf, as well as for enhancing cultural and humanitarian values.

'Slovenia keen on ties with Kuwait'

FM Erjavec attends Slovenian-GCC meeting



The winners of the autistic children's Quran competition with the officials.

Quran memorisation competition for the autistic

Head of the Kuwait Center for Autism (KCA) Dr Samira Al-Saad said that Shaarefa Al-Subeih's Quran memorisation competition for the autistics is to encourage this segment of the Kuwaiti people to memorise the Holy Quran.

This came in a statement to KUNA

on Wednesday, on the sideline of the competition's ceremony, that came under the patronage of Sheikha Fareeha Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Secretary-General of Awqaf Mohammed Al-Jalahma.

Dr Al-Saad added that the purpose of

the competition, that was conducted for the fourth time for the people with special needs, is to give them the spiritual blessing of memorising the Holy Quran.

She added that this year's participants were too many and "we had 11 winners divided into three segments." (KUNA)

IMF's Dr Tamirisa says some 90 mln suffering due to conflicts

'World must take responsibilities of refugees'

DUBAI, Dec 14: During the first session of the Arab Strategy Forum, held in Dubai, Dr Natalia Tamirisa of the International Monetary Fund says the regional economic landscape in 2017 is likely to vary widely across Arab countries. She noted that "there would be discussions around regional economic predictions, conflicts and oil prices, all of which constitute drivers for these countries."

Dr Tamirisa grouped the Arab countries into three categories: countries experiencing conflict, such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya; oil-exporting countries, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Algeria; and oil-importing countries, such as Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon, and Morocco.

Dr Tamirisa explained the grave difficulties faced by these countries because of conflict zones. Around 90 million people are suffering from deteriorating economies, while neighbouring countries are forced to bear the additional economic and social burdens of refugee migration.

She pointed out that this burden should be shouldered by the global community, and not solely by these neighbouring countries. Priority must be given to saving human lives and providing economic necessities, a responsibility for the whole world, she noted, and not just this region.

The IMF stated that the agreement between OPEC members and non-member oil-producing countries has resulted in a rise in oil prices, although these are not expected to return to the \$100 per barrel prices, but rather will fluctuate between \$50-60 per barrel.

Prices

Oil-producing countries — GCC countries and Algeria — will see a drop in oil prices and may have to face the possibility of economic stagnation in the medium term. This will require budget adjustments and more concerted efforts toward economic diversification.

Dr Tamirisa also indicated that measures which oil-producing countries have been implementing, such as cost-cutting and budget-rational-

isation could have negative implications.

Governments should consider developing sectors such as tourism, industry and transport, among others. Many have made significant progress by decreasing subsidies for electricity and fuel and launching projects aimed at economic diversification, a feat not easily attained, and one which requires spending reform.

Advantage

Oil-importing countries like Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia and Morocco should take advantage of low oil prices to implement integral economic reforms, noted Dr Tamirisa.

Egypt and Tunisia have already seen promising progress, but Tunisia and Lebanon still need to lower their public debt, implement additional economic reform and empower the private sector.

She further recommended that Tunisia and Lebanon create more job opportunities for youth to avert a potential rise in unemployment, if economic diversification is not implemented. Studies already indi-

cate that one in 4 young people in these two countries will be out of work, if the economic situation persists.

Dr Tamirisa called for Egypt and Morocco to continue supporting the economic reform underway, and expects economic growth in the coming year to be low, with little tangible improvement to living conditions and job opportunities.

This is why, she noted, the private sector needs to be empowered to contribute, and diversification measures should be put in place to address unemployment.

Dr Tamirisa concluded by saying that "GDP growth in oil-exporting countries will be slower than that in developing countries, and they will face many challenges in the coming year, but these countries must provide the light at the end of the darkened tunnel.

We need 2017 to be a year of economic reform and planning in order to further development and create new opportunities for young Arab men and women".

LJUBLJANA, Slovenia, Dec 14, (KUNA): The Republic of Slovenia is keen on developing relations with the GCC countries, especially Kuwait, said Karl Erjavec, Slovenian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Tuesday.

Speaking to KUNA on the sidelines of the two-day Slovenian-GCC conference, Erjavec said that this will not be the last meeting of this kind to be held in Slovenia, stressing that his country was looking forward for future events aimed at boosting cooperation between the two sides.

The current meeting will look into all suitable measures to enhance cooperation between the GCC and Slovenia, said the minister.

Slovenia, as part of the EU, is willing to boost ties with the Gulf States, said Erjavec who alluded to the 25th meeting of the EU and GCC Foreign Ministers back in July.

The Foreign Minister said that the EU, as one of the strongest partners to the GCC bloc, had signed several agreements to strengthen commercial and economic ties, revealing that the two sides signed an agreement back in April 2016 to boost economic relations.

Relations

On relations with Kuwait, Slovenian Minister said that holding dialogue with the Gulf state was within his country's top priorities.

Previous agreements signed between Slovenia and Kuwait had provided solid grounds for the two nations to pursue more cooperation in the near future, said the minister who commended the Kuwaiti participation in the current Slovenian-GCC conference.

Kuwait and Slovenia currently focused their cooperation within the commercial level, said Minister Erjavec who hoped that the two countries will increase their commercial exchange from the 2015 sum of 14.2 million euro.

The Minister took the chance to invite Kuwaitis and GCC business personnel to invest in his country, revealing that the health tourism sector was one of the major business attractions in Slovenia.

Meanwhile, Erjavec touched on the issue of Kuwait's bid for a non-permanent seat as representative of Asia and the Pacific in the UNSC for 2018-19, saying that the strong bilateral relations will reflect positively on Slovenia's stance on the issue.

OIC-CERT meeting held in Jeddah

OIC eyes cybersecurity unit to combat cyber 'terrorism'

JEDDAH, Dec 14: The Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Dr Yousef A. Al-Othaimen said the Organisation is considering establishing a Cyber Security Unit within its General Secretariat in 2017 to prevent and combat Cyber Terrorism.

The OIC Secretary General made the statement during the OIC-Computer Emergency Response Team's (OIC-CERT) Annual General Meeting and Conference 2016 with the theme "Towards Cyber Resilient Ummah" held from Dec 11-14, 2016, in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

"The OIC is considering to establish a Cybersecurity Unit within the General Secretariat in 2017 with the objective of promoting and developing cooperation among OIC Member States to prevent and combat cyberterrorism" said Al-Othaimen.

"We all realize that the nature of the internet and cyberspace is not confined to the physical boundary of a country. Hence there is a strong need to strengthen the OIC-CERT, which is meant to establish cross border collaborations to share information and initiatives to counter cyber threats," he added.

Al-Othaimen therefore urged OIC Member States, who are not yet members of OIC-CERT, to exert more efforts to join the organization to make the important mechanism more effective in dealing with cyber security issues.

Also speaking at the conference, Eng Badar Ali Said Al Salehi, Chair, OIC-CERT and Director General, Oman National Cert (OCERT) noted that the conference aligns well with the objectives and ef-

orts OIC-CERT is putting to address the uprising issues of cyber-attacks and their significant impacts on the

economy, defense, Security, energy, financial services, telecommunication and transportation.

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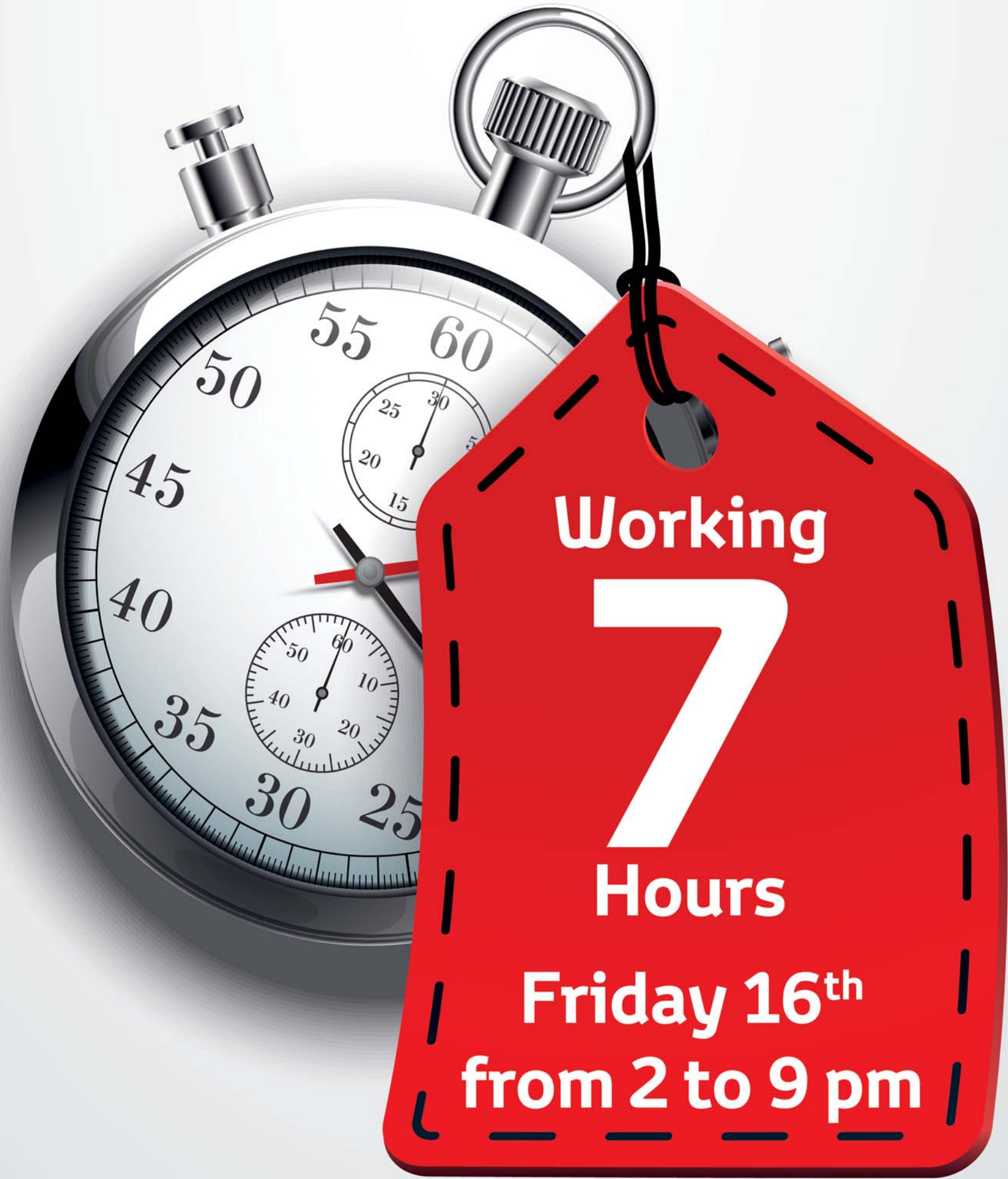
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Rollback eyed on petrol prices

New Parliament urged to work on reducing flat rent

By Cintra Fernandes
Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: In this week's Arab Times online poll, readers weighed in on the issues they would like the newly elected Members of Kuwait's National Assembly to tackle. Half of the respondents would like to see apartment rents regulated.

Kuwaiti voters cast their ballots to elect 50 lawmakers on Nov 26. 50 percent of voters would like for more controls on apartment rent according to considerations of size and locality. "I think most people are concerned with what hits their wallets the hardest. For many families, housing in Kuwait is the biggest expenditure and the costs seem to be exorbitant. I think it would benefit us greatly if apartments were regulated according to the size, locality and features offered", a reader commented.

"We've been reading news reports of committees being formed to look at this issue. But so far nothing has been done. Apartments keep shrinking in size while taking a larger chunk of my salary. I think the Parliament has the authority to bring about fast change in this regard, I hope this new Parliament looks into it", another respondent shared.

12 percent of poll voters called for a roll back on increased petrol prices. "I was very unhappy with the government's decisions to increase the price of petrol. I hope the new Parliament reinstates the subsidy and does not increase prices for water, electricity and other resources as well", a reader told the Arab Times.

"The austerity measures adopted by the old Parliament is the cause many of them have lost their seats in this election. A lot of the new

members campaigned against these fiscal measures and won. People in Kuwait have been enjoying subsidies for so long now, they do not want any cut backs. Plus there is a general view that the funds sourced through this measure will be mis-managed", a young Kuwaiti professional shared.

25 percent of respondents felt that the Parliament should work towards ending the 'Wasta' system in Kuwait. "I think most of Kuwait's endemic problems will be solved if wasta and corruption are targeted. The government should implement strict laws against the practice and automate government services for greater transparency", another reader remarked.

6 percent of voters felt that the lawmakers should prioritise control and better medical facilities. "The hospitals in some governorates are in a very bad state. I hope the government will prioritise health and invest more in this sector which seems to be getting neglected of late", a reader pointed out.

Only 4 percent hoped that the new Parliament would scrap the DNA law. "I think the DNA law is the most dangerous law that is not getting enough media attention. It is a threat to everyone's privacy and the new Parliament needs to reverse the decision", a concerned voter stated.

3 percent of voters felt that all new traffic laws should go through Parliament's approval. "The recent action taken by the MoI of removing license plates would have been met with resistance if it had come up in Parliament and it could have been better thought out and fine-tuned. Another positive aspect of traffic policies passing through the Parliament will be that the public will be aware of it rather than being surprised by the cops."



Sunset as viewed from the coast of Kuwait. (KUNA - Jaber Abdulkhalq)

Forged passports for Asians in travel ban seized; one held

Ethiopian woman fights off likely rapist

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: Personnel from the Customs department in co-operation with the police have arrested a Bangladeshi for attempting to smuggle into the country six forged passports, reports Al-Shahed daily.

During interrogation he admitted that he planned to sell these documents to Bangladeshis wanted by law in Kuwait and carry a travel ban.

Rape bid thwarted: Securitymen are looking for an unidentified person for kidnapping an Ethiopian woman, attempting to rape her and tearing her clothes, reports Al-Anba daily.

This happened when the 26-year-old victim sought the help of the suspect to take her to the Fintas Police Station.

The suspect reportedly offered to take her to the police station and instead drove her to a desert area and tried to rape her and when the victim fought him back he tore her clothes and left her semi-naked in an open area.

A case of kidnapping and attempted rape has been filed at the police station.

Porn stuff seized: Director of the Jahra Security Directorate Major-General Al Mahdi has issued an order to refer a 40-year-old Kuwaiti to the Criminal Investigations Department for possessing and 'distributing' porno material to customers, reports Al-Rai daily.

During initial investigations police discovered the banned contraband was smuggled into the country from an unidentified European country. The man was arrested at a checkpoint in Rahiya.

Indian arrested: Personnel from the Sharq Police Station have arrested a 50-year-old Indian following a case filed against him by his sponsor, reports Al-Shahed daily.

The suspect has been referred to Police Station of the area.

Meanwhile, the Doha customs officers have foiled an attempt to smuggle large quantities of foodstuffs into the country, reports Al-Shahed daily.

The daily added, the foodstuff came from Iran and the bill of lading mentioned the foodstuffs as animal fodder.



Lt-Gen Abdullah Al-Nawaf with senior army officers.

Kuwait Army 25th Commando Brigade win race

Under the patronage and in the presence of Deputy Chief of the General Staff of Kuwait Army Lieutenant General Abdullah Al-Nawaf, Kazma military field hosted the two-kilometer military race for the 2016/2017 season organized by the Union of Military Sports Command.

The race consisted of various challenges such as barbed wire crossing, ladder climbing and wet land crawling, among other obstacles that soldiers encounter in war zones.

Winners were Kuwait Army 25th Commando Brigade in first place, whereas the second place was

taken by 26th Al-Soor Mechanized Brigade and the Sixth Liberation Mechanized Brigade came in third.

In the individual race, Captain Dhari Shuweil' came first, followed in second place by Warrant Officer Abdullah Yusuf and in third place was First Sergeant Abdul-Aziz Fahad Al-Azmi.

registered against the man.

Absconders caught: The Jahra police recently raided the home of a bedouin who was wanted by law and had been sentenced in absentia for five years in prison has been arrested and referred to the concerned authorities, reports a local Arabic daily.

In another, unrelated incident, personnel from the Ahmadi Security Department have arrested a Kuwaiti who had been sentenced in absentia to seven years imprisonment. The suspect was arrested in Fahaaheel.

Farm set on fire: Police have arrested an unidentified Kuwaiti for setting fire to the farm of a Kuwaiti in Abdali, reports Al-Shahed daily.

The man was arrested red-handed by the Al-Qashaniyah police. At the time of arrest the arsonist was under the influence of alcohol.

Police have also seized from him a bottle of imported booze.

The motive for setting the fire to the farm is still unclear.

19 cash frauds: The Khaitan Police have referred a Kuwaiti who had been sentenced in absentia in connection with 19 fraud cases worth KD 800,000 to the concerned authorities, reports Al-Shahed daily.

He was also taken to the General Department for Drugs Control because at the time of arrest he was in possession of drugs.

Customer beaten: An Egyptian has filed a complaint with a Police Station accusing a Syrian butcher of assaulting him and causing injury, reports Al-Anba daily. The victim said he was beaten because he complained about the quality of meat. The victim has been admitted to the Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital.



Deputy FM Khaled Al-Jarallah receives the Pakistani Ambassador to Kuwait Ghulam Dastagir.

Al-Jarallah meets Pakistani envoy

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah met on Wednesday with the Pakistani Ambassador to Kuwait Ghulam Dastagir discussing the

bilateral relations between the states of Kuwait and Pakistan in addition to regional and international issues. (KUNA)

Other Voices

Peaceful 'bombs' of the Pope

By Ahmad Al-Sarraf

Voltaire said: 'We have a natural right to make use of our pens as of our tongue, at our peril, risk and hazard'. He added: 'To hold a pen is to be at war but this war cannot be legitimate if the situation honestly did not support the issue of what you speak or write'.

The head of the Roman Catholic Church has exploded 'several bombs' since taking over the papacy in the Vatican.

The importance of the Pope being head of the largest religious gathering known to mankind is there are an estimated 1.2 billion Roman Catholics in the world and more than 40 percent of the world's Catholics live in Latin America.

The Pope said, 'Through humility, soul searching, and prayerful contemplation we have gained a new understanding of certain dogmas. The church no longer believes in a literal hell where people suffer. This doctrine is compatible with the infinite love of God. God is not a judge but a friend and a lover of humanity. God seeks not to condemn but only to embrace.'

'Hell is merely a metaphor for the isolated soul, which like all souls ultimately will be united in love with God', Pope Francis declared.

In a speech the Pope claimed 'All religions are true, because they are true in the hearts of all those who believe in

them. What other kind of truth is there? In the past, the church has been harsh on those it deemed morally wrong or sinful.

'Today, we no longer judge. Like a loving father, we never condemn our children. Our church is big enough for heterosexuals and homosexuals, for the pro-life and the pro-choice! For conservatives and liberals, even communists are welcome and have joined us. We all love and worship the same God.'

He added: 'The church has witnessed important developments, and today is the religion of the modernists. He said it was time to give up on intolerance and recognize that religious truth changes and evolves; they are not absolute or carved stone above.'

The Pope also said: Through acts of love and affection, we can make a non-believer acknowledge God and then free his soul and make him an active participant in the redemption of mankind.

He added: 'When we spread love and beauty in the world, we touch God and recognize Him.'

The Bible is a beautiful sacred book, but as a whole like old great books, there are some parts that need to be reviewed to fit with the message of love and truth according to our new understanding.

The Pope concluded: 'We will begin in the nomination of women cardinals and bishops and priests. I hope one day in the future to have a woman Pope to open doors for women as they are opened to men.'

Now, is it possible to learn something from the words of the Pope?

email: habibi.enta1@gmail.com



Al-Sarraf

Cleric Rifai accused of violating nationality law

By Jaber Al-Hamoud
Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: Lawyer Mohammad Abbas has submitted a petition at the Public Prosecution against a cleric Fuad Al-Rifai, accusing the latter of violating the national unity law.

He based his accusation on blogs and video clips posted on social media that can be regarded as malicious against Kuwaiti Shites and their faith.

In the petition, Lawyer Abbas accused the cleric of posting statements wherein he described Hussainiyat as an innovation and

stressing that every innovation amounts to straying from the right path and that straying leads to hell. He said Hussainiyat is a place where pious people gather and discuss the life history of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), his family and disciples. He stated that Shiites in Kuwait also use it as places for festivities, adding some of them are over 100 years old and represent an age-long tradition in the society.

Lawyer Abbas stressed that Article 1 of Law No. 19/2012 criminalizes any form of agitation and incitement of public through any means. He also cited Article 29 of

Law No. 31/1970 with amended provisions in the penal law concerning hatred and disdain towards any sect, initiating sectarian or tribal crises, and publishing ideologies to encourage racial, class or group discrimination.

Woman gets custody: The Family Court presided over by Judge Meshal Al-Sneedah has granted a woman the custody of her two children and ordered her estranged husband (the father of the two children) to pay monthly expenses of KD 130 for the care of both children starting from the date the lawsuit was filed.

The court also ordered the man to pay the housemaid's monthly wage of KD 70 from the same date and the recruitment cost of KD 500, as well as monthly rent of KD 120 from the same date and the legal fees.

The plaintiff counsel Lawyer Mohammad Khalil Al-Qattan who filed the case on behalf of his client, said she was married to the defendant and had two children with him. She is currently nursing the children to which she has legitimate right. However, the estranged husband refused to pay for their expenses despite his financial stability and comfortable lifestyle.



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Protesters wave flags during a demonstration in solidarity with the inhabitants of the embattled Syrian city of Aleppo, outside the entrance to Downing Street, in central London on Dec 13. Civilians and rebel fighters were start evacuating from Syria's Aleppo 'within hours' under a deal reached Tuesday that would end years of opposition resistance in the city. Rebel officials, Russia and Turkey confirmed the agreement which, if implemented, would mark a major victory for President Bashar al-Assad over opposition forces who rose up against him in 2011. (AFP)

Brexit

'May come home after Brexit'

Britons in Spain fret over their healthcare

MIJAS, Spain, Dec 14, (RTRS): British pensioner Judy Swatridge's spine is held together by titanium pins and plates since breaking her back over 10 years ago. She needs regular check-ups and takes prescription drugs for illnesses including diabetes and high blood pressure.

The 75-year-old is one of tens of thousands of British retirees in Spain worried that they might lose their free access to Spanish health care, currently assured by European Union law, as a result of Britain's exit from the bloc.

"I'd have to go back to the UK, I'd have no choice," Swatridge, who sold her house in Britain to move to Spain 13 years ago, said after attending a meeting of pensioners with similar concerns in the southern coastal town of Mijas.

"I've looked into it," she added.

Britons retiring to Spain are attracted not only by a warm climate and Mediterranean lifestyle but also by free access to a well-regarded health system, with London ultimately picking up the bill by refunding Madrid for their health costs.

It is unclear if that EU-mandated arrangement will continue as the issue is likely to become tangled in divorce negotiations set to begin by March. Pensioners meanwhile worry they may have to return to Britain's stretched health system, another example of unintended Brexit consequences rippling across Europe.

A return of ailing pensioners to Britain would threaten to further strain its National Health Service (NHS) where patients can wait for hours in hospital corridors before they are treated – not an outcome envisaged by Brexit campaigners.

The Brexit campaign had argued the NHS would benefit from a break with the EU, saying funds no longer spent abroad on EU projects could be freed up to boost health funding at home.

Spain is the most popular European retirement destination for Britons, home to around 300,000. Around a third of them are aged over 65. Together, Spain and Portugal account for almost a quarter of all Britons living in Europe, U.N. data shows.

In total, more than 1 million Britons live in Europe, and over 3 million EU citizens in Britain – potential bargaining chips in the upcoming divorce between London and Brussels.

British Prime Minister Theresa May has pushed for an "early resolution" to the anxiety facing foreign residents. But EU leaders have ruled out talks on mutual residence rights until she triggers the exit process under Article 50 of the EU treaty.

Greater Britain is by far the biggest user of Spain's state-funded, universal health care system amongst foreign nationals, social security figures show, running up a bill over three times greater than the next biggest users, the French, last year.

Britons cost Spain 285 million euros (\$304 million) in health care last year, including tourists and pensioners and accounting for nearly half of Spain's total spend on foreign European Union nationals.

This dwarves the cost of Spaniards' medical care in Britain of less than 150,000 euros last year – or just 0.05 percent of Britons' cost to Spain, according to Spanish social security data. Spaniards living in Britain tend to be of working age.

Under rules governed by European law, Spain and Britain compensate each other for their citizens' medical care bills. This more or less covers costs on an annual basis, Spanish social security figures from the last nine years show.

A British government spokeswoman said nothing had yet been decided on the future of reciprocal healthcare arrangements, adding that Britain remained a full EU member with all the accompanying rights until exit negotiations were concluded.



British Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond reacts after making a Christmas decoration during the Chancellor's annual Christmas party, this year with the charity Starlight, at 11 Downing Street in central London on Dec 13. (AFP)

Britain

EU proposes new rules: The European Commission proposed new rules on Tuesday on what social benefits governments must pay to citizens from other EU states – a key for people concerned about immigration and "benefit tourism".

The package of measures, delayed by nearly a year as Brussels hoped to avoid Britain voting to leave the EU, is designed to clarify rights of EU expatriate workers and states' obligations on unemployment benefits and social security.

The new rules will confirm a series of EU court decisions that backed mainly rich northwestern states in rejecting "benefit tourism" by poor Europeans who did not look for, or find, work after arriving.

"To sum up in one word, it is about fairness," said EU Commissioner for employment and social affairs Marianne Thyssen.

Under the proposal, jobseekers will be able to take unemployment benefit with them to a different country for six months, rather than three.

Economically inactive people would, however, not be able to claim social security benefits abroad, setting out that freedom of movement of workers is not a full right to reside for everyone.

One element on which former prime minister David Cameron had secured a promise of change before the Brexit vote is absent. States will continue to have to pay full benefits to children of EU expatriates working in their countries, even if those children live in other countries with lower allowances and living costs.

Thyssen said the payment for such exported benefits was less than 1 percent of child benefit costs. (RTRS)

Johnson pokes fun at PM: British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has publicly poked fun at Prime Minister Theresa May, telling dozens of foreign ambassadors she was so cosmopolitan that she sported leather trousers like German "lederhosen".

Johnson, known in Britain and beyond for his often outlandish persona and dishevelled mop of platinum hair, said his country would not turn its back on the world after Brexit and cast the United Kingdom as a cosmopolitan consumer of imports.

"We are gluttons in this country for imports. We buy huge quantities of stuff, particularly of course from our friends in the European Union, as of course we shall continue to do so when we do that great free trade deal," he told ambassadors.

Johnson quipped that Britain had even managed to export Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage, who enjoys a friendship

Britain

Leaks, EU diplomats suggest there's no strategy

PM keeping Brexit plan secret

LONDON, Dec 14, (RTRS): If Prime Minister Theresa May has a detailed Brexit plan, it is very secret.

Since the June 23 referendum, May has been clear only that the United Kingdom will leave the European Union and that she will formally trigger exit talks by the end of March 2017.

May says it would be foolish to reveal her cards before one of the most complicated negotiations in post-World War Two European history that could decide the fate of both her premiership and the world's fifth largest economy.

"It is absolutely right that we do not set out at this stage every single detail of our proposed negotiating strategy, because that would be the best way to get the worst possible deal for Britain," May told parliament when asked whether she had a coherent plan.

May attends an EU summit in Brussels on Thursday but she has not been invited to a dinner where leaders of the other 27 EU member states will discuss their approach to Brexit.

Britons' vote to leave the bloc has opened a huge number of questions including whether exporters will keep tariff-free access to the single European market and British-based banks will still be able to serve continental clients, not to mention immigration and the future rights of the many EU citizens already living in the United Kingdom.

Demands

Brexiters say there is little point laying out detailed demands as, with France and Germany due to hold elections next year and the future of a new Italian government uncertain, it is still unclear who will be in power in Paris, Berlin and Rome.

Another unknown is how Donald Trump, who once said Brexit was wonderful, could affect the divorce proceedings after he becomes US president next month.

Beyond the secrecy, though, there are signs of muddle.

When May pushed for informal negotiations with German Chancellor Angela Merkel at a Nov. 18 meeting in Berlin, Europe's most powerful leader blocked the attempt, according to people involved with the negotiations.

After months of refusing to speculate about Britain's negotiating position, Brexit Secretary David Davis told parliament this month – almost in passing – that he would consider making payments to the EU to get access to markets, a move that sent sterling up almost 2 cents on the day.

The government fought and lost a legal challenge in the High Court

'They feel like foreigners in UK'

'Great uncertainty' for French

LONDON, Dec 14, (AFP): France's ambassador to Britain Sylvie Bermann has warned of "great uncertainty" among the French community in the wake of the Brexit vote, in a House of Lords report published on Wednesday.

Speaking to the Lords' EU Justice Sub-Committee, Bermann said the French community has "a lot of questions" about the consequences of Britain's June referendum to leave the European Union.

"It is worried because of the great uncertainty about its future in the UK; its members have invested a lot in this country, both personally and professionally."

"It is also worried, because in the aftermath of the referendum some French nationals were subjected to negative or aggressive language," Bermann said in comments published in the House of Lords report.

The French ambassador said she and her colleagues had received testimonies of such abuse following the Brexit vote, coming after decades of Britain being seen as "a success story in terms of dynamism and respect for others".

Bermann estimated 300,000 French people were living in Britain and said some were ready to change their plans after the referendum.

"Some of them told me that before 23 June they felt like Londoners and now they feel like foreigners, which is different."

"Many express a sense of sadness and are waiting for answers," she said.

The envoy's comments echoed

those made by her Polish counterpart, Arkady Rzegocki, and Romanian ambassador Dan Mihalache, who also spoke to the committee for its report on the impact of Brexit on rights.

Rzegocki said there were around 984,000 Poles in Britain, while Mihalache said there were 272,000 Romanians living there.

In its assessment the House of Lords committee said the government had a moral duty to provide clarity to EU citizens in Britain.

"The government is under a moral obligation to provide certainty and legal clarity to all EU nationals working, living and studying in the UK, who contribute so significantly to the economic and cultural life of the UK. It should do so urgently," the report said.

It further called on the government to explain its actions to combat xenophobia, while also warning that EU workers filled gaps in the labour market that cannot be filled by British workers.

"The longer their future is uncertain, the less attractive a place to live and work the UK will be, and the greater labour market gaps will be," the committee said.

Prime Minister Theresa May has repeatedly said she wants to protect the status of EU nationals already living in Britain, although she has stopped short of guaranteeing their rights.

The premier has promised to start the two-year negotiating period to leave the EU – by triggering Article 50 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty -- by the end of March 2017.

That memo was itself promptly leaked to the media.

At least five executives of major British companies told Reuters they had sought clarity but been given none by the government.

Foreign diplomats say there is no unified British position on Brexit but rather a host of different utterances, both public and private, from various government ministers.

"I simply do not know what the Brits want: they seem to want access to the single market and limits to immigration," a senior diplomat from an EU member said on condition of anonymity. "Beyond that, I am unsure. It is all unclear. Perhaps it is a great cynical strategy to be unclear but I am not convinced."

rights that was established by the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht.

Britain wants to control immigration from EU countries as part of Brexit, though EU leaders say Britain cannot have full access to EU markets if it does.

"The last time I spoke to so many ambassadors, I'm afraid a rather curious account of what had I said emerged ... perhaps the media misunderstood something," Johnson told ambassadors at a reception in London late on Tuesday. (RTRS)



Cameron



Johnson



Acclaimed Lebanese Restaurant Babel arrives in Kuwait

Babel promises unique dining experience in iconic new location



The award-winning Lebanese brand Babel, known for its authenticity, exquisite culinary offering and dining experience, has opened its first outlet outside of Lebanon at a stunning custom-built location overlooking the Arabian Gulf in Kuwait. Babel has been providing unique culinary experiences to Lebanese diners since 2009, and has become known for its progressive cuisine through a contemporary fusion of flavours, using the finest Lebanese ingredients. Babel is also known for its breathtaking architecture, dazzling décor and spacious interiors.

The opening of the magnificent new outlet on Gulf Road, Kuwait, was celebrated at a ribbon cutting event hosted by Dory Rizk, Chief Executive Officer of Afkar Holding Group, and Mohammed Alshaya, Executive Chairman of M.H. Alshaya Co.

"This opening marks the first major expansion of the Babel brand outside Lebanon and represents the largest development deal in Babel's history. We see Babel as a beacon of culinary sophistication, using

food as a common language that brings together the best ingredients of the Lebanese cuisine," said Mr. Rizk.

"We are committed to remaining true to our traditions while adapting to the cultures and tastes of our new locations. By partnering with one of the world's leading international franchise operators, Alshaya, we are confident that Babel's expansion strategy is on the right track," added Mr Rizk. Mohammed Alshaya, Executive Chairman of M.H. Alshaya Co., said: "We are delighted to bring this unique Lebanese dining concept to local diners, adding significantly to the wide range of dining choices that we already offer our customers in Kuwait. Babel shares our passion for excellence and customer service, and we look forward to embarking on a journey of growth and success with the brand."

Babel goes to great lengths to deliver the highest quality cuisine. This starts with the most authentic ingredients: the olive oil is made of Lebanese green

olives pressed on traditional stone mills, while sunny cucumbers are hand-picked and pickled in-house to ensure consistent quality and taste. Plates are garnished with authentic Lebanese pine nuts, and sumac, a traditional Lebanese spice, is picked in season from organic lands.

Babel's History

In 2009, Babel was established in the town of Dbayeh, Lebanon, known for its historic location and its role as a melting pot for different civilisations and cultures. This heritage of bridging cultures and traditions is strongly echoed in Babel's approach, tailoring a specific menu based on the location and region of each Babel outlet.

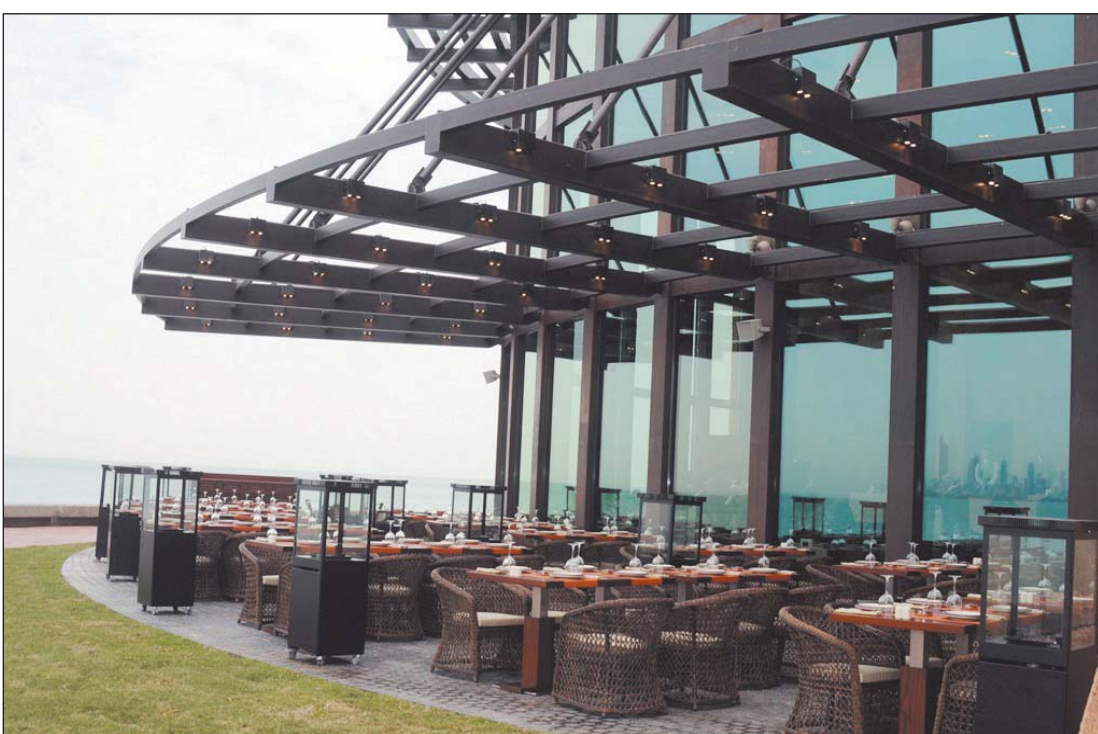
With their first outlet in Dbayeh, Babel combined concept, design, mood and cuisine, recreating an extraordinary atmosphere by using exterior elements of a castle's yard to create an exceptional dining experience.

In 2012, their second location came to life in the

heart of Zeitounay Bay, Beirut. Babel Bay paid homage to Beirut with a meticulously styled interior replicating the capital's shoreline, positioned on top of 7 sandstones to symbolize the 7 destructions which Beirut has faced.

In 2013, Babel Bahr landed on the seashore of Amchit. The new location combined Mediterranean elements, welcoming guests to a majestic lighthouse illuminating the shoreline. The venue immerses visitors in a unique journey where food, service, ambiance and quality come together. In 2016, the new Babel Kuwait offers a grand environment, with sophisticated and exclusive decor rich in detail, including an olive tree of around 1000 years old, and a sweeping view of the Kuwait city skyline and the Arabian Gulf.

Babel Kuwait can be found on the waterfront of the Gulf Road, facing Marina Waves. To find out more about Babel, follow them on Facebook @ BabelKuwait and Instagram @BabelKuwait.



World News Roundup



Family members mourn during a funeral ceremony for police officer Tugay Can Kizilirmak, 26, who was killed with dozens others late Saturday outside the Besiktas football club stadium Vodafone Arena in Istanbul, in Ankara, Turkey on Dec 13. Turkey's police rounded up more than 100 members of a Kurdish political party on Monday as the country mourned the dozens killed in a bombing attack near an Istanbul soccer stadium. (AP)

Palestine

Peace confab to be postponed

Palestinians no longer believe in 2-state deal

RAMALLAH, West Bank, Dec 14, (Agencies): Two-thirds of Palestinians believe a two-state solution to their conflict with Israel is no longer possible, a poll said Tuesday.

The share of those who lost faith in such a deal rose from 56 percent in September to 65 percent now, probably due to an acceleration of settlement activity, said the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey research.

Most in the international community still back the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, even though a deal appears to be increasingly complicated, in part because of the continued growth of settlements. Gaps between Israeli and Palestinian leaders remain wide, preventing any meaningful talks since 2009.

The poll was conducted last week among 1,270 Palestinians and had an error margin of three percentage points.

The survey also found that 54 percent have no faith in the newly elected leadership of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah movement. The vote at a recent Fatah convention affirmed aging party stalwarts in top jobs and was seen as a move to sideline exiled Abbas rival Mohamed Dahlan.

In a related development, Abbas decided to strip four legislators seen as close to Dahlan of their parliamentary immunity, taking yet another step to prevent a Dahlan political comeback.

Strip

In the past, only the Palestinian parliament could strip legislators of their immunity. Parliament has been defunct since 2007, when the violent split between Fatah and rival Hamas produced separate governments in the West Bank and Gaza. Abbas has ruled autonomous West Bank enclaves by decree since then.

Fatah said on its Facebook page that the four legislators would be investigated about suspicions of embezzlement of funds and weapons dealing.

Najat Abu Baker, one of the legislators being targeted, said the decision amounts to "suppression of the freedom of expression." She said she was not notified of any possible legal steps against her. Tuesday's survey said 60 percent of Palestinians reject the court ruling giving Abbas the right to move against legislators.

□ □ □

France will postpone a proposed Middle East peace conference in Paris to January next year, Voice of Palestine radio reported on Wednesday, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refusing to participate and US attendance in doubt.

France has been trying to persuade Netanyahu, who has repeatedly rejected the conference proposal, to meet with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in the French capital to try to revive moribund peace talks between the two sides.

Voice of Palestine radio quoted Palestinian Ambassador to France Salman El Herfi as saying that Paris had informed the Palestinians of its delay to the peace conference until January "to make better preparations."

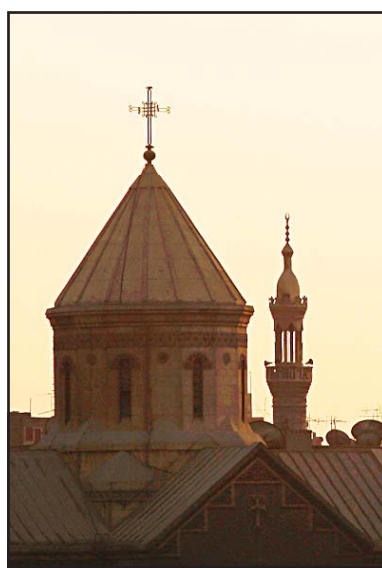
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A Palestinian stabbed an Israeli policeman with a screwdriver in annexed east Jerusalem's Old City before being shot dead on Wednesday, police said.

The attacker "produced a screwdriver and stabbed a policeman in the head, lightly injuring him", police spokeswoman Luba Samri said in a statement.

"Security forces neutralised the terrorist." She later confirmed he had died of his injuries after being taken to a local hospital.

The assailant struck in the heart of the Old City, a major draw for foreign tourists and pilgrims but the site of several attacks over the past year.



A church and mosque are silhouetted as the sun sets in Cairo, Egypt on Dec 13. 25 Christians were killed Sunday at the city's main Coptic cathedral in what was one of the deadliest attacks on the religious minority in recent memory. The bomb went off while worshippers were attending Sunday Mass at a chapel adjacent to St Mark's Cathedral. (AP)



Gulen



Koenders

Mideast

'Long arm' of Turkish state: The Netherlands said on Wednesday it would challenge every instance of the "long arm" of Ankara extending to its territory, after a report the Turkish embassy had sent home a list of Dutch Turks who might have sympathized with July's failed coup.

The Dutch foreign minister summoned Turkey's ambassador in The Hague after a report in De Telegraaf newspaper citing Yusuf Acar, who is both a diplomat and the chairman of the Dutch arm of Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs, as acknowledging he had compiled the list of "Gulenists".

Ankara accuses supporters of exiled cleric Fethullah Gulen of backing the short-lived coup in which over 240 people were killed. In Turkey, over 100,000 people have been detained, suspended or sacked from judiciary, media and civil service and tensions have spread within the 500,000 Dutch-Turkish community, with some suspected Gulenist sympathizers facing death threats.

In a statement, Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders said the Telegraaf report was "worrying."

"We're going to ask for clarification about this," Koenders said.

"In addition, we are going to engage with the Turkish authorities and the Diyanet organization in Ankara. That's part of our policy of challenging every incident that concerns the "long arm" with our Turkish counterparts."

Acar told De Telegraaf that he had assembled the list from publicly available sources in his capacity as an employee of the Turkish Embassy, and not as leader of the religious affairs directorate, the Diyanet.

Koenders said that "if true, that means the combination of a diplomatic status with

Egypt

Military court jails Brotherhood supporters

IS claims Cairo church bombing

CAIRO, Dec 14, (Agencies): The Islamic State group claimed responsibility on Tuesday for a bomb attack on a Cairo church that killed 25 people, the first claim for one of the worst attacks on the Coptic Christian community in recent memory.

IS identified the suicide bomber who carried out Sunday's attack by the pseudonym Abu Abdallah al-Masri in a statement circulated on social media on Tuesday.

The bomber "got in between the crowd" and detonated his explosive belt, the jihadist group said in the statement.

The group said it would continue attacks against "every infidel and apostate in Egypt, and everywhere".

President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi named the suicide bomber as Mahmud Shafik Mohamed Mostafa, 22, during a funeral for the victims on Monday.

Egyptian authorities are battling an Islamist insurgency led by an Egyptian affiliate of IS.

Targeted

While most of the insurgents' attacks have mainly targeted police and military in northern Sinai province, the jihadists have also targeted security forces and government officials in Cairo.

The attacks have worsened since the July 2013 ouster of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi. The ouster was led by Sisi, who was defence minister at the time.

Following the deadly dispersal by security forces of two pro-Morsi protest camps in Cairo in August 2013, mobs attacked more than 40 churches nationwide, as well as dozens of schools, houses and businesses belonging to Copts.

They pointed to the appearance of Coptic Pope Tawadros II next to Sisi

in July 2013, when the then army chief — also surrounded by Muslim and opposition figures — announced Morsi's removal on television.

Sisi said Mostafa, the suspected suicide bomber, had detonated his explosive belt at the Saint Peter and Saint Paul Church, which is adjacent to Saint Mark's Cathedral, the seat of the Coptic pope.

The interior ministry said late on Monday that Mostafa had been identified by DNA tests from body parts which matched that of his family.

It also said Mostafa was working with a group that received logistical and financial support from Muslim Brotherhood members residing in Qatar.

The Muslim Brotherhood has denied any involvement with the incident.

The authorities have arrested four alleged members of this group, the interior ministry said.

The attacks were "aiming to foment a large-scale sectarian crisis" without linking the group with these attacks, the interior ministry said.

The ministry statement claims a group named The Egyptian Revolutionary Council, an alleged arm of the Brotherhood, has issued a statement on Dec 5 "vowing to target the heads of the Orthodox Church because of its support for the state."

Some analysts had warned that Islamists affiliated with the Brotherhood, though not necessarily under their control, could turn to serious violence after the 2013 post-coup crackdown.

Accused

Meanwhile, Qatar has denied any link with a Cairo church bombing that killed 25 people and accused critics of trying to sully the country's name.

Doha's Ministry of Foreign Affairs

added that it condemned all "terrorism acts", in a statement released through the Qatar News Agency on Tuesday night.

On Monday, Egypt accused fugitive Muslim Brotherhood leaders who fled to Qatar of training and financing those responsible for the deadly bomb attack on the Saint Peter and Saint Paul Church a day earlier.

Cairo's interior ministry pointed a finger at suspect Mohab Mostafa el-Sayed Qassem, also known as "The Doctor", who travelled to Qatar in 2015.

It said Qassem was offered financial and logistical support to carry out attacks in Egypt. But Qatar said such claims were baseless.

Also:

CAIRO: A military court sentenced 141 supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood to up to 15 years in prison on Tuesday for ransacking public facilities and rioting, the defendants' lawyers told Reuters.

The Assiut military court sentenced 96 of them to 15 years in absentia. Forty-two of those in detention were sentenced to seven years in prison and three of those detained to five years. The 45 detained were each also fined 20,000 Egyptian pounds (\$1,100), said lawyers Khaled al-Koumy and Mohamed Samir.

The case dealt with events in August 2013 in the city of Malawi in the Province of Minya which were among a wave of unrest after the army removed elected Islamist president Mohamed Morsi from power, following mass protests against his rule.

Suspects in security and terrorism-related cases are often sent to the military courts in Egypt. The general prosecution referred the defendants to a military tribunal in March last year.

The Trump name months ago with Kurdish authorities. The 31-year-old entrepreneur insists the branding is more about turning a profit than endorsing politics, but he likes Trump's strong personality and reputation as a successful businessman.

Above all, he appreciates the president-elect's promise to ramp up support to the Kurds and their peshmerga fighters, a sensitive proposition in a country where competing pro-government forces vie for Western backing.

"I personally love Trump for this," Zawiy told Reuters. "The name Trump is beloved in Kurdistan."

The Kurds, oppressed under successive Arab governments in Iraq, are perhaps the biggest victors of the new order born out of the US-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003.

While Iraqi Arabs further south have been gripped by sectarian conflict for more than a decade, Kurdistan remained relatively safe, enjoyed an economic boom and steadily developed its autonomy.

More recently, Kurdish peshmerga fighters — whose name literally means "those who face death" — have proven vital US allies in the war against Islamic State, which seized a third of the country in 2014 when Iraqi forces collapsed.

The Kurds have pushed for years to receive direct support instead of aid funnelled through Baghdad — something Washington has resisted in pursuit of a strategy to prevent Iraq fragmenting. (RTRS)

the chairmanship of Diyanet is problematic."

As recently as Friday, the Dutch Diyanet had issued a press statement denying any involvement with "collecting information on Gulenist sympathizers". (RTRS)

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Kurds see hope of Trump vows: The newest enterprise bearing Donald Trump's name is not a five-star hotel or an exclusive

golf club. It is a restaurant in northern Iraq serving fire-roasted carp for \$10 a kilo which the US president-elect probably doesn't even know exists.

Trump Fish, whose logo features the businessman-turned-politician's distinctive yellow mane, opened about 10 days ago in the Kurdish city of Duhok, an hour's drive from the latest battle against Islamic State militants in Mosul.

Owner Nedyar Zawiy says he registered



Iran's President Hassan Rouhani waits for the arrival of Indonesia's president at Saad Abad Palace in Tehran on Dec 14. (AFP)

Lat/Am

20-yr spending freeze OK'd: Brazil's Senate approved Tuesday a 20-year freeze on government spending billed as the centerpiece of austerity reforms aimed at restoring economic health to the troubled Latin American giant. The upper house voted 53 to 16 to lock in the spending ceiling.

Center-right President Michel Temer says tough measures are needed to get Brazil's finances back under control, but his austerity policies have prompted violent protests and were criticized last week by a UN expert as "a historic mistake." Police were out in force in the capital Brasilia to protect government buildings from demonstrators during the upper house vote, which was wrapped up unexpectedly quickly. Luis Jorge, a union leader who had come for the protests, expressed anger

at the Senate for voting "before we could demonstrate. That makes us very angry." However, hundreds of people, many with their faces covered, clashed with police later Tuesday. Security forces fired tear gas to try to disperse the crowd. A bus was burned during the demonstration, which drew about 2,000 people, police said. The police operation in the capital ended with 100 arrests, officials said. In Sao Paulo, left-wing protesters at-

tacked the headquarters of FIESP, the country's main industrial association, before being driven back. The vote means that the spending cap is now mandated by the constitution, serving as the central plank in Temer's bid to "transform" the broken economy, which is in deep recession. (AFP)

Fast-track reforms approved: Colombian judges Tuesday approved special fast-track procedures to imple-

ment the government's contested peace accord with leftist FARC rebels which aims to end half a century of conflict. The government says the fast-track reforms are needed to see through the peace deal before a fragile ceasefire collapses. Constitutional court judges voted eight to one in favor of the measure, the court said. The decision gives the green light to President Juan Manuel Santos to use accelerated legislative procedures to pass the various reforms included

in the peace accord through Congress, where his side holds a majority. Under the deal, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, must demobilize and surrender their weapons within six months. The FARC will relaunch as a political party and its members will receive an amnesty or non-custodial sentences -- the most contested part of the accord. Santos's opponents argue the deal grants impunity to rebels guilty of war crimes. (AFP)

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World News Roundup



French President Francois Hollande (left), flanked with, former culture minister Jacques Lang, second left, and Culture Minister Audrey Azoulay (3rd left), attend the opening of the Palmyra Exhibit, a three-dimensional projection featuring never-before-seen images of Palmyra taken by a drone in April after the city was liberated from IS fighters, at Grand Palais, in Paris on Dec 13. (AP)

Maritime

History ... hurricanes

Florida's 'shipwreck' an unparalleled find

MIAMI, Dec 14, (AFP): Treasure hunters have apparently found the 500-year-old remains of a naval expedition led by a colonizer who could have changed Florida's history, making it French-speaking at least for a while.

The big question is if the shipwreck is that of "La Trinite," the 32-gun flagship of a fleet led by Jean Ribault, a French navigator who tried to establish a Protestant colony in the southeast US under orders from King Charles IX. They probably are, say authorities in Florida, the French government and independent archaeologists.

And if they in fact are, this is an unparalleled find, said **John de Bry**, director of the Center for Historical Archaeology, a not-for-profit organization.

"If it turns out to be 'La Trinite,' it is the most important, historically and archaeologically, the most important shipwreck ever found in North America," he told AFP.

All indications are that the shipwreck found is the real thing.

The artefacts found at the site off Cape Canaveral include three bronze cannons with markings from the reign of King Henri II, who ruled right before Charles IX; and a stone monument with the French coat of arms that was to be used to claim the new territory. The remains are "consistent with material associated with the lost French Fleet of 1565," said Meredith Beatrice, director of communications with the Florida Department of State.

Attack

In 1565, Ribault set sail from Fort Caroline, today Jacksonville, to attack his arch-enemy, the Spaniard Pedro Menendez de Aviles, who had been sent to Florida by King Philip of Spain to thwart French plans to set up a colony.

But Ribault got caught in a hurricane, which destroyed "La Trinite" and three other galleons and ended French dreams of claiming Florida.

Ribault and hundreds of other French Huguenots were massacred by Menendez de Aviles.

"If the French had not been driven south and ships sunk by the hurricane, we would have a totally different story," said de Bry. "Florida could have been speaking French for a number of years."

In modern day Florida, archeologists and historians have been looking for this shipwreck for years.

Two years ago, an expedition from the state-run St. Augustine Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program gave it a shot but found nothing.

Marine archeologist Chuck Meide, who led that try, said "this is one of the most important shipwreck discoveries we have had in Florida."

The find was finally made in May of this year by a treasure hunting firm called Global Marine Exploration.

Precisely where has not been disclosed. "It is not advisable," said French consul general Clement Leclerc.

"This is potentially a major discovery and we think it deserves a scientific and rigorous analysis and exploitation, because we think it should be later presented to the general public given its historical interest," he told AFP. The one who is not happy is Robert Pritchett, the owner of GME, who says he has invested three million dollars in this gig and now runs the risk of getting nothing for his trouble.



French mathematics professor at the College de France Claire Voisin poses for pictures at her residence in Paris on Dec 5. Voisin will be awarded with the CNRS Gold Medal, France's highest scientific distinction on Dec 14. (AFP)



Howe



Vasavada

Discovery

Pokemon get you on the Go: It has been hailed as a revolutionary way to get people moving, using smartphones to pursue cartoon creatures through city parks and streets on foot, instead of taking the car or metro.

But has Pokemon Go made people more active and healthy? A study Wednesday reported mixed success.

In the first week of playing the game, people took 955 additional steps per day on average — equalling nearly half the World Health Organization's recommended physical activity level, researchers found.

But this soon petered out, with activity levels "back to pre-installation levels" of around 4,250 steps per day by week six of playing the game which has become a global phenomenon.

"The results suggest that the positive health impact of Pokemon Go is moderate and diminishes after six weeks of playing," said a statement from the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, whose researchers conducted the study.

The team measured daily walking among a group of 1,182 adults aged 18-35 in the United States. All used an iPhone 6 smartphone, which automatically records the number of steps you take while carrying the device.

They compared the average number of steps taken per day for four weeks prior to downloading Pokemon Go, and for six weeks thereafter.

Pokemon Go is an augmented reality game which uses overlaying graphics to get people chasing cute cartoon creatures that appear in their vicinity, as seen through their phone camera.

The game has been downloaded over 500

Heritage

Rio gets UNESCO world heritage status

Palmyra rises again in 3D show

PARIS, Dec 14, (Agencies): Palmyra may just have fallen yet again to the Islamic State group, but a new "immersive" 3D show in Paris lets you walk through the Syrian city's classical colonnades as they were before the jihadists blew them to bits.

The "Eternal Sites" exhibition uses high-definition images often shot by drones to allow the public to visit four of the most threatened heritage sites in the world in war-torn Syria and Iraq.

The eighth-century Umayyad Mosque in Damascus — regarded by many as the fourth holiest place in Islam — and the Krak des Chevaliers Crusader castle near the ravaged city of Homs have also been virtually recreated under the dome of the Grand Palais in Paris.

The show, which has been organised with the nearby Louvre museum, is part of a global push to digitalise spectacular archaeological sites that are at risk.

The remains of the ancient Iraqi city of Khorsabad, which dates from the 7th century BC, has also been recreated using images captured by French company Iconem.

Like the other three sites, the 3D images are matched with real artefacts from the city from the Louvre's collections. The museum's director Jean-Luc Martinez, who curated the show, said that they wanted to "show sites that are no longer accessible and the beauty of their art."

Palmyra fell for a second time to the jihadists at the weekend despite heavy Russian bombing to prevent the extrem-

ists entering the city.

Islamic State fighters ravaged the Roman-era ruins during the 10 months it held the ancient oasis city from May 2015 to March 2016, systematically blowing up temples and columns in attacks that provoked worldwide outrage.

Photogrammetric technology developed by Iconem has also been used to record the Roman theatre in the Syrian coastal city of Jableh and the Phoenician site in the ancient port of Ugarit, where evidence of the world's oldest alphabet was found.

Major

Its technicians have also been working alongside 15 specialists from the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) to digitalise some of the country's major museum collections.

Hundreds of important heritage sites have been sacked or destroyed during the five-year conflict, with the destruction of the first-century temples of Bel and Baalshamin in Palmyra making most headlines. IS has made a point of razing ancient shrines and statues it considers as idolatry and is also suspected of involvement in the illegal sale of antiquities.

Work on the "Syrian Heritage" database, the biggest 3D record of the country's monuments and treasures, began last December and includes a large number of Ottoman-era buildings in Damascus as well as its 11th-century citadel, which looms over the city.

The head of DGAM, Maamoun Abdulkarim, said the operation was essential to "avoid an irreplaceable loss to humanity" given "the dramatic situation in our country".

The drive, carried out with the help of the French grande ecole ENS and the research institute INRIA, is one of a number trying to catalogue sites in danger of falling into the line of fire.

The Institute for Digital Archaeology, created by Oxford and Harvard universities and Dubai's Museum of the Future, is also compiling a record of many vulnerable sites in Syria and neighbouring Iraq.

It has handed out 5,000 low-cost 3D cameras to archaeologists and NGOs with the hope of gathering a million images of threatened sites.

Also:

RIO DE JANEIRO: Rio de Janeiro, nicknamed the Marvelous City, officially entered the UN's list of world heritage sites Tuesday in recognition of its soaring granite cliffs, urban rainforest and beaches.

The UN cultural body, UNESCO, highlighted the "extraordinary fusion" of man-made and natural beauty in certifying Rio on the world heritage list during a ceremony held at the Christ the Redeemer statue.

That blend has "created an urban landscape perceived to be of great beauty by many writers and travelers and one that has shaped the culture of the city," the UN said.

million times since its launch in July, according to the study published in the journal *BMJ*. The study did not comment on the reasons for the relapse.

"We are only at the beginning of understanding how augmented reality gaming

can potentially be beneficial to health," said **Katherine Howe**, who co-authored the study.

"They give people a reason to go outside, walk, and socialise. Imagine the potential of developing these games to not only increase

physical activity but to also boost mental well-being, mood, cognitive abilities and social interaction," she added. (AFP)

□ □ □

NASA troubleshooting problem:

NASA's Mars rover Curiosity has halted its trek up a mountain filled with potentially habitable niches for life while engineers troubleshoot a problem with one of its key instruments, scientists said on Tuesday.

Curiosity landed on Mars four years ago to determine if the planet most like Earth in the solar system ever had the ingredients for life. To answer the question, Curiosity has been drilling into rocks and chemically analyzing the samples.

Drilling operations have been suspended however due to a suspected problem with the instrument's motor, project scientist with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory **Ashwin Vasavada** told reporters at the American Geophysical Union conference in San Francisco. The problem first appeared about a week ago, Vasavada said. Project engineers thought they had resolved it, but the problems cropped back up, he said.

"If we can't move the drill bit down, there's no drilling," Vasavada said. "There isn't any way to sugar-coat that one."

The problem comes as scientists are beginning to glimpse a history of Mars replete with life-friendly, water-rich environments and intriguing chemistry, including the first detection of the element boron. (RTRS)



A shooting star crosses the sky during the Geminids, a meteor shower above the National Park of El Teide, on the Spanish Canary Island of Tenerife on Dec 14. (AFP)

Overheard in the Souk the grapevine

● Following the opening session of the new parliament, the opposition could not score any important goals as they missed their targets.

Prior to this session, the opposition announced their plan to contest and win key posts in the parliament namely speaker, deputy speaker, secretary and observer of the parliament. These posts surely went to other MPs who are pro-government.

The opposition was planning to dominate the new parliament not only with their number, but also through holding key positions, but unfortunately this could not hap-

pen during this session. Does this mean the beginning of the end of the opposition or they have any other strength to control and influence the new parliament. People believe that the opposition can make serious impact in the new parliament through the laws that will be enacted. Let's wait and see the impact that will be made by the opposition in this new parliament.

● 'Tis the season to be jolly! With the holiday season in the air, it's been festive in most shopping malls in Kuwait this De-

cember with all the sale and mark down prizes of clothes, shoes, make-up, perfume and even appliance as well as furniture.

Shoppers scamper for holiday gifts for their friends, family and even for themselves. Christmas is getting close and sale is left and right. One can just shop till one drops but what happens when the new year comes in? Many may complain "I'm broke now," so to avoid this from happening, one should not go on shopping spree like there's no tomorrow.

First look into your budget and don't be

like any other shopaholic. Write the most important stuff that meets your budget. Prioritize your gift list. It's not the worth of the gift but it's the thought that counts.

Avoid impulse buying! Try to innovate and be creative, you can search on the internet for some "Do-It-Yourself" holiday presents and people appreciate more the DIY stuff.

There are a lot of ways to enjoy the holiday shopping and not end up getting broke and that's the best way to start a prosperous New Year.

● Christmas is in the air and the enthusiasm and eagerness of some can be impossible to match. Many feel the need to spread holiday cheer. It is time to brace yourself for an onslaught of the corniest jokes and wordplays of the season.

Before you know it, you will find yourself in the midst of a knock-knock rampage. Knock. Knock. Who's there? Hanna. Hanna who? Hanna partridge in a pear tree! In moments like these, when the urge to walk away is so strong, remember that the term Grinch shall apply when Christmas spirit is in short supply.

Tongues Wag

Events

click

Alcoholics Anonymous: If you know someone who can't stop drinking and would like to help them please check us out and we promise to try to help at www.aarabia.org There are no fees. This is a genuine public service.

Drinking problem?: Friends of Bill W. are available to help. Totally confidential. Email: rohsecretary@gmail.com

Narcotics Anonymous: NA can help with addiction problems. Totally confidential: 94087800 English/Arabic.

Cancer online support group: If you are Cancer patient or family member fighting with this deadly disease, come join our online support group. Best way of dealing with this disease is providing support and share our experience with each other. There are lot of things which even doctors can't tell so be member of this website and start sharing your experiences which may help others. October is recognized as National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM). The primary purpose is to promote self examination and screening mammography as the most effective way to save lives by detecting breast cancer at early stage. For more information visit: <http://fightingwithcancer.webs.com/>

Latest

Share your story with Amricani: Do you or any of your family members, acquaintances or friends happen to have a story with the American Missionary hospital in Kuwait (Mustashfa Lemraicani) during the years from 1914-1967, the official period of offering medical services in Kuwait?

Please share with us your story or your memory during those old days by writing the event and sending it to the following email address: Mystory@darmuseum.org.kw

Notes: 1. Please send your story only to the above mentioned email. Story shared in Instagram, Facebook or Twitter will not be considered.

2. Please write your story or memory and sign it with your full name, and your contact number.

3. It will be great if you send us your personal photos or those of the place related to the story (optional).

Your story will be part of a new book to be

'Tis the season to let your child read to a merry dog or cat!



Please join us

Reading to Animals,

organised in with PAWS Kuwait,

Dec 18 at 4:30

Amricani Cultural Centre

Children may bring a favorite book to read or borrow one from the DAI Children's Library

In lieu of a fee, everyone is asked to bring a bag of dog or cat food.

To register, email education@darmuseum.org.kw

A flyer of the event.

What happens when you put paint and paper in the bands of little ones



We'll find out at

Yarmouk Minis

(Children 18 months - 3, with a parent)

Saturday, Dec 17 at 10 am

Yarmouk Cultural Centre

To register email: education@darmuseum.org.kw

A flyer of the event.

published by DAL.

I am confident that your contributions will be an essential part of the history of Amricani. Share with us!

Dec 17

Sense-Sa-Tional Christmas: Making sense of Christmas through our 5 senses!

Seasonal celebration with q8 SA brass band and praise band, carols, candles, drama, tambourines, skits, gifts and the children's

nativity play!

@ The Salvation Army Kuwait, The Fellowship Hall — National Evangelical Church Kuwait — Arabia Gulf Road

Saturday Dec 17, 2016 @ 6.45 pm for 7 pm

For more info phone: (+965) 6570 3764 /

e-mail: stewart_grinsted@mde.salvationarmy.org

or

Dec 22

STECI parish carol service: Christmas

Carol service of St Thomas Evangelical Church of India Kuwait Parish will be held on Thursday, Dec 22, 2016 at 7.30 pm at Church and Parish Hall of NECK. Apart from Carol singing by the parish choir, Christmas Pageant of Sunday school children will also be conducted. The Carol service will be presided by the President Vicar Rev Saji Abraham and the Christmas message will be delivered by Rev Bobby Mathew, Vicar of St Thomas Marthoma Church Kuwait.

Jan 1, 2017

Friday Forum elocution contest: Friday Forum is organizing its 11th Inter School Elocution Competition and aiming to bring forth the smartest to show their public speaking skills, on Jan 1, 2017 at Hotel Rajadhani Palace, Khaitan from 8:00 am to 2:30 pm. Students from all Indian schools in Kuwait shall be participating in Junior and Senior categories. The topic for juniors is "Islam

Continued on Page 24

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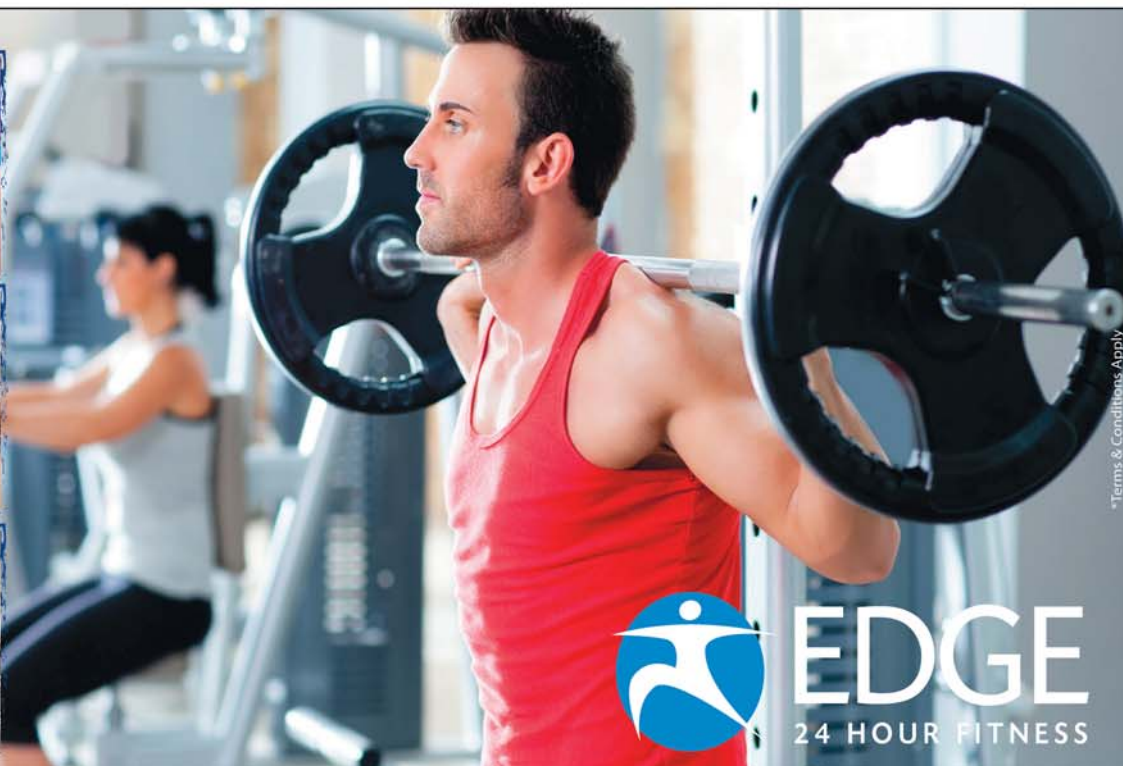
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Somethin' different gardening

By Dean Fosdick

Landscape designers in cities are creating quieter living spaces by using trees to mute loud noises like sirens and air brakes. It's called "soundscape," and it aims to restore peaceful, natural sounds like wind whispering through leaves, birds chirping or rain dripping from branches.

"Massive walls are often installed to quiet freeway noise in major cities, but there are more aesthetic ways to handle it," said Tim Moloney, who teaches landscape design at the University of Missouri. "Use vegetation for minimizing the background clutter." The denser a tree's lower branches, the better it masks or deflects bothersome noise, Moloney said. Evergreens are the preferred vegetative sound barriers because they are densely branched and are attractive year-round. Ideally, shrubs would be a major component of any green muting mix.

"The thing with shrubs is you don't have the height of a tree but they grow more



This Nov 25, 2016 photo shows soundscaping evergreens photographed in Langley, Washington. Soundscapers use trees to mask bothersome urban noise. (AP)

quickly," Moloney said. "Along with density, choose vegetation having desirable landscape qualities: fruit, flowers, canopy shapes, fragrance and fall colors. And for best results, plant them on an earthen berm."

Urban noise has become so annoying in many places that soundscaping has grown into a popular landscape-design specialty, Moloney said.

"The first line of defense is buffering," he said. "That overshadows background noise just by virtue of proximity. Add a screen of vegetation and then look for other options. Perhaps the soothing sounds of a waterfall or a stream." Healthy urban forests make for healthier neighborhoods and improve quality of life, said R.J. Laverne, an arborist and urban forester with The Davey Tree Expert Co. in Kent, Ohio.

"Trees give us green spaces that get us outside, where we're more likely to walk and get exercise," he said. "They also help reduce stress levels. We can concentrate better and feel less fatigue."

Trees also improve air quality. "Trees absorb many of the air pollutants through their foliage," Laverne said. "They provide a place for the particulate matter to stick. It's the stuff floating through the air we inhale that aggravates our lungs."

The cooling shade from trees also provides economic benefits, Laverne said. "Among other things, we don't have to run our air conditioners as much."

One challenge facing soundscapers in urban areas: There often isn't enough space for planting trees and shrubs between the noise source and homes, especially for trees with low-hanging foliage.

"But if you have a dense enough tree canopy, it doesn't have to be designed as a physical wall," Laverne said. "Foliage, branches and trunks do a pretty good job of dispersing sound energy, especially in the high frequency ranges. 'Sound waves travel horizontally,'" he said. "When foliage reflects it in different directions, it's diminished. Sounds aren't as loud." (AP)

BAS



Photos from the event

BAS organizes Eureka Exhibition

The British Academy of Sports (BAS) organized the EUREKA Photographic Exhibition with exceptional photos from the recent BAS Sports trip to Greece which took place in the November term break.

The guests, including students, parents and teachers, admired more than 80 unique photographs taken by Sebastian Gray, BSK Art Teacher, during the trip. The viewers were attracted to the exhibition by the amazing

landscape from Thessaloniki, Zagori Ioannina, Voidomatis River and the biggest Canyon in Europe.

Apart from the exotic locations, most of the photos had shown the students in action during the sports activities including rafting, horse riding, climbing, archery, bowling and many interactive and scouts games from the trip.

The event was opened by HE The Greek Ambassador Andreas Papada-

kis, Madame Vera Al Mutawa MBE founder of BSK and Mr. Lucian Anisia BAS Director.

Following the success of the Sports Trip, BAS is planning their next trip to Ireland which will take place in April 2017.

For more details about BAS Trips and Activities please call 99458013 or visit www.bas.edu.kw.



Photos from the event.

ICSK Junior conducts special Diwali assembly

The students of ICSK, Junior held special assemblies to mark the festival of lights-Diwali. The tiny tots celebrated the festival of lights in a joyous way in their morning assemblies held on Oct 24 to Oct 31 and Nov 2, 2016. The assemblies began with verses from The Holy Quran followed by the school prayer.

"It's better to light a candle than to curse the darkness" was the befitting and meaningful thought for the day.

In their speeches the children explained the significance of Diwali. They stressed that light symbolised knowledge. A skit performance reliving the story behind the festivities associated with Diwali enlightened the children on the reason why we celebrate Diwali with such

enthusiasm and happiness and also reminded them to celebrate it in an eco-friendly way. Any celebration would be incomplete without a foot tapping number, the song and dance performances added to the mood of festivity. The entire audience was thrilled by spectacular dance performances by the kids. The stage was lit with many "Diyas" to bring more light to the celebration. Mrs. Sheeja Ravi, Vice-Principal in her speech spoke about the necessity of removing the darkness of evil from our minds with the light of goodness.

Principal in-charge Mrs. Sheryl Dennis congratulated the participants and advised them to be the light of the world with their good deeds and thoughts. Assembly dispersed by the National Anthem of India.

the Prime Minister. Chief Ministers of several states also participate and address the delegates on opportunities available in their respective states. The last day of PBD features the valedictory address by the Hon'ble President of India, who will also confer the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards on Overseas Indians for their achievements and contribution both in India and abroad.

The Youth PBD is a new feature which has been introduced recently. It is a special day long programme which provides a platform to connect with Young Overseas Indians and discuss subjects of relevance to them. The Young PBD delegates will also have the opportunity to interact with other Young PIOs and Young Indians of their own age group. The highlight of the Youth PBD is the inaugural address by the Minister of External Affairs and Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, followed by a plenary session, cultural programme and dinner.

Continued on Page 25

click

Latest

Continued from Page 22

and environmental protection" and for seniors is "Maintaining communal harmony — a believer's responsibility". The event will be attended by dignitaries from various socio-cultural arena, parents and teachers as well. For registration and more details you may please contact your school directly or contact us on 5079 6776 or 9402 9024.

Jan 7

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2017: 14th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention is

being organized from Jan 7-9, 2017 at Bangalore International Exhibition Centre (BIEC) Karnataka. Highlights of PBD 2017 are:

- (i) PBD 2017 will focus on the theme "Redefining the engagement with the Indian Diaspora".
- (ii) To strengthen Diaspora engagement and

provide a platform for networking with the Diaspora.

- (iii) To recognize the Diaspora's contribution to India and know their expectations and concerns.
- (iv) To deepen engagement with young Diasporas, to help them know more about their

roots.

The PBD Convention features Plenary Sessions; an Exhibition; Cultural Programmes and provides an opportunity to interact with other Overseas Indians, Policy makers, Political leadership and others. The highlight of the PBD convention is the inaugural address by

Chubby babies on the decline

Zika can keep growing in infant brains even after birth

NEW YORK, Dec 14. (Agencies): US researchers have found evidence of the Zika virus replicating in fetal brains for up to seven months after the mother became infected with the virus, and they showed the virus can persist even after birth, according to a study published on Tuesday.

The findings confirm earlier observations from case studies suggesting that the mosquito-borne Zika virus can grow in fetal brains and women's placentas.

"Our findings show that Zika virus can continue to replicate in infants' brains even after birth, and that the virus can persist in placentas for months — much longer than we expected," Julu Bhatnagar, lead of the molecular pathology team at CDC's Infectious Diseases Pathology Branch and the study's lead author, said in a statement.

The findings help explain how the virus causes devastating birth defects and pregnancy losses even if a woman had only a minor illness. Last month, the World Health Organization declared that Zika no longer constitutes an international emergency, but stressed the need for a long-term effort to address the virus, which has been linked to thousands of birth defects and neurological complications.

For the study, CDC researchers tested tissues from 52 patients with suspected Zika virus infection, including brain tissues from eight infants who had microcephaly and later died. They also tested placental tissues from 44 women — 22 of whom delivered apparently healthy babies and 22 whose pregnancies ended in miscarriage, abortion, stillbirth or who delivered babies with microcephaly. Zika has been shown to cause microcephaly, a rare birth defect in which infants are born with undersized heads and brains, which can cause life-long disability.

The researchers found Zika genetic material in fetal brain tissue and placentas more than

HTLV-1 virus more deadly for men

Sneaky virus 'goes easy on women to infect kids'

PARIS, Dec 14. (AFP): At least one kind of virus has become less lethal when targeting a woman to ensure she does not die before it can infect her offspring, according to a study released Tuesday.

For years, scientists assumed that the HTLV-1 virus — which can cause leukaemia among other illnesses — was more deadly for men because women had a stronger immune system, at least for that particular bug.

But new evidence, published in the journal Nature Communications, shows the virus has adapted through evolution to take advantage of an opportunity that males cannot offer.

"The reason why these illnesses are less virulent in women is that the virus wants to be passed from mother to child," explained Vincent Jansen, co-author of the study and

a professor at the University of London.

This can happen, he added, either at birth or during breast feeding.

As Charles Darwin discovered, the evolutionary strategies that creatures devise to attract mates or prey, or avoid getting eaten, are endlessly complex and surprising.

Exactly how viruses — microscopic particles that have relatively simple genetic material — can detect and adjust to the gender of the host they infect remains unknown.

But using complex mathematical models, Jansen and fellow University of London researcher Francisco Ubieda showed that no other explanation is nearly as plausible.

They compared the incidence and progression of HTLV-1 in Japan and the Caribbean.

In Japan, they found the virus was near-

ly three times more likely to graduate to deadly adult T-cell leukaemia in men than in women.

In the Caribbean, however, the chances of the virus mutating into its lethal form was roughly equal for both sexes.

The reason, they surmised, was a difference in how infants are reared.

Breastfeeding — one of the ways the virus can be passed from mother to infant — is more common and prolonged in Japan, "prompting the virus to become less fatal in women", they concluded.

A virus replicates only inside the living cells of other organisms, including plants, animals and bacteria.

Viral diseases range from the common cold to smallpox, hepatitis, dengue, Ebola, measles and AIDS. They kill millions of people every year.

seven months after the mothers contracted the virus. In one case, they also found evidence of the virus growing in an infant with microcephaly who died two months after birth.

Of the eight infants who had microcephaly and later died, all tested positive for Zika. The mothers of all eight of these infants contracted Zika during the first trimester of pregnancy, adding to prior evidence that Zika is most dangerous early in pregnancy.

"We don't know how long the virus can persist, but its persistence could have implications for babies born with microcephaly and for apparently healthy infants whose mothers

had Zika during their pregnancies," said Bhatnagar, whose findings were published in CDC's Emerging Infectious Diseases journal.

There are no treatments or vaccines for Zika, which previously had been seen causing only mild disease.

A decline in chubby babies and toddlers is providing a glimmer of good news in the fight against childhood obesity.

The trend was found in a study of children up to age 2 enrolled in a US nutrition assistance program for low-income women and children.

Half of all US infants up to 12 months old are enrolled in the program.

The rate of youngsters at risk for obesity fell during the study, from almost 15 percent in 2010 to 12 percent overall in 2014, researchers from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Tuesday in the journal Pediatrics.

The rate declined in all ages studied. It was lowest — about 8 percent in 2014 — for the youngest infants, from 3 to 5 months, versus almost 15 percent among toddlers.

The results were unexpected, given rising rates earlier in the decade, said CDC researcher

David Freedman, the lead author.

"People are thrilled," he said.

Freedman said reasons are uncertain for the decline, but it came amid changes designed to improve nutrition and health in food packages, including more whole grains, fruits and vegetables. Also, breast-feeding among participating women increased in 2009 and that can protect against obesity.

The results echo a reported decline in older children in the program, referred to as WIC for women, infants and children. Also previous CDC data showed a similar decline in all US youngsters from 2 to 5 years old, from about 14 percent in 2004 to 9 percent in 2014, coinciding with national campaigns targeting childhood obesity. Obesity rates tend to be higher in children from low-income families including WIC participants.

Dr David Ludwig, director of obesity prevention at Boston Children's Hospital, called the results encouraging but said, "It's too soon to tell whether these new data represent a statistical fluke or evidence of real progress with the pediatric obesity epidemic." The researchers analyzed WIC survey data from 2000 to 2014 involving almost 17 million infants and young children. Rates increased early on, then remained stable from 2004 to 2010 until the decline.

Doctors don't usually describe babies as obese, but measure their risk using a weight-for-length ratio. Those with a high ratio, generally heavier than 95 percent of their peers, face an increased chance of becoming obese later on.

Whether the decline has continued is uncertain and the study didn't track infants to see if they became overweight or obese later on.

According to the CDC, US obesity rates total almost 18 percent among all 6- to 11-year-olds and nearly 21 percent among 12- to 19-year-olds

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Ayman Sejiny, Group CEO of Bank Alkhair

Bank Alkhair announces sale of its major stake in Pakistan's Burj Bank

Bahrain-based Bank Alkhair, a leading Islamic wholesale bank, announced today that the bank has obtained approval from the State Bank of Pakistan to sell its stake in Pakistan's Burj Bank to Al Baraka Pakistan Limited (ABPL), a subsidiary of Al Baraka Banking Group.

Prior to the transaction, Bank Alkhair was Burj Bank's major shareholder, followed by Jeddah-based Islamic Corporation for Development of the Private Sector with 33.9 per cent of shares.

This transaction follows the announcement on Sept 5, 2016 of the approval of shareholders to the merger of Pakistan's Burj Bank and ABPL, creating an institution with assets totaling more than US\$1.1 billion. The amalgamation was approved by the State Bank of Pakistan and has become effective since Oct 31, 2016.

Burj Bank is a Pakistani Islamic bank, headquartered in Karachi. It currently operates a total of 74 branches and provides a full range of Shariah-compliant banking services. Bank Alkhair acquired a 22.2 per cent equity stake in Pakistan's Burj Bank (formerly Dawood Islamic Bank), a Shariah-compliant commercial bank,

in June 2006. In March 2009, Bank Alkhair increased its equity stake in the bank to 37.9 per cent.

Commenting on the announcement, Ayman Sejiny, Group CEO of Bank Alkhair said: "At Bank Alkhair, we actively manage our investment portfolio to ensure that our investments support the company's strategic direction. In keeping with this we are pleased to sell our stake in Pakistan's Burj Bank to Al Baraka Pakistan Limited, a subsidiary of Al Baraka Banking Group, a leading Islamic bank in Bahrain."

Deal extends Group's corporate venturing to US

Zain makes strategic investment in Colle Capital Partners

NEW YORK/KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: Zain Group, a leading innovator of mobile communications in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, has made a strategic investment in Colle Capital Partners, (www.collecapital.com) a global, opportunistic, early stage technology venture fund based in New York, with a presence in San Francisco.

Colle Capital Partners has a diversified technology focus with an emphasis on data in the following sectors: Energy, Media, Telecommunications, Health IT, Security, and Software Development. The fund's managers have access to unique, high quality investment opportunities and the fund was oversubscribed. Its Managing Partner - Victoria Grace - is a professional venture investor with a successful track record of over a decade.

Zain's investment in Colle Capital Partners forms part of its Zain Digital Frontier and Innovation (ZDFI) business unit strategy, which was established in 2014, and charged with launching Zain into



Scott Gegenheimer, Zain Group CEO



Victoria Grace, Founder and Managing Partner of Colle Capital Partners.

the digital space with the view to growing the company through new innovative business streams, which add to its financial viability and market capitalization.

Zain has previously made three investments in technology-focused venture capital and early-stage in-

vestment companies, and this latest participation further establishes a bridge between successful digital startups and Zain. The investment in Colle Capital Partners also extends the geographic range of Zain's potential partner entities to the United States, taking them be-

yond the Middle East and Eastern Europe where the company's current investment ventures have their pool of influence.

Zain's strategy to participate at an early stage in the lifecycle of a company and help the team to achieve its commercial goals by supporting

its early-stage development drove its interest in Colle Capital Partners. The fund is driven by a desire to invest in people, with a goal to identify and support teams that demonstrate intellect and passion as well as agility in their thinking and execution.

Commenting on Zain's latest strategic investment, Group CEO, Scott Gegenheimer said, "We are delighted to add Colle Capital Partners to MEVP, Wamda and EarlyBird as early stage investment companies we have made investments in, with this fund being particularly nimble and highly selective. We are keen to extend our reach to the US as we are well aware of that market's innovation and hi-tech credentials, and we believe ideas and solutions from that geography will drive real-life digital applications and create new revenue streams in our region."

Victoria Grace, Founder and Managing Partner of Colle Capital Partners said, "We are thrilled to be partnering with Zain in our efforts. We aim to bring to our portfolio companies not just capital but also access to forward thinking, strategic

partners that will create significant synergies for our companies beyond US borders. We are already engaged with Zain on a number of efforts and view this as a win-win partnership."

Emre Gurkan, Chief Strategy & Business Development Officer of Zain Group said, "Mobile operators must innovate to remain relevant and the exploration of new opportunities to differentiate ourselves is vital to our future prosperity. At Zain, we have taken a pro-active step to cooperate with a broad range of partners that we believe share our vision of digital transformation. The inclusion of Colle Capital Partners into our growing eco-system of partners will add value to our progress in this area for the benefit of our customers and other stakeholders."

Boosted by this latest investment, ZDFI will continue to focus on the areas of innovation; digital services; corporate venturing; and smart cities, with the ultimate aim of Zain becoming a regional innovation trendsetter.

Agency named 'Media & Marketing Company of the Year'

ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller wins 2016 award

DUBAI, UAE, Dec 14: ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller has been announced as the "Media & Marketing Company of the Year" at the annual Arabian Business Achievement Awards, which were held in Dubai recently.

The Agency's Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Sunil John, picked up the award during a gala dinner at the Armani Hotel Dubai, where the United Kingdom's former Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, gave a keynote speech.

Selected by an independent panel of judges, the award

recognises ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller's strong track record. During the last 12 months, the Agency has developed strategic campaigns for governments in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Egypt, as well as for a roster of local and multinational blue-chip clients, including Emaar, Etisalat, Emirates NBD, Qatar Airways, GE, Ford and Nestlé.

The Agency is also behind the annual Arab Youth Survey, one of the most widely cited pieces of public opinion research on the region by media throughout the world. ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller employs 160 professionals across 11 wholly owned offices throughout the Middle East.

The Arabian Business Achievement Awards seek to recognise and reward outstanding corporate leadership across a range of sectors, with nominations being drawn from across the Gulf and Middle East region. For more than a decade, the awards have been one of the most prestigious events in the region, and have traditionally seen participation from some of the biggest names in business and politics, both regionally and internationally.

"The Media & Marketing category covers a significant range of sectors in the Middle East, which makes us all the more honoured to have won this award," said Sunil John, Founder and CEO of ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller.

The award caps a stellar year for ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller, which also won the Public Relations Agency of the Year in the Middle East and Africa for the sixth year running at this year's International Business Awards, as well as collecting a coveted SABRE In2 Award EMEA for Thought Leadership in PR for its work on the Arab Youth Survey.

At the end of November, Sunil John was presented with the Chairman's Award at the Middle East PR Awards 2016. ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller also picked up a MEPR Gold award in the Corporate Reputation category for its work on the Arab Youth Survey, as well as two Silver Awards for its work with GEMS Education and Emirates Islamic Bank.



Photo from the event

Bid to provide fun-filled activities

AUB sponsors special needs all-day event 'Color Your Life'

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: Ahli United Bank (AUB) announced the sponsorship of 'Color Your Life', a dedicated event that has been developed to provide a host of activities and fun filled programs towards special needs across Kuwait. The all-day event was held on December 7th at the Al Kharafi Activity Kids Center and on the occasion of World Disability Day, held on December 3rd of every year.

The event included a number of activities such as the creation of handicrafts in an entertaining environment, creating an extensive range of interactive activities that involve all participants from special needs while also encouraging a healthy competitive environment amongst participating teams.

Participating teams were engaged in activities that involve movement motions, Henna drawings for females, caricature artists, as well as sports games amongst other entertaining programs and a wide variety of surprising gifts.

AUB said, "We are proud to be associated with social functions that aim to tell a strong story around Kuwait's

integrated social fabric. AUB's commitment to corporate social responsibility starts with its belief in the core values of Kuwaiti society, and the Bank's policies and vision are aligned to meet the needs of Kuwait. We continue to support special needs development throughout the year, and ultimately reiterating AUB's commitment to the wider community."

AUB continues to drive community wide social initiatives that reflect its dedication towards sustainable development across Kuwait. The Bank's core social strategy includes driving programs across multiple sectors along with catering to special needs within its own branches, with the objective of providing an enhanced and complete experience.

For further information on the Bank's products and services, customers may visit any of AUB's branches, call 'Hayakom', the Bank's telebanking service at 1812000 or visit the Bank's website www.ahliunited.com.kw



Sunil John, Founder & CEO of ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller (left), receiving the award from Ali Akawi Managing Director of ITP Publishing Group Ltd.



Murouj outdoor retail and entertainment venue.

ICSC Middle East and North Africa Shopping Centre and Retailer Awards

Murouj named 2016 Silver Award winner

DUBAI, Dec 14: The International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) has announced the winners of the 2016 Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Shopping Centre and Retailer Awards, recognizing the region's most innovative shopping centers for outstanding achievement in retail, retail store design, design and development, and marketing. ICSC has named Murouj, Kuwait as a Silver Award winner in the development and design category.

Murouj is a Premium Leisure and Entertainment Destination in Kuwait developed by Al-Jazeera Real Estate Development Co and designed by R204DESIGN, Los Angeles/ executed by Lab 100, Kuwait, as an exclusive mixed-use development with unique food & beverage offerings, high-end brands, health, fitness and recreation outlets. Designed as an outdoor retail and entertainment venue part of the Sahara Golf & Equestrian Club, Murouj defies all

conventional norms of shying away from the exterior environment and harsh climatic conditions of Kuwait, by nestling it within a serene garden setting and creating a "comfortable place" for people to meet, dine, chat and enjoy the landscape.

"We are very excited that the ICSC/MESCSC Jury has recognized Murouj as a unique project and selected it as a 2016 Award winner for Design and Development Excellence in the MENA region. The development team deserves significant credit for upholding the original vision and ensuring successful execution of the project" — Sidhartha Sabikhi AIA, Founder & Director of International Projects for R204DESIGN.

R204DESIGN is a global planning and architecture firm with offices in Los Angeles, New Delhi, and Dubai. The firm has recently formed a strategic alliance to establish presence in Kuwait by appointing Waleed

Shaalaa as its Director of Projects for MENA region to serve the needs of the market providing comprehensive planning & architecture services and delivering quality projects in the GCC region.

The 2016 ICSC Middle East and North Africa Shopping Centre and Retailer Awards competition was open to shopping center owners, developers, management companies, architects and designers, and retailers. ICSC announced the winners at an awards ceremony during ICSC RECon Middle East and North Africa in Dubai.

All 2016 Gold award recipients receive automatic entry into the 2017 ICSC VIVA Awards, the international program that honors the retail real estate industry's most cutting-edge properties, innovative solutions, and creative responses to market trends. ICSC will announce the victors of the VIVA Awards during RECon 2017 in Las Vegas.

First financial exchange certified by TÜV NORD for 9001:2015 standards

Lulu Exchange awarded ISO certification

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 14: Lulu Exchange, the leading worldwide remittance and foreign exchange services provider, was awarded the ISO 9001:2015 Management System certificate by TÜV NORD. The certification was awarded to Lulu Exchange for the quality management system associated with executing remittance operations and dealing in sale and purchase of foreign currencies.

The certificate was presented to KNS Das, GM, Lulu Exchange by Shibu Davies, GM — Certification & Auditing, TÜV Middle East in the presence of the senior management of Lulu Exchange.

"We are extremely proud of our team for attaining the ISO 9001:2015 certification. This ISO certification

brings with itself greater commitment to higher standards, quality service and customer focus," said Adeeb Ahamed, CEO, Lulu International Exchange.

ISO certification for management system is based on principles such as customer focus, risk-based approach, process approach, commitment from top management and continual improvement. The focus of this endeavor is to provide convenient financial transactions that fulfill the core customer need for a secure, quality, speedy and value-laden service.

"It was our great pleasure to award ISO 9001:2015 certificate to Lulu Exchange. The organization has demonstrated great commitment

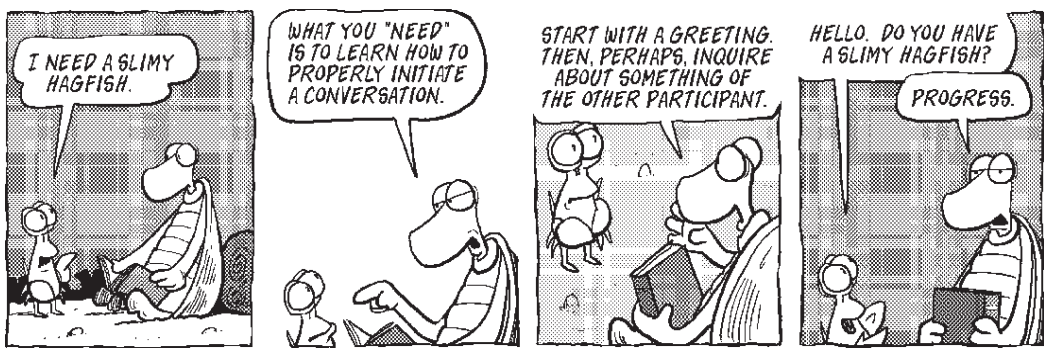
towards this quality management system through management commitment, detailed process definition, compliance and team work. This is the first Financial Exchange, which is certified by TÜV NORD in the region for the 9001:2015 standards. We congratulate Lulu Exchange on this achievement," said Shibu Davies.

"A lot of planning, implementation and execution effort has gone into the ISO 9001:2015 certification. Our march towards excellence and continuous improvement has just begun. This recognition reflects that we are on the right path and we have to constantly reinvent ourselves to meet and exceed expectations," added Adeeb Ahamed.

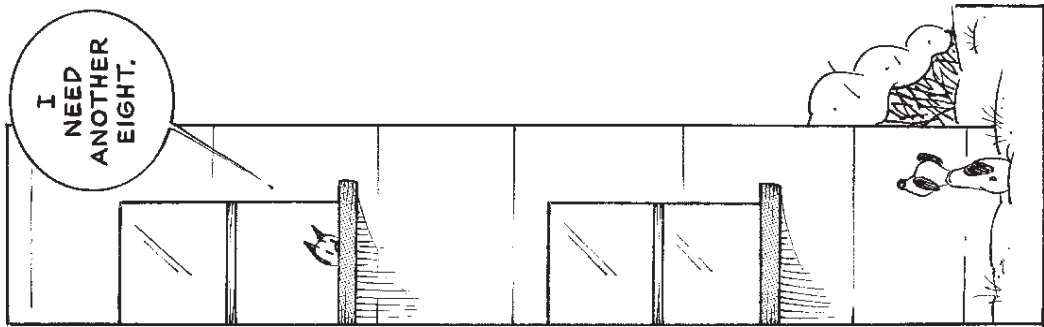


Senior Management of LuLu Exchange receive the certificate.

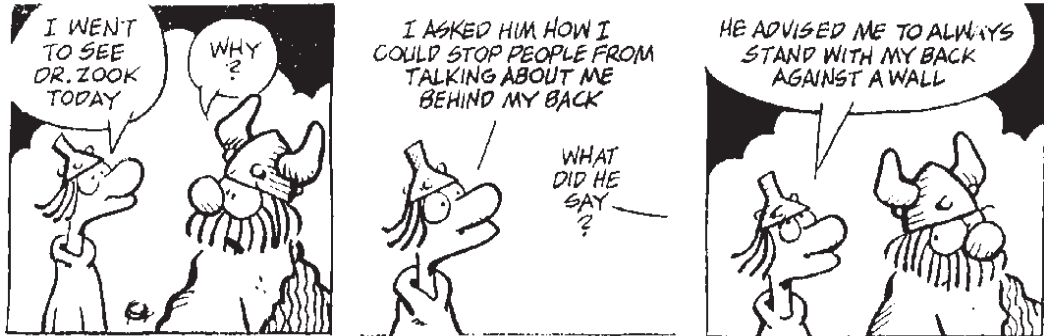
Sherman's Lagoon — By J.P. Toomey



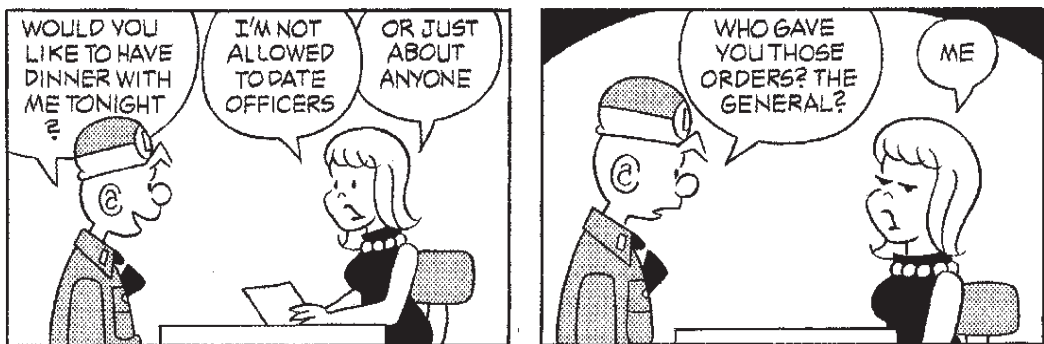
Mutts — By Patrick McDonnell



Hagar The Horrible — By Chris Browne



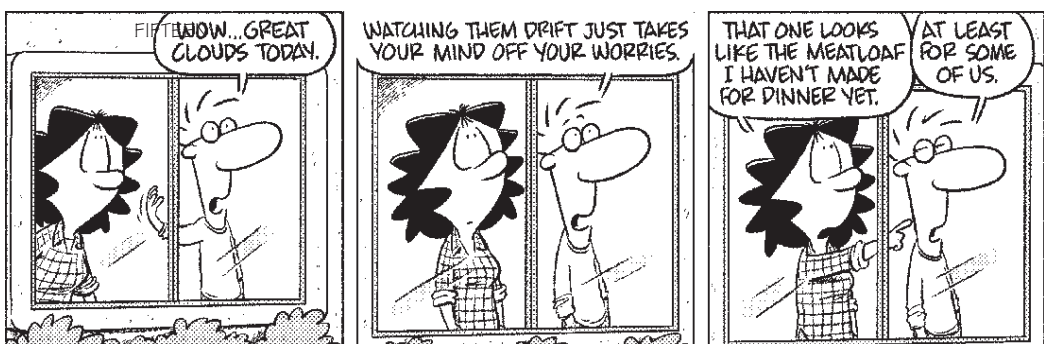
Beetle Bailey — By Mort Walker



Garfield — By Jim Davis



Baby Blues — By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



Conceptis Sudoku

The grid must be so completed that every row, column and 3x3 box has every digit from 1 to 9 inclusive

Sudoku grid with numbers 7, 1, 5, 8 in the top row.

Difficulty Level *

Answer to yesterday's puzzle: 3 1 9 4 8 2 7 5 6... 9 3 2 1 4 6 5 8 7

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

Challenger

DIRECTIONS: Fill each square with a number, one through nine.

Horizontal squares should add to totals on right. Vertical squares should add to totals on bottom. Diagonal squares through center should add to total in upper and lower right.

THERE MAY BE MORE THAN ONE SOLUTION.

Today's Challenge Time 7 Minutes 57 Seconds Your Working Time ___ Minutes ___ Seconds

Challenger puzzle grid with numbers 26, 27, 27, 27, 27, 34, 32, 25, 17, 23

Yesterday's solution: 8 8 9 8 33, 5 1 6 4 16, 7 1 8 1 17, 9 2 9 7 27, 29 12 32 20 24

Word by Word

Cat (هرة) Hera

A cat has nine lives. Lelhera tesi arwah.

Numbers: للهرة تسع ارواح

7426 Seven thousand four hundred twenty-six

٧٤٢٦ Sabat alaf wa arbai maah wa seta wa eshroon

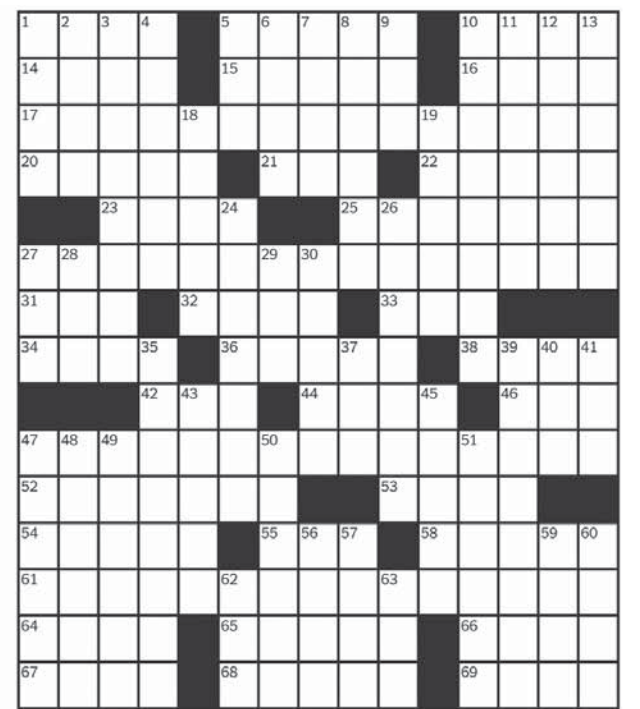
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Music direction meaning "with the bow"
5 What a physiognomist studies
10 Some servers
14 Cardinal feature
15 Window treatment
16 "Star Trek: T.N.G." crew member
17 "Supposedly, some Australian birds can participate in the America's Cup," palindromically
20 What all politics is said to be
21 One turned on by a rock star?
22 Can't take
23 One for the money?
25 Tending to wear away
27 Peter the Great, Mother Teresa and Bob Marley, palindromically
31 Go with
32 Superficially injure
33 Word with bar or blanket
34 The last of the Pillars of Islam
36 Last word in the Gettysburg Address
38 Goes back
42 Silence fillers
44 "Topaz" novelist, 1967
46 Kia subcompact
47 "My concealment of that footwear was so unfortunate," palindromically
52 Many lab rats
53 ___ Moss (women's clothing label)
54 Sam of "Jurassic Park"
55 Praise that's not prose
58 Resulted in
61 That tropical entry could not have captured first place in the fruit competition, palindromically

DOWN

- 1 Ferrara who directed "Bad Lieutenant," 1992
2 San ___ (resort locale)
3 Got together for a party?
4 ___ Baiul, 1994 Winter Olympics figure skating gold medalist
5 Rx overseer
6 Henry Purcell's "Dido's Lament," e.g.
7 Composed
8 Help for one with serious allergies
9 Host
10 "We're on!"
11 Savages
12 Second cousin?
13 Time out?
18 Offensive words
19 Strengthen, with "up"
24 Gets by
26 1960s western starring Clint Eastwood



PUZZLE BY ALAN ARBESFELD

- 27 Tree with "helicopter seeds"
28 Spot of ___
29 Long in Hollywood
30 Jesse who lost the governor's race to Ronald Reagan in 1970
35 Ecstatic
37 Prefix with cycle
39 Where some long runs take place
40 Science class, informally
41 One who has trouble passing the bar?
43 Virile
45 Venture (forth)
47 Worker with hides
48 World Cup chant
49 Luke's Jedi mentor
50 14-legged crustacean
51 Turn white, maybe
56 "The Persistence of Memory" artist
57 It's a long story
59 Related
60 Never to be repeated
62 Home Depot competitor
63 Pretense

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

Grid with crossword answers: ITEM RAZE KAYO, MOVE ICER SENOR, PROTESTER PADUA, URN YES OPENER, TINKER PROCURER, EDEN FIST SOO, OPART ALMOND, PROVOCATION, DEARIE CROSS, IAN RHEA ECRU, PROPOSER LUSHES, DRIVEL PEZ EWE, BRAVE PROFILERS, RUMOR MINT ESAU, AMAT EDGY DEPP



Scratch pad

odds 'n' ends

SYDNEY: If you've ever struggled to decipher Australian English, then 'democracy sausage' — the 2016 word of the year Down Under — may lead to blank faces with its obscure origins in election campaigning. The Australian National Dictionary Centre defined it Wednesday as a barbecued sausage served on a bread and bought at a polling booth "sizzle" on election day, which fell on July 2 this year. How it came to be selected may baffle all but close observers of Australian politics. But other contenders such as "smashed avo", "census fail" and "Ausexit" could have been even more difficult to digest for outsiders. And the 2015 winner, "sharing economy", is yet to find popular appeal. The dictionary centre tried to explain its choice. "Arguably, the democracy sausage has been one of the best things to come out of a tumultuous year in politics and political campaigning," said centre director Amanda Laugesen. "Its use was also boosted by a controversial incident where Opposition (Labor) leader Bill Shorten — who noted his sausage sandwich was 'the taste of democracy' — ate his sausage from the middle," she said. Sausage sizzles are barbecues for good causes, which proliferate outside big shops, schools and local sports events across the vast country. (AFP)

PARIS: Steve Jobs may have been a technological revolutionary, but his legacy will not be remembered in a Paris street name. Jobs's name was one of several famous figures from the technology industry proposed to adorn new roads in the French capital's soon to be launched tech startup campus in the southeastern 13th district. The socialist local district mayor Jerome Coumet had proposed naming one of the new roads "Rue Steve Jobs" but the former American entrepreneur, who died in 2011, didn't even make it to the voting booths after objections from communists and ecologists. Instead, the likes of British World War II hero mathematician and computer scientist Alan Turing, whose work helped the Allies defeat the Nazis, and American computer scientist and former Navy Rear Admiral Grace Murray Hooper, who pioneered computer coding, have both been chosen. Apple products such as the iPhone, iPad and iPod may have revolutionised the technological world but Jobs faced a backlash when his name was put forward to be honoured in the hub. (AFP)



This picture shows a 7x2 meter puzzle, the biggest one in the world, made with 40,320 pieces and shown at the Jose Luis Cano Documentary Center in Algeciras, southern Spain on Dec 13. (AFP)

contract bridge

By Steve Becker

Famous Hand

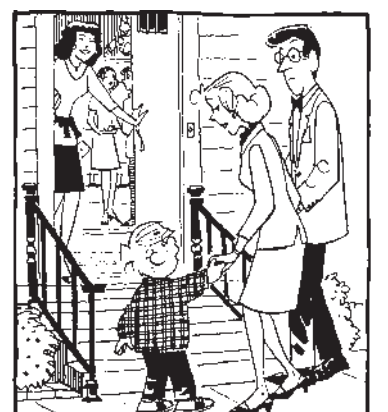
East dealer. Both sides vulnerable.

- NORTH: ♠K J 8 6 4 3, ♥Q 2, ♦10, ♣Q 9 7 3
WEST: ♠10, ♥5 4 3, ♦A K 9 7 6 5 4, ♣5 4
EAST: ♠, ♥A K 9 8 7, ♦Q 8 3, ♣A K 8 6 2
SOUTH: ♠A Q 9 7 5 2, ♥J 10 6, ♦J 2, ♣J 10

The bidding: East 1♥, South 1♠, West 2♦, North 5NT, Pass, 7♣, 7♠, Dble

Opening lead — king of diamonds. What happens when an irresistible force meets an immovable object? There's no good answer to this philosophical question, but, interestingly, there are times when a similar situation arises in bridge. Consider this deal played in the 1977 U.S. Grand National Team Championship. It occurred in the final round of the event, when only two teams of an original entry of 8,000 remained in the contest.

It was a remarkable hand in many ways. Probably the most striking feature was that the bidding was identical at both tables! In each case, East opened one heart, South overcalled one spade, and West bid two diamonds. At both tables, North jumped to four spades (pre-emptive), whereupon both Easts bid five notrump. This was the Grand Slam Force; it agreed on diamonds as the trump suit and directed West to bid seven diamonds if he had two of the three top trump honors. Both Souths passed, and both Wests duly bid seven diamonds. The grand slam in diamonds (worth 2,140 points) would undoubtedly have been made, but at each table, North, showing complete faith in the opponents' bidding, sacrificed at seven spades. This was doubled and went down five — 1,400 points — at both tables. So in the end, the hand was a total washout! Eventually, one team, from Texas, triumphed over the other, from Washington, D.C., by the smallest margin possible. The final score in the 64-deal match was 100 International Match Points to 99, an extremely low score for that number of deals. Indeed, the bridge played by both teams, as illustrated by the deal shown, was magnificent. Tomorrow: It's a very logical game.



So which is it? Am I supposed to have fun, or am I supposed to behave? *

PRIME TIME

thursday — (all times are kuwait local)

- 08:45 crystal vs man united/soccer ... bein sports 3hd
- 10:00 fiorentina vs sassuolo/soccer ... bein sports 4hd
- 11:45 hotspur vs hull bein sports 4hd
- 12:15 lavante vs rayo/soccer bein sports 3hd
- 13:45 bordeaux vs nice/soccer bein sports 6hd
- 15:00 celta vs sevilla/soccer bein sports 3hd
- 17:00 celtics vs spurs/basketball bein sports 1hd
- 20:00 sweden vs germany/handball ... bein sports 8hd

Sports

Latest sports scores at — <http://sports.arabtimesonline.com>

Japan's Antlers reach Club WCup final

Asian champions Jeonbuk Motors trash Sundowns 4-1 to claim 5th place

OSAKA, Japan, Dec 14, (Agencies): Japan's Kashima Antlers shocked South American champions Atletico Nacional 3-0 on Wednesday to reach the Club World Cup final, helped by a controversial first-ever penalty awarded by video referee.

Nacional's players reacted furiously after Hungarian referee Viktor Kassai referred to the new technology in Osaka following complaints from the Kashima bench protesting that Daigo Nishi had been tripped on the half hour mark.

Shoma Doi made history by converting the penalty before Yasushi Endo added a cheeky back-heeled goal and substitute Yuma Suzuki completed the rout late on, Suzuki striking a Cristiano Ronaldo-style pose in celebration.

Club America vs Real beIN SPORTS 1HD
13:30 Local

The Antlers, who become the Japanese team to reach the final, face either Ronaldo's Real Madrid or, in the event of a seismic shock, Mexico's Club America for the title of the world's best team on Sunday. Those two sides meet in Yokohama on Thursday.

Video technology is being trialed in FIFA competitions for the first time at the Club World Cup in Japan.

The system involves assistant referees monitoring television screens and relaying information on so-called "match-changing decisions" to the match officials during the game.

Kashima were fortunate not to be at least three goals down before the penalty incident, Nacional forward Jhon Mosquera going closest for the Colombians with a ferocious volley which rattled the crossbar.

Antlers goalkeeper Hitoshi Sogahata was forced to make several sharp saves before Mosquera smashed another shot against the bar



Kashima Antlers' Mu Kanazaki (left), and Atletico Nacional's Mateus Uribe (right), battle for the ball during their match at the FIFA Club World Cup soccer tournament in Suita, west Japan on Dec 14. (AP)

just before halftime as the Libertadores Cup holders went in search of the equaliser.

Earlier, South Korea's Jeonbuk Motors thrashed South African side Mamelodi Sundowns 4-1 to win the fifth-placed playoff.

Meanwhile, Asian champion Jeonbuk Motors thrashed African side Mamelodi Sundowns 4-1 to claim fifth place in the Club

World Cup on Wednesday.

Kim Bo-kyung scored his second goal of the tournament in the first half and Lee Jong-ho, playing in his last game for Jeonbuk, doubled the advantage 10 minutes later.

Jeonbuk went into the break 3-0 ahead when Jang Yun-ho's low cross was turned into the net by Sundowns defender Ricardo Nascimento.

Sundowns pulled one back three minutes into the second half when Percy Tau found the top corner with a left-footed strike, and Kim Shin-wook's header off a corner kick at the end sealed the win.

Before the match, Lee and teammates Kim Chang-soo and Choi Kyu-baek were traded to Ulsan Hyundai.

'Always motivated'

Ronaldo a rare breed: Zidane

YOKOHAMA, Japan, Dec 14, (AFP): Cristiano Ronaldo is itching to prove just why he deserved the Ballon d'Or by leading Real Madrid to another Club World Cup title, Zinedine Zidane said Wednesday.

The Portuguese superstar, voted the world's best player for a fourth time earlier this week, will lead Real's charge in Japan, where the European champions face Mexico's Club America in Thursday's semi-final.



Ronaldo

"Cristiano is hugely motivated for this game — as always," Real coach Zidane told reporters in Yokohama.

"He would be motivated even if it were a friendly, that's just the sort of player he is.

"Obviously we have many great players at Real Madrid but it's very rare one player wins so many awards," added the Frenchman, whose side are chasing their second world title in three years this week.

"To win four Ballon d'Ors is a fabulous achievement and it's not an easy thing to do. What he's doing is absolutely incredible — maybe he deserves a fifth one too!"

Pora, Yama shine in 1st Suzuki final

Indonesia crush Thailand 2-1

JAKARTA, Dec 14, (AFP): Indonesia's dream of winning the AFF Suzuki championship is just a step away, after the nation defeated defending champions Thailand 2-1 Wednesday in Bogor, Indonesia.

Playing in the first leg of the final at Pakansari Stadium, Thailand's Teerasil Dangda managed to secure the first goal of the match in minute 33.

Thailand soon led the game with players who seemed to dominate, but



Indonesia's Bayu Pradana Andriatmoko (front), is tackled by Thailand's Threerathon Bunmathan during the AFF Suzuki Cup final football match between Indonesia and Thailand at Pakansari Stadium in Cibinong, West Java on Dec 14. (AFP)

last AFF Suzuki Cup in 2014.

The country had previously suffered under a one-year ban from international events imposed by world soccer body FIFA.

The AFF Suzuki Cup is the first international tournament for Indonesia after the ban was lifted in May. The second leg of the final will be played on Saturday in Thailand, which has won the AFF Suzuki Cup four times.

Torneos to pay \$112m penalty

NEW YORK, Dec 14, (RTRS): US prosecutors on Tuesday announced an agreement allowing Argentine sports media Torneos y Competencias SA to pay about \$112.8 million to settle charges stemming from a sweeping bribery probe targeting FIFA, soccer's world governing body.

The deferred prosecution agreement with Torneos, whose former chief executive pleaded guilty last year to engaging in schemes to bribe soccer officials, was approved by US District Judge Pamela Chen at a hearing in federal court in Brooklyn.

Under the deal, Torneos agreed to forfeit \$89 million and pay a \$23.76 million penalty. Prosecutors charged it with one count of wire fraud conspiracy, which will be dropped if it abides by the agreement's terms for four years.

Outside of court, Ignacio Galarza, the company's general manager, said he welcomed the agreement, which is the first with a company in the FIFA corruption probe.

"Today is a great day for us as we start to leave this investigation behind," Galarza told reporters.

In a statement, Brooklyn US Attorney Robert Capers said the company cooperated and is "being given a chance to change the way the business of soccer is done in the future."

Gabon ready to host CAN

LIBREVILLE, Dec 14, (AFP): Gabon insists it is ready to host the African Cup of Nations despite concern about the state of preparations amid political instability just one month ahead of the opening ceremony.

The CAN is due to run from Jan 14 to Feb 5 next year but was thrown into doubt after violence broke out following President Ali Bongo's controversial re-election in August.

Call for Africa's showcase football tournament to be moved to a different country were heard following rioting after the vote whose outcome is still contested.

Breaking News

24/7

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