

Govt mulls center to deal with emergencies



Dow Chemical, DuPont merge in \$130bn deal



Sports tribunal upholds Platini suspension



## GLOBAL CLIMATE TALKS STUMBLE TOWARDS END

DEAL 'SURE', BUT PITFALLS AHEAD



Min 05°  
Max 21°



PARIS: Activists hold a banner in front of a giant polar bear puppet called Aurora during a demonstration organized by environmental organization Greenpeace at the venue of the COP21 United Nations climate change conference in Le Bourget on the outskirts of the French capital yesterday. — AP

**LE BOURGET, France:** Sleep-starved envoys tasked with staving off catastrophic climate change are on track to seal a historic accord, the French hosts of UN talks said yesterday although the biggest pitfalls were yet to be cleared. The 195-nation conference in Paris had been scheduled to wrap up yesterday, but was extended another day after ministers failed to bridge deep divides during a second consecutive all-night round of negotiations.

Still, Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, who is presiding over the talks, voiced confidence the event would culminate with a much-awaited pact. "We are almost at the end of the road and I am optimistic," said Fabius, whose hopes were echoed by many negotiators and observers despite potential deal-breakers still up in the air. Fabius said he would submit the deal at 9 am (0800 GMT) and was "sure" it would be approved. "It will be a big step forward for humanity as a whole," he said.

World leaders have billed the Paris talks as the last chance to avert disastrous climate change: increasingly severe drought, floods and storms, as well as rising seas that would engulf islands and populated coasts. The outcome of a laborious two-decade-long process, the post-2020 accord would commit all nations to curb greenhouse gases that trap solar heat, warming Earth's surface and disrupting its delicate climate system.

Highlighting the urgency of the moment, US President Barack Obama and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, spoke by phone yesterday about the Paris negotiations, according to China's foreign ministry. Xi said the world powers "must strengthen coordination with all parties" and "make joint efforts to ensure the Paris climate summit reaches an accord", according to a statement on the ministry's website. The planned accord would seek to revolutionize the world's energy system by cutting back or potentially eliminating the burning of coal, oil and gas, whose carbon dioxide is the big warming culprit.

UN efforts from the 1990s have been hamstrung by rows between developed and developing nations over sharing the emissions-curbing burden, aiding climate-vulnerable poor countries and funding the shift to cleaner renewables. Developing nations have insisted established economic powerhouses must shoulder the lion's share of responsibility as they have emitted most of the greenhouse gases since the Industrial Revolution.

But the United States and other rich nations say emerging giants must also do more. They point out that developing countries now account for most of today's emissions and thus will be largely responsible for future warming. The financing issues remained the biggest potential deal-breakers in Paris, highlighted in a draft text presented by Fabius on Thursday that was debated through the night.

Rich countries promised six years ago in Copenhagen to muster \$100 billion a year from 2020 to help developing nations make the energy shift and cope with the impact of global warming. But how the pledged funds will be raised remains unclear - and developing countries are determined to secure a commitment for increasing amounts of money after 2020. The latest text refers to the \$100 billion as a floor, potentially triggering a last-minute backlash from the United States and other developed nations fearful of being forced to sign a blank cheque.

Another remaining flashpoint issue is how to compensate developing nations that will be worst hit by climate change but are least to blame for it. The developing nations are demanding "loss and damage" provisions, which Washington is particularly wary of as it fears they could make US companies vulnerable to legal challenges for compensation. — AFP

### SHEIKH AHMAD TO FIGHT JAIL SENTENCE

**KUWAIT:** Sheikh Ahmad Fahd Al-Sabah, an influential figure in football and the Olympics, vowed yesterday to fight a six-month jail term imposed in Kuwait for insulting the judiciary. Sheikh Ahmad, a member of the FIFA executive committee and the International Olympic Committee, was sentenced to jail by a lower court on Thursday, local media said. The sheikh, also president of the Olympic Council of Asia, was convicted of casting doubt on the integrity of the judiciary, insulting the public prosecution and threatening public order in a television interview three years ago, Al-Qabas newspaper reported.

Prosecutors had placed a gag order on the case, but Sheikh Ahmad spoke out about it on Kuwaiti television anyway. Authorities later dismissed the sheikh's complaint and he appeared on state television in March to issue an apology, saying he was "misinformed" about the plot, without elaborating.

The case erupted in the weeks after FIFA and the IOC suspended Kuwait for government interference in sport. Sheikh Ahmad said he is appealing against the jail term and a KD 1,000 (\$3,300) fine and denied any wrongdoing. "This is a personal attack and unfortunately is symptomatic of the current relationship between Kuwait and the sports movement," he said in a statement released by the OCA. "Under Kuwait's democratic constitution, it is my right to express my opinion freely, and that is all that I have done," he added.

"I have fought against all forms of corruption and promoted freedom of speech all my life - when I was in the military, when I was in the government and now within the sports movement. I will continue to protect the value of democracy, freedom of right of speech and the autonomy of the sports." The OCA statement said the 55-year-old royal had been "personally targeted for criticisms

he made on the general situation in Kuwait during a television interview three years ago."

It added that new sports laws "which threatened the autonomy of sport in Kuwait were introduced in response to the outcome of the last International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) elections in December 2014 and have led the IOC to suspend the Kuwait Olympic Committee on October 27, 2015." Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah, Kuwait's information minister and former head of the Asian Shooting Confederation, lost the 2014 election to lead the world shooting federation. "Certain individuals who introduced these sports laws have further sought to seek retribution on the OCA for the suspension," the statement added. "These individuals are also threatening to ban Kuwaiti athletes from being able to compete at international events - including the Rio 2016 Olympic Games." — Agencies

## KUWAIT, AUSTRIA EYE CLOSER LEGAL COOPERATION

**VIENNA:** Visiting Kuwaiti Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Al-Sane and Austrian Minister of Justice Wolfgang Brandstetter met in Vienna yesterday on ways of promoting bilateral legal and judicial cooperation. Speaking to KUNA following the meeting held in presence of Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria and its Permanent Representative at International Organizations in Vienna Sadeq Maarefi, the Kuwaiti minister said: "Kuwait is interested in promoting its historical relations with Austria in various fields." He hailed the significant role played by Austria in the international arena, noting that it is home to several weighty international organizations, including anti-crime committees.

Sane appreciated growing international willingness to promote and reinforce cooperation in legal and judicial domains by means of hammering out bilateral and multilateral agreements in this regard. On his meeting with the Austrian minister, he said they had addressed a number of important legal issues

and topics, and possible bilateral agreements in the area of legal assistance, repatriation, terrorism and extremism.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria and its Permanent Representative at International Organizations in Vienna Sadiq Marafi highly commended Austria's fair positions towards Islamic issues in general, recalling its honorable stance during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Kuwait is to hold soon a celebration in Vienna marking the 50th anniversary of forging diplomatic relations with Austria, under chairmanship of First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz, the ambassador said.

He said he looked forward to clinching a number of agreements and memos of understanding during the celebration, quoting the Austrian minister as hailing the level of distinguished relations between both nations. — KUNA



**VIENNA:** Kuwaiti Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Al-Sane (right) is pictured with Austrian Minister of Justice Wolfgang Brandstetter (center) and Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria Sadeq Marafi. — KUNA

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His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

## AMIR MEETS KYRGYZ PRESIDENT TODAY

**KUWAIT:** Kyrgyzstan President Almazbek Atambayev will meet His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as part of his three-day official visit to Kuwait today.

In other news, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is scheduled to patronize the ceremony for distributing the cup and award of the camel race for

the 2015-2016 season, organized by the Kuwait Camel Racing Club.

His Highness the Crown Prince has deputized Hawalli Governor, retired Lieutenant Colonel Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to attend the ceremony on his behalf. The ceremony will be held on the track of the Martyr Sheikh Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the club headquarters at 3:30 pm today. — KUNA

## KUWAIT AFFIRMS KEENNESS ON COOPERATION WITH EUROPE

**ROME:** Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has affirmed the State keenness on bolstering dialogue and cooperation between the Arab states and Europe for confronting major challenges and hazards against the two regions. The ambassador, addressing a session of the Med-Euro Mediterranean Dialogue forum, currently hosted at the Italian capital, affirmed that the Middle East is currently witnessing critical conditions due to terrorism and disturbances as well as plight of refugees.

He shed light in his address on Kuwait's role in confronting such challenges and touched on its history in the realm of philanthropic aid. Kuwait in 1961 established the Fund for Economic Development, offering aid estimated at \$17 billion to 103 countries worldwide, since then.

The three-day forum, organized by the Italian Institute for International Political Studies, is designed to address crucial and pending issues concerning countries of the region. The forum, opened by Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi and Jordanian King Abdullah II late on Thursday, tackles issues such as prosperity and security sharing and the immigration.

### Different sectors

In his address within the framework of tackling the topic of 'prosperity sharing,' Ambassador Sheikh Ali Khaled shed light on the Kuwaiti assistance for projects in different sectors such as agriculture, rural development, infrastructure, transports, communications, energy, industry, water, sanitation, health, education, beside financial support for development banks that secure funds for young entrepreneurs. As to terrorism, he noted that Kuwait "has been a victim" of this peril, noting that the latest of such attacks was the bombing Imam Al-Sadeq Mosque, where scores of people died or suffered injuries.

On immigration, he noted Kuwait's hosting of three international conventions for raising donations for the Syrian refugees and those who have been relocated due to the ongoing bloody conflict in Syria. Kuwait had contributed with the largest sum, \$1.3 billion. Such Kuwaiti aid, both at the state and grass-root levels, has drawn worldwide applause and admiration, crowned with the UN designation of His Highness the Amir as the 'Humanitarian Leader,' as well as the State of Kuwait as the 'Humanitarian Center.'—KUNA



**ROME:** Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (left) attends the session of the Med-Euro Mediterranean Dialogue forum. — KUNA



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# KUWAIT STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

**NEW YORK:** The State of Kuwait on Thursday stressed the importance of the World Humanitarian Summit, to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, in May, 2016. "The summit represents a historic moment for the donors to affirm commitment to saving



**NEW YORK:** First Secretary of Kuwait mission to the UN Sabah Nasser Al-Sabah speaks at a debate during the 70th session of the UN General Assembly. —KUNA

lives, alleviate poverty and protect the dignity of people hit by natural or man-made disasters," First Secretary of Kuwait mission to the UN Sabah Nasser Al-Sabah said.

He made the comments in a speech to a debate during the 70th session of the UN General Assembly on "strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance."

Sabah voiced concern over the safety of the UN aid workers in conflict zones, citing reports of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in this regard. He urged scaling up the efforts to of the UN aid agencies to help the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, meet their urgent needs and speed up the reconstruction process. On behalf of Kuwait, Sabah reiterated the call for establishing a fair, permanent and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and forcing Israel, the occupying power, to comply with the relevant UN resolutions and acknowledge the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people foremost among which is the right to establish their independent state within the pre-June, 1967, borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Kuwait, as member of the Advisory Commission of the UNRWA, is keen on supporting the activities of the UN agency and contributed \$32 million in aid in response to the urgent appeals issued by the agency, he went on.

He added that Kuwait spares no effort in supporting the UN-led relief effort worldwide out of deep belief in humanitarian action and the principles of the UN Charter, recalling the UN honoring of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as humanitarian leader and of Kuwait as humanitarian center. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** MP Dr Ouda Al-Rowaie (right) attends the permanent committee for political affairs' session, held as part of the 8th Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA). —KUNA

## KUWAIT TO CONTINUE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM: MP

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait will continue exerting efforts in the fight against terrorism and drying up origins of its resources, said a member of a Kuwaiti delegation currently on a mission in Cambodia. MP Dr Ouda Al-Rowaie affirmed that Kuwait had joined more than 11 international treaties for combating terrorism, also noting the National Constitution stipulates the state abidance by accords with other states and organizations.

He was addressing the permanent committee for political affairs' session, held as part of the 8th Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), hosted by Cambodia. Excerpts of his address were given to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) yesterday.

Elaborating on the national anti-terrorism efforts, he noted the Central Bank of Kuwait's issuance of the Law 106/2013, regarding money-laundering and funding terrorism and the Cabinet Resolution 5/2014 concerning implementation of UN resolutions that fall under Chapter VII related to terrorism and its funding.

Shifting to democracy, he mentioned that the National Constitution includes five chapters and 182 provisions defining the relationship between the ruler and the ruled in terms of duties and rights, drawing up a way of life for the Kuwaitis based on social justice, equal opportunities and freedoms.

However, he cautioned that "absolute freedom" can be detrimental and may lead to chaos, noting that freedoms must not be measured equally for all nations without taking into consideration diverse cultures, customs and civilizations. The 8th Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) kicked off Wednesday in the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh. The three-day conference aims to "promote peace, reconciliation and dialogue in Asia" by bringing together parliamentary presidents and representatives of 22 countries to discuss and exchange views on current issues of politics, economics, finance and social affairs.

### Pledging conferences

Meanwhile, MP Madi Al-Hajri said that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was the first to sense sufferings of the Syrian refugees. Thus, Kuwait hosted the First, Second and Third International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria under the umbrella of the UN that honored His Highness the Amir as a 'Humanitarian Leader,' he added.

Hajri's statement was made in the address of the Kuwaiti parliamentary group at a meeting for the Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs of the APA. The three conferences managed to raise \$7.7 billion to support the humanitarian situation in Syria, he said.

Kuwait's contributions were extended to humanitarian operations carried out by the UN organizations. These include \$210 million that went to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Recently, the country has offered \$121 million to the UNHCR operations in Syria, he noted. Hajri also pointed to of Kuwait's strong belief in the importance of preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage, pointing to the role of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL). In addition, the country issued in 1960 the first law on antiquities in the Gulf area, to regulate excavations and protect monuments, in a bid to preserve the country's cultural heritage.

Since 2010, the world has been engulfed by a whirlpool of tensions, and ethnic and religious conflicts, besides regional wars that produced racism and hatred, Hajri said. He also denounced all acts of violence and terrorism against innocent people. Hajri denounced the attempts to destroy or steal nations' antiquities and cultural heritage. He stressed that Muslim countries managed through 1,400 years to preserve antiquities and heritage of various cultures. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Riders Motorcycle Club visited the American Hospital recently as part of its 'discover your country' campaign. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Electricity and Water Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah speaks to reporters at the sidelines of the exercise. — KUNA photos



**Chief of Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) Yousef Al-Ansari speaks at the event.**

# Govt seeks setting up national catastrophe-prevention apparatus

**KUWAIT:** The cabinet is mulling the notion of establishing a catastrophe prevention apparatus that can activate measures to withstand the onset of either natural or man-made disasters in the country, said an official on Thursday.

Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Electricity and Water Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah made this statement to reporters after having

attended the annual exercise dubbed 'Shamel 2' which tests the nation's emergency responses in the event of the occurrence of a disaster of any kind such as torrential rains or floods or eye-blinding sand storms. He said the annual exercise was necessary to upgrade and streamline the response time and magnitude of various government agencies and civic institutions in the face of disasters.

Meanwhile, Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz

Al-Khaled Al-Sabah said this recurrent exercise was vital for his governorate as it hosts numerous oil and industrial facilities in addition to large population concentrations, making it crucial to have an effective apparatus to protect everything in the case of natural or man-made disasters such as fires or torrential rains.

Also speaking to reporters at the conclusion of this year's exercise was chief of Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) Yousef Al-Ansari

who emphasized the necessity of having military and government and civic organizations coordinate their functions in the event of a catastrophe or nation-wide emergency.

Shamel 2 exercise took place today in the governorate of Al-Ahmadi in the southern region of the country with the participation of 11 government agencies equipped to handle natural or man-made national emergencies. — KUNA



## TRAFFIC DIVERTED ALONG JAMAL ABDUL NASSER ROAD

**KUWAIT:** The Interior Ministry's Traffic Department announced that traffic along Jamal Abdul Nasser Road in the leg between Al-Sabah Hospital and the Psychiatric Diseases Hospital roundabouts was diverted starting from yesterday at dawn, adding that the diversion would be in effect until 5:00 am tomorrow, Sunday, December 13th, 2015. The department explained that traffic going from the psychiatric diseases hospital's roundabout to Al-Sabah hospital's roundabout would be diverted to the other side of the road for traffic heading to Kuwait City, whereas vehicles

heading to Doha would use the inner way going through the maternity hospital.

Meanwhile, the traffic department announced that a new U-turn flyover will be opened at the 73th kilometer mark along King Fahad Highway tomorrow, Sunday, December 13, 2015 to be used by vehicles heading to Nuwaiseeb to return towards Kuwait City safely. The department also announced that trucks longer than 10 meters and heavier than 60 tons would not be allowed to use the flyover unless otherwise authorized by the traffic department.

## DUO FACE LEGAL ACTION FOR KILLING ENDANGERED ANIMAL

**KUWAIT:** The recent killing of a wolf by two young men at Wafra desert South of Kuwait has drew the ire of environmentalists and advocates of animal rights in Kuwait, especially after the two men reportedly posted photos and videos online explaining how they killed the endangered species. The two young men did not expect such reactions when they posted the photos and a video showing how they killed the animal and then towed it by their vehicle, Al-Rai daily reported yesterday. They reportedly explained that their actions were made to 'warn campers of such life-threatening wild dangerous animals.' Instead of receiving praise as they expected, the two men were stormed by

angry statements for the brutal way of killing the animal, Al-Rai reported. Most comments blamed the duo for failure to report seeing the animal to relevant authorities in the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) to capture it alive and return it safely to a reservation as it had already become so rare in Kuwaiti deserts. Commenting on the story, Environment Public Authority's (EPA) Public Relations and Awareness Director Dr Khaled Al-Enezi said that the law incriminates killing migrating birds and animals. He also described what happened with the wolf as 'absurd,' and promised to take legal actions against the two young men. —Al-Rai



The Palace of Justice

## COURT SETS JAN 12 TO DELIVER VERDICT IN TERROR CELL CASE

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Criminal Court on Thursday set January 12, 2016 as the date for a verdict-delivering session in the terror cell known as 'Al-Abdali,' in which 26 people are being tried over possession of huge amounts of weaponry and ammunition, as well as espionage for Iran and Hezbollah.

On Thursday's session, the court allowed defense lawyers to deliver their final statement. During last Tuesday's session, the testimony of the witness Athby Al-Fahad Al-Sabah was heard. The court, in previous sessions, listened to a number of defense lawyers, the public prosecution,

coroners and a criminal investigation officer. It held the first hearing on September 15, prosecuting 26 persons accused of being members of or affiliated with the secret cell.

The prosecution had accused the defendants of committing acts that violate the State of Kuwait sanctity, collaborating with Iran and Hezbollah for carrying out hostile schemes against the country. They are also accused of possessing explosives, guns, ammunition, and unlicensed spying devices, with the intention of perpetrating crimes in the country. —KUNA

## GROCERY STORE ROBBED AT KNIFEPOINT

**KUWAIT:** A grocer in Abu Halifa reported that three unidentified robbers attacked his store late at night and threatened him with knives, stealing KD 320 in cash and prepaid mobile cards worth KD 180. The man said he failed to write down the robbers' vehicle plate number. A case was filed.

### School storming case

Following the arrest of a citizen for storming his son's school with a loaded gun demanding to see someone who had beaten his son, informed security sources said that the man works for KUNA and is also the media representative of the People's Democratic Movement (Hashd). The sources added that despite pressure to release him on bail, the public prosecutor ordered detaining the suspect till Sunday pending further investigations. Notably, the school administration and teaching staff testified that the man barged into the school holding the gun behind his back before he drew it out, shouting demands to see the person who hit his son.

### Embezzlement

A citizen reported that an accountant working for him embezzled KD 2,100 he was supposed to deposit in the company's bank account, said security sources. The employer added that on discovering that the sum had not been deposited, he called the accountant's mobile phone but received no answer. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

### Smuggling foiled

Two Asians were arrested on arrival at Kuwait International Airport with possession of drugs, said security sources, pointing out that one of the suspects had a kilogram of marijuana while the other had hidden 5,000 banned pills in his luggage. Two cases were filed and the suspects were referred to relevant authorities.

### Fraudster caught

A man wanted for fraud was arrested at a routine checkpoint in Shuwaikh, said security sources, noting that on checking on the man's ID at the checkpoint, policemen found he had been wanted for fraud and writing dud cheques. Meanwhile a citizen wanted for a KD 72,000 financial claim was arrested in Farwaniya, said security sources. Case papers indicate that the man was stopped during a routine checkpoint in Rehab where he seemed nervous and confused. Checking his ID, policemen found he is wanted.

### Fights

An Asian man sustained a serious head injury when a compatriot hit him with a metal object during a fight over financial disputes, said security sources. Meanwhile, an Asian man filed a complaint at Khaitan police station accusing four people dressed in national outfits of assaulting him and breaking his nose over a traffic priority dispute. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress to identify the assailants and arrest them. —Al-Rai, Al-Anbaa

## DOCTORS EXPELLED OVER FATAL MEDICAL ERROR

**KUWAIT:** The health ministry recently announced that two doctors were fired and referred to the public prosecution after they were found responsible for the death of a Kuwaiti man in a public hospital. The ministry clarified in a recent statement that it had 'nothing to hide' regarding the ongoing investigation of the death of citizen Ali Hussein Boabbas, adding that its investigations were finished and that the two doctors were found technically and administratively guilty. The ministry also stressed that it would never tolerate negligence and would never hesitate to take proper actions against those who endanger patients' lives. —Al-Rai

## MAN KILLED BY SMOKE INHALATION

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** An Asian man was found dead in his bed inside a chalet where he worked as a guard, said security sources. Initial examination of the scene suggests that the man inhaled smoke from a charcoal fire he had lit in his room to keep warm, the sources added. Further investigations are in progress.

## ENVOY ATTENDS ARGENTINIAN PRESIDENT'S INAUGURATION

**WASHINGTON:** Kuwaiti Ambassador to Argentina Salah Mubarak Al-Mutairi participated in the swearing-in ceremony of Mauricio Macri as the new President of Argentina. The Ambassador was present at the inaugural ceremony as directed by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti Embassy in Buenos Aires said in a press statement yesterday. Mutairi relayed the greetings of His Highness the Amir to Macri, wishing Argentina prosperity and advancement. Mauricio Macri won presidential elections in November 2015, marking the beginning of a new political era for South America's second-largest economy. —KUNA

# International

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2015

**3 Palestinians killed  
in West Bank, Gaza**

8

**US ex-cop guilty  
of raping on duty**

11

**Two Koreas hold  
high-level talks**

14



RIYADH: Saudi King Salman bin Abdelaziz listens to a member of the Syrian opposition during their meeting in the Saudi capital on Thursday. — AFP

## SYRIAN OPPN TO MEET GOVT FOR TALKS NO PART FOR ASSAD AND AIDES

RIYADH: A joint team of Syria's political and armed opposition will meet the government next month for talks seeking a political solution to nearly five years of conflict, the chairman of a Saudi-hosted opposition conference said on Friday. More than 100 members of Syria's opposition parties and rebel fighting groups agreed at the end of two days of talks in Riyadh to work together to prepare for peace talks with President Bashar Al-Assad's government.

But the final hours of the meeting, which excluded Islamic State and Nusra Front fighters as well as the main Kurdish force controlling large parts of northern Syria, were overshadowed by protest from the powerful insurgent group Ahrar al-Sham. In a statement, it said it had withdrawn from the Riyadh meeting, objecting to what it said was a prominent role given to the mainly Damascus-based political opposition group, the National Coordination Body for Democratic Change, which it said was closer to Assad than to the opposition.

It also said rebel fighters had been under-represented at the talks and their voices largely ignored. However a copy of the final statement, seen by Reuters, had been signed by the Ahrar al-Sham delegate. Nevertheless, its withdrawal - however brief - highlighted enduring rifts among Assad's enemies which have bedeviled Western and Gulf Arab efforts to rally enough political and military pressure on the president to force him to step down.

Abdulaziz Al-Sager, a Saudi academic who chaired the Riyadh talks, said the opposition would meet government officials in the first 10 days of January, the first such talks in two years aimed at ending a bloody civil war which has drawn in forces from the United States, Russia, Europe and the Arab world. "There will be a meeting decided by (United Nations envoy Staffan) de Mistura in January. A meeting between the opposition and the Syrian regime to go to a transitional period," he said, in comments translated at a news conference. "This will take place in the first 10 days of January."

A statement at the end of the two-day conference said Assad should leave power at the start of a transitional period, and called for an all-inclusive, democratic civic state. It also committed to preserving state institutions. The opposition was willing to enter talks with Syrian government representatives and to accept a UN-supervised ceasefire, the statement said.

### Confidence-Building

The meeting came amid escalating conflict in Syria, pitting the army and allied militias including Lebanese Hezbollah fighters backed by Iran and Russia against competing rebel and jihadi fighters, who include Arabs and Kurds. The Riyadh meeting called on the United Nations to pressure the Syrian government to make a series of confidence-building moves before peace talks start, including suspending death sentences against opponents, releasing prisoners and lifting sieges.

Monzer Akbik, a member of the National Coalition opposition group, said the conference agreed to set up a 32-member secretariat to oversee and supervise peace talks. The statement said that body would select the negotiating team. Participants also committed to a political system which "represents all sectors of the Syrian people", and would not discriminate on religious or sectarian grounds - in a gesture towards minority Alawite, Christian and Kurdish populations.

US Secretary of State John Kerry welcomed the declaration. "While this important step forward brings us closer to starting negotiations between the Syrian parties, we recognize the difficult work ahead," he said. International efforts to resolve the conflict have been lent added urgency by a wave of deadly attacks across the world claimed by the Iraq- and Syria-based Islamic State and by a massive flow of refugees into Europe. Major powers agreed in Vienna last month to revive diplomatic efforts to end the war, calling for peace talks to start by January and elections within two years.

### No Part for Assad

The demands that Assad and his lieutenants should play no part in a political transition marked a tougher stance than that of several Western countries which back Assad's opponents. The United States, France and Britain all called for Assad to step down after protests broke out against his rule in March 2011. Although they all say Assad ultimately must go, they have been less specific about the timing of any departures, indicating that they could accept his staying on in an interim period.

Assad's fate was one of several questions left unresolved at the Vienna meeting last month which was attended by Russia, the United States, European and Middle Eastern countries including Saudi Arabia and Iran, which back opposing sides in Syria. Saudi Arabia is a main backer of the rebels along with Turkey and Western countries. Iran and Russia support Assad.

Iran has openly criticized the decision by Saudi Arabia to hold the talks, saying they were designed to harm the Vienna process. On Thursday, Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said some groups linked to the Islamic State militant group were involved in the Riyadh meeting. Russia launched air strikes in Syria 10 weeks ago, helping the Syrian army - backed by Iranian troops, Hezbollah fighters and allied militia - to contain rebel advances.

Russia says it is bombing Islamic State militants, who control large areas of eastern Syria and western Iraq, but Western and Arab states which have been carrying out air strikes against Islamic State for more than a year say the Russian jets have mainly hit other rebel forces in the west of Syria. Moscow's intervention has not swung the war decisively Assad's way and several Western-backed rebel groups, some of whom were represented in Riyadh, have been emboldened by the increased flow of foreign-supplied anti-tank missiles which have helped stem parts of the army's counter-offensive. — Reuters

## IS TRUCK BOMBS KILL UP TO 60 IN SYRIA

**BEIRUT:** A triple truck bomb attack claimed by Islamic State in northeastern Syria killed at least 50 people and wounded 80 others, a spokesman for the Kurdish militia that controls the area said yesterday. The town in the northeastern province of Hasaka is controlled by the Kurdish YPG militia, which has been battling Islamic State with the support of US-led air strikes. Kurdish fighters have advanced against the militants in the last few weeks in Hasaka, notably taking over the town of al Houli backed up by a US-backed rebel alliance that includes the YPG.

The three blasts, carried out by at least two suicide bombers, struck outside a hospital, at a marketplace and in a residential area in the town of Tel Tamer late on Thursday, the YPG's Redur Xelil said via an internet messaging service. "There is massive destruction in the town and the number killed

is between 50 and 60, all of them civilians," he said. Islamic State later said in an online statement that three of its fighters driving three separate vehicles had detonated the suicide bombs targeting "bases" belonging to Kurdish fighters.

Earlier the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights gave a death toll of at least 22 people in the attack, saying that number was likely to increase. The Observatory said one of the bombs exploded near a health centre and another near a vegetable market. It said there was "confirmed information" about casualties among the Kurdish internal security force, known as the Asayish. The YPG has been the most effective partner on the ground in Syria for the US-led coalition that is fighting Islamic State. In October, it became part of the new US-backed alliance, called the Democratic Forces of Syria. — Reuters



**ALEPPO:** Syrian government forces walk past the bodies of reported members of the Islamic State group who were killed during a battle with regime forces in the area, as the corpses are displayed on the ground at the Kweyris air base in the east of this province yesterday. — AFP

## 3 PALESTINIANS KILLED IN WEST BANK, GAZA

### ISRAELI TROOPS USE LIVE ROUNDS

**HALHUL:** Three Palestinians were killed yesterday in the occupied West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, one after allegedly attempting to run down Israeli soldiers and two in clashes with troops. Palestinian youths clashed with Israeli forces near the northern entrance of the West Bank city of Hebron, and the soldiers responded with live fire, witnesses said. "Uday Jihad Irshaid, 22, was killed by live ammunition in his chest during clashes in

warning shots into the air." Irshaid's 17-year-old sister Dania was killed six weeks ago after trying to stab security forces, according to Israeli police. On the border with the Islamist Hamas-run coastal enclave of Gaza, a Palestinian was shot dead and 12 wounded in clashes with Israeli forces on the other side of the frontier fence. The Palestinian health ministry said Sami Maadi, 41, died in the incident east of the refugee camp of Al-Bureij.

Palestinian security sources identified the driver as Issa Haroub from Dir Samat village west of Hebron.

About an hour beforehand, a Palestinian fired at Israeli forces at a crossing between the northern West Bank and Israel and was shot and wounded, the Israeli defence ministry said. "An armed Palestinian assailant fired shots on the Gilboa crossing from several dozen metres (yards) away," said a statement from the ministry, which employs civilian guards at the site. "No casualties or damage have been reported to the crossing or its operators. The assailant, wounded, was picked up by a van and fled the scene," it added. The checkpoint is one of the main crossings in the northern area. Since Oct 1, near daily attacks and clashes between Palestinians and soldiers have killed 116 on the Palestinian side, 17 Israelis, an American and an Eritrean.

#### 'Return the Bodies'

More than half of the Palestinians killed have been alleged attackers. Israel has withheld the corpses of many attackers, a policy authorities say acts as a deterrent but critics argue leads to more anger. Yesterday, protesters in Silwad northeast of Ramallah called for Israel to return the bodies. Bassam Hamad, whose son Anas was killed this month after he tried to ram Israeli soldiers with his car, led a protest. "If (Israel) wants to make us suffer by stealing and keeping the bodies of the martyrs, we will make it suffer by being patient and resilient," he told AFP.

After yesterday's protest, clashes broke out between Palestinian stone throwers and Israeli soldiers, with six Palestinians wounded, an AFP correspondent said. In a separate incident in central Ramallah, Israeli security forces raided a shop in the early hours of yesterday, leading to clashes between residents and soldiers, witnesses said. Three Palestinians were shot during the clashes, one resident said. Their condition was not known. — AFP

#### Attack at Crossing

Earlier on Friday, a 57-year-old was shot dead as he tried to drive his car into a military checkpoint at Halhul, near Hebron, the Israeli army said. "A Palestinian attempted to ram his vehicle into security forces near Hebron" in the south of the territory, an army statement said. It said that forces present "shot the attacker, resulting in his death", adding that no Israelis were injured in the attack.



**HEBRON:** The mother of Uday Jihad Irshaid, a 22-year-old Palestinian man who was killed during clashes with Israeli security forces in this West Bank city, mourns during his funeral yesterday. — AFP

Hebron," a Palestinian health ministry statement said.

The Israeli military confirmed the use of live rounds but not the fatality. "A violent riot is taking place in Hebron. Hundreds of Palestinians are attacking forces, hurling rocks and rolling burning tyres at them," an army spokeswoman told AFP. "In order to disperse the crowd, (forces fired) 0.22 calibre rounds towards the main instigators and

## SISTANI CRITICIZES DEPLOYMENT OF TURKISH FORCES

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq's top Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani yesterday criticized the deployment of Turkish troops and tanks to the country's north that Baghdad says took place without its approval. Iraq has demanded that Ankara remove the newly-deployed forces, which were sent to a base near the city of Mosul, but Turkey has pushed for them to stay. No country should "send its soldiers to the territory of another state under the pretext of supporting it in fighting terrorism without the conclusion of an agreement... between the governments of the two countries," Sistani said in remarks delivered by a representative at weekly Friday prayers.

Turkey has been training forces opposed to the Islamic State jihadist group, which overran large areas north and west of Baghdad last year, at the base where the recently-deployed troops were sent. Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has defended the deployment as an "act of solidarity" and said: "When the threats (to the trainers) increased, we sent troops to protect the camp." But the base also gives Turkey a foothold in an area where a major ground operation against IS is eventually to take place, and where its archfoe, Turkish Kurdish rebel group the Kurdistan Workers' Party, has also sought to expand its presence. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi, whose high-profile reform program has accomplished little in the way of lasting change, can ill afford another setback now, but repeated calls for a Turkish withdrawal have gone unheeded. Abadi said yesterday that he directed the foreign ministry to make a "formal complaint" over "the Turkish incursion."

#### 'Out of the Question'

And he called on the United Nations Security Council to "protect Iraq and its security, sovereignty, safety and territorial integrity, which were violated by Turkish forces", a statement from his office said. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Friday that "it is our duty to address the Baghdad government's concerns" but indicated that Ankara wanted to obtain Iraqi approval for the deployment. "Especially after starting the fight against (IS), threats have increased against Turkey and our forces on the ground. It is the Turkish republic's duty to ensure our troops' security," Cavusoglu said during a live interview on NTV television.

IS "still controls around 35 percent of Iraqi territory. Do you (Iraq) have a force to ensure security of our troops providing training there? No. Then who will protect them? We are discussing this," he said. The foreign minister also reiterated that Ankara had stopped further deployment of troops to the region due to "our respect (for) Iraq and the Baghdad government". Earlier this week, Iraq gave Turkey 48 hours to remove the forces, but the deadline passed without Ankara doing so and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan subsequently ruled out a withdrawal. "What they do in Bashiqa and at the camp is training," Erdogan told a news conference in Ankara late on Thursday, referring to the area where the base is located. "The number of our soldiers will increase or reduce according to the number of peshmerga (Iraqi Kurdish forces) who are trained. (Their) withdrawal is out of the question," Erdogan said. — AFP



## SPD STRUGGLES TO EXPLOIT MERKEL WEAKNESS

**BERLIN:** Germany's Social Democrats are struggling at a party congress this week to emerge from Angela Merkel's shadow, where they've languished for a decade and been unable to exploit her current weakness in the polls. Chancellor Merkel's junior partners in her left-right "grand coalition" government have long been stuck in the doldrums, currently tallying only about 24 percent support among voters. The country's second-strongest party trails Merkel's conservative Christian Democrats (CDU) by 15 points even as the migration crisis has eroded her support, particularly among her own rank-and-file.

The embattled leader, Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel, a dynamic public speaker but little-loved among Social Democrats, has been blamed for the stagnation of the venerable party, now in its 150th year. His critics also complain that he has failed to snatch issues back from the master tactician Merkel, often credited with

occupying the middle ground in German politics. Nevertheless, with no challenger in sight, Gabriel was on Friday reelected with 74.3 percent of the vote, down from the 83.6 percent he obtained at the party's last polls in 2013.

### 'That's Enough'

In an address to around 600 delegates meeting in Berlin yesterday, Gabriel hit out at Merkel's pro-austerity policies during the eurozone debt crisis for the gains of France's far-right National Front. "I have always warned Merkel against trying to impose austerity on France," he said, ahead of his reelection. "Without it, (FN leader Marine) Le Pen would not have made it that far," he said.

But observers noted that the debt turmoil had also presented challenges for the SPD. While Merkel backed a fresh bailout for Greece under strict conditions over the summer, Gabriel had appeared to struggle

to find a firm position. In the end, Gabriel, "who is targeting the centrist electorate", opted not to challenge the pro-austerity line favored by the chancellor "knowing that most Germans are very sceptical when it comes to Greece", political scientist Oskar Niedermayer said.

The most dramatic example of how Merkel has poached key issues has been in the refugee crisis - the defining issue of German politics this year. By embracing an open-doors policy for Syrians fleeing war and terror, Merkel has won over many voters from the traditional left who might never have considered voting CDU. Recognizing his weak support in the party, Gabriel announced in October that he was willing to hold a party referendum to decide who will lead the SPD into the 2017 general election.

Merkel, who is holding her own party congress from Monday, is expected to decide next year whether she will stand for

a fourth term at the helm of Europe's top economic power. In the run-up to the party congress, SPD vice president Ralf Stegner insisted that the mighty Merkel could be defeated: "12 years at the chancellery: that's enough!" SPD supporter Clara Klapprodt, 19, admitted she had little confidence her party could win the 2017 general election. "To do that, we would need a real vision capable of winning people over," she told AFP at the congress which opened Thursday.

However another SPD supporter, Wilhelm Drabke, said he was keeping hope alive but that it would take another candidate, popular Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, to topple Merkel. Steinmeier already took on Merkel once, in 2009, leading the party to its worst showing since 1949 with just 23 percent of the vote. It remains unclear whether he would be willing to risk reliving the experience. — AFP



**BUJUMBURA:** In this Dec 9, 2015 photo, a young boy joins other onlookers at the scene where five dead bodies, seen behind, were found in a street in the Cibitoke neighborhood of the Burundian capital. — AP

## ATTACKS ON MILITARY BASES IN BUJUMBURA

### 12 INSURGENTS KILLED

**NAIROBI:** Heavily-armed gunmen launched coordinated assaults on three army bases in the Burundi capital yesterday, leaving at least a dozen attackers dead, the military said, in the worst unrest since a failed May coup. Army spokesman Colonel Gaspard Baratuza claimed that 12 attackers were killed and 21 captured while five soldiers were wounded, following the early morning assaults on a base at Ngagara and a military training college in the capital, as well as another base at Mujejuru, 40 km outside the city.

Baratuza said the attackers aimed "to stock up on weapons and ammunition". "The army has defeated them seriously," the spokesman said, while Bujumbura residents reported continuing gunfire into the afternoon. Clashes continued throughout the day in different parts of the capital with witnesses describing heavy firing, including artillery, lasting several hours at the military locations.

Streets were deserted as city residents

stayed home and the army and security forces attempted to lockdown the city. Witnesses reported many arrests by security forces of mainly young residents of different city neighborhoods. US Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Thomas Perriello, said he was "alarmed" by the violence and called for an "immediate ceasefire and calm".

Yesterday's firefights are the heaviest since a failed coup in May, sparked by President Pierre Nkurunziza's bid for a third term, which he later won in disputed elections in July. Months of street protests have devolved into regular armed attacks with gunfire disrupting the nights and dead bodies appearing on city streets almost every day. Attacks on security forces have escalated, with frequent ambushes of police convoys by rebels armed with assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and mortars aimed at government installations. Eight months of unrest have claimed the lives of at

least 240 people so far while more than 200,000 have left for neighbouring countries, according to the UN.

### Worst Fighting in Months

Frightened residents of Bujumbura said yesterday's fighting was the worst in months. "I am holed up in the corridor of my house with my wife and children," said Eric, a resident of Musaga. "Pray for us because we will die!" As sporadic gunfire continued around Bujumbura, a government spokesman claimed on Twitter that the attacks had been foiled. Referring to the gunmen as "Sindumuja" - meaning "I am not a slave", a name sometimes used for the insurgents - presidential media advisor Willy Nyamitwe wrote, "Tonight the Sindumuja tried to attack military camps but they failed." "A failed coup in May 13, many defeated attacks including this one... all their plans against Burundi fail," he added later. — AFP

## PUTIN SAYS RUSSIA BACKS FSA ALONG WITH ASSAD TROOPS

**MOSCOW:** President Vladimir Putin said yesterday Russia supports the opposition Free Syrian Army, providing it with air support, arms and ammunition in joint operations with Syrian troops against Islamist militants. His statement appeared to be the first time Moscow said it was actually supporting Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's opponents in the fight against Islamic State forces. Putin said last month the Russian air force had hit several "terrorist" targets provided by the Free Syrian Army.

Western and Arab states carrying out air strikes against Islamic State for more than a year say that Russian jets have mainly hit other rebel forces in the west of Syria. "The work of our aviation group assists in uniting the efforts of government troops and the Free Syrian Army," Putin told an annual meeting at the defence ministry. "Now several of its units numbering over 5,000 troops are engaged in offensive actions against terrorists, alongside regular forces, in the provinces of Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Raqqa," he said, referring to the Free Syrian Army. "We support it from the air, as well as the Syrian army, we assist them with weapons, ammunition and provide material support."

Putin said strikes by Russia's air force and navy had inflicted heavy damage on the infrastructure of Islamic State, which controls large areas of eastern Syria and western Iraq. Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said, however, that the influence of Islamic State was increasing in Syria, where militants control around 70 percent of the country. The number of IS fighters in Iraq and Syria totals around 60,000, Shoigu said, and there is a threat of violence spilling over into post-Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Talking to his generals, Putin issued a veiled warning to Turkey, whose downing of a Russian bomber jet near the Syrian-Turkish border last month sent bilateral relations to a freezing point and led Moscow to impose economic sanctions to Istanbul. "I want to warn those who may again try to stage provocations against our troops," he said. "I order you to act in an extremely tough way. Any targets threatening Russia's (military) group or our land infrastructure must be immediately destroyed," Putin told the generals. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu earlier yesterday called on Russia for calm, but said Turkey's patience is not unlimited. — Reuters

## SPAIN'S 'LOST' GEN STRUGGLES TO FIND PLACE

**CADIZ, Spain:** Sleeping in, hanging out in the park and slouching in front of the TV is how 18-year-old Carlos Cabilla, a member of Spain's so-called "lost" generation, fills his days. Like nearly three in ten Spanish youths, the tattooed and pierced 18-year-old is unemployed, not studying and not seeking work, the product of an education system that experts say fails to adequately prepare students for the job market. Their plight is a key concern for Spanish voters in a Dec 20 general election in which conservative Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy faces a hard-fought battle to retain power. Cabilla lives in Segunda Aguada, a working class neighborhood in the southwestern port of Cadiz, where the unemployment rate stands at a whopping 37 percent, compared to 21 percent at the national level. For those under the age of 25, the jobless rate surpasses 60 percent. Cabilla started studying hairdressing when he was 15 but dropped out after just one term. He has only had a few odd jobs since then. "I wake up at around noon, I spend the afternoon with friends in a park, we talk, we smoke (joints), until 10 or 11 pm," he said.

He then returns to the flat he shares with his father Ramon and his partner, as well as his 22-year-old brother and 13-year-old half-brother. He also spends hours watching TV or playing video games. When asked how he sees his son, Ramon, a who works for the local government, says: "Unmotivated". "I am worried but I have no other choice but to put up with it. I can't put him in the street," he added. His son is not alone. During Spain's decade-long building boom many young people dropped out of school to get well-paid work on building sites or in the services sector.

But when the property bubble collapsed in 2008, sending the Spanish economy into a tailspin, these jobs dried up, leaving thousands of youth out of work and without education. Just over 27 percent of Spaniards aged 15-29 were neither in school nor



**CADIZ, Spain: Carlos Cabilla poses in the "parque de bomberos" (Fireman's Park) on Dec 4, 2015. —AFP**

working in 2013, according to the OECD, compared to 15 percent for the entire 34 nations that make up the club of mostly rich nations. The situation has become so common in Spain there is even a new word for it - "NiNi", a colloquial Spanish contraction combining "neither" and "nor" referring to youth who are not studying and who don't even try to find a job.

### 'No Useful Training'

Part of the problem is that Spain does not offer high-quality apprenticeship schemes and short-term vocational training like those that exist in other European nations like Germany, said Anna Laborda from the ESADE business school in Barcelona. "There is no practically training that is really useful," she said. Vitor Rebola of Spain's Youth Council, which groups 76 youth organizations from across the country, said "there is a lack of ambition on the part of institutions" to help these youngsters.

The body calls for more professional training schemes to fight Spain's school drop-out rate of 22 percent, the highest in the European Union. "Before it was really easy to dream, today no," said Ramon. Today young people "are bitter and they don't talk about their future because they don't have one," he adds. His son Carlos agrees. "I don't know how my future is going to be, I don't even know what I am going to do this afternoon."

A fan of tattoos - his neck, chest, arm and hand are covered in them - Carlos dreams of becoming a tattoo artist. But he said he does not have the Euro 700 (\$760 dollars) to pay for the course and has missed the deadline to sign up this year. "I'm a slacker," he said. Carlos has not bothered to sign up at the local jobs centre. "It's useless," said his uncle Antonio Garcia, 38, who himself has been unemployed for the past three years. Both Antonio and his nephew Carlos plan to vote for new far-left party Podemos, which has made the fight against economic inequality a central part of its platform. —AFP

## UKRAINIAN LAWMAKER MANHANDLES PREMIER

### ROWDY SCENES IN PARLIAMENT

**KIEV:** Fighting broke out among members of Ukraine's ruling coalition yesterday after a member of President Petro Poroshenko's bloc physically picked up Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and pulled him from the podium. Yatsenyuk was defending his embattled government's record when lawmaker Oleh Barna walked over to him, presenting him sarcastically with a bunch of red roses. Barna then grabbed him around the waist and groin, lifting him off his feet and dragging him from the rostrum.

Members from Yatsenyuk's People Front party waded in, pushing Barna and throwing punches. Lawmakers from Poroshenko's bloc joined the fray and an angry brawl ensued for several minutes before deputies returned to their seats. The incident exposed deep divisions in the pro-Europe coalition that have fuelled speculation the government could fall even as Ukraine's Western backers warn that time is running out for Kiev to make good on its promises to root out endemic corruption and cronyism.

Yatsenyuk is, like Poroshenko, a pivotal player in the pro-Western leadership that emerged after the downfall of the Moscow-backed Viktor Yanukovich in Feb 2014. But support for him has fallen dramatically in the past year. "The atmosphere in the room provoked mentally unbalanced people. Oleh Barna served on the frontline and is therefore too impulsive, but that does not excuse his actions," the head of Poroshenko's bloc Yuriy Lutsenko told journalists.

The brawl interrupted a question-and-answer session with Yatsenyuk, 41, after he delivered a summary of the performance of his government, which after exactly one year in power is now no longer immune from being dismissed by parliament. "I told you a year ago that nobody is going to promise the moon," Yatsenyuk said, appear-



**KIEV: A deputy from the Ukrainian President's political party attacks Ukrainian Prime minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk (right) during the annual report of the government in the Ukrainian parliament yesterday. —AFP**

ing to defend his cabinet from accusations they have not made good on their reform promises. "You have full constitutional right to vote on the question of dismissing Ukraine's cabinet. Put it to the vote. I'll accept the decision of the Ukrainian parliament. I'm not clinging to this chair," he said.

Opposition parties are calling for a no-confidence motion to be tabled and commentators say enough votes could be gathered to dismiss the government, but a vote is not yet likely due to the lack of a candidate to replace Yatsenyuk. In an impassioned speech on Tuesday, US Vice President Joe Biden urged parliament to put their differences aside to approve reforms, including critical tax and budget bills and judicial changes, without which he said Ukraine would fail to rebuild itself

on transparent, democratic lines.

"The President, the Prime Minister, the members of this august body - all of you must put aside parochial differences ...If you fail, the experiment fails," he told parliament. A disagreement over proposed tax amendments and the draft 2016 budget has delayed the disbursement of up to \$4 billion in international loans which Ukraine had hoped to secure to boost its war-torn finances before the end of the year. Yatsenyuk said the government had submitted a "compromise" tax reform bill and urged lawmakers to approve the amendments before the turn of the year. Yatsenyuk's People's Front party triumphed in parliamentary elections in 2014, but the approval rating for the party is now around 1 percent. —Reuters

## PROSECUTORS END BRITAIN'S PHONE HACKING PROBE

**LONDON:** Prosecutors announced yesterday they would take no further action in Britain's mammoth phone-hacking probe, ending a four-year investigation that rocked the political and media establishment to the core. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) said it would take no further action against News Group Newspapers (NGN), global media baron Rupert Murdoch's British tabloid publisher. England's state prosecutors also said there would be no further action against 10 journalists from the rival Mirror Group Newspapers (MGN) stable - among them former Daily Mirror editor Piers Morgan. The phone hacking scandal, which first emerged in 2006 and resurfaced explosively in 2011, engulfed top newspaper executives, police chiefs and politicians. It swiftly sank the expose-led News of the World weekly tabloid, which was Britain's biggest-selling newspaper. The probes into voicemail interception and other alleged media crimes amounted to the biggest police investigation in British history.

Several journalists from Murdoch's publications have been individually convicted of voicemail interception offences. But since July, the CPS was also considering whether to prosecute NGN as a whole for corporate liability. It was further deciding whether to bring phone hacking charges against 10 MGN journalists. But Alison Saunders, the director of public prosecutions, announced the CPS was dropping both probes.

### Insufficient Evidence

"We have decided there is insufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of a conviction and therefore no further action will be taken in any of these cases," she said. "There has been considerable public concern about phone hacking and invasion of privacy. Over the past three years, we have brought 12 prosecutions and secured nine convictions for these serious offences. These decisions bring the CPS's involvement in current investigations into phone hacking to a close." The CPS said they had been considering potential corporate charges of phone hacking and perverting the course of justice against NGN. However, "the law on corporate liability in the United Kingdom makes it difficult to prove that a company is criminally liable if it benefits from the criminal activity of an employee," the CPS said. "There is no evidence to suggest that any member of the board of NGN had knowledge of phone hacking when it was taking place."

On perverting the course of justice, it said there was nothing NGN employees could have done between 2006 and 2011 which would have altered or affected the phone hacking prosecutions. Furthermore, "the fact that NGN decided to settle rather than resist civil proceedings cannot be considered to be actions which could pervert the course of justice". —AFP

# US EX-COP GUILTY OF RAPING ON DUTY

## CONVICTION SYMBOL OF NATIONAL PROBLEM

**OKLAHOMA CITY:** A former Oklahoma City police officer was found guilty of rape and sexual battery by a jury on Thursday in a case where prosecutors said he preyed on women who had trouble with the law, hoping that their word would not



**OKLAHOMA CITY:** Daniel Holtzclaw cries as the verdicts are read in his trial on Thursday. —AP

stand up against his. Daniel Holtzclaw, who turned 29 on Thursday, broke down in tears as the verdict was read in the case where he was charged with sexually assaulting and raping 13 women. He was also cleared of about half of the 36 counts against him.

Sentencing was set for January and he could face life in prison. Holtzclaw was led out of the courtroom in handcuffs. The jury has been deliberating since Monday night. Protesters who gathered outside the court earlier this week, demanded that the all-white jury convict the officer based on the physical evidence and the word of the 13 black women, who testified about how they were sexually assaulted.

In closing arguments on Monday, prosecutors said Holtzclaw targeted his victims by going after women he came across while on patrol. He ran background checks and went after those who had outstanding warrants, previous arrests or carried drugs or drug paraphernalia. They said he did this because he did not think authorities would take the victims' word over his if he had to defend himself against sexual assault allegations. The defense said the victims provided testimony that was unreliable and dishonest.

Defense attorney Scott Adams said Holtzclaw was an honorable police officer whose activities were made to appear evil and suspicious. Thirteen women took the stand in the trial, which began more than a month ago, telling jurors of sexual assaults that ranged from touching over their clothing to forced oral sex and rape. Holtzclaw, who did not testify, was fired over the accusations in Jan 2015 after approximately three years on the job. Holtzclaw is mixed race Asian and white. His father - a police officer in Enid, about 100 miles northwest of Oklahoma City - his mother and sister were in the courtroom as the verdict was read. At least one accuser was present, as well as several black community leaders.

Holtzclaw's case brought new attention to the problem of sexual misconduct committed by law enforcement officers, something police chiefs have studied for years. After receiving a report from a grandmother who said Holtzclaw forced her to perform oral sex during a traffic stop, police identified a dozen other women who said Holtzclaw had victimized them. The youngest was the 17-year-old girl. She was the last to testify at Holtzclaw's trial.

The girl recalled Holtzclaw pulling up in his police car as she walked home one night in June 2014. Holtzclaw drove her to her family's home and walked her to the porch, where he told her he had to search her. She said he grabbed her breasts, then pulled down her pink shorts and raped her. She testified that he asked if it was the first time she had ever had sex with a cop. Her DNA was found on his uniform trousers. —Agencies

# DIVERS SEARCH LAKE FOR EVIDENCE IN MASSACRE

**SAN BERNARDINO, California:** A week-old investigation into the shooting rampage that left 14 people dead at a holiday party in Southern California turned on Thursday to a small lake near the scene of the massacre, where divers searched for evidence. The FBI also revealed investigators were looking into any connections there may have been between one of the two killers in San Bernardino last week and four men arrested in 2012 in a separate federal terrorism case brought in nearby Riverside, California.

Thursday's underwater search stemmed from unspecified leads indicating the married couple who carried out the shooting spree had been in the vicinity of Seccombe Lake in San Bernardino on the day of the killings, said David Bowdich, assistant director of the FBI field office in Los Angeles.

Bowdich said he would not discuss the "specific evidence we're looking for."

CNN reported investigators were seeking a computer hard drive that belonged to the couple, who the FBI has said were inspired by Islamic extremists. Bowdich said investigators already have combed the surrounding park, and that the search of the lake by FBI and Sheriff's Department divers could take days.

Seccombe Lake Park lies about 2.5 km north of the Inland Regional Center, the social services agency where 14 people were killed and 22 others injured when Syed Rizwan Farook and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, stormed a holiday gathering of his co-workers there on Dec 2 and opened fire with assault rifles. Farook, 28, a US-born son of Pakistani immigrants, and Malik, 29, a Pakistani native he married last year in Saudi

Arabia, were slain hours after their attack in a shootout with police.

The FBI said it is treating the mass shooting as an act of terrorism, citing the couple's declaration that they were acting on behalf of the militant group Islamic State, as well as a large cache of weapons, ammunition and bomb-making materials seized in the investigation. The couple's motives remain unclear. But if the crime proves to have been the work of killers driven by militant Islamic ideology, as the FBI suspects, it would mark the deadliest such attack on US soil since Sept 11, 2011. The latest slayings and disclosures about the killers' backgrounds have put law US law enforcement on heightened alert and reverberated into the US presidential campaign, intensifying debates over gun control, immigration and national security. —Reuters

## News

in brief

### US Muslim group gets white powder in mail

**WASHINGTON:** A Muslim advocacy group evacuated its national headquarters on Capitol Hill on Thursday after receiving a letter containing white powder, but staff were later allowed to re-enter after authorities conducted preliminary tests and deemed the substance harmless. The letter received by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) also contained a note that read, "Die a painful death, Muslims," according to CAIR staff attorney Maha Sayed. "Our fear is at a pretty high level at this time, given the anti-Muslim rhetoric going on," said Sayed. In California, a CAIR branch office in the Bay Area city of Santa Clara, was also evacuated on Thursday after receiving an envelope with an unknown powder inside, CAIR spokesman Ibrahim Hooper said. About three CAIR employees came into contact with the powder and were quarantined in the building while police and firefighters investigated the scene, said group spokesman Hooper, adding that the rest of the office staff waited outside on the sidewalk. Sayed said on the group's Facebook page that the organization receives hate messages daily.

### Hundreds march after Chicago mayor apology

**CHICAGO:** Hundreds of protesters marched through the streets of Chicago and staged "die-ins" on Thursday, calling for the resignation of embattled Mayor Rahm Emanuel a day after he emotionally apologized for the 2014 police shooting of a 17-year-old black teen. The day's protests started with dozens of medical students of different races lying down in front of City Hall for 16 minutes at the start of the work day, some holding signs reading "Do No Harm" in a demonstration broadcast by local media. The protesters chose 16 minutes to symbolize the 16 times white police officer Jason Van Dyke shot Laquan McDonald in 2014. Another demonstration unfolded during evening rush hour in the city's downtown. About 500 people marched from City Hall to Millennium Park, at times stopping traffic and making sharp, unexpected turns that forced police to scramble to catch up. The march was one of the largest in Chicago since the release of the video. Protesters held signs demanding the resignation of Emanuel and Cook County State Attorney Anita Alvarez and for an overhaul of Chicago's police board. At times, they chanted "16 and a cover-up!"



**SAN BERNARDINO, California:** An FBI dive team conducts a search for any evidence that may have been left by the husband and wife behind the San Bernardino massacre at Seccombe Lake Park on Thursday. —AFP

## NO 'WHITE KNIGHT' TO RESCUE BRAZIL FROM CRISIS

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Some are charged with bribe-taking, others electoral crimes and one with forming a gang: Meet the men overseeing the impeachment of Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff. The first woman to lead Latin America's biggest country could be ejected one year into her second term on charges that her government illegally managed the federal budget. But many of the politicians directly responsible for Rousseff's fate do not have clean hands.

Of the 65 congressional deputies elected in controversial circumstances Tuesday to a committee scrutinizing the impeachment case, about 30 percent face criminal probes, according to a detailed count by specialist website Congresso em Foco. The architect of the impeachment drive himself, house speaker Eduardo Cunha, has been charged with taking as much as \$40 million in bribes. He allegedly stashed the loot - part of a vast corruption network centered on state oil giant Petrobras - in secret Swiss accounts.

Dozens of other senators and deputies also face

Petrobras-related charges. Throw in scenes of deputies brawling on television this week, or reports that the agriculture minister, Katia Abreu, threw a glass of wine in the face of a senator at a dinner late Wednesday, and the idea that exchanging Rousseff for another leader would clean up Brazil's politics looks ever less likely. "There's no white knight," says University of Brasilia politics expert David Fleischer. "There's no national savior riding from the horizon."

### 'Depressing Spectacle'

Tuesday's election of the impeachment commission encapsulated the mix of bad tempers and questionable legality plaguing the capital Brasilia. Pro-Rousseff and opposition deputies pushed and screamed during voting to form the commission, which will recommend whether or not Congress should impeach the president. The Supreme Court intervened hours later to suspend the commission for a week, citing irregularities. The O Estado de Sao Paulo newspaper called the

scenes "a scandalous and depressing spectacle."

"The chamber was turned into a circus. We are living in a degrading and humiliating situation," said Julio Delgado, from the Brazilian Socialist Party. On Thursday, another group of deputies punched and shoved each other on national television. This time they were members of the house ethics committee, which has repeatedly tried and failed to decide whether it should open a probe into the powerful Cunha. Fleischer estimated that about 20 percent of Congress members as a whole face criminal investigations, many of them linked to Petrobras.

These include senior figures like key Rousseff ally Senator Delcideo do Amaral and even a former president, Fernando Collor de Mello. Collor resigned from the presidency in 1992 during his own impeachment trial, before making a comeback as a senator. For Fleischer, the fighting in the chamber was a new low point. "Because it's an ethics committee, you wouldn't really expect that."—AFP

## MACRI SWORN IN PRESIDENT

**BUENOS AIRES:** Mauricio Macri took office as Argentina's first non-Peronist president in more than a decade on Thursday, promising to end policies of leftist populism and revive the South American country's ailing economy. Macri began his 4-year term in a ceremony snubbed by his predecessor, Cristina Fernandez, following a rancorous argument over where the handover of power should take place. The 56-year-old Macri, his wife and daughter were escorted by horse-riding guards through streets packed with cheering supporters waving the national flag and yellow balloons, the color of Macri's "Let's Change" alliance.

In his first speech as president, the former center-right mayor of Buenos Aires vowed to make the economy grow, lift all Argentines out of poverty and tackle endemic graft. "Multiplying job opportunities is the only way to achieve prosperity where, today, there is an unacceptable level of poverty," Macri told lawmakers moments after taking his oath in the National Assembly.

His victory delivered a hammer-blow to the Peronist movement that has dominated Argentine politics for much of the past 70 years and which will be ready to pounce on him if his planned reforms to the fragile economy unleash a new crisis. Peronism is a now a fragmented force but many Argentines who in the same breath voice support and disdain for it have tended to turn to it in times of political and economic turmoil.

Reading from a script, Macri did not provide any fresh details on how he would unwind capital controls and import restrictions, tame double-digit inflation or narrow Argentina's yawning fiscal deficit. They are tasks that will be complicated by a central bank running low on US dollars and a festering debt dispute with creditors that isolated Argentina from global debt markets and plunged it back into default last year.

Tens of thousands of Macri supporters swarmed toward the Pink House presidential palace, where Macri later received the presidential baton and sash from the Senate leader in Fernandez's absence. In the streets, firecrackers rang out in celebration as he delighted the crowd with his dad-style dancing on a palace balcony. Macri's argument with Fernandez stemmed from his wish that he receive the presidential sash and ceremonial baton at the palace, while Fernandez insisted on holding the full ceremony in Congress, where her party has the most seats.—Reuters



**BUENOS AIRES:** Argentinian President Mauricio Macri sits in his office at the government palace after his inauguration ceremony on Thursday. — AFP



**TORONTO:** Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (left) greets Georgina Zires, Madeleine Jamkossian and her father Kevork Jamkossian, refugees fleeing from Syria, as they arrive at Pearson International airport yesterday. —AP

## CANADA WELCOMES FIRST SYRIA REFUGEES

### TRUDEAU AT AIRPORT TO GREET ARRIVALS

**OTTAWA:** Canada welcomed 163 Syrian refugees late Thursday, taking in the first of a planned 25,000 in a matter of months and promising them a better life as they flee their country's horrific war. The refugees arrived just weeks after Canada's newly elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his country would pull its fighter jets from a US-led coalition targeting Islamic State fighters in Iraq and Syria. Trudeau and several members of his Liberal government were on hand to greet the Syrians as they arrived on a troop transport plane in Toronto.

Dozens of volunteers, interpreters and immigration officials helped the Syrians through the formalities of admission and gave them blankets, snow boots and other welcome gifts. Over the course of the day, good Samaritans came to the airport to donate winter clothes and try to greet the Syrians who had set out from Beirut. But in the end the tired travelers were admitted through a terminal that was closed to the public.

"Tonight they step off the plane as refugees. But they walk out of this terminal as permanent residents of Canada with social insurance numbers, with health cards and with an opportunity to become full Canadians," Trudeau said.

### 'Memorable' Day

The government hopes to bring in 10,000 Syrian refugees and another 15,000 by the end of February. "We will all remember this day," Trudeau said shortly before greeting the refugees, many of them women and children. Syria's grinding four-year civil

war has killed more than 250,000 people and displaced four million others. The new Liberal government, elected in October, had campaigned on a pledge to resettle 25,000 Syrians this year.

But it backpedaled last month, citing logistical issues and following criticism that Ottawa had been moving too fast despite security concerns heightened by the terror attacks in Paris last month. Broadcaster CBC reported in November that Canada will accept only whole families, lone women or children from Syria, while unaccompanied men - considered a security risk - will be turned away.

Since the start of 2014, Canada has welcomed 3,500 Syrian refugees. Another plane carrying around 160 Syrians is due to arrive in Montreal today, and the pace of arrivals is scheduled to increase to as many as two planes per day. The ones who arrived Thursday night were to stay in hotels before joining relatives or Canadian families who have offered to open up their homes to them.

The generosity being shown by Canadians stands in contrast to the colder approach of the United States toward the refugees. President Barack Obama has pledged to take in 10,000 Syrians over the course of the next year, and many American states - apparently fearing Islamist extremists will be hiding amid the refugee flow - have said they do not want them. Canada last year deployed 69 military trainers to northern Iraq to train Kurdish militia, as well as six CF-18 fighter jets to conduct sorties in Iraq and Syria. — AFP



**VARANASI, India:** Milkmen pass a poster featuring Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (right) and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday. — AFP

## FRIENDS ABE, MODI SEEK BUSINESS DEALS

**NEW DELHI:** Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will look to seal a deal on building India's first bullet train after he arrived in New Delhi Friday for talks with counterpart and conservative soulmate Narendra Modi. New Delhi and Tokyo are seeking to take advantage of a warm relationship between the two premiers that has only deepened, partly to counter China's growing rise, since Modi came to power last year. Before setting off yesterday, Abe told reporters that relations between Japan, Asia's second largest economy, and India, its third, harbor great potential.

"I want to achieve results that will give a boost to the development of future Japan-India relations in the areas of high speed railways, security cooperation and an agreement on the peaceful use of nuclear power," Abe said. The premier was later greeted at Delhi airport by junior finance minister Jayant Sinha bearing a bouquet of roses. Abe will meet Indian business leaders in the capital before taking a tour with Modi today of India's holiest city of Varanasi and the prime minister's parliamentary constituency.

Several lucrative business deals are slated for discussion during the three-day trip, according to officials, including a \$15 billion agreement for Japan to provide a "Shinkansen" bullet train connecting the cities of Mumbai and Ahmedabad. Modi has pledged to overhaul India's ramshackle railways and other infrastructure as part of ambitious reforms to revive the economy. The pair are also expected to discuss a long-mooted civil nuclear deal that would allow Japan to export its nuclear plant technologies to the subcontinent. — AFP

# WOMEN BATTLE AGAINST MUMBAI MOSQUE BAN

MANY INDIAN WORSHIP PLACES HAVE GENDER RESTRICTIONS

**MUMBAI:** A landmark mosque in Mumbai is facing pressure to overturn a ban on women entering its inner sanctum, a move that could set a precedent on gender restrictions to places of worship in the deeply religious country. A Muslim women's rights group is locked in a bitter legal battle with trustees of Mumbai's Haji Ali Dargah, built in the 15th century and popular not only with Muslims but Hindu devotees and sight-seeing tourists.

Women have been prevented entry to the mosque's mausoleum since 2011, with its trust saying close female proximity to the tomb of a revered saint is "a grievous sin" in Islam. Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA) has petitioned the Bombay High Court seeking a ruling that the ban is unconstitutional, hoping such a decision would mark a major step forward for women's rights in India. "A positive ruling would set a precedent and would have a wider and long-term effect," BMMA co-founder Noorjehan Niaz told AFP. "It would send a message and encourage women of all religions who are barred from entering places of worship to approach courts with similar demands," she added.

The mosque is located on an islet accessible via a causeway at low tide. It was built in the 1430s in memory of a wealthy Muslim who gave up his worldly possessions and went on a pilgrimage to Makkah. Legend has it that Pir Haji Ali Shah Bukhari, who became a Sufi saint, died during his spiritual journey and his body washed up on rocks in the Arabian Sea off south Mumbai. The mosque was constructed on the spot where his body was found, and his tomb, or "dargah", lies in the



**MUMBAI:** In this photograph taken on Dec 9, 2015, Indian Muslims and visitors are seen inside the Haji Ali Dargah. — AFP

inner sanctum - the mosque's most sacred place. It is one of a string of temples and mosques across India that restricts access to women. Last month local media reported that a Hindu temple in western Maharashtra state, of which Mumbai is the capital, suspended seven security guards after a female devotee stepped on a platform to worship an idol. Women are barred from the stand and temple authorities later performed a "purification" ceremony on the idol, according to the reports.

### 'Women are Impure'

Haji Ali Dargah is one of Mumbai's most recognizable landmarks and receives tens of thousands of visitors every week. But Niaz said the trust started banning women from the mausoleum four years ago, although they are still allowed into the mosque's other areas, where they can pray. She said trustees cited menstruation as the reason for barring women entry to sacred spots, an argument often given by conservative elements. — AFP

Kuwait Times

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## THAI PRINCE LEADS CYCLING EVENT 'FOR DAD'

**BANGKOK:** Thailand's crown prince led a mass cycle in Bangkok yesterday at a symbolic event to honour his father King Bhumibol Adulyadej and highlight his role as heir apparent amid increasing anxiety over his dad's health. Clad in lycra, a helmet and sunglasses, Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, 63, headed the cyclists at the "Bike for Dad" event - a rare public appearance for the prince - which follows a similar event in August for his elderly mother Queen Sirikit.

The mass cycles, broadcast live on every Thai television channel, have been billed as a chance to promote unity among Thais 18 months after a coup swept away the civilian government - the latest episode in a seemingly endless succession of elections and coups. They also give the twice-divorced prince a chance to bolster his image, promoting himself as a dutiful son, and crucially, that he has the strong backing of the armed forces, who joined him at the event.

"I am delighted that the Crown Prince graciously inaugurates the 'Bike for Dad'... to honour the King on his 88th birthday," coup-making army chief turned premier Prayut Chan-O-Cha said. Prayut and top military and political leaders, all clad in yellow in a nod to the King's official colour, followed the

Prince among an expected 100,000 cyclists on a 29-km route through the capital.

Nationwide, more than half a million people are expected to take part, topping the 136,411 people at the "Bike for Mom" cycle. "I am happy to stop work because I love the king. With all my heart I wish the king good health," said Supab Jarupoom, a 68-year-old butcher from Bangkok, wearing a Thai flag headband and with a photo of the King on his bicycle.

### Prince Centre Stage

The king is revered among many Thais but has been in hospital for much of the last two years and is rarely seen in public. Vajiralongkorn has yet to attain such popularity and his ability to operate as a unifying force ostensibly above the political fray is untested. In recent years, the crown prince has spent much of his time away from the public eye. But he has stepped in at some official ceremonies as his father's health declines.

The cycling events have thrust Vajiralongkorn centre stage at a time of heightened concern over his father's health and country's future. "Though the activity intends to praise the king as father of the



**BANGKOK:** Thai Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn rides a bicycle as he leads a mass cycle event to honor his father King Bhumibol Adulyadej yesterday. — AFP

nation, some might interpret the activity as bestowing greater monarch-to-be legitimacy upon the crown prince," Thai politics expert Paul Chambers told AFP.

For much of the last decade Thailand has been rocked by political instability partially fuelled by jostling among the country's elites for influence as the king's reign enters

its twilight years. Bhumibol and his family are protected by one of the world's harshest lese majeste laws, making criticism of the monarchy or public debate about its role in society all but impossible. Prosecutions have surged since last May's coup, with a Thai man arrested this week for 'liking' a doctored photo of the king. — AFP

## TWO KOREAS HOLD HIGH-LEVEL TALKS

### NEIGHBORS SEEK TO EASE TENSIONS

**SEOUL:** North and South Korea sat down to rare, high-level talks yesterday, aimed at building on an August agreement to ease cross-border tensions after a flare-up brought them to the brink of an armed conflict. Although any dialogue between the

end of the 1950-53 Korean conflict. The last such sit-down, with the mandate to discuss a range of inter-Korean issues, took place nearly two years ago. "Let's take a crucial first step to pave the way for reunification. I hope various pending issues will be solved one by

one by the talks which, in the past, have often run deep into the night or over several days. The meeting was held on the North Korean side of the border in the jointly-run Kaesong industrial zone - which opened in 2004 and has survived as a rare symbol of inter-Korean cooperation.

### Breaking Down Barriers

Jon said the talks were an opportunity to overcome the decades of mistrust and confrontation. "Let's make efforts to break down the barrier, fill up the cracks and make a new and wide road together," he said. Analysts say a positive result would see the two sides simply agreeing to continue the dialogue and offering some encouraging noises about future cooperation. "The outcome this time could have a significant impact on the path the overall inter-Korea relationship takes next year," said Cheong Seong-Chang, an analyst at the Sejong Institute think tank in Seoul.

The elephant in the room for any North-South dialogue is Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program. But while Seoul may well raise the issue of denuclearization, experts said the two sides were likely to focus on more achievable targets. "The North's denuclearization needs to be seen as the ultimate goal of inter-Korea dialogue, not a pre-condition of it," said Kim Keun-Shik, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul. The talks came a day after North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un said the country had developed a hydrogen bomb - a claim greeted with skepticism by US and South Korean intelligence officials. There was no set agenda in Kaesong, but both sides have clear, if not necessarily complementary priorities. — AFP



**KAESONG:** South Korean Vice-Unification Minister Hwang Boo-Gi (left), Seoul's chief delegate for high-level talks with North Korea, shakes hands with his North Korean counterpart Jon Jong-Su during their meeting at this joint industrial zone on the North Korean side of the border yesterday. — AFP

two Koreas is welcomed as a positive step, past experience suggests the talks - being held at the vice-minister level - are unlikely to produce a significant breakthrough.

Previous efforts to establish a regular dialogue have tended to falter after an initial meeting -reflecting decades of animosity and mistrust between two countries that have remained technically at war since the

one," South Korea's chief delegate Hwang Boo-Gi told his North Korean counterpart Jon Jong-Su as they shook hands.

The morning session lasted just 30 minutes with the two delegation heads delivering prepared statements. After a lengthy consultation with their respective capitals, they resumed discussions in the early evening. There was no set agenda or time-

## BILLIONAIRE HEAD OF FOSUN GROUP 'DISAPPEARS'

**BEIJING:** The billionaire chairman of one of China's biggest private-sector conglomerates, Club Med owner Fosun, has disappeared from public view and is being questioned over a corruption inquiry, reports said, as shares in the group's companies were suspended yesterday. Guo Guangchang, 48, dubbed "China's Warren Buffett", has been out of contact since Thursday, respected business magazine Caixin reported on its website. Police took Guo away at one of Shanghai's airports, Caixin cited social media postings as saying, without making clear whether he was under investigation himself or assisting a probe. "Many linked his disappearance to an investigation by the authorities," the official Xinhua news agency reported.

Since coming to power Chinese President Xi Jinping has waged a much-publicized anti-corruption campaign that has ensnared a long list of officials, including the country's former security chief Zhou Yongkang. It has largely been confined to within the ruling Communist Party - with critics saying it has been used for internal faction-fighting - and Guo would be by far the highest-profile businessman to fall if he is brought down by it. Chinese authorities have also launched wide-ranging probes into the financial sector following a market rout earlier this year when a debt-fuelled bubble - encouraged by officials - burst. Guo is China's 17th richest person with a net worth of \$5.6 billion, according to Bloomberg News. He is a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a debating chamber that is part of the Communist Party-controlled governmental structure.

The Fosun Group is one of the country's biggest private companies and its flagship subsidiary, Fosun International, has net assets of 50 billion yuan (\$7.8 billion). Fosun has interests in property, finance, pharmaceuticals, steel and entertainment, and has been aggressively buying assets in Europe and North America. It bought renowned French holiday company Club Med earlier this year and in April was part of a consortium that acquired Canadian entertainment juggernaut Cirque du Soleil. It also has a stake in British-based tour operator Thomas Cook. — AFP



**Guo Guangchang**

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LA PORTE: A Dow Chemical plant in La Porte, Texas. Dow Chemical and the DuPont will attempt to merge in an all-stock deal that would create a colossal chemical producer worth \$130 billion, before splitting into three separate companies. The deal announced yesterday is being billed a merger of equals, to be called DowDuPont. —AP

## DOW, DUPONT TO MERGE TO CREATE \$130BN GIANT

DUPONT CEO BREEN TO GET TOP JOB • DOW CEO LIVERIS TO BE CHAIRMAN

**NEW YORK:** Chemical giants DuPont and Dow Chemical Co agreed to merge in an all-stock deal valuing the combined company at \$130 billion in a win for activist investors that could spark further consolidation in the farm chemicals industry. The deal to combine two of the biggest and oldest US chemical producers is a prelude to an eventual split-up of the combined company into three discrete businesses, Dow and DuPont said on Friday. But it is likely to face intense regulatory scrutiny, given an extensive overlap of their agriculture businesses. The proposed split would create businesses focused on agriculture, materials and specialty products. Excluding preferred shares, existing shareholders of Dow and DuPont will each own about 50 percent of the combined company, to be called DowDuPont. DuPont Chief Executive Ed Breen will be CEO of the new company, and Dow Chemical CEO Andrew Liveris will be executive chairman.

Dow Chemical shareholders will get one DowDuPont share for each Dow Chemical share held, while DuPont shareholders will get 1.282 shares in DowDuPont for each DuPont share they own.

The merger, one of the biggest of the year, will allow Dow and DuPont to rejig assets based on the diverging fortunes of their businesses that make agriculture chemicals and plastics.

The companies have been struggling to cope with falling demand for farm chemicals due to falling crop prices and a strong dollar, even as their plastics businesses have thrived thanks to low natural gas prices. DuPont shares were down 4.4 percent at \$71.25 in premarket trading, while Dow's were down 1.8 percent at \$53.92.

### FOCUS ON COMPETITORS

"This transaction is a game-changer for our industry and reflects the culmination of a vision we have had for more than a decade to bring together these two powerful innovation and material science leaders," Liveris said in a statement. The companies said the split

would "occur as soon as feasible" and would likely happen 18-24 months after the deal closes, which is expected in the second half of 2016. The combination will help the companies save about \$3 billion in costs in the first two years, with the possibility of saving another \$1 billion, Dow and DuPont said. The biggest of the three new companies by revenue would be a material science company, which would cater to the packaging, transportation and infrastructure industries.

The combined revenue for the materials business was about \$51 billion in 2014 on an adjusted basis. The companies said a new specialty products company would focus on electronics. The combined adjusted revenue of that business was about \$13 billion in 2014.

The third business, selling seed and crop protection chemicals, generated adjusted revenue of about \$19 billion. The merger puts fur-

ther pressure on rivals such as Germany's BASF SE and Bayer AG to consolidate as falling crop prices curb sales.

It could also prompt a renewed flurry of takeover bids for European rivals, with Syngenta AG the most likely target.

Analysts have said a Dow-DuPont tie-up might push Monsanto Co to take another shot at Syngenta after the US company abandoned a \$45 billion offer for the Swiss company in August.

"The biggest impact will certainly be in the agriculture market, where the seeds and crop chemical industries are to undergo rapid consolidation," SunTrust Robinson Humphrey analyst James Sheehan told Reuters yesterday. "(The question is) how does Monsanto respond to the strategic move by two of its main competitors?"

Activist investor Nelson Peltz, who has long championed breaking up stodgy conglomerates, has been pressing DuPont to separate its agriculture, nutrition and biosciences units from its building and safety materials divisions. Investor Dan Loeb, meanwhile, has been pushing Dow to split its agri business and other specialty chemical units from its petrochemical divisions.

### Pre-merger restructuring

DowDuPont's board is expected to have 16 members, with each company contributing eight directors, the companies said. In a separate announcement, Dow Chemical said it would buy the remaining stake in its 50-50 joint venture with Corning Inc, the supplier of Gorilla Glass for iPhones. The transaction is expected to yield more than \$1 billion in additional annual EBITDA at full run-rate synergies, Dow Chemical said. DuPont, in another statement, said it would cut costs by \$700 million in 2016, affecting 10 percent of its global workforce. Klein and Co, Lazard and Morgan Stanley & Co LLC are Dow's financial advisers. Evercore and Goldman, Sachs & Co are advising DuPont. — Reuters



A DuPont logo on sheets of Tyvek insulation covering a wall of a home under construction in Springfield. — AP



**DAMASCUS:** Syrians prepare shawarma sandwiches, a popular Middle Eastern dish of grilled spiced meat, at a restaurant in the capital Damascus on Thursday. — AFP

## SYRIA GOVT SCRAPES BARREL AS ECONOMIC WOES BITE

### 2016 BUDGET PROJECTS 31% DEFICIT

**DAMASCUS:** More than four years into a grinding civil war, the Syrian government is scraping the barrel to boost its revenues with everything from taxes on shawarma sandwiches to telephone lines.

The country's economy has been ravaged by the conflict that began in March 2011, which has claimed the lives of over 250,000 people and pushed over four million to become refugees. Perhaps the most tangible evidence is the weakness of the Syrian pound, currently trading at 390 to the US dollar, compared to around 60 before the war and 240 just a year ago.

Most money changers in Damascus expect things to get worse still, anticipating a further slide to 500 pounds to the dollar next year. When the uprising against President Bashar Al-Assad's regime began, the governor of the central bank announced the country had reserves of some \$18 billion.

But experts say much of that has been used up, though it is impossible to know how much remains.

"The regime has less and less foreign currency, revenues have dried up, the war effort is becoming more taxing and its two main donors, Russia and Iran, have their own financial problems," said Jihad Yazigi, editor-in-chief of The Syria Report, an online economic journal.

Since March 2011, Iran has extended Syria some \$5.5 billion in credit lines, but Russia in November last year decided against a one-billion-dollar loan.

#### Shawarma sandwich tax

Revenues have slowed to a trickle, particularly as the government has come under sanctions that prevent

exports and lost control of much of the country's oil and gas resources.

The oil minister has acknowledged some \$58 billion in direct and indirect losses to the oil and gas sector since the war began. With the capture by the Islamic State jihadist group of most of Syria's eastern oil fields, the government now produces just 9,688 barrels a day, down from 380,000 before the war.

Refined output—made up of Syrian and imported oil—has sunk from 112,000 barrels a day in 2014 to just 80,000 barrels, and gas production is down to 12 million cubic metres a day from 27 million five years ago.

The 2016 budget projects a 31 percent deficit, similar to that of 2015, prompting the government to rein in spending and impose new taxes. It has instructed all public administrations to reduce their energy consumption by 30 percent and to eliminate thousands of temporary government employee contracts.

The state telecommunications company, which has a monopoly on landlines, has also doubled monthly subscription fees for its 4.5 million subscribers.

That in theory ought to bring in some 10.8 billion Syrian pounds (\$308 million), but The Syria Report noted that the company's subscriber base has plummeted because up to 40 percent of its network has been damaged. Even the humble shawarma sandwich, a popular Middle Eastern dish of grilled, spiced meat cut into thin slices, has not escaped the government's drive for revenues.

"Last week I had to pay 220 Syrian pounds for my shawarma sandwich

instead of 200, and the restaurant owner told me it was because there's a new 10 percent 'reconstruction tax' that's being imposed on each sandwich," 50-year-old Damascus resident Tahseen told AFP.

#### 'Bleak' future

Property rents also face new taxes of between 500-1,000 Syrian lira a month, and the tourism ministry has begun taxing restaurants based on the number of diners they can accommodate. The measures come after previous steps, including easing subsidies for bread, which increased in price three times in 2014, along with rising costs for water and electricity.

And the government has also sought to squeeze revenue out of issuing and renewing passports, raising fees while lifting some restrictions to bring in around \$520 million since the start of the year, according to the interior ministry. And it has stemmed the outflow of foreign currency, limiting import licenses and giving priority to those seeking raw materials for the production of dairy products, canned foods, medicines, detergents and textiles inside Syria.

But despite the regime's efforts, Yazigi said "the future is bleak" for Syria's economy and the government's finances.

"The state will be forced to slash its spending even further," he said. "And since it won't be able to touch military spending, it will cut public services and not repair what is damaged, and people will become poorer and poorer," he added. "They will be forced increasingly to dip into their savings and many will look to emigrate." — AFP

## OIL SLIDES TO 7-YEAR LOW AS IEA WARNS OF WORSE GLUT

**LONDON:** Crude oil prices hit fresh seven-year lows yesterday as the International Energy Agency (IEA) warned global oversupply could worsen in the new year. Brent slipped below \$39 per barrel for the first time since December 2008 as the IEA, which advises developed nations on energy, warned that demand growth was starting to slow. "The technicals and the fundamentals are singing from the same hymn sheet," said Tamas Varga, oil analyst with PVM Associates. "We will not see support until we hit the lows of 2008."

Brent crude futures were down 60 cents at \$39.13 a barrel at 1058 GMT, bouncing slightly from a session low of \$38.90. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) US crude futures were at \$36.26 per barrel, down 50 cents after touching \$36.12, their lowest since February 2009. Varga said there was room to fall further, with little support likely until oil reached the 2008 lows of \$36.20 per barrel for Brent and \$32.40 per barrel for WTI.

Prices have tumbled this month after OPEC failed to impose a ceiling on output. OPEC producers pumped more oil in November than in any month since late 2008, some 31.7 million barrels per day. "Consumption is likely to have peaked in the third quarter and demand growth is expected to slow to a still-healthy 1.2 million bpd in 2016, as support from sharply falling oil prices begins to fade," the IEA said in its monthly report.

Should sanctions on Iran be lifted, its exports could rise, adding to the market's oversupply. "The next quarter is going to be particularly tough as we go from a high-demand to a low-demand quarter," said Richard Gorry, director of consultancy JBC Energy Asia. "Can you rule out \$20 per barrel? No, you can't," he said, although adding that prices would not likely fall that far.

Still, the IEA said the pace of stock-building should roughly halve next year and that it was very unlikely that global storage capacity would be filled.

"Concerns about reaching storage capacity limits appear to be overblown," it said. The IEA said it expects a decline in non-OPEC production in 2016, as US light tight oil shifts into contraction, and it that further spending cuts could spur deeper output declines. "There is evidence the Saudi-led strategy is starting to work," the IEA said, referring to the producer group's decision to maintain high output to safeguard market share. — Reuter

## GOLD SET FOR 7TH WEEKLY DROP IN EIGHT

**LONDON:** Gold drifted lower yesterday and was headed for the seventh weekly drop in eight as investors positioned themselves for a likely US rate rise. A rate increase at the Federal Reserve's policy meeting on Dec. 15-16 would be the first in nearly a decade and could dent demand for non-interest paying gold. Spot gold fell 0.6 percent to \$1,064.63 an ounce by 1112 GMT, after closing flat over the last two sessions. It was on track for a 2 percent decline for the week.

"What we are likely to see in the next three months is the discussion moving from the rate hike to the pace of rate tightening cycle," ETF Securities strategist Martin Arnold said.

"A broad range between the high \$1,080s to \$1,030 is where we are going to see gold in the first quarter, starting towards the lower end of the range in a knee-jerk reaction to the Fed's move and then grinding higher throughout Q1." The dollar steadied, gaining against China's yuan after Beijing set the mid-point for the currency's tightly controlled official onshore value at its lowest in more than four years.

A higher US currency makes dollar-denominated gold more expensive for holders of other currencies. Technically, a break below \$1,064 could take gold to a near-six-year low of \$1,045.85, according to Reuters technical analyst Wang Tao.

Weakness in crude oil prices, near 2009 lows, was also hurting bullion prices. A slide in oil could trigger fears of deflation, a bearish factor for gold, which is often used as a hedge against oil-led inflation. Short positions in COMEX gold futures and options are at record highs, while assets in SPDR Gold Trust, the top bullion exchange traded fund, are at their lowest since September 2008.

Investors have boosted bets that the gold price will soon drop to \$1,000 an ounce, options data shows. Gold, on track for a third straight annual decline, has lost 9.8 percent of its value this year. — Reuters





KATHMANDU: People queue up to refuel after a severe fuel shortage in Nepal.

## NEPAL'S FUEL CRISIS WILL PUSH A MILLION PEOPLE INTO POVERTY ECONOMIC CRISIS LIKELY TO HAVE A WIDER IMPACT

**JHOR, Nepal:** With a large cone-shaped bamboo basket strapped to her back, Nirmala Bhandari treks two hours every day from her village to a protected forest in the hills, heaving it back filled with enough firewood to cook food for her three children. Despite knowing timber collection in this forest is illegal and wood stoves cause deadly indoor pollution, the 35-year-old widow says she has no choice since a shortage of cooking gas hit Nepal more than two months ago.

"My children and I spent three days outside a fuel shop for cooking gas but did not get any," she said in a village in Jhor, 12 km (7 miles) from Kathmandu.

"If there is a problem collecting wood then I may have to feed them only alternate meals," said Bhandari, explaining that guards at the Shivapuri National Park have already warned her to stop hacking off tree branches in the fast-depleting forests.

Bhandari's family is among hundreds of thousands in the impoverished Himalayan nation crippled by a shortage of basic commodities after Nepal adopted a new constitution, sparking protests by the Madhesi minority, who say it marginalizes them.

Since September, 50 people have died in protests at border points with India, where demonstrators have blocked trucks carrying everything from petrol to medicines from entering the landlocked nation, still reeling from two deadly earthquakes. The crisis has prompted the United Nations to express deep concern over what it said is a "critical" shortage of life-saving medicines and fuel, and warns this could put at least three million children at risk of illness in the coming winter months.

Experts say this economic and humanitarian crisis is likely to have a much wider and longer-term impact. "The fuel short-

age will push more than 800,000 people below the poverty line. This is our estimate based on the study of the losses faced by agriculture, industry and service sectors," said Trilochan Pangen, a spokesman for Nepal's Central Bank.

"These people are wage earners, marginalized and low income people. We have derived this figure after a detailed and close study in all these sectors. This will hit the economy badly."

### FUEL QUEUES, FIXED MEALS

In streets of the capital Kathmandu, the crisis is evident. Thousands of residents line up with empty gas cylinders outside fuel depots every day only to be told that the elusive tankers have not arrived from across the Indian border.

With authorities imposing a ration on fuel, motorists line up in queues stretching more than two kilometers outside petrol stations. On the black market, petrol and diesel smuggled in jerry cans from India sells up to five times the normal price. The cost of commodities like cooking oil have soared amid fears inflation could hit double digits by the end of the year.

Even ready-to-eat items like noodles have disappeared from the shop shelves. The fuel shortage has led to buses cutting down services, forcing commuters to sit on roofs. Taxis are no longer an option for many as they can't afford paying six times the normal fare. Tour operators say the country's key economic pillar, tourism, is already suffering. On average, 800,000 tourists visit Nepal annually, contributing four percent to the GDP.

Domestic airlines have reduced the number of flights, and hotels are offering only fixed menus to beat the fuel shortage. "How can you expect tourists to come when you don't have fuel even to cook a

full course meal for them?" said Jiban Ghimire of the tour operating group Shangri-la Nepal Trek.

Large and small businesses alike have been badly hit. The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry says more than 2,200 industries producing food items, plastic goods, edible oil, iron ores and cement have closed down, throwing 220,000 workers out of work.

In an empty restaurant on the outskirts of Kathmandu, owner Rupesh Shrestha says he has been forced to give leave to 25 of his 30 employees because they have no gas to cook with.

"Only five of us manage to serve a few of our regular customers who come. We use firewood to cook as there is no cooking gas. I don't know when the situation will improve," said Shrestha.

Wedged between China and India, Nepal is recovering from a decade-long conflict between Maoist rebels and government forces which ended in 2006. Years of political instability have slowed development efforts and two deadly earthquakes in April and May this year, have further hampered efforts to lift 25 percent of the country's 28 million people out of poverty.

Under these circumstances, central bank spokesman Pangen says it is the most vulnerable who are hardest hit. "They are hotel workers forced to stay on leave because hotels have cut down on services due to fuel shortage. Transport workers have lost jobs, rickshaw pullers are out of work," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"Tens of thousands of people who were self-employed in small pavement businesses like tea and coffee shops, cake shops, street vendors are out of work. All these people have no income." — Reuters

## BRITAIN'S MOTORISTS SHOULD THANK NAIMI FOR CHEAP FUEL

**LONDON:** Britain's motorists have Saudi oil minister Ali Al-Naimi to thank as the country's supermarkets cut the price of petrol to less than one pound per litre for the first time in six years.

Morrisons, the country's fourth-largest grocer, has cut the price of unleaded gasoline to 99.9 pence per litre, the lowest price excluding special promotions since 2009, and other supermarkets are expected follow, according to the BBC. Brent prices have fallen to \$39 per barrel for the first time since 2008/09 after the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) failed to agree a production level at its meeting on Dec 4.

Both OPEC and the International Energy Agency (IEA) have forecast the oil market will remain oversupplied in 2016, sending oil prices crashing to new lows.

Cheaper fuel as well as continued economic expansion and a faster rise in wages have combined to produce a surge in traffic on Britain's roads.

Traffic volumes rose by 2.2 percent in the 12 months ending in September compared with the prior period, according to the UK Department for Transport.

Traffic has increased for 10 consecutive quarters, for the first time exceeding the previous peak, set back in 2007 before the recession. Traffic growth mostly reflects the steady increase in economic activity and employment but lower fuel prices may also have contributed, the department says.

The increase in traffic is the fastest and most consistent for more than a decade stretching back to the early 2000s, before fuel prices started to climb sharply.

Vehicles sales are also booming, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, a trade association. For the first time since 2004, new car registrations topped 2 million in the first nine months of 2015. In September, registrations reached their highest ever level for the time of year.

Surging traffic and vehicle sales look a lot like the United States, where traffic volumes increased by 3.5 percent in the first nine months of the year, according to the Federal Highway Administration.

US sales of cars and light trucks are on course this year to exceed the prior record set back in 2000, according to WardsAuto. Cheaper fuel sales have also encouraged consumers to buy larger and more fuel-hungry sport utility vehicles (SUVs) and crossover utility vehicles (CUVs) rather than smaller cars.

Sales of light trucks, a category that includes SUVs and CUVs, are up 12 percent this year, while car sales have fallen by 2 percent, according to Wards.

### Consumption

As a result, US gasoline consumption has risen almost 3 percent so far this year, the fastest increase since 2005, according to the US Energy Information Administration.

Cheaper fuel may not last indefinitely. Saudi officials have indicated they believe oil prices of \$60-80 per barrel will be needed in the longer-term to sustain investment in production.

"A prolonged period of low oil prices is ... unsustainable, as it will induce large investment cuts and reduce the resilience of the oil industry, undermining the future security of supply and setting the sharp price rise" in a few years' time, Naimi's deputy warned a conference last month.

But in the meantime, cheaper fuel prices and rising consumption, coupled with a reduction in high-cost oil production, is an essential part of Saudi Arabia's strategy for rebalancing the oil market. Saudi Arabia is relying on low prices and strong consumption growth to mop up some of the excess crude oil production in the market and help absorb extra Iranian barrels once sanctions are lifted in 2016. — Reuters

## NO CHEER AS CHINA YUAN HITS 4-1/2-YEAR LOW

**LONDON:** World stocks were on the brink of a two-month low on Friday, as beaten-down oil prices, a slide in China's yuan to 4-1/2 year lows and turbulence in emerging markets created a somber mood. Renewed volatility in oil markets and worries about China, the world's biggest commodities consumer, have pressured many markets ahead of a widely anticipated interest rate hike by the US Federal Reserve next week.

The MSCI world equity index, which tracks shares in 45 countries, fell for a fifth straight day as emerging markets tumbled again and European shares hit a two-month low. US stock futures pointed to losses on Wall Street. The euro was a touch firmer against the dollar after pulling back

from a rise above \$1.10 earlier this week.

But the most striking currency moves came from emerging markets. South African's rand hit a new record low following this week's dismissal of the finance minister and Russia's rouble slumped 2 percent on weak oil prices, holding lower after the country's central bank left rates steady.

"Emerging markets are looking shaky - there are a whole number of things going on and number one is weakness in oil prices which is clearly hurting commodity exporters' currencies," said Investec chief economist Philip Shaw. "Everyone is also looking toward the Fed next week and there's a tug of war between an aversion

to higher interest rates in the US and getting closure," he said.

US retail sales, inflation and consumer sentiment data due between 1330 GMT and 1500 GMT could cement expectations that the Fed is gearing up to hike rates for the first time in a decade at its Dec. 15-16 meeting. Fed fund futures place an 85 percent chance of the Fed raising rates next week.

### YUAN GOING DOWN

China's yuan fell to 4-1/2 year low at 6.4564 per dollar and posted its longest weekly losing streak in a decade, raising questions about how far Beijing intends to let the currency depreciate.

China's economic growth is within a reasonable range but the economy still faces challenges, Premier Li Keqiang said on Friday. European shares fell 1.5 percent, declining for a fourth straight session, while MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan hit a two-month low and posted a weekly loss of just over 3 percent. Emerging market stocks were down for an eighth day running and on course for their worst week since September, while Chinese shares closed lower ahead of a spate of economic data scheduled to be released today. "We are in risk-off mode," said Piotr Matys, emerging market currency strategist at Rabobank in London. — Reuters



**PARIS:** A worker staples boxes at the fruits and vegetables pavilion of the Rungis international food market in Rungis, a southern suburb of Paris yesterday. — AFP

## UK GROWTH COULD SUFFER DUE TO EU VOTE: IMF

### HOUSEHOLD DEBT, HOUSE PRICES AMONG VULNERABILITIES

**LONDON:** Uncertainty about the outcome of Britain's referendum on leaving the European Union could hurt its economy, the International Monetary Fund said yesterday, though it also praised the way the country has bounced back from the global financial crisis.

In a contrast to tension in recent years between Fund staff and finance minister George Osborne over his austerity push, IMF chief Christine Lagarde was effusive as she stood alongside him at the launch of an IMF report on Britain's economy. "We are saluting a very strong performance by the UK economy which is due clearly to the commitments to consistent policies which have managed to restore confidence in the British economy," she told reporters.

Osborne said the praise from the IMF would help his plan to turn Britain's still large budget deficit into a surplus by 2020, something many economists say is not necessary.

"This is the strongest IMF assessment of the British economy in the five years that I have been in this job," he said.

Britain grew faster than any other rich nation last year and is close to the top of the

pack again in 2015, helping Osborne and Prime Minister David Cameron lead their Conservatives to a decisive election win in May. But Cameron's promise to hold a referendum on membership of the EU has raised questions about Britain's relationship with its main trading and investment partners in Europe. It could also lead to the break-up of the United Kingdom if Scotland then pushes to leave the UK in order to stay in the EU.

The IMF listed the EU vote among the vulnerabilities for Britain which also included a "strikingly large" current account deficit and high levels of household debt and house prices which could be a problem when interest rates finally start to rise.

### EUROPE UNCERTAINTIES

Lagarde said it was unclear what relationship Britain would have with Europe if it were outside the EU. The Fund will assess the issue in its 2016 report on Britain, which is due next May.

"How quickly will there be trade agreements? How promptly will the partners want to reestablish or reset the framework within which its financial and trade relationships

are put in place?" she said in response to questions from reporters.

"We will spend a lot of our collective brain power so that for the next Article IV (report) we can have a solid assessment. Because by then we will know better what the alternatives are in that new framework, if there was such a thing," she said. Lagarde, a former French finance minister, said she personally hoped Britain would stay in the EU but stressed she was not speaking for the Fund.

Opinion polls show Britons fairly evenly divided on whether to remain in the 28-member bloc.

The IMF report, while backing Osborne's plans to run a budget surplus by 2019/20, urged him to give the economy more help if growth slows.

The Fund also raised the possibility that Osborne's plan to make deep spending cuts might prove unachievable and he should consider raising taxes if so. The Fund predicted steady growth would continue over the next few years and that inflation should gradually return to the Bank of England's 2 percent target. —Reuters

## THIRD AVENUE JUNK FUND BLOWUP EXPOSES RISKS OF UNSELLABLE ASSETS

**BOSTON:** The blow-up of Third Avenue Management's junk bond fund this week, the biggest mutual fund failure since the financial crisis, show the dangers of loading up on risky assets that are hard to trade even in good times. At least one-fifth of Third Avenue's Focused Credit Fund, with less than \$1 billion under management, was composed of illiquid assets, meaning they trade so infrequently that they don't have a market price, according to a Reuters analysis. That's one of the highest percentages of exposure in the junk bond sector.

Meanwhile, some of the most popular US junk bond funds also have made large bets on assets considered the hardest to trade and value in the industry, and their portfolios may not reflect the full extent of the current downturn in the junk bond market, said junk-bond analyst Marty Fridson, chief investment officer of Lehmann Livian Fridson Advisors LLC.

"Precisely because these (assets) are hard to price, they won't necessarily show the full extent of the market decline," Fridson said. "That can make a fund with lots of illiquid security look better than a fund with big, liquid names where the price declines are very transparent."

AllianceBernstein's AB High Income Fund has the biggest holdings on a percentage basis this year among the largest junk bond funds. At the end of July, the fund reported \$1.08 billion in illiquid assets, or 15 percent of the securities in a \$7.3 billion portfolio, according to a Reuters analysis of the 10 largest US junk bond funds. The Third Avenue fund isn't in the top ten.

AllianceBernstein did not respond to questions seeking comment. With the \$236 billion junk bond mutual fund sector on course for its worst performance in seven years due to a rout in commodity prices and expectations of higher interest rates, some big junk bond funds already are scaling back exposure to their riskiest assets.

The \$17 billion American Funds High-Income Trust Fund, which this year realized nearly \$200 million in losses on its most illiquid assets, told Reuters it plans to reduce its current exposure of 1.6 percent of securities that are hard to price and trade.

An American Funds spokesperson said the positions are carefully researched. High yield, also known as junk, debt issuance has skyrocketed from \$147 billion in 2009 to more than \$300 billion in each of the last three years. Record-low interest rates have encouraged investors to take on more risk, including the debt of less creditworthy issuers, to get a higher return.

Tom Lapointe, portfolio manager of the Third Avenue fund, said in an October 2014 interview with Reuters that "any company with a pulse has been able to refinance." In addition to AllianceBernstein and American Funds, other investment funds such as BlackRock Inc and Waddell & Reed Financial Inc have junk bond funds - staple holdings for pension funds, retirement plans and mom-and-pop investors - that hold the largest amount of assets that are so illiquid and so hard to price that their valuations are sometimes pegged to assumptions made by the investment managers themselves, their fund disclosures show. — Reuters

## CHINA APPROVES MERGER OF TWO TOP SHIPPING FIRMS

**SHANGHAI:** China will merge two of its biggest state-owned shipping companies, official media reported yesterday, as the government seeks to reform lumbering public companies to try to bolster growth. The State Council, China's cabinet, approved the restructuring of China Ocean Shipping Group, known as Cosco, and China Shipping Group, the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) said on its website.

It did not detail how the restructuring will be carried out, but the official Xinhua news agency said the two would merge. "Both COSCO and China Shipping have struggled to be competitive, with overlapping investments, high costs, similar business operations and

industrial chains," it quoted their chairmen as saying in a joint statement.

Cosco is the largest shipping company in the country by fleet size, and China Shipping Group has total assets of 200 billion yuan (\$31.1 billion), according to their official websites. Under a merger the new entity would have a 7.7 percent share of the global container market and become the fourth-biggest company in the industry, Bloomberg News reported earlier, following APM-Maersk, Mediterranean Shg Co and CMA CGM Group, according to Alphaliner's ranking.

But the global shipping industry is in the grip of a long-term downtrend and a merger will give the Chinese firms an opportunity to benefit from economies

of scale. It was not clear whether the move might be subject to regulatory approval in the European Union or United States, even though Western multinationals have had to secure the green light from Chinese authorities for some of their deals.

The approval followed news of the merger of two of China's largest metals firms, China Minmetals Corp and China Metallurgical Group Corp, announced earlier this week.

China, the world's second-largest economy, says it is overhauling its dominant state-owned sectors as it grapples with stalling growth.

SASAC said separately that loss-making state-owned enterprises (SOEs) would be given two years to improve

their performance, and that firms which made losses for three years could face closure, Bloomberg News reported.

Beijing has already merged its top two train makers—China CNR Corp and CSR Corp—into a single conglomerate, aiming to avoid competition between the two as China vies for lucrative rail contracts overseas against industry giants such as Germany's Siemens and Bombardier of Canada.

Xinhua said in April that China was considering merging scores of its biggest SOEs to create around 40 national champions. Total revenue from national SOEs dropped 7.1 percent year-on-year to 13.21 trillion yuan (\$2.16 trillion) in the first half of 2015, data from the finance ministry showed. — AFP



SHANGHAI: A man rides his loaded tricycle next to three schoolgirls in Shanghai yesterday. — AFP

## CHINA'S NOV LENDING BEATS EXPECTATIONS

### TOTAL SOCIAL FINANCING MORE THAN DOUBLES

**BEIJING:** New loans and money supply grew faster than expected in China in November as interest rate cuts and higher government spending spurred more demand for credit, a welcome bright spot after a raft of disappointing economic data. Chinese banks extended 708.9 billion yuan (\$109.81 billion) of new loans last month, more than the 700 billion yuan economists had expected and up 38 percent from October.

Total social financing, a broader measure of net new credit, more than doubled to 1.02 trillion yuan from the previous month, while broad money supply (M2) rose 13.7 percent year-on-year, its strongest pace since June 2014 and up from 13.5 percent in October.

The stronger showing was led by increases in conventional lending, bond issuance, and corporate fundraising via equity markets, while forms of credit associated with riskier shadow banking products continued to decline, yesterday's data showed. In addition, the new lending

was dominated by the long-term and medium-term loans that Beijing wants. They comprised 65 percent of total new loans, up from 50 percent in the first nine months.

Policymakers have been trying to boost productive investment through monetary easing without stimulating unhealthy speculation, which is often fueled by shorter-term financing. Beijing has been pushing hard to get bogged-down infrastructure spending back on track to offset slowing economic growth; in October fiscal expenditures rocketed up 36.1 percent, the biggest rise in over 3 years. Outstanding loans rose by 14.9 percent from a year ago, below expectations of 15.3 percent and October's 15.4 percent.

#### MIXED PICTURE

Other data earlier this week showed downward pressure on the world's second-largest economy persisted in November, worrying those who had expected activity to stabilise in

the fourth quarter after a year-long flurry of stimulus measures including both rate cuts and fiscal spending.

"Aside from seasonal factors driving up new loans, the rebound was weaker than expected and lower than the 852.7 billion yuan in November 2014, indicating that domestic demand remained soft and banks were cautious to provide new loans amid rising credit risks," wrote ANZ economists in a research note, calling for more rate cuts in response. November exports fell for a fifth consecutive month and imports declined for the 13th month straight, while weak consumer and producer prices raised concerns that the economy could be sucked into a Japan-style deflationary trap. Activity data for November, including industrial output, investment and retail sales, is due to be released today. Credit demand has softened in China along with the economy, while bad loans are on the rise, making banks more risk averse. — Reuters

## JAGUAR LAND ROVER SEALS DEAL FOR \$1.5BN SLOVAK CAR PLANT

**LONDON/BRATISLAVA:** Luxury carmaker Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) confirmed yesterday it will build a car plant in Slovakia, beginning a 1 billion pound (\$1.5 billion) project which will be one of the biggest ever foreign direct investments in the central European nation.

The company, which is rapidly expanding its model line-up and volumes, had said in August it aimed to build a plant at the western Slovak town of Nitra with an annual output of up to 300,000 cars.

On Friday, JLR, owned by India's Tata Motors Ltd, said it will begin constructing the site next spring with around 2,800 jobs created as production ramps up. "The new factory will complement our existing facilities in the UK, China, India and Brazil and marks the next step in our strategy to become a truly global business," JLR CEO Ralf Speth told reporters after signing the deal with the Slovak government in Bratislava.

JLR's new plant will operate alongside its British plants at Castle Bromwich and Solihull in the English midlands, and Halewood in the northwest, turning out models such as the Jaguar XE sports saloon and the Range Rover Evoque.

Volkswagen, Kia and Peugeot Citroen already build hundreds of thousands of models in Slovakia, which said its membership of the euro-zone helped encourage JLR pick it over neighboring countries.

The Slovak government said it approved 130 million euros in state aid for the project, which helps Prime Minister Robert Fico project an image of strong economic management ahead of elections in March.

The car industry represents 43 percent of Slovakia's industrial output and a quarter of its exports, according to the Automotive Industry Association, which expects the country of 5.4 million to make almost 1 million cars this year.

Economy Minister Vazil Hudak said the JLR factory would create 12,000 jobs in supplier industries in addition to those at the factory. The central bank expects it may add 0.3 percentage points to economic growth next year, and 0.8 percent once production launches.

Hudak said JLR would invest 1.4 billion euros through 2021, when capacity should reach 150,000 cars. A further 500 million would raise capacity to the maximum 300,000. JLR has grown rapidly since it was bought by Tata in 2008 but has suffered in recent months due to a blast at China's Tianjin port, which destroyed thousands of its cars, and a sharp decline in sales in China earlier in the year.

Speth said targets were unchanged by the setbacks. "There is no change in previous plans, China is still the biggest automotive market in the world, we can grow even more there." — Reuters

## US CONSUMER SPENDING RISES; PRODUCER PRICES UP

**WASHINGTON:** A gauge of US consumer spending rose solidly in November, suggesting enough momentum in the economy for the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates next week for the first time in nearly a decade. Other data yesterday showed producer prices increased last month as services cost more, but the underlying trend continued to point to weak inflation pressures.

Retail sales excluding automobiles, gasoline, building materials and food services increased 0.6 percent after gaining 0.2 percent in October, the Commerce Department said. These so-called core retail sales correspond most closely with the consumer spending component of gross domestic product. Consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of US economic activity, surprisingly slowed in September and October. The moderation came despite a tightening labor market, which has started to lift household income.

The latest signs of strength in consumption could see economists bumping up their fourth-quarter growth estimates. Solid domestic demand supports expectations that the Fed will raise its benchmark overnight interest rate from near zero when policymakers conclude a two-day meeting

next Wednesday, despite weak inflation.

The US central bank has not raised rates since June 2006. In a separate report, the Labor Department said its producer price index advanced 0.3 percent last month after falling 0.4 percent in October. But the PPI declined 1.1 percent in the 12 months through November after sliding 1.6 percent in October.

November marked the 10th straight 12-month decrease in the index. Dollar strength and continued declines in oil prices amid a glut and slowing global growth have dampened price pressures, leaving inflation running persistently below the Fed's 2 percent target. US Treasury debt prices slipped on the data and the dollar weakened against the euro and the yen. Last month, overall retail sales increased only 0.2 percent as automobile sales fell and cheaper gasoline weighed on receipts at service stations. Retail sales edged up 0.1 percent in October.

Auto sales slipped 0.4 percent last month, the largest decline since June, after falling 0.3 percent in October. Though automakers reported strong sales in November, the units sold were slightly below October's levels. Receipts at service stations fell 0.8 percent after decreasing 1.0 percent in October.



**PITTSBURGH:** Chuck Barrett helps a customer load 2x4's at the Allegheny Millwork and Lumberyard in Pittsburgh. Economists forecast that the producer price index, which measures price changes before they reach the consumer, were unchanged last November, according to a survey by data firm FactSet yesterday. — AP

Elsewhere, sales at clothing stores shot up 0.8 percent, the largest increase since May. Sales at online retailers rose 0.6 percent and receipts at sporting goods and hobby stores increased 0.8 percent. Sales at electronics and appliance outlets advanced 0.6 percent. The

increase last month in discretionary spending suggested a fairly busy start to the holiday shopping season. However, receipts at building materials and garden equipment stores slipped 0.3 percent as did sales at furniture stores. — Reuters

## INDIA PROPOSES BUDGET HIKE FOR SOCIAL SECTORS

CRITICS WARN SPENDING SHAKEUP COULD HURT THE POOR

**NEW DELHI:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's federal government yesterday proposed to raise its budget for sanitation and the fight against malnutrition and HIV/AIDS, months after New Delhi faced criticism that spending cuts were crippling welfare programs.

The budget increases for social sectors will come as a relief for the largely poor population in India, where many people,

especially in remote towns and villages, lack access to basic healthcare and clean water. Almost two-thirds of India's 1.2 billion people have no safe and private toilets, according to international charity WaterAid. More than 1 million children die annually before reaching the age of five.

The federal government plans to raise its sanitation and drinking water budget by 60 percent to \$2.15 billion, while the

child welfare budget will rise by a quarter to \$2.68 billion.

The budget for fighting HIV/AIDS will rise by nearly a fifth but the main health department's funding will rise by just 2 percent, according to a government document presented to parliament.

"The government seems to have realised that cutting social sector funds is actually resulting in lower health outcomes," said Amir Ullah Khan, an economist at health research company Aequitas. "This was the need of the hour." Modi in February irked many of his own officials by slashing social spending to free up funds to build roads and highways, hoping states would fill the gap from the additional share of taxes they receive from New Delhi.

But many individual states complained of a funding crunch to run vital social schemes and, as a result, thousands of health workers received delayed salaries and a key scheme to fight child malnutrition suffered.

Critics had warned the spending shakeup could endanger the most vulnerable.

With the latest announcements, Modi has now proposed to hike social budgets twice since imposing cuts in February. Modi's minister for child welfare, Maneka Gandhi, told Reuters in October the budget cuts had hit her plans to strengthen the fight against malnutrition and made it difficult to pay wages of millions of health workers.

Overall, the government sought parliamentary approval to spend a gross additional \$8.42 billion in the fiscal year to end-March 2016. But the extra net outlays will be \$2.7 billion and the balance will be funded through savings in other schemes. — Reuters

## AFTER RESCUING BANKS, ITALY MOVES TO BAIL OUT SAVERS

**MILAN:** Italy was working yesterday to set up a solidarity fund to help small investors hit by the rescue last month of four regional banks, following the suicide of a man whose life savings were wiped out, government sources said.

Finance Minister Pier Carlo Padoan is expected to address parliament's budget committee later Friday on the issue. "We are studying an intervention to reduce and mitigate the burden on savers" who lost money following the rescue of the small banks, Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said Thursday. Italy's financial daily, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, said the government was thinking of creating a 100 million euros (\$109 million) solidarity fund, with contributions from both the state and the banking sector.

The four banks-Banca delle Marche, Banca Popolare dell'Etruria e del Lazio, Cassa di Risparmio di Ferrara and Cassa di Risparmio della Provincia di Chieti-had all been put under special administration over the past two years.

A 3.6 billion euros (\$3.83 billion) rescue plan was launched by the government last month using a newly-formed National Resolution Fund, which is fed by the country's healthy banks.

But there have still been heavy losses for some investors and the government has drawn fire for the suicide of a retired man after he lost 110,000 euros which he had invested in bonds issued by Banca Etruria.

Some 130,000 shareholders and junior bond holders lost money in the rescue. Under mounting pressure from consumer associations and political opponents, Renzi said he supported a parliamentary decision to hold an inquiry into "what has happened" in the banking system over the past decade.

After the European Commission criticized the sale of "unsuitable products" to small investors, the Bank of Italy's director general Salvatore Rossi said in an interview yesterday that the bank had called in the past for the sale of subordinated bonds to ordinary savers to be banned. The problem, he told *Corriere della Sera*, is that Bank of Italy does not have the "authority" to intervene in the matter. — AFP

## RUSSIA KEEPS RATES HIGH IN FIGHT AGAINST INFLATION

**MOSCOW:** The Russian central bank, worried about inflation even more than the ailing economy yesterday held leading interest rates at current high levels. At its regular monetary policy meeting, the bank kept its key interest rate at 11 percent, citing inflationary risks as its main motivation against easing credit.

The Russian economy is in deep recession, dogged by weak oil prices, a sliding ruble and Western sanctions over Ukraine and will continue to see negative growth into 2016, the central bank warned.

The bank promised that it would ease credit at "one of its upcoming meetings" but "only if inflationary risks diminish". The Russian economy shrank by 4.1 percent in the third quarter and the government predicts that growth measure gross domestic product (GDP) will decline by around 3.9 percent in 2015 as a whole, before recovering slightly next year.

But the World Bank has cautioned that the full-year downturn could reach 4.3 per-

cent, depending on the price of oil, and that Russia is likely to remain in recession for all of 2016. The Bank of Russia has gradually reduced rates from a 17-percent peak a year ago, which it deemed necessary at the time to defend the spectacular slide in the ruble.

But stubbornly high inflation has stopped it from doing more. Consumer prices were up 14.8 percent year-on-year in early December, dangerously above the government's full-year inflation target of 12.2 percent. Worse news could be coming on the inflation front as the ruble has come under renewed attack in the wake of even weaker oil prices, which this week dipped below \$40 per barrel. Currency weakness stimulates inflation as more rubles are needed to pay for imports, pushing up prices. Other factors likely to push inflation higher are a trade war with Ankara after Turkey downed a Russian warplane for allegedly violating its airspace, and a new tax on road transport. — AFP

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2015

# Kuwait Times Weekender

[www.kuwaittimes.net](http://www.kuwaittimes.net)



Netflix leads wide-ranging  
Golden Globes contenders

SEE PAGES 24 & 25



## Paltrow says robbery is 'good publicity'

The 43-year-old actress lost more than \$173,000 worth of stock after a cabinet, stashed with lavish watches and sparkly necklaces, in her temporary shop in New York was broken into but her mother Blythe Danner, 72, said Gwyneth was trying to look on the bright side. Blythe told the New York Post's Page Six: "I called her immediately. And she said, 'Oh, Mom, it's OK. It's good publicity.' "She always has a good spin on things, and I admire her tenacity and her upbeat message." When asked if there are leads in the case, Blythe replied: "I don't know anything about it. I'll find out." Police believe the criminals used an object to tease open the cabinet

and then managed to make off with a pile of expensive jewels - including a vintage Bulgari bracelet valued at \$106,000. Gwyneth launched her store, Goop Mrkt, at the end of last month inside Manhattan's Time Warner Center. The pop-up store, which has also been held in Dallas, Chicago and Los Angeles, features clothing, household items and makeup, with prices starting from \$100.

## Minaj wants to be the next Meryl Streep

The 33-year-old rapper - who made her movie debut in 2014's 'The Other Woman' and will star in the upcoming 'Barbershop: The Next Cut' - is a huge fan of the Oscar-winning actress and would love to emulate her diversity in movie projects by taking on a number of very different roles. She said: "I want to do something very serious. "Meryl Streep is one of my favorite artists of all time. She blows me away in just about everything she does. I love how she can go from 'The Devil Wears Prada' to 'The Iron Lady'-she's so incredible in that. "My dream would be to have that type of acting career, where I can do both things believably." As well as her rapping and acting careers, Nicki is also working with ABC on a sitcom about her childhood and she admits she has got "too involved" with the project, much to her own surprise. She told the new issue of Billboard magazine: "I am maybe too involved. Two days ago I was in casting. I'm going back tomorrow. "I found one girl who I'm obsessed with who might play me, and someone who could rival her. So I've been coaching them both. I do a beat, let them rap. I do little dances with them. "It has been magical. I didn't even know I had it in me, but I love children so much." The 'Super Bass' hit-maker is taking inspiration from Chris Rock's 'Everybody Hates Chris' for the show. She explained: "I narrate this show, like Chris Rock narrates 'Everybody Hates Chris'. It was little differences that made that show stand out. I want to have those nuances. "My first day, I said to the casting director, 'This will not be a cliched black show.' "



## Hamilton enjoying the single life

The formula 1 hunk split from his long-time girlfriend Nicole Scherzinger, 37, 10 months ago following a seven-year romance but, rather than wallow in heartache, he's keen to make the most of the solo life and focus on his career. He explained: "It's different. I've been in two relationships in my life, [one when] I was 18 to 22 and [then] 23 to 30 and so I missed the single life that all my friends had. "Now I've just been throwing myself at work, I've worked harder than ever this year, I've travelled like crazy, I've experienced everything I wanted to experience." But that doesn't mean the handsome sportsman, who has been romantically linked to Kendall Jenner and Rihanna, isn't still having the "occasional" companionship. He added: "I'm enjoying it, it's really good fun, it's a fun period of time in my life." Meanwhile, Lewis - who crashed his car last month in Monaco following a night out - is keen to let his hair down a little more next year as he believes it benefits his performance on the track. Speaking on the 'Jonathan Ross Show,' he said: "Up until this year, I sacrificed everything so I never really went out. Last year I think I might have gone out three times, it's probably a bit too extreme. "I think this year I don't have any regrets about anything that happened this year and things I didn't do, I just tried to make sure I juggled everything... Not surprisingly I drove better than ever so I'm going to keep going out!"

## Hadid wanted to be a forensic scientist

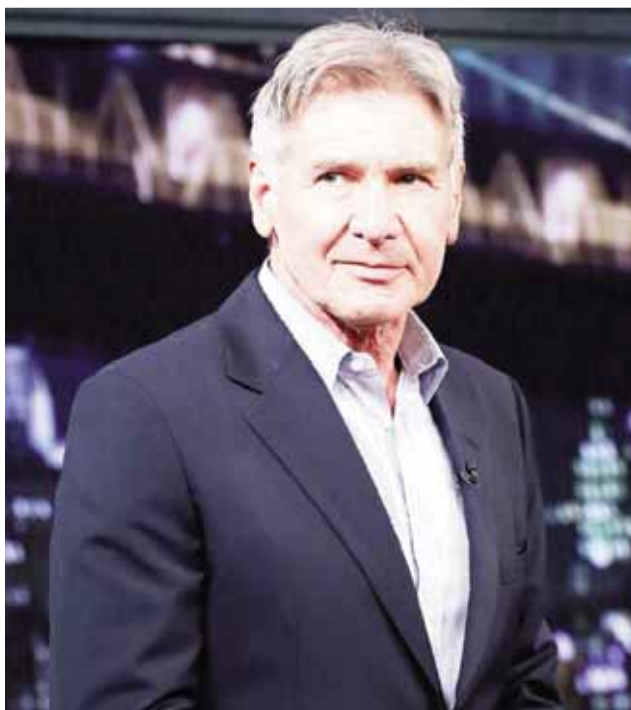
The 20-year-old model - who signed to modeling agency IMG when she was 17 - moved to New York three years ago to study criminal psychology after rejecting her initial plans because they were too intensive. She said: "I've always been interested in [criminal psychology]. First I wanted to be a doctor. "Then I wanted to be a forensic scientist. But to be a forensic scientist means you have to go to school for eight years. "I was like, 'Over that.' I realized what I enjoyed was trying to unravel people's brains why people commit crimes when they get older." Gigi dropped out of the course last year after her modeling commitments grew too much but she is happy she didn't quit earlier. She told Britain's Vogue magazine: "I was really happy I waited to commit to modeling full time. I think that having a core of other things is so important. "I can go to a shoot and then get on a horse. I have things to talk about."





## Versini and husband having serious problems

The 'I Don't Care' hitmaker tied the knot with Jean-Bernard Fernandez-Versini 18 months ago after a whirlwind romance but it is thought their marriage is already on the rocks, with the pair not being spotted together publicly since October. A source said: "There are serious problems for Cheryl and JB. It's very sad and they're trying to make it work, but it could explain why she's clearly not in a good place. A lot of us thought she might move towards taking some sort of break earlier this year but she decided to give the relationship another go and try to make it work. "But there's a feeling she's been unlucky in love and doesn't tend to pick the right men. Let's hope this won't be the most disastrous example of that ... There have been concerns raised about whether Cheryl really knew enough about JB to be able to dedicate her life to him." The news that her ex-husband Ashley Cole is reportedly expecting a child with his Italian girlfriend is said to have only added to her woes. A source told The Sun newspaper: "It's very obvious to everyone that Ashley was the love of Cheryl's life. She expected to be with him forever and for him to be the father of the babies she's desperately wanted. They are no longer in touch but hearing that news wasn't easy."



## Ford learned to fly a plane because he was getting old

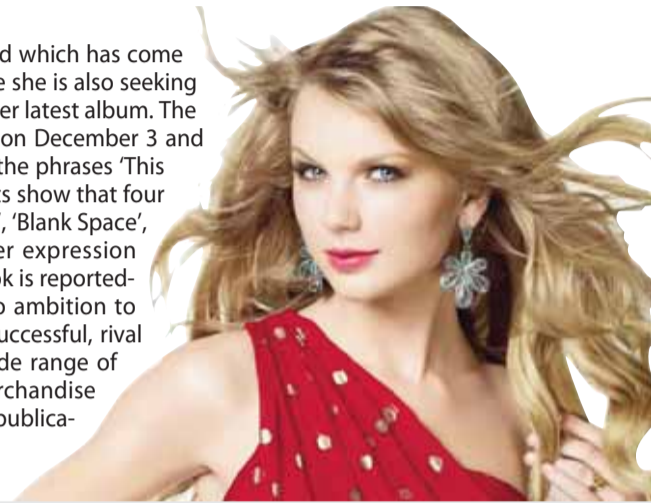
The 'Star Wars' actor initially took pilot lessons as a college student but ran out of money after just three sessions, eventually picking them back up much later in life when he feared he had lost the ability to learn new things. He explained: "I didn't pick it up again until I was 52. I was worried I was getting old and I couldn't learn anything anymore. I didn't only want to be an actor in my life. No dissatisfaction with that career, I just wanted some other experience. "Airplanes are expensive but at a certain point it was clear to me that maybe it would be cheaper to buy my own than for Warner Bros to keep flying me around, no such thing as a free lunch. "I have a love for airplanes. It's the hole in daddy's armor and yes, where all the money goes." The 73-year-old actor - who crashed one of his vintage planes earlier this year - insisted the appeal of flying for him isn't about taking risks

and being a daredevil, but the "responsibility" of taking care of his and other people's safety. He told GQ magazine: "I've later come to understand that what I love about the experience of flying is freedom and responsibility. "The notion of taking responsibility for your own safety and your passengers imposes a kind of rigor in your situation. "It is that combined with the freedom of flight, the joy of seeing, of being part of the third dimension. "It's understanding the visual complexity of the thing, the joy of creating this body of knowledge of flight, that you didn't know anything about and then applying it to practice - that is the appealing thing to me. "People think it is about the danger or the thrill of it. But it's not about risk, for me, it's about mitigation of risk." — Bangshowbiz

## Swift

## trying to trademark the word 'Swiftmas'

The chart-topping singer is attempting to protect the word which has come to be used to describe her random acts of kindness, while she is also seeking to trademark '1989', the year of her birth and the title of her latest album. The documents were filed to the US Patent and Trademark Office on December 3 and follow on from Taylor's efforts earlier in the year to trademark the phrases 'This sick beat' and 'Nice to meet you, where you been?'. Documents show that four trademark applications have been launched each for 'Swiftmas', 'Blank Space', 'And I'll write your name' and 'A Girl Named Girl'. The latter expression relates to a novel Taylor penned when she was just 14. The book is reportedly in the care of her parents and as yet, Taylor has shown no ambition to publish the work. Assuming the trademark applications are successful, rival performers will be prevented from using the phrases in a wide range of contexts, including on-stage performances, on clothing, merchandise and consumer goods, as well as on stationary, in books and in publications.



## Poehler

## was a 'late bloomer'

The 44-year-old actress has confessed she endured a tough time growing up in the 80s, but on reflection, she doesn't think being a late developer has been a bad thing for her. She joked: "I was a late bloomer which I would recommend to anybody. That's a tough thing when you get most popular, it's all down hill from there." Amy recently received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and she's tremendously proud of the honor. She told the 'Today Show': "It was great ... my parents were there, my family was there. It's something I never even imagined. "I'd never even been to California growing up. I never knew anyone who was an actor or a writer. I didn't know anybody famous so to be included in that fine company ... it was really special." Amy stars in new comedy movie 'Sisters' with Tina Fey, but she is philosophical about the film's money-making prospects, as it's being released at the same time as the JJ Abrams-directed 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens'. She quipped: "We're coming out against a little indie film called 'Star Wars'. "Made by a first time director, I'd love everybody to give him a chance - week two - and week one go see 'Sisters'."



Kyle Chandler, left, as Harge Aird, and Cate Blanchett as Carol Aird in a scene from the film, "Carol."



Chloe Grace Moretz announces nominations for the 73rd annual Golden Globe Awards at the Beverly Hilton hotel. — AP photos

# 'Carol,' Netflix lead a wide-ranging Golden Globes field



Brie Larson, left, and Jacob Tremblay appear in a scene from the film, "Room."

**F**rom the sumptuous romance of "Carol" to the apocalyptic rage of "Mad Max: Fury Road," streaming series to network dramas, Will Smith to Amy Schumer, the 73rd annual Golden Globe nominations unveiled a widespread field of nominations that attempted to corral a chaotic Oscar race and an ever-expanding television landscape.

The Hollywood Foreign Press Association swooned hardest for Todd Haynes' 1950s lesbian tale "Carol," which landed a leading five nominations on Thursday, including best picture, drama. Nods for its two stars, Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara, as well as for Haynes' direction, lent a boost to the film's growing Oscar outlook.

But little else was so straightforward in nominations that rewarded the acclaimed newsroom drama "Spotlight," but not its cast; gave Netflix a leading eight nominations (plus one for its first original movie); and supplied "Creed" co-star Sylvester Stallone his first Globe nomination in 29 years, yet for the same character (Mr Rocky Balboa).

It remains to be seen if an Academy Awards heavyweight will be anywhere to be found at the January 10 Beverly Hills, Calif., ceremony. Such questions should lend drama to the Globes, which will be hosted again by its grinning nemesis, Ricky Gervais.

#### Crowded field

In the season's crowded field of contenders - and with "The Force Awakens" threatening box office obliteration - attention from the Globes was very much welcomed Thursday. "The number

one reaction to these kinds of nominations is, 'Oh, thank God. It'll help the movie get out there,'" said Adam McKay, director of "The Big Short."

McKay's starry finance farce was one of the films that surged Thursday. Originally slated for release next year, its late jump into awards season was rewarded with four nominations, including best picture, comedy, and nods for Steve Carell and Christian Bale.

Alejandro Inarritu's follow-up to his Oscar-winning "Birdman," the frontier epic "The Revenant," took four nominations, including best picture, drama, and best actor for Leonardo DiCaprio. A four-time Oscar nominee and one-time Globe winner, DiCaprio is gunning for his first Academy Award.

Tied with four is the Aaron Sorkin-scripted box-office disappointment "Steve Jobs." But it failed to join the dramatic best picture nominees, which, along with "Carol" and "The Revenant," are: "Mad Max: Fury Road," "Room" and "Spotlight." Streaming series from Netflix, Amazon and Hulu dominated the TV side of the Globes, which scattered nominations across the dial. Six shows tied for the most nominations at three: " Fargo," "Mr. Robot," "Outlander," "Transparent," "American Crime" and "Wolf Hall."

Tom McCarthy's acclaimed Boston Globe drama "Spotlight," arguably the Oscar favorite, took three top nominations, including best director for McCarthy and best screenplay. But its ensemble cast is struggling to stand out from the pack.

After the Screen Actors Guild Awards passed over Michael Keaton and Mark Ruffalo on Wednesday, the Globes did, too.



Kirsten Dunst, left, and Jesse Plemons appear in a scene from "Fargo."



Idris Elba appears in a scene from "Luther."





Tom Hardy in a scene from, "Mad Max:Fury Road."



Emilia Clarke appears in a scene from "Game of Thrones".

(Ruffalo, however, was nominated for his performance as a bipolar father in "Infinitely Polar Bear," and Liev Scheiber for Showtime's "Ray Donovan.") "They know how good they are and recognize the work of all the other actors," McCarthy said of his cast. "The best picture nomination really speaks to that. Truthfully, I think all the nominations do. That's the wonderful thing about actors. They can take a little bit of credit all the way down the line."



Jennifer Jason Leigh in a scene from "The Hateful Eight."

Something to show

Most of the expected contenders came away with something to show from the Globes, including the science-nerd space adventure "The Martian." It was nominated for best picture, comedy, actor (Matt Damon) and director (Ridley Scott).

David O Russell's matriarch portrait "Joy," won nods for best picture, comedy, and best actress for Jennifer Lawrence, a Globe winner the last two years. The haul for "Mad Max" also included a nod for best director for George Miller. The Emma Donoghue adaption "Room," landed one for Brie Larson's lead performance as a captive mother.

Smith, whose upcoming "Concussion" has drawn headlines for its depiction of head trauma in football, apparently displaced Johnny Depp ("Black Mass") from the best actor, drama, nominees. The others in the category were Michael Fassbender ("Steve Jobs"), Eddie Redmayne ("The Danish Girl") and Bryan Cranston ("Trumbo").

Alicia Vikander, the ubiquitous star of 2015, joined the best dramatic actress field for Tom Hooper's transgender period drama "The Danish Girl," as well as the supporting actress nominees for her performance as an artificial intelligence in the sci-fi indie "Ex Machina."

Though some questionable category decisions left less humorous films competing for best comedy or musical, two of comedy's top stars will crash the party: Melissa McCarthy and Schumer. Both were nominated for best actress in a comedy, and their films - "Spy" and "Trainwreck," respectively - will compete for best comedic film.

In the best animated film category, the Charlie Kaufman-scripted, stop-motion animated "Anomalisa" slotted in alongside a quartet of more family-friendly releases: "Inside Out," "The Good Dinosaur," "The Peanuts Movie" and "Shaun the Sheep Movie." Though younger stars like DiCaprio and Lawrence are the leading acting contenders, a number of esteemed veterans joined the nominations, too. Al Pacino ("Danny Collins"), Maggie Smith ("The Lady in the Van"), Jane Fonda ("Youth") and Helen Mirren ("Trumbo") all earned nods. — AP



Christian Bale appears in a scene from "The Big Short."



Jennifer Lawrence in a scene from "Joy."



This photo provided by Twentieth Century Fox & Peanuts Worldwide LLC shows a scene from "The Peanuts Movie."



This image released by Netflix shows Wagner Moura as Pablo Escobar in the Netflix Original Series "Narcos."



Alicia Vikander appears in a scene from "Ex Machina."



Italian composer Ennio Morricone poses with his wife Maria Travia on the red carpet of the European premiere of film 'The Hateful Eight' in London. — AFP

## After Tarantino film score, Morricone readies tour

The maestro has a bad back and his memory may not be what it was but the man behind some of the most famous film music ever can still keep Quentin Tarantino waiting. In an interview with AFP, Ennio Morricone said he had initially ruled out writing the soundtrack for the US director's Western "The Hateful Eight" which premiered in London this week.

"I immediately refused," said the 87-year-old Morricone, wearing in a polo-neck jumper and dark suit. "He then came to my house to talk to me and told me about his appreciation for my work, for cinema. He convinced me to compose for him," he said.

Morricone, who won a lifetime achievement Oscar in 2007, is best known for the so-called "Spaghetti Westerns"—he himself dislikes the term—directed by his childhood friend Sergio Leone in the 1960s. But he draws a line between his latest composition and those works starring Clint Eastwood, which famously featured coyote sounds, whip cracks and gun shots.

Tarantino "has done a beautiful, interesting, original film and I treated it differently from what I did for Leone, not like a Western but like a free film. "I wanted it to have its own sounds. I didn't want the music to be the leftovers of what I did for Leone."

### Classical ambition

For someone with around 500 film scores to his name, the irony is that cinema was not his first calling. "My real purpose was to write classical music. Since the conservatoire, that was my ambition. Then, of course, you have to live—and you can make money from film music," he said. "That's just how my life went."

As a child, Morricone played the trumpet with his father in 1930s Rome. After attending music school there, he went on to compose hit Italian pop songs, and then got into the Italy's film industry in its heyday in the 1960s. He has since composed music for films like "Once Upon a Time in America" (1984) as well as "The Mission" (1986), both starring Robert de Niro.

The variety of directors he has worked for reflects the differences in his work—from Oliver Stone to Pedro Almodovar, Brian de Palma to Bernardo Bertolucci. And next month, he embarks on a world tour to celebrate 60 years in the music business, with plans to play in London in February and Paris in May.

"It will almost all be film music—the scores that interest me for their compositions, for the discoveries that they yielded, not based on the film or the director. "It is an attempt to be myself, despite what I call my service to the public, to the director and to the film."

### 'Different sounds'

Known for introducing unusual sound effects into his music—he once wrote an entire song based on the sound of a typewriter—Morricone is still keen to experiment. "I use normal, important, historical instruments but to make different sounds, completely different."

"I think the human voice makes the strangest sounds, more than any instrument. I can become a little devil or angel for example, whatever sound suits the occasion," he said, distorting his voice into a devilish snarl.

At London's Abbey Road Studios—made famous as the preferred recording venue for The Beatles—Morricone picked up his baton this week to direct an orchestra for part of "The Hateful Eight" score, which was being recorded for a limited edition release. Suddenly animated, he conducts with vigor and rehearses again and again with the orchestra—his words in Italian translated to the other musicians by a violinist.

"It didn't go well. Let's do it again," he told them during the recording of an ominous-sounding passage, filled with double basses and oboes. "Be angrier!" he told the choir, rolling his eyes when a voice interrupts the recording. "We'll be here till midnight!" he huffed. — AFP

## 5 trends making the movie business lose sleep

Blockbusters like "Jurassic World" and "Furious 7" powered the movie business to record numbers in 2015. But not everything Hollywood touched turned to gold. There were plenty of "Pans" and "Victor Franksteins" to splatter red ink around. Here are five things that should keep the studios and filmmakers up at night.

### Indie crisis

Arthouse cinemas are beginning to feel like ghost towns. Sundance favorites like "Dope" and "Me and Earl and the Dying Girl" scored big deals, only to die at the box office. In response, distributors kept their checkbooks closed at the Toronto Film Festival. Plus, there are fewer buyers after Relativity Media went belly up and the Weinstein Co cut the number of movies it will release in half.

### Incredible shrinking stars

Norma Desmond was wrong. It's not the pictures that got smaller, it's the stars. Big names like George Clooney, Channing Tatum and Adam Sandler couldn't save "Tomorrowland," "Jupiter Ascending" and "Pixels." Diminishing drawing power threatens that most cherished of Hollywood institutions—the passion project. Hoping to nurture relationships with the likes of Sandra Bullock and Angelina Jolie, studios greenlit such risky projects as "Our Brand Is Crisis" and "By the Sea," losing millions of dollars in the process.

### Netflix and Amazon fail to make a stir

Streaming services can write big checks and field buzzy TV shows like "House of Cards" and "Transparent," but they haven't had a breakout movie. Netflix says "Beasts of No Nation," a brutal drama about child soldiers, was widely viewed online, but it was barely seen in theaters. The company's deal

with Sandler also raised eyebrows after "Pixels" flopped. Amazon has been more tentative, launching its first theatrical release with Spike Lee's "Chi-Raq." Though the services have revolutionized the way content is watched at home, they haven't made many revolutionary movies-yet.

### R-rated comedies running out of laughs

Amy Schumer emerged as a bona fide star with "Trainwreck," but most films hoping to ride raunch to box office gold derailed. "Vacation," "Ted 2" and "The Night Before" left audiences cold, and even well-reviewed "Spy" fell short of previous Melissa McCarthy efforts such as "The Heat" and "Identity Thief." Nothing matched the success of 2014 smash-es like "22 Jump Street" and "Neighbors," and some studio executives fret that gross-out gags aren't delivering belly laughs.

### Feast or famine

The hits were big, but so were the flops. For the first time, at least five films this year will top \$1 billion globally. But even as movies like "Jurassic World" mint money, misses like "Pan" are leading to nine-figure writedowns. Fall was weighed down by adult dramas that cannibalized one another, leaving the likes of "The Walk" and "Steve Jobs" to wither. The year had two of the 10 best openings in history with "Jurassic World" and "Avengers: Age of Ultron," but also suffered four of the worst wide-release debuts ever with "Burnt," "Victor Frankenstein," "Jem and the Holograms" and "Rock the Kasbah." Not every record is worth breaking. — Reuters



In this photo provided by Twentieth Century Fox, Matt Damon as Astronaut Mark Watney finds himself stranded and alone on Mars, in "The Martian." — AP

# Beggar writes bestseller but is still down and out

A homeless man who begs on one of Paris' swishest avenues has become an unlikely celebrity after writing a bestselling book about his life on the streets. The creme de la creme of Parisian society pass daily in front of Jean-Marie Roughol's pitch outside a Chanel boutique on the chi-chi Avenue Montaigne.

The actor Jean-Paul Belmondo once gave him 10 Euros (\$11), and France's most famous chat show host, Michel Drucker, always tossed him a coin. But now the beggar is appearing on television himself including on Drucker's show after selling 40,000 copies of his memoir, "My Life As A Panhandler".

But despite the success of the book, which the 47-year-old wrote on park benches and in the dosshouse hotels where he sleeps, Roughol is still on the streets and was back working his pavement this week in a Santa Claus hat. "In 10 months I will start getting my royalties, although I would prefer to have them now," he told AFP.

## Pet rat

But from the small advance he has been given Roughol has bought a smartphone to keep up with his growing band of followers on Facebook, where his profile picture shows him with a rat on his shoulder. "People write to me from everywhere and I am stopped every day by people who have read my book," he said.

Roughol, who has been on the streets for 25 years and regards begging as "a profession", has to make 80 Euros a day to pay for his food and board. And his new-found celebrity has helped him put bread on the table from the most surprising of sources.

"Last week I was taken to a restaurant by a man from Tennessee who bought 15 copies of my book and another person came from Switzerland with chocolate for me." Roughol wrote the book with the help of a former French interior minister Jean-Louis Debre, after offering to look after his bicycle for him while he did some shopping on the nearby Champs Elysee. In the book he tells how their friendship was cemented when a couple who saw them chatting, said, "Look, it's Debre with a hobo." Roughol began writing down the story of his life two years ago in school exercise books.

Abandoned by his mother when he was a small child and brought up by his alcoholic father, he ended up on the streets after he lost his job as a waiter in his early 20s. He admits to "not spending much time at school" so Debre-now head of France's highest constitutional court-agreed to correct and reshape his drafts. Roughol said he hopes the book might help



This file photo taken on October 06, 2015 shows French writer of the book "Je tape la manche" Jean-Marie Roughol poses in Paris. — AFP

change the way homeless people are viewed. "People who have read it say they look differently at us now." Certainly it seems to have had a positive effect on the life of the other beggars in his neighborhood. "They tell me 'lots of people are coming to see us because of you,'" he said.

## Celebrities and politicians

Also thanks to the book he has been reunited with one of his long-lost brothers. "He saw me on the TV and didn't know I was homeless. When you are on the streets, you are ashamed and you turn in on yourself. Now I have nieces and nephews who want to meet me—imagine! — when I have always been alone."

Roughol is also now getting help to get the social security payments he is entitled to. "When you are on the street getting all that sorted out would mean you would lose days of begging," he said. The book's success has also given him hope that he might realize his life's dream of opening a creperie.

"When I have my own apartment I will buy a computer so I can continue writing books," he said. But it is finally being rec-

ognized as a worthwhile human being which warms his heart most. "People ask me to sign my book, they give me money and clothes too," he said showing off the "brand new" sneakers he was recently presented by one of his well-heeled "neighbors".

It was not always thus. While Roughol sings the praises of the French actor Gad Elmaleh and producer Robert Hossein, who both hired him as an extra, he said the the screen legend Alain Delon was horrible to him, and is equally scathing about another actor Gerard Jugnot, star of the hit feelgood movie "The Chorus".

"He plays poor people in his films but he doesn't like them" in real life, he wrote. But his most damning verdict was on Jean-Luc Melenchon, France's firebrand leftwing leader, who has walked past him many times without as much as a nod. "He is not a nice man," said Roughol. — AFP



The Armenian Patriarchate in the Iranian capital Tehran. — KUNA

## Armenians in Iran preserve cultural identity

Christian Armenians have lived in Iran since thousands of years ago and their existence in the nation dates to the pre-Christ times. According to historic evidences and relics, their existence in the nation dates back to the BC fifth and sixth centuries. Since then, they have preserved their own social fabric and language in Iran, as well as in other countries of their diaspora.

In an interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the chief Armenian bishop in Tehran, Sebul Sarkisian, said the Armenians have been since the old times a very active community in Iran in humanitarian, cultural, literary, commercial and military sectors.

In the 17th century, the Safavid Shah Abbas transferred more than 300,000 Armenians from Armenia to Esfahan, with aim of renovating the city and creating a new social mix-up, he said. Esfahan was the first city to host the Armenians. They built their own town in Esfahan, named Newo Julfa before spreading to other countries such as India and Iraq.

According to official figures, there are some 100,000 Christians, including 80,000 Armenians, in Iran. They practice their religious rites freely. The Iranian Christians have three patriarchates. According to historic sources, the patriarchate in Tibriz is the oldest one in the country, followed by the one in Esfahan. The newest is located in Tehran.

The Tehran patriarchate groups the largest number of Armenian worshippers. It is significantly influential, managing 20 schools, 20 associations in addition to a number of clubs for the community. The Armenians are represented with two men in the parliament. They publish a number of newspapers and the patriarchate in Tehran oversees up to 11 churches.

Bishop Sarkisian noted that the largest number of Armenians live in Tehran, followed by Esfahan and Aroumiah. He affirmed that the Armenians enjoy freedoms in Iran, unlike other countries, with exception of Lebanon. They practice their rituals without any restrictions, Sarkisian said, adding that the authorities encourage them to hold their religious ceremonies.

The Armenians view Armenia which ceded from the Soviet Union 24 years ago as their mother land. The Armenian schools teach the official curricula, except for the religious curricula, the Armenian language and history. — KUNA



Colombian designer Adriana Restrepo (center) —a victim of the armed conflict— works at a computer waste recycling in downtown Medellin, Antioquia department, Colombia. —AFP photos



Adriana Restrepo works with used tires at a waste storage.

# Colombian eco-designer

## FINDS BEAUTY IN TRASH

Adriana Restrepo has a lot of experience searching for silver linings. The Colombian fashion designer and environmentalist was a pregnant 18-year-old when drug traffickers in Medellin, her violence-stained hometown, killed her partner, leaving her to raise their son on her own.

Maybe that has something to do with her talent for finding beauty in other people's trash, which she avidly collects to turn into hip, colorful home decor and accessories. Restrepo lights up as she criss-crosses Medellin, Colombia's second city, visiting used tire depots and warehouses full of cannibalized computers.

"It's my shopping mall," she said, beaming as she brandished defunct hard disks she planned to turn into pop-art coasters or clocks. Restrepo, who is now 33, is known as the "All-Terrain Blonde" among the impoverished trash-pickers of Medellin, who sort through the city's garbage looking for what-

ever can be reused or recycled.

She is their regular customer in the subway stations where they spread their meager wares on the floor, hoping to sell an old CD, broken toy or empty box. "I've always been very aware of nature. With my brand, I try to send a message of caring for the environment by giving things a second life. But they have to be beautiful. Because who likes ugly?" she told AFP.

### Designs from the dump

In the living room of the small apartment she shares with her 15-year-old son, David, Restrepo shows off her workbench—a reconverted kitchen table—and her shelves stacked with rescued treasures. This is where she transforms wine corks into USB flash drives, old inner tubes into trendy bags, discarded plastic toys into flower pots.

She proudly shows off her two sewing machines, one of which she received from the Victims' Unit, a government body tasked with

helping Colombians affected by an armed conflict that has simmered for more than half a century.

Over the years, the conflict has drawn in the army, leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries and drug traffickers. It has killed more than 220,000 people and uprooted six million. The violence has been fueled by the drug trade in Colombia, the world's largest cocaine producer. Medellin, home to the now-defunct cartel led by late kingpin Pablo Escobar, has been hit especially hard.

"The Trianas, a gang linked to the narcos and the guerrillas, killed my boyfriend, David Alexander," Restrepo said. "I never found out why. I was three months pregnant." She has had just one goal ever since, she said: to get through the ordeal. Her mother took care of her infant son while she finished her studies— all while working from home. Today, Restrepo markets her creations all over the world through her Facebook page, Adriana Restrepo

Eco Diseno. She also teaches young people looking to break into the fashion industry.

### Transform that trash

One of her students is 23-year-old Catalina Casas, who was uprooted by the Colombian conflict when paramilitaries killed her uncle. Like Restrepo's younger self, she is a single mother desperate to make it in design. "I love sewing! I would never have imagined you could make a bag out of a tire," she said.

On a recent day, Restrepo visited the sprawling slum of Comuna 13, a shantytown perched precariously in the hills on the outskirts of Medellin, to give a Christmas workshop. Armed with just paintbrushes, glue and Santa Claus napkins, she taught a dozen residents to turn a scratched CD into a festive wine coaster. It all fits into her larger mission, she said. "We have to show that things can be reused, instead of thrown away," she said. —AFP



Adriana Restrepo holds a wall clock made out of a recycled computer hard drive at her workshop.



Adriana Restrepo works with people of the Commune 13 neighborhood.



Adriana Restrepo cleans handbags made out of recycled tires.

# Hip-hop dancers defy Zimbabwe's woes



Members of the dance-theatre ensemble Elysium go through their paces during a rehearsal at a municipal park in Zimbabwe's capital Harar. —AFP photos

**W**earing baggy matching T-shirts and exuding urban street style, the dancers spin through their routines to a backtrack of thumping hip-hop beats—not in a park in New York, but in Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe. The Elysium dance group brings a rare burst of energy to weekday lunchtime in Harare, a dilapidated city that has endured years of economic decline, authoritarian rule and mass emigration.

Much of Zimbabwe's official data is unreliable, but figures suggest less people are in formal jobs than any time since 1968, and some economists put unemployment as high as 80 percent. Millions of young people have left the country since 2000 when government-backed seizures of white-owned farms triggered a collapse of the agriculture sector and hyperinflation wrecked the economy.

But every day, about 20 young people gather in Harare Gardens park for a grueling session of dance moves that look straight from a professional American dance studio or film set. Heather Gupo, 21, who joined Elysium four months ago after losing her job with a fast-food chain, said dancing offers her an outlet for her ambitions, despite her family's disapproval.

"I faced a lot of resistance including being beaten up, and locked indoors (by relatives) to try to stop me going to rehearsals," Gupo told AFP. "I have been called all sorts of names, the mildest one being 'bar dancer'. "But dancing is

one thing I am good at, so I decided to pursue it anyway."

Gupo lives with her mother and four siblings, and when money ran short she was forced to give up hopes of studying law at university to take a job as a waitress. Now she helps with decorations at weddings, and works as a make-up artist. The troupe earns occasional fees performing at corporate parties or civil events, but not enough to provide the dancers with a regular income. Instead the intense practice sessions provide an essential release for youths frustrated by life in Zimbabwe under President Robert Mugabe, 91, who has ruled since independence in 1980.

#### Channeled frustration

"As they dance they express themselves," said dance leader Hillary Tandi Chin'ono, who instructs the group by barking military-style orders and is addressed as the "chief commander". "There are some who are very bitter with disappointment in their lives, so they channel their energy towards dance and express that bitterness, that anger.

"After they have left rehearsals, they are too tired to think of anything else so they will go home to relax instead of sitting on bridges taking drugs." Daves Guzha, Zimbabwe's most famous theatre director, likened the emergence of new dance groups to how the hip-hop movement grew as a mode of expression for disillusioned black youth in the United States.

"Like hip-hop, it's about the kids," Guzha said. "In an environment like we have at the moment where there are no jobs, we are bound to see more of the dance groups trying to get more professional. "Ultimately, perhaps it is going to produce gems from the talent that's will come out." One regular date for Elysium is the annual street carnival organized by the tourism ministry to try to lure tourists to Zimbabwe.

Competition between rival dance groups is fierce, and standards are high. "It is not easy, but Elysium has opened closed doors in my life. I had financial problems in 2013. That's when I started taking dance seriously," Marlon Magondo, 23, said. "Things are hard these days so one can only survive by doing as many things as possible. I also work a bit as a singer and gymnastics instructor.

"I decided to try dancing since it was the only thing I could do to get a bit of money without first going to college." The depressed economy has spawned what economists in Zimbabwe have called "a lost generation", waiting and hoping for change when Mugabe dies or loses power. "You find a lot of young people, whether they have passed exams or not, are unemployed," said Plot Mhako, head of the country's biggest contemporary dance even, the Jibilika Dance Festival. "They are faced with a lot of challenges, and some young people find dancing is what they need—an escape." —AFP

## K-pop band held at airport as suspected sex workers

**A**ll eight members of a new girl K-pop girl band, traveling for an album cover shoot in the United States, were detained at Los Angeles airport on suspicion that they might be sex workers, their agency said yesterday. The eight member band, Oh My Girl, were held for 15 hours on Thursday before being released, after which they flew back to South Korea.

Their agency WM Entertainment released a statement saying the LA immigration authorities had gone through the

band's costumes and props. "Then, probably because of their young age, they seem to have mistaken them as sex workers," the statement said, without elaborating. The agency said it was taking legal advice in the United States as to whether the band's detention was lawful.

There might also have been an issue with the type of visa the band members were holding, as they were also booked to perform at a gala event in Los Angeles on Saturday. Oh My Girl was only formed in March this year and released its

debut single in April. South Korea's K-pop scene, which has been exported with enormous success across Asia and beyond, is dominated by young girl and boy bands whose members are sometimes as young as 13 or 14 years old.

In 2012, the South Korean authorities took steps to curb over-sexualized performances threatening to slap R-ratings on films, music videos and TV shows that placed an exaggerated sexual emphasis on young singers and bands they featured. —AFP

## BITCOIN'S ALLEGED ARCHITECT TROUBLED BY FINANCIAL WOES

**SYDNEY/SINGAPORE:** Australian Craig Steven Wright is the latest in a line of men alleged to be the mysterious creator of bitcoin, a digital currency that has attracted the interest of banks, speculators, criminals and regulators. Wired magazine, which along with fellow US publication Gizmodo published a story outing Wright based on a stash of leaked documents and emails, called him a genius.

But interviews with those who have done business with Wright, and a closer inspection of documents published by the two technology websites paint a more complex picture. They point to a smart but sometimes abrasive figure facing growing legal and financial problems at least in part caused by his involvement with bitcoin. While it was not immediately possible to support or refute claims that he is Satoshi Nakamoto - the person or group credited with writing the paper, protocols and software that led to bitcoin - some of those who worked with Wright raised questions about the timing of the leak and the likelihood that he was Nakamoto.

"It can't be him, there's no way he could have kept quiet about it this long," said a former senior employee at Hotwire Preemptive Intelligence, who also detailed Wright's difficulties with authorities over his Australian businesses' bitcoin dealings. The former employee, who asked to remain anonymous, citing legal issues, said the collapse of Tokyo-based bitcoin exchange Mt. Gox in early 2014 had a direct effect on Hotwire, which is registered in Australia and is in the hands of administrators attempting to unravel disputes with the Australian Tax Office (ATO). The collapse of Mt. Gox and the disappearance of hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of bitcoin coincided with a decision by the ATO, according to the documents, not to regard Wright's bitcoin as money and that the digital currency therefore was taxable like any other commodity. This punctured Hotwire's hopes it could recover more than A\$3 million in tax credits and helped sink the company.

"Their cash flow disappeared right around the time Mt. Gox collapsed," the former employee told Reuters, adding that staff at Hotwire were told that Wright had funds in a bitcoin trust, in which he was a beneficiary along with other unnamed parties.

"When they were trying to find cash flow after they were hit by Mt. Gox, they couldn't sell the bitcoins in the trust to get the cashflow because they couldn't break this wallet as there are other trustees."

Wright has not commented publicly on the Wired and Gizmodo reports, and Reuters' attempts to contact him using various listed email addresses were unsuccessful. Wright's blog was taken down on Wednesday, his Twitter and Google+ accounts were deleted and access to his full LinkedIn profile restricted.

Attempts to reach Wright's lawyer were unsuccessful and another former Hotwire employee said all staff had been instructed not to speak to the media. Wright's whereabouts are unknown. The landlord at his rented Sydney home told a Reuters reporter that Wright had been due to move out with his family before Christmas to move to London, where he recently attended a conference and was, according to his LinkedIn profile, enrolled for a Master's degree at University of London.

### Unmasking the mysterious Nakamoto

The ATO was behind raids by Australian police on Wednesday on Wright's home and office in Sydney. It declined to provide any further detail on the raids, citing legal confidentiality. Administrator McGrath Nicol told creditors last month that the ATO slapped a A\$1.7 million fine on Hotwire over its tax refund claims. The former Hotwire employee said Wright once paid in bitcoin to buy a banking platform from a Middle Eastern seller. He then sought to claim a goods and services tax return, or import credit, in cash worth millions of dollars which the ATO denied.

Bitcoin experts say that unmasking Satoshi Nakamoto would be significant for the industry. Not only would the proven founder likely hold some sway over the future of the bitcoin protocol, but Nakamoto may also hold enough bitcoin to influence the price of bitcoin.

"What people are looking for essentially is the Bill Gates of bitcoin," said David Glance, a director of innovation at the University of Western Australia and noted bitcoin expert, who doubts that Wright is Nakamoto, pointing to pro-capitalist, anti-hacking columns Wright wrote for The Conversation, a local publication, in 2011. After ditching several directorships in July, Wright remains a director of three companies, including Hotwire, which had sought to launch the world's first bitcoin bank. —Reuters



**LAS VEGAS:** Dag Reckhorn, Faraday Future's global vice president of manufacturing, is congratulated by dignitaries after a news conference on Thursday in Las Vegas, announcing plans for the Chinese-backed electric carmaker's \$1 billion manufacturing plant to be built in North Las Vegas. —AP

## AMIT YORAN'S 2016 PREDICTIONS

By Amit Yoran, president of RSA

2015 was most notably characterized by security vendors claiming to be able to prevent advanced threat breaches when the reality is, they can't. It was characterized by enterprises recognizing the need to monitor and defend their digital environments differently, but continuing to center their security programs on the same technologies and approaches they have been using - hoping for a different



outcome, but not acting differently. 2015 saw threats continuing to evolve faster than most organizations' ability to detect and respond to them. What was considered an "advanced" threat in years past has become a commodity today with sophisticated malware and exploits available for the price of a movie ticket. As troublesome as these observations seem, the most impactful evolution goes almost entirely unreported and misunderstood. The threats that matter most, today's pervasive threat actors execute attack campaigns comprised of multiple compromise methods and multiple backdoors to assure persistence. Incomplete incident scoping has become a critical failure point.

We're starting to see progress in some areas as security investments begin to shift from a maniacal focus on prevention, toward greater balance on monitoring, detection, and response capabilities. It's become cliché to say that breaches are inevitable and that faster detection

and more accurate incident scoping is the way forward, but too many organizations are trying to do these very different tasks using the technologies and processes they have on hand...not designed nor capable of answering their need. Here are some of the emerging trends that our industry and organizations need to be ready for in 2016:

1. Strategic Data Manipulation and Disruption - Organizations will begin to realize that not only is their data being accessed inappropriately, but that it is being tampered with. Data drives decision making for people and computer systems. When that data is unknowingly manipulated, those decisions will be made based on false data. Consider the potentially devastating consequences of misrepresented data on the mixing of compounds, control systems, and manufacturing processes.
2. Increasing Attacks on Application Service Providers - As organizations become more comfortable with the "as a Service" model, many of their most sensitive applications and data reside in the Cloud. The aggregation of this valuable data from many companies creates an incredibly lucrative target for cybercriminals and cyber espionage. A deeper appreciation of third party risk is needed.
3. Hactivism and the Attack Surface - Per my earlier comment, as cyber-attack tools and services become increasingly commoditized; the cost of attacking an organization is dropping dramatically, enabling more attacks that do not have financial gain as the primary focus. Sophisticated hactivist collectives like Anonymous have been joined by relatively unso-

phisticated cyber vigilantes. Organizations need to realize that financial gain is no longer the only or even the biggest driver of some of their adversaries. Security operations and risk managers should evolve their understanding not only of the threat, but also of what, why, where, and how they are being targeted.

4. ICS (Industrial Control Systems) pushed to the Breaking Point - Intrusions into systems that control operations in the chemical, electrical, water, and transport sectors have increased 17-fold over the last three years. The advent of connected and automated sensors with the IoT aggressively exacerbates these issues. The growth in the use of cyber technology for terrorism, hactivists and other actors, combined with the weakness of ICS security generally, combined with the potential impact of bringing down a power grid or water treatment plant (hello, California), makes the critical breach of an ICS in 2016 extremely concerning and increasingly likely.
5. Shake-out of the Security Industry - Our industry has been awash in venture capital and as a result, foolish investments have been made in strategies and technologies that are little more than snake oil. As organizations' security programs continue to mature, they are learning that claims of being able to prevent advanced threat breaches are nothing more than fantasy. Expect to see a shake-out in the security industry as organizations maturing understanding of advanced threats increasingly drives their security investment decisions.

## SOURCING STRATEGIES: WHEN A RISK SHARED IS A RISK HALVED

By Jyoti Lalchandani

In recent years, end-user organizations have been paying increasing attention to their vendor and sourcing management strategies as they look to streamline their costs and maximize their flexibility.



This new focus on establishing deeper buyer-vendor relationships holds true right across the board, but is perhaps most prominent when it comes to the procurement of information and communications technology (ICT) services.

Indeed, buyer-vendor relationships in the ICT space are increasingly evolving from short-term transactions into long-term relationships that

resemble more of a partnership than a conventional supplier-consumer transactional affiliation. This is because the rise of transformational 3rd Platform technologies such as big data and analytics, mobility, cloud, and social media is introducing a new level of complexity when it comes to organizations managing their existing portfolios of vendors and suppliers.

The need to balance multiple service providers, maximize the financial benefits, and manage performance, supplier productivity, and risk is driving organizations to develop a deeper understanding of the different vendor engagement models that are most often used in IT sourcing. These models typically range from basic time and materials (T&M) and fixed-capacity agreements at one end of the maturity scale to more complex managed services and fixed-price contracts at the other.

IDC's global research suggests that by 2017, 35% of vendor sourcing relationships around 3rd Platform

technologies will fail, causing CIOs to revisit existing sourcing governance processes and consider implementing new sourcing processes and engagement models. But adopting new technologies, engaging with emerging vendors, and attempting to manage an ever-changing list of outsource vendors will inevitably put buyers in an increasingly complex business environment.

Despite this, organizations are continuing to turn toward external vendors to achieve their business goals. The external sourcing of IT and business functions has always been associated with inherent risks, but the types of risk organizations face in today's environment have grown along with sourcing practices. The popularity of 3rd Platform technologies has complicated this situation, forcing organizations to find ways to confront the risks associated with relying on outsource vendors.

To determine the most suitable model of engagement with vendors, IT initiative owners should consider the maturity and risk of the different vendor engagement models. At IDC, we have developed a model that shows how higher levels of vendor engagement maturity typically drive lower buyer risk. So for the T&M and fixed-capacity models, the buyer needs to assume all the risk, while in the case of managed services and fixed-price models, the buyer shares the inherent financial and performance risks with the vendor.

By comprehensively assessing the level of maturity and mitigating the risk of a vendor engagement, organizations can put themselves into a desired position where cost and business impacts are reduced in the case of a risk event occurring. In this regard, the use of developed and mature vendor engagement models will help drive a competitive advantage, optimize costs, and deliver predictable quality for their organizations. However, IDC also stresses the need to understand that there is no way to avoid all risks

because buyer risks will always exist.

It is clear then that selecting and implementing the right model for any given situation is an essential step in managing complex, high-value vendor and sourcing engagements. Indeed, the increasing scope and complexity of outsourcing engagements make it imperative for organizations to leverage different vendor engagement models to hold suppliers responsible for on-time, on-budget delivery and quality of the final product.

Organizations that are looking to go beyond gaining short-term benefits from their vendor engagements will need to develop trusted relationships with vendors, enabling them to use more mature vendor engagement models. The use of these more complex models will allow them to gain transformational and innovative insights and go beyond just traditional cost savings to create long-term competitive advantage and enterprise value.

It is no surprise then that IDC is witnessing a shift in vendor and supplier relationship models from a short-term transactional model that focuses on simply buying, building, and running a particular solution to a longer-term relational model in which ongoing delivery, integration, and performance management take precedence over pricing. By utilizing a combination of vendor engagement models that go beyond cost-focused procurement and short-term benefits, vendors are transformed into valuable partners that can help organizations achieve their strategic goals.

In such a scenario, buyer-supplier relationships should be based on trust and information sharing and designed for competitive advantage, and it is this state that all progressive end-user organizations should be looking to achieve from their sourcing engagements because, ultimately, a risk shared is a risk halved.

The author is the Group Vice President and Regional Managing Director at IDC, Middle East, Africa and Turkey.

## 'FACEBOOK AT WORK' SET TO BE LAUNCHED IN COMING MONTHS

### PROFESSIONAL VERSION TO DEBUT AFTER LONG TRIALS

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Facebook at Work, Facebook Inc's professional version of its social network, is expected to launch in the coming months, after spending a year in tests, a company executive said.

The new service, geared towards workplace collaboration, is nearly identical to its ubiquitous social network, with a scrolling news "feed", "likes" and a chat service.

"I would say 95 percent of what we developed for Facebook is also adopted for Facebook at Work," Julien Codorniou, director of global platform partnerships at Facebook, told Reuters.

However, Facebook at Work users will maintain special profiles that are distinct from their existing Facebook profiles. The company is also developing exclusive products for Facebook at Work, including security tools, Codorniou said.

Facebook started beta-testing the service in January and has kept it as a free, "invite-only" service for companies so far. The service will be open to all companies once launched and Facebook plans to charge "a few dollars per month per user" for premium services such as analytics and customer support, a company spokeswoman said.

The online career market, which

includes LinkedIn Corp and Monster Worldwide Inc, is worth about \$6 billion a year, market research firm IDC had said in August. More than 300 companies, including Heineken, Royal Bank of Scotland and jewelry company Stella and Dot, are using Facebook at Work and Club Mediterranee SA is set to be the latest adopter.

The French resort company will offer

the service to all its 13,000 employees through summer 2016, Anne Browaeys-Level, Club Mediterranee's chief marketing & digital officer, told Reuters.

Facebook's Codorniou said almost everything on Facebook at Work is the same as the regular Facebook social network, with some minor exceptions. "You cannot play Candy Crush on Facebook at Work." —Reuters

## SATELLITES COULD TEST THE WORLD'S CLIMATE VOWS

**PARIS:** Scientists from the United States, Japan, and China are racing to perfect satellite technology that could one day measure greenhouse gas emissions from space, potentially transforming the winner into the world's first climate cop. Monitoring a single country's net emissions from above could not only become an important tool to establish whether it had met its promises to slow global warming, a point of contention at climate talks in Paris, but also help emitters to pinpoint the sources of greenhouse gases more quickly and cheaply.

"The real success of a deal here fundamentally revolves around whether we can see emissions and their removals," said John-O Niles, director of the US-based Carbon Institute, which studies methods of carbon dioxide (CO2) measurement. "We know satellite technology is evolving so that there is an increasing ability to actually tell whether countries are telling the truth."

Most estimates of greenhouse gas emissions are now based on calculations of energy use and other proxy data, rather than on-the-ground measurements, leaving a huge margin of error when nations submit their figures to the United Nations. —Reuters



## YAHOO CEO MAYER GIVES BIRTH TO IDENTICAL TWIN GIRLS

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Yahoo Inc Chief Executive Marissa Mayer gave birth to identical twin girls early on Thursday, a day after the company reversed course on a planned spinoff of Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. "Our whole family is doing great! Thanks to everyone for all of the support and well wishes throughout my pregnancy," Mayer said in a post on Tumblr, which is owned by Yahoo.

The company had no immediate statement on the news beyond Mayer's post. Mayer has previously said she would take limited time away as she works toward turning around the company's struggling online ad business.

Yahoo shelved plans on Wednesday to spin off its stake in Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba amid pressure from activist investors worried about billions of dollars in taxes. Instead, it said it is looking at creating a separate company to hold the rest of its assets. "Since this is a unique time in Yahoo's transformation, I plan to approach the pregnancy and delivery as I did with my son three years ago, taking limited time away and working throughout," Mayer wrote in a blog post when she announced she was pregnant. —Reuters

**Discovery Channel HD**

00:20 Ultimate Cops  
01:10 Misfit Garage  
02:00 Wheeler Dealers  
02:50 Cuban Chrome  
03:40 How It's Made  
04:05 How It's Made  
04:30 How It's Made  
05:00 How It's Made  
05:30 How It's Made  
06:00 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown  
06:50 Dual Survival  
07:40 Deadliest Catch  
08:30 Outback Truckers  
09:20 Manhunt With Joel Lambert  
10:10 Misfit Garage  
11:00 Wheeler Dealers  
11:50 Cuban Chrome  
12:40 Property Wars  
13:05 Property Wars  
13:30 Property Wars  
13:55 Property Wars  
14:20 Property Wars  
14:45 Storage Hunters UK  
15:10 Storage Hunters UK  
15:35 Storage Hunters UK  
16:00 Storage Hunters UK  
16:25 Storage Hunters UK  
16:50 Yukon Men  
17:40 Alaska: The Last Frontier  
18:30 Mythbusters  
19:20 The Carbonaro Effect  
19:45 The Carbonaro Effect  
20:10 You Have Been Warned  
21:00 Alaskan Bush People  
21:50 Alaska: The Last Frontier  
22:40 Flying Wild Alaska  
23:30 Shocking Survival Videos  
23:55 Shocking Survival Videos

05:50 Mouk  
06:00 Lolirock  
06:25 Hank Zipzer  
06:50 Girl Meets World  
07:15 H2O: Just Add Water  
07:40 Wizards Of Waverly Place  
09:45 I Love Violetta  
10:00 Best Friends Whenever  
10:25 Abominable Christmas  
11:15 Goldie & Bear  
11:40 Goldie & Bear  
12:05 Frozen Fever  
12:15 Cars Toons  
12:20 Jessie  
12:45 Girl Meets World  
13:10 Mako Mermaids  
13:35 Dog With A Blog  
14:00 Gravity Falls  
14:30 Violetta Recipes  
14:45 Frozen Fever  
14:55 Miraculous: Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir  
15:20 Good Luck Charlie  
15:45 Good Luck Charlie  
16:10 Best Friends Whenever  
16:35 Austin & Ally  
17:00 Gravity Falls  
17:25 Girl Meets World  
17:50 I Love Violetta  
18:00 The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement  
19:55 Dog With A Blog  
20:20 Jessie  
20:45 Good Luck Charlie  
21:10 Good Luck Charlie  
21:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place  
22:00 Binny And The Ghost  
22:25 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
22:50 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
23:10 Wolfblood  
23:35 Wolfblood

02:55 Henry Hugglemonster  
03:05 Calimero  
03:20 Zou  
03:30 Loopdidoo  
03:45 Art Attack  
04:10 Henry Hugglemonster  
04:20 Calimero  
04:35 Zou  
04:45 Loopdidoo  
05:00 Art Attack  
05:25 Henry Hugglemonster  
05:35 Calimero  
05:50 Zou  
06:00 Loopdidoo  
06:15 Art Attack  
06:35 Henry Hugglemonster  
06:50 Calimero  
07:00 Zou  
07:20 Loopdidoo  
07:35 Art Attack  
08:00 Calimero  
08:10 Zou  
08:25 Limon And Oli  
08:35 Jake And The Neverland Pirates  
09:05 Sofia The First  
09:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse  
10:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse  
10:30 Doc McStuffins  
11:00 Sofia The First  
19:55 Doc McStuffins  
20:15 Jake And The Never Land Pirates  
20:45 Sheriff Callie's Wild West  
21:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse  
21:35 Sofia The First  
22:00 Aladdin  
22:30 Adventures Of The Gummi Bears  
23:00 Chip n Dale Rescue Rangers  
23:30 Lilo & Stitch

10:15 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills  
11:10 New Money  
11:35 New Money  
12:05 E! News  
13:05 Stewarts And Hamiltons  
14:05 Hollywood Cycle  
15:00 Hollywood Cycle  
16:00 WAGs  
17:00 WAGs  
18:00 E! News  
19:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
20:00 Dash Dolls  
21:00 Christina Milian Turned Up  
22:00 E! News  
23:00 The Soup  
23:30 Sex With Brody



00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
00:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
01:00 Follow Donal... To Vietnam  
01:30 Follow Donal... To Vietnam  
02:00 Bite This With Nadia G  
02:30 Bite This With Nadia G  
03:00 Man Fire Food  
03:30 Man Fire Food  
04:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
04:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
05:00 Guy's Grocery Games  
06:00 Chopped  
07:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin  
07:30 Roadtrip With G. Garvin  
08:00 Chopped  
09:00 Amazing Wedding Cakes  
10:00 The Kitchen  
11:00 The Kitchen  
12:00 Chopped  
13:00 Guy's Big Bite  
13:30 Guy's Big Bite  
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
15:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
15:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
16:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
16:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
17:00 Chopped  
18:00 Siba's Table  
18:30 Siba's Table  
19:00 Amazing Wedding Cakes  
20:00 Chopped  
21:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
21:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
22:00 Man Finds Food  
22:30 Man Finds Food  
23:00 Food Court Wars

**itv HD CHOICE**

01:05 The Chase: Celebrity Specials  
02:00 Coach Trip  
02:25 Emmerdale  
05:15 Coronation Street  
07:30 I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here!  
08:25 I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here!  
09:50 Midsomer Murders  
11:40 Autopsy: The Last Hours Of...  
12:30 The Jonathan Ross Show  
13:25 The Chase: Celebrity Specials  
14:20 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs  
14:45 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs  
15:15 The Syndicate  
16:15 Derren Brown - The Great Art Robbery  
17:35 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs  
18:05 Autopsy: The Last Hours Of...  
19:00 Seven Days With A...  
19:50 The Jonathan Ross Show  
20:45 Derren Brown - The Great Art Robbery  
22:05 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs  
22:30 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs  
23:00 Coronation Street  
23:25 Coronation Street  
23:50 Coronation Street

17:00 Breakthrough  
18:00 Hubble's Cosmic Journey  
19:00 The Border  
20:00 Man V. Viral  
20:50 Breakthrough  
21:40 Hubble's Cosmic Journey  
22:30 The Border  
23:20 Car SOS



00:35 Ariana's Persian Kitchen  
01:00 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen  
01:25 Cruise Ship Diaries  
01:50 Cruise Ship Diaries  
02:15 Valentine Warner Eats Scandinavia  
02:40 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita  
03:05 David Rocco's Dolce Vita  
03:30 Dog Whisperer  
04:20 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces  
05:10 Tales From The Bush Larder  
05:35 Hook It, Cook It  
06:00 East Bites West With Chef Wan  
06:25 East Bites West With Chef Wan  
06:50 Access 360 World Heritage Get Stuffed  
07:40 Get Stuffed  
08:05 Chefs Run Wild  
08:30 David Rocco's Dolce India  
08:55 David Rocco's Dolce India  
09:20 This Is Brazil  
10:10 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces  
11:00 A Marriage Of Flavours  
11:25 Tales From The Bush Larder  
11:50 Maverick Chef  
12:15 Maverick Chef  
12:40 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen  
13:05 Cruise Ship Diaries  
13:35 Cruise Ship Diaries  
14:00 Valentine Warner Eats Scandinavia  
14:30 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita  
14:55 David Rocco's Dolce Vita  
15:25 Dog Whisperer  
16:20 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces  
17:15 Eat Street  
17:40 Hook It, Cook It  
18:10 East Bites West With Chef Wan  
18:35 East Bites West With Chef Wan  
19:05 David Rocco's Dolce Vita



00:10 Locked Up Abroad  
01:00 Ancient X-Files  
02:00 Survive The Tribe  
02:55 Wild Case Files  
03:50 Seconds From Disaster  
04:45 Air Crash Investigation  
05:40 Engineering Connections  
06:35 Car SOS  
07:30 Man V. Viral  
08:25 Dog Whisperer  
09:20 Dog Whisperer  
10:15 Yukon Gold  
11:10 Wicked Tuna: North vs. South  
12:05 Monster Fish  
13:00 Ultimate Airport Dubai  
14:00 Megastructures  
15:00 Car SOS  
16:00 Man V. Viral

**Discovery Science**

00:35 Mythbusters  
01:20 How It's Made  
01:44 How It's Made  
02:08 Mighty Ships  
02:55 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?  
03:42 How The Universe Works  
04:29 Mythbusters  
05:16 Mighty Ships  
06:03 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?  
06:50 Nyc: Inside Out  
07:37 How It's Made  
08:00 Deadliest Space Weather  
08:23 How It's Made  
08:45 How It's Made  
09:08 How It's Made  
12:08 Building The Biggest  
12:53 Building The Biggest  
13:38 Building The Biggest  
14:23 Nyc: Inside Out  
15:10 Nyc: Inside Out  
15:57 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?  
16:44 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?  
17:31 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?  
18:18 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?  
19:50 Home Factory  
20:15 Home Factory  
20:40 Mighty Ships  
21:25 Food Factory  
21:50 Food Factory  
22:15 Strip The Cosmos  
23:00 How The Universe Works  
23:45 How The Universe Works



00:00 Nina Needs To Go  
00:05 Henry Hugglemonster  
00:20 Calimero  
00:35 Zou  
00:50 Loopdidoo  
01:05 Art Attack  
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster  
01:45 Calimero  
02:00 Zou  
02:15 Loopdidoo  
02:30 Art Attack



00:00 House Of DVF  
00:55 The Grace Helbig Show  
01:25 Hollywood Cycle  
02:20 E! News  
03:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
04:10 E! Entertainment Special  
05:05 E! Entertainment Special  
06:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
06:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
07:50 Style Star  
08:20 E! News  
09:15 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills

**Disney Channel**

00:00 Violetta  
00:45 The Hive  
00:50 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
01:15 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
01:40 Wolfblood  
02:05 Wolfblood  
02:30 Violetta  
03:15 The Hive  
03:20 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
03:45 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
04:10 Wolfblood  
04:35 Wolfblood  
05:00 Violetta  
05:45 The Hive



NORTHMEN- A VIKING SAGA ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2015

- 19:30 Dog Whisperer
- 20:25 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
- 21:15 Eat Street
- 21:40 Hook It, Cook It
- 22:05 East Bites West With Chef Wan
- 22:30 East Bites West With Chef Wan
- 22:55 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
- 23:20 Cruise Ship Diaries
- 23:45 Cruise Ship Diaries



- 00:20 Ultimate Animal Countdown
- 01:10 I, Predator
- 02:00 The Dark Side Of Hippos
- 02:50 Built For The Kill
- 03:45 Wild Cambodia
- 04:40 World's Weirdest: Funny Farms
- 05:35 Animal Intervention
- 06:30 Shark Men
- 07:25 Fish Warrior
- 08:20 Yukon Vet
- 09:15 Live Like An Animal
- 10:10 Philly Undercover
- 11:05 The Incredible Dr. Pol
- 12:00 Big Blue
- 12:55 Africa's Blood River
- 13:50 World's Deadliest Killer Three
- 14:45 Elephant Queen
- 15:40 Expedition Wild
- 16:35 Wild Japan: Snow Monkeys
- 17:30 Wild Case Files
- 18:25 I, Predator
- 19:20 Elephant Queen
- 20:10 Expedition Wild
- 21:00 Wild Japan: Snow Monkeys
- 21:50 Wild Case Files
- 22:40 I, Predator
- 23:30 Big Blue



THE MAZE RUNNER ON OSN MOVIES HD



- 00:30 Hot In Cleveland
- 01:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
- 02:30 You're The Worst
- 04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 05:30 Last Man Standing
- 06:00 I Hate My Teenage Daughter
- 06:30 My Name Is Earl
- 07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 08:30 Last Man Standing
- 10:30 My Name Is Earl
- 11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 12:00 I Hate My Teenage Daughter
- 12:30 \$#! My Dad Says
- 13:00 Last Man Standing
- 13:30 My Name Is Earl
- 15:30 Hot In Cleveland
- 16:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
- 16:30 I Hate My Teenage Daughter
- 17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 18:00 Marry Me
- 18:30 2 Broke Girls
- 19:00 Mr. Robinson
- 19:30 Life In Pieces
- 20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 21:00 Hot In Cleveland
- 22:00 Saturday Night Live
- 23:00 You're The Worst
- 23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers



- 00:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 01:00 Good Morning America
- 03:00 Tyrant
- 04:00 Helix
- 05:00 Good Morning America
- 07:00 Top Gear (US)
- 08:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 09:00 Red Band Society
- 10:00 Top Gear (US)
- 11:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 12:00 Drop Dead Diva
- 13:00 Once Upon A Time
- 14:00 Red Band Society
- 15:00 Chicago Fire
- 16:00 Live Good Morning America
- 17:00 Drop Dead Diva
- 18:00 Once Upon A Time
- 19:00 Red Band Society
- 20:00 Drop Dead Diva
- 21:00 Once Upon A Time
- 22:00 Tyrant
- 23:00 Helix



- 00:00 Reginald D. Hunter: Live
- 02:00 Last Vegas
- 04:00 Streetdance: All Stars
- 06:00 Until She Came Along
- 08:00 A Simple Twist Of Fate
- 10:00 Streetdance: All Stars
- 12:00 Last Vegas
- 14:00 Shanghai Calling
- 16:00 A Simple Twist Of Fate
- 18:00 Stand Up Guys
- 20:00 Walk Of Shame
- 22:00 Without A Paddle



- 01:00 Breathless-PG15
- 03:00 Begin Again-PG15
- 05:00 Middle Of Nowhere-PG15
- 07:00 Breathe In-PG15
- 09:00 I'll Follow You Down-PG15
- 10:45 Middle Of Nowhere-PG15
- 12:30 Atlas Shrugged Part 2: The Strike-PG15
- 14:30 For Greater Glory-PG15
- 17:00 I'll Follow You Down-PG15
- 19:00 Deadfall-PG15
- 21:00 What Maisie Knew-PG15
- 23:00 Only God Forgives-18



- 01:15 See Girl Run
- 03:00 How I Live Now
- 05:00 Grace Of Monaco
- 06:45 Great Expectations
- 09:00 Awakenings
- 11:00 Grace Of Monaco
- 12:45 Odeio O Dia Dos Namorados
- 14:45 The Butler
- 17:00 Awakenings
- 19:00 Late Bloomers
- 21:00 The English Teacher
- 23:00 Carlos



- 01:15 Ouija-PG15
- 03:00 The Boxtrolls-PG
- 04:45 Into The Woods-PG
- 07:00 Draft Day-PG15
- 09:00 Guardians Of The Galaxy-PG15
- 11:00 The Maze Runner-PG15
- 13:00 Earth To Echo-PG15

- 15:00 Bad Parents-PG15
- 17:00 Guardians Of The Galaxy-PG15
- 19:00 Nightcrawler-PG15
- 21:00 The Theory Of Everything-PG15
- 23:00 The Expendables 3-PG15



- 01:15 Tiny Heroes
- 02:45 The Dragon Pearl
- 04:30 Blackie And Kanuto
- 07:30 From Up On Poppy Hill
- 09:15 Delhi Safari
- 11:00 Tarzan
- 12:45 The Dragon Pearl
- 14:30 Columbus In The Last Journey
- 16:00 Ernest & Celestine
- 18:00 Delhi Safari
- 20:00 Vampire Dog
- 22:00 Columbus In The Last Journey
- 23:30 Ernest & Celestine



- 00:00 Stretch-18
- 02:00 The Package-PG15
- 04:00 Tinker Bell And The Pirate Fairy-FAM
- 06:00 Alexander And The Terrible... Very Bad Day-PG
- 08:00 Maleficent-PG
- 09:45 A Christmas Wish-PG15
- 11:30 Captain America: The Winter Soldier-PG15
- 14:00 Diana-PG15
- 16:00 Maleficent-PG
- 18:00 Admission-PG15
- 20:00 The Remaining-PG15
- 22:00 The Wedding Ringer-18



- 04:35 The People That Time Forgot
- 06:05 Charge Of The Light Brigade
- 08:10 The Great Escape
- 11:00 The Watsons Go To Birmingham
- 12:30 Pieces Of Dreams
- 14:10 Big Screen
- 14:25 Impromptu
- 16:10 The People That Time Forgot
- 17:40 One Summer Love
- 19:20 One More Kiss

- 21:00 Into The Badlands
- 22:00 Breaking Bad
- 23:00 Doubt
- 00:45 Dracula 2000
- 02:25 Leather Jackets



- 03:35 Tanked
- 04:25 The Lion Queen
- 05:15 Gator Boys
- 06:02 Treehouse Masters
- 06:49 Roaring With Pride
- 07:36 Call Of The Wildman
- 08:25 Tanked
- 12:55 Ten Deadliest Snakes
- 13:50 The Lion Queen
- 14:45 Rogue Nature With Dave Salmoni
- 16:35 Bull Shark: World's Deadliest Shark...
- 17:30 The Lion Queen
- 18:25 River Monsters (Best Of Series 1-5)
- 19:20 Biggest And Baddest
- 20:15 Untamed China With Nigel Marven
- 21:10 Almost Human With Jane Goodall
- 22:05 Deadly Islands
- 23:00 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
- 23:55 River Monsters (Best Of Series 1-5)
- 00:50 Ten Deadliest Snakes
- 01:45 The Lion Queen
- 02:40 Rogue Nature With Dave Salmoni



- 03:20 Jack The Ripper: Prime Suspect
- 04:15 The Weakest Link
- 05:00 Teletubbies
- 05:25 The Green Balloon Club
- 05:50 Gigglibiz
- 06:05 Teletubbies
- 06:30 The Green Balloon Club
- 06:55 Gigglibiz
- 07:10 Charlie And Lola
- 07:20 The Weakest Link
- 08:05 Doctors
- 10:30 Doctor Who
- 12:00 Last Man Standing
- 12:50 Breaking Pointe
- 13:30 Jack The Ripper: Prime Suspect
- 14:20 Eastenders
- 03:14 Grojband
- 03:35 Johnny Test
- 05:05 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
- 05:50 Regular Show
- 06:00 The Amazing World Of Gumball
- 07:00 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
- 07:25 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
- 08:10 Ben 10: Omniverse
- 09:00 Matt Hatter Chronicles
- 09:20 Teen Titans Go!
- 09:45 Teen Titans Go!
- 10:10 We Bare Bears - New
- 10:30 Johnny Test
- 10:55 The Amazing World Of Gumball
- 11:20 Adventure Time
- 12:05 Regular Show
- 12:50 Johnny Test
- 13:40 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
- 14:00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
- 14:25 Teen Titans Go!
- 15:10 Matt Hatter Chronicles
- 15:35 Ben 10: Omniverse
- 16:20 Regular Show
- 17:10 We Bare Bears - New
- 17:30 Adventure Time
- 17:55 Steven Universe
- 18:20 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
- 18:40 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
- 19:05 Teen Titans Go!
- 19:50 Transformers: Robots In Disguise New
- 20:15 New The Amazing World Of Gumball
- 20:40 Clarence
- 21:00 Regular Show
- 21:11 Regular Show
- 21:22 Regular Show
- 21:33 Regular Show
- 21:50 We Bare Bears - New

# K'S PATH VISITS KNES

**K**uwait National English School (KNES) and Chantal Al-Gharabally, school Director were pleased with the visit from K'S PATH with Fatima Al-Sabah, President of K'S PATH, Bashayer Al-Zayed, Education Program Manager, Angelique Bhattacharjie, Director of Development. On this occasion, Kuwait National English School received a certificate of appreciation for participating for years in the program of K'S PATH for the protection of the animals and their habitats in Kuwait and for being their First Partner School Friends in this program.



# KG INTERNATIONAL DAY AT ABS 2015

**K**G students at the American Baccaulaeate School (ABS) recently celebrated Annual International Day. Students and teachers were excited to show off their dances and what they learned about their host country. After our International Day celebrations in the courtyard, the children went back to classrooms to enjoy some traditional foods from around the world. KG students worked very hard and had a wonderful time.





Kuwaiti businessman and Annahar daily's Editor-in-Chief Emad Jawad Bokhamseen recently received at his office columnist and author Abdullah Abbas Bowair, who presented an English copy of his book 'His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Humanity Leader,' and a trophy. Bokhamseen wished Bowair best of luck in recording the history of Kuwait and Al-Sabah family.

# SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTER OPENS NEW GIFTEDNESS CENTER BUILDING



Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, State Minister for Planning and Development Hind Al-Subaih said the ministry is keen on cooperating with state establishments to support students and adopt their skills and innovations. In a press statement on the sidelines of the opening of the new premises of Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity, Subaih said that she was happy for opening the new building, adding that the building originally belonged to the ministry and is now used for the service of students.



## LANDFILLS: A LOOK AT THE CLIMATE CRISIS IN TRASH

**LE BOURGET:** While efforts to avert disastrous climate change zoom in on cars, industry and power plants belching harmful gases into the air, a potent source of global warming is stealthily stewing underground: rotting trash. Landfills packed with decomposing dinner leftovers and grass clippings are among the world's top sources of methane—one of the most powerful heat-trapping gases contributing to the Earth's warming.

The worst dumping grounds "are places where climate change is being caused on a very great scale," David Newman, who heads the International Solid Waste Association, said on the sidelines of the UN conference in Paris where a climate rescue pact is edging towards possible agreement.

Curbing emissions, mainly from burning oil, coal and gas, is a key thrust of the 195-nation talks billed as the last chance to avert worst-case-scenario global warming. But scientists estimate that dumps produce at least 10 percent of man-made methane, making it the world's third biggest source of the gas after energy production and agriculture.

### Garbage leaks

Methane has a much shorter lifespan in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) — the most abundant greenhouse gas—but traps about 20 times more per unit of the heat radiated from Earth's surface. Rotting garbage in landfills emits the gas because it is buried and therefore decomposes without oxygen-anaerobically. A backyard compost pile exposed to air would generally not produce large quantities of the gas.

Experts warn the methane is seeping out of landfills around the world despite efforts to boost recycling and cut waste. In the European Union, more than 100 million tons of trash are dumped every year, though the 28-nation bloc has issued a directive to limit the volumes sent to landfills by 2025.

The United States, China, India and many other nations send millions more tons of their waste to the dump annually for burial. Veerabhadran Ramanathan, a climate science expert at University of California, San Diego, said tackling methane is key to limiting global warming to the UN ceiling of two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-Industrial Revolution levels. "You can't do it with (cutting) CO<sub>2</sub> alone, we have lost that luxury," he said. "It's too late—you need to bring in these other pollutants."

### 'Uncontrolled methane'

How to deal with landfill gas—up to 60 percent methane—has long been a problem for dump operators. Gas has been known to escape from dumps, leak into homes and explode, notably in Britain and Denmark. Many landfills now collect the gas, burn it off or use it to make electricity. For example, gas from Shanghai's Laogang landfill, one of China's largest, will provide enough electricity per year for 100,000 families, said Gary Crawford, a vice president of international affairs at water, waste and energy giant Veolia. "The project contributes to significant greenhouse gas emission reductions, over 700,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent in 2014," he said. Those emissions are on par with the pollution emitted by 147,300 cars in a year.

However, environmentalists have been critical of using landfill gas as an energy source. American advocacy group Sierra Club issued a report in 2010 saying burning methane results in a net increase in pollution. Sierra Club said it is better to keep organic waste out of landfills "so that uncontrolled methane is not generated in the first instance". The benefits of generating electricity in this way, it said, are outweighed by methane escaping into the air. Ramanathan stressed that methane emissions can be largely averted. "CO<sub>2</sub> is an inescapable consequence of burning fossil fuels," he said, but for methane, "there are ways to avoid" it. —AFP



**EL SALTO:** View of the Santiago river in El Salto, Jalisco State, Mexico. Some 400 factories settled on the banks of the Santiago river have poured industrial waste into it for four decades, making it a deposit of 1.090 toxic substances, metals, chemicals, etc., documented the Mexican Institute of Water Technology. —AFP

## POLLUTION WHIPS UP HAZARDOUS FOAM CLOUDS IN MEXICAN RIVER

**EL SALTO:** Dead fish floating in fetid waters, swarms of mosquitoes and clouds of foam whipped up by pollution: Activists say Mexico's Santiago River, among the dirtiest in Latin America, is making people sick.

The river runs from Lake Chapala in the western state of Jalisco to the Pacific Ocean, a 562-kilometer waterway that was once known for magnificent waterfalls and picturesque sceneries in a deep canyon. But 400 factories set up shop in an industrial area along the river, dumping waste for decades, including more than 1,000 toxic substances, metals, chemicals and other pollutants, according to the governmental Mexican Water Technology Institute. And that's not all.

The river has also had to swallow sewage from some 10 municipalities surrounding Guadalajara, Mexico's second biggest city. The residents of two towns, Juanacatlan and El Salto, have borne the brunt of the problem. A waterfall between the communities churns sulfate pollutants, acting like a giant washing machine that produces thick foam, parts of which often floats into the air, reaching a bridge above used by locals.

### Dead child

"Any child here knows that this is anything but water," said Enrique

Enciso Rivera, a member of Un Salto de Vida, a non-governmental organization founded in 2006 by local residents to combat the pollution.

In El Salto, a town of 20,000 people, the mosquito problem got so big that when people would chat outside their homes, "we couldn't talk anymore because there were so many ... and they'd fly into your mouth," Enciso told AFP. People can no longer take the stench from the river, which causes headaches, nausea and eye irritation. In 2008, an eight-year-old boy died 19 days after falling into a canal and swallowing arsenic, Enciso said.

"Two years ago, thousands of dead fish appeared from one day to the next," said Juanacatlan Mayor Refugio Velazquez Ballina, whose office is just a few meters (yards) from the river. "There have been a lot of cases of cancer, kidney failures and skin problems" linked to the river, he said.

Carlos Olguin, a 54-year-old man who runs a taco stand, recalled his daughter's death from cancer at the age of 28 four years ago. Shortly before she died, a doctor at the public hospital told him that he had "many cases of people from El Salto who were getting cancer." While locals no longer swim or fish in the

river, they are still exposed to it because the ground water has been contaminated and people use wells in their homes for their kitchens and bathrooms.

### Ineffective treatment plant

Relatives of victims, civil organizations and municipal officials say the Jalisco health department is covering up the effects of the pollution. A health department spokesman told AFP there is no evidence linking the pollution to the illnesses in the towns, but that the agency is investigating it.

In 2013, the government opened a water treatment plant in El Salto, but the facility only cleans out part of the waste, said Sinai Guevara, coordinator of the toxics campaign for the Mexico branch of Greenpeace. The environmentalist group tested the river in 2012 and 2013 and found neurotoxins, as well as hormone-disrupting acids.

Chemical plants, breweries, electronics factories and food-processing facilities dump the most heavy metals and cyanide in the river, according to Greenpeace. More than two-thirds of rivers in Mexico are polluted and the Santiago is among the top three, only behind other waterways in Chile and Brazil, the group says. —AFP

# MEDICAL SCHOOL DELVES INTO MARIJUANA SCIENCE

**BURLINGTON, Vermont:** As more states allow for the use of medical marijuana, the University of Vermont is offering a course in the science of the drug - and the professors say they are challenged by a lack of research on what has long been a taboo topic.

Other institutions have offered classes in marijuana law and policy, but the university's medical school is likely the country's first to offer a full course on medical cannabis, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges. Other medical schools have touched on the topic.

"What we're trying to do with this course is to sort of demystify this whole subject matter, to try to treat this like any other drug, like alcohol or amphetamines or opioids," said Vermont pharmacology professor Wolfgang Dostmann. "Just demystify the whole thing and say what it is, what is going on with it, how does it work."

### Range of conditions

Twenty three-states, including Vermont, allow the use of medical cannabis for a range of conditions or symptoms from glaucoma to HIV and cancer, although the drug is still illegal under federal law. The Massachusetts Medical Society, an accredited institution, is offering online medical marijuana courses including one on pharmacology, but it's also limited because of the lack of research on the topic.

Medical cannabis is clearly a hot topic. Nearly 90 graduate and undergraduate students have signed up for the Vermont class, which is to start in the spring, forcing the professors to

expand the classroom twice. The class is also open to the general public, allowing members of the Legislature, or those in law enforcement or medicine, to attend.

Alice Peng, a pharmacology graduate student who plans to go medical

school, signed up because she's interested in the potential for marijuana to treat pain. "I also do work in the cancer center in the hospital, and so I see a lot of cancer patients, and I would be really interested in seeing how it would help their chronic pain," she said.

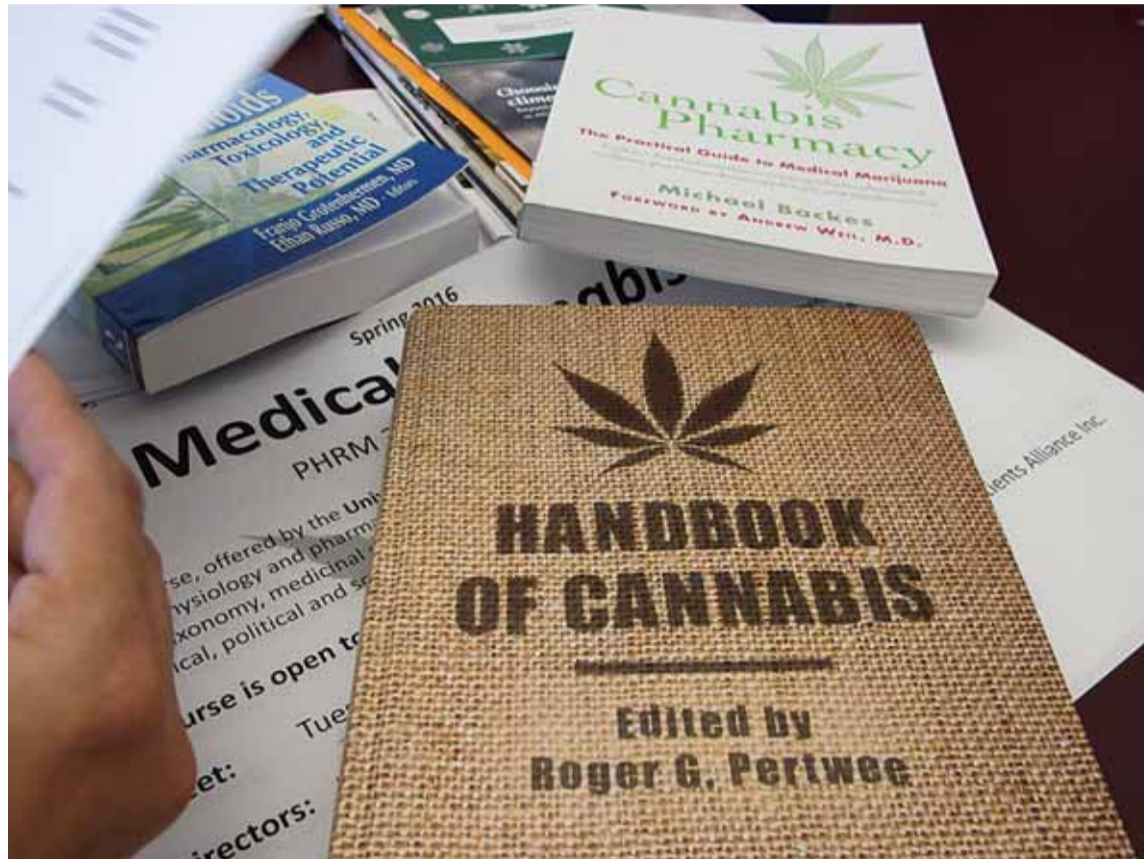
But the professors say they are hampered by a lack of access to high-quality research. "There's so much information out there that's just hearsay," said Vermont pharmacology professor Karen Lounsbury.

### Cannabis taxonomy

The course will cover cannabis taxonomy; medical chemistry of cannabinoids, the chemicals found in marijuana; physiological effects of the drug; emerging therapeutic applications; and the historical, political and socio-economic influences on marijuana legislation. Dostmann, whose expertise is in pharmacokinetics, or how a drug works in the body, and Lounsbury, who focuses on the body's physiological and biological response to a drug, will teach some of the course.

Students will also benefit from what's happening with marijuana in Vermont. A university research affiliate and head of a Vermont medical marijuana dispensary will discuss the plant's biology. An associate business professor who is part of a Vermont think tank working to develop technology to research uses of medical marijuana products will talk about economic impacts. Students may also visit the Legislature, which is expected to discuss legalizing marijuana for recreational use. Books exist on the science of marijuana, but they also cover topics like how to clean pipes or cook with the plant, not what the university wants to teach students. So Lounsbury and Dostmann plan to write their own textbook for future studies.

And if the class attracts stoners, the professors hope it will motivate them to study pharmacology. Above all, they hope they can raise awareness about a potentially useful drug. "Without having enough clinical trials," Lounsbury said, "we won't really know whether this is applicable or whether it is a snake oil." —AP



**BURLINGTON:** In this Dec 4, 2015 photo, books about marijuana lay on a table in the office of University of Vermont pharmacology professor Wolfgang Dostmann. — AP

CLINIC  
PAGE



Kuwait Times  
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem  
د. فهد علي المخيزيم  
Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال  
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## KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (10/12/2015 TO 16/12/2015)

Screen	Time	Movie	Time	Movie	Time	Movie
SHARQIA-1V8-2	11:30 AM	BENGAL TIGER - Telugu	9:30 PM	CREED	2:30 PM	CREED
	11:30 AM	CREED	9:30 PM	BRIDGE OF SPIES	5:30 PM	BRIDGE OF SPIES
	1:45 PM	CREED	12:30 AM	CREED	8:30 PM	BRIDGE OF SPIES
	4:15 PM				11:30 PM	
	6:45 PM					
SHARQIA-2	1:00 PM				1:00 PM	THE GOOD DINOSAUR
	3:15 PM				3:15 PM	THE GOOD DINOSAUR
	5:30 PM				5:30 PM	THE GOOD DINOSAUR
	7:45 PM				7:45 PM	THE GOOD DINOSAUR
	10:00 PM				10:00 PM	THE GOOD DINOSAUR
SHARQIA-3	12:30 PM				12:15 AM	CREED
	2:30 PM					
	4:30 PM					
	6:30 PM					
	8:30 PM					
MUHALAB-1	11:45 AM				11:30 AM	THE GOOD DINOSAUR
	1:45 PM				1:30 PM	STRIKE ONE
	4:15 PM				3:45 PM	STRIKE ONE
	6:45 PM				6:00 PM	STRIKE ONE
	9:30 PM				8:15 PM	STRIKE ONE
MUHALAB-2	1:00 PM				10:30 PM	STRIKE ONE
	3:00 PM				12:45 AM	STRIKE ONE
	5:00 PM					
	7:00 PM					
	9:00 PM					
MUHALAB-3	12:15 PM				11:30 AM	THE GOOD DINOSAUR -3D
	2:30 PM				2:45 PM	THE GOOD DINOSAUR
	4:45 PM				5:00 PM	THE GOOD DINOSAUR -3D
	7:00 PM				7:15 PM	THE GOOD DINOSAUR
	9:15 PM				9:30 PM	THE GOOD DINOSAUR -3D
FANAR-1	11:30 AM				11:45 PM	THE GOOD DINOSAUR
	1:30 PM					
	4:00 PM					
	6:45 PM					
	9:15 PM					
FANAR-2	11:30 AM					
	1:30 PM					
	4:00 PM					
	6:45 PM					
	9:15 PM					
FANAR-3	12:30 PM					
	2:30 PM					
	4:30 PM					
	4:30 PM					
	4:30 PM					
FANAR-4	1:00 PM					
	3:15 PM					
	5:30 PM					
	7:45 PM					
	10:00 PM					
FANAR-5	12:45 PM					
	3:30 PM					
	3:30 PM					
	6:30 PM					
	6:30 PM					

## REQUIRED

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**1-Office Secretary**  
**2-Wholesale representative**

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### CHANGE OF NAME

**I, Potturi Harsavardhana Naidu**, holder of Indian Passport No: M7062597, R/o Diguvanallaguttapalli Village, Guttapalli Post, Sambepalli Mandal, Kadapa Dist., AP, changed my name as Muhammad Arshad. **(C 5095) 10-12-2015**


**My daughter, Magishaa Madhan Kumar**, born on 05th June 2014 (native district: Coimbatore), residing at No. 54, Jothi Theatre Road, Chinnasamy Kadu, Ammapet, Salem - 636003. Shall henceforth be known as Darssha Madhan Kumar. **(C 5096) 12-12-2015**

## THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY FOR CIVIL INFORMATION

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is **1889988**

### Prayer timings

<b>Fajr:</b>	<b>05:08</b>
<b>Shorook</b>	<b>06:33</b>
<b>Duhr:</b>	<b>11:42</b>
<b>Asr:</b>	<b>14:32</b>
<b>Maghrib:</b>	<b>16:51</b>
<b>Isha:</b>	<b>18:13</b>



## Hospitals

<b>Sabah Hospital</b>	<b>24812000</b>
<b>Amiri Hospital</b>	<b>22450005</b>
<b>Maternity Hospital</b>	<b>24843100</b>
<b>Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital</b>	<b>25312700</b>
<b>Chest Hospital</b>	<b>24849400</b>
<b>Farwaniya Hospital</b>	<b>24892010</b>
<b>Adan Hospital</b>	<b>23940620</b>
<b>Ibn Sina Hospital</b>	<b>24840300</b>
<b>Al-Razi Hospital</b>	<b>24846000</b>
<b>Physiotherapy Hospital</b>	<b>24874330/9</b>

## Clinics

<b>Kaizen center</b>	<b>25716707</b>
<b>Rawda</b>	<b>22517733</b>
<b>Adaliya</b>	<b>22517144</b>
<b>Khaldiya</b>	<b>24848075</b>
<b>Kaifan</b>	<b>24849807</b>
<b>Shamiya</b>	<b>24848913</b>
<b>Shuwaikh</b>	<b>24814507</b>
<b>Abdullah Salem</b>	<b>22549134</b>
<b>Nuzha</b>	<b>22526804</b>
<b>Industrial Shuwaikh</b>	<b>24814764</b>
<b>Qadsiya</b>	<b>22515088</b>
<b>Dasmah</b>	<b>22532265</b>
<b>Bneid Al-Gar</b>	<b>22531908</b>
<b>Shaab</b>	<b>22518752</b>
<b>Qibla</b>	<b>22459381</b>



Word Search Puzzles

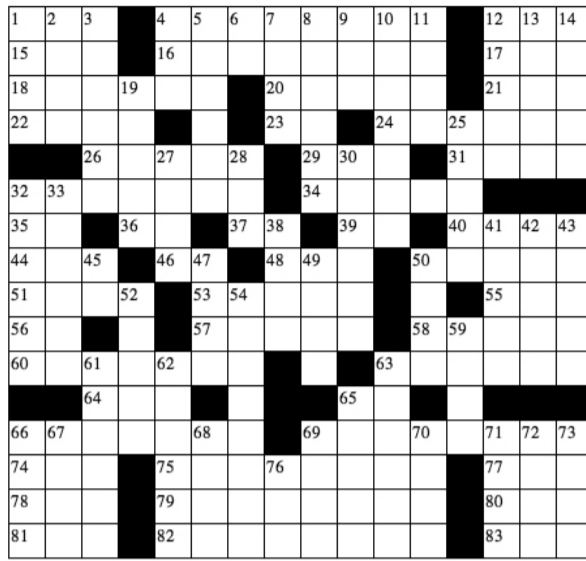
Winter

Find and circle all of the Winter related words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a Japanese proverb.

L S O S E K A L F W O N S E L C I C I N  
 L E Y C E K R A I M N D D R A Z I L B  
 A S C A W V K A I O E C I K C A L B R D  
 B W A R D R O T E S N O W S H O V E L C  
 W E R F A I T L C W A F I R E P L A C E  
 O A N P I E L I G E R N H E A D B A N D  
 N T I S N C P O L S Y E S E T A K S S W  
 S S V S N M E T H K E A D N D F R N E M  
 T H A M Y O S F S C K T N N O L O H A R Y  
 Y I L L R A W E I O C W O E U W O G S W  
 E R O S C O R S W S O I I B B G M C O I  
 S T E W A I T S H L H V T O O S N A N N  
 N K O P T M O S P O G I A S T G O O N D  
 D N I W P L T W T O E R N C O E G U L C  
 S E O I S I O S N W D S R G A R E A P H  
 E N L T N N L G I F R E E Z E T F L N I  
 S R I S S G G S M R O N B O O D I K S L  
 T C F I R E W O O D H A I L S T O O B L  
 E H S S T N A P I K S C H P A C T I N K

- BLACK ICE
- BLIZZARD
- BOOTS
- CARNIVAL
- CHRISTMAS
- COLD
- EGG NOG
- FIREPLACE
- FIREWOOD
- FOG
- FREEZE
- FROST
- GLOVES
- HAIL
- HEADBAND
- HIBERNATION
- HOCKEY
- HOLIDAYS
- ICE FISHING
- ICICLES
- KNIT CAP
- LONG UNDERWEAR
- MITTENS
- OLYMPICS
- PARKA
- SCARF
- SEASON
- SKATES
- SKI DOG
- SKI PANTS
- SKIING
- SLED
- SLEET
- SLIPPERY
- SNOW CASTLE
- SNOW PLOW
- SNOW SHOVEL
- SNOW TIRES
- SNOWBALL
- SNOWBOARD
- SNOWFLAKE
- SNOWMAN
- SNOWSHOES
- SOLSTICE
- SOUP
- STEW
- STORM
- SWEATSHIRT
- TOBOGGAN
- VACATION
- WIND CHILL
- WOOL SOCKS

CROSSWORD 1107



ACROSS

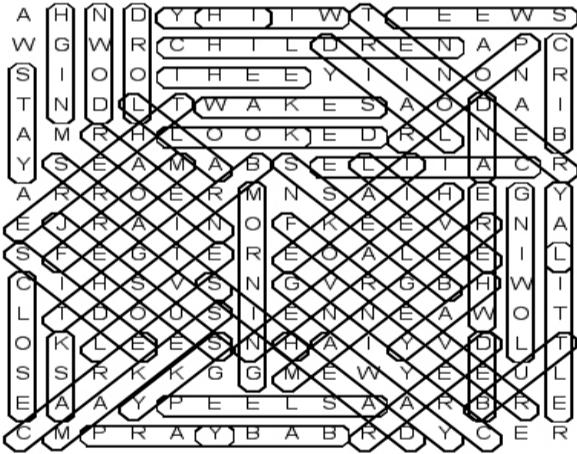
1. A room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter.
4. Weaponry used by military or naval force.
12. A woman religious.
15. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
16. Someone who procures customers for whores (in England they call a pimp a ponce).
17. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
18. Metal or plastic sheath over the end of a shoelace or ribbon.
20. (Babylonian) A demigod or first man.
21. A theory of strong interactions between elementary particles (including the interaction that binds protons and neutrons in the nucleus).
22. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
23. A metric unit of volume equal to one tenth of a liter.
24. (followed by `with`) Deeply filled or permeated.
26. Italian violin maker in Cremona.
29. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
31. Any physical damage to the body caused by violence or accident or fracture etc..
32. Mediterranean liliaceous plants.
34. A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
35. A colorless odorless gaseous element that give a red glow in a vacuum tube.
36. An associate degree in nursing.
37. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
39. A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
40. A large number or amount.
44. Any of various coarse shrubby plants of the genus Iva with small greenish flowers.
46. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
48. (Babylonian) The sky god.
51. A member of a European people who occupied Britain and Spain and Gaul in pre-Roman times.
53. A linguistic element added to a word to produce an inflected or derived form v 1.
55. The compass point midway between northeast and east.
56. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.

DOWN

1. A small ball with a hole through the middle.
2. The capital of Western Samoa.
3. A motley assortment of things.
4. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
5. Flightless birds having flat breastbones lacking a keel for attachment of flight muscles.
6. A hard brittle gray polyvalent metallic element that resembles iron but is not magnetic.
7. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
8. Small deciduous tree of southern Africa having edible fruit.
9. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
10. Water scorpions.
11. A conveyance that transports passengers or freight in carriers suspended from cables and supported by a series of towers.
12. Diuretic drug (trade name Naqua) used to treat hypertension.
13. A circumscribed inflammatory and often suppurating lesion on the skin or an internal mucous surface resulting in necrosis of tissue.
14. Mild form of diabetes mellitus that develops gradually in adults.
19. (folklore) A corpse that rises at night to drink the blood of the living.
25. God of wealth and love.
27. A former copper coin of Pakistan.
28. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
30. Rich and superior in quality.
33. Make visible.
38. A small restaurant where drinks and snacks are sold.
41. A chronic disease of the nose characterized by a foul-smelling nasal discharge and atrophy of nasal structures.
42. Of or relating to the African people who speak one of the Bantoid languages or to their culture.
43. Marked by quiet and caution and secrecy.
45. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
47. Offering fun and gaiety.
49. Being on the left side.
50. Any plant of the genus Hoya having fleshy leaves and usually nectariferous flowers.
52. Learns from a tutor.
54. A building that would be hard to escape from if it were to catch fire.
59. Tropical starchy tuberous root.
61. Towards the shore from the water.
62. A woman's large folded hooped hood.
63. Not private.
65. A benevolent aspect of Devi.
67. (Old Testament) Cain and Abel were the first children of Adam and Eve born after the Fall of Man.
68. A person who is tricked or swindled.
69. The universal time coordinated time on board the spacecraft.
70. A small cake leavened with yeast.
71. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
72. The content of cognition.
73. South American armadillo with three bands of bony plates.
76. A self-funded retirement plan that allows you to contribute a limited yearly sum toward your retirement.

Yesterday's Solution

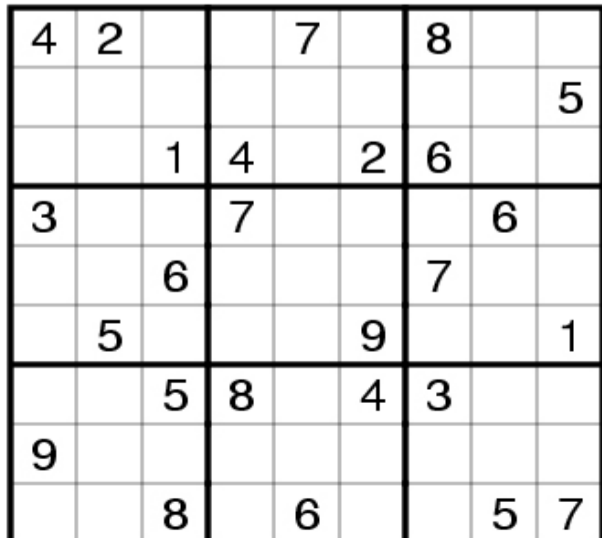
Mystery Christmas Carol #2



- ALL
- AND
- ASK
- ASLEEP
- AWAY
- BABY
- BED
- BLESS
- BRIGHT
- BUT
- CARE
- CATTLE
- CHILDREN
- CLOSE
- CRIB
- CRYING
- DEAR
- DOWN
- FOREVER
- FROM
- HAY
- HEAD
- HEAVEN
- HIS
- JESUS
- LAI
- LAY
- LITTLE
- LIVE
- LOOK
- LOOKED
- LORD
- LOVE
- LOWING
- MAKES
- MANGER
- MORNING
- NEAR
- NIGH
- POOR
- PRAY
- PRAY
- SIDE
- SKY
- STARS
- STAY
- SWEET
- TAKE
- TENDER
- THEE
- THERE
- THY
- WAKES
- WHERE
- WITH

The Mystery Christmas Carol is: AWAY IN A MANGER

Daily SuDoku



hard

Yesterday's Solution



very hard

Yesterday's Solution





## BADMINTON

## MARIN SHOCK LOSS PUSHES HER TO THE VERGE OF EXIT

**DUBAI:** Carolina Marin, the world champion, the BWF player of the year, and the favorite to win the Super Series finals for the first time, was pushed to the edge of the exit yesterday after a second surprising defeat in two days. The Spaniard's 21-9, 21-15 loss to the half-overlooked but highly mobile Japanese player Nozomi Okuhara left Marin's survival depending on Taiwan's Tai Tzu Ying achieving an improbable first win of the week against former world number one Saina Nehwal.

And yet Marin's debut in the tour's flagship event started satisfactorily two days ago with a tidy victory over Tai. It went very oddly wrong however when she missed a game point in the first game yesterday against Nehwal, her far-from-fit predecessor as number one, and slid to a defeat that sounded as though it was as unexpected to her opponent as to anyone else. It soon became even worse today against Okuhara, who took the

lead straight away, dominated the first game, resisted Marin's fightback from a four-point deficit to 11-11, and finished as confidently as if she had expected this outcome all along.

Certainly in the slow conditions the result was less of a surprise than it seemed. Marin's formidable smash hardly ever found the floor, and after one long rally which she nearly won several times but somehow never quite did she ended flat on her back on the floor. That dramatic moment, at 13-11, also seemed significant. The Spaniard's point-winning screams of celebration grew fewer while Okuhara's movements became ever quicker and, after completing her third win of the week to become an unexpected semi-finalist, Okuhara claimed she expected to play even better.

She added: "I'm now going off to do more training", to general amazement. Marin was honest. "I didn't prepare so well for my match with Saina," she admitted. "And today

I made far too many mistakes. I'm very disappointed." She also spoke about going home straight away to Spain at the end of a long hard season. But there was a wait of several hours before that probability, along with Nehwal's fate, could be confirmed. A few moments later Ratchanok Intanon joined Okuhara in the semi-finals. The former world champion from Thailand was able to create many more openings than Marin had, and enterprisingly squeezed out a 21-14, 21-19 win against Wang Shixian, the former world number one from China.

The other Chinese player, Wang Yihan, the former world champion, had already qualified in this group, with two tough three-game wins, one of which was against her compatriot, the other Wang. The best known Chinese player here, the defending champion Chen Long, completed an unbeaten three-match sequence in his group with a 21-14, 21-17 win over Jan Jorgensen, the

world number two from Denmark. Both had already qualified for the semi-finals and according to Chen "enjoyed themselves out there."

That did not however prevent him from accelerating impressively from a 10-13 deficit to win the first game, and producing another well-timed surge of five points out of six in the middle of the second game to ensure control of the match. He looks an odds on favorite. Earlier the tournament saw the premature exit of one famous player, but in the process lost two pairs of Olympic champions, when Zhao Yunlei withdrew with a knee injury. Zhao, a winner gold medals in women's and mixed doubles at the 2012 London Olympics, had struggled through four matches in the two doubles events with her partners Tian Qing in the women's and Zhang Na, before deciding to call it off for the week after two wins and two defeats. — AFP

## WITH NO HEADGEAR, US OLYMPIC BOXERS ARE STRUGGLING WITH CUTS

**RENO:** Antonio Vargas never had a cut in his boxing life until blood trickled down his forehead Wednesday during his most important bout. The touted flyweight fought through the surprise and pain, but his Olympic dreams were imperiled when he lost a split decision at the US team trials. "It happened so fast," Vargas said. "It was just a clash of heads. I had that fight, man." Vargas didn't blame his loss on the blood, but facial cuts are a growing problem worldwide for Olympic-style boxers fighting for places in Rio de Janeiro at the first Olympics since the International Boxing Association (AIBA) decided male boxers will no longer wear protective headgear.

Seven fighters developed significant cuts during the first three days of the US Olympic trials in Reno this week, including heavy-weight favorite Cam F. Awesome and Vargas, the Pan Am Games champion who might be the Americans' best chance to end their 12-year gold medal drought. They both fought on, but three other boxers were cut badly enough to force them out of the tournament. Mark Dawson was done after he needed 18 stitches in his forehead to seal a grotesque cut, also the first of his career. Even Chris Ousley's Olympic dream died because his opponent, Carlos Monroe, was cut down to the skull and couldn't continue, yet still won their bout on the scorecards.

## Serious cuts

The problems aren't confined to the US, with serious cuts reported from tournaments around the world since the 2013 rule change. AIBA reportedly reassessed its headgear decision during the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow when Australian boxer Daniel Lewis was cut too badly to continue, but quickly confirmed the plan would move forward to Rio. Even AIBA's detractors realize the absence of headgear has made Olympic boxing more television-friendly. While AIBA acknowledges the danger of cuts, it claims the change was made because concussions will decrease without the heavy protective padding, although many American coaches and fighters chuckle at the science used to justify the decision.

"I don't like it, and I don't think it's necessary," said Virgil Hunter, the respected veteran trainer behind Olympic gold medalist Andre



**RENO:** Cam Awesome (left) and Derae Crane compete in the US Olympic Boxing Trials in Reno, Nev. Facial cuts have become a problem for many Olympic boxing hopefuls fighting toward the Rio Games, where they won't wear headgear. — AP

Ward's career. "Because what does it really say about the sport? You're subjecting a kid to trauma for nothing. It's one thing to get cut, and you get a million-dollar check when you get out of there. It's another thing to get cut, and you get a trophy or a handshake." Boxers have worn headgear in every Olympics since the 1984 Los Angeles Games, and women still wear it. The proliferation of cuts is fueling complaints throughout the sport from athletes and trainers who believe head guards are the only practical way to compete in an Olympic-style, multi-fight tournament.

WBO 140-pound champion Terence

Crawford was an accomplished amateur boxer, but the unbeaten pro star wouldn't be interested in the current version of the sport. "These kids are getting cut up and not getting paid for it, and it's potentially coming back to haunt them in their pro career," said Crawford, who traveled to Reno to support friends from Nebraska. "I've already seen four cuts in one day, and then you ask them to get stitched up and go fight tomorrow." In a sport long dominated by tedious complaints about judging, AIBA's move from computer scoring to a traditional 10-point judging system has drawn widespread praise. — AP

## FORMULA E COULD DEVELOP DRIVERLESS ELEMENT: AGAG

**LONDON:** Imagine a motor race where the cars drive themselves from the garage to starting grid and then park up, ready for the drivers to jump in. Sounds like science fiction? Not for Alejandro Agag, the chief executive of the Formula E electric series whose latest brainchild is an entirely driverless championship to be known as 'Roborace'. If the Spaniard concedes that robot racing is not sport as the world knows it, he believes the technology could also find a home in more conventional competition—and maybe not in the too distant future.

"Maybe...(Formula E) cars could drive themselves to the starting grid and the drivers can just walk and do interviews on the way," Agag told Reuters when asked about potential crossover between Roborace and his main series. "I think that is a transfer we could organize quite soon, actually," he added. "I kind of just came up with it but...the cars could just go and place themselves on the grid and then we start the race. This is the kind of technology every car will have in the future," he added. Agag, an entrepreneur whose office in Hammersmith, West London, overlooks a particularly traffic-choked part of the capital, is a big fan of 'disruptive' technology that changes the existing order.

He also likes to think out loud, the conversation free-wheeling from the dawn of classical civilization to the realms of science fiction, but his series has pushed boundaries from the start.

The 'Roborace' concept was conceived less than two months ago when Agag flew back from Beijing with Denis Sverdlov, founder of investment fund Kinetik. It was unveiled last month as a proposed support package for Formula E's 2016-17 season, with 10 teams each fielding two identical all-electric cars in hour-long races.

Every 'car' will have a name, so that fans—and particularly gamers—can engage even without the human element. For those who say robot racing is a long way from sport, Agag can only concur. "This is a competition of technology which is not necessarily motorsport or sport at all. Sport is Formula E. Driverless racing is probably not sport," he said. "People will always want to see drivers racing. Driverless is never the end of motorsport. Motorsport will always be there. From the Roman times, or before, we've been watching humans racing each other."

## Prototype production

Driverless technology is, however, a major focus for manufacturers and others such as Google and Apple. "Formula E wants to be where the industry is going. This is one of the places where the industry is going and we want to add value to the industry," said Agag. The Spaniard recognized, however, that the technology was still only 90 percent complete. "I think we can have a prototype ready in September (2016), so we will do testing...in October, November and December and then start producing in January and you can have 10 or 20 cars by end of March and do the first race in April (2017)," he said. "This car is more or less going to be like a skateboard. So you have a flat battery in the floor, four motors - one on each wheel - and that's it. "It may not look like a car. But cars of the future may not look like cars. Or the cars today won't look like cars of the future," he added. — Reuters

## DONALDSON OVERCOMES HEAT FOR 2-STROKE LEAD

**CHONBURI:** On a day in which the oppressive heat sapped the strength of even the strongest players, Jamie Donaldson held on to a two-shot lead in the second round of the Thailand Golf Championship at Amata Spring Golf and Country Club yesterday. The Welsh Ryder Cup star fired a four-under 68 to keep two clear of a charging Martin Kaymer who moved into second spot with an excellent seven-under 65, the best round of the day.

Spain's Sergio Garcia, who shot 69, led the chasing pack a further two strokes behind, along with the impressive English youngster Matthew Fitzpatrick who shot an excellent 67 and Thailand's Chinnarat Phadungsil with a 69. In joint sixth place were Korea's Byeong-Hun An with a 67, and

Thailand's Panuphol Pittayarat who shot 66. Donaldson, who fired a magnificent 63 in the opening round, admitted the tropical heat was a factor. "It was a great temperature to start with, but it got really hot on the back nine," he said. "It was tough out there and a case of trying to stay hydrated and not drop sweat on the ball." The Welsh star said he was pleased with his performance, considering the conditions.

"I dropped a couple of shots out there today, but overall, I have been playing nicely. I've just got to keep doing what I've been doing." Kaymer also had problems with the heat, although it did not seem to affect his play. "It was like a sauna out there," he said. "They say you get nicer weather in the morning, but that was not really the case

today. But the good thing is that the ball goes further." The German, who was runner-up in this event last year and would dearly love to win the trophy, said he was very pleased with his performance. "I played really well. I think seven-under today is a very good score."

Kaymer said his strategy for the weekend would be hitting the fairways. "Driving will be the key," he said. Garcia said the key to his round was "having plenty of water to drink. I got through a lot of bottles." The Spanish star said he really felt the heat on the last six holes. Garcia said he was relatively happy with his score. "I gave myself plenty of chances but did not put them all away. But I felt I played pretty good through the round." One of the pre-tournament

favorites, big-hitting Bubba Watson, was some way back after shooting a 70. He admitted he was not at his best and was happy to make the cut.

"The best moment was at the 17th island green. I almost hit it in the water, but then sunk a much-needed birdie," he said. Defending champion Lee Westwood felt he was still in with a chance after shooting a 68, although he is well behind the leaders. "I've played pretty well," he said. "But I've been wasting too many putts. I still have a chance for a weekend charge up the leaderboard." Thai fans were pleased to see their local hero Thongchai Jaidee have a much better second round, ensuring he would make the cut and climb the leaderboard after shooting a five-under 67. — AFP

# GAUDREAU SPOILS RISTOLAINEN'S HAT TRICK, FLAMES BEAT SABRES

## KANE EXTENDS STREAK BUT HAWKS LOSE TO PREDATORS

**CALGARY:** Johnny Gaudreau returned after leaving with an apparent injury and put Calgary ahead late to spoil Rasmus Ristolainen's hat trick in the Flames' 4-3 win over the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday night. Gaudreau exited in the first period after a collision but returned for the second. In the third period, he worked a give-and-go with Sean Monahan, then zipped a low shot through Chad Johnson's pads with 4:50 left for the 4-3 lead. Monahan had two goals and an assist, and Markus Granlund also scored in Calgary's fourth straight win. Jonas Hiller stopped 27 shots. Ristolainen scored three goals in the final period, including a tying tally with 5:45 remaining. That one came when he banked a shot from the corner off the skates of Flames defenseman Dennis Wideman and past Hiller.

### PANTHERS 4, CAPITALS 1

Jaromir Jagr moved into a tie for fourth on the career goals list with a first-period score that sparked Florida to a win over his former team. Jagr gave the Panthers the lead 51 seconds into the game. Dmitry Kulikov's long shot from the point was deflected by Jagr and bounced into the net. The goal was Jagr's first since Nov 21 and the 731st of his career, tying him for fourth on the career list with Hall of Famer Marcel Dionne Logan Shaw, Aaron Ekblad and Brandon Pirri also scored for the Panthers and Jonathan Huberdeau had two assists. Al Montoya had 19 saves. Alex Ovechkin scored for Washington and Philipp Grubauer stopped 23 shots in his first start in nine games.

### PREDATORS 5, BLACKHAWKS 1

James Neal, Craig Smith and Filip Forsberg each scored in the first period and Nashville beat Chicago even though Patrick Kane extended his franchise-record points streak to 24 games. Kane scored his 18th goal this season at 5:43 of the third. He'll have a chance Friday night against Winnipeg back in Chicago to match Sidney Crosby's 25-game streak, set in 2010-11, for the longest since 1992-93. The Predators lost their challenge for goaltender interference on Kane's tally. Nashville goalie Pekka Rinne thought he had covered the puck with his glove when Chicago center Marcus Kruger came in, knocking it away. Kane had the easy tap-in from the side. Rinne even skated out near the blue line trying to argue his case with the officials.

Neal sealed the victory with his second goal unassisted at 14:55, and Eric Nystrom scored a short-handed empty netter with 1:14 left.

### JETS 6, BLUE JACKETS 4

Mathieu Perrault had a goal and three assists, Dustin Byfuglien and Drew Stafford each had a goal and two assists and Winnipeg held off Columbus. Rookie Connor Hellebuyck made 25 saves and improved to 4-0-0. Mark Scheifele, Adam Lowry and Blake Wheeler also scored for Winnipeg. Bryan Little had a pair of assists and Scheifele also had one. Cam Atkinson scored consecutive goals to pull Columbus within 5-4 in the third period before Wheeler scored into an empty net. Boone Jenner and Scott Hartnell each added their 12th goals of the season, and Alexander Wennberg had three assists. Curtis McElhinney stopped 29 shots for Columbus and fell to 0-5-1. McElhinney started in place of Sergei Bobrovsky, who suffered a groin strain on Tuesday and is expected to be out three weeks.

### RED WINGS 3, CANADIENS 2

Darren Helm's second goal with 6:01 left in the third period broke a tie and lifted Detroit to a comeback win. Helm scored 1:12 after Justin Abdelkader pulled Detroit into a 2-all tie, scoring off his right skate on a goal that stood after video review. Petr Mrazek made 21 saves for the Red Wings, whose 12-game point streak matches their longest since 2010. The Atlantic Division-leading Canadiens have lost four straight, their worst skid in a season that started with a 9-0 record and 18 wins in their first 24 games. Montreal's Tomas Fleischmann scored a go-ahead goal 4:30 into the third period, but goaltender Dustin Tokarski could not make enough saves to seal the win.

### FLYERS 4, BLUES 2

Claude Giroux capped Philadelphia's three-goal second period with his 11th of the season in a win over St Louis. Michael Raffl and Matt Read also scored in the second and Ryan White added an empty-net goal to help the Flyers snap a two-game skid. Michael Neuvirth made 35 saves. Robby Fabbri and David Backes scored and Brian Elliott made 25 saves for the Blues. St Louis has lost four of five games in December. After Fabbri opened the scoring 1:35 into the



**ST LOUIS:** Philadelphia Flyers right wing Wayne Simmonds (left) tries to jump clear of a teammate's shot as St Louis Blues goaltender Brian Elliott defends in second-period action during an NHL hockey game on Thursday, Dec 10, 2015. — AP

second period, the Flyers responded with three consecutive goals. Raffl scored just 2:20 after Fabbri when he tipped in a centering pass from Brayden Schenn for his third of the season and first goal in 11 games. Giroux also picked up an assist on the goal.

### LIGHTNING 4, SENATORS 1

Nikita Kucherov had two goals, Ben Bishop made 30 saves and Tampa Bay beat Ottawa. Valtteri Filppula and J.T. Brown also scored for

the Lightning. Ottawa got a goal from Cody Ceci. Kucherov opened the scoring from the slot off a pass from Steven Stamkos during a 5-on-3 power play with 7.5 seconds left in the first. The two-man advantage came after both Chris Wideman and Mark Borowiecki were given minor penalties with 1:16 left in the first. Kucherov made it 3-0 on a rebound of his own shot at 8:33 of the third. Ceci got his first goal in 15 games to end Bishop's shutout bid with 7:54 to play in the third. — AP

# RED-HOT CARDINALS OVERCOME VIKINGS TO BOOK PLAYOFF SPOT

**LOS ANGELES:** The Arizona Cardinals won their seventh straight and joined the Carolina Panthers in the post-season Thursday by holding off the depleted Minnesota Vikings for a 23-20 win Thursday. The Cardinals continue to roll over their opponents and are now assured of at least a playoff spot. They can claim their first NFC West division title since 2009 if the Seattle Seahawks lose or tie Sunday at Baltimore. "The season speaks for itself," said Cardinals coach Bruce Arians. "Knock on wood we get into the playoffs and everybody is healthy and ready to go."

The Cardinals blew a 10-point, fourth-quarter lead but got a 47-yard field goal from Chandler Catanzaro with 1:28 remaining to snap a tie and take a lead they would hold onto for good at the University of Phoenix stadium. The Vikings had a chance to win it or at least force overtime. But veteran pass rusher Dwight Freeney forced a fumble by Minnesota quarterback Teddy Bridgewater that was recovered by the Cardinals Calais Campbell with five seconds to go. Arizona just had to take one kneel-down after the turnover to run out the clock.

Arizona quarterback Carson Palmer beat up a Minnesota defense that was missing four starters. Palmer threw for 310 yards and two touchdowns and has 31 scoring passes on the year, breaking Kurt Warner's single-season franchise record. "This was a weird game but to win the weird ones shows the character of your team," Palmer said. Palmer, who was 25-of-35 with no interceptions, threw touchdown passes of 65 yards to wide receiver John Brown and 42 yards to wide receiver Michael Floyd.

The loss was the second in a row and the third in four weeks for the Vikings, who are fighting to stay in the post-season race. Bridgewater helped Minnesota get in position to tie the score at 20 with 4:55 left in the fourth quarter, but the Vikings' defense



**ARIZONA:** Arizona Cardinals tight end Darren Fells (85) is up-ended by Minnesota Vikings cornerback Trae Waynes (26) during the second half of an NFL football game on Thursday, Dec 10, 2015, in Glendale. — AP

couldn't stop the league's most explosive offense when it counted the most. Running back Adrian Peterson rushed for 69 yards on 23 carries after complaining publicly about his Minnesota coaches

because he got the ball just eight times the week before. Peterson also had a fumble and a touchdown. His touchdown Thursday was the 100th of his career and he moved ahead of Steven Jackson for

17th place on the NFL's all-time rushing list. Minnesota limped into the game without four starters on defense and without three others right behind them on the depth chart. — AFP

## THUNDER DOWN HAWKS

**OKLAHOMA CITY:** Kevin Durant had 25 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists in his seventh career triple-double as the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Atlanta Hawks 107-94 on Thursday. Russell Westbrook had 23 points and 10 assists. It was just the second time both Durant and Westbrook had at least 10 assists in the same game, and the first time it happened in a win. Durant got his final assist on a pass to Westbrook for a 3-pointer with 1:14 remaining. Serge Ibaka had a season-high 23 points and 10 rebounds for the Thunder, who won their third straight. Kent Bazemore scored 22 points and Jeff Teague had 18 for the Hawks, who had won their previous two games. Kyle Korver added 12 and Thabo Sefolosha fin-

ished with 11. The Thunder outrebounded the Hawks 52-34.

### BULLS 83, CLIPPERS 80

Pau Gasol scored 24 points as Chicago beat the Clippers to end a three-game losing streak. The Bulls caught a big break midway through the third quarter when Clippers All-Star Blake Griffin was ejected for a hard foul against Taj Gibson, and they came away with the win after blowing a 16-point lead. Jimmy Butler finished with 14 points after pouring in a career-high 36 the previous night against Boston. Derrick Rose scored all of his 11 points in the second half, and Gibson finished with 12 points and eight rebounds. Griffin led the Clippers with 18

points. Chris Paul scored 12 but missed the tying 3-point attempt, while DeAndre Jordan added 10 points and 14 rebounds. The Clippers hit 10 of 22 3-pointers but came up short after winning three straight and six of seven.

### NETS 100, 76ERS 91

Andrea Bargnani scored a season-high 23 points, and Thaddeus Young had 18 points and 11 rebounds as Brooklyn beat Philadelphia. Brooklyn won for the sixth time in its last seven home games. Philadelphia fell to 0-13 on the road. Shane Larkin scored 14 points and Bojan Bogdanovic had 10 for the Nets. Jahlil Okafor had 22 points and 10 rebounds, and T.J. McConnell scored

17 points for the 76ers.

### KINGS 99, KNICKS 97

Rajon Rondo had 16 points, 12 assists and a jaw-dropping dunk in the fourth quarter that led Sacramento over New York. Rondo added nine rebounds to finish just shy of his fifth triple-double of the season. DeMarcus Cousins had 27 points and 11 rebounds for the Kings, who have just their second winning streak of the season. Sacramento also won three in a row in November. Carmelo Anthony had 23 points and 14 rebounds but missed a potential game-winning 3-pointer at the buzzer for the Knicks, who have lost four straight and eight of the past 10 games. — AP

## BRAVO NEARS TON AS LYON PUTS WINDIES IN A SPIN

**HOBART:** Nathan Lyon put the skids under the flailing West Indies as Australia set course for an overwhelming early victory despite Darren Bravo holding on in the first Test in Hobart yesterday. At the close of a stop-start day through showers, the Windies were 207 for six with Bravo offering spirited resistance on 94 and Kemar Roach in support on 31. Bravo and Roach kept the Windies innings pulse beating with an unbeaten seventh-wicket stand of 91. "I think the guys are confident in Darren and me at the crease. We've done a pretty good job so far, hopefully we can carry on tomorrow and do a much better job," Roach said.

Lyon claimed two wickets in one over to trigger a middle-order collapse to have the West Indies in familiar trouble in their chase after a mammoth declaration of 583 for four on the second day. The probing off-spinner snared the wickets of Marlon Samuels and Jermaine Blackwood in his seventh over along with opener Rajendra Chandrika for 175 Test wickets to leave the hapless Caribbean tourists struggling to avoid a heavy defeat with three days left.

"I'm really confident in my skill set to get the job done. The ball is coming out beautifully out of my hand in the nets and I've been working hard," said Lyon, who is playing in his 50th Test match. The Windies sticky predicament was accentuated by the dismissal of skipper Jason Holder, the last of the recognized batsmen at the crease with Bravo. Holder refused to seek a referral after being struck high on the pad by Peter Siddle and walked off for 15, leaving his side in deep strife at 116 for six. Replays showed that the ball was missing the stumps and the towering Holder may have stayed on as the players left the field for a brief rain break.

The West Indies efforts were in sharp contrast to Australia's run spree, propelled by a record 449-run fourth-wicket stand by Adam Voges and Shaun Marsh.

The West Australian pair eclipsed the fourth-wicket Test record of 437 set by Sri Lankans Thilan Samaraweera and Mahela Jayawardene against Pakistan in 2009. It was also the biggest Test stand by Australians at home, bettering the 405-run fifth-wicket partnership by Sid Barnes and Don Bradman against England in Sydney in 1946. But the duo fell two runs short of Australia's all-time highest partnership for any wicket of 451 held by Bill Ponsford and Bradman against England at The Oval in 1934.

Voges also posted Australia's highest score against the West Indies with an unbeaten 269, eclipsing Doug Walters' 242 in 1969. Marsh holed out just before lunch for 182, caught on the ropes by Bravo off spinner Jomel Warrican, ending a day's occupation of the crease as he compiled his highest Test score. Australia hammered 145 runs in the session to go to lunch at 583 for four enabling Steve Smith to declare the innings during the break. "That partnership between Voges and Marsh was unbelievable and to have those guys out in the middle for that long and to do that job has put us in a pretty good position as bowlers," Lyon said. "It's now up to us to go out and take 20 wickets."

The Windies made a steady start after lunch, but soon began to unravel. Kraigg Brathwaite lasted 26 balls before Josh Hazlewood trapped him leg before wicket for two in the ninth over. Chandrika followed in the 20th over when he was deceived by a drifting Lyon delivery and got an outside edge to Smith at slip for 25. Samuels lasted only 14 balls before he was splendidly caught and bowled by Lyon for nine. Blackwood didn't see out Lyon's over and was gone five balls later, caught at bat-pad by Joe Burns, giving the spinner three for 18. The Windies attack went down a bowler when quick Shannon Gabriel left the field with what a team spokesman said was a stress reaction in his left ankle, putting him in doubt for the rest of the series. —AFP



**HOBART:** Australian spinner Nathan Lyon dives to take a catch to dismiss West Indies batsman Marlon Samuels on the second day of the first cricket Test match in Hobart yesterday. —AFP

### SCOREBOARD

**HOBART, Australia:** Scores at the close of the second day of the first Test between Australia and the West Indies at Bellerive Oval in Hobart yesterday:

Australia 1st innings (438-3 overnight)		West Indies 1st innings	
J. Burns b Gabriel	33	K. Brathwaite lbw b Hazlewood	2
D. Warner c Ramdin b Warrican	64	R. Chandrika c Smith b Lyon	25
S. Smith c Blackwood b Warrican	10	D. Bravo not out	94
A. Voges not out	269	M. Samuels c and b Lyon	9
S. Marsh c Bravo b Warrican	182	J. Blackwood c Burns b Lyon	0
M. Marsh not out	1	D. Ramdin b Hazlewood	8
Extras (b4, lb3, w3, nb14)	24	J. Holder lbw b Siddle	15
Total (4 wickets declared; 114 overs)	583	K. Roach not out	31
Fall of wickets: 1-75 (Burns), 2-104 (Smith), 3-121 (Warner), 4-570 (S. Marsh)		Extras (b7, lb10, w1, nb5)	23
Bowling: Taylor 17-0-108-0 (2nb, 1w), Roach 16-1-99-0 (4nb, 1w), Gabriel 10-1-59-1 (4nb), Holder 24-3-75-0 (4nb, 1w), Warrican 28-1-158-3, Brathwaite 13-0-52-0, Blackwood 6-0-25-0		Total (6 wickets; 65 overs)	207
Did not bat: P. Nevill, P. Siddle, J. Hazlewood, J. Pattinson, N. Lyon		Fall of wickets: 1-17 (Brathwaite), 2-58 (Chandrika), 3-78 (Samuels), 4-78 (Blackwood), 5-89 (Ramdin), 6-116 (Holder)	
		Bowling: Hazlewood 16-4-43-2, Pattinson 15-0-68-0 (5nb, 1w), Siddle 12-5-22-1, Lyon 19-6-43-3, M. Marsh 3-1-14-0	
		To bat: J. Taylor, J. Warrican, S. Gabriel.	

### SCOREBOARD

**DUNEDIN, New Zealand:** Scoreboard at stumps on the second day of the first Test between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at University Oval in Dunedin yesterday:

New Zealand 1st innings (overnight 409-1)	
M. Guptill c Chandimal b Mathews	156
T. Latham c & b Lakmal	22
K. Williamson c Karunaratne b Pradeep	88
R. Taylor lbw Pradeep	8
B. McCullum c Vithanage b Siriwardana	75
M. Santner c Chandimal b Chameera	12
B. Watling c Vithanage b Chameera	5
D. Bracewell lbw Pradeep	47
T. Southee c Siriwardana b Lakmal	2
N. Wagner c Jayasundera b Pradeep	7
T. Boult not out	0
Extras: (b4, lb3, w1, nb1)	9
Total (for 10 wickets, 96.1 overs)	431
Fall of wickets: 1-56 (Latham), 2-229 (Williamson), 3-245 (Taylor), 4-334 (McCullum), 5-359 (Santner), 6-365 (Watling), 7-394 (Guptill), 8-399 (Southee), 9-426 (Wagner), 10-431 (Bracewell)	
Bowling: Lakmal 16-1-69-2, Pradeep 23.1-2-112-4, Mathews 9-2-28-1, Chameera 20-2-112-2 (w1), Herath 19-1-46-0, Jayasundera 5-0-33-0 (nb1), Siriwardana 4-0-24-1	
<b>Sri Lanka 1st innings</b>	
D. Karunaratne c Watling b Santner	84
K. Mendis c Watling b Boult	8
U. Jayasundera c Watling b Wagner	1
D. Chandimal not out	83
A. Mathews c Watling b Southee	2
K. Vithanage not out	10
Extras (b1, lb4, nb4)	9
Total: (for 4 wickets, 81 overs)	197
Fall of wickets: 1-19 (Mendis), 2-29 (Jayasundera), 3-151 (Karunaratne), 4-156 (Mathews)	
Bowling: Boult 16-5-38-1, Southee 16-4-35-1, Bracewell 16-4-29-0 (nb4), Wagner 13-2-53-1, Santner 19-6-37-1, Williamson 1-1-0-0.	

## KARUNARATNE STANDS TALL FOR INEXPERIENCED LANKA

**DUNEDIN:** Dimuth Karunaratne had recognized prior to the first test against New Zealand that he was now the senior man in the top order for Sri Lanka and he needed to stand up and be counted to guide his younger team mates in their two-test series. The 27-year-old left hander was considered a veteran in the top of the order, having played 23 previous tests, with his opening partner Kusal Mendis playing just his second, while number three Udara Jayasundera was making his debut.

"There is no (Kumar) Sangakkara and Mahela (Jayawardene) so we have to put our hands up and play big knocks," Karunaratne said in a televised interview after he made a patient 84 in Sri Lanka's 197 for four at the close of play at University Oval in Dunedin of the second day. "We have to play with the youngsters and hang

on with them, rotate the strike and try to get a big one and (for me) to play a senior role." Unfortunately Mendis and Jayasundera were unable to put that advice into action, with the side slumping to 29-2 before the opener combined with fellow 'veteran' Dinesh Chandimal, also playing his 24th test, to patiently rebuild Sri Lanka's innings.

The opening batsman, who had a previous reputation as a dashing player who needlessly gave his wicket away chasing the shot that was not quite on, buckled down with Chandimal and thwarted, then frustrated, New Zealand's attack. He took 136 deliveries to reach his sixth test half century, though it was brought up with a elegant straight drive off Neil Wagner for his fifth boundary. After tea he had looked set to secure his fourth test century but he fell tantalizingly close and it was something of a surprise given the way he had blunted the efforts of New Zealand's disciplined four-pronged pace attack.

Having resisted temptation for so long, he sat back and looked to punch a wide delivery from left arm spinner Mitchell Santner behind point, only for the ball not to turn and he succeeded in giving BJ Watling the third of his four catches in the innings. The dismissal ended his 122-run partnership with Chandimal, who was left 83 not out with Sri Lanka 197-4 at the close and will now need to take on the mantle left by Karunaratne to ensure his side continue to chip away at the home side's 431. "I did all the hard work in the first few overs and unfortunately I didn't get to bat through the innings and get a big one," Karunaratne added. "I missed out on a golden opportunity." —Reuters

## SPORTS TRIBUNAL UPHOLDS PLATINI SUSPENSION

**LAUSANNE:** The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) yesterday backed a 90-day FIFA ban against Michel Platini, in a new blow to the Frenchman's hopes of entering the FIFA presidential race. Platini, head of European confederation UEFA and a FIFA vice president, had been the favorite to succeed outgoing FIFA president Sepp Blatter, until he was named in a Swiss criminal investigation in September. FIFA suspended Platini and Blatter in October.

CAS Secretary General Matthieu Reeb said judges considered whether

Platini suffered irreparable damage from the temporary suspension while an investigation over a 1.8 million euros (\$2 million) payment was completed. In its appeal, Platini's camp insisted the ex-Juventus star had done nothing wrong and was being unfairly blocked from campaigning for FIFA's presidency. In a unanimous decision, the three CAS judges found that no irreparable damage had been caused, but urged FIFA to quickly reach a final decision in the case.

The court ruled out an extension of the temporary ban, saying it would

breach Platini's rights. "Mr Platini has lost a round, but it's not final," Reeb told journalists. FIFA's ethics watchdog reportedly wants to ban Platini for life, and Blatter is also facing further punishment. FIFA's in-house court is expected to issue its final verdict this month, a statement said on Thursday. Platini's temporary suspension expires on January 5 and CAS noted that even if it were lifted, there was no guarantee that FIFA's electoral committee would approve Platini's candidacy before the temporary ban runs out.

**Still hopeful?**

Platini's camp voiced optimism after the ruling. "Michel Platini knows he will ultimately be exonerated", his lawyer Thibaud d'Ales said. D'Ales also highlighted CAS's order against FIFA extending the provisional ban. He claimed that given the emergence of new evidence in Platini's favor—a 1998 UEFA document seen by AFP this week—FIFA's ethics judges would not be able to issue a ruling before January 5. —AFP

## 'BIG PHIL' BACK ON BIG STAGE AT CLUB WCUP

**TOKYO:** Well-travelled coach Luiz Felipe Scolari has become an unlikely figurehead for China's soaring football ambitions as he takes Guangzhou Evergrande into the Club World Cup this week. Just a year after leading Brazil's ill-fated World Cup campaign on home soil, the mustachioed "Big Phil" is thriving with the megabucks club after helping them secure their second Asian title in three years.

The ebullient Brazilian has brought a dash of Latin passion to the touchlines and military rigour to his team, who are unbeaten since he arrived in June and won their fifth straight Chinese title in October. The ex-Portugal and Chelsea boss now returns to the global stage at the Club World Cup, where Evergrande will meet Spanish uber-team Barcelona if they win their opening match against Mexico's Club America on Sunday. In the background are moves to revolutionize football in China, a country which has so far been better known for watching rather than playing the sport with huge viewing figures for European leagues. But under football fan President Xi Jinping, China has its eyes on hosting and even winning a World Cup, while football has been mandated at more and more schools. China's most ambitious club-full name Guangzhou Evergrande Taobao have proved a good fit for the resurgent Scolari, 67, who departed the Selecao after their thumping 7-1 World Cup semi-final defeat to Germany, before a brief stint at Gremio.

**'I feel quite extraordinary'**

"The winners are those that will not give up," said the jubilant Brazilian, after hoisting the AFC Champions League trophy last month. "My next target is the (Club World Cup). Why not? I have a great team at a great club and great players—I can realize this dream," he said. "In life we have happy days and not so happy days, but tonight it has been a wonderful night. I've had a few great moments before and tonight, I feel quite extraordinary." Scolari is handsomely compensated for his work in Guangzhou, a bustling metropolis of 8.5 million people not far from Hong Kong, where he rakes in a reported salary of \$5 million. Money seems no object for some clubs in the world's second biggest economy, where Mano Menezes this week arrived at Shandong Luneng as the third ex-Brazil boss in China—reportedly on even more money than Scolari.

But Evergrande, jointly owned by Internet giant Alibaba and one of China's biggest real estate firms, have been in a league of their own when it comes to splashing out on foreign talent. Former Real Madrid striker Robinho arrived in July, following in the footsteps of ex-Spurs midfielder Paulinho (14 million euros, \$15.4 million) and another Brazilian, striker Ricardo Goulart, who signed for a Chinese record 15 million euros in January. Scolari is also Evergrande's third big-name coach of recent times, after fellow World Cup-winner Marcello Lippi, who led them to the 2013 Asian crown, and the brief tenure of Fabio Cannavaro.

**Barbecue houses**

The thick-set Brazilian appears popular with his players, who bounced him up and down with some difficulty after the Champions League win, and say Evergrande are "transformed" under his watch. "Two years ago, we were very much an attack-minded team under Lippi. But now with Scolari in charge, our team has been transformed into a new side," said midfielder Huang Bowen. "We have more balance between defense and attack. We remain an offensively strong side and our back-line has become more solid. We have entered a new level." Even so, Scolari's biggest test may yet be in negotiating the notorious complexities of Chinese football—an environment where discretion and cultural sensitivity count for as much as football know-how. —AFP



**MONTERREY:** Jose Rivas (right) of Tigres vies for the ball with Javier Cortes of Pumas during the first leg of the final of the Mexican Apertura 2015 tournament football match at the Universitario stadium on December 10, 2015. —AFP

## GIGNAC'S TIGRES MAUL PUMAS 3-0 IN MEXICO FINAL FIRST LEG

**MONTERREY:** French striker Andre-Pierre Gignac scored a penalty as his Tigres of Monterrey took a big step toward the Mexican league title by defeating Pumas 3-0 in Thursday's first leg. Gignac, who shocked many in the football world when he snubbed

European clubs to join Tigres in June, opened the score in the 14th minute. Midfielder Javier Ignacio Aquino doubled the score in the 28th minute while Gignac was involved in the third goal in the second half, as his volley was blocked by the keeper only to land

at the feet of Brazilian winger Rafael Sobis, who did not miss. Gignac has now scored 14 goals in the Apertura-2015 championship and his team is well placed to win its fourth title when they play the return leg in Mexico City tomorrow. —AFP

## LEICESTER CAN BECOME CHAMPIONS: MOURINHO

**LONDON:** Jose Mourinho believes Chelsea can still make the top four but also says Leicester City can actually win the Premier League ahead of their key clash on Monday. The defending champions travel to the Kingpower Stadium on Monday, with Mourinho's side 14th in the table and Leicester sitting unexpectedly top. That has been partly down to the big teams not performing to their usual level, and the Chelsea manager also believes it can give his side a chance to get back into the Champions League chase.

"Before we lost the last three points against Bournemouth I was convinced, absolutely convinced of the fourth position in the table. I was absolutely convinced of a great December for us. "But the reality is some clubs are doing so well and some other clubs are not capable of doing what people are used to. "It's not easy for the top clubs any more to win three, four, five, 10 matches in a row. So who knows?"

Mourinho also thinks it is possible that Leicester win the title.

"Well, first of all they deserve to be where they are. I think, let's be honest. I told a couple of weeks ago I don't believe they can be champions. "Maybe I have to think twice before saying that again. One thing is to be top of the league in September after a beautiful start. Another thing is to be top of the league in December, that's a completely different story. "It would be something magnificent, something to impress the football world, but sometimes these things can happen. Why not to happen with them?"

Mourinho succeeded Ranieri in the Chelsea job back in 2004, and clashed with him when both managed in Italy between 2008 and 2010, but only had huge praise for the Italian on the eve of their meeting - stating that the Leicester boss has been by far the best coach in the Premier League this season. "He has just won manager of the month. I think he should win manager of the half-term. If you could give an award to the first six months of competition, everybody is miles away from him. And every club is miles away from what Leicester is doing. —AFP

German League Preview

# BAYERN OUT TO EXORCISE GLADBACH DEFEAT IN DERBY

**BERLIN:** Bayern Munich host Ingolstadt in the first Bundesliga derby between the clubs today full of respect for their Bavarian neighbors, but determined to bounce back from their shock defeat at Moenchengladbach. Pep Guardiola's Bayern crashed to their first German league defeat of the season last Saturday when they were humbled 3-1 by third-placed Gladbach. It was only Bayern's second loss of the season, following a Champions League defeat at Arsenal, and Bayern are determined to protect their five point lead in the table. "We have to play well and fight for everything, it won't be an easy game," said Robert Lewandowski, whose goals sealed a 2-0 win at Dinamo Zagreb on Wednesday with Bayern in the last 16 in Europe. "We have to keep our concentration and score the first goal, that should lay the foundations for us to have some fun."

Ingolstadt deserve Bayern's respect with a

symmetrical record of five wins, five draws and five defeats in their first season in Germany's top-flight and are 11th in the table with 20 points. Coach Ralph Hasenhuetl has kept most of the side which won last season's second-division title and they have drawn with top side Wolfsburg, Schalke and Moenchengladbach so far. "They deserve to be where they are in the league and I hope they stay up," said Bayern captain Philipp Lahm, who played alongside Hasenhuetl in the Bavarian youth football. "They don't just play defensively and don't just stand at the back." Between them Poland's Lewandowski and Thomas Mueller have scored 27 league goals so far this season, but the Germany forward expects a tussle. "We have a task today which will clearly be a difficult thing," said Mueller. Bayern are set to be without centre-back Medhi Benatia, who suffered a suspected torn left thigh in Zagreb. — AFP

## GERMAN BUNDESLIGA TABLE

**BERLIN:** German Bundesliga table ahead of this weekend's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Bayern Munich	15	13	1	1	43	8	40
Dortmund	15	11	2	2	42	20	35
M'gladbach	15	8	2	5	31	23	26
Hertha Berlin	15	8	2	5	20	18	26
VfL Wolfsburg	15	7	4	4	24	17	25
Schalke 04	15	7	3	5	21	21	24
Mainz 05	15	7	2	6	23	21	23
Bayer Leverkusen	15	6	3	6	19	20	21
Hamburg	15	6	3	6	18	21	21
FC Cologne	15	5	5	5	15	19	20
FC Ingolstadt 04	15	5	5	5	11	15	20
SV Darmstadt 98	15	4	6	5	15	19	18
Eintr. Frankfurt	15	3	5	7	18	23	14
Hanover	15	4	2	9	18	27	14
Werder Bremen	15	4	2	9	15	29	14
FC Augsburg	15	3	4	8	18	25	13
VfB Stuttgart	15	3	2	10	19	36	11
Hoffenheim	15	1	7	7	16	24	10

Italian League Preview

# SUPER-CHARGED SERIE A PUTS FOCUS ON INTER

**MILAN:** Napoli host Roma and Fiorentina are away to Juventus in a super-charged Serie A weekend in which all four title contenders will have one eye on leaders Inter Milan. Although designed to provide some pre-festive thrills, the penultimate round of games before the league stops for the winter break has been made even more enticing by the current state of affairs in Italy's top flight. Inter travel to Udinese today with a one-point lead on Fiorentina, with Napoli two points behind and Roma in fourth at five points off the pace. Champions Juventus are only one-point behind Roma in sixth.

Inter could go four points clear of Fiorentina with a win today but their trip to the Friuli comes with a twist, 38-year-old striker Antonio Di Natale hinting Wednesday it could be his last home game for the club that has been his home since 2004. "The fans are always behind us and always fill the stadium. I want to show my thanks in our last home game of the

year by giving them a special gift today," said Di Natale. Having seen Udinese lose to both Napoli and Fiorentina in recent weeks, either side of two wins against Sampdoria and Chievo, Di Natale expects no-frills Inter to be tough to beat today.

He added: "Their game is not exceptional, but they're winning consistently and conceding few goals. We've been working hard in the past days for this game." Inter have scored the fewest goals (18) from the top six teams, but Roberto Mancini's men have conceded only nine times in 15 games and their reverse at Napoli a fortnight ago was their lone defeat in nine successive outings. The visitors should welcome back Felipe Melo, who spent a night in observation last week after a head clash with teammate Gary Medel in their 1-0 win against Genoa.

"I'm fine, thank God. I don't remember much about the game but luckily I'm okay," said Brazil midfielder Melo, who does not expect an easy

run-in to the festive break. "It's important we finish this first half of the season strongly, but we know it's going to be tough at Udinese and against Lazio after that." Napoli host Roma tomorrow in the 'Derby del Sole', with the hosts firm favourites at the San Paolo three days after hammering Legia Warsaw 5-2 in the Europa League to record six wins out of six in the group stage.

Last week's 3-2 reverse at Bologna left scars, and Napoli coach Maurizio Sarri said: "There are a lot of title contenders this sea-

son, but that doesn't mean we have to settle for seventh place." Roma, unconvincing in a 1-1 Champions League draw at home to BATE Borisov on Wednesday that secured passage to the last 16, travel south on the back of a league defeat to Atalanta and last week's 1-1 draw at Torino-and likely to be without injury-hit Ivorian Gervinho. "We're going through a tough spell in the league," admitted Roma coach Rudi Garcia. "We have to recover quickly ahead of Napoli given that we put a lot in tonight." — AFP

## BARCELONA AIM FOR 1 BILLION EURO GOAL

**LONDON:** Barcelona are aiming to become the world's highest earning club in the next six years and are determined to counter England's Premier League, club president Josep Maria Bartomeu said in an interview published yesterday. The Spanish giants will make about 600 million euros (\$658 million) this year but Bartomeu told the Financial Times newspaper he was aiming to lift this to one billion euros (\$1.1 billion) by 2021.

"We want to be the first club to reach one billion euros in revenues," said Bartomeu, who won an election for a six-year term in July after Barcelona overcame team divisions to win the Champions League. A Deloitte survey said that Real Madrid (549 million euros) and Manchester United (518 million) were the of top world football revenue earners in 2014. The president said he wants to increase Barcelona's presence abroad and embark on a 600 million euro renovation of the

93,000 capacity Camp Nou stadium. It has one overseas office in Hong Kong and plans to open more in New York, Sao Paulo and Shanghai by 2017, Bartomeu said.

Barcelona, which is owned by its 145,00 members, also wants to set up its own university and move into women's sports. But the Barcelona boss acknowledged that the shadow of England's Premier League hangs over his club's plans. "Our rival is the Premier League. It is not a specific club, it is the strength of the Premier League itself," Bartomeu said. He insisted that Barcelona has the financial power to hold off any English challenge for its three top stars Lionel Messi, Neymar and Luis Suarez. But Bartomeu said Barcelona academy teenagers were being lured by big money English offers. "The 16-year-olds constantly receive offers from the Premier League that are very tempting. Every year there are some who go," the Barcelona chief said. — AFP

## ITALIAN SERIE A TABLE

**MILAN:** Italian Serie A table ahead of this weekend's fixtures (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Inter Milan	15	10	3	2	18	9	33
Fiorentina	15	10	2	3	30	12	32
Napoli	15	9	4	2	28	12	31
Roma	15	8	4	3	30	18	28
Juventus	15	8	3	4	22	11	27
Sassuolo	15	7	5	3	19	14	26
Atalanta	15	7	3	5	18	15	24
AC Milan	15	7	3	5	19	18	24
Torino	15	6	4	5	21	19	22
Empoli	15	6	3	6	17	20	21
Chievo	15	5	4	6	20	16	19
Lazio	15	6	1	8	17	24	19
Udinese	15	5	3	7	14	20	18
Sampdoria	15	4	4	7	21	25	16
Bologna	15	5	1	9	16	21	16
Genoa	15	4	4	7	15	20	16
Palermo	15	4	3	8	13	23	15
Frosinone	15	4	2	9	14	26	14
Carpi	15	2	4	9	13	27	10
Verona	15	0	6	9	10	25	6



## Matches on TV (Local Timings)

### ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Norwich City v Everton	15:45
West Ham v Stoke City	18:00
Crystal Palace v Southampton	18:00
Man City v Swansea	18:00
Sunderland v Watford	18:00
Bournemouth v Man United	20:30

### SPANISH LEAGUE

Barcelona v Deportivo	18:00
Levante v Granada	20:15
Celta de Vigo v Espanyol	20:15
Sevilla v Sporting Gijon	22:30
Las Palmas v Real Betis	0:05

### ITALIAN LEAGUE

Genoa v Bologna	17:00
Citta di Palermo v Frosinone	20:00
Sassuolo Calcio v Torino	20:00
Udinese v Internazionale	22:45
SV Werder Bremen v FC Koln	17:30
Darmstadt v Hertha Berlin	17:30
TSG Hoffenheim v Hannover	17:30
Bayern Munich v Ingolstadt 04	17:30
Wolfsburg v Hamburger	17:30
Bayer 04 v Monchengladbach	20:30

### FRENCH LEAGUE

Stade de Reims v OGC Nice	18:00
Montpellier v Guingamp	22:00
Lille v Lorient	22:00
ES Troyes v Bastia	22:00
Nantes v Toulouse	22:00

# NEYMAR-LESS BARCELONA AIM TO STAVE OFF CHASING MADRID DUO

**MADRID:** European champions Barcelona will have to do without the injured Neymar for their final La Liga game before Christmas at home to Deportivo La Coruna before jetting off to the Club World Cup in Japan. The Brazilian star's absence due to a groin problem is a huge miss as he has been Barca's player of the season given Lionel Messi's recent two-month layoff due to a knee ligament injury, scoring 14 goals in just 13 league appearances.

Messi also missed training on Thursday due to personal reasons and was seen heavily stretching his hamstring towards the end of a depleted Barca side's 1-1 against Bayer Leverkusen on Wednesday, but is expected to be fit to start. Luis Suarez was left on the bench for the trip to Germany as the holders had already qualified for the last 16 of the Champions League, and will return seeking to score for his ninth consecutive game. Barca were left to rue a host of missed chances last weekend as they conceded late to draw 1-1 at Valencia and allow Atletico Madrid to cut the gap at the top to two points with Real Madrid two points further adrift.

And they face another stiff test at the Camp Nou against a revitalised Deportivo la Coruna side that are enjoying a return to their glory days

after a number of seasons bouncing between the top-flight and the second division. Lucas Perez's 10 goals have propelled the Galicians up to sixth in the table and he is happy for Barca to be distracted by their upcoming trip to Japan. "It seems like Barca will be without Neymar which benefits us. If Messi, Suarez and (Andres) Iniesta also want to stay at home and save themselves for the Club World Cup, we'd accept it," said Perez.

"We are going there to compete. They drew in their last match, but they are playing great football and are in their best form with the return of Messi." In contrast to Barca's injury problems, Real Madrid coach Rafael Benitez finally has a fully-fit squad to choose from as he is expected to welcome back Sergio Ramos and Marcelo for Sunday's demanding trip to fifth-placed Villarreal. Madrid's problems off the field have continued this week as the club's appeal against their expulsion from the Copa del Rey was turned down and star striker Karim Benzema suspended from playing for France due to his alleged part in a blackmail scandal.

However, on it they are fine form having smashed Malmo 8-0 to equal the biggest ever margin of victory in the Champions League on Tuesday with Cristiano Ronaldo scoring four and

Benzema hitting his first hat-trick in five years. That win was Madrid's fifth in a row since being humiliated 4-0 at home by Barcelona last month and Ronaldo believes they are on the right track. "It is normal at a club like Real Madrid when things don't go well everyone is critical," said the World Player of the Year. "We are used to that, but little-by-little we are improving, the team is better and more confident. Five consecutive victories, we are on a good run and we need to continue like this."

Barca's brilliance and the madness at Real Madrid in recent weeks has taken the attention away from Atletico Madrid. However, Diego Simeone's men can be top of the league at Christmas should they win their next two league games due to Barca's Club World Cup commitments next weekend. Atletico face a tough test themselves at home to Athletic Bilbao on Sunday, though, as Europe's best defense faces up to the triple threat of Ariz Aduriz, Inaki Williams and Atletico old boy Raul Garcia, who have already combined for 30 goals this season. Meanwhile, after a disappointing start to his managerial career as Valencia crashed out of the Champions League in midweek, Gary Neville gets his first taste of La Liga action as Los Che travel to Eibar.— AFP

## Spanish La Liga table

**MADRID:** Spanish La Liga table before this weekend's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Barcelona	14	11	1	2	34	13	34
Atletico Madrid	14	10	2	2	20	6	32
Real Madrid	14	9	3	2	32	12	30
Celta Vigo	14	7	4	3	25	22	25
Villarreal	14	7	3	4	18	15	24
Deportivo	14	5	7	2	21	14	22
Athletic Bilbao	14	6	3	5	21	16	21
Valencia	14	5	5	4	18	11	20
Eibar	14	5	5	4	18	16	20
Sevilla	14	5	4	5	19	19	19
Real Betis	14	5	4	5	13	18	19
Espanyol	14	5	2	7	15	25	17
Real Sociedad	14	4	3	7	16	19	15
Sporting Gijon	14	4	3	7	15	21	15
Getafe	14	4	2	8	15	23	14
Rayo Vallecano	14	4	2	8	15	25	14
Malaga	14	2	5	7	7	13	11
Granada	14	2	5	7	15	24	11
Levante	14	2	5	7	11	25	11
Las Palmas	14	2	4	8	11	22	10

# VAN GAAL DEFIANT IN FACE OF UNITED CRISIS

**MANCHESTER:** Louis van Gaal played down the scale of the storm gathering around Manchester United and claimed that expectations of the Old Trafford club need to be re-assessed. Van Gaal's management of United has come under closer scrutiny following his team's exit from the Champions League at the group stage following their 3-2 defeat at Wolfsburg on Tuesday night. The former European champions are now heading for the Europa League but van Gaal insists that winning that competition will not be straight-forward with the status of United, and the level of European competition, much changed in recent years.

Van Gaal said: "We are now in the Europa League and we have to win the Europa League but that is not easy. I can say that in advance but nobody hears me because they don't want to hear. "A club as Manchester United has to win. That's the past. You have to analyze the club now and you cannot compare it with 10 years ago. There is an evolution in European football. "We have to work hard to win that. I have already won the Europa (UEFA) Cup with Ajax in my first season, and I was very proud of that. For me, the Europa League is a big competition."

United have failed to win any of their last four games following their defeat in Wolfsburg but remain fourth in the Premier League, three points behind leaders Leicester City ahead of their trip to Bournemouth today evening. However, their results and style of play continue to come in for criticism from former players, pundits and supporters. United have not won a trophy since the last of their 20 top-flight titles in 2013 but van Gaal insists there is no turmoil within the club. The Dutchman added: "You can lose and you can win in sport, and you have to accept that, as a player and as a manager. "But you have to work very hard and I am working very hard and my players are working very hard and doing everything we can do."

"The problem is that we have to meet the expectations and the expectations at a club like Manchester United are very high, and that's our problem. "I work here and my players are working here, I have a board who works here, so you have to manage that you have good results and that you are progressing. "We are doing that, but

in the outside world I think it's more of a problem than in our inside world." Meanwhile, van Gaal said he will wait to hear from Ryan Giggs whether there is any truth in the speculation linking United's assistant manager with the vacancy created at Swansea by the sacking of Garry Monk.

United are without nine players for their trip to Bournemouth with Bastian Schweinsteiger starting a three-match ban after the Germany international accepted an FA charge of violent conduct for putting an arm into the face of West Ham defender Winston Reid in last Saturday's 0-0 draw with West Ham. Midfielder Morgan Schneiderlin returns following the damaging defeat in Wolfsburg but captain Wayne Rooney remains sidelined with an ankle injury and is joined on the absent list by defenders Chris Smalling and Matteo Darmian, who both picks up knocks in Germany.— AFP

## English premier league table

**LONDON:** English Premier League table ahead of the weekend's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Leicester	15	9	5	1	32	21	32
Arsenal	15	9	3	3	27	13	30
Man City	15	9	2	4	30	16	29
Man Utd	15	8	5	2	20	10	29
Tottenham	15	6	8	1	25	12	26
Crystal Palace	15	7	2	6	20	15	23
West Ham	15	6	5	4	25	21	23
Liverpool	15	6	5	4	18	17	23
Everton	15	5	7	3	28	20	22
Watford	15	6	4	5	17	16	22
Stoke	15	6	4	5	13	14	22
Southampton	15	5	6	4	21	18	21
West Brom	15	5	4	6	14	19	19
Chelsea	15	4	3	8	17	24	15
Swansea	15	3	5	7	14	22	14
Norwich	15	3	4	8	17	27	13
Bournemouth	15	3	4	8	18	30	13
Newcastle	15	3	4	8	16	30	13
Sunderland	15	3	3	9	17	29	12
Aston Villa	15	1	3	11	13	28	6

## French League Preview

# PSG PUT UNDEFEATED RECORD ON THE LINE

**PARIS:** Unfancied Normandy club Caen can go second in Ligue 1 when they visit Rennes while runaway leaders Paris Saint-Germain put their undefeated record on the line at home to Lyon tomorrow. Few would have expected Caen, whose best top-flight finish was fifth in 1992, to be challenging for Champions League places but while PSG have been, as expected, the dominant force, the battle for European spots is now the main point of interest in France. Newly-promoted Angers currently hold second spot having lost just three times in 17 outings, although they are a whopping 15 points behind PSG already with the season not yet at its halfway stage.

Angers are not in action until tomorrow when they host struggling Bordeaux while, elsewhere, Monaco and Saint-Etienne meet at the Stade Louis II in a battle of two sides who were expected to compete towards the top of the table from the outset. Monaco have revived their fortunes after a slow start and have climbed to fourth, just one point behind Caen in third while Angers are a further point ahead. After an awful run of form, Lyon caused a surprise when they beat Gary Neville's Valencia side 2-0 on Wednesday in the Champions League. They are currently fifth, three points adrift of the podium so still very much in contention despite poor recent results that have piled pressure on coach Hubert Fournier.

"We showed a different face (on Wednesday) and if we had played this way in some previous games we probably would have fought to be in this competition for longer," said Fournier, whose team finished bottom of their group and so must now focus purely on domestic matters for the rest of the campaign. "That's life. Elite football is not forgiving. However, this game gives us hope, and shows us the path we must take in the league, which is our bread and butter. "We have a difficult match in Paris tomorrow night," he added. Last season's Ligue 1 player of the year Alexandre Lacazette is a major concern for Lyon after hurting himself while scoring his side's second goal against Valencia. "He felt

something at the back of his thigh on the run that led to his goal," said Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas.

Laurent Blanc's PSG side will be in relaxed mood as they continue a stunning start to their campaign that has seen them drop just six points. Paris have not lost a domestic game since March and a fourth straight title already appears a formality while the Champions League is the biggest priority with passage through to the last 16 already guaranteed. Elsewhere, Marseille can continue their mini-revival as they come into their match at home to Corsican side Gazelec Ajaccio on the back of a good run that has lifted Michel's side into the upper half of the table. OM come into the weekend in ninth spot but are only six points shy of the top three.— AFP

## French league table

**PARIS:** French Ligue 1 table ahead of this weekend's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Paris SG	17	14	3	0	40	8	45
Angers	17	8	6	3	16	9	30
Caen	17	9	2	6	20	18	29
Monaco	17	7	7	3	24	23	28
Lyon	17	7	5	5	21	16	26
Saint-Etienne	17	8	2	7	21	21	26
Nice	17	7	4	6	30	22	25
Lorient	17	6	7	4	27	23	25
Marseille	17	6	5	6	26	19	23
Rennes	17	5	8	4	22	20	23
Nantes	17	6	4	7	13	16	22
Bordeaux	17	5	6	6	21	26	21
Lille	17	4	8	5	11	12	20
Reims	17	5	5	7	18	21	20
Gazélec Ajaccio	17	5	5	7	17	20	20
Montpellier	17	5	4	8	20	23	19
Guingamp	17	5	4	8	16	23	19
Bastia	17	5	3	9	17	23	18
Toulouse	17	3	6	8	19	31	15
Troyes	17	0	6	11	9	34	6

# Sports



**Red-hot Cardinals overcome Vikings, book playoff spot**



**AMSTERDAM: Davy Klaassen (left) and Mitchell Dijks (right) of Ajax Amsterdam duels with Mattias Mostrom of Molde FK during the UEFA Europa League football match on December 10 2015. —AFP**

## 4-TIMES CHAMPIONS AJAX EXIT EUROPA

### LAMELA HITS TOTTENHAM TREBLE; LIVERPOOL TAKE TOP SPOT

**LONDON:** Four-times European Champions Ajax Amsterdam were felled at the first hurdle of the continent's second tier Europa League on Thursday, exiting in the group stage two days after rivals PSV Eindhoven celebrated long-awaited success. Dutch football was in a jubilant mood after PSV became the first club in eight years from the Netherlands to reach the last 16 of the Champions League on Tuesday, but Ajax's failure to make it out of Group A following a 1-1 draw at home to Molde will have dampened enthusiasm. Ajax were pipped to second place by Fenerbahce, whose 1-1 draw with Celtic added their name to the lengthy list of qualifiers for the knockout rounds after Thursday's games.

Fifteen teams had booked their spots in the last 32 before the final group matches, leaving nine places up for grabs, with eight teams set to drop into the competition from the Champions League. Joining Fenerbahce in the draw were Olympique de Marseille, Sion, Midtjylland, Lokomotiv Moscow, Sporting, Fiorentina, Anderlecht and Augsburg, who wrapped up their place thanks to a dramatic late goal against Partizan Belgrade. Ajax, one of Europe's most decorated teams, won four straight domestic titles between 2010 and 2014 and currently lead the table, but they are no longer the force they once were on the continent.

They came into their final group

match needing to win and hoping Fenerbahce would slip up against Celtic, beginning with promise by taking the lead through Donny van de Beek's looping header after 14 minutes. Yet Norwegian outfit Molde, under the guidance of former Manchester United striker Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, have proved surprisingly impressive in the Europa League and Harmeet Singh levelled with a low shot 15 minutes before halftime. Fenerbahce, at this point, were leading Celtic 1-0 through Liverpool loanee Lazar Markovic's 39th-minute goal, and although the Scottish side fought back to level through Kris Commons, a draw was enough to leave the Turkish side second behind Molde and two points clear of Ajax.

#### Perfect Napoli

Among those safely into the hat for the next stage before Thursday's games were Napoli, who rounded off their impressive group stage campaign with a 5-2 thrashing of Legia Warsaw to end with a perfect record of six wins. Their romp in Naples, in which Dries Mertens scored twice, took their group total to 22 goals, the most by any side in this season's competition. Tottenham Hotspur were another side whose place in the last 32 was secure before they hosted Monaco in their final group match in which much-maligned striker Erik Lamela scored a superb first-half hat-trick in a 4-1 win. Argentine winger Lamela was written off by many Spurs supporters last season after failing to shine following his

25 million pounds (\$37.9 million) move from AS Roma, but some of the sparkle has returned to his game more recently, particularly in Europe.

Augsburg sealed their knockout stage berth in the most dramatic fashion, coming back from a goal down to win 3-1 at Partizan Belgrade and progress from Group L at the expense of the Serbian champions. Raul Bobadilla netted in the 89th minute for Augsburg, who edged out their opponents on overall goal difference after finishing level on nine points with an identical head-to-head record. Swiss side Sion celebrated wildly after they drew 0-0 at home to Liverpool to secure second spot in Group B, ahead of Rubin Kazan who were held 2-2 by Girondins Bordeaux. —Reuters